Rachel McConnell: Hello. Thanks for having me. I am a content ops manager at BT. My name is Rachel. I was previously the content strategist at Clearleft and for the last few years, I've worked in strategy, content design, and consultancy. I'm here today to talk to you about content strategy. Let's get going. When people talk about content strategy, here are some of the questions you might have in your head. What is content strategy? What should I put into it? I've created a strategy document—why is no one following it? There's so much to do, where do I start, or even how do I get to create the strategy while I'm doing all the work?

What I'm going to do for you today is answer some of those questions. I'm going to share some things that I've learned about content strategy. I'm going to share what I think strategy is and how to create one, how to define all the elements that go into that, how to get it done, so my tips for getting it actually done, and then also my tips for sharing your strategy and how you get people on board with that.

Before we start the theory, I'm going to give you a bit of background information to this because I moved into my first strategy role probably about seven years ago and made some mistakes, I would say, quite quickly. I'm going to talk to you a bit about those first. I moved into the role and I took over from someone called Ben who left me this big pile of strategy books and I thought, "This is fantastic. This great. This is loads of stuff I can really get my teeth into, start reading about, start learning about, and then create my strategy."

I was reading all this information and it was really, really great, and I was just fumbling my way through, though, because I had all these component parts but I just wasn't really sure how to put them together but had the instruction manuals and I was reading through all the instruction manuals and I thought they made sense, but actually, it was all still a bit of a jumble in my head.

I expected that I would go away and put this strategy document together and come back, present this magical document and everybody would buy into it and all the money would just come flooding in and it'd be great. I'd be so successful, but the problem is, while I was creating this strategy, I was only looking in one direction. I was only looking at what I thought was important to the business, and of course, what I think was important to the business at that time might not necessarily have been important to everybody else.

Because I was then looking in one direction, when I came back and presented my strategy, I fell a bit flat on my face. What I hadn't realized is that all the different people I would need to influence all had different agendas and different motivations, and I hadn't really taken enough of that on board when I was creating the strategy. I learned some lessons from that experience.

Firstly, I learned that the people that you need to influence might have different agendas, they might have different objectives and targets and actually, you need to understand what all of those are before you create your strategy. Before you invest any time and effort, you need to spend a lot of time understanding your stakeholders and what's important to them. I also learned that strategy wasn't just this one thing, it was actually a culmination of many things that need to come together, and again, you need to identify what they are before you start creating a strategy.

Even if one document was enough, no document ever changed a company culture. You need to think more broadly than this thing that you're creating, this document that you're creating. The biggest factor that will determine whether a strategy gets delivered is that culture, and so you need to take those stakeholders on that journey. You need to take them with you. They need to be part of that process to fully get their buy-in because if you don't, your strategy could be amazing but it's just going to fall flat on its face.

Finally, I learned that even if you take those stakeholders on that journey with you, they probably will forget and deny all knowledge of having been a part of that process. Again, you need to document your journey. If you're having workshops, that's taking photos, but there's something that you need to document to remind them that actually their input was very, very valid to the strategy and they were very much a part of that as you were.

They're the lessons I've learned and now we're going to talk a bit about what I think strategy is. Strategy is a plan of action to achieve a desired outcome, and what that means is, it's a set of activities that will come together and a collection of activities that will come together and move you in the right direction to achieve your goals, and that's what you want to do. You want to achieve some goals. What we need to understand is, what is that collection of things that you need to create?

I think it's about understanding the what, which is the things like substance, the structure and hierarchy, the things we talk about every day, voice and tone, what your interactions are but as much as the what, it's also about the how. How will you get there and how will you produce the what? What will that process look like, what your workflows need to be, what tools will you use, how will you govern it and how will you measure it? It's the what but it's also the how. Often, I think in strategy, people tend to just think about the what, so, "What are we going to do?" but actually when I said it's a culmination of many things, that “how” is just as important.

How do you create one? If you think back to the first content strategy book and you'll probably recognize this from Kristina Halvorson and Melissa Rach's book, which is really, really helpful and this diagram here is still very, very relevant. Actually, what I found is on a daily basis my life looked a little bit like this when I first started as a content strategist and I had all this, just, stuff that I was dealing with every day in no particular order, and it left me puzzled as to how I then take all this stuff and move it into a document or a strategy that I could then tell a story with and then share with different stakeholders.

