

The State of Content Marketing 2023 Global Report

Content
Opportunities
You'll Want
to Implement



Discover

Real Insights for Real Business

2023 is the year we all roll up our sleeves and get ready for business. We're prepared for the challenges the year will throw at us.

As we've seen in our last few State of Content Marketing reports, there's nothing a dedicated content marketing team can't do. You can even keep growing during a recession if you crack the content marketing code.

With better return on investment than paid ads and a longer lifespan, it's time for entrepreneurs and their marketing departments to harness the power of content marketing.

The biggest question, though, is how to create content that reaches your audience.

That's what you'll find in this rundown: We'll help you discover your brand voice, learn how to talk to your audience, and get the most out of the content you are creating now.

We'll share the data and the insights from thousands of companies and thousands of marketers. Then we'll guide you through best practices so you, too, can benefit from the power of effective content marketing.



In this report, you will learn

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Brand Trends





Top 6 Content Marketing Trends in 2023

We spoke to a number of Semrush experts and industry thought leaders. They gave us their insights, based on the trends they've seen growing over the past year.

Sharing their thoughts are:

Kyle Byers

Director of Organic Search at Semrush

Margarita Loktionova

Content Marketing Lead at Semrush

Michael Brenner

Content Marketing Agency CEO at Marketing Insider

Julia McCoy

VP of Marketing, Content at Scale

Andy Crestodina

Chief Marketing Officer and Co-Founder, Orbit Media Studios, Inc.

Joe Pulizzi

Co-Founder CEX: Creator Economy Expo



01

Trend One:




Understanding What Your Audience Needs and Values Will Be Your Key to Content Marketing Success in 2023

By **Kyle Byers**,
Director of Organic Search at Semrush

Google's "helpful content update" shows how important it is to understand your audience needs, challenges, and pain points.

- 01** Initiating and improving on top-ranking content only works if that content really provides value to the audience.
- 02** Dive deep into conversations on social media and have real interactions with your audience.

For Semrush blog content, we focus on things like:

-  Understanding the reasons behind each search (their search intent)
-  Getting to the point, faster
-  Helping readers achieve their goals

Basically, we want to make the content as valuable as possible for our readers.

As Google focuses more and more on content quality, this will become increasingly important.

Google's [helpful content update](#), which landed in 2022, is clear evidence of that.

As its name suggests, this update prioritizes content that makes "visitors feel they've had a satisfying experience."

In this context, quality content is something that lives up to its promise and meets a person's needs.

And users are demanding better content, too—not just in blog posts, but also on social media, in videos, etc.

That said, it's not always obvious what it will take to make a piece of content "as valuable as possible."

Most SEO-focused content marketers figure out what to write by looking at the top-ranking pages for a given keyword. And then imitating them.



That approach actually works pretty well, much of the time.

But it assumes that someone else has already figured out the best possible approach to that topic.

Usually, you can do better.

To really know what to include in your content, try going a little deeper to understand your audience.

Their challenges.

Their pain points.

Their goals.

You can get lots of insights by looking at how people are talking about the topic online.

Check out the discussions happening on Reddit, Twitter, TikTok, Facebook

groups, and in the communities in your industry.

Look at what topics are being covered by the speakers at your industry conferences.

Scan the tables of contents of new books in your space to see the main points they're making. And read the Amazon reviews of those books to see which parts are grabbing people's attention.

Have conversations with your audience.

Then take what you've learned and use it to improve your content. The more valuable you can make it, the better your results will be.



02

Trend Two:

Improving Content Quality Will Be Your Number One Priority

By **Margarita Loktionova**,
Content Marketing Lead at Semrush
and State of Content Marketing 2023 author

takeaways

- 01** No matter the size of your business, anyone can create useful, valuable content that drives results.
- 02** Focus on people and their needs when creating high-quality content.
- 03** Align your content with your brand story for the most impact in 2023.

It doesn't matter if you head up a Fortune 500 company or run a small family business—you can create content that offers real value to your audience.

Get it right and you'll see more website visitors, click-throughs, and conversions.

Sharing real-life experience

When someone lands on your website or blog, they have a purpose and they have questions. They need something useful, practical, and original—and they hope you can provide it.

Your content should therefore satisfy your audience's needs. It has to answer your reader's doubts and offer a great user experience at the same time.

Part of a great user experience is authenticity. For this reason, your content should be based on your real-life experience. This will help make sure your content is unique and practical.

To achieve that, focus on the topics of your expertise. Also provide original research, leverage subject-matter experts in your community, and avoid creating generic, unoriginal content.



Tying content in with your brand



The content you create should also be tied strongly to your brand. This will ensure it leaves a lasting impression.

Consider how each piece of content aligns with your brand voice and your story. For example:

- Does your content translate the right values and messages?
- Is the tone of voice consistent throughout each content piece?
- Does your content address challenges and questions relevant to your target audience?

Google's helpful content update, which was also mentioned in the previous trend, has some key guidelines on this for marketers:

- Does your content share firsthand expertise and knowledge?
- Is your site focused on a clear topic or have a definite purpose?
- Will your content inform your readers?
- Will your readers be satisfied by the whole experience?

To sum up, 2023 is about a laser focus on your audience and their positive experiences.

You should create content for the real person behind the screen and do your best to understand who they are and what they are looking for.





03

Trend Three:

Proving Return on Investment Will Be a Principal Aim

By **Michael Brenner**,
Content Marketing Agency CEO at Marketing Insider

With budgets under more scrutiny, marketers will have to focus on what really matters—return on investment (ROI).

- 01** Organic search traffic will be the most important goal for marketers in 2023.
- 02** Marketers will revisit SEO-driven planning and creative storytelling in their content.

In times of economic uncertainty, brands are going to cut ineffective ad spend, stop tinkering with TikTok, and focus on being smarter with their marketing budgets.

It's my bet that 2023 will be a year of getting back to the basics of content marketing.

Let's take a look at why.

Paid ads and social media account for less than 10% of B2B website traffic, leads, or sales. Even for ecommerce, the number is less than 20%.*

So, what is the largest and most effective source of marketing ROI for brands?

In every industry—ranging from technology to manufacturing and non-profits to pharma—the answer is: organic search and referral traffic.

And it's all generated by content marketing!

So what are the basics of content marketing? We're talking about:

- SEO-driven planning
- Creative storytelling
- Consistent content

As we get back to the basics, ROI measurement will also become a hot topic again. (You can learn more about content marketing ROI in the next section.)

Content marketers will determine which outcomes the sales and brand departments need the most—and then content marketing strategy can be tied directly to business outcomes.

***Figures from Marketing Insider Group research.**



04

Trend Four:

Businesses Will Look for Reliability Over Novelty

By **Julia McCoy**,
VP of Marketing, Content at Scale

Social media algorithms will continue to shift—and as brand accounts are rewarded or penalized as a result, marketers will look for stability.

- 01** Business-owned websites will be the preferred content distribution channel, considering the unpredictability of social media.
- 02** AI tools like ChatGPT will help brands scale production, but will also generate tons of low quality content. Brands will need original, human-researched content to stand out.

Social media platforms will continue to develop features that keep people glued to their platform and content consumption. As their algorithms shift, they become less predictable and more unreliable for bringing in leads and customers.

Content published on a platform the business owns (their website) will therefore become more and more of a priority in 2023: They will continue to earn leads and sales and grow over time as more content and traffic is added.

With the launch of ChatGPT, AI-assisted content production will become a huge player in 2023. It will allow website owners to get content developed more quickly and easily to bring in traffic.

But there's a downside. There will be mass production of non-original, fluffy, and inaccurate content. Humanly-researched, high-quality, unique content will stand out more than ever in 2023.





05

Trend Five:

Ranking Will Be Less Important, but Your Click-Through Rates Will Count

By **Andy Crestodina**,
Chief Marketing Officer and Co-Founder,
Orbit Media Studios, Inc

The search results pages are evolving—and now being number one doesn't equal success.

- 01** Brands are going to focus on qualified, high-converting traffic over nearly all other considerations.
- 02** There are many ways of being visible beyond just ranking in the search results—and creating memorable, inventive content should never be underrated.

In 2023, the biggest trend will have nothing to do with how your content ranks.

The biggest trend has everything to do with click-through rates.

Your rankings may rise, but your traffic keeps falling. There are several reasons for this, and they all relate to new features in the search results:

- The visitor's needs are met without the need to click on anything; they might see related questions, featured snippets, or knowledge panels
- The visitor's needs are met by a non-web page format; for example, they might see a video, image, or map
- There's just so much visual noise in search results that traditional organic rankings get lost in the mix

SEO agencies will deprioritize ranking reports, and content marketers will start tracking click-through rates. Moreover, brands will need to focus on qualified, high-converting traffic.

How?

- You can be visible in other people's high-performing websites through guest blogging and digital PR
- Videos can create awareness without driving traffic at all; optimize them to rank in Google for keyphrases that show videos in the results pages
- Amazon, LinkedIn, Reddit, Quora, and a dozen other big tech networks also provide you with tons of visibility

Finally, stay top of mind by creating memorable content, keep in touch with your audiences by growing your email lists, and build communities through events.



06

Trend Six:

This Year Will Be About Buying Growth, Not Building It

By **Joe Pulizzi**,
Co-Founder CEX: Creator Economy Expo

Marketers need to start thinking like media companies—not everything needs to be built internally.

- 01** It's time to look at acquisition as a means of marketing growth.
- 02** The rise of the creator economy brings with it a lot of opportunities for companies with a budget to spend.

When I was working in business-to-business publishing, half my growth strategies would be about new internal launches or product lines.

The other half would be what we could acquire to hit our targets. These would be content sites, blogging platforms, podcasts, newsletters, and (later) social media audiences.

When I moved over from publishing to marketing, I learned that media companies think differently than marketers do about audience growth. No one considered acquisitions.

One of the few examples I do remember was when L’Oreal bought a fledgling content site called makeup.com.

Instead of spending five years building out an educational makeup site that scored well with search results, they took a shortcut to success and bought a site already doing everything they wanted.

This is a formula that can be repeated.



Today, with the rise of the creator economy and millions of [content entrepreneurs](#) building niche media sites, the opportunities have never been greater for brands to purchase small content brands instead of building audiences.

We are just starting to see this trend unfold before our eyes.

Last year, Salesforce purchased CMO Club. Hubspot purchased the Hustle. Product analytics firm Pendo bought the event and media site Mind the Product.

So before you go building yet another “thing”—a blog, a podcast, a newsletter, a YouTube channel—take some time to find out if one already exists.



insights



Content Marketing Industry Survey

The Semrush content marketing industry survey aims to establish industry benchmarks, provide the opportunity for you to learn from others, and help you understand how to create content that succeeds with your business goals.

It shows us what works and what doesn't in content marketing—and can offer useful direction for business founders, Chief Marketing Officers, and marketing managers alike.



About Our Respondents

So who answered our questions? To get a good look inside the industry, we surveyed over 1,700 marketers and business owners:

- They represent 34 different countries—with the majority working from the US, UK, Canada, and Australia
- The company sizes are fairly evenly spread; the largest group (with 22.6% of responses) are marketers from small businesses with 1-10 employees
- The top three industries are retail, tech and IT, and online services (although there are over 20 different sectors covered in this report)
- B2B and B2C are the most common business structures (41% and 25% of responses, respectively)
- We also had responses from B2B2C hybrid businesses (15%), non-profit organizations (3%), and agencies (5%) (other business structures accounted for just over 11% of responses)

Here's What the **Most Successful** Content Marketers Do

Here we dive into the details to see how very successful content marketers and their unsuccessful counterparts differ in their approach.

In the table below, you'll find the entire comparison for each group of respondents (from very successful to unsuccessful in content marketing).

	Very Successful	Successful	Minimally successful	Unsuccessful
Have a documented content marketing strategy				
Yes	80%	73%	50%	52%
Spend less than 5% of their total marketing budget on content	9%	9%	27%	31%
Spend more than 10% of the total marketing budget on content	79%	75%	53%	52%
The average monthly content marketing budget is less than \$1,000	17%	20%	45%	50%

	Very Successful	Successful	Minimally successful	Unsuccessful
The average monthly content marketing budget is more than than \$5,000	43%	38%	23%	24%
Plan to increase the 2023 content marketing budget	77%	71%	63%	61%
<hr style="border: 2px solid #E91E63;"/>				
Use influencer marketing to promote content	30%	31%	18%	8%
Use email marketing to promote content	49%	55%	50%	37%
Use paid social to promote content	49%	53%	49%	29%
Use PR and media outreach to promote content	31%	32%	23%	18%
Uses paid channels for content promotion	72%	68%	51%	58%
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Don't have a dedicated content marketing team/specialist	8%	13%	35%	34%
Have more than 4 specialists in the content team	66%	53%	28%	32%
Plan to grow their content team in 2023	53%	49%	36%	29%
<hr style="border: 2px solid #E91E63;"/>				

	Very Successful	Successful	Minimally successful	Unsuccessful
Measure content marketing ROI in their company	70%	68%	46%	56%
Believe that they measure content marketing ROI effectively	34%	23%	12%	3%
Measure the overall content performance in their company	77%	73%	61%	50%
<hr style="border: 2px solid #E91E63;"/>				
Conduct content audits 2 or more times a year	61%	59%	43%	29%
<hr style="border: 2px solid #E91E63;"/>				
Use a marketing automation platform	18%	14%	8%	3%
Use visual content creation tools	24%	21%	21%	5%
Use an editorial calendar	16%	16%	15%	7%

Insight #1

Have a Documented Content Marketing Strategy

80% of those who considered themselves very successful in content marketing in 2022 have documented their content marketing strategies, as do 73% of content marketers who regard their efforts as successful.

But just 50% of minimally successful and 52% of unsuccessful content marketers do this.

So our takeaway here is that you should have a defined content marketing strategy.

From these results, we can confidently say a defined content marketing strategy will make success more likely, no matter the size of your business.

Insight #2

Prioritize Content Marketing Budgets

Nearly 80% of very successful content marketers spend more than 10% of their total marketing budgets on content.

Just 52% of those who are unsuccessful spend more than 10%.



Insight #3

Promote Your Content Creatively

When it comes to content promotion, we saw a big difference between successful and very successful content marketers and those who are minimally successful or unsuccessful.

We asked about influencer marketing, email campaigns, paid social, PR and media outreach, alongside other paid channels.

We see that top performers are much more likely to have different and creative promotional strategies for their content.



Insight #4

Prioritize Your Content Marketing Team

If you want to be successful, it's important you have a solid content marketing team.

66% of very successful content marketers have more than four specialists in their team, as opposed to just 32% of unsuccessful content marketers.

On the other end of the scale, 34% of respondents who were unsuccessful in content marketing don't have any content specialists at all.

Insight #5

Measure Your Return on Investment

Metrics are important. They show you what to focus on. It comes as no surprise that respondents with the most success in content marketing measure their ROI effectively.



Full Content Marketing Survey Results

Now we'll explore strategy and tactics, and what leads our respondents to content marketing success overall.

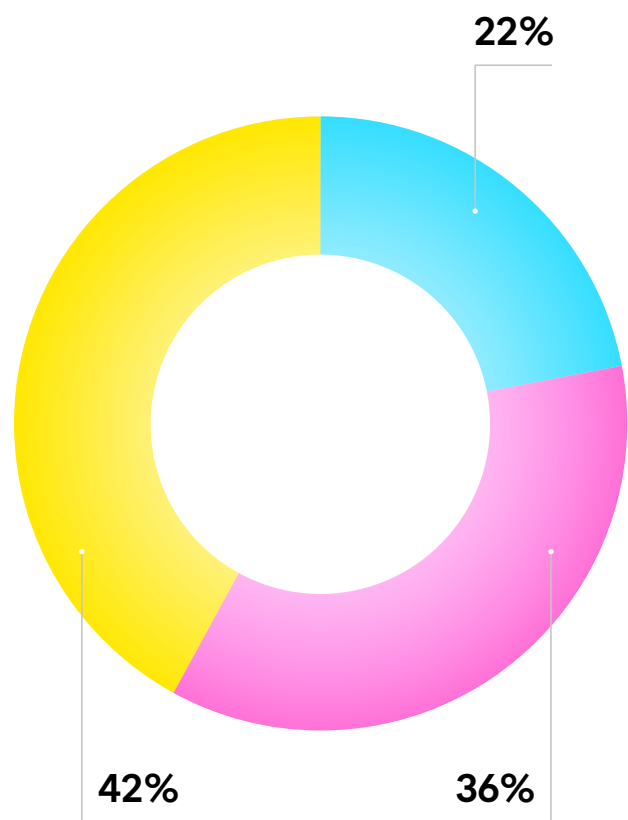
Look out for the takeaways in each section.



Content Marketing Strategy Data and Insights

How would you rate your content marketing strategy's maturity/complexity?

- Fairly Developed
- First Steps
- Advanced



What factors lead to success in content marketing?



Which tactics help the most to boost your ranking?



What are the top challenges you face in content marketing?



Documenting strategy is becoming more important

- 90% of our respondents say that content marketing is part of their marketing strategy, and 66% say this strategy is documented—that's compared to 57% who documented their strategy in 2022.

Content marketers are increasingly successful

If you're just now thinking about diving into content marketing, you have a 97% chance of success:

- Just 3% of our respondents said their content marketing efforts were unsuccessful
- That's a considerable improvement over last year, when 9% of respondents said they were unsuccessful

You must understand your audience

- We found that, more and more, success in content marketing comes down to understanding your audience and their needs, challenges, and goals
- Of course, SEO is still a key factor in success, as is aiming for high-quality content and publishing it consistently. This is especially true for smaller businesses of 50 people or fewer and those just starting out in content marketing.



