

A black audio cable with a Y-splitter at the bottom. The Y-splitter has two gold-plated 3.5mm male connectors at the top and one gold-plated 3.5mm female connector at the bottom. Two other black audio cables with gold-plated 3.5mm male connectors are positioned above the Y-splitter, as if they are about to be plugged in.

Strategic Marcomm and Techcomm Integration

Develop customer relationships that are better, longer, deeper and more profitable.

Based on industry research and his own, nearly 20 years in diverse enterprise marketing and technical communication projects, Noz Urbina brings to you a pragmatic analysis of current market megatrends.

"Strategic Marcomm and Techcomm Integration" will show how aligning, or better yet, unifying strategies and platforms across the two major communication departments in your enterprise could move the needle on many core content goals.

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Introduction

Marketers and web content strategists are under a lot of pressure right now. They're facing multiple challenges:

- channel proliferation
- global/local balancing acts and their associated costs
- and of course, customers who are increasingly informed, empowered to self-serve across their lifecycle, and quick-to-switch if experiences disappoint

In this forest of new changes and demands, there's a relatively easy win with extensive ROI which many are not taking advantage of- leveraging existing content more. More effectively. More often. For more audiences and regions. On more channels. In more deliverables and formats. And at more points in the customer relationship lifecycle.

But it's not totally straight-forward because it's not the content your marcomm department creates and manages that can provide you this new win, but that of your techcomm colleagues.

It might be the last place you'd think to look, but your colleagues in technical communication departments probably have content that can address some of your most pressing content-related goals and challenges.

Aligning strategies and leveraging content from technical communication for marketing purposes is one of the highest effort-to-return ratios on offer in today's enterprises.

Concrete benefits on offer

This paper describes industry challenges and recommends strategic and tactical responses to those challenges that can move the needle on key business metrics.

Although any organisation that has products requiring technical documentation can benefit from these lessons - the more voluminous or complex your documentation and products are, the more potential there is for gain. The modern B2B, high-consideration consumer product purchase is a complex, often multi-stakeholder, usually multi-channel and always multi-touch-point relationship; with extensive opportunity for improvement.

Goals that can be advanced with marcomm/techcomm alignment:

Improve...	Reduce...
Customer experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support across the customer lifecycle• Support for digital transformation initiatives• Consistent story and voice	Turnaround time <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes reflected digitally across deliverables
Revenue per customer (upgrades and upsells)	Time to market
Return on investment	Localisation time / cost
Brand equity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness• Engagement• Loyalty	Review time
Product evaluation experience	Translation time / cost
SEO	Risk

Challenges

How does separation in content processes and platforms challenge today's enterprises?

Marketing is getting pushed outside its comfort zone

Marketing today includes sales enablement and providing support for value-added conversations across the entirety of the customer lifecycle. Clients and evaluators are savvy and use all avenues at their disposal, including technical content. James Mathewson, Head of Search Strategies for IBM.com, says, "60% of prospects used what would usually be called 'post-sales documentation' material as part of their sales cycle."

Prospects are self-serving information across the business

If marketing doesn't address the entire customer lifecycle, crossing the presales/postsales divide, then revenue opportunities will be missed and customer experience will suffer. Content of all types on all channels impacts relationships in ways we don't always anticipate.

The Harvard Business Review reported as far back as 2012 that a "Corporate Executive Board study of more than 1,400 B2B customers found that those customers completed, on an average, nearly 60% of a typical purchasing decision—researching solutions, ranking options, setting requirements, benchmarking pricing, and so on—before even having a conversation with a supplier."¹ In another study, up to 70 percent of the B2B buying decision is made based on information the buyer accesses before speaking with the sellers' representatives. (Intercom: The Magazine of the Society for Technical Communication, May 2013 edition, page 34.)

If techcomm and marcomm content aren't strategically aligned to support this self-research, this process remains sub-optimal.

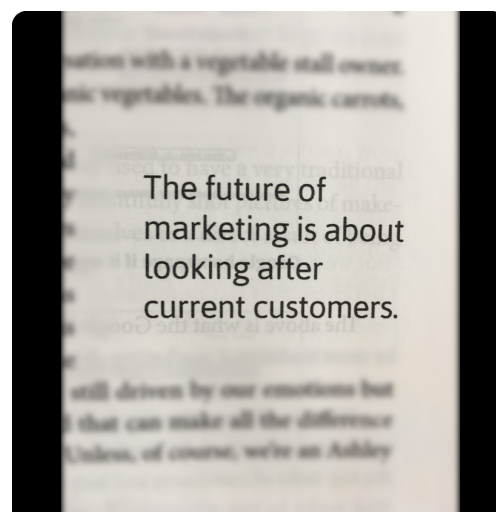
If the content evaluators don't find the answers they need, they are left with more opportunities to "revert to Google" or otherwise disengage, increasing the probability of re-engaging with competitive offers.

Client relationships need ongoing support

Furthermore, the distinction between "clients" and "prospects" is artificial and unwise if your brand is looking for long-term, high-value relationships. As Content Strategist Gerry McGovern says, "The future of marketing is about looking after current customers." The relationship is not done when the sale is closed. In a globalising, hyper-connected marketplace, the strength of the relationship over its lifetime is key to delivering competitiveness and profitability. Customers must be supported from purchase through to advocacy and, most important for large brands, re-investment. As prominent industry analyst and thought-leader Tim Walters says, "[Customer experience management] is imperative because you're either competing with superior customer experiences - or you're not even part of the game."²

Evaluators may also use service and support channels traditionally used by existing customers, bypassing the sales conversation until they are actively seeking a commercial discussion. Contemporary analysis regarding call centres points to a future where support "becomes recognised as a vital CX touchpoint"³ that will no longer "be seen as an afterthought—what happens after the marketing department has reeled customers in"⁴. We call staff that use content to provide answers "human channels". Providing these indirect human channels with a good content service is important and often overlooked when looking only at a windowed view on the customer lifecycle.

