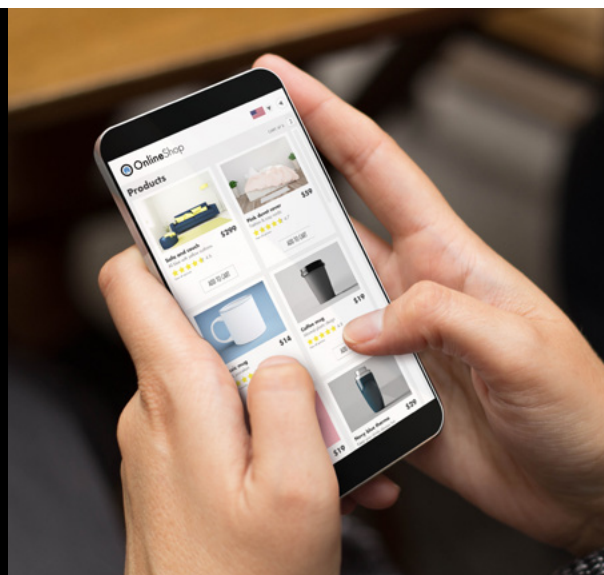# The Marketer's Guide to Agile Product Content Strategy

How to Seize New Revenue Moments and Maximize Customer Engagement

**inriver** | **retail TouchPoints**®

# How Product Content Connects (and Converts)

Content has always played a crucial role in brand building, and most marketers know why. Content helps establish a brand's ethos, support its mission and values, and reaffirm its value proposition. In the simplest terms, content shows customers how your products and services can meet customer needs, and why your brand is valuable to them.

While all content works to tell a brand's story, product content in particular — which includes everything from attributes, to specs, images and videos — is becoming more and more crucial to realizing successful retail marketing strategies. In fact, as more consumers rely on digital channels to research, compare and buy products, compelling and consistent product content is key to standing out. How your brand and its entire ecosystem of products appear on the **digital shelf** significantly impacts how your target audience perceives your brand, and whether you can successfully drive engagement, build trust and drive conversions.

We've seen the breadth of channels and apps expand this past year, creating more opportunities for brands to cash in on their product information — especially their visual content, like photos, videos and even 3-D renderings. But with every new opportunity comes a list of potential obstacles that marketing teams need to prepare for.
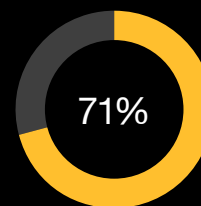
## Top goals achieved with content

**81%**
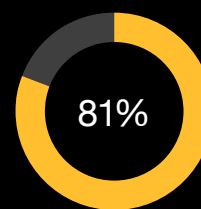
Create brand awareness

**76%**
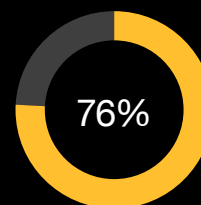
Build credibility and trust

**71%**

Educate audiences

MarketingProfs, Content Marketing Institute, 2021 Research

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**The underlying challenge? Finding a way to ensure the seamless activation of product content and ensuring consistency across all channels. And, oh yeah, that content must be relevant to your audience and tailored / translated to specific markets.**

As the marketing team feels more pressure to prove the effectiveness of campaigns and activities, leadership can derive value from a closed-loop process that helps them measure performance and fully grasp product information's impact on engagement and bottom-line results.

This guide will break down the latest trends and requirements in product content marketing for retail and offer tactical advice to set you up for success — even as new channels, apps and platforms continue to emerge. The key to unlocking new optimization opportunities is embracing engagement intelligence, which provides deeper, more actionable insights that are only available in best-in-class technologies.

### What is the digital shelf?

Frankly, the digital shelf is everywhere your brand's products are sold online.

