

DISSECTING THE B2B CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY



InboxInsight 

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What is the secret to a killer content marketing strategy?

In order to uncover the state of play, we conducted research among senior marketing professionals within the Insights for Professionals (IFP) community.

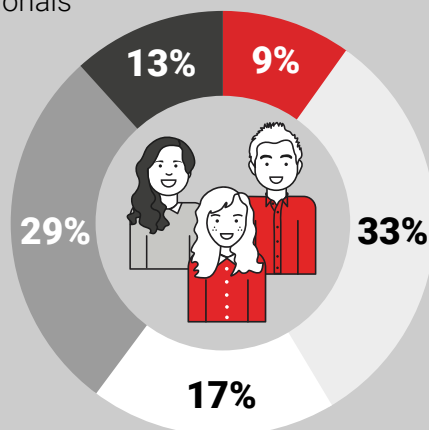
IFP is a centralized knowledge platform that brings together professionals across multiple disciplines and sectors through the common goals of professional development and knowledge collaboration.

Our findings have revealed invaluable insights about the current marketing landscape.

Sample

Sample size: 200 marketing professionals

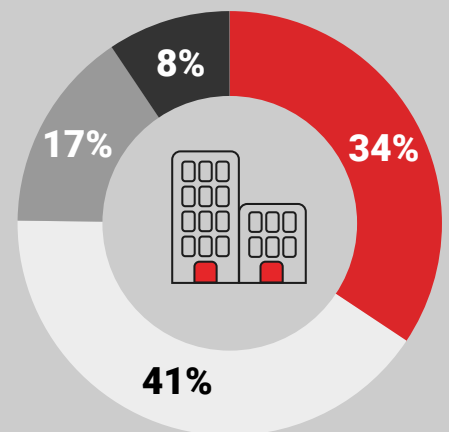
- Senior Manager
- Director
- Head of
- VP
- C-Suite



Company Size

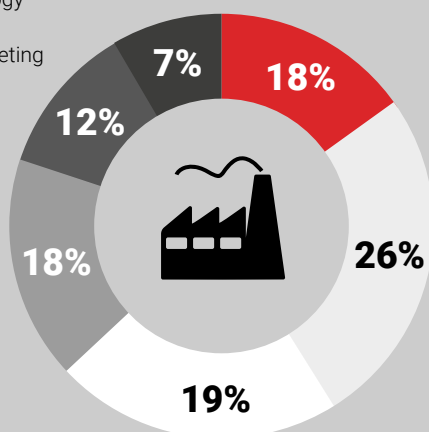
(number of employees)

- 500-999
- 1000-2499
- 2500-4999
- >5000



Industry Split

- Information Technology
- Advertising/PR/Marketing
- Finance and Banking
- Telecommunications
- Software
- Service Industry



Functions

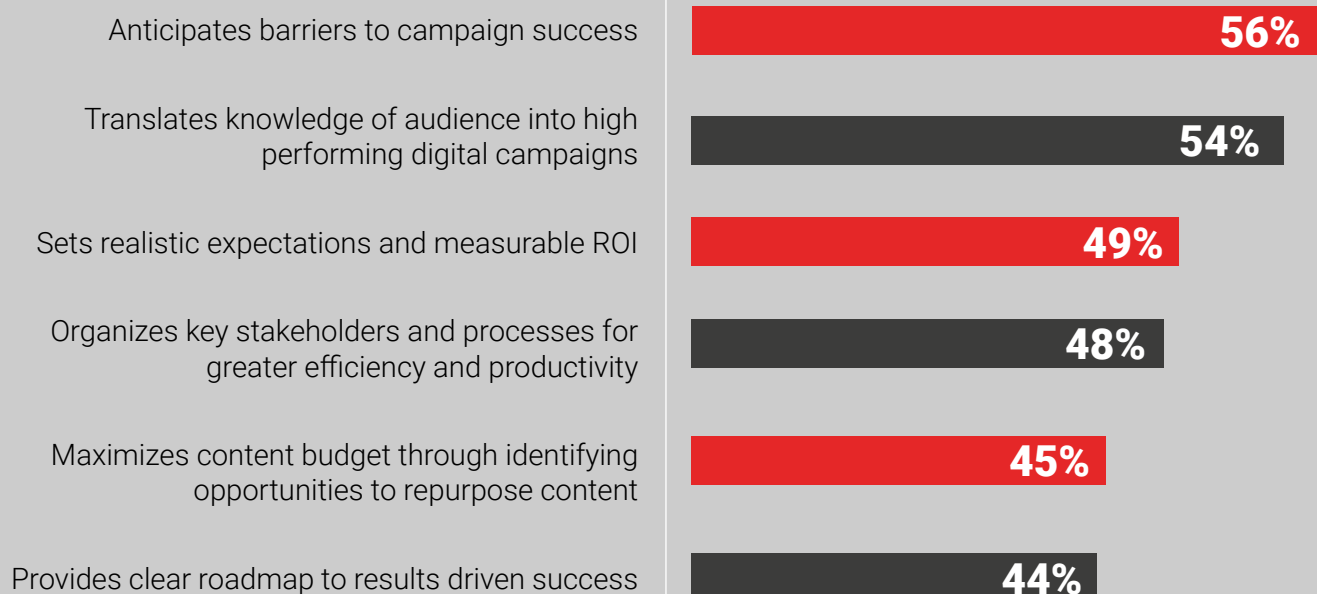
- Human Resources Responsibilities | 18%
- Finance Responsibilities | 28%
- General Management Responsibilities | 29%
- Information Technology Responsibilities | 33%
- Operations Responsibilities | 38%
- B2B Marketing Responsibilities | 100%
- Other Responsibilities | 40%

Why does content marketing strategy remain a key focus for 2021?

91% of B2B marketers leverage content marketing to achieve their demand generation initiatives. 82% see a correlation between strategy and content marketing success, with 86% leveraging a documented content strategy.

What's more, as 88% are looking to increase the amount of content they produce in 2021, it appears content marketing strategies remain top of the agenda to ensure both the right quality and quantity of content is produced to reach the right people at the right stages of the buyer's journey.

6 KEY BENEFITS OF A CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY



How can my content marketing strategy support demand generation?