Support teams and customer service have traditionally been more connected with the technical communicators who supplied them with detailed, accurate answers, but the balance may shift as marketers and content strategists are taking more of an active role in customer service and support centres.



Kristina Halvorson @halvorson · 16h
Just received a copy of @gerrymcgovern's new book Transform.
Already cheering out loud.

20 55

Our siloed departments are damaging customer experience

Silos between marketing and technical communication teams represent traditional separations of leadership, decision-making, funding and strategy inside the enterprise, rather than customer needs or the reality of multichannel experiences. Departmental silos are number one killers of great customer experiences.

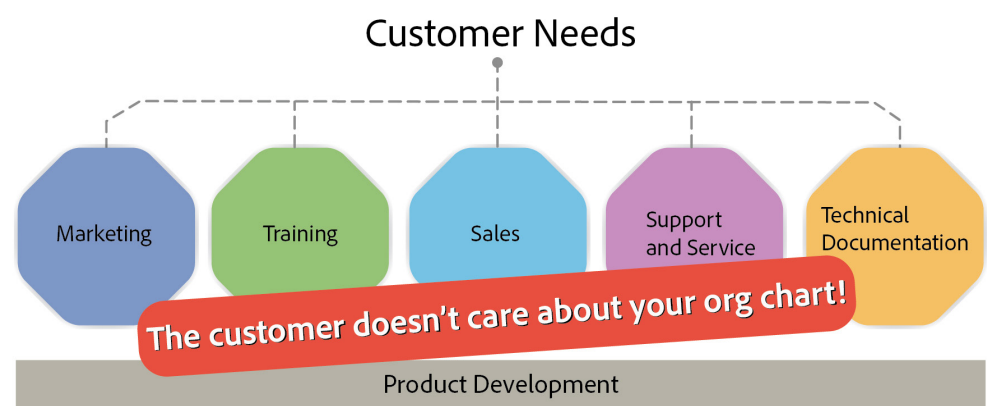
It's not the client's problem until we make it their problem

Whenever a customer is made aware of departmental silos, we've failed. Thus, today's market research landscape is littered with terms like 'integrated', 'coherent', 'one voice', 'omnichannel' and 'unified'.

Customers can be disrupted or frustrated by silos in various ways:

- inconsistent content, formats, or branding
- disconnected navigation
- misaligned or disconnected prioritisation, focus, messaging and stories
- staff contacts that are not up-to-date with what self-serve content channels are saying

What should be a smooth transition is made bumpy by awkward or non-existent connections among content assets across departmental boundaries. Customers want to select and use products and services to advance their goals, and they simply have no reason to know or care how any given supplier is organised internally. As we say at Urbina Consulting: the customer doesn't care about your org chart!



Silos make us fail on the most basic things

The silo challenge is pervasive with large enterprises having the biggest challenges in keeping consistent across touchpoints. A classic symptom of silos is when basic facts go out of sync. This happens even in regulated industries like medical devices, pharmaceuticals and banking. Clients and prospects can view two different resources, or call call centres with questions, and for example, receive:

- Conflicting features or process descriptions
- Conflicting guidance on usage
- Conflicting prerequisites for purchase or use
- Conflicting side-effects or safety requirements

These conflicts hurt brand impression and confuse and frustrate users.

Fragmented systems slow us down and make us underperform

Organisations sprout management systems like mushrooms, and there's rarely resource or time available to plan, design and build adequate integrations. Traditionally, marketing content management has really meant website content management (WCMS), with a litter of point-solutions for things like social and email which may or may not be integrated. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) data is also often disconnected. Technical communications either have their own systems, for example Darwin Information Typing Architecture (DITA) CCMSs, or no real management system at all.

When you use various disconnected systems:

- Customer experience suffers with consumers being forced to expend redundant effort
- The brand misses out on engagement and revenue opportunities
- Turnaround times for updates or publishing are slowed down
- Content teams can't collaborate effectively
- The brand can't keep track of its own content and customers
- The brand misses opportunities for content reuse, increasing content production and translation costs

Customer experience suffers

Consumers must browse from landing pages to dig deeper into their area of interest two or more times. Many of our clients' customers complain of having to navigate 'marketing pages' first before jumping over to 'techcomm pages' and start again from top-level navigation or search. If terms, keyword tagging or categorisation are inconsistent, then this extra navigation becomes even more confusing.

When calling a call centre, "72% blame their bad customer service experience on having to explain their problem to multiple people (Zendesk)." Repeating your navigation when switching between content silos is the digital equivalent.

Turnaround times suffer

Techcomm deliverables can be large and numerous. Techcomm departments often generate 3-10 times as much content as marketing departments. This means that for every 100 pages of marketing content, there are 300-1000 pages of technical content. To simply load all those hundreds of thousands of pages from an external system to a web publishing platform becomes its own bottleneck. Large clients told Urbina Consulting and Adobe that they were losing thousands of hours per year in this process. When errors were found, sometimes whole deliverables needed to be regenerated, creating great inefficiencies.

Content teams can't collaborate effectively

When systems don't share workflow or search systems, the brand doesn't know the status or physical location of all its content at any given time. In a complex project, sale, or campaign, this can be a great disadvantage. I once worked for a client who had invested significant amounts in customer research and CRM software (Customer Relationship Management) to be able to understand and track which clients wanted which kinds of content. However, they were then totally unable to collect and deliver that content in an effective, logical way. The only option was to simply point clients to multiple sites and indicate that their topics of interest were findable within them. This completely defeated the point of investing in tracking the interests of individual accounts.

