DesignSpark Content Creation Guide

https://designspark.zendesk.com/hc/en-us

Contents

1.0 What is this guide and who is it for?

This guide is for suppliers and partners who are responsible for planning or writing of articles for the DesignSpark website.

We'll explain the concept of content marketing.

We'll provide some simple frameworks to help you create content that works.

We'll also provide practical advice to help you create and upload successful articles to DesignSpark.

2.0 Why did we create this guide?

This guide is for suppliers and partners who are responsible for planning or writing of articles for the DesignSpark website.

We'll explain the concept of content marketing.

We'll provide some simple frameworks to help you create content that works.

We'll also provide practical advice to help you create and upload successful articles to DesignSpark.

We wanted to create a reference guide for our suppliers to refer to, rather than trawling through a multitude of web pages.

It's a short guide to ensure that you understand the principles of content marketing and search engine optimisation.

Understanding and applying the basics can help you reach many more customers with minimal effort.

3.0 About the author

Michelle Goodall has written this guide in collaboration with the DesignSpark team.

Michelle has more than 18 years experience working client and agency side, in digital strategy, marketing and communications.

Michelle is a top digital consultant, trainer and author and has worked with a wide range of clients, including London2012, BBC, Direct Line Group, Barclays Bank, Coca-Cola, Unilever, US Embassy, Brandwatch and now with us at RS Components.

4.0 What is content marketing?

Pre-Internet, attracting customers to buy your products could involve many things.

For example, exhibiting at trade shows, distributing brochures, producing guides, branding coffee mugs, and advertising and distributing press releases.

These marketing and communications tactics are still very relevant in a digital world. However, the role of web technologies in marketing is increasingly important and there are many more marketing tactics at your disposal.

Content marketing is:

"Creating & delivering information tailored to audience needs

where both business and audience gain value from the exchange

of content for attention. The primary goal is to convert audiences to a business building outcome"

Or put even more simply:

"packaging up information that your customers want

continues...

or need in a way that they can find and making that information so relevant and interesting that makes them think or feel different…which in turn makes them want to buy your products."

In short, instead of pitching your products, you are delivering content or information that makes your buyer more intelligent.

The essence of content marketing is the belief that businesses that deliver consistent, valuable information to buyers, they ultimately reward us with their business and loyalty.

Content Formats

So, if content = information, then another term used by content marketers that we need to understand is 'Content Formats'. This refers to the types of content we create. This is a useful, but not exhaustive list of content formats:

Blog posts/long form articles	Videos
Infographics	Animated Gifs
Instructographics	Calculators
Data Visualisations	Podcasts
Videos	Comic Strips
Quizzes	Webinars
White Papers/EBooks	Playbooks

Some content formats are more widely used and will be more relevant to specific audiences than others.

Different content formats can perform different roles.

For example, blog posts and long-form articles are strong formats if your objectives are visibility in search engines, trial or purchase of your product.

Animated Gifs and Instructographics are likely to be shared in social media and can be helpful formats for entertaining audiences or helping change behaviours.

4.1 Why is content marketing so important for RS Components and our suppliers?

Our website DesgnSpark has 500,000 members who are potential buyers. These are primarily Design Engineers who are looking for help/advice to overcome their challenges….and ultimately to try and buy products.

Like the average person, most of these Engineers will "Google it", when they have a specific need or question. In fact, there are 2.3million searches per second on Google.

Most Google searches are related to the latest craze, recipes, relationships and existential questions, but some will be specifically related to your customers' needs at work.
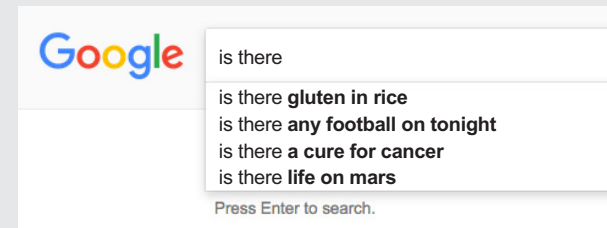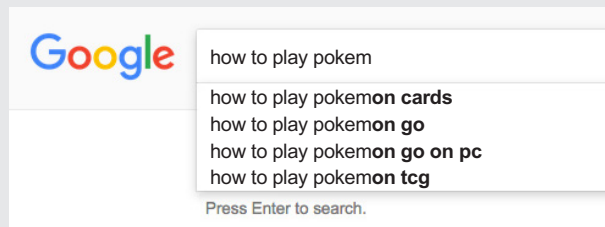
When we search, the results shown are those that Google feels are most relevant to the user and the words they use (Tip: we call these search terms "keywords' or "key phrases" and the search results "organic results").

Sometimes, Google will display adverts at the top and bottom of the results, if they feel it is relevant to the user. These are denoted by a green 'Ad' symbol. The advertiser pays only when someone clicks on the link.
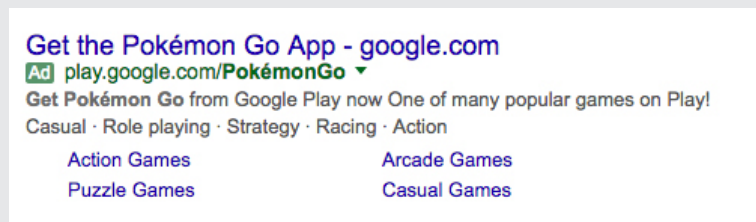
4.1 ...continued
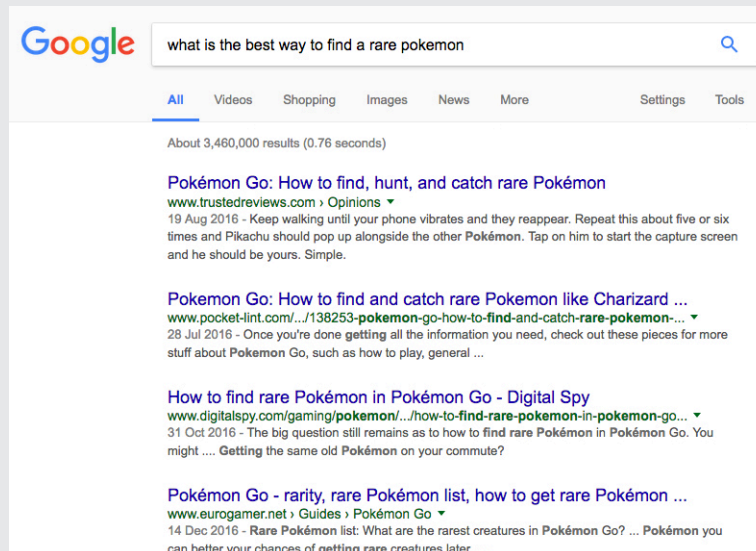
Organic search results in Google from the keyphrase:

