

# THE BLUEPRINT OF MODERN PRODUCT LAUNCH MARKETING



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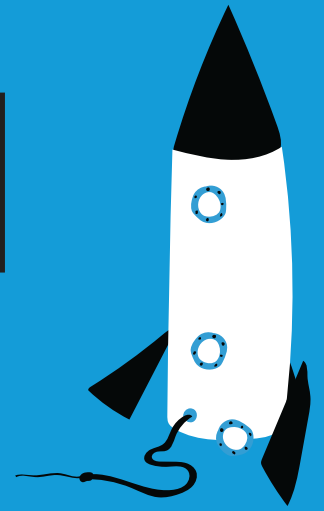
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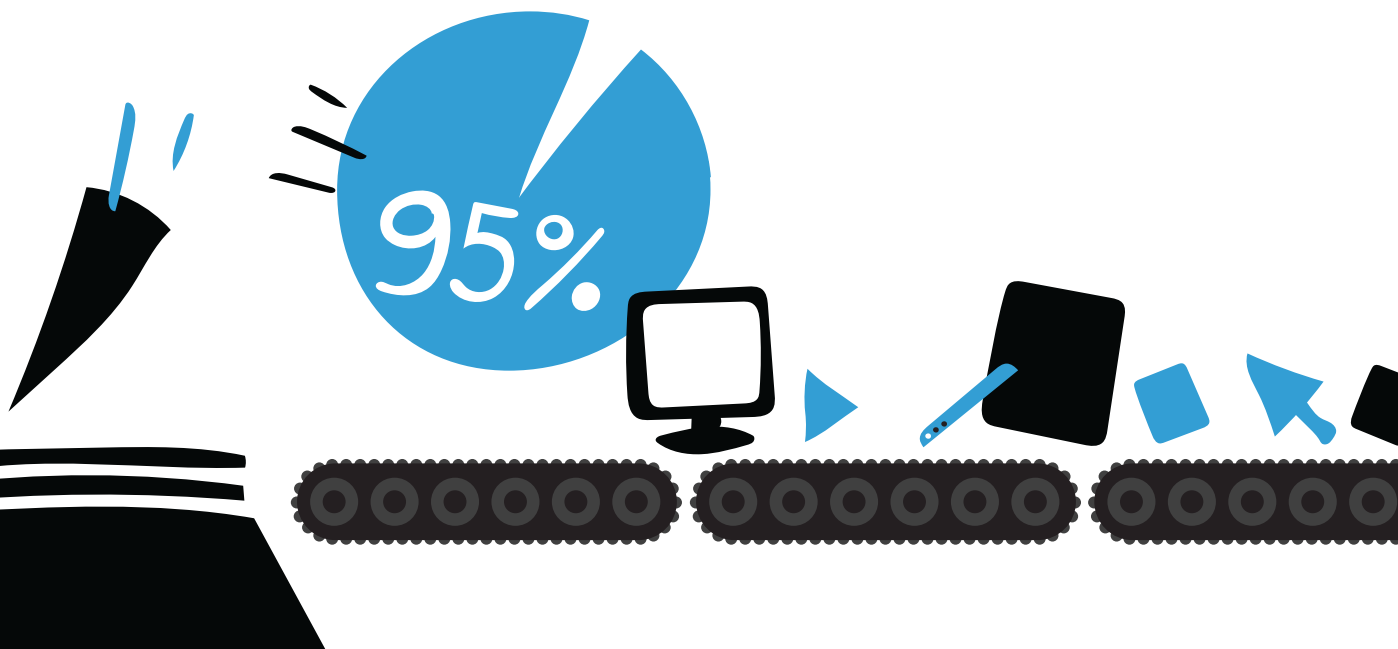
# 1 THE PROBLEM WITH PRODUCT LAUNCHES



## PRODUCT LAUNCH MARKETING IS SUFFERING

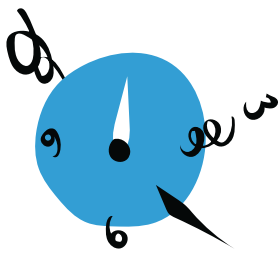
New products and features are essential for sustaining and growing a business, and marketing can make or break the success of a product launch.

But most B2B product marketers are struggling to make a splash. In fact, more than **95 percent** of new products launched by established companies each year fail, according to an AcuPoll study.



# PRODUCT LAUNCH MARKETING IS SUFFERING CONT

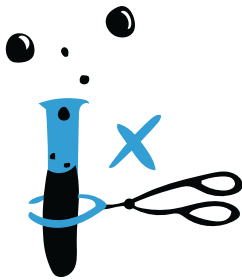
A number of factors contribute to these product-launch flops, including:



**POOR LAUNCH  
TIMING**



**INACCURATE  
MESSAGING**



**INADEQUATE  
TESTING**



**LIMITED  
MARKET SIZE**



**LACK OF PROCESS  
AND COORDINATION**

**But these factors are simply symptoms of a larger, more glaring problem:** the failure to create a coordinated launch marketing strategy that delivers a compelling product story organized around the buyer, not the business.

