

It's the  
**DIGITAL CURVE**

**The Marketing Directors Guide  
To Staying Ahead on the Web**

By Derek Little & Trailblazer Writing

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## WHAT IS THE DIGITAL CURVE?

The staggering pace at which the internet has transformed business over the past decade is nothing short of remarkable. And now that the digital revolution has fully arrived, B2B customers can't get enough. With access to free content, they can self-educate and lead their own buyer's journey.

On the other hand, some businesses are falling behind the curve because of ongoing change.

But there are many benefits to staying current.

For example, you can attract the right customers, control spending and scale up. This paper shows you how to stay ahead of the digital curve by leveraging your existing resources. But first, there are a few challenges.

**Digital marketing spend will be up 13.2%, while traditional advertising spend will be down 3.2% over the next year.**

## CHAPTER 1 THE WAVE OF DIGITAL DEMAND

With a strained look on her face, the Marketing Director shared a lengthy to-do list of content marketing projects. What her company needed most, but her staff was too overwhelmed to create, was long-form educational content. And who could've blamed them.

The internet has been growing rapidly since it was first introduced. And now, thanks to emerging mobile technology from Google, it's about to speed up even more. The result is plenty of change. For example, a 2014 report by Forrester Research titled, Death of a

(B2B) Salesman<sup>1</sup>, revealed that, “by a factor of 3 to1, B2B buyers want to self-educate versus talking to sales representatives to learn about products and services.”

Further, in a February 2016 Report, CMOSurvey.org<sup>2</sup> found that, “Digital marketing spend will be up 13.2%, while traditional advertising spend will be down 3.2%

**One of the top three things Marketing Managers dread most is getting all the work done in a 40-hour work week .**

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved 5 August 2016 – [Death of a B2B Salesman](#)

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved 5 August 2016 – [CMOSurvey.org Report](#)

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over the next year.” So what does this mean for you?

### Impact of Change

The new digital economy has shifted priorities for Marketing Directors. Not only are they saddled with right-brain creative activities like copywriting, but left-brain tasks like budgeting, planning & managing resources, project management and meetings.

As the pressure mounts, stress in levels are increasing. For example, in their 2014 StressPulse Survey<sup>3</sup>, ComPsych Corporation found that “64 percent of employees report having high levels of stress,” leading

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved 5 August 2016 – [StressPulse Survey](#)

to extreme fatigue, weight gain and sleep loss.

**Fast thinking makes us jump to the wrong conclusions.**

Further, a study on marketing stress by Workfront<sup>4</sup> found 1 in 4 marketers say they’re “overly stressed” or “stressed to the max.” 80% say they’re “overloaded” or “understaffed.” The report goes on to say one of the top three things Marketing Managers dread most is getting all the work done in a 40-hour work week. And a common bottleneck is the copywriting.

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved 5 August 2016 – [Workfront Survey](#)

## Implications of Change

Good writing is hard to create under pressure. And there's plenty of research to back this up. J.W. Wilson, Executive Director for the Advanced Learning Institute<sup>5</sup> says stress causes our brains to “downshift.” This means there's less blood flow to the areas of the brain that use and store knowledge.

When this happens, we think fast. And before we know it, the least evolved parts of our brain have taken over. For example, if you've ever tried giving a speech but suddenly started blubbering, you've just experienced

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<sup>5</sup> Retrieved 5 August 2016 – [Interview](#)

downshifting.

According to Daniel Kahneman, fast thinking is the part of your

brain you'd use if you were running from a bear. As the Nobel Prize winner in economics, Kahneman is the go-to expert on fast thinking. In his book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*<sup>6</sup> he explains that fast thinking makes us jump to the wrong conclusions.

But good marketing only comes from careful planning.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011  
[Time Magazine interview](#)

**If you're thinking too fast, you'll never see the distinctions that lead to deeper insights.**

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In other words, thinking slowly and gathering all necessary information. Further, research shows that fast thinking impairs more than just our rational ability.

