

12TH ANNUAL

B2B CONTENT MARKETING

BENCHMARKS, BUDGETS,
AND TRENDS



INSIGHTS FOR 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION 3
- B2B CONTENT MARKETING TOP PERFORMERS AT A GLANCE..... 4
- STRATEGY, OPINIONS & OVERALL SUCCESS 5
- TEAM STRUCTURE & OUTSOURCING 11
- CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION 20
- METRICS & GOALS 33
- BUDGETS & SPENDING 39
- LOOKING FORWARD 44
- CLOSING THOUGHTS – BY ROBERT ROSE 49
- KEY TAKEAWAYS 51
- METHODOLOGY 53
- ABOUT 54

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 they are a content marketer, involved with the content marketing function, and/or someone to whom content marketing reports, either directly or indirectly.

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.

LISA MURTON BEETS

Research Director & Report Author, CMI

STEPHANIE STAHL

General Manager, CMI

KIM MOUTSOS

VP Content, CMI

AMIE CANGELOSI

Marketing Director, CMI

ANN HANDLEY

Chief Content Officer, MarketingProfs

ROBERT ROSE

Chief Strategy Advisor, CMI

JOSEPH “JK” KALINOWSKI

Creative Director, CMI

KAREN SCHOPP

Account Manager, CMI



THE SLEEPING GIANT AWAKES

Welcome to the 12th Annual Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Insights for 2022 report. What a year it has been.

This edition of our report looks back on the last 12 months and includes expectations for 2022.

Throughout, you will see quotes from the many rich, qualitative responses we received to the question “What did the pandemic change most about your organization’s content marketing strategy/approach?” In all, 75% of respondents took the time to answer this question and we are ever so grateful. What amazing insights it yielded!

The key theme that emerged was this: The pandemic awoke a sleeping giant – content marketing, that is.

Without in-person events and face-to-face selling, many who had previously paid little attention to content marketing suddenly became aware of its power. More content marketers got a seat at the table and helped keep many businesses on their audiences’ radar. Some discovered new audiences altogether.

The research also confirmed what many of us already knew: Content marketers are some of the fiercest business pros around. In the most difficult of times, they get the job done – and many come through more creative and stronger than before.

Congratulations, content marketers, for a job well done in the most difficult of times. Our entire team salutes you!

How B2B Content Marketing Top Performers* Describe Their Organization – At a Glance

	Most Successful	All Respondents	Least Successful
Has a documented content marketing strategy	62%	40%	11%
Characterizes their content marketing as sophisticated/mature	71%	40%	5%
Has two or more full-time employees dedicated to content marketing	54%	43%	17%
Outsources content marketing activities	57%	50%	36%
Uses content creation/calendaring/collaboration/workflow tools	83%	73%	50%
Uses a content management system (CMS)	60%	49%	40%
Measures content performance	90%	75%	39%
Characterizes team’s ability to demonstrate ROI for content marketing initiatives as excellent/very good	64%	36%	8%
Spends 50% or more of total marketing budget on content marketing	32%	22%	8%
Expects 2022 content marketing budget to increase over 2021	75%	66%	61%
<i>Strongly/somewhat agrees:</i>			
Organization values creativity and craft in content creation and production	92%	80%	63%
Organization provides customers with a consistent experience across their journey	81%	60%	30%
<i>Uses content marketing successfully to:</i>			
Build loyalty with existing customers/clients	78%	60%	34%
Nurture subscribers/audiences/leads	64%	49%	23%
Generate sales/revenue	57%	42%	22%

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: Content marketers.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

STRATEGY, OPINIONS & OVERALL SUCCESS



For some, 2020 was the year of quickly adapting their content marketing strategy. For others, it was the year to finally develop one.

“The pandemic made us create a strategy. Getting attention got way harder, and we had to adapt. We built an SEO strategy and a content marketing strategy on that, as well as a new website, and are seeing improvement in our results,” one respondent said.

Others found their companies finally paying attention to content marketing:

“The pandemic forced us to start content marketing and add marketing as a focus. We were previously very sales oriented.”

“The pandemic reinforced the importance of our content marketing strategy. The commitment to content marketing is now company-wide and there is increased collaboration between the sales and marketing team.”

73% OF RESPONDENTS HAVE A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY.

“Before the pandemic, my company did not have a marketing presence at all. I was brought in to revamp the look and feel of a tired, industrial B2B company and introduce new strategies to assist in sales development. We have now completed a rebrand and are looking at expanding our marketing presence even further.”

“Content marketing became more essential during the pandemic. Due to a decrease in revenue, we weren’t pursuing paid advertising. With restrictions and wanting to ensure the health and safety of our team and clients, we had few in-person meetings. Content marketing helped us stay in front of people digitally.”

Companies became more empathetic

About half of respondents (51%) agreed that over the last year it had become increasingly difficult to capture audiences’ attention. To combat that, many adjusted the tone of their marketing.

“We increased our empathy toward our audience and found them to be more receptive.”

“We stayed in touch with customers with tips for helping their staff and patients. We offered more uplifting and educational marketing, positioned ourselves as a partner, and focused on helping rather than selling.”

“We had to be more thoughtful about the topics we were covering, as well as the target audiences we were approaching. Our core audience is healthcare professionals, so we had to cover topics they cared about rather than talking about what WE thought they cared about (and risk appearing tone-deaf).”

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58% SAID THEIR CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY IS MODERATELY OR SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT NOW VS. PRE-PANDEMIC.

“We understood that digital does not exist without real life. We are now working on more ‘daily and authentic content’ for brand awareness and trust. Selling will be the last step, not the first one.”

Success was mostly attributed to value content provides

Nearly a third (29%) of respondents said their organizations were extremely or very successful with content marketing in the last 12 months – a figure that’s in line with what we find every year with this research. Most of those marketers (74%) said the value their content provides was the top factor.

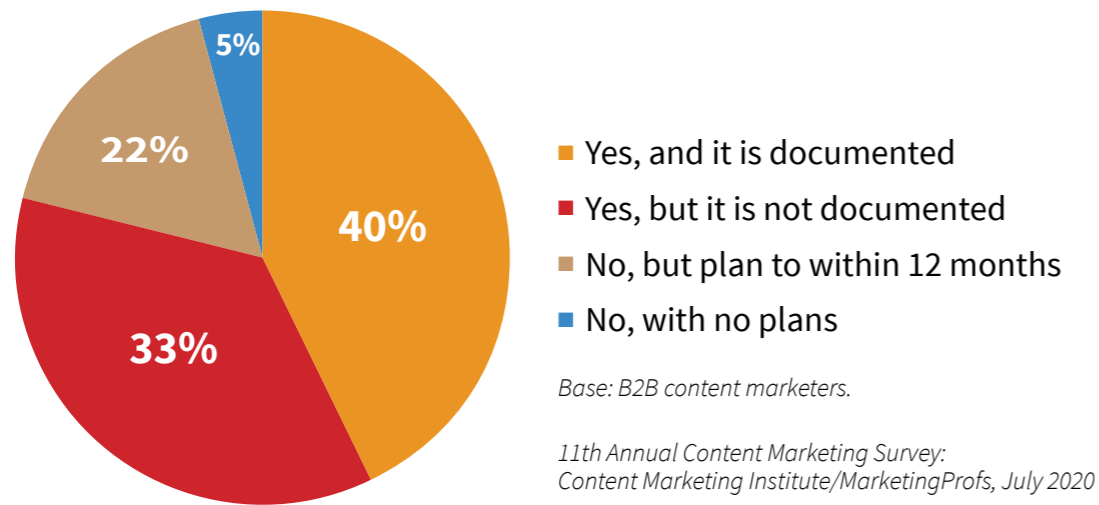
29% SAID THEIR ORGANIZATIONS WERE EXTREMELY OR VERY SUCCESSFUL WITH CONTENT MARKETING IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS – A FIGURE THAT’S IN LINE WITH WHAT WE FIND EVERY YEAR WITH THIS RESEARCH.

“We changed the way we write,” one respondent said. “More empathy and less hard sell. We don’t want to kick people when they’re down. If your only objective is to force someone down your journey or path, you should find another job. Give more and take less!”

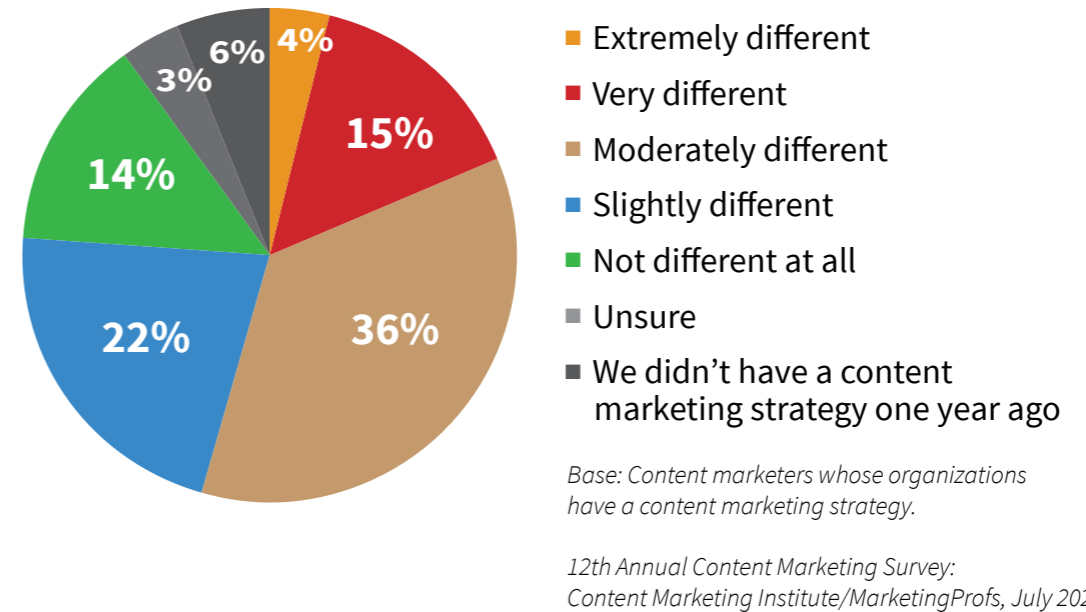


77% reported that their organization has a content marketing strategy. Of those, 58% said their strategy is moderately or slightly different now versus pre-pandemic.

Percentage of B2B Marketers With a Content Marketing Strategy



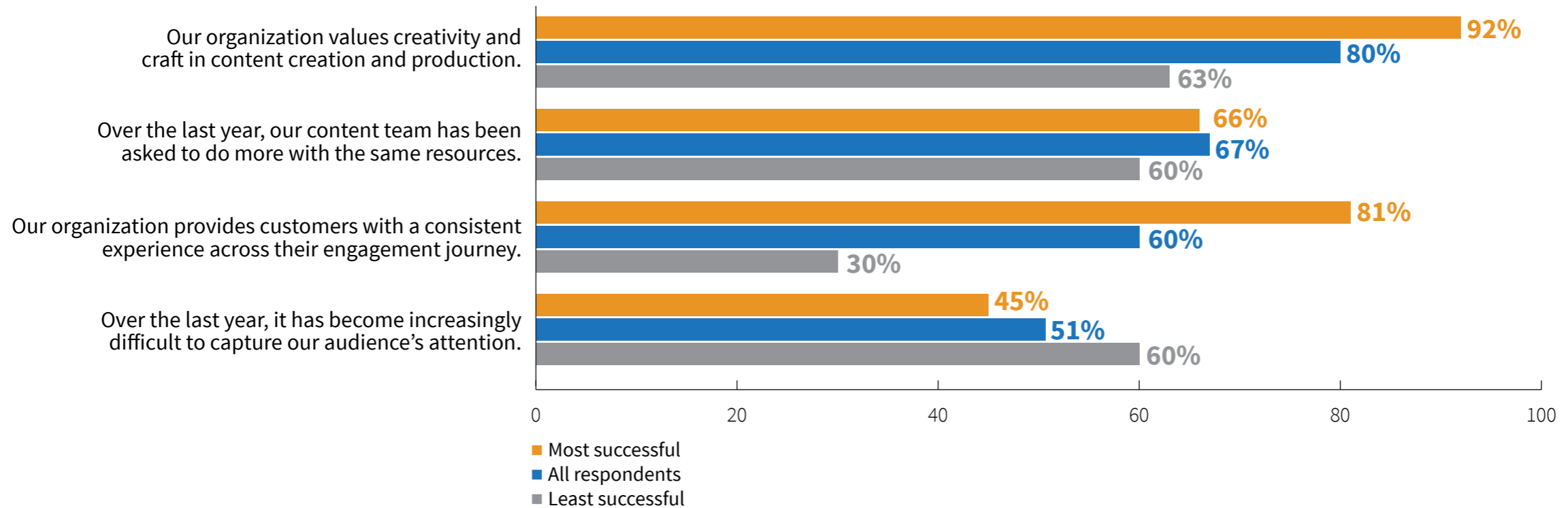
Difference in B2B Content Marketing Strategy Now Vs. Pre-Pandemic



Most content marketers said their organizations value creativity and craft in content creation and production.

Over the last year, many have been asked to do more with the same resources. Half of all respondents said it has become increasingly difficult to capture their audience’s attention.

B2B Marketers’ Opinions About Content Marketing in Their Organizations (Strongly/Somewhat Agree)

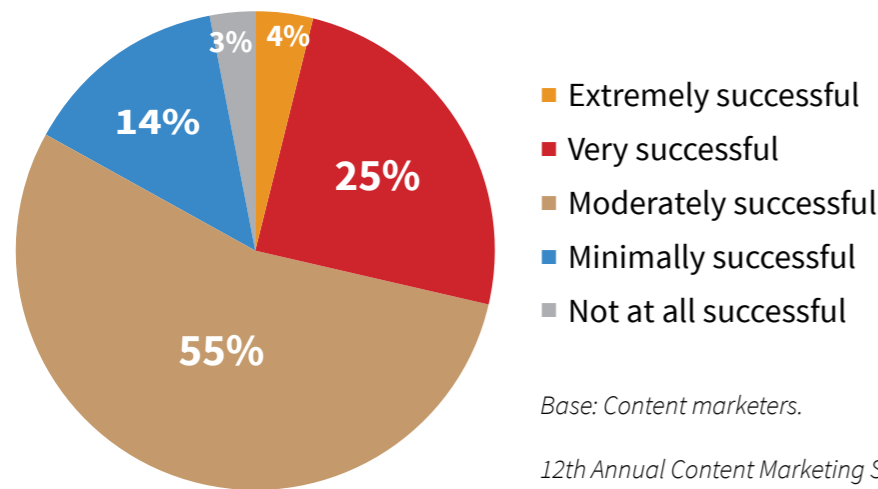


Base: Content marketers who answered each statement.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

29% of respondents said their organization was extremely or very successful with content marketing in the last 12 months. The top contributing factor was the value their content provides.

