



**EXPERTFILE INSIGHTS**

# **THE POWER OF Q&A**

7 REASONS WHY Q&A CONTENT IS NOW  
CRITICAL FOR PROMOTING YOUR  
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



# PROVIDE YOUR AUDIENCE THE ANSWERS THEY'RE LOOKING FOR

OFTEN OVERLOOKED AND UNLOVED,  
Q&A CONTENT CAN MAKE A BIG IMPACT

If you had to summarize the golden rule of content marketing in a single word, what would it be?

We say it's "relevance." Being in the relevance business has been key to the success of Google.

That's why they continue to be intensely focused on content that is aligned with "user intent" - content that is relevant to what a user is looking for. Such a simple yet powerful principle.

Over the years, we've established ourselves as a leading authority on ways to publish expert content, and we are major fans of Q&A. As formats go, there simply is no better return on investment than Q&A. Yes simple, questions and answers. The same content your digital team may have dismissed as simple FAQ's. You may hear comments such as "aren't those just for customer support?" or "We don't do FAQ's on our site." "We're too busy creating more professional content for our audiences such as blogs." We get that. But consider this compelling case for the Q&A content format, and take a fresh look at the role it plays as part of a balanced content strategy.

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So what's so great about Q&A that drives this kind of performance? We'll outline seven reasons here in detail. But if there's one reason that stands out, it's back to the concept of relevance. Q&A makes your content more relatable and approachable, allowing site visitors to quickly skim content, only looking for those questions which are of interest to them. Q&A content empowers your audience while it also gets them to pay more attention. Why? You have organized your content in a way that makes them feel more in control.

Q&A is a simple but very powerful secret that many inhouse and agency SEO pros have used to organically boost rankings on Google. Now there's an exciting movement happening as it spreads to other departments. People in roles as diverse as communications, media relations, business development, sales, fundraising and research are using Q&A to more easily tap into the knowledge of their organization's experts, and using that expertise to engage with media, customers, donors and partners.

Somehow, with all the focus on creating heavy-lift content such as blogs, videos and whitepapers, we've forgotten that sometimes less is more. Remember in these crazy times, many valuable prospects are distracted and pressed for time. Attention is at a premium. Prospects want to graze on content that is snackable - most aren't ready for a five course meal. Q&As are those appetizers that your audience is looking for. There's an old saying in the restaurant business about that very thing - "Hit 'em while they're hungry."

- Organizations can create content **5x** faster vs. other forms like blogs<sup>1</sup>
- Q&A can boost site traffic by as much as **10x** with higher SEO page rank and authority<sup>2</sup>
- Conversion rates improve by **2-10x**<sup>3</sup>



# TOP 7 REASONS FOR Q&A CONTENT

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## #1 RELEVANCE

ANSWERS MAKE YOUR CONTENT EVEN MORE INTERESTING AND ARE PROVEN TO BOOST AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Your audience starts their journey with questions, and they're looking for solutions. Offering answers that zoom in on specific topics allows you to map content more closely to "user intent" to build engagement. Q&A content allows customers to quickly browse - they're in the driver's seat but you've built the road. And it works across all stages of the customer journey, especially in the middle stage when you are looking to sustain interest, build <sup>3</sup>influence and trust.

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## #2 ATTRIBUTION

SHOWING YOUR EXPERTS IS THE BEST WAY TO BUILD TRUST.

Creating a direct link between the answers your experts provide and a page explaining their credentials, like a profile page (i.e. why you should believe them), is the best way to build trust with your audience. According to Edelman's Trust Barometer, trust in organizations across the board is at an all-time low; people want to know the source of the information you give them.<sup>(4)</sup> This transparency also establishes a more human, personal connection to your content.

It's also important to understand that Google is increasingly favoring content that is closely linked to detailed biographical information on the experts who are the sources of this information - especially on critical "Your Money, Your Life" topics related to finance and health. It's one of the ways search engines seek to counter fake news and misinformation. Google's latest E-A-T algorithm update is a significant example of how Google is favoring the content of real experts, but for the many organizations this update is poised to favor (especially colleges and universities) aren't structuring and tagging their expert content with schema and other identifiers to take advantage of this. This is a reason sites that use real expert identities such as Quora are well indexed by search engines, as opposed to others that allow individuals to create custom usernames.

