



Content marketing done right:

30 questions and answers on your strategy for success

Including 3 checklists!

Foreword

Content marketing has quickly established itself in recent years as an important instrument in the marketing mix. As a result, a long-overdue paradigm shift is taking place: the common outbound marketing approach is changing to an inbound marketing strategy. Thereby, it is less about advertising products and presenting their advantages. There is greater focus on informative, educational or entertaining content with clear added value for the consumer. The motto is: away from colourful images and loud slogans and on to passionate storytelling for brands.

The advantages of this approach are obvious. In addition to increasing the brand recognition, content marketing also makes it possible to strengthen customer confidence and brand loyalty for the long-term and promotes access to new target groups. With informational, advising or entertaining added value for consumers, companies can also escape the never-ending price spiral. Customers are connected to the brand with values and emotions, and the price is no longer the crucial distinguishing selling proposition.

In practice, targeted long-term planning for content marketing activities proves to be a tricky matter that raises many questions. With this e-book, we therefore hope to provide all interested marketers with handy, practical instructions to guide them step-by-step through the implementation of their content marketing strategy.

The authors hope you enjoy reading this e-book.



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Nadja Schröder

Nadja Schröder studied business communications at the HTW Berlin and has worked at plista as a Junior Marketing Manager since 2012.



XING[®] LinkedIn

Milko Malev

Milko Malev is a Senior Marketing Manager at plista. Following several years as a communications consultant, he has been responsible for the areas of product, sales, content and e-mail marketing at plista since the start of 2014.

Topic Overview

To start with, we would like to give you a brief overview of the individual levels in creating your content marketing strategy. In the following sections we will present answers to the most important questions.

1. ANALYSIS

An in-depth analysis of the current situation must be completed before the content planning can start. On this basis, the target groups are determined and the communication goals are set. In other words: who do you want to reach with your content marketing strategy?

2. CONTENT PLANNING

The next step is the actual topic planning. This involves defining your relevant thematic areas. The content planning also goes along with determining the publication deadlines, responsibilities, and publication channels.

3. CONTENT CREATION

Now it is time to implement the planned themes – a stumbling block for many marketers. In addition to a variety of possible content marketing formats, we also want to give you practical writing tips and suggestions for creating exciting articles.

4. CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

After the content is created, the focus is on generating a wide readership for your content. What is more, it is not only a matter of intelligent content distribution, but also of precise tracking and ongoing campaign optimisation.

5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Last, but not least: performance monitoring is essential to the long-term success of a content strategy. This is the only way to assess what you have done correctly and what could be done better next time. For this reason, we want to show you in detail how performance monitoring works and how you can benefit from the high measurability in online marketing.

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1. ANALYSIS

1. What is the current state of your content?

Before you start to draft your content marketing strategy, you should first get an overview of the content that you have already published.

Date	Article	Topic area	Channel	Performance	Interaction	Link
	Header, Content, Format	e.g. Marketing/ Sales/ Recruiting/ Management/ Research & Development	Owned Media, Earned Media or Paid Media	e.g. User Statistics (Unique Users, Page Views), Average Visit Duration, Bounce Rate	e.g. Shares, Likes, Tweets, +1, Newsletter Registrations (Leads)	

Recording your content history in table form allows you to research the performance of your content and consider the visitor structure of your internet presence (home page, [blog](#), single [microsites](#)) as well as the question of where traffic to these sites originates. These findings can help later in not only creating the content but also in determining its targeted distribution.

2. How relevant is your content?

In order to find out which content of yours is particularly successful, you should specify the performance based on individual indicators. The following metrics are easy to measure and quickly return an insightful image:

- **User statistics (unique users, page impressions)**
- **Bounce rate**
- **Social media activities (likes, shares, comments)**
- **Newsletter performance (number of new leads, opening rates and click-through rates).**

By enhancing your content history with the measured values, you can understand exactly which content achieves the greatest success or which content you should omit in the future. This allows you to build on your strengths and target any possible weak points.

1. ANALYSIS

3. Which analytical tools are helpful?

If you have not used analytics tools in the past, we absolutely recommend that you learn more about the wide range of free and fee-based products available.

