



Making content strategy stick

How to operationalize and socialize your work

Hilary Marsh

Seattle Content Strategy Meetup, September 2020

Photo by [Kelly Sikkema](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Three elements

1. Build a strong foundation
2. Foster champions and allies
3. Keep content practices top of mind

1. Build from the foundation





CHAOS!

to by [Ashim D. Silva](#) on [Unsplash](#)

You've
done
the
work

A word cloud centered around the word "content". The word "content" is the largest and most prominent, rendered in a light blue color. Surrounding it are numerous other words in various sizes and colors (including purple, green, and red), all set against a dark background. The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the central word, with some appearing more frequently or in larger fonts than others. The words include: descriptions, collaboration, optimization, findability, message, guides, promotion, job, audits, workflow, management, success, customer, readability, roles, engine, tone, style, search, governance, taxonomy, personas, getting, architecture, calendars, voice, staffing, metadata, journeys, buy-in, models, analytics, modeling, systems, keeping, distribution, writing, responsibilities, lifecycles, and metrics.

descriptions
collaboration optimization
findability message
guides promotion job
audits workflow management
success customer readability roles
engine tone style search governance
taxonomy personas
getting architecture calendars voice
metadata journeys buy-in
models analytics modeling
systems keeping
distribution writing responsibilities
lifecycles
metrics



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Content strategy roadmap

1. Understand the organization and project business goals (stakeholder interviews, document review)
2. Understand the dynamics and goals of top-priority audiences (audience survey, personas and audience journey mapping)
3. Audit and assess existing website content
4. Analyze content from comparative/competitive organizations
5. Develop guidelines for content creation and publishing
6. Identify roles, lifecycles, workflow, and governance models
7. Facilitate the creation of a single, organization-wide taxonomy
8. Plan for content transformation and migration
9. Create a framework for content planning and marketing/promotions

However.....



Content strategy documents are aspirational

- They articulate what *WILL* be
- Just because you've written them down....
 - Not everyone knows about them
 - Not everyone remembers them
 - Not everyone uses them

**Putting content strategy
into action
is about
more than documents**

Extending the roadmap

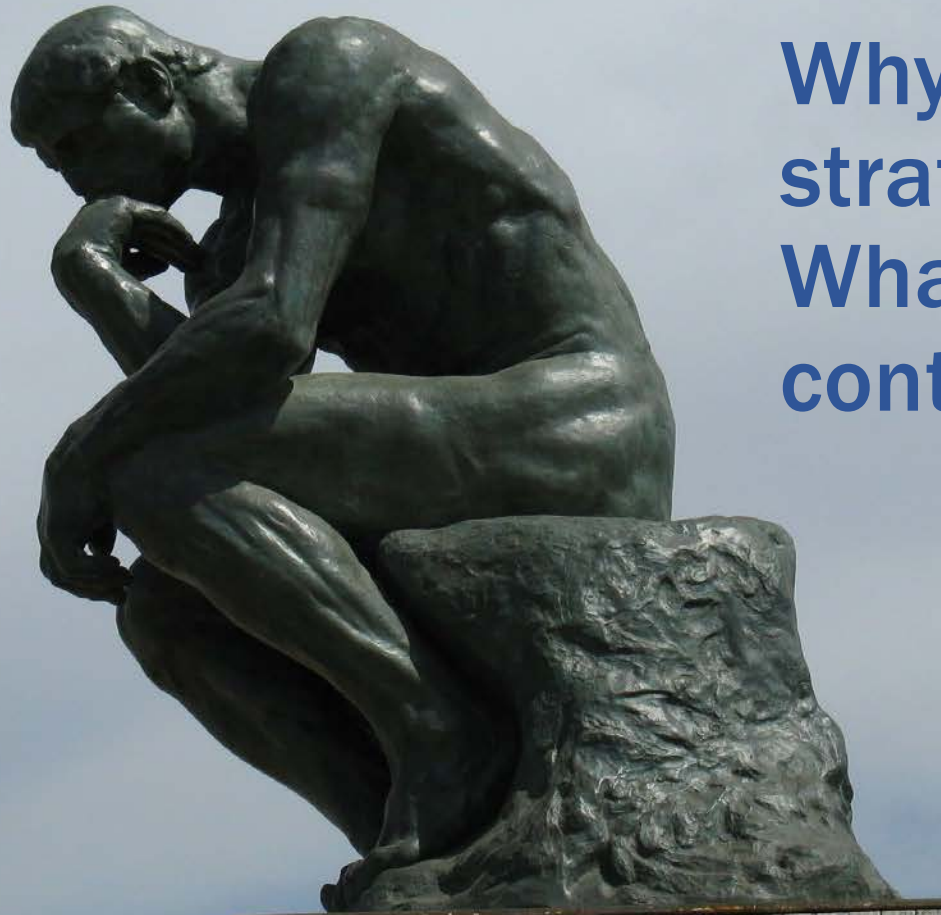
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10.Determine staffing needs

