

**SEO**  
Unlocked

NEILPATEL

# CONTENT CREATION TEMPLATE COMPILATION

HOW TO GET A **FLOOD OF ONLINE TRAFFIC**  
WITHOUT SPENDING \$1 / DAY

# CONTENT CREATION TEMPLATE COMPILATION

## CONTENT CREATION TEMPLATES

These templates are invaluable for finding the right structure for the type of content you're creating.

Why is this important? Because when it comes to communicating your ideas, the way you organize and present them is as important as your ability to put them into words.

In most cases, one of these templates will suffice. What's more, these templates work for video and audio content as well as written.

So each time you begin a project — no matter what type of content it is — after gathering research and developing your ideas, review these templates to find the best structure for your particular message. Then all you have to do is plug in your ideas and develop each section of the template.

For short content, you can use one of these formats as you see them here. For longer content, you may mix and match them. For instance, your overall project may be a thought leadership piece, but individual chapters may use other formats, such as how-to, case study, or interview.

When it comes to content creation, variety adds to the overall impact of your content. So don't settle for just one or two. Experiment. Try different formats. And enjoy the creative process.

## THE TEMPLATES:

- > **EXAMPLE**
- > **POINT-ILLUSTRATION-EXPLANATION**
- > **THOUGHT LEADERSHIP**
- > **INVERTED PYRAMID**
- > **INTERVIEW**
- > **LIST**
- > **LINK POST**
- > **BOOK REVIEW**
- > **PRODUCT REVIEW**
- > **HOW TO**
- > **CASE STUDY**
- > **MEDIA POST**

## EXAMPLE

Sometimes the point you want to make is simple enough to express in your introduction. The real value is in the examples you provide, showing your readers how other people have applied the information you share.

When that's the case, try an example post.

Readers love this type of article because they can see many examples in one place, without having to do the research themselves.

### Title/Headline it right

The title often includes a number, such as 10 ways to show your inner geek, or 5 types of tiles you'll love in your kitchen.

In the article, you can number your examples or not. It's up to you.

So how do you structure an example post?

### Step 1: INTRODUCE YOUR TOPIC

Tell people what you're talking about and why they'll be interested in it.

### Step 2: GIVE AN EXAMPLE

The subhead may be the product name, as in this example from Houzz.com:

<http://www.houzz.com/ideabooks/7313761/list/Guest-Picks--Beautiful-Backsplash-Tiles-for-Every-Budget>

Or it could be a method or concept. This one, from Mashable, gives a general idea, followed by a specific resource:

<http://mashable.com/2013/02/15/watch-asteroid-2012-da14-online/>

Pictures aren't necessary in the Example format, but if your example is visual, pictures can help clarify your points.

### Step 3: EVALUATE IT

After you give an example, talk about it. Include a few sentences about why you like it (or don't like it), why it works, or how your readers can get it.

## Step 4: REPEAT WITH REMAINING EXAMPLES

Follow the same format for all your examples. There is no right number of examples to use. We've seen posts that focused on two examples, and we've seen posts that give 20 or more.

In general, in short-form content, the fewer examples you provide, the longer (or more detailed) your evaluation. In long-form content, you have the space to provide a lot of examples and in-depth evaluation.

## Step 5: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION

Many example posts leave this off. But you can make your content stand out if you'll wrap it up for your readers. End your article with:

- > A summary of the examples you've shown.
- > Your opinion.
- > Advice to your readers.
- > A question.

Then include your call to action. Ask for comments or social shares. Or tell people to visit another page on your website.

## POINT-ILLUSTRATION-EXPLANATION (PIE)

This type of content is very similar to the Example post above. But in this type of content, you aren't simply sharing examples of your point. You're making statements about your topic.

Each section provides another point, which is then illustrated and discussed.

A good example of this type of post is 5 Essential Qualities of Irresistible Product Descriptions, which you can find at <http://blog.crazyegg.com/2013/01/26/5-essential-qualities-of-irresistible-descriptions>

## Step 1: INTRODUCE YOUR TOPIC

Tell people what your topic is and why it matters.

