

Wellness Marketing:

How to Build a **Content Strategy**
for Your Healthcare Organization





Healthcare, at its heart, is a conversation.

After all, what is the doctor-patient relationship if not an ongoing exchange of ideas? Patients offer their symptoms, their worries and their stories. Doctors respond with education, guidance and support.

Both sides are sharing *content*. This content is carefully chosen and delivered at the right moment.

Healthcare conversations today are moving into the digital realm, which offers convenience and round-the-clock connection.

Patients can track their blood pressure and other health measurements with at-home devices, then send the data to their doctors. In turn, a growing number of medical practices offer online portals that allow patients to read their health records, order medication refills and exchange messages with their healthcare providers.



Innovative healthcare marketers are creating vibrant communities within this digital space. These provide life-changing health and wellness content that audiences soon associate with a trusted brand. In turn, the public shares valuable insight into its needs, which healthcare organizations can use to improve their services.

**Want to pull your
audience into a
conversation?
First, you'll need
a strategy.**

AN ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER TO FIND.

The national desire for health-related knowledge is ongoing and unquenchable: What does that symptom mean? What surprising wellness tips can I share with my friends? Where's the closest doctor?

More than 70 percent of Americans who use the Internet have recently gone online to research these sorts of health questions. Since nearly two-thirds of Americans now have smartphones, most can tap into an electronic health conversation in a few seconds.^[1,2]

But studies show that whether the public is seeking advice on children's health questions or they're trying to diagnose their own symptoms, their search results are often unsatisfying or even inaccurate.^[3,4]

The online world is crowded and noisy, and trusted healthcare brands have a voice the public wants to hear.



CONTENT HELPS YOUR PROVIDERS MAKE THE BEST IMPRESSION

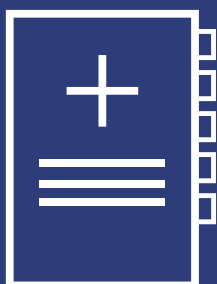
When people are searching for a healthcare provider, they often look online. Nearly two-thirds of American adults are familiar with doctor review websites. Among those who'd looked at physician ratings in the past year, 37 percent had avoided a doctor based on bad ratings.[5]

Negative reviews on Yelp, Healthgrades and other sites “can be pretty brutal,” one doctor confessed. “Part of being a physician now is having to deal with these.”[6]

When your target audience “meets” your organization’s providers online, what do they see? How do they feel about your brand after these encounters you don’t control?

You can help ensure your audience’s impressions of your organization make them want to continue the conversation. This requires an ongoing stream of content that:

- fascinates
- begs to be shared
- makes them feel part of a community



**This content doesn't
happen accidentally.
It requires the following
5-Step Process.**



STEP 1:

Know what your content should accomplish

The Content Marketing Institute notes that great content marketers set themselves apart by documenting their strategy and periodically reviewing their plan to ensure that they're following the course they set for themselves.^[7]

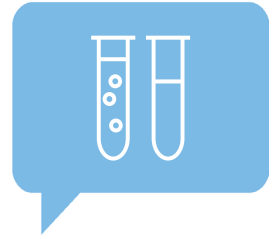
In other words, you *don't* want to have an off-the-cuff chat with your audience—especially about their health. Effective content strategy requires thinking before you speak. That starts with setting **goals you can measure**.

One of healthcare's biggest content success stories in recent years is the Cleveland Clinic.

The overall goal the organization set for its content is to achieve “national brand awareness and affinity. Our overall strategy is really around content that helps people anywhere in the world, whether they’re our patients or not,” Digital Engagement Manager Amanda Todorovich told us. “We want to be useful, helpful and relevant every day.”^[8]

That’s a good goal for any healthcare organization: Create content that helps people live healthier, happier lives. They’ll keep coming back, and they’ll bring their friends with them.





STEP 2:

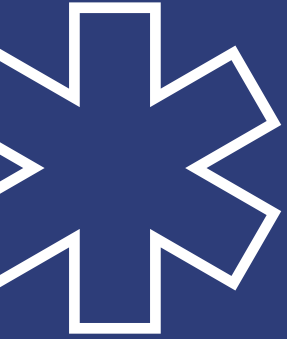
Assemble tools and establish processes

To create timely, effective content, your healthcare organization will need to take on multiple new roles.