Publishing more content boosts organic ranking

- For companies of all sizes, we see that publishing more content is a big driver of success when it comes to ranking higher organically (55% of responses noted this as the top tactic)
- Improving content quality, doing your research, and paying attention to keywords are all also incredibly important
- This corresponds with the [August 2022 helpful content update](#), which indicates that Google wants your website visitors to have a good user experience and find exactly what they are looking for

Leads are the hardest thing for content marketers

- Generating leads is the biggest hurdle for content marketers
- And although creating more content helps improve results, 38% of businesses struggle with finding enough resources for producing more, making it the second-most important challenge
- For the smallest companies (up to 10 people), the biggest struggle is generating traffic with their content

Content Marketing Budget Insights

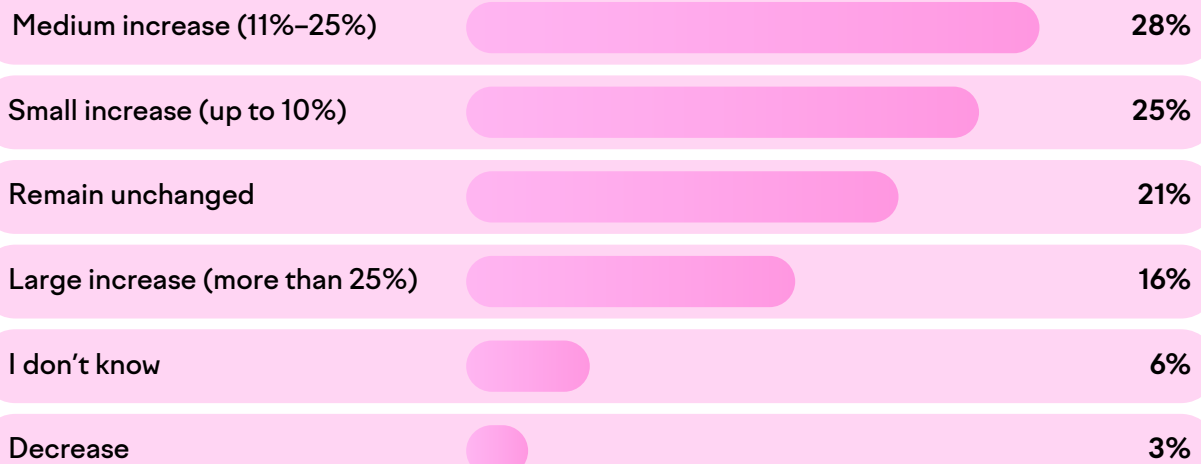
How much of your total marketing budget do you spend on content marketing?



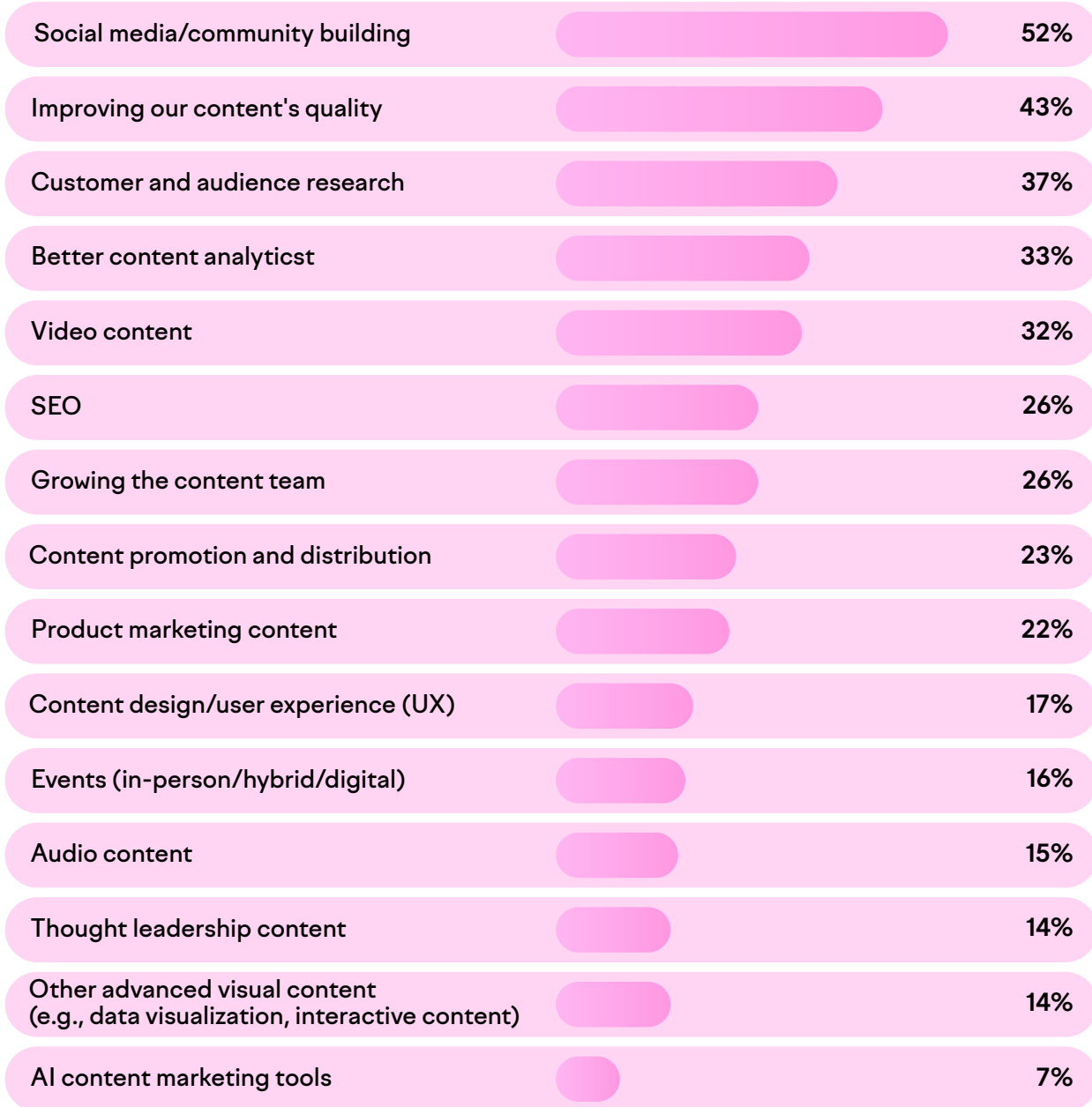
What is your average monthly budget for content marketing?



How will your content marketing budgets change in 2023?



How will your content marketing spend be directed?



Is the economy affecting your content marketing budgets?



Content marketing gets a significant slice of the budget

- 69% of respondents are spending more than 10% of their total marketing budget on content

More than half of respondents spend at least \$3,000 a month on content marketing

- While the most common response was “less than \$1,000,” the more interesting statistic is that 53% of our respondents spend more than \$3,000 a month
- Note that spending less than \$1,000 correlates with having the least content marketing success

Budgets will increase in 2023

- Seeing that 69% plan to increase their budget, we can confidently say content marketing is performing well and not being significantly impacted by threats of recessions

Community building will get most investment

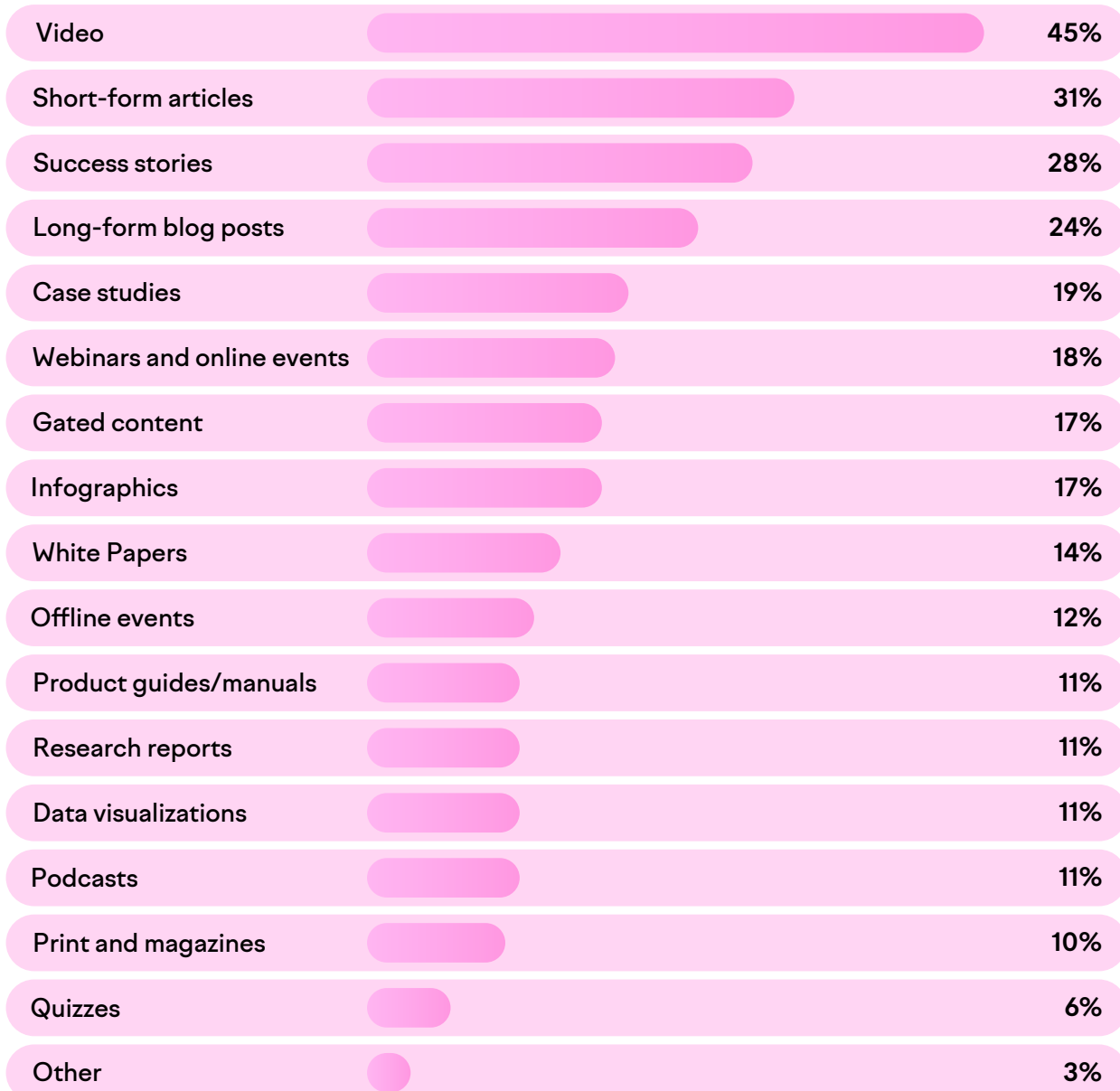
- Social media and community building is a top priority, as is improving content quality, followed by audience research. These are also followed by content analytics, video and SEO.
- Last year, the top three investment areas were social media, content quality, and content promo, followed by video. Audience research and content analytics have become far more important.
- That said, better content analytics are mostly more important for companies with 51+ employees

The recession isn't having a huge impact yet

- 76% say the situation is still not so bad as to affect their content marketing efforts. Even so, it looks like recession will have some impact and may make it harder to do content marketing for some of our respondents.

Content Production Insights

Which content formats perform best?



Which tactics help your blog posts rank more highly?



Which video formats perform best?



Focus on video and written content

- Once again, when it comes to the most popular content types, video is leading the pack by quite a long way, garnering 45% of responses
- It's followed by short-form articles, success stories, and long-form blog posts

Keyword research is still a top tactic

- Researching related keywords is the top tactic. This is followed by addressing customer questions and adding visuals in your blog posts.
- Other tactics include exploring what the audience really wants to achieve (known as their search intent) and working on getting links from other sites (link building)

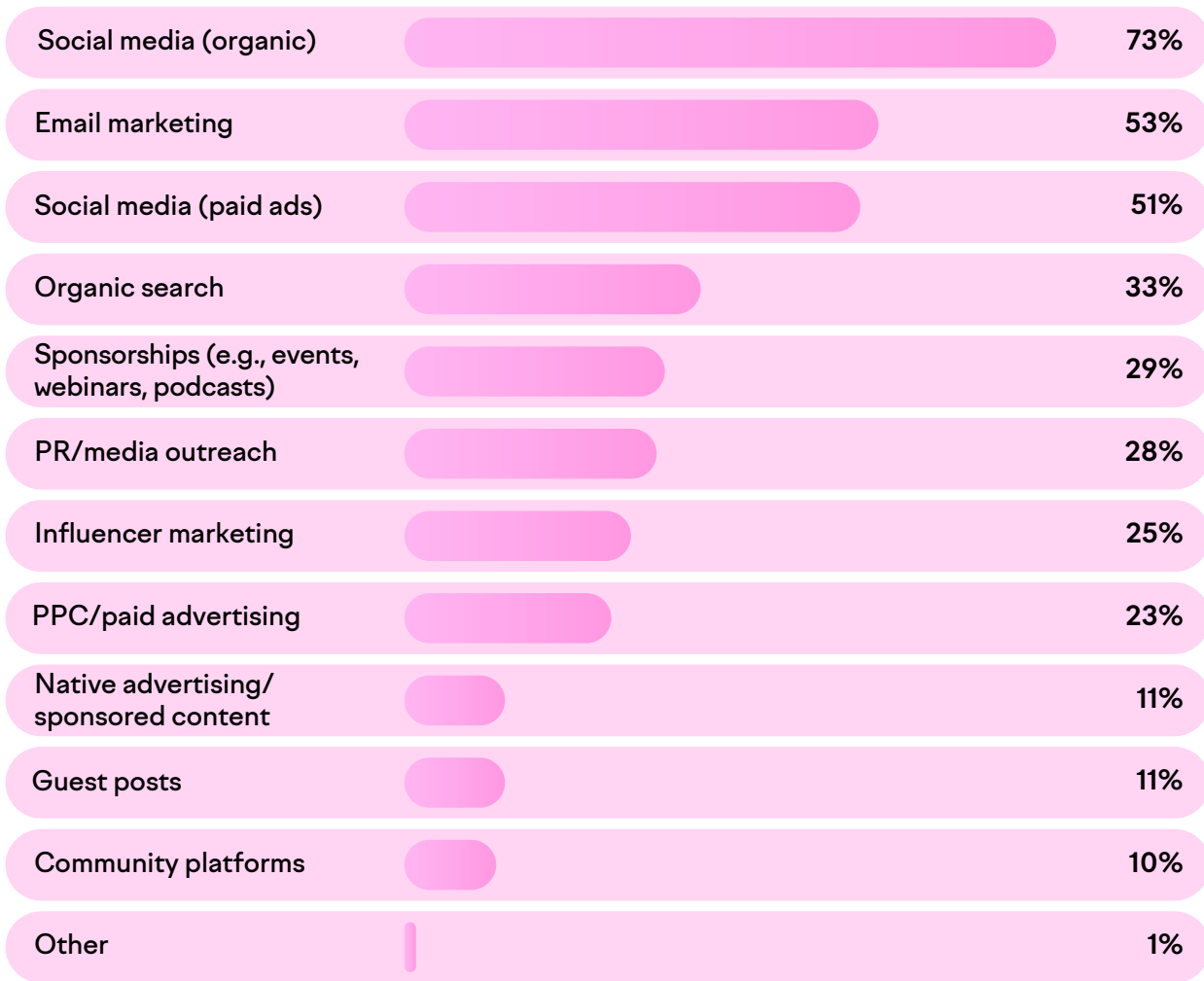
Short-form video formats perform best

- Short-form video (43%) comes in at the top by quite some margin, which is good news as this format is potentially less of a drain on resources
- Next, we see that both about our company/product videos and success story videos about customers perform similarly (33% and 32% respectively)

