

The State of Content Marketing for B2B Companies in 2018 – Five Factors for Success

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the Content Marketing Institute published a study on the State of B2B Content Marketing in 2018. You can download the complete study here, but we wanted to summarize the most important takeaways for you here.

The research was conducted by contacting 2,190 organizations and presenting the findings associated with the 870 respondents who indicated their organization is for-profit in North America, primarily selling products and services to businesses (B2B).

The overall message is that Content Marketing an important tactic for growing audiences in 2018 and that organizations that have made a commitment to developing and distributing relevant content are seeing significant positive results.

The study compares the most successful respondents to the least successful respondents to understand the reasons behind the most successful content marketing efforts.

COMPARISON CHART

This Year's B2B Content Marketing Top Performers At-A-Glance

	Most Successful	All Respondents	Least Successful
Organization is extremely/very committed to content marketing	89%	56%	27%
Organization's content marketing is sophisticated/mature	73%	34%	4%
Has a documented content marketing strategy	62%	37%	16%
Measures content marketing ROI	55%	35%	18%
Percentage of total marketing budget allocated to content marketing (average)	40%	26%	14%
Rates project management flow during content-creation process as excellent/very good	70%	36%	14%
Agrees that organization is focused on building audiences	92%	80%	65%
Agrees that organization values creativity and craft in content creation and production	88%	74%	59%
Agrees that organization is realistic about what content marketing can achieve	86%	62%	45%
Agrees that leadership team gives ample time to produce content marketing results	84%	59%	38%
Always/frequently delivers content consistently	75%	59%	33%
Rates alignment of metrics and content marketing goals as excellent/very good	54%	19%	2%

Chart term definitions: A top performer (aka "most successful") is one who characterizes his or her organization's overall content marketing approach as extremely or very successful. The "least successful" characterize their organization's approach as minimally or not at all successful. Base: B2B content marketers.

2018 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Five factors that determine Content Marketing Success



HAVING A CLEARLY DEFINED STRATEGY

Highly successful organizations have a clearly defined content marketing strategy that has management support, is adequately budgeted, and clearly defined and measurable goals.

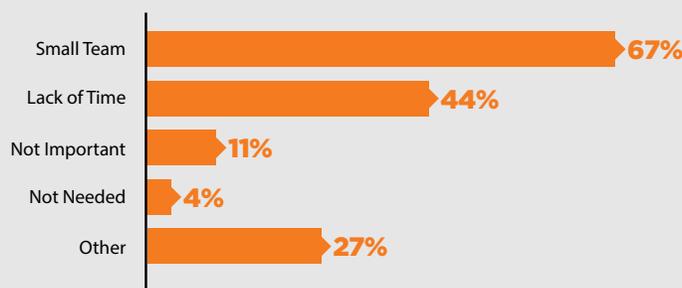
If you are not sure where you are going, it is going to be extremely hard to get there. According to the study, respondents who have a documented content marketing strategy reported greater success than respondents without a documented strategy.

Respondents without a documented strategy and no plans to develop one cite lack of resources and lack of time as explanations.

CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Why do you think your organization does not plan to develop a content marketing strategy within 12 months?

Reasons B2B Marketers Do Not Plan to Develop a Content Marketing Strategy Within 12 Months



Base: B2B content marketers who indicated their organization has no plans to develop a content marketing strategy within 12 months (n=45). Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

2018 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America; Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Having a clearly defined and documented strategy is key to overall success and is too important to go without. A clearly defined strategy will guide your efforts and allow you to optimize over time as you learn from your successes and mistakes.



DEFINED METRICS AND MEASUREMENT

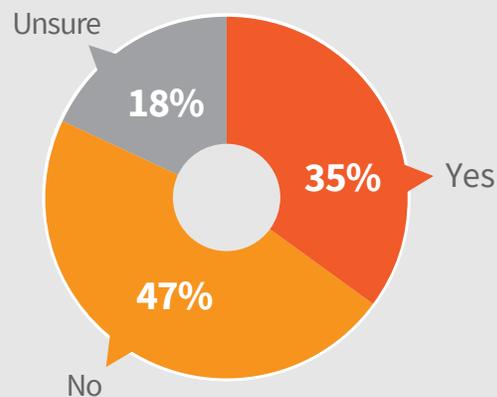
One of the key advantages of digital marketing of all kinds is the ability to measure the effectiveness of your efforts. Only through defining and measuring performance metrics can we make the necessary adjustments and improvements that lead to success.

However, it appears that metrics and measurement remains a challenge for many marketers. Only 19% of the respondents rated their organizations as doing an excellent/very good job of aligning metrics with content marketing goals. Almost half of the respondents do not measure Content Marketing ROI and cited as the top two reasons as “no formal justification” and “we need an easier way to do this”.

GOALS & METRICS

Does your organization measure the return on investment (ROI) of its content marketing efforts?

Percentage of B2B Marketers Who Measure Content Marketing ROI



2018 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America. Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Base: B2B content marketers; aided list.