Depending on the content you want to produce, you may need to function like a newspaper, a cable news channel or a movie studio (or *all* of these outlets).

Here's what all of these entities have in common:

- They're continually creating new content. It's not a side hobby they do only occasionally—content is their core mission.
- They're not just focused on today's content. Today's work is just a snapshot from the stream they're planning for tomorrow, next month and maybe even further out.
- The richness of their content is the result of a well-trained, highly skilled team.
- A carefully planned process guides all the moving parts.



You'll be tracking a lot of items as they pass through multiple departments under the pressure of numerous deadlines. You'll need high-tech tools—and ongoing communication—to keep your content moving in the right direction.





THE CONTENT CALENDAR

Your content calendar tracks each item you produce; its format (such as blog, video or podcast); who's creating it; who's in charge of ensuring it's completed; its status in the creation process; and when it will be published.

This tool is a must-have. You can also use it to:

- **TRACK** upcoming holidays, seasons or events that provide an angle for content (e.g., gardening safety in the spring, the importance of carbon monoxide detectors in the fall)
- **SHOW** where the content will be published
- **GIVE** each item a category label so you can easily find it later when you want to repurpose it for a different channel

THE CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

To create effective content, you also need a content management system (CMS). This is the software that organizes your content and publishes it online.

Not just any CMS will do. You need a version suited for your particular content creation needs. HubSpot is our tool of preference because it has gone a step further and created a COS, or Content Optimization System. It not only organizes and distributes content, but also provides many analytical tools for measuring success. But you can choose from many others, as well.

Cheryl Welch, the managing editor of the Spectrum Health Beat website, joined the organization just one month before the site went live. The site gives voice to the 12 hospitals and 1,300 providers of the Michigan-based Spectrum Health System.^[9]

Her first task was to bring a CMS on board to direct the stream of content the staff was passing around and editing by email.

You'll want a CMS that's easy to use and fits into your processes like a hand in a glove. Before you make your choice, take the time to thoroughly understand *who* will be using the CMS and how they'll be using it. Envision how your CMS will aid your workflow.



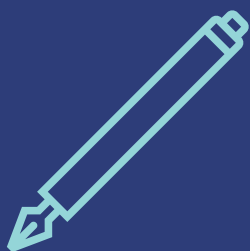
YOUR TEAM

The main purpose of your content is not to sell your organization. It's to share health news, tell stories, and create relationships between your providers and potential patients. This requires content creators who have a careful touch.

“Anytime you do research on content marketing ... one of the first things they say is hire a journalist,” Cheryl Welch told us. “Hire a journalist because they know content.” To create content, she recruited five in-house employees—four of whom had news reporting backgrounds—and built a pool of freelance journalists.

Your writers, however, can't generate content alone. They need gifted editing. They also need ongoing access to your organization's providers, administrators and patients. Given the unique nature of health-related information (it has the potential to cause harm or run afoul of federal regulations), other stakeholders play critical roles in ensuring that your content follows applicable standards.

Scheduling meetings with your team at least weekly helps ensure that everyone is adding value and treating the organization's content as a priority.



YOUR QUALITY CONTROL REVIEWS

All your content should travel through a review process, with steps that include:

An initial editorial review. Does the message and the tone match your brand? Is the content newsworthy? Does it appear factual? Is it enjoyable? Is it actionable? Does it inspire the user to return for more?

Content strategy check. Keep content strategists from different departments within your organization in the loop to ensure that the content carries the right message.

Provider review. Give the doctors or other providers quoted in the material ample time to weigh in on the content's accuracy. Have a process in place for internal subject matter experts to review the content, as well.

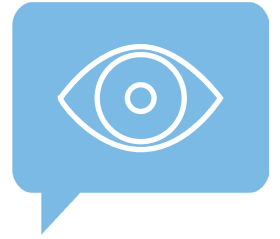
Compliance review. Establish a spirit of collaboration with the legal team that will be combing through your content to check that you're complying with HIPAA and other regulatory demands. Alert them in advance about any content that has the potential for higher risk. This helps eliminate surprises on their end and time-consuming revisions on yours. Also, make sure your writing team thoroughly understands compliance issues that apply to their work.



