



# The Content Marketing Index™

The Industry's First Social Media and Content Marketing Performance Metric

## A Batavia Research White Paper

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### Summary

The Content Marketing Index is a data driven, evidence-based, social business barometer of a company's social media and content marketing activities. It is based on the principle that the manifestations of an organization's content marketing lifecycle activities can be observed and measured.

By applying common criteria, the Content Marketing Index performs as a "yard stick" that can be used to support various activities such as benchmarking, comparative analysis, and data driven marketing. Additionally, the nature of the index suggests that even as it evolves, is changed and/or refined, all organizations to which the Index is applied are again measured to the same standard.

This white paper is written and published by Batavia Research. Batavia Research is a highly automated data-as-a-service (DaaS) platform that profiles a company's digital footprint. The Index was developed by Batavia Research as a mechanism to characterize this digital footprint and an organization's social media and content marketing performance. The following identifies the assumptions for such an index, the variables that comprise it and the potential applications for its use.

### Topics

Introduction	2
Social Media and Content Marketing Lifecycle Process	3
Measurement Principles	8
The Content Marketing Index	8
Applications	10
About	11



## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

### Introduction

How are your social media and content marketing efforts performing? Are your various initiatives making a difference? Is management skeptical about ROI? How do you compare to others in your industry or even your competitors? These and other questions continue to be raised by marketing teams across almost every type of business and industry. Batavia Research has developed an index that seeks to answer these questions and more.

When we think of indices in our day-to-day lives we might think of the FICO score, maybe the Dow Jones Index, Nielsen ratings or the Case-Shiller Index (for the housing market). These are indices that normalize a vast array of data. They help give us insight into the state of certain activities, direction, and emerging trends within major markets. They help us develop “apples to apples” comparisons. They help us make decisions.

So likewise, why not an index that can give us visibility into our social media and content marketing activities? But what would this look like? What would the basis for such an index be? The FICO score is comprised of 5 key indicators of financial management and behavior. Both the Dow Jones and the Nielsen ratings tend to be less complex and consider an empirical collection of numbers. The Standard and Poor’s Case-Shiller Index leverages multiple data sources to develop an interpretation of industry insights and trends.

Each of these represents a combination of interpretation and data-driven metrics. So how would this be done for social media and content marketing?

From a perspective of businesses, the activities of social media and content marketing are executed within a series of processes and activities. Of course, the degree to which these are fulfilled can vary from organization to organization. None-the-less there is an underlying process.

Assessing and interpreting the various manifestations of this process is the basis for the Content Marketing Index. This paper examines what this process looks like and identifies the variables related to content production, distribution and engagement that are evaluated and used to calculate the index. Additionally, we look at other factors that are not yet incorporated, but warrant ongoing consideration as the use of the index evolves.

## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

### The Social Media and the Content Marketing Lifecycle Process

Content marketing is a marketing strategy fueled by the creation and sharing of content in order to attract, acquire and engage clearly defined target audiences. Content marketing subscribes to the notion that delivering valuable and original content on a consistent basis can lead to consumer action, establishing your brand as a thought leader, lead generation, increased direct sales, and improved customer retention. Content marketing has become the cornerstone of online marketing and is widely used across all industries in today's marketplace.

We have defined a series of seven (7) steps that comprise the content marketing lifecycle. This lifecycle is repeatable and serves as the basis for effecting successful social media and content marketing results. In principle, by optimizing the steps, an organization will optimize results.

The seven steps of the Content Marketing Lifecycle are highlighted below. As you read each of these, consider the question ... "what manifestations of a lifecycle step would be evident on the internet?"



### The Content Marketing Lifecycle

Based on the Cadence9 Model

#### Step 1 - Goals

Defining goals are the cornerstone of any initiative ... no less with content marketing. Goals are statements of what your business wants to accomplish. Goals are specific and measurable and can be used to observe progress.

Content marketing ultimately feeds both search and social behavior. As a result, the types of goals can generally be grouped into three key outcomes:

- Visibility and Brand Awareness – being known and recognized
- Engagement – two-way communication, relationship building
- Inbound Opportunities – generating leads, conversion to sales



## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

Measurable elements of these areas could include a number of visits to your website, friends on Facebook, retweets, shares, newsletter or email signups, blog comments, website downloads of information, customer service contacts, qualified leads, and completed sales. Progress can be monitored by having Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place for those areas you want to track.

### ***Step 2 – Planning and Strategy***

Once you have goals in place, you now need to determine the who, what, when and where of your content. Defining your target audience/s and their so-called buyers' journey is essential. All content planning and production will revolve around what you determine here.

