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# Creating engaging content

**What is content and how do I ensure that it is engaging?**

**What international considerations are there?**

**What is a content calendar?**

**What content channels are available?**

### When we talk about content, this includes written information, images and video.

Content is not just the information and images that you distribute via your own online and offline channels, but also that which you distribute via other third parties. Your own channels might include your website, a brochure you produce or your social media channels. By third parties, this might be a blogger featuring your product, or a company with whom you are working in partnership.

### All content should be:

- Customer centric – identify your customer segments, and their content needs
- Data driven – where you have the information, base your content on what you know works, then measure it and tweak it to ensure that you're always learning. If you don't have this information, then put measures in place to track it.
- Focused on clear objectives and KPIs (key performance indicators) - based on where the consumer is on the decision making journey
- Relevant and engaging
- Distributed via the right channels at the right time



### Before creating any new content, it is helpful to ask the following:

- What is the role and purpose of this content?
- Who is the audience? What are their needs? How well do they know your product?
- Where does the content sit on the customer journey?
- Is there anything you already have that could be re-used, or edited?
- Is this the best way to achieve the goal?
- Where does this sit in your overall content plans?
- Do you have enough time to produce it?
- Are you best placed to create this content? And to publish this content?
- Which third party channels could utilise your content?
- Who else could/should contribute to this piece?



## What international considerations are there?

### Written content

- Consider whether you want to translate your content, and whether you have the budget to do so. It may be that you just translate in certain markets, and that markets where English is widely understood you leave the copy in English. Similarly you may translate your most popular pages
- Consider whether you use a local market url for your website e.g. [www.thelittlebarn.fr](http://www.thelittlebarn.fr)
- Your tone of voice needs to embody your brand e.g. playful, straight-talking etc. – and remember that this may or may not work so well in foreign languages
- Try to avoid using idioms, as they do not translate well. Word play will also not translate so is best avoided
- Translated content usually leads to a higher word count than the original English copy, and so will take up more space on the page
- Do not assume knowledge. The consumers may not know where a certain place is or who a particular famous person was, so if it is vital information it is best to explain it. Bear in mind that international awareness of England outside of London is generally low
- Consider using a strapline to help explain your product, if it isn't evident from the name itself e.g. *The Little Barn – Notre petit hotel gastronomique au coeur des Cotswolds*
- Different markets have different language needs. For example, where the French consumer or consumers from the USA are happy with a descriptive approach, German or Dutch consumers prefer reading copy which is more factual and direct
- Rather than getting it translated word for word, consider submitting bullet points to be re-written by a copy writer. This allows for local nuances to be taken into consideration
- Localise keywords rather than translating directly, as it is important to ensure that your keywords correspond to what people are looking for in the local market. Do not leave the keywords in English
- Avoid using superlatives and over descriptive language
- Avoid using Google Translate. If you are not going to translate properly then it is often better to keep the text in English. Most browsers now offer to translate content for you if you wish, so then the decision to translate is the user's. A German user may, for example, just think you are lazy for not translating, but will be actively turned off if they land on a page with a poor Google translation that you have selected. Ideally copy should be translated by a native speaker and then checked by an independent native speaker
- Observe seasonal and date differences e.g. Mothers' Day is on a different date in the USA



## Visual content

- Images should be aligned to your brand and have a similar look and feel. An emphasis on experiential images (real people doing real things) works well, and can be used across different content channels
- Consider a mix of ethnicity, and bear in mind your target market
- Remember that in the GCC images should not show bare arms, legs, alcohol or meat. Content in these markets should also avoid LGBT imagery and themes
- The first three to five seconds of video footage are key – and on mobile there is even less time (as little as 0.25 seconds) to capture people's imaginations, so make sure that the first few frames are eye-catching and impactful
- Many people scroll through videos with the sound turned off, so colour, movement, and subtitles are key
- Visual content almost always needs to be accompanied by permission forms. Whilst images can be used for your own editorial purposes without permission forms, as soon as you use these commercially, then best practice is to ensure you have property / model / artist release forms signed and stored. If you let other people use your images or film then you should ensure they sign a licence agreement so that your visual content is used in a way with which you are in agreement

## Visual content – what does good look like?

We find that images with emotion, pace/energy, people, colour, experience and unexpected perspectives on icons work well.



Images that are washed out, flat, dull, or that are straight on shots of well-known icons do not work so well for our audiences.



### What is a content calendar?

If you are working across different international markets, you may find it useful to have a global content calendar. This can be as simple as a table or spreadsheet showing what messages and supporting content you are planning on featuring in your chosen markets across the year.

Using a content calendar will help you coordinate your messaging, and have a joined up approach across your communication channels.

Your content calendar will depend on your needs, channels and resources but here is a five week snapshot of what it might look like:

WEEKS					
INSPIRATION	1	2	3	4	5
SEGMENT 1	Easter 'Top chocolate hotspots'				
SEGMENT 2		International Children's book day			
EVENTS/HOOK	Easter Sunday April Fool's Day	International Children's book day			
SEASONAL TRENDS	Gardens, outdoor activities, spring breaks, summer holiday planning				
SEO			Queen's birthday	Shakespeare's birthday	
SOCIAL TRENDS	April Fool's Day	World Art Day			Star Wars Day

### What content channels are available?

Beyond your own channels, the following channels are examples of platforms to distribute your content:

- Instagram – use for inspiration and amplification
- YouTube – serves video content at all relevant stages in the consumer journey
- Facebook – use for inspiration and trigger
- Website – use for trigger and planning
- Twitter – use for inspiration and trigger
- Email – news and must do information to inspire subscribers to book, and to give more information to those who have already booked
- Partners/influencers – broaden reach and engagement across the customer journey

Try to ensure that the use of your brand/product name is used consistently across all channels e.g. The Little Barn, should be @TheLittleBarn or @The\_Little\_Barn – not @LittleBarn or @Littlebarn. Remember that you are operating in a crowded market place, so reinforcement and making it easy for people to find you are really important.



Leadenhall Market, London



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