

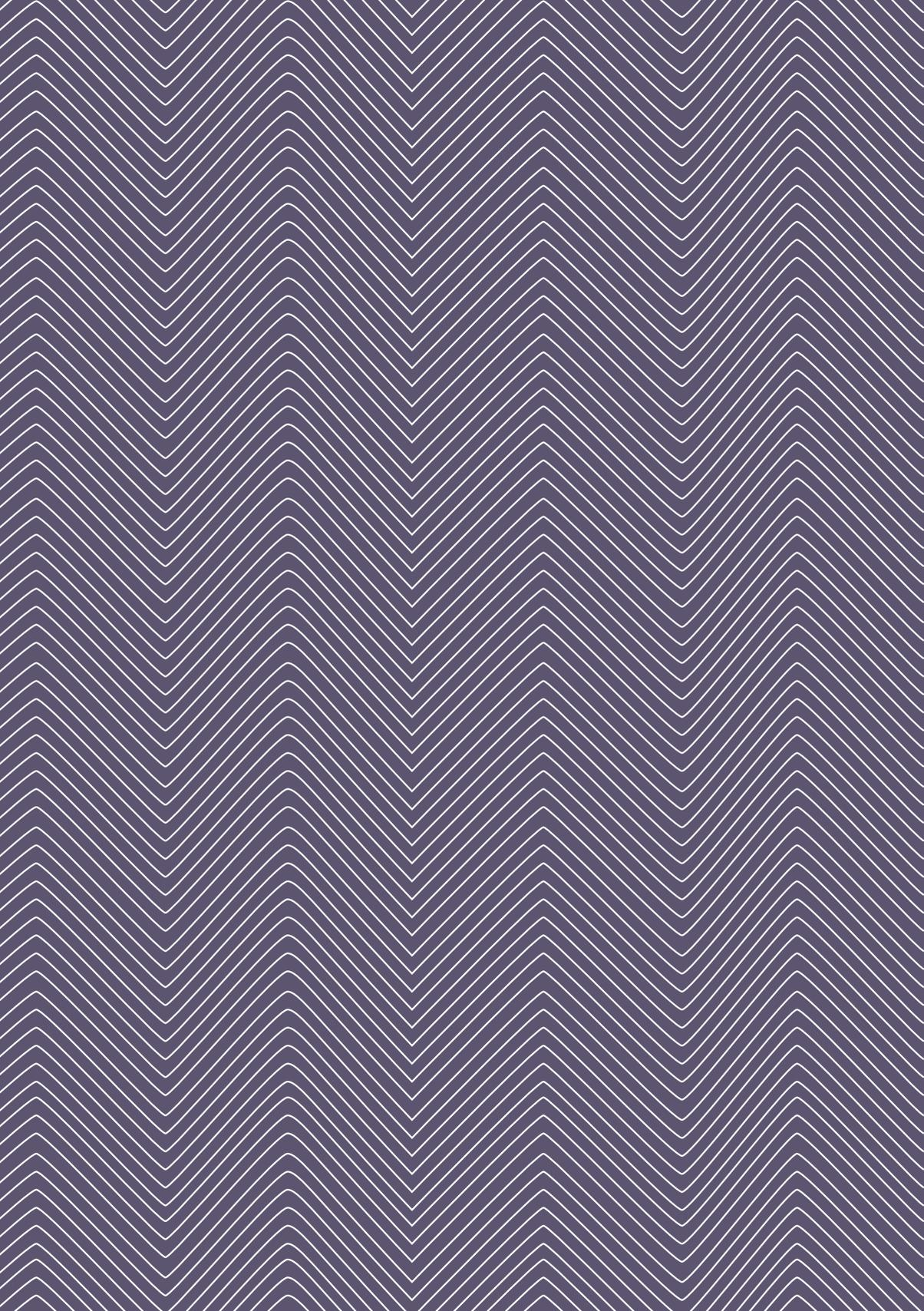
GUIDE FOR
CONTENT GOVERNANCE

Improve your content quality,
your operational efficiency and protect
the value of your brand



Content

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Discover why content governance is essential to your organisation

Content is important. As a company or organisation, you create and publish content to add character to your brand, to train your employees, to attract applicants or investors and to inform journalists or the general public. You use content in different ways, involving many people inside and outside the organisation.

It is becoming increasingly clear that content is no longer a question of top-down publishing, but involves conversation and commitment. Today, marketers and communication managers even use content channels to build a community. They have apps, websites, Facebook, blogs, e-books, webinars, serious games, mash-ups, podcasts, virtual learning, *content curation*, crowdsourcing, online video and a wide range of traditional print channels.

In order to maintain a certain level of control in the ever more complex world of content, publishing, conversation, channels and technology, you need content governance. Content governance has become an indispensable tool to protect and strengthen the value of your brand and improve the operational efficiency and quality of your content.

If you take your content seriously, you have to take your content governance seriously as well. “Content governance is a way of managing the content supply chain”, David Edelman writes in *Four Ways To Get More Value From Digital Marketing*. He draws attention to the three key advantages of content governance: the reduction of creation costs, a higher return on content, and more ROI by optimising the customer experience.

Unfortunately, content governance is not easy in a world of legacy systems, silos and often poorly documented processes. But what would be the alternative? Goodwill? Internal politics? Informal networks?

In organisations with little or no governance structure, the employees create and distribute content without any common policies, standards and procedures.

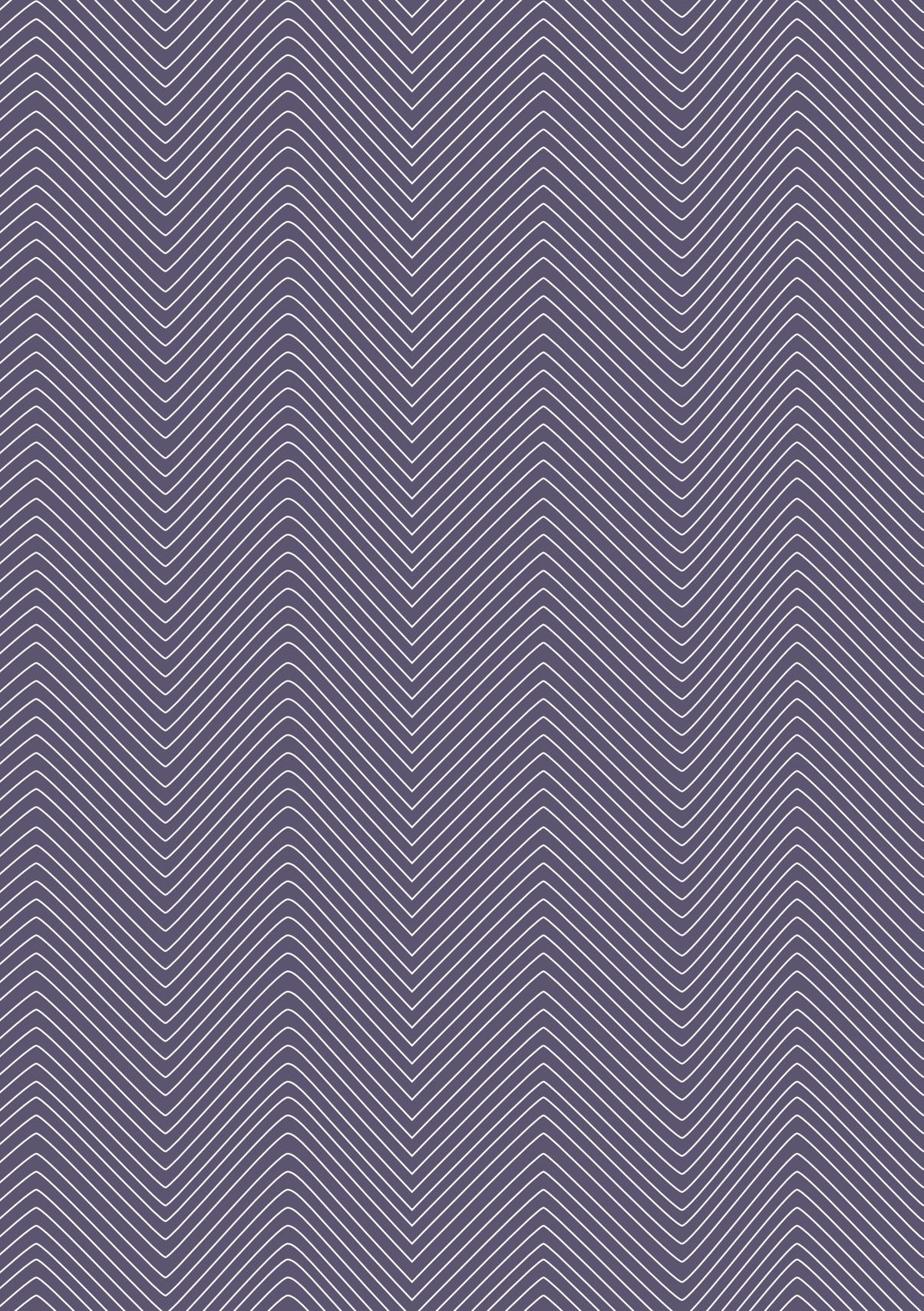
This leads to problems and risks such as:

- × Fragmented use of communication channels
- × Poor customer experience and a low level of involvement
- × Usability and accessibility problems
- × Lack of alignment between objectives and content
- × Reinventing the wheel
- × Focus on internal discussions
- × Poor content quality
- × Outdated content
- × Unnecessary repetition of content and editions

If you only have a static website and a few printed publications to manage, you obviously do not need an extensive governance structure. However, if you have several channels to manage dynamically in real time, such a structure is paramount. It is easy to publish a text or launch a new channel, but how do you keep the content up to date and how do you manage your channel? How do you deal with the discussions that will hopefully result from your content? Content governance ensures that all tasks are performed in the right way at the right time.

