Create.
Engage.

CONSULTANCY
MARKETING NOW

The ultimate playbook to help you achieve maximum ROI

The way we work has changed forever. And that means you need to evolve your marketing approach to match.

With the world of work having gone from fully in-person, to fully virtual, and now a blend of both, it's only natural to wonder where the balance lies in terms of your marketing.

The biggest questions we're getting right now are: What's the mix? Do we go all the way back to physical events? Do we stay fully in the digital? How do we manage it all?

You're probably asking yourself these questions for your consultancy too.

To help set the scene before you begin to answer them, it's worth remembering three key points:

1. **Hybrid is here to stay** – Your clients and consultants are no longer on site every day, and this means that many of your 'tried and tested' marketing tools are no longer effective. The well-known tactic of sitting in your client's canteen, waiting to strike up a conversation with an executive walking by, doesn't work anymore.

2. **Your clients are now accustomed to this** – Pre-pandemic, attending a webinar was a mark of laziness. Sitting in the office staring at your screen meant you had nothing to do. The shift to hybrid working has changed this, and webinars are now a go to resource for industry insight. This shift in client behaviors and the acceptance of digital marketing gives your consultancy the opportunity to reach new clients at a scale never previously available to firms outside of the big players.

3. **Your competitors are already doing this** – Savvy consultancies have taken this as an opportunity to breathe new life into their marketing, actively investing in improving their digital presence. Competitors in your space are doing this right now. Their webinars and podcasts are attracting clients as you read this. And if you're not doing the same, you'll be losing out to those firms that are.

What does this mean for your marketing?

While there's always going to be a place for 'physical' marketing, to win in this new hybrid world your marketing strategy needs to embrace a digital first approach.

But with challenge comes opportunity, and this is a key thing to remember for your marketing strategy. With clients embracing remote working and international travel still very much restricted, your clients will have more capacity to absorb the digital content you serve up, and more space in their diaries to attend your webinars, guest on your podcasts and ultimately meet with you to discuss how you can help solve their business challenges.

But before you rush ahead to create all that engaging content, you need to get your strategy right. Because without a strategy, your marketing won't land with the people you want and won't deliver the results you need.

So where do you start?

Unsurprisingly, the amount of digital content being created has skyrocketed since 2020, and you've only got to take one look at your inbox to see that there's a lot of noise out there.

The key thing for you is to stand out from the crowd. And the only way you can do it is by honing in on **what** makes you different, **who** you're selling to, and **why** they want to buy from you.

At Create Engage, we help our clients do this with our Digital Marketing Framework. It's a simple, practical, and effective guide to being really clear on what you're offering, who you're talking to, and what will resonate with them.

