Content Strategy

Setting the stage

This deals with that part of a content strategy which relates to **technical communication, technical documentation** and **translation**. It may seem a somewhat narrow field and scope for a strategy, but as this area has profound importance in many companies the need for a content strategy is quite obvious.

It does not make any sense to define what a strategy is, unless you have some idea what it is going to "protect" and achieve.

This will not give you a solution or a working platform for your content strategy. It is meant as an important reminder that you should never throw yourself into this, unless you are aware of the implications. It defines and discusses why you should take a step back and seriously not dive deep into e.g. a new fantastic tool, which you are told can "save the world". Neither should you give up on your existing solution. It might work, if looked at in a new perspective.

Having a content strategy is also important to ensure future events. It is a deadly sin, and business wise foolish, to change your software solution just because you do not like the one you have.

It is - unfortunately - a proven fact and empirically established that taking shortcuts on decisions outside of a strategy, and the principles that are established with it, is a far more elaborate, costly and resource heavy, than thinking twice, when needed, and doing things correctly.

Furthermore these days, the area of technical communication is burdened with MDR (Medical Device Regulations). And other regulations, as it is not only the medical business which is affected by these regulations. They are not easy to deal with. They are not easy to implement, and they are certainly not easy to maintain, trace and update easily. That is if you do not have strategy and in that a description of the solution for this.

An important aspect of introducing and having a content strategy shall be found in a situation which unfortunately, and admittedly, is too common. In too many companies it seems that there is little or no focus on the real importance of the area of technical communication. In this short introduction to a content strategy the statement is that having one, knowing what it brings and contains literally can save any company thousands.

You will discover that having a content strategy will improve your consistency in your content, the cost savings are quite substantial, in particular if your translate your content, and you will find quicker response times. Other areas which are positively affected are education of your audience, connection between you and your client improves, often by keeping the clients' attention. Internally in the company the mere exsistence and acceptance of a content strategy will create a positive mindset and ownership broadly among more employee segments. Finally combining a content strategy within this field of technical communication, with the strategy you may have for marketing will be the icing on the cake.

Visualisation

Try to envision a **jigsaw puzzle**. You are free to envision any size or any motive. Then try to think about the most common way for you to assemble this. Unless you are exceptionally proficient in jigsaw puzzlings and a savant, our best guess is that you start with assembling the frame. Putting all the pieces with straight sides together first.

Because it makes sense. It defines the size of the surface you can work on. It indicates where it makes sense to start to assemble pieces on the inside. There might even be parts of the entire puzzle where you can start to assemble areas into meaningful sub-pictures. If you are three people - if the puzzle is big, you will most likely volunteer to look for all the "flower" pieces.

The frame of the puzzle is equivalent to a content strategy. The one which defines the scope, size, possibilities, dos and don'ts, who does what.

Now try to envision the opposite.The savant approach. Pick up one random piece and work from there. First of all it's hard - maybe even impossible. It takes a long time and, apart from looking at the box the pieces came in, you have no guideline for assembly. You do not have an end goal.

If you substitute each of these pieces in the puzzle with a certain method, workflow, task, role in your company, or something else then suddenly the importance of having a content strategy is more clear. A frame which makes you stick to what you decided on.

Unlike the very fixed sized pieces in the puzzle, the real world has very dynamic and elastic pieces. People are people. They act and re-act as people. They make decisions which can be controlled or uncontrolled. Conscious or unconscious. Any installed system's solution has a tendency to change. When someone asks for a new translation job (as always after deadline), the impact of this could be devastating, or at least the most expensive translation you ever made. Your agreed tone of voice on content can be very vulnerable if "anyone" is allowed to contribute. And expensive too.

Some really "uneven" pieces, could be when you choose three different translation agencies. One for quality and one which is cheap and one which delivers fast. Or you buy some software because you have heard it is good without any relation to the rest of the processes, workflows, roles or anything else in the company.

Some pieces are often small and very static in their form and shape, others are larger and naturally ever expanding. Within your content strategy you must take this into conseration. Otherwise your jigsaw puzzle will keep being jagged at the edges.

If you do not have absolute control over all the different entities which define your entire setup, any change, anywhere, might make the pieces change size or shape.

The result is they do not fit together any more. You need a content strategy to ensure this.

The pieces

Here are examples of pieces which always have to be considered. How they interact is different from company to company, from department to department. People might have different perceptions of how the different pieces are defined. There might be more, or some may not be relevant for your company. Here is a commonly used list of pieces which should be part of a good content strategy.

- Employees
- Tools
- Vendors
- Management
- Design
- Legacy material
- Technologies
- Imagery
- Testing and reviewing
- Design and work for the future
- Resources
- Workflows
- Roles and responsibilities
- Structure
- Translation setup at the source
- Substance
- Governance
- Writing skills
- Multichannel publishing
- Interaction with other departments
- Automation and reduction of human errors
- Integration with other company systems
- Regulatory matters (MDR)
- Source control, version control
- Scalability
- SEO
- Finances and budgets
- Localization maturity
- Language strategy
- Quality assurance
- Terminology management.

When do you need a content strategy?

Important before starting up with a silver lined content strategy, is to define if you really need one. There might of course be situations where it does not make sense.

Here is a list with a number of situations where it is advantageous to introduce and implement a content strategy. Of course this is only apparent after a number of years.

- If you have worked years without having one
- If you contemplate to change from one tool or system to another
- If you decide to only have one system in place and in particular if you have several systems with the same purpose
- In company mergers
- When you migrate from marketing produced material to a different environment.

What can you expect from TBRO

We have spent the past many years helping companies making the right decisions. On tools, systems, translations, design, people skills and of course content strategy.

We have a broad knowledge of different segments in the industry at large. Aerospace, trains, medical, software, machine manufacturing, travel agencies, banking, audiology, public offices and governments, defense, furniture, catalogues, structured publishing, and retail. We also have extensive knowledge of incorporating MDR regulations into the strategy.

We can get you on the way. The right way and the best way. We will, if you would like to work with us, establish a working relationship and engage into creating a content strategy for you.

This might seem like quite a big thing. It is. From our experience however, and in the long (and short-termed) run, it is far smaller than trying to fix and fit the uneven pieces you allowed yourself to have - because there was no frame to keep them together.

The examples described in brief are real world examples. Even more so none of them are solitary events. We have seen it many times and sadly witnessed devastating results. And also seen the opposite in terms of positive results from having a content strategy.

You do need to think ahead. Let us help with that. At the end of the day all we want is to give you a content strategy, with all its pieces, so you can get better and cheaper results.

Regards

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