Content Ideation
Playbook

Your best content starts with better ideas. Let's build your process.

At ClearVoice, we believe ideation isn't just about quantity, it's about generating strategic, thoughtful ideas that serve your brand, your goals, and your audience. Whether you're building a fresh content calendar or refreshing existing topics, this guide helps you ideate with purpose and creativity.

We walk you through how to generate, refine, and implement high-quality content ideas. You'll find practical formats, templates, and prompts to support both manual brainstorming and AI-assisted workflows.

Let's get started.

Step 1   # Kick Off with Discovery

Before you start ideating, take a step back and zoom out.

This exercise is meant to shape your overall content strategy, not just one blog post or campaign. You can absolutely adapt this framework for individual pieces later on — but here, we're looking for patterns, priorities, and opportunities that can guide all future content efforts.

If you don't have documented content pillars or themes yet, don't worry. We've included a short primer below to help you define them.

Use this moment to get clear, get aligned, and make sure you're not brainstorming in a vacuum.

IDEATION KICKOFF WORKSHEET:

This is a collaborative worksheet to be completed before ideating.

| 📄 Google Doc | W Microsoft Word |

PRO TIP:

This doesn't have to be a 10-person project. Keep it manageable by looping in 2-3 key collaborators, typically from marketing, product, sales, or leadership. A short sync or async doc review can go a long way toward shared clarity.

What Are Content Pillars and Core Themes?

Think of content pillars as your brand's key areas of expertise or focus. These are the foundational topics your content should consistently support, often tied to your product, audience needs, or industry trends.

Examples of Content Pillars:

- A **payroll software company** might have pillars like: Compliance, Workforce Planning, and Employee Experience.

- A **marketing agency** might use: Content Strategy, Performance Metrics, and Team Collaboration.

Under each pillar, you'll often find **core themes** — more specific topics or angles that ladder up to the bigger category.

Example:

Let's say you're a B2B project management platform. Your content pillars might look like this:

1 **Team Collaboration**

Core themes: Hybrid team workflows, communication tools, remote culture tips

2 **Productivity & Time Management**

Core themes: Task prioritization, deep work, automation tools

3 **Project Planning & Execution**

Core themes: Gantt charts, Agile methodology, stakeholder management

4 **Scaling Operations**

Core themes: Onboarding processes, team growth, cross-functional alignment

If you don't have pillars yet, try listing 3-4 broad focus areas you want your brand to be known for. Then, pressure-test those against your goals and audience. These will become your North Star during ideation.
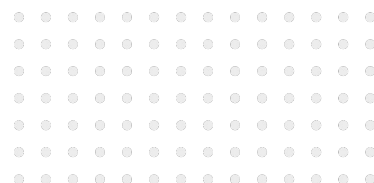
Step 2 # Generate Your Ideas

You can approach ideation in one of two ways: **Manual Brainstorming** or **AI-Assisted Generation** (we'll break each down below). But no matter your method, each idea should be structured in a way that makes it easy to evaluate, prioritize, and bring to life.

Here's what to include with every idea you submit:

Field	Why It Matters
Working Title	Clear and compelling, often with a hook that previews the value or takeaway.
1-2 Sentence Description	Explains the angle, format, and intent of the piece — what it covers and why it matters to the audience.
Content Type	What format best suits this idea? (e.g., blog post, video, social carousel, webinar, infographic)
Content Goal	What does this content aim to achieve? (e.g., drive traffic, generate leads, build authority, enable sales)
Target Audience	Who is this for, and what do they care about? (Bonus: tie back to a persona or audience segment.)
Primary CTA	What action do we want the reader/viewer to take? (e.g., read more, book a demo, download a guide)
Suggested Channel or Medium	Where does this idea belong? (e.g., blog, LinkedIn, email, YouTube)
2-3 Supporting Links	Example content, data sources, or references that support the concept or execution.

These components help ensure your ideas are not only creative but also brief-ready and execution-friendly.

PRO TIP:
If you're ideating a full campaign or multi-channel execution, include how one idea might be adapted across different formats (e.g., blog post → LinkedIn post → short video).

2a: Manual Brainstorming

Prefer a hands-on approach? We've got you. Use a mix of these proven formats and approaches to diversify your content plan:

Foundational Formats *(Great for evergreen and educational content)*

- **Listicles:** "7 Ways to Streamline Financial Reporting"
- **How-To Guides:** "How to Repurpose Long-Form Content for Social"
- **FAQ / Explainers:** "What Is ESG Reporting and Why Does It Matter?"
- **Pros & Cons:** "The Pros and Cons of Outsourcing Content Creation"
- **Versus Comparisons:** "Podcast vs. Webinar: Which Converts Better?"

Strategic & Thought Leadership

- **Industry Outlooks:** "The Future of AI in Healthcare Content Marketing"
- **Trend Spotlights:** "The Rise of Audio-First Content"
- **Point-of-View / Hot Takes:** "Why the Best B2B Brands Think Like Publishers"
- **Frameworks & Methodologies:** "Our 3-Tier System for Content ROI"

Cross-Channel Ideation

- **Short-Form Social:** Tips, stats, questions, or excerpts repurposed from long-form content
- **Video Scripts / Webinars:** Walkthroughs, demos, expert insights, or explainer content
- **Email Series:** Education sequences, nurture campaigns, content roundups
- **Interactive / Downloadables:** Quizzes, templates, checklists, or calculators
- **Internal Enablement:** Sales decks, one-pagers, product FAQs

Where to Find Inspiration:

You don't have to start from scratch. Use these resources to spark smarter, more relevant ideas:

Search Behavior

- **Google 'People Also Ask':** Type in a keyword and explore what real users are asking.
- **AnswerThePublic:** See the actual phrasing and variations people search for around a topic.
- **Google Trends:** Identify when and where interest in a topic is rising.

