

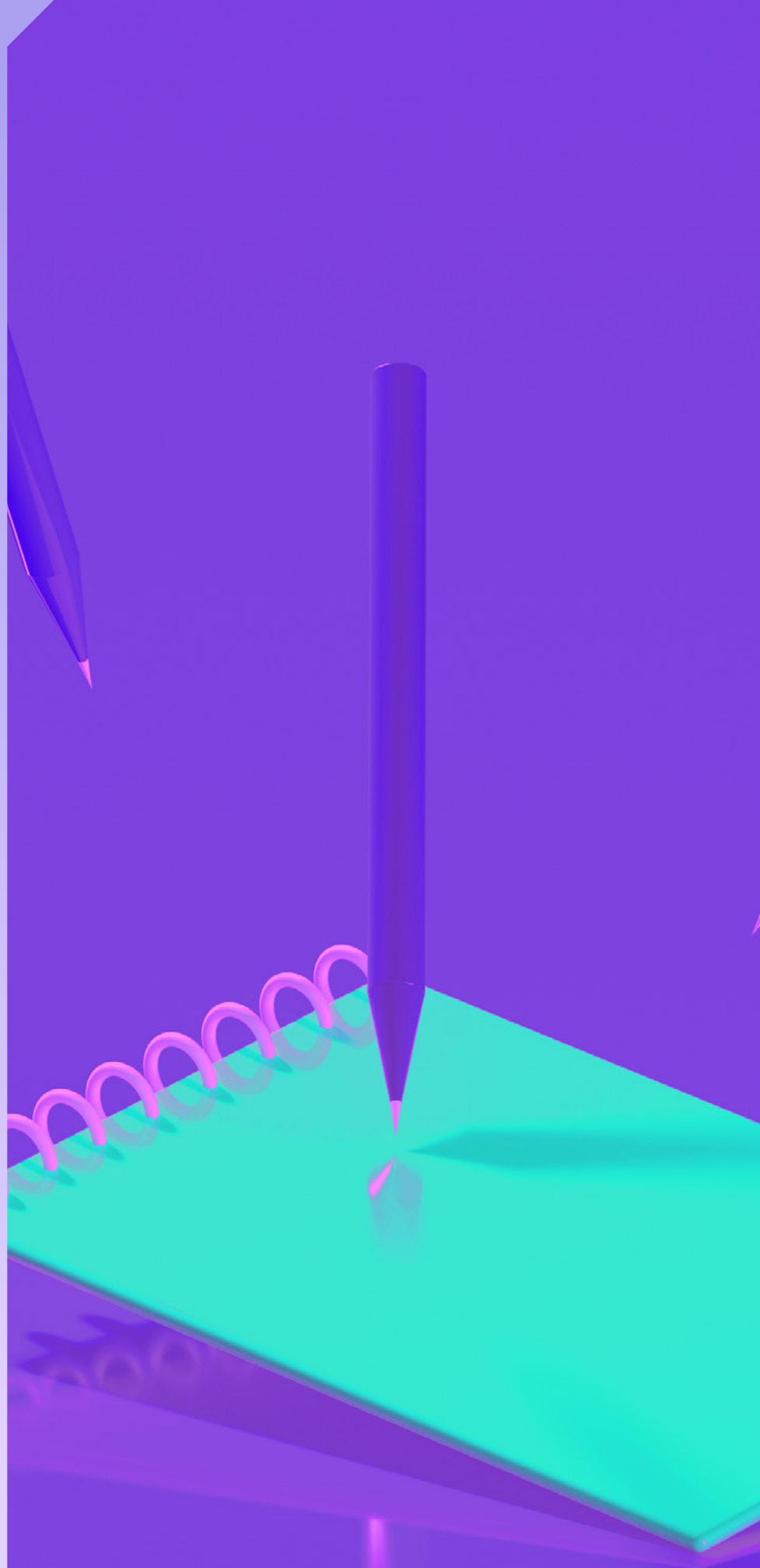
Welcome

WELCOMESOFTWARE.COM

# How to Create Content that Compels

Trends & templates based on data from 350+ marketing leaders

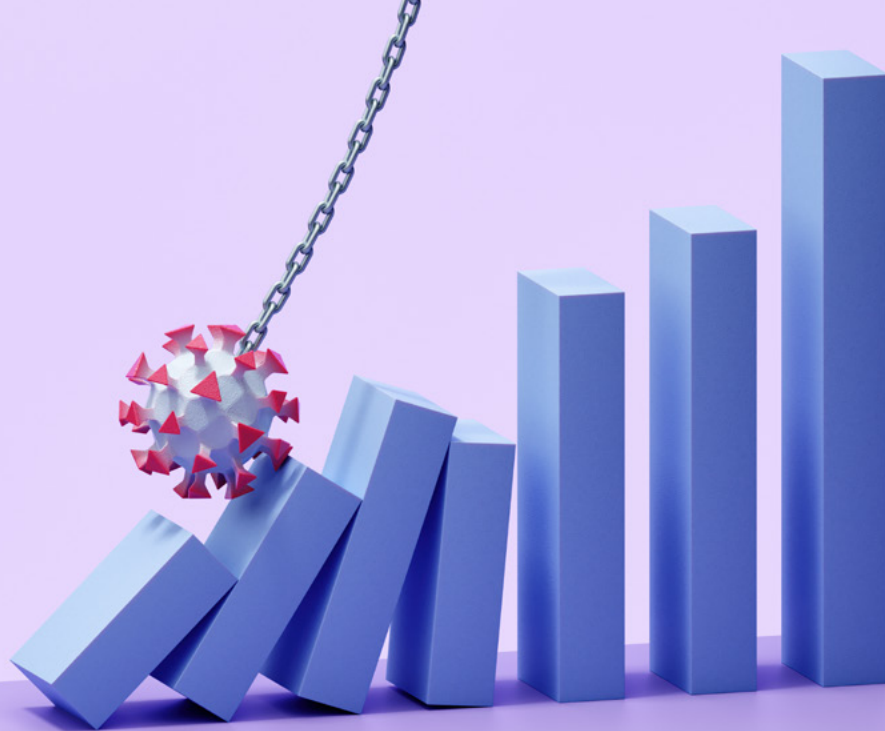
- ▷ Freshly minted trend research, from budgets to channels to team burnout & more
- ▷ A useful (yet fun??) content process template
- ▷ Gartner's read on what you need in a content marketing platform
- ▷ Plus tons more tips & tricks to pinpoint how you can inspire your audiences in 2021



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**Creating  
content that  
compels...  
can you  
even think  
of a time  
when that's  
been more  
difficult?**



Here you are. One year out from the onset of the pandemic.

Let's be real...your main goals haven't really changed, have they?

You're still aiming to create content that compels – that inspires audiences to visit, click, convert, buy. As you always have, as you (probably) always will.

Yet nobody's favorite virus, COVID, has thrown content marketers off in their pursuit of this aim. No, the content marketing 'north star' hasn't shifted, by and large. But COVID has shifted content marketers' ability to reach it.

Actually, that's an understatement. Creating content that compels...can you even think of a time when that's been more difficult? We can't.

So here's an entire guide to help you answer this question:

## **“How can I create content that compels – during this particular moment in time?”**

Hopefully, by the time you've finished...

- ▶ combing through *Welcome's* proprietary trend research,
- ▶ filling out the useful yet fun content process template,