We have compiled a selection of providers for you here:

- [Google Analytics](#) is without a doubt the top dog amongst analytical tools. The product is free and offers both standard reports about the interaction on your website and a large variety of settings for customised reports. In terms of data protection, however, [the use of Google Analytics is controversial](#).
- [Piwik](#) is an open source tool and is likewise available for free. Piwik saves sensitive data on its own server.
- [Etracker](#) offers several price levels, and depending on your needs and level of experience you can continually expand your tracking functions. Invoicing is done on a monthly basis.
- [Adobe Web Analytics](#) dominates the market for premium web analytics tools and serves the largest customers in the area of paid web analytics products.
- [Webtrends](#) is also a premium provider for precise tracking and reporting in real time.
- [Webtrekk's](#) is a Berlin company whose tool tracks the user data of website visitors and analyses success factors. Also active in the international market, Webtrekk is taking on competitors like Google, Adobe, and IBM.
- [Heap](#) offers the advantage of analysing all actions on your website starting from the time of the installation and can be retraced at any time, even if certain functions were not set up until later. In addition, the easy operation does not require any knowledge of programming.

Our tip

These tools are also relevant for monitoring the success of your activities as part of the final evaluation of results.

1. ANALYSIS

4. Which challenges does content marketing present for you?

Think about the challenges that you see with regard to your content marketing strategy. This allows you to formulate realistic communications goals that are based on your specific needs and resources. Finally, content marketing places high demands on every company, requiring high-quality content, well thought-out storytelling, and intelligent tracking methods. This results in the typical stumbling blocks like insufficient experience in creating editorial content, lack of success in content distribution or inefficient resource planning.

5. What do you want to achieve with content marketing?

Key figures show you where you stand. Goals, on the other hand, show you where you want to go. Always set your communications goals individually, depending on your company, your products or your market position. As part of the study „2015 B2C Marketing Trends“, the following content marketing goals were mentioned with particular frequency:



6. How do you formulate your individual communications goals?

When setting goals, they must be precisely formulated, challenging but feasible and above all manageable. The SMART criteria are excellently suited for this purpose:

S: Specific, **M:** Measurable, **A:** Attractive, **R:** Realistic, **T:** Timed

Example of SMART communications goals:

- 20% more visitors to the company blog by the end of Q3
- 200 new subscriptions to the newsletter within the next three months

1. ANALYSIS

7. What are the buyer personas?

Instead of an abstract target group description, you can use buyer personas to make a more personalised image of your existing or potential customers beyond the usual socio-demographic information and thus make it more tangible. Draw up representative target persons with the most specific characteristics possible. These should consider the requirements of various types of influence, for example decision-maker, influencer or user.

	<p><i>B2B-Persona</i> Name _____</p>		<p><i>B2C-Persona</i> Name _____</p>
<p>Job position Tasks, decision-making expertise, goals</p>		<p>Personal descriptions age, place of residence, family situation, job, income</p>	
<p>Companies Industries, number of employees, market position</p>		<p>Consumer behaviour Interests and hobbies, value orientation for purchasing decisions</p>	
<p>Information-related behaviour (Specialist) magazines, blogs, news, social networks</p>		<p>Information-related behaviour News portals, magazines, blogs, social networks</p>	
<p>Contact channels Internet, e-mail, telephone, networks, organisations</p>		<p>Contact channels Internet, apps, e-mail</p>	

8. How many buyer personas are practical?

Avoid the mistake of creating too many buyer personas. Focus instead on two to three target persons and serve their needs as extensively as possible.

1. ANALYSIS

9. What is the customer journey of your buyer personas?

The customer journey as a virtual journey for the customer is divided into the five phases of a purchase decision: awareness, favourability, consideration, intent to purchase and conversion.



10. Where are the contact points for content marketing in the customer journey?

Each phase of the purchase decision-making process involves a point of contact between the consumer and your brands and products, known as the touch point. You should start here and assist you customer with appropriate information on the path through the Internet.

- **Awareness: Awareness for your product is created.**

As you actively strengthen the visibility of your content with online advertising and PR, the customer receives access to inspiring content.

- **Favorability: The customer interest in the product is increased.**

The customer’s engagement grows thanks to the interaction with the product. For this purpose, comprehensive informative or entertaining content like videos, photos and text are made available on topic-specific platforms and your own website.

