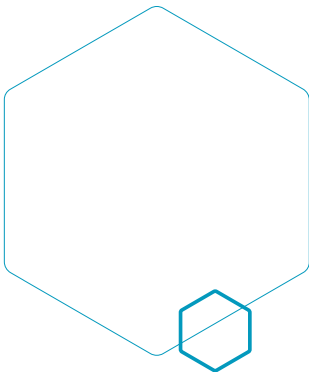**THINKWARWICK**

Webinar Guide

HOW TO WRITE MORE ENGAGING CONTENT

A Walk-Through With ClearVoice and Jacob Warwick, Content Strategist

ClearVoice

Writing engaging content for your blog or for a third-party publication is crucial to building long-term content marketing success — yet, it is no easy task. That's why I've teamed up with the content professionals at ClearVoice to show you exactly how I've found success writing for Forbes, Entrepreneur, Adweek, Content Marketing Institute, Convince & Convert, and several other esteemed publications.

Whether you're a one-man content department trying to get the most out of your writing, a freelance writer interested in improving your content, or you're managing the efforts of freelance content contributors for your organization, the following guidelines will help you create more engaging content and earn more pickups at third-party publications.

Jacob Warwick is the founder of ThinkWarwick Communications, a strategic marketing company in Northern California. He specializes in content strategy and public relations for B2B software and tech organizations. Reach him on Twitter @jacobwarwick or on LinkedIn.

I recommend first reading the example article, "3 Tips To Write More Persuasive Content," in its original format, and then reading how I crafted that article to find success, below. I've also included a checklist to help you and your contract writers follow these guidelines — please print a copy and share with your colleagues.

How to Write More Engaging Content

[1] 3 Fundamental Ways to Write More Persuasive Content

1

The title is arguably the most challenging and important section. You must capture audience interest and summarize your content in a concise way. Think of it as writing a catchy email subject or ad headline. Your headline should include your primary keyword theme and be between 50-60 characters for SEO.

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2

The introduction announces your topic, sets the tone, and provides context for your article. The lead needs to both earn the reader's interest and promise that your writing will be worth their time. It should be no more than 100-200 words.

[2] In the 4th century BC, Aristotle's Rhetoric theorized about three fundamental elements of persuasion: ethos, logos, and pathos.

The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker (ethos), the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind (pathos), the third on the proof (or apparent proof) provided by the words of the speech itself (logos).

According to Aristotle, a speaker must have ethos, pathos, and logos to effectively persuade their audience. This can be compared with how top brands reach their customers using content at conferences and events or through their blog.

[3] Learn how you can solve complex modern marketing problems by adding more persuasion into your blog content using Aristotle's ancient rhetoric.

[4] **Add Credibility to Your Content (Ethos)**

3

The nut graph is a sentence or two that reinforces the value that the reader will gain in your content. For shorter articles, concentrate on proving one point.

4

Subsections allow readers to scroll to the sections they are most interested in. Keep subsections within 250-350 words.

5

Each subsection should also have a brief transition to improve the flow of your writing, bring in new ideas, and support the overall theme of your content.

[5] Aristotle would argue that your blog readers are more likely to be persuaded by your content if they find you credible and trustworthy.

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[6] This could mean working with respected industry influencers, copywriters, and content creators for your blog or highlighting your biggest clients on your site.

A Few of our Delighted Customers

HYATT   Stanford University   COLDWELL BANKER   razorfish   UPS

BENTLEY   zipcar   ticketmaster   Yogurtland   box

Many organizations highlight their most respected and well known clients to establish trust with their audience. *Image via SproutSocial*

6

Visual content is used to break up long blocks of text, prove your concepts, and add more context to your writing. Transition to your images with a sentence or two and explain why you included it with a sentence afterwards. Always link to or source your images.

[7] To add credibility to your blog, start by identifying influential content contributors from within your industry. Read publications, competitor blogs, social posts, and more in-depth content like ebooks and white papers to find creators that match both your brand voice and marketing needs.

7

Since the purpose of most marketing content is get a reader to take action, you must make your writing more actionable. To do this, walk the reader through the steps you'd like them to take. In how-to articles or guides, concentrate on sharing your expertise, ideas you've tried, or any real examples you have. Actionable content helps you create thought leadership.

