



**ABACUS E-MEDIA:**

CONTENT MARKETING PLATFORM  
FOR LEAD GENERATION



**Category number:**

8

**Category name:**

Best use of content marketing

**Programme/initiative name:**

Abacus e-media: Content marketing platform for lead generation

**Agency:**

First Base

**Brand or client:**

Abacus e-Media

**URL:**<http://www.abacusemedia.com/><http://www.abacusemedia.com/company/resource-centre/>**Summary:**

Abacus is an award-winning provider of specialist software for content owners, publishers and member bodies. Its solutions enable these organisations to fulfil their digital strategy, adjust their business models and transition from largely print and offline operations into 'digital-first' businesses for their subscribers and members.

To exploit growing market demand for digitisation and to help expand into new vertical markets, Abacus needed better reach and engagement with the key decision-makers responsible for driving digital strategy within content businesses, in order to activate sales leads earlier in the buying cycle.

First Base developed a comprehensive content marketing strategy and programme for Abacus including:

- Brand positioning and messaging update
- Mapping detailed buyer personas
- Information architecture and wireframing for new website, designed to enable content-driven lead generation
- Compelling, issues-based, content assets that push and qualify buyers along a journey
- Phase one, four-month content marketing campaign applying content assets to existing and newly captured contacts
- Behaviour-based lead scoring and analytics to identify MQLs / qualified leads for sales team follow up

In month one, the Abacus website recorded 55% increase inorganic web traffic; 14% increase in email click-throughs and 276 organic web traffic; 14% increase in email click-throughs and 276 MQLs from content downloads.

## About the client company

Abacus enables content owners to successfully translate digital strategy into digital business. It helps publishers and member bodies to realise their digital potential by publishing and monetising content more effectively and maximising audience engagement.

Over the course of the last 30 years, Abacus has helped some of the largest content owners in the UK realise their digital vision, including Thomson Reuters, Centaur, EMAP, The Law Society, Royal Pharmaceutical Society and Christie's.

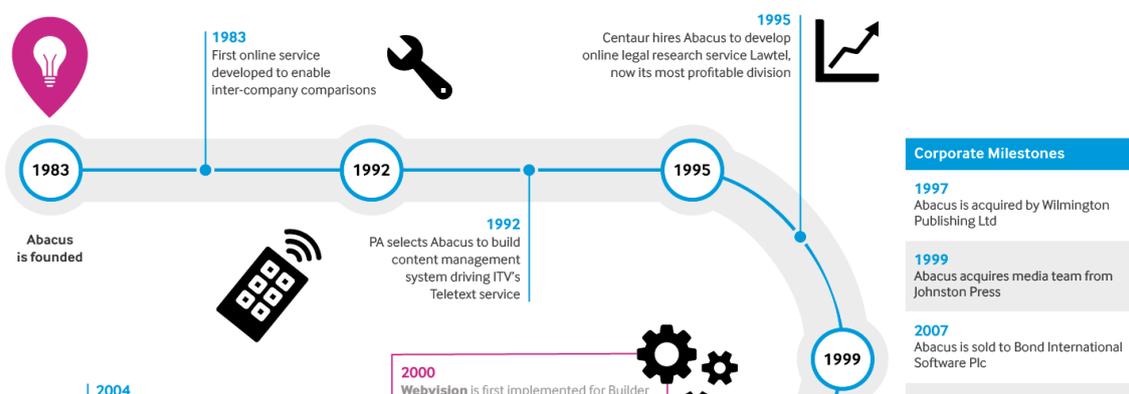
## Strategy

To drive lead generation and expand into new vertical markets, Abacus needed to reach and engage key decision-makers inside publishers and member bodies as they considered new digital approaches, business models and strategy. This demanded a content focused strategy that addressed the needs of multiple stakeholders within the target prospect organisation.

Abacus needed to position itself as a digital specialist for commercial, creative and strategic buyers, as well as carry a consistent brand message around its ability to act as a trusted advisor for content owners seeking to undergo a digital transformation project.

