



6 STEPS TO BUILDING A CONTENT INC EMPIRE



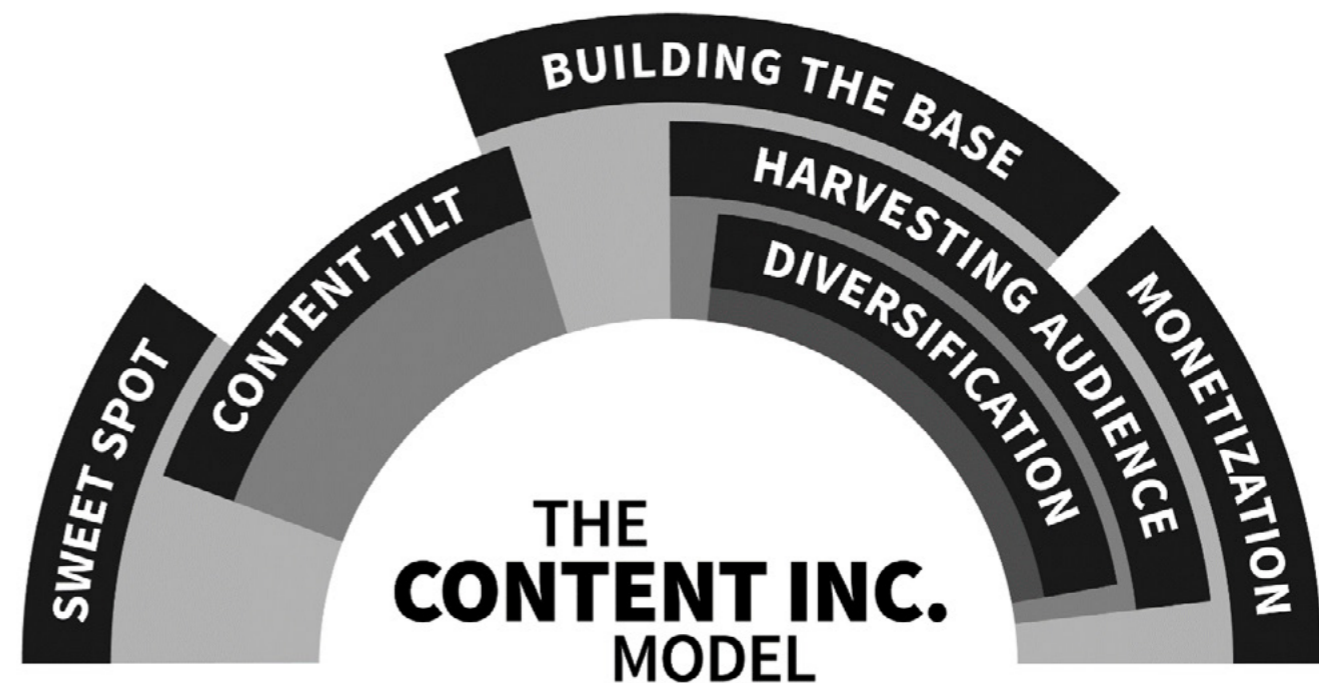
CONTENT INC.

6 STEPS TO BUILDING A CONTENT INC EMPIRE

It's been an interesting ride in preparation for my latest book, *Content Inc: How Entrepreneurs Use Content to Build Massive Audiences and Create Radically Successful Businesses*.

At the start, my plan was simply to talk about how entrepreneurs and start-ups (myself included) used content to build a new business. But after conducting countless interviews with other successful entrepreneurs, I discovered that each one used the same six basic steps to grow a multimillion dollar business with content:

- 1 The Sweet Spot
- 2 The Content Tilt
- 3 Building the Base
- 4 Harvesting Audience
- 5 Diversification
- 6 Monetization



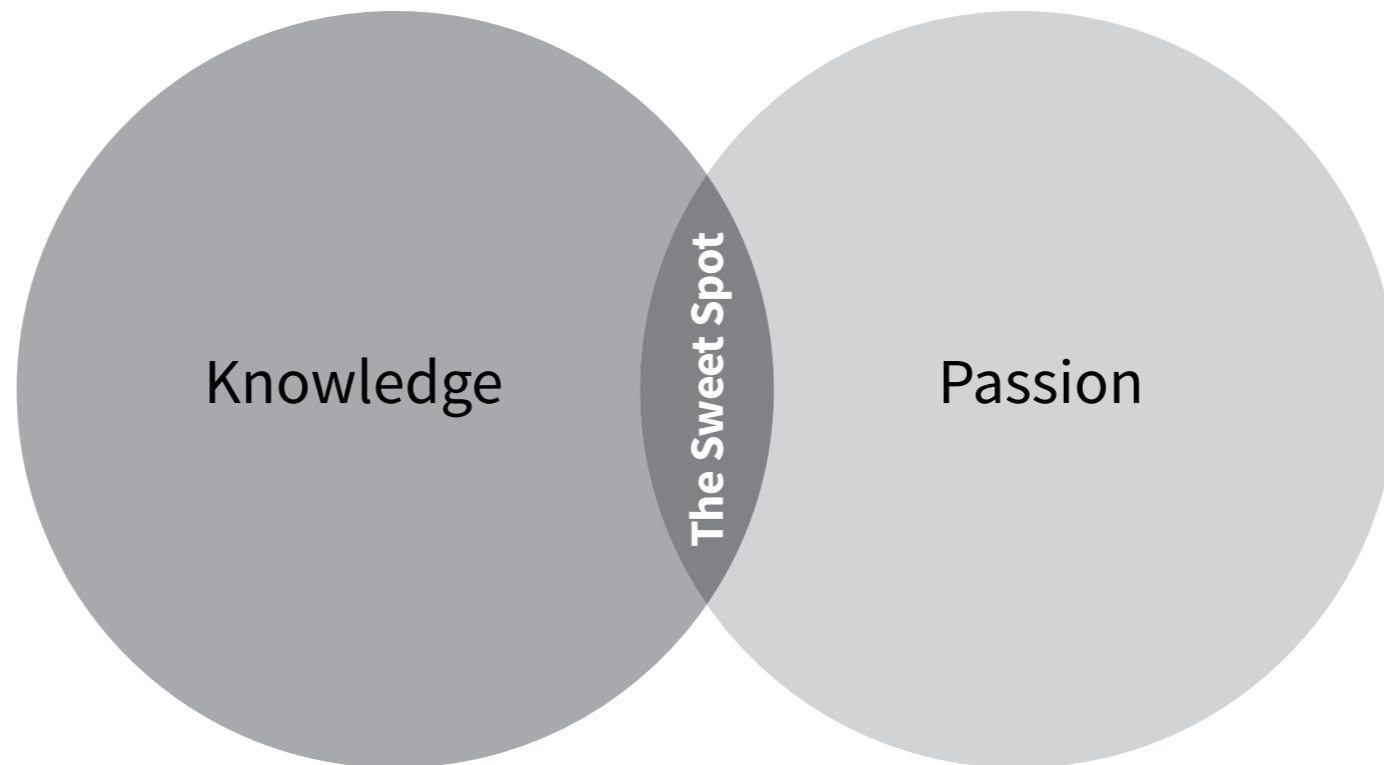
➔ Let's explore how you can use this same six-step approach to make your own Content Inc plan a reality.