DEFINED METRICS AND MEASUREMENT *(continued)*

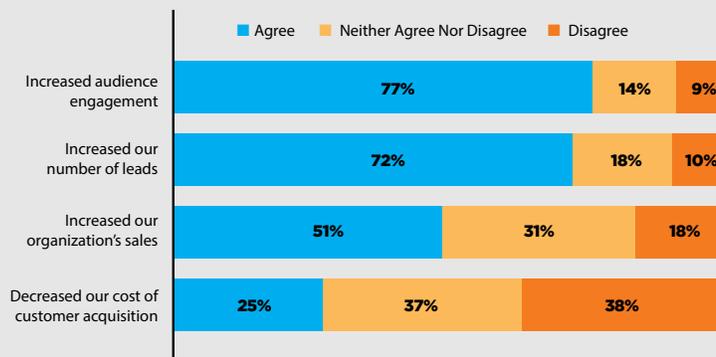
However, the good news is that respondents who do measure metrics state that they can explicitly demonstrate how content marketing increases audience engagement (77%) and increases the number of leads (72%). As marketers know only too well, their efforts and budgets are being subjected to a high level of scrutiny these days. Being able to quantitatively demonstrate the effectiveness of your marketing efforts is crucial to how your efforts are perceived by your organization.

GOALS & METRICS

Indicate your level of agreement with each statement concerning the content marketing metrics used in your organization.

B2B Marketers' Metrics Agreement Statements

/my team can demonstrate how content marketing has...



2018 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Base = B2B content marketers who use metrics to determine content marketing results. Aided list.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTENT FORMAT AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL

Creating content is difficult. Developing quality resources that are interesting, compelling, and useful to your audience requires skill, time and effort.

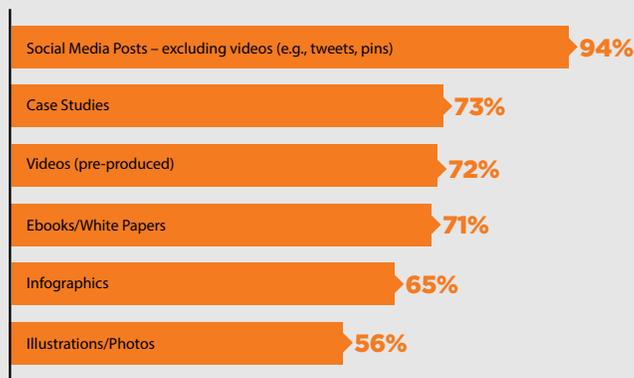
Only 36% of respondents rated the flow of Content Creation projects within their organizations as good. This reflects the difficulty most organizations encounter in their content creation efforts.

According to the study, the most effective content types were ebooks and white papers (50%) followed by Case Studies (47%) and Social Media posts (41%). While these content formats are effective, it is critical not to ignore emerging content types such as video which, while not in wide use, have been shown to be extremely effective in driving engagement.

CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

Which types of content does your organization use for content marketing purposes?

Types of Content B2B Marketers Use for Content Marketing Purposes (Top 6)



Other types of content used:

Research Reports (37%); Interactive Tools (e.g., quizzes, assessments, calculators) (33%); Podcasts (17%); Videos (live-streaming) (17%); Mobile Apps (11%); Film/TV (e.g., documentaries, short films) (4%); Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality (VR/AR) Experiences (4%); and Other (11%).

AVERAGE NUMBER USED:

Most Successful 7
 All Respondents 6
 Least Successful 4

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Base = B2B content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTENT FORMAT AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL (continued)

The study reports that the most effective distribution channel was email (93%) followed by Social Media (92%), and Blogs (79%). While the most effective Social Media platform was LinkedIn (97%), followed by Twitter (87%), and Facebook (86%).

CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

Of the content marketing types you use, which three are the most effective at helping your organization achieve specific objectives?

Top 3 Most Effective Types of Content B2B Marketers Use for Content Marketing Purposes

ALL RESPONDENTS



MOST SUCCESSFUL



LEAST SUCCESSFUL



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Base = B2B content marketers who use the types listed. Maximum of three responses permitted. Results shown based on response frequencies.

What the study didn't mention is the importance of matching the content and distribution methods with the Buyer Personas you have defined for your audience. All good content begins with a deep understanding of your audience. Once you define the important characteristics of your audience, it is easier to develop content that answers the questions they have and determine which distribution channels offer the best chance to reach them.