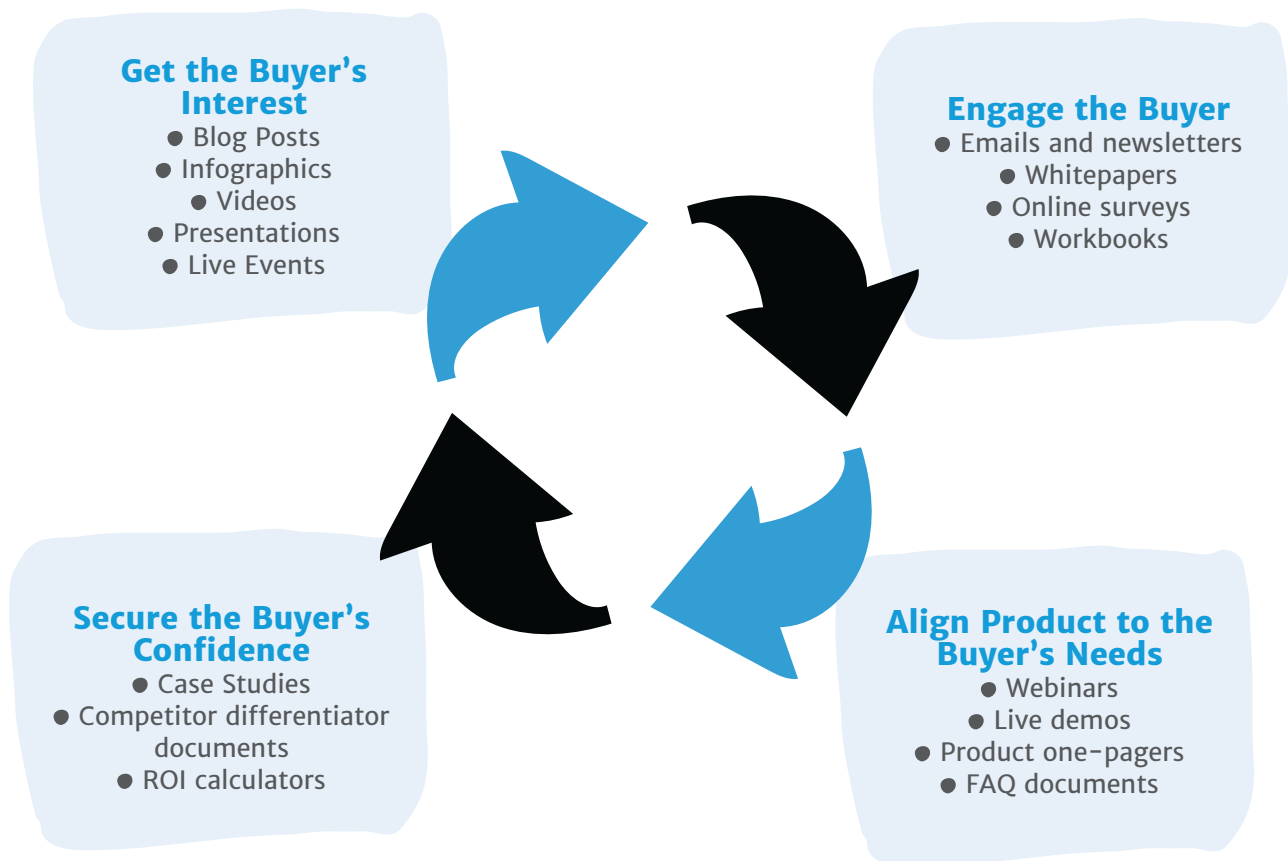
# WHY CONTENT IS KEY



The backbone of successful product launch marketing is great content. Content that:

- Frames the larger problem your buyers are trying to solve
- Clearly and accurately explains your product and how it helps solve that problem
- Enables your sales team to sell the product

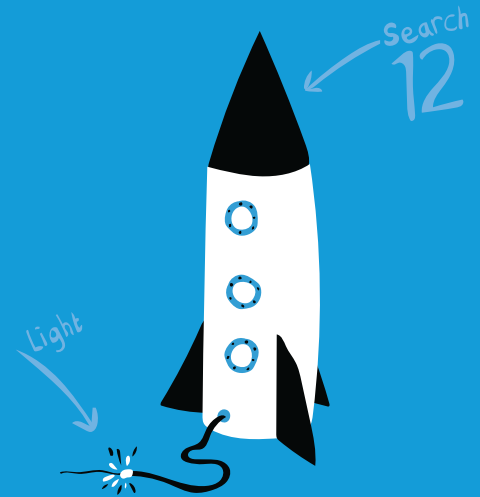
Put simply, content is not simply an “inbound” effort. It should be utilized at every stage of the buying cycle, from first touch and throughout the entire customer lifecycle. With any new product launch, you’ll need content for each of these touchpoints.



This eBook is designed to help you create winning product launch strategies in an increasingly content-dominated landscape. It contains best practices for a holistic product launch organized around the buyer, so you can facilitate each step of that journey with engaging, consistent content.

**Let's get started!**

# 2 PLANNING YOUR PRODUCT LAUNCH

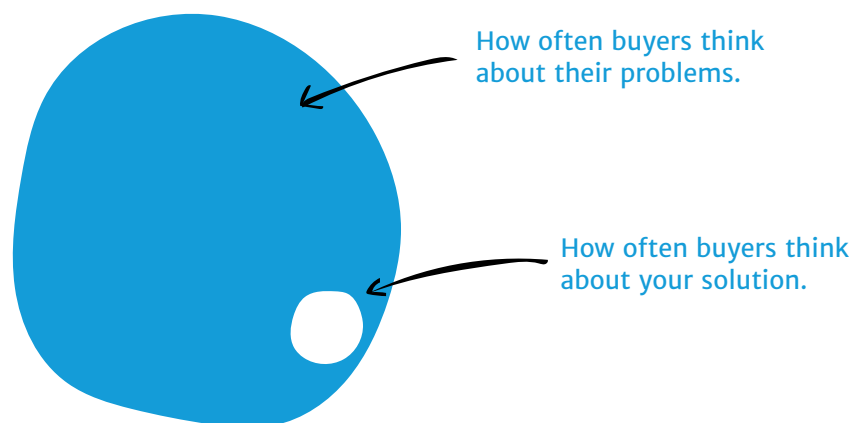


## FRAME THE PROBLEM

It's natural for any product marketer to want to trumpet the features of their new solution. But great product launches don't just announce new features and functions. They work back from the solution to better frame the problem that buyers are trying to solve, and then create content that tackles those topics and moves the buyer toward your solution

If you need proof that your content should address the issues your shiny new product is made to solve, just look at Google searches throughout the industry. [Recent research from Google](#) found that B2B buyers conduct an average of 12 searches before ever jumping on a specific brand's site.

