Mapping Relevant Content to the Healthcare Technology Buyer's Journey to Drive a Faster-moving Pipeline

In 2024, the traditional approach to content marketing has proven futile.

The old tricks of pushing out random pieces of content, following your competitors' content marketing strategy, and getting distracted by the next trending topic or every new idea from the C-suite do not move buyers.

This is particularly true in the healthcare technology space because of the ever-evolving buyer's journey.

According to 2023 research by HIMSS, the healthcare IT purchase journey has gotten increasingly complex. 27% of organizations have about 10+ people involved in the healthcare IT buying process. 69% of organizations report a sales cycle of 13+ months, while over 40% have a cycle of 24+ months.[1]

HIMSS research also found an increase in self-serve buyers. Buying groups are more involved in the research phase than ever before, relying on product demos, followed by vendor-focused content (case studies, whitepapers, ebooks, etc) and peer-focused content (executive briefs, Q&As) to make informed purchase decisions.[1]

In an industry evolving at an unprecedented pace, you cannot keep doing the same thing while expecting different results.

The good news is that content marketing still works. In the HIMMS research, 93% of respondents took action after discovering valuable healthcare technology related information and 78% suggested that content helps them in making informed technology purchase decisions.[1]

To win in this competitive and complex landscape, healthcare technology marketers must remain adaptable, and deliver contextual and valuable information across all touchpoints, including websites, webinars, events, social media, and other digital channels.[2]

This white paper focuses on mapping relevant content to the healthcare technology buyer's journey and strategies for developing relevant content ideas for your target accounts.

Mapping Content to the Healthcare Tech Buyer's Journey

Content mapping is providing relevant information to meet your buyers where they are in their journey. It allows marketing and sales teams to build strategic, intentional, and connected content experiences for health tech solution buyers instead of isolated and one-off content that does not align with their journey. The goal is to help your buyers make confident decisions as they move through the funnel. [3]

In a Gartner article titled "*How to deliver relevant content across the technology buying journey*", the author noted that providing the wrong content at the wrong time—or the right content at the wrong time—interferes with buyers' decision-making, lengthens the buying process, and lowers conversion rates.[4]

To map the right content for that stage in your buyer's journey, you must know what questions buyers are asking, and align content to fit their particular needs and the action you want them to take next. What are your expectations for customer behavior after reading a piece of content? For example, after reading an article on how virtual nursing leads to patient satisfaction and outcomes, does the prospect download a related solution-stage whitepaper on how virtual observation systems work? Do they request for a demo after reading the piece on how virtual observation systems work?

This is why Content Marketing Institute described mapping content to the buyer's journey as the marketers' secret weapon, representing the intersection of buyer needs and your organization's calls to action.[4]

Content Ideas for the Different Stage of the Health Tech Buyers' Journey

In health tech, the stages of the buyer journey can be categorized into: problem identification, solution exploration, vendor evaluation, and decision making. [5]

To create relevant content for healthcare solution buyers at each of the stages, you must consider the following questions proposed by the Content Marketing Institute:[4]

- What are the interests, titles, and roles of the team and individuals who MUST have a say in the purchase decision?
- What pain points and drivers brought them to this stage of their journey?
- What questions are they asking? How and where are they asking them?
- What are they doing? What online behaviors can confirm your assumptions about them?
- What will it take to satisfy their current needs and move to the next stage? Or, what behaviors could you trigger to move them through the funnel more quickly?

Problem Identification

Problem identification is where the healthcare buyer collective becomes aware of their challenge. However, they are yet to consensually agree on the exact definition of their problem and the scope for solution. [6]

As such, they have many questions here. Seeking answers, these decision makers start with independent online research.[6]
Your content goal as a vendor is to provide information that answers their many questions and helps them understand their problem.

According to Adam Turinas—health tech marketing and sales expert and CEO of HealthLaunch pad, possible questions for this stage include the following:[7]

> "How do we define our problem?
> Who else has these problems?
> What's best for our population?
> How can we do what we do more cost-effectively?
> Why is the problem occurring?
> Can we solve it with what we have?"
>
> Adam Turinas—health tech marketing and sales expert

Another content angle is identifying what triggered the problem or why they are searching for a solution now. Maybe, there is a change in leadership. Talk about how the solution can help this leadership achieve the set goals. An example can follow this format: how replacing your software places you in a position to meet organizational goals?

