

A hand holding a glowing lightbulb in front of a blurred laptop screen. The lightbulb is the central focus, emitting a warm, golden glow. The background is a soft-focus office setting with a laptop and a mouse visible.

HOW TO CREATE **ENGAGING** eBOOKS

 **ROGER WEST**
CREATIVE & CODE



eBOOKS GENERATE LEADS FOR YOUR BUSINESS WITH EASE

An eBook is a B2B marketing tactic for delivering long-form content that is more informal, engaging and visual than a typical whitepaper. Whether presented as a PDF, SlideShare or other interactive content, eBooks are ideal for businesses that need to communicate complex information in an easily digestible format. The best eBooks are both entertaining and educational, providing useful information that aligns with your business' brand and marketing strategy.

“The eBook has become the current standard for the long-form content package. A lot of companies are moving away from the verbose white paper to the sleeker, more appealing eBook.”

-Joe Pulizzi, founder Content Marketing Institute (CMI)



3 REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD CREATE AN eBOOK

- 1** An eBook is a powerful lead-generation tool in your digital marketing arsenal
- 2** An eBook is a great tool to generate leads
- 3** An eBook will help you to establish your business as a thought leader in your industry





#1

REASON WHY YOU SHOULD CREATE AN eBOOK

An eBook is a powerful lead-generation tool in your digital marketing arsenal, but it can also be an intimidating project to take on. What marketer has time to write, design and promote a BOOK?!

Have no fear. An eBook doesn't have to be a massive undertaking. We've seen some that are only 5 or 6 pages long, or others that simply compile/repurpose existing blog posts, articles or whitepapers. There is no rule for how long it needs to be; it just has to contain valuable information that educates your reader about a topic they're interested in.

That's the first reason to create an eBook – to educate your audience, and provide them with a solution to a problem. An eBook should NOT be salesy or promotional; it is not a brochure. It should build trust with your target market by giving them information they need in an engaging format.

“eBooks are the hip sibling of the white paper.”

-HubSpot





REASON WHY YOU SHOULD CREATE AN eBOOK

The second reason to create an eBook—and probably the most important reason for marketers—is that it’s a great way to generate leads. We’ll go into more detail on this later, but basically, you use your eBook as gated content, and a user has to fill out a form with their contact information to access it. eBooks are proven to have more perceived value with users than blog posts, and customers are willing to fill out a form to receive that value.

“94% of marketers consider eBooks to be very or somewhat effective at lead generation.”

-Marketing Sherpa



#1

#2

#3

REASON WHY YOU SHOULD CREATE AN eBOOK

The third reason to create an eBook is that it helps you to establish your business as a thought leader in your industry. When people start looking to you for answers and see you as an expert in your space, they are more likely to come to you when they are ready to buy.

So...are you ready to get started?



6 BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AN eBOOK

1

MAKE IT VALUABLE

We've already mentioned this one, but it can't be emphasized enough. Your eBook has to provide more/better information than you would find in a random blog post or article. It must be valuable enough that a person would trade their contact information for it.

Some ways to increase the value and quality of your eBook is to:

- Cover a topic more comprehensively than you've seen elsewhere
- Compile and include relevant research if applicable
- Consider interviewing industry experts and including their perspectives
- Include real-life success stories or statistics that show positive results
- Include checklists, quick tips, infographics, how-to information or other practical tools

“B2B Marketers give the highest priority and dedicate most of their time to three main content types: blogs, eBooks, and whitepapers.”

-Kapost



2

MAKE IT TARGETED

For your eBook to have impact, it must address a specific audience. You may want to focus on one of your buyer personas at a certain stage in the buying cycle. By understanding exactly who you want to reach, you can better tailor your content to address their pain points.

3

MAKE IT COMPELLING

Lists, tips, and best practices with examples tend to be the most compelling eBook content types. People want information they can use and apply right away. Also, use active voice and story-telling techniques to capture your reader's attention.

