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CONTENT PLANNING

Where to start and what
questions to ask before
creating content.



Contents



• Objective	3
• Concept	4
• Platform	5
• Style vs Substance	6
• Budget	7
• Quality vs Quantity	8
• Tips and Tricks	9
• Takeaway	10



Objective

Every piece of content has a purpose no matter how it's dressed up. Whether you're looking for leads, make people aware of your brand, or sell a product, there's no point creating content unless you know the objective of what you're trying to create.

It would be like trying to tell a story that has no real theme or message. Sure it might have a lot of action, look good, have a beginning, middle, and end, but if the audience forgets it the second they're finished with no lingering questions - then what was the point?

Content can do multiple things, but generally there's four main objectives - and all four take a different path to the biggest overall of any business - to generate profit.

Awareness - This could be awareness of a business, a product or service, but the point is to highlight to your audience what it is you're trying to make them aware of.

Educate - Awareness is great, but maybe what's more important is educating your audience on how beneficial the product or service is.

Leads - Like awareness with a stronger call to action, this is where you're looking to turn that awareness and education into a customer or client.

Entertain - Audiences don't like being bombarded with sales ads at every turn, sometimes they just want to be entertained. Brands that entertain and have fun with their audience inevitably do better.



Awareness

Leads

Educate

Entertain



Concept

So you have your primary objective. You know who your target audience is, what you want them to take away from your content and how that might help to obtain the objective that you've already set out. How do you present it?

Your industry and the message you're trying to deliver will largely guide you on this, but don't be afraid to try things. Doing the same things that everyone else is doing is a good way to get lost in the never ending wave of freshly created content. Find your point of difference.

Types of Content

- Video / Motion Graphics / Animation
- Photos / Slideshows / Carousels
- Art / Infographics
- Podcasts / Music
- Posters / Flyers
- E-Books / Guides
- Webinars / Training Courses



Aspect Ratio

Be Authentic

Audiences are smarter than ever before. They understand when a business isn't being authentic no matter how many bells and whistles you put on your content.

Get to the Point

Attention spans are short, don't take your time getting to the point. Reach out and grab your audience from the moment they come across your content.

How you present and create your content will largely be influenced by Aspect Ratio. This is the relationship between the width and height of a photo or video. For example 16:9 is a common aspect ratio for video, 16 pixels wide for every 9 pixels high. Generally this is the same aspect ratio as your mobile phone when horizontal. Conversely when holding your phone vertical the aspect ratio is 9:16, or 9 pixels wide for every 16 pixels high.

Knowing aspect ratio is important because every delivery platform whether it's TV, cinema, print, or varying social media platforms, will have their own recommended aspect ratios for different content.

Platform and Scheduling



Technology has changed how we consume content. It's no longer restricted to TV, radio and print as social media and online connectivity has created multiple delivery platforms for your content to reach audiences.

Even though uploading and sharing your content is the final step of the process, it's important to consider it before you decide on your content creation approach. Questions to ask include...

- Where will the content be viewed?
- What aspect ratio will it be in?
- What content works on which platform?
- Will separate content be created for different platforms?
- Can the same content be repurposed for different platforms?



If you know your target audience then you should know where you're most likely to find them and what platform they will be on. Each platform has its own requirements or recommendations for the aspect ratio which is best for various types of content for that platform.

Not all content works the same on different delivery platforms. What works on Youtube or TV with its horizontal aspect ratio won't translate as well to Instagram which favours vertical over horizontal.

The other factor to consider is what sort of schedule you want to maintain. Are you posting once a week, twice or even three times? Are you looking to create one high quality piece that will be repeated multiple times (TV ad or event poster for example).

Again this is looking at the end of the process before we even get to content creation, but that's why planning out the details is as vital as the creation of the content itself.





Style over substance is a term often used to describe big blockbuster Hollywood movies that rely on big action, a lot of CGI, and very stylised cinematography to compensate for the paint by numbers story that would be overall bland without these other elements.

There's a reason why this page is split in half. On one side you have a visually pleasing image that instantly draws a viewers attention first and foremost. On this side however, all we have is some boring text - but if that text has the information you want then which would you rather have?

In content creation there's a lot more leeway to go in either direction. Much like the horizontal versus vertical debate, there is no one size fits all, right or wrong answer.

For example, an instructional or testimonial video doesn't need all the bells and whistles of a big budget ad to get it's message across because all the audience wants is the information.