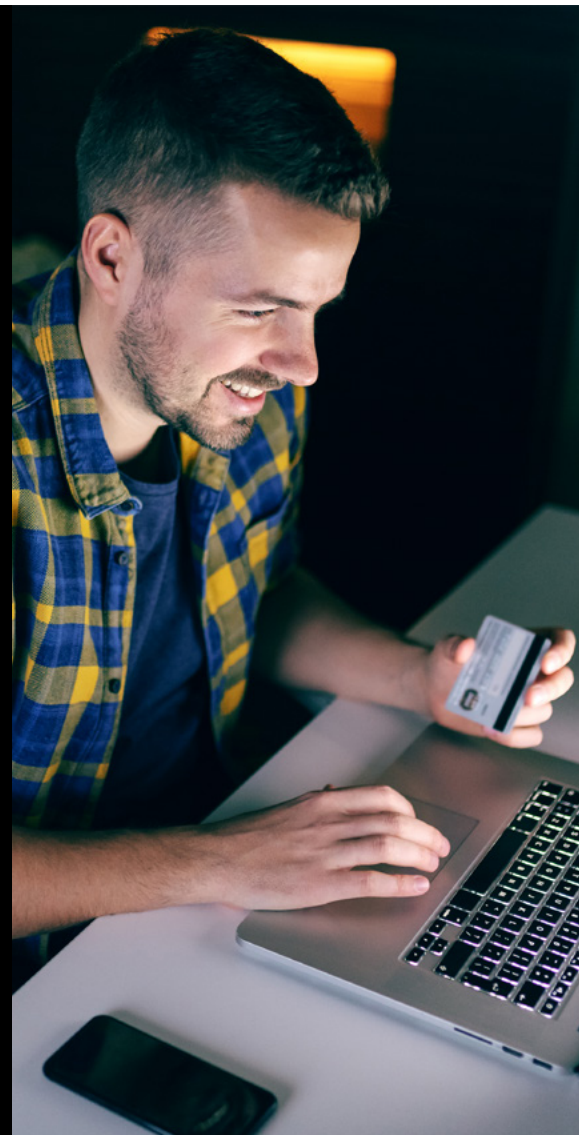| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 🟨 | Branded e-commerce site | 🟨 | Marketplaces |
| 🟨 | Retail partner e-commerce sites | 🟨 | Social commerce |
| 🟨 | Branded mobile app | 🟨 | Livestreaming |
| 🟨 | Retail partner mobile apps | | |

# Channels and Trends Driving Content-Driven Commerce

You could say 2020 was many things. But for retailers, it easily is considered the industry's official shift to digital. Although many apps and platforms have been gaining traction for years, we saw consumer adoption and reliance reach new heights. If you're using any of these channels and platforms to reach target consumers, compelling, relevant and up-to-date product information plays a key role in your success.

## Marketplaces

**70%** of Amazon searches don't include a brand name.

Accenture

Marketplaces have become a powerful first step for consumers as they research their needs and compare all available options. In fact, recent data shows that many are starting to go to Amazon first to search for products. (That's right, even before Google.) Whether mass or niche, these marketplaces provide a curated set of options, and consumers rely on content from these marketplaces to narrow their search.

General product details, high-quality images, videos and even product Q&A details all influence the decision-making process. So, as you expand your SKU count or even enter new marketplaces, you need to ensure that all relevant product content is available and helpful. If it's not, gaps and inconsistencies emerge, which can impact consumer confidence and stop them from clicking "add to cart."

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## Social Commerce

Consumers reported spending **45%** more time on social media in Q4 2020, and orders coming from social-referred channels (including paid ads and organic posts) grew by 50% year-over-year.

Salesforce
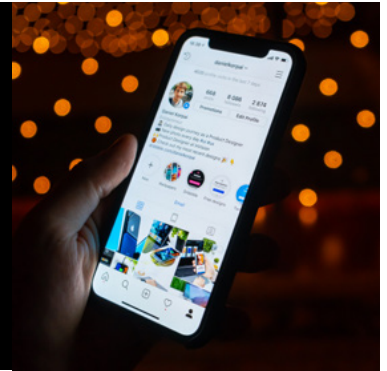
In 2020, people spent more time at home. And that meant they had more time to scroll through social media. The typical user now spends more than two hours on social media every day, which is making it a prime channel for consumers to find product inspiration and, most of all, shop. That's why we've seen Instagram, TikTok and even Snapchat level-up their social commerce capabilities. They want to eliminate the barriers between information and conversion.

