Content Marketing Trends

SURVEY SUMMARY REPORT

MARKETING PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

Ascend2 Monthly Research Series Conducted in Partnership with Leading Marketing Solution Providers
Content Marketing Trends Survey Summary Report

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License. You may adapt, copy, distribute and transmit this work. However, you must attribute the work as produced by Ascend2 and its Research Partners but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rising above the content marketing noise</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most important objectives</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rating content marketing success</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most challenging obstacles to success</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How budgets are changing</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content types by effectiveness</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content types by difficulty</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most effective content creation resources</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness versus difficulty</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring content marketing performance</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey methodology and demographics</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Ascend2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The volume of content being distributed through marketing channels has reached deafening levels. Yet, half of companies surveyed (52%) don’t plan to increase content marketing budgets.

**What strategies and tactics will savvy marketers use to rise above the noise and budget constraints?**

To find out, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded the Content Marketing Trends Survey and completed interviews with 290 marketing, sales and business professionals from around the world. We thank them for sharing their valuable insights with you.

The charts in this edition of the study titled *Content Marketing Trends Survey Summary Report* represent the average of all market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments are reported on exclusively by our Research Partners.

This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy planning and presentation materials. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

*Sergio Balegno*  
Partner / CEO

---

**Ascend2**
Improving customer engagement and increasing lead generation are the most important content marketing objectives for more than half of companies surveyed. To achieve these important objectives, marketers are required to produce a steady stream of relevant and compelling content.

What are the MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES of a content marketing strategy?

- Improve customer engagement: 52%
- Increase lead generation: 52%
- Increase brand awareness: 44%
- Increase sales revenue: 38%
- Improve lead nurturing: 32%
- Increase website traffic: 28%
- Increase customer retention: 26%
- Improve search engine rankings: 19%
Content marketing is successful at achieving important objectives for 89% of companies. It is also a time-consuming tactic that requires a commitment from marketing leaders and their teams.
Lack of content creation resources is the most challenging obstacle to content marketing success. There are many options for creating and distributing the volume of relevant and compelling content required, and 42% say the lack of an effective strategy for accomplishing this is a top obstacle.

What are the MOST CHALLENGING OBSTACLES to content marketing success?

- Lack of content creation resources: 53%
- Lack of an effective strategy: 42%
- Budget constraints: 40%
- Inability to measure effectiveness: 33%
- Lack of cross-channel integration: 27%
- Lack of employee skills: 25%
- Lack of a variety of content types: 24%
- Lack of management support: 15%

Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=290
Ascend2 and Research Partners, Published March 2015
Overcoming obstacles that content marketers face to achieve important objectives requires a financial commitment. Less than half of companies surveyed (48%) are increasing content marketing budgets. Despite the high success rate of content marketing, 8% are decreasing budgets.

*How is your content marketing BUDGET CHANGING?*

- Increasing: 48%
- Staying the same: 44%
- Decreasing: 8%
The phase “a picture is worth a thousand words” may not be as applicable to content marketing where word-intensive articles and case studies rank as the most effective type of content. Instant gratification content like videos and infographics also rank high on the effectiveness scale.

What are the MOST EFFECTIVE types of content used?

- Articles/case studies: 54%
- Videos: 46%
- Infographics: 43%
- Research/white papers: 36%
- Webinars/online events: 30%
- eNewsletters: 28%
- Photos/illustrations: 24%
- News releases: 10%

Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=290
Ascend2 and Research Partners, Published March 2015
CONTENT TYPES BY DIFFICULTY

The most difficult types of content to create such as videos, webinars and research-based papers often require resources and capabilities not available in-house.

What are the MOST DIFFICULT types of content to create?

- Videos: 59%
- Webinars/online events: 50%
- Research/white papers: 50%
- Infographics: 34%
- Articles/case studies: 31%
- eNewsletters: 13%
- Photos/illustrations: 8%
- News releases: 6%
The degree of difficulty required to create many types of content is driving the need to outsource content creation. 85% of companies surveyed say they outsource all or part of their content creation, allowing them to access specialized skills and capabilities not available in-house.