"what is the best way to find rare Pokemon"

Paid search results in Google from the same keyphrase:

"what is the best way to find rare Pokemon"

4.2 Why is a Google 'primer' important?

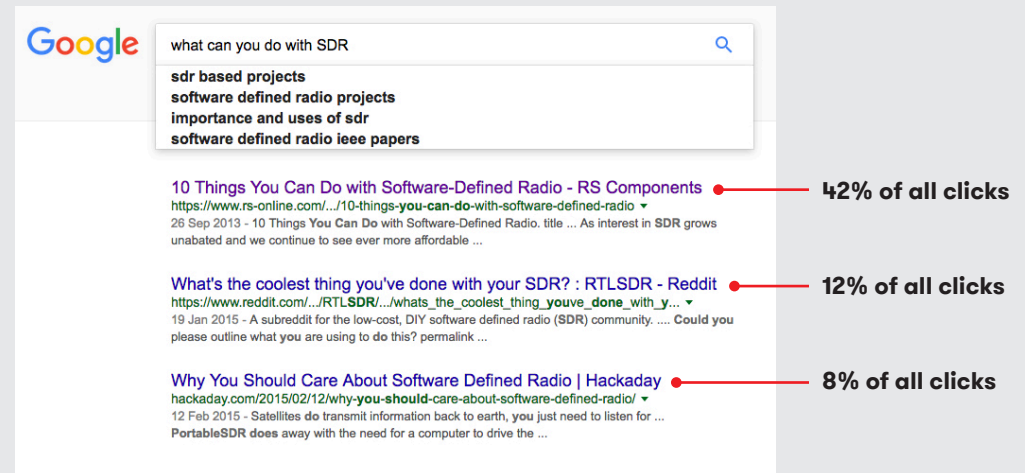Imagine if you were one step ahead of your customers.

You anticipated their needs and have prepared answers to their search questions before they even thought of it themselves.

Thinking creatively about your products, what are engineers likely to use them for? What are their pain and passion points?

Which keywords and keyphrases they might type into Google when looking for ideas or answers to work challenges?

For illustration, on our DesignSpark website, there is a helpful article on Software Defined Radio, providing 10 examples of use cases for engineers. Imagine how you would feel if you were an engineer and you saw these results if you typed "what can you do with SDR".

Which link are you most likely to click on?

42% of all clicks

12% of all clicks

8% of all clicks

Prominent search engine 'organic' rankings for keywords and keyphrases is important. In fact, 42% of all clicks from these results will go to the top result.

4.2 ...continued

This article is more than 3 years old and engineers are still clicking through in significant numbers from Google. Many go on to purchase products as a result.

In its simplest form, content marketing is creating content for the web where you are thinking about your audiences needs and wants first.

At RS Components, we have been applying the principles of content strategy, content marketing and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to ensure that everything we publish on our website is fully focused on what our customers want. This has been a very successful strategy for us, so we want to share our secrets with you.

There are some fairly straightforward rules about what Google likes and dislikes, which we'll cover in this guide.

So, if you want we content to play a huge part in your marketing, communications and sales success and learn a few smart content marketing techniques, then read on.

DESIGNSPARK

5.0 The principles of Content Marketing

To be a good content marketer, it's good to have a planning framework.

The Content Marketing Institute's 7-step framework is a helpful basic guide.

AUDIENCE

PLAN

STORY

CHANNELS

PROCESS

MEASUREMENT

CONVERSATIONS
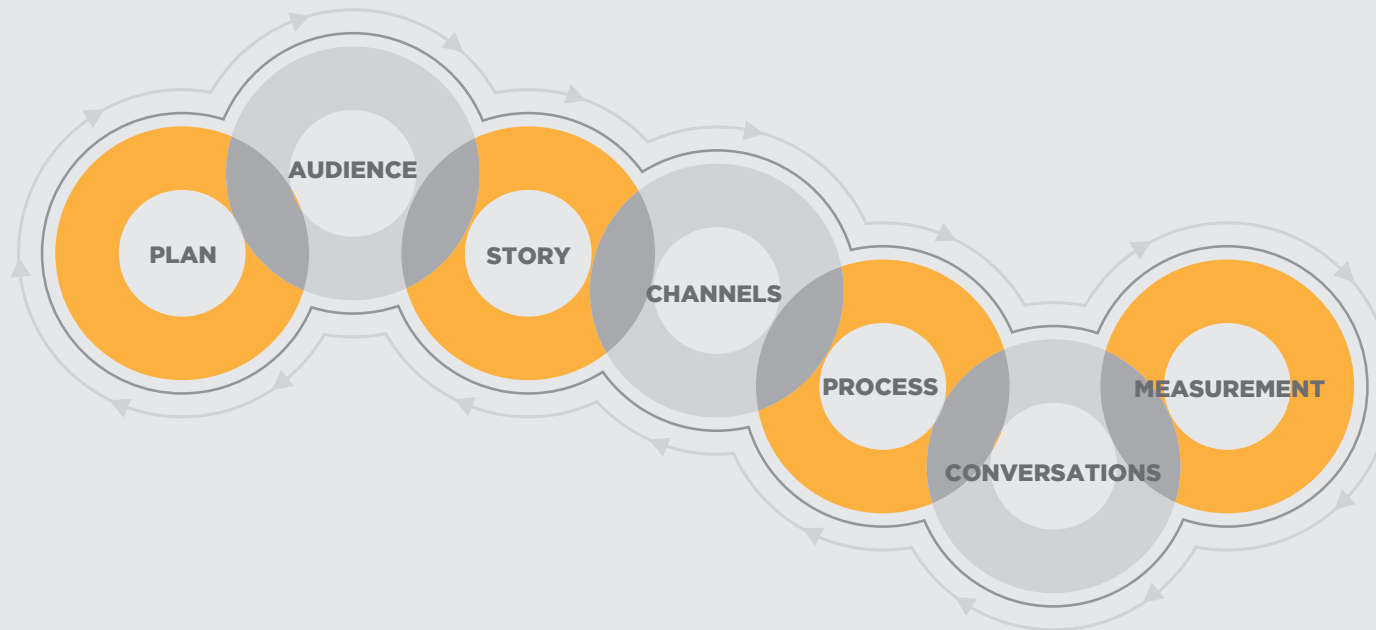
link: http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2013/03/content-marketing-institute-framework/

5.1 Plan

The questions you need to answer are:

- Do we have any brand guidelines or brand proposition that we need to consider when creating content?

- Do we have a 'Content Marketing Mission' (i.e. a statement that focuses us on why we are creating content in the first place)

- What do we want to achieve with the content we create?