As more consumers engage with your sponsored posts and digital ads, you need to ensure that images, videos and all supporting content shared for these campaigns are consistent. You also need to make sure you're promoting content that ties to in-stock products. Because there's nothing worse than clicking on a social ad only to find the product that caught your eye is no longer in stock!

## Same-Day Delivery Services

The pandemic has **more than doubled** food-delivery app business.

MarketWatch

During the pandemic, many consumers turned to delivery apps and services for the first time. Their ease, convenience and diverse range of partners all have driven their first-time customers to become loyal users. After all, who doesn't love instant gratification?

Companies such as Instacart, Uber and others are capitalizing on this opportunity by expanding their retail partnerships. After Sephora launched on Instacart during the peak of the pandemic, we've seen many cosmetics brands follow suit. But as brands make their way into this brave, new world of the last mile, they have to ensure their product information is accurate. These apps are marketplaces in their own right, so brands and retailers need to ensure product information and imagery stands out.

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# Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is so powerful because bloggers, experts and tastemakers are creating content on your behalf. They're creating images, videos and even micro-blogs tailored to their unique audience — an audience you want to get in front of.

But activating these campaigns takes a lot of time and budget, and your marketing team will want to get as much value out of these partnerships as possible. They'll want to be able to publish and syndicate this content across all business-critical channels and bring influencers into their owned and paid marketing campaigns. For example, they can repurpose influencer videos and photos for e-commerce product pages, display ads and even in marketplaces. All information relevant to a specific product they share has to be up to date if you're going to use that influencer content to your advantage.

**80%** of consumers have purchased something after seeing it as a recommendation from an influencer.

Oberlo

# The Bottom-Line Impact of Accurate, Agile Content

Product information doesn't just play a role in educating and engaging your audience. It has a tangible impact on influencing — even accelerating — the decision-making process, so you can reach your marketing objectives.

Consistently accurate information also helps build and keep consumer trust, which is a mounting issue for brands and retailers. In fact, Edelman's most recent *Trust Barometer* found that consumers only have 64% trust in retailers to do the right thing, a 5% drop from the year prior.

Let's break down an example of how inaccurate product information can lead to distrust: Imagine if Instacart mislabeled a line of cereal and you got the wrong flavor when your order arrived. Or imagine you ordered a new pair of pants on Amazon, only to discover the sizing information is incorrect and the quality is poor. Both scenarios create tension and frustration…and they both could have been prevented with more accurate product information.

Creating and continuously updating content across the digital shelf helps support transparency, too. If your goal is to provide ethical, eco-friendly products, you need to provide end-to-end visibility into how ingredients and materials are sourced, how items are formulated and how they are shipped to stores or consumers' front doors. Publishing this information can help you build a loyal community of customers — especially as sustainability becomes a more pressing consumer concern.



21%
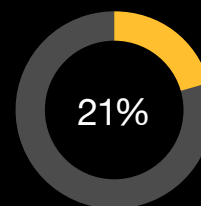
Only 21% of consumers say they trust brands

20%
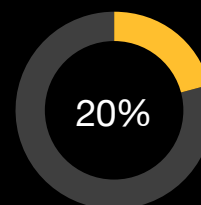
20% say they trust retailers

EY

Top-performing brands are investing in a broader marketing library that expands beyond their "hero" products. They know they need a robust e-commerce strategy to meet varying consumer needs and behaviors. But the reality is, creating, implementing and managing this information across an ever-expanding digital shelf takes a lot of time and effort. And if your team is only using digital asset management (DAM) software to upload and handle digital assets, you're missing a significant part of the content optimization equation: the ability to maintain content consistency and accuracy across channels, even as you make updates based on consumer behaviors and expectations.