1

THE SWEET SPOT



The Content Inc model is dependent on first identifying the Sweet Spot. Simply put, the Sweet Spot is where your particular fields of knowledge and your skill sets intersect with a passion point — something you feel is of great value to you personally, or to society at large.



A Template for Finding Your Sweet Spot

If you are an individual, begin by listing the areas in which you have specialized expertise or more knowledge than the average person. (If you are an organization, think about this in terms of organizational expertise.) Next to this, list the specific skills where you excel. This is brainstorming time, so feel free to list as many as you can think of at this point.

The form is a template for finding your sweet spot, consisting of two columns: Knowledge Areas and Special Skills. Each column has a title, a callout bubble, and a list of horizontal lines for writing.

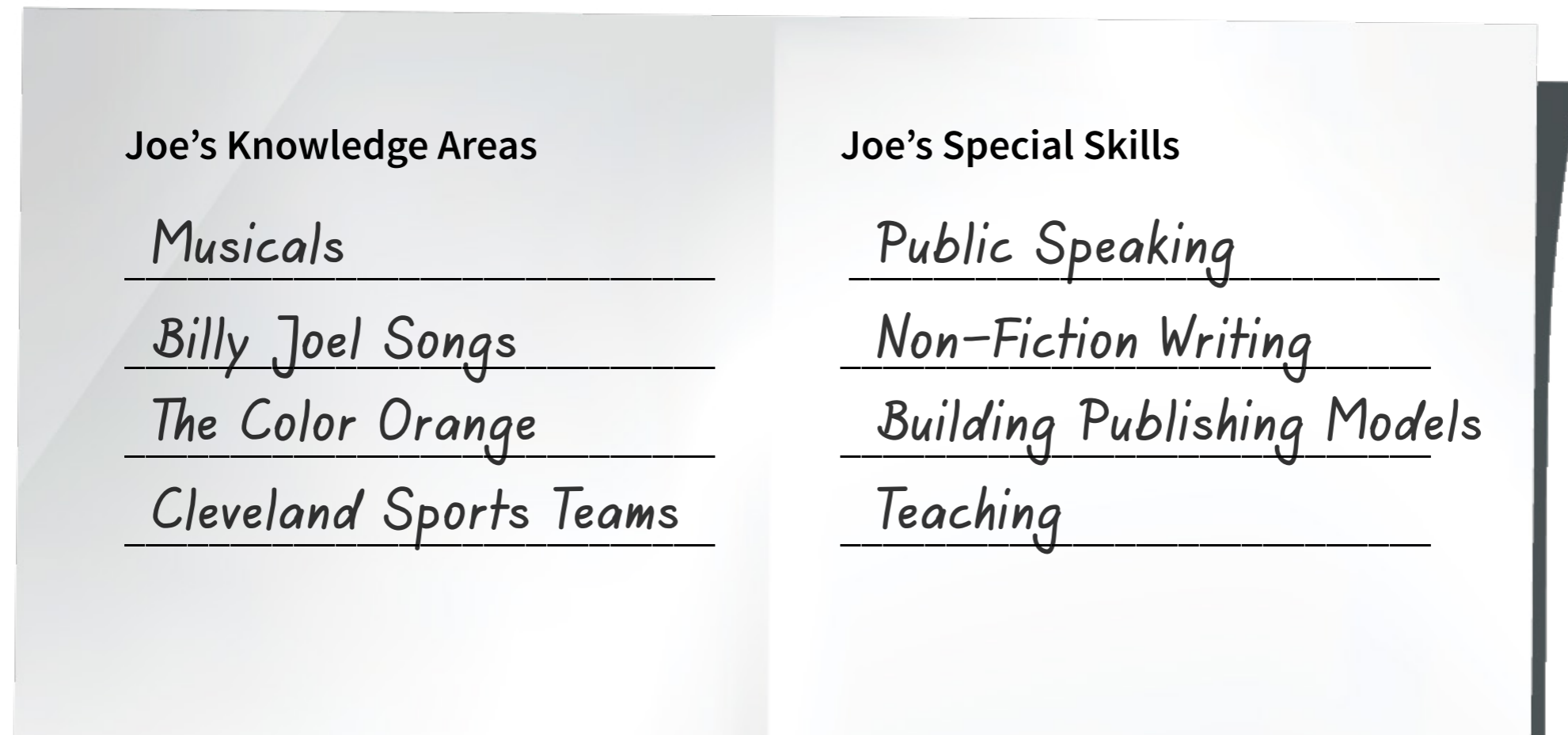
Knowledge Areas

List the stuff you know

Special Skills

List the skills you are good at

If you completed the exercise correctly, you will likely have vastly more knowledge areas than skill areas. Here's a snapshot of some of my answers:



CMI was borne from my identifying a passion that correlated with my Sweet Spot — the point where my public speaking abilities, expertise in building publishing models, and experience as a teacher might intersect with my knowledge of content marketing, Cleveland sports teams, and my love of all things orange.



Example:



To illustrate how the Content Inc process works, let's walk through the journey of one Content Inc entrepreneur: Joy Cho, of the wildly popular **Oh Joy!** media and lifestyle brand.

Let's set the stage:

In 2005, Joy Cho had recently graduated from Syracuse University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Communications Design. She moved to New York City to start her career in design, and eventually landed a graphic design job at a boutique advertising agency, where she gained experience over the next few years by working with a number of clients.