### Struggle to Change

In 1995, Neuroscientist Antonio Damasio courted controversy when he published his book *Descartes' Error*<sup>7</sup>. In it, he demonstrated conclusively that emotion and reason both run on the same circuits. Therefore, you can only pick out what's important to you by articulating your emotions.

But if you're thinking too fast, you'll never see the

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<sup>7</sup> Anthony Damasio, *Descartes Error*, Avon, 1995, [Ross institute lecture](#)

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distinctions that lead to deeper insights.

Support for his findings come from Daniel Goleman. In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*<sup>8</sup>, he explained that people who are more successful generally have a higher Emotional Quotient (EQ) as opposed to a higher IQ.

So decreased ability to make sound judgments certainly makes content creation more difficult. In particular, educational content.

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional intelligence*, Bantam, 1994



## THE NEW DIGITAL REALITY

The truth is, gaining more control over your marketing can transform your business. While content marketing is now key, customers want quality content not just another sales pitch. According to the Content Marketing Institute, there's a difference between sales copy and content<sup>9</sup>,

“Companies send us information all the time – it's just that most of the time it's not very relevant or valuable. Good content marketing makes a person stop.. read.. think.. behave... differently.” But why?

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<sup>9</sup> Retrieved 5 August 2016 from [CMI Article](#)

Early behavioral research by Pavlov led to the theory of behaviorism. This

was the idea of behavior driven by reward or punishment. However, Cognitive Psychology surpassed this by seeing the brain as a complex computing system.

One of its most innovative thinkers was Neuropsychologist Donald Hebb. Beginning his career as a headmaster for a school in a troubled area of

**The process of learning creates new meaning for people throughout their lives.**

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Montreal, Canada, he went on to research how people learn after brain injuries. In his 1949 book called, The Organization of Behavior<sup>10</sup>, Hebb made the connection between physiological and psychological learning.

He found that when brain cells become associated with each other, they work together more efficiently, causing their neural pathways to continually grow stronger. In other words, “Neurons that fire together wire together.”

Further, he found that learning only happens when there is massive firing of brain neurons. Now known as

neuroplasticity, Hebb had discovered that the process of learning creates new meaning for people throughout their lives.

So to be truly effective, educational content must also be meaningful to the reader. But what do people find meaningful?

**You need to know what makes customers tick in order to create compelling content.**

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<sup>10</sup> Donald Hebb, The Organization of Behavior, John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1949 , [About Hebb's 3 Postulates](#)

## Planning the New Digital

Some of the latest research on what people find meaningful is called Positive Psychology, the science of happiness. In his book, Flourish<sup>11</sup>, one of the movement's founders, Martin Seligman, described how he believes psychology should help people achieve their personal best using core strengths.

While research shows helplessness is an inborn state of mind, he discovered people can overcome this by aspiring to something greater, what he calls well-being. Further, he discovered that this can be measured five

ways. These include positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement.

Psychology may seem like a nebulous science, but one thing's for sure. You need to know what makes customers tick in order to create compelling content. Based on this understanding, writers must dig for insights that make buyers stop and think. Unfortunately, this is a very time consuming process. And it's only going to get worse.

**IBM predicts knowledge will soon be doubling every 12 hours.**

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<sup>11</sup> Martin Seligman, Flourish, Free Press, 2011, [Interview](#)

## Creating the New Digital

In his 1970 book, *Future Shock*<sup>12</sup>, futurist Alvin Toffler first used the term “information overload.” He predicted that increasing amounts of information would eventually force people to delay decision-making or else make mistakes. Toffler’s future seems to have arrived.

Andre Agostini, in his new book *The White Swan’s Beyond Eureka and Sputnik Moments*<sup>13</sup>, says, “Human knowledge is doubling every 10 years, as per 1998

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<sup>12</sup> Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, Bantam, 1984

<sup>13</sup> Andre Agostini, *White Swan’s Eureka Moments*, 2013, [Lifeboat Foundation](#)

standards. In the past decade, more scientific knowledge has

been created than in all of human history. Computer power is doubling every 18 months. The internet is doubling every year.”