> **A DAM alone doesn't support the speed, scale and agility required for you to capitalize on new revenue opportunities found on the digital shelf.**

Product information management (PIM) is a core system that provides a single source of truth for accurate and consistent product information. It can hold all product information and content formats, including photos and videos, to improve your presence on the digital shelf. But PIM systems typically are limited to a very linear process, which doesn't serve marketers who require agile workflows. If you don't continuously monitor and update content across all channels, it can significantly impact engagement and trust. This, of course, has bottom-line implications for your brand and all retail partners.

# Engagement Intelligence: The Missing Link in Product Content Optimization

As new shopping channels emerge and evolve, so do consumer behaviors. The way they discover, engage with, and use content to guide their decision-making process is always changing, and they're always looking for new and better ways to make decisions.
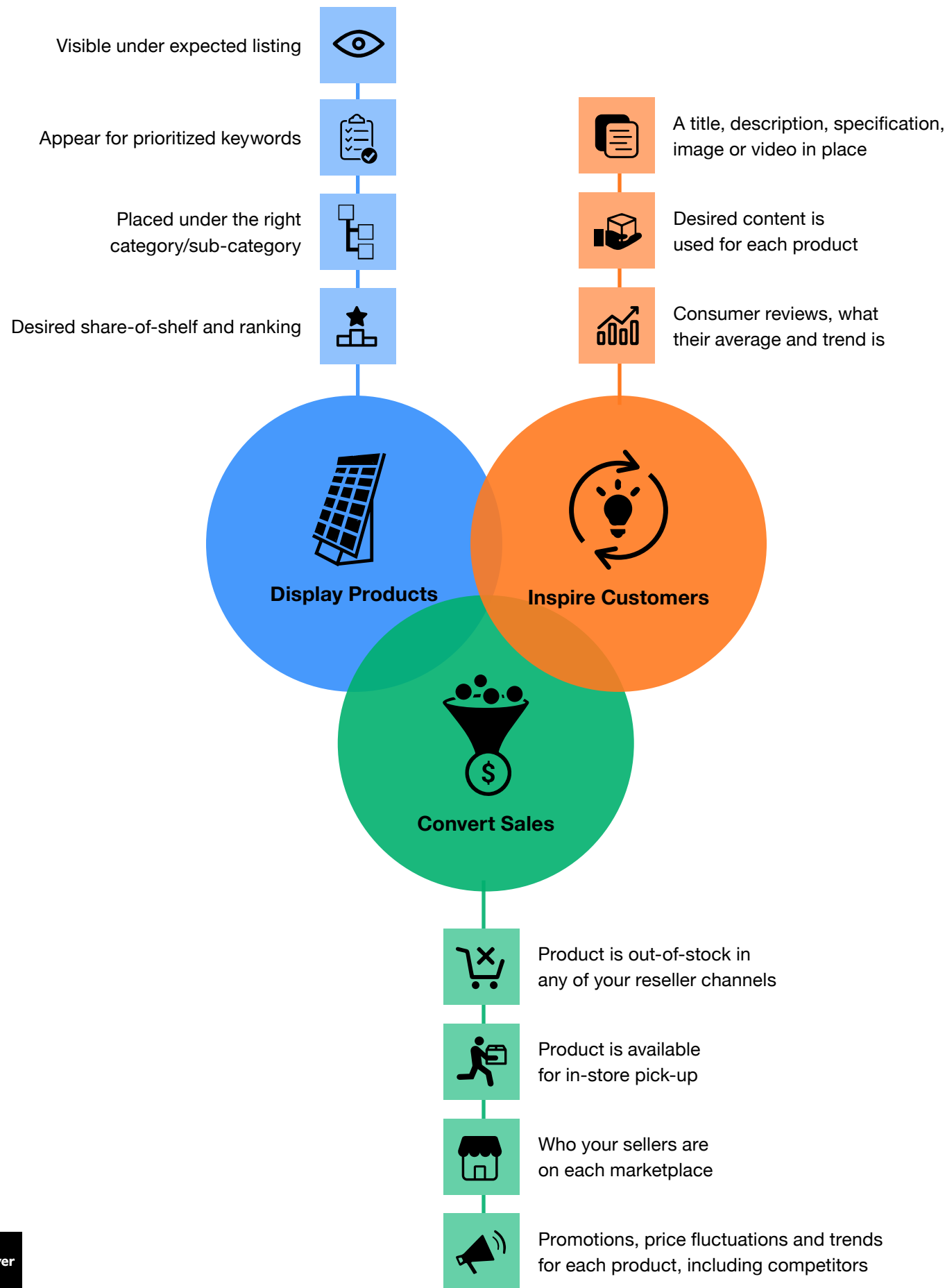
Revenue moments reside in all these different channels and platforms. By understanding the influence and impact of all product information and supporting content, brands can capitalize on new opportunities and adapt based on performance. However, this level of insight is missing for many business-to-consumer (B2C) companies. According to research from MarketingProfs and the Content Marketing Institute, only 12% of brands said they had the accurate measurement capabilities and scale to deem their content marketing strategy as "sophisticated."