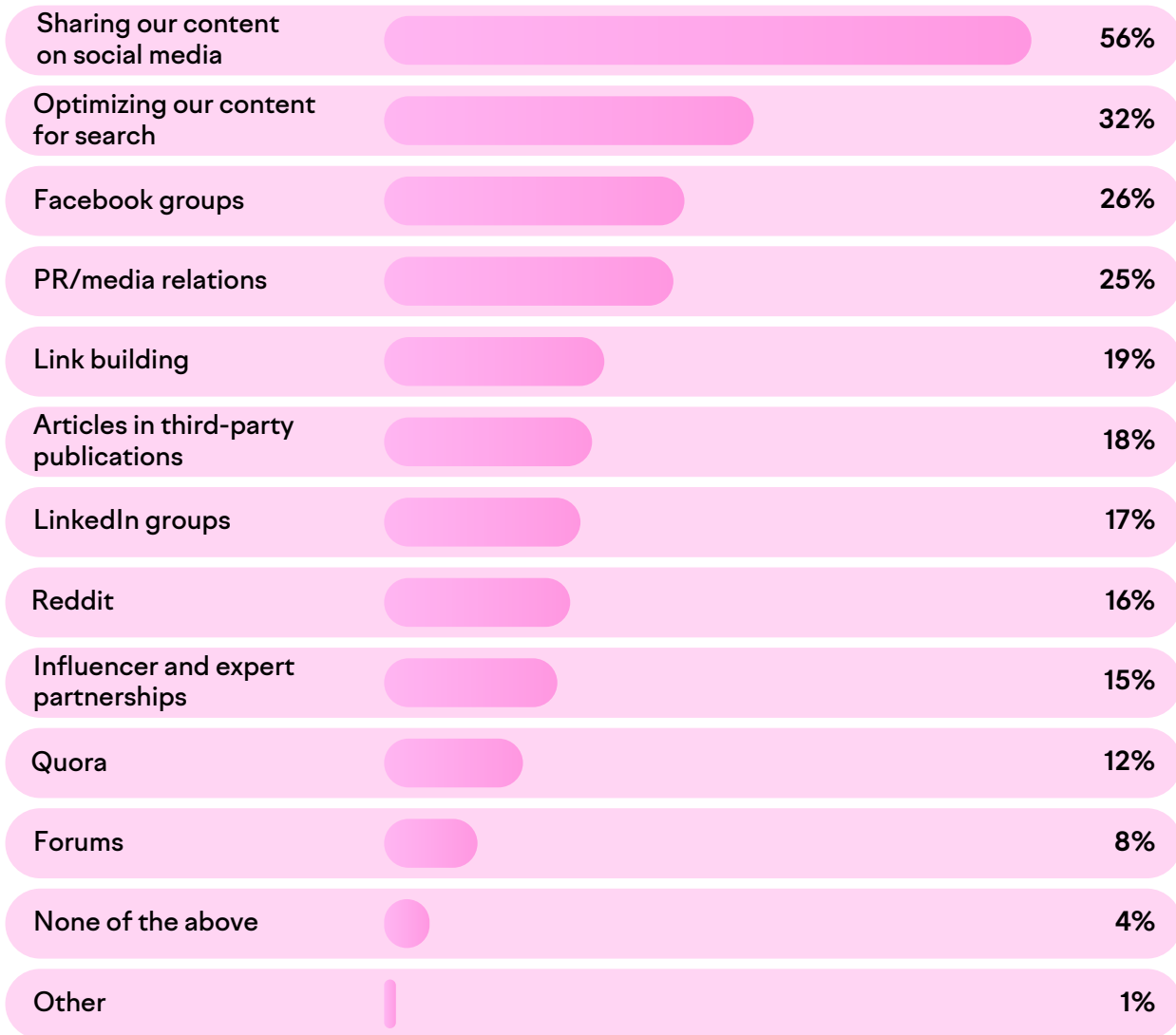


Content Promotion Insights

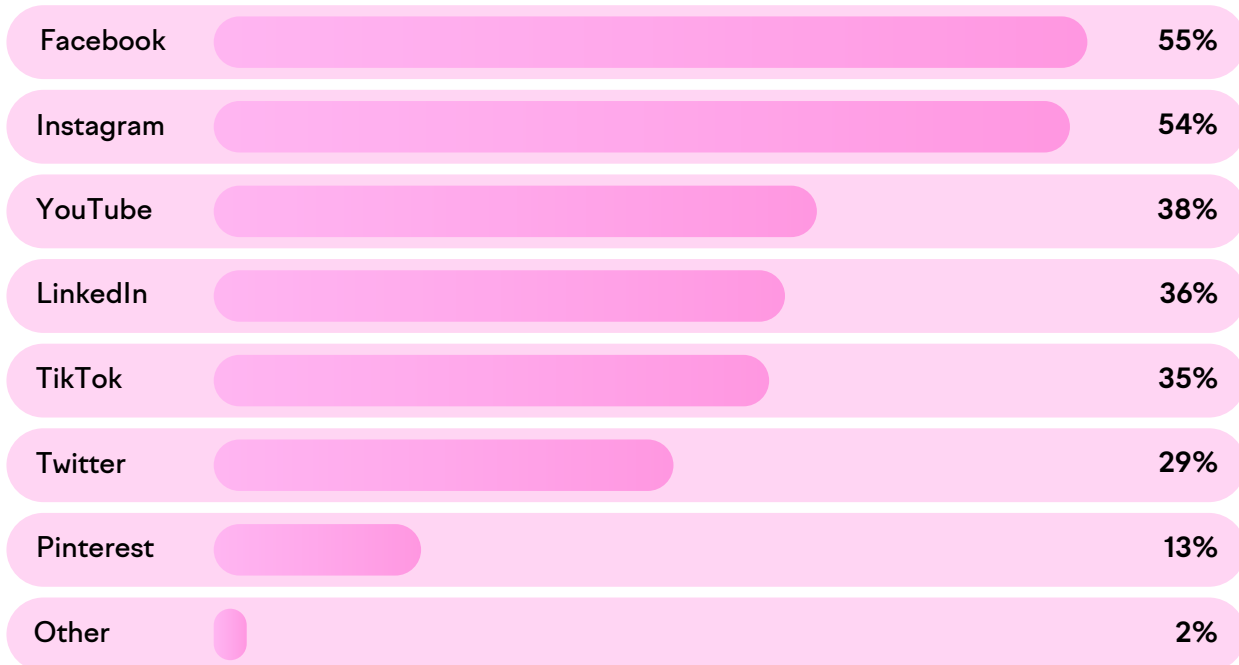
How do you promote your content?



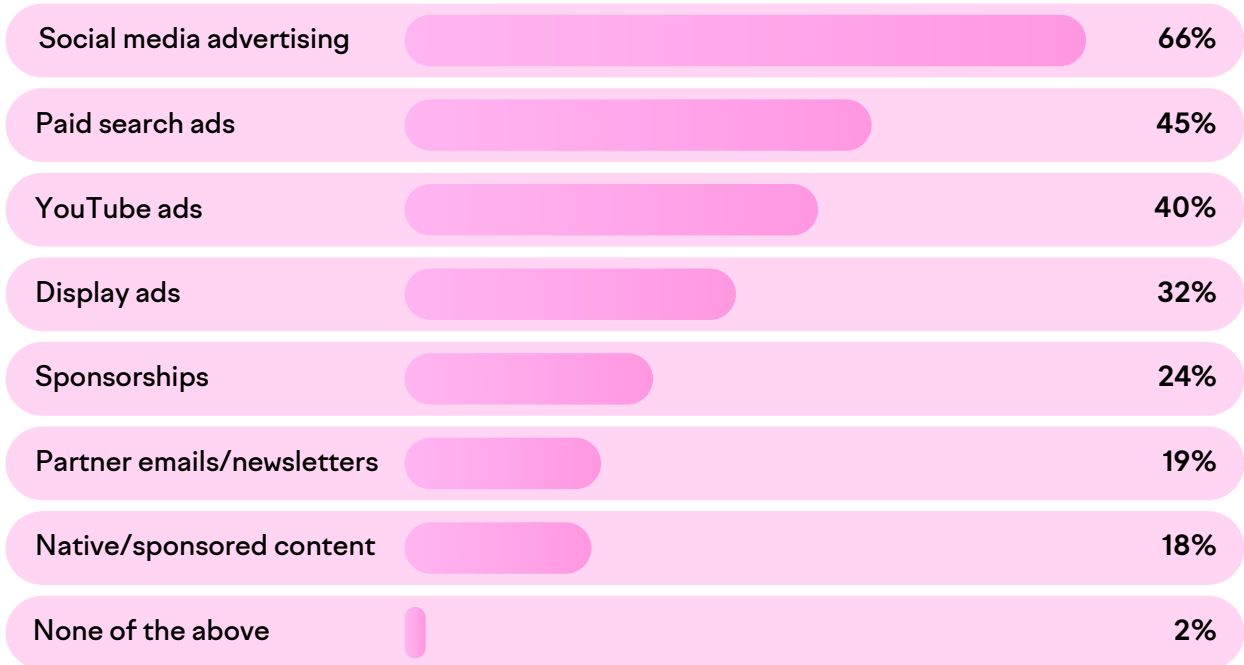
Which organic promotion tactics do you use for your content?



Which social media channels are best for sharing your content?



Which are the best paid channels for sharing content?



Pay attention to paid promotional tactics in 2023

- 63% of our respondents use paid channels to accelerate their content distribution
- In our previous survey we found that 35% planned to increase their paid content promo spending; this year, the percentage has risen to 43%
- Organic social is so popular it's almost a default option, with 73% selecting this channel. Email (53%) and paid social (51%) are also popular options.

Consider how you employ unpaid promotional tactics

- The most effective organic promotional tactics are social media sharing, optimization for search, and sharing in Facebook groups

Pay attention to where you have the most engagement

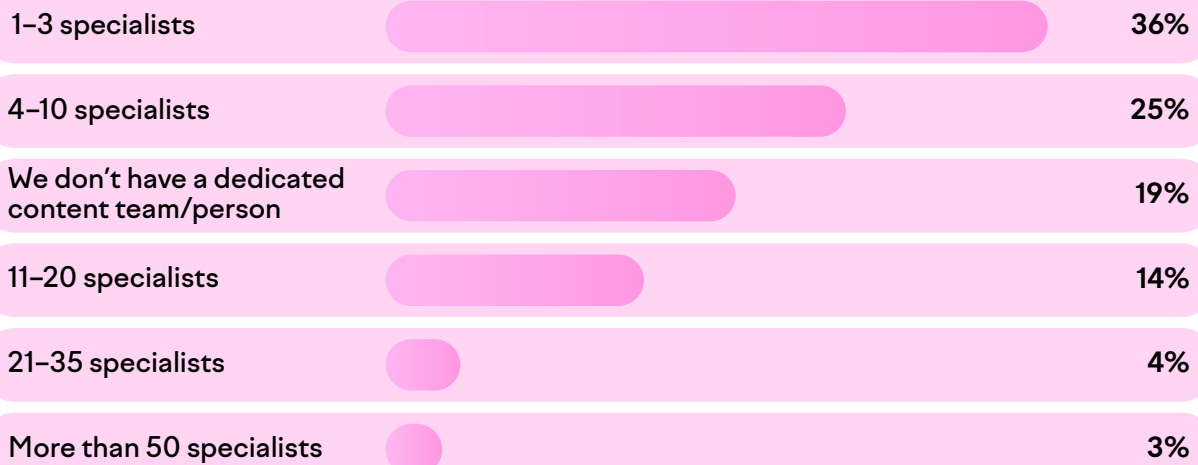
- While it's interesting to see where other businesses were successful, take this with a grain of salt; you will only perform well on a social media channel where you have an interested audience
- Facebook takes top spot for the best channel for sharing content, with 55% of responses

Social media channels are your best bet for promoting content

- Social media ads rise to the top with 66% of responses
- Paid search (66%) and YouTube ads (40%) follow in second and third places

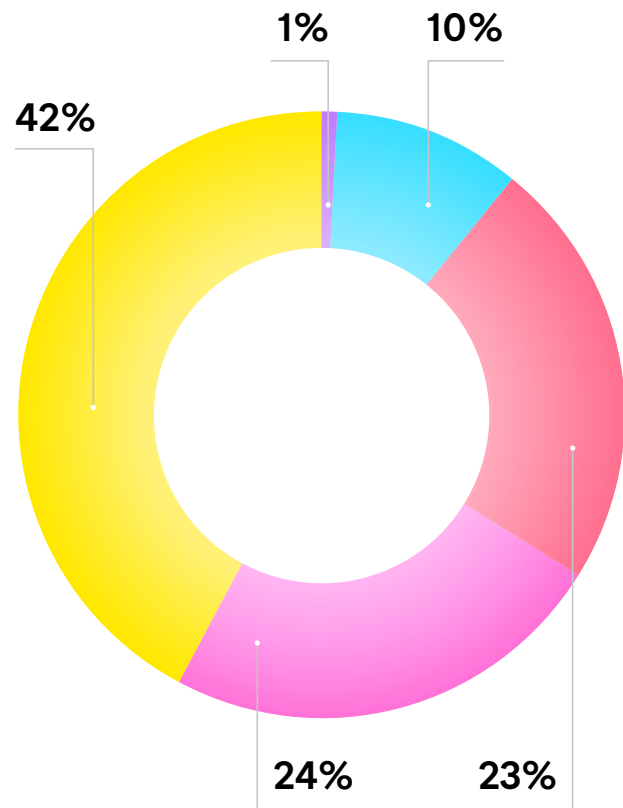
Building a Content Team

How many people do you have
in your content marketing team?

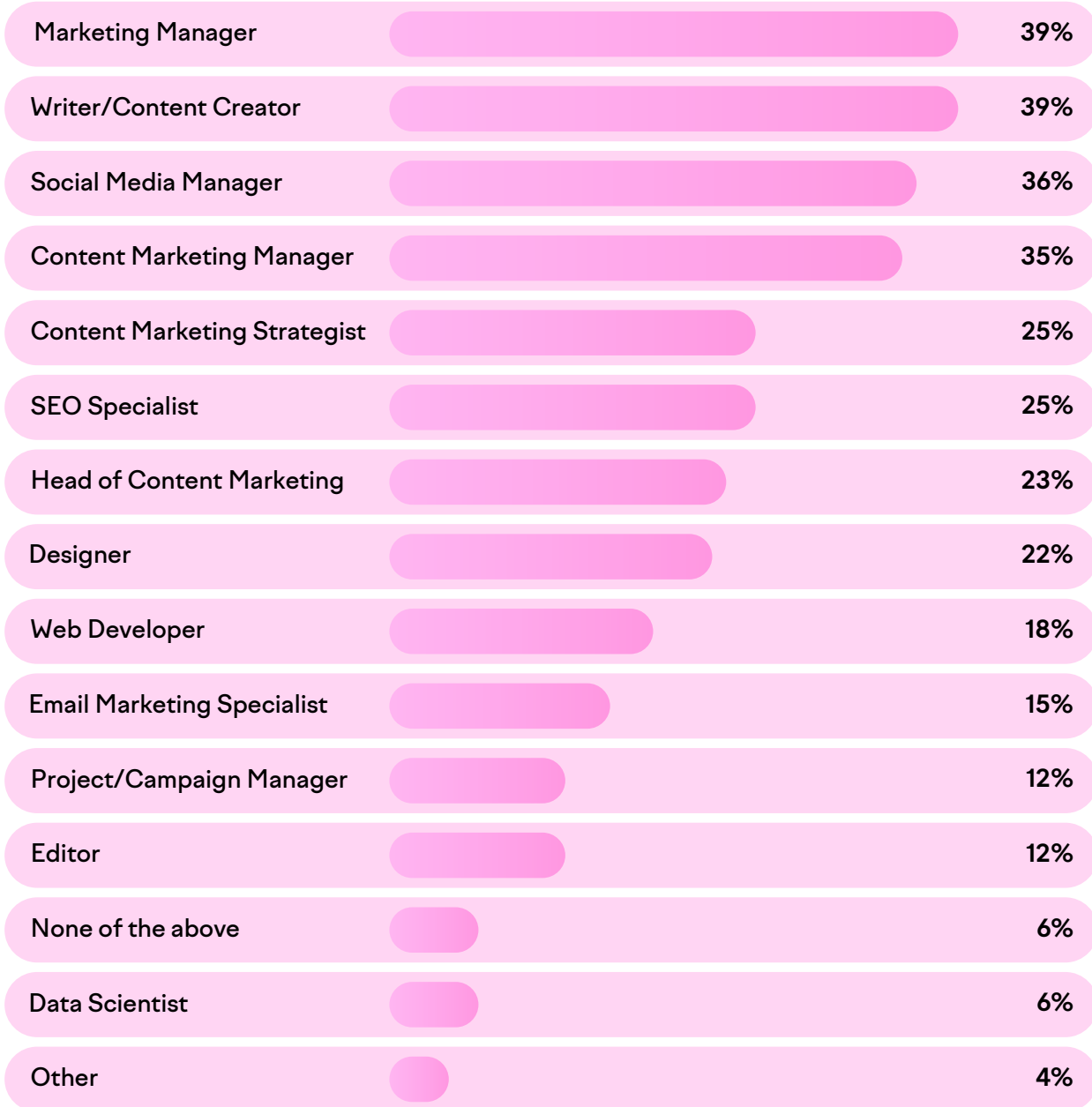


How is your content marketing team structured?

- We have one team/one person that does content marketing for the entire company
- All of the above: we have a centralized content marketing structure and various teams also have their own content specialists
- Different departments/product teams have their own content marketing team/manager
- We don't have a specialized content marketing person. Content is created by different team members
- Others

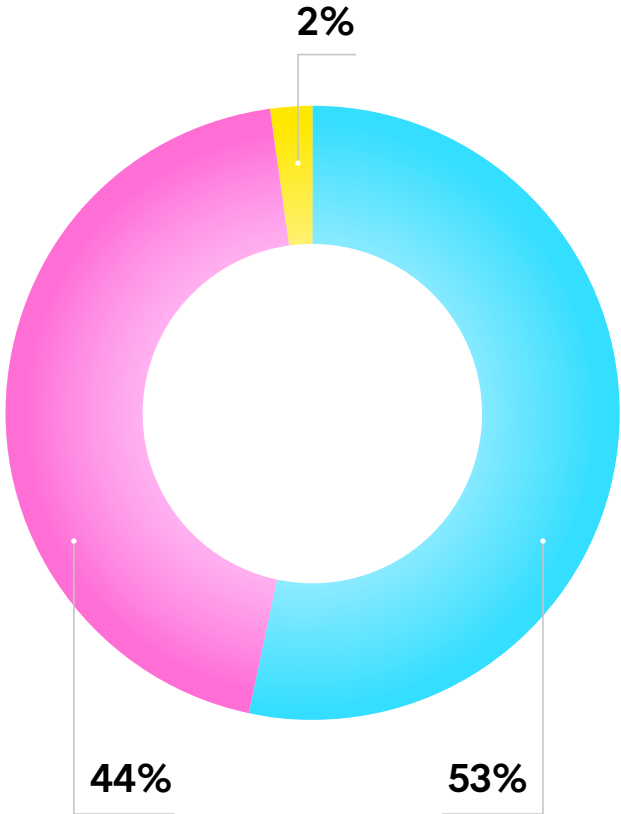


Here are the most common in-house content specialists



Do you expect your content marketing team to grow in 2023?

