

11TH ANNUAL

# B2B CONTENT MARKETING

BENCHMARKS, BUDGETS,  
AND TRENDS



INSIGHTS FOR 2021



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION ..... 3
- B2B CONTENT MARKETING TOP PERFORMERS AT A GLANCE ..... 4
- PANDEMIC RESPONSE & CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS ..... 5
- TEAM STRUCTURE & OUTSOURCING ..... 13
- CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION ..... 20
- METRICS & GOALS ..... 32
- BUDGETS & SPENDING ..... 36
- INSIGHTS FOR 2021 ..... 42
- METHODOLOGY ..... 48
- ABOUT ..... 49

## SURVEY TERM DEFINITIONS

**Content Marketing:** A strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

**Success:** Achieving your organization’s desired/targeted results.

## CHART TERM DEFINITIONS

**All Respondents:** B2B content marketers, all of whom indicated their organization has used content marketing for at least one year.

**Most Successful (aka Top Performers) and Least Successful:** The “most successful” are those who characterize their organization’s overall content marketing approach as extremely or very successful (Top 2). The “least successful” characterize their organization’s approach as minimally or not at all successful (Bottom 2). See Page 10.



**ANN HANDLEY**  
Chief Content Officer,  
MarketingProfs



**LISA MURTON BEETS**  
Research Director/  
Report Author, CMI

**STEPHANIE STAHL**  
General Manager, CMI

**ROBERT ROSE**  
Chief Strategy Advisor, CMI

**KIM MOUTSOS**  
VP Content, CMI

**CATHY McPHILLIPS**  
VP Marketing, CMI

**JOSEPH “JK” KALINOWSKI**  
Creative Director, CMI

# CONTENT MARKETING IN A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

**W**elcome to the *11th Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends* report. You may notice this year's report feels different than past years and that's by design. A year like no other required an approach like no other.

As in past years, we fielded the survey during the summer. We asked many of the same questions as last year but added new ones to see how content marketers were faring several months into the pandemic.

Although the data did not reveal drastic reductions in content marketing resources, many respondents shared in the fill-in comments their challenges of having to do more with less. Others shared their concerns about trying to reach audiences in an overcrowded virtual world.

Nevertheless, one thing stood out: Content marketers are resilient. Most have met the challenges of the pandemic head-on: They're adapting quickly—and they believe *in the value their content provides*.

## B2B Content Marketing Top Performers At A Glance

For many of the questions this year, we did not observe large gaps between all respondents and the most successful. Areas where we observed a gap of at least 10 percentage points are shown here.

	Most Successful	All Respondents	Least Successful
Has a documented content marketing strategy	60%	43%	21%
Organization’s content marketing is sophisticated/mature	77%	49%	10%
Uses an editorial calendar	80%	70%	50%
Has established an online community	42%	32%	21%
Uses metrics to measure content performance	94%	81%	60%
<b>Strongly/somewhat agrees:</b>			
Organization made quick changes due to the pandemic	93%	83%	62%
Organization made effective changes due to the pandemic	94%	80%	51%
<b>Uses content marketing successfully to:</b>			
Nurture subscribers/audiences/leads	73%	60%	38%
Generate sales/revenue	64%	51%	41%
Build a subscribed audience	60%	47%	25%

\*Chart term definitions: A top performer (aka “most successful”) is a respondent who characterizes their 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.

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

# PANDEMIC RESPONSE & CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS



**W**hen COVID-19 began to spread, marketers made quick adjustments to their content marketing strategy. At the time of the survey, many had responded swiftly by changing their messaging strategy and adjusting their editorial calendars; however, far fewer had begun to study how the pandemic influenced the customer journey—or how it affected personas. Even fewer had adjusted their content marketing key performance indicators (KPIs) or metrics—important steps for analyzing whether changes being made are effective.

Even so, when we asked respondents to look back over the last 12 months as a whole, 31% said their organization had been extremely/very successful with content marketing. It will be interesting to see how marketers report next year on the pandemic's broader impacts on their success, considering we were only four months into a “stay-at-home” world at the time of the survey.

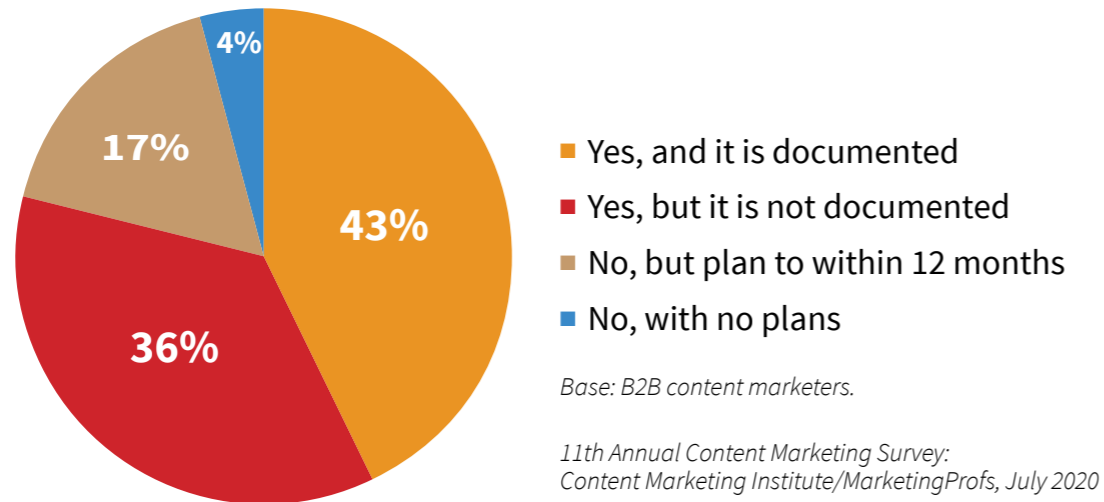
**“WE ARE CHALLENGED WITH KEEPING TRACK OF HOW COVID-19 IMPACTED THE BUYER JOURNEY AND HOW WE NEED TO CREATE CONTENT TO ADDRESS THOSE POINTS OF FRICTION AND GET PEOPLE ACROSS THE FINISH LINE.”**

**Survey Respondent**

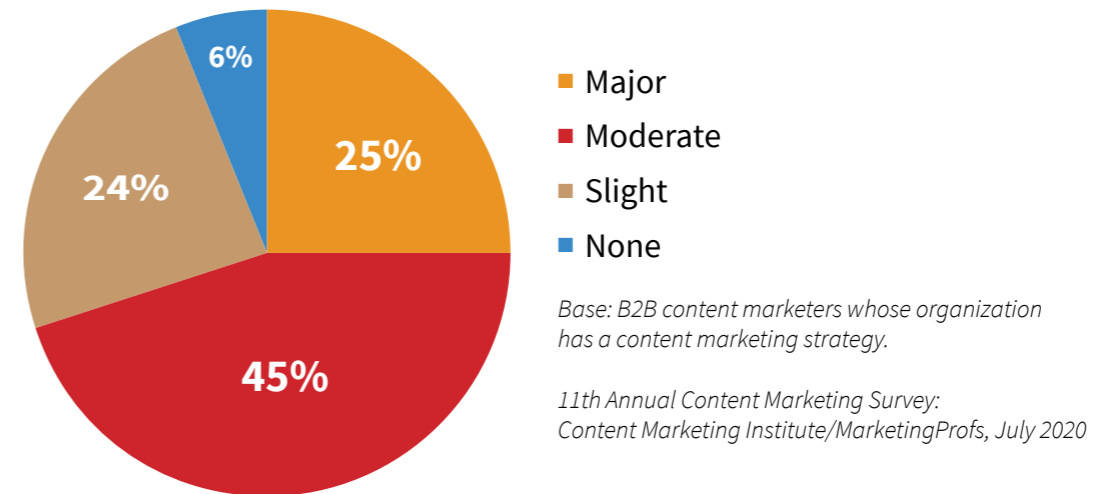
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey

79% of B2B marketers reported their organization has a content marketing strategy. Of those, 70% made major or moderate adjustments to their strategy due to the pandemic. 22% view those adjustments as short-term and 66% view them as both short- and long-term.

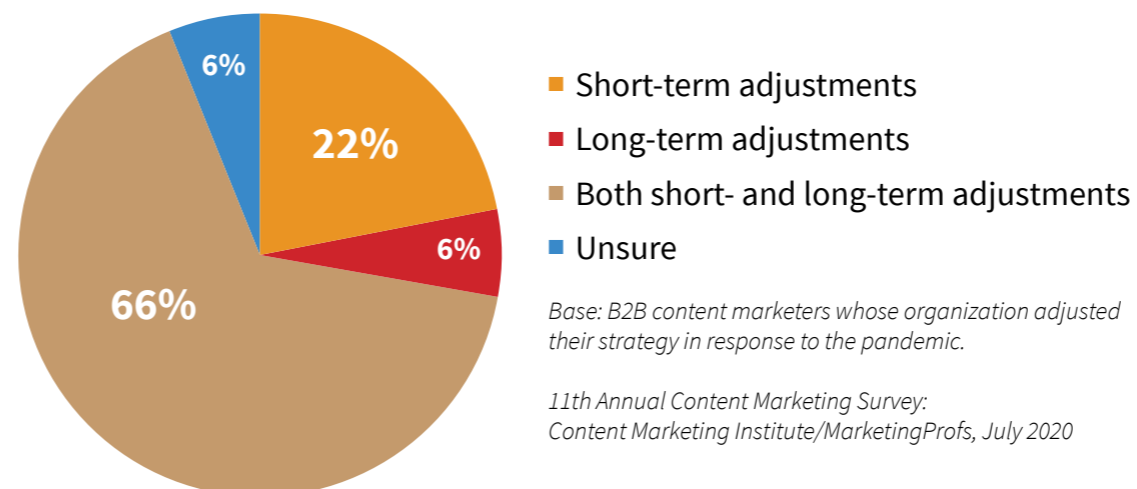
**Percentage of B2B Marketers With a Content Marketing Strategy**



**Impact of Pandemic on B2B Content Marketing Strategy**

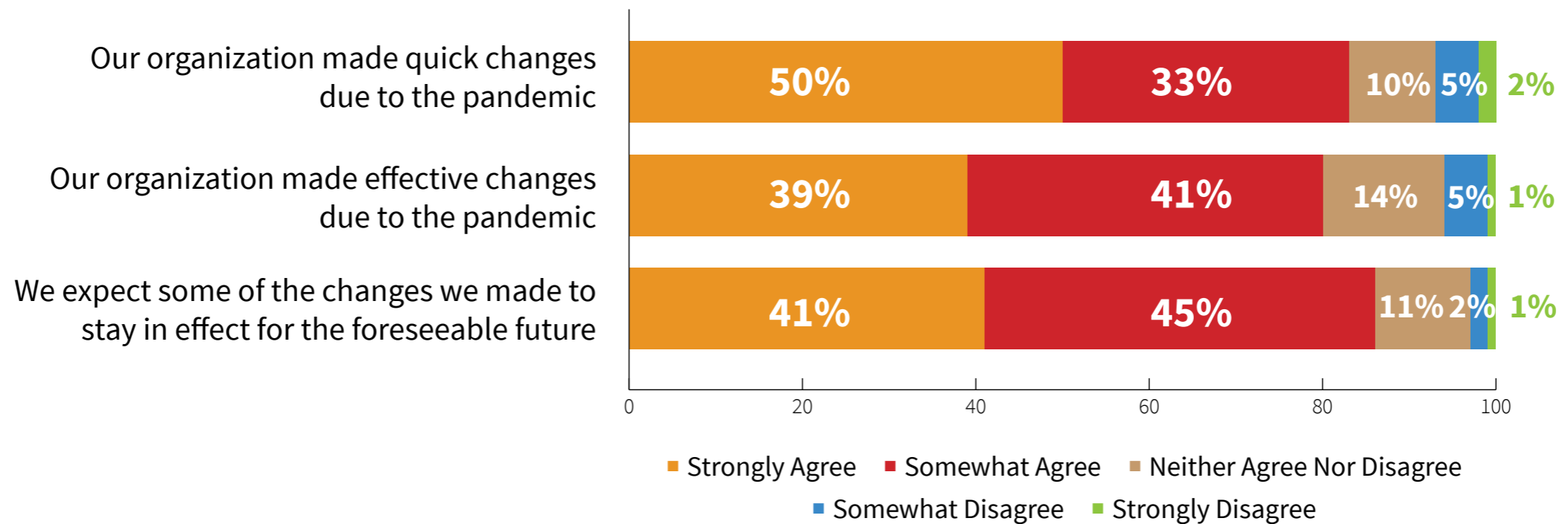


**Nature of Adjustments Made to Content Marketing Strategy as a Result of Pandemic**



Regarding the speed with which organizations responded to the pandemic, 83% said they made quick changes to their content marketing. 80% felt the changes were effective and 86% expected some of the changes to stay in effect for the foreseeable future.