You also need content governance because content is now becoming more social and mobile. A flexible governance structure leads to operational efficiency and quality checks and allows you to dynamically manage the content and discussions without putting any unnecessary pressure on your budget. Content governance gives you quality content that is optimised for your customers and suitable for multi-channel publishing.

Of course there is more than one way of managing your content processes efficiently, but you should always make sure that your governance structure is tailored to your specific needs, resources and challenges. This guide gives you a general summary of the main steps and principles for setting up your own governance framework. It is intended as a guide for those who are unfamiliar with the concept of content governance or with a number of the more technical aspects of content management.



Crucial challenges and opportunities

Structured or unstructured content

There is no single definition for content and there is no generally accepted view of how content is related to concepts such as information and data. Technical people tend to make a distinction between structured and unstructured information. The content of an article in a Word file is considered unstructured. It only becomes *structured* when its components (headline, lead, sub-headings, body copy, ...) are entered as data in separate fields of a database or content management system.

Marketing and communication people do not usually see content as unstructured or structured information. In their language, content simply refers to “what the information is about” rather than “what the information looks like”, i.e. the presentation of the content. Marketers see content as meaningful information in a certain context. This information can be rich and layered: a brand story, a testimonial, an interactive application or a viral game. In other words, marketers see content as a way to increase the brand experience and commitment of the customers.

A tale of two cultures

The distinction between these two definitions of content is a tale of two different cultures. When technical people talk about ‘structuring content’, they mean dividing the content into pieces and saving it in a system in order to control it.

When marketers talk about structuring content, they mean putting together elements on a web page or printed page and composing a piece that is attractive to external target audiences in a certain context.

These two perspectives complement each other and are equally important. To manage several content channels, you need the structured content of the technical people. You can use this content in an automated way that can be monitored. However, to communicate in a customer-focused way, to enhance the brand experience and to get people to act, you need the content of marketers and communication managers. They know best what you should say to your customers and *how, where* and *when* you should say it.

Your company can only be successful in content marketing if it brings these two perspectives together. Those who have the skills to organise and automate your data in a structural way usually do not have the necessary insight to determine what content your audience needs. Important decisions about content that has an impact on your brand are best not left to the technical people in your company, and yet this is what happens all too often, usually for historical reasons rather than strategic ones. In the early days of the Internet, webmasters did almost everything: they designed and programmed the websites, wrote the copy and measured the results. There was little maturity and no task distribution. In today's complex digital environment with companies producing huge amounts of content, this process is completely outdated.

Although the solo webmaster has now been replaced by a web or digital team, the focus has often been left unchanged. A web or digital team often works on a single content channel (a website) or a collection of channels and technologies (digital services), *but hardly ever focuses on the customer as such*. If your web team's activities are not coordinated well with the activities of the other teams that are completely customer-focused (such as Marketing, Sales, Service and Support), your brand will suffer.

Bridging the gap

Many IT departments and web teams have tried to integrate the customer's perspective in their work through disciplines such as information architecture (IA) and user experience design (UX), but these efforts were often only moderately successful. In 2010 Forrester Research concluded that "in most companies IA is still at an early stage"¹.

Marketers and communication departments should also not shy away from taking a critical look at their own practices. Until now, they have been fairly slow in recognising and understanding the possibilities of new technologies. If marketers and communication managers knew more about technology, they would be able to apply it more successfully in more innovative ways. Of course the reverse is also true: if technical people had a better understanding of how to communicate with customers, they would be able to build better systems for them.

Better cooperation between marketing and IT is an essential part of good content governance. This coordination of marketing and IT can be seen within the wider framework of the well-known demand for more *IT-business alignment*, a concept that Henderson and Venkatraman introduced two decades ago in *Strategic Alignment: Leveraging Information Technology For Transforming Organizations*.

¹ See Gene Leganza's *Topic Overview: Information Architecture*

Governance levels

In these times of media fragmentation with content becoming ever more mobile and social, the introduction of content governance is easier said than done. It is both a technological and an organisational challenge, all the more because content is present everywhere in your company. Because content is transversal, you should organise it in such a way that includes not only IT and the *marcom* specialists, but also people from other departments, such as Sales, Product Development, Human Resources, Legal, etc.

It takes strong leadership to transcend these silos, particularly if they are all determined to defend their own positions. Some companies have understood that content is the brand and the organisation, and have therefore appointed a Chief Content Officer (CCO) to approach content from a transversal perspective.

In the end, managing marketing content is only one aspect of a much greater challenge: to expand content governance across the entire enterprise, and *enterprise content governance* itself can also be seen as a part of the wider concept of *information governance*.

“Good cooperation between Marketing and IT is essential for good content governance.”

Why now?

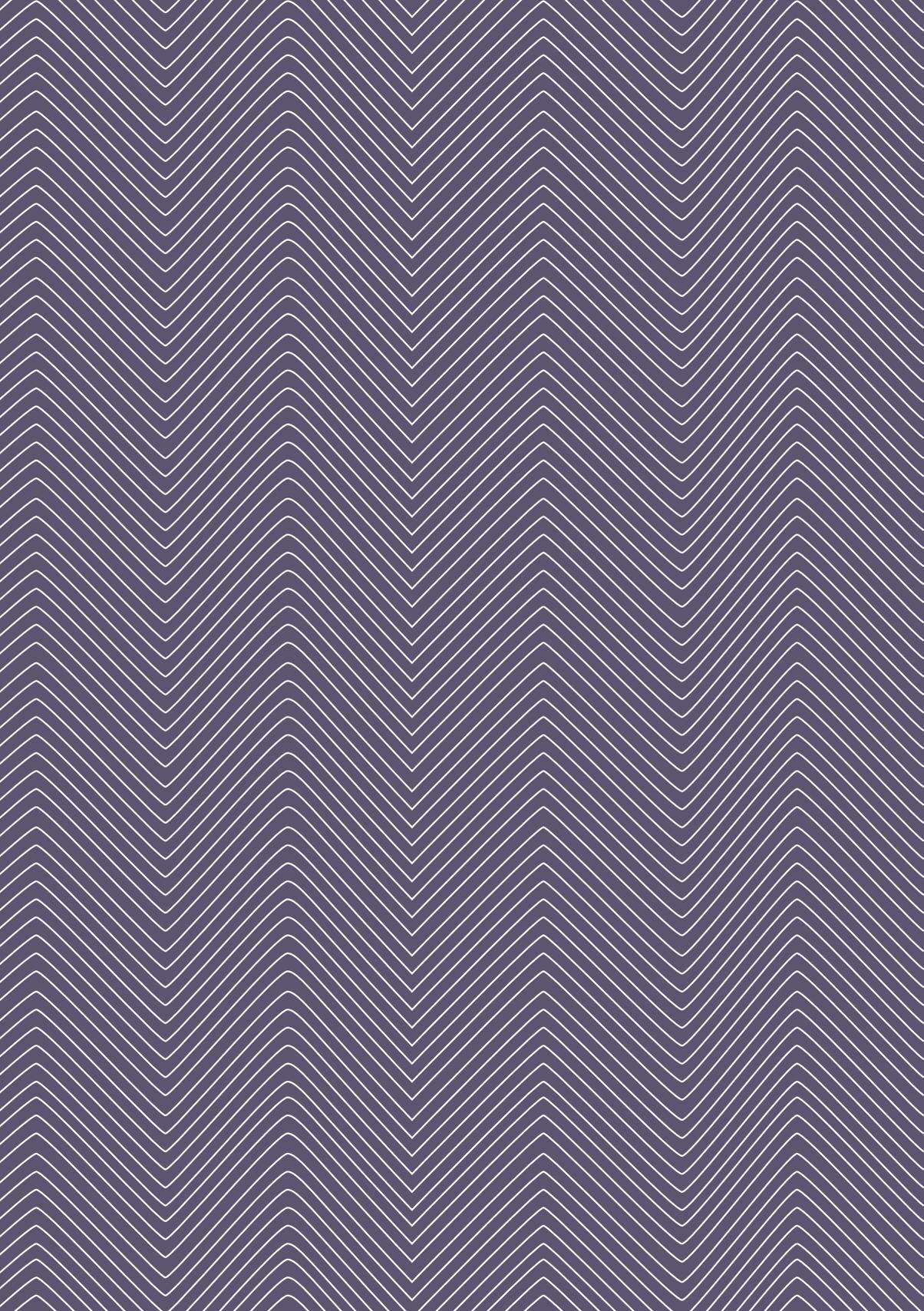
In order to work quickly and efficiently in today's world of multiple channels and devices, you need content governance and automation. Creating content manually for every separate screen, device and *touchpoint* has become expensive and virtually impossible.

This new reality forces marketers to pay more attention to the *where* and *when* of content. It is no longer just about *what* content and *how* it should look. We now need to learn how to use systems to increase our control of the *where* and *when* and to generate customer-tailored content at the right time and in the right context.

Such an approach is also referred to as 'intelligent content' (Ann Rockley), 'nimble content' (Rachel Lovinger) or 'adaptive content' (Zack Brand). If you are unfamiliar with these concepts, you can find out more about them in the introductory presentation *Adapting Ourselves To Adaptive Content* by Karen McGrane or the book *Nimble* by Rachel Lovinger.

Digital content

In this guide **digital content** refers to content that is digitally created and managed. Of course nowadays content published in print is also kept in a digital format somewhere.