Who you are talking to and what would they like to read, see and hear. What media channels do your customers use? What are their main points and questions, how do they search, and so on. Where does your target customer spend the most of their time in Social Media? Mixed into this are considerations for any paid activities, keywords, and other digital marketing initiatives to ensure a cohesive and synchronized effort.

This information translates into topics and content categories that will provide relevant information for your readers—exactly what you will talk about to engage your audience and develop relationships. A social media and content marketing implementation guide is an excellent outcome of this step.

### ***Step 3 – Editorial Calendar***

Your editorial calendar is the tactical framework that is based on the previous step and serves to guide the execution of content creation and publication. It allows you to map your content ideas in advance, 3-6-9-12 months, to help visualize editorial topics and ideas. You can chart topics, audiences, media distribution channels, keywords and content format, as well as assign roles and responsibilities for content creation, approval, submission and publication.

With the calendar in place, you can tell, at a glance, what needs to be created, when production is on schedule, where adjustments need to be made to accommodate additional topics or types of content, or which media channels are being under-utilized to reach your target audience and prospects.

### ***Step 4 - Production***

There is no substitute for quality content. The content needs to be in lock-step with the work done in Step 2 – Strategies. Ensuring that the content produced is relevant, informational, and interesting to your audience will be vital to achieving the original goals defined.

Considerations that impact content creation include understanding the best content for the various channels used, who are the content creators and authors, supplemental resource



## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

requirements, and use of a prescribed style guide manual to control messaging, presentation and branding.

Organizing and maintaining control of content creation can be divided into three major roles or responsibilities:

- Publisher-manager – qualify participating authors, assign and track task assignments, ensure distribution channels are active and ready for publishing, review and approve all content prior to publication
- Author-contributor – writers, volunteers, sales people, executives, developers, etc. in your company who can contribute subject matter that aligns with stated goals for your content marketing
- Asset creation-delivery supporters – provides content enhancement and branding assets such as collaterals, photographs, images, art, logos, slides, videos, etc.

When the burden of production is spread across a team of individuals, each can be responsible for specific tasks in a coordinated effort with no one working outside the framework.

### ***Step 5 - Publish***

Publishing is the ultimate purpose for all the hard work that's gone into creating your content. Online distribution is your fastest way of delivering compelling and engaging content to your target audiences with the goal of driving online and offline behavior. A publishing plan that makes strategic reuse for all content created provides the most value across the organization.

The channels that will be part of your social media and content marketing distribution should be selected strategically. Choosing only as many channels as you can dominate should be the ultimate goal. You don't have any reason to be creating content and publishing to a channel where you aren't able to build and maintain an active following. Technology efficiency tools for planning and publishing will be your best path forward when you are distributing content at scale for a franchise organization.

Another part of publishing is being aware of governance, risk and compliance (GRC), concerning channel authentication and access, content review policies, publishing rights and engagement rights. This could come under the responsibility of the publisher-manager as defined in Step 4, Produce.

### ***Step 6 - Engage***

An engaged online audience is your goal for all content being produced. Content should be published with the expectation of engagement. Refining your content plan can be achieved by identifying types of content that capture your online audience's imagination and interest. Content they share helps you begin to leverage their networks. Creating and distributing content that your audience believes is valuable and shareable is a true measure of success.



## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

Sharable content creates brand evangelists working to promote your products and services without actually being part of your organization. When this is done well, organic growth can begin to be valued over paid content placement like PPC campaigns.

Being responsive to your active audience is critical to your long-term content marketing success. Having follow-up content ready to support your response effort is also important to keep the conversation moving forward and ultimately convert your prospects into sales.

Every communication presents an opportunity for your company, and how you handle each interaction is important to relationship building.

### ***Step 7 - Measure***

Measuring your results is definitely the most critical step in every Social Media and Content Marketing program. Data-driven decision making is facilitated by seeing real-world results. Data will always show the areas of opportunity and maybe more importantly, the areas where you should fold up the tent. Knowing which social and content platforms NOT to be participating in is just as important as determining where you should be.

Your editorial calendar planning and next steps should always be influenced by identifying top performing content and channels and streamlining your production procedures. The more efficiently you manage this area of your digital marketing strategy, the more return you will have for the investment of resources.

In addition to your own metrics, using advanced diagnostic tools to perform competitive analysis is just as valuable as understanding your own present status. You can't fix what you don't know is broken and knowing what is working will guide your team to do more to perpetuate additional online success.

Measurement is the process of assessing the results of your content marketing strategy—did you reach your stated goals or are you at least making progress in the right direction?

You can become obsessed with traffic, statistics and tracking your competitor's stats, but what is most important is to define and measure those data metrics that are critical to the success factors of your own organization. You want to focus on measurements that add the most value to your business and not get bogged down in mountains of extraneous information.