## B2B Marketers' Opinions About Changes Their Organization Made to Content Marketing in Response to Pandemic

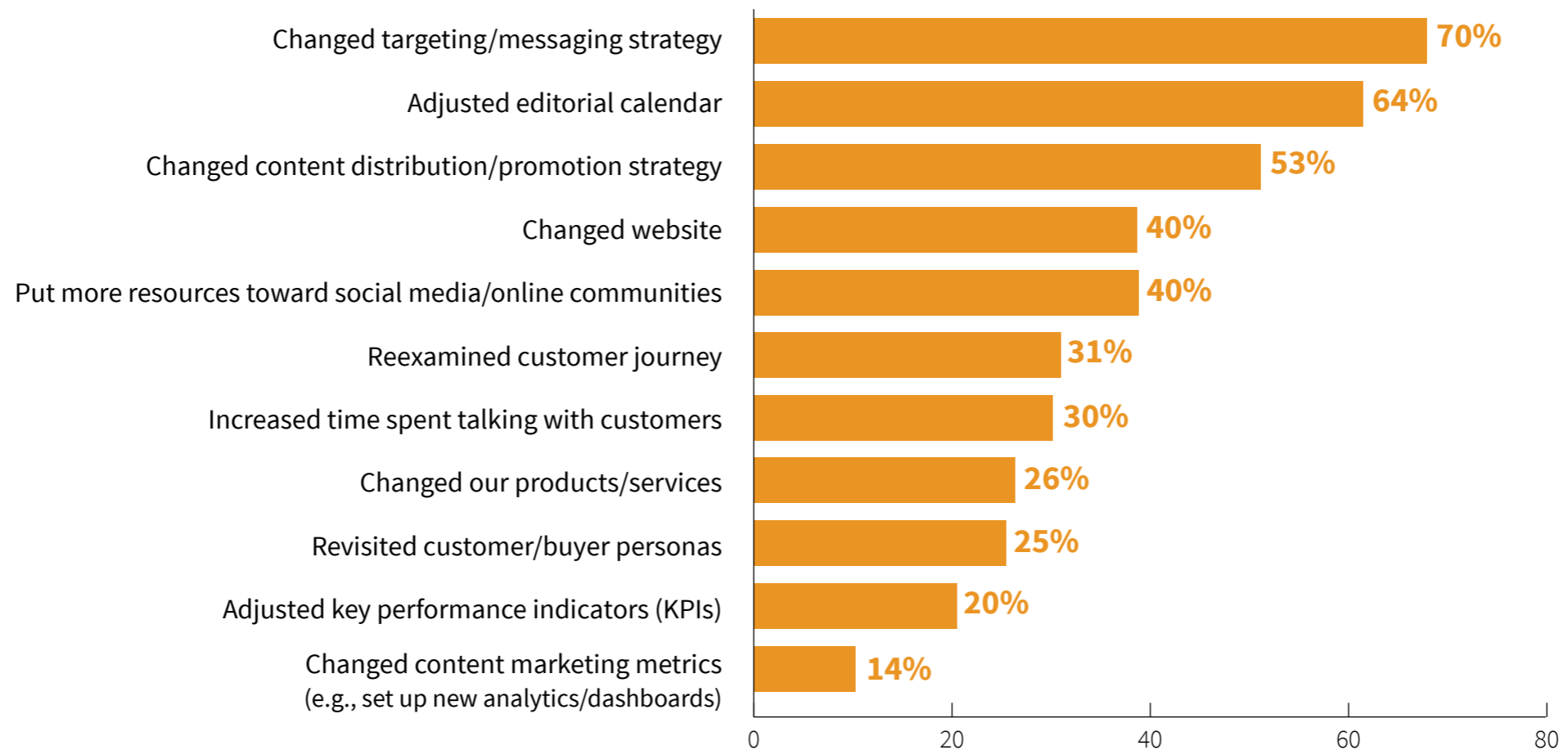


*Base: B2B content marketers who answered each statement.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020*



In response to the pandemic, many B2B marketers changed their targeting/messaging strategy, editorial calendar, and distribution strategy. Fewer revisited the customer journey and personas, or adjusted their content marketing key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics.

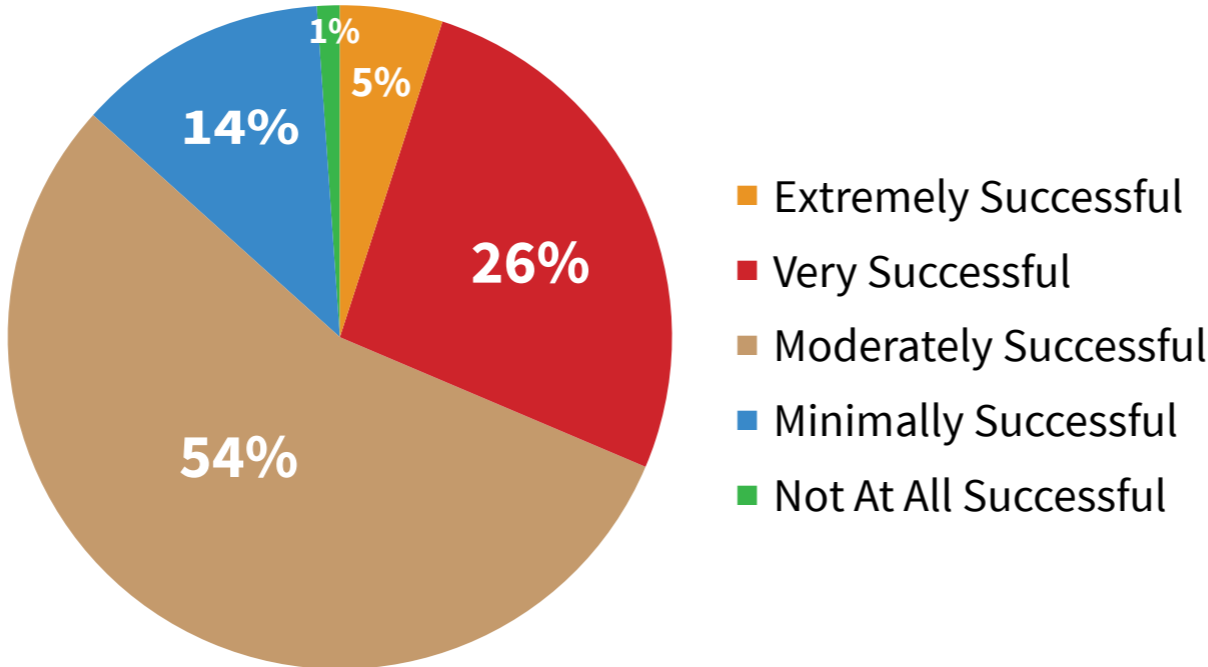
### Content Marketing Changes B2B Organizations Made in Response to the Pandemic



Base: B2B content marketers whose organization made at least one of the changes shown on the aided list. Multiple responses permitted. Six percent indicated none of the above. 11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

Four months into the pandemic, 31% of B2B marketers reported their organization was extremely or very successful with content marketing in the last 12 months.

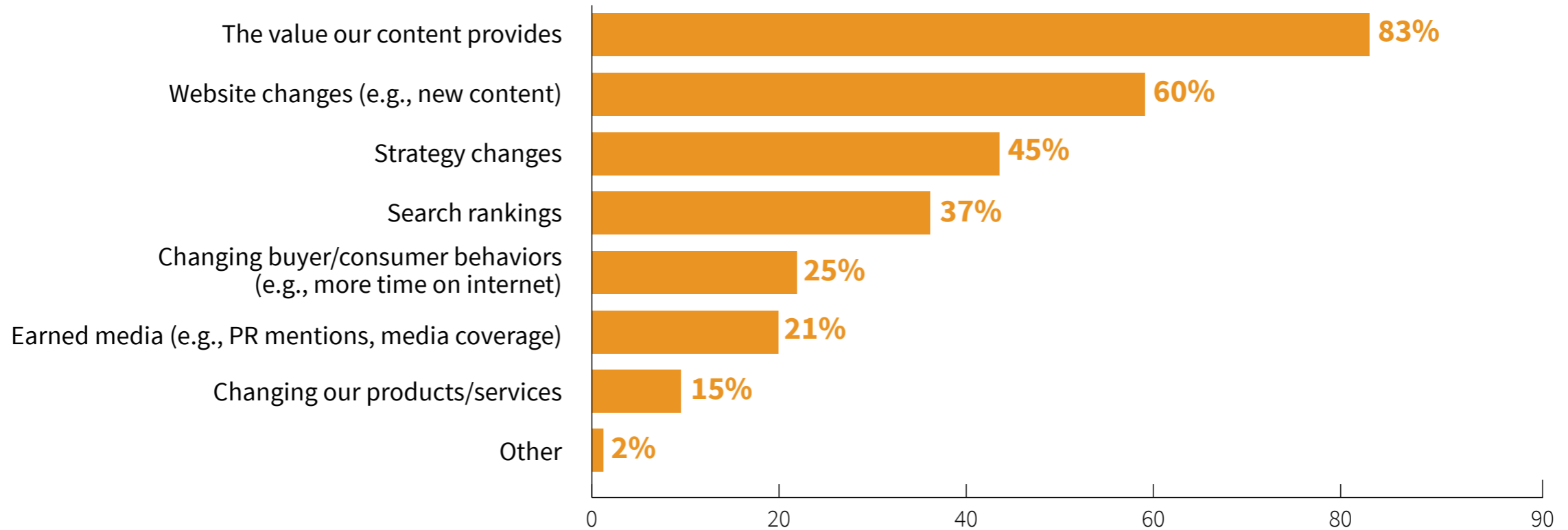
### How B2B Marketers Rate Their Organization's Overall Level of Content Marketing Success in Last 12 Months



Base: B2B content marketers; aided list.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

B2B marketers who reported high levels of content marketing success (extremely/very successful) said the top two factors contributing to that success were the value their content provides (83%) and website changes (60%).

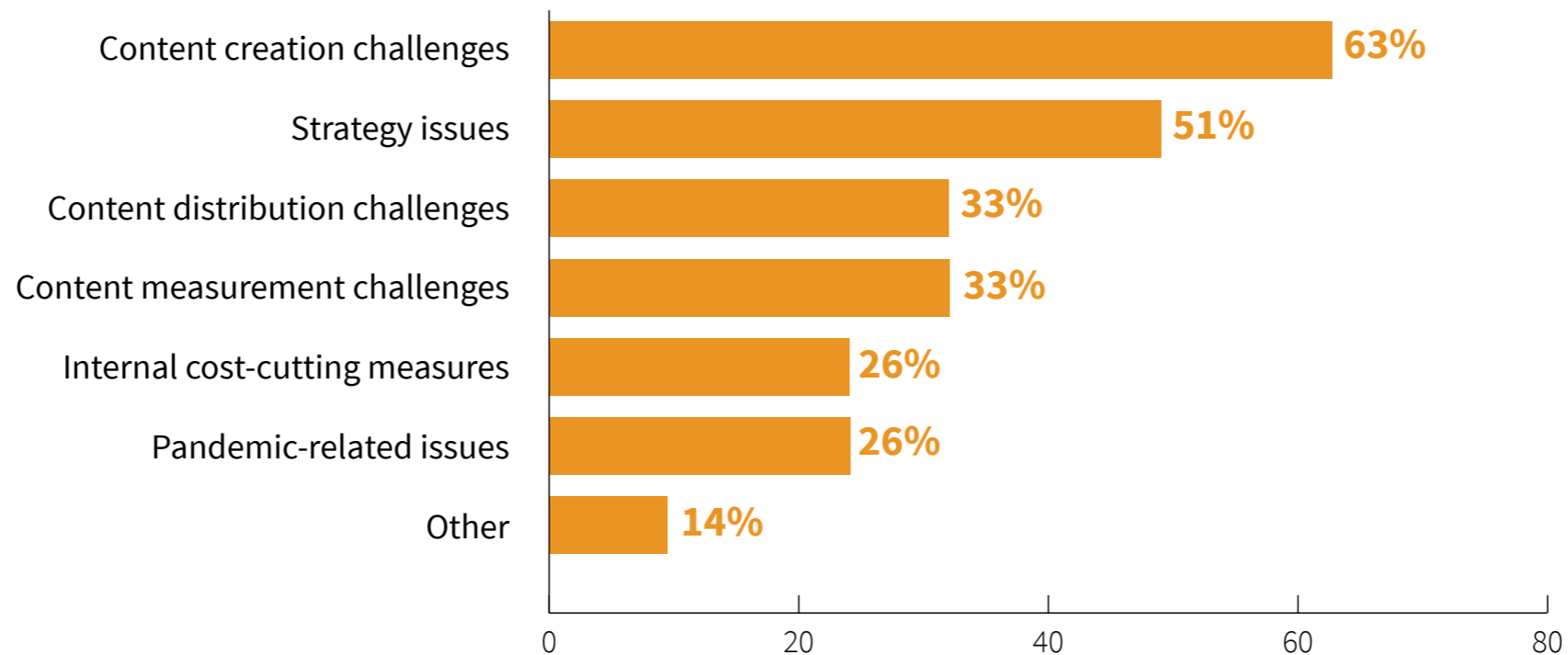
### Factors B2B Marketers Attribute to Their Organization's Content Marketing Success in Last 12 Months



Base: B2B content marketers whose organizations were extremely/very successful with content marketing in the last 12 months. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

B2B marketers who reported low levels of content marketing success (minimally/not at all successful) said it was mostly due to content creation challenges (63%) and strategy issues (51%).