4

MAKE IT CONVERSATIONAL

Your eBook does not need to be stilted and formal—like many white papers—to be educational or to help people. Write like you speak. Use “you” for a more direct and personal approach that engages your reader individually, and keep your writing clear, concise and casual.

5

MAKE IT VISUAL

People learn in various ways. Some people want to read a block of text, others want to skim through bullet points, and others prefer looking at an infographic, chart or photograph. Cover all your bases by providing your readers with all of these types of content. Make sure you put as much thought into the design and visual elements of your eBook as the written copy.

6

MAKE IT PROFESSIONAL

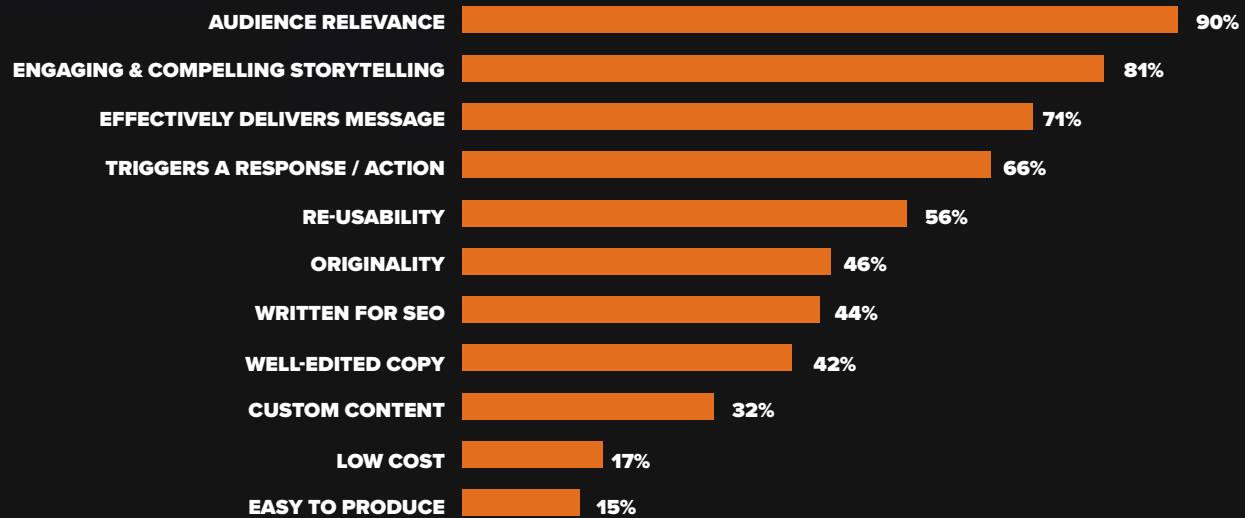
Even though you are able to publish your eBook yourself online, the finished product should be professional – visually appealing (no clip art or cliché, overused stock photos), reflective of your brand and well-written. Pay special attention to the cover, as this will be the image that you'll use the most when promoting your eBook.



MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE B2B CONTENT

Based on a survey of 285 senior marketing leaders and business leaders, 45% of whom are from companies with \$1B+ in revenues

“In your opinion, what are the important elements of effective content?”