The organization's size had little impact on overall success. For example, 27% of those from small companies reported high levels of success, as did 30% of those from large companies.

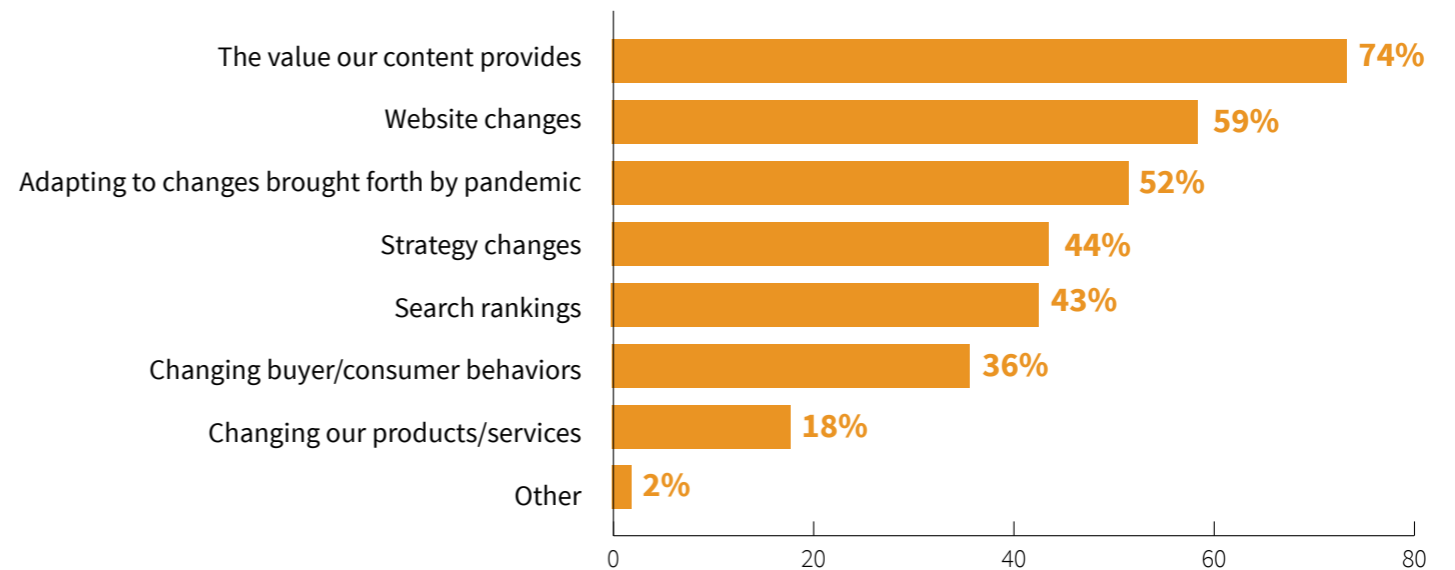
How B2B Marketers Rate Their Organization's Overall Level of Content Marketing Success in Last 12 Months



Base: Content marketers.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

Factors Contributing to B2B Content Marketing Success in Last 12 Months



Base: Content marketers who said their organizations were extremely/very successful with content marketing.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

TEAM STRUCTURE & OUTSOURCING



As we've found in past years, many organizations have small or one-person content marketing teams serving the entire organization. Large companies (1,000+ employees) are the exception.

67% AGREED THAT, OVER THE LAST YEAR, THEIR CONTENT TEAM HAD BEEN ASKED TO DO MORE WITH THE SAME RESOURCES.

How does the work get done? The data suggests that many companies are both outsourcing content marketing work and asking internal staff with other responsibilities to take on more. However, those who have dedicated internal content marketing resources tend to be more successful with content marketing.

“The pandemic slowed things down for us,” one respondent said. “We were going to hire support for content, but we haven't been able to. So, we're doing more with less/the same and it's tricky.”

Outsourcing trends

In a consistent year-over-year trend, around half of all surveyed used outsourcing. The percentage was higher for large companies and lower among the least successful. It makes sense that the least successful are doing more content marketing work in-house, as many from that group are in the early phases of content marketing maturity and may be laying the foundations internally before seeking outside help.

Regarding large companies, 61% indicated last year that they outsourced. This year, the figure was up to 75%. This suggests that in the early phase of the pandemic large companies pulled the reins back on outsourcing but are now back to the practice. In fact, more large companies are outsourcing now than in 2019 (75% vs. 71%).

THE DATA SUGGESTS THAT DURING THE THICK OF THE PANDEMIC, LARGE COMPANIES PULLED THE REINS BACK A BIT ON OUTSOURCING BUT ARE NOW BACK TO THE PRACTICE ... MORE LARGE COMPANIES ARE OUTSOURCING NOW THAN IN 2019 (75% VS. 71%).

Reinforcing this, 40% of respondents said budget issues were a top challenge when seeking outsourced content marketing help – down from 51% the previous year. The top challenge? Finding partners with adequate topical expertise (65%), which was also the top challenge the previous year.

Where the content came from

Many organizations did whatever it took to keep the content coming:

“We created a dedicated cross-functional task force team to pump out content regularly to keep up with changing COVID issues related to our customers. This team spent 25-50% of their time doing this which made us the leader in our industry.”

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“OUR CONTENT MARKETING TEAM WAS BUILT DURING THE PANDEMIC AND GREW FROM ONE TO THREE PEOPLE — ALL FULL-TIME REMOTE, EVEN AFTER ‘RETURN TO OFFICE.’”

“We work in the clinical trial space, so we were extremely busy with a VERY small team. We had new products that we developed and promoted in response to the pandemic that were not on our roadmap. We were also in the middle of redoing our website and suddenly had to pivot and add a lot more information that was not originally planned/budgeted for. The shift to virtual events/tradeshows was also a very big lift for us.”

“Our company increased its respect for our messaging strategy and content marketing efforts, though it also demanded more from our small team. I had to take a seat at more tables and collaborate more across the company to put together the most valuable content possible.”

“Our content marketing team was built during the pandemic and grew from one to three people — all full-time remote, even after ‘return to office.’”

Some faced staff reductions

But it wasn't all rosy. Others lamented the reduction in staff:

“Our budget was significantly reduced overall and remains that way. We also had to lay off employees, so we don't have the time to develop a full-blown strategy.”

“Less content marketing and social media management was being produced/maintained due to a reduction in staff and working hours per week.”

“The pandemic hit our marketing team resources (furlough, leaves, etc.) and put new hires on ice.”

“Our executive team did not approve most marketing efforts. It seemed like we were pushing for sales during a terrible time. All budget was pulled for activities. The ones that remained brought minimal effort and low results. This was against my professional recommendation to continue marketing to keep leads coming in.”

Others took on more work

In some verticals, companies saw business increase:

“We support data centers and edge computing. The increase in work from home and data use led to a booming market with many different technologies. Our company is investing in more R&D and creating new products in adjacent markets. This means our content team has had to understand new technologies, find new SMEs, and understand new target personas. There was no Netflix bingeing for us. We have been running since March 13, 2020 and will be running for a while.”

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“OUR CONTENT TEAM HAS HAD TO UNDERSTAND NEW TECHNOLOGIES, FIND NEW SMES, AND UNDERSTAND NEW TARGET PERSONAS. THERE WAS NO NETFLIX BINGEING FOR US. WE HAVE BEEN RUNNING SINCE MARCH 13, 2020 AND WILL BE RUNNING FOR A WHILE.”

“For whatever strange reason, we were the busiest we’ve ever been during the pandemic, so we’ve focused more on better content processes and finding the right staff to do the work.”

One respondent mentioned the challenges presented by people leaving companies and new talent coming in:

“A LOT of people changed jobs during the pandemic, so one of the biggest changes is that content teams are new right now — and being new to an organization comes with a learning curve to become an SME in that brand, even if you’re a content marketing veteran.”

“Figuring out how content was measured by your predecessor vs. how you want to do it takes time, not to mention a content audit of what exists vs. creating a calendar of what’s to come.”

“This is all normal, but I think it’s more widespread now than ever before. There are SO many new hires on big-tech marketing teams right now that institutional knowledge is gone for a lot of folks and/or we’re just trying things that haven’t been done before,” they continued. “Similarly, there are a lot of new hires in other departments that I lean on as SMEs, so they are figuring it out right alongside me.”



Most organizations have small (or one-person) marketing/content marketing teams serving the entire organization (58%). Large organizations are most likely to have both centralized groups and individual teams working throughout the organization (37%).

B2B Organizations' Content Marketing Team Structure

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
We have a centralized content marketing group that works with multiple brands/products/departments throughout the organization.	21%	0%	29%	27%
Each brand/product/department has its own content marketing team.	6%	1%	6%	15%
Both of the above — We have a centralized group and individual teams throughout the organization.	16%	6%	14%	37%
We have a small (or one-person) marketing/content marketing team serving the entire organization.	58%	78%	52%	20%

Base: Content marketers.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

Medium- and large-sized 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%	.5%	1%	15%
6-10	6%	2%	8%	11%
2-5	33%	22%	45%	41%
1	26%	33%	23%	15%
0 (no one is full time, dedicated)	32%	43%	23%	17%

Base: Content marketers.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

The most successful content marketers are more likely than all respondents to have more internal content marketing resources and to outsource.

B2B Organizations' Content Marketing Team Size & Outsourcing (By Success)

	Most Successful	All Respondents	Least Successful
Zero full-time employees dedicated to content marketing	19%	32%	58%
One full-time employee dedicated to content marketing	27%	26%	26%
Two or more full-time employees dedicated to content marketing	54%	43%	17%
Outsources content marketing activities	57%	50%	36%

*Base: Content marketers.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021*

Half of all respondents said their organization outsources at least one content marketing activity, with large companies being the most likely to outsource.

Two years ago, 71% of respondents from large companies said they outsourced, compared with 61% the previous year. The figure is back up again, and even higher than two years ago (75% vs. 71%).

Does Your B2B Organization Outsource Any Content Marketing Activities?

	All Respondents	Small (1-99 Employees)	Medium (100-999 Employees)	Large (1,000+ Employees)
Yes	50%	37%	54%	75%
No	50%	63%	46%	25%

*Base: Content marketers.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021*

The top challenge for B2B marketers who outsource is finding partners with adequate topical expertise (65%). The percentage of those who indicated that budget issues are a challenge decreased to 40% compared with 51% the previous year.

Top 5 Challenges When Seeking Outsourced B2B Content Marketing Help



Base: Content marketers who outsourced at least one content marketing activity. Aided list; up to five responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION



One thing that changed during work-from-home was collaboration. It makes sense that 73% of respondents indicated they used content creation/calendaring/collaboration/workflow tools, which represented a big increase over the previous year (58%).

“Our use of internal technology changed,” one respondent said. “Working 100% virtually improved our skills and mindset about collaborating across the world; however, it sometimes hindered informal collaboration that can take place when on site. We saw the increased promotion of higher-level content and helpful, useful content for customers and less focus on product feature promotions — something we’ll continue.”

Others noted:

“The planning process got harder. The content produced was relatively the same but planning with team members changed.”

“The time spent caring for family, team, daily logistics ate into work time.”

Virtual events and webinars take center stage

The types of content that marketers were creating changed, too — the most obvious example was the shift from in-person events to virtual events, which took center stage (virtual events/webinars/online courses were rated the content type that produced the best content marketing results in the last 12 months).

Webinars also took the top spot when we asked which video formats produced the best results (51% said webinars/webcasts/web series, with interviews with industry experts coming in at a distant second at 36%).

VIRTUAL EVENTS/WEBINARS/ONLINE COURSES WERE RATED AS THE CONTENT TYPE THAT PRODUCED THE BEST CONTENT MARKETING RESULTS IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS. WEBINARS ALSO TOOK THE TOP SPOT WHEN WE ASKED WHICH VIDEO FORMATS PRODUCED THE BEST RESULTS.

The pandemic prompted many marketers to try new things. “We developed less static content and more interactive and animated content formats,” one said.

“It gave us time to try things that we may not have before,” another noted. “We created some content that had only been ideas previously.”

Distribution also changes

Some respondents noted they began producing more content during the pandemic and distributing it across more and different channels:

“We began generating content on a more frequent basis and exploring new channels in which to distribute the content”.

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“We came to a fundamental understanding that our customers are consuming content in more channels than we imagined.”

“We did more outbound sales calls and increased webinar frequency to once per month. Previously we did only whitepapers and blog content.”

“WE BEGAN GENERATING CONTENT ON A MORE FREQUENT BASIS AND EXPLORING NEW CHANNELS IN WHICH TO DISTRIBUTE THE CONTENT.”

“We began paying more attention to social media platforms as well as blogging platforms from the traditional offline marketing techniques. This resulted in increased user retention, a hike in pageviews, and more.”

As several respondents said, the pandemic made content marketers rethink how much content they deliver. We heard from many who cut back on quantity to focus on quality.