### Factors B2B Marketers Attribute to Their Organization’s Minimal/Lack of Content Marketing Success in Last 12 Months



Base: B2B content marketers whose organizations were minimally/not at all successful with content marketing in the last 12 months. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

# TEAM STRUCTURE & OUTSOURCING



## TEAM STRUCTURE & OUTSOURCING

The majority of respondents reported the size of their content marketing team had stayed the same compared with 12 months ago, while another one-third said it had increased. Large companies were slightly more likely to report a decrease.

In the survey fill-in comments, many reported having more work for the same sized team or trying to do more with less due to layoffs and spending freezes. As one respondent said, “Bandwidth is a challenge, as is trying to continue to grow the content marketing function when hiring has slowed.”

Thirty-two percent of respondents indicated their content marketing team ranges in size from two to five employees; however, 35% said they don’t have a person dedicated full time to content marketing (not surprisingly, this was more prevalent among small companies).

The percentage reporting their organization outsources at least one content marketing activity didn’t change much this year. The exception was for large companies with 1,000+ employees (71% last year vs. 61% this year).

Those who outsource said their top challenges are finding partners with adequate topic expertise (69%), budget issues (51%), and finding partners who understand/are able to empathize with their audience (43%).

**“OUR COMPANY NEEDS MORE CONTENT. WE SERVE A DEEP NICHE AND FEW PEOPLE UNDERSTAND OUR INDUSTRY WELL ENOUGH TO POP IN AND DO SMALL PROJECTS FOR US.”**

**Survey Respondent**  
11th Annual Content  
Marketing Survey

The majority of respondents (57%) reported the size of their content marketing team was the same as 12 months ago and 31% said it had increased. Large companies saw more change overall in the size of their teams, with 38% (vs. 31%) reporting an increase and 17% (vs. 12%) reporting a decrease in team size.

### Size of B2B Content Marketing Team Compared With 12 Months Ago

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
Increased	31%	27%	33%	38%
Stayed the same	57%	66%	52%	45%
Decreased, due to economic impacts of pandemic	6%	3%	6%	11%
Decreased, due to economic impacts of pandemic plus other reasons	2%	2%	3%	3%
Decreased, due to reasons unrelated to pandemic	4%	2%	6%	3%

Base: B2B content marketers.

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

35% of all respondents said their organization doesn't have a person dedicated to content marketing full time. Medium and large companies tend to have bigger teams, often in the two-to-five employee range.

### **B2B Organizations' Content Marketing Team Size (Full Time/Dedicated to Content Marketing)**

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
11+	4%	0%	3%	11%
6-10	6%	1%	5%	19%
2-5	32%	22%	43%	40%
1	23%	27%	25%	11%
0 (no one is full time, dedicated)	35%	50%	24%	19%

Base: B2B content marketers.

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020



49% said their organization outsources at least one content marketing activity, with large companies being the most likely to outsource.

These percentages are similar to last year, with one notable exception:

- ▶ Last year, 71% of respondents from large companies said they outsourced, compared with 61% this year.

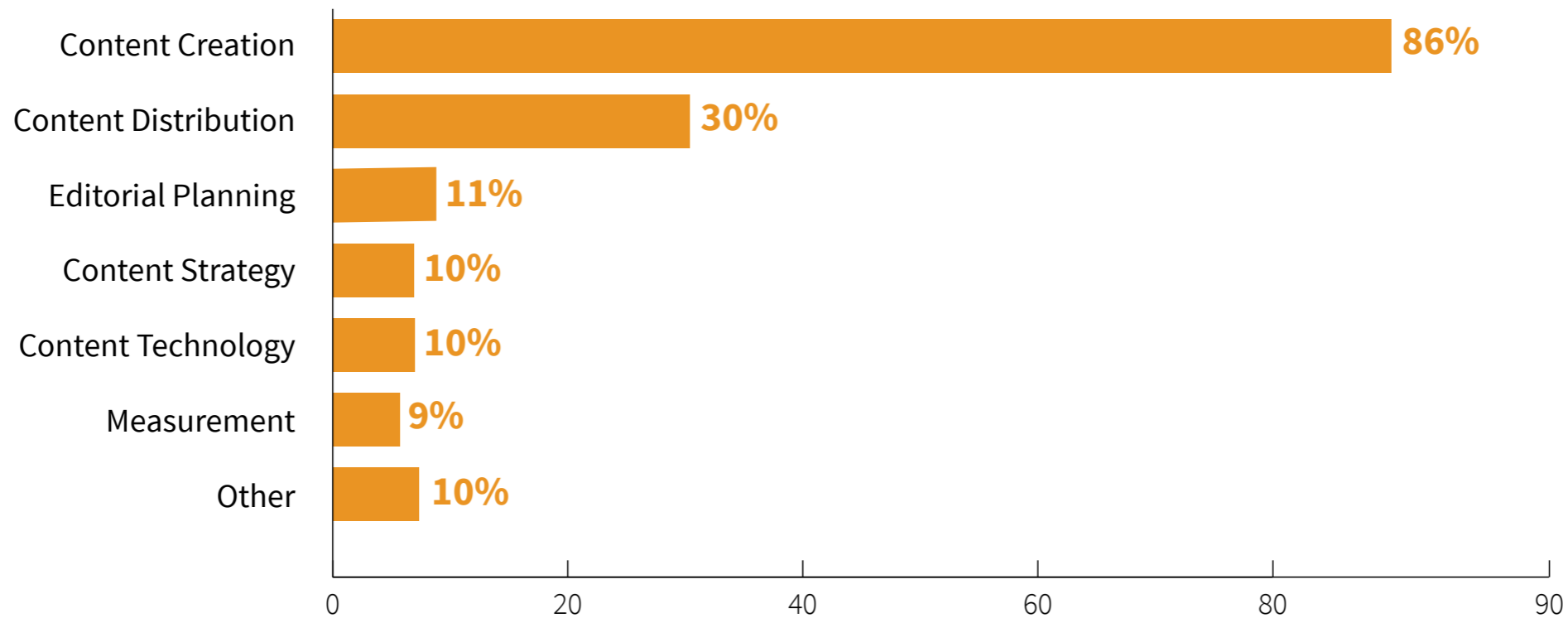
### Does Your B2B Organization Outsource Any Content Marketing Activities?

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
Yes	49%	37%	60%	61%
No	51%	63%	40%	39%

*Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020*

Among those who outsource, content creation is the activity most outsourced by far.

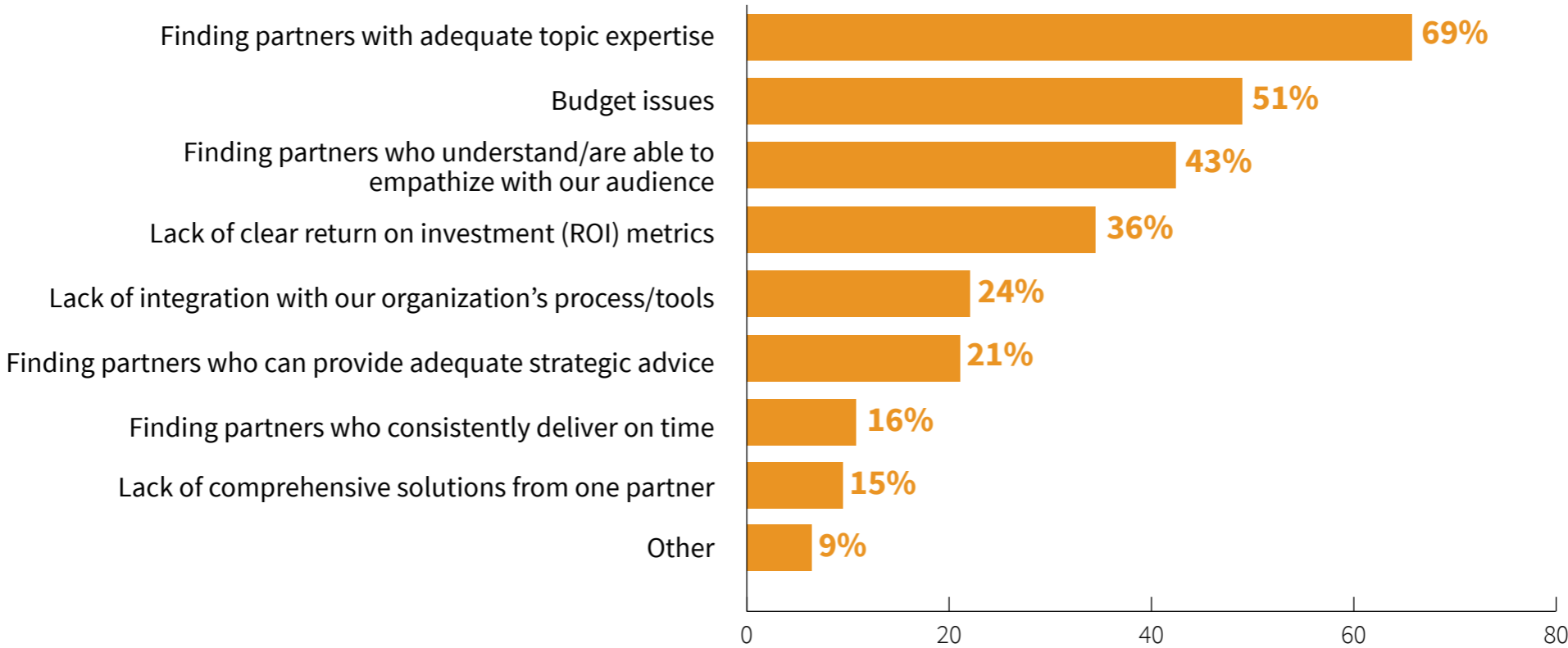
## Content Marketing Activities B2B Organizations Outsource



Base: B2B content marketers whose organization outsources at least one content marketing activity. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

The top reported challenge for B2B marketers who outsource is finding partners with adequate topic expertise (69%).

## Top 5 Challenges When Seeking Outsourced B2B Content Marketing Help



Base: B2B content marketers whose organization outsources at least one content marketing activity. Aided list; up to five responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

# CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION



## CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

**W**e saw an increase in those whose organizations use content creation/collaboration/workflow technologies (58% this year vs. 48% last year)—not surprising in a work-from-home world.

Beyond the broader technologies, we asked marketers what tools they/their teams use while creating content: keyword research tools (78%) and editorial calendars (70%) topped the list. Surprisingly, only 22% indicated they use fact-checking procedures/tools, revealing an important step missing for those striving to build trust/credibility with their audiences.

Regarding the content types they use, blog posts/short articles topped the list. Obviously, marketers reported a decrease in the use of in-person events over the last 12 months (42% from 73%), while the use of virtual events/webinars/online courses increased to 67% from 57%.

Because online communities present a good way to attract audiences and build relationships, a new question on the survey asked marketers if their organization had established one: 32% said yes. Among those who have not, 27% said they are likely to within the next 12 months, while another 48% said they are unlikely to.