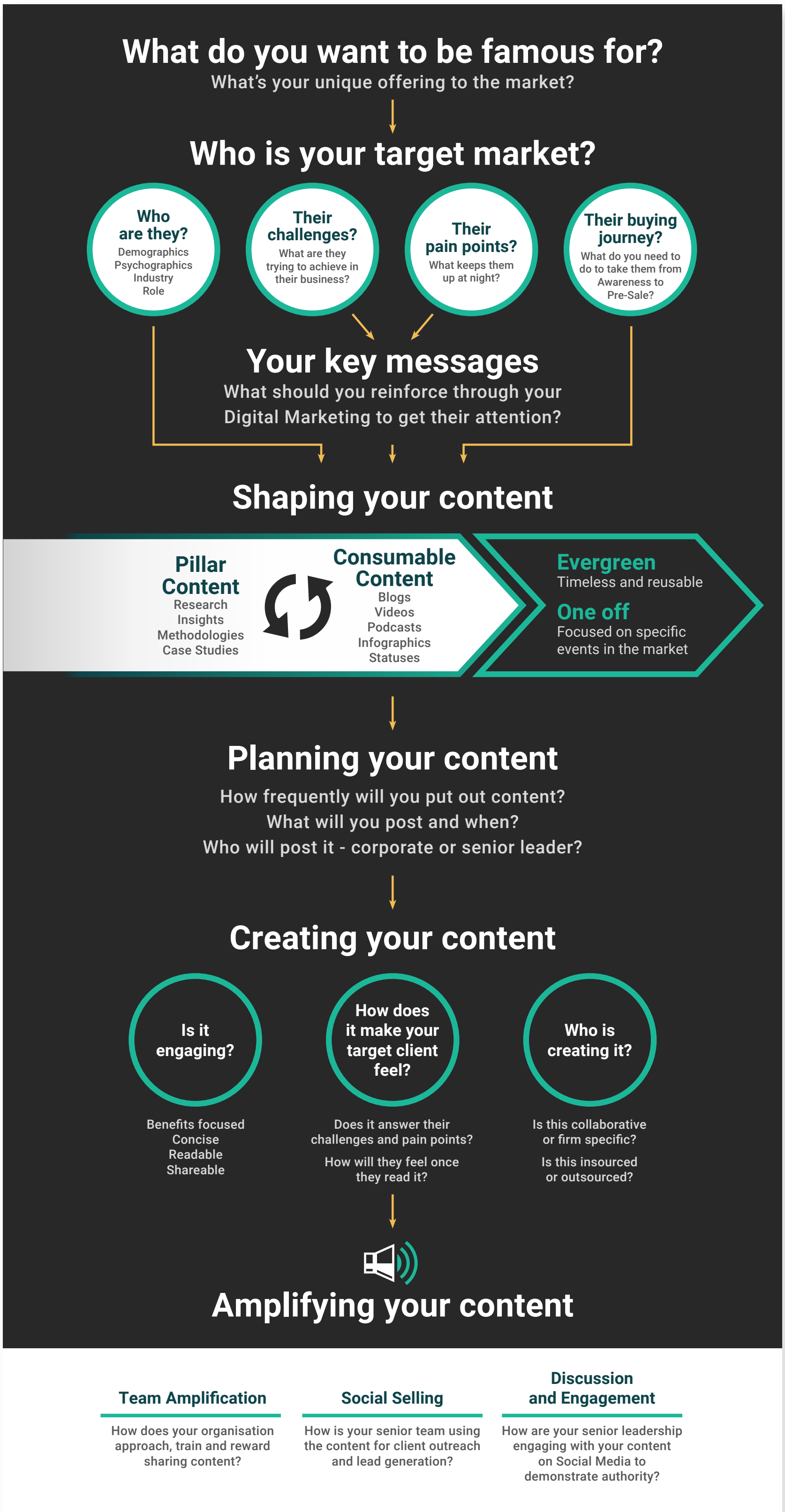
Your Digital Marketing Framework

We **always** start with this whenever we work with our clients.

It works across all levels of consulting, whether you're an independent looking to grow your reach, a small company focused on a specific vertical or a large firm looking to refine your marketing strategy.

And it works very well for the hybrid world, it focuses on the principles of what's special about you and who you're trying to market to, before going into the tactics.

There are seven steps, and we'll take you through each of them. By following this framework you'll have everything you need to create high quality marketing that generates ROI. But if you skip it or cut corners, you'll just end up wasting time, adding to the noise out there and seeing nothing in return.



STEP 1

What do you want to be famous for?

So many consultancies start by saying “we have great people, we have great projects, we do transformation, and we've won loads of awards”. But none of those are unique. Every one of your competitors says the same. So instead, focus on what makes you different.

You could have a different methodology, you could have a unique approach, or it could be something around your branding that’s completely original.

If you’re reading this and thinking “well we’re not the biggest, we don’t have a unique methodology or approach, so how can I stand out?” there’s a simple answer – niche down. Dig down into what you do and find an area where you can say you’re the best, the biggest or at the very least you have a strong track record in.

> For example, if you’re a ‘transformation’ consultancy, you’re going to be stuck in the middle. There are hundreds of these. But by niching down, say to a sub sector within the work you do or an element of the transformation process, you can become distinct.