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Make a list of 5–10 reputable resources and reach out to each of them to determine if you can create a co-marketing opportunity or hire them directly. Be sure to ask for their full content portfolio and any references to validate their credibility.

8

When applicable, use visuals to illustrate what your actionable ideas look like in practice. As with other visuals, explain why you're including the image and link to the source. It's best to use 2-3 visual examples per 1,000 words of copy.

8

SMART SOCIAL STORYTELLING

Brian Honigman is a Content Marketing and Social Media Consultant and the CEO of Honigman Media.

AS SEEN IN

Inc.   **Entrepreneur**   **Forbes**

The New York Times   **TNW** THE NEXT WEB   **ADWEEK**

Content consultant Brian Honigman shares his content credibility by highlighting the esteemed publications that he contributes to.

9

You won't always have enough room to share your insight in great detail. Include lists of ideas or resources in a bulleted format or table.

9 A few other ways to add credibility to your blog content:

- Link to trusted third-party sources to validate your content.
- Use examples or quotes from respected industry influencers.
- Highlight your company history, expertise, or awards.
- Encourage and share customer testimonials and product reviews.
- Illustrate transparency, authenticity, and vulnerability in your writing and marketing efforts.
- Launch a user-generated content campaign to improve social proof.
- For entrepreneurs or small companies, share your business acumen and professional resume.

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As a rule of thumb, make sure that you, and any freelancers you hire, have your readers' or customers' best interests in mind when creating content.

10 Your audience is smarter than you think and can sense hidden agendas or too much self-promotion—all of which could damage your credibility.

10 Wrap up each idea with a brief final thought summary to prepare the reader for the next section; again, 1-2 transitional sentences is best.

11 Give Reason for Customers to Understand Value (Logos)

11 Each subsection header should summarize the next 250-350 words, follow a logical order within your article, and include secondary keywords for SEO. It's best to have your main title and subsection titles written in an outline before writing the entire piece to make sure your ideas are well-organized.

Logos can be defined as a statement, sentence, or argument used to convince or persuade an audience by using reason or logic.
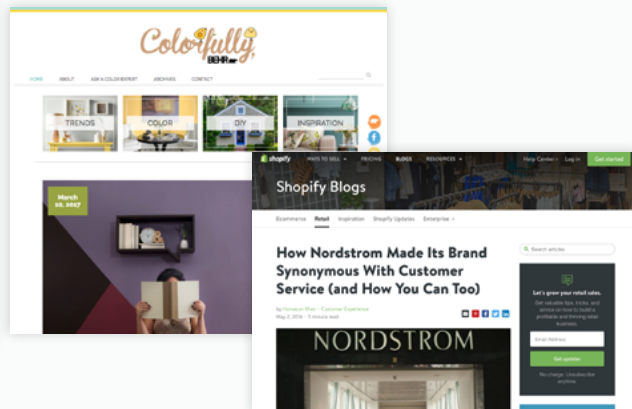
Top brands have recently raised the bar for fellow content marketers by creating inspirational blog content, quickly responding to social inquiries, or by consistently providing exceptional customer service.

People have grown to expect this high level of value and customer service from all brands, regardless of their size or available resources. These benefits and expectations **help convince customers to make a logical case for purchasing your product or service over that of a competitor.**

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[12] To give your customers a reason to purchase your offerings, you will need to maintain intimate knowledge about what your competition is up to—and tactfully market your logical advantages.

Think about the key purchasing factors in your industry. Do your customers care most about price? Quality? Brand experience? Identify a list of benefits of purchasing your product over a competitor's, and use that research to inform your blog content.

> **12**
> It's best to reinforce your content with actionable advice to keep the reader thinking about what they should do to solve their challenges. Since you're providing the information, your advice helps you build audience trust and brand authority.

To convince or persuade your readers using logic on your blog:

- Bolster any claims or hypotheses that you make with credible statistics or data.
- Create and promote real customer case studies and illustrate what you learned.
- Highlight your competitive advantages and product differentiators with side-by-side analysis.
- Give detailed scenarios of how your product can improve their lives or solve their challenges.

[13] For example, Chevrolet offers a side-by-side comparison with other auto manufacturers in the same price range to help their customers form a logical decision on which car to purchase.