- **Consideration: The customer considers the purchase of the product.**

At this point, the measures for brand awareness and brand trust take hold. The customer gathers third-party opinions, and compares product reviews and product tests. The active marketing of attractive reviews of your products and rankings should be focused on this phase.

1. ANALYSIS

- **Intent to Purchase: The purchase intent is concrete.**

Content once again provides the impetus to purchase, mostly in combination with affiliate marketing or coupons, vouchers, or discount campaigns as typical performance marketing instruments.

- **Conversion: The customer effects the purchase of the product.**

The high point of the customer journey has been reached, thanks to the successful use of content marketing. Now you can maintain customer loyalty with a mix of good content and additional sales offers. Of course the process does not end there: the customer's enthusiastic report on his experience and personal recommendation to his friends can increase sales of your products over the long-term.

11. Why are key performance indicators (KPIs) important to your content marketing strategy?

Before you start planning your content, it is advisable to determine precise indicators (KPIs) in order to transfer your marketing goals into measurable units and to exactly track the degree of their achievement.

KPIs as a consensus and decision-making tool for planning content marketing activities

KPIs for better comparability and success measurement of ROI on your content marketing

KPIs for uncovering potentials for optimisation and for further budget planning



1. ANALYSIS

12. Which KPIs come into consideration for you?

Different performance indicators are available for performance measurement, depending on the goal. The following excerpt of KPIs for measuring the achievement of your goals illustrates the diversity in marketing controlling:

Brand awareness

Number of visitors to your website, page views, video views, documents viewed, downloads, activity on social media channels, etc.

Thought leadership

White paper downloads, references on external websites, interview requests for blogs and specialist magazines, speaker slots, etc.

Lead generation

Completed web page forms, newsletter and RSS feed, subscriptions, conversion rate, bounce rate, etc.

Customer loyalty

Newsletter subscriptions, opening rates, visit duration, user activities in social networks and forums, etc.

Engagement

Blog commentary, social signals, inbound links, user movement on the website (heat maps), participation in lotteries and competitions, etc.

2. CONTENT PLANNING

13. Where are your sweet spots?

The „sweet spots“ in your corporate communications are the topic areas in which you act as a pioneer and on which you have valuable knowledge. Some possible topics for your content marketing would be:

- **Expertise in a certain product segment,**
- **Company history,**
- **Aspects of your corporate culture, such as sustainability, employee development, etc.**
- **Special features of your business model (e.g. traditional family company, innovative start-up, international enterprise).**

14. Which publication channels are available to you?

There are three different relevant media types in content marketing that are used for different channels of distribution.

- **Owned Media** is content that you manage yourself and can distribute across your own channels. As a result, you generally reach readers who already trust your company and your products and therefore show a strong interest.
- **Earned Media** is content that is created by independent external persons, for example journalistic reporting, customer feedback or viral marketing. This media type is an indicator of the degree of quality in your content and your products: positive feedback sustainably strengthens the credibility of your brand.
- **Paid Media** is paid content that is placed on external channels and is subject to your control. This media type is used primarily to generate broader range and increase awareness for your brand.

2. CONTENT PLANNING

15. At what intervals should publication take place?

The frequency of publication depends heavily on [your company-specific communications goals](#). [The benchmark taken from the Content Marketing Institute for 2015](#), however, indicates that 48 percent of B2C marketers publish content daily or several times per week. In the B2B area, 42 percent of respondents publish this frequently.

You should also plan extensive research into the editorial schedules of your industry media. This way you create an overview of the key topics in reporting as well as upcoming trade shows and events. Furthermore, you can derive the publication dates for your company's content as well as the planning for sponsoring activities or advertorials. Depending on the industry and target group, you can also take relevant holidays and celebrations into consideration. The effort is worth it, because with good media timing you can guarantee even more attention for your publications.

16. How do you respond to short-term events and incidents?

Someone should be available at all times who can create content on short notice for spontaneous events and react on current news and trends, especially in crisis situations. Comments and other responses to your publications also require quick reaction times. Continuous media observation guarantees that you are appropriately attentive to relevant events. [Google Alerts](#) offers no-charge monitoring of online publications, whereas other specialized providers help you monitoring print media.

