



ON24

B2B Insights

3 Trends Every
Marketing Leader
Should Know





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Introduction

B2B marketing continues to evolve. From managing sales development teams to being accountable for pipeline generation, marketers are taking the lead in shaping the customer journey and driving their company's go-to-market success. And, it's no surprise to see marketing at the helm. After all, [a recent ON24 survey](#) on the state of digital maturity found that companies with a digital engagement strategy are 4X more likely to exceed their business targets.

To dig even deeper into the latest B2B marketing trends, ON24 polled over a thousand marketers on how their role is changing and the challenges this shift brings.

The findings demonstrate that marketers are taking on more strategic priorities, and as a result, have a greater opportunity to align, scale and optimize marketing programs. Ultimately, this means that today's marketing leader must find ways to balance day-to-day campaign execution with their broader go-to-market responsibilities so that they can achieve maximum results.

Read on to see the key opportunities to advance your business success based on insights from your peers.

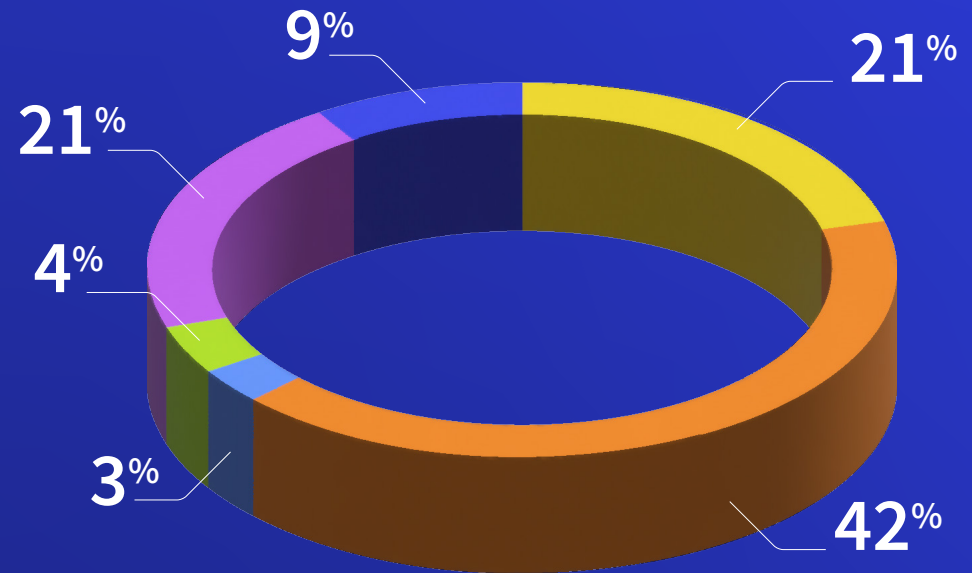
Key trend 1

Sales and marketing alignment

Clarity in pipeline ownership and reporting is a critical gap

Gartner predicts that by 2025, almost 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels. Additionally, according to Forrester, the average number of interactions buyers consume on their journey rose 58% from 2019 to 2021. To respond to the rapid rise of the digital-first buyer and overall increase in the amount of buyer data being collected, companies are making significant organizational and management changes to their sales and marketing teams as well as prioritizing strong alignment between them.

The first major opportunity for B2B marketers to drive sales alignment is in the area of pipeline ownership, which varies across companies.



