7 Things to Master in Switching from Journalism to Content Marketing

While journalism is collapsing, content marketing is thriving.

If you already have strong writing and other journalistic skills, like writing accurately and objectively with the inverted pyramid structure, reporting, verifying, and interviewing, you definitely can master content marketing. There are striking similarities between journalism and content marketing in terms of storytelling, writing good copy, and conducting interviews.

There are, however, seven other things that you'll need to master for a smooth transition from journalism to content marketing.

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1. Use your client's perspective

When you write for a client, you'll need to understand their objective for the article, unlike in journalism where you write your own angle. As a content marketing writer, you write for both the readers and the client who assigned you the job.

If the article is part of a marketing campaign, find out the details so you know how it fits in the big picture. Remember that you're writing on behalf of the client, and the ultimate goal of the article is to attract organic traffic that can be translated into sales leads and converted into revenue.

2. Beware of potential conflict of interest

Before completing any project for a client, clarify beforehand whether there is a potential conflict of interest with your other clients. Ask your new client if there is anything you'd need to be aware of, such as past non-compete agreements with any entity.

3. Be a multi-discipline subject matter expert

Master several subjects really well – take courses if you have to. With many free and affordable online training providers like Coursera or StackSkills, there is no excuse for not learning new subjects.

By "subjects," I'm not referring to topics. Project management, habit-forming, and viral marketing are all good examples of subjects, and each subject can be discussed in a variety of topics. For instance, you can write about "how to manage projects remotely," which is a specific topic within the project management realm.

4. Master SEO

SEO is short for search engine optimization and it's about more than just sprinkling certain keywords over and over within the body of an article. You'll need to understand how the search engine truly works, particularly Google.

Familiarize yourself with how to write search engine-friendly headlines, meta descriptions, hyperlinks, and frequency of primary and secondary keywords. SEO writing takes time to get used to, but with your journalism background, you'll soon get up to speed.

5. Master virality principles

Even if your article is SEO-friendly, can it go viral? Understand what Stanford Marketing Professor Jonah Berger means by "evoking arousal" and the VAD (Valence-Arousal-Dominance) model. Apply those principles to your articles, so all those SEO keywords wouldn't go to waste when they go viral. When SEO principles are combined with virality principles, the result can be amazing.

6. Be familiar with various content marketing assets

While the most popular journalism assets are articles (both long and short forms) and book-length investigative reports, content marketing assets have more variety, like white papers, ebooks, case studies, business blogs, guest posts at third-party publications, landing pages, and social media posts.

You'll need to get familiar with the length (character and word counts), size of images, placement of texts, and other specific characteristics. Your job is ensuring that the content appears natural in those mediums.

7. Use grammar and plagiarism check apps

Before submitting your work to your client or having it published in third-party publications as a guest writer, make sure to use grammar and plagiarism check apps, like ProWritingAid.

Even though you didn't plagiarize anybody's work, it's always better to be cautious of potential similarities. And you'll want to make sure that all your work is grammatically flawless.

Final thoughts

Taking the leap from journalism to content marketing is an exciting one. You can still use your hard-earned objective thinking, writing, and analyzing skills while practicing new ones.

You'll learn many new interesting concepts in both theories and action. Follow these seven tips and you'll be well on your way to success.

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