By evaluating data on a regular basis, you can see what goals are being met and where you may be missing the mark. This process provides the ongoing opportunity to adjust or restructure what you're doing that isn't working, as well as providing confirmation on what is moving you along in the right direction.

## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

### Measurement Principles

The ability to bridge the above lifecycle to an index is based on an important assumption. That is ... the degree to which processes are executed will produce corresponding outcomes. Another way to state this is that by optimizing the processes ... in this case the content marketing lifecycle process, an organization will likely optimize its results. And these results are manifestations evident on the internet.

Interestingly enough, the principle says that we don't actually need to know what's going on inside an organization. We aren't sitting in on the goals and strategy meetings. We don't know what the budgets and resources are. Who are the content creators ... internal staff or agencies? The list of questions goes on. Rather we can observe and characterize the publicly available evidence and assemble a measure of effectiveness.

It's worth noting that even when we can access the manifestations as suggested above, the nature of attribution can further challenge the assessment approach. An organization's marketing efforts have multiple "contributors". At a macro level there can be both traditional and digital initiatives. Each of these in turn may have multiple "channels" of focus. The digital marketing aspect can include email marketing, "behavior tracking" of users at a website, pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns and so on.

However, regardless of the various contributions and potential vagueness in attribution we would argue that optimizing most any process will most likely optimize the results. And so likewise, the content marketing index provides a representation of process execution via an apples-to-apples approach. Admittedly, the methods of measures, associated variables and quickly changing landscape of internet marketing will all contribute to an evolving index. In the meantime we have a tool that can expose opportunities for improving our processes.

### The Content Marketing Index

The Content Marketing Index is based on the concept that manifestations of an organization's content marketing lifecycle (previous section) can be observed and processed. Moreover, the concept is based on empirical evidence.

Based on the framework of the content marketing lifecycle, the following categories and measures are assessed and formulated to create the content marketing index.

#### *Strategy and Planning*

- Blog platform standards (OTS, custom, proprietary)

# Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

## *Editorial Calendar*

- Post count (total posts within reporting period)
- Post frequency
- Post consistency variance (across channels)
- Media variation (ratio - different media variation ratio across all channels)
- Number of authors

## *Production*

- Total channel engagements
- Total channel comments
- Reaction count (engagements and posts)
- Reaction ratio (reaction count/posts)

## *Publishing*

- Posts/Channel
- Number of channels
- Distribution variance (channel variation)
- Number of dormant channels
- Publishing tools (efficiency factor)

## *Engagement*

- Reaction variance (engagements plus comments)
- Channel engagement variance
- Response latency

## *Metrics*

- Embedded analytics tool (i.e. Google analytics, Omiture, etc.)

Additionally many of the above have “time based” components. In other words, some variables are not time tagged. But since BR updates profiles on a recurring basis, an inherent time tag is assigned to differential data. Hence, the ability to represent changes over time and corresponding trends.

Like other indices, the calculation of the Content Marketing Index is based on a combination of the variables as highlighted above, their respective performance criteria, and effective weighting. By processing 100,000's of profiles, the Index is continuously refined and inherently improves in its accuracy.

## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

### Application

The application of the Content Marketing Index can be folded into five (5) primary narratives. These include:

- Analysis
  - ✓ what moves the needle
- Benchmarking
  - ✓ earned media
- Comparisons
- Marketing
  - ✓ new business intelligence
- Data enrichment

### Summary

The Content Marketing Index is a data driven, evidence-based, social business barometer of a company's social media and content marketing activities. It is based on the principle that the manifestations of an organization's content marketing lifecycle activities can be observed and measured.

By applying common criteria, the Content Marketing Index lends itself as a “yard stick” that can be applied to comparative benchmarking as well as time-independent assessments. This latter point suggests that even as the Index evolves, is changed and refined, all organizations to which the Index is applied are again measured to the same standard.

Ultimately, the Content Marketing Index reflects and benefits a value that can be derived from a content marketing initiative. Very simply, improving the score will improve the results.

## Content Marketing Index – Social Business Intelligence

### About Batavia Research

At Batavia Research, we believe that organizations can better leverage social business intelligence to fuel innovation and make better decisions. We pursue this vision by a focused effort on automating the collection and delivery of data that profiles a company's entire content marketing and social media marketing footprint. This includes the generation and maintenance of the Content Marketing Index.

Significant value-add capabilities that have been developed include matching channels to their owner, extracting data from channels, normalizing and transforming to static snapshots to time-based variables, accessibility via our data-stream API and establishing Batavia Research as a data-as-a-service (DaaS) platform to support dynamic scalability by both users access and data processing.

Batavia Research was founded in 2012 by an experienced team of people with backgrounds in big data, enterprise content management, content marketing and social media marketing. Today, we're a team of 11 talented folks headquartered in southern California.

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