

Content Operations for Editorial Teams





Content operations for editorial teams

5 ways content operations can free content marketers to focus on writing

Content marketing has become the catch-all term used to describe how businesses approach their content and its distribution. It covers aspects of marketing from sponsored Instagram posts to new web projects. But schedule a content marketing meeting with your team and you'll most likely be met with: "what exactly are we doing here today?".

Content marketing used to be an excellent description of what content teams did. Teams would produce resources for potential customers (ranging from blog posts to email marketing campaigns) and distribute them to the best of their ability. Updating the website was a sporadic activity, despite being a primary part of marketing strategy. It was a process usually done slowly at the hands of outsourced developers. Content was advertising or documentation. It stopped cold when people became customers.

As people realized the opportunities opening up on alternative digital platforms, content marketing exploded. It was a roaring success that changed businesses, team structures, and let's face it, everything else, to become different. Like anything that experiences rapid growth, content marketing jumped in complexity. Companies allocated more resources and staff time to stay ahead of the game. Teams with specialized roles and responsibilities sprouted up, and content marketing splintered into something else. While 10

years ago, you might have found editorial teams only in ad agencies and newspapers, they're now a valuable asset found in every major enterprise.

Unfortunately, this huge jump in content complexity wasn't met with the tech, workflows, systems or processes to match. Anyone who has worked in an editorial team and battled against a legacy CMS will know this to be true. It includes painful workarounds such as copying and pasting content across different CMSes, difficult communication between developer and editorial teams, and systems where content gets lost or underutilized.



The new way to approach content

Content marketing doesn't work as a complete description of what editorial teams do anymore. There's a whole new aspect that needs to be implemented and refined if teams are going to succeed in digital transformation and content requirements that come with it.

Here's where the emerging field of content operations comes in.

Content operations is the term to describe the set of processes, people and technologies for strategically planning, distributing and analyzing content. It's the foundation and context of content marketing. It's the how, not the what. It's the actions that editorial teams perform when they consult their content strategy, come up with the ideas, create the content, and distribute it throughout their channels.

Content operations are one of the best ways of maximizing not only the value of your content, but the members of your team too. It's all about coming up with a repeatable process for creating content; it's optimized and streamlined to factory-like levels of processing.

It's a much better, and more specific, way of talking and approaching, your day-to-day processes of content marketing.

And content operations isn't just a term or abstract concept. Nor is it the same as content strategy. More and more businesses are hiring people into their editorial and content teams to be in charge of their content operations. Their role is to streamline content processes, keep content organized and troubleshoot problems that arise. Whereas content editing and creation are about working on specifics, managing content operations is having an end-to-end view of the bigger picture.

Specificity is the name of the game here. When you don't define the moving parts from strategy to distribution, it's impossible to keep up. When you don't break down the complexity of your content plan, you can't tackle your challenges, improve your workflows, iterate on your content and improve your overall operation.

It also matters because content doesn't just belong to marketing. We're no longer producing content for top of funnel marketing, or as clickbait to draw people into a website. Instead, content is created and distributed for everyone. Training, education, customer retention, and sales enablement are just some of the areas of business that need a constant influx of new content.

We're no longer advertising. Instead, we're nurturing. And not just prospects either. If content was a warm blanket, we're not ripping it away the moment a prospect signs on the dotted line. No, we need to keep everyone warm. Current customers expect a connected and dynamic experience. We need to start thinking of content as being part of the customer experience, not a tool for marketing. How do we do that? Content operations is a good start.



Content operations: The Specifics

Content operations are not all that different from manufacturing operations. While there are workers on the ground doing the heavy lifting, there is also someone in charge of operations who has an overview of the entire process from start to finish. They're the ones making sure the shipment gets to where it needs to. If a product gets lost during distribution, they're the ones who will track it down. Your content operations team, or team member (if you're a smaller unit), will have an overview of content and its lifecycle. Sitting between the editorial and development/product teams, they'll manage the challenges of tracking, organizing, and optimizing content across your portfolio of digital products.

A content operations role will also cover:

Tasks such as post-production management, uploading, scheduling, tagging, labeling, metadata, optimizing for different channels, segmenting, localization/translation, image sizing, and governance.

- **Brand consistency:** When editorial teams are caught up in the day-to-day, it's the content operations team or person that ensures all content aligns with pre-existing strategy and brand priorities. Despite being critical, ensuring content contribution towards growth and revenue goals is often overlooked.

- **Cross-departmental communication and mediation:** Extolling the benefits of cross-functional teams is one thing, but having someone actually do the work as a communicator is another. Your content operations team will create the processes needed for teams to communicate and work.
- **Impact and analyzing the data:** While an editorial team might quickly move onto the next project, content operations are about feeding back into the content strategy on what's working and what isn't. An editorial team might not know what to do with insights but your content operator can do a complete evaluation and report back.