11.Plan for training and communications

2. Fostering champions & allies





**Why content
strategy?
What is
content?**

Products
Services
Programs
Research
Events
Advocacy
Information
Tools

**Content is
the way our work
is manifested in the world**

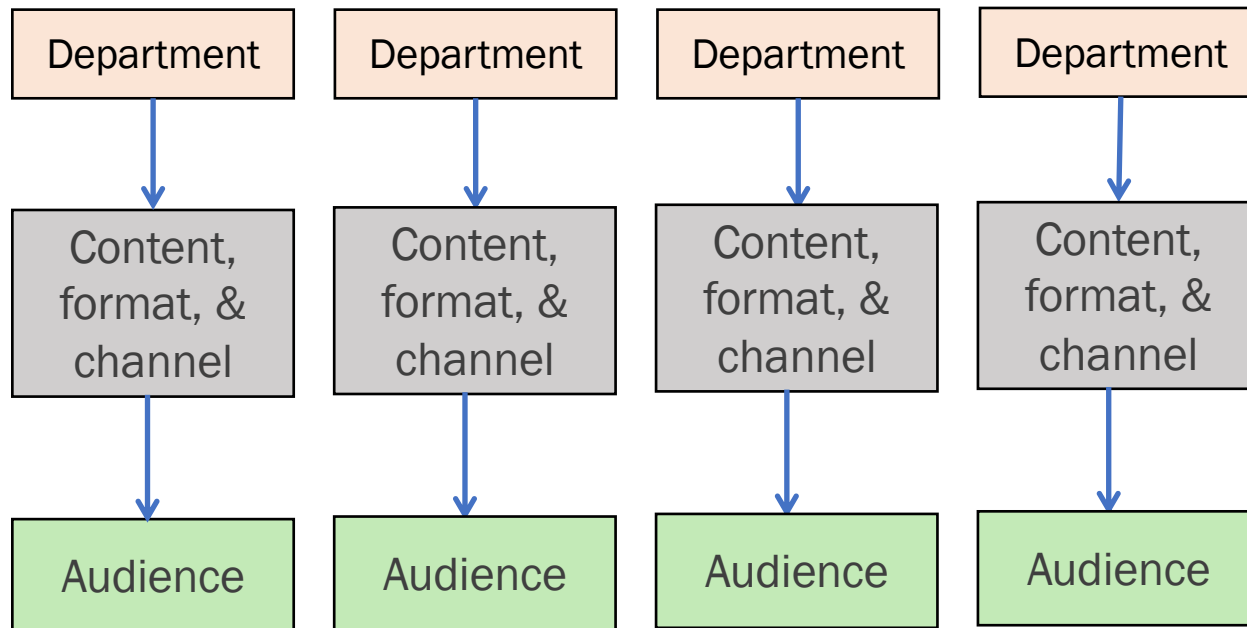
***My* Products**
***My* Services**
***My* Programs**
***My* Research**
***My* Events**
***My* Advocacy**
***My* Information**
***My* Tools**