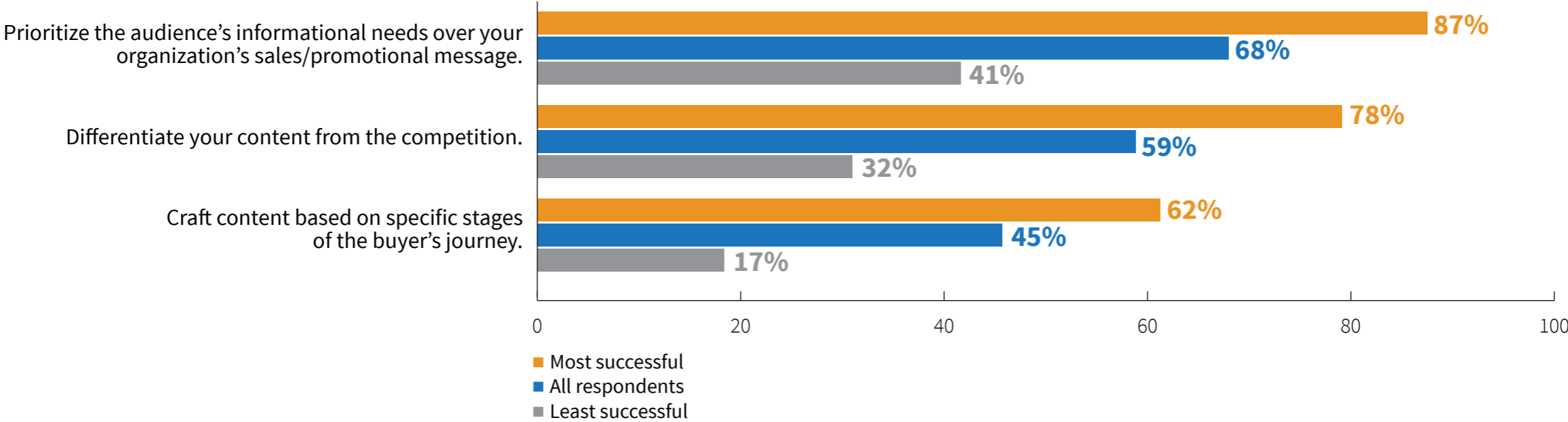
“When everything went to digital there was an onslaught of emails, podcasts, and webcasts. We forced ourselves to be much more thoughtful in what we were putting out there, and if it wasn’t highly relevant to what was going on at that moment in time, we didn’t produce and distribute.

“Our audiences did not have time to read evergreen content,” they continued. “We tried to be highly relevant in the moment, providing insight from our perspective on ONLY the topics where we could provide meaningful, actionable insight.”



The most successful marketers were more likely than all respondents to prioritize the audience’s informational needs, differentiate their content from the competition, and craft content based on specific stages of the buyer’s journey.

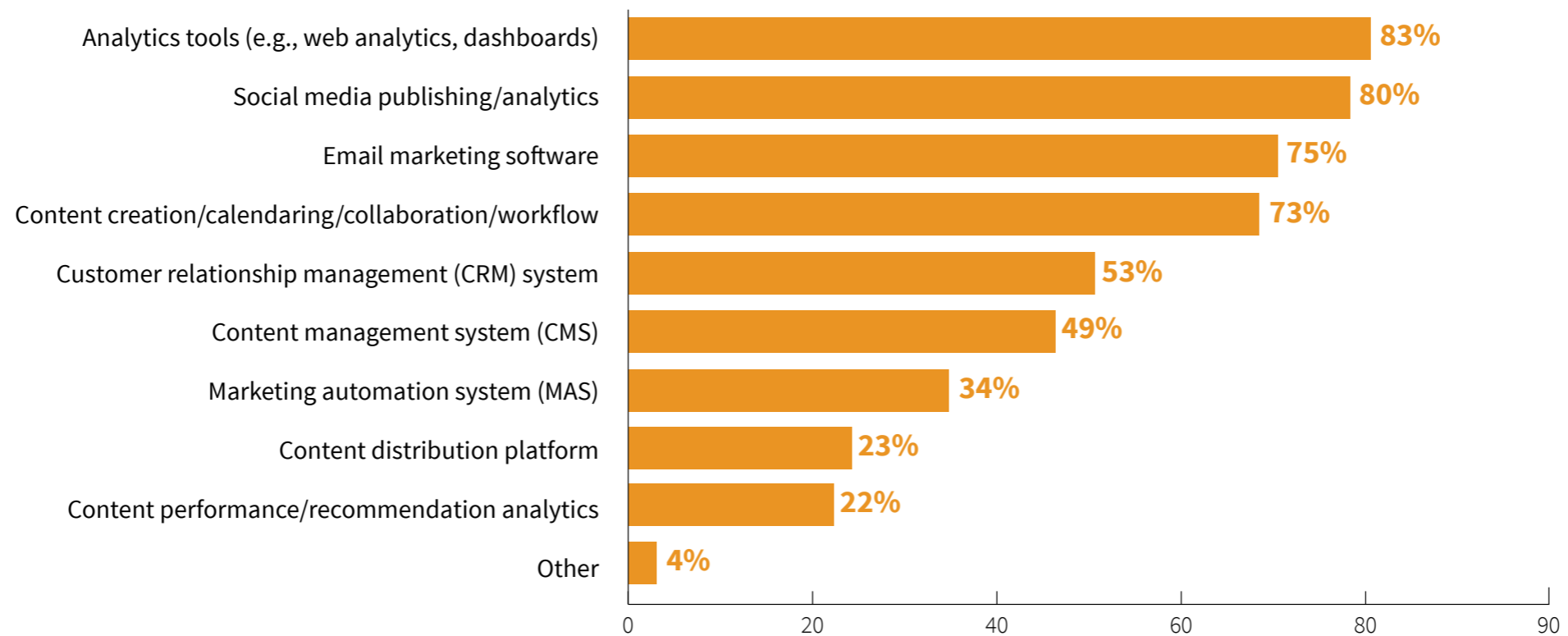
Concepts B2B Marketers Always/Frequently Take Into Account While Creating Content for Their Organization



Base: Content marketers who answered each statement.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

The top technologies B2B organizations use to assist with content marketing are analytics tools (83%), social media publishing/analytics (80%), email marketing software (75%), and content creation/calendaring/collaboration/workflow tools (73%).

Technologies B2B Organizations Use to Assist With Content Marketing



Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

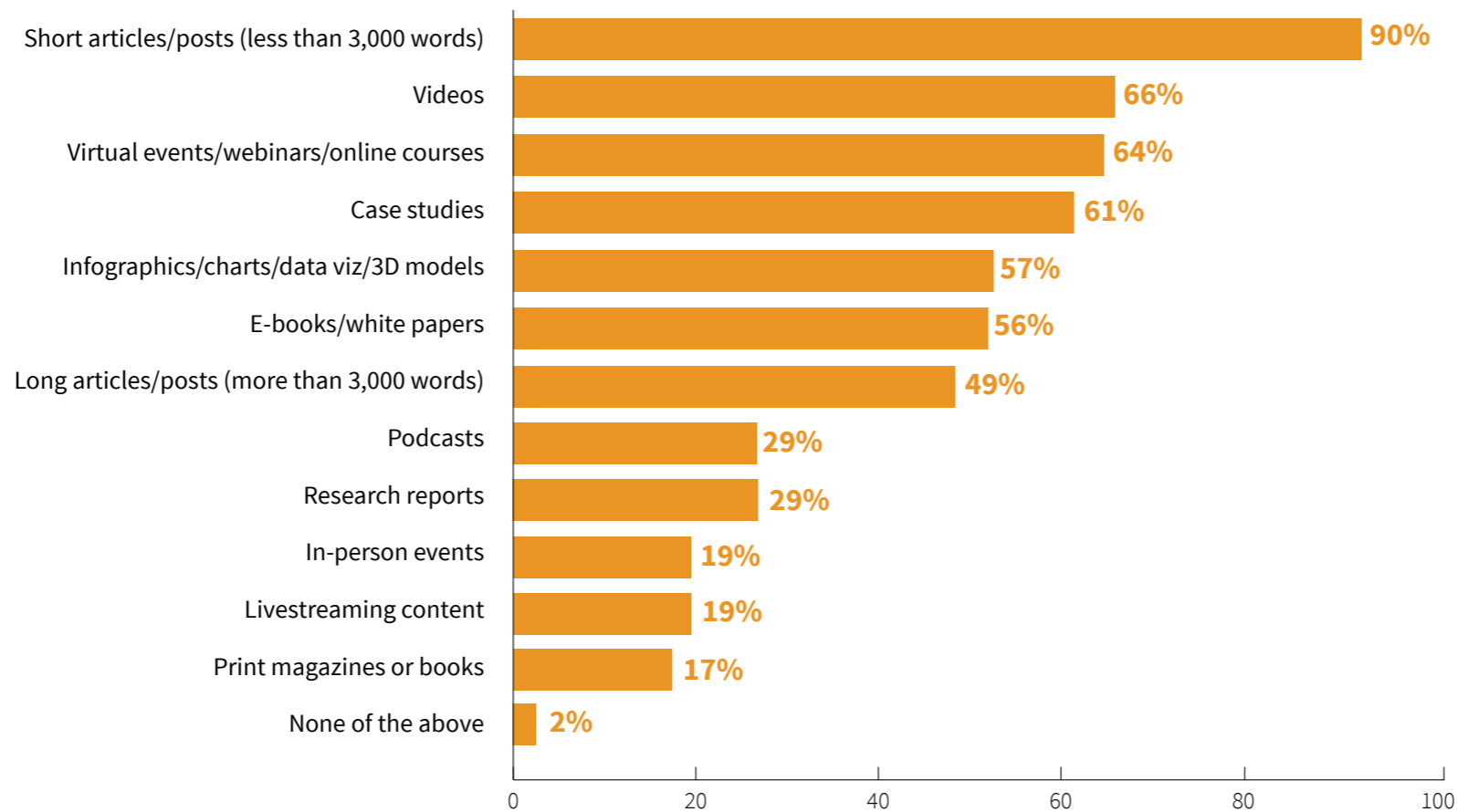
CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

90% of respondents used short articles/posts for content marketing purposes in the last 12 months.

The most successful content marketers were more likely than all respondents to have used:

- ▶ Case studies 73% vs. 61%
- ▶ E-books/white papers 67% vs. 56%
- ▶ Long articles/posts 62% vs. 49%
- ▶ Research reports..... 40% vs. 29%

Content Assets B2B Marketers Created/Used in Last 12 Months



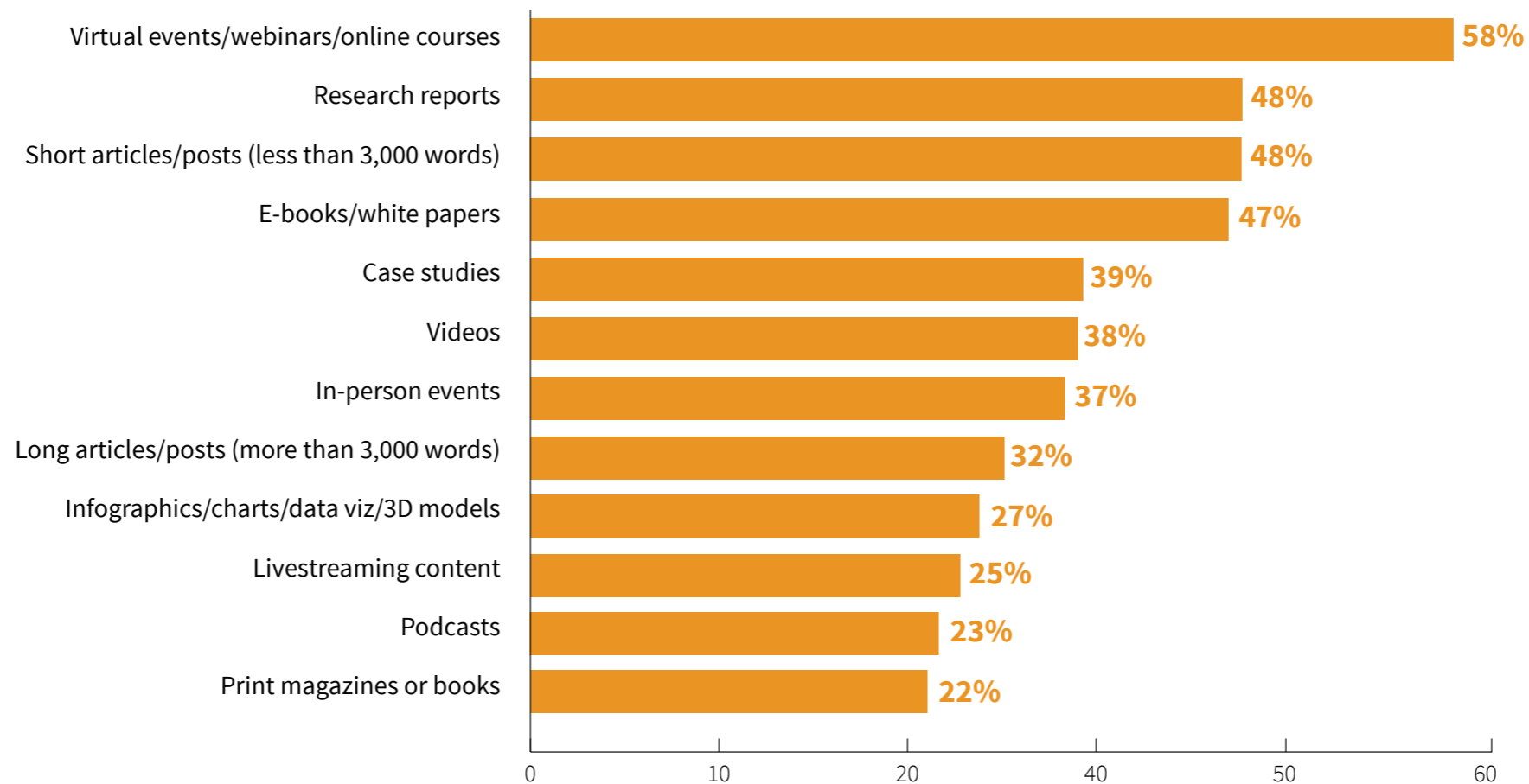
Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
 12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

Respondents said virtual events/webinars/online courses produced the best results for their content marketing in the last 12 months (58%) — those who are most successful agreed (66%).

Long articles/posts stood out as an area where those who are most successful reported better results than respondents overall (43% vs. 32%).