Having someone in charge of content operations allows editors and editorial teams to do what they're good at. Editors can focus on creating content while the content operations teams ensure it flows into digital products. It is the solution to free up your team from drowning in operational details and busywork. With well-oiled content operations, your content has more reach. Editorial teams get to spend more time writing content than tackling tools and processes they might not be experts in.



Content operations and content infrastructure

How does content operations fit in with Contentful content infrastructure? Easy! Unlike legacy CMSes which were created before content marketing went mainstream, content infrastructure was created with effective content operations in mind.

Content infrastructure was developed to improve workflows for people working with every type of digital product. It's built around what you do, and it doesn't force you to bend or customize your behavior.

For example, a feature loved by editorial teams using Contentful is the ability for content creators and developers to work concurrently. In the past, the relationship between editors and developers could be tricky; it was often a waiting game between the two, as only one team at a time could

make changes and edit content. Or even more frustratingly, editorial teams had to hand off their content to developers and wait days for changes to be made.

There's also no need to copy and paste your content into multiple CMSes. Content infrastructure is platform agnostic. There is no platform-specific data in your content chunks. They are reusable across all platforms. You can press publish once and your content will be automatically optimized for each digital platform.

Content infrastructure solves the content bottleneck. With more independence on both sides and more options for posting, content can be turned out quickly with a whole lot less frustration.

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Content operations and content infrastructure

GOVERNANCE

Proper governance means that content passes the necessary checks for accuracy, brand consistency, and any industry-specific requirements before publishing.

Content governance can, at very least, help your brand avoid serious embarrassment, or in extreme cases, legal trouble. We've all read (or experienced) stories of an accidental tweet, usually posted by someone who thought they're on a personal account, or a blog post with completely wrong information. It usually ends in awkward apologies and a dip in brand credibility. Having a person perform final checks on content can reduce the chances of brand-damaging events happening. No awkward apology posts here.

While we think that's all there is to governance, it goes a lot deeper. As teams grow, brands risk content straying from brand values, factual correctness, tone of voice and style guidelines.

Businesses are also inviting people who aren't professional writers or content creators from all areas to contribute to the content output. This democratization of content creation is great for customers. They're getting direct access to the experts through content that has been edited and packaged by editors. But opening up the chance to create means more voices and a greater chance to stray from the brand. When done right, content governance keeps your content creators in check.

Once the checks are done, it's also the responsibility of content operations to manage permissions and roles. They have the job of reviewing, updating and removing content as it ages. While this might seem tedious, customers have no time for factually incorrect documentation or resources. They can find information elsewhere, and usually take their patronage with them.

UPLOADING CONTENT

Uploading is no longer a matter of pressing publish. It's something that editors everywhere are coming to terms with.

Research shows that content creators and editors are spending over half of their time doing busy work such as uploading. Having content operations take ownership of this part of the process means clearing work off editor's plates.

Uploading content also involves:

- Putting the content into Contentful content infrastructure
- Creating reusable chunks that are tagged, labeled and correctly formatted
- Optimizing content for every digital channel
- Ensuring that content is localized and handling the translation process for different geographic audience segments
- Sizing images

DISTRIBUTION

According to Jake Sorofman, Digital Analyst at Gartner, "the best content marketers think like manufacturers." In manufacturing, the product tends to get to where it's going. In content marketing, a huge amount of content is left unused or under-utilized.

With content flooding in from teams and a network of freelancers, the hard truth is that a good chunk gets lost somewhere between creation and distribution. After all, we're playing with the largest volume of digital content since the creation of the internet.

This is where content operations come in. Content operations are in charge of tracking content end-to-end, just like a product is tracked from warehouse to final delivery. The process from conception



to iteration (based on data) is in the hands of the content operator, as they are the liaison between the different teams.

And it doesn't stop at distribution. Content operations will bring the required checks and processes to ensure that data isn't taken at glance but is instead fed back. It doesn't just improve the performance of future content as you make more targeted, optimized content, but it also creates a culture where data is taken seriously.

UPDATES AND EDITS

Your content operations manager updates and edits published content. It's about keeping your content fresh, and signaling to your audience that you're active and engaged. Like servicing your car keeps it running longer, maintaining your content extends its useful life. It's an investment, but one that usually pays off.

This includes keeping blogs up-to-date, refreshing web pages, tracking documentation for inaccuracy, updating author bios, and optimizing for SEO trends. It's a task that requires process and structure, and is rarely done well by busy editors.

It's also common that content is left unchanged after extensive brand personality and style shake ups. Having a brand that changes from one blog post to the next can leave customers confused -- and doubting the trustworthiness of the service. The systematic approach of content operations means that someone will be updating the content regularly.

Unlike developer-dependent legacy CMSes where you have to make changes to every page and content piece, Contentful's reusable content pieces make things easy. Without having to copy and paste, or write any code, you can edit once and update everywhere. For example, say one of your editors has received a promotion, and you would like to update their bio. Instead of having to copy

and paste that new bio across everything they have written, you can instead edit their Author card in Contentful and the change is reflected everywhere.

