



# Amplify Buyer Attention

Design relevant content that invites prospect interactions.



Third in the  
eBook series.

62% of companies don't view the customer experience as critical for the future.

– Forrester



## The Challenge of Relevance

People are kind of funny. They have no patience for things that don't impact their perceived reality. If a flood is happening across the world, they may spare a compassionate moment, but are soon refocused on their daily priorities. If that flood is 2 miles away—and closing—they'd be riveted on learning more.

A bit dramatic, perhaps, but very true. The biggest challenge for marketers today is determining how to create relevant, fresh content that catches and keeps potential buyers' attention as well as that impending flood. The first part is getting noticed (favorably), the second is creating anticipation for what's next—in consistently repeatable ways. Often, it's a matter of focus.

You've, no doubt, heard the phrase *it's all about the customer*. The fact that it's true doesn't automatically shine a light on what that means for compelling content execution. That's what Amplifiers help you do. But before you can do that, you need to know the back story. People assign relevance based on how the topic discussed relates to issues they're dealing with right now. Knowing that "back story" helps your content immediately prove relevance by connecting with something important they're currently thinking about.

That correlation will catch their attention and help you build anticipation by showing your buyers what's possible in relation to that important issue or challenge—and help them envision a successful future after it's solved. Applying Amplifiers to your content and communication strategy will get your buyers' attention and expand their interest in the value your company can provide.



*Amplifiers structure your content to confirm, correct or expand information and knowledge buyers need to actively engage with your company to solve their high-priority issues.*

## The Nature of Amplifiers

Amplifiers help marketers define content strategically to ensure focus is kept squarely on creating prospect engagement. Amplifiers are guides that help you tap into the natural ways buyers think. They make sure you have the best shot at addressing high-value issues with greater relevance. Since it takes multiple touch points to move a prospect forward in their buying process, Amplifiers provide a variety of ways to catch and keep buyers focused on your company.

The difficulty in connecting with potential customers is one of perception. Vendors like to believe they're customer centric. The majority of their customers disagree. That disconnect is costing companies more than \$1 billion in annual revenues. Amplifiers help to correct this issue by generating prospect-to-opportunity transitions that translate to higher levels of customer acquisition.



**50%** of companies say  
lost sales are directly  
related to lack of  
engagement.

– Economist Intelligence Unit

Amplifiers define 7 structures for value-driven content. They work best when marketing's goal is to establish more than the fleeting attention that results from one-off messages. Moving prospects from attention to anticipation is the beginning of engagement. Amplifiers also help you build momentum that promotes the progression of your prospects through the buying cycle.

Each step a prospect takes with you further qualifies them for sales activities. Without this measurable progression, closing the deal is less likely to happen.

These 7 Amplifiers provide templates to create content that connects with buyers via their natural thought processes and relevance antennae.

1. Answer a Question
2. Relieve a Doubt
3. Confirm a Suspicion
4. Simplify Complexity
5. Provide a Path
6. Correct a Misconception
7. Mitigate a Risk

People have a high desire to know that their assumptions, beliefs and knowledge are correct. Industry advances happen quickly. Keeping up-to-date is vital to producing consistent, successful outcomes. By developing your content and communications to **confirm, correct or expand understanding and knowledge buyers need**, you'll be seen as a valuable advisor helping to develop solution to problems they must address—or opportunities they need to explore.

## Unknown Lead



## Engaged Buyer



## Amplifier Preparedness

The effect of Amplifiers on content is dependent upon tightly targeted communications finely tuned to connect with urgent priority issues. In order to utilize Amplifiers for best outcomes, you must know your prospects intimately.

Which of the pictures on the left is indicative of what you know about your buyers? Until you know your prospects definitively, using Amplifiers will help, but it won't deliver optimal results. You see, buyers are different. Depending on their roles, interests in project outcomes, company objectives, professional goals and influence, their reactions to your messaging will differ. How well you know the priorities they're thinking about with the most urgency will impact your ability to engage them for the long haul of their complex buying journey.

Once you've developed [buyer synopses](#) and segmented your leads into related interest groups, you've got a place to start. Now, define the [back story](#). What this means is defining the business situation and need. How did they get there? What are they doing now and how will their situation improve if they address that business priority? Make a list of responses related to the perspective of each profile.

