



AN MX HOW-TO GUIDE

THE CONTENT HUDDLE

A Structured
Process for Ideation

GET BEYOND BRAINSTORMING

GATHER AND CREATE THE CONTENT YOU NEED FOR DIGITAL SUCCESS

Now more than ever before, effective B2B demand generation requires an approach that goes beyond promoting your products and services to creating a library of content that delivers real value to your customers and prospects.

But creating valuable content can cost an extreme amount of time and resources. It also can't be a one-person job. It needs to include expert and organizational perspectives.

Our agency was challenged to create more content using our subject matter experts. In doing so, we created the solution, the Content Huddle. It helped us shift as an organization to quickly get the ideas we needed out of people's heads and into content that compels and engages. This guide will show you how to create a variety of content to help your marketing efforts succeed.





INTRODUCTION

Holding a brainstorming session can be tricky... we've all attended them and some have been well worth our time. But frankly some have been a hot mess. So what's the best way to gain valuable, new perspectives in an efficient, successful manner? The answer is the "Content Huddle," a structured, focused ideation session that helps you build an arsenal of content to fuel demand generation efforts for an entire year or more. With a little advance planning and disciplined follow-up, a 90-minute Content Huddle will allow you to receive a wealth of stellar (and realistic!) ideas for content from stakeholders who are experts in the topics your target audience cares about.

This guide will help you:

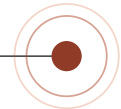
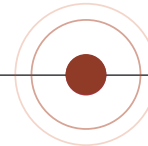
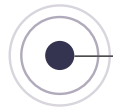
- Get in front of your customers and prospects with content that really resonates.
- Increase the volume of high-quality content you generate.
- Make the best use of your SMEs limited time.



When you implement Content Huddles into your content marketing process, you will be amazed at how many concepts will flow out of it. A few sessions can provide ideas for a year!

INTRODUCTION

THE CONTENT
CREATION PROCESS



SMEs AS STORYTELLERS

Before we dive into the process for running a great Content Huddle, let's talk first about who you'll invite to the party. Because if you're managing B2B content marketing and only leveraging resources within the marketing department, you're missing out on a big opportunity!

Undoubtedly, you have internal help you can turn to—subject-matter experts (SMEs): These are the people in your organization who can connect authentically with your audience. Your SMEs already speak the language your audience knows and uses everyday. They can get techy with your technical buyers and talk dirty with your industrial audience. When it comes down to it, content from SMEs provides storylines you just can't create on your own.

Think adding SMEs into the mix sounds easier said than done? Worried that your SMEs have too many other priorities? They do. But with a documented, well-

communicated process, you can smartly loop SMEs into your content marketing programs with great success. During your Content Huddles, you'll be able to leverage insights from these folks in a way that both respects their time and provides you with the ideas and insights you need.

What do SMEs Bring to Your Content Marketing Efforts?

1. A point of view that will sound authentic, not like a marketer's point of view
2. Experience from "the trenches," creating, building, solving issues related to your buyer every day
3. The right language. They will "speak" and use the same terms as your buyers
4. A new audience to consume your content – if they've been involved in creation, they'll be more apt to share it!

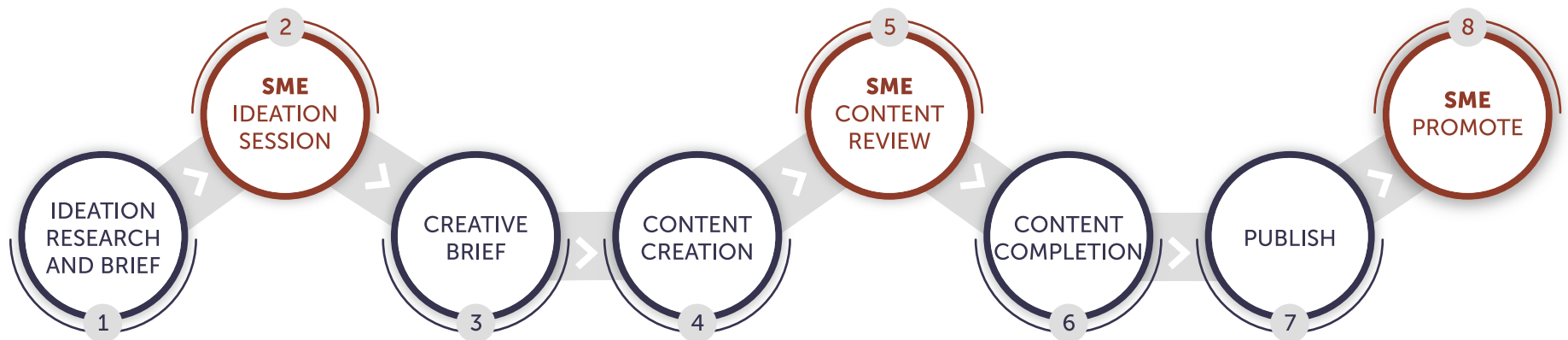
SMEs AS
STORYTELLERS

STEP 1

THE CONTENT CREATION PROCESS

A multiple-step content creation process can work wonders for your team, particularly when it's shared ahead of time and agreed to by all members of your content team before you actually hold your Content Huddle. And here's a big tip—after your session is over and it's time to show your