Fear of regulatory noncompliance makes many healthcare content marketers timid. This reluctance, in turn, fosters bland content. Be bold, yet cautious and you can set your organization apart.

WEBSITE TRAFFIC AND
APPOINTMENT REQUESTS
INCREASE IN RELATION TO
THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY
OF CONTENT PUBLISHED.

Give IT support a prominent role on your content team, whether it's an internal staff member or a contractor. Posting content online and relaying input from viewers and readers can be technically demanding. Your online conversation must be responsive and timely, which requires IT staff that acts quickly on your requests.



STEP 3:

Bring Your Content to Life

Visionary marketers are creating innovative content even in industries that rarely capture the public's imagination, like industrial equipment, cargo transportation and janitorial services.

Compared with many other arenas, healthcare offers an especially fertile ground for growing content. (It's no accident that medicine has been the focus of dozens of television shows since the earliest days of the medium.)

Every day, stories of hope, triumph and discovery flow out of the nation's healthcare organizations, from urban academic centers to rural clinics. Every year, new treatments and technologies become available.

Health and wellness content comes with a built-in “wow factor.” All you have to do is bring it out and make it shine so it catches your audience's attention.

LET FAMOUS PEOPLE HELP YOU DRAW A CROWD

Getting the nation to talk about genetics isn't easy. But Angelina Jolie has done it several times. The actress announced in the *New York Times* that she had undergone preventive mastectomy after genetic testing revealed she had a high risk of breast cancer.^[10]

Demand for this testing then surged, which researchers dubbed the “Angelina Jolie Effect.” They expected interest in genetic testing to spike again after she revealed her follow-up surgery to remove her ovaries.^[11]

Celebrities are increasingly willing to bring even once-taboo health issues into the media spotlight, sparking conversations about cancer, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease, alcoholism, substance abuse, depression and anxiety.

At these moments, readers and viewers want to learn more. Your organization's experts have a terrific opportunity to share trustworthy facts and well-informed perspective with an attentive audience.



LOOK AT THE CALENDAR

At any given time, large swaths of the public are facing shared threats to their well-being: Tree pollen in the spring, fireworks in early July and snow in the winter. Your healthcare providers can offer information that helps audiences protect themselves from these threats.

Keep in mind that other healthcare outlets will be pinning their content to the same events, just as they did last year. Be sure you're coming up with surprising facts and fresh insight each time.



HELP YOUR CLINICIANS GUIDE THE CONVERSATION

What topics will your audience want to look at and share tomorrow? Ask your doctors, nurses, dietitians, occupational therapists and other providers. They have the inside scoop on the questions and concerns on the public's mind right now.

Some clinicians will be interested in helping your staff create content. Ask collaborating doctors and departments to connect you with notable patient stories. Discuss trends they're seeing in their exam rooms. Ask about any surprises or newsworthy stories they encountered at their recent medical conferences.

Others may need more persuasion before they'll participate. When you encounter evidence that your content is raising awareness of your brand or providing other benefits, share it via your organization's internal channels, such as newsletters, websites and emails.

Also develop insight into the factors that motivate your physicians and departments to play a role in content creation—and the barriers that keep them from joining—and use this knowledge to build a case for the advantages of participating.



ASK YOUR AUDIENCE

Consistently use your audience's feedback to guide your content. Offer frequent polls to solicit topics they want to learn more about. Ask them for their personal anecdotes and success stories.

Read the comments on your blogs and seek out remarks about your organization on social media. Answer the public's questions and let them know that your organization has heard their concerns.

THINK LOCALLY, CREATE GLOBALLY

Generate content that even audiences outside the boundaries of your community will want to share. Remember, you're not using every piece of content to sell your products and services. You're trying to elevate awareness of your brand with materials that educate and fascinate.

When local residents see that your content is striking a chord far beyond your region, it will add to your organization's credibility and strengthen its reputation.

BACK UP YOUR CONTENT WITH FACTS

Cite reputable research—ideally recent—to support your content. Your organization's reputation is on the line every time you publish a new blog, infographic, video or other item. If your content makes a statement that's untrue or overhyped, comment sections far and wide may let you know. And that's the kind of viral sensation you don't want.

THE BOTTOM LINE: CREATE CONTENT THAT WILL HELP PEOPLE LIVE HEALTHIER, HAPPIER AND LONGER.

