

The following is a response to a client's request for proposals (RFP) asking an insurer how they address diversity, equity, and inclusion in their benefits plans and services.

Your interest in how we address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) is appreciated. Canadian (and global) employers increasingly strive to embrace inclusive work environments, and our group benefits solutions continue to evolve alongside those needs. Because not all employees are the same, our workplace benefits plans are as diverse as our Clients' teams.

A crucial aspect of showing your team you value them is providing benefits that meet their needs. We help you achieve this by offering benefits plans that support various mental, physical and social support requirements and scenarios. Understanding how different cultures, beliefs, lifestyles, and locations impact your employees helps us deliver the high-standard benefits our Clients demand.

A vital aspect of the value we offer is how we deliver it. Our Client Care Centre provides global support in over 200 languages. Our Future of Work initiative accommodates our employees' various work location requirements without sacrificing our Clients' service quality. Inclusivity is integral to how we operate in all respects, including our hiring, placement, education and advancement practices and goals. With this in mind, our business relationships adhere to a strict Supplier Code of Conduct, ensuring DE&I is valued at all stages of our Client support systems and benefits.

We continue to learn and evolve as we strive to push through barriers and improve inclusivity. This commitment to our Clients' diversity, equity and inclusion demands is evident in our workplace benefits plans and Client support solutions. Our offerings deliver intrinsic value and show your employees you value them as individuals.

The following illustrates my ability to proof, edit, and rewrite existing content to fix errors and make it more concise.

**Original:** If you cannot afford to make your mortgage payments, you could face the loss of your home. Once you miss 3 consecutive payments, the lender, or your bank, could begin the process to take possession of your property. So, if you think you are going to miss your mortgage payments, discuss this matter with your lender to see whether a plan can be made to prevent your defaulting on the property and losing the property. Try to find ways to bring your mortgage account into good standing. Speak with your mortgage advisor to ensure all possible financial resources have been explored to prevent the loss of your home. Call us at <PHONE>.

**Revised:** Your lender or bank can proceed to possess your property if you miss three consecutive payments. If you expect to miss any mortgage payments, plan with your lender to avoid defaulting. Prevent losing your home and keep your mortgage account in good standing. Call your mortgage advisor at <PHONE> to explore your financial options.

**Original:** If you think you are going to miss a mortgage payment, let your lender know as soon as possible. They will work with you to make a plan on how you can make up the missed payment. If you don't make arrangements with the lender, your mortgage goes into default. Once you've missed three payments in a row, the lender is in a position to begin the process of taking possession of your property.

**Revised:** Contact your lender immediately if you expect to miss a mortgage payment. They can proceed to possess your property if you miss three mortgage payments in a row. Work with your lender to plan how to make up a missed payment before your mortgage defaults.

**Original:** You can maximize the security of your online activities and protect yourself against identity theft and other online fraud by learning more about our security tools and safe computing practices.

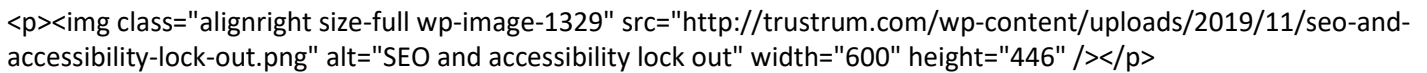
**Revised:** Maximize your online security by protecting yourself from fraud and identity theft. Learn how our security tools and safe computing practices can help.

Original	Revised
Transfer money to whoever you like, whenever you like.	Transfer money to whomever and whenever you like.
An adress change is already currently being processed for you.	We are currently processing your address change.
By paying yourself first, your savings will grow quickly.	Pay yourself first to quickly grow your savings.
ts easy to pay bill's online. Sign-on to Online Banking and find out for yourself.	It is easy to pay bills online. Sign on to Online Banking to find out for yourself.
Even when your doing good, it's important to have a financial plan.	A financial plan is important, even when you are doing well.

I wrote this article to address issues I'd heard among other writers complaining that accessibility requirements made SEO more difficult to implement.

# SEO and Accessibility Don't Have to Fight Each Other

## SEO and Accessibility Can Work Together

An image with alt text "SEO and accessibility lock out" showing a lock icon and the text "SEO and accessibility lock out".