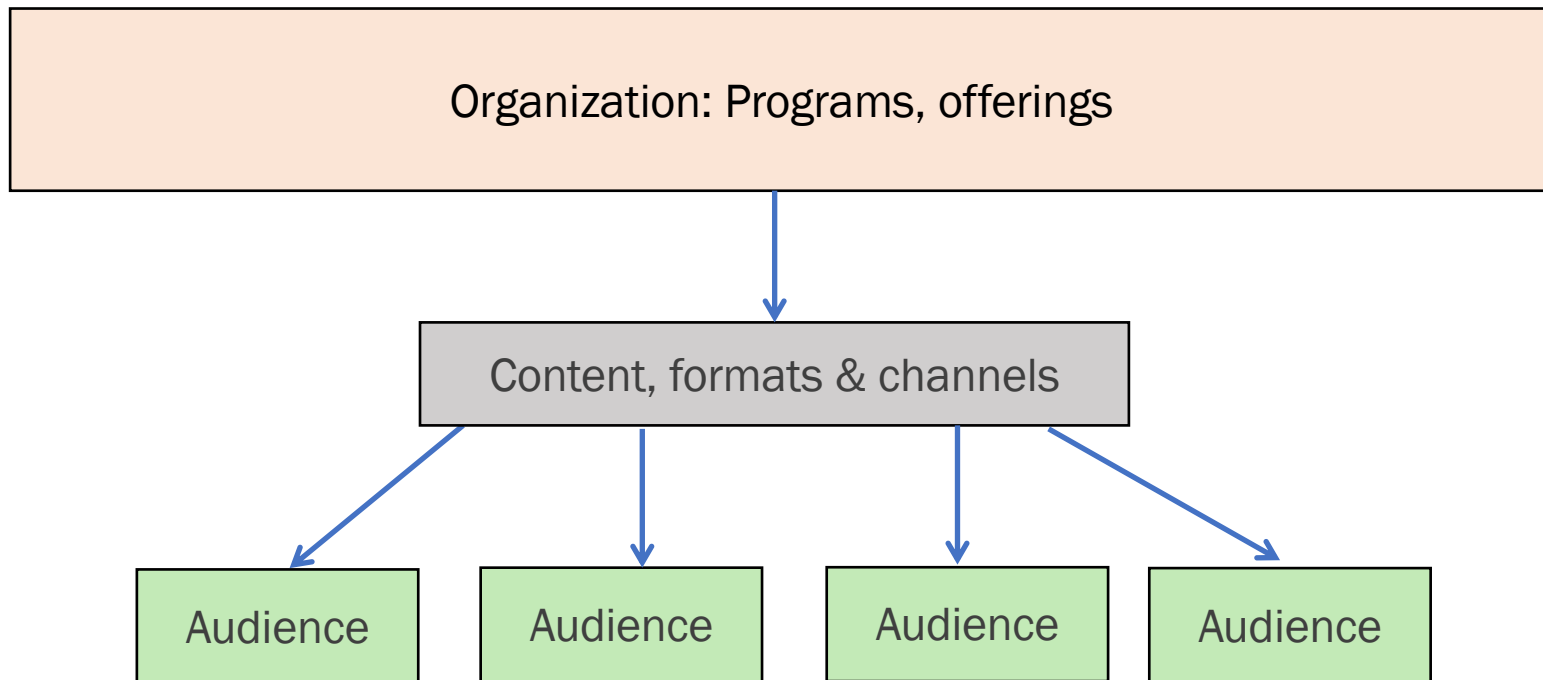
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/lentini/14112670288/>