There's even a growing number of people on social media who purposefully scroll passed content that is simply too well put together because they have an assumption it will be a sponsored ad. This group of people are more likely to stop and view something that may appear amateur in appearance but as long as it's authentic, informative or entertaining it can still meet their needs.

The point is - there's a time and place for almost every type of content, it's a case of paying attention to your audience, seeing what they respond to and engaging with them in ways they enjoy being engaged.

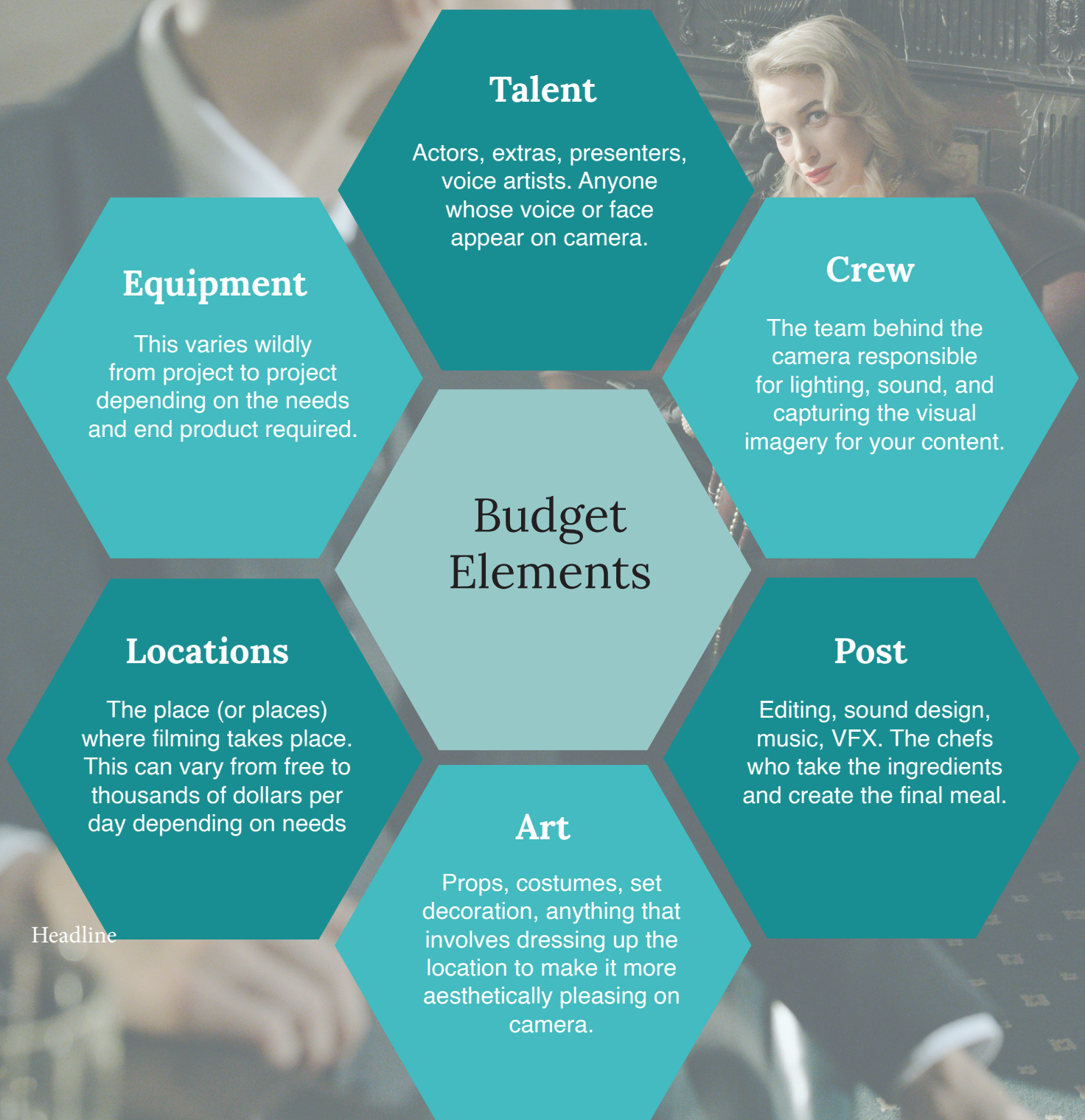
Of course, if in doubt there's one rule that has stood the test of time - Keep it simple.

Budgeting

The first question everyone wants to know when it comes to content creation - or anything else for that matter - is, how much does it cost? The usual response is - how long is a piece of string? It's a response I dislike greatly, a lazy way of answering a question that has a no set answer.

