Content measurement that matters

Not everything that can be counted counts

Hilary Marsh
Content Company, Inc.

or,
Is Your Content Working?

Content is working if it achieves its goal

In fact...

Content strategy is the practice of planning for the
creation, delivery, and governance of
useful, usable, *effective* content.

If you measure, you can

- make better decisions about content format
- use the most effective wording
- understand what to create more of, what to stop

Agenda

1. Three kinds of content
2. Success criteria
3. Measuring effectiveness
4. Best practices and traps

Takeaways

1. Make sure content has the right goals
2. Measure wisely
3. Use what you've learned

Photo by Lucie Dawson on Unsplash

Three kinds of content

Photo by Elena G on Unsplash
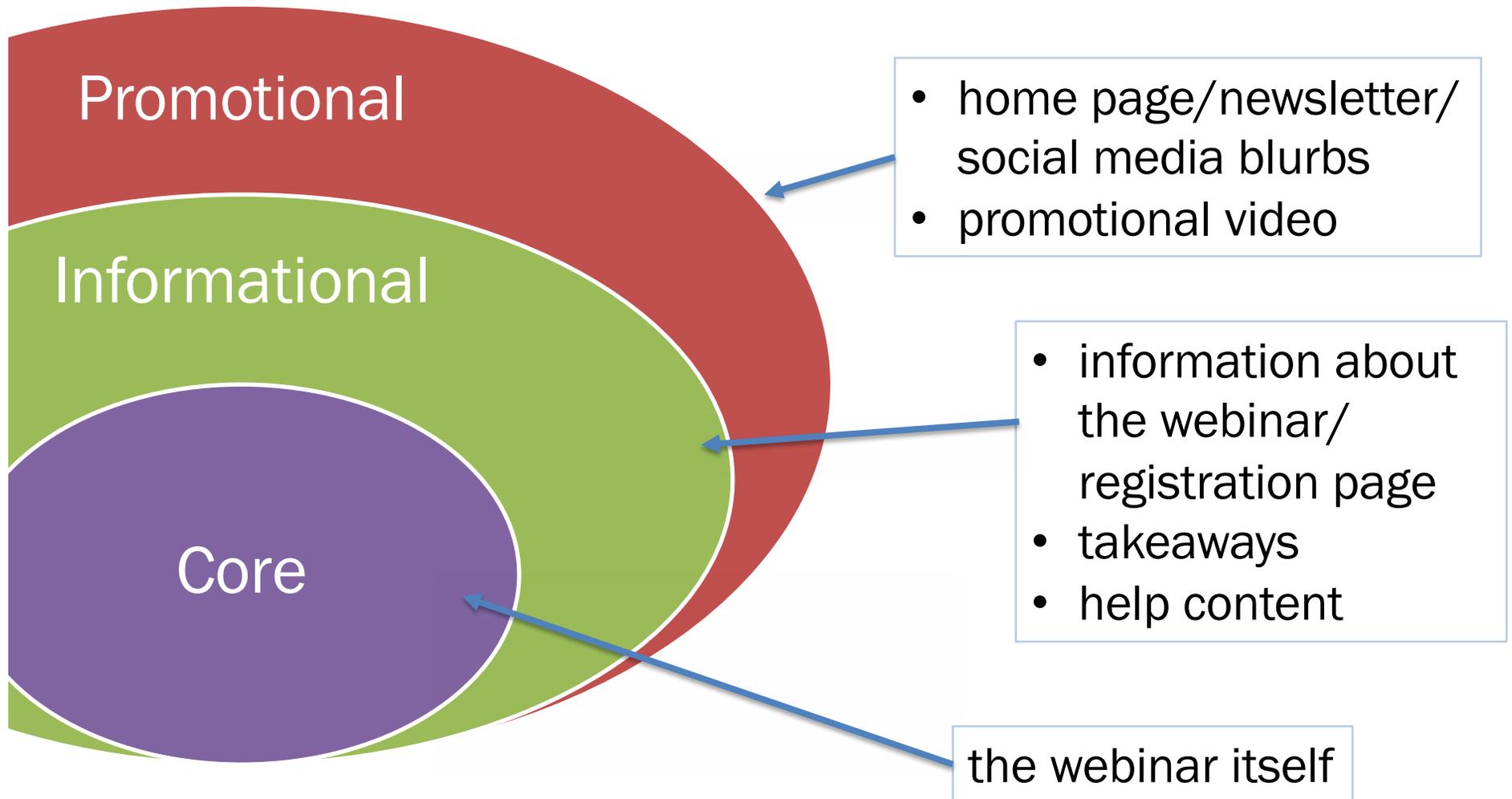
Promotional content