## Objectives of the campaign

- Refresh Abacus's brand positioning, differentiating it as a sector specialist with the expertise and 'built for purpose' solutions to enable prospects to successfully realise their digital strategy
- Develop personas to understand, target and engage multiple digital decision-makers
- Create vivid and compelling content that speaks to each persona's challenges. Guide prospects through the buyer journey, ultimately converting them into MQLs and pushing them towards a sale.
- Develop a new website that communicates the Abacus brand and proposition, applies simple UX and site architecture to support each persona and applies content to effectively enable a buyer journey and qualify prospects
- Score prospect behaviour to qualify MQLs and apply marketing technologies to enable granular analytics and content campaign optimisation



## The target audience

Two vertical audiences were targeted:

- Publishers
- Member bodies

These two markets both fundamentally deliver content, but they have very different business models and needs that required careful tailoring of brand messages and language in content development.

Three personas were identified as Abacus buyers, based on their needs:

- Digital visionary (the person responsible for the strategy and its execution)
- Content editors (Editors, producers, hands on operators)
- Commercial decision-makers (the business leader, CEO etc)

Each buyer persona has different requirements in enabling digital transformation and required tailored messaging and content to attract them into a content pathway.

Building a content strategy that addressed the needs of each persona whilst ensuring a cost-effective approach to development the necessary content assets to build a buyer journey was the biggest challenge for this project.



## Media, channels or techniques used

### Brand positioning

First Base facilitated a workshop with Abacus's management and sales teams to identify value propositions, USPs, review competitors and understand the buying audience.

Outputs were used to develop updated brand positioning and messages that was then validated through customer interviews and versus competitors for its uniqueness.

### Persona development

First Base interviewed a number of Abacus customers to unpick the drivers and organisational needs that caused customers to engage with Abacus, and to understand their view of the market.

We then whiteboarded the categories of needs downloaded from customers and from the internal workshop, to identify three buyer personas that Abacus needed to engage for a successful sale.

### Content strategy development

Personas were used as a start point to brainstorm topical and compelling content angles and themes. We then mapped ideas according to the type of content asset (e.g. infographic, checklist, datasheet, report etc.) into a progressive buyer journey which could be scored. Stage three was to then ensure buyer personas in each vertical market could successfully navigate the proposed content journey. The final stage rationalised our content strategy matrix to optimise it for phase one - producing the minimum number of content assets that would enable the complete online buyer journey for each persona for each market (applying relevant assets to more than one pathway for instance).

### Content development

Concept and content synopsis was agreed for each asset, First Base interviewed subject matter experts to then develop content assets.

### Website / IA & wireframing

First Base took the persona strategy forward into developing a new architecture for the Abacus website. We developed the sitemap to provide answers to each persona's questions in a logical order and in the fewest volume of pages. Content assets were planned into a journey to enable the user to move through the pages, qualifying themselves as they clicked; and to not have to return to the navigation unnecessarily.

## Media, channels or techniques used (...Cont')

### Lead scoring

Content was applied to the website as gated or ungated assets, to support inbound acquisition and progressive qualification through online form capture. Content was already mapped to a buyer journey and this, plus behaviour such as repeat visits, email clickthrough etc. were developed into a lead scoring framework, tracked through a number of integrated analytics tools.

### CRM

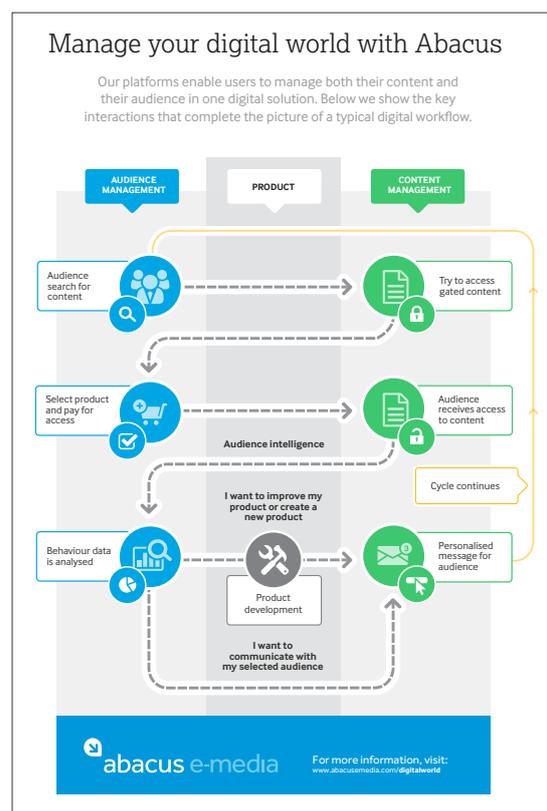
Content assets are tagged according to persona and the scoring framework of content clicks and downloads also allows identification of the likely persona to then be applied to outbound campaign / selection of content for email nurture.

