Twitter Thread by Carol Forden



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1. The major problem most startups face is marketing and the ability to carve out a niche, find and retain paying customers.

Even with a stellar developer team and a stellar product, your startup may not grow or survive without a great marketing and sales teams.

2. Start growing your audience before you've a product or an idea.

You should start promoting yourself and building your audience before you have a finished product or even before you have a great idea that you want to build.

3. Don't wait to start building your audience after you've launched a product.

Most first-time developers actually ignore marketing.

They're oblivious to the challenge of attracting people to take a look at something they've created.

4. At least until they see their first project crash and burn within hours of the launch.

There are so many times that I have seen developers spend countless hours building something, releasing it with no fanfare...

5. and only then trying to figure out how to promote it by asking marketing questions on Indie Hackers, Quora or Hacker News. Don't make that mistake.

6. So how do you start building an audience?

Create a website on your domain name and start publishing great content about things that you know (or even things you're working on or trying to learn about).

7. Content will help get you discovered and build your authority and influence.

Don’t fall into the idealistic developer trap of wanting to build this from scratch.

Use something like WordPress and with a plugin or two you can get a great website, blog or even a MVP done...

8. ...in a day or two rather than spend a month or two building it from scratch.

This time is better spent on building an audience and talking to actual people you are trying to serve.

9. Here’s why content is your best marketing bet:

Traditional PR and getting press mentions is not as efficient and cost effective for startups. It’s difficult to become a new Warby Parker.

Paid advertising on Google and Facebook is fine if you can afford it and have time to..

10. ...experiment with, but it’s not a long-term solution.

It stops producing results as soon as you stop paying. Same can be said for influencer marketing.

Content marketing, on the other hand, is easy to start with (you can simply produce content yourself) and if done well

11. can keep producing value months or even years after the work has been done.

Content can be anything from blog posts, YouTube videos, podcasts, and live streams.

It depends on what fits best for you (and the audience you’re trying to target).

12. These efforts mean that you will have someone to shout to when you have a finished product you want everyone to know about.

Your first customers will find you through your content.

Building an audience can even help you figure out what product to create and...

13. ...get great feedback as you take your followers on your founder journey.

Ask visitors to sign up to a mailing list and follow your journey

You want a reliable way of reaching out to the audience that you are building.

14. This way you can tell them when there’s something big such as you being ready to open the doors for customers.

Social media is definitely not a very reliable communication channel.

Due to the different algorithms in place, you rarely get more than 10% of your...

15. ...total audience to see any message that you post on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and others.

Email marketing is different.

It's a very low tech and flexible medium.

It's very personal and gets higher reach than social media.

16. You completely own your mailing list too so you can choose between the different email providers or even self-host it. MailChimp is a great starting point for building your database and running your mailing list.

Start growing that mailing list straight away.

17. And keep growing it even after you have a finished product.

Most people who discover your startup are not ready to buy straight away.

They need time and may need your product only in the future.

18. Each new email address that you add to your mailing list is a new lead and a new prospect for you or for your sales team.

You have many WordPress plugins that allow you to insert various calls to action on your content asking people to sign up to hear from you.

19. Again, this is not something you want to spend time building yourself from scratch.

This is also something you can experiment a lot with trying to find the best copy, the best offer and the best location for your call to action.

20. Invasive pop-up ads that take over the majority of the screen as soon as you enter a site are a big turnoff.

On the other hand, I'm happy to experiment with messages that show up depending on how long a user has been on site, how deep the visitor has scrolled down the page

21. or even showing a message on exit intent and see what results they bring.

Get used to being ignored. You have put a lot of time and effort into something be it a product or a blog post.

You release it into the wild but get no feedback whatsoever.

22. The web and social media are full of lurkers.

The Internet is a great place for people to join a community and passively observe.

There's no obligation to respond or interact.

23. 90% of users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% contribute a little, and 1% account for almost all the action.

You almost certainly have more people paying attention to you than what you see in your engagement numbers so do beware of that and keep pushing your project.

24. Understand the audience you are trying to reach.

It’s extremely difficult to get any attention these days.

There’s just so much content and everyone has so many options for what they want to spend their time on.

25. Take some time and think about your content strategy before you start producing the actual content.

It helps that you think like the audience you’re trying to reach, that you’ve had a similar experience, been in a similar position and that you can be in their shoes.

26. Think about your target audience:

Who are they?
Where are they spending their time online?
What questions do they want to get answered?
What issues do they face?
What are their pain points?

27. This will not only help you get tons of ideas for content to create, but it will also help you create more targeted and more effective content that will result in more benefits to you and your business.

Publish content that ranks, gets views and shares.

28. You really need to work hard on figuring out what can make you stand out in the crowded world.

What makes you different from the other sites in your industry.

The common angle of looking at a topic is no longer of any real interest.

You should add an angle on an angle.

29. Can you make boring concepts exciting?

Can you make complicated things simple?