Our tip

Proactively develop communications guidelines as part of your crisis management. Should you be under pressure due to time constraints and the need to make a decision or take action as the result of a negative media event, the guidelines will assist you in selecting the appropriate way to react.

2. CONTENT PLANNING

17. How do you utilise your content marketing budget?

Consider content marketing as an investment because good website content pays off in the long-term. Don't spend large amounts of your budget indiscriminately on content that doesn't meet the needs of the target group, but instead use it for exclusive and high-quality content. In terms of content distribution, you can continuously expand your readership through paid content distribution via [paid media](#). With search engine marketing, you lease range often only for a certain time period whereas native content distribution is suited for sustainably expanding loyal readership.

18. How do you create an editorial plan?

The output for your content marketing planning is specified in an editorial plan. This creates commitments and transparency. The following elements should be included in your plan:

Elements of an editorial plan



Publications channels

- Owned media
- Paid media



Resource planning

- Persons responsible
- Employees
- Replacements in case of absence



Scheduling

- Processing time
- Deadlines



Topic planning

- Briefing
- Image material
- Links

3. CONTENT CREATION

19. Which formats do you use to best address your customers?

Whether owned, earned or paid media: you can use various content types as part of your content marketing strategy. The following overview contains a few central formats in content marketing:



Depending on your goals, you should focus on selected formats, which you master well and can use continuously without loss of quality in consideration of your resources.

Our tip

Do you already have a wide variety of high quality content? Then you can go a step farther and create an integrated brand experience for your buyer personas. With tools like the plista Content Hub you can collect all the content relevant for your brand and offer a focused brand platform.

3. CONTENT CREATION

20. Where do you find input for your content marketing?

Depending on the industry and topic, you can use different sources to find inspiration and material for your content creation. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Just take a look at best practice examples in other industries and use them as inspiration for your own content.



Internal company know-how

- Incorporate other departments into content creation: marketing and customer service, research and development, human resources, etc.
- In addition: Develop complex topic threads and article series in cooperation with every department.



Your own network

- Use the potential of existing partnerships and memberships in associations and clubs.
- In addition: Develop complex topic threads and article series in cooperation with every department.



Industry experts

- Contact opinion leaders from your industry and try to win them as guest authors, interview partners, and as source of ideas or quotes.
- In addition: Long-term partnerships with experts may also have positive effects on seeding and visibility of the created content.



Additional material

- Images and videos of events, trade shows, conferences and presentations
- Numbers from the company's own databases, your own surveys or data collections from statistical departments and organisations as well as studies, from foundations and associations

3. CONTENT CREATION

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21. Which tools assist you in your daily content work?

The following free tools make it easier for you to not only complete day-to-day research and writing tasks, they also help you in keyword planning, SEO evaluation and snippet optimisation of your texts.

1. Keyword planning

This free tool is set up for ad words but can also supply excellent ideas for longtail keywords.

adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner

2. Snippet optimisation

The snippet optimiser by SEomofa shows a snippet preview after the input of meta data.

[seomofa.com/
snippet-optimizer.html](https://seomofa.com/snippet-optimizer.html)

3. Infographics

Create your own infographic with Piktochart. The user-friendly online tool offers flexible templates in the basic version that makes it easier to create graphics without expert knowledge.

piktochart.com

4. News reader

An RSS reader bundles and sorts your newsfeeds. If you have discovered an exciting website, you can stay up to date of the latest with Feedly.

feedly.com

5. Internet findings

Pocket saves incidental findings from the Internet like infographics or useful articles for later use and is available as an add-on app.

getpocket.com

6. Collecting information

Whether notes, documents, images, screenshots, audio or video files, Evernote helps you organize information in a simple way. The tool suits the needs of content marketing teams and enables them to work together on projects, coordinate releases, etc.

evernote.com

3. CONTENT CREATION

22. How do you create captivating content?

First determine your writing style. This depends largely on the target group and environment: A scientific study on the topic of insurance sounds differently than a blog entry about travel tips in Tuscany. In each case, the tonality must be determined first, also for the different formats. This includes information on active and passive constructions, verbal and nominal constructions, length of sentences as well as numbers, abbreviations, etc. Wording and tonality are also important: how do you address your readers? Which terminology and expressions should be used or avoided?