creative brief or outline with your SMEs, don't do it over email! Plan an in-person, 15- or 30-minute meeting with your SME during the creation process that will serve as a great touchpoint to get their feedback (and it will be a date on their calendar they will be accountable to show up for!)



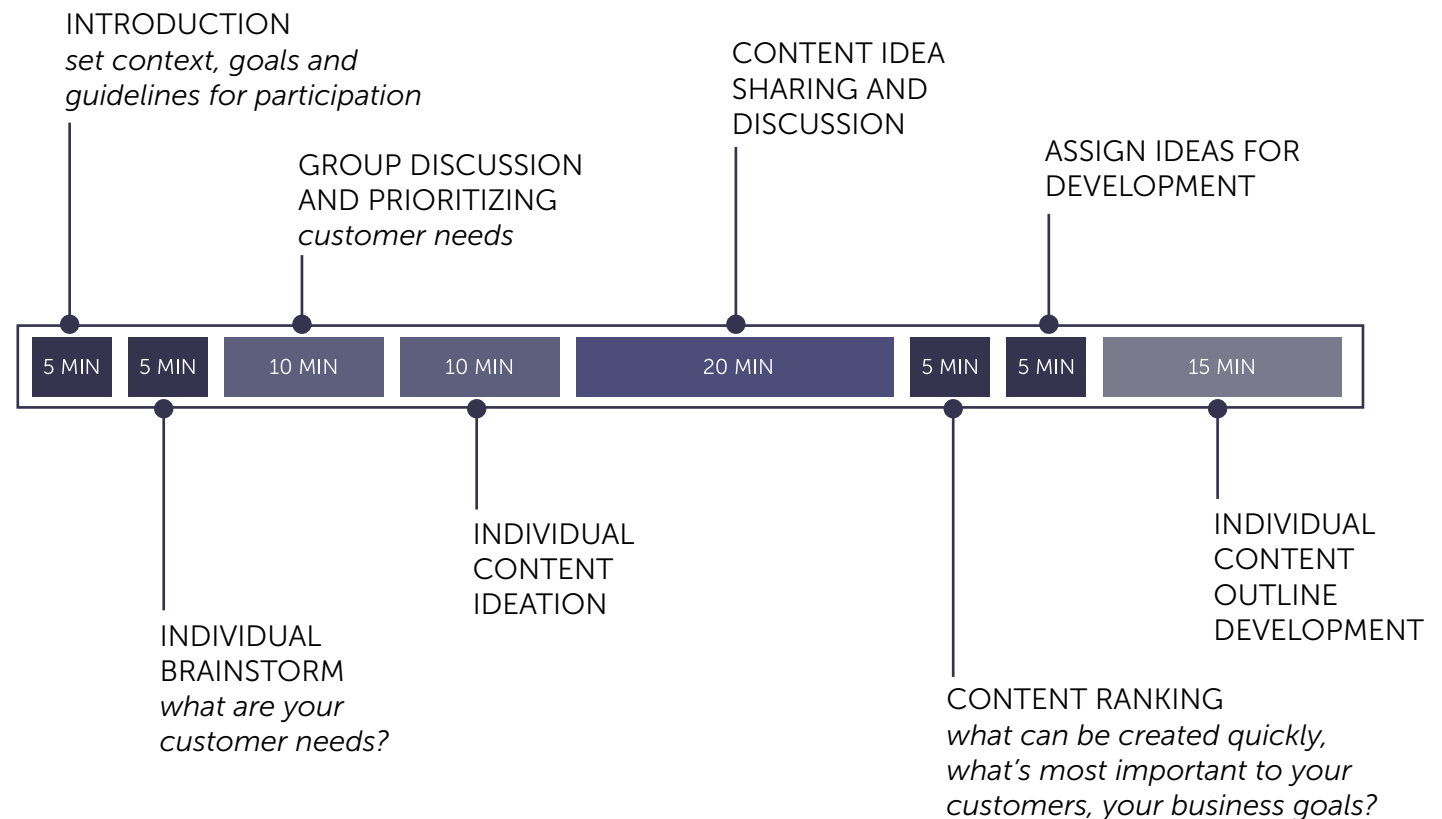
THE CONTENT
CREATION PROCESS

STEP 1

STEP 2

CREATE A TIGHT AGENDA

Plan for your Content Huddle sessions to be a minimum of 90 minutes. Scheduling over lunch is often an ideal time (especially if lunch is provided for the participants!). Adhere closely to this timeline and you will find that the time will be very well spent during this brainstorming session, producing a myriad of content ideas, some with enough detail to begin working on right away.



STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

CREATE AN IDEATION BRIEF

Don't start your Content Huddle cold—be sure to create an ideation brief and send it to all attendees in advance for a pre-read. You'll get the most out of your session by providing a thoughtful document that outlines some content background and research to help lay the ground work. The document should be thorough, but take no more than 15-20 minutes to read and process.

CONTENT IDEATION BRIEF

GENERAL INFO

Topic: _____ SME: _____

Management expert: _____ Target audience: _____

SEO KEYWORDS / PHRASES

Direct keyword opportunities include: _____

Related topic keyword opportunities include: _____

Volume / difficulty of all related keywords: _____

RELEVANT MATERIALS

Website links: _____

Existing materials: _____

Management insights: _____

RESEARCH

Related influencers: _____

LinkedIn groups: _____

Potential collaborators: _____

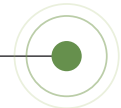
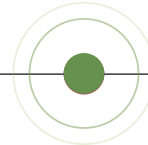
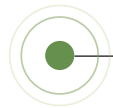
Other: _____

Connect with us to get a copy of our ideation brief template. >>

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4



RUN (AND ROCK!) YOUR SESSION

You've invited your attendees, created a tight agenda and sent everyone your ideation brief in advance. It's show time! Here are 10 tips on how to run a successful Content Huddle:

1. CHOOSE A FOCUSED ENVIRONMENT.

If possible, select a location for your session that has minimal distractions and allows for maximum creativity. This may mean using a different space than you normally use for meetings, or your regular meeting room might be fine. No matter where you hold your Content Huddle, writing "Welcome to our Focused Environment!" or something similar on the whiteboard just might remind attendees to keep their phones away and stay present for your session.

2. BEGIN WITH BUSINESS OBJECTIVES AND CONTENT GOALS:

Remind everyone of the big goals you're trying to achieve. This helps the team understand the value of their contributions and encourages alignment.

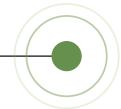
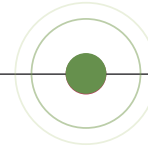
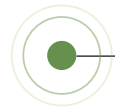
3. GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE ROOM:

As with any meeting, the attendees are critical for the outcome. Of course, you'll want to make sure you have subject matter experts at hand – folks who know the topic and your customers well. Don't be afraid to bring some other attendees who may not be as deeply steeped in the topic but can provide a different perspective. And importantly, you need people who will be positive participants and are bought in and aligned to the purpose of your content.

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4



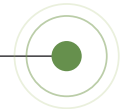
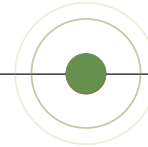
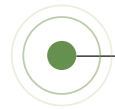
RUN (AND ROCK!) YOUR SESSION

- 4. MAXIMIZE YOUR TIME:** Subject matter experts are crucial to your success, but they have other priorities. Ensure you get the most out of the limited time you have. Demonstrate that you value the SME's time by creating a structured, time bound meeting plan rather than an open-ended forum. And focus on the information you can only get from them. If the conversation starts to go off on a tangent, take a note and refocus the participants.
- 5. MAKE IT AN ACTIVE, ENGAGING SESSION:** Make sure your sessions have some pizzazz so participants look forward to them. Plan a mix of individual brainstorming and group activities. Get up and move around the room with exercises that use whiteboards or sticky notes. This type of variety and activity keeps everyone engaged and limits distractions.
- 6. FOCUS ON THE BUYER:** Remember, great content marketing is about delivering value to buyers. To develop content that serves the buyer's needs first, you need to make sure the group is centered around what those needs are. If you already have buyer personas, review the critical points in your meeting. If not, lead an exercise focused on getting to the heart of buyer needs and pain points.
- 7. USE CONSTRAINTS TO GET CONCRETE IDEAS:** "Limit" isn't a dirty word. In fact, sometimes boundaries and constraints can inspire the best ideas. Use time limits in the meeting to inspire rapid brainstorming. And introduce limits such as brainstorming blog titles with seven words or less. Even though the constraint may be hypothetical, it can force participants to crystallize their thinking.

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4



RUN (AND ROCK!) YOUR SESSION

8. NO BAD IDEAS, BUILD UP AND BUILD ON:

Create a positive environment where there are no bad ideas. Instead, create an environment built on the great improv principle of “Yes, and...”. When participants feel free to get creative, sometimes the most out-there ideas can eventually translate into your top content ideas.