### #3 COVERAGE

#### ANSWERS PROVIDE A WAY TO RAPIDLY EXPAND KEYWORD-RICH CONTENT

Answers are hyper-focused on specific topics, so they are generally shorter in length and simpler to organize than blog posts or other forms of content. This means there are fewer barriers to providing simple yet helpful answers that people are searching for. Q&A also allows you to repurpose content from other sources such as blog posts, whitepapers and videos - a major plus for teams who are challenged to create new content with limited resources. Think about where you need to fill in content gaps on your existing pages. How could Q&A help to quickly address this issue and enrich the conversations you are having with audiences?

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## #4 DURABILITY

ANSWERS YOU PROVIDE IN Q&A CAN BE USEFUL TO AUDIENCES, EVEN YEARS AFTER THEY ARE WRITTEN.

If you are writing answers that are foundational, they will continue to be useful for future audiences. Other time-sensitive forms of content, such as news releases and social posts, often have shorter shelf lives, tied to specific events or the news cycle.

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## #5 DISCOVERY

Q&A CONTENT IS WELL STRUCTURED FOR SEARCH AND CONVERSATIONAL ACTIVITY - EVEN CHATBOTS LOVE IT

The simple structure, brevity and topical relevance of expert answers make it the best content for search engines and on-site search. Plus it's perfect for mobile users which often account for the majority of page traffic. Also did you know that Google has updated their algorithms (see BERT and E-A-T updates) to give higher page rank to high quality content that is structured in the form of questions and answers. The advances that Google and Bing have both made in machine learning give them a much deeper understanding of user intent and Q&A helps them more closely match your content to the questions their users are typing in.

Q&A content can also boost the effectiveness of your conversational marketing programs by providing more relevant links in your chatbots to move visitors deeper into your website. A study by Salesforce.com shows 71% of customers now expect companies to communicate with them in real time but making these interactive conversations more relevant has proven to be a challenge for marketers. Q&A can nicely leverage these technology investments your organization may have already made by feeding these platforms with more specific, topical content that is nicely dialed-in to customer intent.

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## #6 COLLABORATION

Q&A CONTENT IS THE EASIEST WAY FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO SHOWCASE THEIR KNOWLEDGE AS PART OF THEIR CONTENT STRATEGY

Many employee advocacy programs can benefit from a more pragmatic approach to creating content. Q&A allows real experts to stop overthinking content and dive in to share their knowledge. Remember that all your experts have domain knowledge but not all have writing talents for blog posts or the on-camera skills for video. Q&A has far fewer entry barriers and allows you to engage a wider group of experts at all proficiency levels in assembling simple yet helpful answers that people are searching for.

Our client research with experts in sectors such as financial services, higher education and professional services shows that Q&A content can be produced 5x faster than blog posts. While blogging remains important, many experts struggle with developing an engaging story and structural setup that goes into them. By contrast, the simpler structure of Q&A content allows experts to focus on what they know - sometimes very dry topics such as changes to tax rules, legal precedents or scientific results - but nonetheless very valuable to audiences searching on these specific, often "long tail" topics.

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## #7 MEASUREABILITY

GETTING MORE CONTENT PUBLISHED  
ACROSS A WIDER RANGE OF TOPICS  
GIVES YOU MORE AUDIENCE  
ENGAGEMENT DATA TO WORK WITH.

Q&A content is a goldmine for people who love data, and it won't take a lot of time to gain important insights that show where you need to focus. Look at what specific questions are generating the most traffic - that will tell you where you can dive deeper with more challenging content such as blogs, videos and whitepapers. Q&A content produced across a wide variety of topics also allows you to create "leaderboards" - sortable metrics that highlight the experts on your team that are generating the most Google search activity, pagerank, site activity and lead generation. This feedback creates a virtuous cycle; if your experts can see the impact of their work, they will be more engaged to create more. As one of our clients commented, "Using Q&A reporting data is like playing 'moneyball' with our expert content - it gives you a competitive edge." How are you using Q&A to engage your experts, feed the content beast, and drive more reputation, relationships and revenue? We would love to hear what you think. Drop us a note or let us know if you would like to learn more about how expertise marketing can power your business.

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## **Sources**

1. ExpertFile Client Research Study, 2021 [www.expertfile.com](http://www.expertfile.com)
2. Case Study by Samuel Schmitt [www.samuelschmitt.com](http://www.samuelschmitt.com)
3. Demandbase Study [www.demandbase.com](http://www.demandbase.com))
4. Edelman Trust Barometer Study [www.edelman.com/trust/2020-trust-barometer](http://www.edelman.com/trust/2020-trust-barometer)

## About ExpertFile

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