Data Source: Regalix, February 2015

HOW TO CREATE YOUR EBOOK: A SIMPLE 10-STEP GUIDE

1

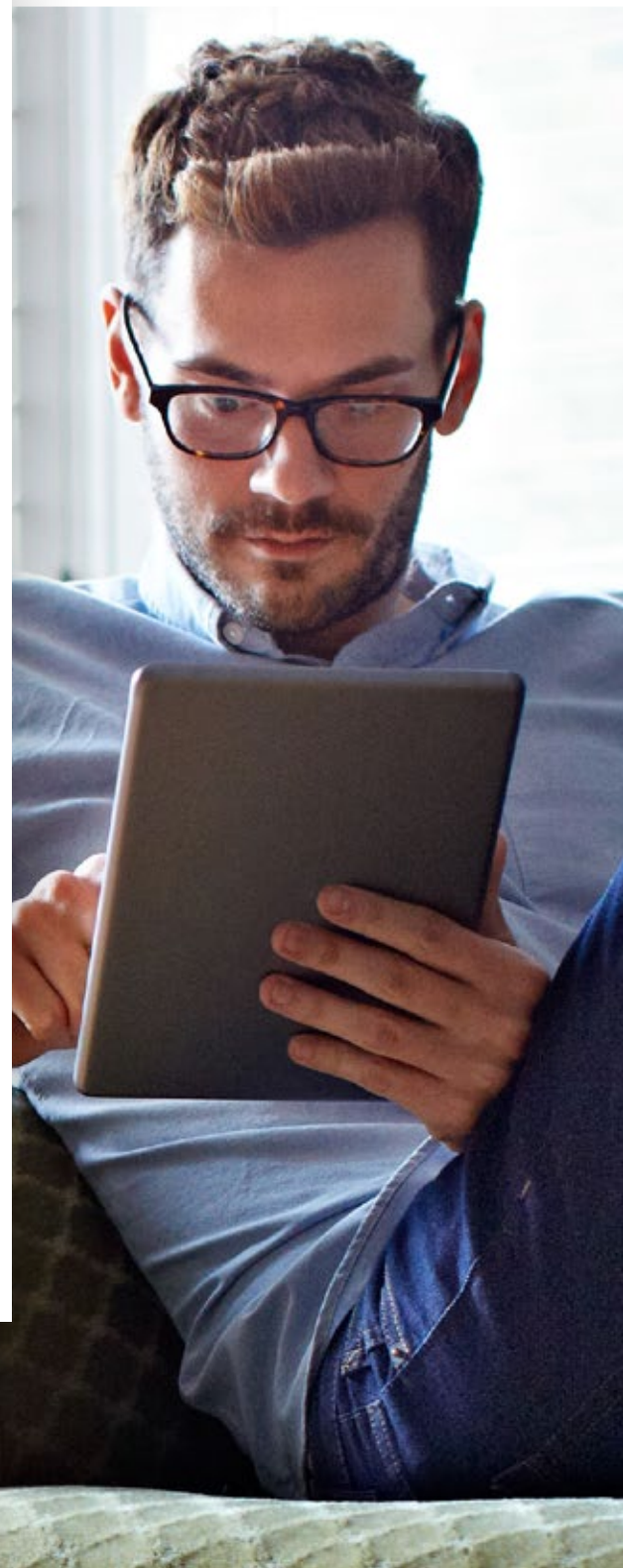
CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC

Pick a topic that your specific buyer persona would be interested in learning about, something that helps them solve a problem, and something that you or your business is an expert in. List out the questions your persona might ask and think of how you would answer those questions.

As we mentioned earlier, you may have a number of blog posts, whitepapers or presentations all on the same subject that you can repurpose and use as source material. If you have existing research on a topic, that will save you some time and effort.

Also, consider picking a topic that enables you to co-create the eBook with industry thought leaders, partners or associations, so you incentivize them to help promote it.

Finally, do an online search of your topic – if there are already a lot of current, well-written eBooks out there on that particular subject, consider doing something different, or give your eBook its own unique angle. You want your eBook to stand out.



2

CHOOSE YOUR FORMAT

Most eBooks are formatted as a downloadable PDF. This is convenient for users because they can save the file to their desktop and read it/ refer to it whenever they choose. In addition to a PDF, you may also want to create your eBook in an embeddable format, like [SlideShare](#).

A newer option to consider is an interactive eBook, which can be customized based on a user's preferences or interests and basically functions as its own microsite, allowing users to navigate through the chapters. An interactive eBook may also feature interesting transitions, animations, video, surveys or other components designed to make the material more engaging. If you decide to create an interactive eBook, be sure that it is responsive so that your users can easily access it on all devices.

