

GOING MICRO FOR A MACRO IDEA

How PTC Uses a Microsite To Launch A Big New Product



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► OPPORTUNITY

The industry called it the feature wars of the 1990s. CAD (computer-aided design) software manufacturers scurried to battle. Their mission: To bring additional software features to product designers. The problem? All of those bells and whistles made CAD software unwieldy and difficult to use. PTC, a major PLM and CAD software developer, saw a flattened, uninspired market with no real growth.

However, this also presented an opportunity. PTC decided to introduce Creo, a new family of design software, built to solve chronic problems that have long plagued companies that use CAD software. Creo would deliver four breakthrough technologies that address the challenges long associated with usability, interoperability, technology lock-in, and assembly management in CAD environments. Creo would reinvigorate and redefine the design market and PTC's position in the marketplace.

How would PTC educate their customer base about this new software suite?
Through content marketing.



ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

What They Do: PTC is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing software companies, delivering a complete portfolio of integral product lifecycle management solutions.

Who They Help: More than 25,000 customers in the Industrial, High Tech, Aerospace & Defense, Automotive, Consumer, and Medical Device industries.

Industry: Design Software

Number of Employees: 5,000

Insource or Outsource Marketing?

Both: Outsource to Mechanica in Boston, MA. Content marketing strategy for the Creo microsite provided by Robert Rose and the Content Marketing Institute.

In Business Since: 1985

Headquarters: Boston, MA

► SOLUTION

PTC hired Joe Pulizzi and Robert Rose from the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) to develop and oversee the project. Joe and Robert worked closely with Rachel Nislick, PTC's Director of Interactive Marketing and Geoff Hedges, Program Director for Creo.

A successful launch would require doing more than developing a new product line; it would mean positioning the company as a thought leader, sharing the company's vision and strategy, and sharing information about the product suite ahead of its release. This would be achieved by creating original content that would educate, engage and excite the core audience.

"This new content marketing effort was to launch the new Creo product, build buzz for it, and educate the market," explains Robert. "The new content strategy required a microsite launch that was (and is) really supporting the effort to drive awareness for the new product and its first release in the summer of 2011."

The team had two primary missions:

- Address the obvious industry problems. The team needed to get the industry speaking about the "unspeakable" - the multitude of complicated, unnecessary features in their existing CAD software. Customers were apathetic because the jangle of ill-matched features created the impression of a staid development atmosphere. End users did not have any awareness of Creo. The microsite would need to develop an engagement with the new software. This needed to change.
- Develop a plan that was strong enough to stand alone. The content marketing solution needed to work hand-in-hand with existing PTC marketing initiatives but also develop a distinctly new "personality." As Robert explains, the team members were tasked with marketing the vision and strategy for a product that wouldn't be ready for several months. But they didn't want to negatively affect current sales of PTC's CAD software. Anyone buying today's products is on the path to Creo, and are upgrade-eligible when the new Creo product releases.

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► STEPS TO SUCCESS

The team had just one month to develop the content strategy and create the relevant content. The site's launch coincided with the company's public worldwide launch of Creo. The key was making sure there was sufficient internal coordination and project management. This would focus attention on content development.

Develop a Content Strategy

The initial content strategy was the first critical deliverable. This identified the pillars of content and mapped the way the content would be laid out strategically. This document guided the production of the editorial calendar, which in turn shaped the content development pipeline.

"This really helped to align the site strategy and the content roll-out with the marketing messaging that was going out," observes Robert. This ensured that the roll-out wasn't just haphazard but instead had a defined plan and strategy. The result was a smooth site launch with regular, ongoing content deployment.

This was supported by a multiple-contributor blog.

Identify Themes

The team identified three themes the new content should address:

- Creo Reactions: Commentary from the industry and customers regarding Creo
- Reinventing Design: Establishing thought leaders, by analyzing trends and innovation
- Behind-the-Scenes: PTC people and culture

PROCESS OVERVIEW

What main steps did they follow?

- Nail down the content strategy first. Be sure it can co-exist with other marketing initiatives.
- Build an editorial calendar based on the clearly defined and agreed-upon strategy.
- Produce specialized content to fill the calendar.
- Use familiar technology tools, such as Wordpress, when fast deployment is necessary.

Who was involved?