B2B Content Assets That Produced the Best Results in Last 12 Months



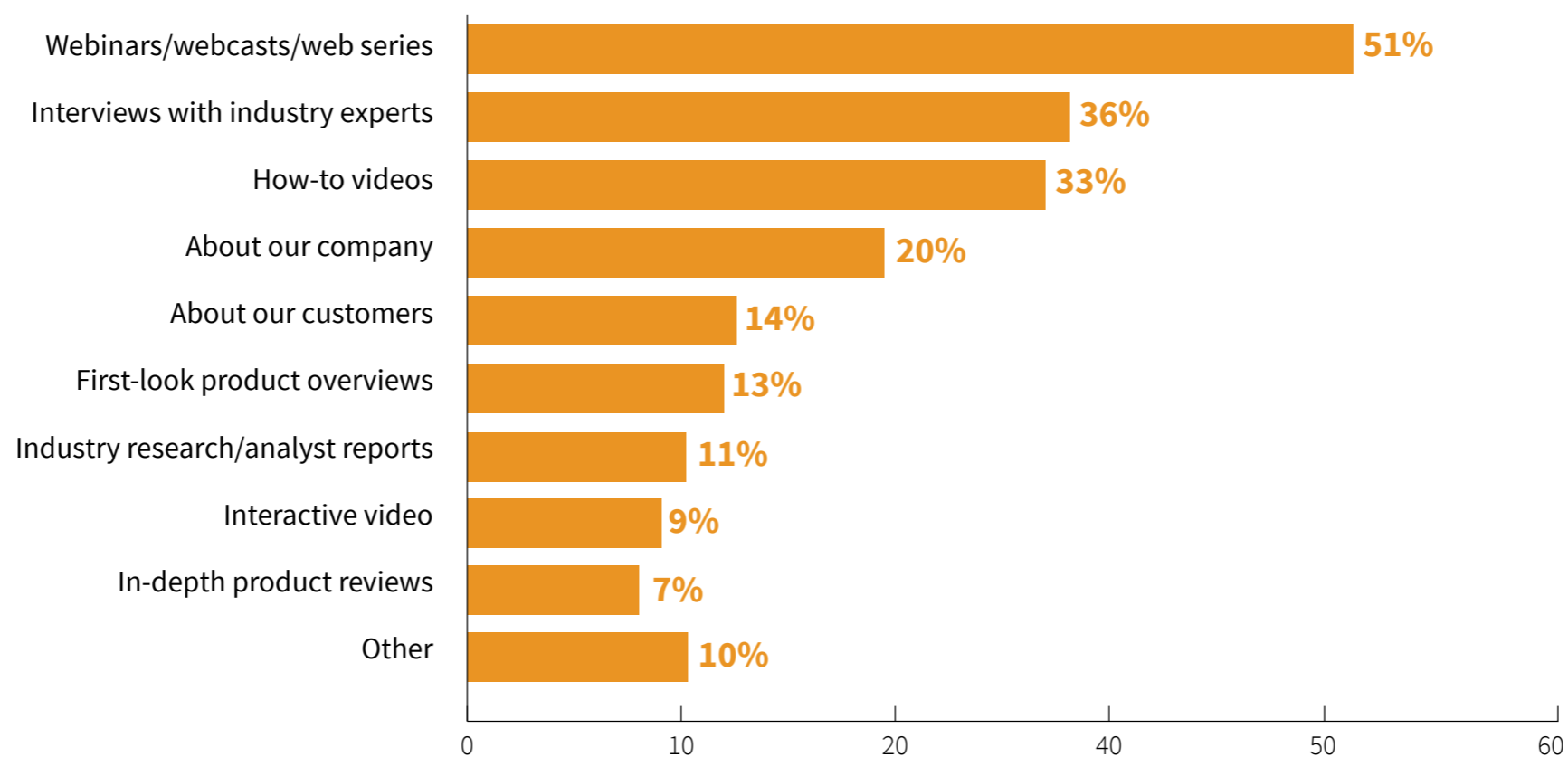
Note: Respondents were shown a display list of the content types they used in the last 12 months and asked, “Which content assets produced the best results for your content marketing in the last 12 months? (Select all that apply.)”

Base: Content marketers who use each content asset listed. Multiple responses permitted.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

Among the video formats they used, respondents said webinars/webcasts/web series produced the best content marketing results in the last 12 months (51%).

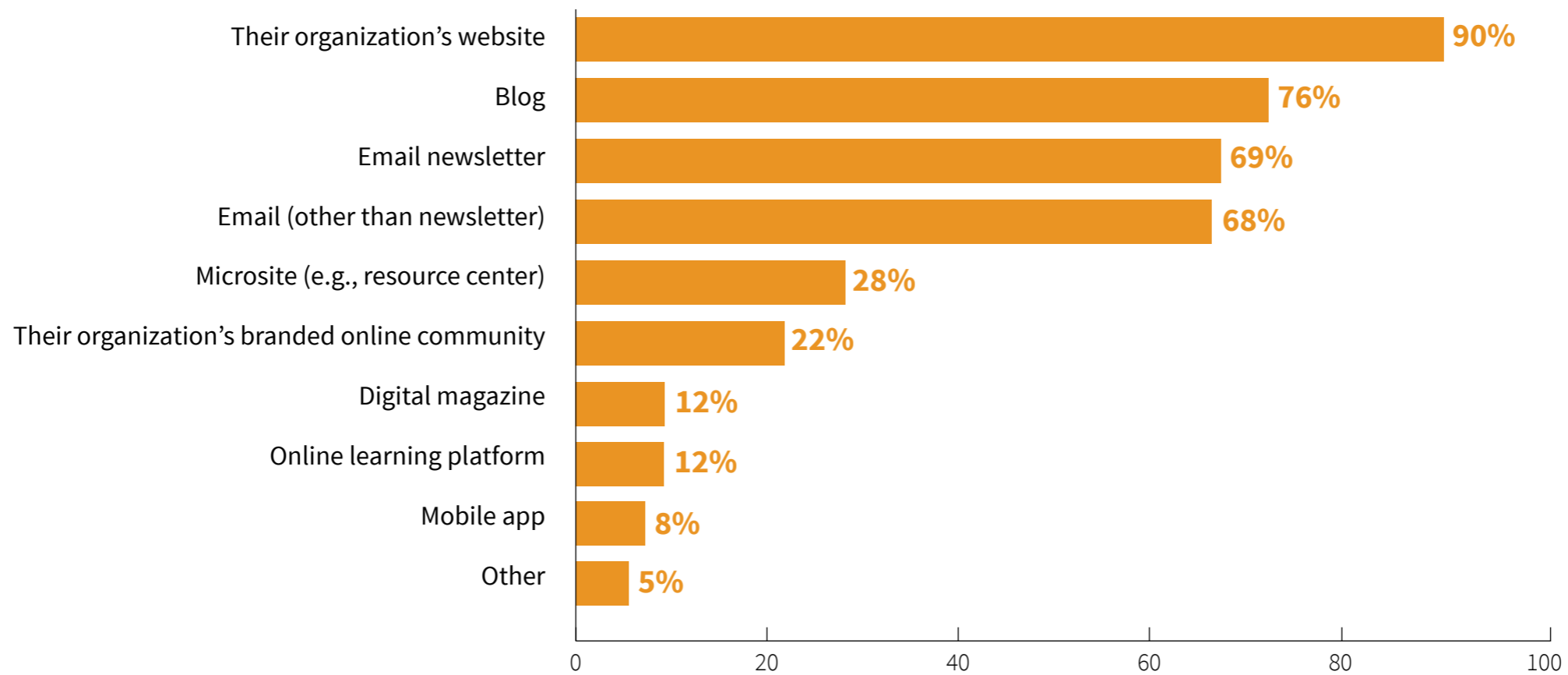
B2B Video Formats That Produced the Best Results in Last 12 Months



Base: Content marketers who used videos in the last 12 months. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

In addition to using their organization’s website to distribute content in the last 12 months, more than 50% of respondents used blogs, email newsletters, and email.

Owned-Media Platforms B2B Marketers Used to Distribute Content in Last 12 Months



Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

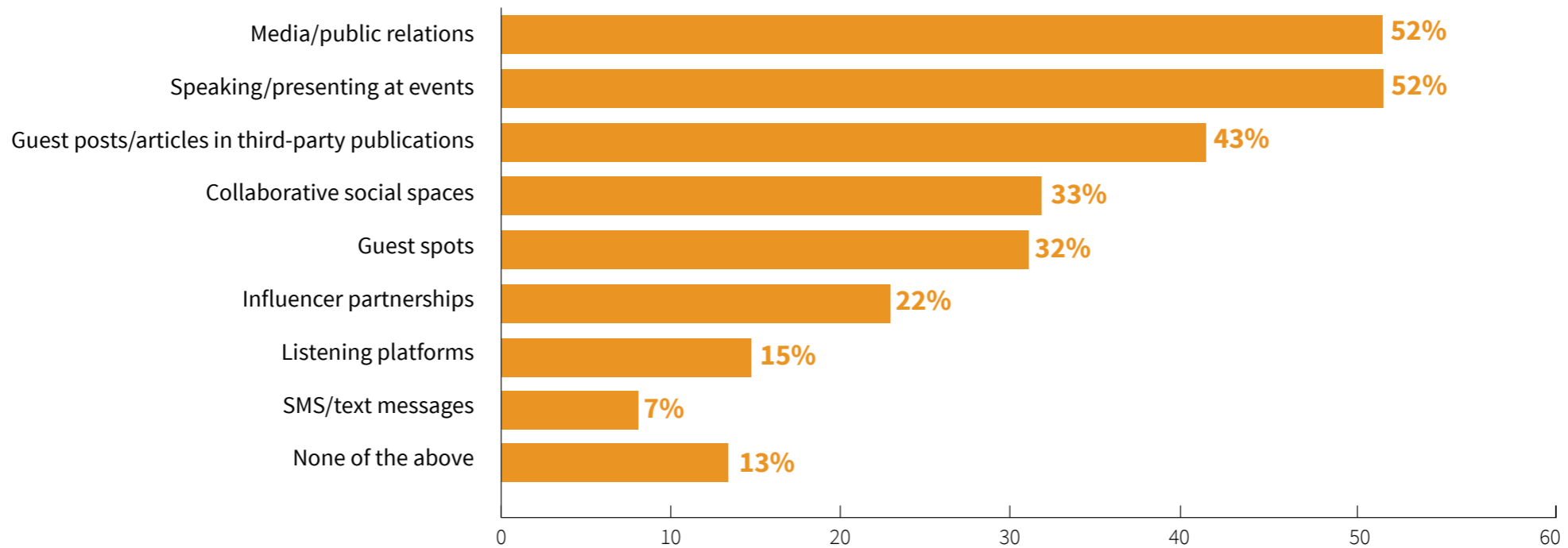
CONTENT CREATION & DISTRIBUTION

About half of respondents (52%) used media/public relations and speaking/presenting at events to distribute content in the last 12 months.

The most successful content marketers were more likely than all respondents to have used:

- ▶ Media/public relations 64% vs. 52%
- ▶ Guest posts/articles in third-party publications..... 54% vs. 43%
- ▶ Guest spots 46% vs. 32%

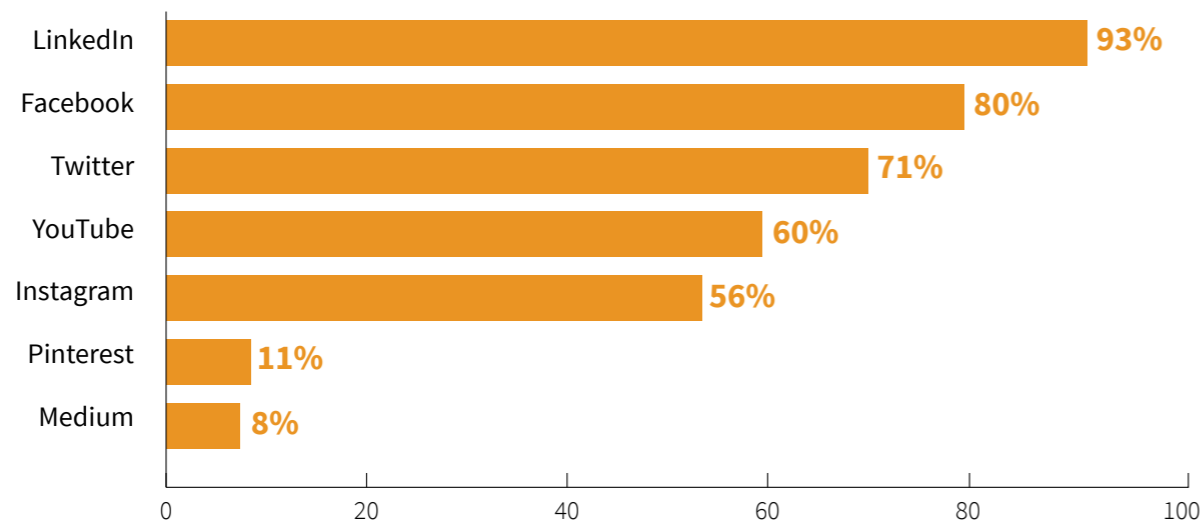
Organic (Nonpaid) Platforms B2B Marketers Used to Distribute Content in Last 12 Months



Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

LinkedIn is the organic social media platform that B2B content marketers used the most and the one they said produced the best results.

Organic (Nonpaid) Social Media Platforms B2B Marketers Used to Distribute Content in Last 12 Months

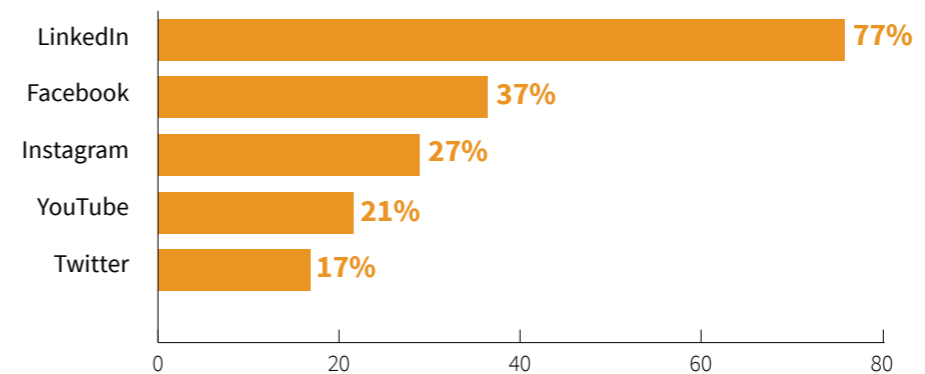


Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
 12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

Other paid social media platforms used in last 12 months:

Clubhouse (5%), Quora (5%), TikTok (5%), Reddit (4%),
 Discord (2%), Snapchat (2%), Twitter Spaces (2%), Other (3%),
 and None (2%).