SEO and accessibility are two different aspects of web design and content creation, both of which are still evolving. As they do so, companies are struggling to make SEO and accessibility work together in harmony. Such woes will become more prevalent as accessibility is increasingly regulated.

Arguably the most common misunderstanding is that SEO takes a beating from accessibility. Why? Because accessibility is about enhancing usability and message clarity, whereas SEO is about increasing visibility to online traffic. SEO and accessibility are therefore framed as an internal goal versus a user need (and perhaps a government mandate.) Such framing unavoidably positions accessibility as the priority. But does it have to be this way?

No, it does not.

### Why are SEO and Accessibility Thought to be at Odds?

One of the significant concerns regarding how SEO and accessibility won't work together is the latter's need for consistency. Some [web content accessibility guidelines](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/) ([WCAG](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/)) require consistent deployment for users with accessibility needs (e.g., screen readers) to know what to expect. For example, the two previous links both go to the same destination (the WCAG.) but use different link text. This is an accessibility defect ([3.2.4 consistent identification](https://www.w3.org/TR/UNDERSTANDING-WCAG20/consistent-behavior-consistent-functionality.html)) because the links both go to the same website but use different wording.

So, why is this a problem?

#### Consistency is Key -- and an SEO Hurdle

Consider how much you take for granted, being able to use keyword phrases for internal and external links. Both are relevant and legitimate search engine optimization techniques for building authority. (External links especially for authority building.) But if accessibility requires consistent (although not necessarily identical) presentation and identification, how can this SEO technique remain useful?

Here's a simple (if potentially time-consuming) approach to internal links: Build keyword-specific, isolated landing pages. This strategy lets you use keywords in links as desired so long as the link goes to that page. From this landing page, you can present a brief message specific to the keyword phrase. Next, add a call-to-action pointing to a preferred outcome. You can even change the call-to-action to suit current campaigns, so long as those links also remain consistent. This approach benefits SEO by providing another page to focus more intently on optimizing for a particular keyword phrase. The campaign's exposure is elevated while also meeting accessibility needs.

(Links must be consistent so their purpose is predictable. Once a screen reader user encounters one link to the destination, they can quickly identify others that do the same.)

#### Links Must Be Self-Explanatory

Another issue that arises between SEO and accessibility is external links. Although consistent link text requires a bit of creativity, it's not the only obstacle. There is another accessibility requirement that can serve as a hurdle. Link presentation must be consistent, but it must also be self-explanatory

