



> online content marketing.

a practical guide to leveraging your expertise and getting more business.

> vision: develop trust and serve your future customers



If people **trust** you, they will prefer you

Trust is gained through **knowledge** and reliability

Knowledge can be captured in high quality **content**

Content can be created to last long and be distributed **online** at low cost.

Which is great news, because your future customers are **online** - searching for answers to practical questions!

> content marketing: what is it?

Defining content marketing

It is something you're probably very familiar with already: a report published and presented by a company at a convention, a brochure with practical tips or an instructional video on YouTube. They're all content marketing activities.

OK, here's a formal definition:

Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action.*



customer loyalty
magazine



instructional
video

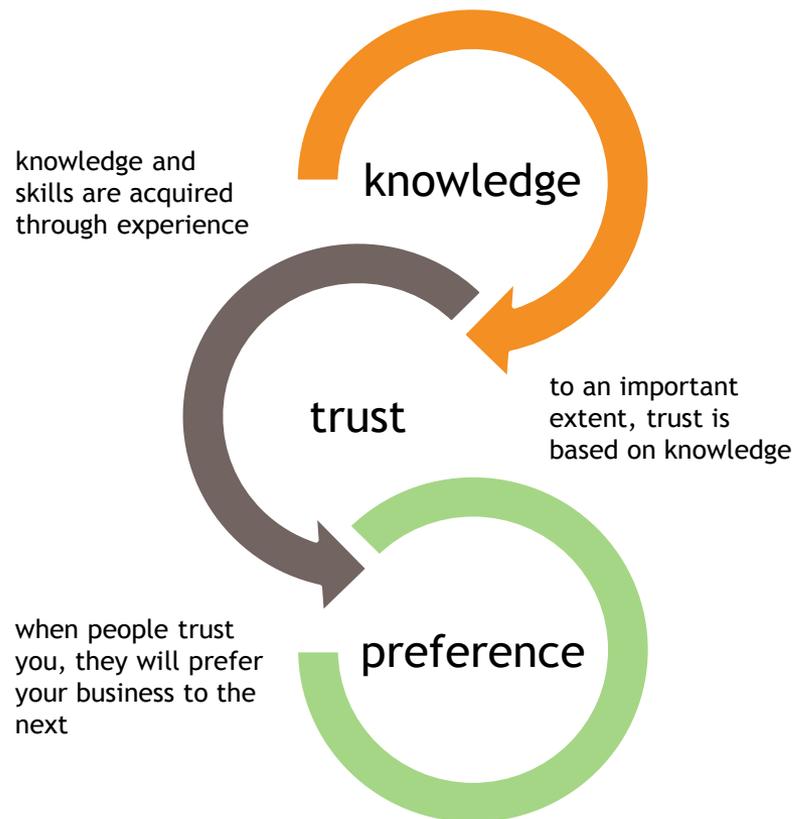


report

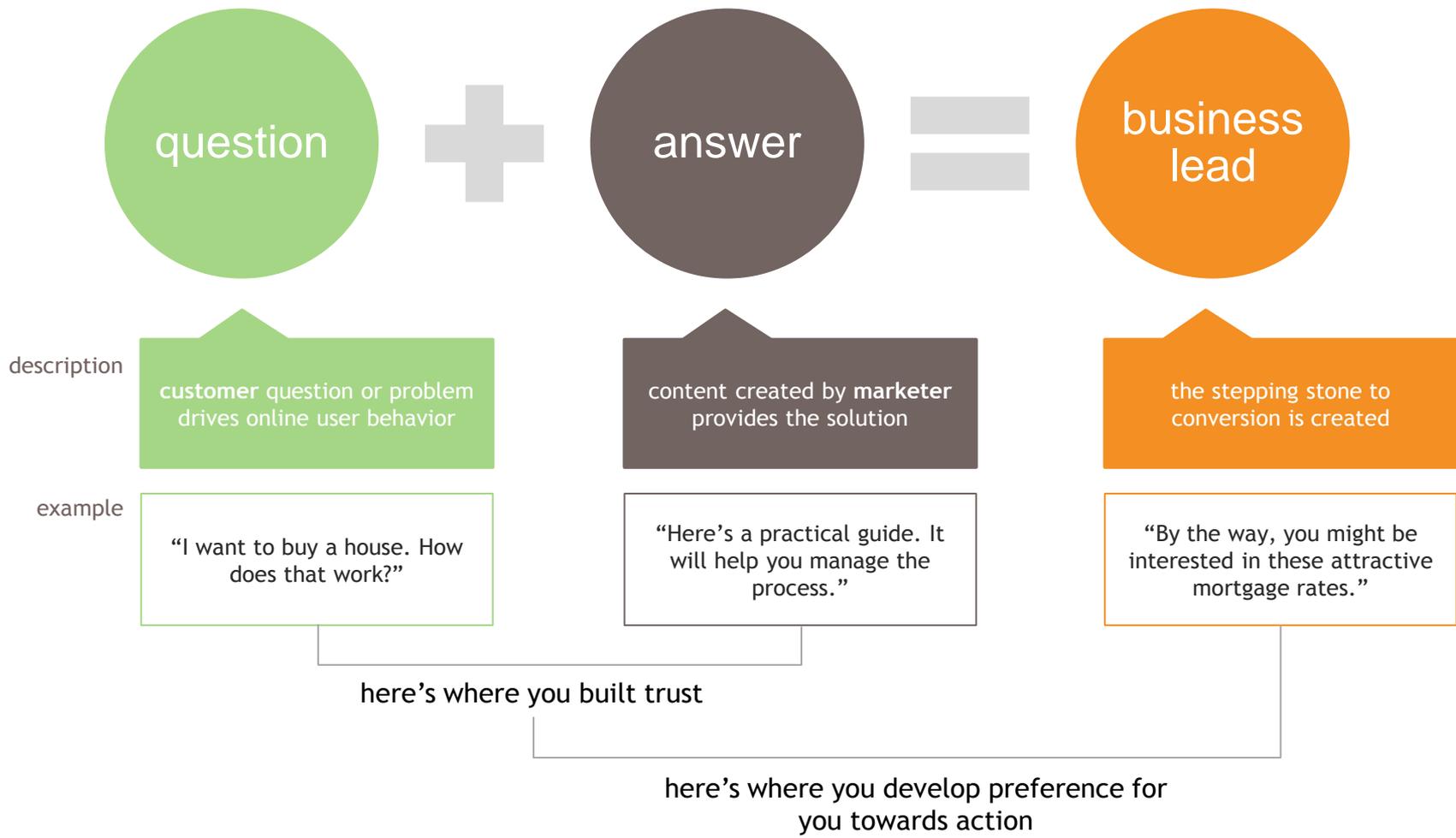
Content marketing can be used to retain existing customers, but it is mainly used to develop leads to acquire new customers.

“To me, a brand is trust”

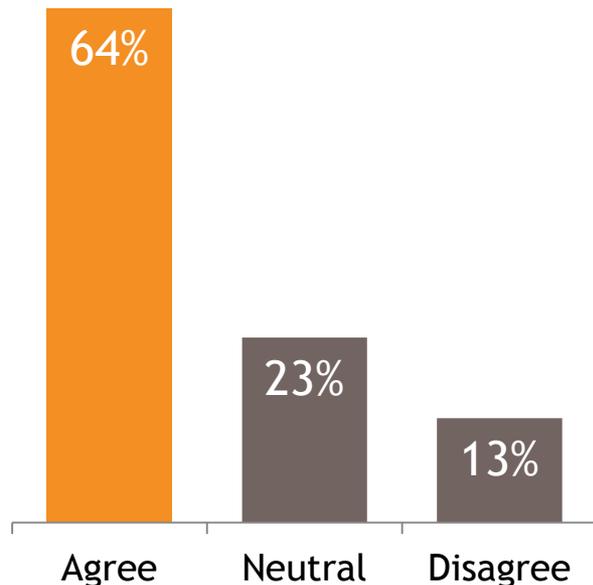
Steve Jobs



> content marketing is about answering real questions



64% of marketers consider content marketing to be more important than advertising*



Other key facts

- Large companies (> 100 employees) spend **18%** of marketing budgets on content marketing
- Smaller companies (< 100 employees) spend up to **40%** of marketing budgets on content marketing

Drivers of content marketing

There are two clear reasons behind the rise of content marketing as a full blown marketing activity: the improved positioning of the brand or the organization and the higher potential return on investment.