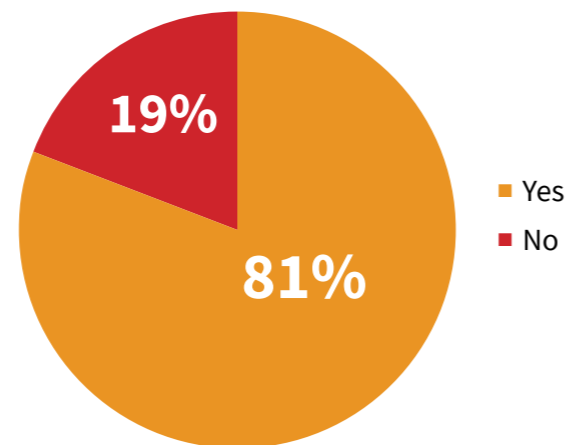
B2B Organic (Nonpaid) Social Media Platforms That Produced Best Results in Last 12 Months (Top 5)



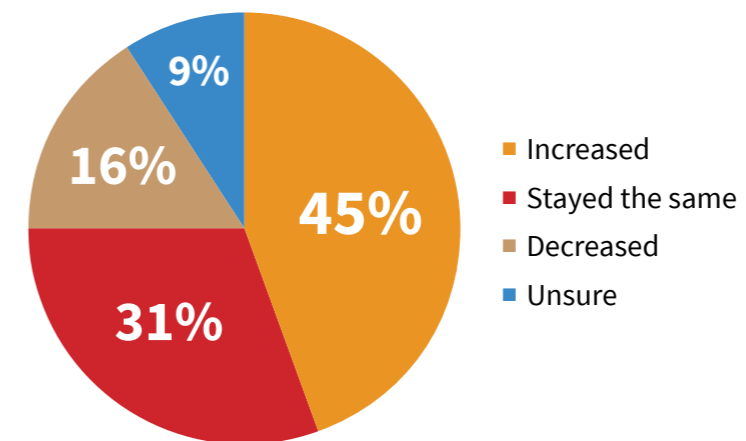
Base: Content marketers who used the nonpaid social media platforms listed to distribute content in the last 12 months.
 12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

Among the respondents whose organizations used paid content distribution channels, 77% used social media advertising/promoted posts.

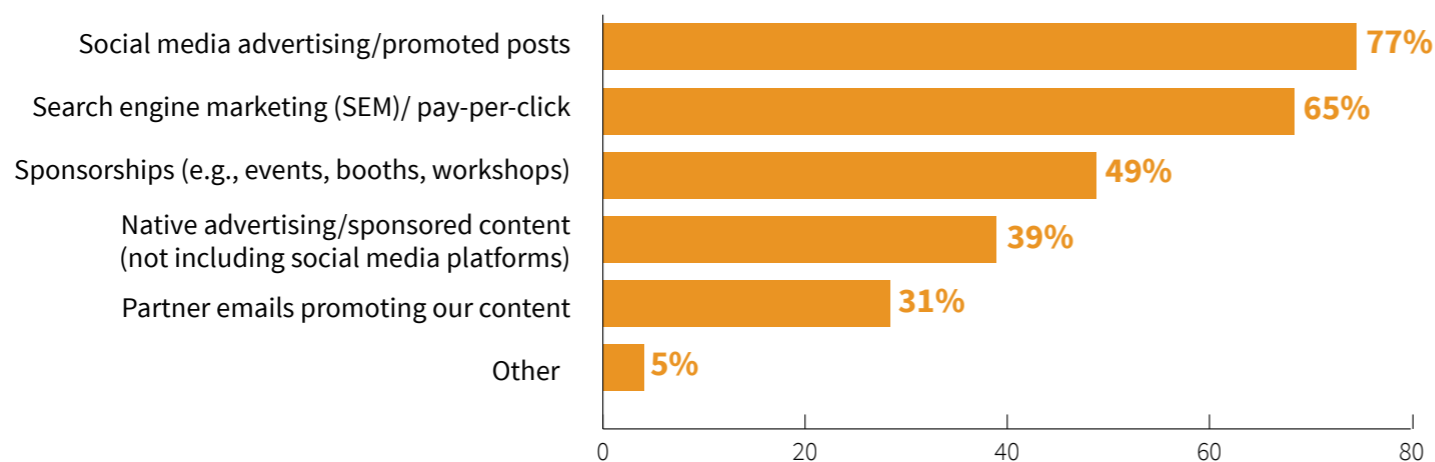
Do You Use Paid Methods to Promote Content?



Over the Last 12 Months, How Has Your Spending on Paid Content Distribution Channels Evolved?



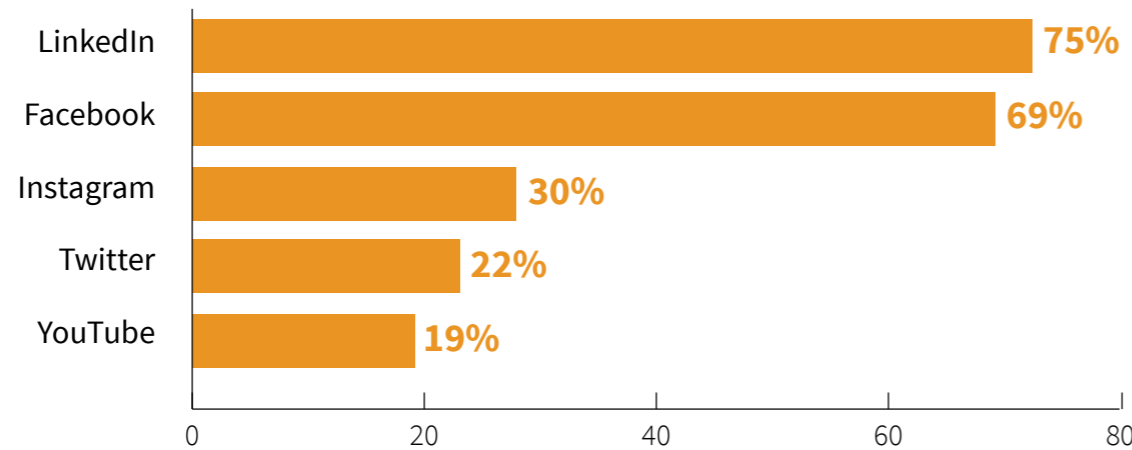
Paid Content Distribution Channels B2B Marketers Used in Last 12 Months



*Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021*

Among the 77% of respondents who used paid social media platforms, the majority chose LinkedIn (75%) and Facebook (69%), which they also said produced the best results.

Paid Social Media Platforms B2B Content Marketers Used in Last 12 Months (Top 5)

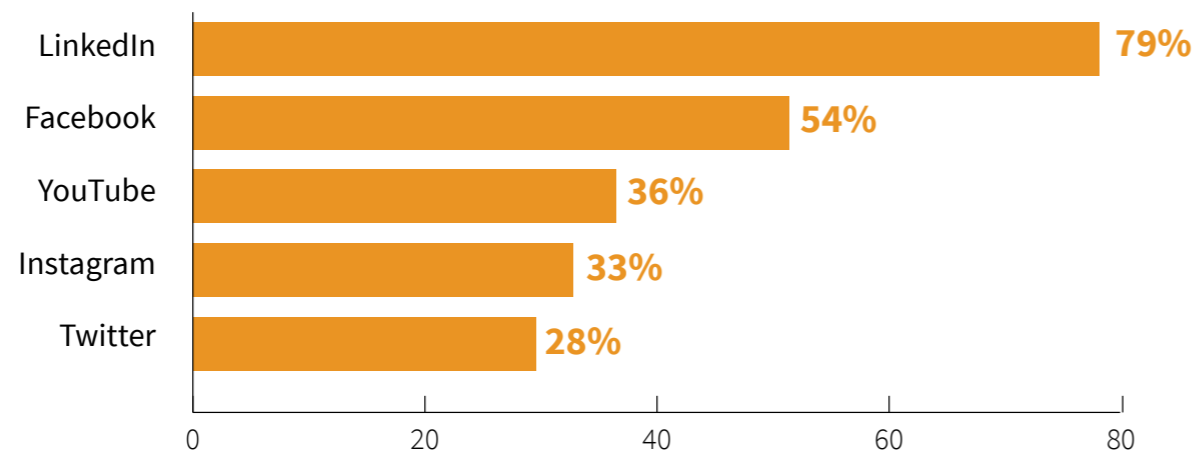


Other paid social media platforms used in last 12 months:

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

*Base: Content marketers who used social media platforms for paid content promotion in the last 12 months. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021*

B2B Paid Social Media Platforms That Produced Best Results in Last 12 Months (Top 5)



*Base: Content marketers who used the social media platforms listed for paid content promotion in the last 12 months. Multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021*

Three out of four respondents (75%) said their organization measures content performance. Those who measure said website engagement (69%), conversions (67%), website traffic (65%), and email engagement (64%) provided the most insight into B2B content performance in the last 12 months.

According to one respondent, “The pandemic has made it possible to show the longer-term ROI of each content investment as we focused on optimizing, improving, and distributing content we already had to increase engagement AND conversions across the buyer journey.”

And while leads didn’t provide the highest levels of insight, numerous respondents mentioned that the number of leads was down, but lead quality had improved:

“Work-from-home forced us to do more webinars instead of live events, which ended up increasing our actual audience 10x. And not a junk audience either, but a relevant audience that we weren’t reaching before.”

“Before COVID, 50% of our leads came from in-person events. We’ve had to double down on focusing on email marketing, SEO, SEM, and emails. Things are slower, yes, but the quality of leads is quite high.”

“WORK-FROM-HOME FORCED US TO DO MORE WEBINARS INSTEAD OF LIVE EVENTS, WHICH ENDED UP INCREASING OUR ACTUAL AUDIENCE 10X. AND NOT A JUNK AUDIENCE EITHER, BUT A RELEVANT AUDIENCE THAT WE WEREN’T REACHING BEFORE.”

The most successful surpass their peers in several key areas

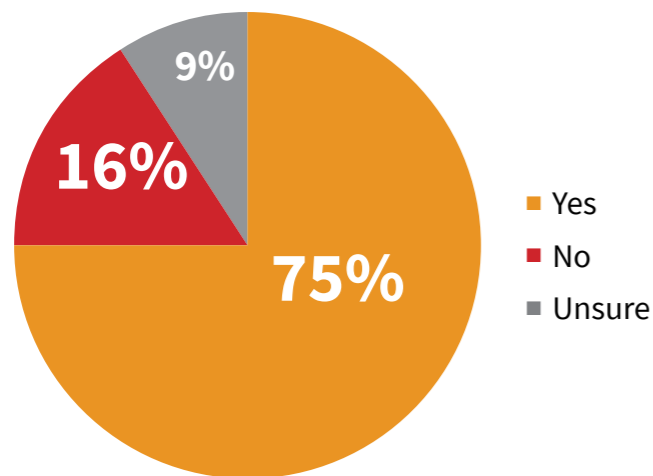
Regarding goals, all respondents were using content marketing successfully to create brand awareness. The most successful stood apart in three key areas:

- Building loyalty with existing clients and customers (78% vs. 60%)
- Nurturing subscribers/audiences/leads (64% vs. 49%)
- Generating sales/revenue (57% vs. 42%)

For more ways the top performers stood out, see page 38.

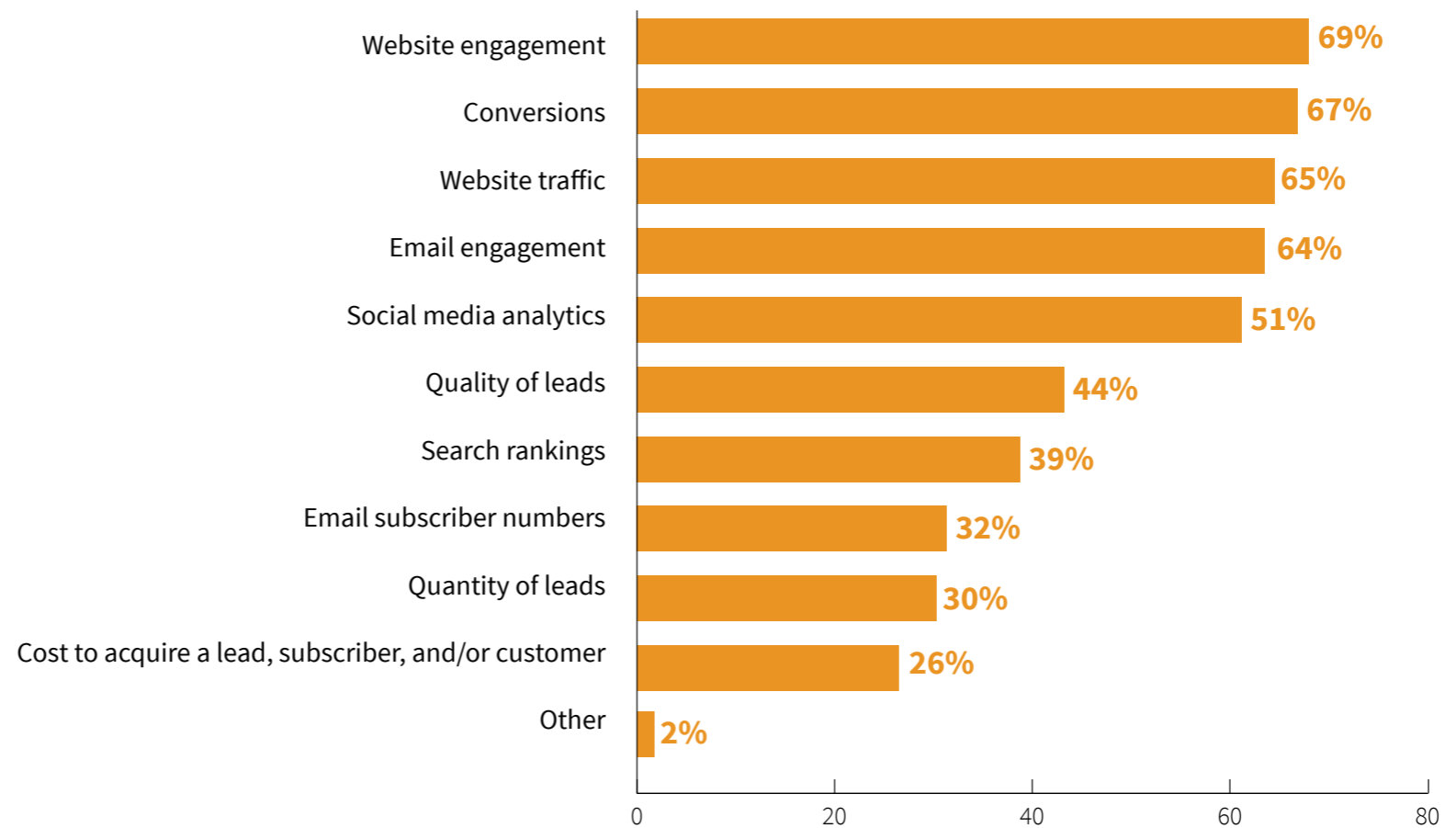
75% of respondents said their organization measures content performance. Among those, 69% said website engagement provided the most insight into performance.