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Understanding/link-purpose-in-context.html>>2.4.4. link purpose in context</a>.</p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 87 952 172" data-label="Text">
<p>What a link does must be apparent from its design and its wording. Link text like "<a href="http://www.misfit-studios.com">www.misfit-studios.com</a>" is not accessible because I don't know what the target site does unless I'm already familiar with the page. (Not that URLs are especially useful to SEO anyway, but you get the point.) The need for a link's purpose to be self-explanatory (in context) means that most keyword phrases can be made accessible if they are pointing at an appropriate destination. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 179 916 247" data-label="Text">
<p>I would also suggest looking into <a href="https://a11yproject.com/posts/how-to-hide-content/">how to hide content</a> from the screen so your links provide additional information for screen readers. You must, for example, indicate when a link opens in a new window or browser tab. You don't want this information to be visible, however. Instead, hide it so only screen readers present it. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 254 380 271" data-label="Section-Header">
<h3>Leverage Other SEO Benchmarks</h3></div>
<div data-bbox="55 278 927 380" data-label="Text">
<p>Accessibility doesn't affect all SEO benchmarks equally (or at all, in some cases.) Some accessibility compliance requirements can even create SEO opportunities. For example, <a href="https://www.w3.org/TR/UNDERSTANDING-WCAG20/text-equiv-all.html">using an image's ALT element properly</a> is a vital part of making informative images accessible. Needing to use ALT elements more effectively (and likely often) creates additional SEO opportunities. Additionally, page titles, meaningful URLs and headings, and proper use of semantic HTML elements (e.g., &lt;strong&gt;) elevate both SEO and accessibility. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 388 947 506" data-label="Text">
<p>Accessibility also aids SEO by enhancing usability. The more accessible a website is, the easier it necessarily becomes to understand and use. Accessibility elevates the entire user experience, potentially reducing bounce rates. As bounce rates go down, the site's potential as an authoritative source on its subject matter increases. Such outcomes are undeniably beneficial to SEO efforts. Once again, we see SEO and accessibility working together. To know more about SEO, look for <strong><a href="https://victoriousseo.com/blog/guide-to-canonical-tags/">Victorious</a></strong> services, an SEO agency that leverages a wealth of performance data and market research to create scientifically-driven SEO strategies. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 513 574 530" data-label="Section-Header">
<h3>Why Making SEO and Accessibility Work Together is Critical</h3></div>
<div data-bbox="55 538 930 572" data-label="Text">
<p>SEO and accessibility are both critical elements for a successful online presence, but for different reasons. As such, neither can be ignored to benefit the other. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 579 952 630" data-label="Text">
<p>Content creators must find creative ways to get SEO's needs and accessibility to shake hands (especially if accessibility compliance is not optional.) I believe it is an inevitable matter of time before technology (including HTML and Aria) shifts even more significantly to accommodate this critical relationship. That day is not yet here, however. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 638 952 723" data-label="Text">
<p>Most of the work required by SEO and accessibility compatibility must be done at ground level until the tools at hand catch up at all levels. Meeting this need requires content creators to expand their skill sets to include accessibility. Also, content and web development teams must work more closely together to incorporate accessible SEO solutions into the site structure. The direction content creation is heading also makes dual <a href="http://trustrum.com/steven-trustrum-cv/">subject matter experts in SEO and accessibility</a> all the more valuable to successful content channels. </p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 730 877 747" data-label="Text">
<p>Are you ready? The future is SEO and accessibility working together as different sides of the same coin.</p></div>
<div data-bbox="55 918 182 935" data-label="Page-Footer">
<p>Steven Trustrum</p></div>
<div data-bbox="338 918 539 936" data-label="Page-Footer">
<p>http://www.trustrum.com</p></div>

This is a marketing blog article I wrote with not-for-profits and small businesses in mind.

# Is "professionalism" killing your content?

## How content reshapes "professionalism" in pursuit of engagement

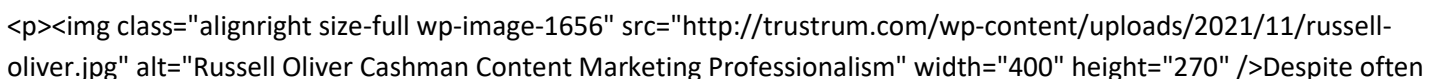
Professionalism is frequently defined as a threshold of conduct that absolutely cannot be crossed if a company's dignity is to be maintained. It constitutes a web of (usually unwritten) workplace rules we begin to instinctively accept and operate around. Whatever your workplace may be, you likely have an idea in your mind what professionalism in the workplace means. You likely also realize that what constitutes professionalism at one workplace is not the same for everyone.

With this in mind, content marketing requires output that best serves the desired message while remaining "professional." But consider how varied the definition becomes when one targets content at a wider audience that extends beyond individual workplaces -- an entire market sector, for example. In such a context, content creators are faced with several questions:

- Which exact definition of "professionalism" must content marketing strategies be guided by when addressing such a broad audience?
- How do content marketing efforts function without risk of drawing negative feedback for being "unprofessional"?
- How does content stand out from the crowd while still adhering to the expectation of professionalism that helps define that crowd?

When it comes to content, focusing on serving professionalism rather than one's content objectives can be a debilitating obstacle. Keeping professionalism as the priority over the messaging can force content creators to shoot for the most restrictive definition. Why? Because they are only willing to risk upsetting the least amount of people. As a result, the content's ability to engage (and thus inform) will likely suffer for it.

### How the idea of professionalism stifles engagement

Despite often believing "professionalism" sets a standard for all things related to our workplace, content marketing simply does not function that way. (Not if it wants a good chance of engaging its audience, anyway.) The most successful content often goes beyond the boundaries of commonly defined professionalism. It is more than just passing along information and a message. It also entertains and keeps one's attention. This is so even if the content outwardly seems ridiculous. Let's look at an example.