*(continued on next page)*

**“WE’VE HAD TO EXPAND OUR NETWORK VIA DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES SUCH AS WEBINARS AND PODCASTS, AS WE RELIED MOSTLY ON IN-PERSON EVENTS AND CONFERENCES FOR BRAND AWARENESS AND NETWORKING.”**

**Survey Respondent**

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey

## CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

The top ways marketers distribute content organically are social media platforms (89%), email (87%), and their organization's website/blog (86%). And while 54% are speaking/presenting at virtual events, only 38% are writing guest posts for other publications (and even fewer are doing guest spots, working on media/influencer relations, or participating in collaborative social spaces)—perhaps indicating missed opportunities to reach broader audiences.

As for paid content distribution, the use of social media advertising/promoted posts increased to 83% from 60% last year, with low-cost opportunities likely being a factor. LinkedIn is the most often used B2B social media platform, both for organic and paid distribution.

Respondents rated paid social media advertising as the second highest-performing paid method they use to distribute content (second to SEM/pay-per-click). However, more paid content can also present more competition. According to one respondent, “Share of attention is harder each day with so many companies pushing low-value content through paid channels.”

**“CLIENTS ARE GETTING BOMBARDED WITH ELECTRONIC INFORMATION—ESPECIALLY NOW SINCE IN-PERSON MEETINGS AND EVENTS ARE ON HOLD. HOW DO WE CREATE COMPELLING CONTENT THAT GETS DISTRIBUTED IN A WAY THAT STANDS OUT FROM THE CLUTTER?”**

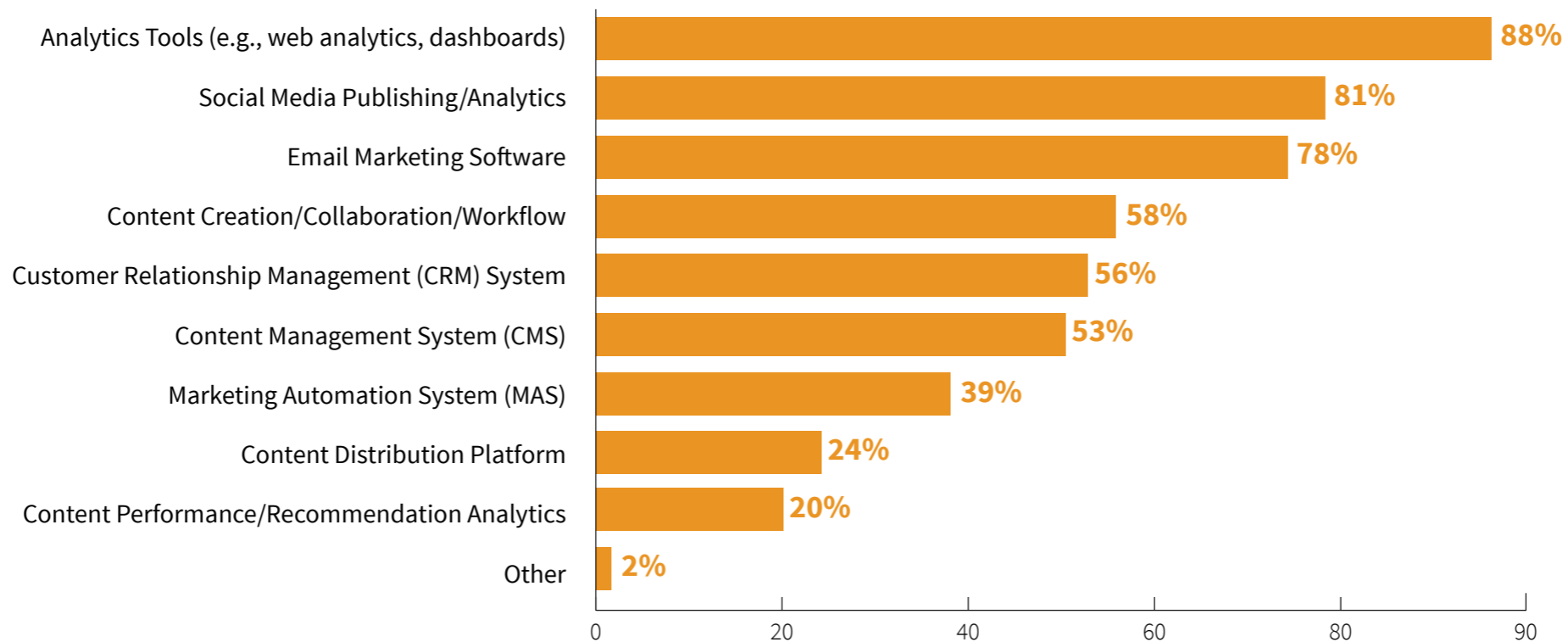
**Survey Respondent**  
11th Annual Content  
Marketing Survey

The top technologies B2B organizations use to assist with content marketing are analytics tools (88%), social media publishing/analytics (81%), and email marketing software (78%).

These percentages are similar to last year, with one notable exception:

- ▶ Use of content creation/collaboration/workflow technologies increased to 58% from 48%.

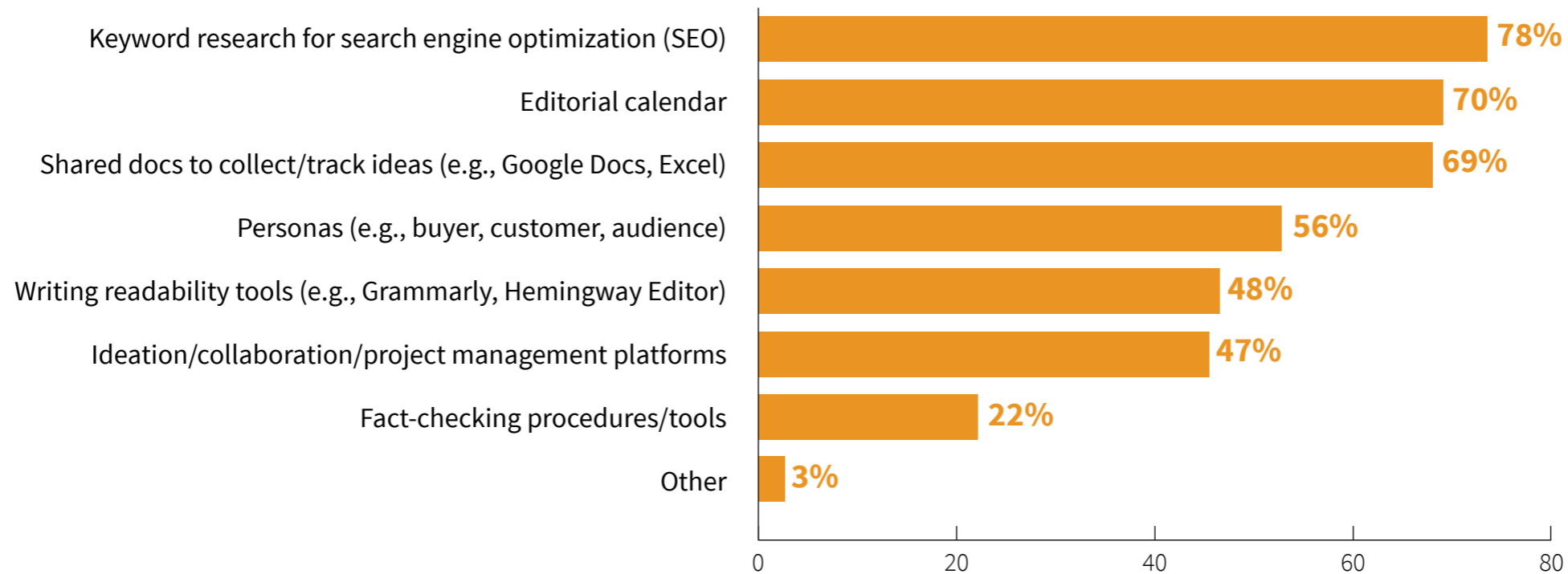
## Technologies B2B Organizations Use to Assist With Content Marketing



Base: B2B content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

78% use keyword research tools for search engine optimization (SEO) during the content creation process, while only 22% use fact-checking procedures/tools.

### Editorial Tools B2B Marketers Use While Creating Content



Base: B2B content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

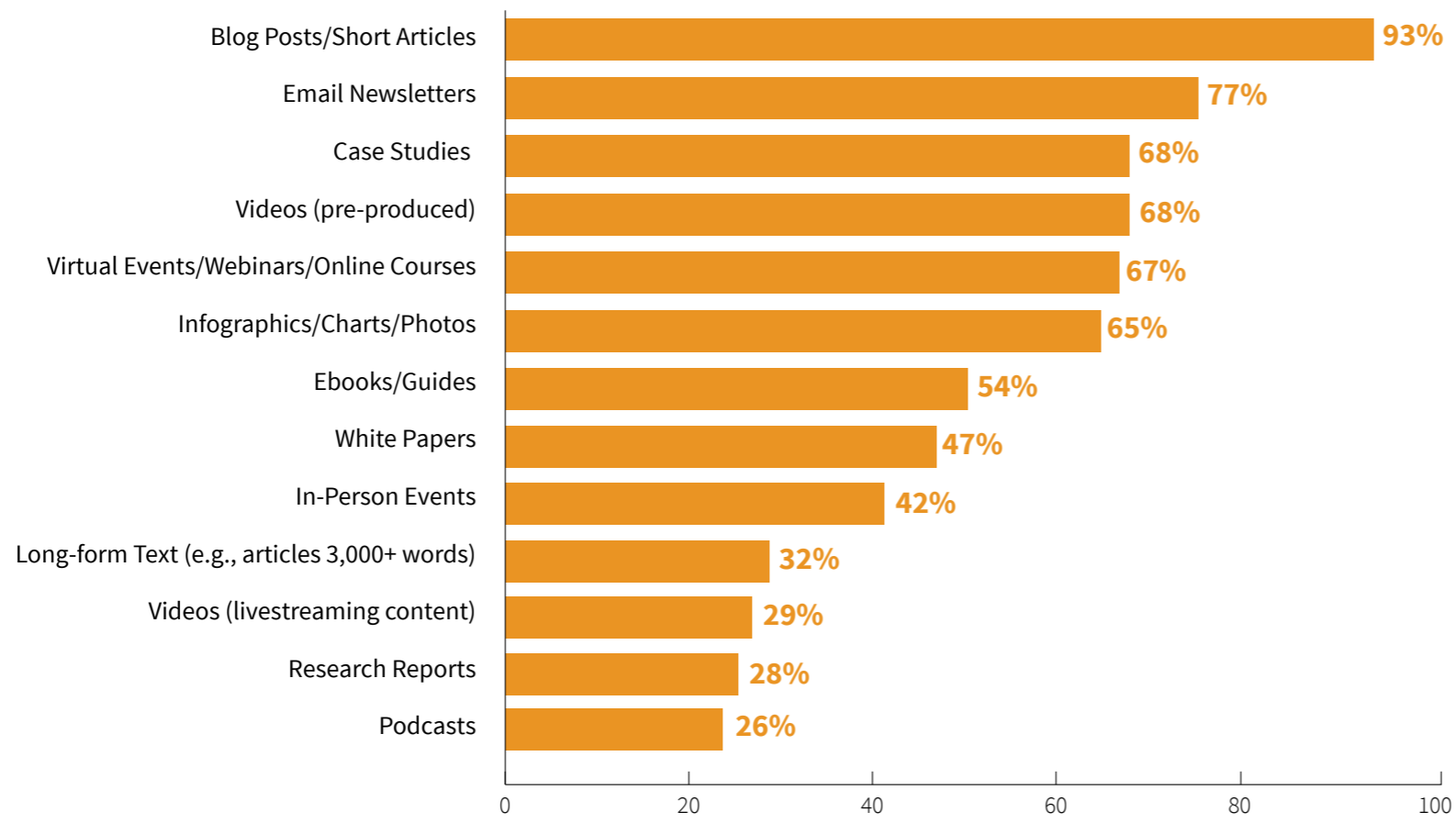


Like last year, blog posts/short articles and email newsletters are the top content types.

The biggest changes this year:

- ▶ Use of in-person events decreased to 42% from 73%.
- ▶ Use of virtual events/webinars/online courses increased to 67% from 57%.
- ▶ Use of livestreaming content increased to 29% from 10%.