I was dealing with all this and I needed to put it into a logical order. The starting point of my strategy was to start thinking about a linear process and steps to get there, and it's not really a linear process. You'll move between some of these steps but I started to piece it into a gradual step. Step one is focus. Understanding what your business is trying to achieve but also what your users are trying to achieve, and we'll talk more about these as we go on.

Step two is starting to understand, to meet those needs, and to understand what the users want. We then feed that into, "Well, what does our brand voice sound like? What's our brand trying to achieve? What's the brand personality? What kind of formats work for this? What kind of frameworks do we need to have in place to ensure we're creating the right content?" They're things like style guides, tone of voice documents, and things like that. They're the foundations for what we're creating.

Then it's about thinking about who does the work. Do you have the right people? Are they in the right roles? Do they have the right skills? Then it's about defining that process. What does that workflow look like? How do things get done? Who do people work with? Then how will you measure success? We've done all this but actually, how will we know if it's worked? How will we know if it's achieving those goals?

Then finally, once you've got that live, as soon as we put content live, it's not just done. We need to maintain that content somehow. We need to govern it. We need to define how that will be tested or governed and maintained going forwards because otherwise, it doesn't get done. This was this linear process that my brain went through thinking about how I'd create that strategy.

How it works in practice, this is what I'm going to talk to you about now. All these things, they all feed into that central strategy, and you'll have all these outputs that you'll feed into it. But it's actually about understanding how we create those outputs and how we get to those outputs because again, this is still theory until we actually start putting it into practice. How do you start to think about defining those elements?

Let's start at the beginning is always the best place to start. Let's start with thinking about the focus. What I mean by this is there's going to be a lot of input into this part. The more work you do upfront, the more robust your strategy will actually become. For example, you take your user needs, your company goals, your brand strategy, your product objectives, you might have marketing objectives, but you also need to understand all your different stakeholder motivations. What we're trying to understand here is, as a business, what are those goals that we need to move towards?

Think about all these different channels that our content is happening in. Even if you are working at a high-level from a business level, you're doing a whole business content strategy, or whether you're doing it at a micro level, so you're working on a product and you're defining the microstrategy of that product, these things all still hold true. All these things will be important in your content creation.

Thinking about what your business is trying to achieve. Now, often we start with these very, very high-level business goals like number one market share, year-on-year profit growth. These things are too big for us to make tangible into our content strategy so we need to drill down into the more granular objectives. Often under those main business objectives, you'll have success indicators or KPIs. What are those key performance indicators that show that we're moving successfully in the right direction?

For example, a success indicator of number one market share might be more sales, or it might be increased online revenue, for example. All those things, again, they still have other contributing factors. They're not purely within our remit. There might be other activity happening around the business or in the marketplace that influenced that. Actually, what we need to think about is what our product or service is trying to do. We need to draw down a little bit further to the things that we can directly control. Sometimes these are called OKRs in some businesses, but these are the objectives that will move us towards the right result and they're objectives that are more within our control.

For example, I'm working on an app or a website. I can influence the online conversion of that website, or I can influence how many people add a certain item to their basket. These are the more granular things that we need to start thinking about when we look at what our objectives are, and that's what we mean by business goals. Then how we're going to achieve those is we're going to look at what we need to do to achieve those goals.

Then we need to understand what our users are trying to do. I think the difference is a lot of businesses only think about their goals and what they're trying to do. Actually they don't think enough about what the user is trying to do. If you can meet your user needs in a way that achieves your business goals, that's the sweet spot, really. You can match these up quite easily. This is a really good workshop to do, again, with your key stakeholders, taking them into a room and getting them to think about, what is the product or service trying to do, or what does it need to do to achieve those broader business goals?

Again, for example, increase online conversion, but also, what are our users needing to do? Let's see how they match up. For example, we might be trying to increase online conversions. Our users need to buy the product or service that's right for them. Great. If we give them the product or services that are right for them, that's helping us meet one of our business needs.