Consider using thought leadership, articles, blogs, whitepapers, and social media posts to educate the buyers at this stage.

Solution Exploration

The healthcare buyer collective has defined and agreed on the problem, and are researching possible solutions.

Epic's "50 features to look for in your next EHR" is a good example of solution exploration content. The white paper serves two purposes, a helpful resource for buyers on what to look for in their search and also shares how Epic EHR measures up.

Content for this stage in the buyer's journey should show how you solve buyer's problems and why you are the best fit over other available options. Talk about your most important features that differentiates you from competitors, and its benefits.

Additionally, consider content that shows how their peers are solving the same problems. For example, case studies explaining how similar organizations addressed their challenges with your solution. Keep in mind that case studies must demonstrate real-world ROI. Did your solution lead to reduction in FTE count? What about the revenue impact? What is the impact on patients, providers, other stakeholders, or the health system in general?

Personalize content to fit the roles and interests of target decision-makers. For example, in selecting an EHR, clinical buyers want to know about efficiency, ease of use, and practicality in patient treatment, while the administrative buyers want to know how it improves productivity and operational tasks.

Your goal is to create content that caters to individual priorities of target accounts in the buying committee.

Vendor Evaluation

Here, the decision makers evaluate and shortlist vendors according to a baseline of key requirements reflective of their priorities. These requirements may include security, interoperability, efficiency, feasibility, cost, integration with EHR solutions and other existing systems and processes.

The best content for this stage includes product-specific information (performance, requirements, features, demos, pricing, and support), case studies (success stories from peers), integration guides, buyer guides, RFPs, security and privacy guarantees.[6]

Customer webinars may also work for this stage of the buyer journey. If you have established a good relationship with existing customers, find out if they can participate in customer-led webinars where they talk about their buying process and the impact of your product or service on their organization.Which decision-makers were involved in the buying committee? What were they looking for, and why did they choose your solution to serve those needs? How has it worked for them (results and ROI)? How does it integrate with their existing systems and processes? Was the product easy for patients or providers to use?

Another content type is competitor comparison matrix, which highlights points of differentiation between your solution and competitors. Such content helps stakeholders compare similar solutions and make informed purchase decisions.

Decision Making

Content for the decision making stage should guarantee trust and double down on benefits, outcomes, and assurances (HIPAA, SSOC2, and HI TRUST).[8] Content that works for these stages may be the same as in vendor evaluation, they include case studies, ROI calculators, integration, training, and implementation guides and any sales enablement content. [7] [8]

5 Strategies for Developing Effective Content that Spark Conversations Among the Healthcare Buyer Collective

Healthcare executive mindshare is extremely scarce. Thus, it is very difficult to earn their attention, and keep them interested.

Content that moves and engages them are high-value thought provoking pieces that address their strongest objections and pain points, empathizes with them, and leads them towards clarity in their decision making.

How can health tech marketers develop valuable and compelling content ideas that healthcare executives cannot ignore even if they tried?

These five strategies will help you develop conversation-worthy content for your target accounts:

1. Conduct Market Research

Market research is essential to achieving your content goals, particularly in an industry like healthcare technology, ridden with complex buyer journeys, fierce competition, and ever-evolving buying dynamics.

Extensive research ensures you are up to date on trending topics, key pain points, and purchase decision criteria in the industry.

Here are some tips on how to structure your research using three core areas:

Prospects

- Buyer persona
- Buyer collective and key stakeholders
- Favorite webinars, conferences, and trade shows
- Favorite industry publications
- Social media

- Hospital size, structure, complexity, ownership type, and region
- Pain points and stage of awareness
- Preferred content for both present and potential customers
- Buying process
- Search terms/ keywords

Competition

- Competitor's positioning
- Competitor's websites, reviews, and social media
- Competitor's content marketing strategies

Industry

- Relevant trends
- State of the industry
- Appropriate media vehicles and industry influencers
- Market opportunities, challenges, and traits

Extensive research demands time and budget, but the end result is worth the effort—content that resonates and engages healthcare decision makers to take action, which cannot be achieved if you keep creating content based on your assumptions.