Rachel Nislick

Director of Interactive Marketing, PTC

Geoff Hedges

Director of Creo Program

Robert Rose

Content Marketing Strategist, Big Blue Moose

Joe Pulizzi

Project Management, Content Marketing Institute

Determine Appropriate Content, format, and strategy

Gone are the days when websites or microsites are thrown together without thought to how the content should fit together, what format should be used to convey information, and the strategy behind it.

Text-based content, for example, can at minimum include anything from original articles, to supplemental downloads or interactive quizzes. Similarly, video, multimedia, and motion graphics each play a different role in communicating marketing objectives. The PTC Creo team settled on a mix of text, video, and image content. Text-based content included original articles, interviews, and best practice guides. Video-based content featured early product demonstrations and behind-the-scenes interviews with developers, customers, and strategic partners.

Create an Editorial Calendar

Next, an aggressive editorial calendar was developed. Content was organized by medium (text or video). Notation was given to how each unit served the site's overall marketing plan, and which team or individual was responsible for development.

The editorial calendar was broken into daily and weekly content deliverables. Robert, the content strategist, compiled the content into a shared template. This document also tracked how text-based content would be illustrated, when it was approved, when the content would launch, and ensured all of it was search engine (SEO) optimized.

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Hire External Help

Barb Schmitz, an expert and former magazine writer in CAD software, was hired to write industry-specific content.

Schmitz's contributions were crucial for a few reasons. As an expert, she could quickly and accurately write about in-depth industry trends. Relevant content was brainstormed weekly with PTC and approved as quickly as possible because the calendar was planned weeks in advance.

Schmitz's writing was structured to fit the calendar and the identified pillar objectives, a hallmark of a content marketing strategy. Schmitz's expertise provided a solid base for in-house contributors. Her writing also set the critical "knowledgeable and fun" tone for the site.

"I developed niche-specific content that explores CAD software design trends. I tend to follow the news curve and make a point to be product-neutral in discussion," said Schmitz. This content prevents the site from being perceived as a one-sided marketing tool. That's the key to establishing a thought leadership position online."

PROCESS OVERVIEW

What was the time commitment?

- The content strategy for the microsite and blog were developed and executed in just a month's time: September to October, 2010.
- There is an ongoing development of thought leadership content.

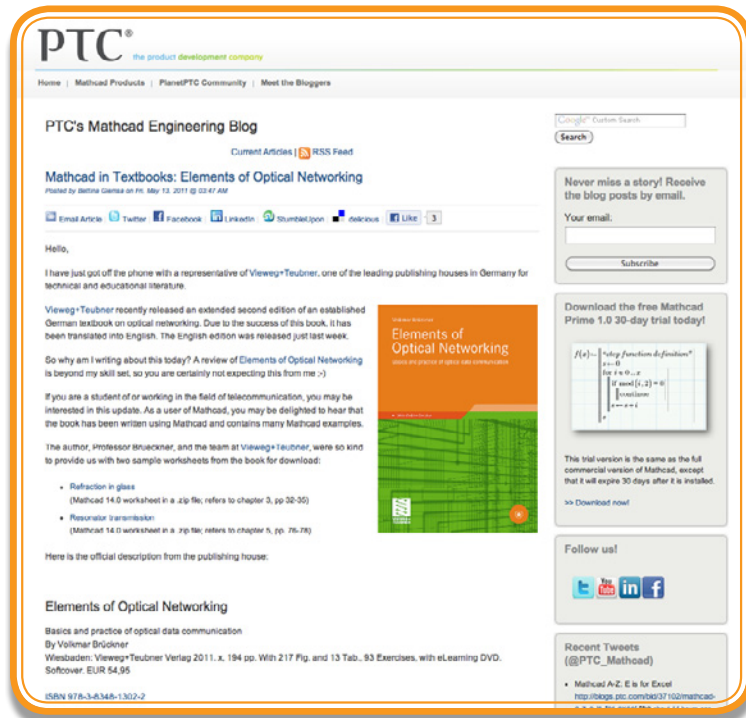
What tools did you use?

- WordPress - for the microsite's content management system
- Google Documents - for sharing editorial calendar
- Adobe SiteCatalyst- for web analytics

Select a CMS for the Microsite

The biggest obstacle the PTC content marketing team faced in executing the microsite was a familiar one: Time.

Time and cost constraints prevented a customized platform from being built, so Wordpress was deployed instead. Wordpress has the advantage of offering an exceptional time- and cost-efficient web development platform. Everyone on the team was familiar with this CMS platform. More critically, by building on commonly-used software, the microsite could be easily handed off to other contributors in the future.