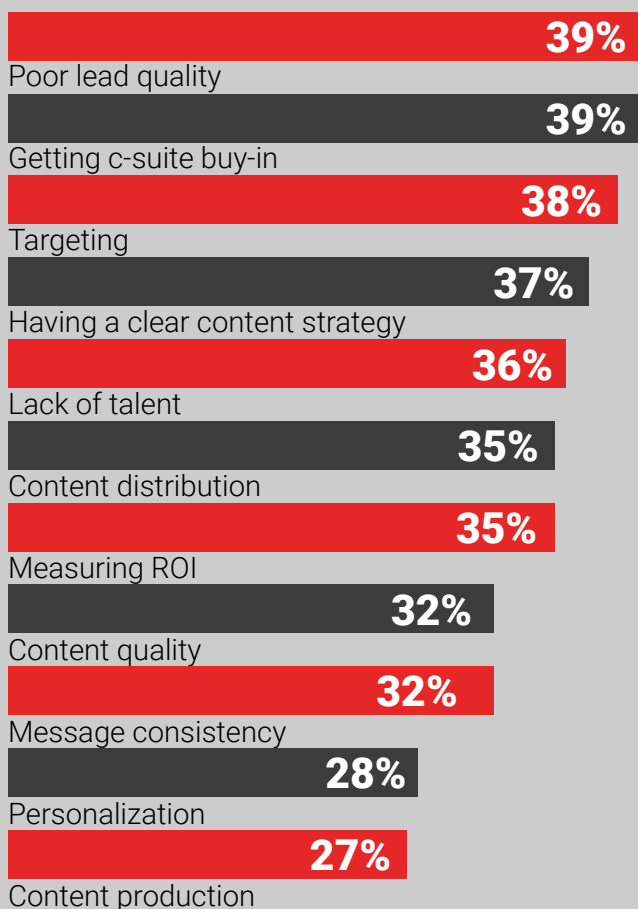
A content marketing strategy sets out how your company will achieve your demand generation objectives (such as brand awareness 53.5%, lead nurture 51.5% and lead generation 51%) through your content marketing efforts.

It means every content activity has a purpose and a clear goal. For a demand generation strategy, this involves generating valuable content experiences for your target audience, no matter where they sit in the buyer's journey.

From brand building and thought leadership right through to lead generation and securing sales - to win big in a competitive marketplace, you better bring your content A game.

What are the key challenges faced by B2B marketers?

POPULAR B2B CONTENT MARKETING PAIN POINTS



31.5% of B2B marketers say having a clear content strategy is a key barrier to success.

This resource provides a behind-the-scenes tour of what goes into a winning content marketing strategy. With over 10 year's experience running high performing content fueled campaigns against core demand generation objectives, we've put all our learnings into one definitive guide.

6 KEY ESSENTIALS WE'LL BE COVERING:

Section 1:

Content Research

Section 2:

Content Goals

Section 3:

Content Strategy

Section 4:

Content Tactics

Section 5:

Content Plan

Section 6:

Content Control Mechanisms



SECTION 1: RESEARCH

Why is research the make or break of any content marketing strategy?

Your research should uncover the secret to what makes great content through taking a customer centric approach.

59% of B2B marketers say research is crucial to content marketing success.

If you don't understand your audience, how do you expect your content to resonate with their needs? Authenticity, trust and credibility are the secret ingredients to audience longevity. In order to achieve these, you must have an in-depth understanding of their unique information needs, alongside the context in which they consume and act upon your information.

For example: *when and how do they plan their budgets? What sway do they hold in the DMU? What are their nagging pain points? What's their perceived barriers to purchase? What channels make up their information eco system? Which formats make information more accessible? What prevailing trends are shaping their opinions and buying criteria?*

Finding answers to these questions requires research. It's only then that you have the basis of designing content that will bring **purpose, value** and **relevancy** to your target audience.

But getting the depth of research required to fuel a successful content strategy can be daunting, especially if you have limited resources available to you.

Running your research methodology against our **LOBE** framework is a great technique for ensuring your approach is focused on achieving the most useful knowledge.

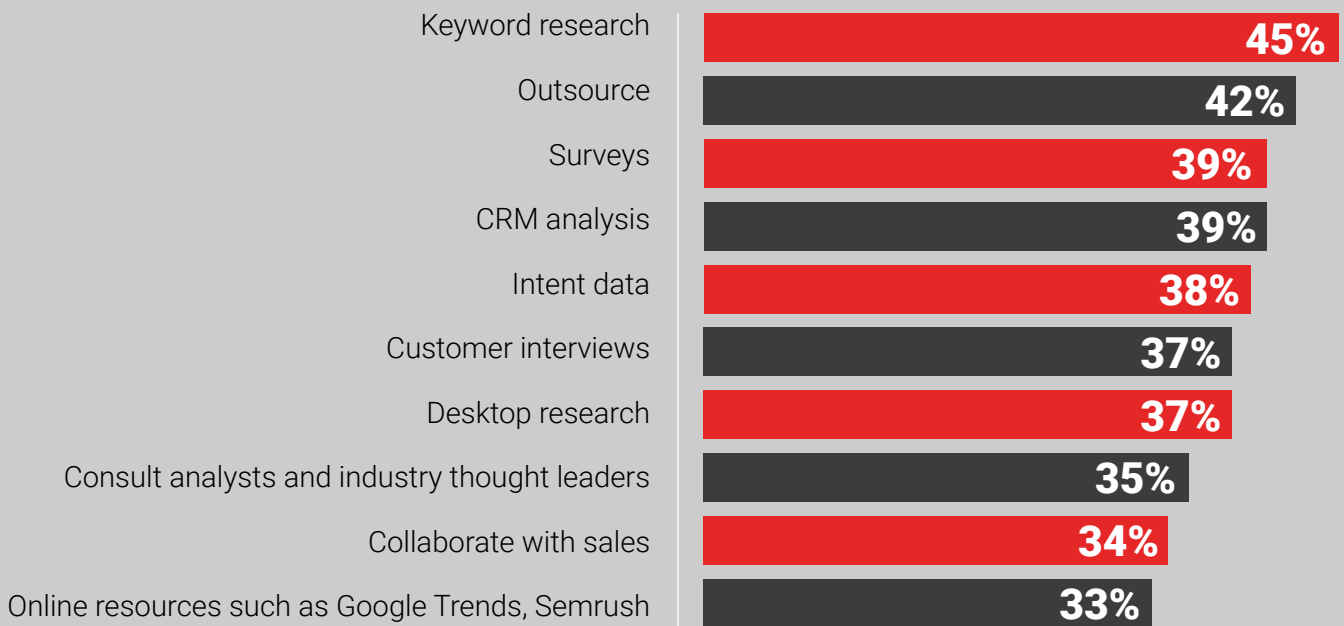


LOBE research framework

- **Listening** – what are your key audiences saying? (1st and 3rd party research, forums, comments, reviews, social, FAQs, customer surveys/interviews).
- **Observing** – where do they go to get content? What changes are occurring across demand generation practices? (How can you use data to observe consumption patterns/buyer journeys?).
- **Benchmarking** – how does your message/content fair against your competitors? What is your channel distribution mix in comparison? (How can your knowledge of the market help you establish competitive advantage?)
- **Evaluating** – how successful are your current activities? How well are they achieving your desired outcome? Does your content create value at every stage of the buying process? Are you bringing in the right audiences? (How can you transform your findings into actionable knowledge?)

