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How to get the most out of your SMEs

A practical toolkit



How to get the most out of your SMEs – a practical toolkit

Thought leadership from your team's subject matter experts (SMEs) builds brand integrity and trust. The insights that they provide are an essential foundation of a strong marketing campaign, informing content strategy.

They know the ins and outs of your offer and target customers' pain points and challenges better than anyone. Without their input at the beginning of a content creation process, it takes more time and resources to produce content and what you end up with may miss the mark.

Quality content with SME input can also serve to boost the profile of the SMEs themselves, especially if they're active on LinkedIn.

In this guide, we outline the five steps to successful SME engagement, highlight the value of their contributions and explain how to fully leverage their content creations.



Five steps to SME success

1) Identify your topic

It's important to identify the topic areas that will underpin your content strategy. Bring in the right people from your team to discuss customer insights and topics that will likely resonate. Keep in mind your company's business objectives and what you want to be known for in the market place to ensure it aligns. Whether it's for thought leadership articles, blogs, whitepapers or website landing pages, a clear idea of your subject areas will ensure that you direct your efforts to the right people.

2) Review existing content

Review any relevant content that your organisation and the SME has produced already to see if it is still valid. There may be an existing whitepaper, article or blog post that encapsulates the main points of your topic. Could it be repurposed or adapted? If you have some content in the bank then factor this into your approach to ensure that it's not wasted and you're not starting from scratch.

3) Set up an interview

Arrange an interview with your SME to discuss your topic. If you already have a range of content to work with then a 30 minute call will suffice. We find that preparing a suggested content structure (including headings and proposed focus/key messages) in advance, along with some questions, helps to guide the interview.

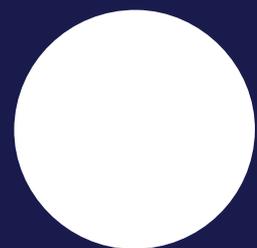
4) Craft your questions

Once the call or meeting to speak to your SME is in the diary, ensure that you craft your questions carefully to extract the right information. Send them at least a day before the interview and aim for no more than ten questions. These should cover all aspects of the topic that you need to know to create some great content: trends, future gazing, challenges, customer pain points, their experience in this field and the company's unique offer.

5) Record your call

Record your discussion with your SME to keep a full record of the conversations that you can refer back to when you are writing your content. As well as an audio recording, there is also software available, such as Otter, which will transcribe an audio recording to give a clear write up.

Voila! – it's done, your SME has contributed their expertise to what will be a highly credible piece of content, and it's taken less than an hour of their time.



Value of SME contributions

It's worth highlighting how SME contributions can add value to campaigns. Wider business stakeholders and sometimes the SMEs themselves may be unaware of how their contributions will be leveraged and it's important to make this clear to them.

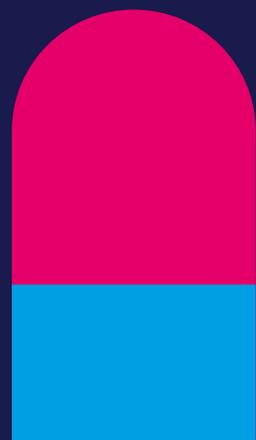
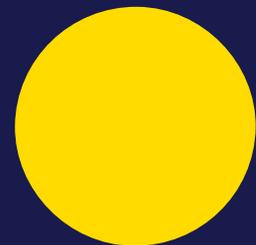
Creates awareness – whether the content is shared on LinkedIn or is published in a trade publication, it can spark an interest in the audience and get them to sit up and take notice.

Builds credibility – Richard Branson said: “A good PR story is infinitely more effective than a front page ad.” Credibility is hard-earned and comes from knowing your service so well that journalists and customers will come to you for guidance and insight.

Showcases thought leadership – SMEs can show themselves as experts and forward thinkers. Each piece of content tells the story to all those interested in listening about their purpose and passion in an authentic voice.

Establishes relationships and open doors – people may remember reading an SME's piece when they meet them at events and conferences.

Earns kudos within the organisation – SMEs can build their reputation within their organisation, not just outside.



Tips for leveraging the content

Your SME's time is precious so be sure to make the most of any content by repurposing across all relevant marketing channels. For example, when an article is published in a credible trade publication, this is only the start. How the company then leverages this content to demonstrate expertise, raise profile and connect with your network is key.

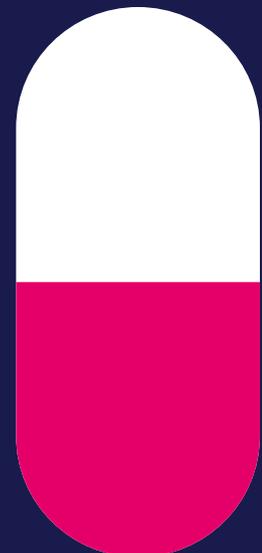
Share, share and share again...

Share the content on your LinkedIn profile to demonstrate your expertise to your network.

Share via email with any key customers or prospects you wish to connect with. Make sure you take a targeted approach. For example, if the article focuses on a common customer pain point or challenge, share with those contacts that you know it will resonate with.

Share face-to-face. Are you attending an important sales meeting? Take along a copy of your article and leave some reading behind for key decision makers to digest.

Share with your colleagues. Encourage colleagues to share your content with their contacts and LinkedIn network. By extending its reach you are helping to raise the profile of your company among a wider audience.



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Engaging your SMEs and making them an integral part of the content process will bring many benefits to your business. To find out more visit www.ramarketingpr.com