Audience Conversations

- **Reddit, Quora, Discord:** Dive into niche communities to find unfiltered questions, opinions, and pain points.
- **Industry Forums / Slack Groups:** Monitor what your audience is discussing in peer-to-peer settings.

Competitor Channels

Look at **competitor blogs, YouTube channels, social feeds,** and even **email newsletters.**

- What topics are they covering repeatedly?
- What's outdated, underdeveloped, or missing entirely?
- Where are they getting engagement, and where are they falling short?

Adjacent Brand Channels

Review what **non-competing brands** (but audience-relevant ones) are creating.

- For example, a project management tool might look at what HR tech companies or remote work communities are sharing.
- This can surface timely themes or fresh takes that your competitors haven't tapped yet.

PRO TIP:
Consider different types of competitors — direct (product overlap), indirect (shared audience), and content competitors (publishing on similar themes).

2b: AI-Assisted Ideation Prompt

Want to streamline the process? We've got a ready-made prompt for you. Simply input this prompt with your updates into an AI tool like ChatGPT or Claude, and let it generate a comprehensive list of ideas for you. You can then refine and format them as you see fit.

Use this with ChatGPT or another AI tool:

AI PROMPT:

Act as a senior content strategist. Based on the information provided, generate [number] unique and strategic content ideas across various formats (e.g., blog posts, videos, social media, email series, white papers, webinars, etc.). Ensure the ideas align with the brand's goals, target audience, and content pillars. Include a mix of funnel stages (TOFU, MOFU, BOFU) and suggest suitable channels for each idea.

Each idea should include:

• A working title

• 1-2 sentence summary

• Suggested content type (e.g., video, blog, social post)

• Target funnel stage (TOFU, MOFU, BOFU)

• Recommended CTA

• 2-3 supporting resources or examples

Project Summary: [insert]
Content Goals: [insert]
Content Pillars/Themes: [insert]
Target Audience: [insert]
Industry/Vertical: [insert]
Preferred Formats or Channels: [insert]

PRO TIP:

You can tweak the language in the prompt to lean more toward video, social, gated content, or product marketing, depending on your needs. The more specific your inputs, the better the output.

Step 3	# Document and Format Your Ideation

Once you've generated a batch of content ideas, don't move straight into production. First, pause to document, organize, and evaluate what you've created. This step helps ensure your ideation efforts are strategic, relevant, and ready for planning and prioritization.

We recommend using a centralized format (like a Google Sheet or Notion board) to keep your ideas easy to access, evolve, and align across your team.

Ideation Storage Template:

Use our editable Google Sheet to:

- House all ideas in one place

- Track key information (like audience, channel, and format)

- Flag ideas for follow-up, development, or campaign inclusion

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IDEATION STORAGE TEMPLATE:

📊 Google Sheet

Pro Tips and Next Steps:

After documenting your ideas, take time to evaluate and refine before moving into briefs or production:

- **Review for Clarity & Impact:** Can any ideas be more concise? Do any need additional explanation or context?

- **Check for Redundancy:** Remove or consolidate duplicate ideas, or group them under broader themes.

- **Align with Brand Voice:** Make sure each idea fits your brand's tone and perspective. Adjust language or framing as needed.

- **SEO / Keyword Considerations:** Add any known keywords or intent signals that should guide execution.

Step 4 | **Operationalize Your Ideation Process**

Turning great ideas into great content requires a seamless workflow. Here's how to put your ideation process into action:

1 **Create a Shared Hub**

- ○ Store all ideation templates, briefs, and approved ideas in a centralized location accessible to everyone on the team.

- ○ Options: Use a project management tool like Asana or Trello, your CMS, or a shared cloud drive like Google Drive or OneDrive.

- ○ Accessibility: Ensure all team members have the appropriate access and understand where to find resources.

2 **Bake Ideation into Your Workflow**

- ○ Regular Brainstorms: Schedule regular brainstorming sessions (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) to keep the idea pipeline fresh and aligned with current goals.

- ○ Define Cadence: Establish a clear cadence and structure for these sessions, including pre-work like discovery briefs or competitive audits.

3 **Use Feedback Loops**

- ○ Idea Approval System: Implement a feedback loop for the ideation stage itself, ensuring ideas are vetted and approved before moving forward.

- ○ Post-Publication Review: After content goes live, review its performance and gather insights to refine future ideation.

4 **Align With Strategy**

- ○ Map to Goals: Ensure every idea aligns with broader marketing strategies, campaigns, and KPIs.

- ○ Regular Syncs: Schedule regular syncs between content, marketing, and sales teams to ensure alignment and consistency.

5 **Train the Team**

- ○ Workshops and Tutorials: Host ideation workshops and provide tutorials on tools like ChatGPT, AnswerThePublic, and other ideation aids.

- ○ Access to Tools: Ensure the team has access to the necessary tools and resources, and consider enrolling them in relevant courses or training sessions.

Ready to
Start Ideating?

From blank page to content calendar, this framework helps you build ideas with purpose. Whether you're ideating solo or collaborating with a team, the right structure can help you turn inspiration into execution.

Need more? Check out:

- [Content Marketing Ideation Guide: Tips & Tools](#)
- [How Much Ideation is Enough? Guide to Brainstorming](#)
- [How to Tailor Ideations for Multi-Channel Success](#)
- [Harnessing AI for Content Ideation and Briefing](#)

Let this be your new starting point.

Great content begins with great ideas — and now, you've got a repeatable, flexible framework to guide every brainstorm. Use this playbook to lead team sessions, kick off campaigns, or unblock your content calendar when things go quiet.

Save it, share it, adapt it.

And keep ideation from becoming an afterthought. Because when you get this part right, everything else flows smoother.