



B2B CONTENT SURVIVAL GUIDE



How to make it through today's perilous marketing terrain and reach your goals in one piece.

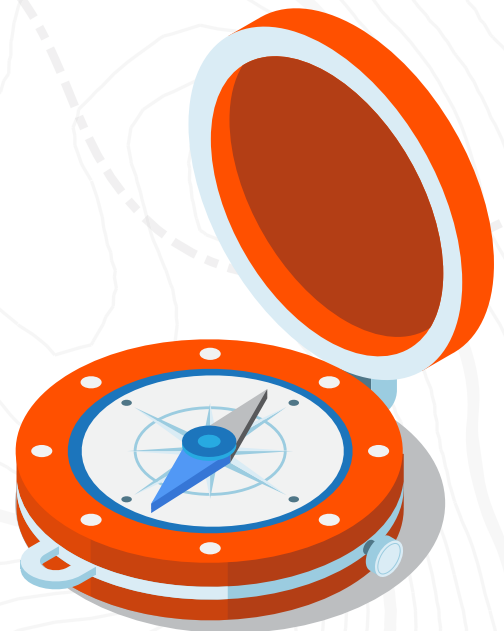
Only the smart survive.

Today's B2B environment can feel like an unforgiving wilderness. Marketers have to create content that meets harsh deadlines and the high expectations of sales and product teams while appealing to audiences that are ravenous for a continuous stream of new ideas.

This guide offers practical, proven tips on how to survive and thrive in the B2B marketing wilds and produce credible expert content with real value for the audiences you want to reach.

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SURVIVAL TIP #1

Always carry a compass.

Often in the wilderness, there is no trail. You have to find your own way. At those moments, you want a good compass to guide you safely to your destination — so you don't end up going in circles and living off boiled tree bark.

Content marketing likewise demands a strong sense of direction: knowing where you want to go and sticking to the plan that will take you there.



HOW TO KEEP YOUR CONTENT ON COURSE

- ✓ **Before you start developing your marketing material, get clear on the messages you want to deliver.** Write a map or framework so that everyone involved has the same messaging 'compass' to guide them — and be diligent about making sure they use it.
- ✓ **Build a focused content creation team.** It's important to have the right mix of skills and expertise available to execute your plans, but the bigger that pool of resources becomes, the harder it can be to manage and avoid inconsistencies and deviations. Try to keep it lean — and work with people you trust.



INTERNAL DISCIPLINE IS KEY

High-capacity marketing can demand an extensive mix of internal and external resources to deliver on time, at scale. When that's the case, be sure to set a strong internal messaging/brand 'screener' to review all work, uphold your standards and ensure consistency.

SURVIVAL TIP #2

Know your limits.

If you decided one afternoon to get out and enjoy nature for a couple of hours, you might walk a 5K forest loop — not attempt the five million-step Appalachian Trail.

Similarly, in marketing it's important to make sure your commitments match your capacity to deliver. An unachievable plan isn't a plan — and missing deadlines or delivering sub-quality material won't do anyone any good.



HOW TO BRING REALISM TO YOUR CONTENT PLANNING

- ✓ **Base deadlines on real knowledge of the resources at your disposal and a complete understanding of the review process.** Too often, marketing teams are asked to churn out a white paper in days or a major campaign in a couple of weeks — leaning on content creators who've committed the same to five other clients. Allow for practical — not optimistic — turnaround times, especially when relying on resources that aren't directly under your control.
- ✓ **Be complete in mapping the process** to avoid last-minute surprises like, "Oh, we also need that translated," or, "Our designer is in Bermuda for five weeks."
- ✓ **Prioritize rigorously.** Work with internal clients, business leads and other stakeholders to understand their priorities. Then make a plan to accomplish what truly matters most — in line with your overall corporate strategy.

WHAT IF EVERYTHING IS A PRIORITY?

The tough truth is it can't be — otherwise nothing is. While it may take some facilitation and lots of communication to get alignment on what matters most, corporate strategy, competitive urgencies, time-dependent events and hard sales targets may all be measures to help weight the relative importance of marketing activities.