- Who will create and update it? Who will ensure that it is high quality?

A 'Content Marketing Mission' might sound a little fancy, but it is simply a way of getting anyone involved in creating to concentrate on why they are spending time writing an article, shooting a video or recording a podcast.

If you don't have one, you can create one with this useful exercise to fill in the gaps, for example:

The content we produce helps our organization/business/brand...			
accomplish	**GOAL**	and	**GOAL**
by providing	**ADJECTIVE**	and	**ADJECTIVE**
content that makes	**AUDIENCE**	feel	**EMMOTION**
so that they can	**TASK**		

The content we produce helps our organization/business/brand
accomplish **increased awareness** and **sales**
by providing **helpful** and **interesting**
content that makes **engineers** feel **inspired**
so that they can **buy and experiment with our products**

5.2 Audiences

We've said that successful content marketing puts the needs and wants of your audiences first.

So it's important to clearly define who you are talking to.

Many marketers find it helpful design some simple personas that illustrate the people that you are talking to. Personas are single page sketches of a typical person that represents your most important audiences.

When developing personas, it may help to speak to your sales team or to develop them based on customers that you have met.

They help anyone in your organisation creating content to focus on who they are writing for, what will gain attention, pique interest and ultimately make your audiences think/ feel differently and take action.

How many Personas should I develop?

Do not create too many personas, just enough to focus you on the most important people in the buying cycle and to highlight any obvious differences in their needs and behaviours.

Look at the typical types of audiences registering for DesignSpark. Which are most important to you?

Are the needs and behaviours of each audience significantly different?

If so, create the number of personas that matches the number of your different core target audiences.

An example Persona framework.

Developing Personas
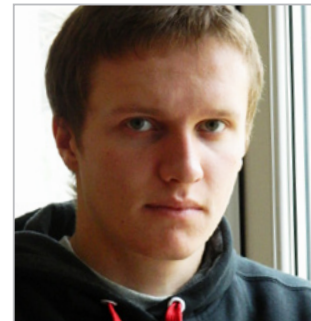
What role(s) does he/she have in the buying cycle (e.g. researcher, recommender, user etc.?

What typical challenges or frustrations does he/she have about his/her job?

What gaps can fill that need?

How does he/she get their information during the day?

A statement that reflects the type of content he/she cares about?

Who is he/she? First name, job title/Industry

Typical work day?

5.3 Story

The 'Story' element of content marketing focuses on understanding and defining who you are as a business, what you believe, what journey have you been on and what are your future aspirations?

Businesses forget the human elements of a brand or business that are required when writing content to earn attention. People love a story and a storyteller.

Econsultancy is the world's biggest community for digital marketers. They created their Brand Story to help employees creating content to understand the organisation that they are writing on behalf of.

If you don't have a Story, you could use their bullet points as a simple framework for creating your own. Here is an edited summary version of their Brand Story [link: https://econsultancy.com/about/]

Who are we?
- A publisher and online resource
- Research house
- Training company
- Community

What we believe:
- It's an exciting time to be a digital marketer
- The Internet is the world's biggest sandbox and battleground
- A community sharing experiences is the best way to improve the web for everyone

Who we do it for
- Client side marketers in all industries
- At all levels

- But our members have something in common: They are trying to rise to the challenges of change, complexity and competition

What value do we deliver?
- We drive online performance – better decisions, faster insight, sharper execution

How are we different?
- Our strongest assets are our brand, our reputation, the quality of our content, our community, our experience, our model, our passion, our experts

Our culture and values
- Entrepreneurial and Dynamic
- Innovative and Experimental
- Independent and Member-focused
- High Quality and Professional

Where are we going?
- Digital never stops evolving, disrupting and advancing
- We're committed to be there out front of each zig and zag so that our members are the first and best informed
- We have no idea where it will all lead but we're just as excited about finding out as we were on our first day of business
- And we're thrilled you're along for the ride

How do we know we're getting it right?
- Commercial metrics
- Unprompted feedback
- We're still enjoying ourselves

5.4 Channel & Processes

Once you've done your planning, defined and created personas for your target audiences and are clear on your story, you need to consider the 'How' and 'Where' your content will be published.
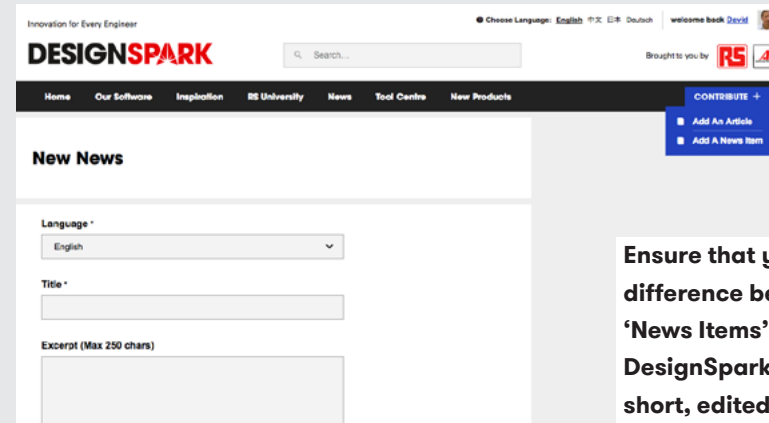
This guide has been written to help you provide quality content for publication on our DesignSpark website. The best performing articles will also be shared on our social media channels.

DesignSpark will not simply re-publish press releases. These are not audience-friendly content formats and may also result in penalties from Google as they might be duplicated web content.

We do offer the option to add new news via the **Contribute >Add a News Item button**, but these should be short news based excerpts and images. Articles are designed to match the audiences need states and will generate longer lasting results for you.

We'll explore in detail how you can make your articles audience and search engine friendly.

Think again about what you need to do to make the best of this channel for reaching your audiences.

Ensure that you are clear on the difference between contributing 'News Items' and 'Articles' to DesignSpark. 'News Items' are short, edited summaries from your product releases, articles can take many forms.

Consider:

- Who will create the content?
- Who will edit and approve the content?
- Who will upload the content to DesignSpark
- What images and other rich media can we provide and who will create/edit those?
- Do we have any style or editorial guidelines that we need to use?
- How do we describe specific things/products/ uses - and does this match how our audiences describe them? Do we have keywords to describe our products?

5.5 Conversations & Measurement

Gone are the days when you publish a blog post or a social media update and sit back.

Audiences can comment on DesignSpark articles, like, share and comment on social media. Once you publish an article, it's a continuing dialogue you're your audience rather than a one-way information push.

We've found that articles that get more comments on our website, also attract more likes, shares, comments and clicks on social media. They also get more visibility, readers and ultimately lead to more sales.