## Content Types B2B Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



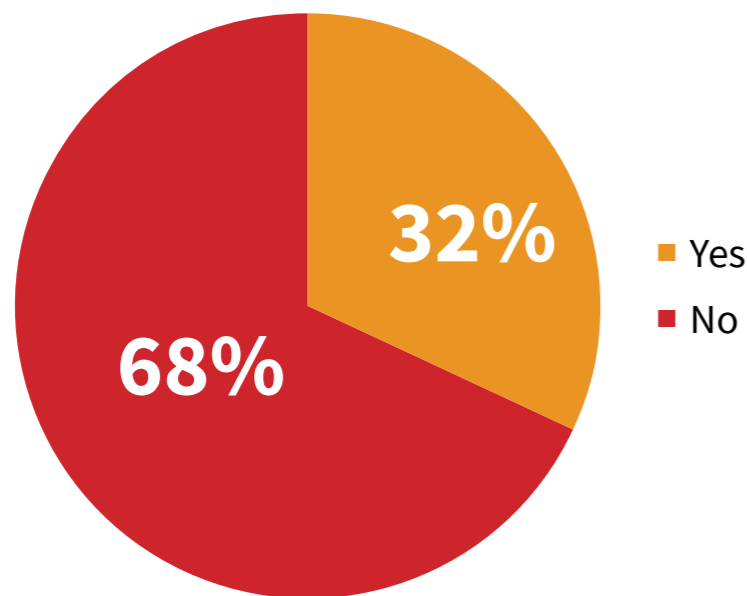
Base: B2B content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
 11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

Of all the content types they use, B2B marketers said **blog posts/short articles** and **virtual events/webinars/online courses** (both tied at 22%) produced the best overall content marketing results for their organization in the last 12 months.

**Other content types used in last 12 months:** Digital Magazines (16%); Print Magazines (11%); Print Books (5%); and Other (5%).

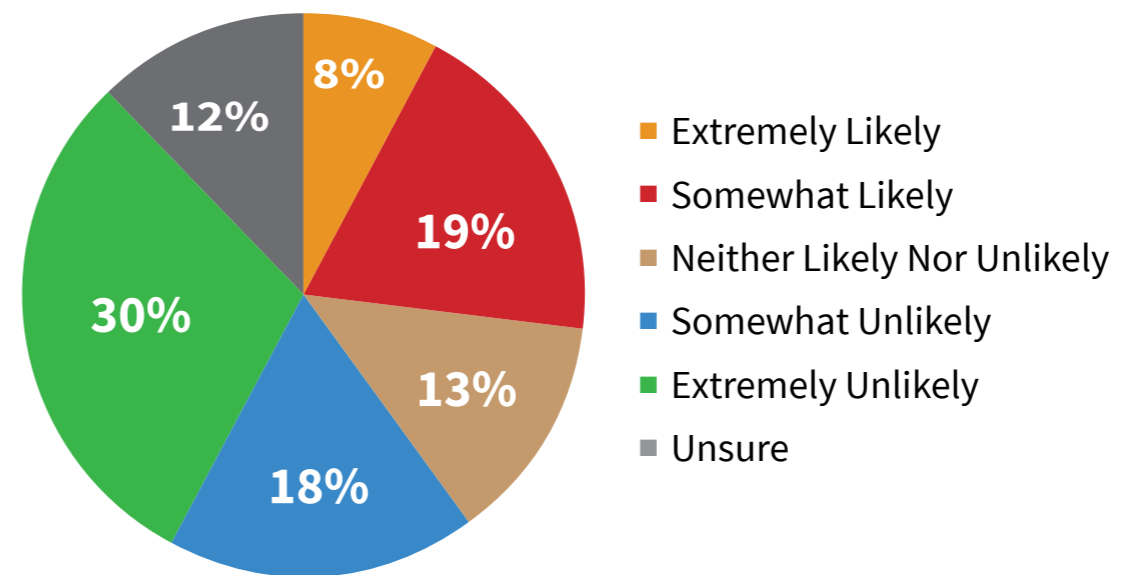
32% of B2B marketers said their organization has established an online community. Among those who have not, 27% say they are likely to within the next 12 months, while another 48% say they are unlikely.

## Has Your B2B Organization Established an Online Community?



Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

## How Likely is Your B2B Organization to Establish an Online Community in the Next 12 Months?



Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

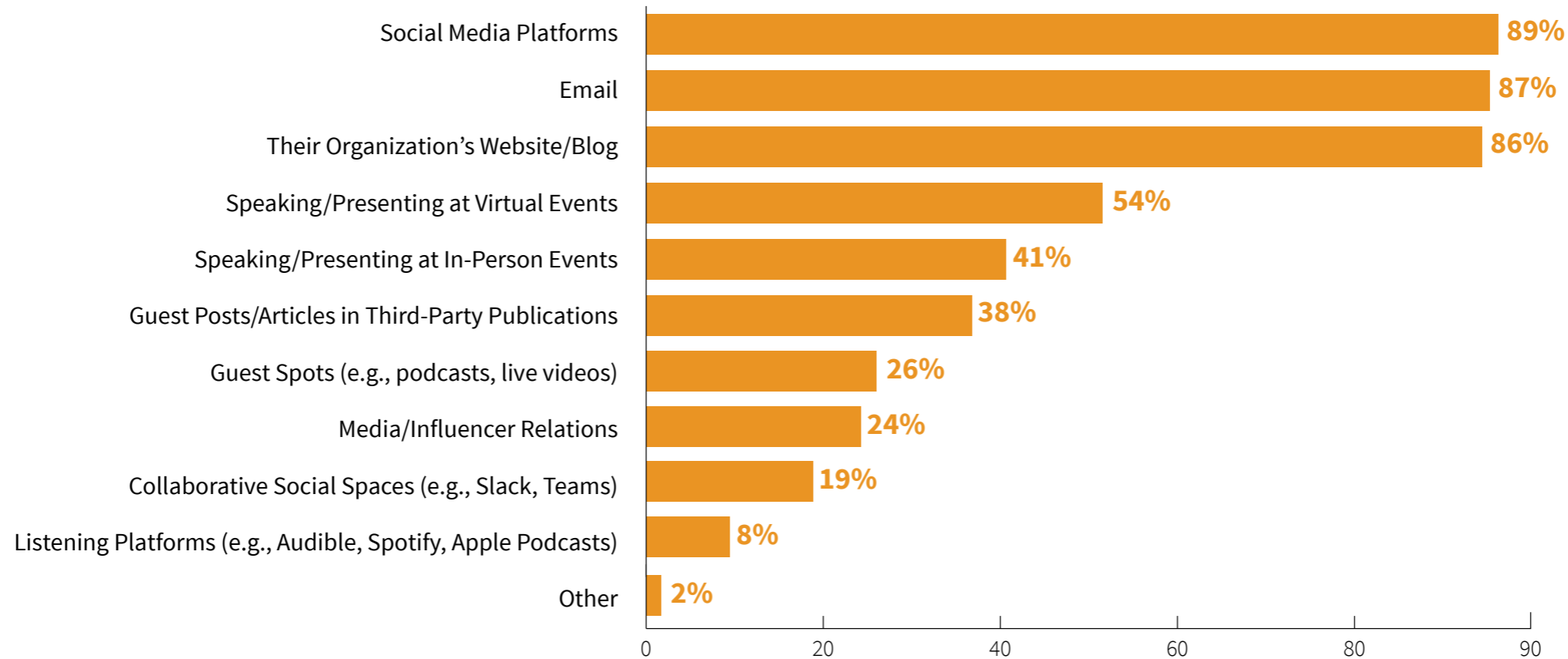
## CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

The top three organic content distribution channels B2B marketers use are social media platforms (89%), email (87%), and their organization’s website/blog (86%).

These percentages are similar to last year, with two notable exceptions:

- ▶ Use of guest posts/articles in third-party publications decreased to 38% from 48%.
- ▶ Use of media/influencer relations decreased to 24% from 34%.

### Organic Content Distribution Channels B2B Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



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

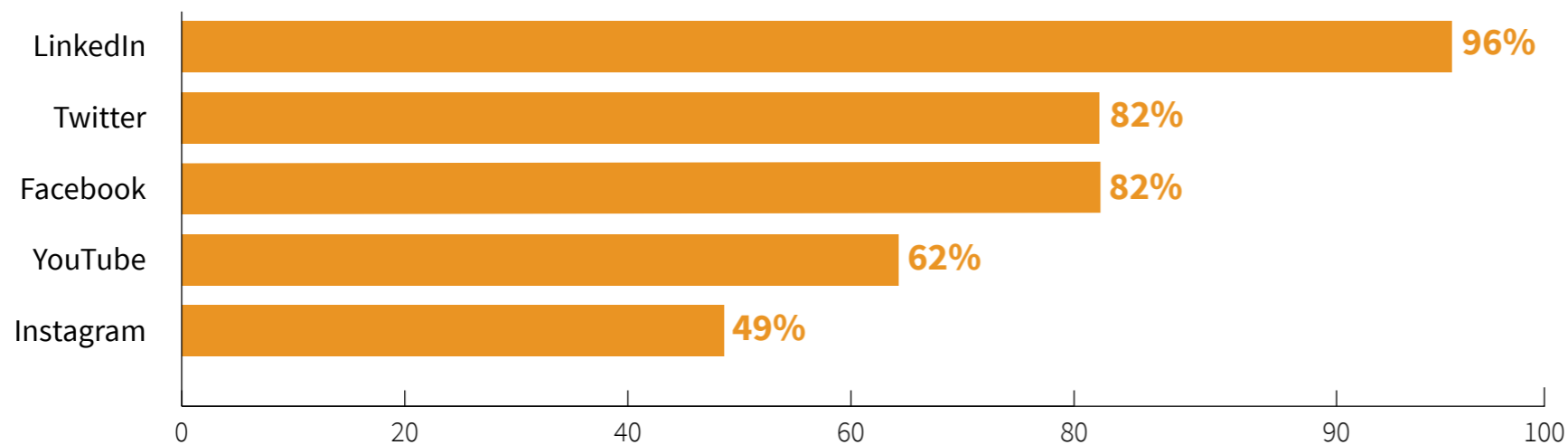
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

Nearly all B2B marketers who distribute content via organic social media use LinkedIn. They also say it is the organic platform that generated the best overall content marketing results for their organization in the last 12 months (66%).

These percentages are similar to last year, with one notable exception:

- ▶ Use of organic YouTube increased to 62% from 53%.

## Organic Social Media Platforms B2B Content Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



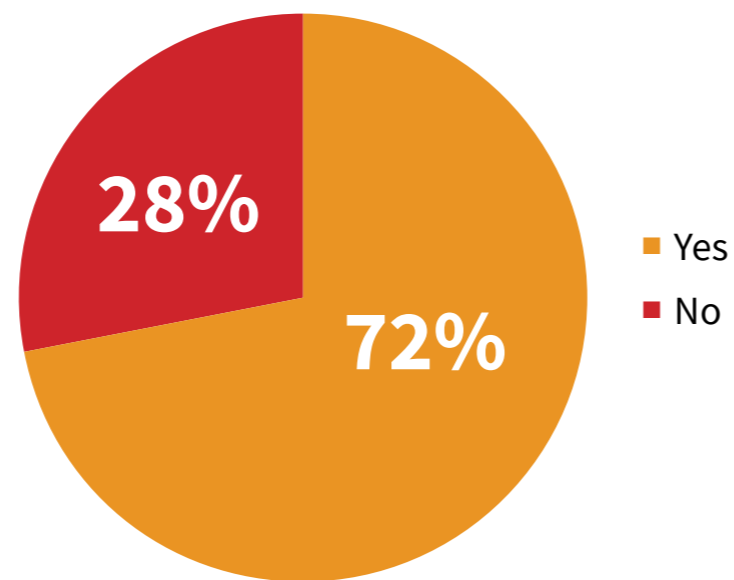
**Other organic social media platforms used in last 12 months:** Pinterest (9%); Medium (8%); Quora (4%); Reddit (4%); Snapchat (1%); TikTok (1%); and Other (4%).

*Base: B2B content marketers whose organization used organic social media platforms to distribute content in the last 12 months. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.*

*11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020*

72% of B2B marketers said their organization used paid content distribution channels (vs. 84% last year) in the last 12 months. However, the percentage of those using each paid channel increased over last year (see next page).

### Did Your Organization Use Any Paid Content Distribution Channels for Content Marketing Purposes in the Last 12 Months?