Examples

- Blurbs for landing pages, home page, e-newsletters, social media
- Ads
- Many blog posts, videos, infographics
- Testimonials
- Press releases

Considerations

- Always exists as a pathway to something else
- Sometimes substitutes for informational content
- Usually written by marketers

Informational content

Examples

- Event description
- Registration page
- Details about a program, product, or service
- Help content
- How-to information
- Summary of a long PDF document
- Case study

Considerations

- Descriptions of offerings
- Often written by content professionals: communicators, writers, content designers

Core content

Examples

- Report
- Webinar
- Advocacy initiative
- Clinical practice guideline
- Course
- Conference session presentation

Considerations

- Related to the organization's mission/purpose
- Often created by subject-matter experts, not professional writers

True success: All three levels

Promotional

Informational

Core

Succeeds when it sends people to informational

Succeeds when people proceed

Succeeds when people use or act on the content
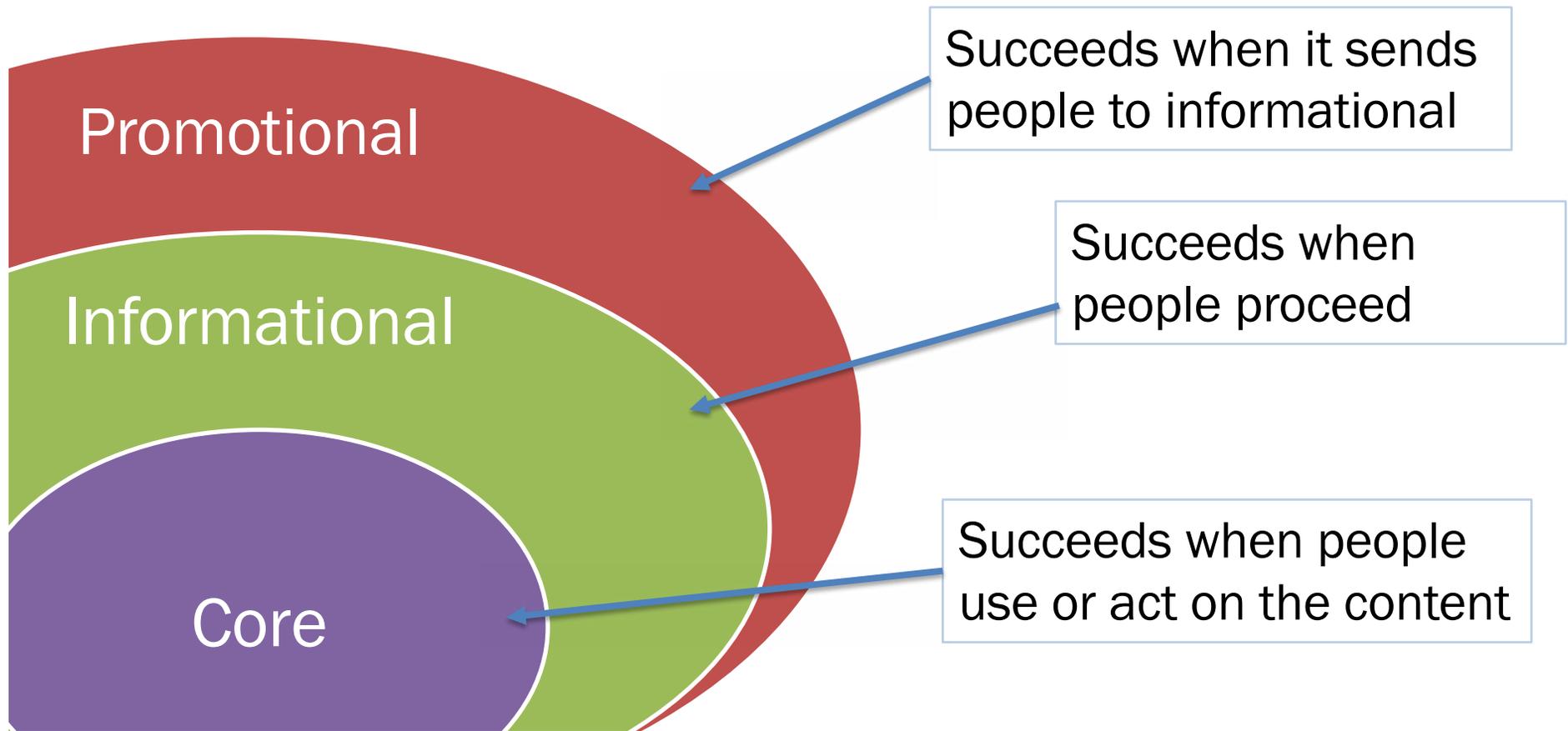
5 whys

