



THE MARKETER'S GUIDE TO **SLIDESHARE**

How to Build Your Brand,
Generate Leads &
Create Opportunities



TODD WHEATLAND

Foreword by Joe Chernov

Copyright © 2012 by Todd Wheatland. All rights reserved.

Published by Content Marketing Institute, a division of Z Squared Media LLC, Cleveland, Ohio.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for any loss of profit or other commercial damages, including, but not limited to, special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

About the Content Marketing Institute

The Content Marketing Institute teaches non-media brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multi-channel storytelling. CMI does this through multiple offerings including the Content Marketing World event, *Chief Content Officer* magazine, electronic and print books from leading content marketing experts, speaking and workshop engagements, and content marketing consulting services.

Content Marketing Institute books are available at special quantity discounts to use as premiums and sales promotions, or for use in corporate training programs. To place a bulk order, please contact the Content Marketing Institute at info@contentinstitute.com or 888/554-2014.

www.contentmarketinginstitute.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012946932

ISBN: 978-0-9833307-9-0

Printed in the United States of America.



THE MARKETER'S GUIDE TO **SLIDESHARE**

How to Build Your Brand,
Generate Leads &
Create Opportunities



TODD WHEATLAND

Foreword by Joe Chernov

LinkedIn Buys SlideShare

In May 2012, SlideShare was acquired by social business network LinkedIn.

The general consensus seemed to be that the \$119 million sale price was a bargain for LinkedIn. (It was just a few weeks after Facebook had paid a jaw-dropping \$1 billion for photo-sharing service Instagram.)

For B2B marketers already familiar with the content marketing connection of SlideShare in conjunction with LinkedIn, the acquisition seemed a logical and even obvious move.

LinkedIn's now-public figures make it clear that recruiting-business revenue continues to dominate quarterly earnings. Partly because of this, it's been easy for people not close to B2B or content marketing to dismiss LinkedIn as an also-ran to Facebook...as the network people use when they're looking for a job.

Yet if you've followed LinkedIn's product evolution, the importance of content to their longer-term strategy is obvious. LinkedIn sits uniquely at the intersection of people, companies, their connections, and the content they share. SlideShare, as the world's dominant business content-sharing platform, fits perfectly into this dynamic.

As this book makes clear, B2B content marketers can benefit greatly by taking advantage of the combined power of LinkedIn and SlideShare. After meeting with senior leadership from SlideShare in the days following the announcement, I am confident there is a strong understanding of the value of SlideShare to content marketers.

What's more, I think this value is only set to grow as a result of the acquisition.



Table of Contents

FOREWORD BY JOE CHERNOV 7

INTRODUCTION 11

CHAPTER 1: WHY YOU NEED SLIDESHARE 17

The business upheavals of the digital age and what they mean for marketers

- Why knowledge still equals power—but not the way it used to
- How education and conversation have replaced traditional sales
- Why marketing’s role now extends much further into the buying process
- How “give away your knowledge” can be a good business strategy
- Why SlideShare is the best platform yet to capitalize on the new marketing reality

CHAPTER 2: HOW SLIDESHARE WILL BUILD YOUR BUSINESS..... 25

A crash course in content marketing and how SlideShare empowers it

- If you’re not educating your potential customers, who is?
- Why shorter, more frequent, highly specific content will beat your big white paper any day
- Why you should live where your prospects are online—not just hunt there
- How creating content is just the appetizer—the meal starts with SlideShare
- Influencers are the secret sauce that SlideShare can empower to spread your message
- How SlideShare helps you move from activity tracking to business-generation analytics

CHAPTER 3: GETTING STARTED WITH PRESENTATIONS 51

From quick start guide to best practices

- **You** can go from novice to ninja on SlideShare
- **Why** time upfront means greater results down the line
- **People** do choose a book by its cover, and what that means for you
- **You** generosity with content comes back in online karma—and new business
- **SlideShare** sits—and connects—with the social media ecosystem

CHAPTER 4: ADDING AUDIO & VIDEO TO PRESENTATIONS 71

Bring your static presentations to life

- **How** use sound and visual stories to build business
- **Examples** companies that get this right
- **Subtle** tweaks that optimize performance
- **Tip** tricks for expanding reach
- **Go** beyond the basics

CHAPTER 5: UPLOADING DOCUMENTS & VIDEOS 89

SlideShare's not just about presentations

- **Research** reports—they're only the beginning
- **Interesting** uses for documents
- **It's** all about the ins and outs of formatting
- **Performance** considerations for videos
- **Places** to embed your videos