The next step is selecting an Amplifier to guide the focus for your content campaign development. Depending upon the value your company provides, some Amplifiers will work better in different stages of the buying cycle than others. The back story lists you've made above will help you choose.

# 1 Answer a Question



Answering a question does not mean you choose one **you** think is important. The secret to this Amplifier is in addressing a question about a controversial subject that your prospect already has on their mind. The more controversial the subject matter, the higher degree of attention and connection your communication is likely to have.

A controversial subject provides a prime opportunity for you to differentiate the way your prospect thinks about your company as well as the value you can bring to their project. Just make sure you can substantiate your claims.

This is like playing the “Why?” game. Start with the issue and the back story list you created for each profile. Begin asking why...? As you think about the answers to the questions, what question logically pops up next? Use the list for each profile as a starting point. Create 5 question/answer scenarios for each.

What’s making them uncomfortable? Start from status quo and work outward. Put yourself in their shoes and consider both personal and professional implications. Make sure to map the questions you come up with to buying journey stages and address them in the order in which they may occur—just as your prospect will experience them. This is the topic list for your content series for each group of prospects. You can also cross reference content for one profile in messaging to another to promote pass-along between influencers.

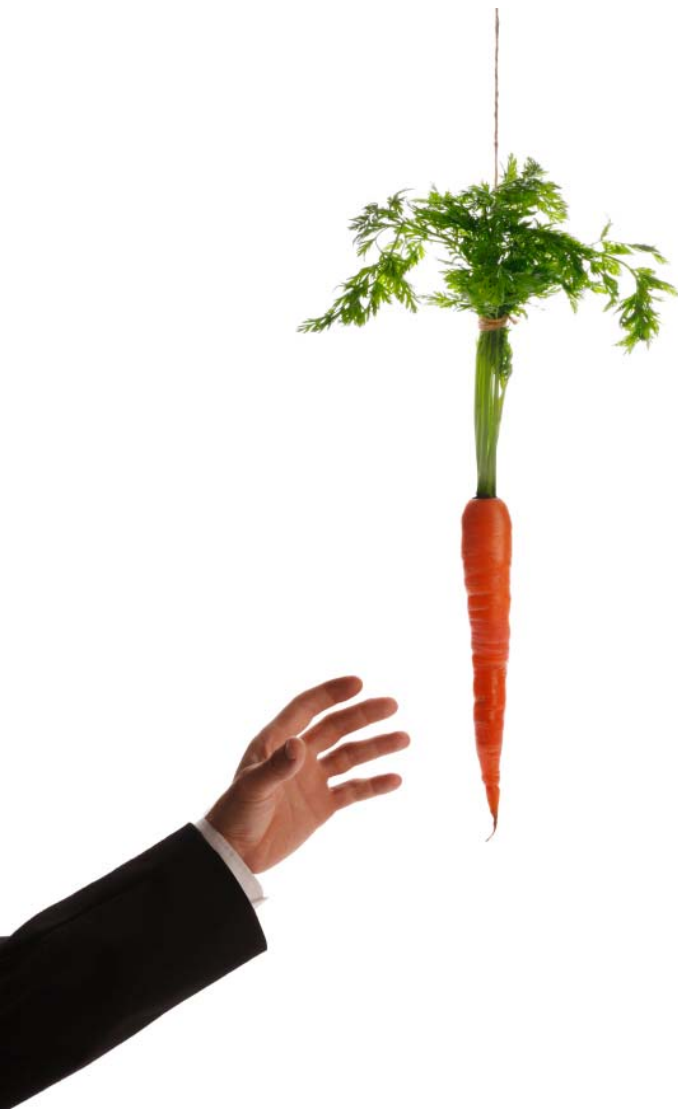
## 2 Relieve a Doubt

Change is hard. Going against status quo is even tougher. When people begin to consider change, it's usually related to shifting priorities due to newly defined strategic objectives. With change comes uncertainty and doubt about potential options, professional ramifications, and how to get the desired impact. The other thing about change that's hard is choice. There is always more than one way to skin a problem or tackle an opportunity. So, how do your prospects know they're making the right choice?