Again, it might be that we need to increase the basket value. Our user needs to see what complimentary items might be available to them for what they're buying so that there's an alignment there. Then with products or services, perhaps we need to reduce calls to the call center. Well, of course, what our user wants to do is not have to pick up the phone to the call center. They want to get help without having to phone up. Again, there's alignment there. What we're trying to do is find that sweet spot in the middle.

One of the ways you can start to get them to think about this is to do a premortem. I really strongly advise doing a premortem with your stakeholders as well. Once they've mapped out the business needs and the user needs, get them to think about, if we didn't focus on content, in 12 months' time, what's gone wrong? You give them five minutes to just think about every single thing that could have gone wrong if they didn't focus on content.

For example, perhaps they'll say something like our content is out of date. Our competitors have overtaken us. Our CMS is out of date. Our team morale is low. Then you get them to start grouping these into themes. Maybe there's things around governance, things around process, things around systems, things around people. Then for the next five minutes, you get them to brainstorm, "Okay. Well, how can we mitigate that? What can we do to stop that happening?" Then you use a different color Post-it.

For example, they might say, "Okay, well, to mitigate our content being out of date, we're going to audit our content every three months." To think about process, "How can we start the process and things happening?" "Okay, well, we can start putting new processes in, for example, making metadata mandatory when creating content." For systems it might be, “We're going to potentially research other content management systems.”

These things that they start thinking about, what you'll find is these start to form a basis of your strategy. All these things are adding up, you're thinking, "Oh, okay. Well, maybe one of our priorities needs to be a new content management system." All these things that you're gathering, all this information you're gathering is really, really powerful foundations to start thinking about your strategy going forward.

You've got them to do a premortem, you've got them to list out the user needs and the business needs. Remember, this is all coming from your stakeholders. The next thing to do is to get them to create a content mission statement. Often you have a company mission statement, but you don't always have a content mission statement. What you want them to do is really focus in on what should all our content be trying to achieve.

We know what our users need. We know what our business needs. We're starting to think about potential things that could go wrong if we don't focus on content. Therefore, what are we going to create as our north star for content? A really great way of doing this is through a Mad Libs exercise. This is the kind of exercise you'll find in *Nicely Said* by Nicole Fenton, which is a really good book. I recommend it. You get them to fill in the missing blanks.

You start off with this statement: We want our content to X customers X so they can X, this will help us X. It sounds a bit strange but what you want is you want to fill that in with your verbs and your adjectives so you end up with something like this: We want our content to help customers feel positive so they can trust us with their well-being needs. This is just an example here. This will help us build a loyal and long-lasting customer base.

You get them to do this with some Post-its and have a lot of discussion around which words go where and how it feels, and they can play around with it a bit. You don't have to completely follow this formula, but the idea is you start to build up a statement to encapsulate what they want their customers to start using content for. What are we offering? What are we offering that no one else is and why? What's the goal?

Now you've got a mission statement for your content. You understand what your business is trying to achieve. You understand what your users are trying to achieve, and you understand where people might be concerned about what you need to focus on as a business when it comes to content. Then you can start to define some content principles. What needs to be true, always needs to be true, for our content?

For example, it might be that our content always needs to be clear, or our content always needs to be concise, or our content always needs to be honest. You start defining things that you want to be true for your content, and you might already have some design principles. If you have that, it's a good starting point, you can build on from the design principles. If you haven't, again, this helps you really create a focus for your content.

Your principles will largely also depend on your brand characteristics. If you've got a brand that says it's strong and powerful, maybe one of your content principles is our content will always be confident. You're thinking about how you're going to bring your brand to life through that content, but also how you're going to make sure that content is useful and usable to your users.

Then what I do with all that input—so again, this is just the starting point. This is the very very start of your discovery, is to start to build out a canvas. On your canvas, you can add your product objective, so we know what we're trying to achieve, our product is trying to achieve, or our business is trying to achieve, but those are measurable goals. Your user objectives, your mission statement that you've created, and then your principles.