The days of relying on feature lists and value props are gone. Product launches today need to include content that moves the buyer through every stage of their journey—from searching the Internet to closing the deal. So you need to start by framing the problem that buyers are trying to solve



# IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE AND OBJECTIVE



Before you start to think about how you want to pitch your product, you must identify who your product is for and what problems it solves for that target audience.

The best way to start defining your target audience and the appropriate messaging is to develop buyer personas. By having a concrete understanding of your ideal buyer, you can cater your content to their needs and preferences and distribute it among the appropriate channels, meaning that your marketing messages are always relevant.



**OF B2B TECH MARKETERS CITE  
LEAD GENERATION AS THEIR TOP  
CONTENT MARKETING GOAL.**

(B2B CONTENT MARKETING TRENDS 2013 REPORT)

When you have your persona, list their major pain points. Then, using these pain points, you can derive the theme you'll address in your product launch messaging.

**In addition to identifying your persona, list your objectives for the product launch. Some examples of product launch objectives are:**

- To generate leads
- How many and by when?
- Drive revenue
- How much and by when?
- Drive adoption
- What percent adoption and by when?
- Generate awareness
- Where and with whom?
- What engagement and traffic goals do you want to target?
- Beat a competitor
- Against whom and at what scale?

The objectives you set can vary widely based on the priorities of your sales team, marketing team, and your business as a whole. Choose goals that make sense for you, then start considering the types of metrics you can use to track them.

# 6 STEPS TO CREATING THE RIGHT CONTENT FOR LAUNCH



**Rebecca Kalogeris**, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, Pragmatic Marketing

**A** lot of work goes into a product launch. It's an exciting time; the company has worked hard to build a new product and is finally ready to unveil it to the world. But to ensure product launch success, the company must understand its buying audience and where that audience goes for information.

Companies struggle to develop content that resonates, and content for product launches is no exception. We want to deliver information that engages buyers and moves them to act. When it misses the mark, we're left wondering what went wrong (and who or what is to blame). Was it well written? Was it well executed? Or, was our approach wrong?

We need to establish a framework for content development and content marketing efforts that focuses on driving results, not simply on creating more content. We need to start with the big picture: why are we creating content, for whom are we creating it, what are their preferences, and what do we want them to do after they consume it?

## STEP 1 KNOW THE AUDIENCE

Our audience is the group of people we want to influence so they will consider buying our product. To influence them, it's important to understand who they are, what they care about, and what motivates them to action.

We use personas to capture knowledge about our target audience. Each persona is a reflection of a type of person we are likely to encounter. The information we hope to collect about each persona can be categorized into demographic and psychographic information.

Demographic information lets us know what a persona looks like, where that persona lives, the kind of business he or she works in, education, job titles, and more.

Psychographic information helps us understand our audience's most compelling needs, what's important to them, and their biases, values, and morals. This information helps transform a statue into a real, live person with opinions, feelings, and likes and dislikes.







## STEP 2 KNOW HOW THE AUDIENCE MAKES A DECISION

It's critical to understand how our target personas make buying decisions. Dumping content on them before they're ready to absorb it wastes time and may result in lost sales.

Remember, everyone takes defined steps before they buy something. These steps follow a logical progression, moving the buyer closer to making a decision. We can observe and document patterns in buying behavior within each target audience.

Let's look at the process we might go through to get a camera. First, we acknowledge that we need one. If we don't need it, there's no reason to proceed. Next, we may do some online research to learn about available options. We may have budget constraints, brand preferences, or must-have features that limit our search options.

If we already have a favorite, we want to confirm it's the right choice. So third, we search for product reviews and customer feedback. What are other people saying about the choices on our list? We eliminate items based on what we learned and confirm a favorite.

But there are still questions that need to be answered. Now that we know which camera we want, where are we going to buy it? Who offers the best price? Warranty? Return policy? Can we get it right away, or will we have to wait a couple of weeks?

Finally, we find the right price, the right terms, and the right retailer, and we buy the camera.

In each of the steps above, different content was consumed to move the buying decision forward. If content was missing or misleading, it may have resulted in a decision to buy a different product (or not buy at all).

## STEP 3 MAP AVAILABLE CONTENT AND IDENTIFY CONTENT GAPS


When we understand personas' content preferences and how they make buying decisions, it helps us examine the content available. Take an inventory of existing content and match each item to the buying step and persona to which it applies. This will uncover content gaps that should be addressed for the product launch.

But the process doesn't end there. Once you identify the content gaps, you need to identify the right way to address them.

## STEP 4 KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE'S CONTENT PREFERENCES

Personas have preferences about what content they like and how they like to receive it, whether it's print or digital, podcasts or videos. Within any given audience, there





are consistencies in the way personas like to consume information. You want to ensure that you are delivering content in the ways your audience wants to consume it.

If you are determining what content to create for a launch based on “this is the way we’ve always done it,” it’s time to validate if this is still the right approach by getting out into the market.

