



The GET IT DONE Guide

TO CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS

Your practical guide to effective content strategy – from the experts



Quick wins do exist.

When resources are scarce and budgets are tight, you need to make the most of what you've got.

Often, clients know exactly what they should be doing with their content – they just **don't have the time or the resources** to make it happen.

But **creating effective content doesn't have to be a constant uphill struggle**. There's no doubting that designing and delivering an ultra-smooth content programme is hard. However, even when time is short, there are ways to make life easier and get a plan off the ground.

This is a guide to the simple wins. Wins that are quick and easy, but never quick and dirty. It explores some of the key challenges that content teams face, and then outlines ways to tackle them while maintaining quality and building momentum for your content programme.

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THE CHALLENGES

Persistent challenges persist.

The roadblocks that hold back a
crisply executed content programme
are unique to each business.

But there are consistent themes and shared challenges, and
many of the same ones are plaguing clients, year after
year...

Keeping up momentum

One of the most common challenges is maintaining momentum and achieving scale. We hear from clients that this can be down to anything from a lack of internal resources to budget restrictions. In their latest report, the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) confirmed our observations. Their results showed:

54% said a lack of resources was a challenge B2B marketers faced. This was the most common answer.

The CMI also found that 42% of respondents said creating content consistently was a challenge for them. However, the fact that this number is down on their 2023 report (54%) suggests that more marketers are taking steps to address stilted momentum in their content programmes.

Quality vs quantity

Another challenge is the quality versus quantity debate. While quality content that is part of broader content programmes has shown to be a more valuable asset to a business than a high quantity of less considered content, it can still be a point of contention. But for those that still need convincing, the CMI found:

1/5 20% of respondents noted that an emphasis on quantity over quality was a reason why B2B content strategies aren't as effective as they should be.

It's also interesting to note that 23% of respondents said 'unrealistic expectations' were a reason for an ineffective content strategy. So for some internal teams, there is a lack of understanding about what valuable content looks like and the effort needed to produce it, but also what it can help a business achieve.

Aligning with business objectives

Publishing great content has a huge range of benefits, but ultimately your plan needs to link to your overarching business objectives.

According to the CMI, the top reason why content strategies lose effectiveness is a lack of clear goals.

42%

Nearly half of respondents said ‘lack of clear goals’ was a reason their content strategy wasn’t as effective as it should be.

Also, if you’re not sure what you’re trying to achieve, measuring results will be near impossible. And marketers are already finding that challenging enough. 47% of B2B marketers surveyed by the CMI found ‘measuring the results of our efforts’ to be a challenge that hampered their efforts.

Find the quick fixes for your challenges.

The challenges we’ve highlighted persist because great content relies on having lots of ducks in a row, from pinning down internal stakeholders to contribute their insights, to managing the expectations of internal clients hungry for content.

There can be a lot of internal pushing and pulling, and as an external content partner we know there’s no silver bullet that can beat having a comprehensive content strategy in place.

However, there are some quick, pragmatic wins to be had while you’re working towards your content holy grail.



ALIGNING WITH YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Get focused.



Content programmes need to be aligned with your wider business strategy.

But that can be easier said than done, particularly in large companies where the focus – and the reasons behind them – aren't so black and white.

Whether your company works in siloes, you need to manage disruptive stakeholder inputs, or there's no clarity over business needs – content plans can drift away from an organisation's overarching objectives.

So how can you ensure you nail down the focus of your marketing efforts – including the 'what' and the 'why' – and align your content with clear objectives linked to your business strategy? In this section, we look at **three key tools**:

- CONTENT PILLARS
- CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING
- CONTENT CALENDAR

Content pillars

Content pillars are the topics you want your brand to be known for.