1 Positioning

Former Apple CEO Steve Jobs used to say that trust is the only real thing that makes a brand stand out. You want to position your organization as trustworthy, thorough and experienced. This is a real differentiator versus your competitors.

Thought leadership is the ultimate position you can achieve here. Thought leaders present ideas to move industries and sectors forward.

2 Return on Investment (ROI)

Content has the potential of a long value horizon. Suppose you develop a buying guide for electric bikes. That's content that will be relevant for some time to come. This means that this piece of content can generate business leads for a relatively long time. Compared to advertising campaigns, which only have effect for short periods of time, content marketing can generate value much longer. That's the return bit of the ROI.

But there's also a cost or investment bit. It doesn't necessarily cost a lot of money to develop high quality content. What content do you already have? What internal sources (people) do you have to develop more content? The trick is to convert this knowledge into an attractive piece of content. That's where copy writers and other creatives come in. But these really do not have to cost a fortune. Certainly not more than an advertising campaign.

> content in the marketing funnel

awareness

a person becomes aware of a problem

Role of Content Marketing

Educate the audience!

You need to familiarize them with your product or service category to make sure they will actually consider it as a possible solution. Remember: initially, the problem could be latent!

Examples for content creation

- inspirational video or article to show the ranges of uses of a product
- list of benefits of products and a discussion of some of the perceived drawbacks - don't forget to add testimonials of real users

consideration

there's a willingness to consider solutions to the problem

Help your audience explore!

Help them create the set of buying arguments they need to get them going.

- buying guide to help people make the proper selection of products that meets their requirements.
- product overview of all types of products and services out there.

decision

the decision on the actual solution is made

Help your audience decide!

Help them decide which product to buy, but also where to buy it.

- decision tree, helping users pinpoint the product that solves their problem best

action

ready to buy or use the solution

Make the deal!

This isn't part of your content creation, but it's essential to the overall success of your strategy. Make your audience a great offer.

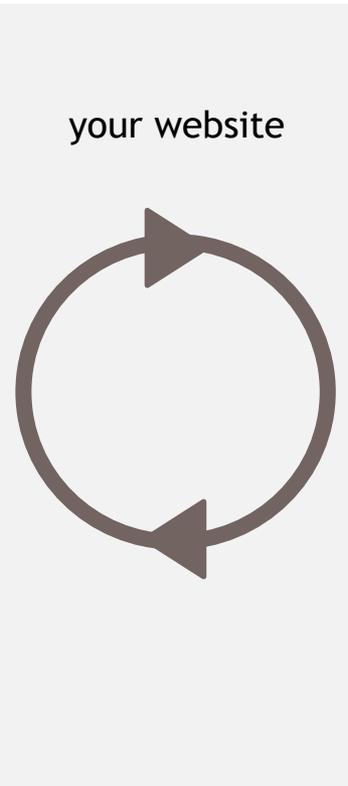
Marketing funnels

There are many marketing funnels out there and I have picked this one. All marketing funnels share similar features: the further people move up the funnel, the better educated they get and the more specific their questions will be.

Your content should address this development and provide the relevant answers.

> moving from content tools to conversion

	awareness	consideration	decision	action
tools				
your website				
article				
report*				
video				
infographic				
whitepaper*				
webinar*				
newsletter				
demo				
instructional				
checklist				
decision tree				
calculator				
case study*				
product spec sheet				



Relevant and available

It is very likely there are a lot more effective content marketing tools out there than the ones I've presented on the left. The important thing to remember is that the effectiveness of any tool depends on how it is used. More specifically, the content should be relevant - a cool tool cannot disguise poor content.

Furthermore, the tools need to be available. Don't "hide" a tool on your website, but distribute it to your audience.

