



Content Syndication for Your Partner Network: Seven Mistakes to Avoid



The Art of Storytelling

Content marketing has become the cornerstone of marketing effectiveness, and content syndication provides amplification via an extended network. Organizations selling through the channel can reach an audience of unprecedented size if they put together a cohesive strategy to distribute relevant content for strategic audiences. Rising above the noise is very important, but so is building a content-based relationship with target buyers via a distributed network. However, many companies flounder when it comes to pulling together a comprehensive content syndication strategy.

In this article we will explore seven core mistakes or pitfalls that can be avoided to maximize the benefit from content syndication via a distributed network of partners:

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1. No Overarching Content Strategy

Often, companies will dive right in and begin leveraging content syndication to drive awareness and reach, but without taking the time to think through how their overall strategy, both from a cadence perspective—daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly cycles—and from the perspective of media channel alignment. Because of that, content syndication often ends up just amplifying the noise while failing to connect with the proper audience. The best remedy for this is to step back and think through a couple of key questions: Exactly who is the target audience you are trying to reach? And what are the media channels they typically go to? Once you've answered those questions, the next challenge is to put together an overall marketing/messaging framework—perhaps on a quarterly and annual basis—that's tied directly to core business objectives and events that are happening in the organization. Once you've addressed those alignment issues, you'll be in a much better position to define a clear content strategy that will help you not only expand your reach via content syndication, but also amplify the core messages that you're trying to distribute through various channels.

2. Unprovocative Storytelling

Too often, we get carried away tweeting about product features or events or specific items that, frankly, are not that exciting. A savvy marketer once told me, "No one wants to hear about the lock, but we all want to hear about the burglary." We all know news is all about sensationalism, but so is content marketing. If it's not provocative, doesn't grab attention and doesn't engage, increasing your reach is actually going to hurt content syndication activities in the long run because your audience is going to tune out. Therefore, it's essential, once a broader messaging architecture has been created, that companies think about what kinds of stories they're going to tell to their target audience, and then proceed from there.

3. Failure to Know—And Act on—What's Actually Working

Once you've figured out your overall content syndication cadence on a daily/monthly/quarterly basis and have determined the channels you need to reach, and once you have a clear idea of the stories you want to tell to your target audience, the next step is to figure out what is really working. When you've done that, instead of creating new "stuff," the most important task is to figure out how to get the messages that are already working out to your entire audience. Unfortunately, many companies have a tendency to overlook what has worked and instead continue to create

new content—just for the sake of creating new content. These organizations not only lose the investment they made in previous content syndication activities, but also fail to capitalize on the continuity of discussion through a variety of channels. A much better approach to driving content syndication via a partner network is to focus on the specific types of messaging and channels that are already producing good results and replicate those efforts.

4. Inability to Effectively Repurpose Content by Channel

There is now sufficient data to show that, for business audiences, LinkedIn, SlideShare and Twitter are the three most effective channels for business-to-business marketing. For consumers, Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram and other micro-blogging or micro-social networking sites tend to be more effective. My point is that it's crucial to think through the redistribution and the repurposing of effective content via a variety of appropriate channels. Once you've figured out a compelling story that's working for your audience, you can create an e-book, a video, a conversation or even pictures or graphics around that same story. There are countless ways to get that message out before you move on to the next piece of content. Redistributing and repurposing syndicated content that's proven effective can have a direct impact on your ROI; it can also substantially increase the engagement of your target audience.

5. Improper Use of Technology

Even now, it's still common for companies to try to perform content syndication manually by literally logging in to various channels, in spite of the fact that there are easy-to-use tools available today like Hootsuite and Sprout Social that allow you to push content out to a vast network. However, it's very important to pick the right platform that fits the unique requirements of your partner marketing organization. Syndicating content through a multi-layered partner network is especially tricky, because you need multiple capabilities that will allow your partners to pick and choose what they want to push through to their customer base and prospect base. Which brings us to our next pitfall...

6. Failure to Allow Partners to Select And Augment Content

Most direct content syndication or social marketing engines allow you to push content through multiple facets. However, in the case of a partner-based marketing network, you not only have to allow the partner to pick and choose content and determine how they want to publish it, but you also have to selectively allow some of them to augment content as well as block some syndicated content to control their brand messaging position and other objectives they may have from a marketing campaign perspective.

7. Failure to Apply Six Sigma Methodology to Syndication Efforts

The essence of Six Sigma is taking a systematic approach towards a given process and figuring out how to improve it to provide a better customer experience. Six Sigma typically comprises five steps: define, measure, analyze, improve and control. You can apply these principles to your content syndication strategy by defining your overall strategy and storytelling goals, measuring what's working, analyzing what channels and segments are responding, improving the syndicated content you want to push via channel, and then controlling the experience and the messaging ruthlessly so the message doesn't get diluted.

Here's another way to think about what we have discussed here: The best approach to content syndication is to slow down in order to speed up. If you think through your strategy, pick your content per media channel, and figure out what works and do more with it, then your partner network can truly leverage your syndicated content to extend your reach and amplify your marketing with an incremental investment. You will be surprised how much you can gain from a cohesive content syndication strategy, once you overcome these seven pitfalls and turn them to your advantages. Happy syndicating!

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