With the internet and other advances in technology, IBM predicts<sup>14</sup> knowledge will soon be doubling every 12 hours. An audience's tolerance for low quality information will surely decline. But what does this mean for content creators?

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<sup>14</sup> retrieved 5 August 2016 – [IBM, The Toxic Terrabyte](#)

**A perfect storm is brewing for Marketing Directors.**

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After overcoming all the aforementioned challenges, they'll need to use the highest levels of critical thinking in order to create content that stands out.

### Managing the New Digital

Few activities take more focus than critical thought. Throughout the ages, philosophers have challenged our thinking with profound arguments. But today, the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking<sup>15</sup> has demystified the process.

They say to think critically you must have a purpose,

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<sup>15</sup> retrieved 5 August 2016 from [NCECT](#)

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solve a question and declare assumptions. In addition, you must share a point of view and back-up everything with evidence. Next, you need to use concepts and interpretations to draw conclusions.

Finally, your content must lead the reader somewhere, with a result that has implications with consequences. But who has time for all that?

Probably not busy Managers or CEOs under pressure to generate leads. With more information, growing demand for better content and mental downshifting caused by stress, a perfect storm is brewing for Marketing Directors. Let's look at some solutions.

## THE NEW DIGITAL BUYER'S JOURNEY

In 1909, advertising expert E. St. Elmo Lewis modeled the buyer's journey<sup>16</sup>. He believed great copy should attract attention, awaken interest, and create conviction. His ideas described the moment a product first attracted attention to the final point of purchase.

His concept became widely known as the buyer's journey. For over a hundred years it's been a reliable framework marketers have used to successfully advertise and drive sales. But now, thanks to the internet, it doesn't work as well as it used to.

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<sup>16</sup> The Bankers' Magazine, 78 (April), pp. 710-711

In the old days, typically over a decade ago, a B2B salesperson

would begin by qualifying a lead. They'd call a hundred people, get ten to pick up the phone, set two meetings, arrive, present the product and make plans to demonstrate. This approach got results, but it was expensive.

Further, customers didn't necessarily get what they wanted either. You can still try this approach, but by the time your salesperson has got them on the phone,

**The B2B market is becoming more demand-driven.**

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they've already been to your website and decided whether they're interested or not. In other words, the B2B market is becoming more demand-driven.

### Navigating the Digital Buyer's Journey

According to a report by Tiffani Bova, Senior Research Analyst for Gartner Research<sup>17</sup>, the old buyer's journey as a linear process no longer exists. It's been replaced by a new one that's fluid, dynamic and continuous. "A customer may go from exploring a solution to evaluating then back to exploring. But then they may suddenly jump to engage or purchase," she says.

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<sup>17</sup> retrieved 9 August 2016 from [Gartner Research](#)

Further, thanks to smart apps, customized information portals and real-

time access, buyers have never been more educated. For example, Bova says technology buyers begin their search spending 69% of their time gathering information from external sources. And that's before they ever contact a vendor. And it's not just the IT department that's making the decisions anymore. Business buyers have an ever increasing role.

**There's one type of content focused on the value B2B buyers want.**

## The New Demands of Digital Buyers

A report by Gartner <sup>18</sup>says that over half the employees in a business unit expect to be involved in technology purchases in the future. And, 64% of them have at least one IT person in their department. But their needs are much different from IT.

Technical buyers are concerned about things like fit, functionality, supportability and ROI of existing IT. Business buyers, on the other hand, want business value. A business buyer in the finance department wants financial analytics and apps. They could care less

about the technical product details.

But since they're involved at the early exploration stage, they can play a key role in determining which products IT evaluates. Fortunately, there's one type of content focused on the kind of value all B2B buyers want – the white paper.