If you are from the Greater Toronto Area, you are familiar with Russell Oliver and his decades-long TV campaign. In his [commercials](https://youtu.be/21I0VP8tf0o), he does everything from cover himself in gold paint to running around in spandex as "Cashman." He is also constantly uttering his ridiculous "ooh, yeeeeeah" catchphrase. (And I'm sure if you are not from the GTA, you know of a local business with similar

commercials.) The commercials are annoying, cheaply made, and I doubt you'd find anyone who would claim they suffer from an abundance of professionalism. But do you know what else his commercials are?

Memorable.

People remember his commercials because Russell Oliver understands something fundamental about his marketing content. His commercials are about getting his audience to look in his direction and come through his door. However, they do not necessarily reflect the "professionalism" he expects in running his business and dealing with customers.

When you are creating content, your priority is to engage the audience -- to get them looking at it. If you cannot do that, everything else about your content is irrelevant. Yes, successful content marketing absolutely must also inform or have some manner of messaging or call to action. But does any of that matter if your audience is not paying attention to you, to begin with?

Limiting content creation to your employee code of conduct's standards of professionalism confines your content's potential in a way that may not reflect its audience's interests. Instead, accept that a different definition and standard of professionalism applies to your content. This standard must exist within a context of representing your message and brand to your audience.

### Professionalism as a skill set and process

When it comes to content marketing, "professionalism" means using available skill sets to get the job done in the best possible way while remaining true to the brand. Much of this process includes experimenting and trying new things. If you stick to what everyone else is doing and expects, your content will not stand out. Sometimes this means coming conflicting with what people traditionally consider to be "professionalism."

Professionalism in the workplace is about relationships with peers and coworkers, as governed by a code of conduct. With content, professionalism is about relationships between the brand and the audience. This process is governed by the objectives sought concerning both. These latter relationships are *very* different from the former. As such, do not hold them to the same definition and standard as staff or volunteer policies. A business creating engaging content while retaining its professionalism thus needs to redefine a new standard for this particular context.

Unfortunately, not everyone will like the results.

### Dealing with negative feedback

A common concern among content creators is how to avoid complaints and how to deal with them should they happen.

From the start, just accept there will be consequences once your content's definition of "professionalism" slides away from that of a workplace. Not everyone will agree with your choices as a content creator or how you represent your brand. You have raised the previously mentioned minimum threshold of risking upsetting someone, so you will likely have to deal with complaints. The larger your audience, the more likely this will prove true. So long as you are going to experiment with new ways to elevate your content marketing engagement, negative feedback is inevitable. But accepting this doesn't mean you have to *fear* getting complaints.

<p>Don't dismiss complaints out of hand. You are, after all, stepping outside the usual perceptions of the norm, so you have taken too big a step. Listen to what the individual complaints have to say and weigh them together to identify patterns. Some complaints may be fairly extreme, going so far as to demand public apologies, retractions, or even firing the content creator. Listening to complaints does not mean you have to comply with any or all demands, however. </p>

<p>No matter what, creating engaging content means being honest enough with yourself to evaluate the standards of professionalism you are working within. Have you moved too far too fast beyond what your audience expects? Is your content too outrageous or sideways to be understood? Has it gone beyond engaging and become offensive or confusing? </p>

<p>Remember, a content creator's version of "professionalism" relies on them getting the job done. If no one is getting your jokes, you are not meeting your objectives. You are failing to maintain the standards of professionalism demanded by your business' goals and brand. Objectively measuring your failures can be difficult. </p>

<p>Even if your content is getting much attention, you need to consider how well this traffic is converting to your goals. A lot of traffic but low conversion likely means your content has missed the mark for one reason or another. People are watching, but they are not responding as intended. This, coupled with complaints, makes it likely your content failed to resonate. </p>

### <h3>Negative feedback as a positive</h3>

<p>Many content creators do not know how to react well to negative feedback, especially claims against their sense of professionalism. A complaint is an opportunity to learn and improve. This is true whether the feedback makes a good point or is someone being overly sensitive, seeking attention, or trying to hammer you with their subjective tastes. </p>

<p>A legitimate, honest complaint provides a closer look at your audience's expectations. This applies to how it defines professionalism regarding both your business' brand and the content representing it. It also gives you an idea of how far outside of the box your audience is willing to go. Negative feedback may also inform you that you need to slow things down with your engagement experiments. </p>