It's about the people

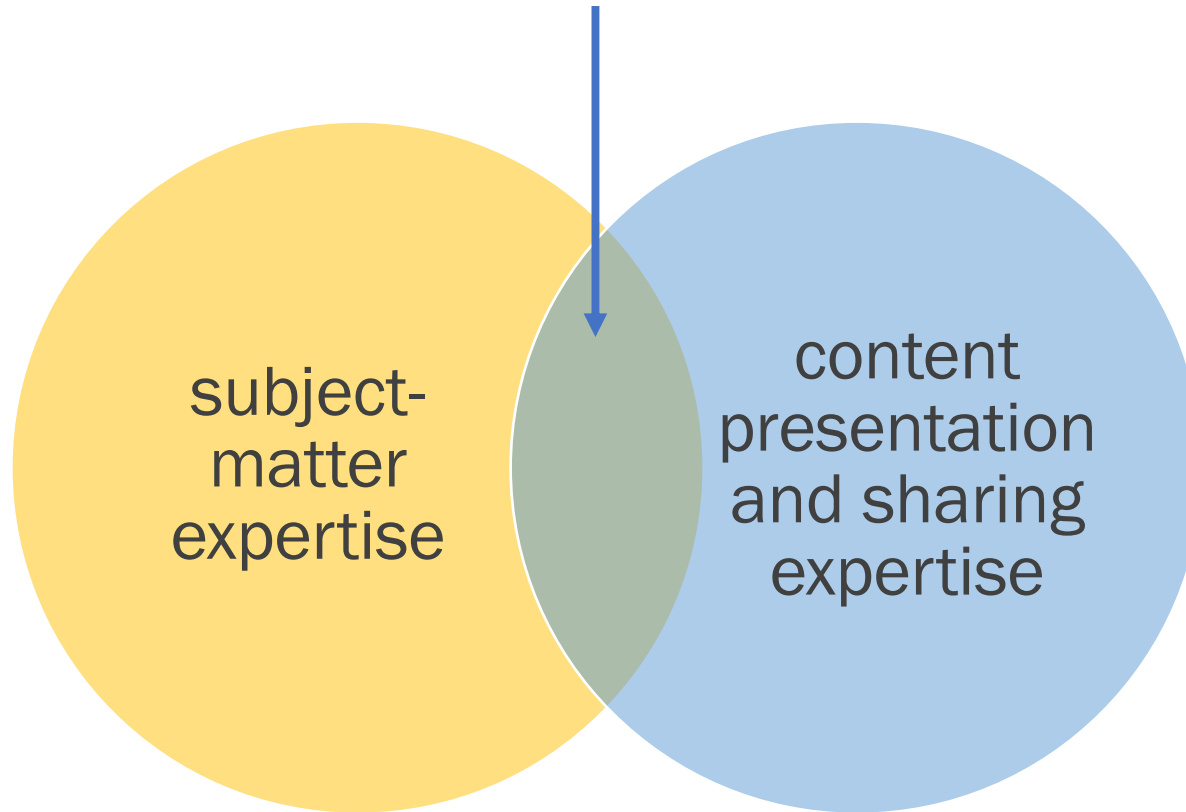
Old thinking



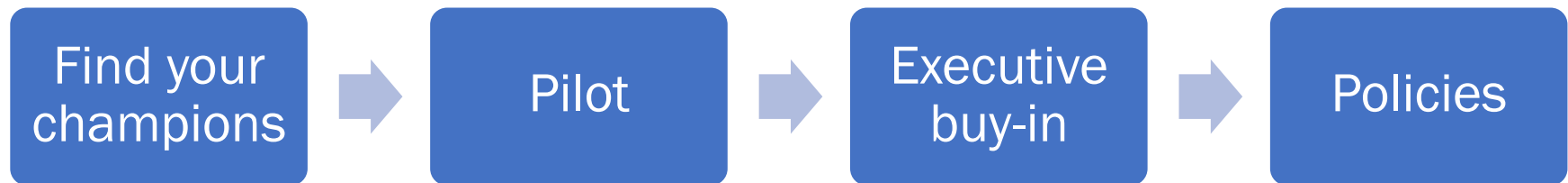
New thinking



Effective content



Success before buy-in



Find
your
allies

Photo by [Annie Spratt](#) on [Unsplash](#)



**Time for
learning**

Photo by [Louis Reed](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Then, executive buy-in

- “We have a problem”
- “I know how to fix it”
- “I know it will work”
- “I’d like your approval to move forward”