## Step 2: MAKE YOUR FIRST POINT ABOUT YOUR TOPIC

Try to find a quick and easy way to summarize your point. This summary statement will be your subhead. If you like, number your points.

This particular post draws examples from different brands advertising online. So it includes the source at the end of the point.

## Step 3: ILLUSTRATE IT

If you have an image, include it under your subhead.

This example makes a point about product descriptions, so the illustration is words, not a graphic. That's okay. Simply take a screen shot of your example and post it as your illustration.

If you use a screenshot of words, check readability before you publish. If the words in your illustration aren't readable, forget the screen shot. Quote your source instead.

For screen shots, you can use Microsoft's Accessory, "Snipping Tool."

Or use Snagit, by TechSmith, which is available for PCs and Macs. You can find it at <http://www.techsmith.com/download/snagit/default.asp>

## Step 4: EXPLAIN IT

Include a paragraph or two that expand on your point. Give an explanation. Then give a practical tip on how your readers can implement it.

## Step 5: REPEAT WITH REMAINING PIE SECTIONS

Follow this same format for all your points.

## Step 6: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION

This type of article needs a strong close. So make sure you tell your readers why your topic is important and what it means in their own lives.

Promise more information.

Make a forecast.

If at all possible, take your point one step further.

Then, as always, give a call to action.

## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP (SYLLOGISM)

If you want to share a new idea, one of the best ways to get people on board is to create a logical argument that leads people to arrive at the same conclusion you have.

With this type of post, you don't start with your main point. You start with something your readers already know and accept.

Then you build on that idea using the logical framework of a syllogism.

If your first point (A) means this (B). And if this (B) means that (C), then you must consider that as a real possibility.

The example below is by from the article, Marketing Has Changed. Are You Keeping Up and is available at <http://www.kathrynaragon.com/marketing-has-changed-are-you-keeping-up/>

### Step 1: INTRO

With this type of content, you want to start with something engaging. Perhaps a story, an interesting thought, or a startling statement.

### Step 2: IF A = B

Begin your first section with a topic or idea that your readers already accept. Then tie it to your second idea. Use research, stories, or logic to make a strong connection and back up your ideas.

### Step 3: AND B = C

In the next section, take your idea one step further. Tie it to your main point. Make it a natural progression of your opening idea.

### Step 4: THEN A = C

Now make your final point. Make it clear that this is a logical extension of the known fact (A) that you started with. If possible, use research or a story to support your statements.

## Step 5: ADDITIONAL POINTS

You may need some additional discussion to bring home your final point. Now that you're on topic, you can add those thoughts here.

## Step 6: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION

Give a strong conclusion. You now have your readers thinking. Give them something to chew on.

Then give your call to action. It's a good idea to ask for comments after this type of post. Then take the time to respond. People are more likely to engage with you if they know you'll answer their comments.

## THE INVERTED PYRAMID STRUCTURE

You may recognize this as the standard format used by journalists over the last century.

It was developed when writers delivered their stories via telegraph. And it was ideally suited to print because the main idea was given in the first paragraph of a story — which meant an editor could cut an article to fit whatever space was available.

But those days are over.

We now live in a digital world. We send messages via email, not telegraph. We publish digital books and magazines, which have no paper-size restrictions.

This format is losing its popularity, but it's still an accepted structure for news-style articles. So if you're writing a press release or news announcement, this may be a good option for you.

A classic example by Honeywell is at <http://honeywell.com/News/Pages/World%E2%80%99s-Leading-Auto-Engineering-Org-Says-It-Has-High-Level-Of-Confidence-In-Safety-Of-Honeywells-Low-Global-Warming-Refrig.aspx>

## Step 1: THE LEAD

The traditional inverted pyramid press release starts out with all the facts: who, what, where, when, why and how.

If you're writing for a news service, include this information in your first sentence or two.