- ▶ and reviewing the final action items

...you'll pinpoint the next steps you & your team can take to inspire your audiences in 2021.

Let's dive in.

## TRENDS

# The Story in the Stats

Before we drill down into the actionable steps you and your team can take, today...

**...let's explore why and how crafting compelling content has never been more challenging.**

In March 2021, *Welcome* teamed up with the brilliant minds at Sirkin Research to survey hundreds of marketers.

Content marketers just like you told us how they're faring right now, compared to how they were doing at the onset of the pandemic. They discussed their greatest obstacles, the way they work, their team dynamics, and so much more.

There are trends in the data and personal accounts we received, and they tell a story.

Not just one story, in fact. Several clear stories emerged around the priorities and difficulties content marketers currently face across all levels of the content creation process: planning, collaboration and execution.

Don't worry. The stories and trends here aren't entirely negative. There are some unexpectedly good bits of news, which you (and your team) can use to your advantage.

So what, exactly, is impacting content marketers' ability to create content that compels?

*Let's explore.*

# At the Planning Level...

(the story of **One Big Change in Plans**)

**65%** of marketers say “**frequently shifting priorities**” is their **#1 challenge**.

Now, on a high level, content directors and above (you? your boss?) say they care most about **understanding what’s trending** (where and how), as well as **sourcing new topics** quickly and easily.