- Stay the same
- Larger
- Smaller



Content teams will grow in 2023

- When we asked whether respondents planned to grow their content marketing teams, 44% are looking to do so, 53% planned to stay the same, and just 2% expect to downsize

Having a dedicated content person is important

- If you are part of the 42% of businesses with only one content specialist, consider adding freelancers/agencies

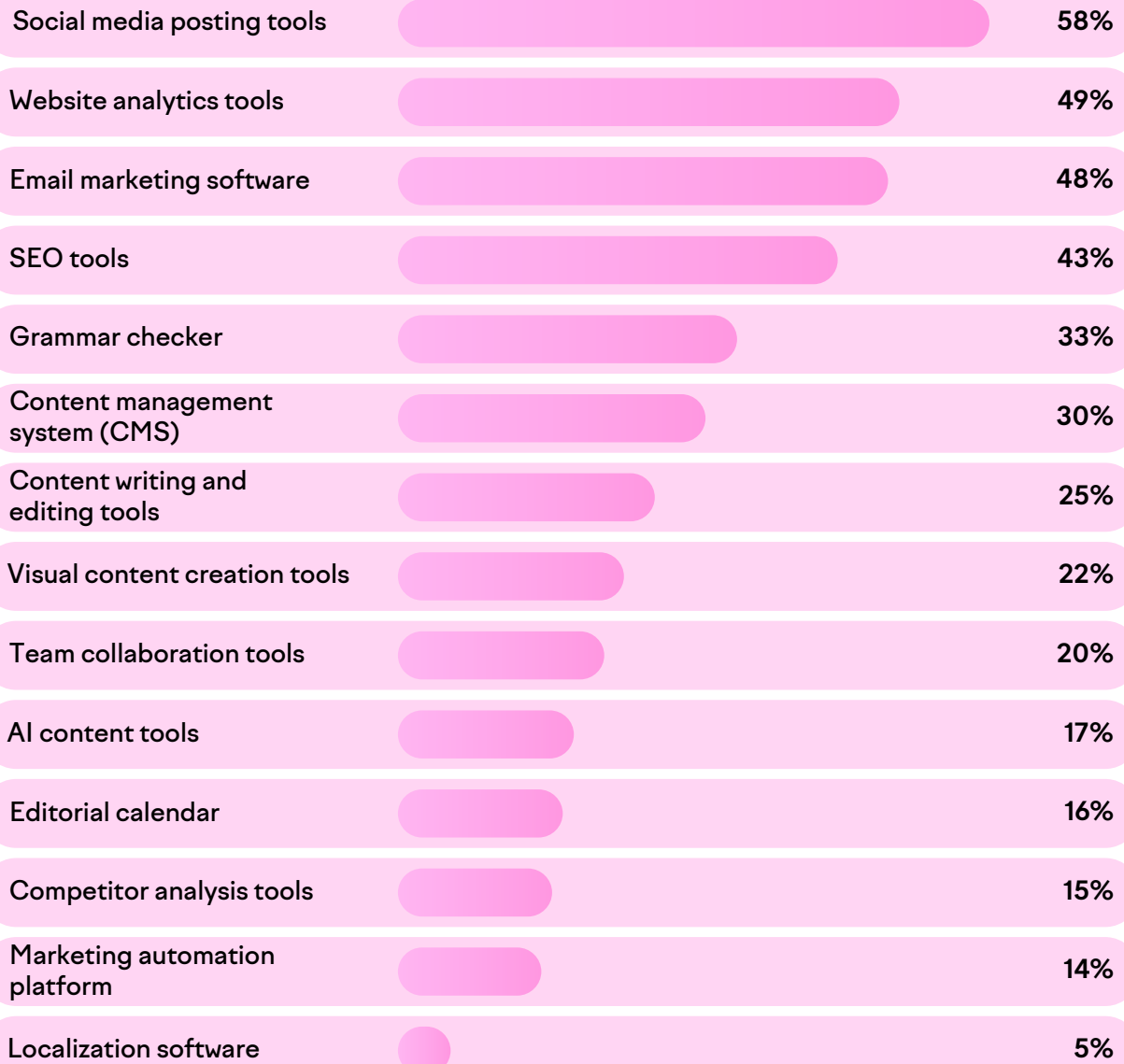


How Businesses Manage Outsourcing and Content Marketing Tools

Which content services do you outsource?



Which technologies does your team use to leverage your content marketing efforts?



Outsourcing can help scale content production

- According to our results, only 48% of our respondents outsource their content
- The most commonly outsourced services are graphic design (47%), video design or animation (43%), and copywriting (37%)

Social media scheduling tools can save you precious time

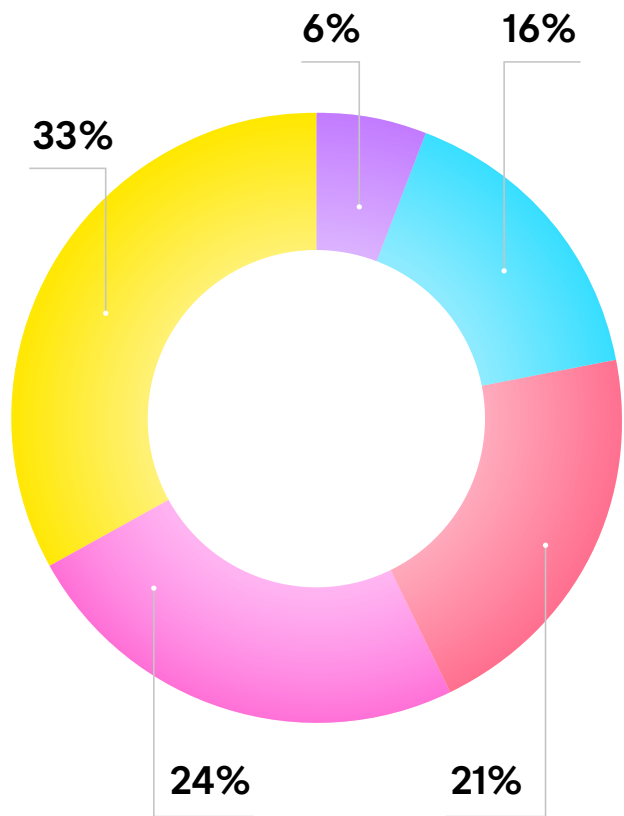
- When it comes to the use of technology, the biggest need seems to be social media scheduling tools: 58% of respondents use them
- If you're not sure which other tools to use, website analytics (49%), email marketing (48%), and SEO (43%) tools are also all popular options



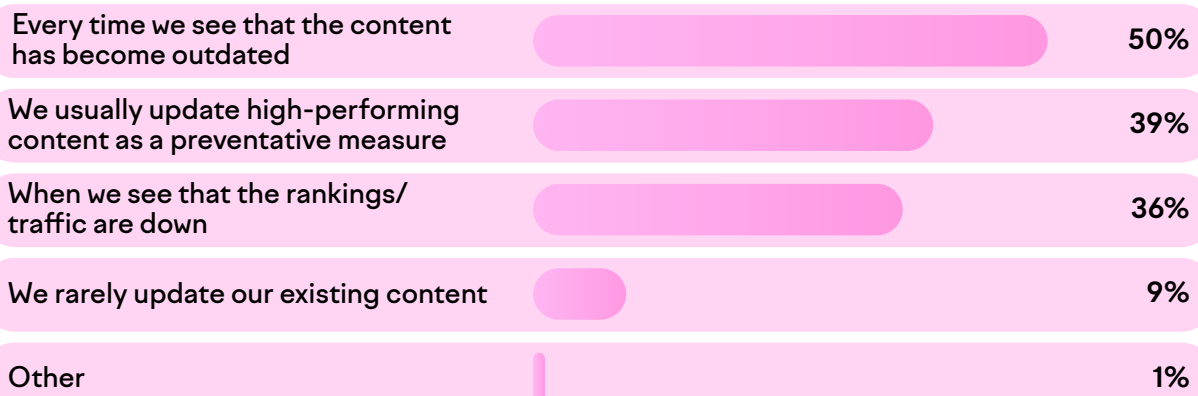
The Importance of Content Audits

How often do you conduct content audits?

- Twice a year
- Once a year
- More than three times a year
- Never
- Once every 2-3 years



When do you usually update your existing content?



Which results did you achieve after updating your content?



Content Performance and ROI

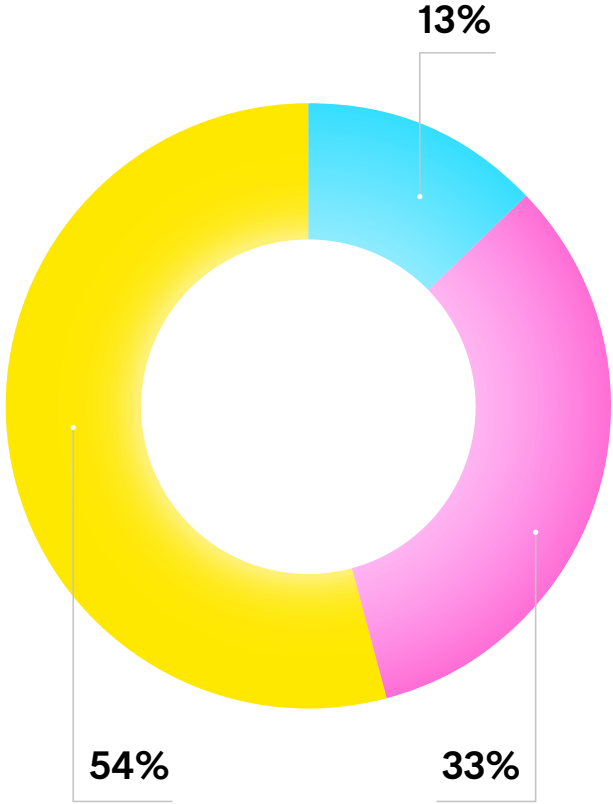
Return on investment is always a hot topic for content marketers. It's important to understand how your efforts are making an impact on the bottom line.

In this section, we explore some data insights on content marketing ROI—and what's being measured and how. We also ask expert CMO Michael Brenner for his perspective.



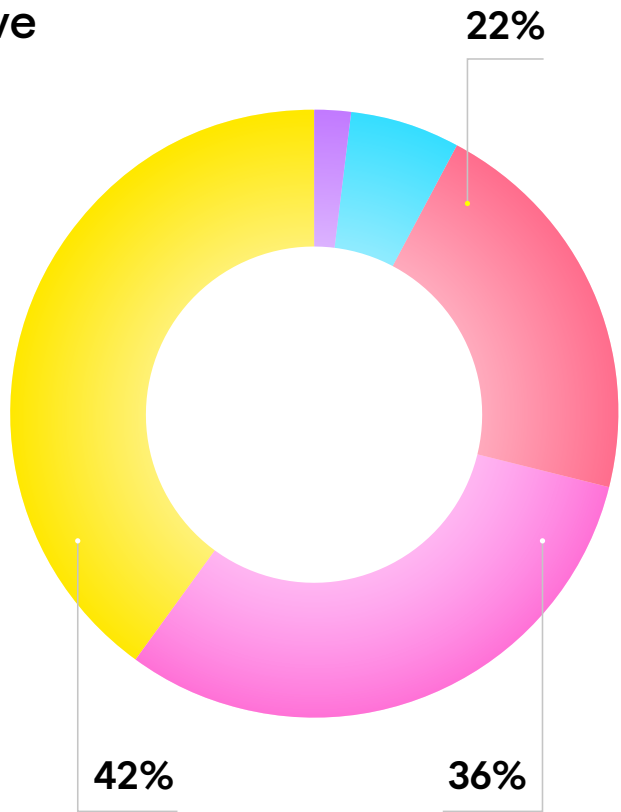
Do you measure content marketing ROI in your company?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure



In your opinion, how effective is your team in measuring content marketing ROI?

- Relatively good
- Average
- Highly effective
- Minimally effective
- Not effective



What are your key content marketing goals for 2023?



How do you measure content marketing ROI?



Which tools do you use to assess content marketing ROI?



What are the key metrics you use to measure your content's success?



Which content marketing goals/KPIs did you successfully achieve in 2022?



Not everyone tracks ROI

- ➔ Only 54% of our respondents track their ROI
- ➔ Only 21% who do so say they are highly effective at it; most (40%) say they are relatively good

Revenue is a good indicator of ROI

- ➔ The most common ways to calculate ROI are by measuring revenue coming from leads and conversions generated by content (67%)

Google Analytics is the top ROI tracking tool

- ➔ Google Analytics is the number one tracking tool used, with 64% of responses

Not everyone tracks ROI

The top metrics to track are as follows:

- ➔ Social media engagement (61%)
- ➔ Organic traffic (52%)
- ➔ Email marketing engagement (47%)
- ➔ Search ranking (41%)

The Importance of ROI

8 Tips from Michael Brenner

Content is about reaching audiences you wouldn't normally reach and creating opportunities for them to convert.

1

Create as many touchpoints as possible. Test different conversion strategies, from newsletter strategies to offers embedded in content and downloads.

2

Articulate the customer story. This helps justify the return on investment of content marketing. The marketing attribution of the touches is highly complex, but they can ultimately lead to conversion.

3

Aim to own the answers to the questions along that buyer's journey. Answer them through video, blogs, newsletters, social—whatever your buyer needs at any given point in their journey.

4



Really effective content marketing strategies attract more customers

and convert them at a higher rate.

5

Last click attribution misses the bigger picture.

Last click attribution credits the last action a customer takes before making a purchase. It misses out on the entire customer journey and fails to account for other touchpoints with your content they may have had along the way.

6

Pipeline influence is an interesting but complex way to measure attribution.

In this model, every touchpoint on the buyer's journey is counted if it becomes a closed deal. All touches are then attributed equally—from email subscribers, organic visitors, paid search, and event attendees—and are then linked to a conversion.

This way, we can then see what is influencing purchases. This requires significant technical and marketing operational expertise. It's just key to understand that any kind of attribution is going to be imperfect.

7

Remember, while that one article might not convert, **publishing consistently has a lot of value and potential impact on the bottom line.**

8



Content



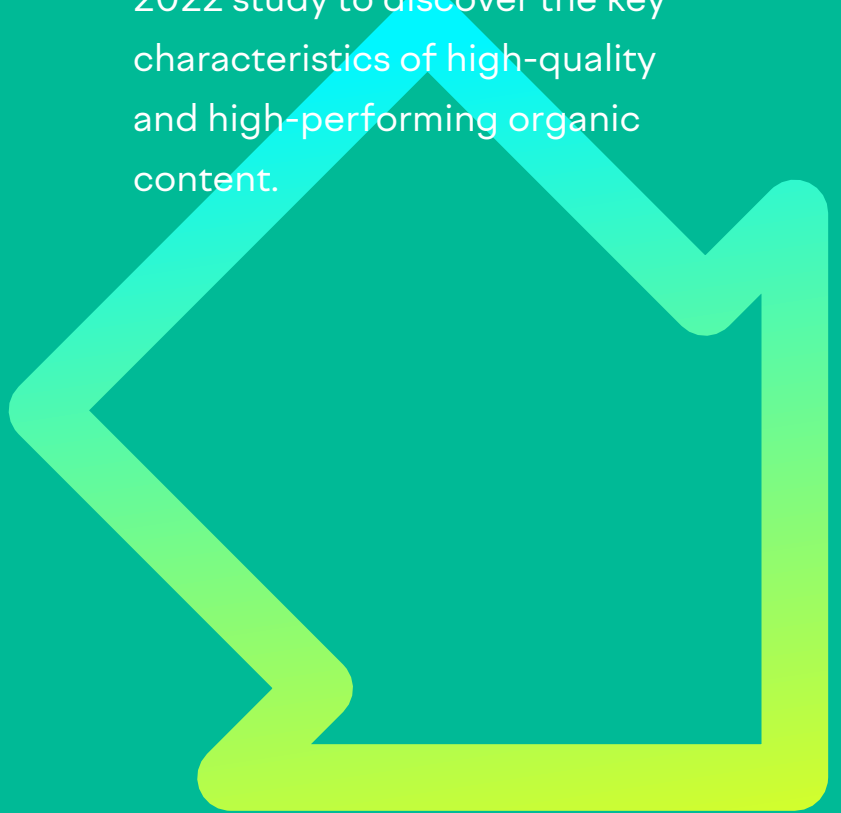
The Anatomy of High-Quality Organic Content

If content is organic, it attracts website visitors or social media engagement without sponsorship or advertising.

It allows marketers to reach their target audience at no additional fee (other than the cost of producing the content in the first place).

Organic content is therefore beneficial for marketers because it brings better ROI.

Let's explore insights from our 2022 study to discover the key characteristics of high-quality and high-performing organic content.



How We Handled the Data

We looked at 500,000 English language articles from all locations. These were published on blogs that had between 30,000 and 500,000 average organic monthly views in 2022, prior to September.

Our success metrics were focused on organic (search) traffic, engagement on social media (Facebook), and backlinks (links to the articles from other websites).

We took an average of all the metrics and split them into three areas:

High-performing (20%), average-performing (60%), and low-performing (20%) articles.