The brand loses track of what's going on

With no holistic analytics, you can't measure spend properly or understand consumer behaviours. As a business, you need to understand how customers move through your content – all of it – to understand their journey and optimise to drive revenues. A major manufacturing client of ours could not trace customer behaviour because their back and front-end content systems had different categorisation systems (taxonomies) which prevented meaningful analytics. They couldn't create a consolidated report of what categories of content were engaging well because the categories couldn't be lined up to make apples to apples comparisons.

Strategic response

What should you do about the challenges?

Align or unify content strategies around the customer

Now that so much of the presales experience is driven by content rather than human interaction, your content isn't just your IP, it's the ambassador for your brand.⁵ Supporting that brand with content that is optimised across the customer journey means planning for coherent experiences across touch points and journey stages. This can only be achieved by building some level of integration into content strategies for marcomm and techcomm teams.

This means making sure that certain fundamentals are consistent. Look first at:

- Personas
- Customer journey maps and user scenarios
- Terminology and high-level writing guidelines
- Metadata – navigation, categorisation, audience, product, application, region, and whatever other tagging your organisation applies

Altimeter Group's Charlene Li says, "Selling must become seamless, bridging traditional department silos like Marketing, Sales and Service to meet customers wherever they may engage an organisation."

Personas

Personas are detailed portraits of a target audience for our content. Yet, it's remarkable how often a client will maintain separate personas for different internal teams, even though in the real world, the people they represent are the same human beings. The influencers or decision makers in any major purchase are often those who will have a role in the ongoing supplier relationship or use or maintenance of the product or service.

When we share persona definitions across teams, we're being more customer-centric, which drives a more streamlined experience and eventually more revenue. When we create separate personas for the same real-world roles, we're setting ourselves up for a fragmented end consumer experience.

Customer journey maps (CJMs)

CJMs lay out the 'story of accomplishing an objective' from a user's perspective. Although conceptually, like a use case or a workflow diagram, CJMs have become essential tools because they are richer, tie experiences to specific content assets, and describe how scenarios develop dynamically across time and touchpoints.

When done collaboratively and from a customer-centric perspective – rather than a department-focused perspective – they highlight opportunities to improve customer experience.

While working for both a major global software vendor and a major microchip firm, we found the same problem repeated. We established that product information pages on the sites lacked the ability to compare product options based on the descriptions found in the technical documentation. This meant consumers who were trying to buy from the brand struggled to zero in on the module that was right for them. In isolation, the different teams – marcomm and techcomm for the respective product lines – were all doing their jobs as directed. Each product was described in an accurate, complete and appealing way. The brand made products look good, but didn't answer the key user question- "Which one is best for my situation?"

By mapping the process from a customer's perspective, it became clear there was a gap in the content where techcomm could be reused to great user and commercial benefit. This was just one of the many insights we uncovered by taking a cross-silo view.

Cross-functional customer journey mapping inevitably turns up insights like this all over the customer lifecycle, because it forces the brand to step out of their usual perspectives and evaluate how content supports real-world user needs.⁶

Metadata

Metadata for all content affecting a purchasing decision should to be aligned, or better yet, unified in a shared central platform. Metadata is a very broad domain, so complete unification is a tall order. By moving in stages, starting from the key terms and navigational categories that audiences use to find and browse content and moving out by order of priority, a brand can begin to improve their alignment.

Accelerate processes and increase ROI by reusing techcomm in marcomm

Reuse from techcomm into marketing gives clients simpler access to the detailed information decision-support content they need or want. Facilitating appropriate access to techcomm along the journey can increase engagement, accelerate processes, and improve relationships that drive revenue. Simultaneously, the brand saves money and time by not re-creating or copy-pasting content that has to be laboriously kept up to date in multiple deliverables.

Common reuse opportunities

Reuse from techcomm to marcomm is limited only by what would make sense for your market. However, some common themes apply. Information can often easily be used between deliverables such as:

- specifications and reference tables
- how-tos
- datasheets
- product comparators
- application notes, and
- tutorials

When managed well, reuse allows deliverables to be built up according to the client's needs, rather than the company's workflows and team structure. For example, one of our clients had users who were searching for and opening 3 or more deliverables to get the full picture of their topic of interest. After designing a new reuse process for the brand, teams were able to put all the related content together in a single deliverable, while still maintaining the original 3 deliverables, giving the client one-stop shopping and a better experience for minimal increase in effort.

Reuse benefits

For customers, reuse means:

- The latest messages, corrections and updates available wherever they look, because they're done once for multiple deliverables
- Increased confidence in material (and the brand) because of increased consistency
- Less fragmented, therefore more pleasant consumption experience because content, that would otherwise require them to open up multiple deliverables (possibly in multiple formats), can be presented together

For brands, reuse means:

- Reviews by high-cost Subject Matter Expert (SME) resources are done once
- Duplicate effort is removed from the overall process
- All savings are multiplied across all languages into which the content is translated
- Risk is reduced by avoiding maintenance of the same content
- SEO is improved - The kind of question-based searches which are often addressed by techcomm materials, such as "I-want-to-know" and "I-want-to-do", are among Google's key strategic focuses going forward.⁷

Let's assume 15% of the overall body of marketing content could be sourced from technical content by reuse.⁸

If the techcomm teams have already created, reviewed and fact-checked it, then that saves 15% of the overall budget for brand content creation, review and translation. For a medium-to-large brand, that can easily mean millions per year, especially when looked at globally.

Content specialists at Precision Content and the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) surveyed hundreds of organisations and found 87% duplicate content creation effort and 79% missed content reuse opportunities.⁹ The waste and opportunity costs for not reusing cannot be ignored.