23. Which guidelines are helpful for creating content?

The primary guidelines with which you work every day should be your brand guide. As part of your corporate identity, it contains your company's vision, values, and customer promises. A text manual is a more concrete working tool which contains the binding guidelines for your brand language, fixed formulations, common corporate terms and their correct spelling. This way you guarantee consistency in your corporate writing style for large editorial teams or in case of co-working with external service providers.

24. What role does SEO play in content marketing?

After texts have spent years on the internet in a dreary existence in the shadow of SEO, the continuing content marketing hype helps to give them a new sheen. Relevant, authentic and unique articles are thus rewarded more than ever with better visibility from search engines. Therefore, when writing you should think of your target group first and foremost and not only the highest possible keyword density.

Nevertheless, SEO should never be left out of consideration in the optimisation of texts. In the right balance, content and SEO are, simply put, the dream team. You should determine internal SEO guidelines for text optimisation in advance. In doing so, you should consider the following main aspects:

- **How are keywords researched?**
- **Where should the main keyword be placed – in the title tag, in the description, in the teaser text, etc.?**
- **How and where are internal and external links set?**

3. CONTENT CREATION

Check-list: Writing tips for effective texts

- ✓ **Start in the middle.**
Don't brood over the headline if you have still not written a single sentence. The first step is to formulate the text's central message. Your content should have a tangible benefit, for example it should satisfy a „pain point“ for your target group, offer a solution or entertain.
- ✓ **Write it down.**
In the meantime, avoid trivialities and write the content down as it occurs to you. You can adjust the details later during the second pass-through.
- ✓ **Say it more simply.**
Check and see if you can reformulate long sentences more crisply. Get to the point more quickly and try to present contexts clearly. Avoid unusual foreign words or explain them so that everyone knows exactly what you mean.
- ✓ **Think in terms of cross media.**
It doesn't always have to be text. Perhaps while writing it comes to your mind that the topic would make an excellent video, infographic or white paper. Or that a Facebook contest could be combined with it. Then do it!
- ✓ **Make it easier for your readers.**
The Internet is overflowing with content. Subheadings give your readers a quick guide to the content and avoid dry text. Use graphics and illustrations to loosen up the text and to motivate users to read it.
- ✓ **Take a good look at the structure.**
Once the text has been written, take a close look at the structure and the headlines, paragraph by paragraph. Now is the time to evaluate your work, to improve the headlines and layout and to remove filler words. Are you unsatisfied with a particular passage but all out of rousing ideas? Write a comment for the proofreader or ask a colleague for their opinion – new ideas often emerge more easily from an outside perspective.
- ✓ **Ask yourself the key questions.**
Finally, put your content to the test. Ask yourself if you have answered the user's specific search query. Is the article actually helpful? Have you taken the special features of the selected format into consideration?

4. CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

25. Which channels can you use for distributing your content?



26. What benefits do you get from active content distribution with paid media?

- Greater reach for high-quality content
- Increased brand interaction with relevant users
- Long-term increase in brand awareness and brand trust
- Constant content optimisation thanks to performance measurement

4. CONTENT DISTRIBUTION

27. How does content recycling work?

The key to content marketing is the reuse and further use of content. Having already invested a great deal of effort into creating your content, you can then recycle the content and thereby further increase the range. This allows you to fully utilise the potential for your content and reduce the costs and time required for your content creation.

Examples of content recycling:

- Update old articles and promote them again
- Create infographics
- Distribute the content further using social media channels
- Publish company presentations on platforms like Slideshare or ISUU
- Integrate customer reviews into your website
- Consolidate series of articles on the blog into a white paper or e-book
- Offer a webinar based on existing user guides
- Turn your content into a podcast

However, please note that content recycling is more than just „copy & paste“. Consider the requirements of the [various formats](#) and adapt your content accordingly. As a result, you maintain the relevance and quality of your content.



5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

28. What role does controlling play in content marketing?

The main goal is to advance your core business for the long-term with the help of content. When it comes to controlling, it is all about monitoring the achievement of your company and communications goals. Thus, you will find out whether you are using your resources in a reasonable way.

29. How do you measure the success of your content marketing activities?

If you would like to use web analytics tools, neatly constructed campaigns and sensible tracking of user behaviour throughout the customer journey are the basis for gaining maximum insights. Furthermore, your customer relationship management (CRM) software can provide valuable data. Customer queries and market analyses are also excellent tools for evaluation. They are however part of more complex and cost-intensive survey processes.