The purpose of content governance

Towards good content governance

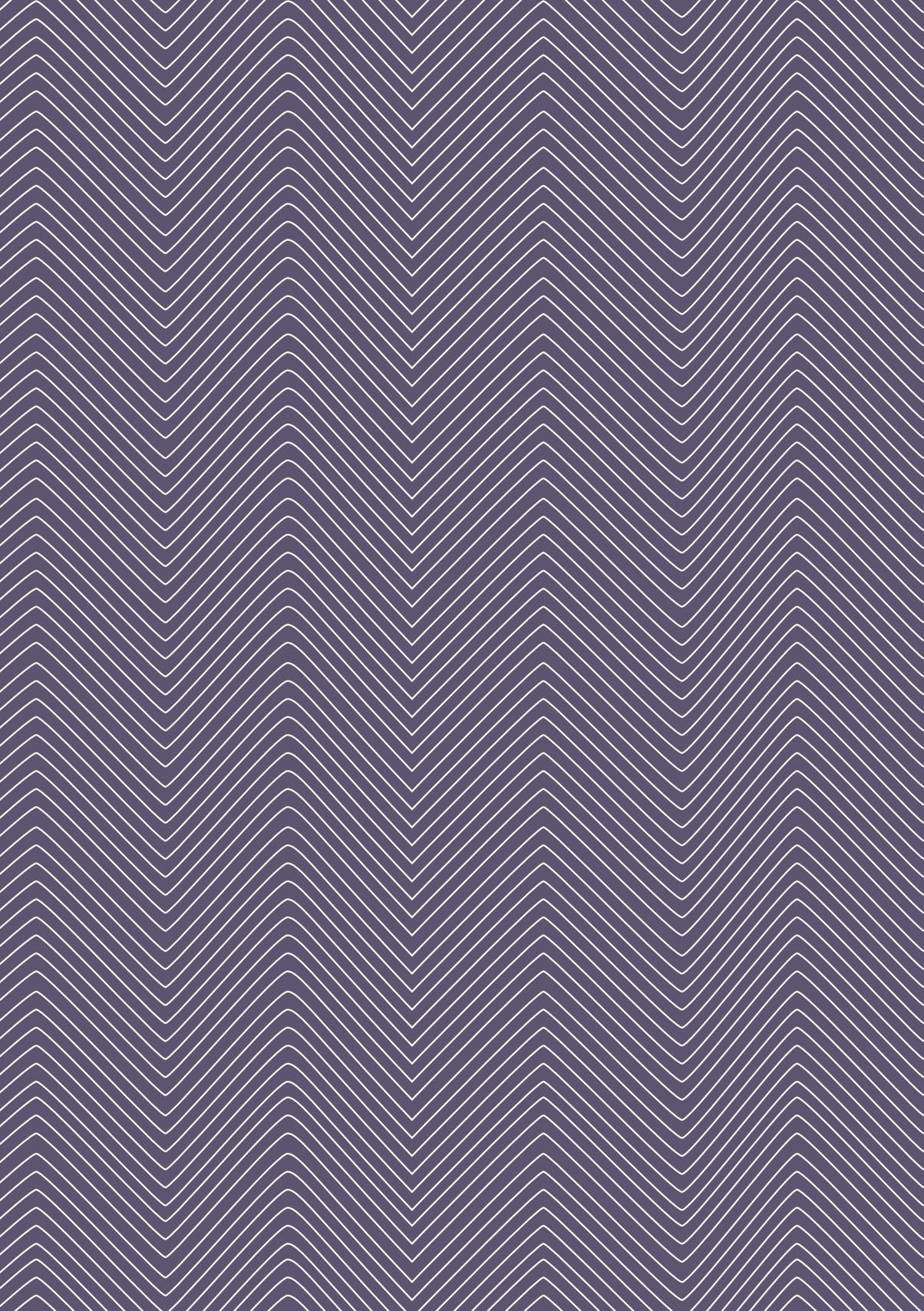
Content governance helps you to solve major process and cooperation problems. This is obviously not done overnight. The objective is to put in place a form of governance to continuously improve and develop the entire content process.

Such governance partly consists of enforcing good management practices by involving the right people in the content process at the right time, by working with realistic, feasible goals, by giving the right people rights of ownership and authorisation, etc.

However, the objective of content governance is more than that. Content governance allows you to protect and strengthen your brand by making the content process visible and accountable for C-level business managers and by aligning your content with your business objectives, the needs of your target audiences and your quality standards.

What is good content?

Good content meets the right needs of your target audience at the right time in the right context and at the same time achieves one or more of your company's objectives.



The scale of content governance

Content governance includes all channels.

Content governance includes all channels. Companies that have already developed a *website governance* framework can easily set up a structure for content governance. The difference between website governance and content governance is one of scale. Website governance involves only one channel, whereas content governance focuses on the policy, standards and procedures for all channels, including the social media, the intranet and your offline channels.

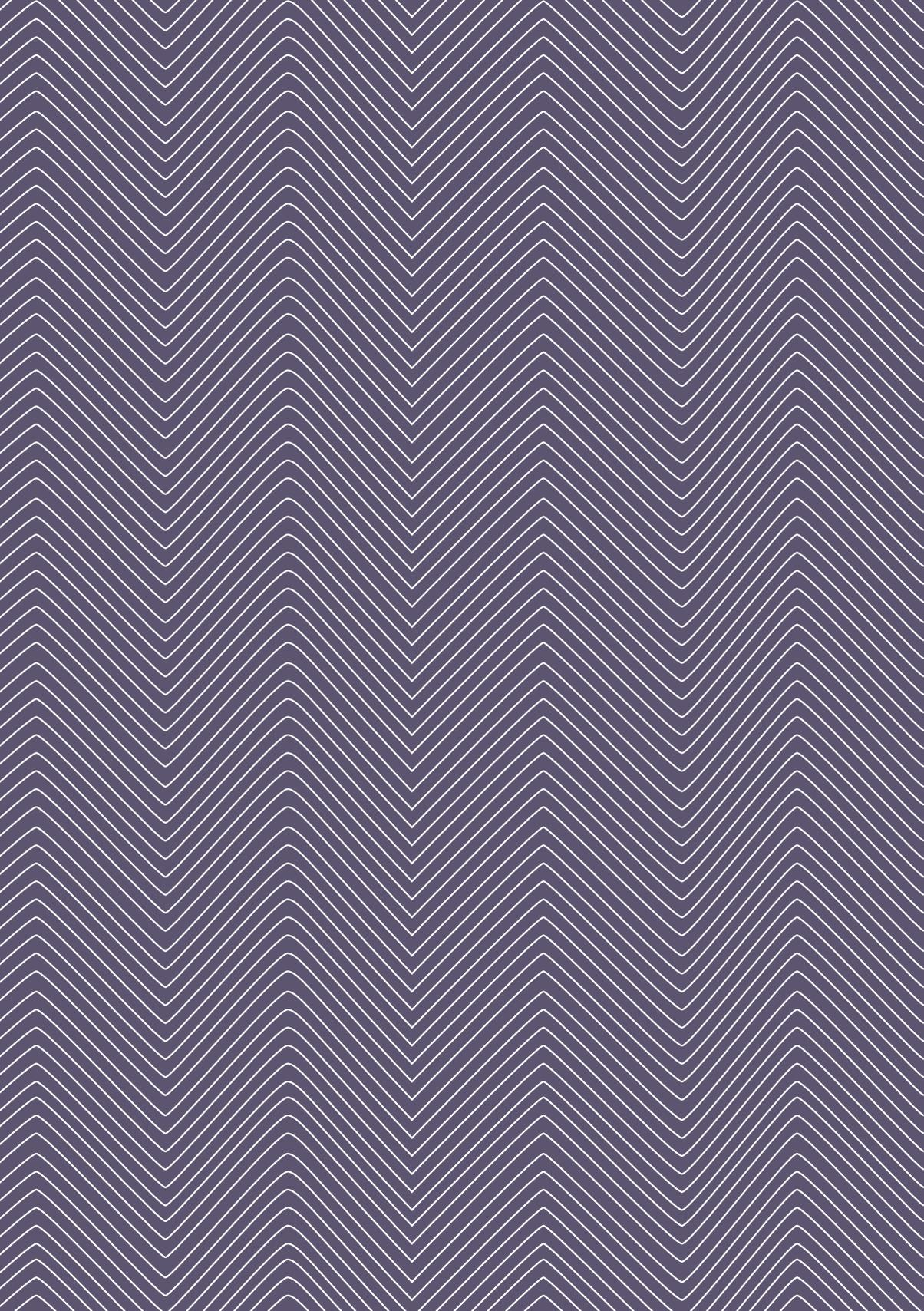
Content governance can be seen as part of information governance, which Gartner defines as follows:

“The specification of decision rights and an accountability framework to ensure appropriate behaviour in the evaluation, creation, storage, use, archiving and deletion of information. It includes the processes, roles and policies, standards and metrics that ensure the effective and efficient use of information in enabling an organization to achieve its goals.”²

To integrate content governance in information governance, it is best to follow the established principles and standards for Records and Information Management (RIM). A RIM framework includes Governance, Policy, Process, Data, Application and Infrastructure³.