It's important that you plan for whether you respond to comments on your articles (we'd actively encourage you to) and whether you use engagement on articles and social media posts as an indicator of your contents' success.

Plan to watch how audiences react to your content. Learn what works for them and be prepared to continue a productive conversation...but please do avoid the hard sell!

We monitor which articles posted on DesignSpark get the most views and also which result in sales.

Whilst we can't provide feedback and measurement on every article posted on the website, we will contact suppliers if a particular article is performing well.

Comments

LOGIN TO COMMENT

John_Crookson
June 29,2016 12:59

Like your article so far understand its a work in progress, Though just in the last month. All things Internet is coming along like a freight train and as an avid integrator of home, office and lite industrial automation and wearables the world of home and automation may surpass Industrial automation.

On that we will just have to wait and see and ride the wave with that can put some comparison work crossing the realms of Z-wave alliance, CEDIA innovations, KNX standards and integrations with Lutron, Schneider, AB, Seimens, honeywell and others and IoT into this. It seems this is fast evolving and with the major security implications as being muted nothing worse than you finger print causing a malfunction of the loo and you just want to get in the front door .

Regards
John Crookston
JDC Automation & Communication

DESIGNSPARK

Audiences can comment on your articles on DesignSpark. We encourage you to continue the conversation and to consider future potential articles that might be 'sparked' by their comments.
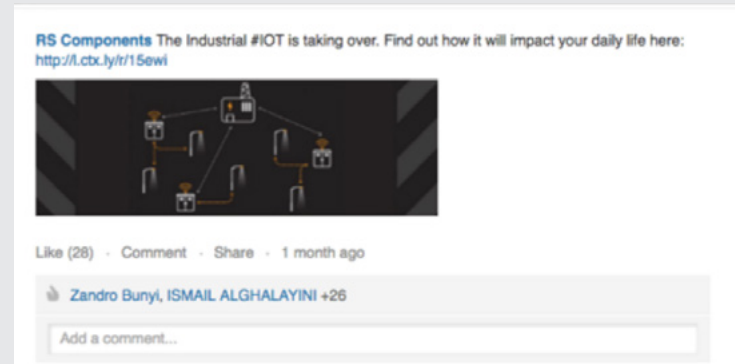
5.5 ...continued

Likes, comments and shares on social media posts linking to your articles can indicate how well the content has been received and provide an early indication of the types of content that works for your audiences.

So, that's the basics of content marketing and a 7-step framework for you to follow.

Let's now focus on the content that we know will be successful of DesignSpark and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and social media techniques to turbo-boost your marketing.

6.0 Getting started with SEO and social media – keywords

Your content in the form of posts and articles on DesignSpark will be largely visited by audiences who find them via Google and through our social media links.

If you are designing content for audiences first, then you need to consider **which keywords or keyphrases your audiences will use to describe their needs in Google.**

These can be grouped into a few different themes, for example:

1. **Intended use**

   How your audiences might use your products, e.g. *"internet of things for dogs"* or *"near field communication internet of things"*

2. **Preference**

   The qualifiers they use in their search, e.g. *"Internet of things with Arduino"* or *"internet of things with Intel Galileo"*

3. **Comparison**

   This indicates a desire to compare the features of similar products, and a possible intention to buy the product that best matches the available budget, e.g. *"Arduino or Raspberry Pi"*

4. **Product type, specification or feature**

   The user has made their mind up about a specific product type or feature, e.g. *"IP 67 rated dust and waterproof connectors"*

5. **Brand**

   The user has made their mind up about a specific brand, e.g. *"list of products by Harting"*

6. **Location, Timeframe**

   The user wants location based information, e.g. *"When is the Rome Maker Faire 2017"*

7. **Urgent Request**

   This shows an immediate intent to purchase, e.g. *"kit for setting up quick wifi hotspot"*

6.1 Identifying keywords that your audiences are using

There are a few methods that can help us understand exactly what our audiences are searching for:

1. Ask Google through its webmaster tools
[link: https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6155685] how often your site appears in Google search results and on which search query (i.e. the keywords/phrases searched on), dates, or device. Note: this does not show infrequent search queries
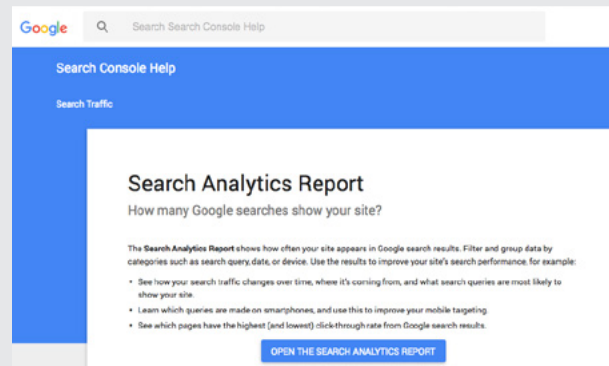
The Google Webmaster tools track the top 1,000 keyword queries that your website is visible for and your average search position for those keywords.

2. Use Google's Adwords Keyword Planner

This Google tool shows expected number of searches for specific keywords and how competitive the advertising is for each keyphrase.
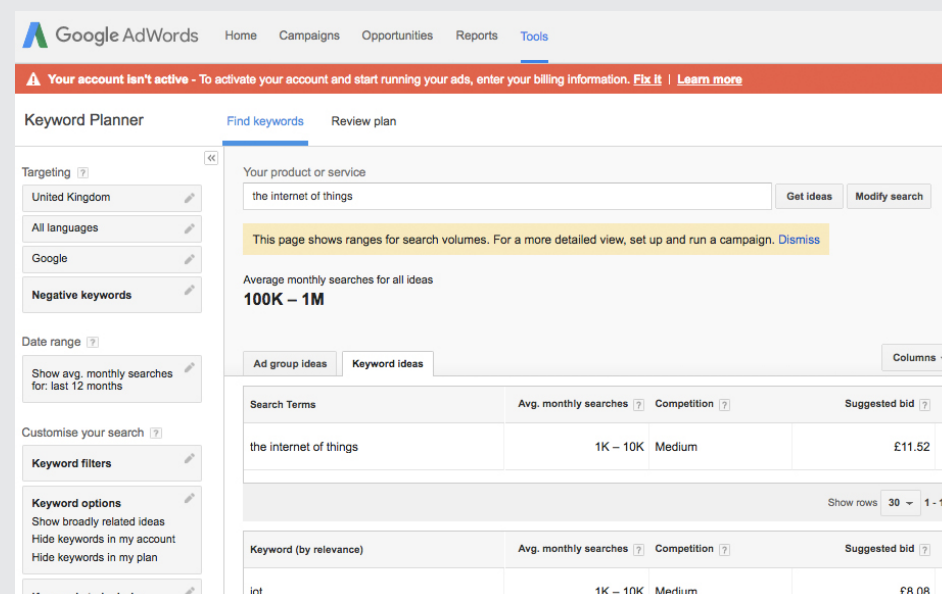
The Google AdPlanner Keyword tool requires you to set up and Adwords account but offers the ability to see both types and volume of monthly searches related to a topic by country, as well as the cost of advertising on the keywords.

