

CONTENT CREATION · CONTENT STRATEGIST

The Originality Standard

A one-page gate that asks a single question of every piece of content: could a competent person with a good model have produced this without you? If yes, it should not go out.

THE DECISION THIS TEMPLATE PROTECTS

Whether this piece contains anything that could only have come from us.

ROLE

Content Creation · applies to every role that publishes

COURSE PLACEMENT

Base Module · Content, attention and decay

REVISION

**Version 1.0
Current as of 19 August 2026**

Run this before publication, not at the idea stage. It takes two minutes and it fails a lot of drafts, which is the point. A piece must clear **at least two** of the five originality sources to publish. One is not enough; the market is currently full of content that clears one.

BEFORE YOU START, YOU NEED

- The finished draft.
- Willingness to kill work you have already paid for.

01 Why this gate exists

Content production costs have collapsed and content performance has not improved to match. Roughly two thirds of B2B marketers report producing more with AI; only a small minority report that it performed better. The gap between volume and value is the whole opportunity.

Which means the scarce thing is no longer the ability to produce a competent article. It is having something in the article that could not have been generated. This gate is how that becomes a standard rather than an aspiration.

02 The five sources of originality

SOURCE	WHAT IT MEANS	PRESENT IN THIS PIECE?	WHERE
Primary data	Numbers we gathered ourselves: survey, account data, experiment		
Lived decision	A real call somebody made, with the reasoning and the cost		
Named practitioner view	A person with a credential saying something specific and attributable		
Original example	A case examined properly, not a well-known brand summarised		
Contested position	A claim a reasonable expert would argue with		

Two of five is the floor to publish. Three is a good piece. Four or more and it will be cited by other people, which is the only distribution that compounds.

03 The replacement test

WRITE THE PROMPT THAT WOULD PRODUCE ROUGHLY THIS PIECE

If you can write it in one line, the piece has no moat. If you genuinely cannot, say why not.

WHAT IS IN THIS PIECE THAT THE PROMPT COULD NOT PRODUCE

04 Verdict

VERDICT	MEANING
Publish	Clears two or more sources. Named byline attached.
Return for one addition	Structurally sound, needs one genuine input. Name which.
Do not publish	Clears none or one. Publishing it costs authority and gains a URL.

VERDICT, REVIEWER AND DATE

JUDGMENT PROMPTS

1. Which of the five sources does your organisation never manage to supply, and what would it take to fix that?
2. Are you failing pieces, or has everything passed since you adopted this?
3. What is the last thing you published that somebody else quoted?

WHAT THIS TEMPLATE WILL NOT DO FOR YOU

- It will not tell you whether a piece is well written. It tells you whether it needed to exist.
- It does not measure performance. Original content can still fail; unoriginal content mostly fails quietly.
- It is a floor, not a ceiling. Clearing two sources is permission to publish, not evidence of quality.

THE DEFENSIBLE OUTPUT

A dated verdict attached to each piece, and over a quarter, a visible pattern of which originality source your team can never supply.

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