How We Compared the Content

We chose the following common characteristics for comparison purposes.

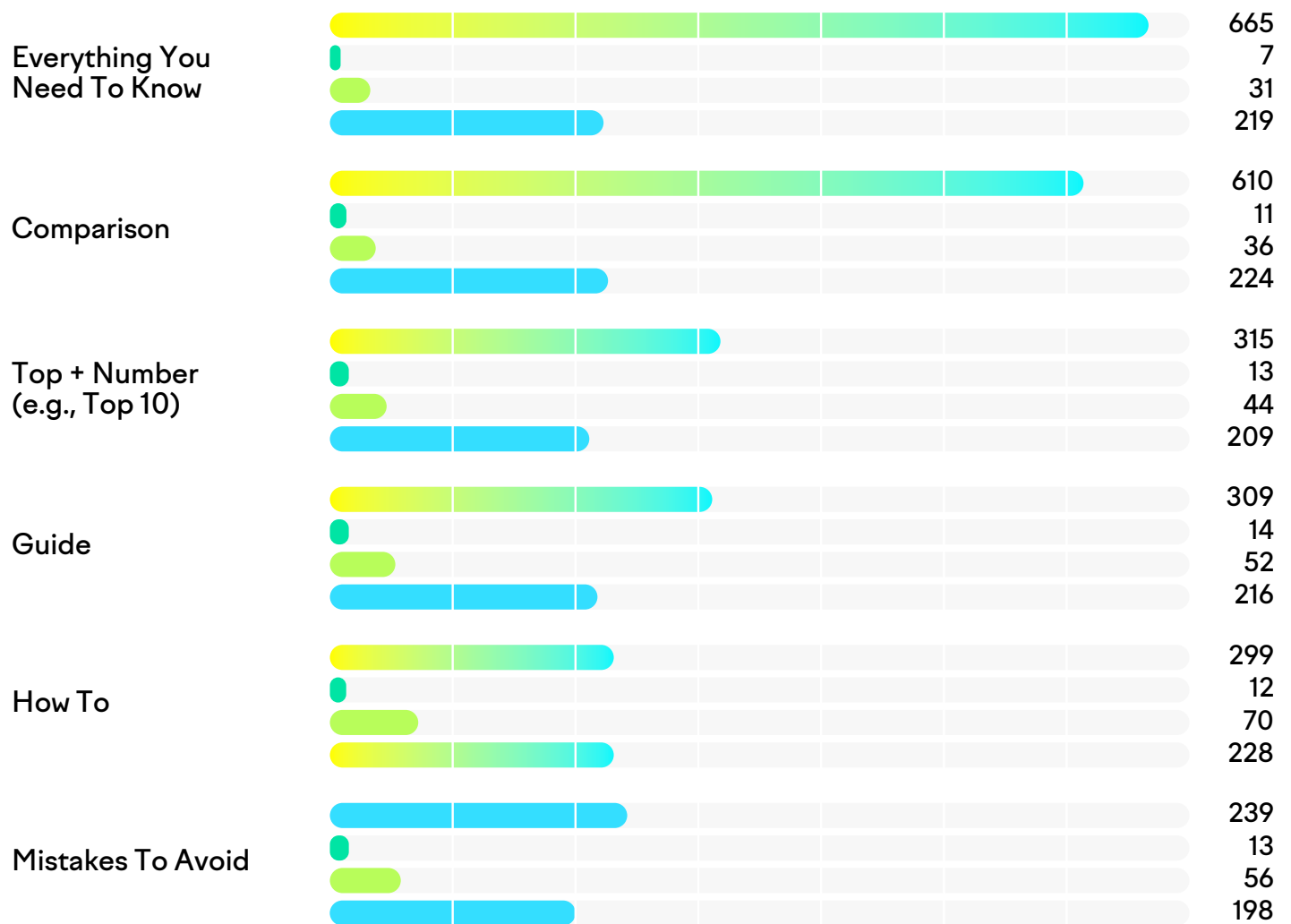
- Headline types
- H1 length
- Heading depth (H2, H3, H4)
- List presence
- Image presence
- Video presence
- Date of publication
- Publishing frequency

We then looked at the data to understand whether these features have any impact on the success of the content.

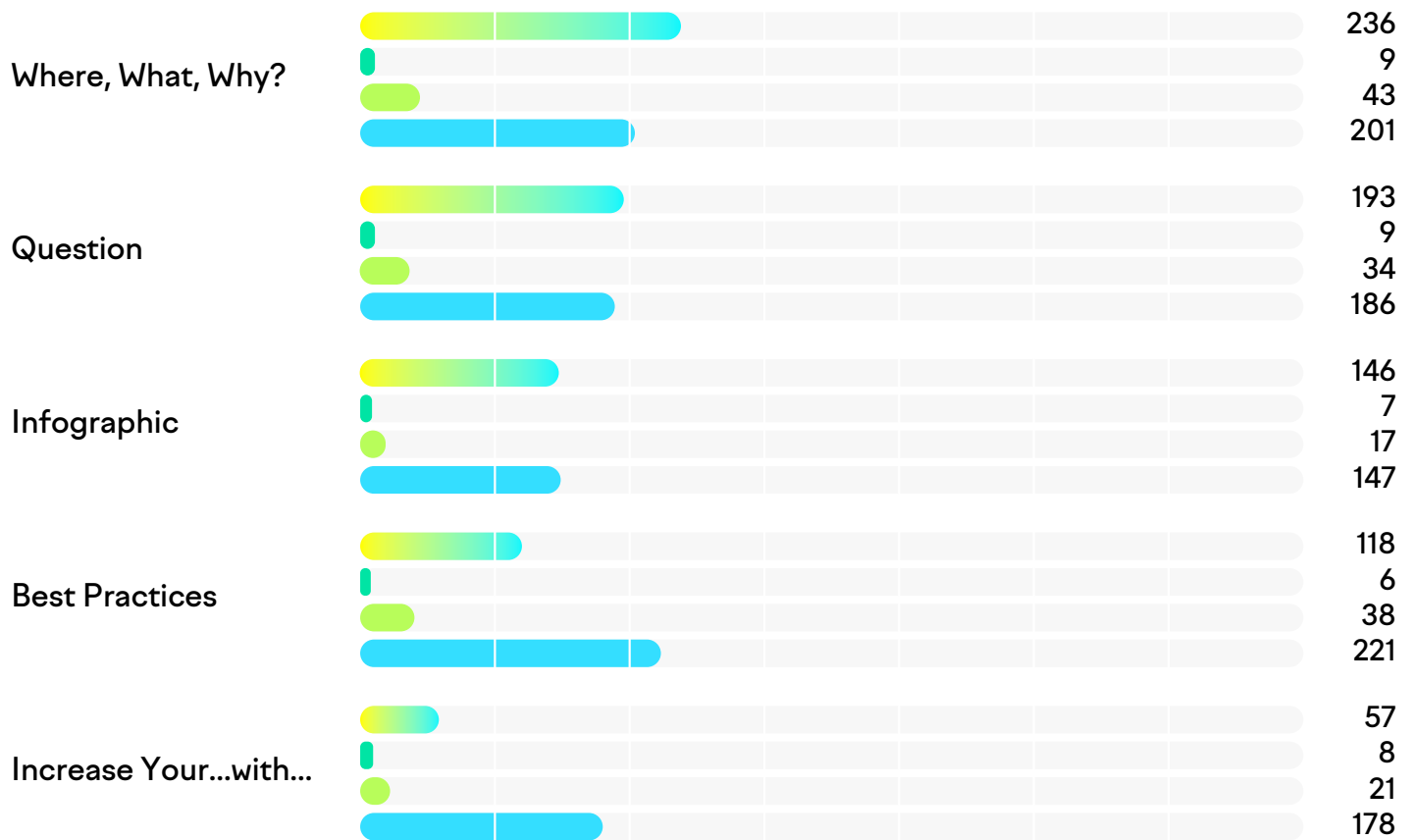
Types of Articles

There are several article types that are more common than others.

We looked at how they tend to perform and uncovered some common characteristics.



■ Average Unique Monthly Pageviews
 ■ Average Facebook Shares
 ■ Average Backlinks
 ■ Average Time on Page



Average Unique Monthly Pageviews

Average Facebook Shares

Average Backlinks

Average Time on Page

The “Everything You Need To Know” titles and Comparison articles generate the most organic traffic on average. There could be an opportunity for content marketers here:

While these article types get the most traffic, they’re pretty uncommon. In fact, we saw that only 0.4% and 0.8% of all articles are in this content format.



Articles with “Mistakes To Avoid” titles and Guides get the most shares



How To and Comparison articles attract the most backlinks

What Makes a Successful Article

Content that generates lots of organic views includes a number of features:

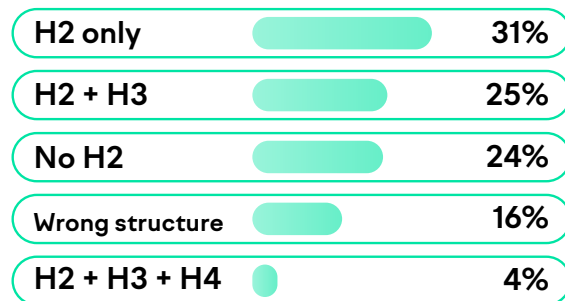
- It's based on original research and data, customer research, and collaboration with customer-facing teams, alongside topic and keyword research
- It has a more complex variety of titles and subheadings. This is known as an H-tag structure, and these articles contain H2s and H3s, or H2s, H3s, and H4s.
- It's structured to improve the reader experience, having lots of white spaces, bullet points, and lists (ideally 2-4 lists per blog post)
- The content is updated every 6 to 12 months, keeping it fresh and useful
- It provides a great reader experience. It's easy to follow and read, the tone of voice stays consistent, and the flow is logical.
- Content length is less important than creating comprehensive content. Topic coverage is extremely important.

Dive Into the Data

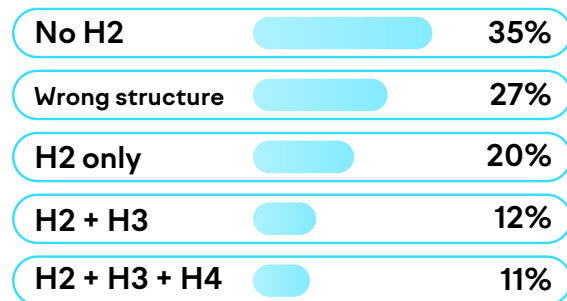
Below you'll find the results fresh from our research team:

Distribution of Heading Depth by Performance

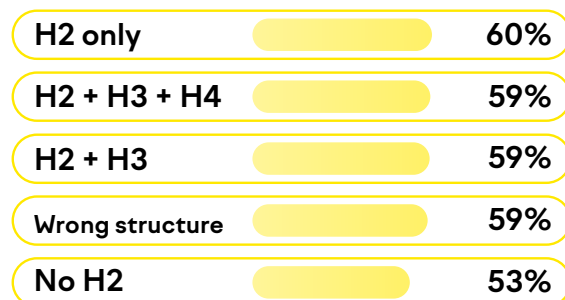
% of articles this type



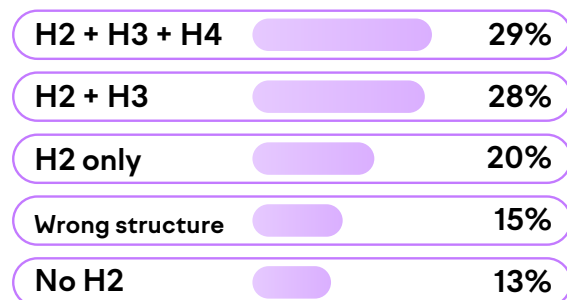
Low Performance



Medium Performance



High Performance



Number of Lists— Impact on Performance

% of articles



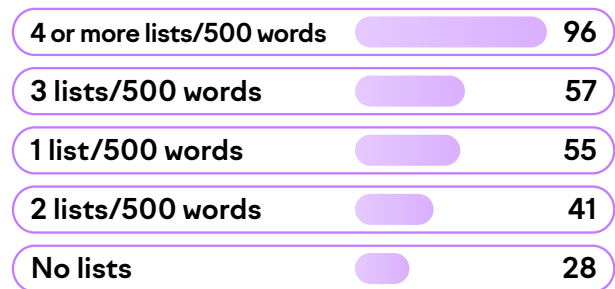
Unique Pageviews



Shares



Backlinks

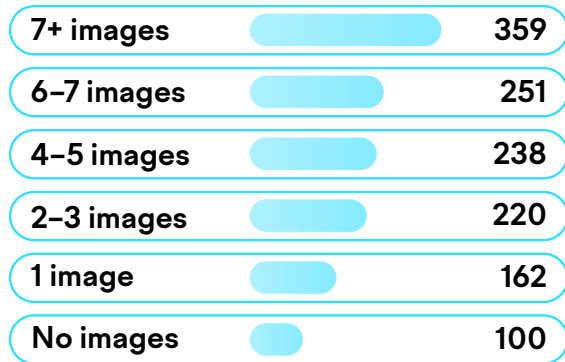


Number of Images— Impact on Performance

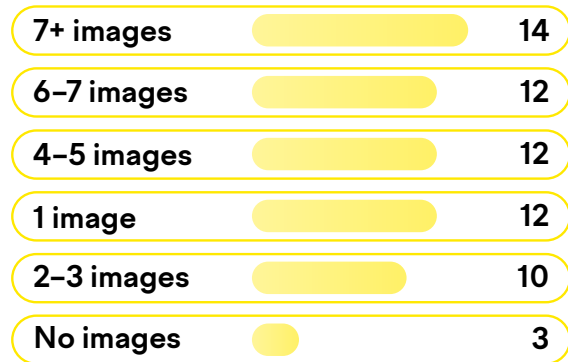
% of articles



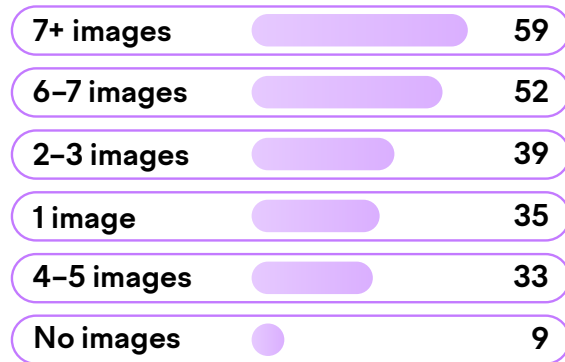
Unique Pageviews



Shares

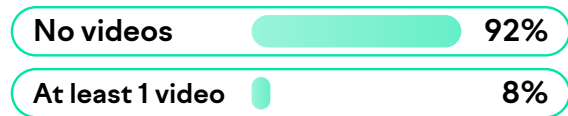


Backlinks

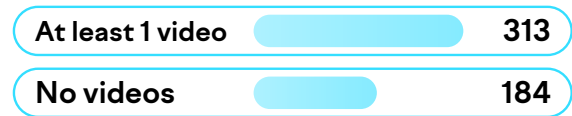


Number of Videos

% of articles



Unique Pageviews



Shares

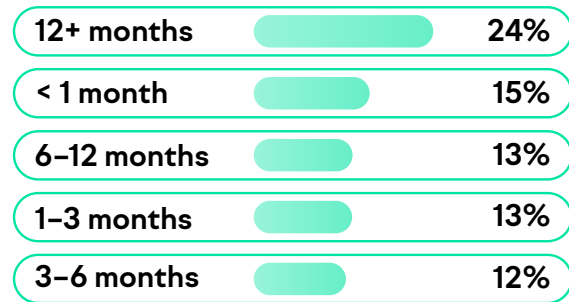


Backlinks

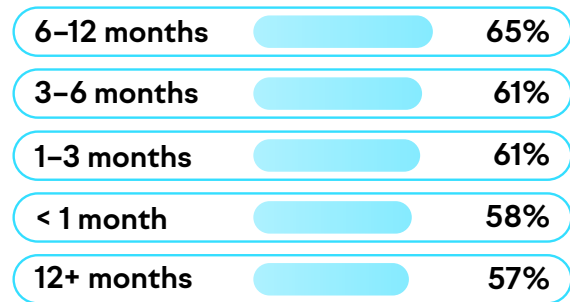


Article age

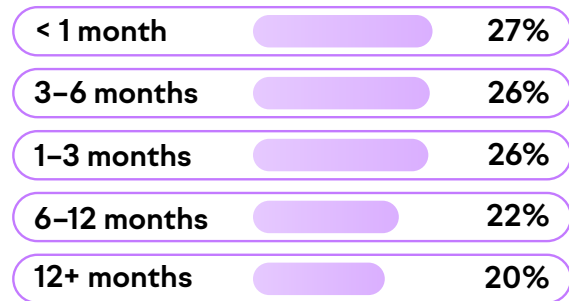
Low Performance



Medium Performance

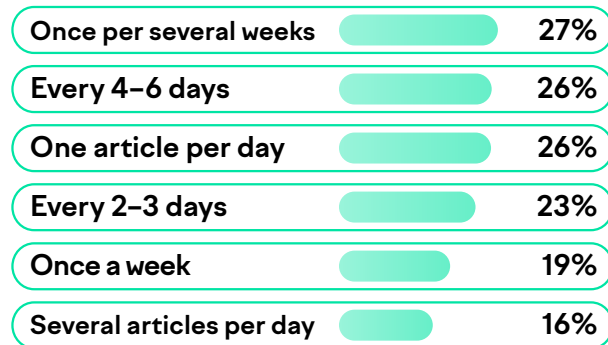


High Performance

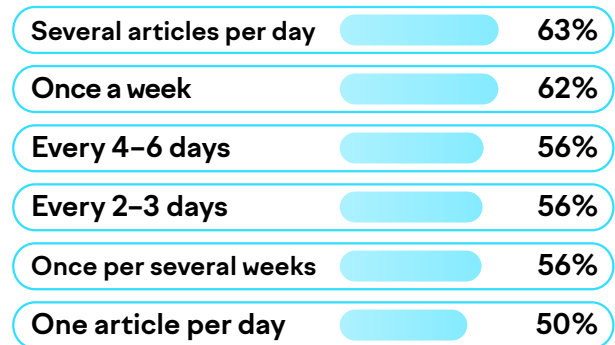


Median Publishing Frequency— Impact on Performance

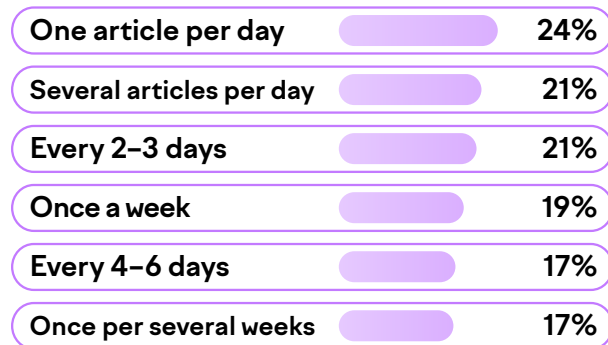
Low Performance



Medium Performance

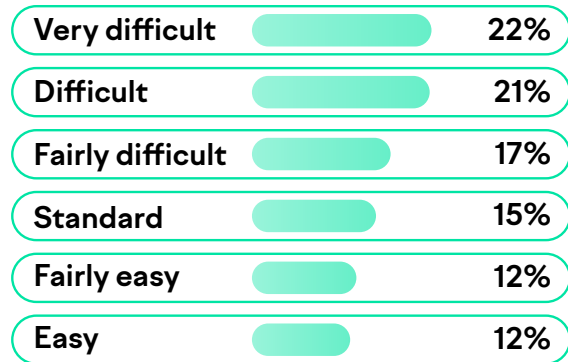


High Performance

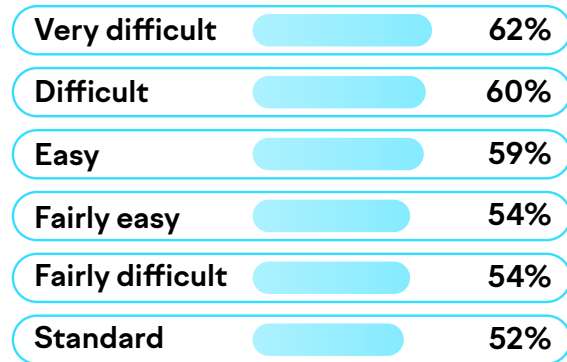


Readability—Impact on Performance

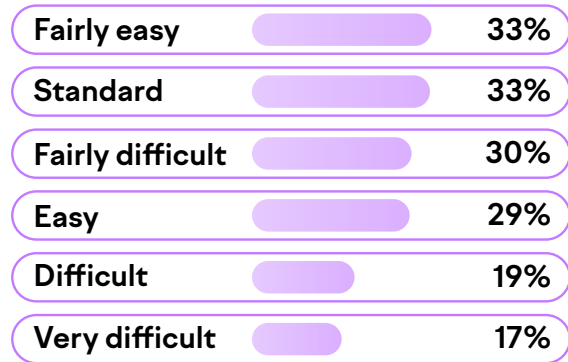
Low Performance



Medium Performance



High Performance



Use a variety of subtitles





While the most common article type had only H2 tags, 28% of the blog posts in the high-performance group have H2s and H3s. And 29% of them have H2s, H3s, and H4 tags.

Include lists in your articles



Articles with 3-4 lists do better across all metrics. On the other hand, articles with no lists are the most common (68%)—and these under-perform.

Images and video improve traffic and backlinks

-  Articles with 7 or more images get the most backlinks (a percentage increase of 555% compared to those with no images) and the most unique page views (a 259% increase). Aim to put in at least 3 images per article where possible.
-  Articles with at least one video also generate 70% more organic traffic than those without. At the same time, only 8% of all blog posts we analyzed had a video. So, there are lots of untapped opportunities for content marketers.

Newer articles perform best

-  There are fewer low-performing articles under one month old and more in the 12-month old group (15.39% and 23.84% respectively).
-  This could mean running content audits and updating your blog posts will help maintain blog performance.

The more you publish, the better



How much you post can improve the number of website visitors you get. 23.84% of high-performing blogs publish every day. Those that publish every 4-6 days and those that publish every 2-3 days also do well.

Readability matters



Readability refers to how easy a text is to understand and digest. While content should be carefully written for your target audience, the clearer it is, the better.



The data shows the more readable an article is, the more likely it is to perform well. Only 16.73% of high-performing blogs were found to be very difficult to read. In contrast, 33.45% of high-performing blogs were fairly easy to read.

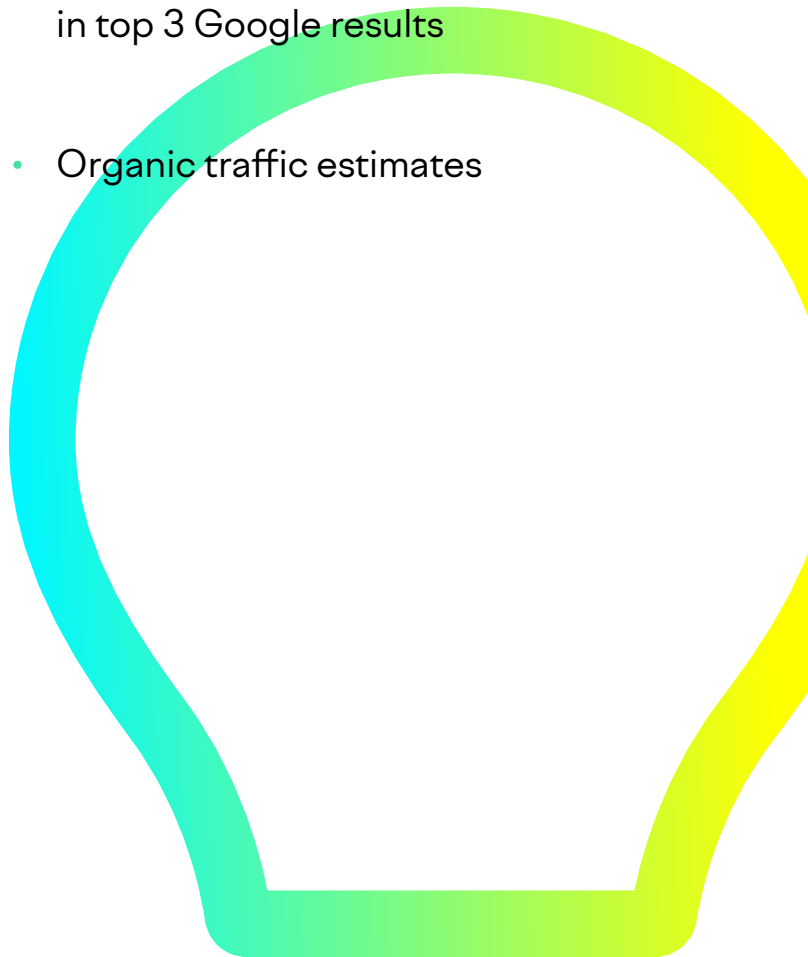
Different Ranking Factors

In this section, we look at how article length and the inclusion of research impacts organic search rankings.

We took a sample of 30,000 articles. One-third was labeled as “high performing,” one-third “medium performing,” and the final third as “low performing.”

We looked at the following data:

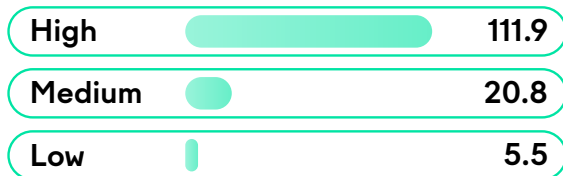
- Number of organic positions in top 100 Google results
- Number of organic positions in top 3 Google results
- Organic traffic estimates



How Length Affects Organic Ranking

Average number of keywords an article ranks for in the top 100 results on Google

Performance group



Average number of keywords an article ranks for in the top 3 results on Google

Performance group



Organic traffic estimate

Performance group



Text length

Performance group



Our data shows posts that perform better in the rankings tend to be longer.

According to Google's guidelines, the length of a text is not a ranking factor—but usefulness is. Perhaps, because these findings indicate content that's more comprehensive performs better.

If you are wondering how long your blog post should be, focus on the needs of your audience.

The optimal length of your blog posts should be determined by the specific requests of your readers and their search intent (the reason they search for a specific topic).

The simplest way to determine this is by googling your topic or keyword and assessing articles that rank on the first page.



How Data and Research Affect Ranking

Providing original research and data is said to increase your chances at ranking. To test this idea, we looked for articles that include research and data in our larger (500,000 article count) data set.

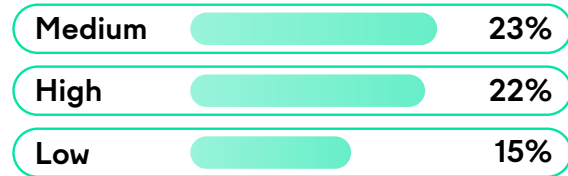
We checked how often the articles contained numbers and how often they appeared on average. We excluded numbers that look like dates and focused on the “filtered” numbers.

We also looked at whether articles contained such words as “data,” “research,” “study,” “infographics,” and “chart.”



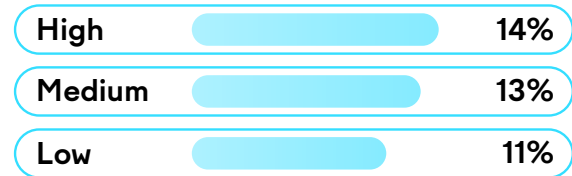
Contains "data"

Performance group



Contains "research"

Performance group



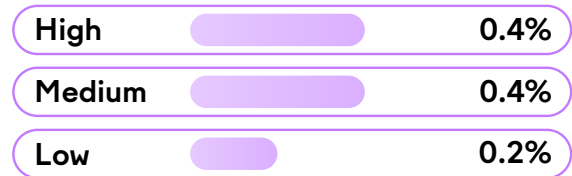
Contains "study"

Performance group



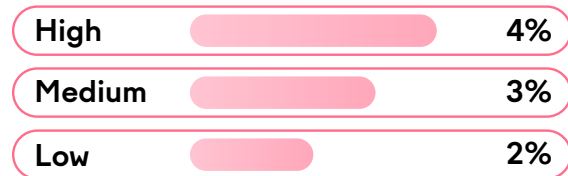
Contains "infographics"

Performance group



Contains "chart"

Performance group



Articles with filtered numbers

Performance group



Average number of filtered numbers in the text

Performance group



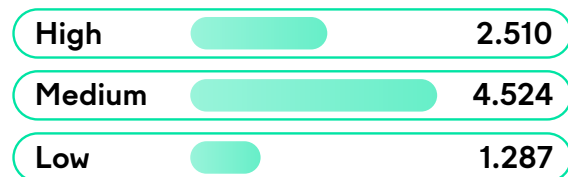
Finally, using a very simple model, we worked out how often studies appeared in our collection of articles.

We found that articles including data tended to be higher performing,

with 5% from all articles in the high-performing group having data studies, compared to 2% in the low-performing group.

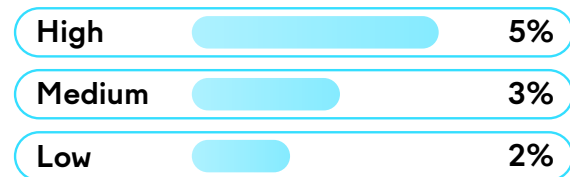
Number of studies predicted by model

Performance group



% of studies predicted by model

Performance group



Creating research-driven content can seem challenging. However, you don't necessarily need lots of resources to do so. For example,

you can run surveys with your followers or have your employees test products to come up with original findings.

MARKETING



Content Marketing Job Market Trends

When you're building your content marketing team, it's good to understand what the job market looks like. We analyzed key trends in the field to help inform you of positions, salaries, and other key insights.



How We Went About It

We downloaded U.S.—based jobs from [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com) using keywords related to content marketing jobs. From these 85,000 listings, we took a more manageable sample of 10,000 jobs.

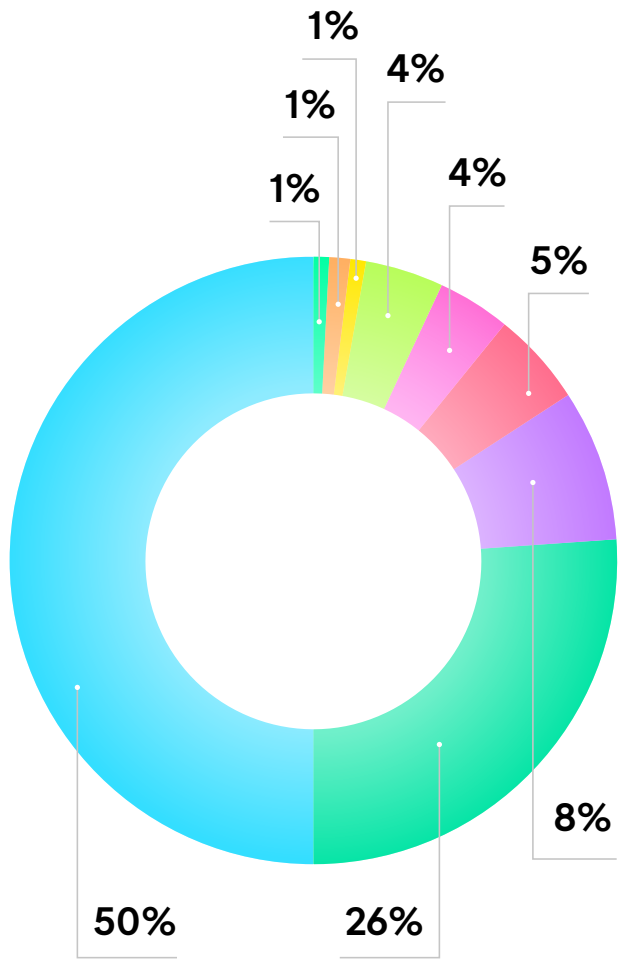
We put all jobs into two major groups: senior positions and others.

Senior positions (33% of the group) include positions like Head, Director, VP, Chief, Lead, and Executive.



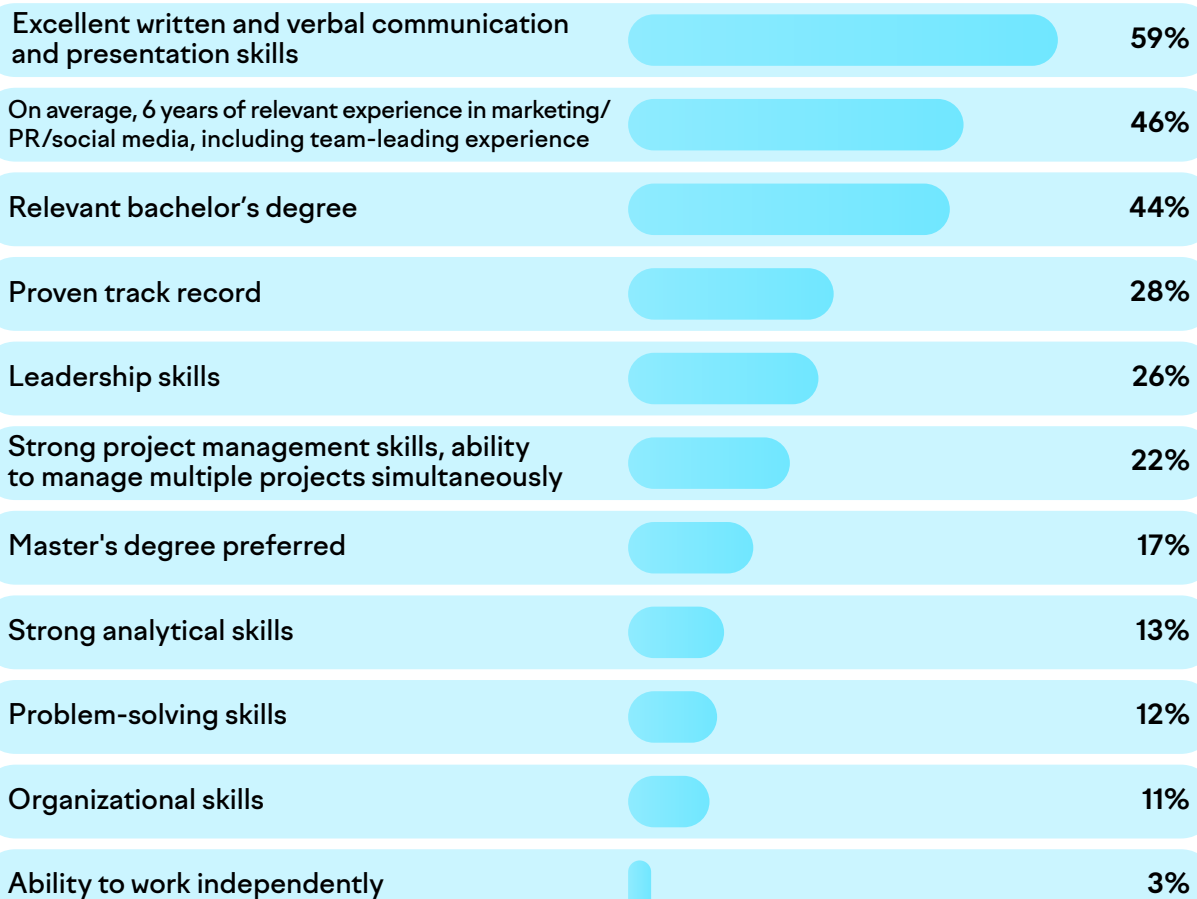
Content marketing roles

- Content Marketing Manager
- Content Marketing Specialist
- Content Marketing Director
- Content Strategist
- Content Creator
- Copywriter
- Content producer
- VP of Content
- Head of Content Marketing