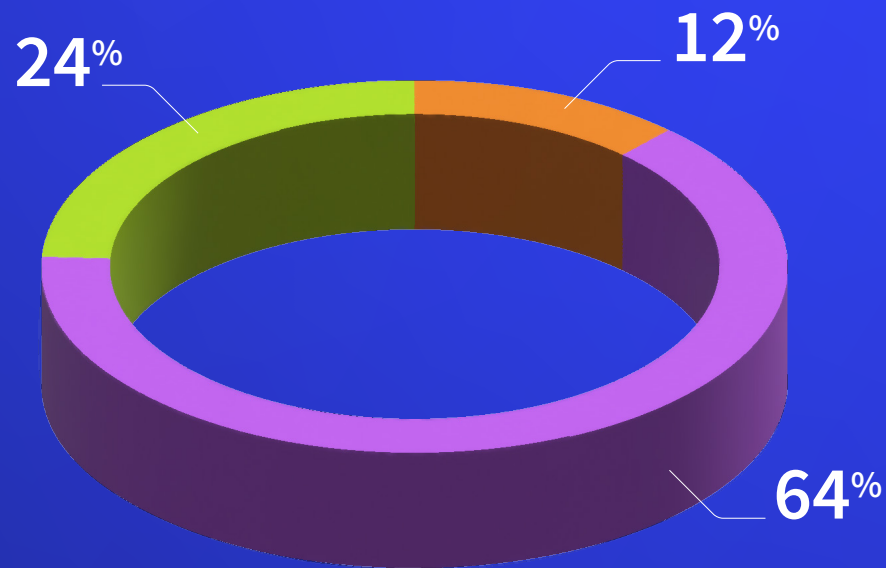
“We use a lot of murals — like sticky note-type apps. My favorite part of that is we invite people from other parts of the company to join in. It’s amazing what happens when you’re asking folks outside of your core department for ideas. Because I think we get stuck in like a routine or our go-to, and having folks come in from all different parts of the organization and brainstorm with you is a pretty awesome experience.”



Bryan Law,
CMO at ZoomInfo



How aligned are sales and marketing on pipeline data?



● Very aligned ● Somewhat ● Not on the same page

While sales is 2X more likely to own pipeline targets, an impressive 21% of marketing teams are held accountable to their company's global pipeline number. This trend corresponds to an increasing number, from 20-40% according to various sources, of inside sales development teams being part of demand generation teams or reporting into the CMO.

However, one out of five of respondents reported that pipeline targets had no clear ownership. This lack of accountability for top-line growth metrics puts organizations at risk for finger pointing. It also unveils that there may be a fundamental gap in a marketer's ability to set and forecast pipeline targets for their campaigns. In a difficult economic environment, having clear ownership of pipeline targets is fundamental to improving alignment.

Another major opportunity to improve sales and marketing alignment is in pipeline data. Yet, only 12% of respondents reported that sales and marketing were well aligned on pipeline data.

Sales and marketing are

2X

less likely to share the same metrics and reporting





Lack of alignment on data breeds lack of trust in the data leading to misinterpretations or misunderstandings on the health of the pipeline. Without a single view, marketing and sales teams won't be able to share priorities and set the right expectations. It is imperative that teams are speaking the same language and focused on the same goals in order to drive to the same success metrics. With 63% of participants reporting that sales or marketing owns pipeline data, teams must prioritize developing a structure for unified reporting and metrics.

“Alignment starts with leadership. As the leader, if you're not driving the right behaviors or setting the right expectations about the work that needs to get done or the change that needs to happen to drive business value, then any misalignment between marketing and the business is on you.”

And for the rest of the team, just because you're in marketing doesn't mean you have to just play in the marketing track. Your job is to help build business growth. So wherever you can contribute to business change that drives that growth, go for it. You don't need to stay in the marketing lane to make that change happen.”