1. *Why do you want to publish this content?*

2. *What is that latest news?*

3. *Why do you give those grants?*

4. *Why do you want people to know about this information?*

1. Because we want to share an update about our program

2. That we have given grants to several more organizations

3. It's part of our mission, to improve society

4. To increase donations, supporting our mission

Measuring effectiveness for each kind of content

General measurement process

1. Create measurable success criteria for each piece of content

2. Identify how to do the measurement, and do it

3. Communicate the results, use them to inform future content decisions

"Return on Content"

Goal	KPI	How we will measure
Get more people to visit the page that explains the program	Specific increase in traffic and/or click-throughs	Analytics—total pageviews and entrances
Get more people to participate in the program	Specific increase in usage/participation	Business data related to the content goal: program participation statistics, new registrant lists, etc.
Ensure that information about the program is clear and adequate	Specific decrease in support frequency for a specific program	Number of people contacting customer service because they couldn't find information about the program or didn't understand what they found
Increase engagement with content	Specific increase in the number of people who share the content via email or social media	Number of shares
Increase awareness of the program	Specific increase in the number of people who know about this	Member survey, event follow-up survey
		survey, event follow-up
Increase the number of people who took the action we wanted them to take – register, renew, download, etc.	Specific increase in conversions	Conversion tracking
Increase the amount of content about the program that people read	Specific percentage increase in the amount of content people read	Eye tracking
Increase the number of people who come to this information from external search engines	Specific percentage increase	Search engine referrals through organic SEO, paid SEM

http://bit.ly/return-on-content-worksheet

Where to start if you don't know the goal

1. Benchmark
   - Collect metrics for current content (baby steps)
   - Compare with expectations

2. Set preliminary goal
   - *Desired* outcome – what would "better" look like?

3. Measure, share, and learn/evolve

Effectiveness for promotional content

Sample promotional content goals

- Get the right people to read the informational content or use the core content/offering
- Get more people to share the informational or core content
- Increase awareness of the offering
- Generate more leads
- Increase the number of people who discover the informational or core content from external search engines
- Fuel more word-of-mouth activity per enthusiast by giving customers easy-to-share narratives and pictures
  (Forrester, ROI of blogging white paper, 2007)
- Change audiences' perception of the organization

Effectiveness for promotional content
Did it get those results?

- Did the right people read the informational content or use the core content/offering?

- Did more people share the informational or core content?

- Did you increase awareness of the offering?

- Did you generate more leads?

- Did you increase the # of people who discovered the informational or core content from external search engines?

- Did you fuel more word-of-mouth activity per enthusiast?

- Did you change audiences' perception of the organization?

