

Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

The Pedestal Group

How to Create Good Content

Special points of interest:

- *Getting Contacts at Companies*
- *Plan for Communicat- ing Challenges*
- *What is your job de- scription?*
- *Malware Removal Tools*
- *Finding Email Ad- dresses Online*
- *Keep Fit*
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- *AND MORE!*

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What is the hardest part of content marketing? Where to get the content! It needs to be relevant and yet worth reading again later. It needs to be helpful and establish your expertise. So what can you do? Here are X ways to write content for newsletters, blogs, informational emails, or web-sites.

1. **Top Lists**—writing a list of the top 10 solutions to problems in your industry, or the top 5 ways to work with you, etc. can be a great way to get readers and have your articles shared with others. The number doesn't have to be 5 or 10—3 or 8 is just as valid!
2. **Summary of the big articles happening now**—Are there trade journals your customers read? Or blogs and web-sites they should be checking? None of us have enough time in our days to be able to read everything we want. Help your customers along by writing executive summaries of articles in those publications that may help them along!

3. **How To**—A how to publication is one people print and file for future reference. Writing a how to is generally easy for a practitioner because it is something you do every day. But your client may not have to do very often so having that information at their fingertips is incredibly helpful. And for those times they don't want to do it themselves, they know who to call!
4. **The Economy**—Reporting on positive economic news is always a great way to go. Your content can be short as it is an "update" but the positive nature of it will get you quoted to others.
5. **Trends**—Check out what is trending on Google Trends (www.google.com/trends/hottrends) or Twitter (twitter.com). You can report to your clients so they don't have to look it up.
6. **Industry-specific quotes**—Can you imagine getting an email from someone that had 5



Clients may look forward to your marketing information!

quotes in it from leaders in your industry once a week? You would take that to meetings and use it, wouldn't you?

Content can be difficult to generate on a regular basis, but using these techniques can help you establish yourself without as much work. You can also use them over and over without fear of people getting bored. In fact, your clients may look forward to your marketing information if they know what to expect. So use these and other ways to generate content and market through education. It is the best way to establish your credibility and expertise!

Getting Contacts at a Company

Some small businesses take the summer off from sending their newsletters and email marketing because they know many of their customers will be taking vacations. But according to Barbara Haislip at the Wall Street Journal,



Out-Of-Office replies contain contact information!

this is the time to be sending them and mining the “out of office” replies!

Most people when setting up an out-of-office reply put in the contact information of someone who can cover for them. These people know something of your contact’s business and may have a use for your product or service that wasn’t recognized in the past.

But use a light touch, says Haislip. Since these are people who didn’t

solicit your contact, be sure to send a copy of your email with a personal note explaining why you are sending it to them. Offer to have them subscribe in the future rather than just signing them up on your list. Or, reach out to them by phone and introduce yourself.

At TPG we always recommend having 4 or more contacts at each of your clients so you can be sure if someone changes positions you still have a presence. This is a great way to build on that number!

Plan for Communicating Challenges

ADDRESSING HOW TO COMMUNICATE ISSUES UP FRONT REDUCES EVERYONE’S STRESS AT THE TIME

During any project there will be things that go wrong—it just can’t be helped. So before you begin a project, add a step to your planning process: how you will communicate problems.

communicate problems.

Acknowledging there will be issues

and addressing how you will communicate them up front helps avoid many of the issues that come up later and stress out your staff as well as your customers. If the employee runs into a problem, does the boss want an email, a voice mail, or to talk face to face? At what point is a problem communicated to the customer?

Think back over past projects and what you did when an issue arose. Did you call the customer immediately only to find it was a false alarm? Or maybe you waited too long and the

customer ended up calling you instead.

Answering this up front also reduces the stress in the office because everyone knows the protocol. If a problem arises and one person has to inform another, they follow the protocol and there are fewer feelings involved because everyone knows why it was communicated the way it was.

Setting the ground rules up front can help you and your team manage issues more effectively. Make it part of every project plan!

What Is Your Job Description?

As employees, most people have a thought a time or two that ends, “but that isn’t my job”. As a business owner, they are all your jobs, right? Not necessarily.

If you sat down and wrote out a real job description for your position, you would find there are things you don’t do as well as may find some areas you shouldn’t do. We’ve all been told to “do what you are good at” and “focus

on your strengths”, but something has to happen with all the rest of the work in the meantime. With a job description, you can quickly and easily see which tasks group together well and would create another position.