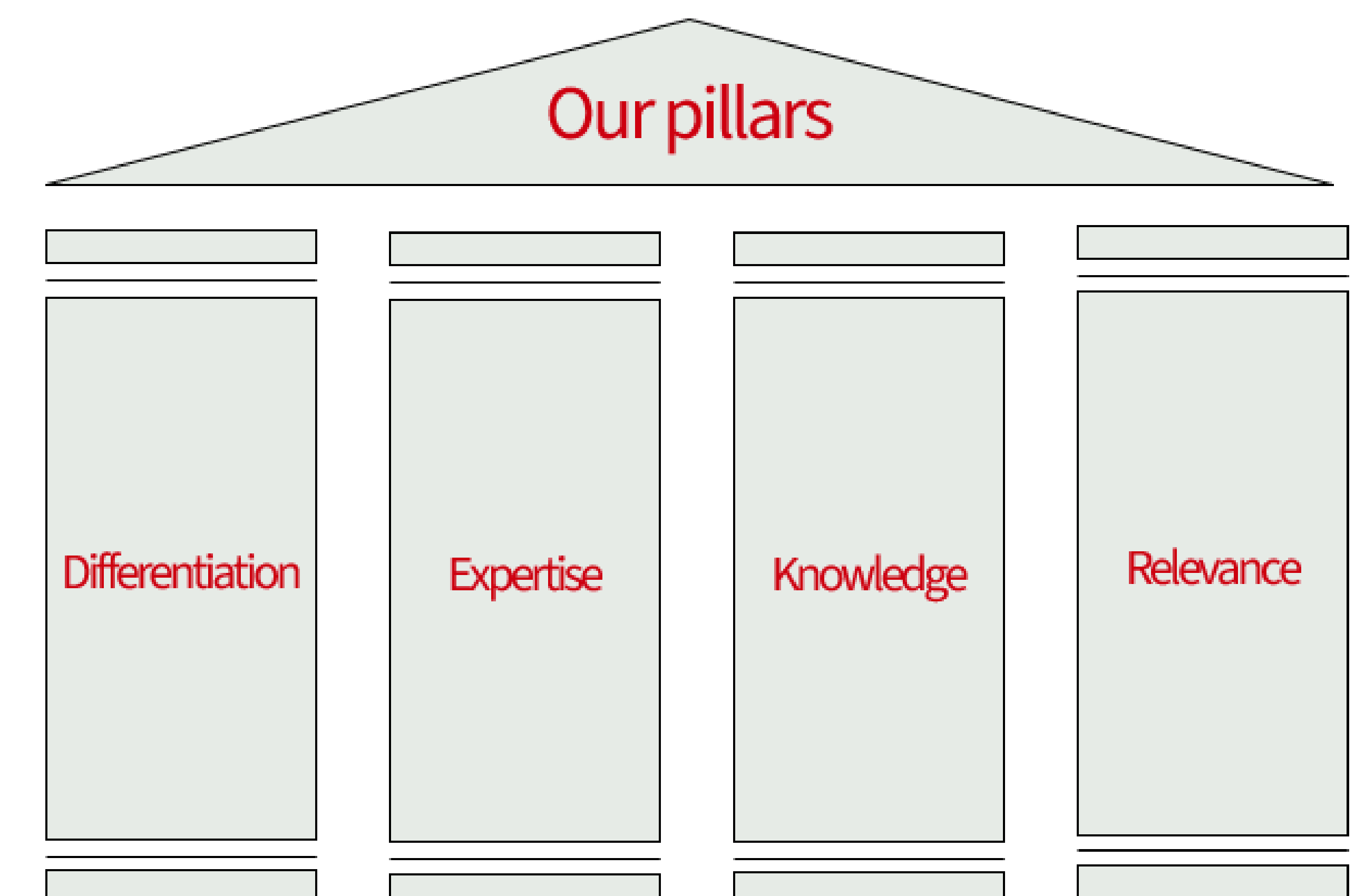
By establishing your content pillars, you can identify key themes and target resources on the topics most relevant to your audience. We usually recommend three to five topics. This can help your company ‘own’ a certain space in terms of thought leadership. By following these pillars, you can maintain the consistency of your content efforts and demonstrate that all of your output is aligned with your business strategy.