6.2 continues...

6.2 ...continued

3. Review which keywords and phrases that have sent people to your website by reviewing your Website Analytics or your website search data

Understand which keywords from organic and paid search are sending searchers through to your website

Acquisition

Overview

▶ All Traffic

▶ AdWords

▶ Search Console **NEW**

▶ Social -

▼ Campaigns

All Campaigns

Paid Keywords

Organic Keywords

Cost Analysis

Google's web analytics tool allows you to review which keywords have resulted in people visiting your website. If your web analytics tracking and reporting is set up correctly, you can also see which searches have resulted in sales or enquiries.

6.2 ...continued

4. Ask your customers what they might search for or observe them at work. This is possibly the most powerful of all methods.

5. Review blogs and trade media to see which keywords or phrases they use to describe products and their uses.

Look at their articles and note what gets shared the most on social media.

You can see the number of shares in social media from blogs and traditional media often from the article itself. This is a well-shared post from Live Science that focuses on innovation relating to the popular Star Trek genre.

The numbers on this tweet show the number of retweets and likes. Click on the date to see how many and the types of comments. The topic is popular amongst the IET's audience.

6.2 Using keywords in your articles

So, you have identified the words that your audiences are using to search for information related to your products or intended uses.

Now you need to choose the keywords that best suit what the audience are searching for...and write an article based on those words.

Never write an article with popular keywords in a brilliant headline that gets people to click, but doesn't have the relevant content to match. You'll just end up with an annoyed reader and it won't perform well in Google search results.

It's good practice to consider 'primary keywords' as the most searched by your audiences/the most relevant to their needs/the most relevant to your products as the most important ones to start with.

'Secondary keywords' gain fewer searches but are still highly relevant to the topic.

Here's a DesignSpark post illustrate this:

Search Terms	Avg. monthly searches
esd shoes	100 – 1K
esd flooring	100 – 1K
esd footwear	10 – 100
esd safe	10 – 100
esd foot grounders	10 – 100

Average monthly searches for all ideas
1M – 10M

Ad group ideas | Keyword ideas

We've checked Google's AdWords Keyword Planner to see how people searching are describing ESD footwear. 'Esd shoes' and 'Esd flooring' have the highest number of monthly searches in the UK.

There are also some popular related searches related to the product, including 'Esd footwear' 'esd safety' and 'esd foot grounders'.

6.2 continues...

6.2 ...continued

So, this is where we need to consider and balance 3 key elements:

1. What our audience wants (and will find interesting)
2. What we want to sell to them
3. What Google suggests that people searching want

The ESD article written cleverly incorporates all 3 elements.

1. What our audience wants and will find interesting – to understand what ESD is, explore intended uses and evaluate the available footwear options
2. What we want to sell to them– the right product to the right customer
3. What Google suggests that people searching want – that people are searching for shoes over foot grounders and flooring and fewer people are using the generic words ESD footwear and ESD safety

For SEO impact, the article title is the most important place to add keywords in your article. The ideal article title length is 55 characters.

Keywords aren't just for article titles, headings and the text in your article. They can also be used in image captions or the image filename that you upload along with the article.

ESD Foot Grounders or ESD Shoes – what's best?

We get a lot of customers asking us if they should use ESD foot grounders or ESD shoes in their EPA. And our answer is always the same: it depends! There really is no right or wrong when it comes to choosing but there are obviously a few things you need to consider before investing in one or the other.

Safety First!

In some cases, protective footwear (shoes, boots, etc.) is required to prevent foot injuries due to falling or rolling objects or from objects piercing the sole. Safety of the operator takes priority over ESD control at all times. **If protective footwear with reliable ESD properties is not available or ESD foot grounders cannot be worn with the protective footwear in the ESD Protected Area, other personnel grounding devices such as wrist straps should be used.**

Introduction to ESD Foot Grounders

ESD foot grounders are designed to reliably contact grounded ESD flooring and provide a continuous path-to-ground by removing electrostatic charges from personnel. They are easy to install and can be used on standard shoes by placing the grounding tab in the shoe under the foot.

Article title uses both shoes and grounders and considers users need for comparison

It's written and structured for a user first, Google second but incorporates common search terms such as 'ESD flooring' and 'ESD safety' within the article

Important keywords are also mentioned in headers in the article such as ESD foot grounders Not just breaking the text but also signaling to Google that the words are important and relevant to the body text.

Remember, the keywords must match the image or again Google won't be happy!

Remote control of an HVAC system via Arduino based PLC
https://www.rs-online.com/.../remote-control-of-an-hvac-system-via-ardu... ▾
6 Apr 2016 - **HVAC systems** usually have an available contactor for relay connection.

ESD Foot Grounders or ESD Shoes – what's best? - RS Components
https://www.rs-online.com/.../esd-foot-grounders-or-esd-shoes--whats-be... ▾
10 Oct 2016 - We get a lot of customers asking us if they should use **ESD foot grounders or ESD shoes** in their EPA. And our answer is always the same: it ...

6.2 ...continued

The article is nicely broken up with correctly subtitled images of shoes and grounders. It not only makes it easier to read, it is also a recognised signal by Google in its image searches.

Example of ESD Foot Grounder

Your article can also be formatted to make it easier to read, especially on mobile devices. Search experts believe that this has a small impact on Google's ranking of content.

If it feels helpful to the reader provide information in a table, bullet points/lists or to make text bold or underlined, then do so.

Most users appreciate anything that breaks up long copy on websites and makes text easier to read and understand.

How many times should I use keywords in my article?

There are no hard and fast rules, however, it's safe to say that Google can recognize an article that has been over optimized with keywords and not written for a human first. It is also pretty horrible to read.

A simple rule of thumb is to avoid unnecessary repetition of the primary keyword and use variations throughout the content. If it feels repetitive to you, assume it will to your reader and Google.

Google is adept at 'understanding' pages and expects to see some synonyms. It will detect a page that has an unnatural number of the same words. In this instance, we'd suggest that the article highlighted has the absolute maximum number of mentions of 'ESD Foot Grounders'.

7.0 Submitting content to DesignSpark for publication

We want to publish content on DesignSpark that offers value and credibility to our readers.