SURVIVAL TIP #3

Go where the fish are.

You may have the world's best-stocked tacklebox, but if you're nowhere near a body of water, your odds of a successful fishing adventure are going to be slim.

The marketing correlative: *know your audience* — their 'habitat' and preferences, the questions they want answered and the problems they want solved.



HOW TO REACH YOUR AUDIENCES

- ✓ **Customers and prospects are people first, with wants and needs, challenges and interests.** Investing the effort in defining clear, detailed personas to understand what makes them tick is an essential step in any effective marketing plan.
- ✓ **Every industry has its own 'ecology' that shapes prospects' concerns.** The pressures in healthcare are distinct from retail; global companies have different priorities than small local businesses. The better you understand your audience's environment, the clearer you'll be about what they want to hear from you.

FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS

It's impossible to market effectively to every potential audience in every sector. Either your message gets diluted or you need to maintain multiple parallel campaigns, which is incredibly resource-intensive. Pick your top segments and direct your efforts there for real results.



SURVIVAL TIP #4

Prepare for the right conditions.

Hardcore outdoor enthusiasts know you need very different gear for camping in February than you do in July. Pack a Panama hat and summer hiking boots in mid-winter, and the best you can hope to get out of the experience is hypothermia.

Marketing is similarly context dependent. It doesn't matter how much content you generate: if it's not suited to your audience and their stage of the buyer's journey, all your effort will amount to nothing.



HOW TO CREATE ON-TARGET CONTENT

- ✓ **Every audience and persona have their own content preferences — types, depths and formats.** Do the research up front to pin down those likes and produce what your targets consume.
- ✓ **Prospects seek different information at different stages of the buyer's journey.** Even the most technically oriented customer wants a high-level understanding of your solution and how it will solve their challenges before diving into the details of a product guide. Tailor your content by journey stage.

WHAT TO USE WHEN

There are no hard and fast rules about the content types to choose for different stages of the buyer's journey. Every case will have its unique aspects. With the following as a starting point, you can use data as a guide to refine your tactics for what content types to use at each stage of the buyer journey:



AWARENESS

- Blogs
- Contributed articles
- eBooks
- Videos
- Use cases

CONSIDERATION

- White papers
- Overview presentations
- Technical solution sheets
- Business briefs (ROI/TCO breakdowns)
- Product and solution web pages

DECISION

- Demos
- App notes and documentation
- Customer case studies
- Technical presentations
- Customer news releases

SURVIVAL TIP #5

Build up to the big stuff.

You can't go from an every-so-often stroll in the woods to a month in the back country without working up to it. The bigger the undertaking, the more preparation, stamina and focus you need to bring.

In marketing, it can be hard enough to produce one really good piece of content in a month. Scaling up to a full, continuous program of output requires practice, commitment and experience.



HOW TO SCALE UP SUCCESSFULLY

- ✓ **Establish clear, formal practices and procedures for getting from idea to implementation.** Make sure everyone involved is aware of the steps — and sticks to them every time.
- ✓ **Producing content at scale demands active management.** Stay in constant communication with your content-creation resources, subject-matter experts and stakeholders so that everyone is on the same page, has up-to-date expectations, and is ready to do their part when the moment arrives.
- ✓ **Build a team of trusted resources based on your needs and budget.** That team may be internal, external or some mix of the two. What's key is that they share your standard and commitment with respect to execution.



IT'S NOT ALL ON YOU

When you need to scale quickly and don't have the time or budget to staff up from the inside, consider outsourcing to a trusted partner to expand your capacity instantly.

Meet your B2B marketing team.

DON'T GO IT ALONE

For companies that need help navigating and succeeding in today's B2B marketing wilderness, the **Zinc Marketing** team of experienced experts is a single source of support from strategy to execution.

Like the chemical element we're named after, we fortify, strengthen and bring resilience to your marketing efforts. We extend your in-house marketing resources and can even serve as a virtual marketing team for companies that don't have one — building awareness, engaging your audience and driving conversions.

Once you know which survival tip your marketing efforts need the most, we can help with a free content session:

zincmarketing.com/guide-me

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