Once you have a clear notion of what information you need to uncover, you can begin planning the most appropriate methods for retrieving it.

10 MOST POPULAR RESEARCH METHODS USED BY B2B MARKETERS

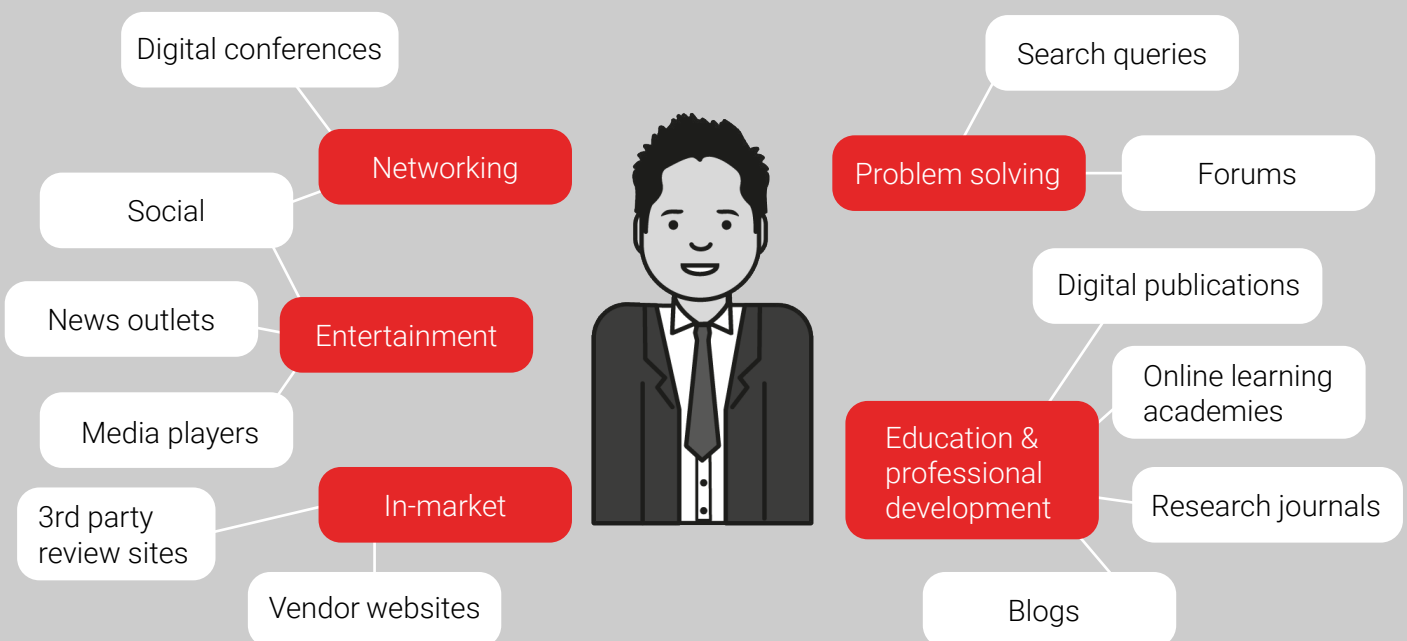


How do I transform my research into actionable knowledge?

83% of B2B marketers create personas for different members of the DMU.

Consolidating your research findings into accurate personas and maps of your target audience's digital eco system, makes this knowledge accessible to your teams and importantly content creators.

The below diagram shows how you can begin mapping out your personas to enable you to identify opportunities to surround your audience with the right content - at the right times.



SECTION 2: CONTENT GOALS

The pressure to demonstrate ROI is crushing, especially in turbulent times.

More than a third (36%) of marketers have said proving ROI is their biggest content marketing challenge, while 23% struggle to secure investment.

If you're struggling to show ROI in your content marketing programs, getting C-Suite buy-in for future programs will be more challenging. 28% of B2B marketers are facing this problem currently.

Goal setting sets the aspirations, focus and expectations for any campaign. They are the crucial measuring stick for identifying when a campaign is on track or needs intervention. This requires a proactive approach that can lead to not only meeting but exceeding campaign expectations.

Your goals must align with overarching objectives, failure to do this makes measuring the effectiveness of your campaigns near impossible.

5 top level business goals B2B marketers are trying to achieve through their content marketing efforts include:

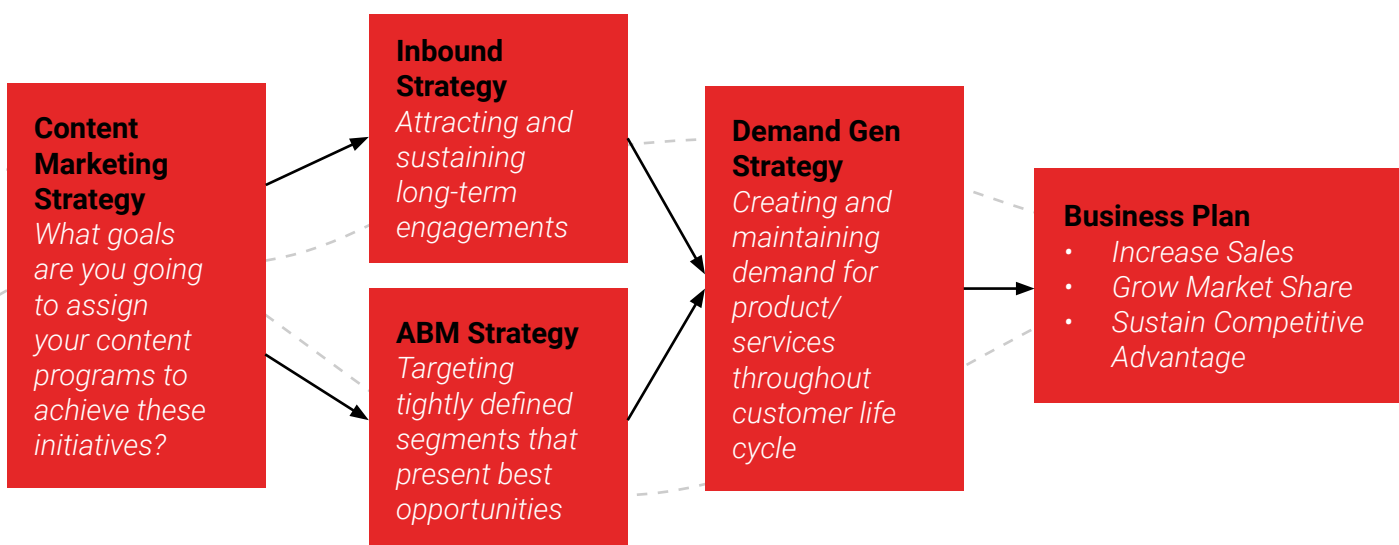
5 SYMPTOMS OF WEAK GOAL SETTING

1. Weak campaign performance
2. Poor quality leads
3. Low pipeline value
4. Slow sales
5. High churn

1. Increase marketshare - **62%**
2. Improve customer retention - **59%**
3. Increase profitability - **55%**
4. Grow revenue streams - **54%**
5. Keep competitive advantage - **46%**

If you are executing content campaigns but are unable to immediately justify how they are contributing to your overall marketing plan, it's time to stop and think...