What you're starting to build up is a picture of what the content needs to do from a functional point of view, but also what you want your content to do from a brand point of view and the service you want it to provide or how you want it to make your users feel. This is a very very sort of focused statement and focused document that is actually just starting to build up a picture of what your content needs to do. We're not yet at the point where we've got our content and we know what our content is, but we're just starting to build up almost like a bit of a self brief for what we want our content to do.

Now, this is where you start laying the foundations and thinking about all those things that you can create to make it easier to achieve those things. These might be things like voice and tone if you don't have it already. It might be something like a style guide, so what words will we use, what words won't we use? Are we using American English? Are we using English English? All these tiny nuance things that build up a style for your product or your website.

The substance, the content itself, we'll talk about that in a minute. The format. What kind of formats work for these audiences, these users and what we need to do, what is the best format to do that in? The structure and the hierarchy of the content and the interactions themselves, so what kind of conversation do we want to be having with our users? There might be some of these things, there might not be all of them, but these are the kinds of things that start to play into your foundations.

The substance of your content is what needs to happen in between what your product's trying to do and what your users need to do, and that thing in between will be your content. What you create, whether it's a form, whether it's richer content, whether it's an app, whether it's a video, the substance of your content is what needs to happen to achieve those. That's your messaging, that's your content hierarchy. Again, that's the conversation that you want to have.

Actually, this is a really, a really nice conversation or design exercise if you've got the right people in the right room. You have one person playing the product or service, you have another person playing the user, and you get them to have the conversation that would need to happen to sell that product. You start understanding, okay, what's that messaging like? What was that conversation like? What order did we ask those things in? What's the kind of logical flow? But that's a whole other talk. The substance of your content is what sits in the middle here.

Let's have a look at that. For example, “how might we” is a really good way of starting to flesh out some of those content ideas from people—turning each of your user objectives into “how might we” statements. Let's take the first one on our canvas. How might we get well-being product help, and guidance to our users, or how might we provide it? You brainstorm around that and you get out of everybody's heads in your content team or your wider stakeholder group, all the ideas for how might they provide well-being product help and guidance.

The important thing is here is not just to think about new content, it's also to think about how you might adapt or improve existing content. Otherwise, everybody just comes up with new ideas and actually you're forgetting about all the existing content that you have and how you could improve that. You brainstorm around all of these objectives, one by one, and then you start to build up a list of really great content ideas that you can then prioritize.

You thought about your new content and how to improve existing content, and then you add these to your canvas. We've got our user objectives now and we've got our product objectives, and now we've got how we will deliver this through content. You get all your ideas and you summarize the things you think are really high priority or could have a really good impact, or you need to do them anyway, and you add these to your canvas.

On this here we've now started to build up our objectives and how we're going to start delivering that through content with some real granular content ideas. Online chat, for example, or product recommendations. You're starting to now build out your canvas with some of the substance, as well as how you're going to get there.

The next thing to do is identify who will do the work and whether you have the right people for the job, if you like. Roles and responsibilities, skills, the right people. A really good way of doing this is with a RACI. So RACI stands for responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed. Again, this is a workshop exercise where you list out everything that needs to happen for content to go live.

For example, a brief or research or testing the content. Then you put all of your potential people that might be involved in that process along the top. Your subject matter expert, for example, or your content designer, and then you take some Post-its and you put a letter on there. Are they responsible for that thing? Or are they just informed about it or consulted, or are they actually accountable for it happening? Then you put your letters on, so you build it up and then you can start to identify where there might be gaps. Perhaps there's things that aren't happening that should be. Perhaps there's things that someone really should be accountable for, but actually they're not.

What I've often found is you get lots of people saying that they're responsible, but no one's accountable. Then you start asking really important questions like, "Okay, well, if something's wrong on the website, who's accountable for that?" You start actually understanding where those accountabilities lie. That's really important because someone has to be accountable for the content and the big problems happen when no one's accountable for it, but everyone's responsible. You've got lots of people creating content, but no one taking ultimate ownership and responsibility for it.

Doing this RACI is really, really great and it also shows you whether perhaps there's someone who should be involved that maybe isn't, maybe designer research, for example. Maybe they're not involved with the content process at all, but actually they really, really should be. Because if you want accurate design and content working well together, it has to happen, it has to happen collaboratively. I'd recommend going through this process.

