

Case Study

**The content marketing that
drives Vendasta's 50% annual
sales growth**

Company: Vendasta, Inc.

Products: White label turnkey solutions for SMB marketing

Location: Saskatoon, Canada

Core Team: Brendan King, CEO; George Leith, CRO, Jeff Tomlin, CMO,

Founded: 2012

Projected 2017 Revenues: \$30 million

Summary: Vendasta sells a turnkey digital marketing for small businesses through a partner network of media and agency resellers. Along the way, the company has applied its marketing skills to its own sales drive, developing a sophisticated marketing engine that generates 1,000 to 2,000 leads a month. In 2016 the company was named 100th fastest growing companies in Canada by Canada Business in its Profit 500 list.

Its content marketing includes a variety of integrated components:

- Case studies, white papers and best practice “pop-ups” throughout the website to generate leads
- A Blog that streams all company news and information
- Three email newsletters
- Central member’s area for “Sales Resources” where end-user information by vertical is housed
- Paid advertising such on LinkedIn and Facebook
- Bottom-up process for generating ideas for development and for content

Background: In 2012 Vendasta started selling online reputation management tools to media and agency resellers. Their basic business model is a three tiered subscription, plus wholesale pricing per product, and a small service charge per report.

The company has grown by over 50% year over year for the last three years with projected sales of \$30 million in 2017 and a team of 300.

Today they supply content for 1100 reselling partners including 13 newspapers in the United States and Canada,

“Today when a consumer sees an ad, they go into the research phase and go online before they ever go to the door of the business,” Leith said.

“There is this entire additional stack of products that a local businesses need. We enable the media to sell the entire stack.”

A key differentiator in this competitive field has been paying close attention to how the software will be used by the ultimate customer.

“We made the decision consciously or unconsciously that we needed to put ourselves in the shoes of the sales person, or a day in the life of the agency.

“Nobody had paid any attention to those people,” he said. By late 2015 Leith was spending 200 days a year in the field on four-legged calls listening to what end-user customers were asking for from their sales representatives. They wanted to be able to utilise one rep and one marketing platform.

“We finally made that connection, to build out the platform into a complete stack that include a CRM, that we were already a long way down the road.”

The platform was upgraded in 2016, so that it now can send a snapshot report or conduct a needs analysis “without a call on the client.”

By then, [sales had already increased by 50% per year. They are projected to reach \\$30 million](#) by the end of 2017.

Half of the company’s success, Leith contends, is the platform, but 50% comes from marketing “muscle” including utilizing what they already knew about marketing SMB’s to market their own company.

How the marketing eco-system works

“A new way to get in front of the customer is with content... We could not do what we do in the organization with without marketing. They create content for inbound marketing and also curate it so... that sales person can send it easily to the end customer,” Leith says.

The entire Vendasta team, 300 plus by the end of 2017, is composed of 100 developers, 16 marketers, and 60 sales reps. But it also includes 14,000 sales people in the field who are supplying data on what customers want every time they login to requests marketing materials.

Leith say that ideas “bubble up from the customer,” as well as trickle down from the marketing team. That content organized into a powerful lead generation system that produces 1000 to 2000 leads from the website monthly.

They also design “content and lead generation for partners,” Leith said.

With this type of company, there are three tiers of audiences for marketing: the media company that buys the software and two tiers of end-users: Anyone in a sales role calling on small businesses and the small businesses themselves.

With 100 developers in R&D “innovating at a blistering pace,” a huge task is simply educating and delivering information through the internal and external ecosystem about new products and services.