If you're writing for a blog, jazz it up a bit. Give the information, but make it interesting. Lead with an unusual fact or statistic. Then give all the required information.

## **Step 2: SECOND MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

The inverted pyramid is aptly named. Each successive paragraph gives information that's less relevant to the overall point.

So tell your story from most important facts to least important.

You can keep the middle of the article interesting by introducing a bit of story, a specific example, or interesting news relevant to the story.

## **Step 3: QUOTE TO BACK UP YOUR CLAIMS**

Include quotes from your key sources.

## **Step 4: PRESENTATION OF FACTS IN DWINDLING LEVEL OF IMPORTANCE**

As you near the end of the article, your story will dwindle. That's because most of the important information was told in the beginning.

You will feel like your article closes with minor facts and story bits. Keep the interest level high by sharing an interesting quote or a concluding thought that is inspired by your news.

## **Step 5: BOILERPLATE CLOSE/CALL TO ACTION**

Most press releases end with a "boilerplate," or short paragraph about the company or brand being written about.

Traditionally, the call to action is a link to your website or landing page.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

An interview is viewed as a high-value piece of content. That's because it shares inside information that most people don't have access to.

Most interviews these days include audio or video as well as the written transcript. But you can still publish a written interview without media.

Format it in whatever way suits you and your readers. Do be aware, though, that just posting a video or audio file doesn't optimize your content page. So even if you opt for a video or podcast, add written content to go with your media.

## 1: A FEW EXAMPLES OF HOW CONTENT MARKETERS ARE PUBLISHING INTERVIEWS AS A MEDIA POST

This interview, available on Jeff Goins's website, is formatted as a media post. (That structure is outlined below.)

You can find it here: <http://goinswriter.com/seth-godin-interview/>

Goins gives a short intro with a picture of the interviewee, then gives the link to an MP3 file. Below that are highlights from the interview and memorable quotes.

## 2: IN WRITTEN FORMAT

When "writing" an interview, you can approach it different ways.

Highlight the name of the interviewer and the interviewee, with their comments following.

*Interviewer:* Tell me how you got into home decorating.

*Helen:* It was an accident really...

Or, as in this example, from Digital Book World, bold the question and write out the answer below it.

<http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2012/interview-seth-godin-on-libraries-literary-agents-and-the-future-of-book-publishing-as-we-know-it/>

## 3: COMBINATION APPROACH

Provide a choice of digital downloads for the live interview. Then present a transcript of the interview for readers.

This example is from On Being does at <http://www.onbeing.org/program/seth-godin-on-the-art-of-noticing-and-then-creating/5000>

Notice that readers can listen to the final edited interview, the unedited interview, or read the transcript. Their choice.

**NOTE:** *Even if you give a digital download of the interview, you need to provide written content for SEO purposes. So the template we provide below assumes you'll present the interview in written format.*

Don't be afraid to mix it up. Add media and images to add interest to your page.

## Step 1: INTRODUCE YOUR INTERVIEWEE

Open the article by introducing your interviewee. Give background information about him or her. Then introduce the general topic of your interview.

## Step 2: ASK QUESTION

If you're going for a written format, pose your question.

- › You can put each speaker's name in bold, followed by their questions or comments.
- › You can put a big Q, followed by the questions, and a big A, followed by the answer.
- › You can highlight the questions and print the answers in normal text.

## Step 3: RECORD THE ANSWER

Transcribe your interviewee's comments in full.

## Step 4: REPEAT TILL DONE

Keep listing questions and answers until the interview is done.

## Step 5: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION

Wrap up your interview with some kind words about your interviewee, or consider highlighting one of the comments in the interview.

If the interviewee has written a book or created a product, highlight it at the end of your interview and link to it.

End with a call to action.

## THE LIST

Some lists are short and some are long — we're talking 30, 50 or 100 long — but it doesn't really matter. People love lists. The longer, the better.

### Tip 1:

One of the secrets to making lists work is to include the number in your title.