We've created 3 content types that we are looking for from you, in order of value.

1. **Articles**   2. **Tools**   3. **News**

7.1 Articles

Your articles need to be specifically written for DesignSpark and must be exclusive content, i.e. not published elsewhere on the web.

You must have the copyright or usage permission for any images you use in your articles.

We appreciate that this may take time and resource limited, but we know that this will deliver the most value, technical credibility, engagement and return on investment for us all.

7.2 Types of articles that should be submitted to the DesignSpark website

- Solutions to design problems
- Ways to improve or cost reduce their designs
- Design guidance and acquiring new skills
- Inspiration from new leading edge products
- Discovering new and emerging technologies/products
- Projects and application examples
- Industry news and trends
- Thought Leadership articles
- Entertainment related to technology and innovation

7.3 Copywriting techniques for articles that work for audiences, Google and social media

As well as understanding how keywords and searches work and how we apply them to our content, there are some copywriting techniques we'd like to share with you.

This should help you move away from regurgitating press releases to becoming an awesome wordsmith and successful article writer.

See if you can try a few of these techniques against the article types we've highlighted and come up with an article working title that can include searched keywords:

The Bridge

Before: Here's your world, here's your problem (pain)

After: Imagine what it'd be like to have that problem solved

Bridge: Here's how to get there (solution)

How I transformed my life with home automation

or
"Robots are taking over but don't fear the future. How to live and work happily with AI"

The Mystery

I understand what you're saying but why are you saying it? (and now I really want to read on!)

How many Engineers does it take to change an LED light bulb?...

or

"Origins of an Engineer's 8-hour workday - and why we should rethink it"

7.3 ...continued

Nostalgia and Familiarity

"What Nintendo Game Boy taught me about Engineering – growing up the 1980s"

The power of 3

Snap! Crackle! Pop!

I came, I saw, I conquered!

Education, Education, Education

Design with Petunia LEDs for better, bigger harvests

or

"Raspberry Pi, Raspberry Pi 2, Raspberry Pi 3"

I feel the need for speed

4 Quick ways to boost your wireless signal

Houston, we have a problem (and here's how to fix it)

Engineering in the UK- Mind the Gap

Playfulness

A Playful Internet of Things

I'll give you X good reasons

7 reasons why your next project should focus on the IoT

7.3 ...continued

If you are still stuck for ideas for an article, here is a handy list of fill-in-the-blank article titles for inspiration.

Remember to use keywords and to keep your title to an optimum 55 characters if possible:

How to _____ in _____ easy steps

How to _____ that drives _____

How to find _____ in _____

How to transform _____

How we/I make/made _____ by _____

How to create _____ that _____

How to _____ the right way

How _____ could inspire your _____

How _____ could change you _____

How to get rid of _____

How _____ is changing _____ for good

What no-one tells you/engineers about _____

What engineers need to know about _____

What engineers can change about _____

What every engineer knows about _____

7.3 ...continued

What does _____ mean for _____

Dear young engineer. X things I'd tell my _____ year old self

What is _____ and what do _____ think about it?

What is _____ and what do you need to know abut it right now?

Why _____ makes great _____

Why _____ could just change the world

Why _____ and _____ can never _____

Why _____ are better than _____ for _____

Why _____ are worth their weight in gold

Why _____ engineers are _____ right now

The following titles could also have numbers or to be a listed article, e.g. 5 crazy things only engineers do or 3 ways to supercharge your IoT project

Crazy _____ that only engineers do

Insane _____ that will give/get you _____

Amazing _____ to try/do right now

Resources that can make you look _____

Ways to make sure your _____ never/always _____

Ways to supercharge your _____

Questions you should ask about _____

7.3 ...continued

Tips about ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ to help you become ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

Examples of innovative ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

Creative ways to ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

Smart/surprising/foolproof/pleasant ways to ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

The secret ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ that only ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ do/know

The lowdown on ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ to consider for ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

Trends for ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ demystified for ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ an in-depth analysis

X signs that you are ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X ways that ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X things that engineers ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X ways to make sure your ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ is not ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X point checklist for ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X tips for busy/stressed/aspiring ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X guiding principles for/in ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X things ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ can learn from ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X ways to freshen up your ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜

X ways to take your ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ to the next level

X things that have changed/transformed in ⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜⬜ in the last ⬜⬜ years

7.4 Tone

Above all, DesignSpark is a community. We are engineers sharing ideas, experience and knowledge.

We suggest that your articles are not too formal and use familiar language for a largely technical audience, but are accessible for a less technical audience.

Your articles should never be antagonistic, critical or rude.

Aim to strike a balance between attracting people to read the article, giving them the information that they need and inspiring them to take action.

Ethos	Tone
• Honest • Transparent • Informative	• Personal • Friendly • Professional
Tone of voice for your articles	
Purpose	**Language**
• Simplify • Help • Inspire	• Simple • Clear • Informal

If you don't have a Brand Story or defined tone of voice, this model can help you think about how you sound and the guiding tone and language principles for writing your articles.

7.5 Grammar and spelling

We are writing articles for a technical audience, who use technical language, but we should also ensure that articles are grammatically correct, concise and free from spelling mistakes.

It's hard to remember all the advanced grammar rules such as subject-verb agreement, article use, and modifier placement and tools such as MS-Word don't provide too much help.

Fortunately, there are a few online free tools that can help make our writing more readable and precise. We encourage you to use these where possible.
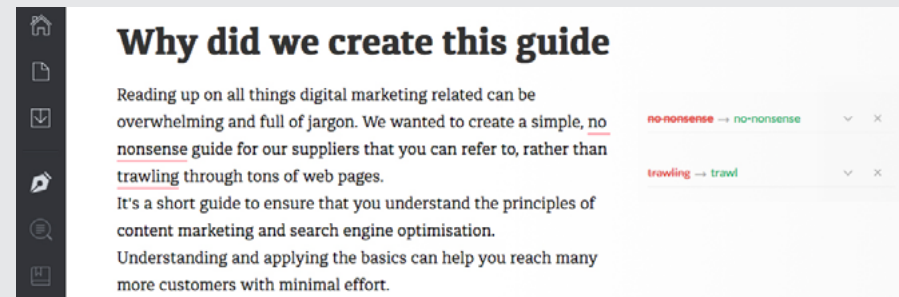
Grammarly.com is a free tool that checks as you type or can check an uploaded document. Try it out. It will transform your life!

7.6 How long should my article be?

We've analysed hundreds of articles and for our audiences and for SEO purposes, posts of around 900 – 2,000 words appears to be the 'sweet spot'.

You article could be shorter of course. Don't pad out something that is perfectly concise and readable.