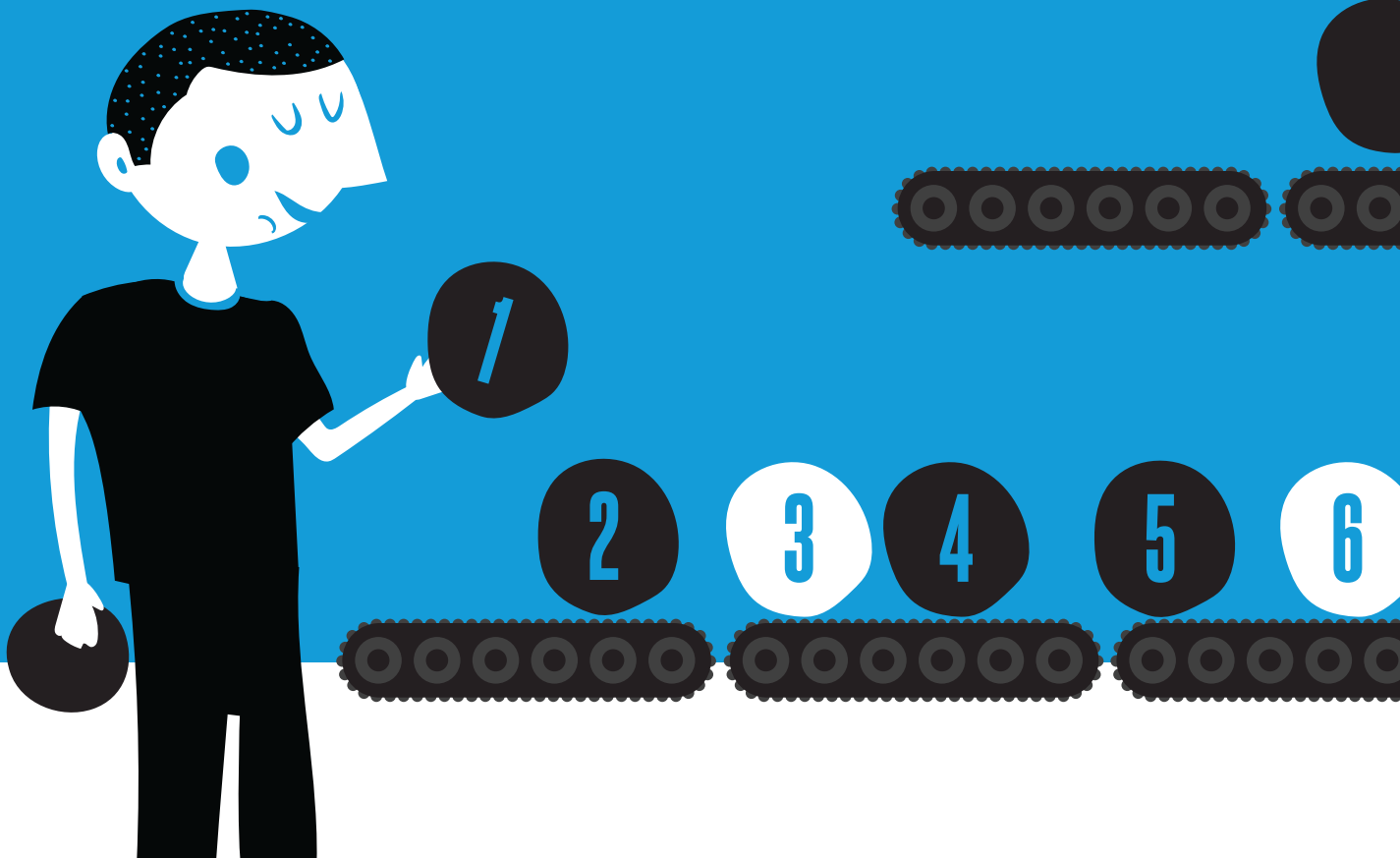
## STEP 5 DEFINE CONTENT GOALS

Once we understand the buying steps, we can establish goals for each content item. How do we want it to influence buyers? What next steps do we want them to take? If they only took away one item from the content, what should it be? Know the goal before you create even one line of content.

## STEP 6 MEASURE CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS

Of course, to determine if the content is meeting the goal and influencing a specific persona during the buying process, we need to develop a set of metrics. This could be as simple as tracking downloads of an eBook and measuring the number and type of links followed within it, for example— but don’t just look at the metrics in isolation. Measure the results against other content of the same type from previous launches and other content types from this launch.

When we can identify each persona’s preferences for digesting content and making buying decisions, we can define our content goals, identify holes in the process, and, finally, measure content effectiveness. And that’s when we know we have the content necessary to make our launch a success.