Though Joy loved her design work, she never felt that she could achieve the financial security and level of advancement she was looking for through a graphic design career. However, she changed her mind after a discussion with her brother-in-law, who challenged this belief: "Who says you can't? You can absolutely make a good living doing what you love — you just have to believe it," he told her.

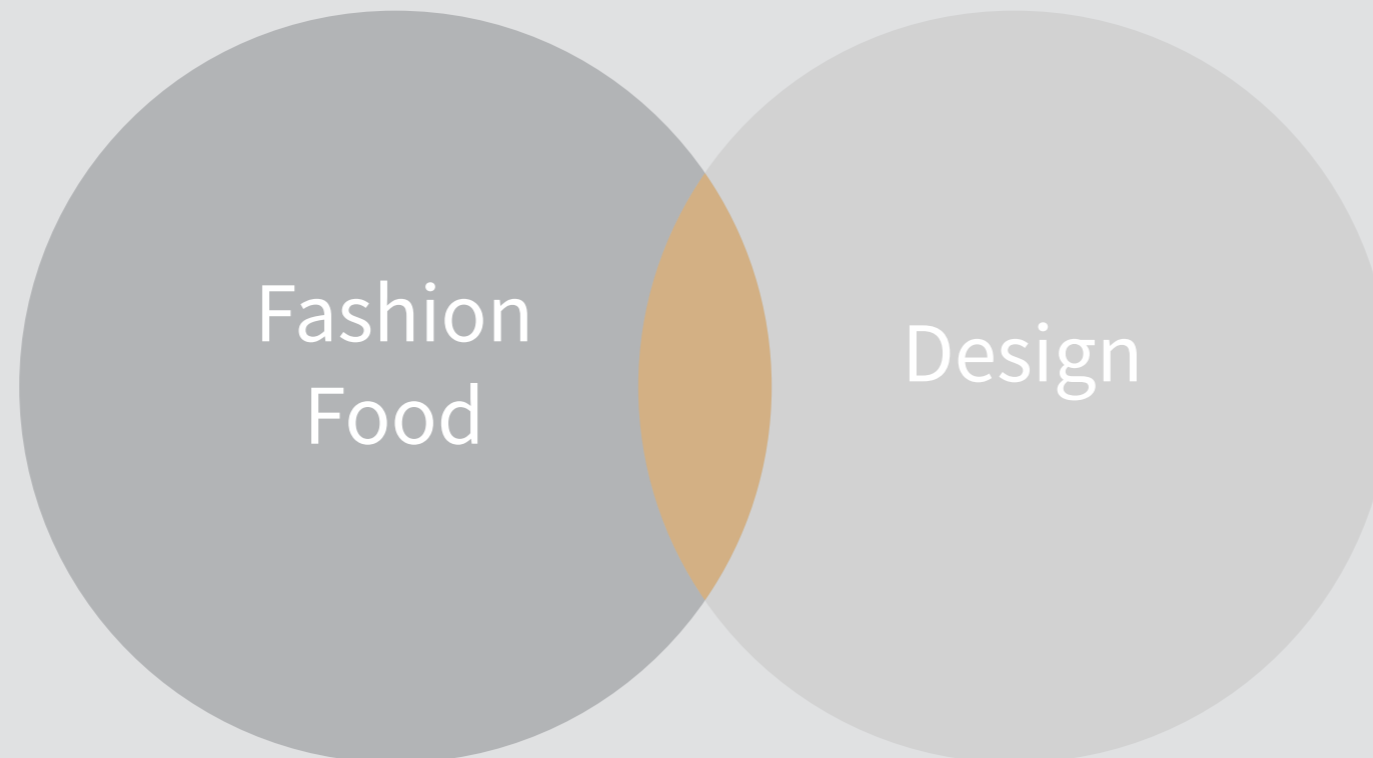
It was then that she began to write down her (lofty) financial goals, and think about alternative ways she could reach them.



Example:

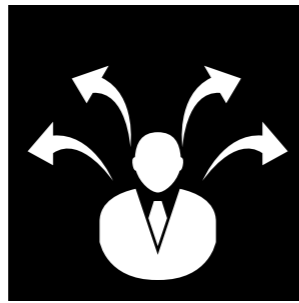
Joy knew she had desirable skills in graphic design and communication design, and she had a keen sense for what worked and what didn't when it came to fashion design (her knowledge areas). At the same time, Joy was passionate about pursuing a career that would offer variety because she dreaded the idea of working on the same old banner ads or client briefs time and time again.

Once she identified her skills and passions, the opportunity she was meant to pursue became clear. Her Sweet Spot? She would build a business around design, fashion, food, and joyful moments from everyday life.