It may be that you specialise in the energy industry and that the area you have the most knowledge in is actually how to transition a project from Change to BAU. That right there is a niche.

So instead of being “A leading transformation consultancy” like everyone else, you're now: “The BAU transition specialists, helping energy companies embed change and deliver benefit from it.”

That small shift in focus takes you from the middle of the pack to the leader in the field, and that’s the best place to be! This “super specific” approach also works at a campaign level and when you’re revising your entire marketing strategy.

Once you know what you want to be famous for, the next step is focusing on who you’re trying to target.

STEP 2

Who is your target client?

If you only spend time on one part of this framework, make sure it's this one.

It's easy to say that you want to target CEOs. But no two CEOs are the same. So, to really resonate with your target clients, you need to understand who they are, what they want and what pushes their buttons.

You need to get specific. And the questions in the framework help you with that.

Who is your client as a person?

Sometimes it's easier to actually think about a physical client - a real person - and build a persona around who they are, their role, their industry, their values and their attitude.

What are their challenges? And their pain points?

It's important to dive into the challenges your target market faces, because people are more likely to want to avoid pain than they are to seek pleasure. Your clients are worried about how their businesses will bounce back to pre-pandemic levels, whether hybrid working will affect performance, and whether they can deliver to their own customers. So, focus on alleviating their pain rather than offering them solutions to help them achieve some distant future goal.

Where are they in the buying journey?

Does your target client already know about you, or what you offer? If they don't, you can plan your marketing around creating awareness. If they do, it's about building on that awareness to take them to a sales conversation.

By answering these questions, you can start picturing what your target client looks like. There's a reason that we often reference our client's actual clients when developing these avatars - because it really focuses you on who you're marketing to and what their needs are.

This is critical when you're coming on to the next steps of the framework, which is all about your key messages.

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STEP 3

What are your key messages?

Your key messages are the standout statements that should resonate with your target clients. The easiest way to build them is to list out your USPs, what you know about your target clients, and what you know about your industry and then combine these to write the phrases that you know will appeal to your target clients in your industry specific context.

This makes your life easy from a marketing perspective, because if you have a list of 10 key things you know will appeal to your target clients, you can craft your marketing content in a way that you know will resonate

Struggling to put this list together?

Start by going right back to the basics of marketing theory, by thinking about the three sections of your marketing funnel, and the stage your potential clients might be coming in from:

Top of the funnel - Your clients have a problem, but they've got no idea if there's a solution for it. It could be that their processes aren't working. All they know at this stage is that something's wrong.

Middle of the funnel - They've started to do some digging into how to solve their problem. If it's a process problem, they've started looking into process improvement like Lean Six Sigma or another methodology.

Bottom of the funnel – They're ready to take action. They've decided on a methodology, narrowed it down to two or three consultancies, and they're deciding which one to go with. This is where it moves into a sales conversation.

Your marketing needs to address clients at all of these levels, and in a way that guides them from the top to the bottom, and we'll walk you through all the tactics you can use a bit later.

But thinking about the key messages themselves, an easy way to create them is to envisage one of your sales meetings. Think about the lines that you can say to every client in your space, where they always light up, and say something like: "that's a brilliant point, I'd never thought about it like that."

Those lines can become your key messages. And once you know **who**, you know **what**, and you know **your messages**, it's onto the content itself.

This is where you really need to focus your marketing for the hybrid world that we now live in.

> **Once you know who, you know what, and you know your messages, it's onto the content itself.**

STEP 4

How to shape your content

Before you dive right in and write a single blog post, or put a random video together, stop. This is a really bad way of doing marketing. If you keep putting out pieces of disconnected content like this, you're not going to see any results.

At this stage, we always recommend taking a step back and considering how your marketing ties together.

Pillar content is a good place to begin. This is a really big, tangible piece of content like an eBook, a podcast series or a toolset you can give away to prospective clients.