I'd also recommend some kind of skills assessment. You can start seeing what kind of content skills you have within your content team and whether you have the right skills in place. The way you do this is you—this is my methodology, there's lots of different methodology out there for skills assessment—is you give someone a one to seven scale and you get them to plot on the scale where they think they are in terms of confidence with a thing.

Let's say, for example, content management. How confident are you on a scale of one to seven? Seven being I'm really confident, I've been doing this my whole life, versus one might be, I've only ever used the content management system for a day, I really wouldn't be confident doing that. You get people to plot their skills and then you put them onto this sort of spider chart. If it was one, it would be in the center and if it was seven, it would be on the edge and you start plotting that pattern to see where their skills lie.

In this example here, you've got someone who's quite strong on content strategy, social media, content management, but really not strong at all when it comes to something like content design system or content modeling, UX writing. If you can overlay your whole team on one of these, you can start seeing where you might have gaps. That's really important when it comes to something like recruitment or a new project to understand who would be right for that project or whether you might need to recruit to fill that skill gap. I'd recommend some kind of skills assessment, particularly if you have quite a bit content team, and you're not sure whether you have the right people in the right places or on the right projects.

Having the right people in the right places is obviously really important to get the work done, but it's also really important for people's own sort of career paths, making sure that they're building the skills they need to be building. They're happy that they're doing the right thing and yes, they're a good match for the team that they're with. We'll say things like product teams, thinking about whether you have the right people on the right product teams. Another good way to do this is thinking about the process and how the work's going to be done; we shall talk a little bit about workflows and process maps in a minute.

Defining the process is things like process flows, workflows, but it's also documentation. How are you documenting what you're doing? What kind of tools are you using? What systems are you using? What kind of templates do you need in place, things like content, briefing templates or anything like that, that can help you with your job.

This is what a workflow might look like, a product workflow. Maybe you have a stakeholder who creates a brief, maybe then they tell the product manager that they want something done for this project. The product manager might brief the team, the content designer, and the designer might prototype. Then they might share it with the stakeholder who makes changes or feedback like a background loop, then it might get tested or validated or might need iterating. Then the content designer might document the content for the dev team.

This is just an example, but when you start mapping out these workflows, you can start to see how efficient it is. Perhaps there's inefficiencies, perhaps you're spending way too much time on one section than another. Maybe there's blockers in this process, maybe it always takes the stakeholder three weeks to feedback but your sprint cycle is two weeks. All those kinds of things that you can start to see happening once you look at the actual process. You can define the current process and then you can divine what it should be to be a more efficient process and see what changes might need to happen within that process.

Again, that then feeds into your longer-term strategy, so how might you change those processes? It's a really good exercise to go through particularly if you have lots of different teams maybe working in different ways. You can take them all into a workshop and get them to map out their current processes and see where the differences are, which teams are working well, which teams aren't working well. Again, it comes back to, are there particular people that might be better on another team? Have you got those right people in the right place?

Another template that might be really useful is something like a content brief. Even if you don't take briefs from external people within your business, maybe it's not subject matter experts that are briefing you, maybe you self-brief, it's still a very good idea to have some kind of template, even if it's just a mental checklist. Perhaps maybe your content work comes in through Jira or Jira tickets. Could you create a Jira ticket template that someone has to fit in all of these things so that when you're creating that content, you have the full context?

Things like a project, the target audience, what do we want our audience to think, feel, or do? A brief summary of the content that needs to be created? Success? What will it look like? Are there any milestones? Are there any constraints? Does it expire? When do we need to revisit the content? All of these types of questions, it's really good to get them all upfront. It's actually a really good thing to have to provide you with a little bit of evidence to push back.

Perhaps you're getting a briefing and the person who's building the brief doesn't know what they want their users to think, feel, or do. Maybe they haven't thought enough about the content of why they're doing it. It gives you a way to push back. It gives you some rationale. Perhaps you can say, well, actually these metrics are not part of what our product is trying to achieve, they're not part of our objectives. We can't prioritize this work, we need to prioritize the work that's meeting our objectives.