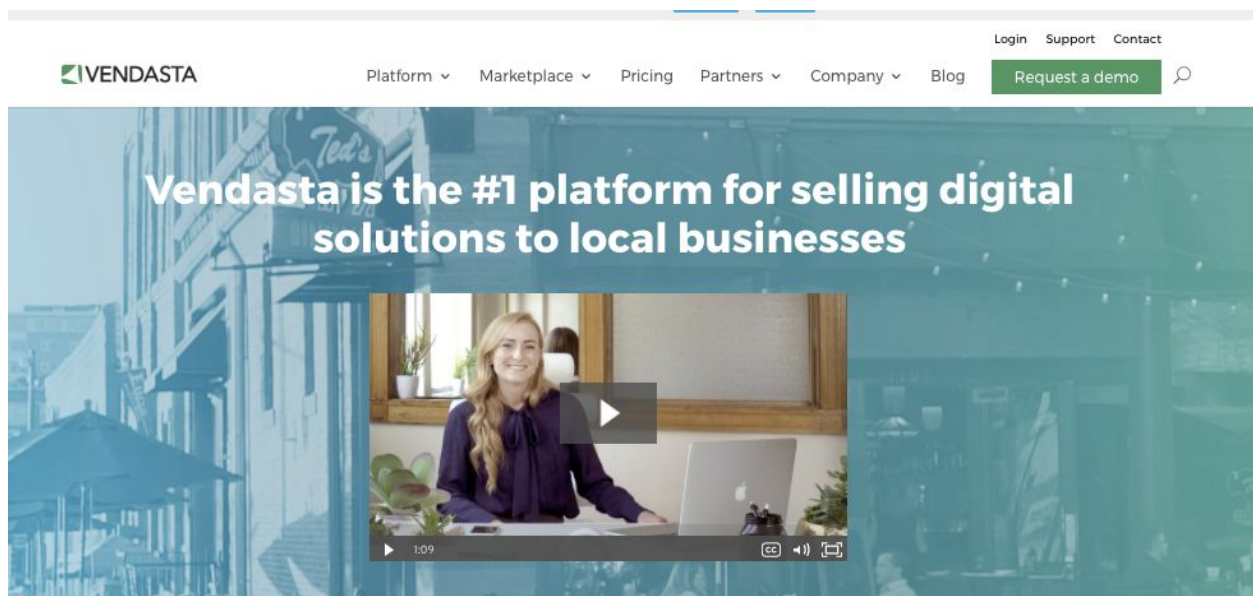
End-user content also builds credibility and becomes a differentiator when media and agency resellers are deciding which digital service provider to use.

The result is virtuous cycle, more of a content web than an indexed library. Here’s a quick tour of how the marketing process works from front to back:

The website

“The sales department are story tellers. But a good web presence is going to do some of this work,” Leith acknowledges.. He advises other marketers to “Identify your customer base and give them something that shows them that you are someone they can trust.”

Vendasta’s home page is primarily aimed media and other resellers; a “Request a demo” is a colored button, not just a tab, at that top right of all pages.



Numerous pop-up case studies

Numerous case studies on the site give critical information about strategies that media companies have used to be successful in growing revenues using the Vendasta platform.

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A Little Digital Advertising Goes a Long Way: One Restaurant's 30-Day, 4381% ROI Success Story

Get the free case study that outlines how Café Mexicana achieved sky-high ROI on their digital advertising campaign with Vendasta

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Best practices

Reports on “best practices” are another lead generation tool.

Ultimate Guide to Online Reviews

Nearly 90% of consumers use reviews to make buying decisions--businesses need to be part of the conversation.

A businesss reputation used to be what they said about themselves. Now, customers define businesses by providing real time feedback on review sites.



Find out:

- ✓ Why online reviews are important
- ✓ How to respond to positive and negative reviews
- ✓ How to get more reviews
- ✓ Effects of reviews on listings and SEO
- ✓ and more!

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- **The blog**

The blog has a critical role in keeping both internal and external sales teams up-to-date on innovations.

“With 100 developers, we are innovating at a blistering pace,” Leith said. “It’s a challenge to keep internal sales and the 14,000 sales reps around the world up to date.”