ORGANIZATIONAL BUY-IN

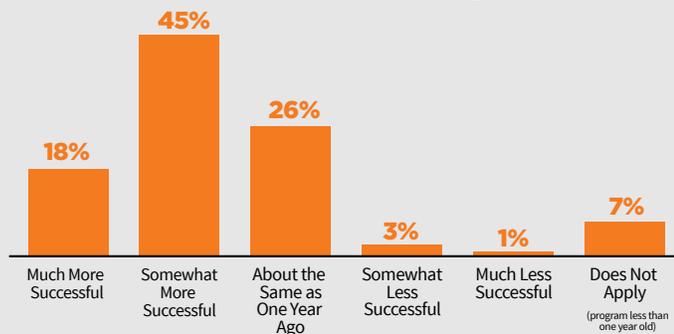
Effective Content Marketing requires a commitment in terms of budget and an alignment between marketing, sales and the entire organization. One of the most effective ways to obtain buy-in is to demonstrate the effectiveness of your efforts. 77% of the survey respondents rate their organizations content marketing efforts as Extremely successful, Very successful, or moderately successful.

According to the survey, 65% of the survey respondents indicated that their content marketing success is improving year over year.

COMMITMENT & OVERALL SUCCESS

How does the success of your organization's current overall content marketing approach compare with one year ago?

How B2B Marketers Rate Their Organization's Content Marketing Success Compared With One Year Ago



2018 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Base: B2B content marketers; aided list.

The demonstrated success of content marketing programs leads to increased budgets.

According to the research, the average percentage of total marketing budget spent on content marketing by all respondents is 26% while the most successful organizations spend 40% while the least successful spent 14%.

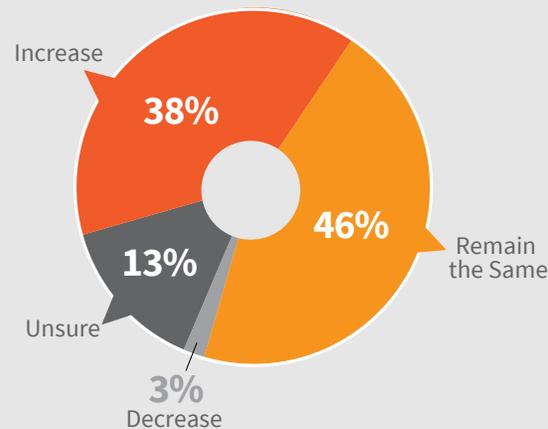
Additionally, the most successful respondents have increased their content marketing budgets over time, in response to the effectiveness of their efforts and 38% of the respondents plan on increasing their content marketing budgets in the next 12 months.

ORGANIZATIONAL BUY-IN *(continued)*

BUDGETS & SPENDING

How do you expect your organization's content marketing budget to change in the next 12 months?

B2B Content Marketing Spending (Over Next 12 Months)



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Base = B2B content marketers; aided list.

It is clear from the study that most of these organizations are experiencing some level of success based on their content marketing efforts. Their commitment to measure their results and optimize their tactics leads to increased success over time. Organizations attribute High Quality Content (78%) and well-defined Content Marketing Strategy (72%) with their improved Content Marketing success. Having a documented strategy and the ability to demonstrate results can make it easier to obtain the organizational buy-in that is critical to the success of any content marketing effort.



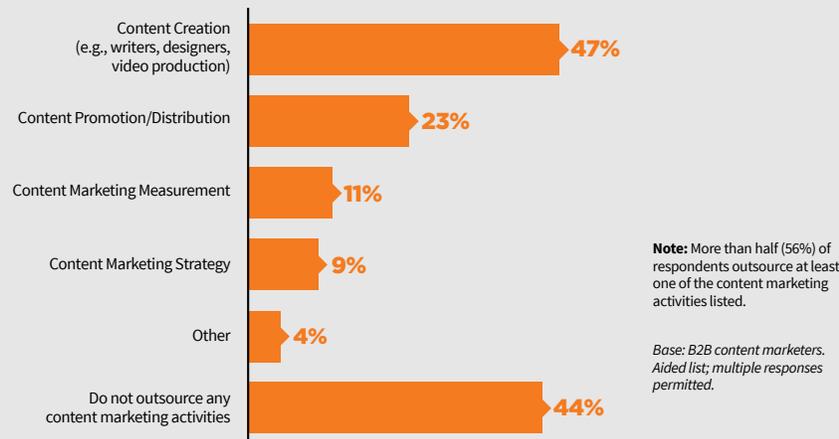
OUTSOURCING CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE PART OF A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY

Over half of the respondents in the study reported that their content marketing team consists of a small or one-person team. 56% of the organizations outsource some of their content marketing activities. These include writing, design, video production, content distribution, and measurement, and even strategy.

USAGE & TEAM ORGANIZATION

What content marketing activities does your organization outsource?

Content Marketing Activities B2B Marketers Outsource



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Content marketing requires a variety of skill sets and they are rarely found in a single individual. Many organizations take advantage of outside resources to design and implement highly effective content marketing programs.

SUMMARY

Content marketing is working to build audiences and increase leads for most B2B Organizations. While content creation can be difficult, it is clearly worth the time and resources required.

While content formats and distribution channels continue to evolve, utilizing digital content to connect with the audiences that you want to connect with remains an effective way to drive new people to your website and landing pages.

Finally, many organizations utilize partners to augment and enhance their content marketing efforts and build on their successes.