Every option has pros and cons. Prospects are outside their comfort zone when dealing with something outside their normal realm of expertise. Make a list of options and determine where doubts play for your buyers. Then, assess how competitors are addressing the subject and set your company apart by applying your expertise in a different context. Amplifiers can help with differentiation.

The beauty of this Amplifier is that you can help prospects relieve doubt and then escalate their confidence by providing evidence that what you say is true. Doubts are natural. They're going to happen whenever change and choice are afoot. Relieving doubt has an emotional component that can also amplify the prospect's trust level in your company as a valued advisor. And that's just where you want to be when they're considering change.





### 3 Confirm a Suspicion

When buyers begin researching alternatives for solving a complex problem or taking advantage of a new opportunity, suspicions arise that must be addressed.

- Will it work? Is it viable?
- Do I really need to do this? Maybe now isn't the best time.
- What will happen if I don't act? Will anyone notice?
- Is what I'm hearing about this issue true?

Suspicions are generally assumptions related to outcomes at the extremes of success or failure. Your prospects may suspect that if they do A, then they're going to get an outcome they don't want. Or, conversely that pursuing A is the exact path they should follow to get a result with a big upside.

Depending on which end of the spectrum your prospects are on, the best time to confirm a suspicion will vary. If your prospect is afraid of getting a result they don't want, you can boost your credibility by confirming their suspicion and then presenting an alternative that circumvents that outcome. Your expertise will have higher impact if they are still resisting the downside.

Alternatively, if the prospect suspects they can get a desirable outcome, but aren't sure, confirming they can and showing how can become the imprint of record for your prospect that others will have to surpass to unseat you.



## 4 Simplify Complexity

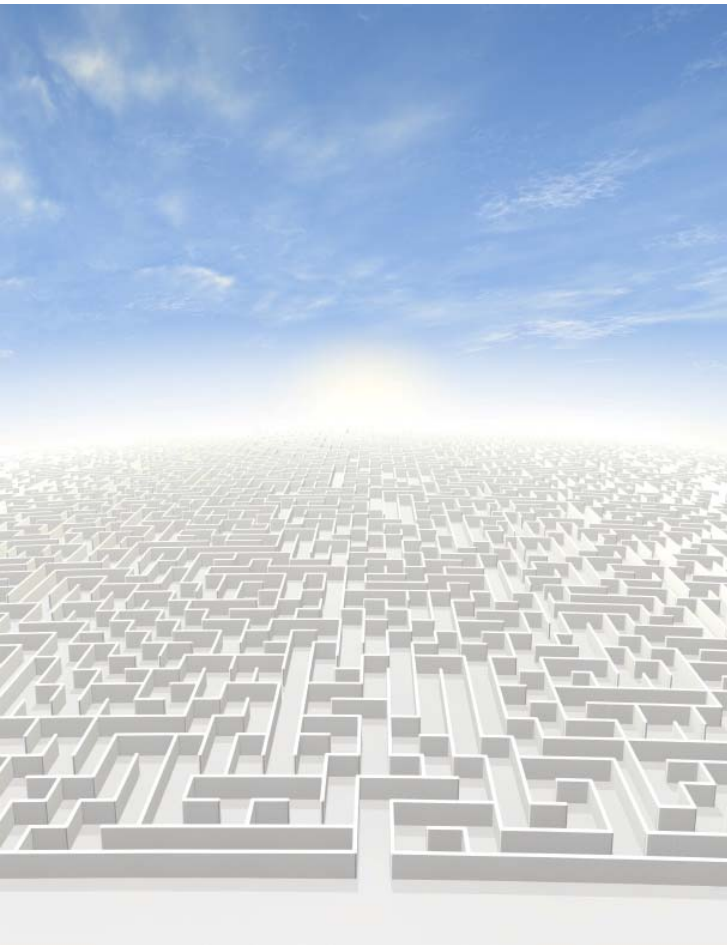
Many of the situations our prospects find themselves confronting today are growing in complexity. Solving them involves a lot of moving parts. Changing a process impacts people, new solutions require willing user adoption and, often the situation's impact reaches beyond the prospect's immediate sphere of influence. Just the number of people involved in the purchase decision can make the sale more complex.