Does Your B2B Organization Use Metrics to Measure Content Performance?



Base: Content marketers.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

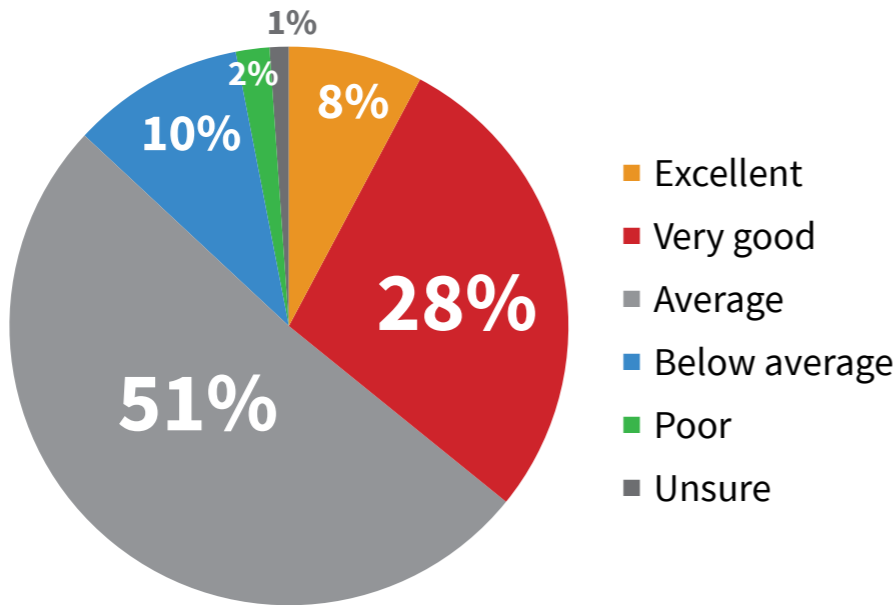
Metrics That Have Provided Most Insight Into B2B Content Performance in Last 12 Months



Base: Content marketers who measure content performance. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

Among the 75% of respondents who measured content performance, 36% indicated they're doing an excellent or very good job.

How B2B Marketers Characterize Their Teams' Ability to Demonstrate Content Marketing ROI



Base: Content marketers who measure content performance. Aided list.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

Excellent — We have measurement data showing ROI on overall content marketing approach.

Very good — We have measurement data showing ROI on at least one content marketing initiative with well-informed insights in other areas.

Average — We have well-informed insights, but lack measurement data showing ROI.

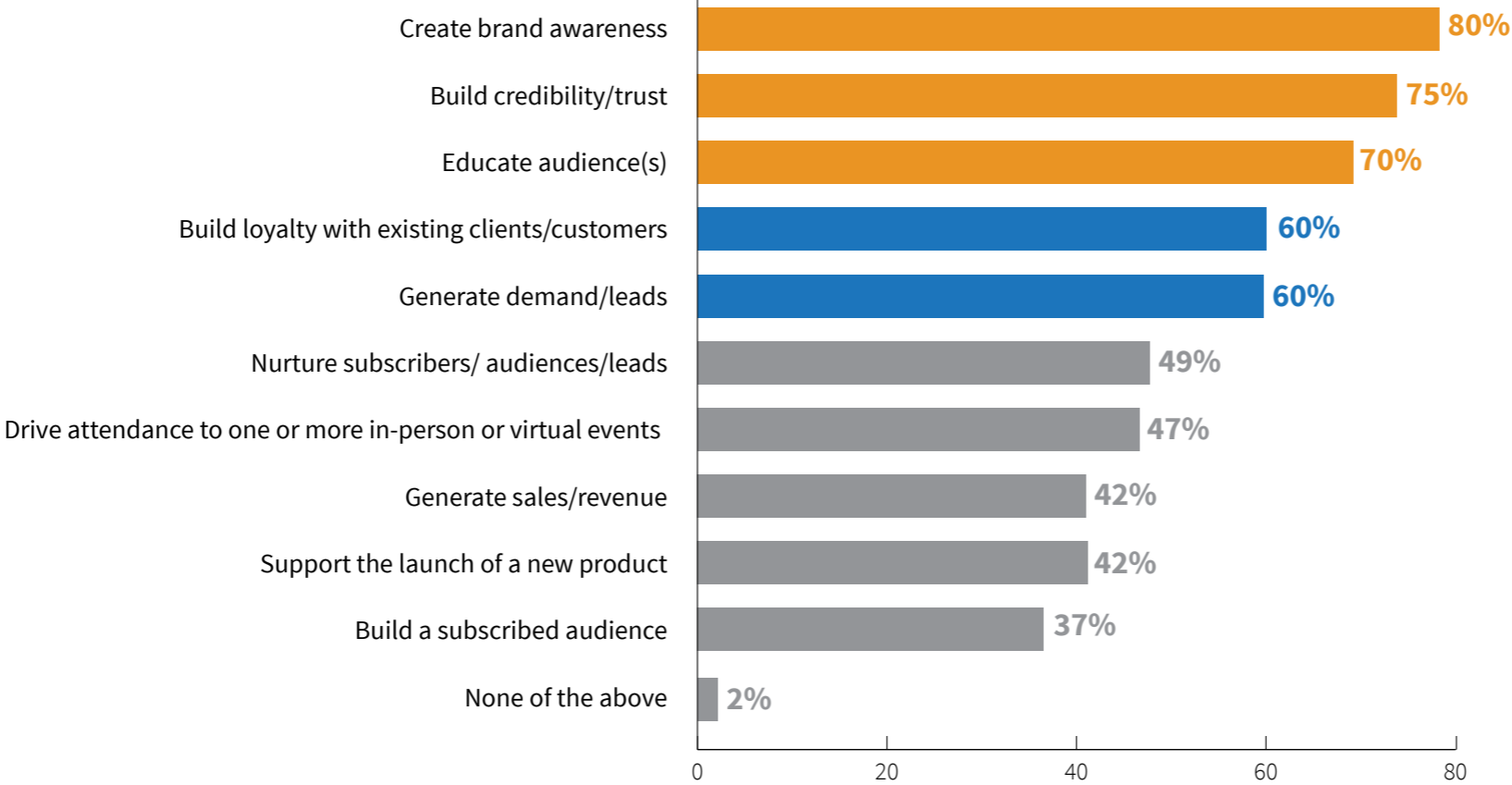
Below average — We have only speculative insights at this point.

Poor — We have little insight into what works and what doesn't.

As we've found in past years, B2B marketers say the top three goals content marketing helps them achieve are creating brand awareness, building credibility/trust, and educating the audience.

This page shows topline results. The next page shows how the top performers set themselves apart.

Goals B2B Marketers Have Achieved by Using Content Marketing Successfully in Last 12 Months (All Respondents)



Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

METRICS & GOALS

Most respondents were successful with using content marketing to create brand awareness. However, a much higher percentage of the most successful said they met the following goals in the last 12 months:

- ▶ Build loyalty with existing clients and customers (78% vs. 60%)
- ▶ Nurture subscribers/audiences/leads (64% vs. 49%)
- ▶ Generate sales/revenue (57% vs. 42%)
- ▶ Build credibility and trust (88% vs. 75%)
- ▶ Build a subscribed audience (50% vs. 37%)
- ▶ Drive attendance to one or more in-person or virtual events (60% vs. 47%)
- ▶ Generate demand/leads (72% vs. 60%)

Goals B2B Marketers Have Achieved by Using Content Marketing Successfully in Last 12 Months (Most Successful vs. All vs. Least Successful)

	Most Successful	All Respondents	Least Successful
Create brand awareness	88%	80%	63%
Build credibility/trust	88%	75%	47%
Educate audience(s)	80%	70%	48%
Build loyalty with existing clients/customers	78%	60%	34%
Generate demand/leads	72%	60%	36%
Nurture subscribers/audience/leads	64%	49%	23%
Drive attendance to one or more in-person or virtual events	60%	47%	24%
Generate sales/revenue	57%	42%	22%
Support the launch of a new product	47%	42%	31%
Build a subscribed audience	50%	37%	14%
None of the above	0%	2%	12%

Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

Sixty-four percent of respondents said they were familiar with their company's content marketing budget. Of those, 22% said they spend 50% or more of their total marketing budget on content marketing.

Forty-three percent said their 2021 content marketing budget increased over 2020 spending levels.

Investment expected to grow

Sixty-six percent of respondents with knowledge of their budgeting process — and 75% of those who were most successful — expect their 2022 content marketing budget to increase over their 2021 budget.

66% OF RESPONDENTS WITH KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR BUDGETING PROCESS – AND 75% OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL – EXPECT THEIR 2022 CONTENT MARKETING BUDGET TO INCREASE OVER THEIR 2021 BUDGET.

Investment in events is expected to increase as follows:

In-person events

In a post-COVID-vaccine business environment, investment is expected to increase in in-person events (52%).

Hybrid events

Investment in hybrid events is expected to increase (39%) more so than stay the same (29%), even though 18% do not use hybrid events at all.

Digital events

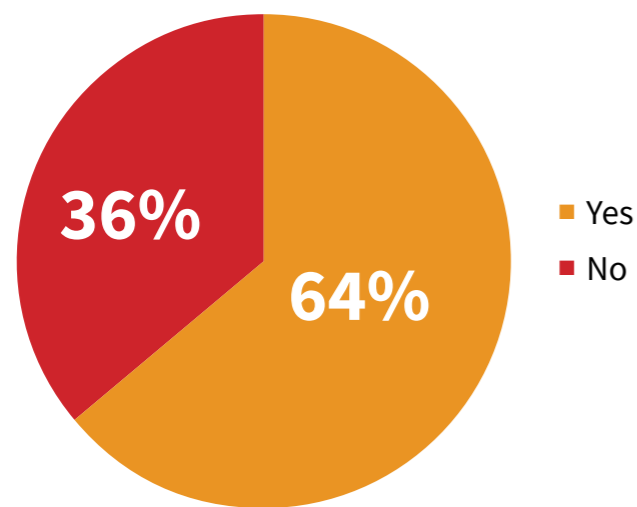
Regarding digital events, many marketers appear to want to stay the course (41% say spending will stay the same), although 33% plan to increase spending.

Note: The percentage of those expecting to increase spending in each area above did not differ among the most successful, all respondents, and least successful respondents.

According to one respondent, “We have more online engagement with customers, and live webinars are more successful and well attended. We have more budget because tradeshow are canceled and they're very expensive.”

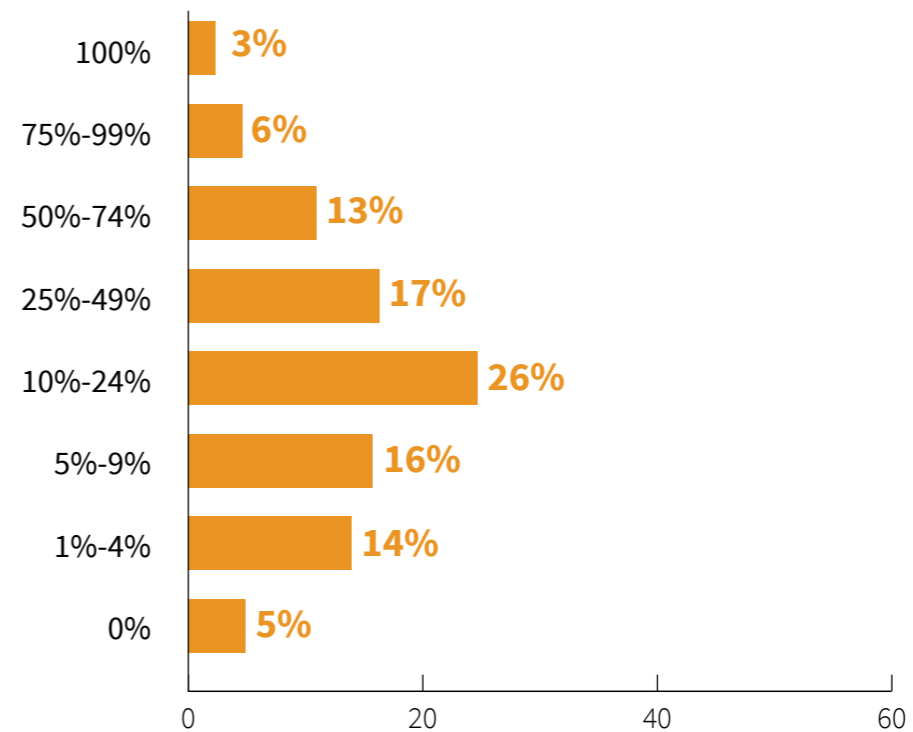
64% of respondents said they had knowledge of their company’s content marketing budget. Of those, 22% said they spent 50% or more of their total marketing budget on content marketing.

Do You Have Knowledge of Your Organization’s Budget/Budgeting Process for Content Marketing?



Base: Content marketers.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

Percentage of Total Marketing Budget Spent on B2B Content Marketing

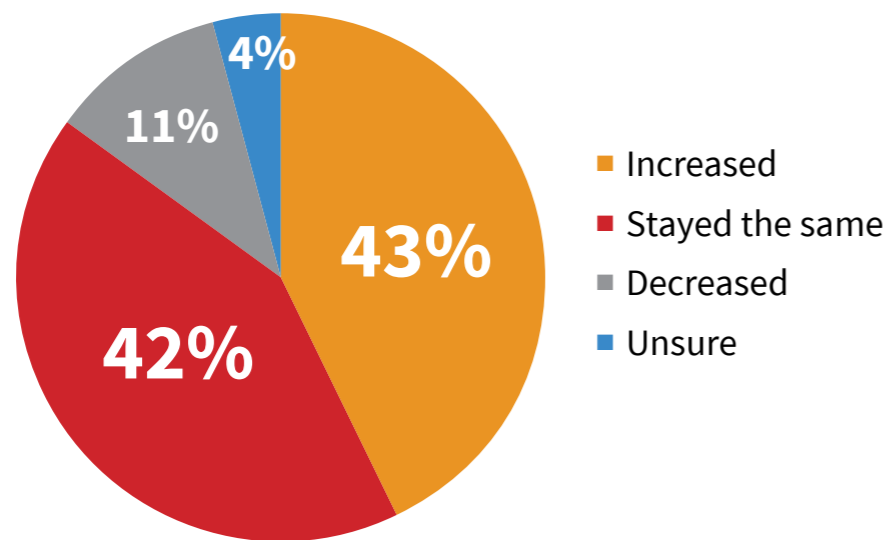


Base: Content marketers who know their organizations’ budget/budgeting process for content marketing. Aided list.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

43% said their 2021 content marketing budget increased over 2020 levels.