It's OUR content



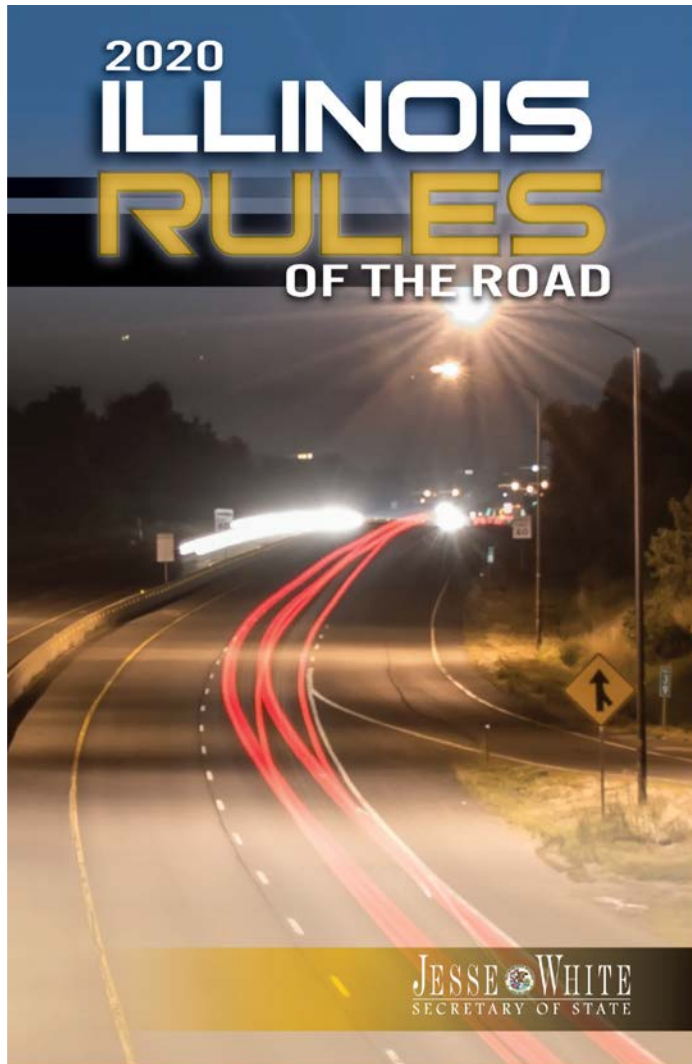
Invite SMEs into the process

- “With you, not to you”
- Listen to their concerns, understand their goals
- Reinforce what they’re doing well now—and why it’s good
- Extend their good work with education
- Help them see/empathize with the audience
- Help see that collaboration and content reuse is a win-win

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a large bunch of dark, ripe grapes. The person is wearing a light blue shirt. The background is blurred, showing more of the person's torso and some greenery.

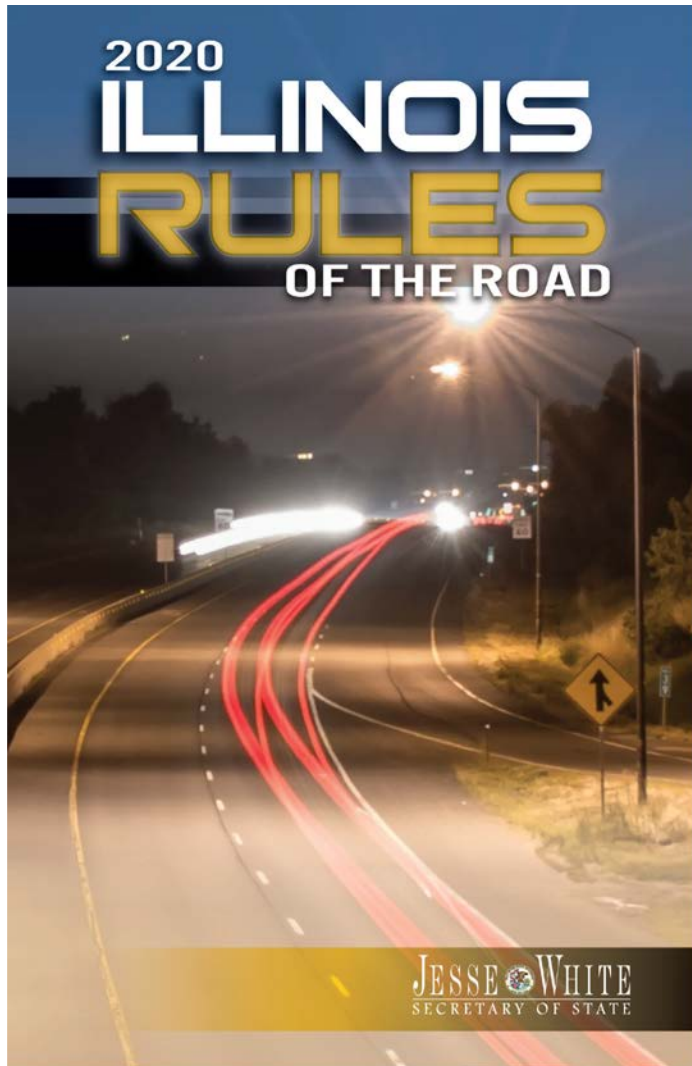
3. Keep content practices alive

or, how to help good content practices go viral



Graduated Driver Licensing Program.....	18
Parental Responsibility	19
Related Laws	19
Chapter 4: Traffic Laws.....	21
Proper Action When Stopped by Law Enforcement	21
Distracted Driving	22
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Child Passenger Protection Act	23
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Construction Zones, Emergency Vehicles, School Zones and Funeral Processions	25
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Special Stops	32
Parking	34
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This book is 112 pages long!