By addressing the components of the issue, you have the opportunity to catch and hold your prospect's attention by exposing the pieces of the solution in a way that makes them approachable. Your capability in simplifying the complex also illustrates your grasp of their situation and your interest in addressing their concerns in a way that matters, specifically, to them.

Instead of addressing how comprehensive your solutions are, highlight individual values that are key considerations for your prospect. Build your story as you show them how to weave those parts together to get the outcome they want. No one cares that your solution has gazillions of features unless each of them is relevant to the situation at hand.

By utilizing a simplicity structure, you can create a series of communications that engages and builds the story with your prospect and increases their comfort level with each step. Simplicity is unique and more easily embraced.

## 5 Provide a Path



Solutions are quite wonderful in theory—but they’re an entirely different proposition when your prospects start thinking about the journey to the project’s outcome. As in the Amplifier above, simplicity is infinitely embraceable, but so is showing your potential buyers how they’ll get there.

Map the journey for them. By showing your prospect the incremental steps it takes to get from beginning to end—and the benefits they’ll reap along the way—they can envision themselves accomplishing the project successfully.

This Amplifier is used to great advantage toward the later stages of the buying process—after your prospect has bought into the idea of taking action. Projects are often derailed, however, when buyers cannot grasp the nuances involved in the journey and believe it’s too difficult, time consuming or risky to pursue.

Consider all the steps of the journey and then prioritize them in order of value, impact and worry for your prospect. By clarifying each, in turn, you provide valuable insights that address high-value needs for buyers. You’re actively increasing their confidence in themselves, in you and your solution. You’re also lessening the effort for the buyer who’d otherwise be trying to figure out how to address these issues themselves. Perspective is the key to providing a path.

## 6 Correct a Misconception



There's a lot of misinformation available. Some companies' websites make you think you can do everything, including slice bread, with their solutions. It's not until the project is underway that the buyer finds out they won't get what they thought without more work, extra steps and added features.

Being a vendor who corrects a misunderstanding about a course of action—saving prospects from future headaches—elevates your status. Buyers need, and want, to be educated. They work in areas of specific expertise. The problem they need to solve is beyond that expertise, or it would've already been handled.

Buyers consider high-value educational information more important than even price in vendor selection. Discover the misconceptions salespeople are trying to fix late-stage and set about correcting them earlier in the buying cycle.

Chances are that if misconceptions aren't illuminated and reframed with new information in the early stages, by the time the salesperson tries to correct the buyer's impression, you won't be on the short list. Or, their misconceptions will already be anchored and difficult to unseat, eliminating you from consideration. This is even more important with the growth in social networks and the variety of people and levels of expertise online professing to know of what they speak. Correcting misconceptions should now be an included tool in every communication portfolio. It's critical to progressive buyer engagement.

## 7 Mitigate Risk



Accompanying any big decision is the shadow of risk. None of us like risk. In fact, it would be nice if it disappeared and made all our choices the best ones. Since that's not likely to happen, helping your prospects mitigate risk makes you a preferable, trusted and credible vendor—one not afraid of the tough stuff.

When confronted with risk, the three most natural responses are avoidance, transference and reduction. Complex sales, by their very nature, come with risk. The key to this Amplifier is monitoring your prospect for risk tolerance and proactively stepping up to address the risk they've assigned the most concern. Show them how to avoid it, transfer it to you or prove you can reduce its impact.

Each stakeholder in the project will have different risk concerns. Each one should be addressed from the appropriate perspective. By unifying your prospects' confidence, your credibility goes up and resistance to choosing comes down. I'd rather be in the boat with someone who can help me get to shore, than someone oblivious to a gash in the side of the hull. Wouldn't you?

There's nothing better than a healthy concern about professional risk to dash your chances of getting the sale. Status quo is preferable to unmanageable risk. This needn't be the case. Especially when you know that mitigating risk is as much a sales role as a marketing one. Proactively addressing risk is one key to maintaining momentum and credibility throughout the buying cycle.