Set the Stage for Success

The team wasted no time filling the site with content in anticipation of the launch. Daily deadlines were necessary, so there would be a sufficient content when the site went live. This prevented the site from appearing too new and offered the audience plenty of material.

PTC microsite launched on time. Simultaneously, the CEO revealed the product name, Creo. Today, the content is updated on a daily basis. The site is maintained by PTC.

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► RESULTS ACHIEVED

Initial Successes include:

Very effective launch. PTC's Creo microsite enjoyed a large launch at the end-of-the-month deadline and capitalized on the industry event. The site quickly crossed 100,000 visitors and continues to grow, with over 70% of the visitors new to PTC.

Continued collaboration and growth. A core team of PTC and CMI contributors continue to create original content for the microsite on a daily basis. Even guest writers have contributed content. Managing this content requires ongoing editorial planning, but the reward is increasing web traffic and brand awareness.



Deep development of niche content. The Creo design software works as apps, providing better alignment of product capabilities with users. Providing ongoing content that explores these specific app-like options ensures thought leadership focused on key roles found in manufacturers

THINGS THEY'RE GLAD THEY DID

Move fast, but be patient.

Results take time. A content strategy can be developed and executed quickly if absolutely necessary. However, it is important to note that the real benefits of a content marketing strategy are realized over time and are not immediate.

Commit to a content strategy.

Strict adherence to a plan makes tight deadlines possible. Respect the editorial calendar. Develop content in advance to ensure delivery deadlines are met.

► WHERE THEY PLAN TO GO FROM HERE

Now that the Creo microsite has launched, the team is building a mix of original and industry-generated content. They are inviting users, managers, and even CEOs to contribute to the site. This way, PTC will capitalize on outside perspectives and be able to highlight projects using its software.

Many parts of the Creo microsite do not heavily discuss PTC, Creo or other products. Rather, they provide a venue for conversation surrounding current manufacturing topics and CAD software trends. Subsequently, the company anticipates that additional discussion of its products will occur naturally.

“We want to really engage the audience in the conversation that PTC is trying to have, which is positioning itself as a thought leader in this new paradigm of design software,” says Robert.

PTC team members plan to continue to increase the volume of content on the microsite, too. They will do this by following an editorial calendar similar to the initial launch strategy. This content marketing will continue to drive awareness of PTC and Creo.

Rachel Nislick adds, “Joe and Robert understood the time constraints. CMI developed an effective strategy so that PTC could execute against a defined editorial calendar and a set of objectives. Having this in place ensures we will continue to develop content for the Creo site in the coming months.”

THINGS THEY'RE GLAD THEY DID

Don't scare off sales prospects.

If your content is promoting a brand new product, particularly one that upends an established industry, be sure your efforts do not dissuade prospects from purchasing existing solutions. For example, illustrate that anyone who buys product “today” will enjoy the same benefits, such as complimentary upgrades, when the new product is launched.

Choose thought-leader contributors carefully.

Specialized content creators are required for specialized content development. Be sure your contributors speak the same “language” as your target audience and have the credentials to demonstrate thought leadership.

► EXPERT COMMENTARY

Robert Rose outlines two factors he thinks made PTC's content marketing vision and strategy successful:

Align tightly with existing marketing messages, where appropriate.

Focus on specific marketing objectives and develop your content accordingly. Evaluate existing marketing messages, and where appropriate, include them in your project's objectives. New life can be breathed into existing material even if you are building a new "voice" for a project. Adaptive reuse of content can shorten development when working with a strict deadline.

Content marketing is not separate from other marketing initiatives.

Clients may find it difficult to understand the value of content if it is perceived as stand-alone. The larger the organization the more pronounced this can be felt. The more closely you can align the existing branding messages to the pillars (or themes) of content that you're trying to drive with content marketing, the more smoothly the iterations will be.

A LOOK AT KEY CONTENT

- **Microsite** formatted as a blog
- "Foundation content" that fulfills content goals prior to launch
- **Community blog** with user generated content
- **Community forum** to discuss industry trends as well as PTC products



Robert Rose
Content Marketing Institute



About the Content Marketing Institute

The Content Marketing Institute helps marketers with one thing: The how-to of content marketing.

Become a member to get access to our library of content that includes more case studies, exclusive research and data to help you make decisions about content marketing – **it's free!**

Get a complimentary 30-minute consultation to see how we can help you get started or move to the next step with content marketing. Email our Strategist in Residence, Robert Rose at Robert@junta42.com.