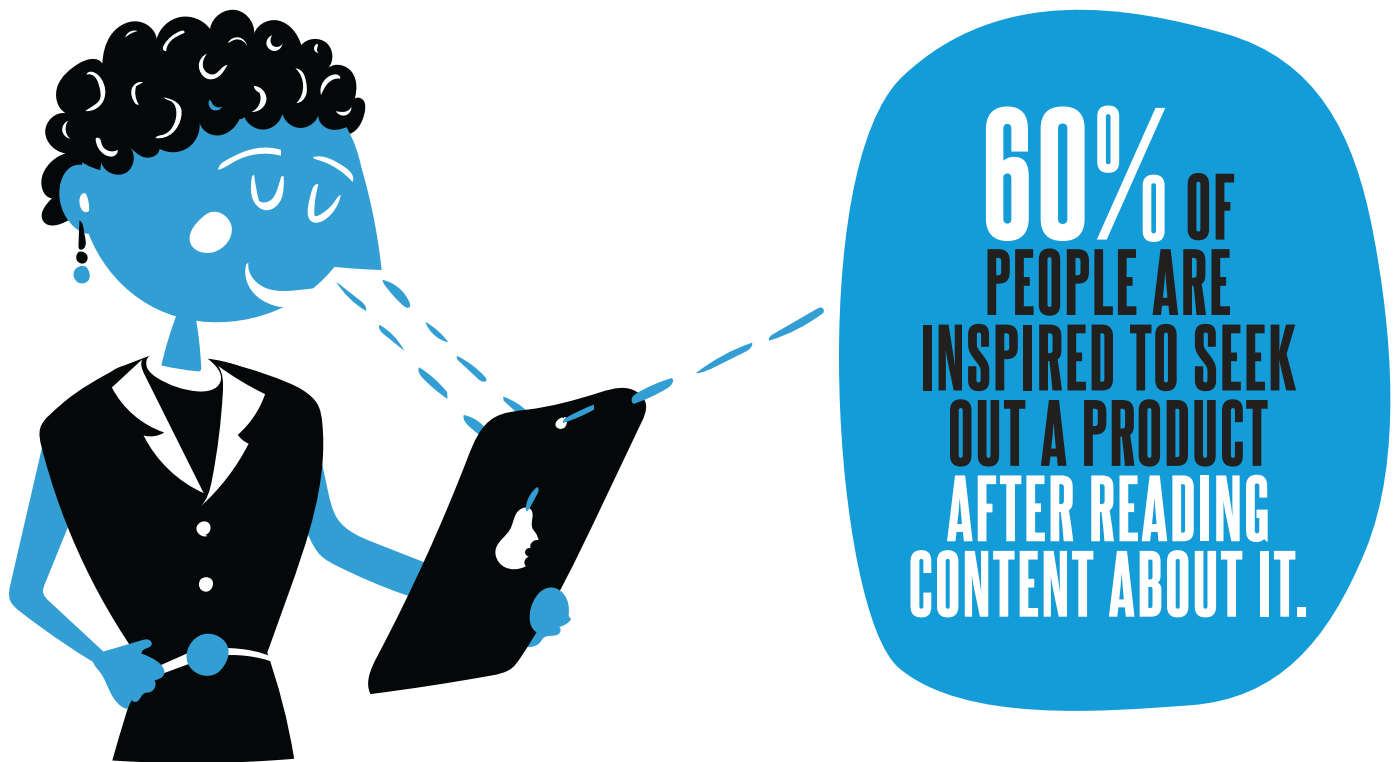
# USE CONTENT PILLARS

When you understand your target audience and goals and your product is on track for meeting the launch deadline, you're ready to start planning your launch marketing.

One of the best ways to market your launch is by taking the “content pillar” approach.

A **content pillar** is a substantial asset, like an eBook or whitepaper, that focuses on the major pain point your new product solves. This large asset is then broken up into many derivative assets to feed all of your marketing channels.

The content pillar approach usually contains three closely aligned assets for each stage of the buying cycle. These assets organize around your buyer's pain point and propel engagers toward your product solution.



We like to think of these three pillar assets as a three-course meal: the top-of-funnel appetizer asset, the middle-of-funnel entree asset, and the bottom-of-funnel dessert asset.





## THE APPETIZER

The **Appetizer** is a fun, engaging content asset like a SlideShare or an infographic. It serves the top of the funnel, pitching your product’s solution in a broad and engaging way. The goal here is to engage a lot of prospects, and drive them toward a related, gated content asset. This type of content is often optimized by channels like your blog and website, social channels (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), and video channels.

The Appetizer drives to a more in-depth “Entree” asset, which provides a deeper dive into solutions.



## THE ENTREE

The **Entree** is your major content pillar asset. The entree piece could be an eBook, a whitepaper, or a workbook. It gives readers who download it actionable guidance for tackling the challenges related to your product solution, without actually pitching your product. The key here is to make this content asset valuable to readers by helping them solve a pain point or problem. Marketers should distribute this content through email or marketing automation, and support it with paid advertising.

The Entree asset should then drive to your product-centric “Dessert” asset, which reveals how your new product helps customers solve the pain point in question.



## THE DESSERT

The **Dessert** is a product-centric asset—like a PDF, video, or demo—that reveals how your new product solves your buyers’ needs. This content can be distributed through your marketing automation as part of your nurturing efforts, hosted on video channels, or supported by webinar platforms (ReadyTalk, ON24, etc.), and distributed to the sales team to accelerate the deal cycle.