- ▶ Content directors and above also say **tracking content activity** across different channels is an equally important priority.

In other words, it’s all about understanding what’s changing and reacting to that change.

As one survey participant put it, “[**COVID**] **has made a reactive job more reactive.**” And from a content perspective, for better and for worse...boy, have things changed.

- ↗ For better: **64%** say **social, email and content** are performing **better** as a result of COVID.
- ↘ For worse: **74%** say **field marketing and events** have been performing **worse**. Not a surprise, but still – two key marketing channels were all but eliminated.

The changes and pivots are giving marketers whiplash. **65%** of marketers say “**frequently shifting priorities**” is their **#1 challenge**.

## TRENDS

# At the Collaboration & Execution Level...

(the story of *More, More, More*)

**More tools:** We tried to keep business...‘as usual’ as possible. **44%** of marketers say their companies made incremental investments in **collaboration and workflow tools**.

- ▶ Makes sense, seeing as the **#1 bottleneck** for marketers right now is the **content and asset creation process** (requesting work, ideating, creating, editing...AKA working).
- ▶ Additionally, **11%** noted incremental investments in **resource management** tools.

**55%** of marketers say their companies **made incremental investments in collaboration, workflow or resource management** tools.

Are all the new resource management and collaboration tools helping? Maybe, maybe not:

- ↘ **38%** of marketers say **deploying teams and resources** is more of a challenge now than pre-COVID.
- ↘ **45%** say **collaborating in real-time** is also more of a challenge today.

**More meetings:** Not to mention the **65%** who say the sheer **number of meetings** (planning meetings, team check-ins, etc.) is more challenging to work around.

- ▶ What’s with all the meetings? They could be necessary to deal with issues around **governance**. Content marketers told us that governance – ensuring content adheres to brand standards – is the **#1 challenge and second-biggest bottleneck they face**.

**More work:** With the absence of key channels and the boosted performance of content during COVID, organizations placed more demands on content marketers...

**More pressure:** ...which goes hand-in-hand with more pressure. **48%** of marketers say the **pressure to perform** has worsened, which our survey takers frequently cited in their responses.

"Pressure to do more with less is greater than ever."

"We face a reduced staff, pressure to do more and shifts into markets we've had no experience in quickly. Plus, unreasonable expectations."

"Every team has more pressure to perform and deliver revenue. And given that marketing is a natural hub for this activity...it's been much more challenging to meet the demands of my organization."

"We have done more work with less money, but now that's the expectation... and less help is given to Marketing overall."



# At the Human Level...

(the story of **No Off Switch**)

Let's zoom out for a minute: As of March 2021, burnout and stress have decreased. **Only 15%** of Americans feel burnt out today, versus the 26% who felt this way over the past year. And **20% fewer** Americans are feeling stressed in 2021.

Unfortunately, this doesn't ring true for marketers. The increased pressure to perform is one reason why **over 61%** of marketers say their **stress levels and work/life balance are worse now** than in 2020. In their own words...

- ⊗ *"The increase in general anxiety has really pushed a lot of people to the edge of burnout."*
- ⊗ *"We all work more hours and there is a total mix between our personal and professional lives, which is a danger."*
- ⊗ *"Meetings and scope creep across teams and there's a ton of personal burnout, as teams have had a tough time 'turning off.'"*
- ⊗ *"The team feels 'always on' – due to the increase in meetings, decrease in productive time during work hours, and the day starts earlier/ends later."*

And, did you know? We're not "off" even when we're unconscious. 1 in 4 Americans report experiencing strangely vivid, frightening or stressful dreams during March 2021.



*"COVID caused me to think about my future at my company."*

Another factor not helping the situation: Although unemployment is coming down (in the US, it fell from 14.8% in April 2020 to 6.3% in January 2021), **38%** of marketers are feeling a **lower sense of job security**. Our survey participants said it best:

- ⊗ *"There's uncertainty about job security, despite my company's success."*
- ⊗ *"COVID caused me to think about my future at my company."*
- ⊗ *"Uncertainty dominates everything. Any sense of psychological safety we had in the workplace is gone."*

But this story isn't as negative or straightforward as it seems. For some marketers, the burnout, stress, new demands, and pressure are actually **paying off**. After all, pressure creates diamonds, as they say.

