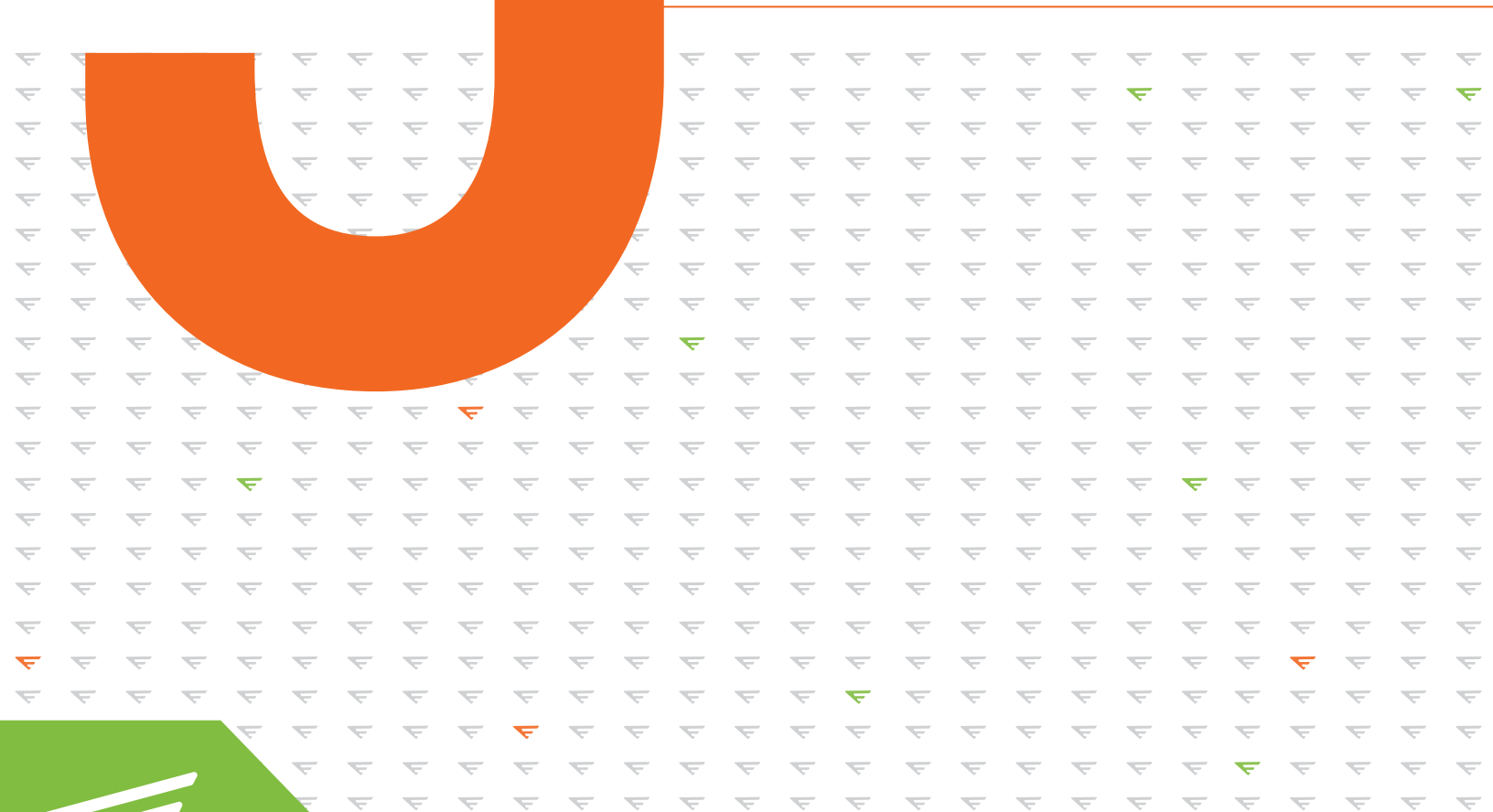# 5

Foundations of a Great eBook

5 Foundations of a Great eBook

It wasn't too long ago that eBooks were mostly the domain of companies with good sized marketing teams and big marketing budgets. Writing, designing, and promoting them required a lot of time and resources that small businesses and individuals like freelancers simply didn't have.

Times have certainly changed and, today, the eBook is a core element of modern content marketing. These assets are intended to provide target audiences — individuals with specific job titles or functions — detailed insight on a particular area of interest or challenge, enhancing the producer's reputation as an innovative thought leader, and hopefully generating new leads for the marketing team to nurture and eventually turn over to sales.

Problem is, now that word processing and design tools have made eBooks more accessible and easier to create, everyone is creating them and flooding the interwebs with a bunch of sameness.