Techcomm teams that industrialise reuse at large scales often see efficiency improvements and bottom-line cost savings that average over 30% and exceed 50%, especially when many languages or heavy personalisation is involved.

Reuse examples

For customers, it often can improve experiences. For example, Sonos, the internet-of-things music equipment provider, often sends how-tos as a part of email newsletters and release notes. They, like many other products, have little-known features, benefits or functions that users may not leverage because they don't understand them or don't know they exist because they were not top-of-mind during original purchasing research. Surfacing these to users via marketing channels to existing or prospective customers can drive valuable (re)engagement.

The popular mobile app Pocket has a how-to from their technical documentation trending alongside publishing portals like BuzzFeed, Mashable, Lifehacker and Searchengineland.com in their "Tech" articles section. The content is valuable and makes user experience better when presented in an attractive and accessible way via the web, rather than being locked in isolated manuals or PDF.

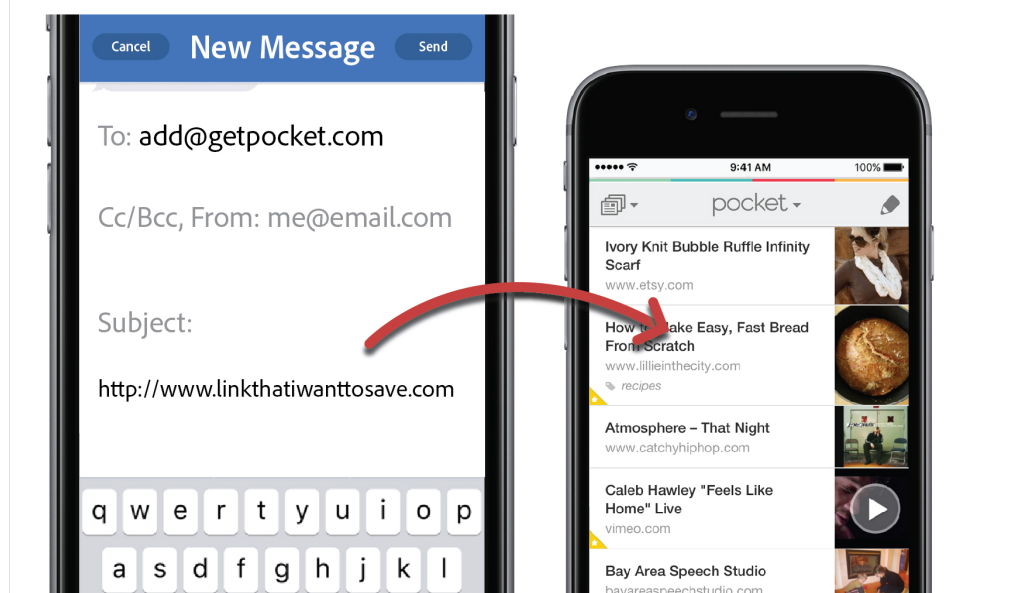
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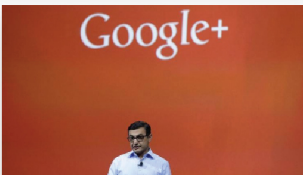
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mashable.com August 2, 2015

Inside the sad, expensive failure of Google+

Create a social network or risk everything. That was the original pitch for Google's Facebook rival, Google+, a refrain hammered over and over by the social network's chief architect, Vic Gundotra, in meetings with the company's top brass.

Save 26,951 saves




theguardian.com November 7, 2015

Lost at sea: the man who vanished for 14 months

In November 2012, Salvador Alvarenga went fishing off the coast of Mexico. Two days later, a storm hit and he made a desperate SOS. It was the last anyone heard from him – for 438 days. This is his story. In November 2012, Salvador Alvarenga went fishing off the coast of Mexico.

Save 24,092 saves

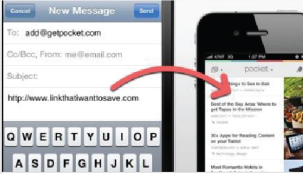


buzzfeed.com

I Followed My Stolen iPhone Across The World, Became A Celebrity In China, And Found A Friend For Life

I've broken this story up into three chapters. It should never have gone this far, but the internet works in mysterious ways. None of this should have ever happened. It makes absolutely no sense at all. It's truly crazy.

Save 42,772 saves




help.getpocket.co... December 3, 2016

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Saving to Pocket is as easy as sending an email. Simply send any link that you want to save to add@getpocket.com and Pocket will put it in your list. Please be sure that the link is included in the Body of the email, and that only one link is shared at a time.

Save 19,940 saves




blog.feedly.com March 14, 2013

All Tips for Google Reader users migrating to feedly

Welcome to all the new Google Reader users migrating to feedly. Here are some tips on how to adapt to the feedly desktop interface. To import your google reader feeds and categories over to feedly, simply login to your feedly using your google account.

Save 3,653 saves

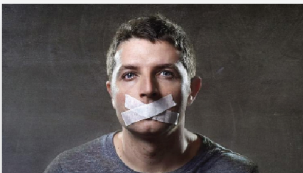


lifehacker.com December 17, 2014

How to Future Proof Your Career with the Skills That Matter

The job market can be scary, but with skills that stand the test of time, you can increase your odds of staying employed. Here's how to find and develop future-proofed skills so you can keep that steady paycheck, no matter what happens.

Save 2,553 saves




vox.com June 3, 2015

I'm a liberal professor, and my liberal students terrify me

I'm a professor at a midsize state school. I have been teaching college classes for nine years now. I have won (minor) teaching awards, studied pedagogy extensively, and almost always score highly on my student evaluations.

