How to create a content-driven website

Thanks to the internet and social media, the world is now content-driven. We consume various amounts of articles, videos, and music on a daily basis. And printed news outlets, such as newspapers and magazines, are not what they once were. Online news and content sites are now the go-to source for information. But starting one may not be as easy as you think.

There are a few steps you'll need to take in order to start a content-driven website.

Plan out the idea

Before you even pen – or type – your first word, plan out your content and business as far as possible. You may be looking at covering local news, or just blogging about movies. Either way, it is a good idea to write down everything you want to do and what you want to achieve.

By planning out even just the first few months in advance, you'll know exactly what you need to do and the numbers you want to reach. This kind of plan will stop you from fumbling around in the dark and searching for direction when it's time to write.

Buy the website

Once your idea has been planned out, it's time to purchase the website domain and a hosting package. There's a good chance that the domain you want is already taken, especially if you want a .com domain. Don't fret too much as there are plenty of other alternative domain extensions out there, such as .net and .org.

When it comes to your hosting package, you won't need anything fancy in the beginning, In fact, purchasing a high-end server before you have any readers means you'll be wasting money. Get something that at least has 2GB of local storage for content, unlimited traffic, and one database. That's pretty much all of you need in the beginning. When you're ready to upgrade, your hosting company will be able to facilitate you.

Get the software

Next, it's time to choose the software you want to use for the website. Don't look at getting a custom website created and choose a free solution in the beginning. For example, Wordpress, Drupal, and Joomla are the most popular content management systems (CMS) at the moment and you can't go wrong with any of those.

When it comes to your theme, you can either go with something free, or get an off the shelf pre-made solution. The latter is recommended. Websites, like Template Monster and Themeforest have thousands of themes ready for purchase and dedicated developers behind them. And even if you can't find the perfect look for your site in the beginning, don't fret as you can always modify it with plugins or add-ons as needed.

Setup social media accounts

These are incredibly important and should be part of your marketing strategy. You'll need to at least have a Facebook page and a Twitter profile for your website – they're the two most popular platforms for consuming written content.

Having to manually tweet and post an article to these channels does become tiresome, but it can be automated. Solutions like SocialOomph will push out your stories as they are published, and schedule them for repeats as well.

Hire staff writers

Depending on what kind of content you want to publish, you're going to need some staff members. Are you able to push out at least six articles a day, every single day of the year and attend PR events? Probably not.

You can start off with getting free staff members and giving them incentives instead of a salary, depending on how much money you have. Just don't promise to pay them in "exposure". Instead, look at giving them vouchers or letting them keep an item for review. It's not a perfect system, but you should start paying them the moment you can.

Don't' be afraid of hiring first-time writers and those that are straight out of school. After all, everyone needs to start somewhere. If you don't have the time to mentor them, consider sending them on a staff training course or forwarding some guides on how you want the business to operate.

Choose a style guide

Though this may not seem necessary to some, you will need to decide on a style guide for your website. These determine how certain things are written out, such as currencies, and keep consistency across every piece of writing. Three of the more popular options are the AP Stylebook, MLA Handbook, and Hart's Rules (Oxford). You can't really go wrong with any, but be sure to pick the one that suits you personally.

Write. Write. Write.

The final step is to write. You'll need to write every single day and more than once. A website that brings readers back is one that publishes consistently. Try to focus on substance over the speed of writing a piece. You may give yourself only a few hours to write an article, but if it's not good you're going to lose readership. Put out the best pieces that you and your staff can and you're sure to be a success.