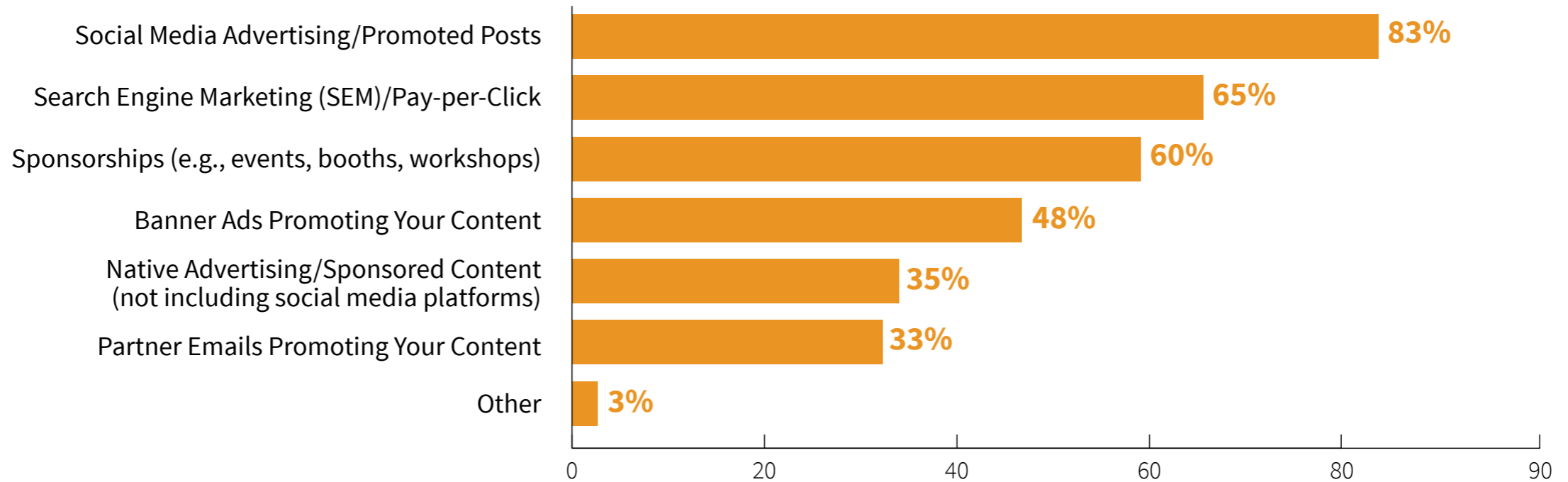


Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

The largest increases compared with last year are:

- ▶ Use of social media advertising/promoted posts increased to 83% from 60%.
- ▶ Use of search engine marketing (SEM)/pay-per-click increased to 65% from 51%.

## Paid Content Distribution Channels B2B Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



B2B content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

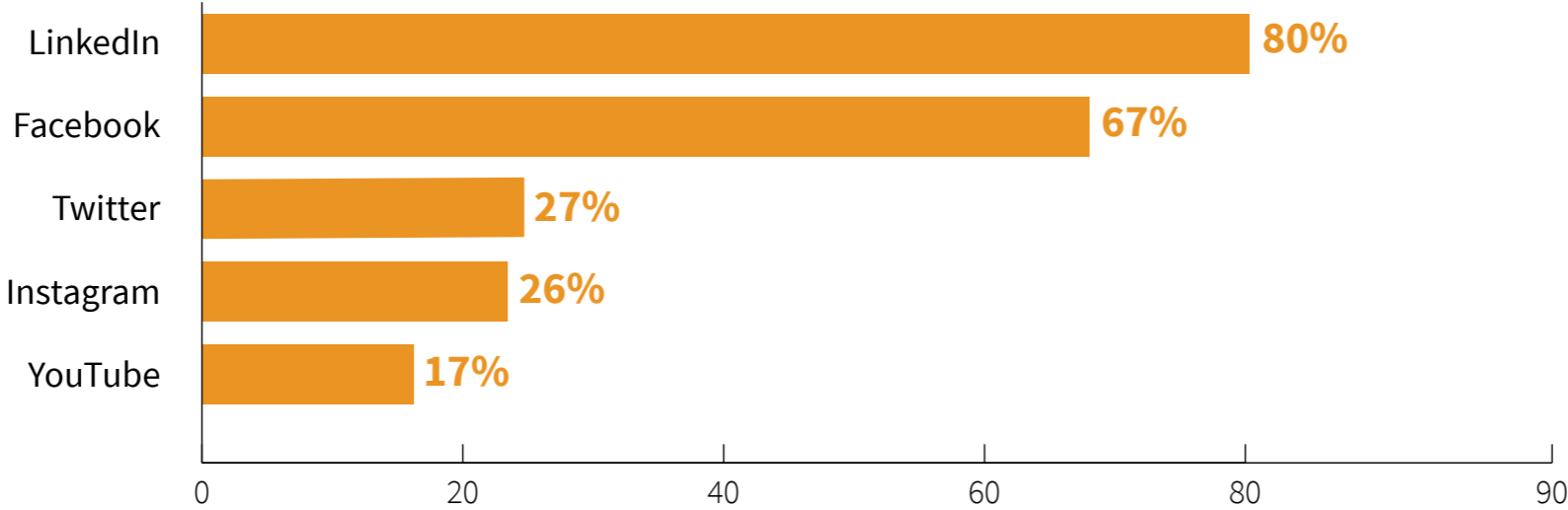
Of all the paid distribution channels they use, B2B marketers said **search engine marketing** (SEM)/pay-per-click (33%) and **social media advertising/promoted posts** (29%) produced the best overall content marketing results for their organization in the last 12 months.

Among the B2B marketers who use paid social media (83%), LinkedIn is the platform used most often. Due to the fluctuating prices of paid social media advertising at the time of the survey, we did not ask respondents which paid platform was generating the best results (last year, they said it was LinkedIn).

These percentages are similar to last year, with one notable exception:

- ▶ Use of paid Instagram increased to 26% from 17%.

### Paid Social Media Platforms B2B Content Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



**Other paid social media platforms used in last 12 months:**

Pinterest (2%);  
Quora (1%); Reddit (1%);  
Snapchat (0%); TikTok (0%);  
and Other (3%).

*Base: B2B content marketers whose organization used paid social media platforms to distribute content in the last 12 months.  
Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020*

# METRICS & GOALS





## METRICS & GOALS

**M**ost respondents said their organization used metrics to track content performance in the last 12 months (81%). Of those, website traffic is used most often (90%).

“One of our challenges is determining what content is most likely to lead to actual business,” said one respondent. “We get a lot of interest in reading our content, but we’re working to determine what to focus on to gain qualified/ready buyers.”

Regarding their goals for content marketing, 87% said they have used it successfully in the last 12 months to create brand awareness. As the chart on Page 35 shows, marketers have steadily been increasing the attainment of numerous content marketing goals over the last three years; however, we observed a decrease this year in those using it to nurture subscribers/audiences/leads.

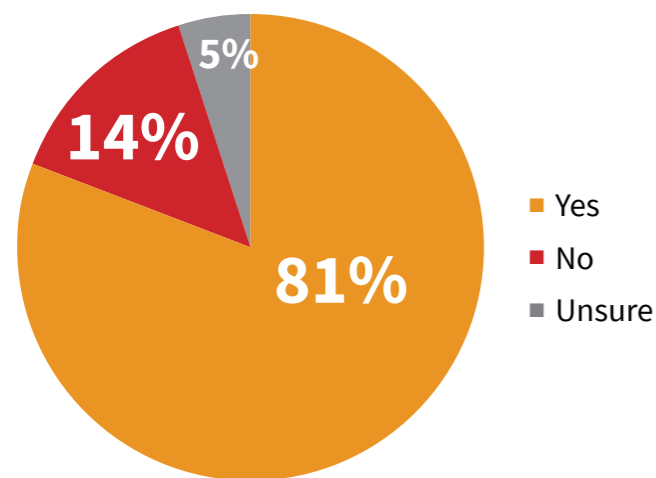
**“WE’RE CHALLENGED WITH DIRECTLY RELATING/TYING THE IMPACT OF CONTENT MARKETING TO OUR COMPANY’S BOTTOM LINE, I.E., EXPLICITLY SHOWING CONTENT MARKETING AS A REVENUE-GENERATING ACTIVITY.”**

**Survey Respondent**

11th Annual Content  
Marketing Survey

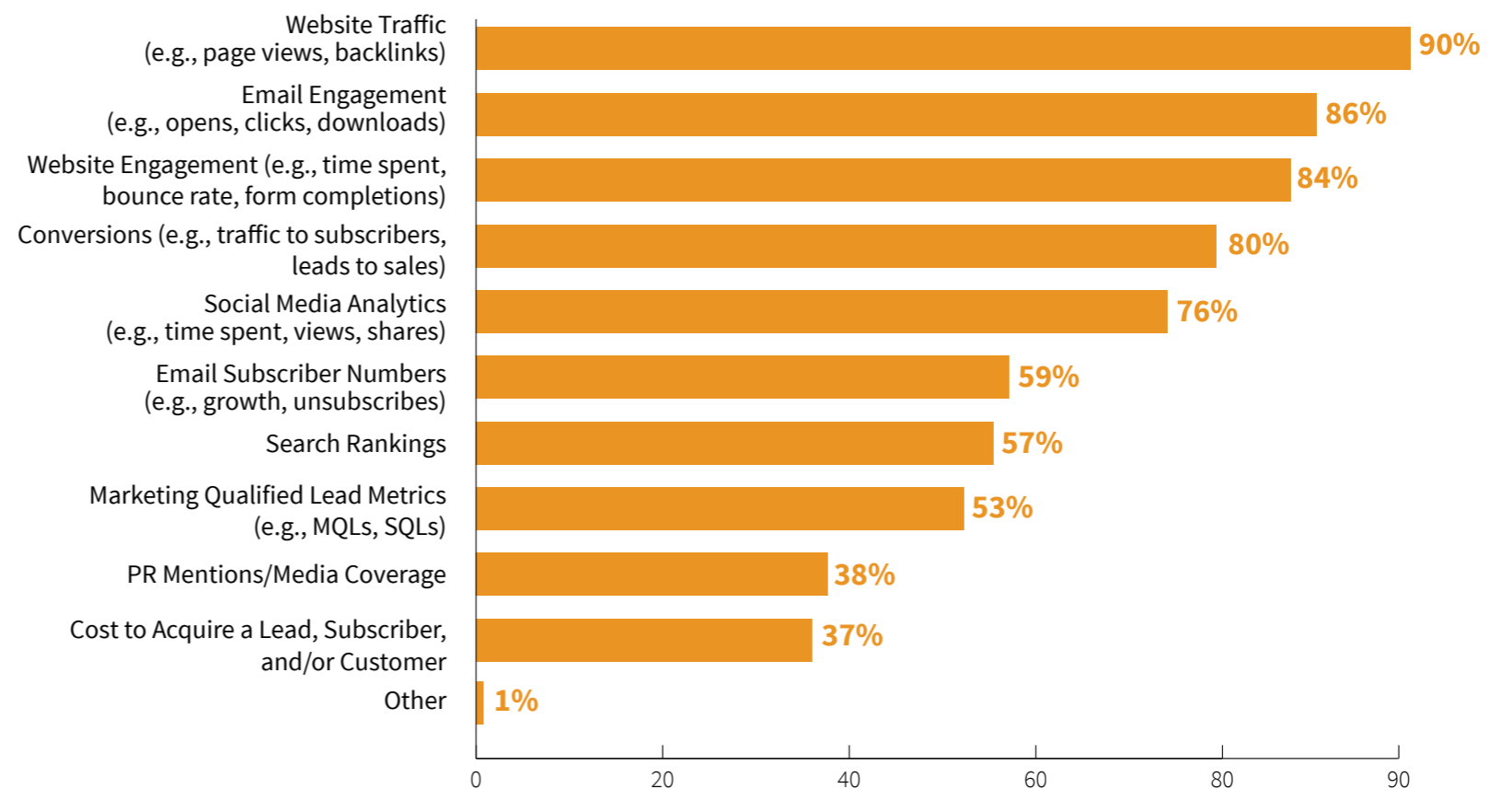
81% of B2B marketers report their organization uses metrics to measure content performance. Website traffic (90%) is the metric that is used most often.

**Does Your B2B Organization Use Metrics to Measure Content Performance?**



Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey:  
Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

**Metrics B2B Organizations Tracked to Measure Content Performance in Last 12 Months**



Base: B2B content marketers whose organization uses metrics to measure content performance.  
Aided list; multiple responses permitted.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

The percentage of marketers reporting success with using content marketing to achieve various goals has increased steadily over the last three years. Note the decrease this year in those who reported using it to nurture subscribers/audiences/leads.