Getting all this information upfront is really helpful. It makes you, it helps you make content decisions. It helps you understand how to prioritize your content work. It's also just best practice to have all this in mind when you're creating your content so you know that you're creating it in the right way for that audience.

Think about those templates, what is useful, what will really help your team push content forward, but also give you that voice in the business to be able to say, well, this isn't helping towards business objectives, or this content's expired now and we need a team combating and edit it. It helps you to have those conversations because you've done the rigor of documenting everything.

Yes, as I said, the metrics and KPIs should really be aligned to your product team's objectives. If they're not, then, there's a question there for your product’s owner. If you have one, why are we doing this? There's a question back to the person briefing in the content of, if you haven't got an objective, why do you want this content?

We need to know whether our content has been successful once we put it live. It's really good to think about upfront, even way before the content goes live, probably even before it's produced, is how will we measure it? What will we measure and how often do we need to report on that? We had in our canvas if you remember earlier on, we had our product objectives and we had, how will we deliver that through content? Now we need to know, how is it working? Is it working? Do we need to change it?

Let's think about, just because we can measure stuff, it doesn't mean we should measure stuff. It's really important to focus in on what to measure. If you think about your team objectives, let's think about the increasing basket value and the reduced calls to the call center. Again, a really good way to do this is in a workshop. You take those objectives and you take your content success measures.

Again, we have those before. We had maybe one way we could track increased market basket value is more clicks to buy the product descriptions. Maybe it's click-throughs from marketing emails. Maybe a way we could measure reducing calls to the call center is how many people complete online chats or how positive sentiment is around our service or our social media service. You think about all the potential ways that you could measure the success and then you start thinking about the insights you'll get if you measure that.

For example, we really want to measure our click rates from email because we're trying to increase basket value, but also that will help say which products are most compelling, so which products are driving more click-throughs. You start to build up a picture of all of the potential success measures, but also what we would learn from that. That's really helpful because the things that you can learn from, are the things that you can adapt and change, whereas it's one thing to be measuring something, but you need to know what you'll do with that information. Having an idea of those insights earlier on is really, really helpful.

You go through this process and then you can add that to your canvas. You've now got your product objectives, your user objectives, how you're going to deliver that through content. You've got your mission statement, you've got your content principles, and then finally, you've got how you're going to measure the effectiveness of that. You've started to actually now put on here what we're going to do, how are we going to do it, and how are we going to measure the success of that.

Then finally, you need to think about once your content is live. How will you update it? How will you test it? How will you know it's working? Governance—my most favorite words are auditing, updating, and improving the content you've created. Things to think about here is how often will you review it? How often will you measure it? Is there a cycle you can get into like a six-monthly cycle or a three-monthly cycle, but also what methods that will you use.

One thing you might decide to do is create a content audit document. This is essentially a spreadsheet and you can use a tool like Screaming Frog to do a site crawl, and extract all of your URLs. You put them into a— Actually, I think you can, you might even be able to do it from something like Google Analytics. You put it all into a spreadsheet and you start collating all the information about those pages. How many views does it get? How many people are coming into this page or leaving it, what's the bounce rate?

But then you start to add more, more granular information, so at what stage of the user journey is this at? Is it a purchase? Is it pre-purchase? Is it post-purchase? What's the user trying to do on that page? Are they trying to find out more information? Are they trying to buy something? What's the business trying to do on that page? What's the next action we're pushing people to do? But then you start feeding in your criteria and you can define your criteria from your content principles that we talked about earlier. Is it honest? Is it usable? Is it clear?

Also, one you might want to add in is, it findable on the site, so you're starting to identify whether you've got the right navigation and structure. Is it findable from Google? How is our SEO? Is it accurate? Is it still current? Is it on-brand, for example? You add all your criteria to this spreadsheet. You might have 20 things, for example, and then you go through each page and you assess it against those criteria.

It's quite a painstaking, slow process, but you can divide it up among the teams. For example, maybe an hour a week, or a day, a week, you will spend on the content audit, and then you give it a red/amber/green rating, or you could give it a scoring system, but I think red/amber/green is easier because then you can look along the line and go, oh, this one's all red, we need to take action. You start assessing each page against your criteria, you give it a green rating for “it's good” against that criteria, yes, it's a brand, yes, it's findable. You give it a red for no, it's not findable or it's not on-brand or it's not accurate, and you give it an amber for “maybe needs a bit of improvement.”