There are two reasons why:

1. **Good pillar content** gives you something to share with clients that can demonstrate your expertise and win you work. It sets you apart from your competitors and shows you're there for your clients. You're giving them tons of value, it's not just take, take, take.
2. It also gives you something that you can chop up into **consumable content**.
For example, an eBook can become five blogs, ten short videos, a whole podcast series, and multiple webinars. In this way, one piece of good pillar content can give you enough marketing content for 1, 2 if not 3 whole months, meaning you can spend your time focusing on your business and not worrying about the next blog you need to write.

When creating pillar content, you'll want to strike the right balance between something that's evergreen (that you can re-use over and over) and something that's one-off (related to specific events).

Take our Digital Marketing Framework, for example. It's proven to work across all consulting firms, big and small, super niche and those spanning multiple verticals/horizontals. This is our evergreen content.

And this eBook we've put together for you is the one-off content. We've taken our evergreen framework and applied it to today's hybrid world. It's that simple.

> **Now we've covered the theory, let's move onto the practical elements of content.**

STEP 5

How to plan your content

Once you've decided on the types of content you'll be creating, it's time to plan the specifics around what content you'll be creating, who'll be posting it, when to do it, and how often.

What content will you put out?

You should decide this based on what you've identified in step 2 – your target client (and within that, how they consume content).

So, if you're targeting senior executives who you know spend time on LinkedIn, then planning regular posts to that platform makes sense. Alternatively, you might be targeting a client group who prefer something meatier than short social posts, so an eBook or webinar could work best.

How frequently will you put out content?

It really depends on what you're saying. If your content's massively valuable for your target clients, then you could post something every day. Or you might find that a bi-weekly piece of content gets the same total engagement as your daily posts. The key is to track your engagement – your likes, comments and shares – keep testing, and do more of what works.

Just remember that we're talking about marketing here. If you go too hard on the 'selling', you'll annoy people. You need to strike that balance between offering valuable, helpful content and weaving in the occasional sales messages to help steer prospective clients into your BD funnel.

If you're unsure on how to strike this balance, start by focusing your content 100% on giving value and 0% on selling. If you've followed our framework correctly and produced high quality, value-giving content, your target clients will search you out on their own. They know their problems, and they know you have a solution. They don't need you to point it out to them.

STEP 5 CONTINUED

Who'll post your content?

Will the content be posted from an individual, or the business account? Will a message be best delivered from a senior leader, or one of the consultants?

There are no right and wrong answers here. Just make sure that wherever a piece of content is published from, the rest of the company or support network all share it to increase the reach and get it in front of as many prospective clients as possible.

STEP 6

How to create your content

Now you've worked through the framework, you'll be ready to structure your marketing so that it resonates with your target clients. You'll know what you need, and you'll be ready to start getting it written, designed or recorded. But before you get too carried away, there are a few final questions you should ask yourself as you're doing this.

Is it engaging?

Why go to all this effort if your content doesn't compel people to read it, watch it or listen to it?

Your target clients want to know what's in it for them, so focus on the benefits and make sure there's lots of value that people can take away with them. They're also busy people, with short attention spans, so make it concise and readable.

When doing this, there are two really practical tips we'd recommend that will instantly improve your content:

1. **Speak to your audience.** Most of us learn to write professionally at university, where essays have to be in a certain academic style. The problem for many people is that they carry this style with them into their professional life.

   This is why you see countless white papers talking in the 3rd person: "organisations should", "firms should", "consultants should". The problem with this approach is that it doesn't engage your reader. It doesn't talk to them.

   To correct this, focus on talking to your reader, using 'you' and 'your' instead of 'firms' and 'organisations' – or worse 'we' and 'our'. To do a quick test, count the number of times these words appear in your writing. If there's more 'we', 'us' and 'firms' than 'you' or 'yours', you should start again and make it more reader-focused.

2. **Simplify your language.** Big words are another problem that stems from university days. We're taught that complex language makes us sound intelligent, so we keep using it. But when it comes to engaging copy, the opposite is true! Simple language is more engaging, for everyone, regardless of their seniority.