Content pillars also give you a framework to help manage expectations and ensure your editorial planning stays focused.

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER
WHEN DEVELOPING CONTENT PILLARS

Content pillars should take into account:

1. Business Goals and Audience Needs
2. Keyword Research
3. Content Analytics and Performance
4. Audience FAQs and Feedback
5. AI-powered Ideas tools – example, Jasper



Customer journey mapping

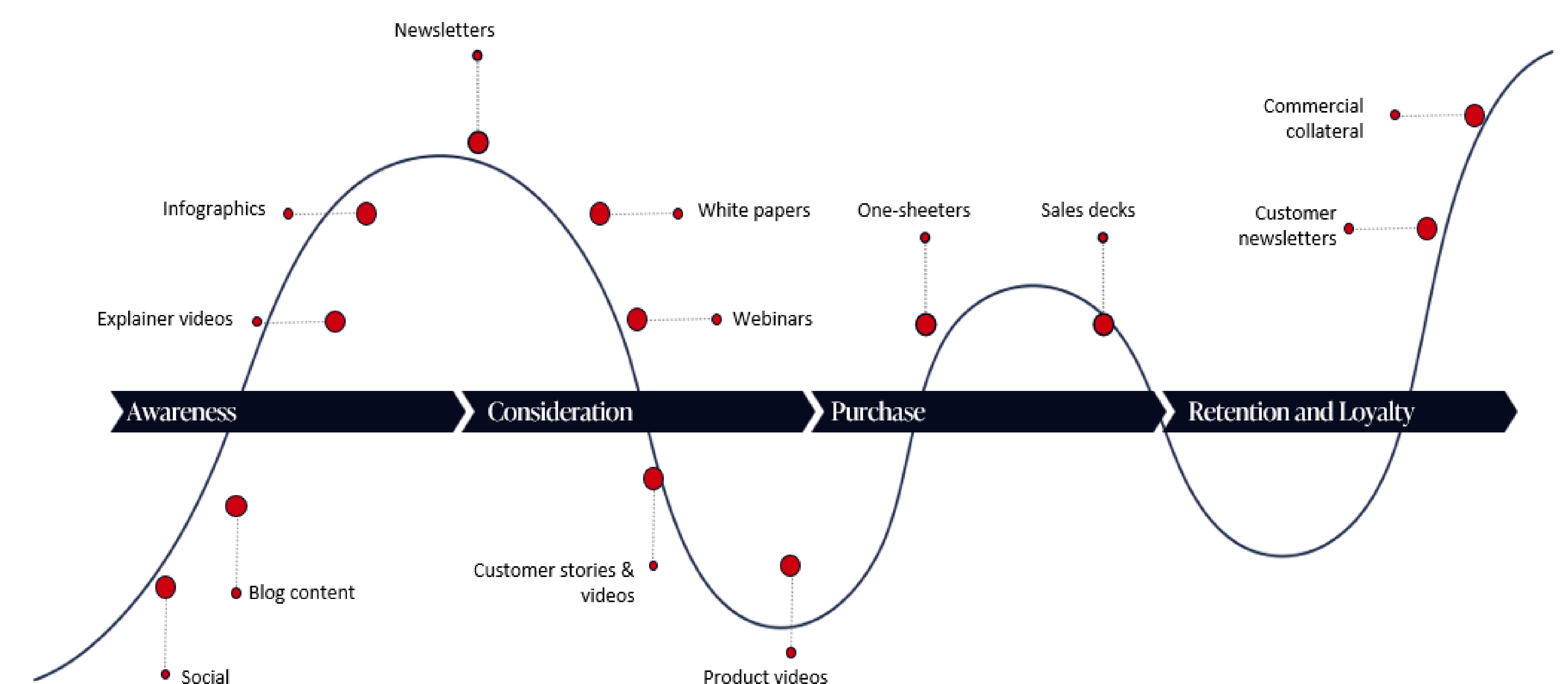
Context is critical to ensure your content is communicating with your audience in the right way.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CONTENT WORK BEST AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY - HERE ARE SOME IDEAS

Customer journey mapping will help you establish what each type of content aims to do. It will also help identify the touch points where you interact with users and whether there are any gaps – or points of friction – along the way. This will improve your chances of generating leads and maintaining loyalty through quality, relevant content.

