

Content Marketing for an Executive-Level Audience

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Too many marketers want to reach, what they consider, the holy grail – the C-suite – through content.

You may spend months researching the most senior executives inside organizations to figure out how best to get their attention, only to have minimal success getting through — or worse, have to rely on the bureaucracy underneath them to take your message upstairs.

Getting the attention of C-level executives — and presenting them with marketing materials that actually make them want to invest in your product or service — is no easy task.

Where are marketers going wrong in compelling this important group to buy?

Today, we'll take a look at why content marketing that targets the C-suite can be a powerful and productive endeavor, as well as what to keep in mind when focusing on this group.

Why Target the C-suite?

It's not because going directly to the top will shorten the buyer's cycle.

Instead, targeting C-level executives with content marketing can help you with very specific marketing goals:

- **Enterprise sales:** If this marketing campaign could lead to a seven-figure sales opportunity, it's worth approaching the top-level decision makers in a company.
- **Long-term business relationship development:** If your firm is looking to forge a long-term, mutually beneficial partnership with a company with complementary interests, the C-suite is typically the only way to go.
- **Thought leadership activation:** If you're looking to get your marketing information in front of influencers not to make way for a sale, but to get them to spread your thought leadership throughout their networks, you'll want to make the C-suite your priority.
- **They'll extract themselves from the gritty details.** Sometimes, the best you can get from a member of the C-suite is a strong recommendation. Your relationship will often be handed off to another member of their team in order to hash out the details of a partnership and negotiate the terms of the contract.
- **You'll need to prove value.** They're not interested in the details of your product or service, but rather what you can do for them. If your marketing doesn't provide demonstrable value, you will be out of luck.
- **They don't want to be badgered.** If you're looking to start a lengthy discussion that leads into a months-long sales process, don't go to the C-suite. It won't make the process move quickly. Only market to the C-suite if it's absolutely necessary for your success and theirs — and if you can prove you'll provide strong value with limited oversight from the senior-most level or management.

But if you're looking to build better C-suite relationships, you need to be prepared.

Why?

Your old marketing tactics simply aren't going to cut it in front of this highly discerning, busy, and preoccupied group.

How They Make Buying Decisions

Chances are slim that the chief information officer you're targeting is going to immediately agree to invest in your product.

Instead, they'll have a specific set of buying behaviors you can expect to encounter:

When you're ready to begin developing your content marketing specifically for C-suite buyers, here are three ways to maximize your chances of reaching and convincing this elusive audience.

Content Marketing Tips: Revamp Your Messaging

In "Selling to the C-Suite," Nicholas AC Read and Dr. Stephen J. Bistriz found that executives want to be sales contacts because they "thrive on fresh ideas from outside their companies."

What does this mean?

It means you need to know what messages C-level executives are being given from inside their own company, what stale marketing propositions they've already heard, and what you can bring to the table that will allow them a new viewpoint on old problems.

In practice, this also means the traditional marketing messages you've been using aren't going to work.

When you're marketing to a group as successful and plugged in as the C-suite, the content marketing that engages other, lower level players won't always work.

Instead, you need to focus your messaging on telling them something they don't already know.

Whether that's by commissioning independent research, crunching available data to reveal new truths, or simply figuring out an elegant way to shift the paradigm around the issues they're currently grappling with, it's time to take a hard look at your messaging — and whether it's truly working.

Do Your Research

To get content marketing in front of the coveted C-suite audience, you need to know how and where they consume information.

Take a look at their company's own marketing materials to suss out their key messages and brand values.

Look through their social media profiles to get a sense of how they not only build their thought leadership, but who they interact with publicly (and keep in mind execs are more likely to rely on advice from peers and those they've seen demonstrate expertise).

Use this research to build out a dedicated buyer persona for the C-level executives you'll be targeting.

Use this persona to help craft a new message based on what information they're lacking, and build it to contrast the information you think they're already receiving.

Identify where you can actually provide value to a particular audience, and hammer that point home in succinct, powerful content.

Emphasize Strategy

Keep your content useful.

Not only should you be provoking thought with your messaging, but you should be providing a solution that works with their strategy, affects their return on influence, and strengthens their overall bottom line.

It's these big-picture things that matter to executives.

Instead of discussing the variety and power of your company's computer chips, for example, focus on how your products can cut their yearly expenditures by 10 percent.

By keeping your content marketing out of the weeds, you're better positioned to reach the highest level of decision makers.

Be Succinct

Imagine the amount of time it takes for a mid-level business manager to make a buying decision.

Now take that amount of time and reduce it by 90 percent, and you have the period in which you need to convince a chief technology officer you're worth spending another five minutes on.

What's more, you don't have time to discuss tactics in those five minutes — you need to prove your company offers a strategic, innovative solution to a problem they know they have — and convince them to take another chunk of their time to continue a conversation with your sales team.

With this in mind, it's clear you need to convey your message quickly.

While this includes keeping content marketing to the point and free of fluff, it also means you need to keep your work channel-appropriate and engaging.

So even if your executive has only five minutes to skim your latest white paper between meetings, they'll be able to get the gist of what you're saying — and the message will stay with them and drive their decision-making process.