If your article looks like will be longer than 2,000 words then do consider whether you can create a part 1, part 2 and even part 3.

MS-Word has a handy Word Count checker in Tools>Word Count and our article submission form also provides a word count as you edit your post.

When submitting an article, we'd like you to also provide a maximum 250 characters excerpt to tempt readers to read your article.

This is published as a thumbnail on the home page of our website and in the activity stream of the Tech Hubs with your main image.

The best way to do this is to write your first paragraph in the style of a teaser within the 250 character limit. What will tempt readers to click on your link?
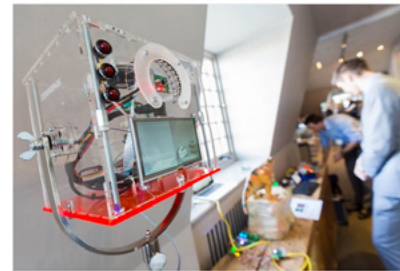
◀ **This successful article by Stuart Childs hits the article length 'sweet spot' of around 900 words.**

7.6 ...continued

Remember, the first few characters of the first paragraph (or first text after the title) will be seen on the Google search results.

Another good example of a use case or product application. ▶

This article has been split into 2 parts and performs well in Google. The first 128 characters of the article are pulled through into the Google search result.

As well as using a compelling title such as "7 Reasons why…" the 250 character excerpt is used to good effect in this IoT animated infograpic. Which reader could resist the temptation to click through?

7.7 Impactful images

Text is important but a strong hero image to accompany your article is another critical consideration. Ensure you also other relevant images and graphics to break up the text and improve readability.

Product images are great, but well shot images featuring people using products or well designed graphics will encourage clicks on your article in the DesignSpark website and shares on social media.

Again, make sure that you have the copyright for any image you use for your articles

Here are some useful statistics about images:

· When people hear information, they're likely to remember only 10% of that information three days later. If a relevant image is paired with that same information, people retained 65% of the information three days later. [link to source: http://www.lifelearn.com/2015/05/12/why-infographics-work/]

· Coloured visuals increase people's willingness to read a piece of content by 80% [link to source: http://www. office.xerox.com/latest/COLFS-02UA.PDF]· People following directions with text and illustrations do 323% better than people following directions without illustrations. Link to source: http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2FBF02765184]

· Articles with an image once every 75-100 words got double the number of social shares than articles with fewer images. [Link to source: http://buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-massively-boost-your-blog-traffic-with-these-5-awesome-image-stats/]

· Visual content is 40× more likely to get shared on social media than text only content [link to source: https://blog.bufferapp.com/infographics-visual-content-marketing]

Two good examples of impactful hero images in articles. Our colourful IoT graphic and an atmospheric image of a wireless data set-up in Reading, UK.

7.8 How do I know what I've written is any good?

Great question!

If you've followed this guide up to here, then we can guarantee that your article will be significantly more successful than a rehashed press release.

We'd encourage you to ask a colleague or customer to read a draft, with the images you will use and provide their feedback.

We also encourage you to check whether your article would pass the Purpose Pyramid test.

This model that highlights some key motivations for reading and evaluating content.

If your article just informs your readers, then they will probably be happy, but imagine if your article informs them, solves a problem and entertains them at the same time…you know you have a potential winner on your hands that will be appreciated and shared with others.

The provocative statement **"If you don't care about this, why should I?"** challenges content producers to create articles, video, blogs post, infographics that they are proud of, rather than just pushing out dull content like a sausage-making machine.

Challenge • Solve problems

Chunked Episodic

Educate • Inform

"If you don't care about this, why should I?"

Entertain

© Michelle Goodall
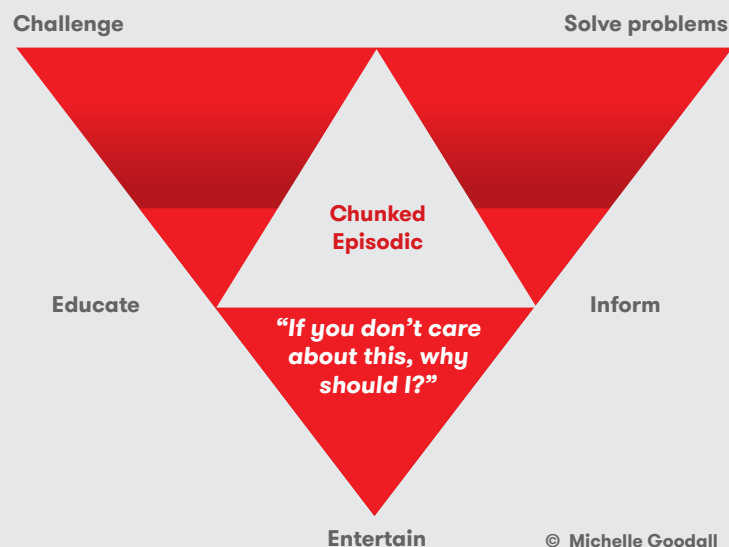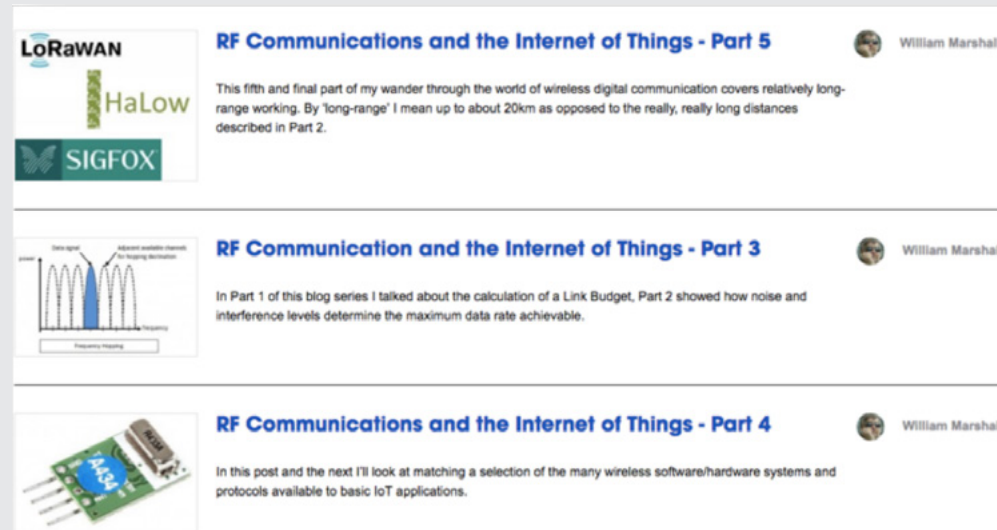
7.8 ...continued

The 'Chunked and Episodic' element of the model prompts you to think whether you can get more value from your content than writing a single article.