- Chapter 1: Illinois Driver's License
- Chapter 2: Driver's License Exams
- Chapter 3: Drivers Under Age 21
- Chapter 4: Traffic Laws
- Chapter 5: Sharing the Road
- Chapter 6: Driving Under the Influence (DUI)
- Chapter 7: Traffic Violations/Crashes
- Chapter 8: Driver's License Revocation, Suspension, Denial and Cancellation
- Chapter 9: Roadway Signs
- Chapter 10: Traffic Signals and Pavement Markings
- Chapter 11: Safe Driving Tips
- Chapter 12: Equipment for Safe Driving
- Chapter 13: Owning a Vehicle



**Fortunately, we
don't just hand
out keys to a car
along with this
book**











Content governance topics

1. Content lifecycle
2. Team structure and staffing
3. Oversight
4. Review processes
5. Authority
6. Success metrics
7. Content access levels
8. Taxonomy and Best Bets governance
9. Implementation plan



Content
strategy
is an HR issue

#WOCinTech Chat

**Content work
needs to be
part of people's jobs**

Communications and training

- Provide regular reminders and updates
- Share successes
- Establish communities of practice (online + in person)
- Include content training in employee on-boarding
- Make content training part of employees' professional development program



Make it easy to succeed

Make it ~~impossible~~ hard to do it wrong

- Create content request forms with required information about audience, measurable goals, and expiration dates
- CMS: headline length limits, automatic expiration dates
- Build in a review process that can't be skipped
- Include the work in people's job descriptions and what they are measured on

Use motivation science

1. Social incentives to change (peer pressure)
2. Immediate rewards (form habits)
3. Progress monitoring (highlight progress)

Social incentives



The first group of ComEd customers to get the reports, in 2009, reduced their electricity use by 2 percent.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/ct-xpm-2014-03-03-ct-energy-comparisons-brotman-talk-0303-20140303-story.html>

Real-time feedback

By Dwernertl at the English Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42415554>

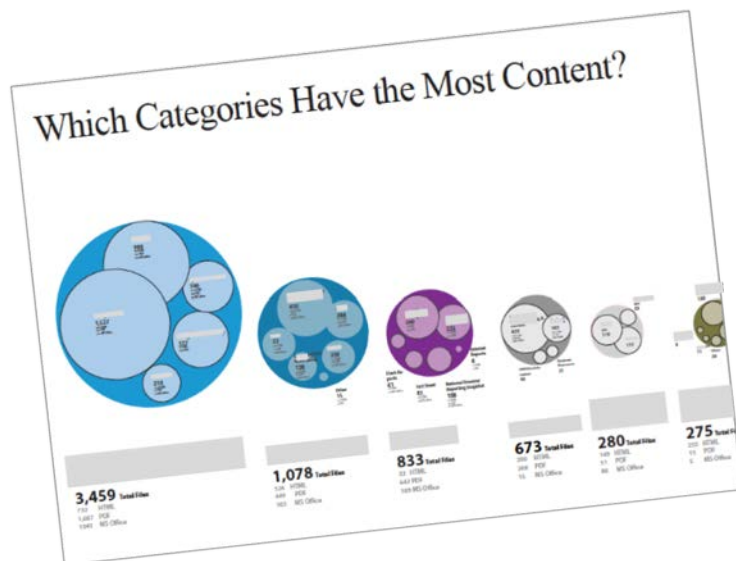


Reward successes

Photo by [Robert Anasch](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Bring the artifacts of your work to life

- Involve stakeholders in the solution
- Choose artifacts that brought the most insights



Our content
strategy
statement

Persona Empathy Framework — United Educators Content Strategy Initiative

The Professional Juggler

Jason

Director of HR for Academic Programs, medium-size university. Male, 39 years old, partnered, one child. Portland, OR

We have almost 2,000 employees in all academic programs, across all departments. With everything that's been happening, and the media's role in amplifying everything, the heat is on to make sure our employees feel safe and secure in working here. Workplace harassment is more on the radar than ever before, and HR can't afford to be caught asleep at the wheel. How we respond goes hand in hand with our ability to attract the best talent in a competitive marketplace. There is so much to stay on top of!