Significant insight can be generated quickly by sketching out your customer journey and brainstorming with a tight group to get the perspective of customers and other users.

Map assets for each stage of the customer journey



Content calendar

A content calendar ensures transparency across your organisation. It offers a visual way to cover your content pillars and address your priority audiences.

Your content calendar gives you an essential ‘big picture’ of your programme. It can serve as your main reference point of planning, offering:

- **Transparency** - letting everyone know what’s available and what’s coming up
- **Coverage** - helping to ensure you’ve addressed all pillars and audiences
- **Momentum** - helping you keep up with your publishing cadence

Your calendar doesn’t have to contain every granular detail – it just needs to include the topics you’ve addressed, the audiences you’re targeting, and the formats and channels you’ve used.

An up-to-date content calendar can boost the effectiveness of your content, making it go further and work harder.

DEEP DIVE

There are some planning pitfalls we see regularly, and they can be the difference between a wasted investment and strategically aligned, results-focused content marketing.

“Take a step back for a second. Is your strategic planning helping you keep up – or is it holding you back?”

Sophie Cole, Writer at Stratton Craig

We've unpacked five of those content strategy mistakes and missteps, and how to avoid them.

1

MISALIGNED

Content strategy works best when it's aligned with your broader corporate strategy.

2

UNBALANCED

Creating content without a coherent strategy leaves you vulnerable to neglecting key areas of your business.

3

UNFOCUSED

Even interesting content can be strategically useless.

4

INEFFICIENT

A common reason content marketing stalls is a lack of resource. A key part of content strategy is knowing who is going to create your content.

5

INEFFECTIVE

Before you implement any kind of content programme, or shift course, you need to understand what success looks like.

[READ THE FULL BLOG HERE](#)

QUALITY VS QUANTITY

Get in shape.



Content
effectiveness
calls for **quality**
over quantity.

Gone are the days of content churn to meet the insatiable appetites of search engines, where keyword stuffing was a trump card.

Now, quality content is the way to reach people. If you produce an effective, high quality content programme, it will help build your reputation as a leader in your field while drawing readers, through SEO goodness, to your website.

DEFINING QUALITY



What does ‘quality’ content look like to you and your audience? If there’s no reference point for your business, different stakeholders will have different definitions of quality – and this can create friction.

A universal source of truth can help you avoid the ‘quality’ question. Creating a [tone of voice guide](#) for the business can keep everyone aligned in their expectations of the content you’re producing.

Meanwhile, a style guide can help you fine tune grammatical rules and accuracy. You can also create a full messaging house to guide your brand positioning.



WRITERS & RESOURCE

A painful truth: not everybody can write effectively. Writing is a specialist, labour-intensive skill and requires specific experience to write for technical sectors.

Creative teams have many demands on their time, with lots of hungry mouths to feed in a business. And if you have enough dedicated writers in your team to meet the demands of peak periods, you might find they're twiddling their thumbs when things are quiet.

Also, the person writing your social media posts should not be the same person who writes your expert-led whitepaper. Writing styles and approaches can be so different that the jack of all trades writer that can 'do it all' is something of a unicorn. That's why it might make sense to tap into a network of expert writers that can bolster your resources when you need them, with specific expertise for the task and the subject at hand, and keep your in-house team lean and focused. Well, we would say that, wouldn't we?

