Biotext

Communication strategy or content strategy: which do you need?

A content strategy and a communication strategy are related, but they solve different problems. Knowing the difference will help you choose the right one for your needs.

What's the difference?

A **communication strategy** sets out the key messages an organisation wants to promote. It identifies the primary audiences and the best channels to reach them.

A **content strategy** is the overarching plan for how an organisation creates, manages and improves its content over time. It guides content production, so audiences receive useful and consistent information across all channels.

Audiences or users?

The term 'user' is often used in content strategies to refer to the intended audience. This word choice reflects the interactions that people have with online content – they skim, click, scroll, navigate and download. A content strategy helps you set up content in logical ways that support user understanding. The same approaches can also be used to improve people's understanding of printed information.

When do you need a communication or content strategy?

You might need a communication strategy if you're asking:

- How do we promote this program or research?
- What messages should we communicate?
- Who do we need to reach?
- Which channels should we use?
- When should we communicate?

You might need a content strategy if you're asking:

- What information do our audiences need?
- What content do we already have, and where are the gaps?
- What are we trying to achieve by publishing this content?
- Are our content production processes working effectively?
- How do we make sure our content is consistent, useful and easy to maintain?

How a content strategy boosts communication outcomes

Most organisations will already have an entity-level communication strategy. Smaller strategies might also exist for specific programs and campaigns.

A content strategy guides the production of content for an organisation or campaign, to make sure all content produced meets the needs of both the organisation and audiences. Having a content strategy for technical or complex information also provides robust processes to draft, verify and publish information that is clear and accurate.

If your organisation already has a content strategy, it probably sets out things like workflows for updating web content, and guiding principles to keep content consistent and of high quality across your organisation's channels.

Taking this strategic approach to content:

- increases the impact of your content by coordinating messages so that all content (web and print) works towards the same goal
- saves time and money by reducing wasted and duplicated effort
- improves content quality by reducing development rush and keeping content up to date.

Typical parts of communication and content strategies

Communication strategy	Content strategy
• project or campaign goals • key messages • target audiences • communication channels • publishing schedules and timelines	• content principles • organisational goals and key messages (in line with communication strategy) • audience definitions (in line with communication strategy) and user-needs insights • a content audit and gap analysis • channels and publishing ecosystems • governance and workflows • performance measures and evaluation methods

How do I create a content strategy?

A content strategy is based on evidence about your organisation and audience. This involves research and analysis to understand your:

- context – business needs, stakeholders, processes, sector and competitor content
- audience – key groups and their tasks, understanding and information needs
- content – existing content, including its quality and any gaps.

The process can include various types of research, such as interviews, workshops and surveys of product owners, stakeholders and audience members.