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<sup>18</sup> retrieved 10 August 2016 from [Gartner Research](#)



## THE MOTHER OF ALL DIGITAL STRATEGIES

In their 2015 B2B Technology Survey Content Report<sup>19</sup>, Eccolo Research found that most buyers consume 2-5 assets before they're ready to make a purchase.

Buyers reported they read the same number of emails as white papers. But when asked which of those two assets were most influential in making a buying decision, the white paper was the winner by a wide margin. So if white papers are that influential, it only makes sense to use them more strategically. In

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<sup>19</sup> retrieved 10 August 2016 from [Eccolo Content Survey Report](#)

his book "White Papers for Dummies"<sup>20</sup>, white paper expert Gordon

Graham describes three main types. These he compares to ice cream flavors.

### 3 Digital Strategy Options

Graham says the most common type is Vanilla. This is a product backgrounder focusing on features and

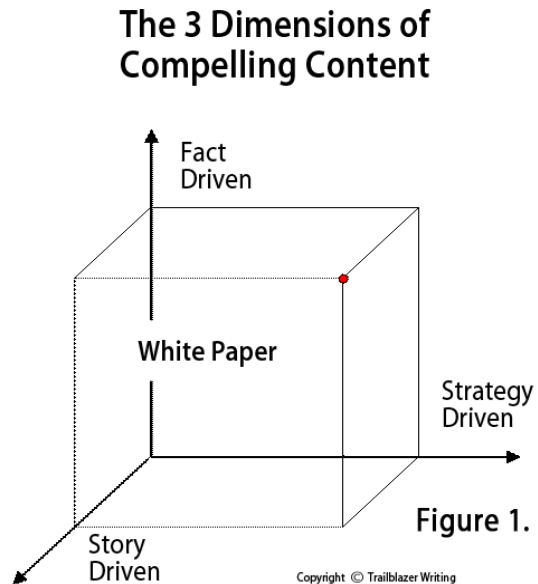
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<sup>20</sup> Gordon Graham, White Papers for Dummies, John Wiley & Son Ltd., 2013

**A single white paper provides a rich source of relevant content ideas.**

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benefits. While useful for analyzing technical issues and total cost of ownership, it's mostly read by late stage technical buyers.



Then there's Chocolate. Rich and satisfying chocolate delves deeply into customer problems and solutions. This type is particularly effective for generating leads by offering business value to business buyers. In the process, it can position a vendor's product as the best option.

In between the two is light and lively Strawberry. This flavor is often presented as a numbered list. It's useful for comparing product options. It can also cast fear, uncertainty and doubt on competitor products.

## How to Maximize Digital ROI

Creating all the different types of content a B2B company needs can quickly become overwhelming. It can also be quite costly. On the other hand, a single white paper provides a rich source of relevant content ideas.

But your content plan could include story-driven content like social media, case studies, blogs, articles, videos and illustrations. Further, it could contain fact-driven content such as infographics, charts, graphs, diagrams, checklists, slide decks and more. Where does

one begin?

According to a study<sup>21</sup> by CMI, most companies haven't yet

figured this one out. They found that only 32% of B2B firms have a documented content management strategy.

An effective content strategy contains all the elements of compelling content. Because without any of them your content could fail. These include a conceptual framework, plenty of well researched facts and

**The bigger the core idea of your white paper is, the more content you'll be able to source from it.**

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<sup>21</sup> retrieved 10 August 2016 from [CMI Content Marketing Trends Report](#)

storytelling for context and meaning. (See Figure 1).

Using your white paper as the source or reference point for your content strategy means most of these three elements are covered.

### How to Scale Up Your Digital Strategy

Since white papers are typically 2,500 to 5,000 words in length, parts could be sectioned into articles, speeches or other numerous assets. The bigger the core idea of your white paper is, the more content you'll be able to source from it. But just re-purposing any old

white paper won't do.

The best type of white paper for re-purposing is the problem/solution type. Because they have a strong conceptual framework, they provide an excellent foundation for re-purposing.