A man and a woman are walking together on a city street, smiling and looking at each other. The woman is wearing a white button-down shirt and a tan skirt, while the man is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and dark trousers. They are walking on a paved sidewalk with buildings and other pedestrians in the background.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN A WORLD FULL OF THOUGHT LEADERS

The digital space is becoming saturated with thought leadership content.

But there are thought leaders, and then there are ***thought leaders***. Effective thought leadership should be founded on unique and differentiated insights where expert opinion offers value to readers. That means starting and leading conversations, or bringing new perspectives to existing ones.

To position your own subject matter experts as thought leaders, you'll need to extract their insight and use it as the foundation for effective content. Guided interviews with your experts can give you the seeds of lots of great ideas to create valuable content.

“Great content isn't always about saying something nobody has ever said before. A fresh take on a well-trodden topic, infused with your business's unique voice and insights, can be incredibly interesting.”

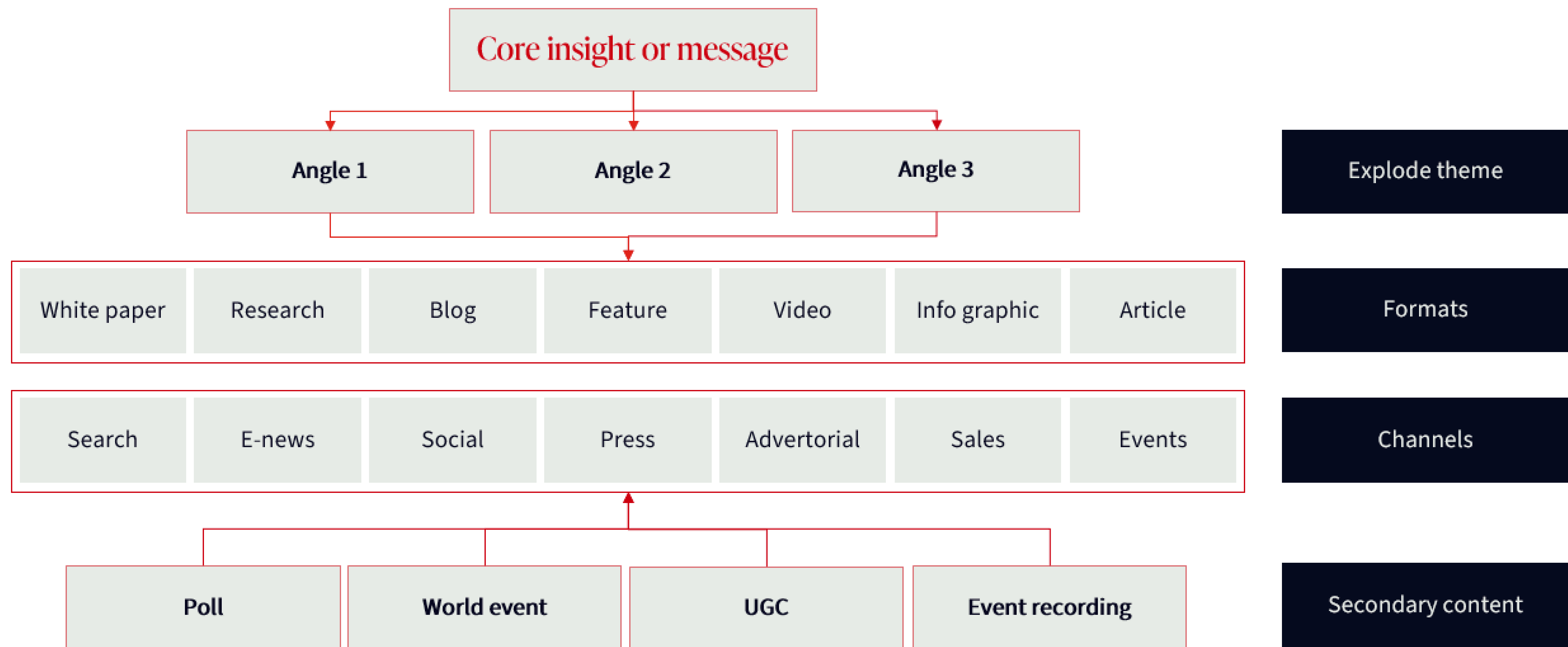
Anna Fozzard, Content Strategist at Stratton Craig

[READ THE FULL BLOG HERE](#)

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

IN A WORLD FULL OF THOUGHT LEADERS

Extracting insight can often be the hardest part of generating thought leadership content, so it makes sense to make the most of it by exploding the themes to create a range of angles for different formats and channels.