This is a favorable time to work as a healthcare marketer:

- The public has an unquenchable curiosity about health, wellness and fitness topics. With Baby Boomers reaching an age when they need more healthcare—while wanting to maintain their vitality—your audience is considerable.
- American adults and older teens who use the Internet now spend more than six hours a day online. More than a quarter of that time goes toward social networking, where they can effortlessly distribute content that's worth sharing.^[12]
- Content marketers can now choose a format that best presents each story, including infographics, memes, lists, videos from a few seconds to a few minutes in length, slideshows, animation, blogs, eBooks, interviews and white papers.

You have an opportunity to create a community that attracts visitors who want to improve their health and well-being—then sends them off with a positive impression of your organization.

By creating good content often, you can achieve both outcomes.



STEP 4:

Distribute your content

Before your content can wow your audiences, inspire them to take action or compel them to hit the Share button, you have to put it where they can find it. Too many marketers are creating great content, but not putting in the effort to make sure it has a big impact.

You can leverage countless opportunities for distribution, including some you may have overlooked:

EMAILS. Give your audience frequent calls-to-action to sign up for weekly or monthly subscriber emails. But don't stop there. Consider embedding links to your organization's content site at the end of employees' emails. Upward of 100 billion business emails are exchanged every day, and each email your company sends out can carry an invitation to learn more about your brand.^[13]

Content marketing helps build opt-in contact databases used for ongoing email communications that contain additional calls-to-action to further engage an audience.

SOCIAL MEDIA. Keep your organization's Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, SlideShare, Instagram and other social media outlets buzzing with fresh content. Patients now rely heavily on social media as they're choosing a doctor or other provider. Improve the chances that they'll find your organization's providers when they go online.

Learn the rules for each channel and understand its culture. If you post tips for getting a healthy breakfast, do it at 7 a.m. Boosting your energy? That's at 2 p.m. Relieving insomnia? Share it at midnight.

Approach social media from every angle. Take out paid ads where you know your market will find them. Post signs around the offices and waiting areas within your facilities to point visitors to your social media content.

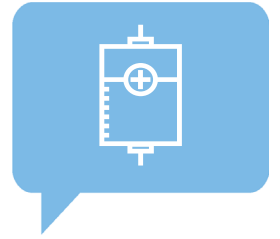
CONTENT CAN BE DISTRIBUTED TO TARGETED AUDIENCES IN SOCIAL CHANNELS ON A LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL.

Syndicating through partner channels, The Cleveland Clinic has partnered with Yahoo! Health and other outlets to carry the organization's content to a wider audience. "How do we get more eyeballs on the content? How can we take advantage of audiences that exist that might be interested? ... It's all about maximum return on investment, on time and on energy and resources," the clinic's content maven Amanda Todorovich told us.^[14]



Meet users where they are

To reach your audience, your content now has to be optimized for mobile devices. The odds are good that your content will be read on a smartphone or tablet, rather than a desktop computer. Thanks to a profound shift in Google's algorithm, sites that aren't mobile-friendly are likely to appear farther down in users' search results. That's another benefit of building your content using HubSpot: It's automatically mobile-friendly.



STEP 5:

Measure your results

Continually scrutinize the feedback that shows how well your content and campaigns have performed:

- Wring your data through Google Analytics from every direction to learn how many people are visiting your site and what they're doing there.
- Track the conversion rate of your contact forms.
- Know what the public is saying about your organization on social media.
- Understand how they're accessing your content, where they're finding it and how often they're returning for more.

This insight will tell you what kind of content your viewers are craving. It will also help you optimize the way you deliver it to them.