But you can stand out from the crowd. Here are the 5 foundations of a great eBook* that will help you cut through the digital clutter and emerge from the sea of boring sameness with something interesting, important, and relevant to say.

Today, the eBook is a core element of modern content marketing.

* The first foundation is obviously a great title, but a great title usually won't come until after you've created a great first draft. So this guide will focus on how to build the body of your eBook in a way that a great title will emerge almost on its own.

FOUNDATION 1

Write with the design in mind

Unlike other top-of-funnel (TOFU) content intended to generate new traffic and marketing leads, eBooks are highly visual assets. Unlike white papers that feature a lot of text or blogs that include only a few random images and differently sized section headers, eBooks are chock full of visual aides.

A good marketing eBook should be both readable and scannable. That means that in addition to telling a great story or making a good argument with your words, you also have to be able to do it with images, callouts, and other visual elements.

Create section subheaders that hint at what's to come in the following paragraphs. Suggest charts, graphs, or quote callouts for the designer to include in each section so that simply by reading the header and those visual cues, your reader can get the gist of your argument simply by scanning the document from top to bottom.

Make it conversational

eBooks stand out from other long-form marketing content because they should feel as though you're having a great conversation directly with your reader about something you both care about.

That means that unlike white papers and customer success stories that are usually written in the third person (them, it, they), eBooks can and probably should be written in second person (you, your) — at least some of the time. You might opt to start an eBook in the third person, describing a general challenge or issue everyone in your reader's position faces. But at some point, you'll want to make it more personal and direct because you're about to tell them how to solve a problem that anyone not reading your eBook may not know about.

That brings us to….

Make it actionable

Effective eBooks don't just highlight a problem or a particular issue, they give the reader actionable steps for solving it. Make sure that your eBook actually teaches the audience something.

That could mean simply giving them a handful things to consider when trying to address their challenge, explaining a few strategies they could employ, or detailing specific types of tools, techniques, or technologies they should use to overcome their business obstacles. Whatever you choose, make it easy to follow and easier to see why doing it your way will lead your reader to success.

4

Avoid self-promotion

It may be an overused buzzterm, but the best-converting "thought leadership" (the ones that get the most downloads and turn into the most leads) focus less on promoting a particular brand, service, or product and more on building credibility through helpful, non-promotional information.

Nearly 45% of today's B2B buyers prioritize the trustworthiness of the content they consume during their purchase decision making process[1]. Seth Godin kicked off this idea of giving away valuable advice for free in order to get people talking about his business way back in 2000. It's why today, more than 40%[2] of B2B buyers say eBooks are the most valuable format and source of content when making their purchase decisions.

Hold off on promoting your brand, product, or service till the very last section. Or skip it altogether and just include an About section at the very end of the eBook.

MORE THAN

40%

of B2B buyers say eBooks are the most valuable format and source of content when making their purchase decisions.

5

Go heavy on stats

Just like you'd include well-sourced and fully cited stats and information from respected third-party sources in a white paper, you should do the same in an eBook...and then some.

Not only does adding statistics, quotes, or supporting evidence from other sources help to build credibility for your eBook, but it also makes it much easier to support Foundation #1 of making it more easily scannable. eBooks are intended to be very heavy on the visuals and very light on the copy. That is, most eBook pages will have fewer than 200 words of prose copy (paragraphs), with the remainder of the page dedicated to charts, images, and statistical callouts.

The more external statistics you can cite, the more opportunities you'll have for creating compelling, eye-catching, and informative callouts, charts, and graphs that will help your readers better understand exactly what you're teaching them at a glance — while giving your information a much-needed boost of oomph and credibility.

[1] Tirico, Klaudia. "Content Preferences Survey Report 2021." DemandGenReport.com. March, 2021.

[2] ibid.

Give away your insights in an easy-to-consume eBook format

eBooks have exploded in popularity among both content marketers and their intended B2B buying audiences in recent years. But with eBook creation so much easier and more accessible than ever, it's imperative that marketers do what they can to create marketing content that stands out from the crowd.

Follow these five foundations in your eBook creation to produce the most visually engaging, easiest to consume, and most compelling story possible.

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SCOTT STRANSKY

Full Funnel Content is a boutique content and copywriting service exclusively serving the B2B tech community. Its founder and content lead, Scott Stransky, is a seasoned content professional with more than a decade of serving some of the world's most recognizable tech brands and innovative, high-growth companies. With an expansive portfolio of thousands of completed assets, along with years of direct hands-on experience managing client-side marketing programs, few other content teams can match FFC's blend of practical corporate marketing experience and content writing expertise to help fill in the gaps for your over-tasked and under-resourced tech marketing team.

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