CHAPTER 6: SLIDESHARE PRO AND BEYOND 105

When and why to move to a premium account

- How a paid account can deliver business results in spectacular fashion
- Silver, Gold, and Platinum accounts—which is right for you?
- How to capitalize on enhanced functionality
- Why a Platinum Network account could align with your corporate objectives
- How best practices can transform your SlideShare Pro results

CHAPTER 7: MASTERCLASS ON ADVANCED TOOLS.... 155

Taking your skills to the next level

- Why lead generation is SlideShare’s (not-so) secret weapon—and how to optimize it
- Why LinkedIn and SlideShare are the Big 2 for B2B content marketing
- How to leverage SlideShare on LinkedIn for branding and results
- Questioning the SlideShare Facebook app
- Use Zipcasts to add an extra dimension to your content strategy

CHAPTER 8: NEXT STEPS & LEGAL STUFF 209

Staying up with future enhancements to SlideShare

- How to register for book updates
- Understanding SlideShare’s Terms and Conditions

NOTES 215

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 219

ABOUT TODD WHEATLAND 221

Foreword

Not long ago, my CEO assigned an ambitious goal to the marketing department. We had recently coined a new business category, and he would consider our efforts successful when financial analysts began reporting on the space.

Category creation tends to be a long process. The concept needs to take root with customers, competition needs to emerge, industry analyst firms like Forrester Research and Altimeter Group need to seed the language in presentations and articles, and only then will financial analysts begin to cover the category. It can feel interminable. We were given less than a year.

A few months into the project, and thanks to the wonders of Google Alerts, we all received the news at the same time: a major financial analyst wrote a report on our space, using our language—right down to the acronym. As the marketing department buzzed with excitement, the CEO asked the sobering question: How did this report come about? Blank stares were followed by a frenzy of research and analytics. Then we found it: SlideShare.

My SlideShare dashboard showed me exactly who had downloaded content we published related to this new category. The SlideShare report included not only the name of the analyst, but also date-stamped the download. SlideShare enabled me to tell my CEO that not only did the author view our assets, he also downloaded them precisely two weeks prior to the report's release. In a data-driven culture like ours, the ability to identify the *cause* (SlideShare) mattered just as much as the *effect* (the report).

This story captures the multi-dimensional value of SlideShare. It shows that SlideShare's community consists of the most influential voices in business; it reveals the remarkable impact SlideShare-hosted content can have on a company's performance; and it shines a light on the data made available to Pro users. Community + content + data = the trifecta of effective content marketing.



Yet where I say “trifecta,” author Todd Wheatland might say “trinity,” which is fitting given that he may just be SlideShare’s most passionate evangelist. And I rank among his many converts.

You see, Todd doesn’t just *like* SlideShare, he *lives* it. In a very real way, he’s bet his (thriving) career on it. It’s the hub of his professional wheel, so to speak. It’s where he turns to publish, promote, discover, applaud, influence, and share content—content designed to build his employer’s business and his personal brand. He has given as much to the SlideShare community as the community has given to him, which is why when I heard rumors that a SlideShare book was in the works, I intuited that Todd was behind it.

I used to say, “SlideShare is the most important social network that nobody talks about.” That all changed the moment LinkedIn bought the company. Today the LinkedIn/SlideShare combo is the most powerful one-two punch in social media, at least for business professionals. It unites people, companies, and content all in a *business-relevant context*. Yet somehow, there are still not enough people talking about it.

My company went public shortly before this writing. I attended the ceremony at the NASDAQ. Since our business is adjacent to—and integrates with—social networks, reporters instinctively inquired about how our customers use our product in concert with Facebook. “We sell to businesses,” my CEO replied, “and businesses care about LinkedIn.”

It required this emphatic response to shake the reporters out of their “zero-sum” mindset. They seem to think, “If Facebook is hot, all others must be cold,” as if the world is one-dimensional. The fact is, the social networks that thrive are those that appeal to a particular audience. Facebook’s audience is, well, “everyone who’s into anything.” The LinkedIn/SlideShare audience is, “everyone in business.” If you sell a business product, which audience makes more sense to you?

While people who market and sell products might be the primary audience for this book, I truly hope they aren’t the only readers. Because it should also be required reading for the entrepreneurs and

developers who are fixated on Facebook’s “social graph” at the exclusion of all other communities.

