Strategic Content Types: Attraction Content

Brian Clark and Sonia Simone

copyblogger

Authority

Authority

Sonia Simone: Welcome back, everybody. It's really good to see you. My name is Sonia Simone, here today with Brian Clark. Brian, how are you doing?

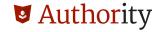**Brian Clark:** Things are going well.

Sonia Simone: Very good. Today, we're going to talk about the kinds of content that go into an effective content marketing program. Different types of content play different roles. They do different things for the business. We are going to walk through four different labels, four different general types.

Just keep in mind that these are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Sometimes a piece of content can play more than one role. They should work together. They should be congruent. They should all have the same look, the same feel, the voice, but they do serve different purposes. Because of that, they have some different attributes. We're going to talk about what those are.

I'm just going to quickly run through the names of the types. Today, we're going to talk about the first content type, how we define it, and what makes it what it is. The types are attraction content, affinity content, action content, and authority content. We have more A's for you. A's all around.

What is attraction content?

Sonia Simone: Let's talk about attraction content. I think Copyblogger is sort of known for this. How would you define 'attraction content,' Brian?

Brian Clark: This is the content that is freely available on the web for social sharing and search engines to index. Essentially, it's the stuff that needs to spread. It needs to be consumed and shared by people in order for Google to get the signals that this is worthy of ranking well on the topic. It's anything that you put out in the world that is intended to attract the right type of person, the right type of audience member, and bring them to your site.

Before you can get them to your site, really there's no opportunity to make them an enduring member of the audience. There's certainly no chance of getting them to buy something or take some other action that you're intending. It's really that terrible word, 'traffic,' but if it's the right type of content for the right type of people, it's the right type of traffic. You're going to have a lot more success with building the type of audience that you need to build the business that you're building.

Sonia Simone: Absolutely. The first letter of virtually any copywriting 'formula' is 'A.' You have to get attention. You have to attract attention. People have to be tuning into what you're doing before they're going to be able to take any other kind of action with your business. This is the content that exists to get that attraction -- and it is traffic. People want to know how to get more traffic.

Let's talk about -- we teach a lot of this on Copyblogger -- some of the techniques that make this work because, of course, everyone writes content. In fact, a lot of people think this is content marketing -- just writing content to get attention.

Brian Clark: Yeah, just this one thing, right? It's just the beginning.

Sonia Simone: It is the beginning, so let's talk about what are the key techniques the writers need to learn in order to make this kind of content work.
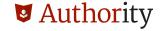
Writing valuable content for the 'right' audience

Brian Clark: The first thing, of course, is value to the right type of person. This is critical. You can write an epic post that attracts attention, but if it's not attracting the right type of person, then you're really not on target.

Value to the audience, but what audience? Well, you have to define who that is. We've spent a lot of time talking about how you figure out who it is that you're talking to and the journey they need to go on in order to do business with you. Never forget that.

That said, it really depends on what that audience is seeing from other providers on that topic. That tells you where and how much you need to give in order to be seen as exceptional in that topical area.

In our field, or content marketing -- which I call the 'nuclear arms race of all content' -- you've got all these professionals and practitioners teaching content marketing, and we're constantly trying to outdo each other. When you see these epic posts like Damien Farnworth writes or the people over at

Buffer writes, that's because that's what's necessary right now to really attract attention at that level.

Now does that mean that's what you have to do in a particular industry? Maybe not. Probably not. You do need to know where the bar is, and then you need to raise it. That's just the essential rule.

The importance of headlines

Sonia Simone: Yeah. I like that. Let's talk about headlines. I don't think this kind of content, in most markets, is going to work without serious attention to headlines. Of course, we're including our Magnetic Headlines ebook.

Headlines are probably, as a professional writer, the quickest bang for your buck in terms of getting better results on your content by learning and getting better at a few key tactics, if you will. Do you want to talk about headlines and the difference between great killer content with a so-so headline, and great killer content with a killer headline?

Brian Clark: Headlines are important with every type of content, every type of copy. We know that. We've been preaching headlines for a long time. In the world of BuzzFeed and Upworthy, it got taken to a ridiculous extreme, but it works at that mass level.

You don't have to be bombastic, but you do have to specifically communicate the value in exchange for the time that person is about to give you. Now

think about this. Once you have someone in your audience, they're a little bit closer to you in the realm of those concentric circles that we like to talk about -- of audience and warmer relationships.

Attraction content is out there at the fringes, generally designed to attract people that don't know you yet, to be shared and exposed to people that don't know you yet, or to at least grab enough attention enough times to get someone to say, "You know what? This publication is really of value to me, and I'm going to take the next step to make sure that I don't miss anything."