## Amplifiers Help You Avoid “Me” Traps

Many companies today start out with all the best intentions in the world to be customer focused. But, your company, and your products, are what you’re immersed in every day, and what you know best. It’s intuitive to you to talk about them and how great they are. Using Amplifiers to focus your content helps you stop that slide back into company speak.

Your latest product may have just gotten 18 new features you think no one should live without, but if each one doesn’t address an urgent priority on your prospects’ must-do list, talking about them will produce a big yawn.

Get to know your customers—develop personas and profiles you can use to actively get an inside view of your prospects’ reality. Get a firm handle on industry trends and look down the road.

- What changes are coming that could affect their success?
- What are their competitors doing that could impact their business?
- What are they struggling to accomplish that you can simplify for them?

Communicating the answers to these questions by applying Amplifiers to your content development process will help your company get you noticed.

Consistently using Amplifiers in your content strategy execution will add momentum and anticipation to the dialog your prospects actively engage in—with you.

## Amplifier Application

The following is a guide for applying amplifiers as a focus for customer-centric content and communications:

### Step 1 – Assess the Back Story

What's the situation? Define the business need.

---

Who owns the priority? \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2 – Define Prospect Concerns Relative to the Back Story

- Status quo
- Potential impacts – both good and bad
- Reasons for resistance
- Future benefits from change
- Industry situation

### Step 3 – Choose an Amplifier and list related elements

For example: If you choose Answer a Question – then, relative to the information above, what questions would your prospect have?

### Step 4 – Order the Amplifier elements in terms of urgency

- By priority
- By buying stage

## Step 5 – Create a Topic Slate

- Select the topics with the best potential for impact from step 4, above.
- For a complex sale, a minimum of 3–5 topics is recommended.
- Write a lead line (brief sentence that explains why you think the topic is urgent to your prospect) for each one.
- Using the information in steps 1 and 2, list 3 high–value points for each topic that will be used to flesh out the content.
- Order your topics and include a pointer for each one that feeds attention toward the next topic.

### Abbreviated Example of Amplifier Application –

**Situation:** Need geo–distributed collaboration for faster time to product development and innovations.

**Prospect:** Product–line Manager in mid–size global company with at least 3 locations for team members on project.

**Back Story** – product time to market is too long, cutting into revenues and the prototypes are too expensive, given budget cuts and iterations needed. Competitors are faster. Everyone is comfortable with our current process and the research guys are abrasive to designers so putting everyone in the same “room” could cause conflicts. But, getting products to market faster and more inexpensively means we could take back our lead. Global insights mean we’d see customer needs from a worldwide perspective.

**Amplifier – Answer a Question:** How do we facilitate global collaboration? What are some concrete ways our product design process could be impacted? What types of system upgrades will be needed? [Importance is assumed as is for this brief example. The last question is tactical.]

#### **Topic Slate: first topic example**

How do you facilitate global collaboration?

Story about the differences from in–person collaboration in an office setting to virtual global collaboration.

- 1) The advantages of real–time global perspective & disadvantages to consider,
- 2) The impact of moderation on idea facilitation and choosing who moderates
- 3) Setting the ground rules

Pointer: Once you’ve figured out how easy it is to facilitate global collaboration, it’s important to minimize design disruptions.



## The Author

B2B marketing strategist Ardath Albee helps companies increase their marketing effectiveness by generating more and better leads for their sales organization. She helps them develop contagious content and e-marketing strategies that catch the attention of website visitors and target markets, and move them through the buying cycle until they are "sales ready."

Ardath has a unique ability to develop content strategies that work hand-in-glove with overall corporate and product positioning to deliver hard hitting e-marketing programs and tools that compel customers to buy. Her blog posts are referred to often by other industry leaders and her articles are syndicated by The Customer Collective, Alltop and Junta 42, and have been used for university ezines, published in CRM Today, Selling Power, Rain Today, Marketing Profs e-newsletters and Enterprise CRM News.

Visit her website: <http://www.marketinginteractions.com>

Visit her blog: <http://marketinginteractions.typepad.com>

Or, you can contact her, via email, at: [ardath@marketinginteractions.com](mailto:ardath@marketinginteractions.com)

©2008 Marketing Interactions, Inc.