Take Highlight, an iOS app launched shortly before last year’s South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive Festival, a popular conference where tens of thousands of “early adopters” convene. By cross-referencing an iPhone’s location with the owner’s Facebook network, Highlight can tell users when friends and friends-of-friends are nearby. Despite the meteoric rise of Highlight at SXSW, the app’s popularity waned shortly after the festival. As it turns out, knowing that your college roommate’s golf buddy is seated in a neighboring coffee shop might be interesting, but it’s not worth your phone’s precious battery life.

But you know what *is* worth your battery ... and a whole lot more? Knowing that nearby is someone your company is trying to sell to, or an executive with a company where you are interviewing, or some random guy who published the SlideShare presentation that you’ve been circulating throughout your office. In fact, that degree of “ambient happenstance” isn’t just interesting, it might even be career-shaping. If apps like Highlight thought first about integrating with LinkedIn/SlideShare versus Facebook, enterprise adoption of social media would be even more accelerated than it is today.

So while Todd Wheatland may rank among the world’s best-known content marketers, and while his book was written ostensibly for sales and marketing professionals, the lessons he shares, clearly and passionately, can do even more than help us drive reputation and revenue. They might also spark an idea that gives rise to the next great social business app. And, in the end, content that drives change is what SlideShare itself is all about.

Joe Chernov
VP of Content Marketing
Eloqua



Introduction

*If you're trying to sell anything to anyone,
SlideShare can help grow your business*

You'd almost certainly be surprised to learn that social media site SlideShare receives approximately 60 million visits and 120 million pageviews—every month. It's one of the top 150 sites on the Internet. That's even more impressive because it's not really a consumer site at all. In fact, the six most-used tags on the SlideShare site are *business*, *market*, *trends*, *research*, *social media*, and *statistics*.

If you've been struggling with how to talk business on Facebook, SlideShare might sound too good to be true. But as you're about to learn, this is one social network where business sits at the center of visitors' intentions—not just as a gimmick to get people to “like” it. For companies of every size and focus, SlideShare—to quote interactive agency Jess3—is “very close to a silver-bullet solution.”

Impact & Opportunity: The Time to Master SlideShare is Now

In late 2011, I presented the B2B keynote at the inaugural Content Marketing World conference. I asked the 400 marketers in the room how many of them used SlideShare. About 20 percent put up their hands. (I don't know what it says about the priorities of marketers that about 85 percent of the same group had seen *The Princess Bride*.)

This number is consistent with the Content Marketing Institute's research.¹ At the same time, surveys put B2B marketers' use of Twitter at 74 percent, LinkedIn at 71 percent, and Facebook at 70 percent. How to explain SlideShare's staggeringly low level of penetration among marketers?

Just like LinkedIn, SlideShare's suit-and-tie friendliness bestows it a certain ugly stepchild status compared to the cool social networks. They're just too business-oriented to provoke conversations in the same

tones. Twitter is fun, Facebook is sexy, YouTube is cool. Everyone's boss *knows* they have to be on Twitter—but SlideShare?

I think there's something else going on that explains this gap. SlideShare's emerging moment in the sun is a sign of marketing in transition. Just as online marketing mania moved from SEO to social, now it's moving from social to content. In many ways, these are just buzzwords, but in others they speak to the collective focus of people in the environment, the prism through which they view the world. Content marketing's time is now, but the "big social" emphasis of recent years has many marketers hung up on networks designed for other purposes.

Every company I speak with that invests time on SlideShare says it is by far one of their most effective social media platforms. Jake Wengroff from Frost & Sullivan says SlideShare gives his company thousands of qualified business leads a year, and a 50x return on investment. Joe Chernov rates SlideShare in Eloqua's Top 3 essential social media sites—beaten out only by Eloqua's own corporate blog and Twitter account.

If you're a solopreneur, small business owner, or large corporation, SlideShare can make a significant impact on your online visibility, credibility, and business growth. It doesn't require rethinking your existing content to make a start, as many experience with YouTube. It doesn't require the same level of "real-time" commitment that makes people so fearful of Twitter. SlideShare makes it easy to take what you've already got to a much wider audience. And—in stark contrast to most business' experiences with social media today—it delivers measurement based on real business impact activity, like leads.

Business' Best Friend and a Rose by any Other Name

Originally launched in late 2006 as a platform to share slide presentations online, the name "SlideShare" is now a misnomer. Just as the *you* in YouTube referred to user-generated videos, which are of decreasing importance to the site, SlideShare has now evolved into a multi-format platform that goes well beyond slides.

