

# MARKETING TIP

Extra Mile Marketing | Best Practice

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## Vary the Lede: The First Rule of Content Marketing



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This content is worth your time.

That's the promise made by any good lede. And in marketing, half the game is nailing the lede.

But what is that weirdly spelled word?

"Lede" (pronounced "leed") is simply journalism jargon for the first sentence in a story—the magical copy that convinces the reader to consume the whole article.

The skill of condensing your message into an addicting morsel of information is crucial in content marketing. You've got 8 seconds to grab a reader's attention online. That's 8 seconds to convince your audience that your content is more valuable than the next post in their feed. The good thing is, once you have their attention, readers will spend an average of 7 minutes with your content.

They will listen to what you have to say, but only if you convince them it's worth their time.

A strong, surprising, or funny lede will make your case. And just as sales teams train on the different methods they can use to *close leads*, there are many approaches to take when writing your lede. Here are a few:

### Get to the point.

If I'm researching a topic and know exactly what information I'm looking for, I don't want to read half a page before I figure out what your article is about. This lede strategy puts the core premise of your blog in the first sentence.



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### STATS & FACTS

You've got **8 seconds** to grab a website visitor's attention.

Readers spend an average of **7 minutes** with online content (once they've decided it's worth reading!)

Minimize language that signals advertisement. Remember, **content marketing is thought leadership**



Writing about the value of managed services for Office 365? Get to the point:

*"You're upgrading to Office 365 and think you can do it on your own. We've seen it before."*

From this lede, it's clear the article will be about common pitfalls of solo email migrations. You can also lean on the context surrounding your content to get to your point even faster. If you're hosting your blog on a site that's dedicated to one thing, say server storage, you don't need to beat a dead horse.

*"I can't stand paying for what I don't need."*

This lede tells the reader that they're about to learn how to save money on server storage, without having to say that explicitly.

And if your argument leverages a critical statistic, put it up front to grab attention.

*"44% of companies experienced a migration failure in 2015."*

For many B2B blogs, this get-to-the-point approach makes the most sense. However, considering the hundreds of blogs readers can choose from, you may want to make your content stand out from the crowd.

## **Juxtapose.**

Sometimes you'll be writing on a topic that's crucial for your audience to understand, but is frankly boring to read about. Surprise the reader with a seemingly unrelated allegory. One blog about an older technology that still delivers value, starts:

*"When did all my favorite things become vintage?"*

The blog goes on to relate hard disk drives to vinyl record players, technologies that are distinct on the surface but have significant parallels in their application. This unanticipated association intrigues the reader, keeping them around for more.

## **Lighten the mood.**

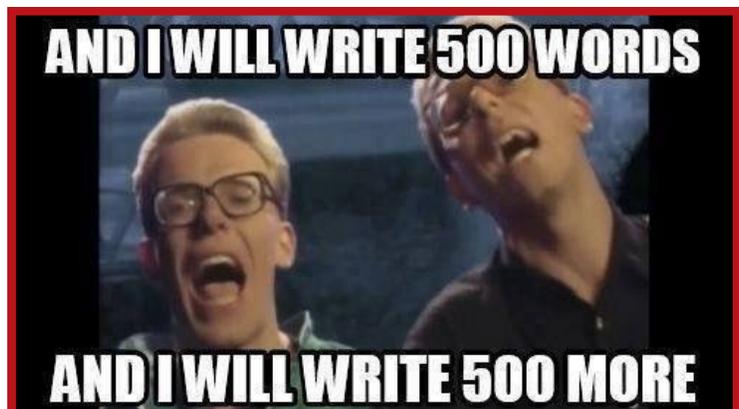
It's a sobering fact—and one that we all must face as we become #2020ready—that your marketing content will have to compete with...yes, I know...

memes.

But in all seriousness, humor wins the internet. It's an easy way to get a reaction, and a gut reaction like laughter (or even just an internal chuckle) will spark an emotional connection that's sure to keep readers on your page.

Try embracing the absurd...

*"Is your teen texting about server storage interfaces?"*



...or playfully rag on your kids...

*“Selective pressure—it’s what sent the fish scurrying on land and spurred the dinosaurs to take flight. It’s also why I suddenly have to shell out a thousand dollars so my daughter can animate emojis on her new iPhone.”*

Sometimes there’s humor in simply acknowledging the predicament your reader is in. B2B buyers are obsessive researchers, and your content is likely one in 20 articles they read on a subject before making a decision.

*“This isn’t the first blog you’ve read about cybersecurity, and it won’t be the last.”*

No, you don’t have to be “haha funny,” but lightening the mood will help endear you to readers, increasing the chances that they’ll stick around for what you have to say.

## **Beware.**

Alright, research says I have you for two more minutes.

Here’s a few pitfalls to avoid when writing your lede.

Careful not to qualify your argument before you make it. Complex topics require nuanced language—points and counterpoints. Nonetheless, your lede should be focused and strong so the reader knows where you stand from the get go. So, “It *might* be argued that *some* insurance carriers *could* benefit from IoT...” becomes “Insurance carriers can discover cost-savings and efficiencies with IoT.”



**Careful not to qualify your argument before you make it.**

**Complex topics require nuanced language—points and counterpoints.**

**Nonetheless, your lede should be focused and strong so the reader knows where you stand from the get go.**

Minimize language that signals advertisement. Remember, content marketing is thought leadership. Your readers need to trust that you’ll deliver objective information to help them reach a balanced decision. Salesy language like “are you ready to say goodbye to slow email browsers?” will turn readers away from your blog.

Finally, think actively! The first sentence in a story should brim with energy and excitement. Copy like “The way healthcare is being administered and received is changing” has already put me to sleep. Passive voice is for the sandman. Try something like “Rapid advances in healthcare technology spell doom for the status quo.”

No matter how you approach your next article, eBook, or think-piece, consider the importance of the first sentence. And next time you’re browsing thought leadership content, remember the lede. Take note of ledes that sprinkle sleep in your eyes, and those that keep you reading.