**What are the MOST EFFECTIVE RESOURCES for creating content?**

- Combination of outsourced and in-house resources 75%
- In-house content creation resources only 15%
- Outsource content creation to a specialist 10%

Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=290
Ascend2 and Research Partners, Published March 2015
Lack of content creation resources is a reality for a majority of marketing departments. However, lack of an effective strategy is also a top obstacle to success. Planning an effective content marketing strategy requires a balance of what is most effective with what is realistic to create.

*Comparing most effective types of content with most difficult to create.*

- **Articles/case studies**: 31% effective, 54% difficult
- **Videos**: 46% effective, 59% difficult
- **Infographics**: 43% effective, 59% difficult
- **Research/white papers**: 36% effective, 50% difficult
- **Webinars/online events**: 30% effective, 50% difficult
- **eNewsletters**: 13% effective, 28% difficult
- **Photos/illustrations**: 8% effective, 24% difficult
- **News releases**: 6% effective, 10% difficult

*Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=290, Ascend2 and Research Partners, Published March 2015*
Engaging prospects and customers, and generating leads, are the top objectives of a content marketing strategy. Subsequently, measuring the conversion of prospects to leads, and the quality of leads generated, are the most useful metrics for measuring content marketing performance.

**What are the MOST USEFUL METRICS for measuring content marketing performance?**

- Conversion rate: 50%
- Quality of leads: 45%
- Website traffic: 42%
- Number of leads: 37%
- Sales revenue: 30%
- Subscriber list growth: 27%
- Social media sharing: 27%
- Search engine rankings: 17%

Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=290
Ascend2 and Research Partners, Published March 2015
Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of popular digital marketing strategies and practices using a standardized questionnaire, research methodology and proprietary 3-Minute Survey format. Findings are examined in a quantitative context by experienced analysts and reported objectively.

This survey was conducted online from a panel of more than 50,000 US and international marketing, sales and business professionals representing a range of demographic roles, channels and company sizes as follows:

### Number of Employees
- More than 500: 22%
- 50 to 500: 21%
- Fewer than 50: 57%

### Role in the Company
- CEO / COO / CMO / CSO etc.: 35%
- Marketing VP / Director / Manager: 33%
- Sales VP / Director / Manager: 8%
- Marketing or Sales Staff: 15%
- Other: 9%

### Primary Marketing/Sales Channel
- B2B (Business-to-Business): 74%
- B2C (Business-to-Consumer): 26%
Research-Based Demand Generation for Marketing Solution Providers

If marketing professionals are your ideal prospects, we can help you find more of them. Marketing software, data and media companies, and digital marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to reliably generate demand and supplement marketing content for their firms. Our Research Partner Programs are transparent – spotlighting your brand and the interests of your market. Learn more at www.Ascend2.com
Research Partner Programs provide white label reports and a guaranteed number of leads in two simple steps:

1. Choose the topics of interest to your target market
   - Content Marketing
   - Email Marketing
   - Video Marketing
   - Organic Search (SEO)
   - Marketing Automation
   - Email List Growth
   - Website Optimization
   - Inbound Marketing
   - Paid Search (PPC)
   - Lead Generation
   - Social Media Strategy
   - Marketing Database

2. Choose an exclusive research segment for each marketing topic
   - Benchmarks for Success [Research data from the successful program segment]
   - B2B Benchmarks [Research data from the business-to-business segment]
   - B2C Benchmarks [Research data from the business-to-consumer segment]
   - Enterprise Benchmarks [Research data from the large company segment]
   - SMB Benchmarks [Research data from the small and medium business segment]
   - Agency Benchmarks [Research data from the marketing agency segment]
   - Leadership Benchmarks [Research data from the marketing leadership segment]
   - Other Benchmarks [Research data unique to a specific topic when available]

If marketing professionals are your ideal prospects, watch this 90 second video.