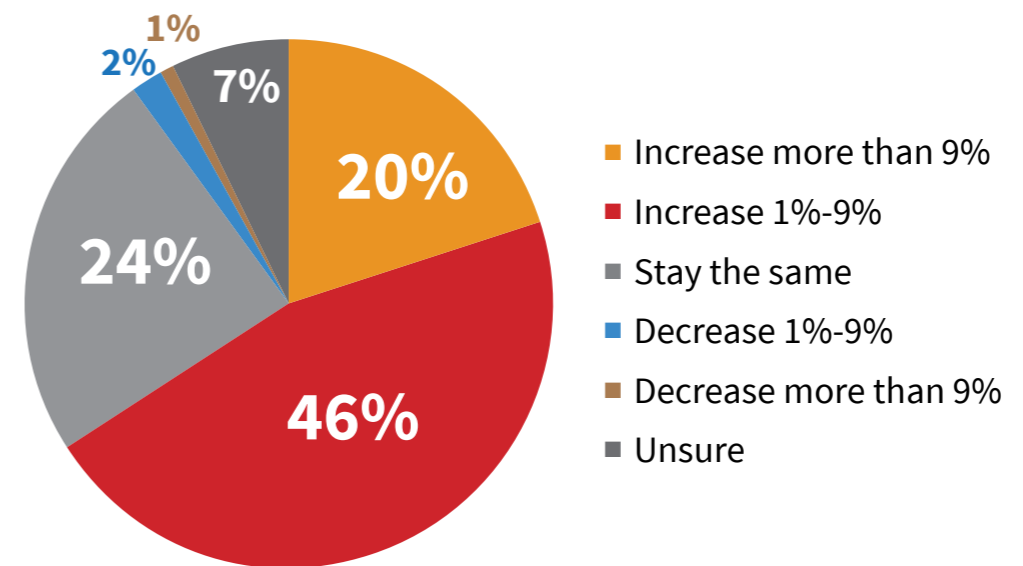
66% expect their 2022 content marketing budget to increase over their 2021 budget.

How 2021 B2B Content Marketing Budget Compares with 2020



Base: Content marketers who know their organizations' budget/budgeting process for content marketing. Aided list.
 12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

How B2B Content Marketing Budget Will Change in 2022 Compared with 2021



Base: Content marketers who know their organizations' budget/budgeting process for content marketing. Aided list.
 12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

In a post-COVID-vaccine business environment, investment is expected to increase in in-person events (52%).

Investment in hybrid events is expected to increase (39%) more so than stay the same (29%), even though 18% do not use hybrid events at all.

Regarding digital events, many marketers appear to want to stay the course (41% say spending will stay the same), although 33% plan to increase spending.

How B2B Organizations' Investment Will Change in Following Areas Post-Vaccine

	Increase	Stay the same	Decrease	Will be a new area of investment	Do not/will not use
Digital/virtual events	33%	41%	16%	3%	7%
In-person events	52%	21%	15%	4%	8%
Hybrid events	39%	29%	5%	9%	18%

Base: Content marketers. Aided list.
 12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs, July 2021

LOOKING FORWARD



It was interesting to see that internal communication is no longer the top content marketing challenge. Rather, the top challenge this year is creating content that appeals to multi-level roles within the target audience. This makes sense considering the crowded online environment that so many marketers are now working in, as well as the number of people who changed jobs over the last 18 months.

As our annual research has shown, the second top challenge — accessing subject matter experts to create content — has been an ongoing issue for content marketers for several years.

Content marketing areas of importance in 2021/2022

The top four content marketing-related areas that marketers said would be most important to their organizations in 2021 and 2022 were:

- ▶ Changes to SEO/search algorithms (62%)
- ▶ Data management/analytics (50%)
- ▶ Content marketing as a revenue center (44%)
- ▶ Changes to social media algorithms (42%)

Algorithms have been named a top concern in our past research, but data management/analytics has overtaken that in importance. That's not surprising, considering the proliferation of big data and the business shift to a virtual working and buying environment.

THE TOP TWO CONTENT MARKETING-RELATED AREAS OF INVESTMENT FOR 2022 ARE EXPECTED TO BE VIDEO (69%) AND EVENTS (DIGITAL, IN-PERSON, HYBRID) AT 61%.

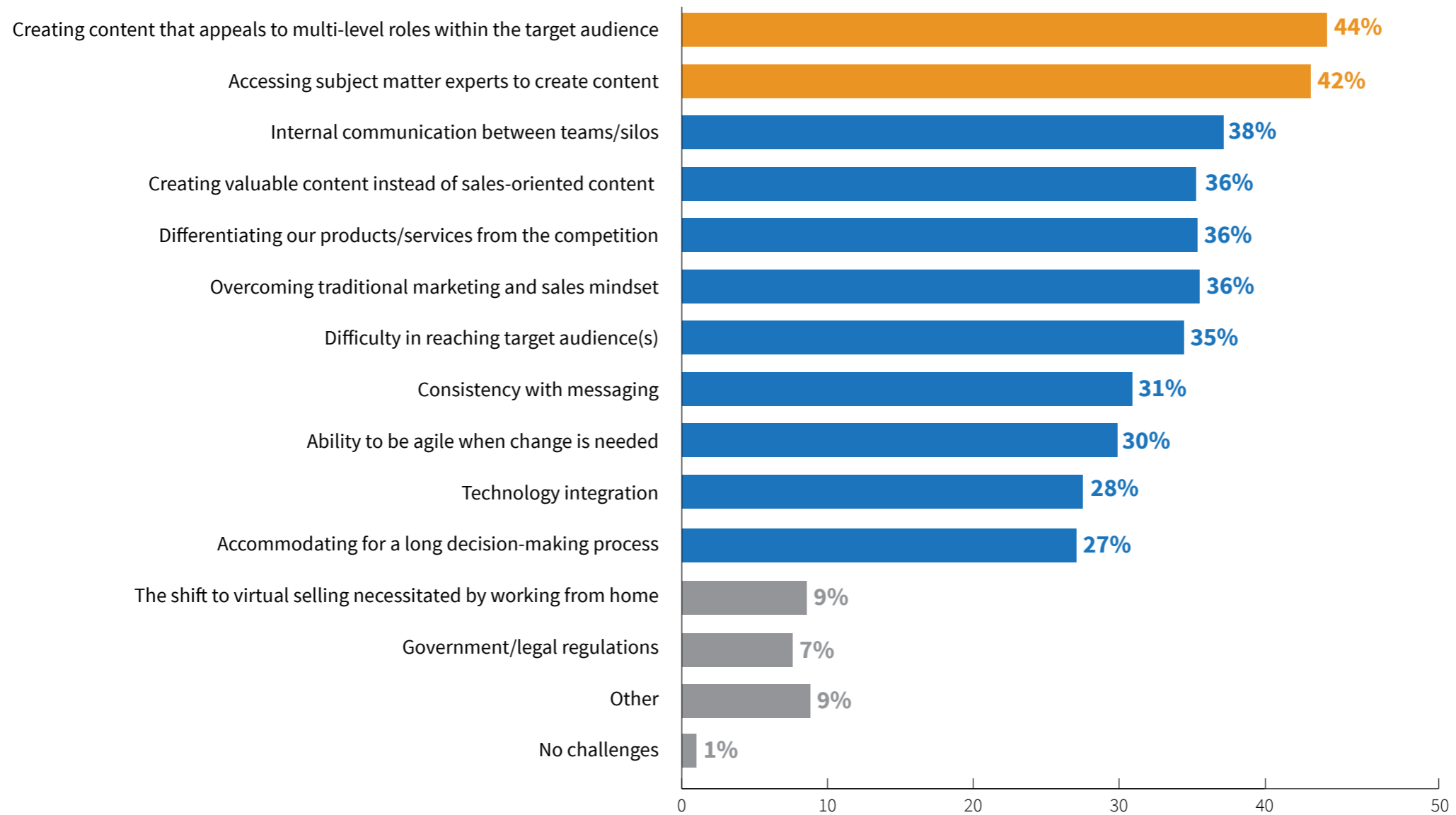
Areas of content marketing investment in 2022

The top content marketing-related area of investment for 2022 is expected to be video (69%). This makes sense, as business has shifted online, and marketers look for new/more ways to tell compelling stories to capture and keep audience attention. It's also unsurprising that we see expected continued investment in events (61%), owned media assets (57%), and paid media (55%) — the top four areas by a long shot (see page 48).



Respondents said their top two content marketing challenges were creating content that appeals to multi-level roles and accessing subject matter experts to create content.

B2B Organizations' Current Content Marketing Challenges

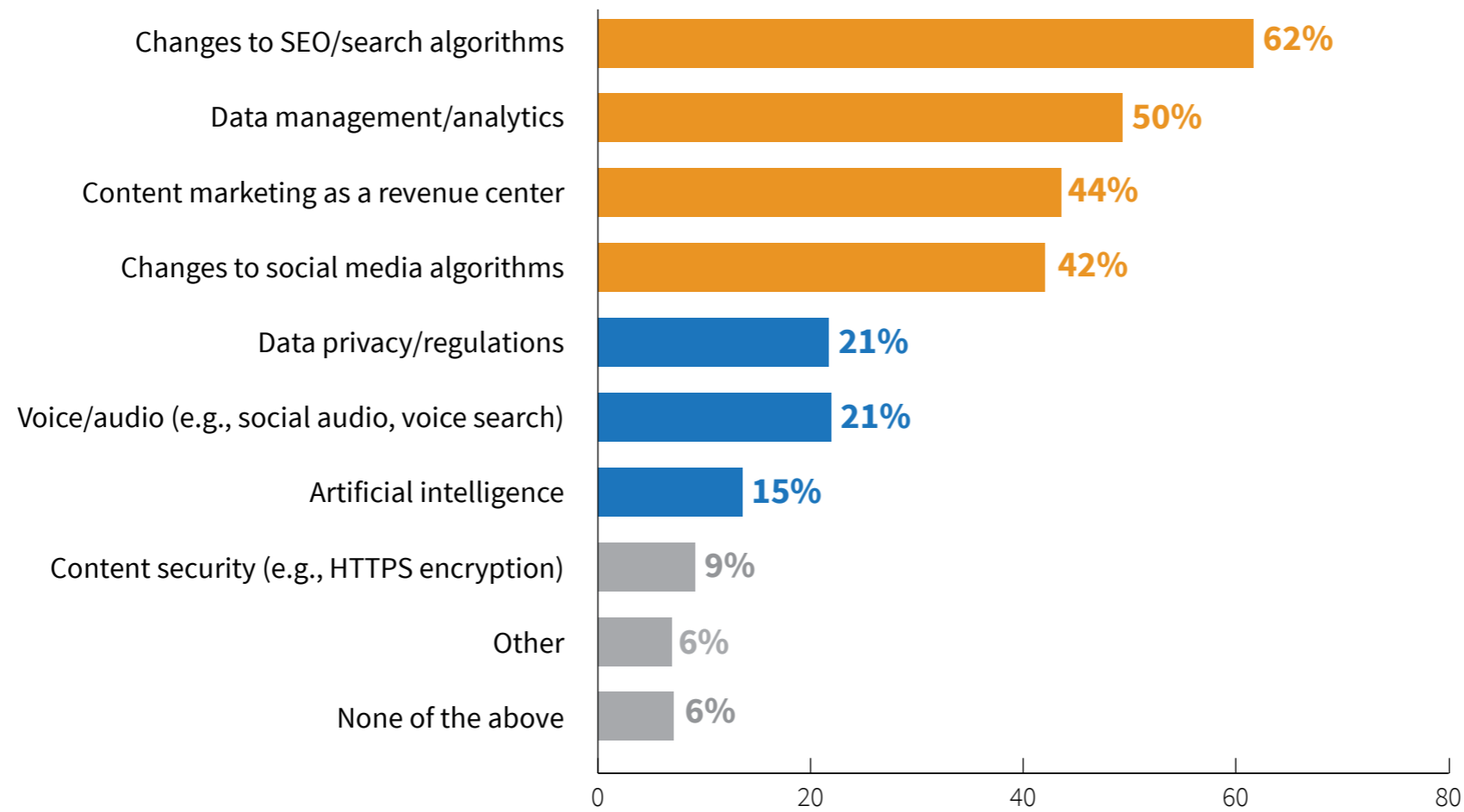


Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

Changes to SEO/search algorithms (62%) and data management/analytics (50%) are top-of-mind for B2B content marketers in 2021/2022.