TIPS FROM
FORMER
SMOKERS®
10 YEARS
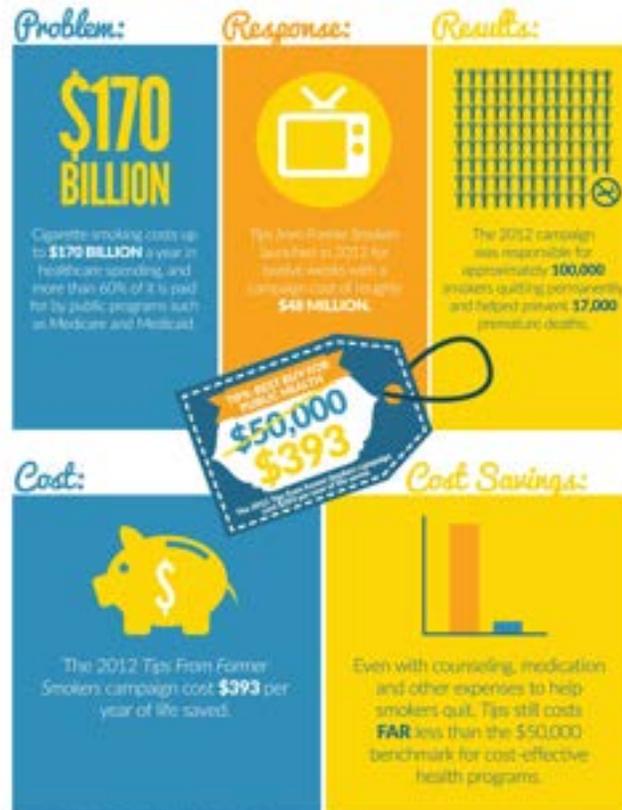
CDC

One million people have quit smoking because of this campaign

Sometimes less is more

- Increased social media engagement by 1.83% by posting less content.

- "One year, only 25% of our award press releases were picked up. So, the following year we only issued releases for strategic awards and achieved 78% pick up. We also saved time not writing releases that had no media pickup."

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/lets-talk-communications-measurement-rachel-tolhurst/

- Reducing the content on a page and having only one call to action made a huge difference in click-throughs
  - Jeff MacIntyre

Effectiveness for informational content

Key questions for measuring informational content

- What impact/outcome do we want this content to achieve?

- If we've published similar content before, how effective was it, and what would "better" look like?

Or to put it in some different frames:

- What is the content's job?

- What is its KPI?

- What is its OKR?

Yes, I mean THIS specific piece of content — success is different for different pieces

Make your KPIs specific

KPI	How to evaluate	What you'll learn
Reduce calls to the call center by 5%.	Numbers from call center	Indicates improvement in your audience finding the information they need online.
Increase percentage of completed transactions after visits to transactional areas of the site by 10%.	Web analytics	How well customers can use the website to initiate and complete tasks.
Users can accurately predict what they'll find on a page after scanning page content for 5 seconds 80% of the time.	User testing	Whether headings and visual cues are descriptive and effective, and support users in finding the right content for their needs.
Increase average duration of watching video content by 25%.	Web analytics	Whether users are interested in your video content, and where they are dropping off.

https://contentstrategyinc.com/using-kpis-to-measure-content/

Informational content goals when it's about core content

- Get the right people to read or use the core content/offering
  - Register, download, act, etc.
- Ensure that the information about the offering is clear and adequate
- Decrease the number of phone calls to customer service about the offering
- Ensure that the audience finds the offering compelling and that its relevance is clear

Goals when information *is* the destination

- Make sure the content is written to be findable and usable
- If task-focused, make sure the audience can accomplish the task easily and quickly
- Ensure that the audience finds the content trustworthy and that its relevance is clear

Sometimes less is more

Site redesign required a news article for each update on the home page

- Volume of news articles they published overwhelmed the staff
- Viewership to each article was relatively low

Fixed the CMS, published fewer news articles, and...

May 15, 2015 - Oct 21, 2015: ● Sessions
May 15, 2014 - Oct 21, 2014: ● Sessions

| June 2015 | July 2015 | August 2015 | September 2015 | October 2015 |

Sessions
40.30%

Users
43.44%

Pageviews
19.83%

Success vs. value

Success

- More people apply to a university

- The right kind of student applies

- More people sign up for a charity event

- 500 potential investors attend a product launch

Value

- The right people apply

- The right kind of student accepts/enrolls

- Raising 50% more donations than previous

- 30 people invest

https://www.slideshare.net/SarahRichards2/confab-2017

Numbers can tell part of the story...