It is no longer enough to simply push product information onto the digital shelf and *hope* consumers find it helpful. Consumer brands need to keep a constant pulse on content accuracy, delivery and engagement to determine what's working, what's not and how to improve. That's where digital shelf analytics (DSA) plays a critical role.

**When integrated into a PIM solution, DSA provides granular data that supports actionable decision-making for modern marketing teams. It turns the once-linear process of creating, activating and updating product information in a PIM solution into a more circular, ongoing process that is agile and reflects the ever-changing nature of our consumers and the entire commerce universe.**

DSA provides data that allows brands to maintain content accuracy and integrity, and tackle outdated or unhelpful content before it can impact brand perception and sales results. Product information on the digital shelf becomes flexible and optimized to the evolving needs of your consumers and different commerce channels.

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# How DSA Supports Brand Visibility and Performance

Visible under expected listing

Appear for prioritized keywords

Placed under the right category/sub-category

Desired share-of-shelf and ranking

A title, description, specification, image or video in place

Desired content is used for each product

Consumer reviews, what their average and trend is

**Display Products**

**Inspire Customers**

**Convert Sales**

Product is out-of-stock in any of your reseller channels

Product is available for in-store pick-up

Who your sellers are on each marketplace

Promotions, price fluctuations and trends for each product, including competitors
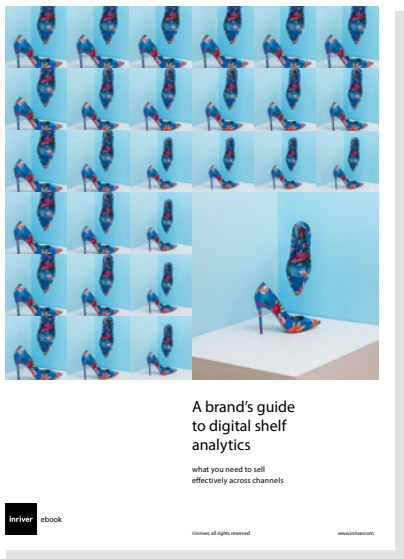
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# New Revenue Opportunities Await

In the new era of product content marketing, brands need to focus on four fundamentals: speed, agility, accuracy and engagement. As the digital commerce universe continues to expand, there are new revenue and growth opportunities just waiting to be discovered.

But in this new era, data is currency. And accurate, relevant product data is your key to seizing new revenue moments. Many PIM solutions help marketing teams quickly and efficiently upload, manage and deliver product content and information to all channels and platforms to maintain consistency. But not all PIM solutions are created equal.

Inriver's Digital-First PIM is equipped with DSA to provide the engagement intelligence you need to optimize product information and content, and drive business results.

A brand's guide
to digital shelf
analytics

what you need to sell
effectively across channels

**inriver** ebook

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To learn more about inriver and how DSA can work for your brand, download this ebook.

'A brand's guide to digital shelf analytics'

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inriver empowers organizations to deliver revenue-driving product information at every customer touchpoint. inriver's digital-first Product Information Management (PIM), powered by the industry's only elastic data model, enables marketing executives to bring to life compelling product stories for high engagement purchases, get actionable guidance on what influences buying decisions, and quickly adapt. As a result, B2B and B2C businesses turn product information into a strategic asset at the leading edge of driving revenue.

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