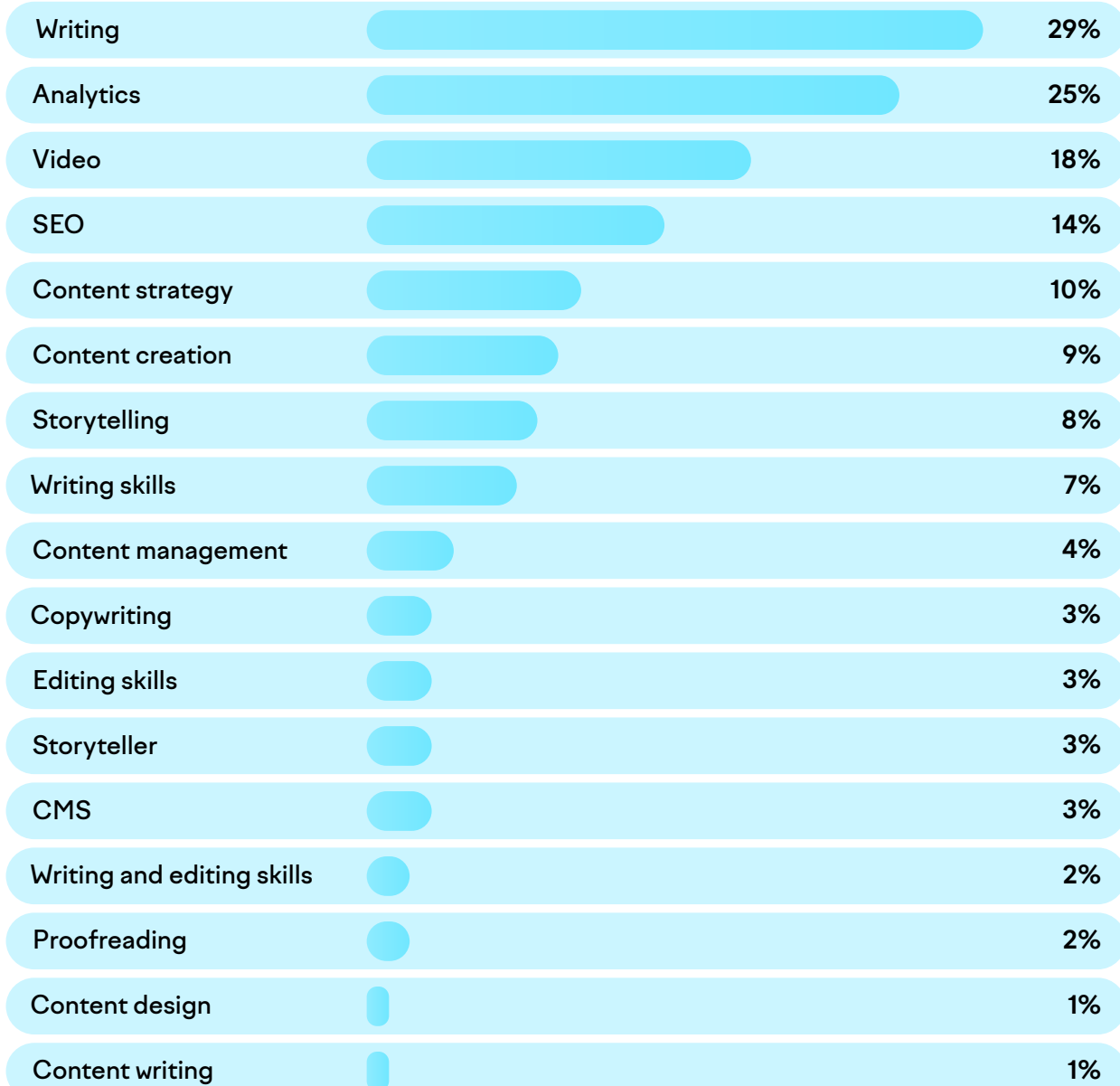


Top Skills, Responsibilities, and Degrees for Senior Content Marketing Positions

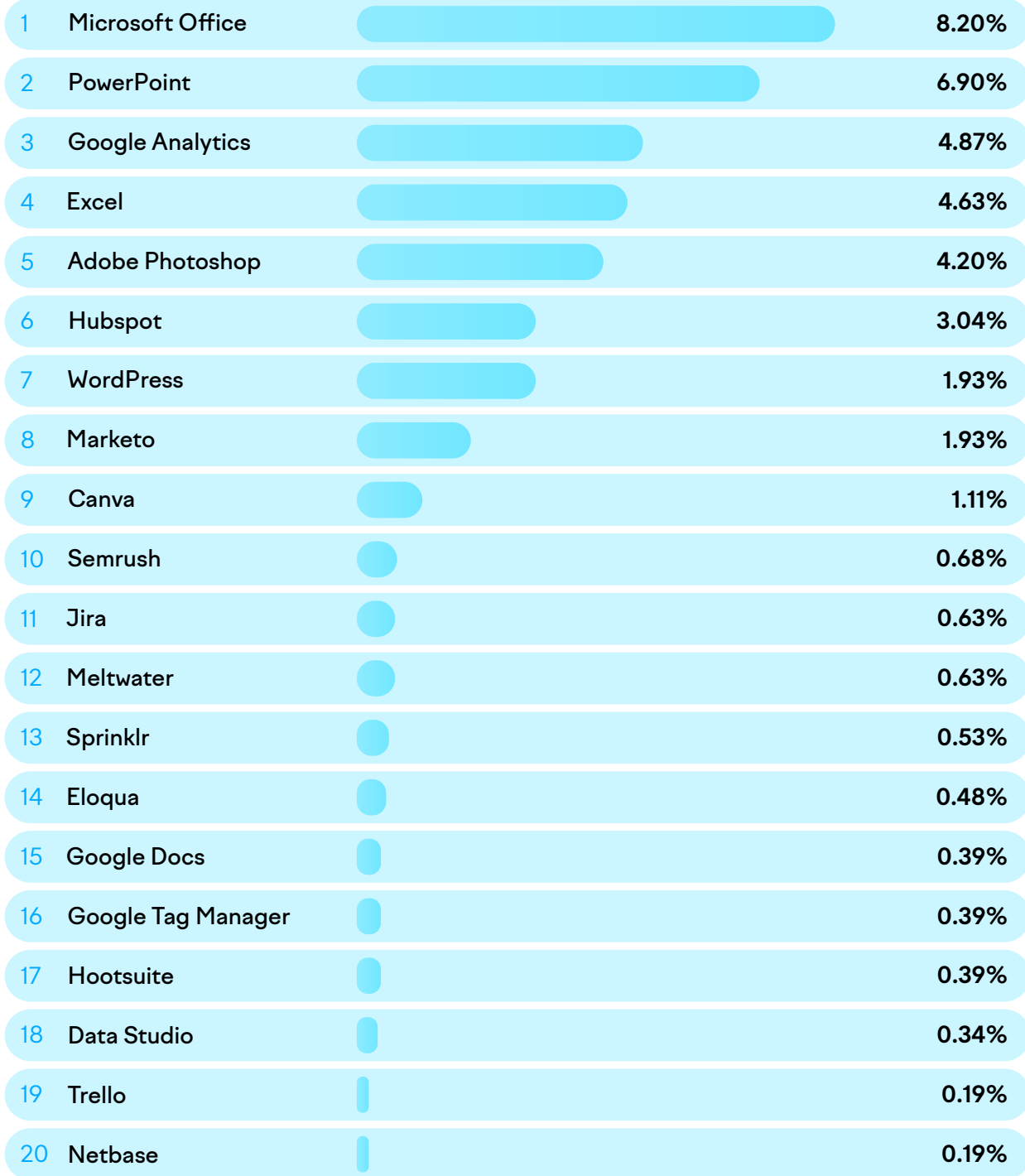
Top skills for senior content marketing positions



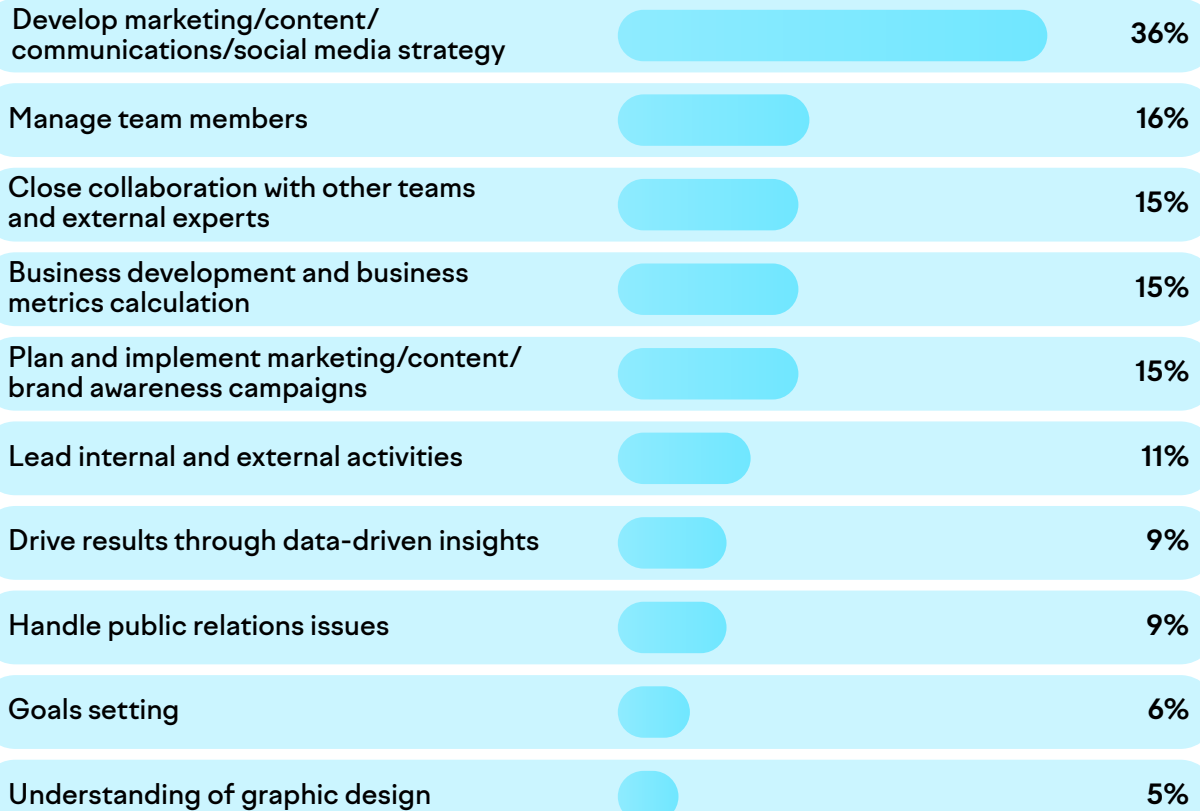
Top marketing skills for senior content marketing positions



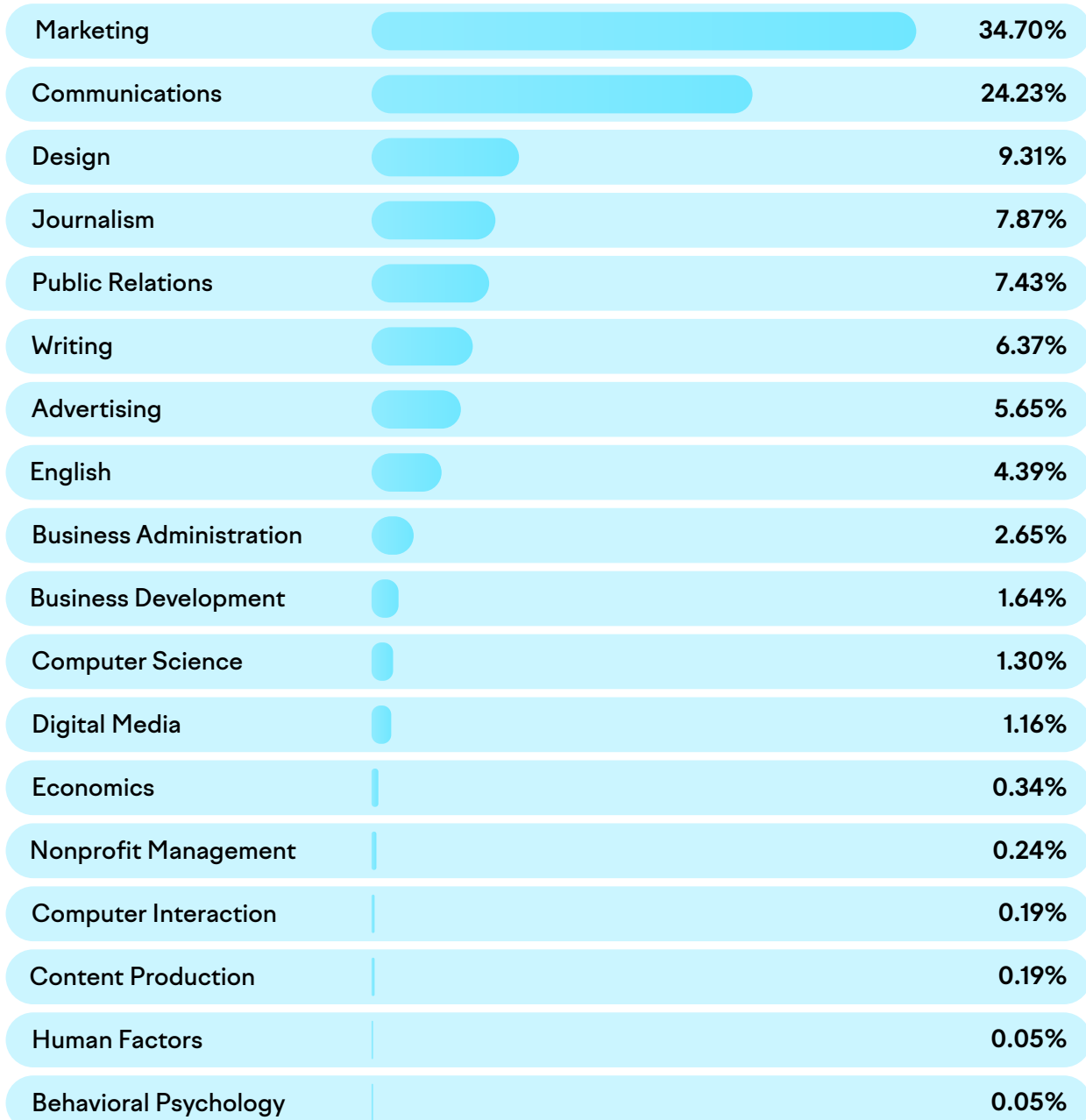
Top 20 tech skills for senior positions



Top responsibilities for senior content marketing positions



Top degree areas for senior content marketing positions



takeaways

Senior positions require excellent written and verbal communication and presentation skills (59%).



On average, employers ask for six years of relevant experience in marketing/PR/social media, including team-leading experience (46%).



And these hires require a relevant bachelor's degree (44%) and a proven track record (28%).

Writing was the top marketing skill asked for in the job descriptions (29%), followed by analytics (25%), video (18%), and SEO (14%).

takeaways

When it comes to tech skills, the biggest request was for Microsoft Office, followed by PowerPoint and Google Analytics.



In terms of skills, senior positions are required to use PowerPoint more than Photoshop, suggesting they will spend more time presenting than hands-on creative tasks.

