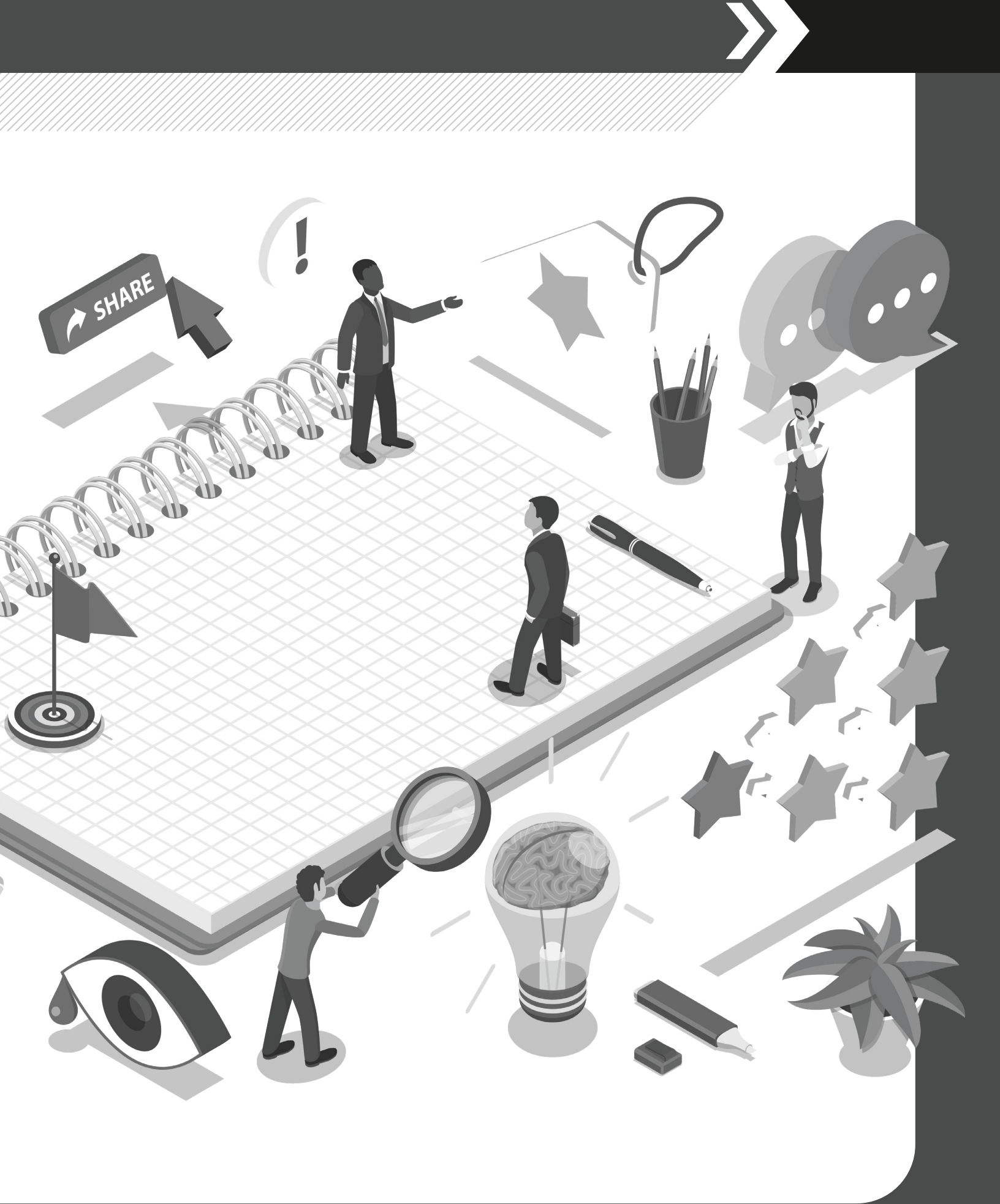


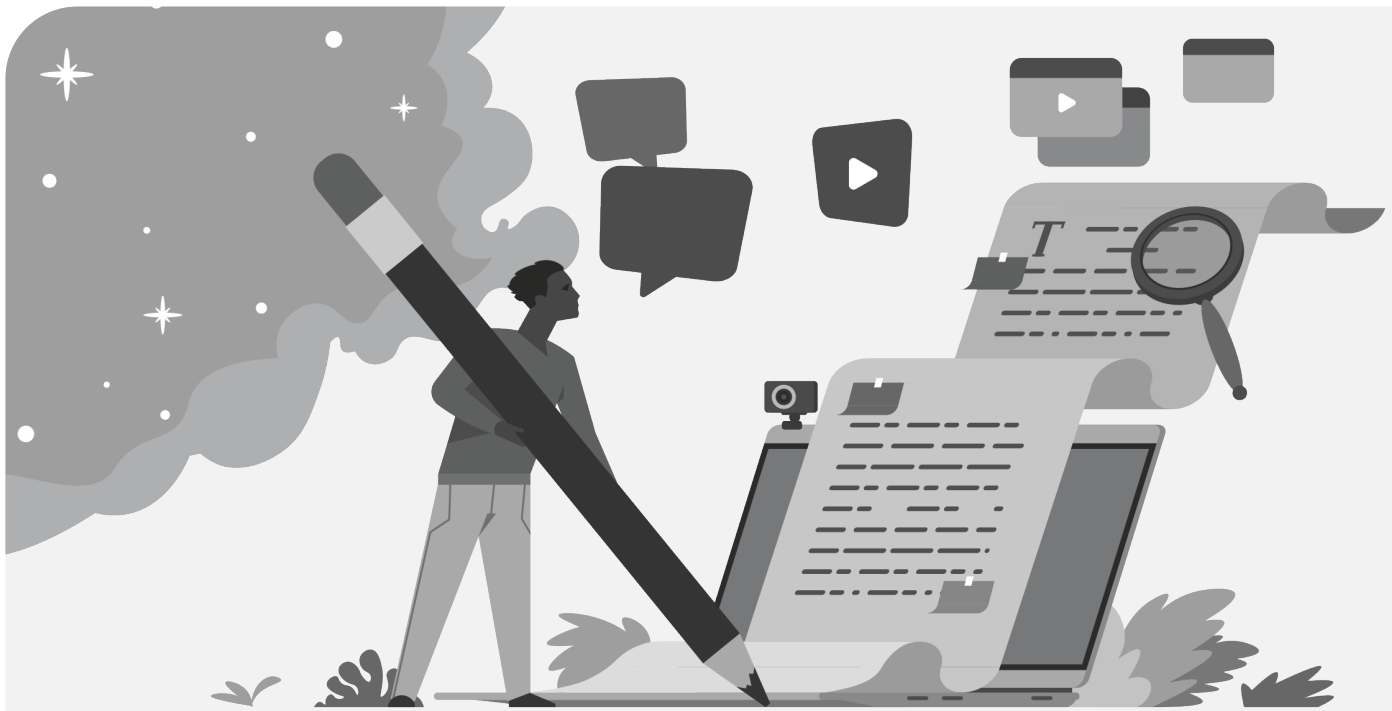
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TIPS FOR CREATING GREAT CONTENT

from a Journalist-Turned-Marketer







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People like to buy from someone they trust, whether it's soap, news, or financial services. No one knows this better than Gavin Daly, a former journalist with bylines in *The Boston Globe*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Hartford Courant*.

Daly, who is senior vice president and head of corporate and digital marketing for Cohen & Steers, uses his newsroom know-how to promote the firm as a specialist investor in real assets and alternative income to institutional investors like pension and sovereign wealth funds, family foundations, financial advisors, and individuals.

Thinking like a journalist can help you with your content marketing assignments. Daly shares five tips for creating great content based on his experience as a correspondent.



Good journalists help their audience navigate thorny challenges. Content marketers do the same by sharing straightforward content about the unknown.

Tip > 1

Be Candid

As a marketing executive, Daly acknowledges consumers' skepticism about the information they receive from various sources.

"Trust is low right now," he says. "It is incumbent on brand managers to produce content that addresses economic or other uncertainty while cutting through the noise. Talented content marketers, like talented journalists, shy away from sensational stories crafted just to increase clicks. However, they are open to sharing content authentically about what's really happening. Instead of offering basic information available anywhere, they share unique insights."

Good journalists help their audience navigate thorny challenges. Content marketers do the same by sharing straightforward content about the unknown. Daly cites inflation as an example. Instead of avoiding investors' concerns or continually painting an overly optimistic picture, his team confronts the topic head-on: "We've seen inflationary periods before, and we know how to navigate challenging markets [such as the] recession, inflation, [and] geopolitical risks. These are scary topics, but we can provide actionable insights to our clients on what's happening, why it's happening, and what may be next. Our goal is to help investors make better decisions."





Tip > **2**

Make It Local

All news is local. No matter what information someone receives, Daly thinks it's only a matter of time before they ask, "What does this news mean to me?"

People want information they can immediately apply. Daly explains, "People need to know where to put their money, whether they should invest defensively or put money to work, or how to plan for a worst-case scenario. Money is emotional. It is scary to think about the downside, but it is not a topic a financial services marketer can ignore."