QUALITY IN THE TIME OF AI

Quality is in the eye of the beholder – and the beholder can be anyone, from stakeholders to customers to Google’s own automated ranking system.

So **what about the artificial elephant in the room?** AI is now inextricably linked with content creation, and there are certainly reasons to be cheerful. Generative AI has made great communication far more accessible, helping people who aren’t naturally creative draft anything from coherent emails to succinct meeting notes.

But as the application of AI grows, it’s increasingly important to stand out in a sea of same. For example, how many times have you read this sort of opener:

“In today’s rapidly changing digital world...”

That’s a vintage line from the likes of ChatGPT, and there are plenty more to be spotted as people resort to AI to do their writing for them. So, while democratising writing is a win for accessibility, it’s critical for businesses to make their content more human and less generic.

OUR APPROACH

Stratton Craig's Writing Lead, Colm, believes that AI can be likened to an “enthusiastic but inexperienced intern”.

“

To us, AI is a complementary tool. Our clients value our strategic content expertise and insights, so by using AI to supercharge ideas and analyse larger amounts of information, we can enhance the value we offer to clients.

Colm Hebblethwaite, Writing Lead at Stratton Craig

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[READ THE FULL BLOG HERE](#)

1 CREATE GUIDELINES

Create and implement tone of voice guidelines, so everyone is singing from the same hymn sheet.

2 USE WISELY

Use AI to supercharge your idea generation or add different perspectives to your outlines. See it as a colleague you can brainstorm with.

3 OFFER VALUE

Ensure you're publishing valuable, insight-led content rather than generic blogs that rinse and repeat cliches and ideas.

KEEPING UP MOMENTUM

Get going.



The momentum and scale of your content relies on a well-thought-out, proactive strategy paired with the flexibility to be reactive when necessary.

At the core of your plan should be an ongoing cycle of quality content based on your team's expert insights, which can be packaged and distributed effectively and regularly.

But as well as a carefully thought-out plan, you should also leave room to react to the things outside of your immediate control – whether they come in the form of new ideas or products entering your market space, or macroeconomic events that have implications for your business and sector.