2. Understand the Buyer Collective

Considering the there are more stakeholders involved in the buying process according to HIMSS research,[1] it is safe to say that it may be impossible to close a deal (whether for a big or small purchase in health IT) without accommodating the pain points, interests, and roles of the team and individuals who must have a say in the purchase decision.

This begs the question: Do you customize messaging and information to resonate with the different perspectives in the buying group?

What are their title and job functions?

What roles do they play in the decision-making process?

What are their needs and questions at each stage of the buying journey?

How can your content meet the needs and priorities of a diverse customer buying committee as they move through their buying journey?

3. Align With Sales

Bidirectional communication is needed for your content marketing to succeed. Involve the sales team from the start when planning content. The sales team can share real-world scenarios, feedback, and in-depth customer insights to inspire mid and bottom-funnel content ideas. This alignment ensures that content produced by the marketing team reinforces the messages sent through the sales team.

4. Investigate Existing Content Marketing Strategy

If content is not performing as expected, review existing content marketing strategy to identify the root cause of your problem.[9] Start with an audit. A content audit allows you to review existing content, check performance, identify gaps, and improve as needed. From the audit, you may find that you need to start producing more of certain kinds of content, create content into multiple formats, find better distribution methods, or clarify your messaging—make it simple and upfront.

5. Study Analysis Reports

As a vendor, analyzing reports on market dynamics shaping hospital and health system purchasing priorities can inspire relevant content ideas.

For example, the August 2023 report from HFMA, shared details on RCM purchasing plans based on survey responses from 321 health system executives and qualitative interviews with CFOs.[10]

The report shows that the top three outsourcing priorities are bad debt, aged accounts receivable, and patient collections/early out, while back-end RCM, patient access, and mid-revenue cycle were listed as the highest automation priorities. [10]

With this information in mind, an RCM vendor can strategize content to address the pain points in the report, signaling that their organization understands the customer's needs and can help solve their problems.

Understand How Buyers Buy From You, Not How You Sell

Buyers' needs evolve, and so does the buyer's journey.

Content that worked in 2022 may not work two years later in 2024, if it does not consider the changing buyer behaviors.

Health tech marketers must become students of the dynamic landscape, constantly reviewing and understanding how these stakeholders move through the buyer's journey and try as much as possible to provide contextual information at all times.

In the Virtual Health Tech Marketing Summit organized by HealthLaunch pad in April 2024, a panelist, Adam Rosenberg, senior director of marketing at RxLightning, shared their experience on how the buyer's journey has evolved and how they meet buyers where they are. [11]

> "Sometimes we take two steps forward and one step back. We might have buy-in from the end users, but we need to do a security review, walk through the implementation with someone else, run through the training plan with the training team..."
>
> Adam Rosenberg, senior director of marketing at RxLightning

When you understand what buyers need at each stage, then you can figure out what content to leverage, and present them beforehand to help buyers in making confident decisions so that they can move faster through the pipeline.

Resources

1. HIMSS HIT Buyers Study, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (2023)
2. How top CSOS and CMOs can optimize the buyer's journey, Gartner (2023)
3. A 4-step customer journey map process for better content results, Content Marketing Institute (2022)
4. How to deliver relevant content across the technology buyers journey, Gartner (Accessed 2024)
5. The buyer journey framework, HealthlaunchPad(2023)
6. New B2B buying journey and its implication for sales, Gartner (Accessed 2023)
7. How useful are personas for complex sales, Healthtech Marketing Ideas (2023)
8. Crafting effective content for every stage of the healthcare buyer, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (Accessed 2023)
9. What you need to know about content marketing for healthcare, Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (Accessed 2023)
10. New report projects robust investment in healthcare revenue cycle and finance solutions, despite economic headwinds,HFMA (2023)
11. The evolution of demand generation,Healthtech Marketing Summit (2023)

About the Author

Racheal Ede is a buyer-intent content marketing writer and strategist for healthcare technology companies. Racheal delivers interview-based and research-backed editorial content that meets the priorities and pain points of your individual buyer persona, offers thought-provoking points of view that AI cannot generate, and builds up your reputation as a trustworthy partner. Racheal is on a mission to help healthcare technology marketers drive a faster moving pipeline, and grow their careers and business revenue.

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