MY MOTIVATIONS

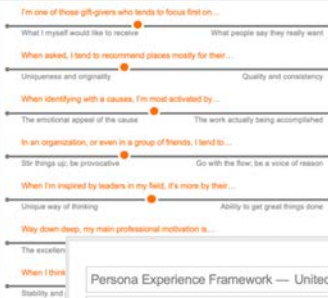
- + Achieve work/life balance
- + Keeping the president happy
- + Demonstrating my value
- + Prevent a major issue from bubbling up
- + Saving for kids' future
- + Stay active: biking, rowing
- + Buy a new, bigger house that's closer to campus
- + Move up to a bigger institution
- + Keep my team aligned with our strategic plan and goals

MY FEARS

- + Something happens to my partner or our baby
- + Not catching something, not counseling employees properly
- + Can't fire a bad employee
- + Another faculty molestation scandal or a serial harasser
- + Audit by EEOC
- + Title IX lawsuit
- + Attracting and keeping good talent; staying competitive
- + Losing my job

MY FRUSTRATIONS

- + Pressure from the president
- + Not enough resources
- + Employee complaints
- + Can't fire a bad employee
- + Listens to the wrong people
- + Division of labor
- + Employee morale



Experience

Persona Experience Framework — United Educators Content Strategy Initiative

[b] + | Brand Therapy

The Professional Juggler

"I'm tossing around in a sea of details, any of which could be the iceberg that sinks the ship."

Jason

Director of HR for Academic Programs, Medium-sized university. Partnered, 39 years old, one child, Portland, OR

MY MOST PRESSING NEEDS

- + Create a safe and secure work environment
- + Promote safety and conscientious, appropriate behaviors
- + Retain good talent
- + Quick way to identify top risks, even ones I don't know about
- + Rapid responses to campus crises
- + Know where to focus my risk management efforts

A TRULY EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE

- + Contributing to HR budget for conferences and seminars
- + Help me elevate my issues/risks to the president/ERM level
- + Showcase my work by including my institution as a case study
- + Help me think proactively when I am busy putting out fires
- + Limit the risk of a lawsuit when we fire someone, and know our insurance will back us up

EXPERIENCES THAT SATISFY NEEDS CREATE DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS

<p>I was doing online research regarding an employee issue and found a fantastic claim study. Turned out, I could get it for free because it was from UE and we already use them. Glad it's part of our UE membership!</p> <p>AWARE</p> <p>+ I need to know you're about more than just insurance</p>	<p>I use UE training extensively, and it's working great. I don't want to have to go through a vendor selection process if insurance doesn't renew, so I make sure to raise this with my boss.</p> <p>PURCHASE</p> <p>+ I need to feel that I'll miss you if we weren't UE members</p>	<p>UE's training keeps me up on current issues. We need very specific risk-related materials. UE helps sort through things, anytime I need it.</p> <p>LEARN</p> <p>+ I need to know you'll provide value to me in the weeks</p>	<p>I don't get involved in litigation, but since I know that UE is on top of them, I can concentrate 100% on other things.</p> <p>CLAIM</p> <p>+ I need to know you'll cover your bases</p>	<p>UE's resources make my job easier and make me smarter at the same time. They provide a different perspective than what I learn from SHRM and CUPA-HR.</p> <p>ADVOCATE</p> <p>+ I need to feel like you make my job easier</p>
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<p>EXPECTATIONS I HAVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + A knowledgeable, available point of contact + Solving my problems quickly + Training that helps me promote a safe and secure campus + Materials that reflect diversity + Materials that fit my needs that are applicable to higher ed + Personalized responses to my questions and requests + Ability to call a claims or risk manager for help or advice + Info that I can distribute to my staff because it's from a trusted source 	<p>CONTENT I VALUE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Discrimination harassment, best practices hiring culture, with an academic focus + Info I won't get from SHRM or CUPA-HR + Concise data that supports my work, peer benchmarks + Easy ways to integrate risk management best practices at my institution + Training on how to limit liability for employment practices + Short weekly blog posts on HR topics, peer success stories + Online training with easy enrollment, and learner tracking + Courses on HR topics specifically for faculty and educational institution staff 	<p>MESSAGES I WANT TO GET</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + "You can help prevent grievances and conflict that might lead to claims" + "You know campus HR issues because you know education, you know midsize institutions" + "You're not just insurance suits, you care about our people" + "You already have a deep relationship with my institution" + "You want to help me do my job better, help me succeed" + "I get all these resources and training offerings, and they don't need to come from my budget!" 	<p>DIFFERENTIATORS I NOTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Make me feel like a member, not a customer + Training that works, and saves us money spent on legal + A stake in education + Materials designed for the specific risks educational institutions face + Communicating complex issues in simple ways to different people here + You're not just a vendor for risk management tools, but a partner for making us safer
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Empathy