## Goals B2B Marketers Have Achieved by Using Content Marketing Successfully in Last 12 Months

	All Respondents	As Reported One Year Ago*	As Reported Two Years Ago**
Create brand awareness	<b>87%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>81%</b>
Build credibility/trust	<b>81%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>68%</b>
Educate audience(s)	<b>79%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>73%</b>
Generate demand/leads	<b>75%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>68%</b>
Build loyalty with existing clients/customers	<b>68%</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>54%</b>
Nurture subscribers/audiences/leads	<b>60%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>58%</b>
Drive attendance to one or more in-person or virtual events	<b>56%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>49%</b>
Generate sales/revenue	<b>51%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>45%</b>
Build a subscribed audience	<b>47%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>43%</b>
Support the launch of a new product	<b>45%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>40%</b>

\*See *B2B Content Marketing 2020: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America*

\*\*See *B2B Content Marketing 2019: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America*

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

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

# BUDGETS & SPENDING



## BUDGETS & SPENDING

**M**ore than two-thirds of respondents went into 2020 armed with a content marketing budget. The timing of the survey (July) made it an ideal time to ask respondents how their H1 2020 content marketing spending was impacted by the pandemic: 53% reported it had stayed the same. Another 29% reported a decrease and 18% reported an increase. A closer look at these figures based on company size revealed little difference.

We then asked respondents to estimate how their spending would look during Q3 2020 and Q4 2020, as well as how H2 would compare with H1. Nearly one-third thought their organization would spend more on content marketing in H2 than H1. The majority, however, expected spending to stay flat for the rest of 2020. Only 12% expected a decrease.

Only time will tell whether content marketing budgets and spending stay flat in 2021. Some respondents in the fill-in comments said they would continue to invest heavily in content marketing. Some of these marketers shared they are part of start-up operations, for whom content/SEO is especially important. Other marketers said their biggest challenge in 2021 would be looming budget cuts depending on where the economy heads.

**“GIVEN COVID-19 AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ECONOMY AND OUR BUDGETS, IT WILL BE A CHALLENGE TO HOLD ONTO THE GROWTH AND GAINS WE’VE MADE WITH OUR CONTENT MARKETING OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. IT WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER OUR BUDGETS CAN GROW A BIT AGAIN IN 2021 OR IF WE LOSE EVEN MORE BUDGET. WE HAVE FOUND WAYS TO WORK LEAN, BUT AT SOME POINT WE’LL HAVE TO START INVESTING AGAIN TO HAVE GOOD RESULTS.”**

### **Survey Respondent**

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey

24% of all respondents said their organization had shifted traditional paid advertising dollars to content marketing in the last 12 months.

### Did Your B2B Organization Shift Paid Advertising Dollars to Content Marketing in the Last 12 Months?

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
Yes	24%	18%	28%	28%
No	27%	27%	25%	31%
Unsure	12%	7%	13%	23%
We haven't spent on traditional advertising in the last 12 months	37%	48%	34%	18%

Base: B2B content marketers.

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

Most respondents said their organization had established a content marketing budget for 2020 prior to the pandemic. Those working in large companies reported higher budgets.

### 2020 Annual Budget for B2B Content Marketing: Pre-Pandemic (Average)

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
Less than \$100,000	47%	57%	49%	20%
\$100,000 to under \$500,000	19%	10%	25%	30%
\$500,000 to under \$750,000	3%	1%	2%	8%
\$750,000 to under \$1,000,000	2%	0%	2%	7%
\$1,000,000 or more	2%	0%	3%	8%
We didn't have a content marketing budget established for 2020	27%	32%	20%	27%

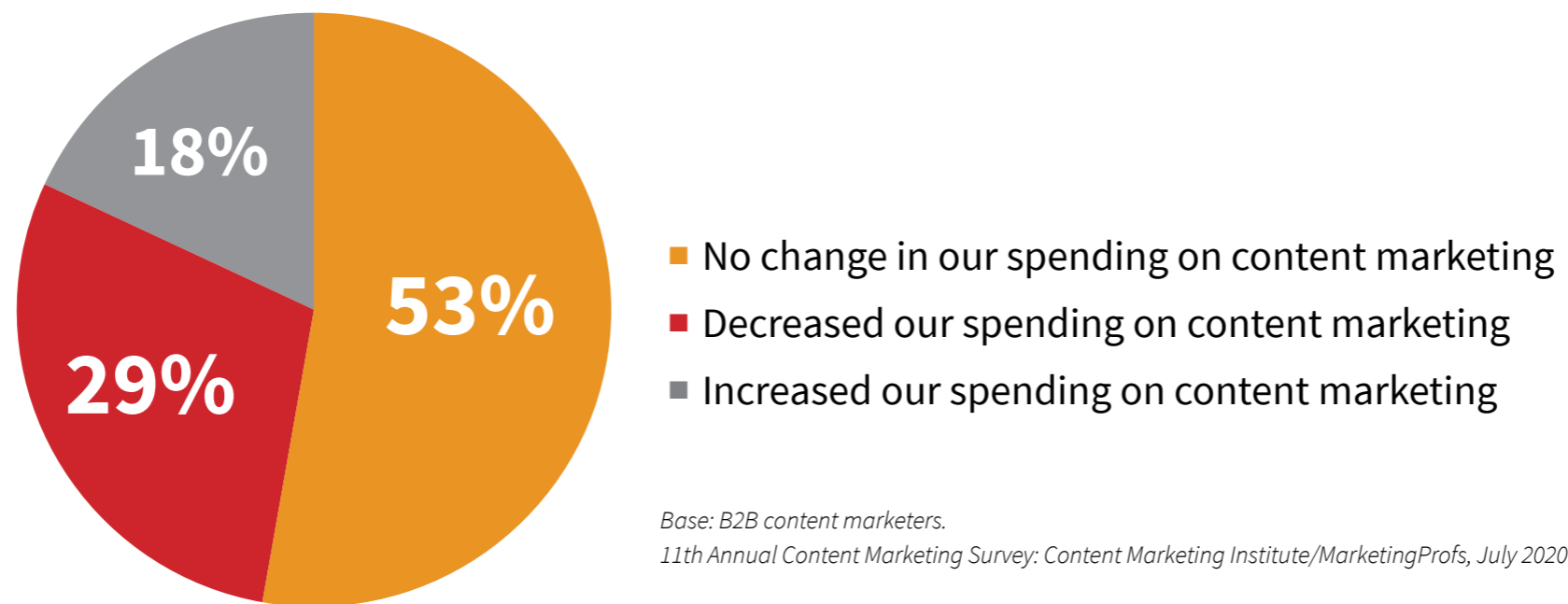
*Note: The question read: "Prior to the pandemic, approximately how much had your organization budgeted for 2020 content marketing (not including salaries), in U.S. dollars?"*

*Base: B2B content marketers. Aided list.*

*11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020*

53% of B2B marketers indicated there was no change in their content marketing spending in H1 2020 in response to the pandemic. Another 29% reported a decrease in spending, and 18% reported an increase. These percentages did not vary much by company size.

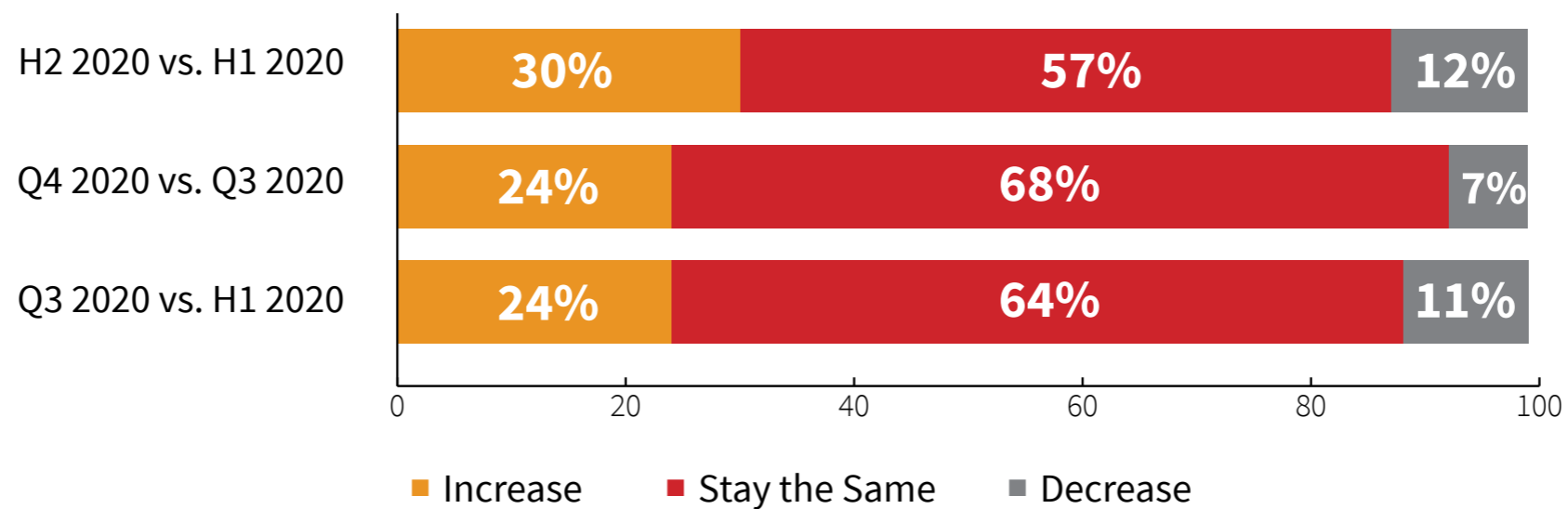
### Change in B2B Content Marketing Spending in H1 2020 in Response to Pandemic





Nearly one-third of respondents estimated their organization would spend more on content marketing during the second half of 2020 than the first half. The majority, however, expected spending to stay flat for the rest of 2020.

### B2B Marketers' Estimated Change in Content Marketing Spending



Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

# INSIGHTS FOR 2021



**A**t the time of the survey, 50% of respondents thought the pandemic would have a moderate long-term impact on their organization's content marketing success. Only 15% felt it would be major. It will be interesting to see if this outlook changes in the months to come.

Looking toward 2021, we asked respondents to select the top five content marketing-related areas they thought their organization would invest in during 2021. Content creation (70%) and website enhancements (66%) topped the list.

“We'll be looking to increase staff and ramp up our inbound strategy through content marketing,” said one respondent. Another said their organization will be “tracking results and continuing to expand our content marketing efforts as our company continues to grow.”

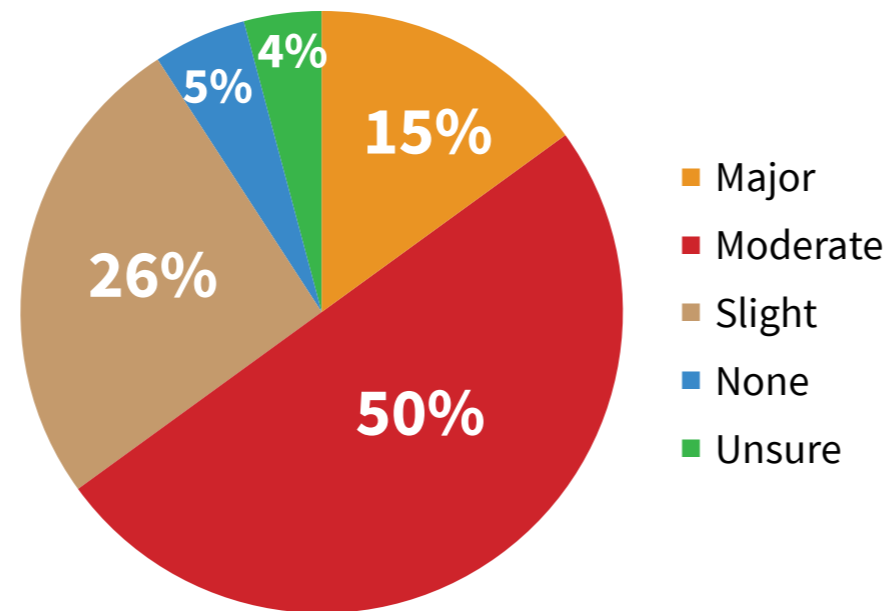
**“WE HAVE TO FOCUS ON ACQUIRING CUSTOMERS WHILE ALSO BEING SENSITIVE TO THEIR ISSUES...WE CAN'T BE TONE DEAF WITH MARKETING IN TIMES OF GREAT CHANGE AND CRISIS. WE HAVE TO SUPPORT PEOPLE BEFORE THE BUSINESS. WITHOUT PEOPLE, WE DON'T HAVE BUSINESS.”**

**Survey Respondent**

11th Annual Content Marketing Survey

At the time of the survey, only 15% felt the pandemic would have a major long-term impact on their organization's overall content marketing success.