All new innovations, press releases and content are posted on the blog in order of recency/

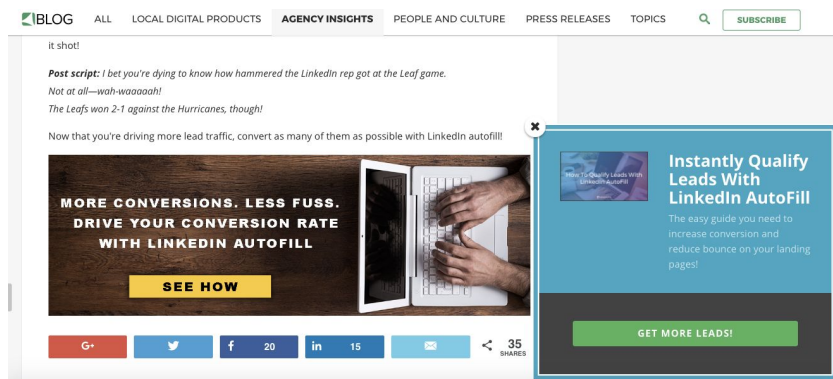
Where relevant, interstitial ads embedded in the blog promote related case studies and best practice reports with email capture.

For example three recent blogs include an infographic on “163 stunning social media stats,” a press release on being ranked in Canada’s Profit [500](#) and [B2B Audience Targeting Tips for LinkedIn and Facebook](#).

In the center of the B2B targeting blog is a promotion for a “Customer profile worksheet,” one of the recommendations before creating an ad campaign.



There is also a pop-up at the end to obtain a LinkedIn best practices report on using Autofill, also in return for an email.



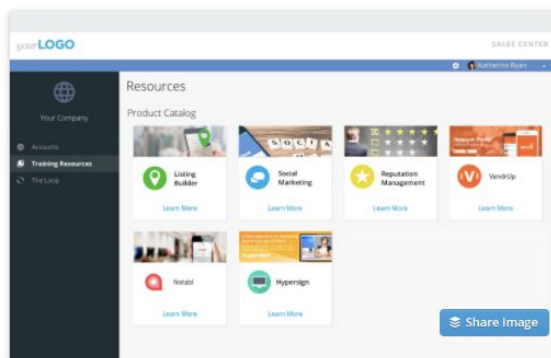
Each promotion and blog includes sharable links, and counters.

- **Helping SMB's with content aimed at end-user customers**

Content designed for SMB's to use is also available with a Partner Log-in.

“The same (marketing concepts) apply to the businesses we help. They should have a content engine and we are helping to provide content in a vertical specific manner. The vertical content is white labeled so the agency or reseller is the trusted provider of that content.”

All sales resources are housed together in a what the company calls “the single source of truth.”



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Distribution methods

As important as the content itself is magnifying it's visibility via multiple distribution channels including conferences, email newsletters, social platforms and paid advertising.

LinkedIn advertising

Vendasta uses both Facebook and LinkedIn advertising to amplify their lead generation strategy.

A notable recent success was its LinkedIn advertising for a lead generation program. The 1.1 % CTR was so unusual that LinkedIn headquarters called Vendasta's marketer, Jamie Taylor, and took him to lunch. Of course, he wrote a blog about it, with two related email capture pop-ups.

Email

Critical is email, which effectively “re-markets’ to new leads, and keeps all the constituencies up to date.

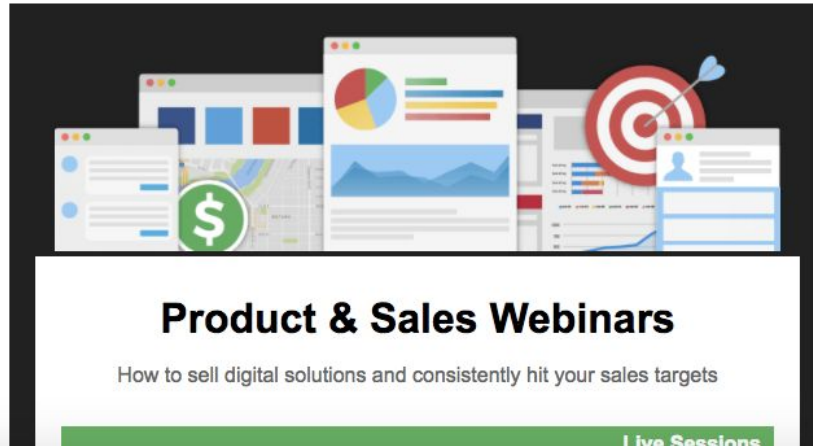
An opt-in to the email can receive a notice every two to three days. These fall into a few categories:

- **Product and sales webinars/video**

These are all educational webinars and video on new products and concepts:



Week of September 18, 2017



- **Local Media Scoop**

These are colorful blog posts that inform in a highly digestible format, like [Dear Agencies You're Screwed](#) based on a pep talk from CEO Brendan King. It includes observations learned, and company announcements.

The latest articles and posts from vendasta.com/blog

[View this email in your browser](#)



No Twitter, no problem?

58% of business website homepages are missing a **Twitter link**. A new addition to the Local Marketing Scoop—the local marketing stat of the week—finds me wondering if businesses really care about Twitter anymore. Do you? Check out the infographic at the bottom of this email for all the details.

This week at **Vendasta HQ**, we had a new face (with big new ideas) join our content team. Big welcome to Patrick Liddy, who will soon be adding his unique voice to the Vendasta blog choir! 🙌

[Dear Agencies: You're Screwed](#)

By *Devon Hennig* on Aug 23, 2017 01:48 pm



A few months ago—I think it was Friday, February 17, but don't quote me on that—I was staring into my computer's webcam with a half-stunned, half-horrified expression on my face. Kind of like this: Someone on the other end of Google Hangouts said something, and I snorted into the camera. (Hopefully my mic was off,... [Read More](#))

- **Product Insider**

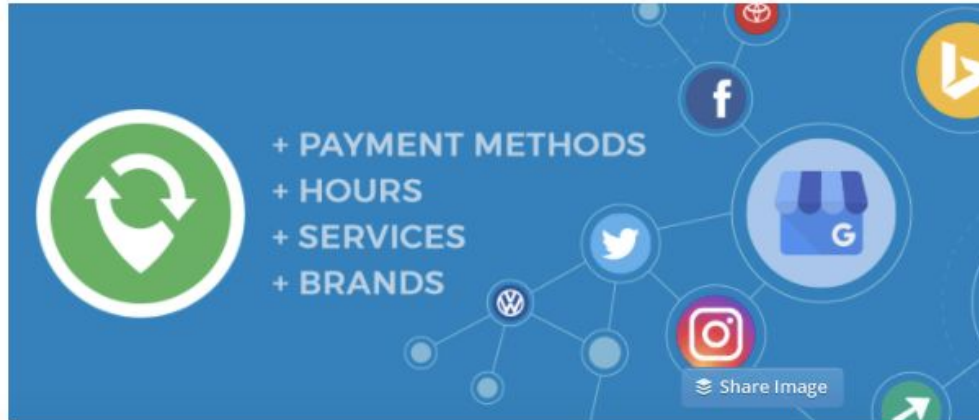
This email showcases new products and what's in BETA. Blogs are promoted at the end of the newsletter.

TechRefs.com 408.892.981510 [Skip the back and forth and book a consultation here.](#)



Product Insider Newsletter

Week of August 28, 2017



The result of the content and distribution is a virtuous cycle that generates leads for both Vendasta and end users.

“My advice is to market your organization with relevant content and see who is interacting with the content,” Leith said. “The day of fitting the package to the needs of the media company are gone.

“The right mix of content you supply should be the one the customer needs.”

Conclusion

Building marketing capability at scale is a step by step process. Even small technology companies can start by developing a few of these internal skills:

- A clear set of customer personas.
- A couple of lead generators
- A blog area on the site
- A few end user case studies
- A “ground up process” in which customer questions and other inquiries fuel the content development