While it's impressive to end with multiples of 5 or 10, don't be afraid of odd numbers. You can get more attention with 7, not 10, or 21, rather than 20 items in your list.

### Tip 2:

For a bit of fun, put your list in reverse order. Begin with the last item and work your way down to your number-one item.

This article by Cracked.com, is a great example. You can find it at [http://www.cracked.com/article\\_18410\\_the-12-most-insane-things-you-can-buy-internet.html](http://www.cracked.com/article_18410_the-12-most-insane-things-you-can-buy-internet.html)

## Step 1: INTRODUCE YOUR TOPIC

A short introduction is fine. Simply tell people what the list is about and why the information is useful. It's okay to be a little tongue in cheek — but only if it's already part of your branded voice.

## Step 2: CREATE YOUR LIST

List all the items in your list. Be creative. Make your list fun to read.

## Step 3: MAKE EACH ITEM IN YOUR LIST A SUBHEAD

List all the items in your list. Be creative. Make your list fun to read.

## Step 4: WRITE A SENTENCE OR SHORT PARAGRAPH FOR EACH ITEM IN THE LIST

Add an interesting thought, opinion or explanation.

Consider including pictures. While you don't have to include them, they definitely add interest.

## Step 5: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION

After spending time compiling your list, it's easy to stop cold when you're done.

Don't do that. Take a few extra minutes to tell your readers why the list matters. How does it help them? What new thought should they take away from it?

Give them a strong close. And don't forget your call to action.

## THE LINK POST (ROUND-UP)

Link posts are a great way to add SEO value to your website. By creating Web pages that link to other pages — whether on your own website or others — you can improve your site's rank.

Here's why...

When you create Web pages that link to other high-value websites, Google may begin to see you as an authoritative site.

And when you link to your own Web pages, you can keep people on your site longer, reducing your bounce rate and increasing your page views per visit.

Do that consistently, and Google may assign you points for Trust and Authority.

## SO WHAT DOES A LINK PAGE LOOK LIKE? HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES:

This one by Copyblogger, at <http://www.copyblogger.com/landing-pages/> starts with a lengthy introduction, then it gives the links.

Here's a shorter version of the same thing. It's by Chris Brogan, <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/my-best-advice-about-blogging/>. Here there's less intro and more links.

With link posts, length doesn't matter. It's the basic structure that does the job. And here's how you can do it.

## Step 1: INTRODUCE YOUR TOPIC

Tell your readers what information you're sharing and why it's valuable.

**Step 2: (OPTIONAL) BREAK YOUR TOPIC INTO CATEGORIES AND GIVE EACH A SUBHEAD.**

If you want to include different categories of information on the same topic, this is a great way to do it.

If all your links relate to one main topic, you don't need subheads. Skip this step.

**Step 3: LIST THE ARTICLES YOU'RE LINKING TO AND ADD LINKS.**

Most link pages just give a list of page titles, linking them to their source.

If you are using sub-categories, include a short blurb under each subhead and then paste your links under each.

**Step 4: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION**

This type of post doesn't always have a conclusion. But it's always a good idea to tell your readers what to do next.

- › Your conclusion may be a normal invitation to comment or share.
- › You can provide a link to a landing page or contact form.
- › You can tell them how to learn more about the topic.

**BOOK REVIEW**

Book reviews are a great way to provide thought leadership.

You can essentially be the Oprah of your community, recommending books, curating ideas, and helping people find the information they need to succeed.

As a perk, these activities also give you Trust and Authority status with search engines.

**SO HOW DO YOU WRITE A BOOK REVIEW?**

It's easy.

Here's one by Brand Driven Digital, at <http://www.branddrivendigital.com/do-you-need-the-impact-equation-book-review/>

## Step 1: INTRODUCE THE BOOK

You can introduce the topic of the book or the book itself. Simply come up with an interesting introduction that gets people curious about the book.

## Step 2: INTRODUCE THE AUTHOR.

In a book review, who writes the book is as important as what the book says. So do your research. Visit the author's website. Check out his or her social media. Look for an engaging story that elevates the author to celebrity status (or at least gives you something interesting to say).