Save 20,488 saves

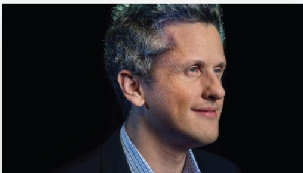


searchengineland... February 14, 2017

What Is SEO / Search Engine Optimization?

What Is SEO? All major search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo have primary search results, where web pages and other content such as videos or local listings are shown and ranked based on what the search engine considers most relevant to users.

Save 1,450 saves



theverge.com November 17, 2016

Perfecting your digital assistant

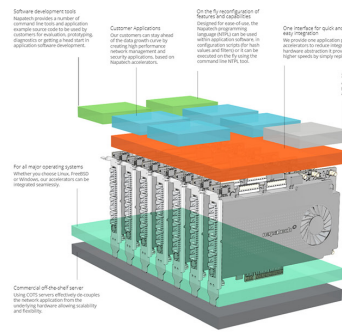
Your company exists, in part, because mobile devices enable us to demand consumer-quality experiences in our work software. Five years from now-ish, how close will we be to parity between work and consumer software? Will we even recognize a distinction ultimately between these two things?

Save 1,183 saves

In the B2B world, Napatech, a Danish manufacturer of network components, blurs the line between technical and marketing content. Like most B2B enterprise tech products, to evaluate a purchase involves extensive factual product information and multiple stakeholders. To optimise for this, Napatech reuses content across technical content in PDFs, and marketing landing pages seamlessly. Downloadable datasheets and pages are made of reusable components and can be rendered to professional-looking PDF and HTML automatically.

Accelerate your time-to-market and reduce risk

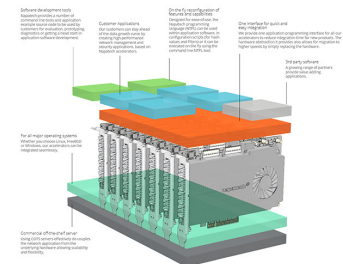
Napatech Software Suite provides an efficient migration path by allowing you to mix and match ports and speeds. An advanced cooling design assures the required airflow while sensors monitor voltage, power, and temperature.



One software suite for seamless integration and migration

Our comprehensive software suite ensures that our accelerators are widely compatible and easy to integrate.

From support for all major operating systems, to the common API for all products, we keep your learning curve to a minimum and provide an efficient migration path for next-generation network speeds. This can help you reduce time-to-market for new products, while reducing risk.



A common API is provided for all Napatech accelerators allowing plug-and-play operation. An intuitive, easy-to-learn, yet powerful programming language is also provided to allow dynamic, on-the-fly configuration of filtering and intelligent multi-CPU distribution on Napatech accelerators.

Napatech-supported applications

Napatech Software Suite is ideal for applications that require multiple high-speed ports and accelerators. Data merging functionality is provided to support accurate merging of data from multiple ports and accelerators.

LEARN MORE

ONE SOFTWARE SUITE FOR SEAMLESS INTEGRATION AND MIGRATION

Our comprehensive software suite ensures that our accelerators are widely compatible and easy to integrate.

From support for all major operating systems, to the common API for all products, we keep your learning curve to a minimum and provide an efficient migration path for next-generation network speeds. This can help you reduce time-to-market for new products, while reducing risk.

Software development tools
Napatech provides a number of command line tools and application example source code to be used by customers for evaluation, prototyping, diagnosis or getting a head start in application software development.

Customer Applications
Our customers can stay ahead of the data growth curve by creating high performance network management and security applications, based on Napatech accelerators.

On the fly reconfiguration of features and capabilities
Designed for ease of use, the Napatech programming language (NPL) can be used within application software, in configuration scripts for truth values and filters or it can be executed on the fly using the command line NPL tool.

One interface for quick and easy integration
We provide one application programming interface for all our accelerators to reduce integration time for new products. The hardware abstraction it provides also allows for migration to higher speeds by simply replacing the hardware.

3rd party software
A growing range of partners provide value adding applications.

For all major operating systems
Whether you choose Linux, FreeBSD or Windows, our accelerators can be integrated seamlessly.

Commercial off-the-shelf server
Using COTS servers effectively de-couples the network application from the underlying hardware allowing scalability and flexibility.

Reuse doesn't happen without some preparation. In most cases, teams will need to align on editorial guidelines and terminology to make sure that techcomm content works well embedded or alongside marketing content. But that's work every company should be doing anyway. Even if you're not reusing, consumers are looking at output from various touch-points side-by-side as a part of their research, whether you like it or not. Any discrepancies will at best detract from the brand impression and at worst, confuse and frustrate customers, eventually losing sales.

Increase revenues by reusing marcomm alongside techcomm

If done properly, reuse from marcom into techcomm can enhance customer experience while still driving brand goals. The idea often even raises instinctual negative reactions because technical content is supposed to be about pure user enablement and a refuge from commercial messages. However, when done properly, in a customer-driven way, marketing content embedded or alongside technical content can in fact be welcome because they offer solutions to problems... for a fee.

Leverage the engagement that techcomm represents

Documentation readers present excellent upsell/upgrade or cross-sell opportunities. For one of our large software customers, they found that contextually appropriate calls-to-action (offers) placed in technical content got 6 times as much click-through traffic as the same offers placed on marketing pages. Why? Because when users are looking at technical content, they are pre-qualifying themselves as engaged, and possibly a lead. They can be either:

- Current clients actively seeking solutions they don't yet have
- Prospective clients who are engaged enough to go into the technical product information to get detailed information

These clients are by their actions demonstrating that they're looking for help. If offers of help have a price associated with them, that may be fine, provided it's truly relevant to addressing their needs.