3

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Start compiling the information you need for your eBook. Pull any research on your topic that you can reuse from other sources. You can also interview experts within your organization, or thought leaders outside of your organization. A good old fashioned Internet search can help you locate pertinent statistics or additional information. Just be sure to cite your sources.

Also, make a note of stats, chart, tips, timelines or other pieces of information that you might be able to convey graphically.

4

DRAFT AN OUTLINE

Review all the information you've gathered and start organizing it into a rough outline/table of contents. This is a book, so organize it into chapters. Put your outline through a review and approval process with any stakeholders involved before you actually begin the process of writing the copy.



5

WRITE YOUR COPY

Start with an engaging, compelling title for your book, utilizing keywords that will improve your SEO performance. As we already mentioned, be conversational. Include different kinds of copy – short paragraphs, bulleted lists, numbered lists, stories, case studies, quotes, stats, testimonials, etc. Change it up and keep it interesting. For more helpful writing tips, check out this blog post: [Cockroaches & Copywriting](#).

6

IDENTIFY/BUILD VISUAL COMPONENTS

If you have charts, infographics or other visual components you've already created for presentations or white papers on your topic, pull those and determine where they will fit into your eBook. Otherwise, take the research you set aside in step three and design some nice visual assets you can incorporate throughout. These assets can also be repurposed for using on social media.

7

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Provide multiple ways for users to interact with your content. Include links within your eBook to complementary resources, such as blog posts, videos and articles – both from your brand and from 3rd party sources.

Include sharable content like infographics, quotes or statistics and embed social media icons for easy sharing.

Also be sure to include a clear call to action for your eBook, such as calling for a consultation or asking users to share or review your resource.



8

DESIGN YOUR EBOOK

There are numerous free templates available online as well as tutorials for designing your own eBook in a PDF format. If you go this route, be sure to use your exact brand colors and brand assets, and that you customize the template by utilizing your own fonts, imagery, charts, etc. Remember, this needs to look professional.

If you don't have the time or resources to do this yourself, task it to your in-house design team or a [marketing agency](#) with experience in developing eBooks. If you opt to create an interactive eBook, you'll likely need to enlist the help of 3rd party experts, as this requires more web development.