Where does your content marketing strategy sit within the larger strategic landscape?



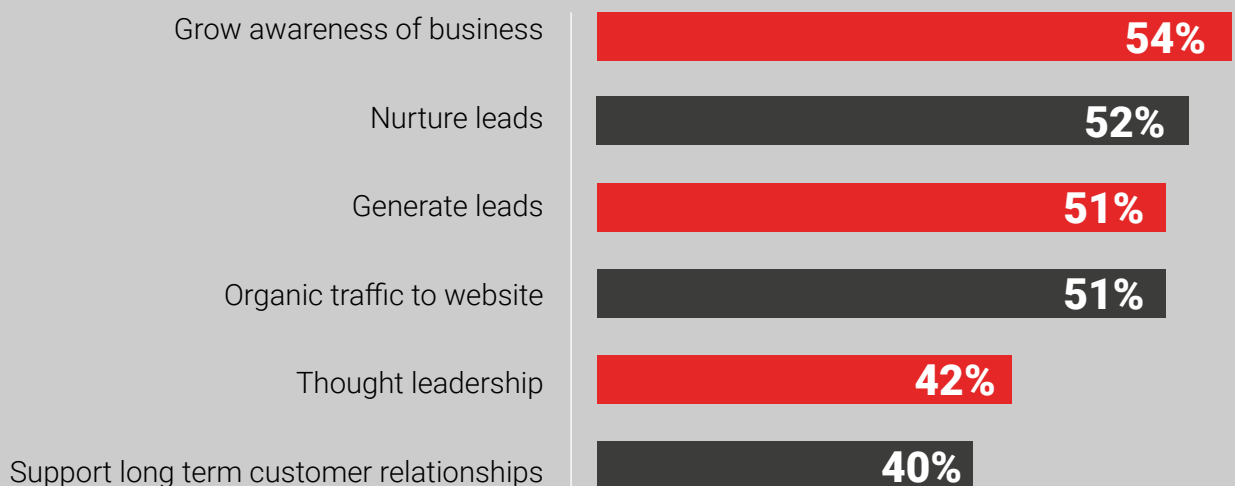
The above diagram shows the relationship between content goals and overarching business objectives. This demonstrates how the best content campaigns never work in isolation. Instead they need to be designed in context of the wider business agenda. This makes tracking and measuring ROI a lot easier.

What's more, the better you demonstrate how they will contribute to achieving your critical business needs, the stronger your business case for investment.

The following is a top level view of how your content goals might be designed to achieve your wider marketing objectives:



6 TOP CONTENT MARKETING GOAL PRIORITIES



Once your goals are clearly defined, it's time to start masterminding how you are going to use content strategically to achieve them. This is where your tactics come in.

SECTION 3: CONTENT STRATEGY

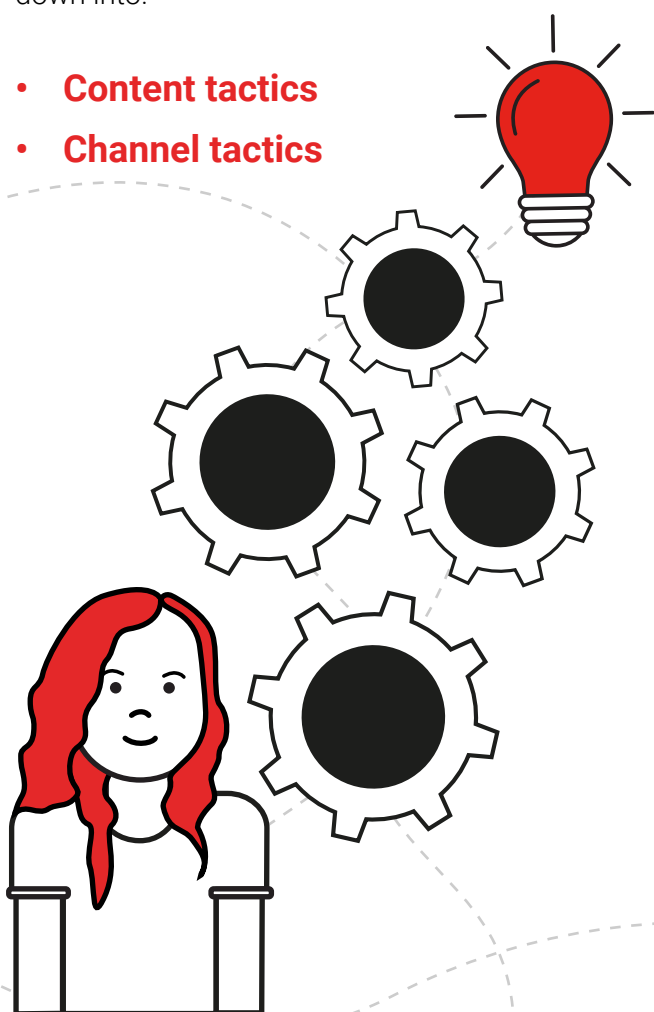
How are you going to accomplish your content marketing goals?

Once you have a clear set of goals, selecting a range of tactics to help you achieve them requires careful consideration. Today's demand generation engine requires both content quality and quantity to sustain engagement throughout the buyer's journey.

As every asset has a cost implication, its crucial every tactic can be clearly traced to its goal. This is essential for measuring ROI.