   Focus on this when you're creating your next white paper. You can use tools like Hemingway to check yourself. If you're writing at anything over a 'high school' reading age, you need to simplify!

How does it make your target client feel?

Think back to step 2 again. Does your content address your audience's challenges, or alleviate their pain points? Put yourself in their shoes and think about how you'd feel once you'd consumed the content.

If you can honestly say that it would improve their life, then you're good to go.

Who's creating it?

Partnering with other organisations can be a great way of demonstrating "social proof", showing your prospective clients that you're well connected and well regarded in the industry.

When creating content, think about how you can bring others in to share their insight and lend their weight to your social proof. Look at 11:FS, for example, who run multiple podcasts where they bring together senior people from their network to discuss key industry topics.

This is hugely powerful, as it gives their prospective clients value through the content discussed, and it acts as massive social proof for 11:FS. Clients will think: "if this many people are willing to come on their podcast, their work must be amazing."

Is it insourced or outsourced?

You're an expert in what you do and when it comes to your specialism, you might think it's going to be easy and time efficient for you to create the content. Especially at a time like this when budgets are tight.

But the opposite is usually true. Hiring professional marketeers can give you a higher quality product, produced quicker. This lets you focus your time on your critical business priorities while getting the content you need much sooner. A win-win for you.

If you think your area's too specialist for an external agency to understand, think again. We've helped clients create content on topics ranging from IR35, to Customer Experience to technical Excel modeling. And our clients tell us our content beats that produced by their competitors.

So, you need to give this serious thought. If it's a social post or a blog, you're probably best-off writing that yourself. But if you want to write a 4,000-word eBook or produce a podcast. You're likely to get a much better result by using an external agency.

Once you've answered these questions, you're ready to start creating your content. Learning how to craft each individual piece of content would take an entirely new framework on its own, but you'll find some ideas later in the eBook.

> **Once your content is ready to send out into the world, it's important to get it seen by as many of your target clients as possible.**

STEP 7

How to amplify your content

The final part of the framework, and probably the single largest area we see big consultancies getting wrong time and time again, is amplifying their content: getting it in front of as many prospective clients as possible.

It sounds simple, so it's often dismissed as unimportant, but it's critical to your marketing success - we've seen clients grow their revenue significantly simply by expanding their reach.

If you have a big team, everybody in your team should be sharing all your content. They're your sounding board, your network that will reach your buyers.

So even if you use this framework to create a blog post that doesn't link to anything, it can still have impact if your team shares it. Because it demonstrates expertise, it sparks conversations, and it gets you involved in what's happening.

This is where you can use your content to drive engagement, discussions, and new business development conversations - ultimately giving you the value that you've spent your time and money to achieve.

> **That completes the framework itself. And now we're going to explain how you can put things into practice straight away, to start marketing quickly and effectively.**

How to start using the framework now

At its simplest, marketing for consulting firms revolves around two things:

1. **Expertise:** Do you have the knowledge your clients need, and can you prove it?

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2. **Experience:** Can you show your clients you've done this before?

If you can prove those two things, your clients will be more likely to have a conversation with you.

Once you're clear on what sets you apart, your target client, your key messages and the content you'll be creating, you need to create it.

And unless you have to go through a committee to get your content out, **just start doing it!**

We recently helped one of our clients launch a webinar in under a week. We were talking to them about the idea on the Monday, we had all of the webinars set up on the Tuesday, we had invites out on the Wednesday, and we had 90 people signed up to attend on the Friday. That's the speed you can work at.

To give you some ideas and inspiration here are some of the things you can start creating straight away.

LinkedIn content

LinkedIn is where most, if not all of your target clients will spend at least some of their working week, whether at home or in the office. So, if you have the resource available, this is where you should be publishing content regularly each week.

You can publish case studies as text-only posts, upload slide decks and infographics with your latest research, and share videos that demonstrate your knowledge. If you can demonstrate your expertise and experience, prospective clients will be more likely to drop you a message to find out how you can help them.