Chevrolet offers a [mid-size sedan](#) comparison to illustrate logical benefits for purchasing a Malibu.

> **13**
> Provide real life examples to add credibility to your writing and illustrate your points. This example is not from my targeted industry, but it helps the target reader gain inspiration from outside sources, something that is often lacking in the marketing industry.

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Notice that Chevrolet makes their offering stand out against the competition. They showcase a newer model—sexy red paint compared to the more conservative grey and silver choices—and clear price advantages. These subtle tricks can help influence their customers to purchase the Chevy Malibu.

[14] For B2B organizations, sharing free, high-quality, and valuable content like white papers, insightful case studies, or video presentations can help them provide logical reasons to retain customers—and these offerings can be promoted through blog content.

> **14** Specifically mention your target audience to further focus your writing and add interesting detail for your ideal reader.

Some sites offer third-party reviews to help customers make a more logical purchasing decision.

Identify three to five industry or product review sites. It's best to perform Google search queries such as, "your company vs competitor company" or "differences between your company and competitor company."

Third-party reviews can give your customers the logic they need to purchase your services. Image via Grasshopper

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15

	buffer	TweetDeck	hootsuite
FEATURES	Schedule content Connect multiple social networks Connect RSS feeds	Monitor multiple timelines with real-time streaming Schedule tweets Keyboard shortcuts	Publishing Analytics Campaigns
SOCIAL MEDIA	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Google+ Pinterest	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter MySpace Foursquare Google Buzz	Facebook LinkedIn Twitter Google+ Instagram Wordpress
MOBILE APP	Yes	No	Yes

Reach out to the sites that rank the best for those queries, ask for a product comparison with your brand, and provide their content teams with compelling information about your company. Finding the sites that rank well will increase your chances of influencing more people.

Additionally, consider engaging on popular blogs in the comments section, or answer industry questions on open forum sites such as Quora or Reddit.

15

Add examples from companies that you admire or that you are interested in building a relationship with. I used an example from Buffer, TweetDeck, and Hootsuite, because it was both relevant to the article and I can use their mentions as a conversation starter with their content team later.

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Create Emotional Appeal with Empathy

16

It's crucial that all subsection transitions reinforce the topic of your content, otherwise your ideas can become confusing. Consistency ensures that your writing doesn't go off the rails.

16 Pathos is the quality of an experience in life or work that stirs up emotions.

Pathos may be the most powerful element in Aristotle's Rhetoric—but it may also be the most difficult to execute tactfully as a content marketer.

To incorporate pathos into your blog content, start by identifying what your readers are truly emotional about. **Concentrate on thinking about your audience and customers as empathetically as possible.**

17 Ask yourself the meaning and purpose behind your brand. Who are you focused on helping? How does your product change the lives of purchasers? What pain points do your services alleviate?

17

Add credibility to your ideas by including quotes from relevant professionals within your industry, either by personal interview or from a sourced, published post. Quotes can also be conversation starters for future project collaboration with influential industry leaders.

> "Empathy should be at the root of all of your content, because having a sense of the people you are writing for and a deep understanding of their problems is key to honing your skill."
>
> – Digital content expert Ann Handley, ★1 *Everybody Writes*

For example, the Adobe Marketing Cloud offers B2B marketing solutions, where their target audience are professionals interested in improving their marketing efforts to increase sales revenue.

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[18] Adobe's team understands that up to 45% of marketing professionals struggle with their data technology. To identify with and appeal to marketer's emotions, Adobe created the following commercial (and empathetic blog content).

Adobe empathetically appeals to organizations that struggle to understand data-driven decisions in their marketing department.

> **18**
> Experiment with different media through your content to engage your reader. In this post, I used screenshots and video content. Consider using interactive content, infographics, or SlideShares to add more engaging and shareable media.

The Launch: Do You Know What Your Marketing Is Doing...

To better understand your audience empathetically, research your customers, engage your followers on social media, and conduct detailed persona research. Document your findings in your content marketing strategy to inform your ongoing blog content creation efforts. Revisit annually, at a minimum.

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[19] Additionally, you should [seek industry influencers](#) and identify the highest performing content to get an idea of what content is most effective in your industry.

Consider the following strategies to find an emotional connection with your customers:

> **19**
> Add links to content you trust to support or expand on a point you're making.

