



What is content marketing?

The [Content Marketing Institute](#) defines it as “creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content, to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, and ultimately to drive profitable customer action.”

I really like this definition and I'm going to use this as a three-part structure for the topic.

What is your why?

But before we get into the specifics, let's talk about the why. You have to understand your why.

If you don't know the why behind what you're doing, then you may well give up because content marketing, particularly, is a long-term strategy.

This is about long-term fiction sales. It takes time to grow.

So unless you understand why you're doing this, then you will give up. So I'm going to give you a few whys that I think are interesting.

Customers prefer content marketing.

This is a picture of one of my blog posts about Bath, around Druids, the Circus and Freemasons which leads into my book, [Map of Shadows](#).

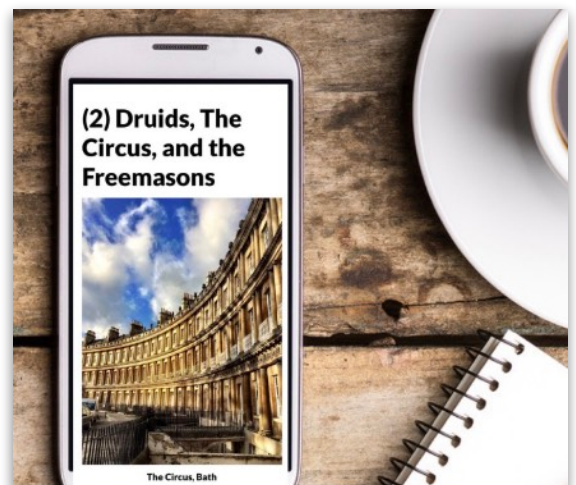
But, basically, these are some statistics from a site called [neilpatel.com](#), which is all about SEO and content marketing, and it's quite technical but Neil has some really good stats.

He said that he has found or reported on this study that **70% of people would rather learn about products through good content.**

68% of consumers spend time reading blog content and other content from a brand they're interested in.

So I want you to start thinking about **your own behavior as a customer**, how do you find things to buy?

How do you learn about products? And does that relate to content, generally?



So whether you're reading a book, whether you're listening to a podcast, that's certainly how I get a lot of information about products. The coffee I'm drinking right now is a particular mushroom based coffee ([4 Sigmatic](#)) that I learned about on Tim Ferriss's podcast, that's just a little example.

Looking around my desk right now – the mic I'm using here, this is an [ATR2100](#), I learned about that microphone way back years ago when I was doing a course on audio. *[Note: in the pic below, I'm using a [Blue Yeti](#). I have both!]* Or the stand up desk I'm standing up at right now [[Humbleworks](#)], this is something I learned about on a blog post about the 10 best stand up desks.

Look around you right now. **What are some of the things that you found and bought because of content**, whether that is blogging, podcasting, videos, maybe social media?

Okay, so that's the first thing. Customers prefer learning about things and discovering things in that way, rather than pop-up ads.

You probably prefer content marketing to push advertising like ads.



The next thing – and I think this is so important – is that **you probably prefer it**.

This is a realization that I came to, I guess a month or so ago. I was like, 'Oh, I have to do some Facebook ads. I have to do some Amazon ads. I have to do these ads.' And I was resisting doing them because it's not fun for me.

I'm certainly not saying you shouldn't do ads. You definitely should. It's part of your marketing arsenal.

But when I thought about **how I want to spend my life and how I want to spend my time**, we only have a certain number of hours in the day and I find **creating content inherently rewarding**.

So when I do a podcast interview, I learn things from that. I have human interaction, I learn things about writing in creative business.

It's also possible that more people's lives have been changed or helped in some way by my podcast than my [non-fiction books](#), which is a really a brain-altering thing to consider.

It's possible that you've learned more from YouTube videos or podcasts than you have from books you have read.

So, I want us to think in a different way about content marketing because, I think, it's **qualitatively different to advertising**.

You create an ad and it might sell a book, for example. But when you create content, say you do a podcast or you do a video and we'll come into all these examples in a bit, you're actually **creating something new in the world** that may stand alone and you are **building another asset**, and we'll come back to that as well a bit later. And I certainly can't say the same for paid advertising.

Think about the amount of time that you want to spend on marketing. How do you want to spend that time?