Then you add a column for action, so maybe your action's to remove this page here. It's completely inaccurate or it's completely outdated, remove it or improve it, so the content needs to be written, or maybe you need to merge it with another page. Maybe your third category is you're going to merge because you've got two pages and they've got really, really similar information, so you give it an action.

Then you give it a priority and your priority will depend on two things. It will depend on the red/amber/green rating, so maybe if it's all red, you need to take immediate action, and it will also depend on how important a page is. Maybe no one ever views it, maybe your views are zero, maybe you don't need to prioritize that one, but maybe the page that most people land on is inaccurate, so you probably want to prioritize that one and then you can also assign an owner to it.

That's Rachel's page, she's dealing with that, it's high priority. It needs to be removed. Rachel, go and do it. You've got some really clear actions for every page of your website and I'm really sorry if your website's 7,000 pages, but this is still a really good exercise to do, particularly if your website is 7,000 pages because it means you probably haven't looked at it in a very long time and fulfilled your content strategy if there even was one.

It's a painstaking process, but maintaining content is as important as creating it in the first place. If you don't maintain your content, it can spiral out of control, and even if you work on an app or something with not a lot of content in, it's still worth regularly auditing it. You might have a translation tool, for example, that has loads of out of date strings in it that aren't used anymore. Go through, delete them. Just do that kind of general housekeeping on your content because otherwise, it becomes a bit cumbersome and starts inheriting content depth. I definitely recommend an audit for cleaning up your content every few months.

The other thing you might want to create is a test plan. Things like A/B tests are a really good way to make sure you're staying on top of your content and it's the best it can be. An A/B test is where you run one version of content against another to see what performs better, but there's other types of tests that you might do. A good way to do this is to create a test template.

You might see some content on a page and think, "Oh, that's not very good. I reckon if we changed it, we can increase conversion." Put it in a test plan, so give it a name, outline what's bad about the current experience, outline the impact you think the change will have—so your hypothesis—explain what you want the test to be, and then provide a metric. How will you measure the success of that test?

Document this; it really helps to put a screengrab of the part of the journey you want to test as well and then this is something you can present to your product owner or your team lead or whoever it is and say, I've got some really great ideas for testing content that I think will help us towards our product objectives, and here are the tests ideas I've got, and this is a good way of starting to show the value of content as well. You're starting to show that small changes could have a big impact. If you do lots and lots of small changes overall, they could have a really big impact, but you need to have like this test plan in able to present your tests.

If you can even mock up the change that you want in something like Whimsical or Figma, even better, because then you can demonstrate, here's what it looks like now, here's what it could do like, let's test it, and it's just a really good way of creating the value of content within your team.

You've gone through that process now, you've put everything together, you've laid the foundations, you've defined how you're going to get there and how you're going to measure it and maintain it. But now the trick is to get it done because that's sort of just the beginning and even though that feels like a lot of work and it is a lot of work, it's still just the beginning so you still need to get it done.

My tips for this are, it's going to take a long time to get your strategy done, and to build it all up, it's going to take weeks. You need to get stakeholders on board, you need to get workshops booked in, you need to get them all in a room, so don't try and do it all at once. It's going to take you quite a long time.

Don't try to do more than two workshops a week because you have prep work for a workshop. You also have to then take all that workshop output and make sure that people have got time to write it up and digest it all and turn it into, you starting to put your canvas together. Definitely don't do more than two weeks, it's just too much. If you can't get the time, the people you need, the right stakeholders, then interview them one to one and still get their input. Don't just write them off because they couldn't make your workshop.

Maybe do the exercise you were going to do with them in the workshop on a one-to-one basis so you've still got all their input. Otherwise, those people can, can be the ones that say, well, you didn't consult me, I wasn't involved in this process, so make sure that you do speak to them and you do get their input.