² See *What is Content Governance and Why is It So Hard?*

³ See John Bolton's *Standards: Providing a Framework for RIM Success, for example*

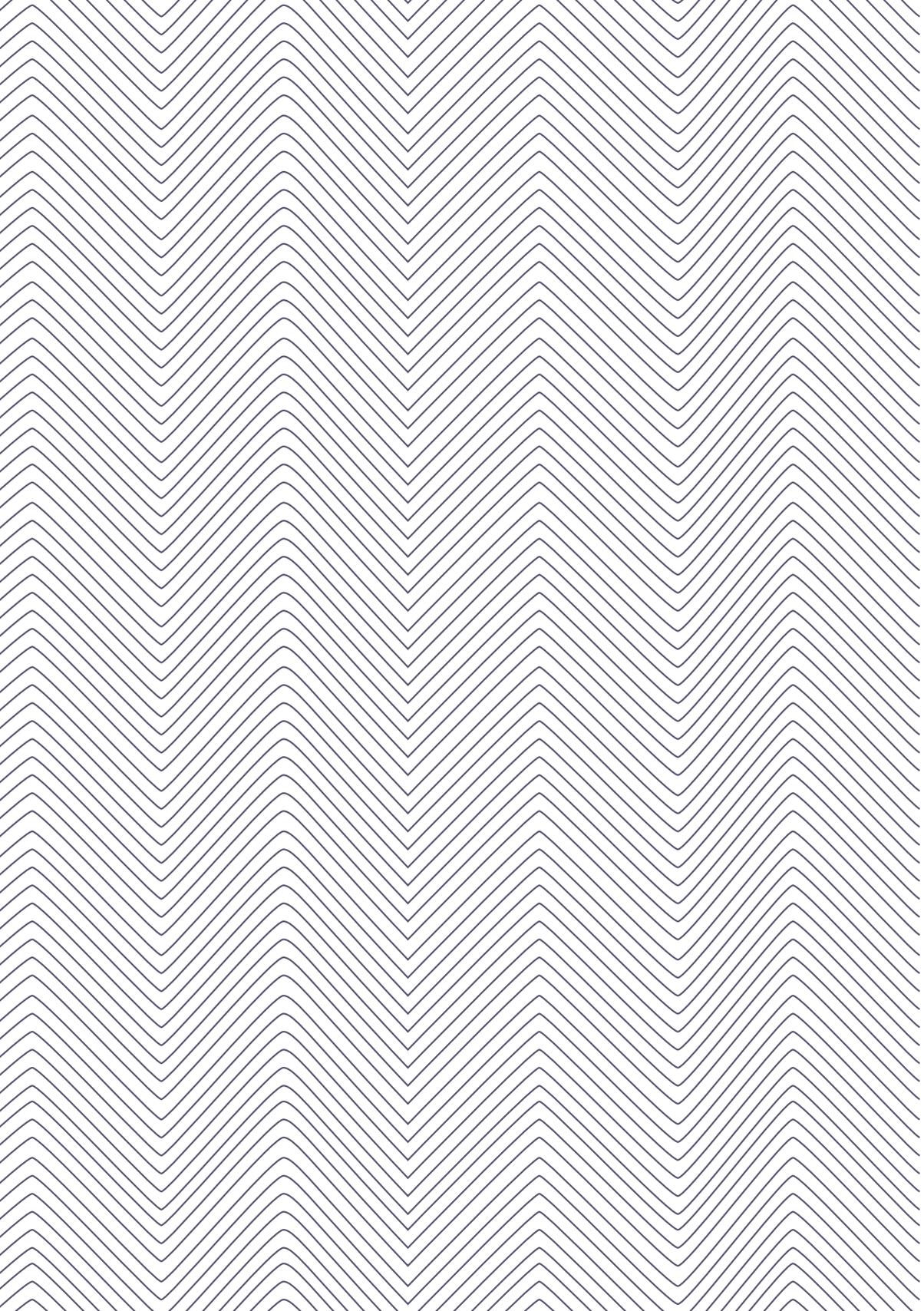


Developing a content governance framework

The following pages are a non-technical introduction to the design and implementation of a content governance framework.

Create your own structure in 6 steps

- 1 Choose your governance model**
Make sure that the chosen model reflects your company's **strategy**.
- 2 Assess your current situation**
Identify the **problems, obstacles and gaps** in your current workflow, so that you can solve them.
- 3 Define the processes and roles**
As soon as you have outlined your current situation, you can start designing a framework to improve your current situation. Establish a workflow that includes your **entire content cycle** from planning to evaluation, and define the specific roles and responsibilities for every process.
- 4 Determine the policies and standards**
Standards and policies are necessary to ensure the **quality of your content** and to prevent any legal problems.
- 5 Set the Key Performance Indicators**
Define the **SMART** goals for your content, so that you can monitor your progress. By **measuring** the results, you can promote the effective and efficient use of your content.
- 6 Automate**
Automation increases the **operational efficiency** of your content and improves its quality, particularly in the current context of real-time communication through various devices, screens and channels.



Step 1

Choose your governance model

Contentology published an interesting Comparison Chart Of Web Governance Models, which makes a distinction between centralised, decentralised and federal governance models.

We summarised a number of characteristics of these models in the table below.

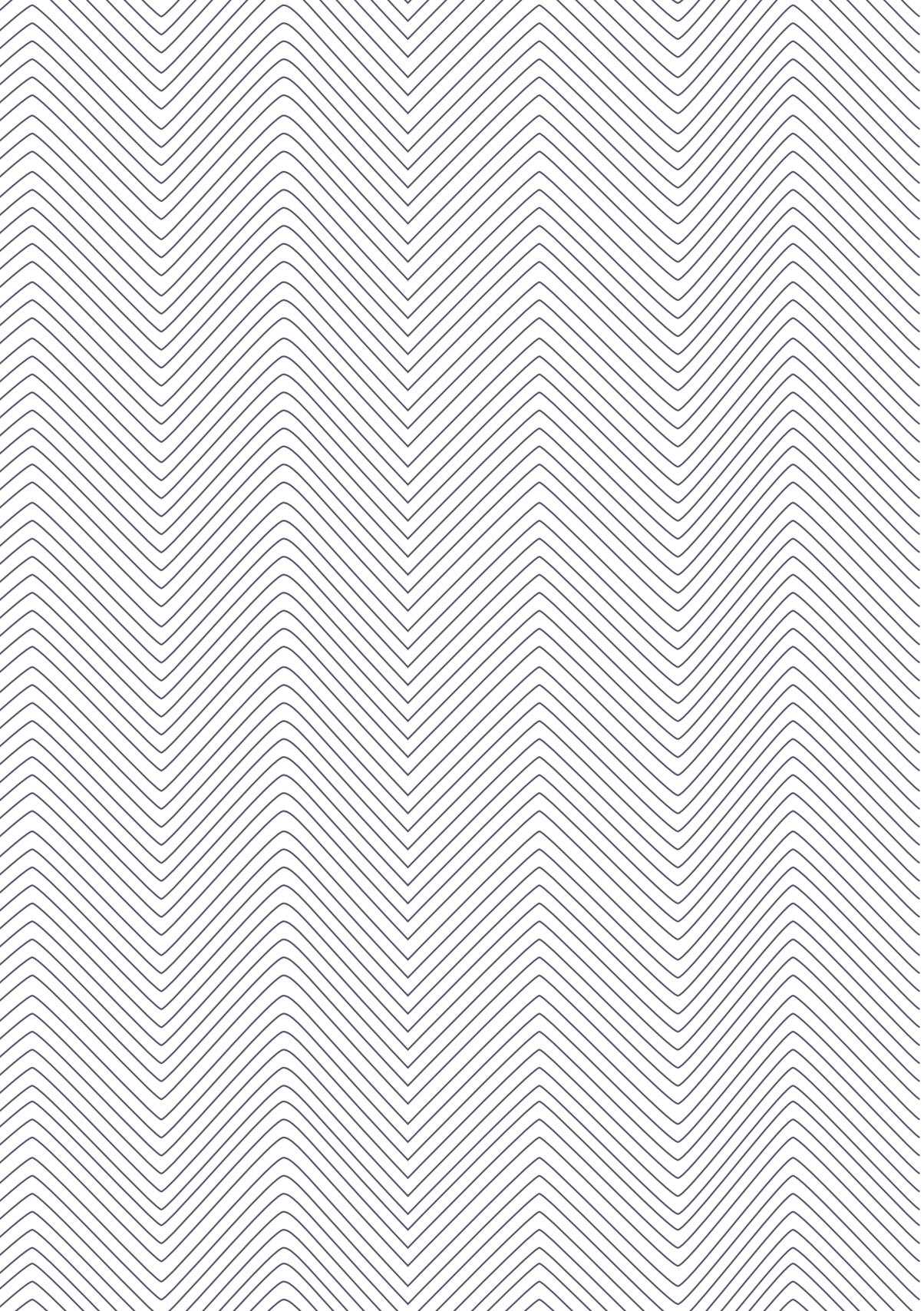
In real life, the model for large corporations with offices in different countries or with several business units is often still decentralised. In such a model, the various divisions manage their own content independently from each other. To improve consistency and cost efficiency, however, companies are increasingly introducing a centralised model. The centralised model has one command and control centre.

The idea is to have one strategy and one look and feel. Some companies, such as Apple, have always been very good at this. Other organisations are finding it hard to achieve and maintain a centralised approach. Particularly if the standards and policies are overly complex and poorly communicated, a centralised approach is destined to fail.

Web governance models

Based on Contentology's *Comparison Chart of Web Governance Models*.

Centralised	Decentralised	Federal
One authority manages all content.	Several silos manage the content.	One authority manages most of the content.
One strategy.	Several strategies, one per department.	One strategy for most, but not all content.
One command and control centre with one set of rules and one approval procedure.	Several control centres, standards and approval procedures.	One command and control centre for most content + silo control to a certain extent.
One website, one look-and-feel.	Several websites, several designs.	Most of the content on one site, but exceptions to the look and feel are permitted.



Step 2

Assess your current situation

The classic approach to improving a situation is to document the situation as it is first and then establish how you can improve things in the future. You can also follow this approach to develop a content governance framework.

Start by taking a look at your content strategy. Do you actually have a real content strategy? All too often, marketing and communication departments simply complete a list of deliverables. They create content without exactly knowing why they are choosing that particular content. The *why* is the core of your strategy. Before you try to solve any questions about workflow and role distribution, you should know the answer to some important questions about basic strategy, such as:

- × **What** is the purpose of your content?
- × **Whom** do you want to reach?
- × **Why** does your target audience need your content?
- × How are their wishes related to your **business objectives**?
- × Which **channels** are you going to use?
- × What is **unique** about your content?
- × How are you going to **measure** your results?

If you answer these questions, you know which content and which channels are important to you and how you can plan and evaluate your content.