THE DREAM PARTNER



Rachel Sue

SENIOR BROKER AT A SMALL
BROKERAGE | CHAPEL HILL, NC

- Works with education and non-education clients
- Still learning about education liability coverage; looks for information to be written "in plain English"
- Needs content segmented by client type
- Her philosophy in working with UE is, "Help me look good to my client and I will show UE in a positive light"

38 YEARS OLD, MARRIED, TWO KIDS

My success is all about my relationships and being a trusted advisor who can anticipate needs.

THE SEASONED CONTENDER



Christine

VP, RISK MANAGEMENT AT A
LARGE UNIVERSITY | ALBANY, NY

- Well versed in education liability insurance and risk management
- Looks for "what's new" or emerging in a short format with the bottom line up front
- Looks for resources on nuanced topics, not just general information
- Looks for clearly written, shareable materials that support risk management initiatives

55 YEARS OLD, DIVORCED, THREE KIDS

I've discovered that being a successful senior exec is knowing how to marshal your resources.

THE MAN ON A MISSION



André

BUSINESS OFFICER AT A PRIVATE
K-12 SCHOOL | BOSTON, MA

- Experienced in corporate finance, but relatively new to education
- Looks for content that explains content and defines education-specific terms
- Looks for digestible resources on general education risk management topics first (to lay groundwork for advancing to more nuanced topics)
- Looks for resources that help show the value of proactive risk management efforts

42 YEARS OLD, MARRIED, TWO KIDS

Education is important. I'm doing my part to make sure we serve that ideal.

THE PROFESSIONAL JUGGLER



Jason

HR DIRECTOR AT A MEDIUM-SIZE
UNIVERSITY | PORTLAND, OR

- Experienced in HR for education, but still learning about risk management
- Engages with staff at all levels to address strategic risks
- Looks for resources that:
 - Help him start conversations about risk management with partners on campus
 - Communicate complex issues simply and with graphics

39 YEARS OLD, PARTNERED, ONE CHILD

I'm tossed around in a sea of details, any of which could be the iceberg that sinks the ship.

THE PROFESSIONAL JUGGLER



“I’m tossing around in a sea of details, any of which could be the iceberg that sinks the ship.”

Jason

Make it fun

- Laminated card-size versions of your personas
- Scavenger hunts to find content ROT
- Jargon bingo
- Offer swag prizes – pens, stickers, etc. ←sneaky reinforcement
- Memes



MAYOR LIGHTFOOT BE LIKE....

"NO LAKEFRONT FOR YOU! COMEBACK...ONE YEAR!"



OK Google. Can we go out yet?

Nope.

WHEN YOU TRYNA SNEAK OUT YOUR APARTMENT



People
can be
proud
of their
content
successes



Content strategy becomes
part of how things work



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/crschmidt/2955871565>

Resources I mentioned

- **How to sell content strategy to management:** <http://bit.ly/selling-cs-to-mgmt>
- **How does your CEO know your content strategy is successful:**
<http://bit.ly/ceo-cs-success>
- **Content strategy roadmap:** bit.ly/cs-roadmap2020
- **Content governance topics:** bit.ly/content-governance
- **How to motivate yourself to change your behavior: Tali Sharot, TEDxCambridge:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xp002vi8DX4>
- **Content maturity assessment tool:**
bit.ly/contentstrategy-maturity-assessment
- **Content strategy study:** bit.ly/assn-content-strategy-report
- **Content staffing:** <https://bit.ly/content-staffing>

Thanks, and please stay in touch!

- **Contact me via email:** hilary@contentcompany.biz
- **Follow me on Twitter:** @hilarymarsh
- **Connect on LinkedIn:** <https://linkedin.com/in/hilarymarsh>
- **Subscribe to my newsletter:** <https://contentcompany.biz/newsletter/>
- **Join the content strategy community:** <https://content-strategy.com>