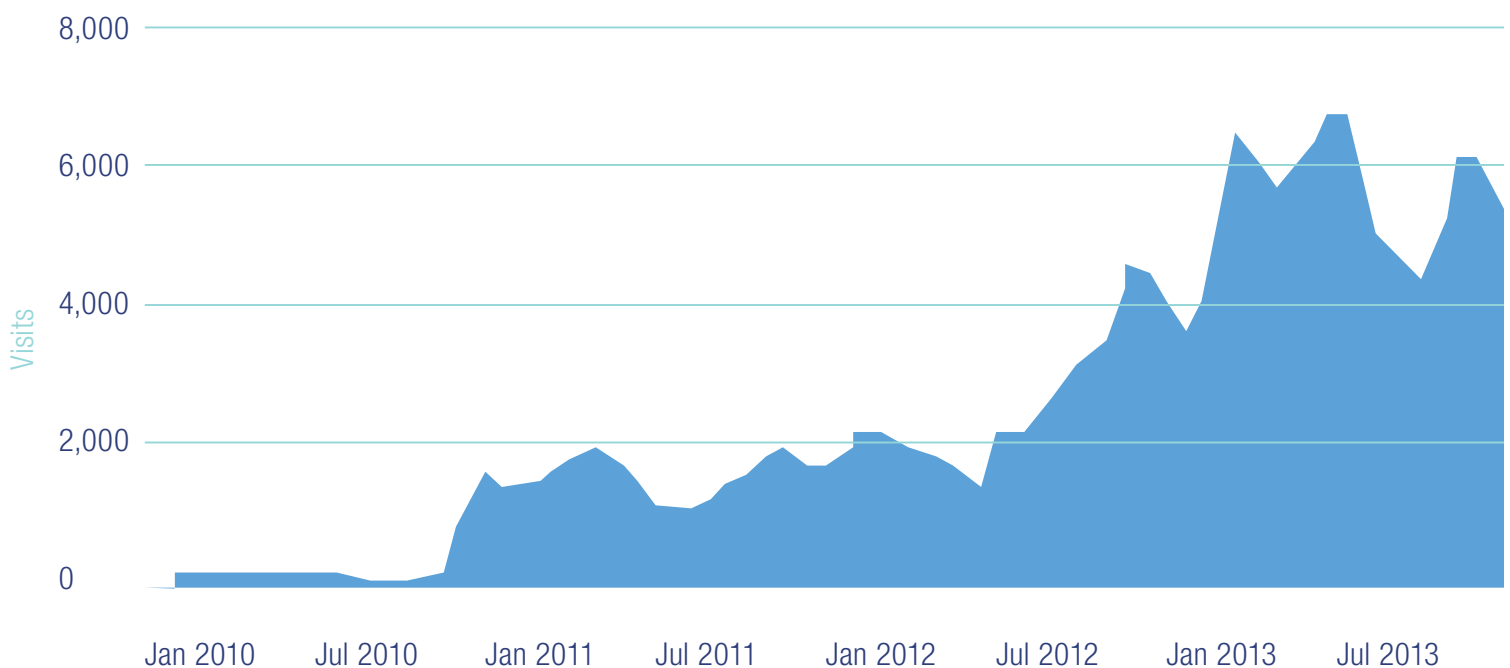
Share these outcomes—positive and negative—with your writers, your participating healthcare providers and the other stakeholders in your content. Your successes will reinforce their buy-in and show them the value of their effort. The moments when you missed the target will help the team adjust its aim on future endeavors.

Health-related [blog articles](#) can drive thousands of visitors to your website each month. Even articles written years ago can continue to be found in search engines and [contribute to brand awareness](#).

Consider these blogs published in 2011 and 2012 by a small, regional healthcare organization. They still attract visitors each month, resulting in thousands of organic views.

Title	Author	Posted	Views
Shocking Fast Food Statistics You Should Know	Deanna Kidd	Apr 23 2012 4:11 PM	8,723
Top 10 Heart Healthy Vegetables	Deanna Kidd	Jul 29 2011 10:01 AM	4,955
Interpreting Blood Pressure Readings	Deanna Kidd	Dec 29 2011 11:25 AM	1,620
How to Deal With Summer Bug Bites	North Ohio Heart I Ohio...	Jul 14 2015 8:30 AM	1,280
Is Low Blood Pressure Dangerous?	North Ohio Heart I Ohio...	Oct 2 2012 2:01 PM	1,007

Additionally, monthly traffic to this organization's blogs increased from under 1,000 to more than 6,000 in just three years.



NEED HELP STARTING AND MAINTAINING CONVERSATIONS?

Kuno Creative has a proven track record for creating compelling content that elevates healthcare companies' visibility and gives them a reputation for trusted expertise. Is your organization enjoying all the benefits that content marketing offers?

If not, we can help you develop and implement a strategy that carries your brand not just across your community, but all around the digital world.

Visit www.kunocreative.com to learn more!



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