To gain more insight into the volume, nature and quality of your content, you can create a content inventory and perform a content audit. A content inventory lists your content assets and where they are located. A content audit applies quantitative and/or qualitative criteria to your content. You can perform this evaluation for a random sample of your content. More information is available for you in the Dutch guide *Gids Voor Contentaudits* by The Content Room.

Once you have a clear understanding of your content and content strategy, you can define the workflow, roles and responsibilities in the content process. To do this, ask yourself questions such as:

- × **Who** is involved in the content process (both internally and externally)?
- × What are their **responsibilities**?
- × Does everyone understand his/her **role**?
- × Does everyone have the right **skills**?
- × Have the roles and responsibilities been well **documented**?
- × How do people **cooperate** in the content process?
- × Do we have the **content specialists** we need?
- × What are our current **standards and policies**?
- × Are they easy **to consult** and are they integrated in the content process?

The RACI matrix

The RACI method allows you to establish which roles you need in your content process. The two-dimensional RACI model reflects how people are involved in an activity. The method uses four labels:

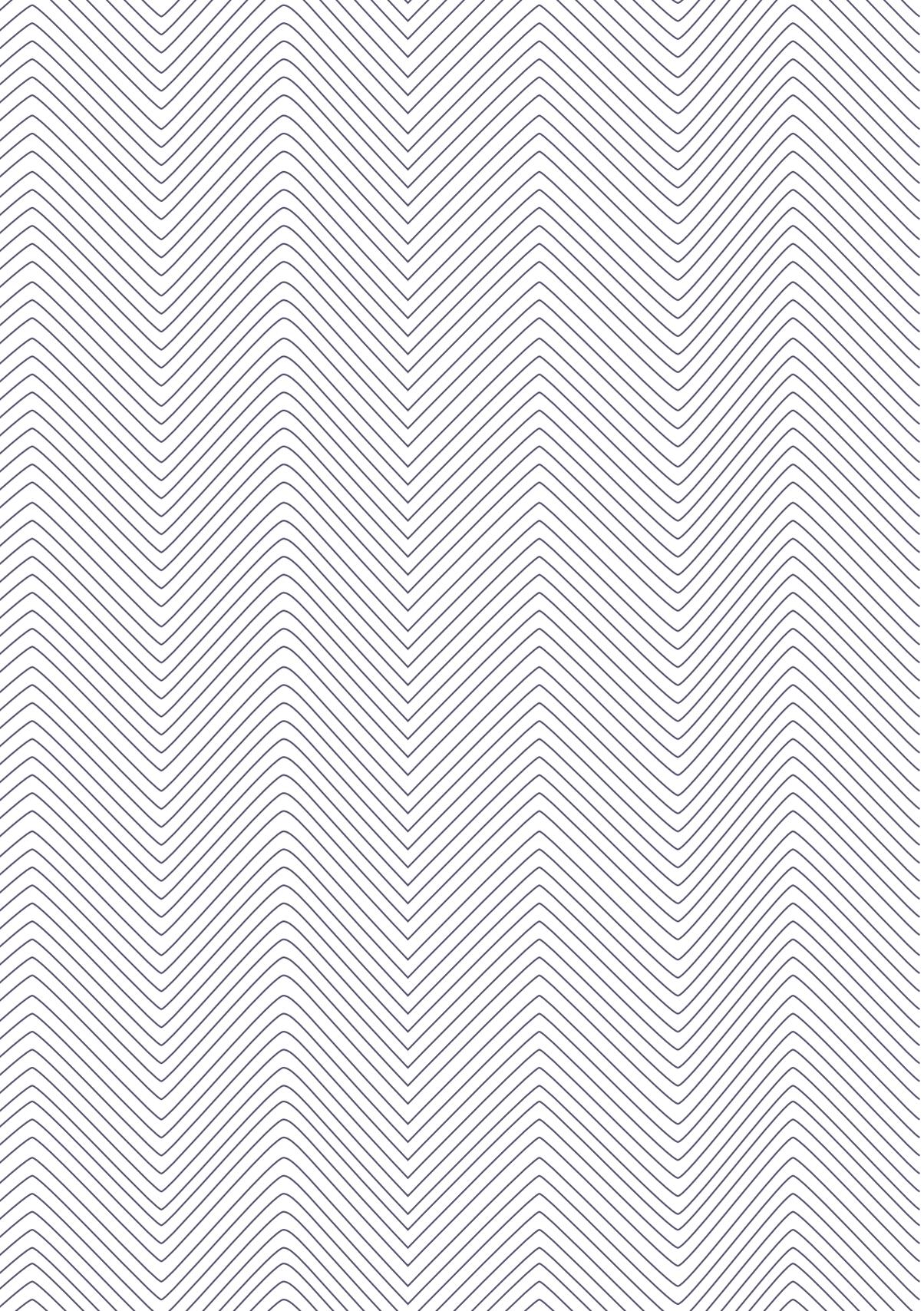
- × **Responsible:**
Who should perform the task?
- × **Accountable:**
Who is accountable (the owner)?
- × **Consulted:**
Who should be consulted before a decision can be made or an activity can start?
- × **Informed:**
Who should be informed after the decision or activity?

A RACI matrix is created together with the stakeholders involved to ensure that all sub-processes are dealt with and all stakeholders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.

By creating a RACI matrix, you detect any workflow problems to do with staffing, informally assigned responsibilities, lack of accountability, gaps in the process, etc.

A simple RACI matrix for editorial work

	Writing	Editing	Verifying	Approval	Reviewing
Author	R	C	I	I	R
Editor	A	R	A	R	A
Owner	C	A	C	C	C
Proofreader	I	I	R		
Publisher				A	I



Step 3

Define the processes and roles

To design a content governance framework, you split your content process into sub-processes and you assign roles and responsibilities to each of the sub-processes. This allows you to write the standards and policies that apply to the sub-processes and the roles you associated with them. The main stages of a content process are strategy, creation, publication and evaluation.

1. Strategy and tactics

At this stage, it is a good idea to make a distinction between strategy and tactics. The strategy indicates the general direction, and the tactics consider details such as the structure of your content, the publication channels, the conversion and the user experience.

It is useful to involve various organisation stakeholders in the development of your content strategy. These are of course preferably people with a good understanding of your audience, company and content. You may want to put in place a multidisciplinary advisory board with representatives from different departments and experts such as business analysts, UX specialists and people with expertise in the subject matter of your content.

A strategic team usually consists of a content strategist, a senior copywriter and an IA and UX specialist. The team's tasks are:

- × Analysing the needs of the target audience
- × Aligning the needs and business objectives
- × Defining the main themes
- × Developing the key messages
- × Structuring the content
- × Defining *content syndication* and curation
- × Planning publication.

Analysing the needs of the target audience

In order to develop customer-focused content, you first need to know what your audience wants. You can probably get a lot of information from reports and presentations, but this will hardly ever tell you all you need to know.

An advisory board with experts who know your company and your sector well may be helpful in this case. If necessary, you can complement this advisory board with several research methods to find out more about your target audience: interviews, focus groups, social listening, ethnography, etc.

Aligning the needs and business objectives

Creating customer-focused content is not enough: your content should also serve your business objectives. Your strategy team will therefore convert your business objectives to more specific marketing and communication objectives and will then establish how your content can be linked to your objectives. For example: 'increasing the market share' is a business objective and 'turning web visitors into buyers' is a marketing objective. To achieve this goal, you can improve the content of your online catalogue, for example.

Make your objectives **SMART**: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-related. **SMART** content objectives are linked to measurable *conversions* such as ‘download the white paper’ and ‘watch the video’.

Defining the main themes

Define the main themes to appear in your content. These themes will determine your brand and brand perception. If you have a long list of themes, set priorities. You then link the themes to target groups and conversions in a strategic matrix.

Developing the key messages

Determine what you want to say about your themes. The key message is linked to your organisation’s vision, mission and objectives and to what you are offering. A key message is created in words that reflect your core values.

Structuring the content

If you want to use your content in an automated way and reuse it on different platforms and in several situations, your content must be structured.

By ‘structured’ we mean that the content must be split up into logical components to be entered into a database or content management system. Content that can be used in a flexible way is referred to as adaptive content. Adaptive content is only possible if you structure your content well.

Some concepts in this context:

- × A **content model** is an overview of your content types (interviews, testimonials, instruction videos, etc.), your components (headings, streamers, etc.) and your attributes (text length, target audience, channels, etc.).
- × **Rules** ensure that your model works. They are usually worded as if/then clauses: “If the screen is smaller than 480 pixels, then the sidebar disappears.”
- × Rules are only one form of metadata. **Semantic markup** is used to inform systems of the meaning of a piece of content. **Presentation markup** is used to determine the format.
- × You can find an **introduction** to content modelling, markup and content rules in *Content Everywhere: Strategy and Structure for Future-Ready Content* by Wachter-Boettcher.

Defining content syndication and curation

Content syndication is an important form of automatic content distribution. Syndication used to mean content entry into an external system, usually through RSS (*Really Simple Syndication*). Today, application programming interfaces or APIs have considerably increased the possibilities. APIs are interfaces that allow applications to communicate and exchange data with each other.

So why would you use APIs? First, you can use them to integrate data and create mashups. You can use an API to integrate Google Maps in your site, for example. You can consider this as an advanced form of content curation: you use someone else’s content in your own channel.

APIs are also very suitable for distributing your own content and increasing your reach. For example, *The New York Times* uses APIs to distribute reviews, calendars, financial data and other content, all showing links to The New York Times website, of course.

Finally, APIs are used to publish content on different devices in more advanced ways than is possible with responsive design.

Planning publication

Define when and where you want to publish which content. A good publication plan shows how different publication channels are related to each other and aligned with each other. At this stage, your plan does not yet have to include the smallest details.