Natalie Truong,

CMO, AMEA & Partner at Mercer



Key trend 2

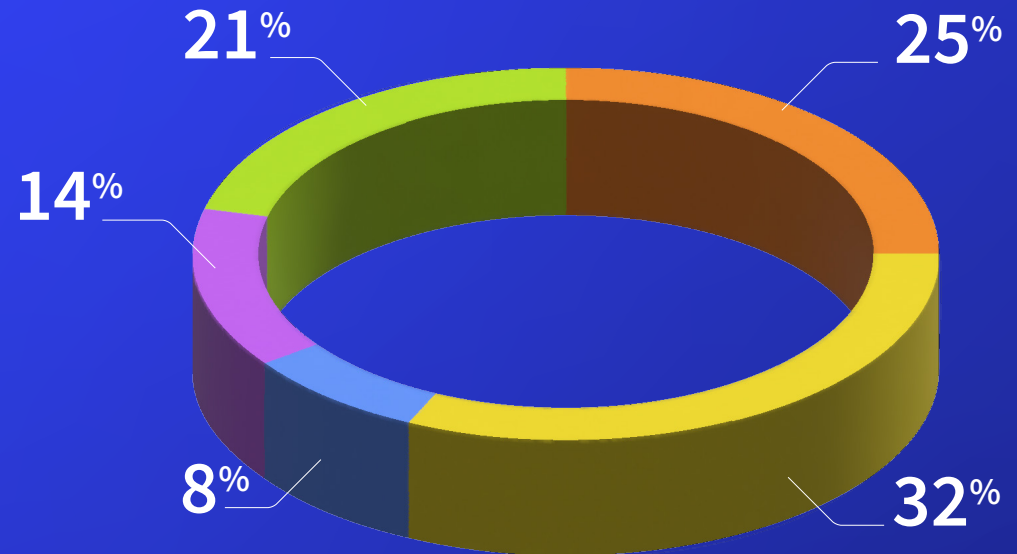
Campaign optimization

Pipeline results and engagement data are top sources for optimization

Testing and optimization are critical components of B2B marketing, allowing marketers to be agile, data-driven and “fail quickly”. However, one out of five marketers reported that they don’t optimize programs today. This is a missed opportunity for marketers to find resource efficiencies and improve the ROI of their efforts. By making changes to existing marketing activities, rather than having to execute additional programs, marketers can refocus their time on more strategic priorities.

On the positive side, nearly 80% of marketers are optimizing their programs. Of those that do, engagement and pipeline are the top two metrics that marketers look at when evaluating program performance. Based on this finding, we can also infer that increasing pipeline results and deepening audience engagement are the top two business goals for marketers today. Interestingly, buying signals, such as a prospect expressing interest in a sales demo, are the least used inputs for optimization. This could also be attributed to an inability to pinpoint and measure high-intent digital interactions separately from general digital engagement.

What informs marketing program optimization today?



- Audience engagement
- Pipeline generated
- Buying signals
- Program ROI
- We don't optimize programs today



"A challenge I've seen – and have fallen into the trap of myself – is trying to make a change that benefits marketing, as opposed to one that benefits the business. We make the marketing case, but we don't make the business case.

We should be asking ourselves, "What is the value to the business? Are we driving brand? Are we driving culture? Are we driving business outcomes?"

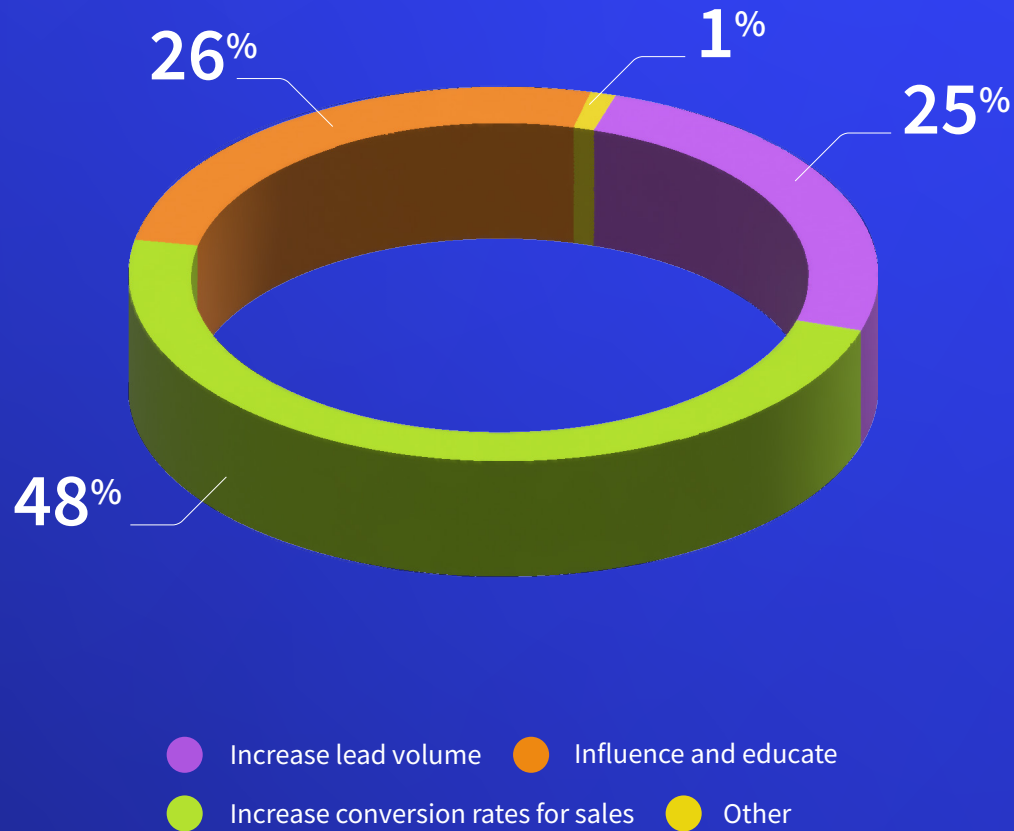
Because if it's none of those things, then why do we need it? Why do we need to do it?"