- Did people read the content or watch the video all the way through?

- Did people take the next step you wanted them to take?

- Did the same user search for the same terms another time?

More than numbers

"Pageviews aren't the goal. Your goal is the goal."

— Mike Powers, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
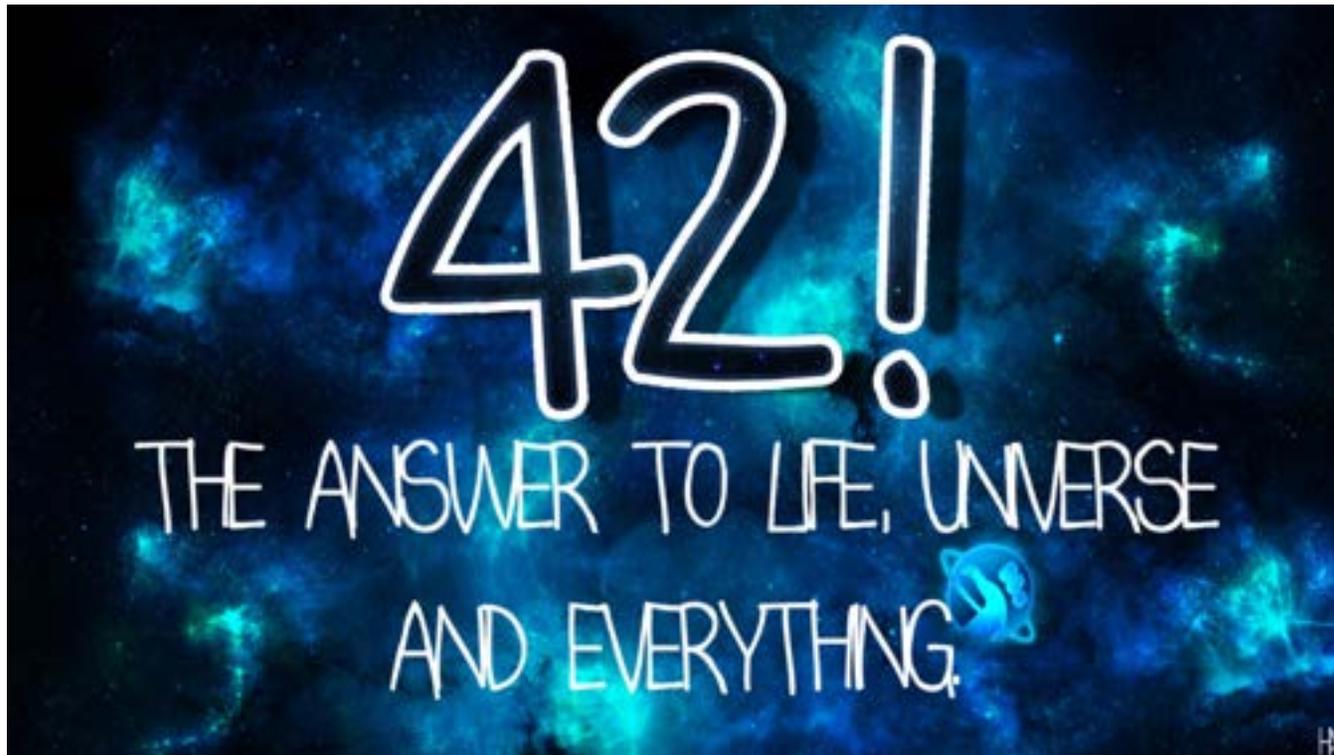
Effectiveness for core content

Core content goals

- **Business goals**
  - Solve an audience pain point
  - Address an organizational goal (revenue, e.g.)
- Passion/purpose for creating the offering in the first place
- Outcome, not activity

When to define the core content goal?