2

THE CONTENT TILT



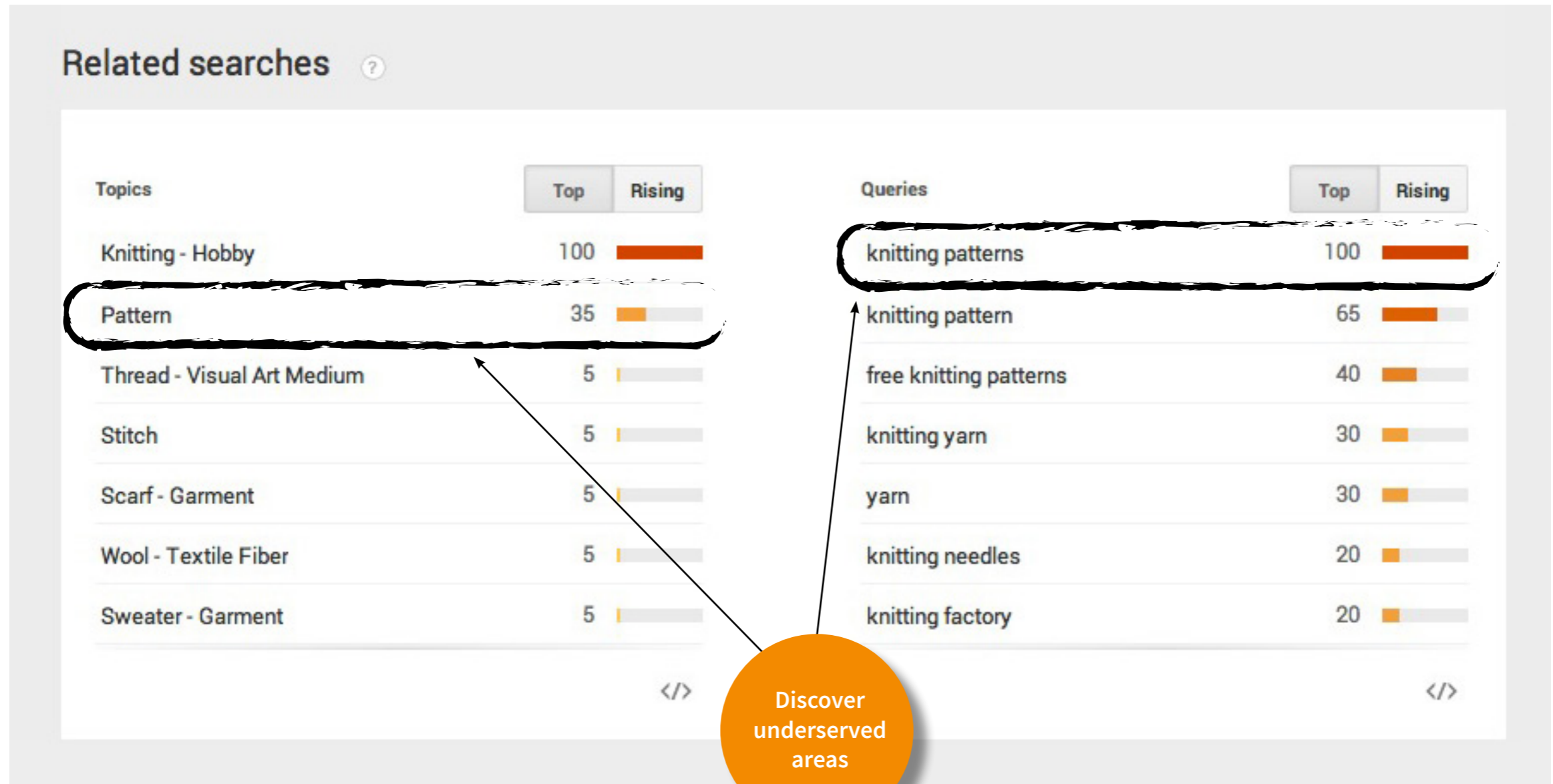
If Content Inc is going to work for you, your content must be different. It must fill a content hole that is not being filled by someone else.

Your Content Tilt is what separates you from everyone else in your market area. It's your unique perspective on your content niche, which creates an opportunity for you to attack, lead and, ultimately, own the category. Without "tilting" your content just enough to tell a truly unique story, you risk blending into the rest of the noise and being forgotten.

With the Content Tilt, you need to ask, "Can we be the leading informational provider in this content niche?" If you don't believe you can, you haven't drilled down deeply enough to find the right angle.

An Essential Tool for Discovering Your Content Tilt

Google Trends may be the most underutilized business tool there is. By using Google Trends, you can look at keyword usage and view breakout terms in your niche to check for underserved areas and opportunities.

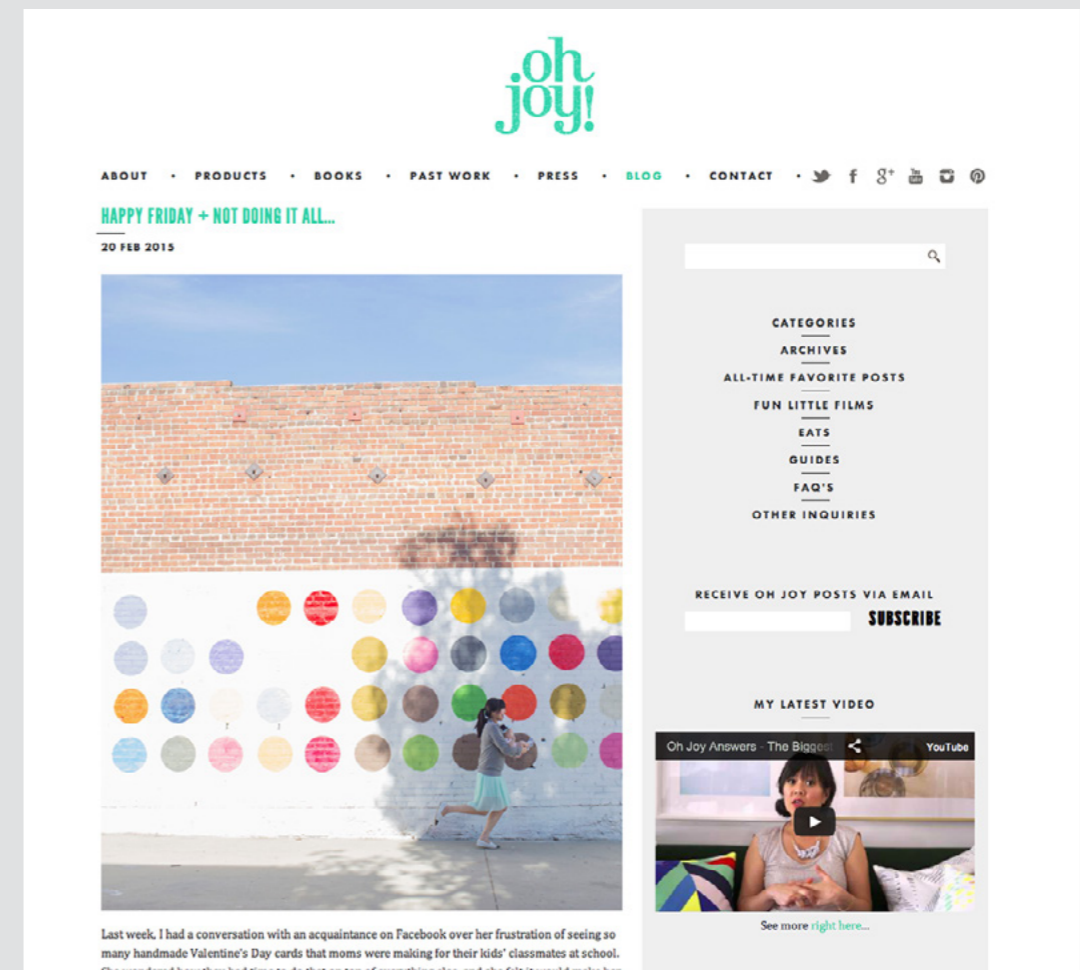


Example:



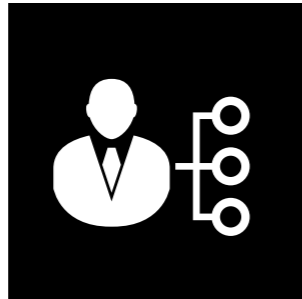
Joy was gifted at authentic self-expression. She loved to share her thoughts and ideas with others, and was rarely concerned about “sharing too much.” Fortunately, people seemed to be highly receptive to this part of her personality — particularly those who shared her passion for design and fashion. As Michael Grothaus of Fast Company once wrote about her, “In spite of the public appetite for expertise, there’s a value in being approachable.”