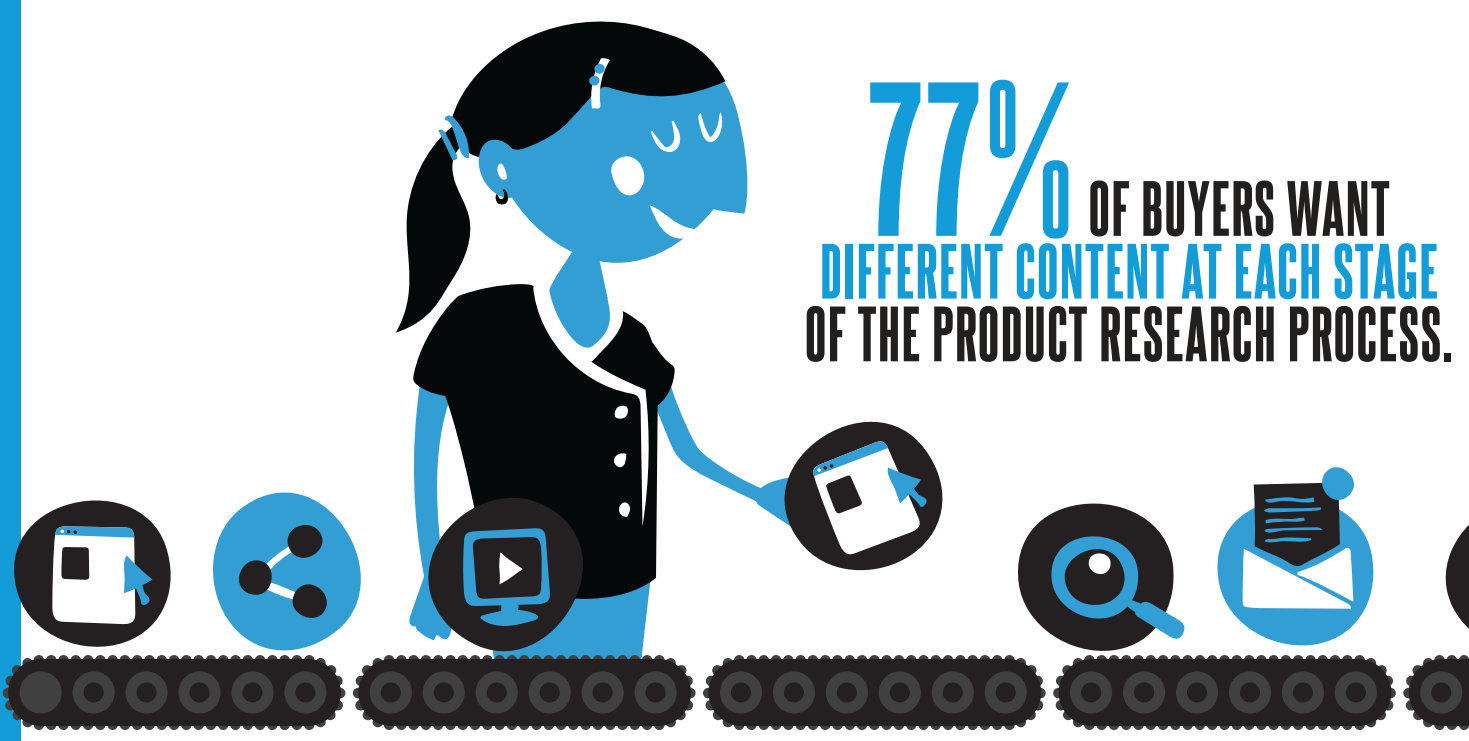
# FEED EVERY CHANNEL

With your pillar assets identified, creating content to fill your marketing channels is a lot easier than starting from scratch. Your derivative assets can be repurposed from your Appetizer, Entree, and Dessert content pieces.

A substantial Entree eBook, for example, can easily break down into 20–30 social posts, four to six blog posts, two to three emails, a webinar, a SlideShare, an infographic, and several product-centric assets.

It's important to remember that **77% of buyers want different content at each stage** of the product research process. A product launch content pillar can fuel all of your marketing channels throughout this journey, from awareness to purchase.

Let's break down your pillar distribution across channels and buying stages, starting with the Appetizer, Entree, and Dessert assets.



**77%** OF BUYERS WANT  
DIFFERENT CONTENT AT EACH STAGE  
OF THE PRODUCT RESEARCH PROCESS.

**Appetizer** assets are usually delivered through top-of-funnel channels like social media and blogs. The call to action drives to the Entree, encouraging interested readers to take action.

**Entree** assets are delivered both at the top of the funnel (on the blog and through social media) and at the middle of the funnel, (through emails targeted to relevant segments within your database). The call to action in the Entree asset drives readers to the Dessert piece.



# FEED EVERY CHANNEL CONT

**Dessert** assets are distributed to people at the bottom of the funnel, usually by a sales rep. Through their online activity and interactions with your company, these potential buyers have shown they're hungry for a more product-centric asset related to solving the problem addressed by your content pillar.

Use the grid below to help identify where your other derivative assets fall in the user flow, from awareness to sales enablement.



STAGE	CONTENT TYPE	CHANNELS
<b>AWARENESS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Infographic</li> <li>● Presentation</li> <li>● Graphic</li> <li>● Blog post</li> <li>● Video</li> <li>● Advertisement</li> <li>● Press release</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website/blog (WordPress, Drupal, etc.)</li> <li>● SlideShare</li> <li>● LinkedIn</li> <li>● Twitter</li> <li>● Facebook</li> <li>● Social media management (Hootsuite, Spredfast, etc.)</li> <li>● Google</li> <li>● Bing</li> <li>● YouTube</li> <li>● Vimeo</li> <li>● Vidyard</li> <li>● Press release syndication</li> </ul>
<b>LEAD GENERATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● eBook</li> <li>● Whitepaper</li> <li>● Workbooks</li> <li>● Templates</li> <li>● Third-party research</li> <li>● Webinar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website</li> <li>● SlideShare</li> <li>● Social media management</li> <li>● Marketing automation, Webinar platform (ReadyTalk, ON24, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>NURTURE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Blog post</li> <li>● Infographics</li> <li>● Email</li> <li>● Case study</li> <li>● Testimonials</li> <li>● Video demo</li> <li>● Analyst report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website/blog</li> <li>● Marketing automation</li> <li>● YouTube</li> <li>● Vidyard</li> <li>● Vimeo</li> </ul>
<b>SALES ENABLEMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spec sheets</li> <li>● ROI calculator</li> <li>● RFP template</li> <li>● Pricing guides</li> <li>● Competitive differentiator guides</li> <li>● Messaging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Website</li> <li>● Marketing automation</li> <li>● CRM</li> <li>● Internal content repository</li> </ul>



# FEED EVERY CHANNEL CONT

Now that you have an idea of what content to include in a pillar, use the empty grid below to sketch out your own ideas.



STAGE	CONTENT TYPE	CHANNELS

Once you've decided on the content pieces you'd like to create, and where to distribute them, build out a launch calendar with important dates to keep your team on track. Include items like: first draft due dates, final draft due dates, and final content launch dates.



# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MARKETING TECHNOLOGIES

When it comes to planning a product launch, there are plenty of marketing technologies that can help you track your efforts, stay organized, and set yourself up for long-term success.

All of the following offer several advantages that marketers of the past would have killed for in the midst of the product launches of old:



**1 Email marketing tools:** Segment your database and target your email communications based on criteria like job title, location, industry, and more

**2 Marketing automation:** Target your email communications, create integrated launch campaigns, and track success with reporting tools

**3 Google Analytics and Adwords:** See which of your channels, product promotions, and ads are driving the most traffic to your website

**5 CRMs:** Track sales opportunities through the pipeline, see a log of all sales touchpoints, and set up reporting to see how your launch campaign is impacting revenue

**4 Revenue-tracking platforms:** Track campaign success and see which pieces of content are influencing revenue

**6 Marketing content management platforms:** Centralize the process for creating multi-asset, multi-channel product launches. Collaborate across content types using automated workflows, version control tools, buyer persona and sales stage mapping tools, and internal libraries so teams can easily access content and consolidate all data points into a single dashboard so you can definitively see ROI





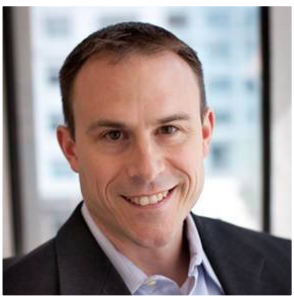
# TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MARKETING TECHNOLOGIES CONT

Use this checklist to identify if you have the technologies necessary to develop and release an integrated product launch:

NEEDED FUNCTION	CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO MY TEAM? (MARK "YES" OR "NO")
● Content collaboration tools	
● Buyer persona and sales stage tagging	
● Automated email distribution	
● Webinar hosting capabilities	
● Automated workflow management	
● Integrated multi-channel distribution	
● Version control and governance tracking	
● Shared internal content library/repository	
● Internal content utilization tracking	
● Multi-channel analytics tracking	



# PRODUCT MARKETING IN A BRAVE NEW WORLD



**Rob Bois,**  
Director of Product  
Marketing, Plex Systems

**P**roduct marketing plays a unique role within an organization, spanning sales, products, and, of course, marketing. As such, the product marketing team often plays a critical role in quarterbacking the product launch process. But as the buyer's journey has continued to evolve in the Internet age, the typical launch process has not.