If you've got a content team, then can you divide up the workshops so that it's not all on one person. Could one of you maybe run the premortem, could one of you maybe run the user needs and business needs session? How can you divide that work up so that it's not all on one person, and also take photos? I mentioned before about documenting that journey and making sure you're reminding stakeholders, that they were part of that journey and they're on that journey with you, so take photos of all those workshops and make sure you put them all together.

Now, sharing your strategy, the chances are lots of people that you wanted to be on board with your strategy have been part of this process and they fed into it. It's a lot easier to get their buy-in because you've had them on that journey with you, there's no nasty surprises at the end. But what I would recommend doing is presenting it back obviously in some kind of keynote or document, whatever works for your team, but perhaps for tricky stakeholders, present it back one to one.

Again, it's very easy for them in a big meeting. It's always the one that sits in the back on their mobile that then turns around and says, "I'm not sure I bought into that." Those are the people that you might need to pick off on a one-to-one basis and take them through it over a coffee. They're the people that, you probably want to make sure you definitely have in your workshops or you definitely have a one-to-one time with to get what's in their heads about it.

Maybe you can do a roadshow, so can you take your content strategy around and run sort of sessions in different places of the business or attend their team meetings? Can you create a blog post? Can you create articles from it? Maybe you've got a workspace, can you put posts up about all the work you've done to create the strategy? Could you create a case study for it? Then share that journey, so don't just share the final output, share the whole journey you've been on. Make sure you have in your final presentation photos of the process, make sure you have photos of those workshops and of course, artifacts, artifacts are really important.

Can you make your canvas look a bit more shiny? Can you put some color on it? Can you put some images on it, make it into a huge poster and stick it up somewhere so that everybody's reminded every day of your content mission, your content principles, your content ideas and how you're going to measure the effectiveness of it. Can you put that up or can you laminate it and put it on people's desks? I don't know, but something where it's there and it's sort of in their faces every day.

Then finally another really great artifact is a roadmap. You've got all your activities for the content itself, but also all the other things you've identified, like maybe you need a new content management system. Maybe you identified you didn't have enough people so you're going to need to hire some new content designers. Maybe you've decided that you need to create a content design system, so how can you do that? What can you do now? What can you do next and what can you do in the future? A good way to do that is to do some kind of an impact and effort matrix.

Think about all the things that you've created in your strategy and that you now need to focus on. Think about the things that are going to have a really high impact on your team and your content and the things that are going to have a really low impact, and the things that are easy to do and the things that are hard to do and maybe you don't have the right people to do them yet, but you want to do them in the future, and then start to prop them onto the right maps—so what are you going to do right now, what are you going to do in six to twelve months' time and what has to be further down the line?

Again, put this roadmap up somewhere as opposed to so people can see exactly what your content team are working on for the next, well, however long it is. It might be a three-year roadmap, but people can see exactly what the focus is for your team.

Don't forget, this is over and above your product teamwork. Your product teamwork is the content itself, but these are all the things that you need to be doing within your team to make your content better across all of your product or your business. Whether it's that granular product creation or whether it's across a whole business, but these are all the things that the content team needs to be focusing on over the next year or three years.

That will help you get buy-in, but it also helps you get visibility for all the work your team does. It's not a direct deliverable for the product or for the website, but it's all the other things that your content team are working on that people don't necessarily know about. Creating your tone of voice or putting CMS requirements together—they're sometimes the invisible work. It's not invisible to us, but having it on this roadmap and somewhere visible means that people can see all the things that go into content creation. It's not just the content itself, it's all these other things that sit behind it.

The key things I want you to remember from this talk—because apparently, we've only taken about 30% of the talk—these are the key things that you need to think about going forwards. Strategy isn't just what you'll do, it's how you'll get there. You need to take people on that journey with you. You can't do everything at once, which is why prioritization is so important. Remember that sharing your strategy really is just the beginning, even creating your strategy is just the beginning. This is the start of a very long road. It might be a one-year, two-year, three-year roadmap that you've created. This is just the beginning that sets you in that direction, and then the hard work starts.

Thank you very much for your time. I really hope you've enjoyed that. If you want to follow me on Twitter, my Twitter handle is @Minette_78 and I'm happy to connect with any of you over Twitter at any time. Thank you.

[00:52:42] [END OF AUDIO]