Here are some of the other things you can do on SlideShare:

- Add audio narration to slide decks
- Load “tall” documents (like reports) and images (like infographics)
- Upload HD video
- Run live streaming video presentations
- Embed a real-time feed of your company blogs.

In this age of content marketing, SlideShare has quietly evolved as the most feature-rich social network business profile out there. Company profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+ get all the buzz—meanwhile, SlideShare is already delivering the sort of functionality everyone hopes other platforms will one day provide. The LinkedIn acquisition and likely future enhancements between the two make it unquestionably the most useful platform for B2B content marketers.

SlideShare & Content Marketing

The online revolution has changed the way people buy. Instead of seeking out salespeople who can teach them about products and features, people are searching for their own solutions to problems. To succeed in this new environment, you have to create outstanding educational content targeting these potential clients, and have it visible in the places those prospects are online.

Content is king, but the best content in the world means nothing if people can't easily find and share it. SlideShare gives you this capability.

Here's how SlideShare will drive your content marketing efforts:

Targeting Buyers & Influencers

The people who might like to buy your product have certain characteristics in common (as well as other things that make them unique). Understanding these different “personas,” and the issues they face as they get closer to making a purchase decision, enables you to accurately target your content to be discovered at the right time. SlideShare can assist throughout this process. It lets you structure your content to target specific personas and buying stages. The greater the degree of targeting, the more powerful SlideShare becomes in

delivering viewers sourced through very specific keywords. And SlideShare's ability to work with content in virtually any digital format means that the right form of conversation can be initiated at the right stage of the buying process.

Producing Content

SlideShare itself is a powerful source of ideas and potential content topics. Unlike other platforms that are format-specific (think podcasts on iTunes or video on YouTube), SlideShare can stretch to cover pretty much any format you will develop. One little-used but powerful approach is to produce content specifically for SlideShare, or modify existing pieces to be optimized. This is the 10 percent of extra effort that can yield 100 percent improvement in results, and this guidebook will get you there.

Distributing Content

SlideShare will get your content in front of a larger audience. Its high-value SEO will bring people directly to your content from search engines. The SlideShare player can be embedded onto any website where you have an outpost or are blogging. Its use of HTML5 means content is playable on all mobile devices. And through its widgets and integrations, your content can be displayed professionally on your own website or blog, and pulled into your other social networks like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

Promoting Content

Through a range of different application program interfaces (APIs) and connectors, SlideShare is both a distribution and promotion platform for your content. You can connect with potential influencers in your industry or target market directly on SlideShare, which can increase your visibility and credibility within the influencers' own networks. Page visitors, whether viewing your content on SlideShare or any other website, can promote your content directly into their own social networks. And SlideShare's app is also the most popular on its new parent site LinkedIn, which significantly extends the reach and promotion power of your content.



Measurement

The rise in social networking has been met with a parallel rise in bewilderment about how to measure it. CEOs seem convinced their companies need to “be” on Twitter, but are often hard-pressed to say why. An entire industry of social analytics firms has sprung up with Apple-cool software products to tempt marketers with shiny things that move. But what do you want to measure, really? What’s the one thing your finance guy might actually agree with? Activities like website visits, downloads, subscriptions, etc., are all fascinating—and SlideShare can give them to you in spades. But where SlideShare blows everything else away is in the highly customizable way you can generate and report on business leads—real people, reading your content, asking to be contacted.

Real Solutions for Real Business

The content revolution has changed the face of marketing. Self-promotion is out; serving with knowledge is in. While everyone’s been trying to figure out how to get Facebook users to stop playing Farmville and start talking about business, SlideShare’s been morphing into a real business social network with hundreds of millions of visitors each year—visitors who are searching for the kind of relevant, business-related content that your company can provide.

There’s never been a SlideShare guidebook—until now. And whether you’re an experienced SlideShare user, just starting out, or have yet to make the step, this book is for you.

Chapter 1

Why You Need SlideShare

The business upheavals of the digital age and what they mean for marketers

Whatever type of business you're in, you're in the new economy. It doesn't matter whether you're a hot-dog cart offering free bonuses via Foursquare, a horse-riding school giving away introductory classes on Groupon, or a cosmetics company presenting how-to-apply-makeup lessons on YouTube. The new economy is free...it's remix—it thrives on sharing knowledge to gain influence.

Facing the Music

How did we get here? There was a time, not so very long ago, when people used to get very excited about concepts like copyright and intellectual property. Then along came Napster and suddenly 25 million people felt perfectly fine about sharing music with friends they'd never met. To old-fashioned people like record companies, that sounded a lot like stealing.