Joy realized her audience wouldn’t necessarily want to hear from “the experts” who came across like they already had all the answers. They wanted to hear from someone who was interested in following a more collaborative path to design excellence. Thus, Joy’s down-to-earth nature and her willingness to share her design insights led her to her Content Tilt.



3

BUILDING THE BASE



Once you have identified your Sweet Spot and Content Tilt, you will need to choose a primary platform, or Base, for the valuable content that you will create.

Building the Base involves selecting one preferred content type (e.g., audio, video, text, etc.) to work with, and deciding on a platform (e.g., a blog, a podcast, YouTube, etc.) on which you will deliver that content consistently, over a significant period of time (usually over 12 months in length).

Though you may be tempted to start publishing anywhere and everywhere right from the start, there is a great danger in trying too much at once. As the founder of the modern strategy field, Michael Porter once said, “The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do.”

The Four Foundations of Successful Content

The majority of Content Inc success stories we've encountered have been built upon one of the following four content types:

Articles or blog posts. For example: [Content Marketing Institute](#) was built on a platform of publishing blog posts that provided helpful, hands-on guidance on the topic of content marketing. At first, posts were published three times a week. Now, CMI publishes a new piece of blog content every day — sometimes even multiple times per day.

E-newsletter programs. For example: [Social Media Examiner](#) delivers new content via email to over 300,000 business owners and marketers every day.

Videos. For example: Every week, video game aficionado Matthew Patrick distributes a fresh video via his YouTube channel, [The Game Theorists](#).

Podcasts. For example: John Lee Dumas, founder and host of the award winning business podcast, [Entrepreneur on Fire](#), publishes a new interview every day.

Remember: There are four “musts” when it comes to building your base:

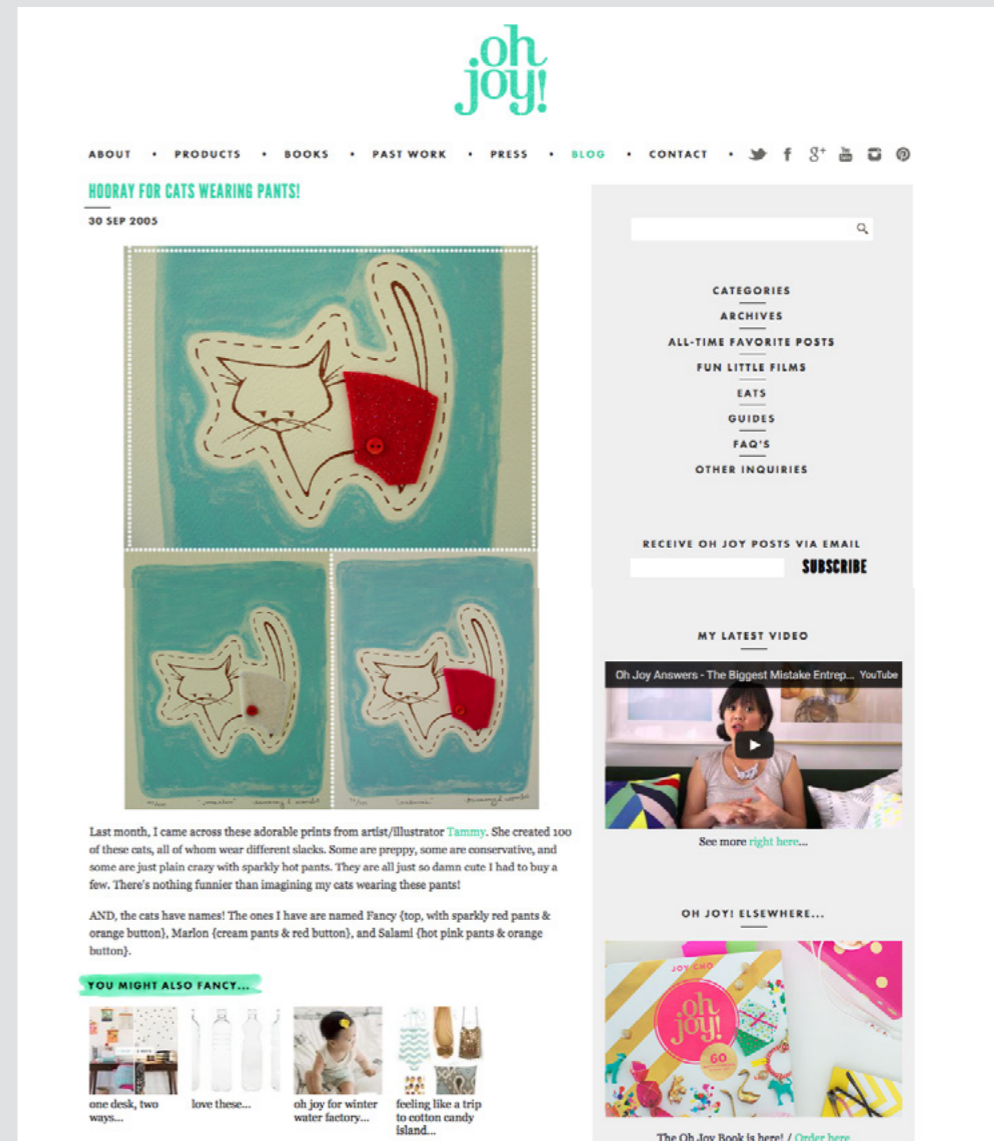
- 1 Focus on one content type
- 2 Publish on one platform
- 3 Deliver consistently
- 4 Continue to deliver over time

Example:



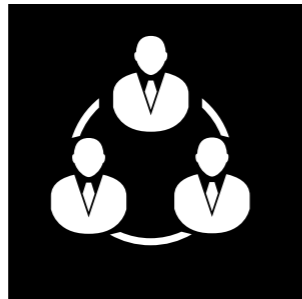
During a period of job transition in the fall of 2005, Joy decided to launch a blog. In her first month, Joy posted 35 times and stayed true to her mission: to offer deeply personal posts that provided a variety of fashion and design tips and demonstrated her first-rate photography and design skills.