For example, can you:
· Write a similar article for different audiences – tip: do not duplicate your text – Google doesn't like it (chunk)
· Break your post up and write a series of articles (episodic)
· Look back at an old post/brochure and write an updated version commenting on how much things have changed (repurpose)

Here is an example of episodic content on DesignSpark. RF Communications and the Internet of Things was cleverly serialised into 5 posts by this author. This has been a highly successful series of articles.

7.9 Where should I link my articles to?

You should always write an article thinking about what the natural next step is for a reader. Where should they go next?

We will link related products available on our website to your article and also link related articles on the right hand side.

You can also think about where you would like audiences to click on when they get to the end of an article and write in the link in a natural way.

In this example, we've pulled in related products and articles. ▶

This author has suggested that the reader follows him on Twitter at the end of his articles. It could be another call to action such as view products, sign up for an event etc. ▶

DesignSpark Admin will associate relevant RS Components available products to your article.

If you're stuck for something to do, follow my posts on Twitter. I link to interesting articles on new electronics and related technologies, retweeting posts I spot about robots, space exploration and other issues.

8.0 Tools

Many of you may have free useful software tools and applications that are useful for Design Engineers.

Please share these in our Tools Section as articles.

Fluke and REDEXPERT have recently published free, useful software tools and applications. If you have tools or applications that are useful for Design Engineers
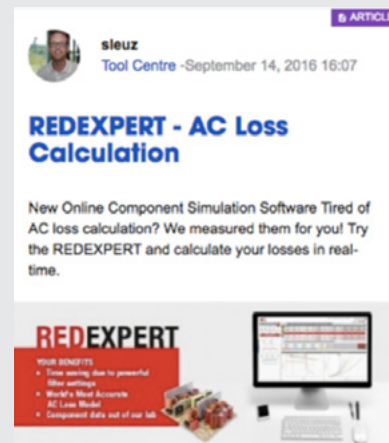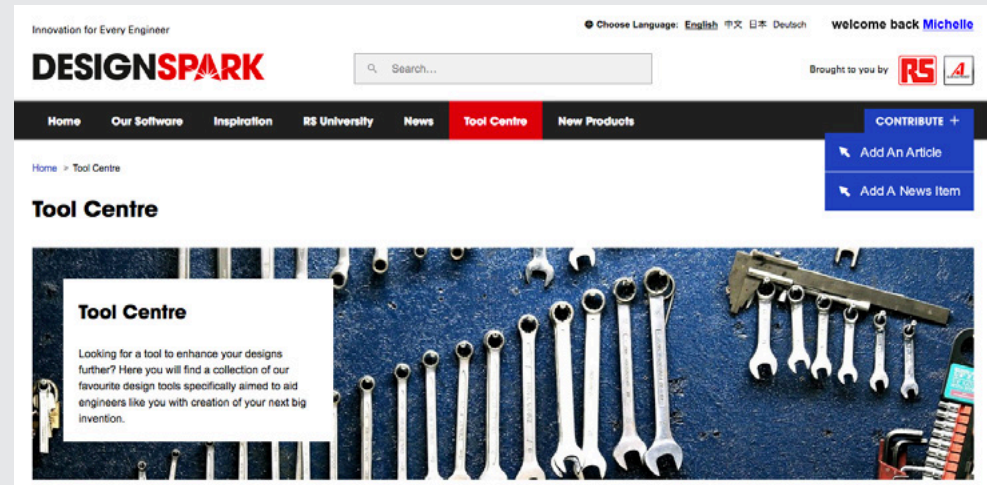
9.0 News

We know that lots of our Suppliers and Partners want to share exciting news about new product launches.

We appreciate that often, a lot of time and money has been spent creating marketing material to support them.

To best host this type of content and avoid content duplication, we have created a "News" section. This allows users to create a News item that is a short headline and summary, perhaps of a press release or a new product announcement/flyer.

This can then be linked back to the original article or the RS Website to purchase (where the product brief and other technical assets can also be found). You can also add an image.

News about upcoming events such as workshops and trade shows can also be shared here and linked to for further information/registration.
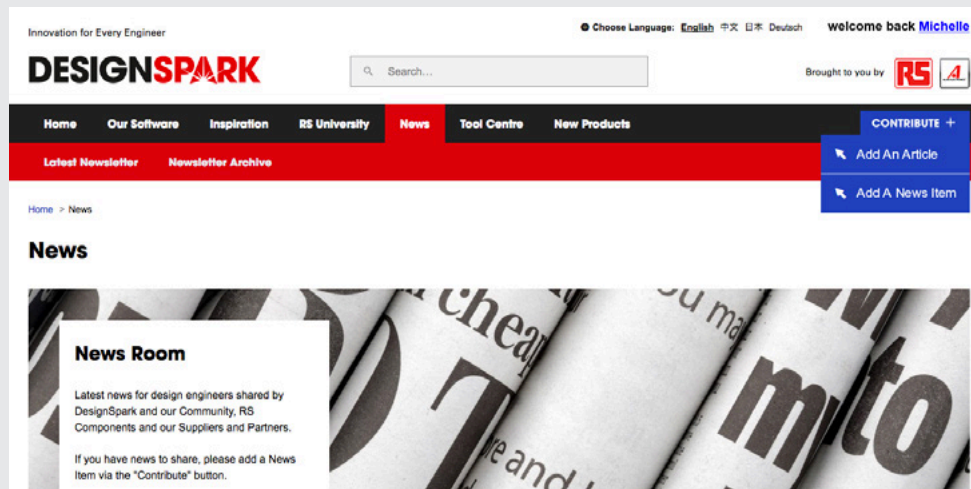
Contribute News items as a short headline and summary of a press release or a new product announcement/flyer. These must not be duplicate web posts. Approved posts will sit in the news stream on DesignSpark

10.0 Content/articles we won't publish on the DesignSpark website

- Cut and pasted Press Releases

- Generic New Product Announcements

- Cut and pasted Product Briefs

- Articles like Case Studies that have already been published elsewhere on the web.

- Datasheets

- White Papers (unless supported by editorial content which can be submitted as an article)

- Content that is a duplicate of another article/ webpage already published on the web.

11.0 In summary

We hope that this guide has encouraged you to contribute to DesignSpark and has helped you identify where you should focus on improvements to your content marketing.

We're looking forward to your articles on DesignSpark and hope we've provided enough practical advice to help you become a content marketing ninja.

We'd love your feedback on this guide and to hear from you if you need assistance.

Get in touch with us via our support community **https://designspark.zendesk.com/hc/en-us**