

GUIDE FOR YOUR
CONTENT LIFECYCLE

Optimise the effectiveness of
your content and the efficiency
of your content workflow



Content

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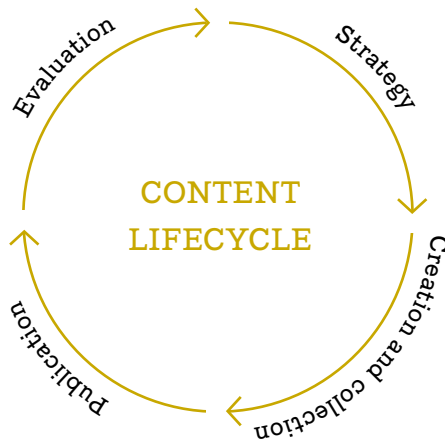
Content is alive

Today content is no longer static. It presents itself through various channels, comes from various sources and is tailored to different users. Content goes through a lifecycle of various stages.

This guide introduces you to the stages that content goes through and provides tips to improve your content lifecycle. By refining the content lifecycle, you optimise the effectiveness of your content and the efficiency of your content workflow.

The main stages of the content lifecycle are:

- × Defining a content strategy
- × Creating and collecting content
- × Publishing content
- × Evaluating content



Stage 1 Strategy

Define the outline

Choosing a content strategy is the first and most important part of your content lifecycle, because the content strategy will determine all the other, more operational and tactical stages.

Without a strategy for your content, you do not know where you are headed. In the strategic stage, you look at your content from the point of view of your customers and your own business objectives. You think of ways to tailor your content to your customers' evolving needs and interests and at the same time you establish how this can help meet your own objectives.

The better you tailor your content to your customers, the more interesting their experience becomes and the more effective you are.

The strategic stage involves the definition of:

- × **Content themes:** what do your customers want to know?
- × **Customer personas:** who are your customers?
- × **Customer scenarios and tasks:** what do your customers want to achieve?

Some related basic strategic questions are:

- × What are **your goals** for your content?
- × **Who** do you want to reach?
- × **Why** do your customers need your content?
- × How are your customers' **needs** related to your business objectives?
- × Which **channels** are you using?
- × What is **unique** about your content approach?
- × How do you **measure** your results?

It is a good idea to revisit these questions and your global content strategy regularly based on your content evaluation, which is stage 4 in the content lifecycle.

Stage 2 Creation and collection

Make your content dynamic

Working with the content lifecycle concept means that you think carefully about what interests the members of your target audience and you customise your content to suit their interests and needs.

This means that your writers must be able to produce content for the various channels used by your target audience. They also have to be able to 'co-create' content together with your audience, update their content more often and regularly enrich it with extra content sources. Editors(-in-chief) should think about ways of extending the lifecycle of a piece of content. This can be done by adding value with additional relevant sources or by giving the piece of content another purpose.

If you want to produce and distribute content in a dynamic way, it is useful to review the different roles and procedures in your workflow. It is important that you can expand, modify or quickly remove your content at all times. In a dynamic content approach, there can be no question of any 'final approvals'.

If you want to discover how traditional media companies reinvent their workflows and roles? Watch the documentary *Page One: Inside the New York Times* or read [this article about Forbes' new newsroom.](#)

"It is important that you can expand, modify or quickly remove your content at all times."

Stage 3 Publication

Define the right components and rules

In today's world, where different devices and platforms co-exist, it is no longer feasible to create content for every device and platform separately. Working with content components such as 'brief product descriptions', 'product properties' and 'product benefits' has proven much more cost-efficient.

Once you have divided your content into separate components, you can establish the rules for using your components in different circumstances. These rules determine when content is published, where everything is stored, how the archiving is done, etc.

The rules are typically worded as 'if-then' clauses. For example: "If the screen is smaller than 480 pixels, replace the long product description by the brief product description." This gives you the necessary operational flexibility to publish through various channels.

In order to use these rules effectively, you should also define content types (article, instruction, testimonial), content properties (length, target audience) and the required presentation format.

If you are not familiar with automatic content assembly, Rockley's *Managing Enterprise Content: A Unified Content Strategy* will give you more information. Another useful source is *Content Everywhere: Strategy and Structure for Future-Ready Content* by Wachter-Boettcher.

Stage 4 Evaluation

Optimise your content for your target audience

You can only improve your content if you know how your audience is using it. You should therefore analyse your content in order to discover what does and does not work for your customers. Try to understand the channels your customers are using, the type of content they prefer, the times when they access your content, etc.

Your final goal is your customers' satisfaction and an increase in your sales thanks to improved content quality and an expanded reach. Web performance analytics, searches and usability analysis, social and mobile media reviews, customer satisfaction surveys and brand monitors all help you improve your content.

You can use Google Analytics or any other analysis application to analyse your web traffic and use. The following data are interesting:

- × The **total number** of visitors
- × The number of visitors **per page**
- × The **search terms** used to find your site
- × The duration of a page visit and the **time** spent on your site
- × The **actions** that take place on the pages
- × The point at which actions **end**
- × The **entry and exit points**
- × The sites or **other points** leading visitors to your site
- × Possibly your visitors' **geographic location**

Content lifecycle tools

Which tools are essential?

You need the right tools to implement and manage a content lifecycle effectively. The essential tools for this are:

- × A content audit
- × A content management system
- × Content governance

A content audit

A content audit starts with the creation of an inventory or list of all the content you have and a description of its quantitative characteristics. A content inventory provides you with basic information: how much content you have, in which format (images, documents, applications), where the content is, how different pieces of content are related to each other and so on.

A content audit assesses what exactly is included in your inventory. Every content audit is different, so it is difficult to say how much time it will take exactly. This depends on the size of the content, how detailed the audit is, the experience of your auditors and the level of automation. *Our Content Audits Guide* will provide you with more information.

A content management system

A content management system (CMS) allows you to store and edit your content, organise the access to your content and publish your content in a structured way. With a CMS you can easily – and if you wish even automatically – update your content, manage different versions and translations of your published content, search your content, etc. There are many different types of content management systems, some of which have been developed for a specific purpose, such as e-commerce. [The article 'How to choose a CMS?' on our blog](#) can help you with your choice.

Content governance

Content governance allows you to monitor your entire content lifecycle in order to establish whether your content meets your business objectives, the needs of your target audiences and specific quality standards.

In order to design a content governance framework:

- × You split up the process of your content lifecycle into a number of sub-processes.
- × You describe the roles and responsibilities within each of these sub-processes.
- × You determine the standards and policies for your content processes and roles.

Of course there is no one right way to manage your content lifecycle. The governance framework you use depends on your needs, the available resources and the specific challenges your organisation faces. You can find out more in our Content Governance Guide.

Cypres nv

Vaartstraat 131, 3000 Leuven, België

T +32.16.29.77.37 – F +32.16.31.71.89

contact@cypres.com

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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