Part of the challenge is that the profile of the emblematic marketing team has changed quite a bit over the past decade, and product marketers have a unique opportunity to capitalize on a far broader array of content.

With the emergence of content marketing as a discipline, product marketers have a secret weapon in the launch process. The reality is that a launch begins the moment the product team green-lights a new development process. Because of this extended timeline, the product marketing team can begin priming the pump as far before the actual launch as needed.

For example, suppose a new product under development will target a new buyer role. Getting attention and emerging as a trusted thought leader in the world of that new buyer could take significant time. You might begin by joining and participating in the online communities they frequent. Or by building alliances with publications or other thought leaders they follow.





As the launch gets closer, you may start building assets in partnership with the content team. An eBook, webinar, or video might be in line. And you may also want to start creating assets to support the demand-generation efforts that will accompany the launch. Product marketing may not be the actual author of any of these assets, but the product experts are the ideal traffic controllers to coordinate the efforts.

The key to all this, however, is to think about the launch not as a series of outbound efforts, but as a rolling set of content assets that will help customers find you and want to learn more. If your buyer doesn't identify with you, or sees that there is no real history of content that appeals to them, you immediately lose credibility even if your product is the absolute greatest solution to ever hit the market.



**GONE ARE THE DAYS OF SIMPLY CREATING A DATA SHEET, AN FAQ, AND MAYBE A SLIDE DECK TO SUPPORT LAUNCH ACTIVITIES.”**

# 3 EXECUTE YOUR LAUNCH PLAN



A lot of the work for a product launch happens up front, but when the date for the official launch rolls around, there are still items that need to be addressed in order for the launch to really have an impact.

## ENABLING INTERNAL TEAMS

A new product is going to touch a majority of the departments within your company. Your sales team will be selling it, your customer support team will be providing support for new and current clients, and your marketing team will be marketing it.

Enable these teams with materials like one-pagers, talking points, demo scripts, value props, lists of content assets, internal trainings, and more. It's a multi-step process, so you need to put together a solid timeline of deadlines and milestones.

A great way to start this internal enablement is by creating an internal launch email with every go-to resource that your teams will need prior to launch. Include a rundown of your launch plan, links to any relevant landing pages, talking points for each team, a prewritten email template for your sales team, and any other relevant information. Make sure to also store these materials in an easily findable place.



# ENABLING INTERNAL TEAMS CONT

On the day of the launch, make sure your PR team has everything they need to go big with public-facing communications. Regardless of where you're launching—at an event, trade show, etc.—publish a blog post announcing your new product, a press release to generate buzz in the industry, social posts, promotional videos, email blasts, and more. You've worked hard to get to launch day; now it's time to make sure everything rolls out as planned.

Use the table below to help identify what assets you'll need to create for each team.

TEAM	ASSETS
SALES	Product demos, one-pagers, talking points, competitive differentiator docs, pricing details, testimonials, case studies
CUSTOMER SUCCESS	One-pagers, detailed technical overview and/or requirements, implementation guides, customer-oriented presentations
MARKETING	Blog posts, social posts, one-pagers, feature descriptions for website, guides, emails, one-pagers, event/tradeshow collateral, internal positioning documents, videos
PR	Press releases, analyst briefings, media outreach

# 4 POST-LAUNCH TASKS



SALES

WEB

**Your product has launched.** You're monitoring your online advertising efforts, continuing to promote your product's solutions on your blog, in your database, via your social media channels, etc., and you're monitoring sales numbers.

**But the work doesn't stop there.**

Over the next few months, you'll want to track KPIs to ensure your product launch is delivering the kind of results you projected. Depending on your findings, you may need to optimize your marketing and promotional programs or introduce new programs to bring extra life to your product.

Let's look at each of the post-launch activities you should be pursuing in order to guarantee success.

## MEASUREMENT

Think back to the goals you set during the planning stage. You'll want to return to those goals immediately after launch to start charting your progress.

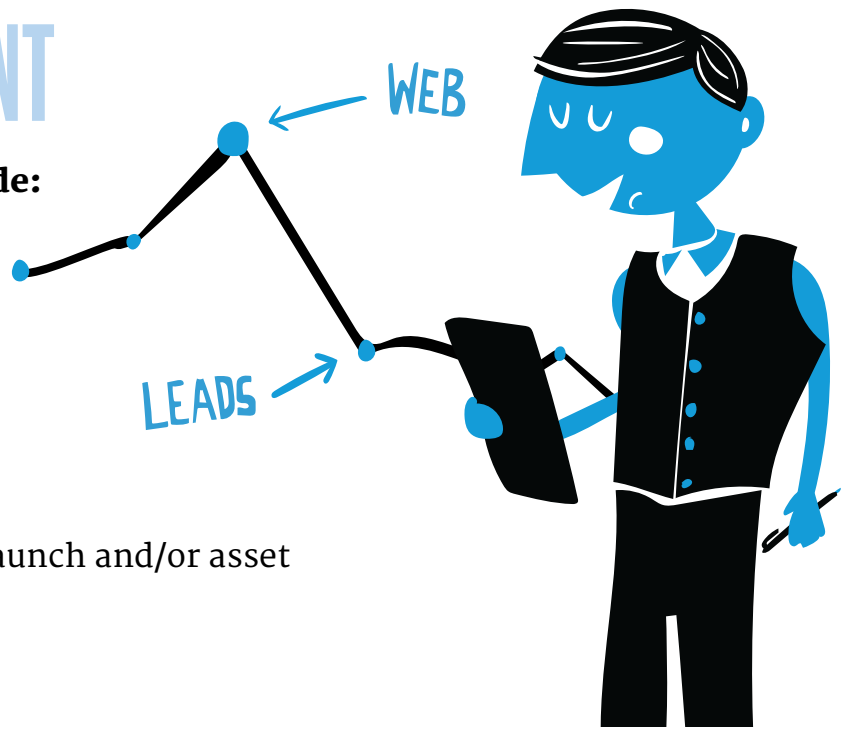
Keep a spreadsheet or set up a dashboard to keep track of all of the relevant metrics, paying specific attention to new customer acquisition and revenue driven from your product launch. Then, communicate the key insights from these metrics to your team.



