



# Content Explanations

An overview of content styles  
and what they are used for.

# CONTENT IS CRITICAL

*Quality, human-drafted content remains key to getting ahead.*

White Matter Communications (WMC) suggests that multiple styles be layered for campaigns as needed to meet goals. We are also happy to consult on any other styles not listed here, as appropriate.

As you consider this document, keep in mind that in public relations (PR) and marketing communications, there are generally four types of media/content:

## Paid

Paid content refers to any type of advertising/media or event attendance items that have been paid for. It can include classic advertising (both digital and print), as well as advertorials, testimonials, profiles, etc. When fulfilling paid placements and event participation, it is acceptable to have a commercial tone to the content, and/or to include a “call to action” (CTA) or selling item.

## Owned

This type of content is both drafted and owned by the author company. The content should act as a complement to the website and the brand, and can include webinars, podcasts, white papers, exclusive articles and/or supplements, videos, etc. These items are specifically written for use by the company in multiple channels, but do not always include a commercial call to action depending on the type of content.

## Earned

Earned content is any type of externally placed content that did not cost money for the placement. It is often categorized as news coverage, and is based on information that has been made available to the market. This would include results of press release distributions, interview participation, roundtable discussions/panels, company stories, local partnership highlights, etc.

## Shared

As the name suggests, shared items are posted via social media that are tagged to/mention the company accounts. It includes both company posted items, and sentiments/engagements from third parties. When communicating via social media, it is always important to maintain relevance and consistency in tone, as well as continuing to monitor audience engagement.



### ADVERTISING/PAID CONTENT

Advertising covers any type of paid for content that is hosted on an external site or location. This can include simple banner ads, through to webinars, podcasts, e-books and more. These items are developed to drive brand and/or campaign awareness and generally include a commercial tone or call to action (CTA).



### ADVERTORIAL

An advertorial is paid editorial content with a more promotional tone (not quite an advertisement but bordering on that line). These are generally a specific part of the paid placements (media buy) as listed above and can vary in length depending on the purpose and publication. An advertorial can include a commercial call to action.



### APPLICATION NOTE

Like a white paper (both owned items) in tone, an application note details a product, service or technology in application. They are used as an external “educational” tool, and refrain from a promotional tone to focus more on the informational aspects of the subject. These papers often run around two pages in length but can go longer depending on the depth of information.



### ARTICLE/EDITORIAL

An article, or editorial, allows you to tell a story to your audience; depending on the format, these are considered either an earned or owned content item. These are placements for industry publications and focus on a technical competence, development in the company, or industry trends and advances. Depending on the publication, the tone of the article will differ. Some publications accept exclusive editorials with a promotional slant, while others prefer strictly non-commercial editorial that is fact-based. Some editorials are nonexclusive and will be in a question and answer format. Rights are not always guaranteed to these content items.



### CASE STUDY

Case studies are owned content that tell a story of how your company solved a specific problem for a client. They should describe the problem, give reason for the problem, and show results; it is critical to explain the path taken to find the “solution”. These can be done neutrally, but we suggest working with clients that are willing to be named and, ideally, involved in the writing process. Case study length varies on depth of story.



### E-BLASTS

The e-Blast can fit into a few categories—paid or owned—depending on the originator (part of a media buys with a third party, or from the company itself). Regardless of type, e-Blasts are short, critically relevant email messages crafted to support various marcom messaging items (campaign messaging, brand messaging, key sales or educational collateral pieces, presentations, webinars, etc.). They are sent to curated lists via email and can be focused on internal or external audiences.



### EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SALES COLLATERAL

Like an advertorial, these types of stories focus on a specific “win”, educate the audience about key offerings, or highlight a key partnership. Though they share a similar style to paid content items, they are considered owned content items, and since these are company generated materials they can be promotional in tone. Of course, it is always preferable that the collateral provide some type of value to the receiver and should still be kept on the shorter side to maintain interest. Note that collateral can be created and distributed either in print or digitally.



### PRESS RELEASE

A press release is an informative written statement sent directly to the news wires and editorial community to garner earned content items (i.e. news stories). Press releases generally announce product line information, facilities updates, key partnerships, developments and more. These should be no more than a page and a half and include quotes from notable sources. It is critical to avoid putting out excessive, self-serving, or non-newsworthy (fluff) press releases to avoid any loss of credibility or interest from the editorial community. Press releases are rare in that the original release is owned, but all the coverage from the release is earned.



### SHOW DAILIES/ TRADESHOWS

For certain events like trade shows, exhibitions, conventions or meetings, there are onsite or online publications that will feature exhibitor stories of half a page or less. These are an opportunity to briefly talk about a product, service or news item that is relevant to those at the event and are considered an earned or paid content item depending on the show.



### SOCIAL MEDIA

The approach to shared content on social media will depend on the channel used. For a more formal industry like life sciences, LinkedIn is most popular. Short form, punchy and informative content performs best, with a clear and easy to connect with visual style and tone. While it is okay to be commercial, a focus on commercial only content quickly disenchant the audience. Leveraging owned content on social media is a great way to get traffic to the website.



### TECHNICAL PAPER

This is a purely technical owned document that may or may not be peer reviewed (in the case of peer reviewed, it can be considered earned). Here, the focus is on remaining non-commercial and it relies heavily on the educational, scientific and/or technical aspects of the data. These can be any length and are usually cited for accuracy. They do not include any kind of company competency statement.



### WEB CONTENT

Written specifically for website use, this type of owned content needs to do more with less words. Copy should be informational, but brief, and there should be consistency in both tone and message. Length varies by objective.



### WHITE PAPER

Per Wikipedia, “a whitepaper is an authoritative report or guide that helps readers understand an issue, solve a problem or make a decision in government or B2B.” These owned items can be used for both internal and external purposes and refrain from a promotional tone or storytelling to focus more on the informational aspects of the subject. These papers should be no more than two pages in length and will offer a brief paragraph at the end about specific competency on the subject.



# WAMC



**10**  
**YEARS**

**2016 - 2026**

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