The following month, Joy increased the amount of content she published, sometimes posting new content up to three times a day. She started receiving so many client inquiries through her website that she was no longer even thinking about working for another company. Within a year, Joy was confident that she could successfully launch her own design studio, using the blog she had developed as her primary content platform.



4

HARVESTING THE AUDIENCE



Once you've built the base for your content, it's time to concentrate on ways to increase your audience and convert one-time readers into ongoing subscribers.

Content Inc leaders should consistently keep one metric top-of-mind: subscriber growth. Email subscribers are at the top of the subscription hierarchy because businesses have the most control over email (see chart below). Email should always be a key component of your efforts to attract, engage, and retain your audience.



Make Your Audience an Offer They Won't Refuse

As you employ your subscription strategy, you'll want to focus on providing an amazing email offering. I'm not talking about a six-week lead nurturing program designed to drop them off at your sales team's door. I'm referring to an ongoing offer of a compelling piece of **email communication** that will cut through the clutter and convert casual site visitors into loyal and engaged followers. There are plenty of ways you can offer this kind of value, including:

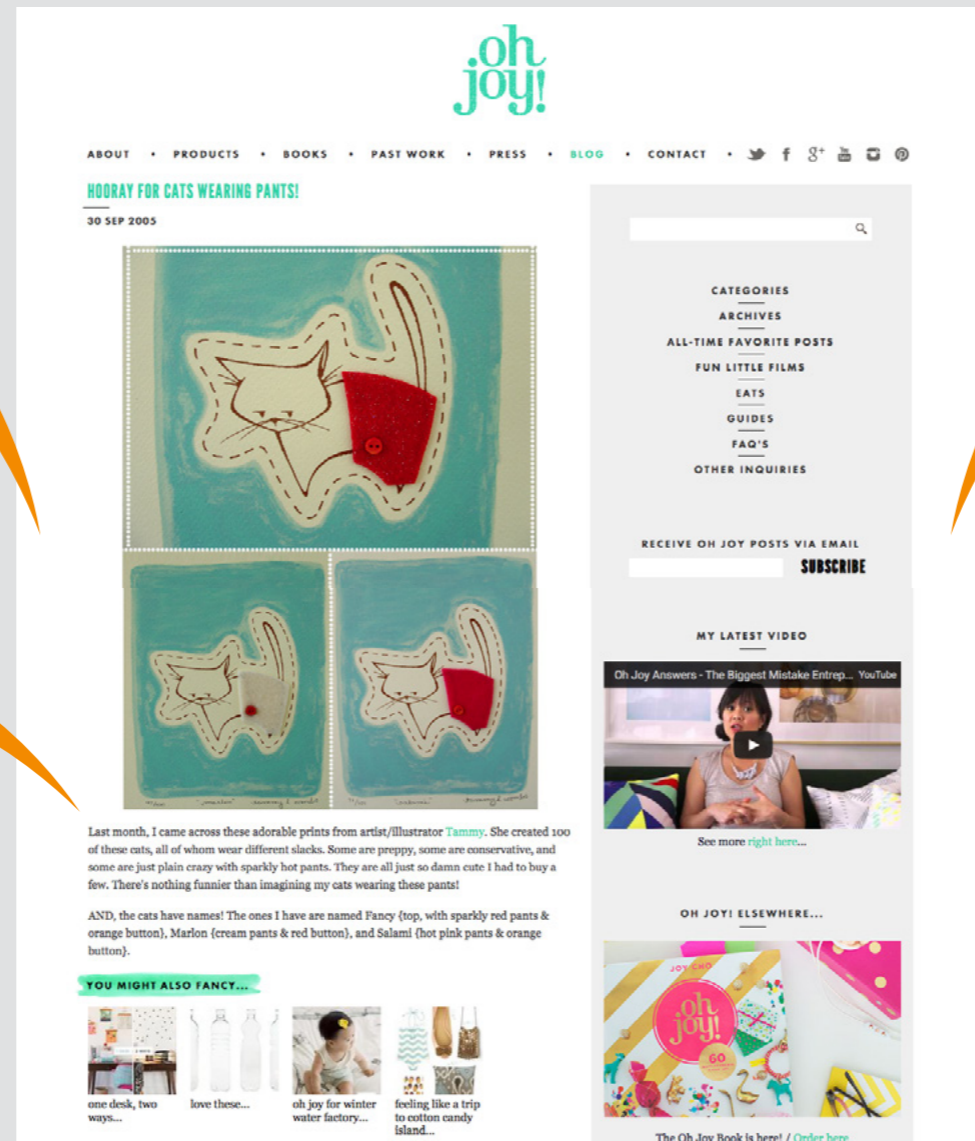
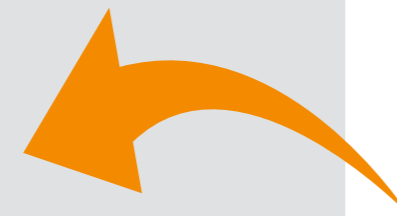
- A daily email newsletter based on your original blog
- A daily email newsletter that shares the latest and most relevant industry information curated from around the web
- A weekly email newsletter or report that offers unique industry insight





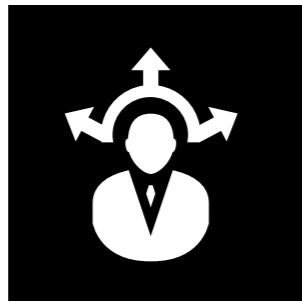
Example:

Joy was actively building a loyal audience. As she continued to meet the needs of her audience, Joy set an official editorial calendar and built a workflow around publishing three times daily. As social media began to grow in importance, she broadened her digital footprint to build additional audiences on Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter.



5

DIVERSIFICATION



Once you have built a strong, loyal, and growing audience using the Content Inc model, it's time to expand your efforts beyond your main content platform and start publishing on additional channels.

There are two different ways to launch additional platforms.

- 1.** Add channels within the same platform. For example, you can launch additional blogs or YouTube channels that target different audiences.
- 2.** Extend your brand content into new platforms. You can take the content you are creating and publish it in new formats, or on different platforms. For instance, if you are already producing blog content, you may consider extending your brand in the following ways:
 - Books
 - Podcasts
 - Events

Do You Need to Keep up the Pace as You Diversify?