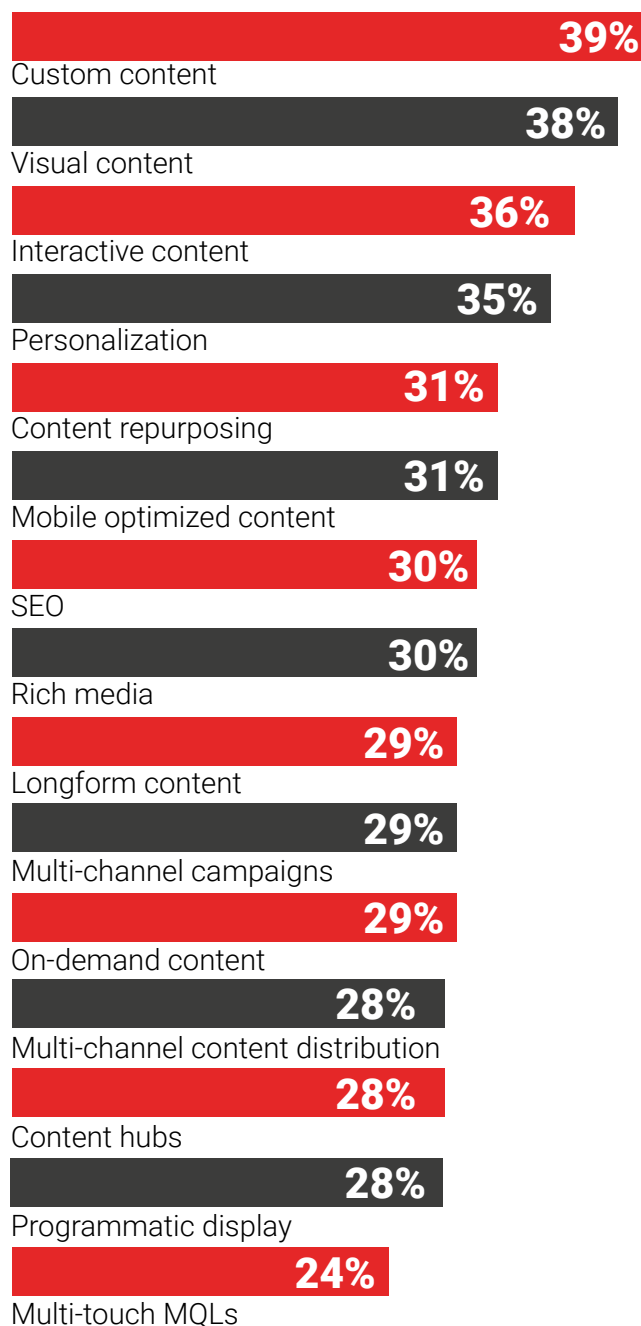
A highly effective approach is to break your tactics down into:

- **Content tactics**
- **Channel tactics**



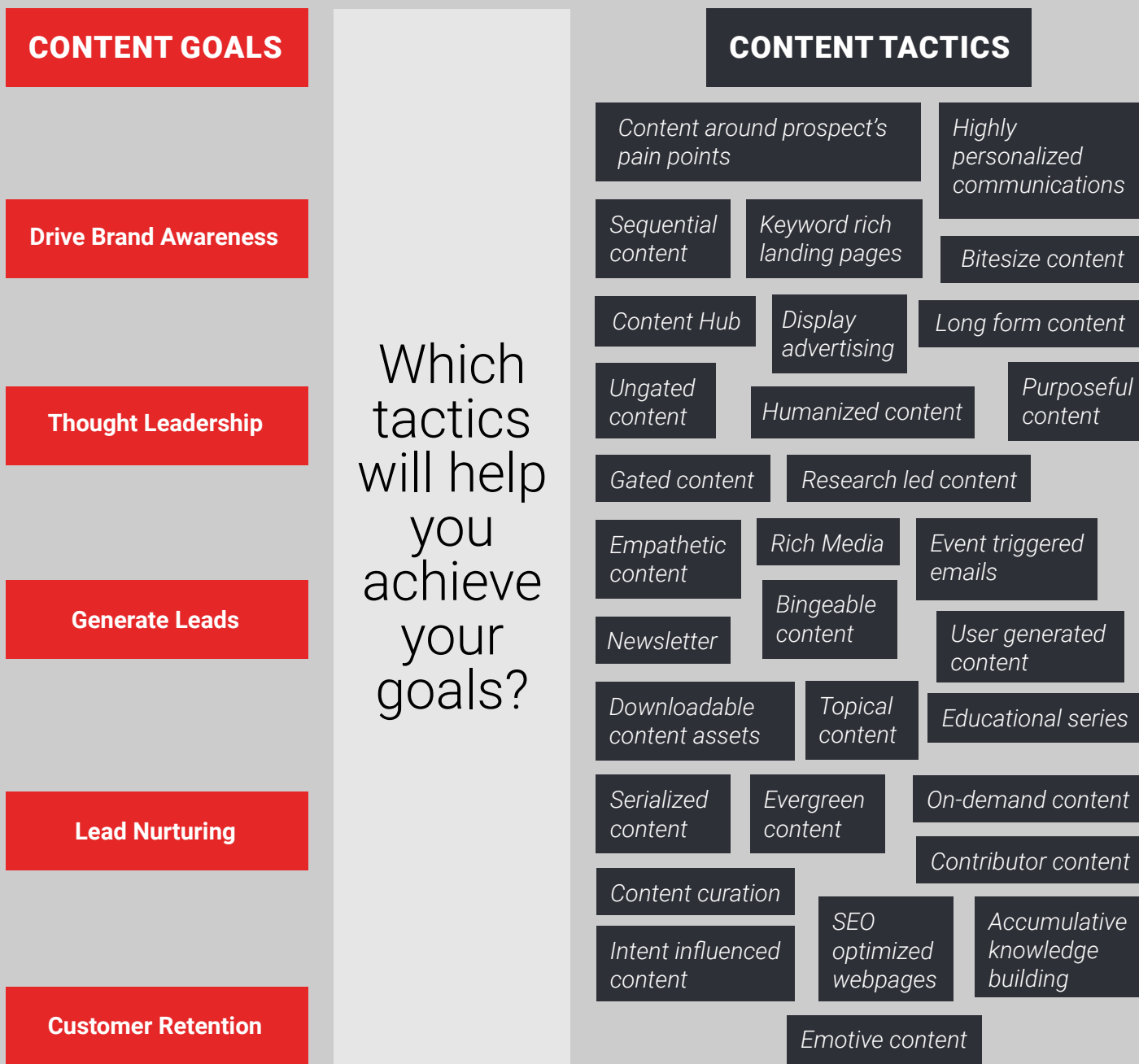
Content Tactics

15 EMERGING CONTENT TACTICS FOR 2021



While the above gives us an insight into how B2B marketers will be approaching 2021, to prevent jumping on the band wagon, it's important to consider how your content will help you achieve your own goals.