<p>Even when negative feedback is clearly off-target (e.g., someone who likes to pick fights online), examine their complaint. If possible, figure out how to cut off such complaints before they can happen next time. Most complaints can still teach something, even if the complaint itself is unfounded or absurd. </p>

<p>But never become afraid of negative feedback. Similarly, don't confuse complaints with failure until your numbers say the same thing. </p>

### <h3>Pushing the boundaries of content professionalism without breaking them</h3>

<p>Every business' content marketing efforts are going to be different, just as their audiences differ. Because of this, I can't tell you <em>exactly</em> what you need to do to increase your content' engagement while maintaining a position of professionalism. I can, however, offer some suggestions I use to govern my own work. Use or discard them as you feel appropriate: </p>

<ul>

<li>Don't be afraid to be a bit silly and use humour. If you have a good joke that fits your content's message, don't be afraid to run with it.</li>

<li>Shape your humour to fit your content's message, don't shape your message to fit the joke.</li>

<li>Don't be silly for the sake of being silly; if you're being silly simply to get attention, you risk attention being diverted from your message.</li>

<li>Humour is okay, but stay away from off-colour humour with large audiences.</li>

<li>Be certain your audience will get the joke. If you unintentionally make an "inside" joke, you waste your audience's time and risk confusing them. Also, no one likes feeling like a joke was made, but they don't understand it.</li>

<li>Be respectful of your message and your audience. Using either as the target of any humour must be done carefully so that the joke is laughing <em>with</em> them and not <em>at</em> them.</li>

<li>With successful content comes trust. Your content should always also seek to earn the audience's respect and build your brand's dignity.</li>

<li>Engagement doesn't always require Big and Bold techniques. Sometimes the subtle, understated approach is best.</li>

<li>Nothing has to be perfect, and don't be afraid of making mistakes. Your audience is more forgiving than you know so long as you keep them engaged and informed.</li>

</ul>

<p>When it comes to content marketing, "professionalism" is what you make of it -- so long as your audience ends up agreeing with you. </p>



This is an explanatory article I wrote for a government funding facilitator.

## <h1>Typical Government Funding Requirements</h1>

<h2>Knowing what to expect can prepare you for finding suitable government funding</h2>

<p>All government grant and loan programs vary for a variety of reasons. However, there are some general points of overlap and intersection. These points can be considered typical of what loan or grant funding programs require of their applicants.</p>

<h3>Be a Particular Type of Business</h3>

<p>Several grants target specific business types or industries because the funding sources are government agencies related to such a cause. For example, the Ministry of Natural Resources may offer business financing to help mining or forestry small businesses. They do so because that is within the realm of their oversight role.</p>

<h3>Small Business Job Creation</h3>

<p>It is not uncommon for financial assistance programs to require applicants to create one or more position within their company using the provided government money. Some government funding options require the business take on a student to receive the funding. (Or the program subsidizes the student's wages.) Other funds demand the money be directly used for job creation.</p>

<p>There are also some tax benefits programs that only come into effect regarding employees. For example, some programs repay small business employers some of their Employment Insurance deductions.</p>

<h3>Attend Mentoring Sessions and other Forms of Training/Education</h3>

<p>The government likes to feel they are financing entrepreneurs with good, viable ideas who know what they are doing. As such, some government funding is contingent on applicants attending small business skill set workshops. Other financial assistance programs require the recipient partner with or obtain an approved mentor.</p>

<h3>Provide Your Own Investment</h3>

<p>The government acknowledges there are benefits of helping small business owners under the right circumstances. However, business funding programs are rarely able (or willing) to shoulder all financial risks. Government funding programs that require a financial stake from the applicant filter out entrepreneurs without the will or means to contribute to their success.</p>

<p>Financial requirements include dollar matching (i.e., you must provide as much money as the government-provided funds) or a minimum annual reinvestment.</p>

<h3>Fit a Specified Objective Type for Government Funding</h3>

<p>Government funding for small business often limits assistance to applicants in pursuit of specific goals. Requisite goals can include benefiting a particular demographic group, for example. Such demographics can include youths, women, and First Nations. Alternatively, goals could be a specific type of business improvement, such as green energy and technology projects.</p>