Can you make intimidating solutions painless?

Will you be visiting every country in the world and sharing your journey?

30. Will you be developing a new start-up idea every month and teaching people how to do it too?

Will you be building your app or product in public and broadcasting it on a live stream?

This can take a long time and may need a lot of testing and experimentation.

31. Here are some more ideas on content you can start:

Talk about your day-to-day work as a developer or a founder.

Share your journey with the audience.

How are you going about building your product or running your team or your company?

32. What actions are you taking to grow your business?

What's working? What's not working?

What are the plans for the future?

33. Look at search trends using tools such as Ubersuggest and Answer The Public.

What are people searching for on Google that's relevant to your industry and things you know a lot about?

34. Could you help answer their questions by creating some great content that's better than what they can currently find on Google's top results?

35. Identify what type of search phrases and questions your competitors rank best with and see how you can incorporate those too by creating even better content.

36. Look at what's actually working well right now in your industry.

There's no reason to try and reinvent the wheel.

Use tools such as BuzzSumo to research relevant content that's shared the most in social media, or to find the content that works best for the competing...

37. ...companies. This can give you an idea of what people want and will give you a list of topics to work on.

Publish original research.

Look at the data you have access to that others don't.

Do surveys.

Use industry data.

Or even Google trends or keyword trends.

38. Find new ways to approach all the data and create some interesting data-driven content.

Speak to your customer support and see what are the most frequently asked questions they get or topics that users struggle with the most.

39. Publish content that sells your product.

The goal of your content marketing is to drive brand awareness and business growth.

This means not just publishing content and driving traffic, but also converting blog visitors into subscribers, leads and paying customers.

40. This is not necessarily the same as driving viral traffic.

Fewer but more targeted visitors is much better than masses of irrelevant people who will visit and bounce back within a few seconds.

Keep that in mind.

It’s quality over quantity.

41. Focus on the different stages of the buying process from awareness to purchase.

Create content for each of the stages, educate your potential customers, enlighten the prospect on what makes you different from the competitors and sell your product to them.

42. Create content featuring best practices, step-by-step instructions, case studies and comparisons with other tools.

Don’t forget to also target the newly acquired customers by helping them maximize the value they get from your product.

43. When acquisition is so hard it’s important to limit the churn and retain your customers as long as possible.

"Blog and pray” does not work. Promote your work proactively

44. You cannot just publish content and expect people to find you.

It doesn’t work like that.

You need to have a marketing strategy ready for things to do after you publish a new piece of content in order to drive awareness and traffic to it.

45. And this doesn’t mean just sending a tweet from your Twitter profile.

The organic opportunities on established social platforms pretty much don’t exist.

Ignore them.

Do this instead:

46. Reach out to all the sites that have published different tools or apps or resources pages relevant to your product.

Introduce them to your product, get them to try it (maybe with a free trial or even a free subscription) and eventually add it to their list too.

47. Use Google to find these different lists by searching for your broad topics and adding keywords such as “tools”, “apps”, “reviews”, “resources”, and “links”.

48. Explore different niche communities (niche websites, Reddit, Facebook groups, Slack groups, forums and so on), join the conversation, be available, share your knowledge and tell people about the content that you’re working on too.

49. Reach also to sites that allow you to submit your product or that allow other people to review products such as G2 Crowd, Product Hunt and Siftery.

There will be some similar sites in your specific industry too.

Take the time to look for them.

50. Syndicate your content to the established sites

Syndicating your content to larger, established sites with broader reader bases works in your favor in several ways.

You get your message in front of a large audience that is interested in what you’re doing.

51. This will lead to an increase in brand awareness and your authority.

It might give you some clicks and visits to your site, some subscribers to your mailing list or some followers on your social media channels.

52. The biggest long-term benefit of getting mentioned on a bigger site is that you’re building the authority and links to your domain name.

53. This will result in your content ranking higher for a wider range of long tail keywords which will introduce you to new people some of which will decide to join your mailing list too.

54. Popular websites looking for content:

These can be considered as low hanging fruit and are a great place to start in your outreach efforts.

Indie Hackers
LinkedIn Publishing Network
Business2Community
Business Insider
Buzzfeed
Entrepreneur. Com
Fast Company

55. Forbes
Harvard Business Review
Huffington Post
Inc. Magazine
Mashable
Moz
Social Media Today
TechCrunch
ReadWrite
SitePoint
Social Media Examiner

56. Reach out to journalists and bloggers

Journalists, bloggers and other influencers already have built their audiences and have access to platforms that can extend the reach of your messages too.

57. Journalists are looking for things to write about

Influencers are looking for content to share

Bloggers are looking for companies to work with

If you can reach out to them with interesting messages and build relationships with them your message may be shared further.

58. This is also where your great content can help you get attention.

Now it’s the time for the hard part

This is it. Pretty much everything you need to know about how to create a great marketing strategy for your startup.
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