2. Creation

At this stage, the main themes defined by your strategy team are developed into articles, images, videos, illustrations and more. The creation process that follows includes several tasks:

- × **Research and interviews** to offer your target audience unique content that cannot be found anywhere else
- × **Text creation:** writing, editing, proofreading, translation, localisation
- × **Script writing** for demos and audio-visual material
- × **Visuals and graphic design**
- × Editorial **planning**

The creation of original content involves several people: writers, journalists, photographers, illustrators, etc. We describe the main roles and activities below. One person can obviously take on various roles.

The content manager

The content manager coordinates the editorial process, solves workflow problems and helps the editors.

The editor

The editors assign stories to writers, manage the editorial teams and oversee the editorial creation process. Traditionally editors (and copywriters) focused on the quality of the end product: a story on a printed page, for example. They had to make certain that the tone and style of the stories were consistent with the company's brand, brand values and key messages.

In today's digital world, the end product no longer exists. Online articles can be updated at any time. This means that editors and copywriters have to learn to work with content that is constantly changing, published in a variety of channels and leading to user-generated content. It is no longer the end product that counts; it is the entire life cycle.

It is useful for editors and writers to think about ways of extending the lifespan of a piece by enriching it or by giving it a new purpose.

The subject specialist

The creators of your content consult subject specialists and researchers, whose contributions help to arrive at truly unique content. Their role is crucial if you are looking to produce valuable and unique content.

The SEO specialist

Search engine optimisation (SEO) specialists ensure that your content is easily found and scores well in search engine rankings.

The chief editor

Chief editors are language specialists responsible for proofreading, revising and using the right terminology. They may also be responsible for submitting content to a content management system.

“Teach the experts in your organisation to write and converse online. Give them their own profile page and make them the ambassadors of your brand.”

The content owner

Content owners are the link between creation and publishing. They manage the life cycle of certain sections of content, proactively assess the content they own, give their approval for publication and remove their content when necessary.

They know the objectives of the content they own and receive information about the results. They have access to the content management system to perform their tasks or activities or they work together with editors to edit the content in the content management system.

You may also need conversation managers, community managers and social media optimisation (SMO) specialists.

The main tools in the creation process are the editorial calendar and the editorial guidelines.

The editorial calendar

The editorial calendar is a further development from the strategic matrix with the main themes and the publication schedule with the publication dates and channels. The editorial calendar provides an overview of all content that is created or reworked, with the names of the contributors and owners of the content, and with the most important dates in the creation process (writing, editing, proofreading, approval).

Editorial guidelines

Editorial guidelines are needed to ensure quality and consistency during the creative process.

How do media companies do this?

Traditional media companies are reviewing their workflows and distribution of tasks.

Find out how they do this by watching the documentary *Page One: Inside the New York Times*, or read about Forbes' new editorial department here.

3. Publication and management

You probably publish your content through different channels: on your website, in a print magazine, in an e-mail newsletter, on YouTube and through other social media channels. A channel lead is responsible for a specific publication channel. A website manager is therefore a channel lead. You probably have several leads for several channels, such as print and social media.

Depending on the scale, you may want to appoint leads to specific sections of a channel, your website product catalogue, for example. A channel lead is responsible for the final look and feel, the correct use of metadata, content updates and the interaction with other channels and systems.

In addition to channel leads, you also need content technology specialists. Technology specialists install and maintain the technology you use to publish, store and manage your content. They inform the content creators about how content should be submitted. Some authors work directly in a CMS, while others supply their content in a text file, for example.

Important tools for content publication and management are:

- × **The content inventory:** a summary of all your content
- × The **publication schedule** and **editorial calendar** with content to be published or revisited
- × The **publication guidelines**, which ensure that the set quality standards are met

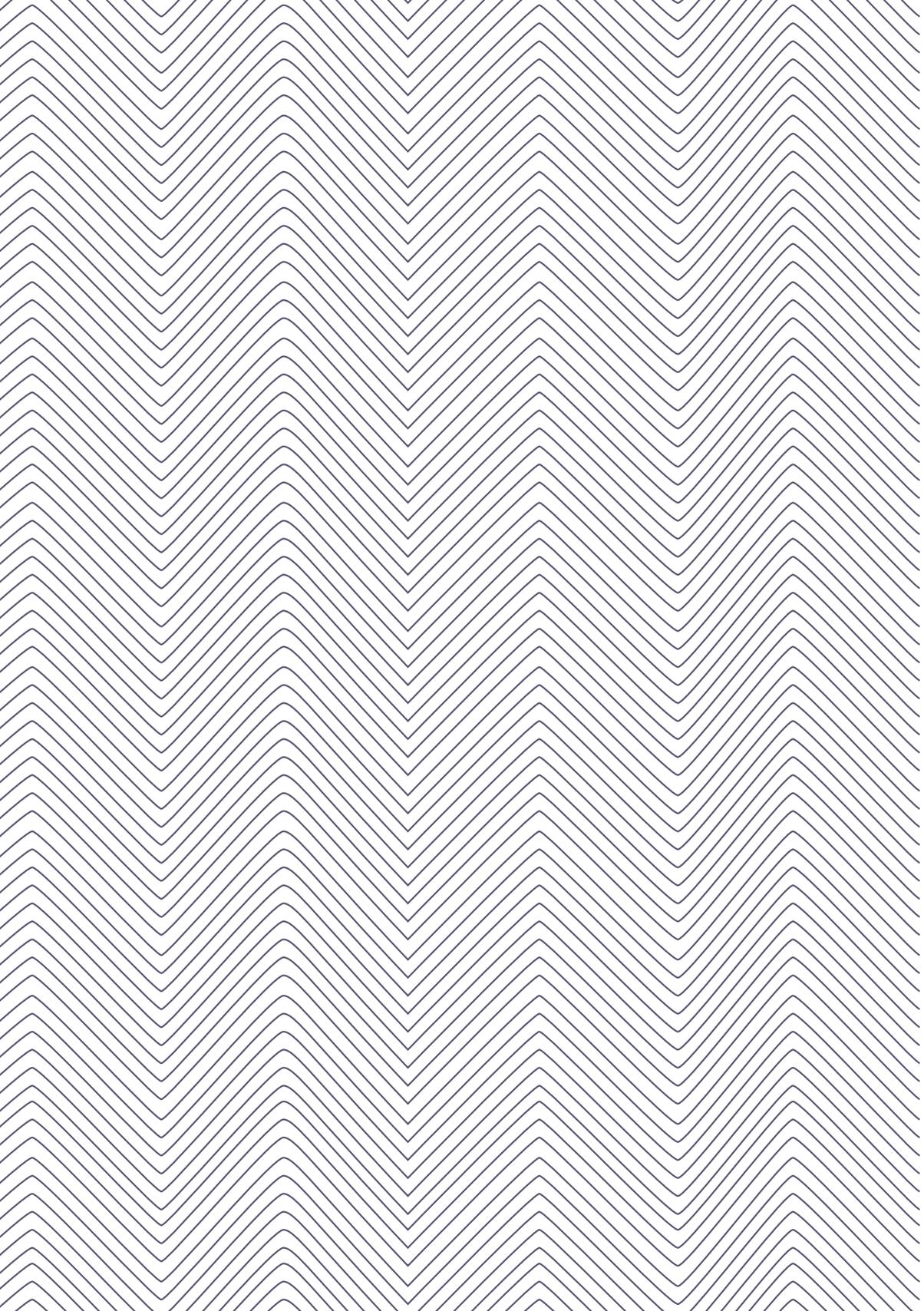
4. Evaluation

You can only improve your content if you know how your audience is using it, so you need to establish how specific channels are performing and how specific sections of your content are doing for specific segments of your target audience.

There are a lot of things you can measure, particularly online. The factors that show a website's performance include:

- × Total number of **visitors**
- × Visitors **per page**
- × **Search terms** used to reach your site
- × **Duration** of a page visit and time spent on the site
- × **Actions** that take place on a page
- × The point at which an action **ends**
- × **Entry and exit points**
- × The sites or other points **leading** visitors to your site
- × Possibly your visitors' **geographic location**

More information about the performance measurement of digital content is available from the *Digital Analytics Association*. The website of *HowTo.gov*, an organisation helping US public companies with customer service channels, also has an excellent section about measuring digital performance. Semphonics published an interesting white paper on analytics, *Digital Analytics Thought Leadership*. We will come back to this in the section about KPIs.



Step 4

Determine the policies and standards

After you have identified the roles and responsibilities and created your workflow, you can start to write or review the standards and policies that apply to the roles and steps in your workflow. Documented standards and policies are necessary to guarantee quality, consistency and operational efficiency. They include information on:

- × Accessibility of your content
- × Brand and visual style
- × Editorial style
- × Information architecture and navigation
- × Legal aspects
- × Metadata
- × Search engine optimisation
- × Social media and community
- × Usability
- × Rich media

How to create standards and policies

Use a lot of examples when you write the standards and policies. Examples make them more accessible and easier to remember. Also make your standards and policies specific for certain channels: content is presented differently on a website than in print and the tone of online conversations is not the same as that of your annual report. Finally, remember that content standards and policies must never contradict your core policies and the values of your organisation.

How to distribute standards and policies

Everyone working with content has to find the documentation they are looking for quickly and accurately. *PAS 124* (see below) rightly advises against distributing standards and policies in printed form, as printed documents are expensive, hard to distribute and problematic in terms of version management.

Online documentation has many advantages. It is easier to search. Online policies can also be integrated in the content process, as context-sensitive instructions in a content management system, for example. However, be careful to ensure that your online documentation is always synchronised immediately.

PAS 124 of the British Institute of Standards

PAS 124 of the British Institute of Standards is a **guide** for creating, introducing and **managing standards and policies**, and is also a **code of conduct**. The guide includes a **checklist** of the most important standards for websites and other content platforms. It explains how you manage standards and policies in a publication process, how you generate buy-in from your editors, how you protect the quality of your content and how you ensure compliance with your standards and policies.

