Case study: Turning one report into 20 pieces of content

When marketing, sales, product, and customer success work together, it's easy to create business impact

The problem: How much content can a team of one produce?

I joined Knapsack, a SaaS startup selling a design systems platform, as the company's designated all-purpose content person. I sat on the marketing team, but was an active participant in the sales, customer success, and product organizations.

Without a budget for freelancers or an in-house content writer, I needed to build a content strategy that was:

- Revenue-focused, as we measured success based on leads generated (instead of traffic or engagement);
- Substantial enough to provide material for future blog posts, sales emails, podcast episodes, and social campaigns;
- Easy to cite and share in sales collateral, including email campaigns

The solution: Quarterly long-form reports

With limited resources and seemingly unlimited demand, I needed to create a content program that I could produce as a team of one while addressing company-wide needs.

To balance sales, marketing, and customer success's needs, we launched a **quarterly report program**. We chose a quarterly editorial pillar based on market research and sales data and dedicated 50% of our editorial calendar and 40% of our social campaigns to covering that topic. The reports were available for download behind a gated landing page, as we were measuring success by business impact (marketing- and sales-qualified leads).

Our first report was based on a webinar we'd produced about design tokens. We featured quotes from design systems experts at Adobe, Johnson & Johnson, Phase2, and Arcade, and supported the report with:

- A mention on the company's podcast, *The Design System Podcast*;

- An organic social campaign;
- Distribution within the design system community, including the Design System Slack and design system-related Facebook groups;
- A blog post;
- Two emails to customers and prospects;
- A sales campaign across LinkedIn and cold emails targeting senior-level design systems practitioners

While we received enthusiastic feedback from the community and achieved the MQL-to-SQL ratio we were targeting, I still didn't think the content was deep enough for our audience. Our next report needed to be more detailed and designed to help practitioners advocate more effectively for increased tooling budget.

Raising the bar: Design system ROI

Sales and customer success were hearing the same concerns from design system practitioners at every level: leadership didn't want to sign the checks. How could we prove the worth of design systems for teams at different maturity levels?

To support sales and customer success goals, we produced a report in conjunction with IBM about achieving and maximizing design system ROI. The report included:

- Participation from external partners at IBM, in partnership with customer success;
- A walkthrough of how to measure a design system's success and ROI;
- A breakdown of how teams without a design system, with a low-investment design system, and with a "mature" design system could increase ROI and advocate for more resources in partnership with product, sales, and customer success;
- A calculator for determining the monetary value of investments in a design system, in partnership with sales;
- Examples of worthwhile investments to make in a design system