- ↗ One example? Productivity soared. **46%** of marketers say their **team's productivity has improved** in this new environment.

- ↗ "Productivity," by the way, got better than everything else. It improved **more than any other factor** (such as pressure, stress, job security) we analyzed.

Furthermore, despite being physically apart, the heightened challenges spurred some teams to **develop closer relationships**.

- ↗ **24%** say their **professional relationships became stronger** overall.
- ↗ For **28%** of marketers, the sense of **trust among team members grew**.

The content marketers we spoke to weighed in:

- ♥ *"We trimmed a lot of the fat and everyone is much more emotionally in tune with the challenges that others face."*
- ♥ *"[Remote working] actually improved communication and collaboration a ton. We are forced to meet more often and to have those meetings be more effective, since we can't meet in person. As a result, there's more trust and more accountability."*
- ♥ *"The continuous recalibration of priorities has forced us to bond together and communicate more than ever."*

# TRENDS

## As for the Future...

(the story of A [Remote] New World)

**We just want a shot** 📌 : In the US alone, as of April 2021, **36%** of adults were vaccinated against COVID.

- ▶ Which is one reason why, in March 2021, **40%** of Americans (up from 26% in January) said they expect to return to a normal-ish, pre-COVID-like life within the next six months.

Despite this anticipated return to normalcy, the marketing world will likely remain largely remote.

**54%** of respondents expect at least **70%** of the marketing workforce to work remotely through 2021.

Still, for marketers, the idea of “returning to the office v. staying remote” is as polarizing as today’s politics.

Marketers **in favor** say...

- ♥ “My team has adapted pretty well and I anticipate it will be a challenge to get us to come back to the office.”
- ♥ “It allowed us to find talent, regardless of geographic location.”
- ♥ “Working from home is fantastic and I hope it continues FOREVER!!!”

...and some **object**.

- ⊗ “Focus seems to be an issue, now that the novelty of so many Zoom meetings has worn off.”
- ⊗ “Worried about the long-term impact of working in this environment.”
- ⊗ “Working remotely has curtailed our highly engaged, collaborative environment, despite technology. Content takes longer, more rounds of revision – frustrating. We will be heading back to the office in Q4.”

Marketers’ varying views of remote work line up with those of the general workforce: **25%** of US employees said they would like to work in the office five days a week, while 20% said they never want to step foot in an office again.

"Working from home  
is fantastic and  
I hope it continues  
**FOREVER!!!**"

Worried about the  
long-term impact  
of working in this  
environment."

Do you think your content marketing team will be able to relate to these sentiments? We think they will.

So, now that you have a full picture of the state of marketing, laid out in your mind... consider what's making it more difficult for your writers and designers to create compelling content, at this present moment.

What changes might you implement? More importantly, how can you spot sources of struggle and areas for improvement in your content creation process?

Luckily, we've created a comprehensive (yet fun!) exercise to help you and your team do just that. Keep reading to get started...

## TACTICS

# Harmonize Your Content... with **The** **Marketing** **Orchestration** **Template**



# What's the key to creating content that compels?

It all starts with managing your process strategically – ensuring all the moving parts (and team members!) within your marketing process are working together, in harmony, to execute the larger marketing strategy. Like a conductor does with their orchestra. Which is why we call this **marketing orchestration**.

This quick template will help you take the first step towards becoming a lean, mean, well-orchestrated content machine – **identifying uncertainties and inefficiencies in your process that aren't in tune with your strategy**.

After all, you can't solve problems if you can't quite locate where they lie...

Which is why you should fill out **The Marketing Orchestration Template** to get a full view of how your team works.

You'll be able to visualize all the steps your team takes to push content out the door, pinpoint exactly where the roadblocks are in your content workflow, and which parts of your process to refine first.

Time to make some (marketing) music.

## How to Get Started:


1. Below are the 5 general stages of the content creation process – Ideation, Planning, Creation, Publishing, Analyzing Results. Every box with a musical note 🎵 represents a step in the stage. In the 'notes' within each stage, write down each step that your team needs to take to complete it, from the beginning of the stage to the end. *Note: We know that some steps may not happen sequentially – they may need to happen at the same time. Which is why we've included 3 'notes' along each point in the timeline.*
2. After identifying each step, write down any roadblocks that make that step difficult for your team to complete. Roadblocks might include...
  - a. A lack of clarity among your team about how this step fulfills wider goals
  - b. Uncertainty around how this step should be completed...or who should be completing it
  - c. Any tools or requirements making this step extra difficult (or inefficient) to complete
3. After you fill out this template, have your team do the same. Get on a quick video call to see if you and your colleagues identified the same roadblocks, for the same steps. Doing so will help you indicate which issues you should knock out, first.