Be sure to write your job description in task statements that have measurable goals wherever possible. Those quickly turn into deliverables for an independent contractor. Also, having

those goals will help you evaluate your own performance at the end of the year. If you plan out what the goals should be, then at the end of the year you’ll have a better idea why you were successful or not.

Using a job description can get at goals and staff planning from the bottom up. For many people, that’s a big help!

Malware Removal Tools

There is a new anti-malware tool in town and it is made by Microsoft. It has many features needed by users with troubled PCs and so far has worked really well for us.

The Microsoft Safety Scanner (www.microsoft.com/security/scanner/en-us/default.aspx) is a tool that will scan your PC from any device—so unlike other tools if you can't get on the internet, you can run the scanner from a flash drive.

Simply go to the website, download the tool onto a flash drive and insert

it into the infected PC. The scanner has three options and we recommend starting with the “Quick” scan. Generally that will get you to a functional place.

The “Full” scan can take several hours so it is may be better to leave that for a time you are leaving the office or over night.

Overall the tool has successfully removed a number of issues and as it is free, it has been well worth running. A downside to the tool is it can't get updates on the fly so you

have to download a new copy every time you wish to run it.

Another tool we still like and use all the time is Malwarebytes (www.malwarebytes.org/products/malwarebytes_free). Malwarebytes does update before you run it but does require an internet connection.

With more and more malware hitting regularly, having tools on hand to fix them is a must in any business.



Finding Email Addresses Online

You go to a conference and meet a new person. You get their name and company, but didn't get their email—or worse, you got their business card but their email address isn't on it! How do you email this person?

One way is to connect to them on LinkedIn. If you are in a group, you can connect through the group. If not, you can add them to your network including in your note where you met. But, this can take time if they don't respond to LinkedIn requests right

away.

Instead, use a new service called “Peep” (samy.pl.peepmail/elift/cgi). Peep allows you to enter the person's name and company and get back an email address.

I entered about 10 names and got back 8 results. On the two it couldn't find, Peep didn't make a guess but instead let me know it didn't find it. So the good news is the results I received are at least valid email addresses.

For those that didn't give me a result, I was able to go to the site and determine the scheme they used for email.

Another site that has been good in the past for email addresses is ZoomInfo (www.zoominfo.com) but it is becoming more and more unreliable. I have found a number of the emails are no longer used or the records just don't have them.

For yourself, be sure your email address is easily found through any channel. Help people find you too!

Keep Fit—Limit the Time You Sit

Several studies recently have come to the conclusion that the amount of exercise is only half the battle to keeping fit—the other half is limiting the amount of time you sit. Sitting for long periods of time send the wrong message to your muscles and cause the fat-burning to slow or even stop. In addition, even among those who regularly exercised, people who sit for long

periods of time showed an increase risk of heart disease and diabetes.

Any movement that breaks up the sitting portions of your day can have a good impact so putting breaks into your day can be a big help. Some suggest moving garbage cans to a central location so you have to get up each time you need to throw something away. Another option is to not group

tasks like making copies or dropping off information at others' offices.

As you manage your time, be sure to build in times to get up and walk around, stretch and generally keep your muscles moving. Any break, even as short as one minute, made a big impact for people. As they say, running water doesn't freeze and neither do moving muscles!

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

Project Context—Vital to Success

Recently I have heard a large number of stories of projects that stalled due to one problem—the sales team never got the context of the project in the company.

For one person, it was placing an executive at the client's headquarters. The search consultant knew what the company needed, skills, background, experience, culture, etc. but never got



a good idea of how the position fit into the organization. In terms of priority, he had no idea where this position fell. When

budget cuts came down, his was a position that was cut. Unfortunately a couple of his candidates, anticipating the concerns at the company, asked the risk of this position and he hadn't been able to answer correctly. He lost credibility as well as the revenue from the sale.

Another company engaged a graphic designer who designed their website, and then engaged a website designer who specializes in their industry. The website is completely done and ready to launch but can't because the sales team never bothered to ask what software they use in the gift shop. They assumed this non-profit uses what everyone else uses in their space so

now they have to rework the backend to get it up and running. Everyone is losing on that one.

So in your discovery process, it is vital to discuss just exactly where this project fits into the organization. Who will it affect most, what happens if the project isn't a go, how does it fit into the organization? These are vital to have answered before you engage on something to help protect you from unexpected challenges as well as help the client manage their projects effectively. It is much more difficult to come back to a vendor and cancel a project if you have already told them you wouldn't!