Due to the time required to complete these tasks, it is recommended that you automate your data collection. Gather information in advance on how to make dashboards more useful and how to configure the automatic data export for the relevant reports. Then you will be well-equipped for continuous evaluation of your activities.

30. How do you interpret your data?

Detecting the actual relationships between cause and effect is the core problem in marketing control. You should therefore look closely for the correlations uncovered by your data. Don't avoid unpleasant data, but instead be prepared to subject your own work to scrutiny. Only then can an evaluation of the results actually assist you in using your resources efficiently and achieving long-term success with your strategy.

5. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Check-list: Content marketing controlling

- ✓ Specify the key performance indicators (KPIs) that you want to check regularly.
- ✓ Set up a schedule for your data collection. Monthly measurements are useful, and for some indicators even weekly data collection might be considered.
- ✓ Create a document which specifies the following:
 - Communications goals, assigned a priority if needed
 - Associated KPIs
 - Tracking methods and tools
 - Resources and schedule
- ✓ If several people are to work on the document, save it on a platform that allows for shared working, such as on a network drive or Google Drive.
- ✓ Plan sufficient time for evaluating and take a close look at the added value from your data collection on a regular basis. Use tracking only for performance indicators that you can actively influence. Expand your repertoire to include additional indicators if necessary.

And now?

Now you can start the strategy cycle again from the beginning. Use your indicators to continually update your editorial plan. Examine your editorial approach with a critical eye and try to give your content greater focus on the interests of your readers going forward. It can be helpful to expand the activities to certain channels or eliminate existing formats. The work on your content marketing strategy is ultimately an ongoing process.



Summary

Check-list: Content marketing strategy

- ✓ 1. Analyse the current status
- ✓ 2. Specify communications goals
- ✓ 3. Draw up buyer personas
- ✓ 4. Identify touch points in the customer journey
- ✓ 5. Define key performance indicators (KPIs)
- ✓ 6. Determine sweet spots for topic planning
- ✓ 7. Organise a meeting for resource planning
- ✓ 8. Create an editorial plan
- ✓ 9. Select content marketing formats
- ✓ 10. Research topics and content
- ✓ 11. Produce and recycle content
- ✓ 12. Generate range with content distribution
- ✓ 13. Monitor the success of the activities and adapt communications goals as needed

What can plista do for you?

With the plista Native Content Distribution, you can place your company's content between editorial recommendations on thousands of premium news and special interest websites. This way you reach even more relevant users with your content as well as earned media. At the same time, the reader's interaction with your content is enhanced.



“Native Content Distribution” is equally suited as a communication channel for brands, publishers and PR agencies:

Brands

Create branding campaigns with sustainable impact based on content, and reach more consumers with high interaction rates who are interested in your topics.

Publishers

Increase the awareness of and traffic to your website by acquiring relevant visitors (unique visitors) through the plista recommendation platform and sustainably improve your website ranking.

Agencies

Native content distribution is the powerful tool for targeted online PR, social media, crisis communication and issue management. The benefits of earned media can also be multiplied with targeted content distribution to interested users.

Contact us! We are happy to advise you on your content strategy.

Imprint

plista GmbH

Torstraße 33–35
10119 Berlin
Germany

Phone +49 30 4737537-0

Fax +49 30 484984411

Editors

Nadja Schröder
nadja.schroeder@plista.com

Milko Malev
milko.malev@plista.com

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https://www.plista.com/documents/downloads/eng/plista_Content_Marketing_E-Book_EN.pdf

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Company profile

plista is a pioneer when it comes to innovative solutions for targeted digital advertising and content distribution in editorial environments. The Berlin-based company has been successfully bringing advertisers and media together since 2008 with its data-driven content and advertising platform. With its specially developed real-time Recommendation Technology, plista is able to deliver both content and advertising that matches the interests of the individual user – on all channels and across all devices.

With the optimal presentation of content and advertising, publishers benefit from increased traffic, longer user visit duration and the additional monetisation of their digital products. plista also enables advertisers to address users seamlessly and efficiently throughout the entire customer journey. plista has 150 employees and is active in nine international markets.