Good luck!


# THE MARKETING ORCHESTRATION TEMPLATE


## Start of Phase





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End of Phase



End of Phase



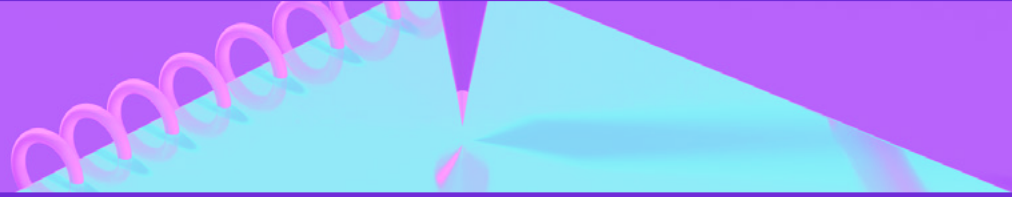
End of Phase



End of Phase



End of Phase



# The Final Checklist

**Well, here you are, at the end of this issue.**

You've absorbed how your content marketing colleagues are faring via the [Trends](#), you've pinpointed your content creation roadblocks via [The Marketing Orchestration Template](#)...

Now, it's time to take action.

Here are actionable steps you and your team can take to better collaborate, coordinate, and – of course – [create content that compels](#).

But don't just take it from us. Take it from Gartner, which – for the 4th year in a row – named *Welcome* a \*Leader\* among CMPs, placing us at the top of its Magic Quadrant.

In 2021, this accolade feels extra special. For the past three years, our team was

recognized by Gartner under our former brand, NewsCred. Ranking high on the Magic Quadrant – this time, as a marketing orchestration platform – is a powerful signal that the future of marketing is in orchestration.

Below are key ways you can create extra-compelling content by waving your (orchestration) conductor wand...

...alongside Gartner's key points from the Magic Quadrant report ([get the full analyst report for free, here](#)) showing what you should value in a CMP.

Go through each of the points with your team, discuss, and [click to check them off](#) ✓ when you're done.

*Happy orchestrating!*

# The Checklist

## Plan, create and edit in one place – and one place only.

Google docs, Slack threads, publishing tools, back-and-forth email chains. Everything that needs to happen to produce content often happens in too many places at once.

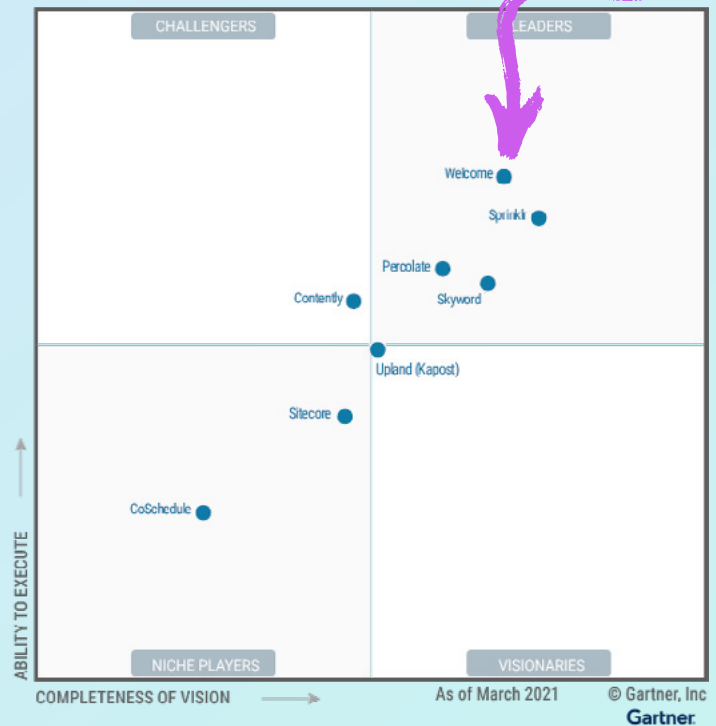
This in turn leads to stress, messaging that misses the mark, confusion among team members...and therefore, confusion among your target audience.