Tip: If you can, combine the book review with an interview. Get some original quotes from the author to add tons of value to your book review.

## Step 3: SUMMARY OF MAJOR POINTS

Provide an overview of the ideas in the book. For example, if the book is divided into three sections, you could create a subhead for each section and share the major point the author makes in each.

## Step 4: TELL WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT THE BOOK.

The biggest draw to book reviews is your opinion as reviewer. So be honest. If the book over-delivers in a particular way, tell your readers.

## Step 5: TELL WHAT YOU DON'T LIKE ABOUT THE BOOK.

As in Step 4, give an honest review. Where does the book fall short? What would make it better?

## Step 6: GIVE YOUR RECOMMENDATION.

Tell your readers whether they should buy the book or not. Be sure to include a link to Amazon or other site where they can get the book.

## Step 7: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION

Your recommendation can serve as your conclusion in this type of article. But you still need to give a call to action. As in our example, give people a link to the book and tell them to check it out.

## PRODUCT REVIEW

Product reviews are similar to book reviews and are an easy way for you to build authority as a solutions provider for your followers.

For instance, if a new tactic is gaining momentum in your space, and if you find a product that makes it easier to implement, you owe it to your followers to tell them about it.

You can treat product reviews like the book review above. To do that you simply introduce the product and talk about what it does and whether it's worth the purchase.

Or you can combine the product review with a how-to article and add significant value.

Like this article, available at <http://www.kathrynaragon.com/author-rank-plugin/>

### Step 1: INTRODUCE THE PRODUCT

Provide an introduction to your topic. You can do this in two ways:

- › Introduce the problem the product solves.
- › Introduce the product and move straight to a review of how it works.

### Step 2: INTRODUCE THE PRODUCER/MAKER.

As with the book review, people appreciate a product more if they know the story behind its production. So introduce the maker and a link to their website.

### Step 3: DESCRIBE THE PRODUCT.

Why was it created? What problem does it solve? How does it do it? Here's where you give all the details about the product.

**IDEA:** You can turn your content into a hybrid product review/how-to by including your how-to information here. Make each step of your solution a subhead, with images and copy to provide in-depth instruction. (We'll give you a template for the how-to article in a moment.)

### Step 4: TELL WHAT YOU LIKE AND DON'T LIKE ABOUT IT.

As in the book review, you need to give your thoughts about the product. Tell your followers what works, what doesn't work, and why.

**Step 5: GIVE YOUR RECOMMENDATION.**

Share your opinion. Tell your readers whether you think the product is worth the investment. If you have any tips, share them as well.

**Step 6: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION.**

If you opened your product review with a problem, you can close with the solution. That's an easy way to take your content full-circle, making your readers feel as if they got the whole story.

As always, include a call to action.

**NOTE:** *Product reviews become high-value content when you compare different products in the same space. For example: <http://www.wareable.com/fitness-trackers/the-best-fitness-tracker>*

**PRODUCT REVIEW**

How-to articles are some of the most-searched-for and most-read information on the Internet.

If you have a solution to a common problem, by all means, turn it into content.

Simple solutions make great blog posts or videos. But if your solution is more complicated, consider creating longer content. You can create special reports, ebooks and even multi-media programs to share your solutions.

No matter how long or short, though, you should follow the same basic structure.

This post from Crazy Egg is a good example: <http://blog.crazyegg.com/2013/02/18/awesome-blog-posts/>

**Step 1: INTRODUCE THE PROBLEM YOU'RE SOLVING.**

Tell people about the problem. Then let them know you have a solution. Don't forget to tell them how the solution can benefit them. (It may seem obvious, but people need you to connect the dots.)

**Step 2: INTRODUCE THE SOLUTION AND BENEFITS OF YOUR PROCESS.**

Tell people about the problem. Then let them know you have a solution. Don't forget to tell them how the solution can benefit them. (It may seem obvious, but people need you to connect the dots.)