Good problem/solution white papers answer strategic questions such as; who's our target audience? What do they want? Why is this important to them? What will pique their interest? What's our objective? What's the

**Your white paper topic could be as effective at differentiating your company as your USP.**

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topic? What content should be included?

Further considerations include your offer, point of view, core ideas, research sources and SEO keywords. And finally, what's the next step? The topic could help centralize and coordinate an entire content campaign.

### How to Launch Your Digital Strategy

The focal point of any white paper is the topic. Advice on creating one comes from Michael Stelzner, author of *Writing White Papers*<sup>22</sup>. He says, "It is important to drill down to specific areas of focus."

He suggests key aspects of a broader topic or key benefits can help shape your topic. The perspective it's written from could be important too. A topic that's not too broad or narrow might provide more latitude for re-purposing.

In this sense, a good white paper topic could be as important for differentiating your company as your USP (Unique Selling Proposition).

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Stelzner, *Writing White Papers*, White Paper Source, 2007

## DIGITAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Proving value to people who don't understand marketing is a top source of stress for Marketing Managers. For example, how do you measure long-term ROI from a syndicated article?

Taking a longer term view, there are clear efficiencies to a white paper strategy that make ROI obvious. These include less cost, less production time and consistently better results.

## Financial Results

A reasonable savings estimate from re-purposing content could be a 30% reduction in cost. But let's break that down. The initial cost of content development is administrative and managerial. This might include sourcing talent, reviewing proposals, establishing fee agreements, reviewing work and managing changes.

If internal staff was used, other costs might include salaries, benefits, overhead, materials and equipment costs. Therefore, a re-purposing strategy would create instant efficiencies at the planning stage.

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### Productivity Results

While each type of content involves new unique work, such as the artwork for an infographic, time would still be saved on initial planning, concept development, researching and materials reviewed.

Further, less need for project management would make mistakes less likely. So a re-purposing strategy would be able to generate instant savings.

### Marketing Results

Says Philip Kotler <sup>23</sup>, professor of marketing at the

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23 Philip Kotler, According to Kotler, Amacom, 2005

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Kellogg School of Management, “A key aspect of marketing is that its impact is cumulative.” In other words, without a marketing strategy to provide direction you'll be going around in circles.

So what's needed is an overarching marketing strategy that coordinates all messaging around a repeatable brand message.

### Summary

Selling B2B products and services just got more challenging thanks to the web. Customers want more

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value and there's no going back. But you can stay ahead of the curve with content that helps buyers self-educate and make the right choice. At the same time, your content can position you as putting your customer's needs first.

Buyers agree white papers are most influential, and the problem/solution type is best for explaining big ideas. Further, once created, a white paper could be the source for a wide range of content. And the ROI is obvious.

One-stop shopping was an innovative business strategy back in the 1920's. It was the idea of buying

everything you needed in one place. Then you didn't need to drive all over town.

If Marketing Managers want better results in less time and with less cost or stress, creating a white paper is a one-stop solution. A good white paper will help you and your company succeed in the marketplace.



## FREE DIGITAL MARKETING TOOLS

[Download these five free tools](#) to help you get started with a white paper content marketing strategy.

### Content ROI Guide

These ROI Guides will help you analyze your costs and give you the proof you need,

### White Paper Development Guide

This White Paper Development Guide will help you to generate a customer problem list.

### 21 Content Re-purposing Tactics

These 21 Content Re-purposing Tactics offer some starter Ideas to get your digital marketing going.

### Content Re-purposing Checklist

This Content Re-purposing Guide shows you which tactics work best for your needs.

### White Paper Writer Checklist

If you've never hired a white paper writer, this checklist is a good starting point.

## About the Author

Derek Little is a B2B Copywriter and President of Trailblazer Writing. He specializes in copywriting for the manufacturing and software industries. In addition to white papers, he provides a wide range of copywriting and marketing services.

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