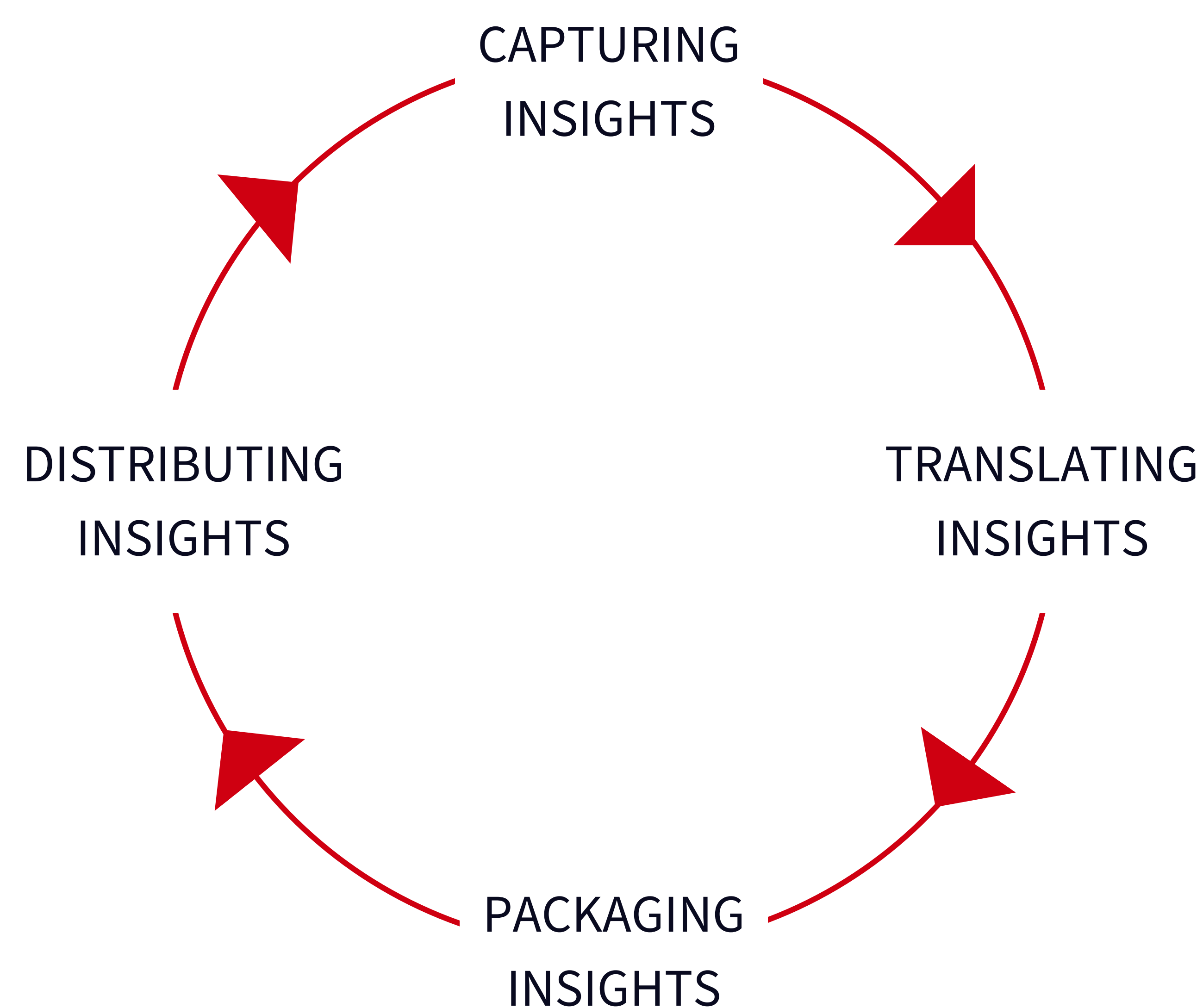
Regular idea generation is key

Creating an editorial panel in your business is a great way to continue generating fresh content – particularly if you can gather people from various areas of your business with alternative perspectives. For example:

- **Sales or other client-facing teams understand audience priorities**
- **Subject matter experts can offer valuable sector-specific insight**
- **Comms and marketing teams will have their finger on the pulse with industry trends**

The scalable model

Valuable insights garnered from across your editorial panel can be used for multiple types of content. By establishing your own model of content creation, you can allocate roles throughout the process and keep up momentum through a collective effort where everyone knows what they need to do and when.



Governance matters

With so many moving parts, content creation needs a person or a team with oversight of the wider programme. Robust governance with clear processes, responsibilities and resources will enable both momentum and quality.

For example, ensuring there's clarity on who is signing off on each aspect, and the resources they may need to check against (such as tone of voice guidelines), is key to avoiding bottlenecks.

As part of the broader oversight of your content, you should look backwards as well as forwards. Establish a cycle of regularly reviewing your old content, where you can refresh what you already have and deliver some quick wins.

Stratton Craig is a strategic content partner. We help clients forge real connections that cut through complexity.

By combining deep understanding of human behaviour with our relentless pursuit of clarity, we create powerful narratives and content strategies that drive change and action.

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