<p>Knowing how to spot funding requirements -- a process that may sometimes mean reading between the lines and not merely reading the eligibility conditions -- may help you find programs suited to your needs.</p>

This is a landing page I wrote for a VoIP service provider's marketing campaign

<h1>Looking for a Versatile Hosted Business Telephone Solution that Rises to the Challenge?</h1>

<h2>The #NAME# Multi-Tenant IP-PBX Platform fills your Business Telephone Needs</h2>

<p>What does the <strong>#NAME# Mutli-Tenant IP-PBX</strong> offer you in terms of a <strong>business telephone</strong> solution? It is:</p>

<ul>

<li>Diverse</li>

<li>Robust</li>

<li>Easy to Use</li>

<li>Scalable</li>

<li>Reliable</li>

</ul>

<h3>See the Advantages of the #NAME# Multi-Tenant IP-PBX Business Telephone Solution</h3>

<p>#NAME# IP-PBX Solution empowers both your business and customers by uniting the following in a single package:</p>

<ul>

<li>Video</li>

<li>VoIP</li>

<li>Call Routing</li>

<li>Customizable Line Extensions</li>

<li>Advanced Billing</li>

<li>E-commerce </li>

<li>... and a broad range of other desirable functions</li>

<p>Our <a href="insert-internal-link">IP-PBX business telephone</a> platform also adjusts to suit your demands. Customization, administration, and access couldn't be simpler with a web interface that places the control where it belongs: in your hands.</p>

<h3>Reduce Costs and Worries While Improving Business Telephone Service</h3>

<p>#NAME#'s reliable, user-friendly IP-PBX Softswitch solution replaces costly on-site hardware. Trim your operational and support expenses while retaining the ability to access and alter your IP-PBX from anywhere in the world.</p>

<p>Whether your needs are local or global (or both!), we offer the same smooth, outstanding service and availability without sacrificing service or quality.</p>

<p>#NAME#'s IP-PBX platform provides everything you expect of a multi-tenant phone network, including:</p>

<ul>

<li>Line and call management (interruption, transfer, parking, etc.) </li>

<li>A customizable IVR auto attendant</li>

<li>Added layers of control, adaptability, and service</li>

<li>... all designed to exceed your expectations.</li>

</ul>

<h4>Need Simplified Account Management?</h4>

<p>Improve billing and invoicing customization, automation, and calling card management.</p>

<h4>Compatibility Concerns?</h4>

<p>#NAME#'s IP-PBX Solution can account for H323 restrictions and emerging DID technology.</p>

<h4>Under Pressure to Reduce Expenses but Improve Call Quality?</h4>

<p>Our IP-PBX Solution can account for changing rates and call quality using manual or automatic call routing (LCR.) We deliver the best available service at the lowest cost.</p>

<h4>Reliability and Support Got You Worried?</h4>

<p>You can easily add redundancy and customizable trouble tickets to your IP-PBX Solution. Make support services easier for you and your customers.</p>

<p><strong>And much more!</strong></p>

<p>You've voiced your needs and #NAME# is prepared to show you why our IP-PBX Solution is the answer. Contact us at <a href="mailto:email" target="\_blank">email</a> to make the change.</p>

The following was a blog article I wrote as a lead-in to my conference speaking session on content marketing.

**Meta Description:** Don't let your content marketing goals lead to stagnation and underachievement. Your content can do better.

**Title:** Content Marketing Goals: Confusing "Good Enough" for Success

## <h1>There is Always Room to Improve Your Association's Content Marketing Goals

When it comes to defining our content marketing goals, associations and other not-for-profits can misunderstand what makes content successful. We do so by mistaking our content's objective to be an immutable finish line.

*"We need to get X amount of results to meet our goals."*

"X" is often defined as the open and/or click-through rate for email blasts; visitors for a website; views on a blog; followers, likes, and shares for social media; online event registrations; and so on.

But why do associations consider such a number to be a success? How is this goal defined?

Typically, associations set their <a href="internal link">content marketing</a> goals based on a correlation to recovering expenses. Consider an association that sends five email blasts with an average open rate of 21%. Event registrations promoted in those emails fill up, so a relationship is understandably derived between open rate and registration. As a result, 21% becomes perceived as an adequate open rate to achieve similar results in the future. The same can be said of any other metric tied to driving towards content marketing goals. Unfortunately, this method does not address all factors.

