

The SchoolFinder Group

# Content Best Practices Guide October 2017



“

We have developed this guide to aid in enabling our partners to deliver valuable content that has a positive impact on students, increases brand awareness, and ultimately generates conversions!

”

Welcome to the SchoolFinder Group

# Content Best Practice Guide

At the **SchoolFinder Group**, your content is what fuels our newsletters and [Discover](#) platform. We have developed this guide to aid in enabling our partners to deliver valuable content that has a positive impact on students, increases brand awareness, and ultimately generates conversions!

Today, content marketing plays a pivotal role within digital strategy. Time and focus should be spent on developing a sound content strategy that delivers value to your target audience. In order to do so, you'll want to include some of today's content best practices to ensure your content hits home and doesn't fall flat.



This guide will go into detail on a list of content to-dos that will help you maximize your performance across our sites, including:

- Creating a Value Exchange
- Don't Forget About the Title!
- Once They're In, It's Time to Engage
- Styles of Content that Perform Best
- Writing Tips for Content Success

# Create a Value Exchange with Your Audience

The number one rule you should follow when putting together a piece of content for your target audience is to ensure that you are creating a value exchange. You want to make sure that your content is authentic, relatable and adds value to someone's life – whether it may be helping to solve a problem or answering a question. The purpose of this is to build a relationship and trust with your audience before selling to them. The key here is to not self-promote within your content, as this is not an effective way to build a relationship.

## ***No one wants to be directly sold to!***

Ensure you can answer the questions: who is your target audience, and what are they expecting from you?

Add value to your reader's life: what do they want to know? What are the problems they are trying to solve?

***The purpose of this is to build a relationship and trust with your audience before selling to them.***

Don't over promote within the content: Remember, deliver value and remove the advertising! It is enough to have "By the University of XXXX" as your promotion. You could even add in a valuable takeaway, such as a link to a webinar you may be offering.



# Don't Forget About the Title!

Getting someone to open your content is half the battle. When selecting a title for your content, ensure you take the time to think through it carefully. The title is the first thing your audience will see, and it is the driving factor behind whether or not they will view your content.

We suggest making a working title first that sets the agenda for your content. Afterwards, create a list of potential final titles and then select the one you think will perform best. Don't be afraid to ask others for their thoughts too!

- Ensure accuracy in your title – don't create expectations you can't fulfill
- Make your title pop! Include things like alliteration, strong language and numbers
- Will your title resonate with your audience? Make sure you're speaking their language
- Keep your title short! Keeping it under 70 characters or 8 words is best practice



Titles that have performed well across the SchoolFinder Group Sites:

***3 Unlikely Places to Find Scholarships***

***The 10 Best Programs in Canada***

***Scholarships Can Make Studying Abroad a Reality: Here's How!***

***6 Things to Know About Canada Before Moving Here***

***Hit Paydirt with these Lucrative Student Summer Jobs!***

# Once They're in, It's Time to Engage

The other half of the battle is ensuring that your audience will actually read what you have to say! At the start of your article, you should inform your audience as to why they should care and why they should continue to read. It is important to be upfront about what your audience is going to gain from reading your article.

More importantly, however, is ensuring that your content gives your audience a sense of how to actually apply the information you are providing them with. The reason your audience is reading your content is because they are looking for the answer to some sort of question. Ensure your content provides the answers they are looking for!

***By eliciting an emotional response, you are creating content that is relatable, and most importantly, shareable.***

You'll also want to ensure that your content elicits some kind of emotional response from your audience.

Happiness is the best emotion to aim for, but don't be afraid to pull at the heartstrings of your audience either. By eliciting an emotional response, you are creating content that is relatable, and most importantly, shareable.



# Styles of Content That Perform Best



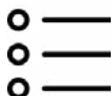
**How-To's and Tutorials:** Answer your audience's questions by directly giving them the information on how to do it. How can they apply for that scholarship? How can they prepare to move overseas to attend your institution? Let them know in a how-to!

**Example:** [\*Tips to Win Scholarships and Awards\*](#)



**Stories:** Why not try delivering information through a story? People love stories! They are a great medium for engaging your audience, eliciting emotion and clarifying your message. This can include an interview, or be a recounting of events.

**Example:** [\*Scholarships Can Make Studying Abroad a Reality – Here's How!\*](#)



**Lists:** Give your audience a simple list that easily addresses their needs.

**Example:** [\*5 Habits To Develop As An Art And Design Student\*](#)



**Controversial Posts:** A great way to elicit an emotional response from your audience is to take a stance on a subject that your audience cares about.

**Example:** [\*Don't Use Automatic Image Sliders or Carousels, Ignore the Fad\*](#)



**Guest Articles:** Why not get a student to write an article for you? This would be a great way to relate to your audience.

**Example:** [\*International Student Life: Exploring Opportunities in Canada\*](#)



**Video:** This is a great content format for engaging your audience! We have a section for video on Discover, and would love to see more amazing videos fill the space!

**Example:** [\*A Global Experience in a Student City\*](#)

# Writing Tips for Content Success

A lot can be done to improve your content by the way it is structured and written. Follow these tips below to ensure your message gets across clearly and effectively.

## **Avoid writing in the passive voice**

Keep action in your article by writing in the active voice. What sounds more engaging? My article was loved by students, or students loved my article? Definitely the latter.

## **Use exciting and unique verbs in your article**

Make your article pop by including some colourful language to add diversity to your piece!

## **Keep your article lively by breaking it up**

Ensure you use multiple paragraphs throughout your article to keep your readers engaged. Aim for paragraphs to be between 1 to 3 lines. This will help keep your readers attention, and move them along through the article.

## **Edit your work**

This may sound like a no-brainer, but you would be surprised with how many articles come to us with mistakes! Ensure your work has no spelling or grammar errors.



We hope these best practices and tips help you to create impactful and valuable content that will engage students and leave them wanting more! If you have any questions, or would like further help in developing effective content, reach out to us at [info@edgeip.com](mailto:info@edgeip.com)! We're here, and happy to help!

**Happy content creating!**