### Outbound nurture programme

Content assets were targeted by vertical and by job title for the initial phase of email activity. An evergreen programme was designed to introduce newly acquired contacts at the right stage. Content assets already mapped to the buyer journey were planned into an email nurture programme to qualify prospects using progressive weights/stages of content, run over a four-month period. Bespoke landing pages were created to consolidate analytics, including Salesforce tracking codes and email UTMs.

## Timescales of the campaign

- **June 2014**
  - Buyer personas developed
  - Content strategy and planning
- **July 2014**
  - Positioning and messaging developed
  - Phase 1 content assets developed
  - Email and landing pages for assets created
  - Website wire-framing, design and build
- **August 2014**
  - First email tested
  - Lead nurture campaign scoped
- **August 2014**
  - First email tested
  - Lead nurture campaign scoped
- **September 2014**
  - SEO project for website
  - Website launched



## Budgets

These details were provided to judges in the original submission but are commercially sensitive and therefore confidential.

## Results

### Web-page content downloads:

- **276** MQLs / net new form completions within first two months

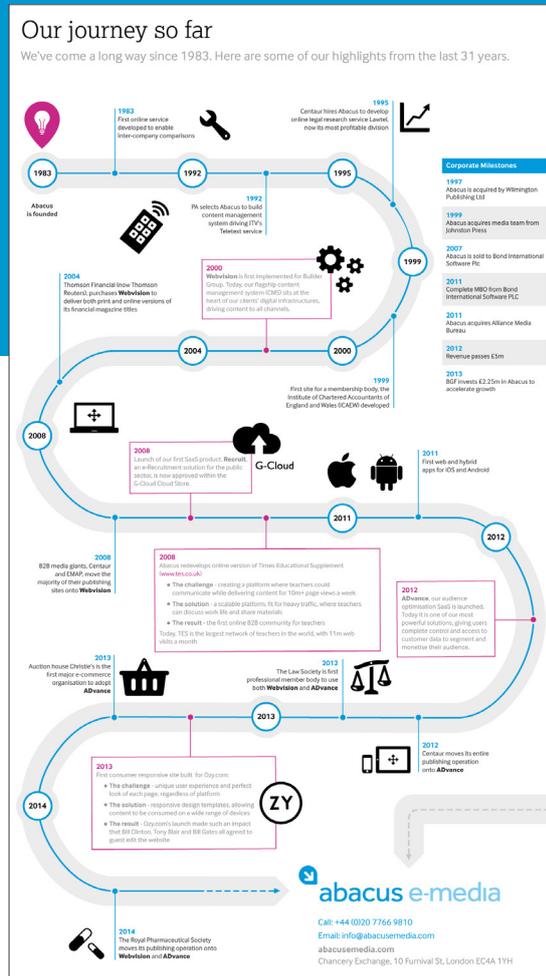
### Email performance:

- Increase in average email open rates, from **13% to 17%**
- Increase in click-through rates from **2% to 16%**

### Web performance:

Within the **first two months** of the new Abacus website going live:

- Google organic traffic increased by **55.55%**
- Page views: **+5%** Session duration: **+11%**
- Bounce rate: **-18.01%**
- Mobile page views: **+27.52%**
- Mobile session duration: **+110.42%**
- Mobile bounce rate: **-22.45%**
- Tablet page views: **+9.17%**
- Tablet session duration: **+12.96%**
- Tablet bounce rate: **-27.26%**



## Client testimonial

**Daniel Murphy, Director, Abacus e-Media:**

“Today there’s a real thirst for well-written, valuable information amongst content owners guiding their businesses through a digital transformation.

With First Base, we created outstanding content backed up by clear messaging, comprehensive persona research, smart targeting and granular analytics – enabling us to prove that Abacus is the right partner for digital success across a host of vertical industries. To date, we’ve seen a dramatic increase in web traffic and audience engagement, as well as a steady pipeline of qualified leads”.