Ultimately, such a perception can easily set false expectations.

### <h1>How Numbers Can Mislead Us

When we set our future expectations and content marketing goals based on correlations in previous results, we do not see the complete picture. You cannot easily know how much of any given content source led to an actual desired outcome (e.g., product purchase, event registration, membership renewal.) Doing so requires the means to entirely track a specific relationship's progress from the point of audience contact to its final conversion while covering everything in between.

Most advanced analytics platforms allow track traffic from a particular email blast, social media post, etc. You can follow your content relationships from access to your goal so long as all progress is entirely digital. You can define goals in analytics software that help determine success. This could be a checkout process from your association's e-commerce shopping cart, for example. Alternatively, it could be completing an online registration form.

Any correlation between your content and your marketing goals becomes less clear without the ability to track content's entire progress digitally. This can happen if orders and registrations are completed offline via a phone call, fax, or similar mechanic your analytics cannot track. Yes, you can look at a broad range of converging data points and make an educated guess, but how accurate is that? You don't know for sure what is working and to what extent.

### <h1>When Future Goals Don't Match Previous Contexts

Consider that future content marketing goals based on previous results are likely set in situations where the context is not identical. Different products, events, membership drives, etc. all have particular factors to consider. (Not the least of which is your audience's shifting nature and needs.) These variables are forever widening the divide between previous outcomes and future objectives. It makes sense to use similar, previous results as a guideline, but do not let them set boundaries or limitation on future goals.

## <h1>Why "Good Enough" Shouldn't Direct Your Content Marketing Strategy

We frequently look at things as "good enough" -- "it does the job" -- and decide that is the same as success. We do so because something that fulfills our minimum threshold at least meets an immediate need. Unfortunately, this perspective limits us. It puts a cap on future content's potential and how high we are willing to set our sights.

As a content manager who has worked at various organizations and companies, I am very familiar with the phrase "it is good enough." I've often bumped into this particular wall while striving in a new direction to get more out of existing content marketing goals. For example, the parties-that-be may be satisfied with their current email blast or newsletter open rates and click-through rates. They believe these metrics are sufficient to make their sales quotas or get their events filled. This is the sort of situation where "good enough" and "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" is the response to proposed changes. It is considered success to make quotas because they balance the books and keep management happy.

But does that count as success?

When we say something is "good enough," we are saying we have reached the bare minimum required of us. We have given up trying to do better. In marketing, real success comes in two parts:

### <h3>Measuring True Success

1. Meeting the minimum threshold.
2. Striving past the minimum threshold to do better.

Your content performing well enough to satisfy your current goals is not the same as having no room for improvement. Is your association holding an event where you consider twenty registrations a success?

Why?

Because thereabouts is what you achieved last time?

Well, what sort of content did you use to promote the previous event? What can you do differently to improve that number?

### <h3>Keep Running Beyond the Current Finish Line

When you allow content performance to dictate goals rather than serve them, you are entering a self-fulfilling cycle of stagnation. You merely aim to do as well as previous comparable instances. You are not shaking things up. You are not undertaking content experiments to do better.

Doing "good enough" means you have stopped trying to do better.

Having successful content marketing goals is never about meeting your minimum thresholds -- the point where conversion crosses the line from debt to profit. Success is not a goalpost or a finish line. Success is an on-going process that requires constant effort, including trying new things with the intention of producing improved results. No content marketing strategy can count itself as truly successful without this understanding.

So, what do I want you to take away from this article?

I want you to understand and accept that no matter how well your current content goals serve your organization, there is always room for improvement. Keep expanding your audience so you have to keep growing your objectives. There is no ceiling on achievement. You need to keep moving forward instead of stopping at some imaginary finish line you have set for yourself.

Stop telling yourself that "good enough" is a synonym for success. Success is a journey, not a destination.

**Call-to-Action:** As CSAE's manager, content, Steven will be speaking at CSAE National Conference 2017. He will be presenting on associations' need to become more creative with its content and to conduct experiments to find ways to improve what they are doing. You really should be there to hear what he has to say.