Blog posts

Just as important as LinkedIn content at the top of your funnel, blog posts that are targeted to your clients' needs and address their pain points are a simple way to position you as an authority in your niche, while also driving traffic to your website through keywords that your prospective clients are searching for.

"How-to" articles are an easy place to start, where your tips and advice convey your approach and your expertise without feeling salesy. Thought leadership posts about current topics work well too. And once published, you can then point people towards your posts from LinkedIn.

Email newsletters

Your email list is one of your most valuable assets, because it allows you to have a direct conversation with people who've willingly signed up to hear what you've got to say – and then nurture them to become clients.

They're not only brilliant in their own right but they can drive people to all your other content, whether it's your blog, your podcast or an in-person event.

Webinars

With long haul business travel no longer the norm, and most companies moving to flexible working, your clients have more time in their day and want to use it to learn, improve and get ahead in their careers.

They're looking for the latest insight and are willing to give their time for sessions that will move them forwards. That's where webinars can be so powerful. You're filling this gap for them, while putting your consultancy front of mind, at the exact time they're wrestling with the challenges your firm solves.

The best part, webinars are easy to set up; take some content that you've already got, such as sales packs or training material, and start running them as webinars instead.

Videos

Video isn't being used by nearly as many consultancies as it should be.

Quite simply, if you have a smartphone that's less than two years old, you've got a 4k camera, which is better quality than most film crews. And with your phone, and five minutes of your time, you can share your knowledge.

Podcasts

While launching a podcast series takes 8 to 10 weeks, you can get started by speaking to your prospective podcast guests, who are all target clients of yours.

So why not start thinking about who you could speak to, what you'll ask them, and carrying out the interviews so you can start to build that content bank for the launch of your podcast? You could have 10 interviews recorded with CEOs, COOs, CFOs or whoever your target client is, ready to go live.

With hybrid working in mind, you can also use your podcast to get your foot back in the physical offices of your prospective clients – by inviting them to be a guest and asking if you can come to their office to record it.

You'll have 15 minutes on either side of that interview to have a casual conversation about business, when they might have otherwise said no to an in-person meeting.

We're not going to get into the technicalities of how to launch your own podcast, but if you're interested, we can send you a link to a podcast we created on exactly this topic – contact us on the details at the end of this eBook and we'll send you the link.

Testimonials

Video testimonials are one of the most powerful tools in your marketing arsenal, but they're something we see so few consulting firms do.

So why not use this time to expand on your traditional "challenge-approach-results" style case studies and take your testimonials to the next level?

If there's a client that you've just finished a project for, and you've got a good relationship with, now's the time to ask them to record a simple testimonial on their smartphone that you can use for your marketing.

Not only is this great for your marketing, but when you're pitching a client, you're instantly going to be above everyone who's got the standard approach because you've got something different.

And finally… reuse, repurpose and repeat

The one thing we can't reiterate enough, is to make the most of every piece of content.

If you record a webinar live, you can chop it up into micro videos to run on your social media channels, or also turn it into a podcast episode. Maybe even transcribe it and turn it into a blog.

By doing this, you create a series of other pieces of content that you can repurpose and reuse. This dramatically increases the reach of your marketing, and the effectiveness of the time you spend putting it together.

These are just some of the things that you can start doing immediately and cost effectively to spark new BD conversations.

Stop reading. Start doing.

You've now got everything you need to get your marketing moving, start engaging your target clients and grow your BD pipeline.

We hope you find our framework easy to follow. If you go through all the steps, it's proven to help you start conversations, create opportunities, and get more business. If you get stuck at any point, need something explaining, or want us to run through the framework with you, just let us know – contact details are on the next page.

Create.
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About Create Engage

We're a specialist digital marketing agency for the consulting industry, working mainly with management consultancies and professional services firms across law, recruitment, and accounting.

Unlike many marketing agencies, we know how consulting services are very different from products, we understand your space and the challenges you face.

Contact us

To talk through anything related to our Digital Marketing Framework, or for any other help with developing your consultancy's marketing, please get in touch.

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