The following provides a starting block from which you can start considering and building your content tactics:

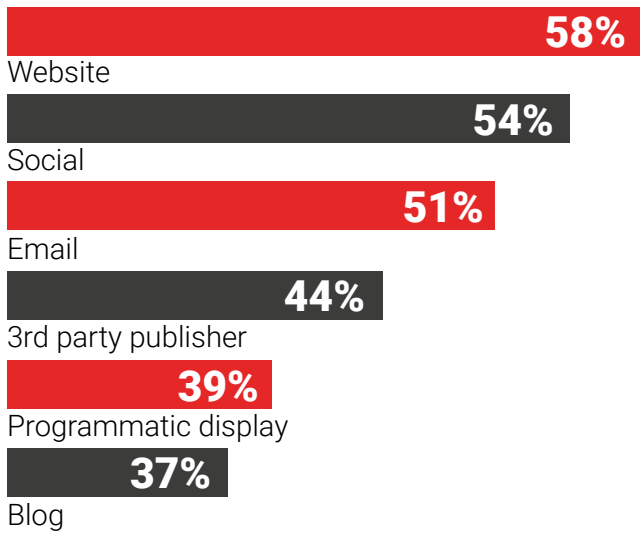


Once you have knowledge of what content tactics will work best for your goals, it's important to pair them with the best channel tactics.



Channel Tactics

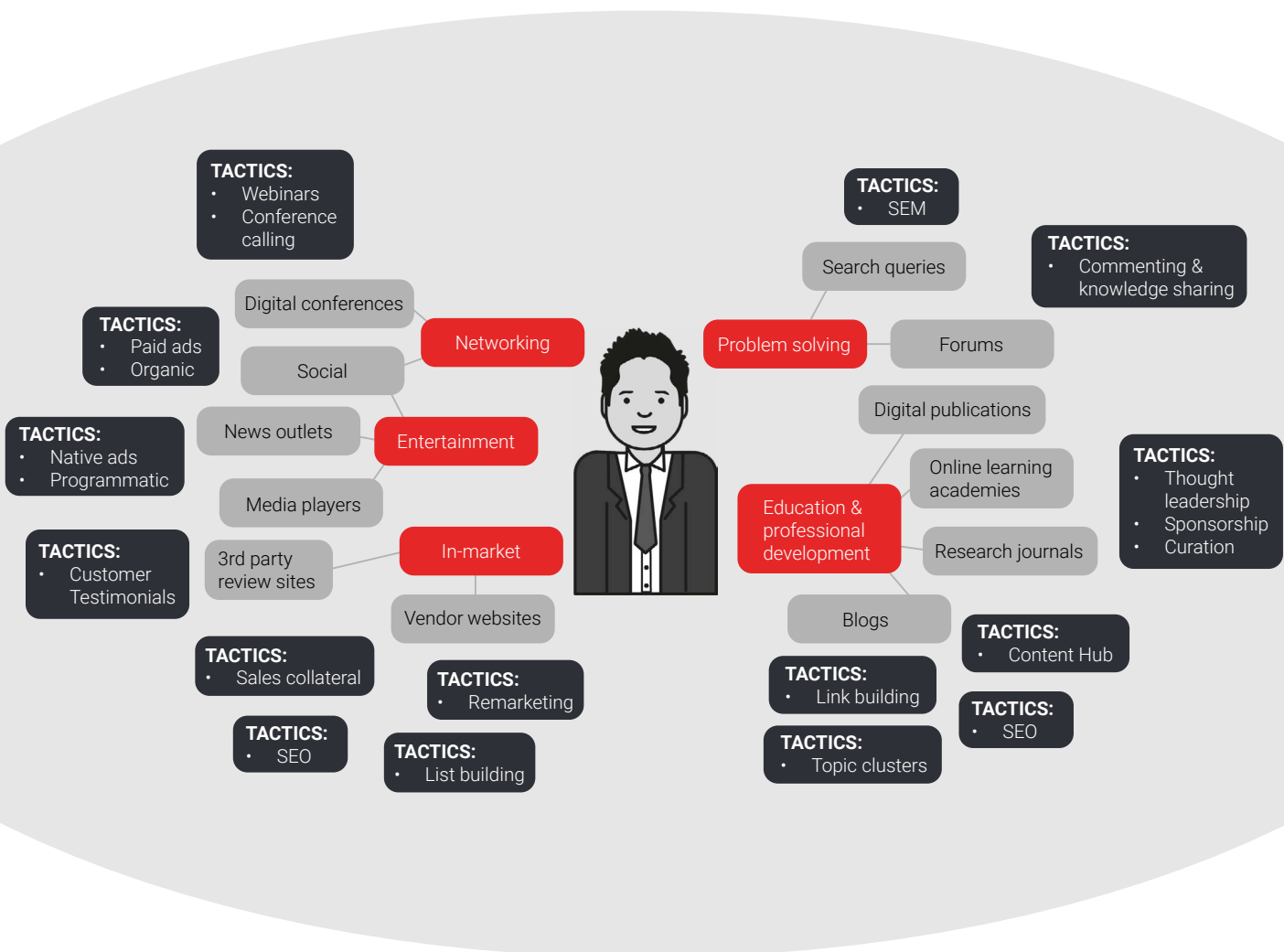
6 MOST EFFECTIVE CHANNEL TACTICS



These stats provide an overview of some of the most popular channels used by B2B marketers. However, the best campaigns take an integrated approach, blending multiple channels to create immersive content experiences.

From your research you should have uncovered what your target audience/s' digital eco system looks like. This knowledge should inform which channels to use to reach and engage your own audience.

It's important to map these out for all your key target DMU stakeholder personas, as it will help you identify similarities and differences. This can uncover areas where campaigns can overlap and where more targeted campaigns need to be devised.



SECTION 4: CONTENT PLAN

How to create a roadmap optimized for efficiency

Nearly a quarter (22%) of B2B marketers don't use a content roadmap, while a staggering 81% say they could see greater efficiencies in their content marketing processes.

A content plan helps to maximize your content marketing ROI by road mapping all the processes, editorial structures and workflows required to achieve your goals, along with resource allocation. This provides clarity to all your stakeholders while identifying how efficiencies can be carried out to optimize your operations.