At the same time, street dancer and rapper Robert Van Winkle, aka Vanilla Ice, “sampled” the famous bassline from *Under Pressure*¹ to make a hit song called *Ice Ice Baby*.² Homage or theft? The early 90s were a period of an intense culture clash between the way things used to be, and the way things were about to become. The digital world had arrived and the music industry has never been the same.

But that's just music, right?

Photography

Trey Ratcliff runs the world's most popular photography blog.³ His work hangs in the Smithsonian museum, and if you're anywhere online you'll come across his amazing images.

When Trey started posting photos online, the standard approach by photographers was to get the better of photo-stealing evildoers by

either adding an ugly watermark over the photo, or only making it available in a very small size—or, if they wanted to make their work look really terrible, both.

As a hobby photographer myself, I've faced the same situation. Most people don't even question that you should share it, but they'll also tell you to "lock it down" to stop people from ripping you off. Many photography websites by default use a Flash-based display for images, making it even harder for anyone to use them.

As a marketer, I've also seen it from the other side. First, the cost of stock images plummeted—and I mean *plummeted*. Global rights to a professional photo 10 years ago might have cost \$30,000. Today, rights for that same image might be \$1,000—if you even bother going through the process of obtaining them.

The quality and ease of use of the digital cameras that 2.5 billion of us now own has meant that any amateur can capture the occasional incredible image. And the non-incredible ones can be posted on Facebook, along with the other 100 billion images that will be uploaded to Facebook this year. That's a real number by the way.⁴ The world is awash with digital images, and they're growing at an exponential rate. Which is why most of your professional photographer friends are re-training as schoolteachers.

So what did Trey Ratcliff, one of the world's highest-profile photographers, do in the face of this incredible change? He ignored the watermarks and the small sizes, and did the opposite—he uploaded huge, untainted versions of his images in formats that are easy to copy and use elsewhere. Hell, he even encouraged people to do so (by the use of a Creative Commons license), asking only for an attribution back to his site if they used his images.

By "giving away" the photos for non-commercial use, Trey achieved both stellar visibility for himself and his work (he may be famous now, but he sure wasn't when he started). Sure, some people are going to abuse the rights and use his images without giving attribution. But he's also created a platform through which he can sell even higher-resolution versions of his images for commercial use—or for books, training courses, iPad apps, and whatever else the muse brings his way.

When I asked Trey about his approach, what struck me more than anything was that here we have a photographer who could lecture on content marketing. Give away—generously—the core of your knowledge and expertise. Create visibility and a following as a result. A small percentage of that following will have the interest and resources to ask themselves, “If I’ve gained so much from all this amazing free stuff, imagine how incredible the paid stuff must be.”

This is essentially a template for marketing in the digital era. Trey’s initial platform was Flickr, where he still maintains a very active outpost. His business revolves around photos, so he went where the traffic was, gave generously and consistently, created and joined conversations, and built his business.

Okay—so music and photography, sure.

TV & Video

YouTube—the third most trafficked website globally—is such a pillar of the online world that it’s sometimes difficult to remember how reminiscent its early days were to Napster’s.⁵

When Google bought YouTube in late 2006, it was in the middle of a drawn-out period of legal challenges from people and corporations holding “pre-digital” ideas of copyright. YouTube stuck to a “content agnostic” position in an effort to push through this. But uploading images of dancing cats was very different from uploading episodes of *The Simpsons*. And by the time a TV network requested that an unauthorized video be taken down, several other people may have uploaded it again.

Suddenly though, as if the issue had just disappeared, people stopped suing YouTube. What happened is that Google quietly changed the game—in a way not unlike what iTunes did with music—by cutting publishers in on the action. Google introduced ContentID, which was able to match every uploaded file against millions of copyrighted original items provided by music, TV, and film companies. Once a video was found to be in breach of copyright, the copyright holder could do one of three things: block the video, leave it up (and track it), or leave it up and make money from it.



If you were a producer whose videos kept showing up on YouTube, you could dig in and insist on taking them all down. Or you could sigh, accept that the world was really changing, be grateful for the huge audience you could reach, and take a healthy cut of the revenues being generated by the ads YouTube scattered around your videos. It didn't hurt that Google knew a thing or two about delivering targeted ads on web pages.

In retrospect, it seems straightforward; but at the time, it was a revolutionary win-win idea. And it worked. Shortly thereafter, YouTube started partnering more and more extensively with content publishers and is now pushing the boundaries against a host of new competitors as TV continues to converge with the online world.