9

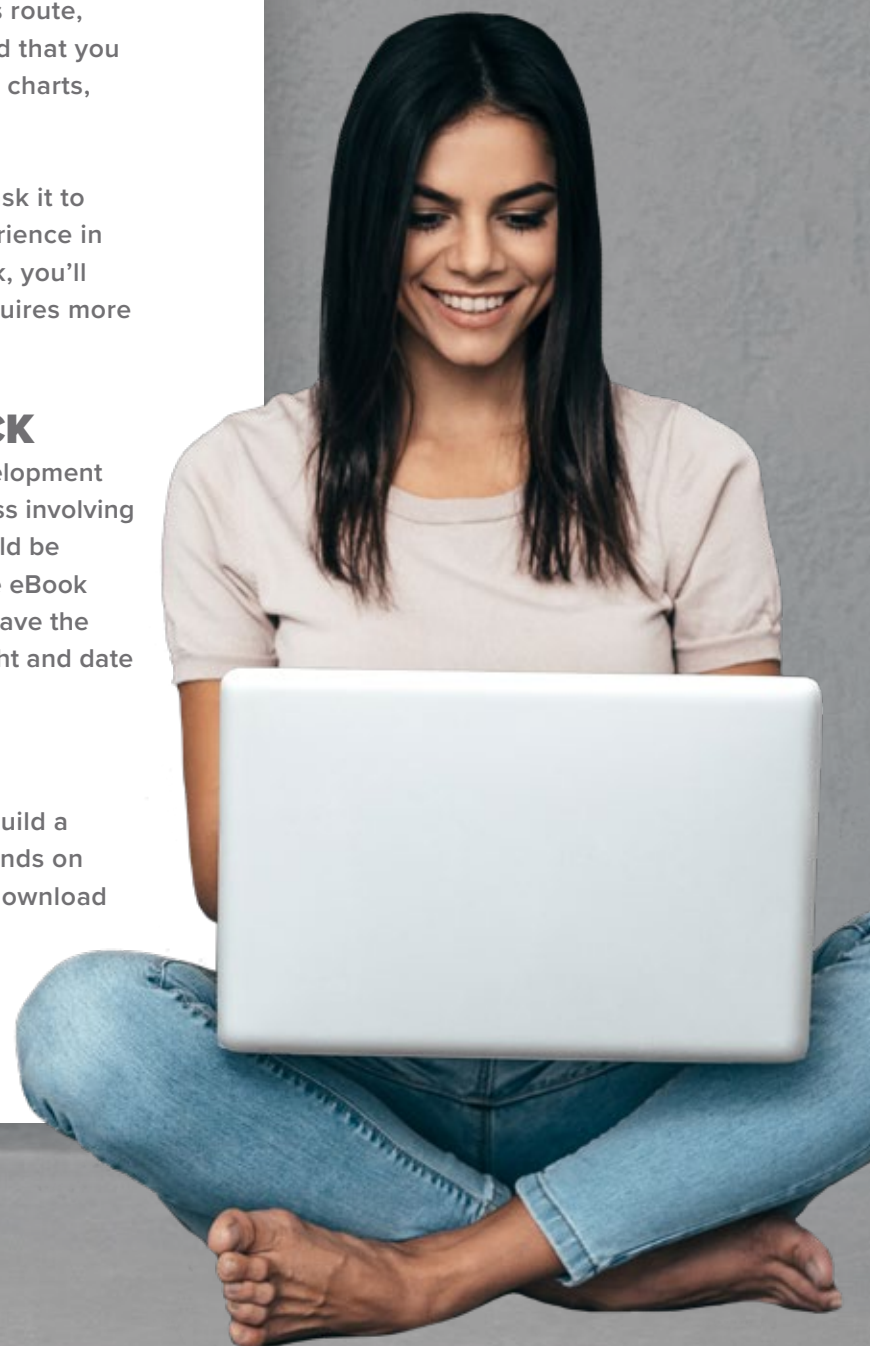
REVIEW, CHECK AND DOUBLE-CHECK

Once your eBook has finished going through the design/development process, make sure it goes through a thorough QA/QC process involving multiple sets of eyes. The book should be proofed, links should be checked, quotes and stats should be verified. Also ensure the eBook is meeting all of your brand guidelines, and that you own or have the rights to use all of the images in your book. Include a copyright and date on your finished product.

10

BUILD YOUR LANDING PAGE

Now you need to "gate" your new eBook. This means, you build a landing page where you drive all your traffic. When a user lands on that page, they will be asked to fill out a form to be able to download your free eBook. This is how you get qualified leads who are interested in your topic. Curious as to how to [build a great landing page](#)? We just happen to have an ebook on that too.





7 WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR EBOOK

Ok, now that you've written and designed an awesome eBook, and have built a landing page so people have to fill out a form to get it, it's time to promote it across as many channels as possible. Spread the word!

“Businesses that use marketing automation to nurture prospects experience a 451% increase in qualified leads.”

-The Annuitas Group





1

SET UP MARKETING AUTOMATION

If you have an MA system, use it. In an ideal world, you will want to integrate your eBook landing page with your MA system so new leads are automatically submitted, assigned to the right campaign, and added to the right workflow. To do this, at the very minimum you will need to create a form in your MA system, create a new campaign for the eBook, and create a workflow that includes two tasks:

1. **Send an email notification to yourself when someone downloads the eBook.**
2. **Send an automated email to users who've downloaded the eBook, thanking them for their interest.**

You can also enter them into a drip campaign to send them follow-up resources that they might be interested in. This is a great way to nurture leads over an extended period of time and keep your brand top-of-mind.