So, why do content marketing? The customer likes it and you like it, plus it can actually be building an asset and it can make money by itself.

This is really fascinating because when you do an ad to drive someone to your fiction books, say, on Amazon, then that may be income producing because someone may buy your book but it's certainly not *asset* building for you.

You're actually building the asset of the person whose platform you're on. So, if you're using BookBub ads, for example, you're helping BookBub run their business. If you're doing Facebook ads, you're giving money to Facebook. And, again, Amazon, we're all giving so much money to Amazon!

So what I like about the idea of content marketing – and we'll talk about owning your own site later – is that, if you **build a website with traffic over the long-term, it actually becomes an asset for you**.

It actually can make money in other ways. It can also potentially be another brand, whether that's your name or something different. You also will build an email list and that can be your own BookBub style marketing. And, of course, if you don't know what BookBub is, just go to bookbub.com, it is probably the biggest email marketing service for authors and books.

So your website, your brand, your email list, these are all assets that can make you money for the long-term. And that's why so many of us talk a lot about building your own website, building your own email list, owning your future and not driving all your traffic directly to the book sites.

But the important thing here is they will only become assets if you retain control and ownership.



So, for example, I don't like the idea of only doing articles on a site like Medium or on Facebook, or on anything you don't own because it builds that other asset for somebody else.

So, again, you're spending your time building someone else's platform. So really think about that as we go through. And remember, **these platforms can change their minds and change their algorithms.**

Remember when Facebook used to be great and easy and you could put an article up and it would go out to everyone who had subscribed to your page? Then it became pay to play. And the same thing has pretty much happened with Amazon ads now.

So what I'm really saying is **change your mindset around who owns your content and how that's going to be an asset for you for the long-term.**

So if you want to own your own home on the internet, then I'm suggesting that you are paying for hosting, you have a WordPress site. I've been using WordPress for 10 years now and it's fantastic. Build your platform where it can't be taken away from you. So you have backups, which you can on free sites but, essentially, you're taking this seriously, you need your own website.



Owning your own home on the internet is a foundation for content marketing.

So you definitely need to up-skill yourself on this but it's not complicated anymore. Obviously this is not a build your own website talk but you can go to my video on How to build your own website at www.TheCreativePenn.com/authorwebsite

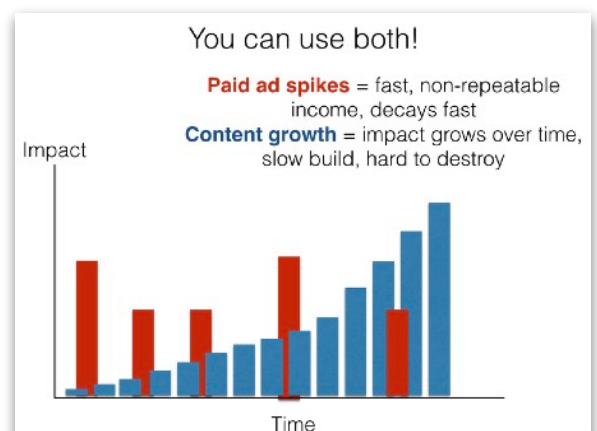
That is a free tutorial and I'll show you how to set things up. There are lots of different hosting services out there. But, basically, **having something that you own and control is fundamental.** And as indie authors, that's what we love!

Use both content marketing and paid ads in tandem.

What I'm suggesting for authors of fiction (and non-fiction) is to use both paid ads for spike sales and content marketing for longer-term growth.

This is how I do things. I have slowly created a website that grows with content over time. So that's the blue lines left. It really takes time. But now, the income from my nonfiction site, The Creative Penn, is significant.

Then I use paid ad spikes at particular intervals, say



around launches. That is a fast income spike, but it's also non-repeatable. So you pay for your ads, you get your income and it decays super fast.

So unless you keep paying, you can't sustain that level of sales and that is how some people get into doing ads every day. Because if you're not running them all the time, you can't sustain the sales.

But, as I mentioned, I don't want to be spending my time doing ads every day. It's not what I love, it's not what I'm good at and **it's important for you to decide how you want to spend your time.**

Questions:

- What is content marketing?
- Why would *you* bother with content marketing? What is your why?
- Why do you feel attracted to content marketing? What do you dislike about other forms of marketing that makes content and attraction marketing something you want to do?