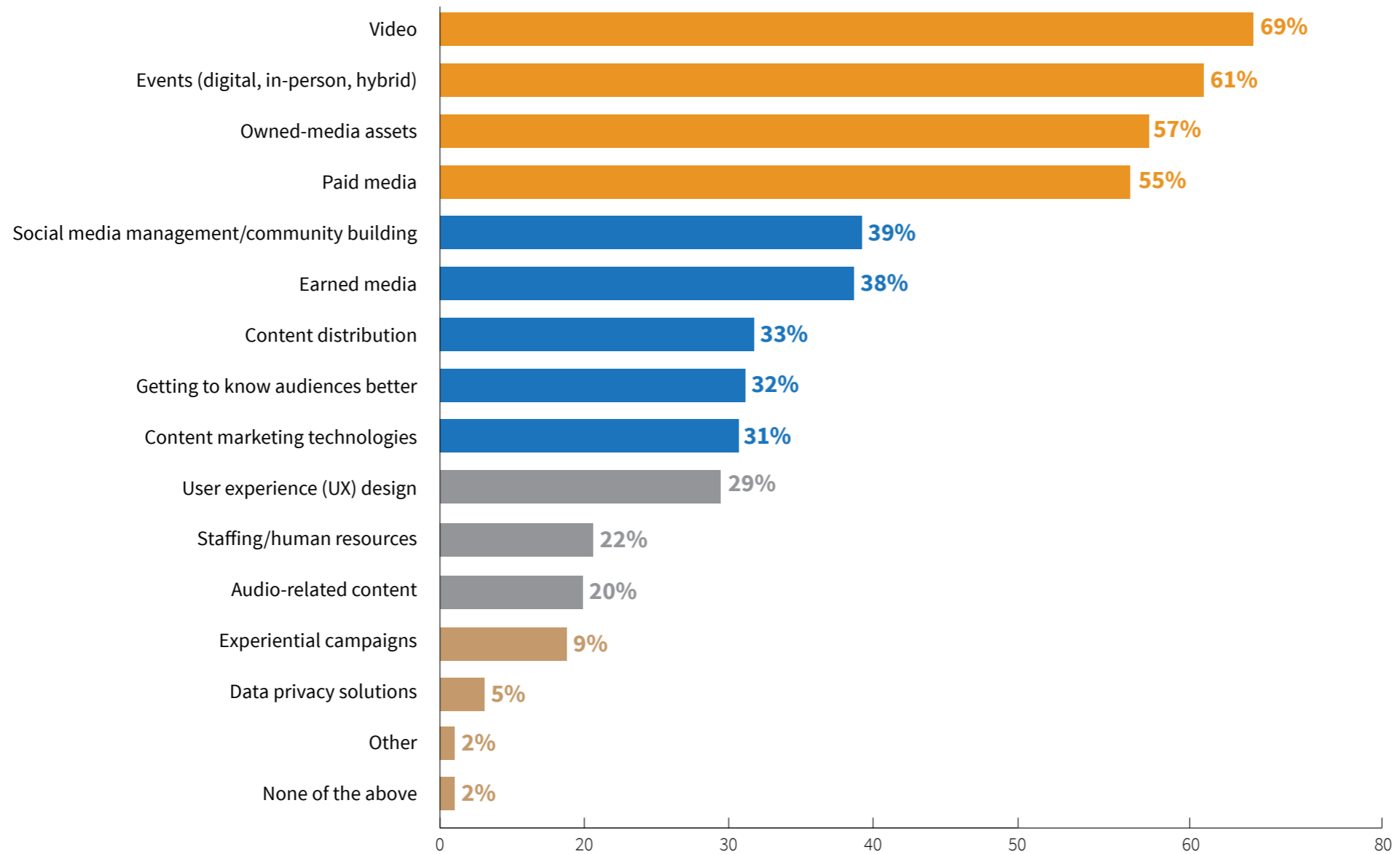
Content Marketing-Related Areas That Will Be Most Important to B2B Organizations in 2021/2022



Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

More than half of all respondents predicted 2022 investment in video, events, owned-media assets, and paid media.

Areas of B2B Content Marketing Investment in 2022



Base: Content marketers. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

12th Annual Content Marketing Survey: Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs, July 2021

THE GIANT IS AWAKE!

By Robert Rose, Chief Strategy Advisor, CMI



As we mentioned in the beginning of this report, the pandemic has awakened a sleeping giant (content marketing, that is). Our research points to transformational shifts to make content marketing an ever more important part of the integrated marketing mix.

But what can go unnoticed is the dangers that lurk when we're so close. There's a wonderful scene in the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* when the rich investor, Walter Donovan, is trying to convince Indy to go after the Holy Grail. He says, "We're on the verge of completing a quest that began almost two thousand years ago. We're just one step away."

Indy responds, "That's usually when the ground falls out from underneath your feet."

In today's modern business, everyone creates content — from the web team to the marketing automation/demand-gen team to the content marketing team, sales, agencies, executives, even frontline account representatives. It's probably easier to count who DOESN'T create content-driven experiences for customers these days.

But we must realize that this explosive trend is actually the awakened giant. And our attempts to slay the giant require us to develop a content marketing strategy. Without a strategy, an inconsistent voice and inability to measure success make our failure imminent.

But don't over-correct and let the ground fall out from underneath you.

continued on next page

CLOSING THOUGHTS

When businesses create a content strategy, there is a tendency to limit the production of content and remove the voices of all frontline managers. We centralize the “storytelling” function, and not only centralize the creation of the voice but the expression of it as well.

What happens? Increasingly we see companies creating much more consistent and customer-centric sets of content. They get their voice and story back. But unfortunately they remove their best storytellers – the rest of the business – from telling it. And as a friend of mine who was cut from a huge Hollywood movie once told me, “It’s hard to be excited about a story that you were removed from telling.”

My advice?

A scalable, successful, and differentiating content marketing strategy will help you more easily create, manage, activate, and measure digital content. You will define success by how well the content marketing strategy empowers everybody on the front line (sales,

account reps, executives, and even accounting and legal) to tell your stories – and the best “next stories – to your audience.

A strategic content marketing operation isn’t the storyteller of the business. It enables everyone else to be the storytellers.

Remember: It’s your story — don’t forget that you need everyone to tell it well.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

The pandemic prompted new strategies to capture audience attention.

Half of all respondents said it had become increasingly difficult to capture their audience's attention in the last 12 months. Many marketers shifted to digital marketing and online selling. In addition, many said they adopted a more empathetic tone toward their audiences. See pages 6 and 9.

Small teams are still the norm.

Our annual research consistently finds that most organizations have small (or one-person) marketing/content marketing teams serving the entire organization (58%). Indeed, many content marketers are spread thin: 67% said their team was asked to do more with the same resources in the last 12 months. See pages 9 and 15.

Outsourcing budgets appear to have freed up a bit – the biggest outsourcing challenge was finding partners with topical expertise.

Among those who outsource at least one content marketing activity, 40% said budget issues were a challenge compared with 51% the previous year, indicating more budget for outsourcing. The top challenge for those who outsource was finding partners with adequate topical expertise (65%) — a compelling reason to hire employees who can learn the company's products and market and/or to hold on tightly to quality freelancers. See pages 18 and 19.

Virtual events and webinars produced the best results.

Respondents said that among the content types they use, virtual events/webinars/online courses produced the best results in the last 12 months (58%) — the most successful agreed (66%). Webinars also came out on top as the type of video format that produced the best results. See pages 26 and 27.

Most marketers successfully used content marketing to create brand awareness, build credibility/trust, and educate audiences.

Creating brand awareness (80%), building credibility/trust (75%), and educating audiences (70%) were the top goals respondents achieved by using content marketing in the last 12 months. Top performers surpassed their peers in several areas at achieving content marketing goals. See pages 37 and 38.

Marketers spent more on paid content promotion.

Forty-five percent of respondents said their spending on paid channels increased in the last 12 months. Of those who used paid content promotion, 77% used social media advertising/promoted posts. The top two platforms where they're spending? LinkedIn (75%) and Facebook (69%). See pages 31 and 32.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Content marketing budgets grew — and are expected to continue to grow.

Forty-three percent of respondents who are familiar with their company's content marketing budget said their 2021 budget increased over 2020. Furthermore, 66% expected their 2022 content marketing budget to increase over their 2021 budget. See page 42.

Investment in events is expected to increase in 2022.

Fifty-two percent said they expected to increase investment in in-person events, 39% in hybrid events, and 33% in digital events. See page 43.

Creating content that appeals to multi-level roles replaced internal communication as the top content marketing challenge.

While communication is still a challenge (38%), creating content that appeals to multi-level roles within the target audience (44%) and accessing subject matter experts to create content (42%) are now the top two challenges. Why? It could be because more marketers are using content collaboration tools (73%). In addition, there have been numerous job changes over the last 18 months. See pages 14, 24, and 46.

Changes to SEO/search algorithms and data management/analytics are top-of-mind issues in 2021/2022.

Concerns about algorithms (62%) are nothing new — they've been a top area of importance in our past annual studies as well. This year, data management/analytics (50%) came in as the second top area. This makes sense in a digital sales environment and as data becomes more important to organizations in general. See page 47.

In addition to spending more on events, marketers expect more investment in videos, owned-media assets, and paid media in 2022.

We asked respondents which areas of content marketing they expect their organizations to invest in during 2022. The top four answers were videos (69%), events (61%), owned-media assets (57%), and paid media (55%). See page 48.

METHODOLOGY & DEMOGRAPHICS

The 12th Annual B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends: Insights 2022 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.

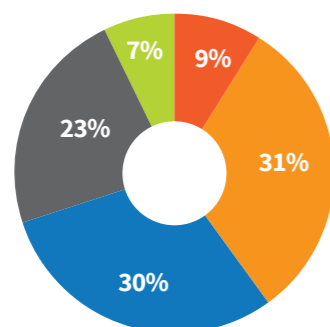
A total of 1,275 recipients from around the globe — representing a range of industries, functional areas, and company sizes — replied to the survey during July 2021.

This report presents the findings from the 810 respondents who indicated:

- ▶ Their organization is a for-profit company, primarily selling products/services to businesses (B2B) or businesses and consumers (B2B+B2C)
- ▶ They are a content marketer, involved with the content marketing function, and/or someone to whom content marketing reports.

Note: Use caution when comparing this report’s findings to past years, as our methodology changed slightly. For the last several years, one of our qualifying criteria was that the respondent’s company had used content marketing for at least one year. This year, we enabled respondents whose companies have not been using content marketing for at least one year (9% of the B2B pool) to complete the survey. We also broadened the respondent pool to include worldwide respondents rather than those from North America only.

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

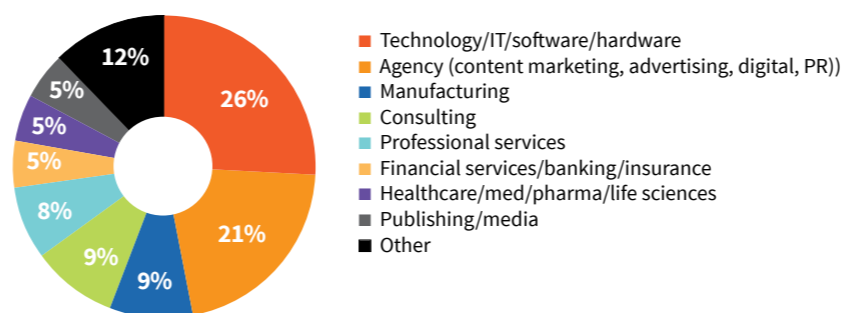
YOUNG

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

FIRST STEPS

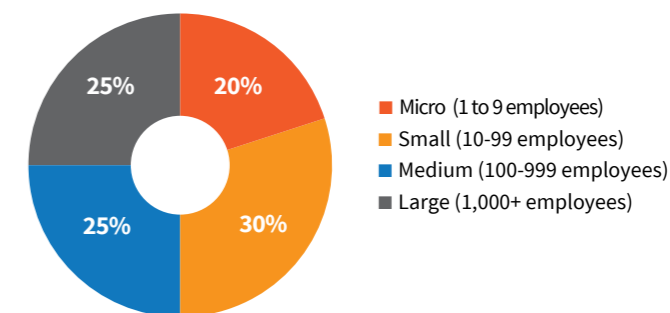
Doing some aspects of content, but have not yet begun to make content marketing a process

B2B Industry Classification



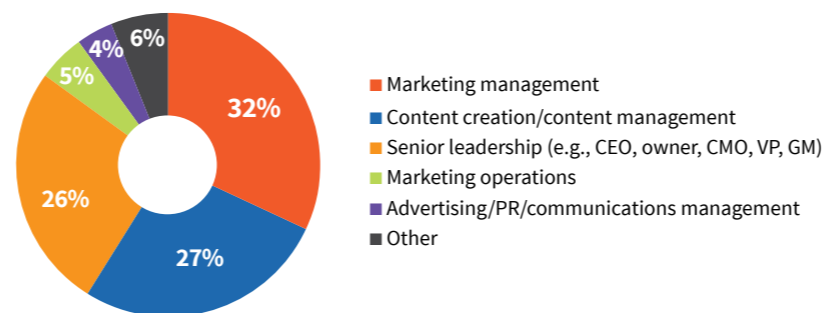
- Technology/IT/software/hardware
- Agency (content marketing, advertising, digital, PR)
- Manufacturing
- Consulting
- Professional services
- Financial services/banking/insurance
- Healthcare/med/pharma/life sciences
- Publishing/media
- Other

Size of B2B Company (by Employees)



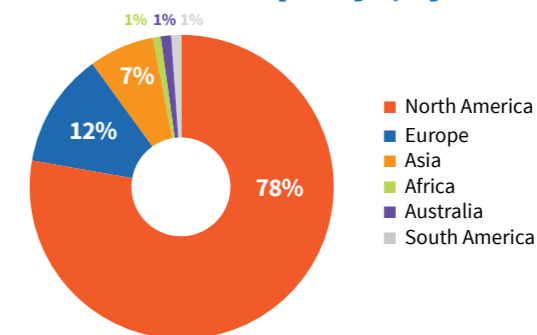
- Micro (1 to 9 employees)
- Small (10-99 employees)
- Medium (100-999 employees)
- Large (1,000+ employees)

B2B Content Marketing Job Function



- Marketing management
- Content creation/content management
- Senior leadership (e.g., CEO, owner, CMO, VP, GM)
- Marketing operations
- Advertising/PR/communications management
- Other

B2B Company (by Location)



- North America
- Europe
- Asia
- Africa
- Australia
- South America

Thanks to 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. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about CMI. Content Marketing Institute is organized by Informa Connect.

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 and Real Estate, and in a number of other specialist markets and connect communities online year-round.

About MarketingProfs

[MarketingProfs](#) has been fueling the success of marketers at some of the world's most iconic brands since 2000—first through webinars, newsletters, and other content; then world-class training; and best-in-class consulting services.

The products and delivery have evolved, yet throughout we have been laser-focused on helping marketers and their teams set priorities, solve problems, and fuel business growth.

We focus also on something equally important: Helping marketers do work they're proud of.

Learn why 700,000+ marketers rely on MarketingProfs as their partner in Marketing. Our clients speak for themselves. Find out how we can help you at [MarketingProfs.com](#).

About ON24

[ON24](#) provides a leading cloud-based digital experience platform that makes it easy to create, scale, and personalize engaging experiences to drive measurable business growth. Today, we are helping over 1,900 companies worldwide, including 3 of the 5 largest global technology companies, 4 of the 5 largest US Banks, 3 of the 5 largest global healthcare companies, and 3 of the 5 largest global industrial manufacturing companies, convert millions of prospects to buyers. Through interactive webinars, virtual events, and always-on multimedia experiences, ON24 provides a system of engagement, powered by AI, which enables businesses to scale engagement, conversions, and pipeline to drive revenue growth. The [ON24 platform](#) supports an average of 4 million professionals a month totaling over 2.5 billion engagement minutes per year. ON24 is headquartered in San Francisco with global offices in North America, EMEA, and APAC. For more information, visit [ON24.com](#).