Ultimately, content marketing activities should:

1. move traffic to your website
2. create a preference for your business

Closing the deal

Of course, content marketing efforts should also help drive conversion. But prospects will only convert into customers or users if they:

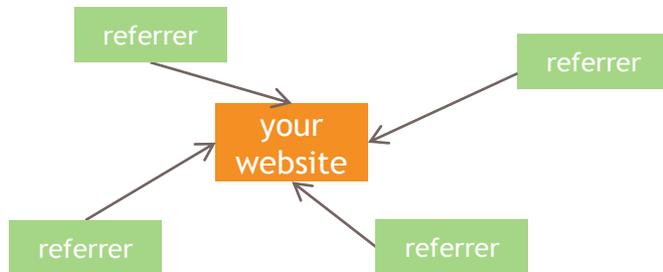
- are presented with a great deal
- can smoothly walk through a sign up or buying flow without frustration

> getting found in Google

How Google works

When you're looking for a plumber, you'll probably want to get recommendations. And the more trustworthy the person you're getting the recommendation from, the more value the recommendation has.

Google does the exact same thing. When a website is linking to your website (such a site is called a referrer), Google sees this as a recommendation. The more recommendations you get, the better your online reputation is to Google. But there's more (and this is really important!): the better the reputation of the websites linking to you, the better your websites reputation will be.



In short:

- you want more links to your website
- you want these linking websites to have a good reputation

Google captures a websites reputation in PageRank. PageRank goes from 0 to 10 with 10 being the best reputation. Having a PageRank of 3 or 4 is already pretty OK. Only sites like Google, Wikipedia and CNN have PageRanks of 9 or 10. Anyway, you want links from sites with high PageRank.

Try to avoid putting your links on websites that show links for the sake of linking. In general, sites with a good reputation are those sites that you “feel” are of good quality.

But you don't just want to be found in Google. You want to be found for the right reasons. So does Google. That's why Google indexes your content. Indexing basically means that Google reads and interprets the information on your site. That's how they know what your site is about. That's what you want: a great reputation in your area of expertise.

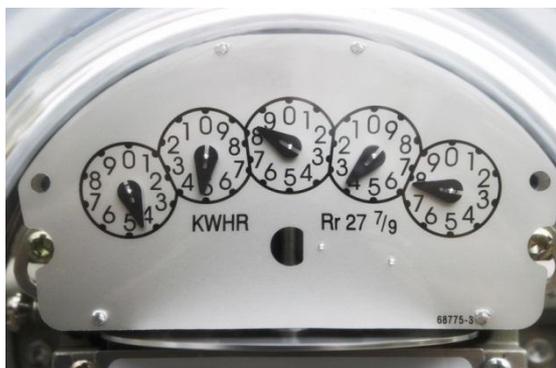
Getting the best from Google

By now you know that it all depends on reputation. So, how do you develop this reputation? The simplest answer is this: present relevant, up to date content and make it available to the internet.

1. create relevant up to date content and put it on your website
2. Google will index your content - your site will start showing up in search results
3. Actively distribute your content online - put it on other (social) platforms, issue press releases with links, etc.
4. Other websites will link to your site because you have relevant content
5. Your site will show up higher in search results as your PageRank improves

In short: It all starts with content!

> measure - learn - adjust



Metrics

The good thing about the internet is that almost anything can be measured. As a result, the bad thing is that the numbers can be overwhelming. So: focus on the metrics you can influence with actions.

Setting simple goals

Of course, you need to measure the results of your content marketing activities. Make sure your overall goal is very clear. Here's what I think online content marketing should aim for:

Traffic that converts into customers

All other goals are subject to this overall goal.

Direct effect

With direct effect I mean those metrics that indicate the actual costs, actual traffic and actual conversion from a piece of content in your marketing effort. These are the metrics you can influence. Some obvious ones are shown in the table on the right.

Indirect effect

An indirect effect of your content marketing activities is the emergence of backlinks to your website. Backlinks are the links from referrers to your website. These backlinks help improve your PageRank which boosts the appearance of your website in Google search results. Good stuff, but it is very hard to measure the direct relationship between a piece of content and the number of back links created by it. So focus on what you can influence!