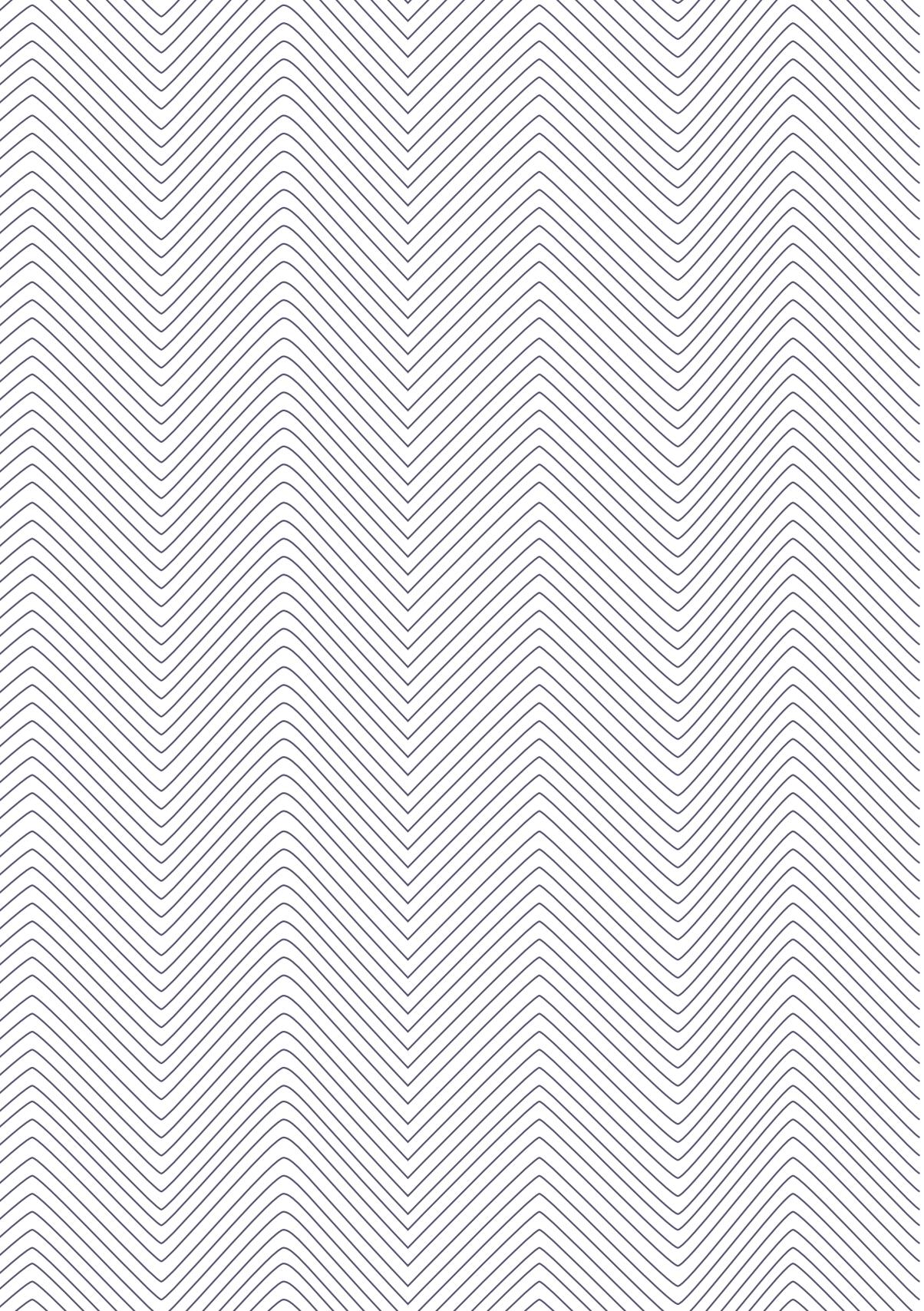
Should everything be documented?

It is advisable to document everything. The precise purpose of content governance is to exclude all informal arrangements and to enforce compliance with the rules. An important part of content governance is therefore the complete documentation of the content process, content strategy and all standards and policies. This documentation helps people to understand their task, supports the task and makes its execution easier.

Promoting standards and policies

Besides writing documentation including standards and policies, you can also create extra material to promote compliance with the documentation and your content strategy in general. Some examples of such material are:

- × A **poster** representing your workflow in an understandable way
- × An interesting **infographic** of your content strategy
- × **Reports** about your content audits and analyses, with clear conclusions and action items
- × A **RACI matrix** with roles and responsibilities
- × **Executive summaries** of your content strategy, its results and your content governance framework
- × A **video** about compliance with standards and policies
- × **Training material** for CMS, SEO, SMO, etc.



Step 5

Set the Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are required to allow continuous improvement. They help you identify the content and content-related interactions that truly add value for your company. You want to know what content attracts the audience and what content leads to the conversions (actions) you are looking for.

There is a lot to measure, but you should only measure what is most important to you: the aspects that will help you improve your content, SEO strategy and navigation. Please also remember that website analytics are only one way of measuring your progress. Follow social media, use your readership, look at your offline channels, consider your e-mails, etc. Combine research methods to increase the reliability of your results. You can organise surveys as well as interviews as focus groups, for example.

There are no official benchmarks. Only when you have collected data for quite some time, can you draw any useful conclusions. The box below provides more information about an existing measurement system, *The Financial Times Bowen Craggs Index of Corporate Website Effectiveness*. You can follow these steps to obtain the KPIs that are important to you:

Link your content to specific objectives

There must be a clear link between your business objectives and your content objectives. This will allow you to show how your content efforts contribute to the general business objectives. Start by listing your business objectives and from this list deduce some specific communication and content objectives. 'Increasing customer loyalty' is a general objective; 'attracting newsletter subscribers' is a specific content-related objective.

Link your objectives to measurable actions

Define your objectives as measurable actions taken or not taken by your target audience. Some examples are:

- × Clicking on a button
- × Reading an article
- × Subscribing to a newsletter
- × Requesting a quote

The conversion rate is the ratio of the total number of website visitors and the website visitors who take action. If 20 visitors download your white paper on a day when you attracted 10,000 visitors, the conversion rate is $20/10,000 = 0.002\%$

Provide your actions with benchmarks

Ask a marketing specialist or web analyst to add one or more measurable benchmarks to your objectives and actions. For example, define the desired average reading time under 'reading an article' and the desired number of subscriptions under 'subscribing to a newsletter'. For B2B sites, the number of qualified leads is an important benchmark.

Channel attribution shows you how interactions on several channels contribute to conversions.

Segment your results

In order to gain an understanding of your results, you segment them according to channel, visitor characteristics, content type, etc. This tells you who enjoys your YouTube videos, which content is suitable for your Facebook page, and so on. You will learn about where you are doing well or not so well. Many free and paid applications are available to perform this type of analyses quickly.

However, be careful with conversion results per channel. Marketers tend to use several channels: organic search, paid search, e-mail, banners, etc. In this context, conversions should not only be attributed to the last channel. Use *channel attribution* so that you can see how interactions on several channels contributed to the conversion. Google calls this phenomenon Multi-Channel Funnels.

Report the results

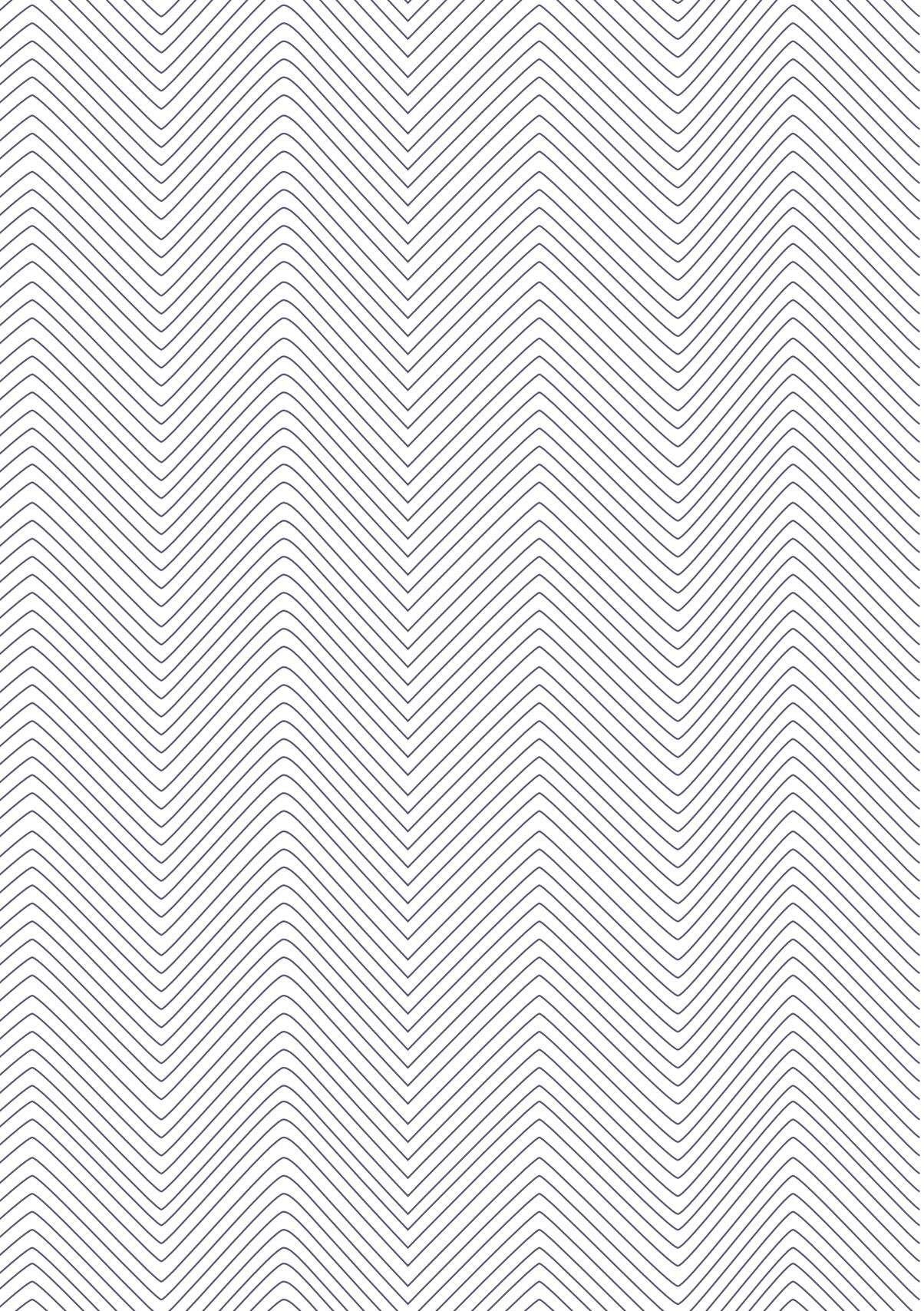
Automate the KPI reporting as much as possible. Analytics software can quickly export your results. You can then integrate them in your own documents and keep your stakeholders up to date on your results. Content owners, and editors in particular, need your results to do a better job and make adjustments where necessary. When certain content starts performing less well, they can check whether the content would be better used differently or should be made more powerful, for example.