When Facebook marketing expert **Jon Loomer** built his business using the Content Inc model, he produced 350 posts in the first year. In the second year, he published 250 posts. By the third year, he was at 100 original pieces of content.

The point? As Jon built his audience and began to diversify into other content offerings, he realized he didn't have to create as much content to get the impact he was looking for. Although this might vary based on the specifics of the platform you are building, continually increasing the amount of content you create isn't always the best way to use your resources.

The ultimate goal is to establish three sturdy content channels, or “legs,” for your publishing stool.

For an individual, this may mean creating a blog, writing a book, and spreading your message through public speaking. For businesses, you will want to have one digital, one print-based, and one in-person platform.





Example:

The three legs of the personal branding stool are now working in full force for Joy, who has published three books (*Blog Inc.*, *Creative Inc.*, and her newest title, *Oh Joy!: 60 Ways to Create & Give Joy*) and has delivered keynote presentations at a variety of design and marketing events — she's even shared the stage with Martha Stewart.

Take a look at some of the fruits of her labors:



Instagram:
Over 200,000
followers.



Twitter:
Over 70,000
followers.



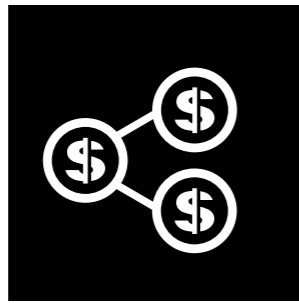
YouTube:
She has amassed
20,000 subscribers
on the YouTube
platform, and even
her lower-performing
videos see thousands
of views.



Pinterest:
One of the most
pinned designers on
the platform, Joy
has over 13 million
followers.

6

MONETIZATION



The last step in the Content Inc model is to generate revenue using the subscriber base you have built, as well as what you have learned about your audience throughout the process. This can be accomplished by offering something they need, such as consulting services, software, licensed content, paid educational events, etc.

Successful Content Inc companies don't just get to a minimum viable audience point or level of subscribers and then make a decision to sell a product. All along the way, these savvy entrepreneurs are leveraging creative thinking to sustain the business model while it develops and continues to grow.

As you look to monetize your Content Inc business, remember these two things:

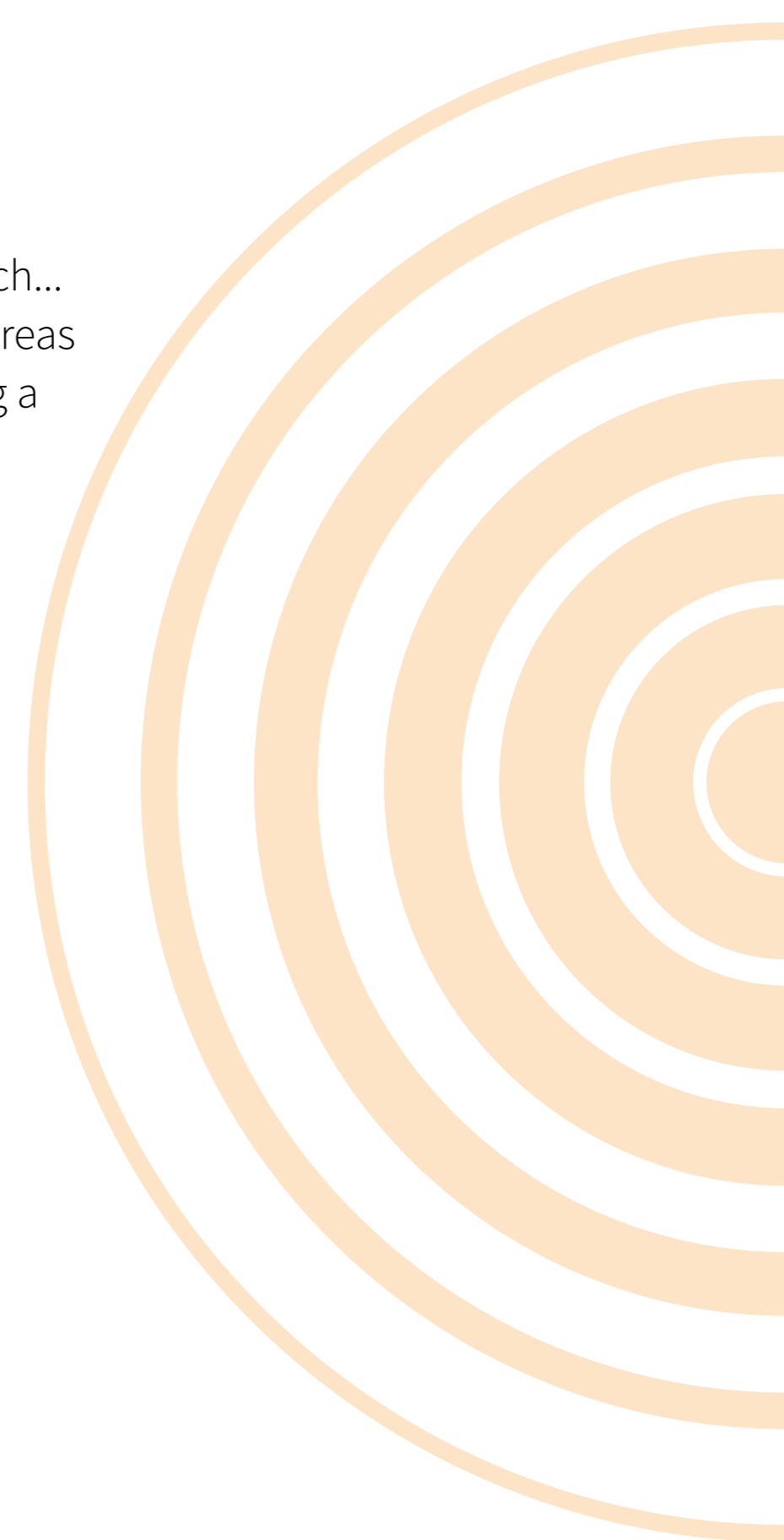
- It will take time to find the right monetization model for your business. In the meantime, begin to experiment with different ways to make money off your content assets.
- You don't need a lot of support to get started — just the right support. Focus on targeting a few companies or consumers that are particularly passionate about your content to help offset expenses.