Make it a habit!

Not everybody gets excited about numbers. Nevertheless, they are the only tool you have to improve your activities. Make it a habit to check your metrics at least every week.

metric	result	possible actions
cost of content production	too high	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ find other suppliers▪ do it yourself▪ re-use / re-format existing content
views on content	too low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ change title / opening image (be attractive!)▪ try other platforms▪ change placement on your site
click-through-rate (CTR)	too low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ change your content (make it shorter, more practical, better looking)▪ improve call-to-action
conversion based on paths from that content	too low	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ is the conversion path user-friendly? (check drop-off points!)▪ improve deal attractiveness

> getting more content

External sources

Most newspapers and websites are filled with content from external sources. So why don't you do the same thing? Proper use of external content can be an important addition to your content marketing strategy.

Curated content

Curated content is content that originates somewhere else, but is selected and sometimes edited by you. It can be a report, or news article or any other piece of content that has a strong connection to the topic of your content marketing activities.

Suppose you have a business selling electric bikes. Then a report on the market developments of electric bikes published by the National Bicycle Association is interesting. You could write a summary on its contents and pick out those elements that you find particularly interesting. You can discuss these elements and by doing so add a bit of originality to it. By selecting and discussing an external content you act as content curator, an expert filter for your audience.

The curated content should help you strengthen the content base of your web site. It is brought in from the external environment. Practically that means: the internet.

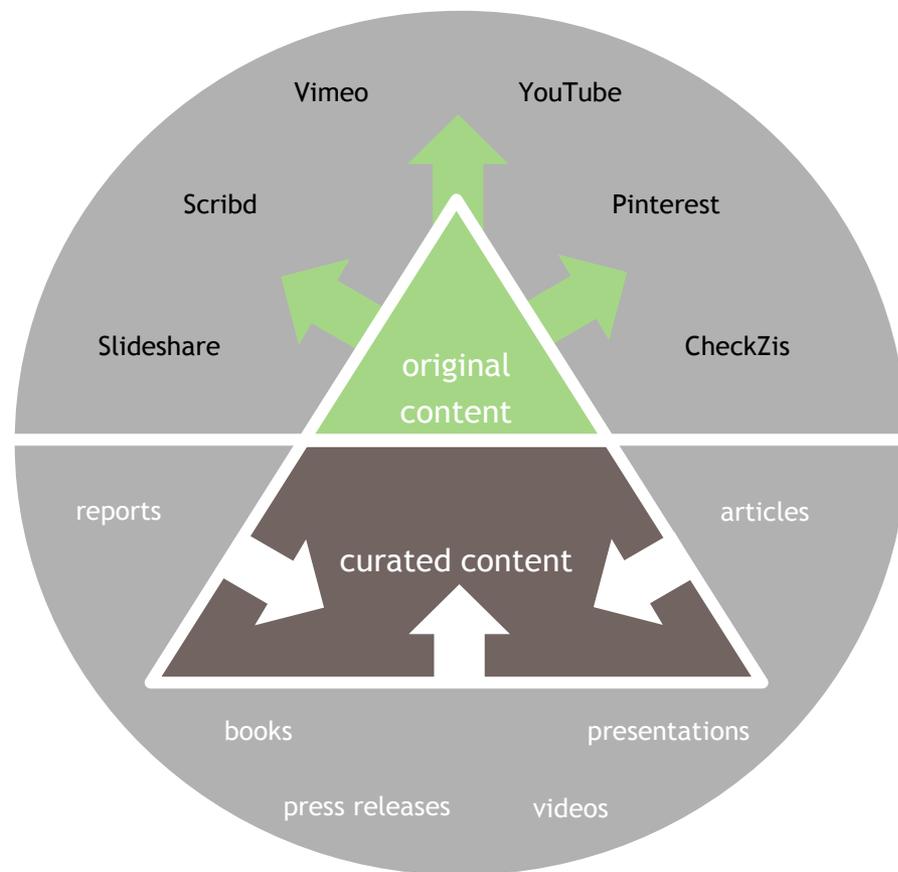
As with original content, make sure to maintain quality standards. Bad selections reflect on your authority. And don't forget to link to the original content and credit its creator.