# MEASUREMENT CONT

## Key metrics to pull should include:

- Web traffic
- Internal content utilization
- New prospects in database
- Marketing qualified leads
- Sales accepted leads
- New customer acquisition
- New revenue
- Leads and revenue by product launch and/or asset



# GATHER FEEDBACK

Just like with any business initiative, gathering feedback is critical—not just on your launch program (i.e., internal feedback), but also on the product itself (i.e., external feedback).

## Ask your internal teams the following:

- Were you provided with the appropriate enablement tools? Did you feel prepared for this product launch?
- Do you think we pursued all of the appropriate outlets for this launch?
- Do you think the timing of the launch plan was appropriate? Was there ample time to complete all necessary pre-launch activities?
- What can we do better next time?
- If possible, collect feedback from your new clients a few months after launch. This feedback will be especially valuable if these new clients were introduced to you through your product launch efforts.

## Ask questions like:

- What messaging really resonated with you when you were evaluating our product?
- Did you feel like you were overexposed to marketing messages from us?
- What do you think of the new product? Does it meet expectations?
- Did the ramp-up process meet expectations?
- Did you encounter any problems with our new product?
- Are you happy with our new product? If not, what could we do to improve your experience?



# GATHER FEEDBACK CONT

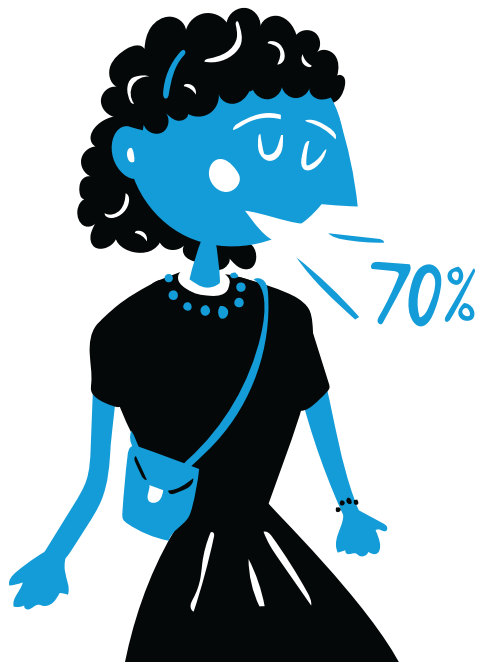
Often, in-app messaging, a simple phone call or email, or a quick email survey can provide you with enough data to inform any future product launches that might be on the horizon.

## DEVELOP A CONTINUED AWARENESS PLAN

You don't want your new product to lose steam after just a few months. How can you keep your internal teams excited about your new product? What can you do to rebuild the hype around your product?

Develop a plan for the six to twelve months immediately after launch. Create content to drive continued awareness and fuel additional lead gen. Additionally, evaluate any upcoming industry events to see if there might be opportunities to gain extra exposure for your product through a sponsorship, keynote, or speaking engagement.

The first six months to a year is a great time to start collecting and showcasing case studies about your product. Contact the customers that have had positive experiences and see if they would be willing to participate in a case study, talk more about their success story, or provide a short quote. Post these stories to your website, or build them into a blog series to continue promoting your product in a positive light. Remember, testimonials are often more powerful than anything your sales reps could say during the selling process, so they're definitely worth the investment.



**CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS  
AND CASE STUDIES ARE  
CONSIDERED THE MOST EFFECTIVE  
CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS,  
IDENTIFIED BY 89% AND 88%,  
RESPECTIVELY, OF B2B MARKETERS.**

(B2B CONTENT MARKETING  
TRENDS 2013 REPORT)



# 5 THE BEST PRODUCT MARKETING RESOURCES

Content-focused product marketing launches aren't easy. But with the right resources and best practices at your disposal, you can reap big benefits. Here's a list of our favorite product marketing resources.



**What:** Pragmatic Marketing

**Site:** [pragmaticmarketing.com](http://pragmaticmarketing.com)

**Why we like it:** Interesting frameworks for product marketing strategy and foundations.



**What:** KISSmetrics, “Launch Like Steve Jobs: 7 Ways to Build Buzz for Your Next Product Launch”

**Site:** [blog.kissmetrics.com/product-launch-strategies](http://blog.kissmetrics.com/product-launch-strategies)

**Why we like it:** Great step-by-step post on how to master your product launch.



**What:** Harvard Business Review, “Why Most Product Launches Fail”

**Site:** [hbr.org/2011/04/why-most-product-launches-fail](http://hbr.org/2011/04/why-most-product-launches-fail)

**Why we like it:** Good insight into the pitfalls of product launches and how to avoid them.



**What:** A Random Jog

**Site:** [arandomjog.com](http://arandomjog.com)

**Why we like it:** Great tips for product marketers from a product marketer in a minimalist, no-nonsense format.