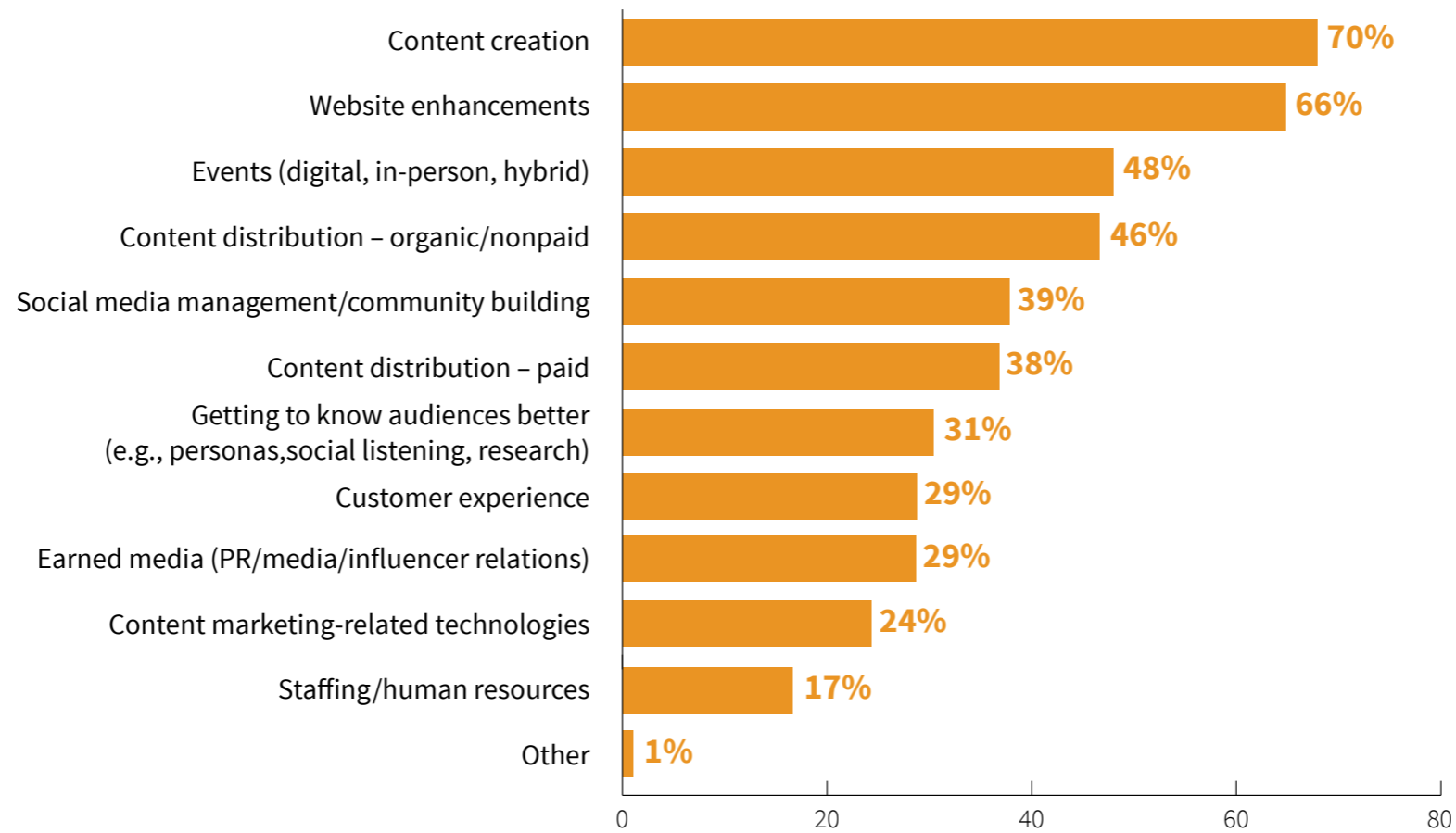
### Long-Term Impact B2B Marketers Think Pandemic Will Have on Their Organization's Content Marketing Success



Base: B2B content marketers.  
11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

The top predicted areas for content marketing investment in 2021 are content creation (70%) and website enhancements (66%).

### Top 5 Areas of Content Marketing B2B Marketers Think Their Organization Will Invest in During 2021



Base: B2B content marketers. Aided list; maximum of five responses permitted.  
 11th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2020

# ACTION STEPS FOR MOVING FORWARD

By Robert Rose, Chief Strategy Advisor, CMI



## ► Stop Waiting For The New Normal—We’re Already In It

We’ve spent so much time in 2020 struggling for an answer to “what now,” that it can seem impossible to plan for

2021. We wonder what the “new normal” will be. Spoiler alert: No one knows.

What can you do, then? Well, we mistakenly believe that “what now” means we should use our experience in all that we’ve been going through to try to predict the new normal future. We believe our experience helps us to see around corners.

Instead, start planning with a self-assessment of your content marketing plan. Remember that answering “what now” is not trying to plan for “what’s next.” Look at all the things that evolved this year that you want to keep,

change, or stop doing. Then ask yourself how you might want to change to prepare for whatever comes next.

## ► Content Marketing Is Cool—But Content Operations Make It Work

As 2021 emerges, we’re seeing more businesses begin to in-source many elements of content creation, production, and management, particularly within large companies. This move to “in-house” services, however, is fueling a broader evolution in building a more creative and media-fluent service to the overall business.

As content marketers, it’s not enough to just understand how to create blogs, infographics, or other media assets. We need to understand how content operations work at scale. That means understanding technology, governance, and how to structure content so that it can be reused, repackaged, and leveraged across silos.

*(continued on next page)*

It won't be long before your business starts looking hard at how to make content more efficient—and measurable at scale. Content marketers that have skill sets and knowledge beyond just creating powerful content will be ready to evolve and lead that charge.

### ▶ **Get Your Audience Data Plan Together**

Privacy and the availability of customer data is going to become an incredibly hot topic very shortly. As we saw from this year's research, "credibility and trust" is a huge goal for content marketing now. Indeed, the percentage of content marketers citing it as a goal has increased 19% in the last three years (see Page 35).

If you're looking for measurability, there will be no other foundational element as important as connecting your content marketing experiences and being able to have a 360-degree view into the audience you are engaging. This includes, of course, the data that customers willingly, trustingly, and emotionally give to you as part of that program. This is what Forrester calls "Zero Party Data." We just call it building an audience.

# METHODOLOGY & DEMOGRAPHICS

The 11th Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends report was produced by **Content Marketing Institute (CMI)** and **MarketingProfs** and sponsored by **ON24**.

The online survey, from which the results of this report were generated, was emailed to a sample of marketers using lists from CMI and MarketingProfs.

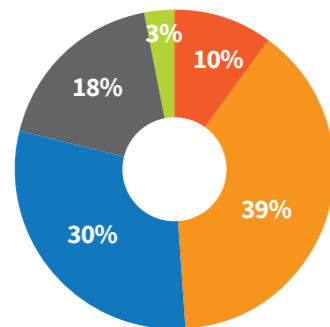
A total of 1,707 recipients from around the globe—representing a full range of industries, functional areas, and company sizes—replied to the survey during July 2020.

This report presents the findings from 740 respondents based in North America. These respondents indicated:

- ▶ Their organization is a for-profit company, primarily selling products/services to businesses (B2B).
- ▶ Their organization has used content marketing for at least one year.
- ▶ They are a content marketer, involved with the content marketing function, and/or someone to whom content marketing reports.

*Note:* This report contains comparisons with findings from last year’s 10th annual survey—reported on in *B2B Content Marketing 2020: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends, North America*—in instances where we observed notable year-over-year differences. Find all our past research at [contentmarketinginstitute.com/research](https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/research).

## B2B Respondent Profile by Organization’s Content Marketing Maturity Level



- Sophisticated
- Mature
- Adolescent
- Young
- First Steps

### SOPHISTICATED

Providing accurate measurement to the business, scaling across the organization

### MATURE

Finding success, yet challenged with integration across the organization

### ADOLESCENT

Have developed a business case, seeing early success, becoming more sophisticated with measurement and scaling

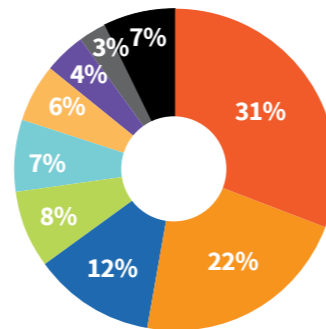
### YOUNG

Growing pains, challenged with creating a cohesive strategy and a measurement plan

### FIRST STEPS

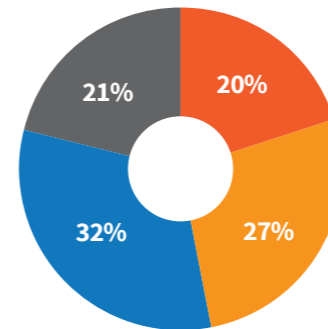
Doing some aspects of content, but have not yet begun to make content marketing a process

## B2B Industry Classification



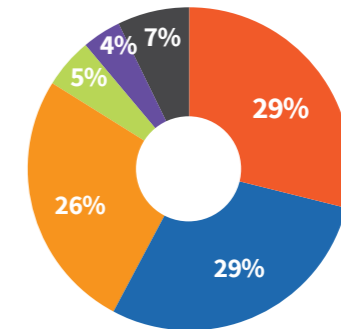
- Technology/IT/Software/Hardware
- Agency (Content Marketing, Advertising, Digital, PR)
- Manufacturing
- Consulting
- Professional Services
- Financial Services/Banking/Insurance
- Healthcare/Med/Pharma/Life Sciences
- Publishing/Media
- Other

## Size of B2B Company (by Employees)



- Micro (Fewer than 10 Employees)
- Small (10-99 Employees)
- Medium (100-999 Employees)
- Large (1,000+ Employees)

## B2B Content Marketing Job Function



- Senior Leadership (e.g., CEO, Owner, CMO, VP, GM)
- Marketing Management
- Content Creation/Content Management
- Marketing Operations
- Advertising/PR/Comm Management
- Other



***Thanks to all the survey participants who made this research possible and to everyone who helps disseminate these findings throughout the content marketing industry.***

### **About Content Marketing Institute**

[Content Marketing Institute](#) is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's [Content Marketing World](#) event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every fall in Cleveland, Ohio, and [ContentTECH Summit](#) event is held every spring in San Diego, California. CMI publishes [Chief Content Officer](#) for executives and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. Content Marketing Institute is organized by Informa Connect. Learn more at [Contentmarketinginstitute.com](https://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com)

### **About Informa Connect**

Informa Connect is a specialist in content-driven events and digital communities that allow professionals to meet, connect, learn, and share knowledge. We operate major branded events in Marketing, Global Finance, Life Sciences and Pharma, Construction & Real Estate, and in a number of other specialist markets and connect communities online year-round.

### **About MarketingProfs**

MarketingProfs is a business-to-business marketing education company—a growing community of more than 550,000+ marketers who aspire to learn, connect, and lead. Its training and education programs include webcasts, master classes, workshops, and its flagship event, the MarketingProfs B2B Forum. And its community offers the support and networking modern marketers need—as a department of 1 or 1,000. Learn more at [MarketingProfs.com](https://www.marketingprofs.com).

### **About ON24**

ON24 is on a mission to transform the way businesses engage with their audience, powering interactive, data-rich digital marketing experiences that drive a resilient revenue strategy. Through the ON24 Platform, marketers can create and deliver live, always-on and personalized webinar, content and virtual event experiences, and capture audience behavior to turn engagement into actionable data. With a digital experience taking place every minute, ON24 is the network where a half million professionals engage every day for a total of 4 billion engagement minutes per year. Headquartered in San Francisco, ON24 has a wide global footprint with eight offices in key regions, including London, Munich, Singapore, Stockholm and Sydney. For more information, visit [www.on24.com](https://www.on24.com).