Original content

The original content is the content produced by you from scratch and what has the best added value for you and your audience. For you, because this is where you set yourself apart with content

based on your unique knowledge. The added value for your audience derives from the fact that this is content they will not find somewhere else.

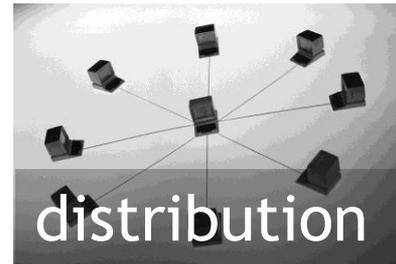
So, the original content is what you want to send out to the world through content sharing platforms on the internet.



> tips for great content marketing



- 1 Be neutral**
People will distrust any organization which only promotes itself. And promotional material is rarely exciting. Remember, you want to gain the trust of your audience through your content.
- 2 Address a real problem**
This will make the content relevant to your audience. Content marketing is about answering real questions.
- 3 Pay attention to style**
There is a real difference between well written and poorly written content. And use attractive graphics!
- 4 Re-use**
So you've created a great article. Next: Elaborate in a white paper. Transform it into a slideshow. Convert it into a checklist. Re-using and re-formatting your content is being smart.



- 1 Put it all on your own website**
The least you can do is share your quality content on your own website. Unique content is liked by search engines so this will help you improve your search rankings. And it is an excellent place to show potential customers what you can do for them.
- 2 Use multiple platforms**
Your knowledge and expertise should not only be translated to documents based on text. Also consider:
 - (short) videos for distribution on video sites such as Youtube or Vimeo
 - slideshows for placement on platforms such as Slideshare or Sliderocket
 - lists and checklists on CheckZis
- 3 Tell the world**
Send press releases, messages on Twitter and posts on Facebook to tell the world about your new great piece of content.

Connect to your objectives

You can create a fantastic piece of relevant content, but if it doesn't help your business or organization, why did you create it in the first place?

> helpful stuff

▶ General

- **Content Marketing Institute**
Lots of information and examples (for some papers you need to leave your contact information)
[Website](#)
- **Content Marketing Today**
Trends, tips and tutorials about content marketing
[Website](#)
- **SEOMoz**
Nice guide (and great example of content marketing!) on how to get started with Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
[The Beginners Guide to SEO](#)
- **Marketo**
Focused on B2B, but useful insights for all content marketers
[Whitepaper: Creating Content that Sells](#)
- **Google Webmaster Tool**
Helps you get useful insights in what's going on on your website - works especially well in combination with Google Analytics.
[Website](#)

▶ Examples of Content Marketing

- **Mashable**
[How 3 companies took content marketing to the next level](#)
- **Business2Community**
[22 Ways to create compelling content](#)

▶ Content sharing platforms

- [YouTube](#): the huge video platform
- [Vimeo](#): the beautiful video platform
- [Slideshare](#): website to share presentations and documents
- [Sliderocket](#): create and share presentations / slideshows
- [Scribd](#): the place to share written documents
- [Pinterest](#): collections of images and pictures
- [CheckZis](#): sharing practical content in lists



The author



I've gained vast online media experience in various B2C and B2B publishers in the Netherlands. I was active in many roles, including online product manager, online publisher and innovation manager, at large media companies such as Sanoma Media en Reed Business. At Reed Business, I was ultimately appointed Chief Strategy Officer, responsible for strategy and business development.

I've studied International Business at the University of Maastricht.

Currently, I'm the CEO and Founder of CheckZis.

> dennis@checkzis.com

CheckZis

What do you need to do to buy a house? Or start a business? CheckZis helps people structure and solve practical problems like these with collaboratively created lists.

The fixed format of the lists ensures a simple user experience. And contributing users are rewarded with free ads.

To marketers, CheckZis provides an excellent opportunity to share knowledge, exhibit expertise and get business leads.