Relevance is the key. An ad for a restaurant just after lunchtime is an irrelevant annoyance. An ad for a restaurant that's open when it's 3 a.m. and you're standing outside a train station can be a welcome lifeline. When marcomm and techcomm are aligned on personas, customer journeys and content categories (taxonomies), delivery can be relevant enough that marketing calls-to-action stop being 'ads' or 'pushes' and become paths to mutual benefit for brand and customer.

My financial services and insurance clients want to make product documentation "chat-bot-ready" so that users can ask about their products via an interface like Facebook Messenger or Amazon Echo & Alexa. For example, a text or verbal question like "Does my travel insurance cover skiing?" and get a spoke reply of "No, but you can upgrade to the next level of package for \$40. Would you like to know how to apply?"

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How to pair SM-7556 mobile and laptop via bluetooth

[Connect a Bluetooth device in Windows 7](#)

1. Turn on your Bluetooth device and make it discoverable.
2. Select the Start button
Start button icon > Devices and Printers.
3. Select Add a device > select the device > Next.
4. Follow any other instructions that might appear.
Otherwise, you're done and connected.

Your Bluetooth device and PC will usually automatically connect anytime the two devices are in range of each other with Bluetooth turned on.

Introducing SM-7556i
The Slimmest Smartphone
4GB RAM | 64GB Internal Storage | SD645 Processor

[Buy Now](#) Pre book online

Relevance is the key: When marcomm and techcomm are aligned on personas, customer journeys and content categories, relevant marketing calls-to-action inside tech content become paths to mutual benefit for brand and customer.

Think outside the box and inside the product itself

Reuse of marcomm can also be in non-website or even offline materials like product help. For years, devices like printers have been able to connect users from online help or error messages to online portals that allow them to purchase new cartridges when they run out.

The Internet of Things will allow all manner of device in the home and enterprise to "phone home" to content services that can offer supplies, updates, warranty, service information and so on. Manufacturers of all kinds of goods are embracing the principle of "everything as a service", and rather than treating their physical goods as shipped, static units, they're considering any device to be a potential link back to offers and content. An entire economy is springing up around this principle.

Take Amazon's "Dash Replenishment Service" where through an Application Programming Interface (API), any device can connect to Amazon to offer supplies or spares. Early adopters include companies like Brother (printers), Brita (filters) and Whirlpool (home appliances).¹⁰



Although the media focuses on household names and consumer goods, large enterprises have both the business drivers and the scale needed to set up private equivalent services that bring together content, devices and the internet to lower TCO (total cost of ownership) for their services and products and improve customer experience. My clients in medical devices and mechanical engineering have been very clear for years that this overall customer experience – which they tie directly into service levels, service level agreements, TCO and other pillars of B2B – is what will differentiate them in an increasingly competitive and disloyal global marketplace.

Increase efficiencies by strategically unifying content platforms

A content strategy looks at addressing the point of greatest synergy between customer and brand goals. The more alignment and unification across touch-points, the more consistent the brand conversation. Removing technical hurdles in this delivery process makes delivery more efficient. Therefore, having a unified strategy and platform across departments simplifies the delivery of coherent experiences out to the market.

If need be, you can start by just sharing standards

With the vast numbers of content technology options available today, systems consolidation is a significant goal, especially to the larger enterprise where new systems are introduced with every merger and acquisition.

Even if content can't itself be directly shared (or maybe not at first), there is still a strong case for sharing metadata, governance standards and models. This is because even if content isn't physically shared or stored in the same location, it can still be held to the same standards, labelled consistently, and be part of a unified overall business process and strategy; it's just more challenging across separate systems.

With the vast numbers of content technology options available today, systems consolidation is a significant goal. Having a smaller number of optimised tools is important, especially to the larger enterprise where new systems are introduced with every merger and acquisition.

If need be, you can start by just sharing standards

When content is consistently labelled and systems can exchange freely, then content becomes a service between departments. The idea of "CaaS" (Content as a Service) has been circulating in specialist circles for nearly a decade, but even mass-market content management research and advisory groups are getting behind the idea. In the early 2017, Gartner announced "The Death of ECM and Birth of Content Services"¹¹. If an initiative looks at reuse, alignment or unification of marcomm and techcomm, then it's sharing goals that Gartner lists as the definition of what they called ECM (and are now calling "Content Services"):

- "Regulatory compliance and risk management
- Retention and dissemination of business knowledge
- Cost and process efficiencies
- Innovation and new ways of working"

The best systems to adopt are those that can competently handle structure and volume while delivering excellent experiences on multiple channels. When this can be done without needing to build costly integrations, it helps streamline processes and facilitates content sharing across the customer journey. Content can either be imported quickly and efficiently between systems that understand common standard or be managed in a standards-based repository and then single-sourced out to where it's needed. One such standard is DITA (the Darwin Information Typing Architecture), a widely-used standard that first gained popularity for technical documentation, but is now growing in popularity for various content types, including marketing.

As Gartner says, "The Content Services approach overrules the notion of consolidation for its own sake. It's strategic, rather than technology oriented and provides an evolved way of thinking about how to solve content related problems. It blends the reality of what is happening now in the digital enterprise and the emerging technology of the near future."

Put simply, you can make content systems work smarter, rather than harder, by aligning strategies and standards first, and then either:

- set up efficient inter-system exchange, or
- consolidate, if that makes sense in your business environment.

Stop choosing formats according to department

Techcomm and marcomm, in simplest terms, can often still be divided into the worlds of web (HTML, marketing) and print (PDF, technical). Even in brands where the techcomm teams have adopted advanced systems using technologies, like DITA, the output is often still a PDF. This badly damages analytics, SEO, and worst of all, customer experience.