we usually think about the goal here

we actually know the goal here

Conceive　　Create　　Publish　　Promote　　Maintain　　Sunset
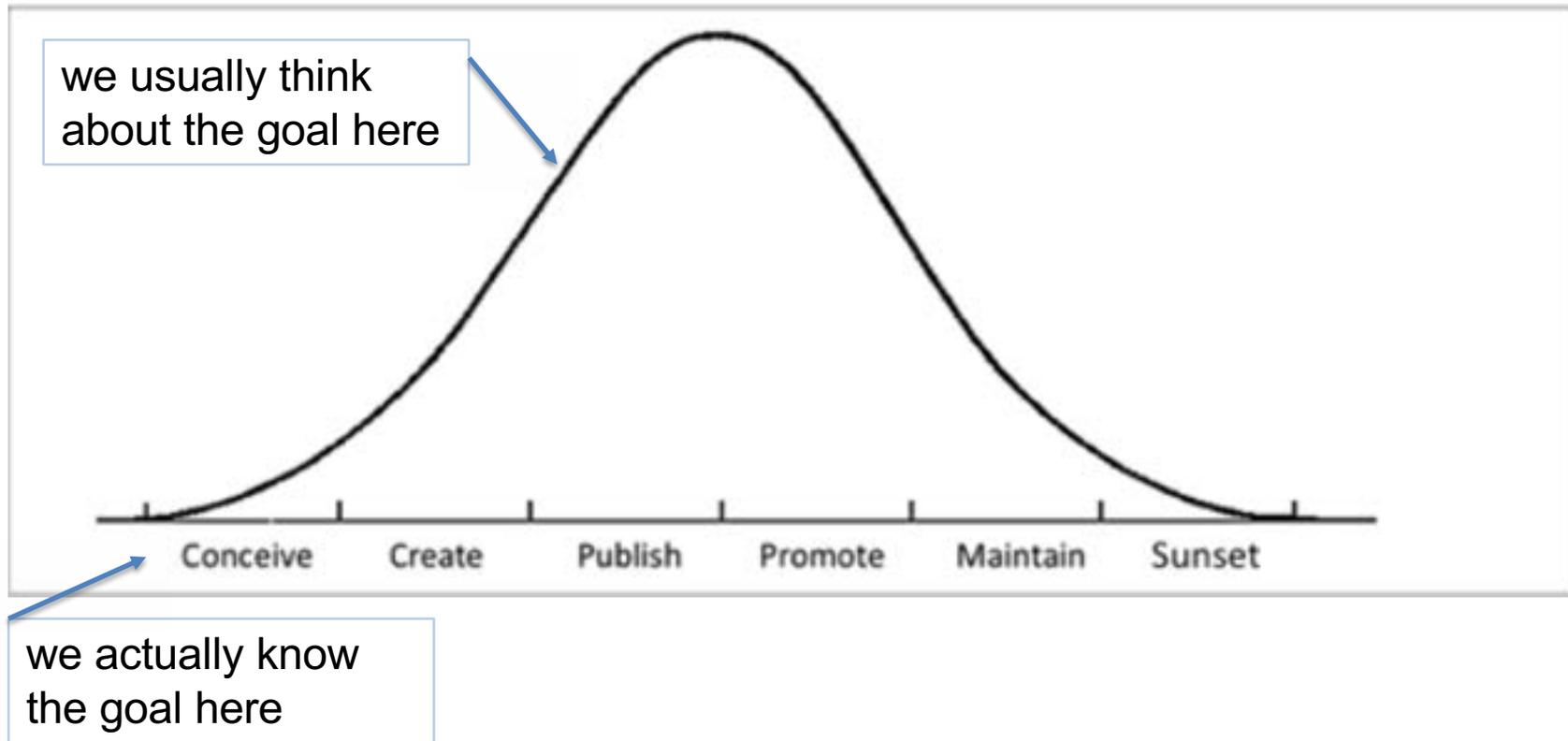
Outcome, not activity

1. Okay to start big:

- Make the world a better place

- Change a scientific practice

- Enable families to resolve conflicts

2. Work to make
   the **outcome** specific enough
   to be measurable

> "Measure observable microgoals – activities that are indicators of their outcomes"
>
> – Stacey Barr
>
> https://www.staceybarr.com/measure-up/how-to-measure-non-profit-outcomes/

Make each goal measurable

- KPIs
- May involve multiple systems and techniques
  - User interviews, post-event surveys, path analysis, etc.