**Step 3: LIST EACH STEP OF YOUR SOLUTION.**

If your how-to involves actionable steps, consider numbering them.

But you don't have to number steps. You can easily just list the action, provide a screen shot or image, and then provide an explanation.

By providing the steps in order, you easily guide your reader through the process.

**Step 4: PROVIDE LOTS OF DETAIL.**

You can organize your information as a list, numbering the steps of your solution. Or you can organize it by topic, providing a complete discussion of each problem as you introduce it.

But no matter how you organize your information, provide lots of details. The best how-to content gives step-by-step processes, graphics, and clear instructions.

**Step 5: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION**

One of the best ways to close a how-to article is to create a final subhead with the bottom-line benefit of your solution. Then tell your readers what they'll gain by taking the actions you've just outlined for them.

Focus on the benefits, and don't forget to include your call to action.

**CASE STUDY**

Case studies are a great form of mid- to deep-funnel content. They can help people understand the value of your product or service. They can also provide value for customers, helping them get the most from your products.

Few organizations do them as well as MarketingSherpa. So for this example, we'll use one of theirs, which you can find at:

<http://www.marketingsherpa.com/article/case-study/personalized-newsletter-increase-open-rate#>

## Step 1: SUMMARIZE YOUR CASE STUDY

This is an executive summary of the study. Provide a quick overview and what you discovered.

## Step 2: CHALLENGE

Explain what the challenges were and what you were trying to accomplish.

## Step 3: SOLUTION.

At this point, you want to share the steps you used to solve the problem. Provide as much detail as possible. It may help to think of this section as a modified how-to article, providing summaries of each step implemented.

In our example, the full solution is summarized under a heading, “Campaign.”

Then each step is listed as a subhead.

Each of these sections contains a description of the exact steps implemented.

## Step 4: RESULTS.

Next, itemize the results that were achieved. Be as specific as possible. You may include a few paragraphs of text. But be sure to include percentages of improvement.

## Step 5: GIVE SAMPLES AND CITE RESOURCES.

Next, itemize the results that were achieved. Be as specific as possible. You may include a few paragraphs of text. But be sure to include percentages of improvement.

With case studies, in lieu of a standard conclusion, you can offer more information. For example, MarketingSherpa provides links to source material from their case study.

As always, try to incorporate a call to action. A few ideas:

- › Invite readers to share similar problems or success stories.
- › Link to a landing page that sells this same solution.
- › If your case study is published as a special report or ebook, offer a discount on first-time purchase of your product or service.

## MEDIA POST

Media is a great way to add variety to your content and engage followers in whatever way they prefer.

People are so busy, they don't always have time to read your content. But if you provide the same information in a podcast, they can listen to it during their daily commute or exercise session.

The type of media you produce is limited only by your imagination. Popular formats include slide shows, infographics, video and audio.

**NOTE:** *The biggest challenge in publishing media is SEO — because search engines can't crawl media. So be sure to optimize your content by providing written content along with your media.*

### Step 1: INTRODUCE YOUR MEDIA.

Introduce your topic as you would with a blog post. Tell people what information you offer and how it will benefit them.

### Step 2: EMBED YOUR MEDIA.

Put the media file in your blog post or digital page. This is an infographic available at <http://blog.crazyegg.com/2013/02/13/art-of-the-sales-letter/>

### Step 3: WRITE A SUMMARY OR A TRANSCRIPTION OF THE MEDIA (FOR SEO AND SCANNERS).

You need approximately 400 words of content around your media. So you have a few options here:

- › Provide a written transcript of the media file.
- › List highlights and other important points from your media file.
- › Draw excerpts from the media file, and provide them in written format.

**Step 4: CONCLUSION/CALL TO ACTION.**

As with all other content, make a strong final point and give a call to action.

**NOTE:** For a great example of a post that uses media as illustrations, check out this one on Mashable: <http://mashable.com/2013/02/18/best-original-song-oscars/>

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