The Importance of Ripples

Ripples are the unexpected benefits that come from a Content Inc approach... like invitations to speak at events, mentions when others talk about your areas of expertise, or other recognition you might receive as a result of becoming a thought leader in your field.

When we begin a Content Inc approach, we are most likely going to be unsure where the greatest potential for revenue might lie. So when it comes to generating revenue for your Content Inc program, it's all about taking advantage of small ripples whenever and wherever you can. The more ripples, the greater the potential that they can be turned into bigger waves over time.

As entrepreneurs, we all need to go through the full process to achieve amazing results like these. But once we do, there's practically no limit to what we can accomplish.



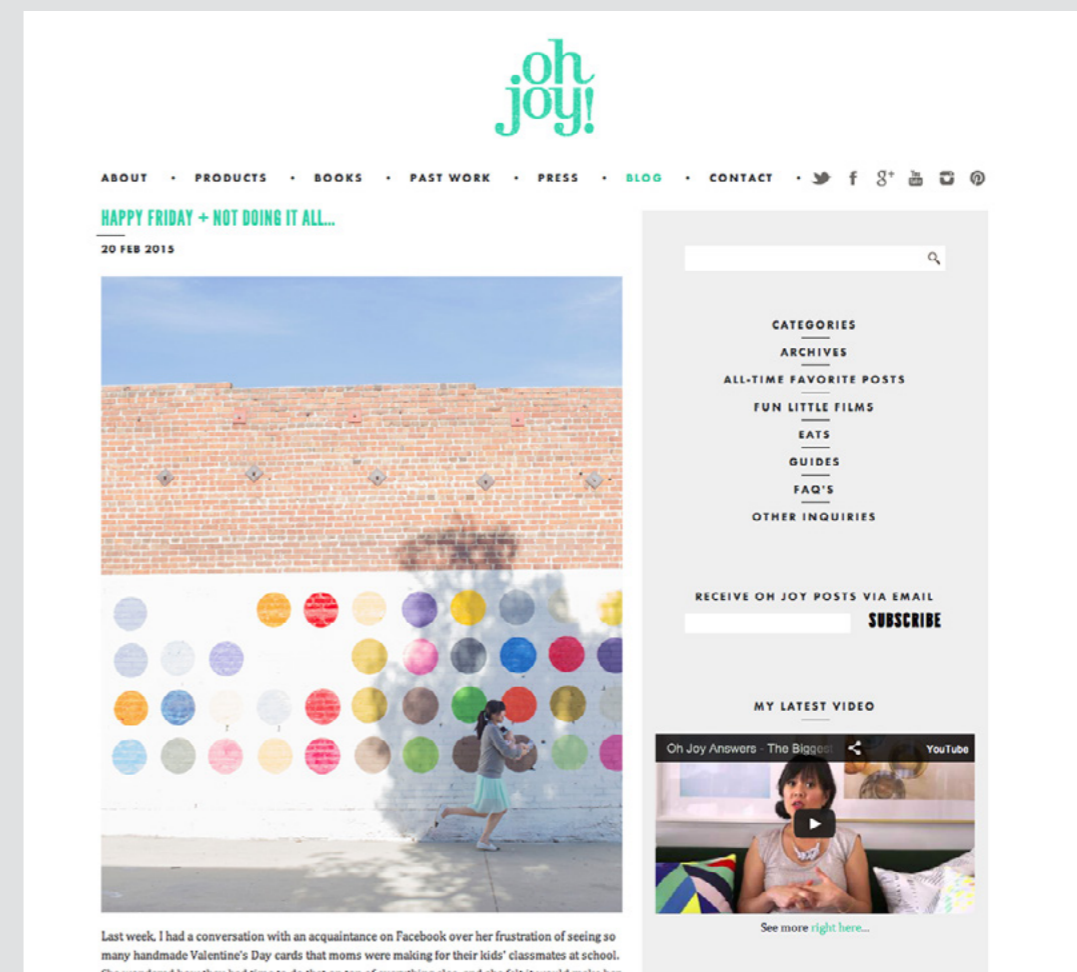


Example:

Joy's revenue lines are diverse, ranging from product sales, to sponsorships, to licensing deals. Joy's studio business also continues to thrive — she consults on design projects for some of the largest brands in the world.

In addition, Joy has designed and co-produced products for such brands such as Target and Microsoft, and has developed stationery lines, wallpaper, bedding, diaper bags, and even computer accessories. She has even debuted a line of Band-Aids in partnership with Johnson & Johnson — a product that is almost certain to sell out quickly, just as her Target line did.

Joy also accepts advertising on her site through sponsored content (or native advertising). Joy has the luxury of working only with brands she believes in, and she closely monitors everything produced under her brand to make sure it meets the needs of her consumers.



CONCLUSION

As you have probably realized by now, the Content Inc model is not an exact science. But it does make strategic sense, and the steps can be followed fairly easily.

The fact is that most people tend to struggle with the process on one of the following two levels:

- Many businesses don't go deep enough into the Content Tilt to identify the particular area where they can truly become the leading informational provider in the world.
- They lack the necessary patience. It takes time to make the Content Inc process work; but ultimately, with dedication, time, and a keen understanding of your audience, the Content Inc model is perhaps the best and most reliable way there is to launch a new business.

WANT
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CONTENT INC



Joe Pulizzi's new book, *Content Inc* will be available for **pre-order** in the summer of 2015. Get the ultimate guide to the Content Inc model today.

Get in-depth, in-person education at the **2015 Content Inc Summit**. The Content Inc Summit will be held as part of Content Marketing World (September 11). Learn the ropes directly from Joe Pulizzi, Andrew Davis, Matthew Patrick, and other entrepreneurs, as they share their experience and insights on how to grow a business with content.

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CONTENT INC.

HOW ENTREPRENEURS USE CONTENT
TO BUILD MASSIVE AUDIENCES AND CREATE
RADICALLY SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES

JOE PULIZZI
Founder and CEO
Content Marketing Institute

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CONTENT INC.

Content Marketing Institute is the leading global content marketing education and training organization. CMI teaches enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's **Content Marketing World** event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA. CMI also produces **Intelligent Content Conference**, Content Marketing Sydney and Content Marketing Singapore. CMI publishes the bimonthly magazine **Chief Content Officer** and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI is a 2012, 2013, and 2014 Inc. 500 company.

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