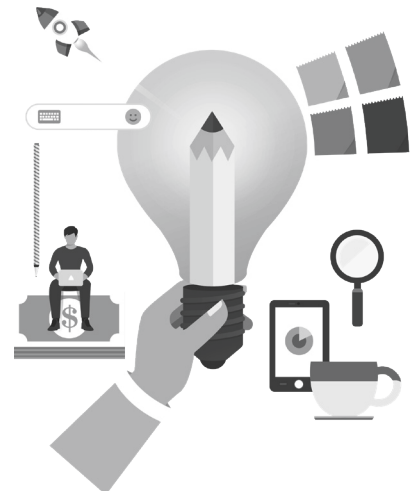
Daly makes a point to share content that reflects his clients' concerns. "When someone hears about the pandemic, the war in Russia, inflation, or something as specific as the Inflation Reduction Act, there's an opportunity to give that person an insight on why an event or new development matters to them," he says. "You need to know where your brand can improve the silence or cut through the noise. For us, it's about what these events mean for investors."

Successful marketers understand the power of keeping things local. They strive to make their content personal for both prospects and clients. As Robert Rose, chief strategy advisor for the Content Marketing Institute, says, "When your audience says 'Your content is exactly what I needed' is when you know you've won."

Daly agrees: "The financial professional audience is a busy audience. Given their spending clout, marketers throw a lot of information their way. The decisions our portfolio managers make each day become the insights we can share with our clients. When our clients are informed and can put market developments into context, we win."



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Tip > 3

Tell a Story

Words have scant value unless they come together to tell a memorable story about your brand. Savvy journalists convey news through the lens of the main character, someone impacted by a current event or villain.

In his book *Moneyball*, journalist Michael Lewis makes baseball math exciting with his description of Billy Beane, former Oakland Athletics general manager. He does not focus on formulas. He shows the pressure Beane faced for trying a new technique. Malcolm Gladwell captivates readers with his *New Yorker* piece, “The Ketchup Conundrum,” about ketchup and food testing as a culinary adventure, featuring condiment pioneers Jim Wigon and Howard Moskowitz.

The publications and media organizations that are thriving today – from the *Financial Times* to *The Wall Street Journal* to niche trade publications and small podcasts with a dedicated following – have built brand equity by telling engaging stories.

When asked how his team tells brand stories, Daly points to the library of videos on his company’s website that features brief tutorials about investing. They are part of the firm’s Real Assets Institute. The same holds for an upcoming investor conference his firm is planning for investors, built around the Institute’s messaging and brand.

Daly describes education as vital to brand messaging: “This type of community outreach is another rich source of brand storytelling for our firm. We create content using a conversational tone. Investing is serious business but being serious is not anathema to using plain language. It is about getting our customers to trust us and to know we are here for them for the long haul. Like a weatherman who distills technical information down to basics, we focus on what topics hit home the most with our investors with simple language.”



Savvy journalists convey news through the lens of the main character, someone impacted by a current event or villain.





Tip > 4

Be Curious

The best journalists are intellectually curious and willing to research their topics. Daly says it is the same for content marketers. Good journalists are reporters first who dig for stories and build a network and expertise. They read and watch all they can on the topics about which they're reporting. Content marketers and in-house writers at businesses need to have the same commitment to their "beats."

"Firsthand business experience is a plus but rolling up your shirtsleeves to dig for information is as crucial as ever," Daly says. "Quality takes time and money. It is hard to produce credible content on a shoestring. Brands must allocate appropriate resources to get the content marketing job done well. Absent credible information, everyone suffers when trying to make essential life decisions."

Daly urges content executives to give their editorial teams ample resources to build the content that drives the content marketing engine. "This means giving them the time they need and the access to your internal experts they need," he says. "Expect those editorial teams to dig and do their homework. Compelling content comes from finding a good story thread and following it."



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Tip > 5

Measure Your Content

Audiences have an ever-expanding appetite for content, which is good news for brands. Produce engaging, relevant, and timely content for a receptive audience and watch your revenue rise.

Remember to calculate ROI (return on investment) using appropriate metrics. Content writers should ask their clients for access to this information so they can produce better, more relevant content. Count clickthroughs for whitepapers. Gauge time spent watching videos or listening to podcasts. Check whether any leading industry publications picked up your brand content. Assess whether online seminar attendees asked for product literature after the event.

News companies track their engagement all the time. Content marketers are no different. Performance numbers reflect the quality of content and the distribution method used to deliver your content. As Daly points out, “Good journalism was built on the back of the news carriers on street corners selling papers. Today, content is delivered from email and apps. Push your content out, track your results, learn from the results, and refine. Measure whether your content is generating leads or leading to client retention. Ultimately, your content must add to the bottom line.”

In addition to measuring content performance, Daly recommends “atomizing” content to stretch marketing budgets even further. “You can repurpose content for two or more audiences. You can convert a data table from a survey write-up to a viral infographic. Post call-out quotes from a podcast or website Q&A on social media. Modern technology makes it easy to distribute brand content and enhance the bottom line.”



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Embrace the Opportunities

Content marketers are ideally positioned to promote brands. They can hire excellent writers, format content in various ways to suit their audience, and exploit technology at rates that fit most organizations’ budgets. Innovative companies know the power of content marketing and act accordingly.