Technical documents are hard to handle

Techcomm deliverables are commonly:

- Large and numerous (hundreds or thousands of pages, with hundreds or thousands of documents updated or published every year),
- Not given adequate funding with which to build modern digital delivery pipelines, and
- Time-consuming to transfer between back-end and front-end systems.

Therefore, rather than properly load techcomm content as web pages (in HTML), brands sometimes try to save time or money and continue to produce PDFs to load onto websites as a single block.

But PDF is still not the answer

PDF has many significant drawbacks. PDFs are:

- Not smartphone-friendly.
- Not part of site navigation or templates, meaning if found through search, they don't allow natural browsing of the site. Users must click on web-links to get out.
- Not part of broken-link reporting, meaning the links inside to get users back on the site may go bad over time.
- Not able to be tracked. The only metric you get on PDFs is around the download itself, not the consumption. PDFs of dozens, hundreds or thousands of pages – as often found in techcomm – spanning multiple topics, are a giant black-spot in analytics and performance evaluation. Many brands try to save time by using PDF, but SEO specialist Tom Fanelli says, "Even if the content is ideally suited for the PDF format, consider how you might repurpose all or parts of it as HTML web pages to gain better control and use of it for SEO considerations". <http://www.tomfanelli.com/pdfs-good-or-bad-for-seo/>
- Not easily reused in pieces. Although there may be tables, graphics, overviews, how-tos and more in PDFs, they're not easily linkable from web pages, and if links are made, they break the consumption flow by forcing users to leave the site to enter the PDF. This disruption means they may or may not make it back to continue their journey.
- Fixed. Although PDF has come a very long way, compared to web pages, PDFs can't offer features like dynamic areas for personalisation and adaptation of content updates that are frequent or real-time.

When we use PDF as a primary delivery format for content used in product evaluation, we sabotage our own efforts.

PDF is good for what it is good for, but it is not and does not pretend to be, an integrated part of sites and apps.

If you're still using PDF as the primary or solitary delivery format for techcomm, stop. Making PDF a secondary format, not the primary, will address these issues. It's a simple step, but due to silos and inappropriate use of technology, it's often not implemented.

But what about voice and tone?

There's often a concern when considering marcomm and techcomm unification that the tone of "documentation" – assumed to be dry and unengaging – simply won't work in the marketing context. To this, there's a simple response:

- It's in the marketing context anyway, so it should be on-brand, on-message and on-voice
- Voice is not tone
- Not all marketing is equal

It's in the marketing context anyway

Since the research indicates that technical content is being used to evaluate purchases, it's being used in the sales context whether the brand likes it or not. If the client has access to secure documentation portals because they have bought product, then they may also be using it to research products they don't yet have.

Regardless of how public the documentation is or isn't, it's going to hit customers at some point, so it should be on-brand and on-voice.

When techcomm is in use, it will be at times when users are specifically seeking solutions, sometimes urgently. It's then that your brand may be judged most harshly, and the relationship truly tested.

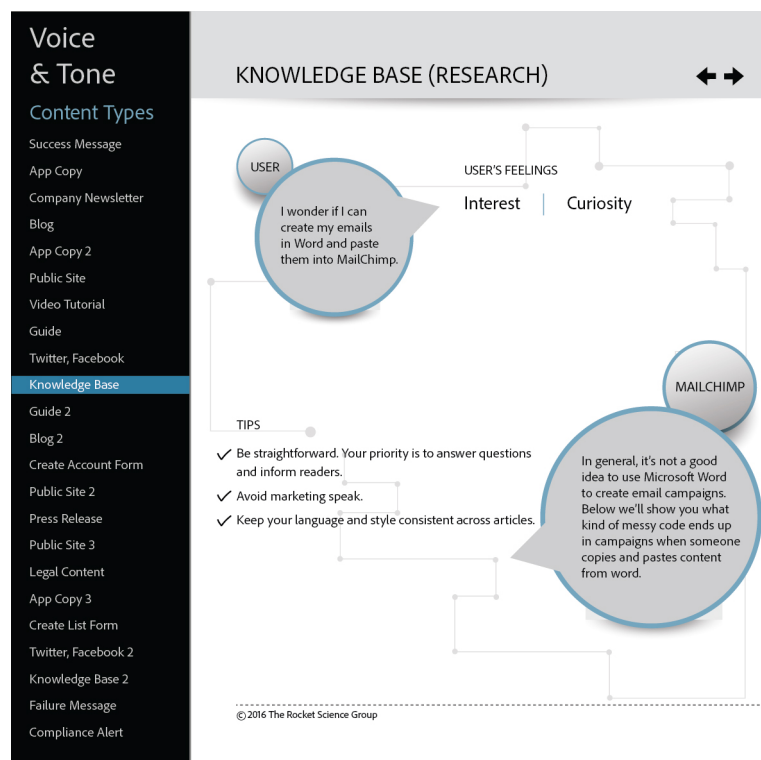
Voice is not tone

Voice is your brand personality; how the brand chooses to represent itself in words in all situations and channels. You have one brand voice because you don't want your brand to have multiple personalities. Voice is not the same as tone.

Tone is contextual. The same personality can deliver different messages using appropriate tone. Consider the difference in tone for these three contexts:

- Announcing a new feature
- Telling a client their delivery is going to be late
- Describing a task in a tutorial

See voiceandtone.com (by the makers of the MailChimp software package) to see a list of different tone tips that keep consistent voice.



Techcomm should be on-voice, but its tone is typically more straight-forward. If your voice is currently very different across your content sets, then sharing things like reference tables and other factual lists of information, which are very important to keep consistent but don't usually have much tone to them anyway, is a great place to start.