2 BUILD YOUR MAILING LIST

You'll want to promote your eBook via email (see the next step), so first you need to create your mailing list. This should be the target audience of people for whom you created the book. If you have a substantial subscriber base for your email program and can target that demographic in your existing database, great. If not, you may want to consider partnering with a third party so you can reach their contacts as well.





3

CREATE AN EMAIL CAMPAIGN TO DRIVE TRAFFIC TO YOUR EBOOK LANDING PAGE

At a minimum, we suggest creating a designed, responsive email with a Call-to-Action that links to your eBook landing page. Remember that you shouldn't just send out one email and forget it. You can send a text follow-up email to people who did not respond to the first email. You can also send out the original one again to different lists. Consider splitting your list and A/B test different subject lines to see which performs the best.

“Every dollar spent on email marketing offers a return of \$44.”

-Exact Target





4

SET UP A PPC CAMPAIGN FOR YOUR LANDING PAGE

Promote your eBook with a pay-per-click campaign. Use long-tail keywords to keep costs lower and to reach your specific market. Google Adwords is an obvious choice, but don't forget about the other ad networks out there, like [Bing](#), where you may get more bang for your buck. Set a budget, write some ads, and go!

“Businesses make an average of \$2 in revenue for every \$1 they spend on Google Adwords.”

-Google



5

DESIGN AND PLACE RETARGETING BANNERS

Retargeting is a great way to recapture lost traffic, and remind people about your eBook. Your banners will appear to visitors who've been to your site before, and will display on websites all across the web. You can also place these banners on related pages or blog posts throughout your own website.

“Retargeted customers are 3X more likely to click on your ad than people that haven't interacted with your business before.”

-Wishpond



6

WRITE A BLOG POST

Publish a blog post that covers some aspect of your eBook, without giving everything away. Encourage people to fill out the form to get the full eBook and learn more. Insert your banner ads (from above) into the post to drive more traffic to your landing page. Promote your blog post via social media, in your email newsletter, and through other available channels.



7 SCHEDULE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Schedule social media posts across all of your social media channels to promote your eBook. You can pull interesting facts, stats or quotes from your eBook to use as tweets. Ask people in your organization to share the posts for greater exposure. You can even provide templated posts to employees and partners to make it easier for them to share for you. Again, don't just post one update and call it a day. Keep promoting your eBook on a regular basis over time, and at different times of the day, to maximize exposure. Also consider social media advertising – paying for a sponsored post on Facebook or LinkedIn.

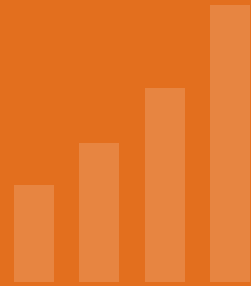
“84% of CEOs and VPs say they use social media to help make purchasing decisions.”

-Lenati



WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that your eBook is published, there is not much you need to do to maintain it. Revisit the copy from time to time and make sure everything is still current and applicable. Otherwise, all you need to do is refresh your campaigns, monitor PPC performance and tweak when necessary, and remember to send out new emails or do new blog posts to keep driving people to your landing page.



TRACK RESULTS

Once you've begun promoting your landing page via multiple channels, you can start tracking results. You can see how many people fill out your form/download your eBook for an overall perspective, but you can also see which promotional channel is bringing the most traffic to your page. Track PPC results, retargeting, and traffic that has come from blog posts, social media, partner sites, etc. to see which channels are most effective.

As you develop more eBooks, you'll be able to compare results to help determine what topics are resonating most with your audience.





SUMMARY

Now you know why your business should create an eBook, as well as best practices, a step-by-step guide, and how to promote your eBook and track results. Don't miss out on this opportunity to bring in qualified leads for your business.

And if you are still a bit intimidated, or concerned that you don't have the time or resources in-house to create an awesome eBook, we'd be happy to help. **Let's Talk.**

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