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WRITING TEAM



STORYONE WORKBOOK:  
**WHY YOUR  
CONTENT IS  
UNDERPERFORMING**



**And 15 Ways  
to Fix It**

# Introduction

In a digital world shaped by information overload, content fatigue, AI-generated noise and fake news, you may find that your marketing efforts aren't as effective as they used to be.

That's because trust and credibility have emerged as decisive factors in successful content marketing.

According to Statista, 61% of respondents cite trust and credibility as the most important benefits delivered by their content.

Building trust is now a strategic imperative.

Content that's perceived as trustworthy and credible lays the foundation for lasting relationships and positions you as a reliable voice in a fragmented landscape.

So, how do you build trust and credibility into your marketing content?

It starts by understanding what your customers need in order to make informed decisions, then giving them balanced, transparent guidance backed by evidence.

That's why we created this workbook. It's designed to help you spot whether a piece of content builds confidence with customers or erodes it.

You score your content against 12 questions and strengthen it using 15 proven tips.

This workbook is based on our StoryOne process, developed over three decades of helping organizations like Dell, Oracle and Thomson Reuters deliver marketing content that builds trust and credibility with customers.

It will help you turn content that's underperforming into more credible and useful information that drives results. Let's begin.

Build your best content campaigns on **StoryOne** — the storytelling process for technology leaders.

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# PART 1: EVALUATE

## 12 ways to score your content

Most marketing content underperforms because it doesn't deliver the trust and credibility your customers need to make informed purchasing decisions. Customers rely on your content to educate them and help them evaluate their options.

If you provide what they need, you'll be remembered. If not, they may move on to a company that does.

Choose a recent asset and score it against these 12 questions:

**Yes = 1 Somewhat = 0.5 No = 0**

1. Does your content reflect how the customer thinks and talks about their challenges in a way that feels honest and trustworthy? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
2. Is the customer framed as the central character, with their emotions, pressures and ambitions shaping the story? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
3. Are the emotional cues grounded in real business moments to build connection? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
4. Does your content deliver tangible benefits that align with customer priorities, such as cost savings, agility or competitive readiness? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
5. Does the content include outcomes-driven language and moments of urgency to turn interest into action? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
6. Does your content use plainspoken, confident language that strives for the clarity and tone of a trusted advisor? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
7. Does your content share key takeaways, practical advice or frameworks that readers can apply immediately to their decision making process? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
8. Do you treat each piece of content as a self-contained asset that delivers value while encouraging the reader to seek more? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.
9. Does the content provide practical insight and stand on its own as something worth remembering? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.

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10. Does your content include customer quotes, analyst data, independent research and sourced statistics to add validation, authority and specificity?

**Score:** \_\_\_\_.

11. Does your story capture attention early on and leave the reader with something memorable? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.

12. Does each sentence build upon the next, moving the story forward, clarifying an idea or creating momentum? **Score:** \_\_\_\_.

**Your Total Score:** \_\_\_\_\_ / 12

### Score between 10–12 | High-Performing Content

This asset is doing many things right. It's clear, relevant, credible and strategically positioned to help customers move toward an informed buying decision. Your customers will notice the quality and appreciate your efforts.

### Score between 7–9.5 | Moderately Effective Content

This asset has many solid elements, but it likely contains weaknesses that reduce its impact. It may inform the reader but not influence the buying decision as strongly as it could. It's time to strengthen the weaker areas so the piece is robust and persuasive.

### Score below 7 | Content That Needs Improvement

This asset may contain useful information, but it is underperforming in the areas that most affect buyer trust. This often happens with AI-generated content. At first glance it may seem adequate, but on closer inspection, it may be missing the authenticity and deeper meaning customers are looking for.

Your score is a helpful guide to whether your content is working.

A strong total score with one weak capability usually points to an opportunity to raise that weakness to the quality of the others.

A low total across several capabilities usually means the content needs a more structured reassessment.

Use the fifteen tips in the next section to raise the level of trust in your content.

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# PART 2: IMPROVE

## 15 ways to improve the level of trust in your content

If your content isn't delivering the trust your customers are looking for, it's fixable. In most cases, developing trust and credibility requires tightening the message, improving the relevance, sharpening the focus and making the content more useful to the buyer.

Use these fifteen tips to help ensure your content gets opened by your customers and shared with team members:

1. Position your customer as the hero of the story by using language that mirrors how your buyers talk about their challenges.
2. Use customer interviews, reviews and sales insights to uncover phrases and emotional triggers that resonate.
3. Frame the story from the customer's point of view.
4. Highlight tangible benefits, like increased efficiency, reduced risk, greater agility or competitive edge.
5. Incorporate compelling calls to action (CTAs) that are tailored to where the reader is in their buyer's journey, using urgency sparingly to be most effective.
6. Weave in motivational language grounded in outcomes, tying your content back to real deadlines, market shifts or evolving buyer priorities.
7. Adjust the depth and tone to each audience.
8. Match the format to the stage of the buyer's journey.
9. Align the content to the reader's needs.
10. Ensure your content feels confident, clear and human, like a trusted peer.
11. Make sure your writing reflects your buyer's world, such as their working language, environment and even their business dynamics.
12. Include details, quotes or shared experiences that make readers feel seen and understood.
13. Replace generic statements with clear and valuable takeaways.
14. Cut filler content and repetition.
15. Make sure the content offers genuine guidance backed by credible evidence.

These fifteen tips will strengthen any piece of content and deliver more valuable information to your customers.

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# Give your customers the content they want

Developing trust and credibility in your content rarely happens by accident. It comes from making deliberate choices about what is relevant, credible and useful to your customers in ways that feel authentic and meaningful. The practices in this workbook were designed to help you do just that.

If you would like a deeper discussion about how to strengthen your marketing content, schedule a call.

There's no cost or obligation. It's a working session where we help you to connect more effectively with your customers.


You'll walk away with useful ideas for delivering greater clarity, credibility and connection that you can apply right away.

If you choose to work with us after the consultation, you'll get 25% off your first project.

## [SCHEDULE A CALL](#)

**Wishing you success,  
The McLellan Writing Team**

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