YouTube is still dallying with a very prominent “REMIX” button alongside clips where copyright holders are okay with people taking their videos and using them as input into an altered version. This sort of community-driven content, often created by fans of bands or films, is another source of visibility and potential revenue for those original copyright holders.

Just like musicians and photographers, TV and movie producers have learned how to find new sources of revenue by giving away the very thing that was their lifeblood.

Books & Publishing

What *hasn't* been written about the death of the printed word?

For better or worse, today's dominant bookseller is a software company. Physical books are being rapidly moved to the realm of “limited edition” uber-fan items. Publishers have struggled to remain relevant. Author advances—where they exist—are shadows of anything that may have once allowed someone to live on.

The barriers of entry to taking a book from laptop to market have dissolved—so, too, have the roles of traditional publishers and physical stores. As the volume of new titles increases and the average sales per unit decreases, authors themselves need to promote and generate attention for their work like never before. In fact, without an “author

platform” (as the publishing world calls a writer’s ability to reach an audience directly), you’re not likely to get a contract at all. Without physical bookstores and the opportunity to do book tours, authors need to make it very easy for the widest possible audience to discover their book and ultimately buy it.

Nearly every book on Amazon now has the “Look Inside” feature.⁶ This allows a prospective buyer to read enough of the key parts of the book to determine whether or not to buy. It’s the equivalent of standing in a bookshop, reading the back cover, scanning the index, reading the first page of the introduction, and flipping through the book. Increasingly, authors have their own blogs where they essentially share some of the concepts and even whole contents of their books (their books, in fact, are often composites of the many blog posts they’ve already written on a topic). When launching books, it’s not uncommon to give away entire free chapters. In fact, some authors give away the entire book, covering printing costs in the shipping and handling, in an effort to reach the greatest audience, build a database, and manipulate bestseller lists.

Musicians, photographers, filmmakers, writers—everyone’s giving away large pieces of their work in an attempt to build a “following” of people receptive to being sold to.

Now think of the last time you bought a piece of software. Did you just jump in and buy it? Or did you try the 30-day free evaluation version—or maybe even the entirely free version (the one with some minor limitations that could be removed by upgrading to the paid version)?

SlideShare & the New Economy

The most successful players in this new economy have something in common that still absolutely shocks people with the “old economy” mindset. It’s both the biggest challenge and biggest opportunity for most marketers today. It’s the willingness to give away free content—free knowledge.

In my company, when launching a new content-focused website, we faced the same issue discussed in organizations everywhere. The “old

way” says to put the most valuable parts of content behind a registration form to capture potential leads. The “new way” says, get over it. Give it away—all of it.

“But wait,” you say? “We don’t want our competitors getting it!”

True—but if they’re halfway smart and motivated they’ll find a way to get it anyway.

“But what if some people take it and do something with it that we don’t know about?”

They probably will. But some of them also will share back ideas with you, and help you improve your original content.

“We should be charging for this stuff!”

Well, you can still try to charge for knowledge. But unless you’re giving away a lot of what you know, and only charging for the exceptionally unique content, you will fail—you won’t build a following of people who see you as a go-to source for knowledge. There are too many others giving away what they know online for you to remain precious about all your knowledge assets.

One of the great SlideShare success stories is Jesse Desjardins. Jesse’s captivating presentations and extremely generous sharing of content have made him one of the most followed—and no doubt copied—SlideShare users.

Listen a bit to Jesse talk about his philosophy on online sharing.⁷

“I was speaking at a tourism conference in Australia, and some of the other speakers told me I was actually kind of crazy for uploading all my slides to SlideShare because people were going to steal my work.”

For “some of the other speakers,” read “old-school thinkers.”

He continues: *“There were only about 200 people at that talk, but since I’ve uploaded that presentation there have been about 8,000 views online.”*

Uploading the presentation gave Jesse access to a much larger and entirely new audience than he ever would have reached otherwise—the same amount of work and preparation has been scaled many times.

“And a bunch of people have commented on it—a bunch of people have given me new ideas—and that helped me make my future presentations even better.”

By giving generously to the “community,” Jesse’s own future presentations were improved—his skills, knowledge, and future products all benefited from sharing.

“And the best part is, I actually got three gigs out of it.”

Lightbulb moment? If people are excited by what you’re sharing freely, a subset of them will want to pay you for even more. The logic: If you’re giving away such great stuff for free, how incredible must the paid stuff be?

This philosophy of sharing generously is a common element among most successful businesses in the online era. It is what we call “content marketing.”