- Support an emotional cause, nonprofit, or community effort and create informational content.

- Express detailed interest in your customers by empathizing with their needs in your blog content.

- Showcase your brand story, morals, and motivators on your website. Promote often.

- Connect with your audience on a more one-to-one level.

- Openly engage with your personality, and be human, authentic, and transparent as possible.

Keep in mind that your customer's needs are always evolving, and you should implement ongoing processes to continue learning about your customers over time. This can help you understand how to better persuade them.

As a final example of ethos, logos, and pathos working together, study this inspirational brand storytelling piece from Kleenex.

Notice that the content is not serving Kleenex branded messages, explaining the benefits of their tissues, or selling their product directly.

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[20] Including relevant statistics is another way to add credibility and support your arguments or advice. While not every piece of content needs statistical evidence, one or two per article is standard.

[20] The story is a compelling centerpiece for their "Messages of Care" campaign on the Kleenex blog. Kleenex earned 1.5 million+ shares and 61 million+ views on Facebook for "Unlikely Best Friends."

The marketing team behind this video used Aristotle's rhetoric to strengthen the story of Chance and subtly suggest Kleenex. The results are impressively persuasive.

[21] How do you create persuasive blog content? Have you studied the theories behind Ethos, Logos, and Pathos? Do you have an example of exceptionally persuasive content? Share your thoughts and feedback in the discussion section below.

[21] Write a conclusion that summarizes your content or asks the reader to engage. If they made it this far, it's likely they've found your writing interesting and may share their thoughts or feedback in the comments section.

What's Next?

Now that you have a real-life example of how I create engaging content, use the following checklist to ensure you are following all the rules in your day-to-day content efforts.
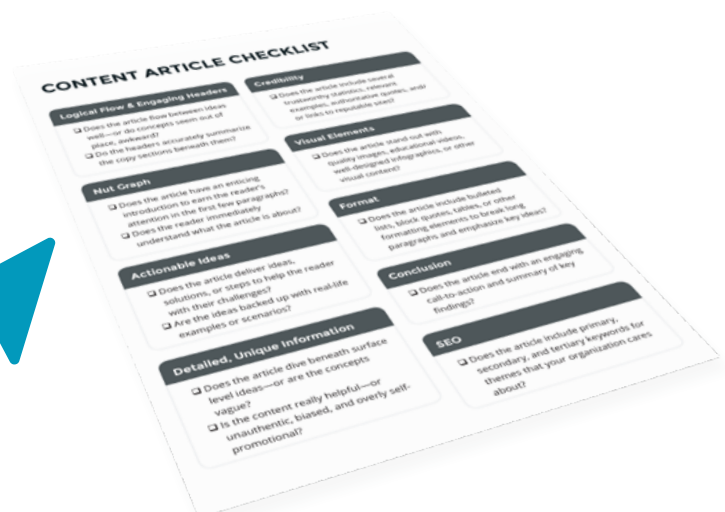
CONTENT ARTICLE CHECKLIST

Logical Flow & Engaging Headers

- ❑ Does the article flow between ideas well—or do concepts seem out of place, awkward?
- ❑ Do the headers accurately summarize the copy sections beneath them?

Nut Graph

- ❑ Does the article have an enticing introduction to earn the reader's attention in the first few paragraphs?
- ❑ Does the reader immediately understand what the article is about?

Actionable Ideas

- ❑ Does the article deliver ideas, solutions, or steps to help the reader with their challenges?
- ❑ Are the ideas backed up with real-life examples or scenarios?

Detailed, Unique Information

- ❑ Does the article dive beneath surface level ideas—or are the concepts vague?
- ❑ Is the content really helpful—or unauthentic, biased, and overly self-promotional?

Credibility

- ❑ Does the article include several trustworthy statistics, relevant examples, authoritative quotes, and/or links to reputable sites?

Visual Elements

- ❑ Does the article stand out with quality images, educational videos, well-designed infographics, or other visual content?

Format

- ❑ Does the article include bulleted lists, block quotes, tables, or other formatting elements to break long paragraphs and emphasize key ideas?

Conclusion

- ❑ Does the article end with an engaging call-to-action and summary of key findings?

SEO

- ❑ Does the article include primary, secondary, and tertiary keywords for themes that your organization cares about?