Not all marketing is equal

Marketing tone is not consistent within itself either. Consider the potential variance in tone across these marketing deliverables:

- Blog post
- Newsletter
- Product description
- Whitepaper
- Press release

If taken carefully and progressively, bringing techcomm and marcomm voice into alignment is perfectly feasible and always beneficial. Furthermore, the voice of the marketing content for the kind of organisation that has large volumes of technical documentation – like a medical device manufacturer, semiconductor company or engineering component company – might more naturally be closer to the clear, straight-forward tone of their techcomm. This provides these companies a head-start.

So now what?

Get the benefits you're after: A tactical menu

If you're looking to enable a strategy that supports your customer better across their whole lifecycle, this summary table takes the points of this article and makes them into a convenient map - from the many potential benefits, to recommended actions, to justifications. Many of the benefits come from multiple actions, so we divided them into the benefits from improvements vs. reductions.

<i>If you want to...</i>	<i>You can...</i>	<i>And your thought-starters are...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve customer experience across the customer lifecycle• Improve revenue-per-customer• Improve engagement customers• Improve customer loyalty• Improve awareness of your offerings• Improve the product evaluation experience• Improve analytics capabilities across the customer lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unify metadata standards across techcomm and marcomm (most easily done in a single platform)• Reuse marcomm alongside technical content• Reuse techcomm inside marketing deliverables and pages• Mine technical content to separate what must really be behind firewalls/ logins and what can be made more available for external viewing and cross-deliverable reuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IBM is a leader in terms of conducting hard research into this phenomenon. James Mathewson, former Editor-in-Chief of IBM.com, now Head of Search Strategies says, "60% of prospects used what would usually be called 'post-sales documentation' material as part of their sales cycle"• Many of our clients' customers complain of navigating first in "marketing pages", before they can jump over to "techcomm pages", and then to start again from top level navigation or search. If terms, keyword tagging or categorisation are inconsistent, then this extra navigation becomes even more confusing• An Urbina Consulting customer had 6x higher click-throughs by placing relevant commercial calls-to-action that helped solve issues alongside corresponding techcomm content

<i>If you want to...</i>	<i>You can...</i>	<i>And your thought-starters are...</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Urbina Consulting client who didn't unify metadata was therefore unable to trace users' paths through content, and therefore, content ROI, because back and front-end content systems had different categorisation systems (taxonomies) • An Urbina Consulting client who didn't tag their content end-to-end properly was able to use CRM data to determine customer interests and goals, but then unable to deliver all their relevant content effectively from their back-end systems
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce time-to-market, total cost of system and content ownership, and update turnaround time • Reduce risk of out-of-sync updates reaching the customer • Reduce expensive review cycles with SMEs (subject matter experts) and legal teams • Reduce localisation costs and translation turnaround times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reuse techcomm in marcomm • Unify management and delivery platforms • Publish techcomm into apps, websites (including reuse into marcomm pages) and PDF automatically from a single source 	<p>Almost all our clients' bottom-line efficiency-based ROI comes from reuse of various kinds. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% reused content from techcomm to marcomm means 15% less total marcomm content creation and localisation budget, which easily means hundreds of thousands per year in a major enterprise • Moving thousands or tens-of-thousands of techcomm pages between repositories can take hundreds of hours per year • Sharing of content assets means that when techcomm teams create, validate or translate content, it's immediately ready for use elsewhere • Not sharing updates effectively can open your organisation up to litigation risks. One Urbina Consulting customer left legal disclaimers out-of-date on thousands of live documents because they weren't able to update them effectively

Building your process

To get your initiative across the ground, you need to build a new collaboration model. Our recommended high-level process is based on Google's Progressive Practices in improving campaign integration (source).



Planning and kick-off

- o Discuss the business need and high-level course of action.
- o Make integration someone's job. Assigning a role to coordinate and ensure that reuse, sharing and compliance with the guidelines are kept on the agenda throughout planning.

Planning checkpoint A

- o Finalise objectives
 - Update or create customer journey maps and define deliverables to support the customer needs across the journey.

Planning checkpoint B

- o Agree to strategy and timelines
 - Establish your detailed deliverable structure and map out reuse.
 - Establish who owns what content assets and establish review and reporting roles.
 - Make content assignments and editorial calendar.
- o Establish how calls-to-action line up with deliverables and the customer journey
- o Establish KPIs for reuse, engagement and other business needs

Campaign launch

- o Create and distribute deliverables

Monitoring and reporting

- o Track success
- o Feed content improvement opportunities back into all teams to allow optimisation and improve reusable assets

Conclusion: Align content and systems to break down silos

From our field experience, most organisations have an established or quickly growing awareness of many of the problems described in this paper. What holds them back most is the architecture of the common enterprise and legacy technology systems.

Businesses are built around departmental functions rather than customer processes and journeys. KPIs, budgets and everything that goes with departmental hierarchies are aligned to those departments rather than customer needs and interactions. Although we've seen that leading organisations are building a solid basis for change by demonstrating that cross-functional squad models can deliver great benefits, the silo problem is not going to change soon.

A pragmatic first step is setting up strategic and technical collaboration between clearly interrelated areas like content strategy and communications teams. Unification of strategy and delivery of product information alone across the customer lifecycle, although it's foreign to your average marketer, is the one of the easiest first steps. The technology and best practices exist, and the successful case studies are growing in number.

Most organisations keep the details of their experiences and learnings private as they don't want to give away their competitive advantage. But what the minority know today, the majority will learn tomorrow:

- Content is fundamental to experience.
- Content managed and delivered in a unified way improves that experience.
- That improved experience improves brand equity and, of course, revenues.

You can do better. Sharing practices, tactics, standards and technology with your own colleagues across the aisle just makes financial and brand sense. It makes customers happier while making operations more efficient. Take advantage of your business assets hidden in plain sight.

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