CONTENT STRATEGY

Content operations communicate content strategy between teams. Sitting between editors, developers and product teams, content operations works as your connection. Sitting between editors, developers and product teams, the content operations role is key to communicating strategy. Content operations and content strategy feed into each other as content becomes more strategic.

While every content marketer knows data and analytics are critical, many struggle to use them effectively. Or they turn to vanity metrics which don't quite communicate a real picture of how well content is performing. Content needs to bring value, or else it's a waste of time.

A content operations manager looks at defined metrics across the entire life cycle of a piece of content and importantly, feeds it back to the editorial team. This includes making changes to strategy to align with supply and demand. And when you're doing your content backfill? Your content operations manager can be your go-to in ideas on what's working and what's not. It's all about closing the circle and making sure you're creating strategic content.



How to bring content operations to your company

Content operations aren't about abandoning your current workflow. Instead, it's an expansion of what your team is already doing and the implementation of better tools, processes, and people. There's no easy plan to follow when going through this process. Content operations isn't a one-size-fits-all product or plan. Instead, it is a substantial transformation. But once you're up and running, you can produce good content a lot faster.

DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF TIME EDITORS SPEND ON CONTENT OPERATIONS

The first step is identifying where your editorial team is spending their time. Research shows that up to 53% of an editor's time is spent on content operations. You can't know where your team is spending their time unless you start tracking it first. A complete audit of your content, processes, and workflow should be your first step.

As part of your audit, it helps to know what the pace of your content production is like. Are you seeing any content bottlenecks popping up? Maybe your editorial team is struggling with design? How's your feedback loop from data and analytics? These are just some of the questions you can figure out with your team.

HIRE OR ALLOCATE A CONTENT OPERATIONS TEAM/INDIVIDUAL

Here is what you should look for in a content operations manager or analyst:

- Strong communication skills to create strong cross-functional partnerships with the teams at your workplace
- Must have a proactive, not reactive approach
- Strong quantitative background with the skill to analyze large datasets
- Translate hypotheses (found through analytics) into actionable changes
- Ability to track metrics and trends and turn them into informed decisions and strategy

- Be able to present and articulate findings when it comes to analytics and insights
- Consider your current content infrastructure

This whitepaper has talked a lot about the tools and technology to run a smooth content operation. If you're running a legacy or monolithic CMS, then there is a good chance your operation is anything but smooth. You probably have many content bottlenecks, a lot of copy-and-paste work, and trouble with the authoring process. It could be that your whole process is very slow when it needs to be fast, repeatable and modernized for today's well-connected market.

That's because the legacy CMS wasn't created for the volume or type of content that businesses are producing now. They were made to publish content, in a newspaper-like way, and not to support an easy producing and organizing experience. They are also not optimized for the different digital devices used by consumers all over the world. Often, companies are juggling not one, but many CMSes in a bid to feed digital content to multiple platforms. This includes a lot of day-to-day tasks such as optimizing and sizing for each platform, tracking analytics from multiple sources, and generally running an operation that isn't intuitive or streamlined. Even the most well-organized companies are finding themselves stuck in operations and experiencing huge coverage gaps when they're running a legacy CMS.



OPTIMIZING YOUR CONTENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Content infrastructure was created to solve a lot of these problems. Content infrastructure lets you build without any limitations. Editors can create and organize content from the unified content repository, and content operations can distribute to all platforms. Here are the top reasons why Contentful is better for content operations:

- **It's fast.** Customers who have switched from a legacy CMS to Contentful create digital products up to 4 times faster. And if you're creating a new digital project, you can start building on day one. There's no need for lengthy wait times (and high costs) associated with legacy vendors.
- **It's empowering.** Editors can create pages and update content in real-time, without bothering developers. While both editors and developers work from one centralized hub, there is no stepping on each other's toes.
- **It's unified.** Ship content to any digital device from a single, flexible platform. You can reduce the complexity of your operations by re-using your existing content infrastructure. All of Contentful's APIs are context-agnostic, so you only need to press publish once.
- **It's scalable.** Contentful has scaled with some of the world's biggest brands. It includes enterprise-ready features for strong resilience and security (such as multiple CDNs). And has features to support governance such as SSO, roles and permissions, and PCI compliance.
- **It's editor-friendly.** Our rich text editor allows you to edit content like you're used to. It includes features like dynamic linking, embedded assets, and embedded entries.

Content operations is an emerging field in companies which are undergoing digital transformations. Large amounts of content are required to support a globally-connected brand. That requires content operations roles to manage the processing and maintenance of that content -- it's as simple as that. One of the very first steps you can take towards implementing your content operation is to make sure your CMS is doing the job right. If it isn't, we would love to talk to you about your operation. [Get in touch with us.](#)