Natalie Truong,
CMO, AMEA & Partner at Mercer



What is your top priority for optimizing programs?



Despite that, the majority of marketers are optimizing programs in order to improve sales conversion rates, which is 2x higher than the priorities of increasing lead volume or to influence and educate. This correlates to the trend of marketing owning pipeline targets, and underscores the intense focus B2B marketers must have on driving high-quality pipeline versus quantity.

With the priority of high-converting pipeline in mind, it's important for marketers to not only optimize programs, but to optimize the sales actions following marketing programs. [ON24 research](#) finds that there is a gap between marketers collecting engagement data and sharing it with sales so they can take better action and follow-up. Across all regions, less than one third of marketers reported sharing engagement data with their sales teams, with data sharing occurring amongst 25% of EMEA marketers, 21% of North America marketers and 8% of APAC marketers¹.

Source: Ready for Growth: The State of Digital Maturity in B2B Marketing





“Data literacy really allows you to have a seat at the table and be able to have a conversation about the results. But complimenting that analytical side with soft skills like interpersonal communication is really key to driving change.”

As a marketer, whether you're a marketing leader, manager or individual contributor, it's important to lead with a mix of analytical and communication skills. This way, you're not only able to get others to trust you, but you're making them want to follow you too. You're impacting and you're bringing people along the journey in the right way.”



