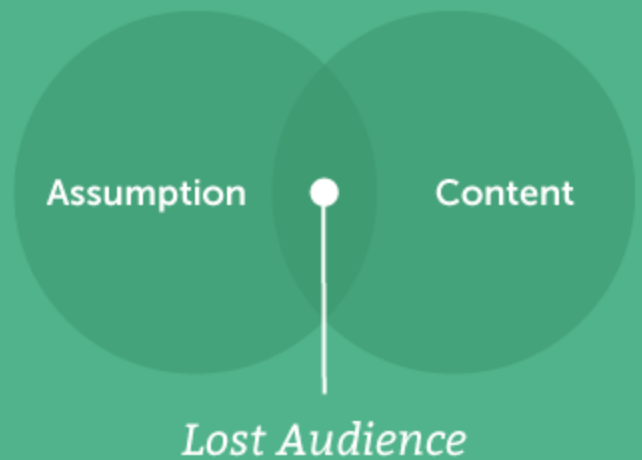


Audience Assumptions You Should Never Make



Making assumptions about your audience is one of the worst things a content marketer can do. We end up creating content that makes our audience feel stupid.

4 Common Audience Assumptions To Avoid

Assumptions are easy to make. They're shortcuts to critical thinking that allow us to feel like we can assess an individual or situation quickly and easily.

However, when you make an assumption about your audience that is incorrect, you run the risk of creating content that alienates them. Two reactions happen in a reader when faced with a false assumption:

1. "You're saying I'm stupid. I'm leaving."
2. "Oh, this article isn't for me. It's for other people who know this stuff."

The result is the same either way. The reader bounces off the page and finds what they were looking for somewhere else.

Every piece of content starts somewhere. If that starting point is off-base with your audience, though, then it doesn't matter how good that content might be. Make sure your work hits the mark by avoiding these four assumptions.

Avoid making assumptions about your audience. Guide your content with data instead.

Assumption #1: Your Audience Is Just Like You

It's likely your audience bears a lot of similarities to you. They may have similar interests or concerns, or fall into roughly the same demographic.

They're not the same person as you, though. They may or may not care about the same things you do. In fact, their personalities and priorities could be wildly different from your own.

This is especially true if you work in a niche you aren't directly passionate about (for example, you could be passionate about creating content while serving an audience in an industry you're not familiar with).

Let data and experience guide your perception of your audience.

Assumption #2: They Know The Same Things You Know

Your audience and you do not know the same things.

Sometimes they know more. Sometimes they know less. Sometimes you both simply know different things.

In a lot of cases, they'll be coming to your content because they have a gap in their knowledge. Follow these two tips to ensure your writing doesn't go over their head:

1. **Think like a journalist by writing in a way that anyone can understand.** News organizations are often required to write for a broad audience that may not be experts on a given topic. They typically use clear, simple sentence structures and strive to avoid ambiguity. Following these principles can help you create content that's clear and easy to read.
2. **Err on the side of providing too much detail, rather than not enough.** Read a political news story and you'll likely read a sentence describing a political party's candidate as "[INSERT PARTY]'s presumptive presidential nominee [INSERT CANDIDATE'S NAME]." You might read this and think, "Doesn't everyone know this person is running for office already?" The answer is maybe not. Being thorough and consistent when it comes to including detail ensures that your reader leaves with an accurate understanding of what you're trying to communicate.

Think like a journalist in a way that anyone can understand your content.

Assumption #3: They Care About Your Brand

Most of your audience cares more about their family, friends, and themselves.

No one is dying to spend an evening bonding with a brand on social media. A study found that 77% care about *real people in their lives*, not brands. Participants felt that relationships were reserved for family, friends, and acquaintances or colleagues.

If you're honest with yourself, you would likely agree.

Make your marketing personal so your audience will trust you.

When you create content that assumes your audience starts by caring about your brand and that it only gets better from there, you've already lost.

You're better off—if you're going to make an assumption—to assume they *don't* care and that you have to earn your way into their peripheral vision.

Use your content to feed that ability to care and help the people in their lives.

Ask yourself: Does my content help my audience's real life concerns and relationships?

Assumption #4: They Know Your Industry Jargon

The AP Style guide has a good practice of identifying, in full, what something is before referring to it in acronym form.

I'm guilty of forgetting to do this. I assume everyone knows what CTA or SEO means, that the audience for this blog has surely learned that.

But we have readers who are both new and experts who are reading this blog, and they may stumble upon a blog post (through search) out of the order we might have written them in.

I need to assume that this is the first time the reader has seen the term, and identify that call to action (CTA) and search engine optimization (SEO) are what I'm talking about the first time I use it before I can use the acronym for the rest of the post.

Don't assume that everyone knows what the jargon in your niche means. Explain yourself.

Some of this ties into tone. Are you conversational in your writing or using the stiff buzz words of the business? Because if you're conversational, you assume less. If you're all about jargon, you dive headfirst and start throwing acronyms around so you can get to the point faster.

Ask yourself: Does my audience understand the industry jargon I am about to use?

By Ben Sailer on August 1, 2016

<http://coschedule.com/blog/how-to-find-your-target-audience/>