How to actually measure?

- Ensure that systems work
- Gather data – ideally, include historical data from similar content
- Especially for core content, goals may need to be inferred from other data points
- Content testing – A/B, heatmaps, eye tracking
- Qualitative too – surveys, feedback
- Next steps people take: exit %, search again, etc.

Unnecessary content

401k information

Answer to an employee question about 401k
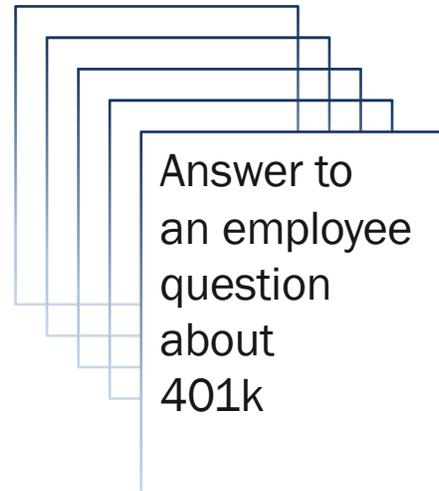
Who is in charge of the information about this program?
Accountability

Effects may evolve

| A/B testing headlines | → | Revenue up, but headline quality down | → | Reputation, customer satisfaction, subscriptions down |
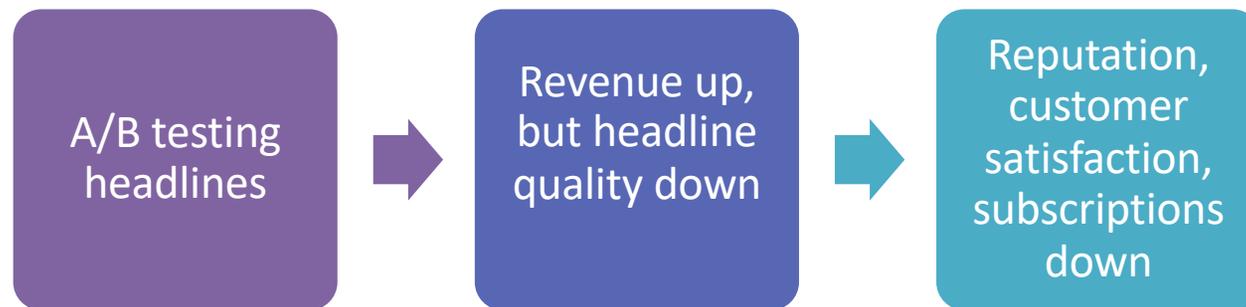
https://simplicable.com/new/impact-evaluationisfaction, and subscription rates.

Measure what matters

Connect with outcomes

- Member retention/customer loyalty
- Audience satisfaction with the organization (end of the journey)
- Impact
  - Did the law pass?
  - Did people change their practices?
  - Did the audience change their behavior because they were more knowledgeable?

Use the right data to tell stories

- Tailor internal messages about insights to the audience
  - Execs need different takeaways than content creators and owners

Don't measure what doesn't matter

Vanity metrics

- Visits alone
  - "HITS"
- Time on page
- Net Promoter Score
- Sentiment

Not every measurement
is quantifiable

Photo by Melanie Weidmann on Unsplash

Use what you learn
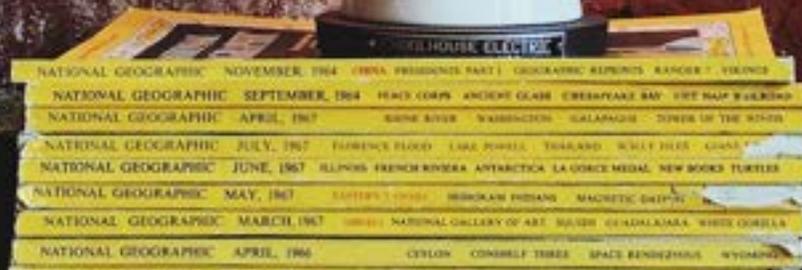
- Would your audience respond more to different headlines, styles, formats?

- Would promoting with different channels or timing improve results?

- Are you, indeed, measuring the right things?

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Thank you!

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