Callan Young,

CMO at ON24



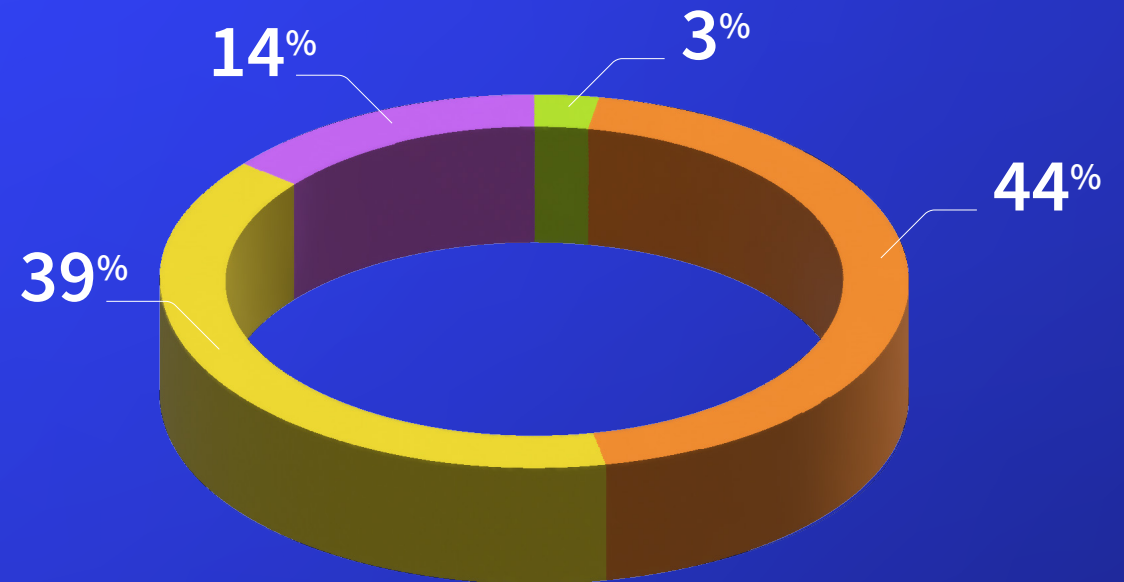
Key trend 3

Operational scale

Marketers struggle with scaling programs but AI can be the solution

While marketers know that they need to do more with less, only 3% of marketers surveyed feel that their efforts to scale marketing programs are very effective. This finding further demonstrates the need for marketers to put processes in place for ongoing program optimization and content repurposing.

How effective are your efforts in scaling marketing programs today?



- Very effective — we're pros
- Somewhat effective — we need some help
- Not effective — we're spinning our wheels
- We're not prioritizing this today

“How we reach people effectively and consistently across all of our different touch points is a driving force for us. And that approach not only informs the technology that we use, but also how we facilitate and execute – in an automated way – the outreach and programming across sales and marketing. This way, you don’t have to rely on an individual salesperson or an individual marketer to do the outreach. Instead, you know what works and you can actually do it effectively and efficiently.

Ideally, the more that you can do to scale marketing and sales activities through things like automated plays, the more you can facilitate the desired intent for alignment that turns sales into action.”



Bryan Law,
CMO at ZoomInfo



Luckily, with the rise of generative AI, scaling and repurposing content creation will get easier and become integrated into the standard marketing program process. For example, marketers can look to webinars as being the cornerstone of a content program by using AI to automatically generate blogs, e-books and videos out of the original event content that is produced.

Generative AI can also support marketers with personalization, which is often held back by lack of content or ability to scale. [Recent research from ON24](#) found that industry personalization lags across the globe, with only 41% in North America, 18% in APAC and 23% in EMEA deploying these tactics.

Source: Ready for Growth:
The State of Digital Maturity in B2B Marketing

“The best piece of advice I’ve received on this topic is to start small on big projects. In order to achieve the change that you want, especially in global companies, you need to start small.”

You can't expect to implement change instantly – especially on a global scale. But you can start by picking small markets where you can make a difference. You can understand what works, what products are selling, how you need to position your organization and solutions. And then, you can begin to roll out those changes globally as you test and assess.”



Natalie Truong,
CMO, AMEA & Partner at Mercer



Final takeaways

As marketing's role increases in importance and visibility, marketing leaders must look at their team's ability to drive sales and marketing alignment, optimize pipeline driving programs and scale efficiently to deliver more pipeline and business impact. This will require a shift in focus from just executing a greater volume of marketing programs to prioritizing the extraction of more results from existing marketing programs. ON24 predicts that organizations that embrace this mindset will be able to get more results with less resources in 2023 and beyond.

“Anybody can drive change.

In marketing, we have to be constantly changing and innovating. But to be successful, we need to have the confidence to stretch ourselves into being uncomfortable — that’s the only way we’ll grow.

Even small, incremental changes can add up to massive outcomes. And whether you’re a marketing leader, manager or individual contributor, you should always be thinking about how you’re getting yourself and your teams to put that mindset into practice — to think differently.”



Callan Young,

CMO at ON24

Appendix

Methodology. ON24 leveraged a consistent set of webinars poll and survey questions in Q2 2023 across a global audience base and 14 webinars. The ON24 team analyzed more than 1,100 responses from these webinars to create the findings for this report. The CMO quotes came from the Change Agents webinar series.

For more insights, read our research report, "Ready for Growth: The State of Digital Maturity in B2B Marketing"

[READ OUR REPORT >](#)

Watch on-demand webinars by:

Change Agents: Become a Champion of Alignment to Convert Engagement Into Pipeline



Bryan Law,
CMO at ZoomInfo

[WATCH NOW >](#)

Innovate or Stagnate: How to Drive Change in Marketing



Natalie Truong,
CMO, AMEA & Partner at Mercer

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