You can summarise your main results in an interesting and clear way in an infographic, for example. This can then be shared with a larger group in your company at regular intervals.

The effectiveness of websites

The Financial Times Bowen Craggs Index of Corporate Website Effectiveness uses eight benchmarks to provide a quantitative and qualitative description of the quality of corporate and non-profit websites. You can use the index as a **benchmark** for your own website and as a guide for **best practices** and trends.

The first three benchmarks are universal: **site construction** (including navigation, orientation, integration, *on-site search*, search engine visibility), **messaging** and **contract information**.



Step 6

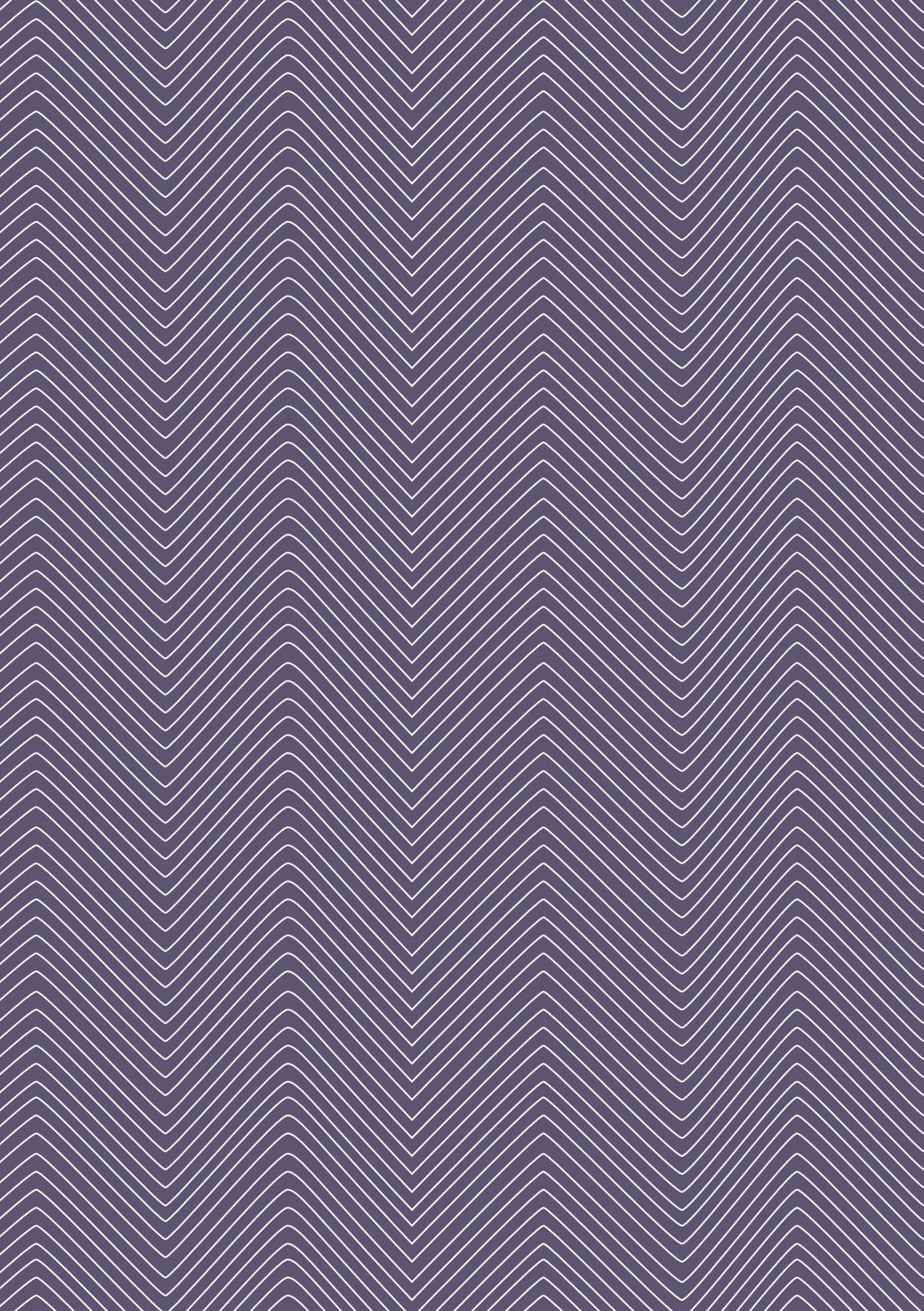
Automate

Content Management Systems (CMS) are essential tools for content structuring, metadata use, version control, content reviews and content storing, searching and finding. A CMS can automatically remove outdated content, automatically replace content by a newer version and inform authors that a certain piece must be reviewed, for example.

If you are developing a content strategy, try to contact the people who know your CMS as early in the process as possible. It is better to adjust your CMS to what your people want than to ask your people to adjust to your CMS. It is also a good idea to involve a content strategist or someone from your editorial department when the CMS developers are defining fields and introducing instructions and help texts. This helps ensure a better user experience. Also organise training sessions and create manuals, so that your CMS is used correctly.

Not all content creators have to attend the training sessions. It is probably more cost-efficient if you ask authors of occasional content to submit their text in a separate file. A content manager or editor can then import it into your CMS.

A CMS is the most important content management tool, but there are other tools as well. Large corporations complement their Content Management Systems with *website quality management software* (WQMS) to validate digital content based on quality profiles. A summary of content technology is provided by Ann Rockley's *Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy*.



Content governance checklist

1. Start with a vision and a transversal team

Gather the main stakeholders from as many departments as possible and put together a transversal advisory team to develop your content strategy plan. Think about the following questions together:

- × What are our content objectives?
- × Whom do we want to reach?
- × Why does our target audience need our content?
- × How are their needs related to our business objectives?
- × Which channels are we going to use?
- × What is unique about our content?
- × How are we going to measure our results?

2. Evaluate your current situation

Put together a governance team to assess the current state of affairs in terms of content.

- × Who is already involved in the content process (internally and externally)?
- × What are their responsibilities?
- × Does everyone understand his/her role?
- × Does everyone have the right skills?
- × Have the roles and responsibilities been well documented?
- × How do people work on content together?
- × Do you have the necessary specialists to create your content?
- × How much content do you have and what is the quality like?
- × How do you measure quality and impact?
- × What are your current content standards and policies?
- × Are they immediately available and integrated in the process?

3. Design the framework for your content governance

Ask your governance team to design a content governance framework:

- × What does your workflow look like?
- × Which roles and responsibilities are suitable for every stage in the workflow?
- × Does each piece of content have an owner?
- × Which standards and policies apply to your workflow and roles?
- × Has every stage, role, standard and policy been documented and is the documentation easily accessible?
- × Do you have procedures for assessing, improving and removing content? Who will be performing these tasks?
- × How are you planning on extending the lifecycle of your content and strengthen its value over time?
- × Who is responsible for content syndication and content curation?
- × How will you encourage user-generated content and who is responsible for this?
- × What are your Key Performance Indicators?
- × How are you going to gather and analyse data?
- × How are you going to communicate the results?
- × Do you have all the technology for working efficiently?
- × Does this technology meet the needs of the users?
Have you consulted the users in this respect?
- × Have your users received training to work with the technology?

4. Document everything

The governance team documents all aspects of content governance and integrates the documentation in the content process. This includes standards and policies about:

- × Accessibility of your content
- × Content formats and types
- × Content workflow
- × Editorial tone and style
- × Metadata
- × SEO
- × Social media
- × Usability
- × User experience and information architecture
- × Visual style

5. Introduce content governance

The elements below are often overlooked.

However, they are crucial to the success of the process.

- × Present content governance as a business case to your senior management.
- × Define the workflow, roles and technology.
- × Start small and focus on feasible steps.
- × Share the documentation.
- × Train and learn. Ensure that everyone understands everything: your content strategy, your workflow, his/her role and responsibilities, the technology.
- × Promote content quality.
- × Give information about changes as and when they occur.
- × Measure, assess and adjust if necessary.
- × Communicate successes.

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Cypres plans, creates and manages cross-media content for your customers, employees and other stakeholders. Our baseline is 'Content to connect', because we believe that information your audience perceives as valuable can build and strengthen your relationship with your audience.

Discover how we create strong content for you and your stakeholders.

The **Content Room** is Cypres' open knowledge centre and creative lab where we think about and experiment with new ways of creating, using and distributing content.

Local and international specialists talk about all aspects of content and content publishing. These discussed topics include content strategy, content governance, social content and content co-creation.

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