In 2021, these issues will persist in orgs that stay remote and have a decentralized content process.

So save your team time (and sanity) by orchestrating all your content creation, planning and editing within a single platform: a central place where creators can see the grand marketing strategy they're a part of, as they're creating. A place where revisions on any kind of content are easy to see, yet difficult to miss.

A place like *Welcome*.

As Gartner noted, **"Welcome's vision as a marketing orchestration software, combining the capabilities of a CMP, MWM and DAM, offers promise."**



Gartner, Magic Quadrant for Content Marketing Platforms, Nicole Greene, Rick LaFond, 22 March 2021

And, of course, these core capabilities are housed in one centralized, organized platform.

Plus, *Welcome* can take on additional functionality through a whole suite of integrations...and we're always adding more.

What does all of the above mean for you? It means no more back-and-forth between software tools (the average marketer, by the way, uses a minimum of 5 tools to launch a single campaign\*). It means no precious content will get lost or altered in the transfer from one platform to the next. It means you'll save time.

And, you won't need 10 browser-clogging tabs open with 10 different tools at all times. Your laptop will thank you. And stop making that wheezing noise.

# THE CHECKLIST

## Ideate with data.

One way to keep your content compelling, even as your audiences' interests shift? Take your brainstorming to a scientific level by using **SEO** (not just your creativity!) to source content ideas.

So for your next ideation session, assign homework: Have everyone on your team identify a **keyword** your competitors rank higher than your organization for, that would help you provide value for your desired audience. Then, at the meeting, have each person present content ideas inspired by that keyword.

Discuss as a team, brainstorm, repeat.

*“Welcome aggregates public domain **SEO, social trend and competitiveness data** to help clients generate content ideas that resonate with their target audience.”*

— Gartner

Whip out the white coats. *Welcome's* built-in **Idea Lab** helps your team fuse their creativity with data, right as you begin brainstorming content ideas, as it includes...

- ★ **Personalized recommendations** on which keywords present the greatest opportunity
- ★ The **keyword rank analysis**, to let you see which keywords you might be missing out on...and which ones your competitors are outperforming you on
- ★ The **topic research tool**, to help your team identify new topics and gaps in your competitors' content strategy

## Draw inspiration from the best of your past.

Yes, you're focused on the future. However, you can still draw inspiration from the best of your past.

If the well of ideas is looking a little dry, revisit your team's previous body of work. Pick out the highest-performing, highest quality content and campaigns you've executed. What made them a success? Could you further explore the themes they touched on?

Or, give some (if not all) of your content new life – and save money – through one of the **3 Re's: Reusing, Repurposing, or Repackaging**. Get creative!

Gartner considers content storage – **digital asset management (DAM)** – to be a critical capability for every CMP. *Welcome*, of course, gives a DAM – and then some. The built-in **Library** module goes beyond your standard storage system through

- ★ **Advanced Filters & Tagging:** Use custom tags to organize your content by factors that matter to you. And use advanced filters to find it when you need it, easily.
- ★ **Content Utilization Tracking:** See the history of who’s repurposing which content and when.
- ★ **A Place for Every File:** The Library supports every kind of file. Enough said.

### **Embrace calendaring to tell cohesive stories.**

Don’t just focus on each individual piece of content. Your content will be more compelling overall if it, collectively, tells a larger story.

Connect the thematic dots between each piece of content, for your team and your audience, by getting your content schedule on one, shared calendar.

Then, on that calendar, categorize your content according to each broader story you want to tell – which should directly correspond to an overall marketing goal you want to hit.

For example: Let’s say you sell frozen meals, one of which is mac and cheese. If you create a bunch of content featuring customers’ comforting mac and cheese memories...that would constitute one story. And it would probably make you hungry.

The benefits? You’ll get an overarching view of how your audience experiences your content over time. You’ll determine which stories you’re overtelling, which ones you’re underselling, and whether or not your cadence is resonating with (or confusing) your prospects.

Another critical capability for CMPs, according to Gartner? Ding ding ding, you guessed it: content calendaring and editorial planning. *Welcome*’s integrated marketing calendar keeps your content cohesive through...