In that sense, headlines are do or die at this level. They're kind of always, but once people trust you more, they'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

I always use the example of Seth Godin, who has been blogging since the Stone Age. Everyone knows he's got something insightful to say. So he'll throw up some vague title, and you're still going to click because it's Seth -- but I'm not Seth, and everyone out there is not.

Until you earn that type of relationship, you have to work to be as clear and specific as you can about why is this piece of content valuable to your day, to your life, to your business -- whatever the case may be. Always keep that in mind with all types of content but specifically at the attraction level.

Sonia Simone: Absolutely. I think that a lot of very capable writers will fall into a trap of thinking that audiences are like them and want interesting word play, cleverness, riddles, and nuance. Headlines are probably not where you want to invest your nuance.

Brian Clark: Yeah. I'm exactly that guy, and I learned a long time ago to get rid of that. I'm reminded of the line in Fight Club where Tyler Durden says, "How's that working out for you, being clever?" It makes us feel better about ourselves than the audience goals that we may have because people are moving at the speed of light out there -- scanning, making decisions. If it doesn't connect right away, it's gone.

Just put the cleverness aside. Save that for the cocktail party. With your headlines, be clear, specific. Try to add some urgency to, "Hey, this is worth your time right now."

Sonia Simone: Too many writers think that this means you're writing headlines for stupid people. What you're actually doing is writing headlines for distracted people. That's an important difference. This is not about talking down to people or assuming your audience are dummies. I see that objection a lot among writers.

Also, sometimes among your clients or your organization might say, "Well, our audience is very smart. Our audience maybe MDs or engineers, or they have a high level of education" -- which may be so, but they still need clarity. They're still distracted. If they're on the Internet, they're distracted.

Brian Clark: There's a difference between specificity and hype.

Sonia Simone: Yup. Some of that advice will come out of the old direct marketing – 'direct marketing' is the nice word for junk mail -- and the junk mail people, the kind of headline writing they taught was definitely hype-y. It
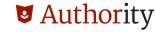
had a definitely hype-y element to it. You don't need to make everything this bombastic breakthrough ShamWow infomercial. In a lot of markets -- ours is one of them -- that doesn't actually do as well as just a clear, specific promise that's realistic, not bombastic.

What role list posts play in attraction

Sonia Simone: The other thing I want to talk about with this kind of topic, this kind of content is the list post, the list article. Sometimes called the 'listicle,' which I think is one of the most horrifying words ever to be coined in English, so please don't use that word. Writers get asked to do them because they're very effective. Let's talk about the numbered list and the role that plays in attraction.

Brian Clark: The beginning place is where we were just at. The number in the headline is a very specific, quantifiable estimate of the amount of time and value that I'm going to get out of this. It's a very deep down, lizard brain thing about humans, but it works. It still works. It's not going to stop working.

Now, there's always nuance and context in how you do it. That depends on who you're talking to, so you don't want to just go copy BuzzFeed -- please! But "5 Problems That You Need to Know About Commercial Real Estate Brokerage," that's going to get the right audience for that content to look at that.

The other thing stereotyped about the listicle is that it's a very shallow list of a couple sentences. Each of those five problems could be three to four paragraphs each of in-depth analysis and explanation. There's nothing shallow about that. It's great content, and it's organized well for the human brain. That's good attraction content.

Don't fear the numbered list. Fear shallow, vapid content that is disappointing and doesn't deliver on the expectations of the promise made by the headline.

Cashing in with content that delivers

Sonia Simone: I think that's a great point to wrap this particular session up on. The problem many people have with attraction content, with this style of content, is just that -- the content doesn't deliver the promise made by that attraction or that headline.

Brian Clark: They blame the headline, but they're really blaming the content because they were let down when they got there.

Sonia Simone: Yeah. Don't let your headline write a check that your content can't cash.

Brian Clark: Well put.

Sonia Simone: The answer is not to write a junkie headline. The answer is to write something great that goes underneath the headline.

All right, so that's 'attraction.' We're going to keep these nice and focused, but of course, we always have a lot of supplemental materials for you so that you can take a deeper dive. This kind of content is very important for you to master as a content marketer. You do want to give your time and attention, your best skill, your best art. This is where you're going to be the hero for your organization. Well worth mastering.

The next content we're going to step into is what we are calling 'affinity content.' This is not necessarily something every organization is doing, but it's really important. Catch up with us next time for that one. For now, this is Sonia Simone and Brian Clark.

Thank you, Brian. Thanks guys.

Brian Clark: Talk to you soon.