Instead it's best to understand what goes into the budget and what makes it increase and decrease. There's so many factors that can change a budget that it would take twenty pages to just scratch the surface, but a brief overview will atleast give you a starting point.

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Social media is a never ending beast wanting to be fed new content. It can be overwhelming, get frustrating, and sometimes feel like you're running on a treadmill getting nowhere fast. It can really help to ease the burden if you have a stockpile of content ready to go at any given time.

On the other hand you don't want to compromise on quality just so you can make sure you're posting X amount of times per week. Like anything it's a balancing act between quantity and quality and while both can be achieved there's always compromises that need to be made when one is forced to be prioritised over the other.

Planning for Maximum Quantity

- **Keep it simple.** The more complex a piece of content is the longer it takes to get right. Whether it's trouble shooting lighting, sound, or getting the look and feel right in post production, high quality takes more time.
- **Experiment.** Changing camera angles, lenses, and focal lengths can bring a new perspective to the same person or product. Nobody wants to see the same thing half a dozen times in a row so experiment to find unexpected results.
- **Repurpose.** Repurposing content is when you take content after you've achieved it's original objective and find new ways to use it and make it fresh again. For example, a picture of a cake could be posted and then later on repurposed as a carousel that includes the recipe itself.
- **Understand your delivery platform.** This is especially true for social media that can often have multiple ways of displaying content. Instagram for example allows you to post a photo, a carousel, reels and stories. Each one has the potential to reach different audiences.

Planning for Maximum Quality

- **Take your time.** High quality never comes from rushing through to the end. Each step of the process needs to be treated with care to ensure that the end product meets its specified goal.
- **Hire the right people for the right job.** Don't expect to hire one person to do the job of five, that's not only unrealistic for the highest quality possible but increases chances of things going wrong if those you hire are stretched too thin.
- **Prepare to spend.** Experts cost money, that's the same as any industry, but beware of diminishing returns. As mentioned earlier, style will only do so much to cover up a lack of substance.
- **Whatever your budget - double it.** This may seem to counter the previous point, but this has nothing to do with creating the content. Once the content is created you want it to reach the maximum amount of people possible, and that itself takes money. After all, there's no point spending money creating content if you can't then put it in front of the people who matter - your audience.

Tips and Tricks

Plan To Repurpose

If you haven't taken the time to understand Aspect Ratio then now would be a good time to start. It's something that has been touched on several times in this book.

It can be overwhelming with the varying aspect ratios and delivery platforms all asking for something slightly different, but understanding them allows you to repurpose, and potentially turn one piece of content into several, saving you time and money creating individual piece.

For example, two or more similar themed photos can be posted individually, combined into a carousel, and even repurposed into a reel or story.



Buy In Bulk

Any content, regardless of price or quality, is going to take time from something else that's on your to do list. Therefore it's important to look for ways to save both - time and money. Content creation is no different to any other industry, when you hire someone to do it for you there's always the option to buy in bulk.

For example, a gym wants to release ten videos, one video a week, highlighting a piece of equipment and how to use it. They wouldn't bring a crew in once a week, they would get all ten videos shot over a 2-3 day period. Less set up time, cheaper gear hire, crew hire, talent hire - time and money saved.



Content is Everywhere

Everyone has a mobile phone these days and the cameras are more than capable of taking a quick pic or video for social media. It might not be the highest quality, but that's Ok as long as it's authentic and has the right message attached to it.

There's growing evidence that content marketing that employs both carefully curated content alongside simple 'home made' content gets better results than content that is 100% curated. That's why live video/stories is something that social media networks are pushing - it's authentic.

Summary



If there's anything to be taken from this book it's that planning is a vital process when creating content. Poor planning can waste time, heavily reduce quality, and even in some cases - cost a lot more money than originally intended to fix those mistakes.

Think of it this way - would you ask someone to build a house without a plan? Ask someone to cook a meal they've never made without a recipe?

Regardless of what your desired outcome is, content creation without a plan will always fall short of expectations. It's the roadmap that gets you from point A to point B with the minimal amount of detours. Considering how expensive content creation can be, and that time may be the most expensive cost of all - why wouldn't you plan to save time and money where possible?

Summary Takeaway

- Have a clear objective in mind.
- Make sure your concept serves your objective.
- Plan your content for it's optimal delivery platform.
- Content can be repurposed - get more value out of a single piece of content.
- Budgets are fluid, look for ways to save time and money.
- Find the right balance between style and substance, quality over quantity.
- Understand aspect ratio, it will allow you to experiment and get more out of your content.