9. **VOTE ON THE BEST IDEAS:** Utilize the expertise in the room to vet all the ideas and narrow down the list to the content that has the most value. Before the team votes, center their thinking around the key criteria for effective content: value to customers, ideas you or the team has expertise in and something you can provide a unique take on.

10. USE THE LAST PORTION FOR RAPID OUTLINING SESSION (INDIVIDUAL WORK):

Selfishly, this might just be my favorite tip because it’s the one that ensures I leave the session with lots of work already done. No one wants to leave a brainstorming session with a huge list of great ideas that seems totally overwhelming to actually complete. Instead, use the last 10-15 minutes at the end of the session and ask each participant to create an outline for one of the ideas. (You can structure the outline ahead of time by creating a worksheet that everyone can use.)

Huddle Worksheet:

Here's a sample of a Content Huddle worksheet participants can fill out during the last 15 minutes of the session. By ensuring everyone in the room fills one out, you'll have several ideas for content, plus details and insights to help you get started on creation right away!

Content Pillar:

Original Idea:

Original Idea From:

Your Name:

Content Structure:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opinion/Why | <input type="checkbox"/> Case Study/Testimonial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> How-to | <input type="checkbox"/> Data Analysis/research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industry news (roundups, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> List (7 questions, top 5 trends) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Checklist | <input type="checkbox"/> Template/worksheet/guide |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Q&A | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Content Medium:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blog | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ebook | <input type="checkbox"/> SlideShare |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Webinar | <input type="checkbox"/> 1-Sheet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Webinane (9-minute webinar) | <input type="checkbox"/> Interactive Content |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infographic | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Which client need does this address? Which problem does it solve? Which question does it answer?
Is there a bigger context for this problem?

Content tilt: What is our unique angle or point of view we can share? What is our solution, service area or approach we should highlight?

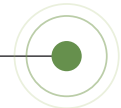
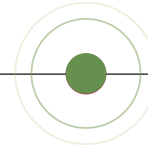
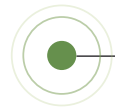
Possible content headline ideas: What would intrigue or hook the reader, make them want to read, learn more?

Content outline: key points, proof, client example, research we might want to feature, etc.

STEP 3

STEP 4

CONCLUSION



EVALUATE SESSION CONTENT IDEAS AND GET TO WORK!

Now for the tough stuff — it's time to take all those content-starter ideas your attendees provided and grow them into engaging, informative blogs, short videos, ebooks or whatever type of content is appropriate for your target audience. As you get to work, here are a few tips:

ORGANIZE AND SAVE

Undoubtedly, a lot of high-quality insights and ideas were generated during your Content Huddle. And... there likely will be a few ideas that aren't winners from your session. That's OK! Review, organize and save everything. You never know how or when your content marketing efforts might benefit from using that information in the future!

PRIORITIZE

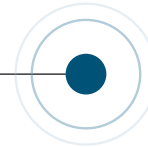
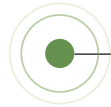
As you reflect and review the ideas that came out of the session, determine what content you can create right away based on the input provided by the attendees, your topic

knowledge, or research / information you have readily available. Make a plan for these content ideas to be first in line for creation, then take your remaining ideas and place them into your editorial calendar for future development. Completing the quick wins ASAP after the session helps validate everyone's participation and builds credibility

FOLLOW UP FAST

Before you even run your Content Huddle, block time for yourself and/or your writing and design team to get started ASAP on that content you prioritized as "low-hanging fruit." Get those creative briefs or outlines written on your top three content ideas from the session and schedule meetings with your SMEs to get input. The faster you can follow up, the more enthusiastic participation you can expect. They will see that the time they spent in your awesome Content Huddle was worthwhile.

STEP 4



CONCLUSION

A Year's Worth of Content Awaits!

If you're looking to increase the quality and quantity of content you create, utilizing Content Huddles as part of your overall creation and brainstorming process is an extremely smart move.

By the end of a pre-planned, organized, 90-minute ideation session on a particular theme or topic, you should have the seeds for a year's worth of content. As a bonus, including subject matter experts in these sessions helps build deeper alignment between your team and others. When participants have shared their insights and have had

a say in what is produced, it makes it easier to ask for their assistance in creating and sharing content down the road. This type of consensus can also help if you face challenges from others within the organization who may question your strategy or approach.

We're collaborating with B2B clients regularly on their content creation and marketing needs. If you are looking for more inspiration on this topic, be sure to subscribe to our blog. And if you want further guidance, [please get in touch!](#)



The Mx Group

The Mx Group is a B2B marketing agency with a 30-year history of solving complex marketing challenges. We impact our clients' revenue and growth by connecting the customer experience through strategy, creative, demand generation and digital development. We're aligned around one goal: creating solutions that propel buyers and businesses forward.

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