The top three responsibilities were to:



Develop marketing/content/communications/social media strategy



Manage team members



Collaborate closely with other teams and external experts

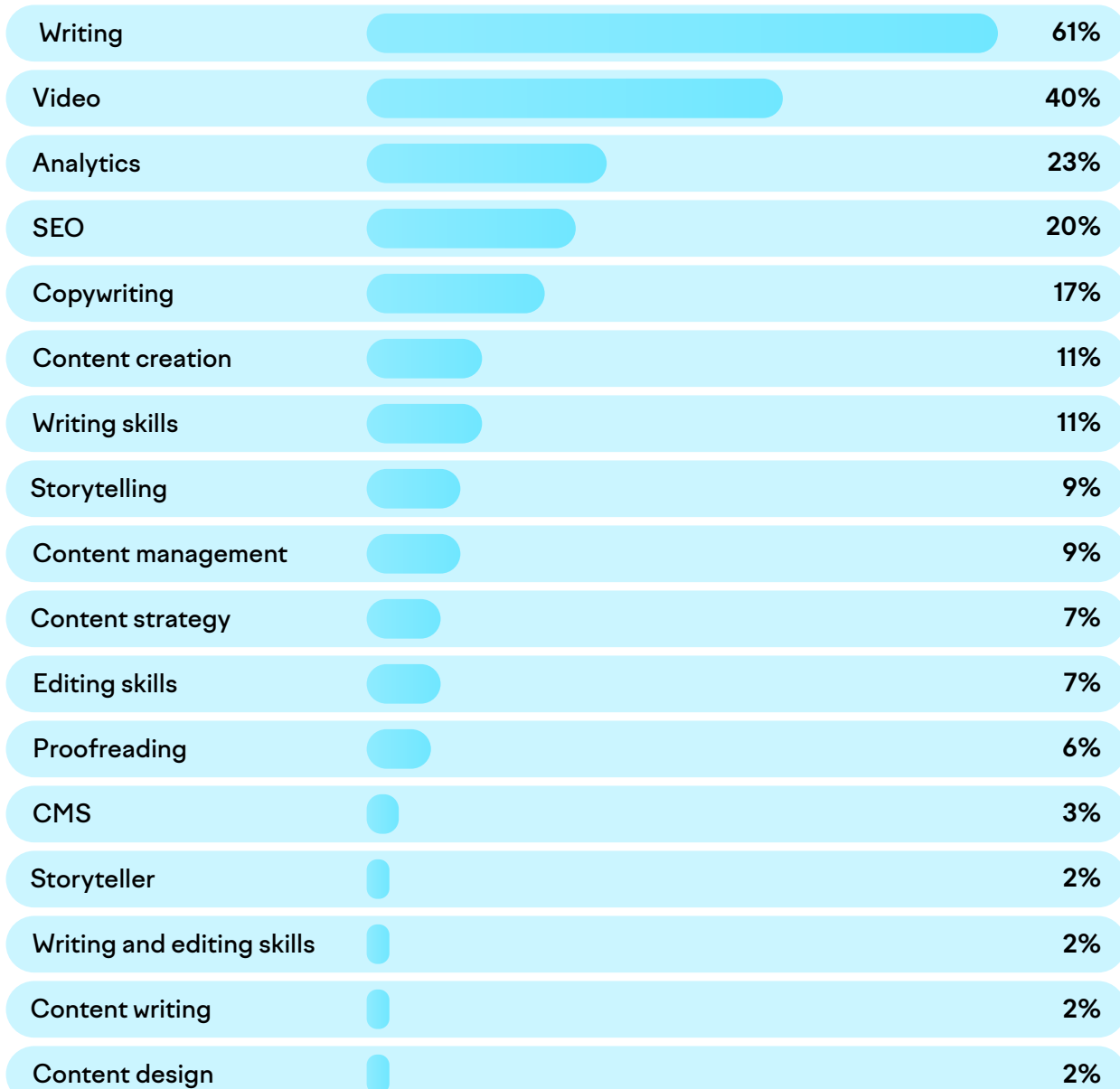
The top three degree requirements were in Marketing, Communications, and Design.

Top Skills, Responsibilities, and Degrees for Non-Senior Content Marketing Positions

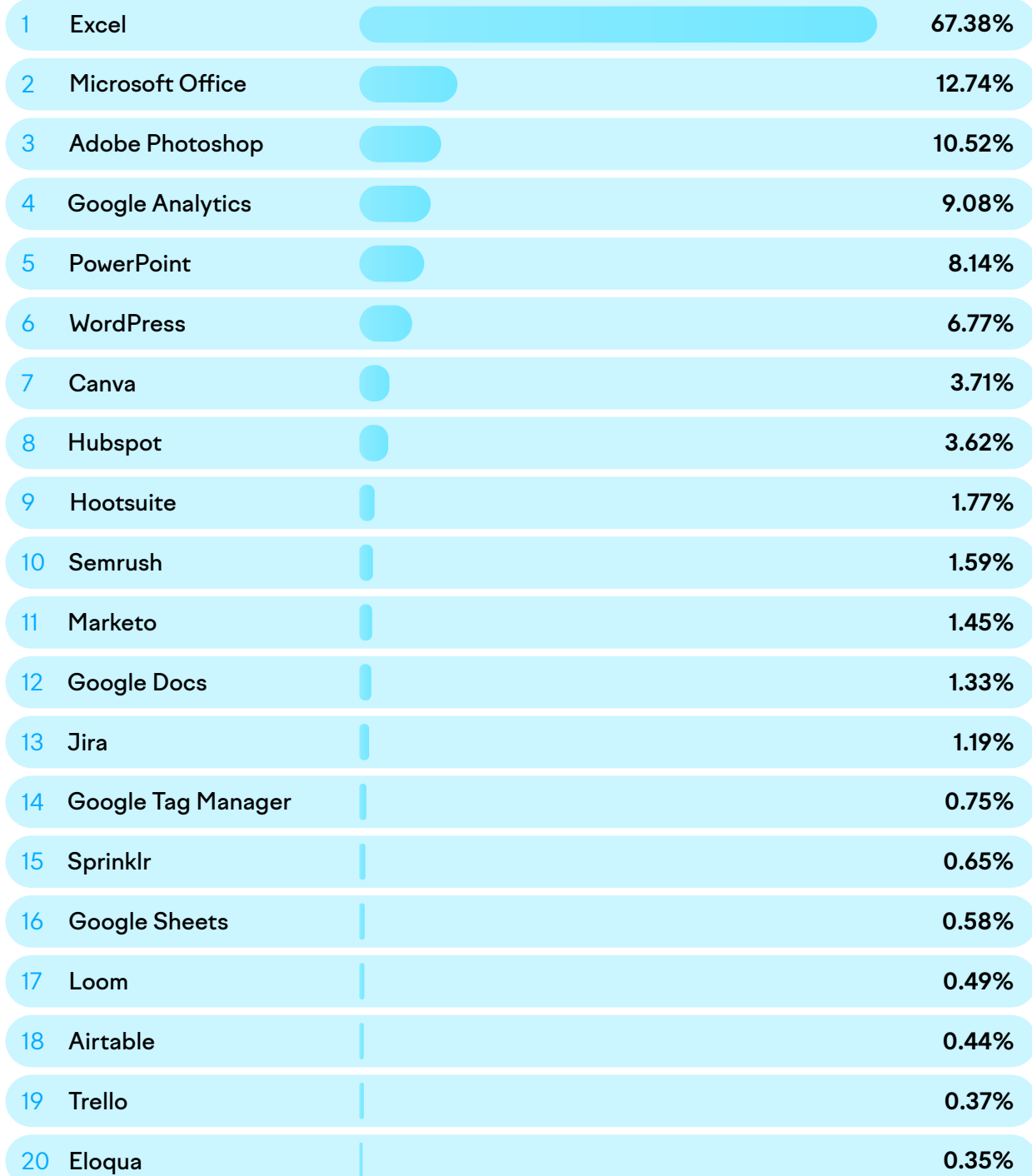
Top skills for non-senior content marketing positions



Top marketing skills for non-senior content marketing positions



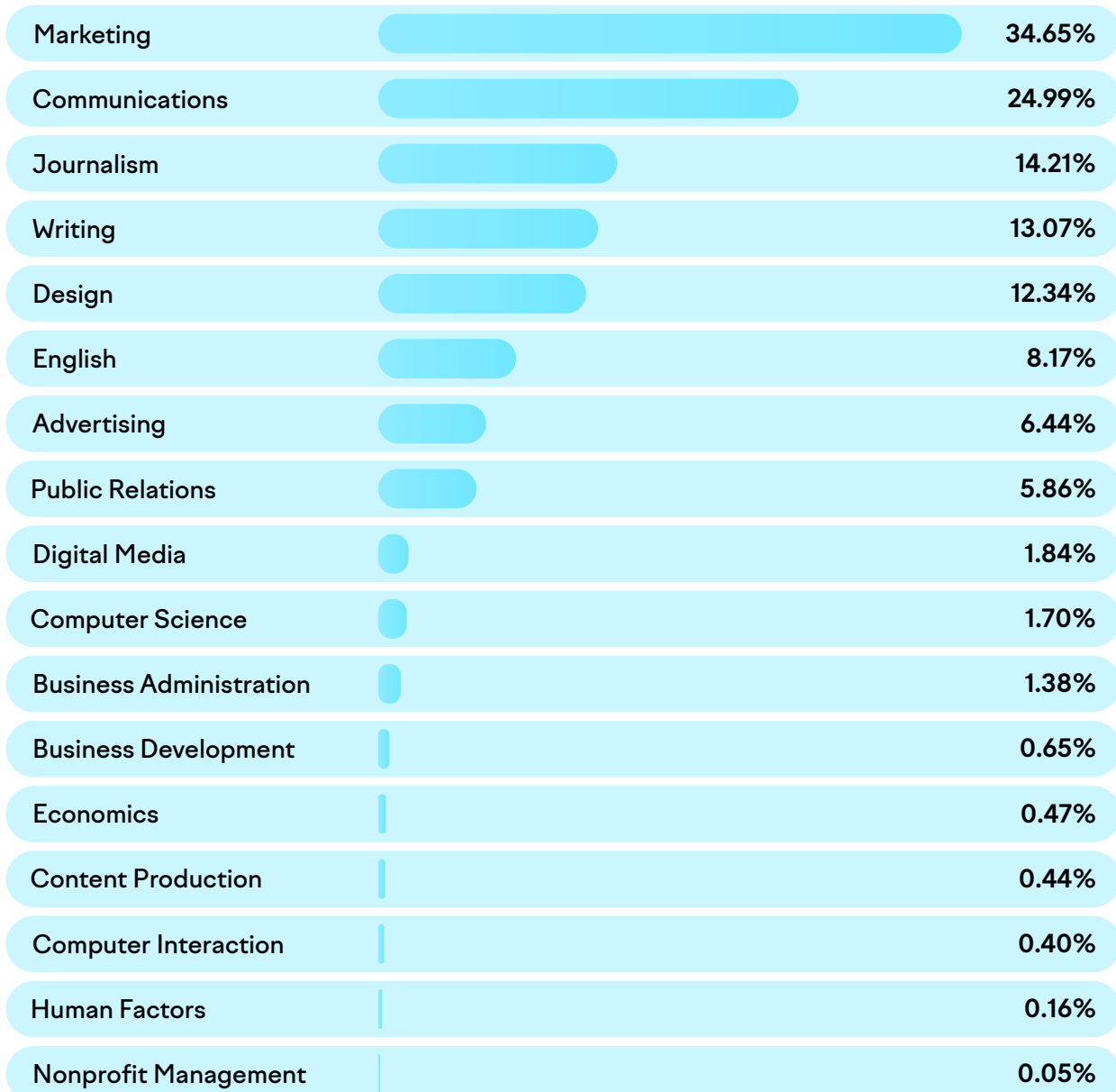
Top 20 tech skills for non-senior content marketing positions



Top responsibilities for non-senior content marketing positions



Top degree spheres for non-senior content marketing positions






Non-senior positions require:

-  a relevant bachelor's degree (43%)
-  excellent written and verbal communication (36%)
-  strong time and project management skills (35%)
-  an average of three years' relevant experience in marketing/PR/social media (34%).




Top marketing skills included:

-  writing (61%)
-  video (40%)
-  analytics (23%)
-  SEO (20%).

The top three tech skills were:

-  Excel (in 67% of job postings)
-  Microsoft Office
-  Adobe Photoshop

The top responsibilities were managing corporate social media accounts:

-  content planning (48%)
-  developing, implementing and managing marketing campaigns (10%)
-  close collaboration with other teams (9%)

The top three degrees were:

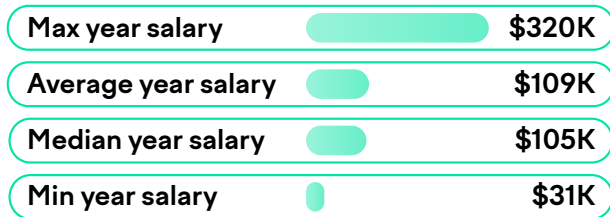
-  marketing
-  communications
-  journalism

Salaries and Working Conditions

We also looked at the average salaries and working conditions for both senior and non-senior content marketing positions in the U.S.

Below you will find the averages, as well as the top and low ends. This should give you guidance if you are building your own team.

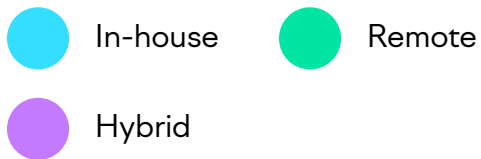
Senior content marketing positions—average salary



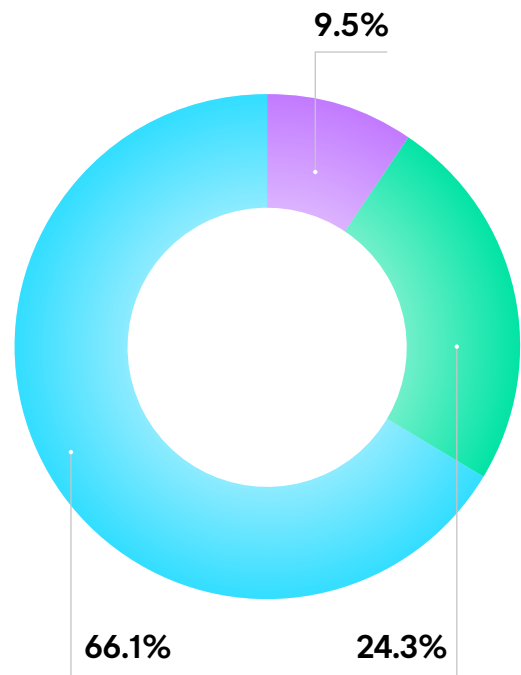
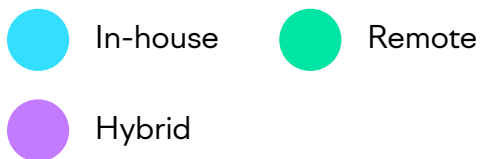
Non-senior content marketing positions—average salary



Type of work for senior content marketing positions



Type of work for non-senior positions



Looking at average salaries, there is a considerable gulf between senior and non-senior positions. The former brings in \$109,000 per year, while the latter grosses \$62,000.

At the highest level, seniors bring in a maximum of \$320,000 and non-seniors \$250,000.

The majority (67%) of senior job listings require the applicant to work in-house. This is closely matched in non-senior roles (66%).

Similarly, both hybrid and remote work scenarios are offered at similar frequencies to senior and non-senior roles.



Yearly summary



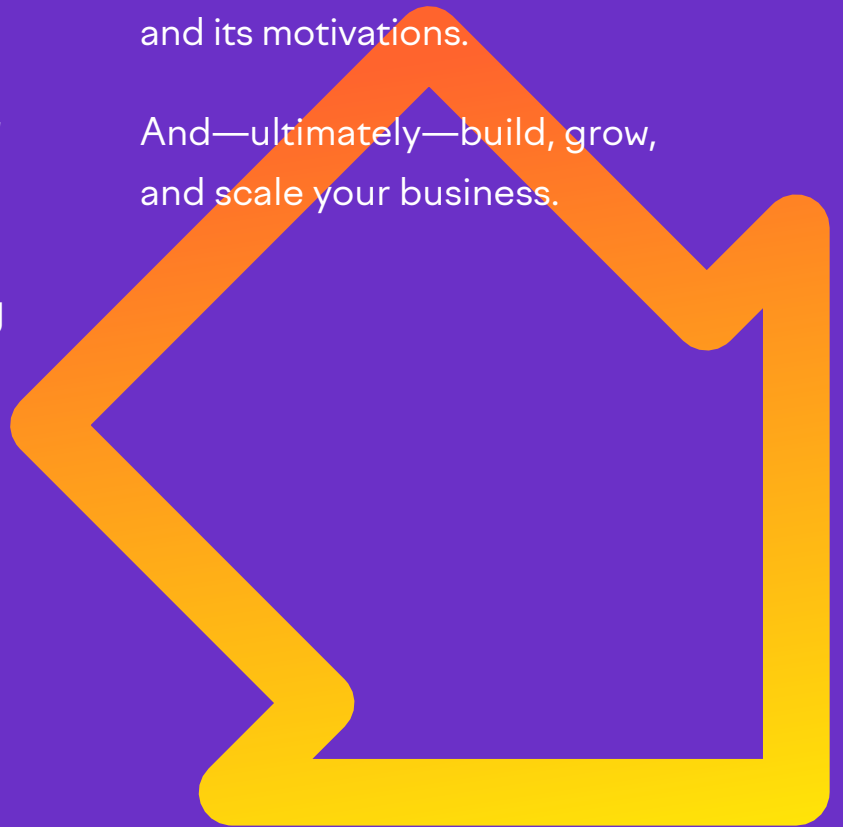
Final Words: The State of Content Marketing in 2023

Despite a shaky economic outlook in the coming year, things are definitely positive in the world of content marketing.

Most companies are maintaining or growing their teams. And 97% are finding some degree of success with their content marketing efforts.

We believe 2023 is the year to discover your brand voice and tell your own story. Through content marketing, you can come to know and understand your audience and its motivations.

And—ultimately—build, grow, and scale your business.



To help you move forward, here are the five keys to content marketing success you should come away with from this report:

So let's end this report with some wise words from the renowned Peter Drucker: "You can't improve what you don't measure."

- **Prioritize audience research:** Understanding your audience and their needs is key to succeeding in content marketing.
- **Define and document your content marketing strategy:** Guide and keep track of your content marketing as the year progresses.
- **Prioritize content marketing budgets:** Be sure to set enough aside to develop and promote your content. Our survey respondents have seen the rewards in the past year.
- **Promote your content creatively:** Video, social, ads, influencers—use the tools that work best for you and get your content in front of as many people as possible.
- **Measure your return on investment:** Most companies look at revenue tied to leads generated by their content.