- ★ **Shared, Global Strategy Views.** *Welcome* is structured from your main goals, down – so you can see how every activity, from a quick social post to a large integrated campaign, ladders up to your grand strategy. No more, “Why are we doing this again?”
- ★ **Separate Planning & Publishing Views.** Make it easy to see content planning (drafts, approvals, etc.) and when content will be published...and distinguish between the two schedules.
- ★ **Saved Views & Advanced Filtering.** See what’s important to you. Create and save filtered views, whittled down across target audiences, geography, channels, or your own metadata.

# THE CHECKLIST

## Create a template for every process.

You need ample brainspace and time to unearth surprising, exciting, compelling insights for your content.

So don't waste your brainspace or time on writing out every step, every time you're planning a blog post, webinar, video – any activity your team does regularly.

Instead, create a playbook template for each piece of content: Outline the steps and best practices once. Then, next time you plan, just copy-and-paste the workflow! This is particularly helpful for organizations with lengthy, highly detailed review and approval processes.

Your team will always know exactly what they need to do, they'll never miss a single step, it'll be easy for you to (re) do what works...and you'll have one less admin-task headache.

Surprise! You can do all that with *Welcome* too —

- ★ **Automated workflows.** Set up workflows quickly by simply hitting 'copy' on a winning content workflow. *Welcome* will automatically progress your project and notify team members responsible for next steps.
- ★ **Distribute content, right from your workflow.** Once you're ready to publish, no need to switch to a different tool. *Welcome* can push your content to your CMS, CRM, social channels, website and more.
- ★ **Brand compliance & approvals.** Build your governance standards right into *Welcome's* automated workflows, so you can easily pinpoint any detail that's off-brand – before you publish.

“B2B and B2C marketers...looking for technology to support the requirements of a **complex, increasingly mature content marketing program** should consider *Welcome*.”

— Gartner



## Measure what matters — and prove content matters.

One of the top challenges marketers face? Attribution.

This is especially true for content marketers, who cite the “inability to attribute content activity to revenue” as a reason they’re constantly having to prove the value of content marketing to leadership – and that their role is essential.

First, create a shortlist of metrics that truly matter for your content team – not just marketing performance analytics, but operational metrics (i.e. efficiency, team workload) as well. Schedule recurring meetings to analyze them alongside your organization’s larger KPIs. Make sure you can easily keep tabs on those numbers and share them with stakeholders.

*“Welcome’s robust reporting capabilities enable clients to measure operational performance, content engagement, and lead and revenue attribution.”*

— Gartner

With *Welcome’s* analytics tools, it’s easy to see...

- ★ **Content performance.** See which topics, formats and channels are resonating with your audience...and share that info with your colleagues.
- ★ **Content ROI.** Attribute campaigns and content directly to revenue – via pipeline and ROI analytics, stats on opportunities and deals influenced, as well as lead generation tracking.
- ★ **Your team’s performance.** Keep tasks on track and boost efficiency with *Welcome’s* operational analytics. You’ll be able to keep an eye on productivity, any task delays, and content planned vs. actually produced.



A blue pen is shown writing on a blue spiral notebook. The pen is positioned vertically, with its tip touching the page. The notebook is open, and the pen is in the process of writing. The background is a solid blue color.

Do you think *Welcome's* features would spark **'gates-of-heaven-opening'** moments for your team?

If so, you and your crew can **try *Welcome* for free** with our **Free Forever plan**.

[Try for free](#)

*Welcome*

# About the Author



**Lisa Feierstein**

Senior Manager, Content Marketing, *Welcome*

Lisa Feierstein is a generally enthusiastic and endlessly curious writer, speaker and content expert. She helps marketers understand and (more importantly) harness trends. In her current role, Lisa drives *Welcome's* own marketing efforts to evangelize and champion software built for marketers.

## *Welcome*

*Welcome* transforms how marketers run marketing. It is the leading marketing orchestration platform used by the world's most ambitious brands to strategically align teams, take the friction out of execution, and demonstrate meaningful results.

Only *Welcome* offers a platform purpose-built for the complexities of modern marketing that can scale to support the largest teams in the world. It is a new layer of the marketing technology stack where marketers can work better together, connect other martech tools, and measure performance.

For more information, visit [welcomesoftware.com](https://welcomesoftware.com) or contact [sales@welcomesoftware.com](mailto:sales@welcomesoftware.com)

# Welcome

One platform to run  
all your marketing, better.