To maximize success rate for your content marketing efforts, let's take a look at some key areas to cover:

Step 1	Planning
Analysis of research findings	How can we consolidate knowledge of our target DMU stakeholders into actionable personas?
Ideas generation	Which topics/ formats/ channels match our different DMU personas?
Content Audit	What existing content can we reuse/ refresh/ repurpose?
Content logistics	How much content do we need to be producing and how often?
Campaign planning	How can we tailor content campaigns to individual persona needs?
Goals and objectives	What SMART objectives can we assign to each campaign - how will these help us reach our overarching goals?
Tactics	Which digital signals are at our disposal to improve campaign accuracy?
Design	How are we leveraging design and format to optimize performance?
Resource allocation	Teams, budgets, deadlines and benchmarking
Step 2	Production
Content creation	Inhouse or outsource?
ToV and Brand guidelines	How are we going to keep our messaging consistent and in keeping with our brand?
Content Calendar	How are we setting activity agenda while taking into consideration key events in industry, seasonal topics, trends?
Editorial process	Who's involved in proofing, approval and publishing process?
Timescales	What deadlines are we setting?
Step 3	Promotion
Channel tactics	How can knowledge of target audience's information eco system be translated into channel tactics?
Campaign execution	Inhouse or outsource?
Performance management	Who's going to be monitoring and analyzing performance?
Step 4	Development
Reporting	How regularly are we going to report on campaigns?
Analysis	What real-time insights can we use to measure, refine and improve campaign performance?
Continuous improvement	How are we going to translate data into actionable knowledge?

The above template provides a handy framework to run your content planning against. It covers some key considerations that, when resolved early on, can enhance the running and performance of your campaigns.

SECTION 5: CONTROL MECHANISMS

On a top level, measurement is crucial in translating content marketing success into business terms. Top KPIs used to demonstrate company revenue include:

1. Cost per acquisition - **58%**
2. Conversion rate - **52%**
3. New leads generated - **52%**
4. ROI - **48%**
5. Existing leads touched - **47%**

On an operational level, measurement is vital for understanding how effective your content is at engaging and driving your target audiences through the buyer's journey. However only 51% of B2B marketers report weekly, while 45% don't have high confidence levels in measuring real-time engagement.

Inaccurate measuring and lack of monitoring can result in misdiagnosing the performance of a campaign, leading to missed opportunities to improve, wrong allocation of budget and poor ROI.

Focusing solely on KPIs will never give you the full picture. Why? Because the demand generation process is longer and more complex, with many more touchpoints. 68.5% of B2B marketers leverage multi-touch MQLs as part of their strategy.

The key is in taking a more granular approach, aligning your KPIs with the best metrics broken down to demand generation stages and campaign level.

This section explores the best content performance-related metrics for evaluating, measuring and improving your campaigns to deliver the best ROI.

Key engagement metrics

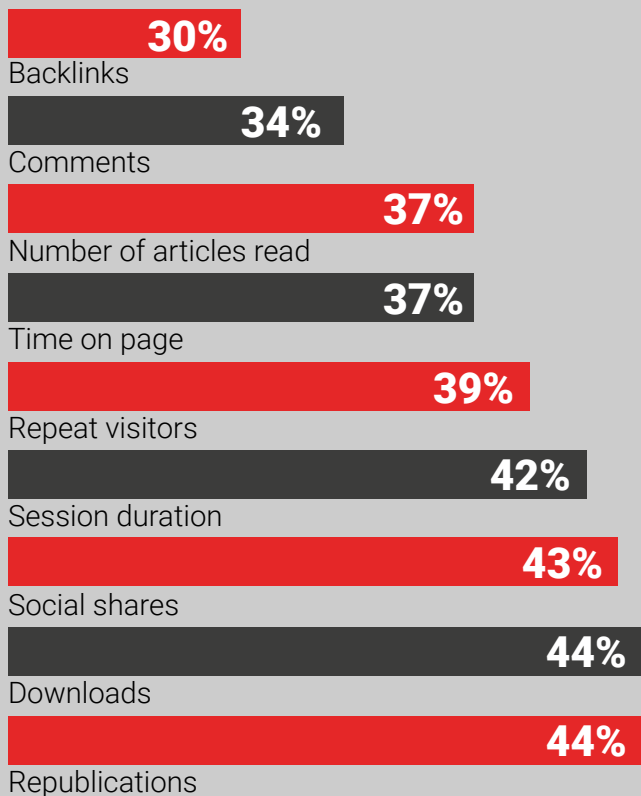
Demand generation stage: Awareness building

Top metrics used to show indication of initial engagement:



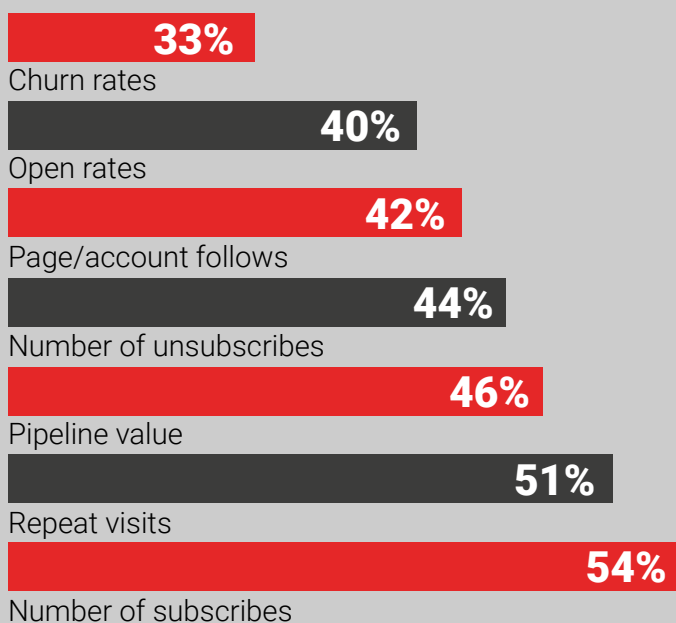
Demand generation stage: Thought leadership

Top metrics used to show indication of **trust and authority**:



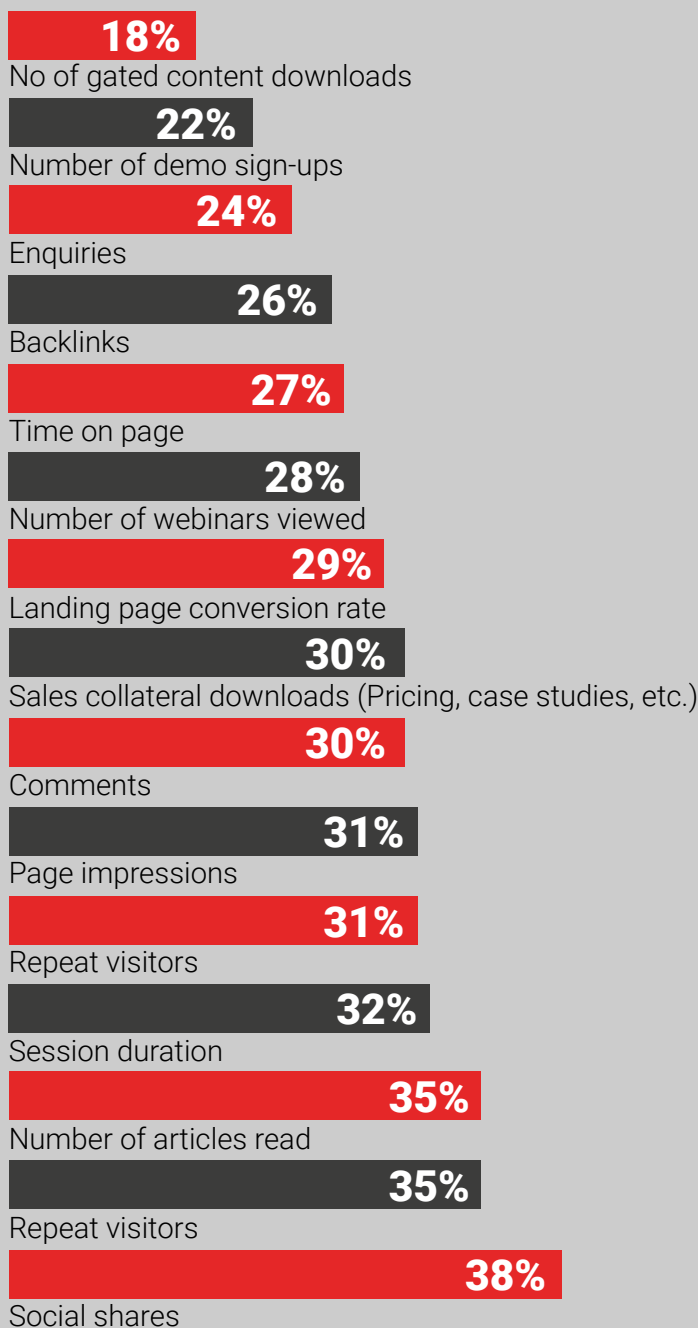
Demand generation stage: Nurture

Top metrics used to show indication of **long-term engagement**:



Demand generation stage: Mid-funnel engagement

Top metrics used to show indication of **intent**:



Putting these metrics into action

While metrics provide more granular insight, they hold little strategic value in isolation and without a wider context. For example, you may receive a high volume of traffic to your blog, but if your bounce rate is high, your success is short lived as you're probably attracting the wrong crowds.

On the following page is an example of a campaign framework that aligns KPIs, metrics and goals to serve a range of corresponding objectives:

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Mini-series of 'How-to' Guides providing solutions to target persona pain points

Content Goal

Snackable content that can be used to:

- Attract new business
- Capture new MQLs
- Act as sales enablement pieces to send to suitable customers as part of customer success strategy

Content Tactics

- Showcase our inhouse talent and expertise while providing tangible value to customers through being easily actionable
- Serializing their release will provide fresh content for social channels throughout Q1 & Q2
- Will be visually engaging with information being scannable to suit time poor audiences
- Will be published onpage rather than downloadable asset to encourage shares – able to monitor
- Remarketing – cookie drop visitors and retarget with next 'How-to' banner

Goal: Attract new business

Objective 1: Increase unique site traffic by 25% in 6 months

Tactic: Emphasis on social channels (LinkedIn and FB) to promote series. Paid and organic. Branded images used to promote posts. Links will drive traffic to targeted landing pages on company website.

KPI: Increased traffic to website from social media sources

Metrics

- Social interaction and shares
- Page traffic
- Bounce rate
- Page duration

The above will provide indication of right targeting and content engagement

Goal: Turn visits into leads

Objective 2: Generate 100 new MQLs per month

Tactic: As a mini series, content is designed to encourage repeat engagement. Strong CTAs for WP and related content to push conversions (strategically placed on page). Retargeting leveraged to keep front-of-mind and drive repeat visits.

KPI: Number of MQLs

TBC on next page.

Metrics:

- No. return visits
- No. pages viewed
- No of enquiries
- WP downloads
- Sales collateral downloads
- Newsletter sign ups
- Form submissions

The above will give indication of engagement and relationship building

Goal: Improve customer retention

Objective 3: Reduce customer churn rate by 40% in 6 months

Tactic: Provide actionable tips that will help customers to improve content - in turn aids campaign performance

KPI: Increase in rebookings and customer satisfaction

Metrics:

- CS scores
- Pipeline value from reoccurring bookings
- Customer feedback
- Churn rate

The above will give indication of engagement and relationship building



CONCLUSION

The best businesses understand content makes or breaks a successful demand generation strategy. Without a clear content marketing strategy, producing low quality content or poorly timed messages can devalue your customer relationship, damage your reputation and take a sucker punch to your profitability.

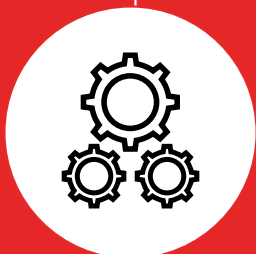
A content marketing strategy will help you avoid this by organizing crucial knowledge about your buyers into tangible content marketing programs that deliver the right message, at the right time in the right way.

The benefits of systematically plotting and documenting your strategy means better communication and accountability between teams. This can have significant impact on the success of your demand generation activities by ensuring all efforts are working towards the same goals.

**The bottom line; better content > better engagement >
better quality business leads > better ROI**

“ We can support your B2B marketing with a series of optimized demand generation products based on your objectives ”

Ready to build your own success story?



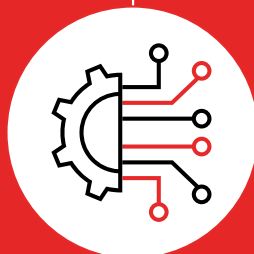
Inbox**ENGAGE**

Identify your audience, activate their interest and generate qualified engagements through our optimized multi-channel campaigns.



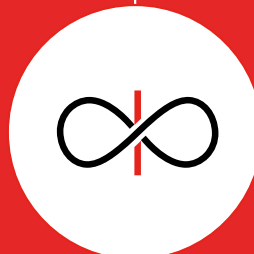
Inbox**NEXUS**

A blend of targeted email marketing and the latest programmatic advertising technology to achieve superior audience reach, relevancy and scale.



Inbox**INTEGRATE**

A powerful end-to-end content amplification solution built around creating seamless digital experiences and optimized reader journeys.



Inbox**INBOUND**

We curate your best content, and optimize it using insight, then drive a relevant audience to the hub with multiple digital touchpoints.



Inbox**CREATE**

A suite of content writing and creative services dedicated to crafting outstanding content that strikes a chord with your target audience.

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