

2017

The B2B Content Strategy & Operations Benchmark

*Research-based insights on the past, present, and
future of B2B marketing*



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The State of B2B Marketing

As fellow B2B marketers, we wanted a data-based lens to better understand how changing teams, tools, and technology impact the goals and priorities of modern marketers. To gain this knowledge, we built a survey for marketers to share their challenges and successes.

The findings are fascinating.

B2B marketers seem to be caught between old and new, digital and events, content and PR, while trying to reconcile if (or should we say, how) these various strategies and tactics contribute to revenue.

Many marketing organizations are heading in the right direction, realigning their teams and tech stacks to produce better marketing results. But the most cutting edge, revenue-driven marketers are still wrapping their heads around cross-team visibility and eliminating content waste, putting key health indicators and real-time collaboration processes into place.

INDICATORS OF MARKETING SUCCESS



Pages
7-13

Teams are aligned around a central plan with clear visibility into the metrics that define organizational goals.



Pages
14-17

Tactics and strategy work cohesively across departments and technologies to eliminate ad-hoc assets and duplicative efforts.



Pages
18-21

Both internal and external consumers have visibility into all content assets with a single source of truth—and thus, no off-brand content.



Pages
22-25

Efforts, activities, and technology are all evaluated on their ability to deliver effective ROI and aid in driving revenue.

We hope you enjoy this report and use it as a powerful tool to challenge your day-to-day, eliminate hair-on-fire marketing, and build a full-funnel marketing strategy that works.



Key Findings

Marketing is as dynamic as ever. What does this mean for modern marketers?



LEAD GEN STILL REIGNS SUPREME

The transition to revenue marketing is just out of reach. Marketers still care more about lead generation than revenue contribution.



CONTENT STRATEGY IS DISCONNECTED

The role content plays in an organization is not black and white. Everyone from leaders to operations has a hand in content creation. Marketers aren't yet sure how to divide tactics and strategy in a role-based way to take control of the customer experience.



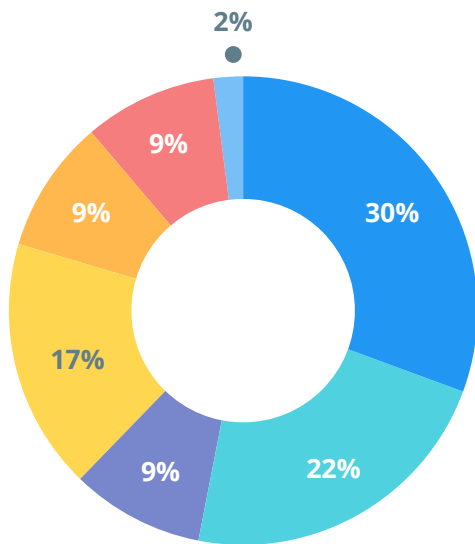
ROI IS CHALLENGE #1

Marketers struggle to evaluate the ROI of everything from the content they create to their tech stacks. Success is often awarded based on feelings or adoption as opposed to true return on investment.



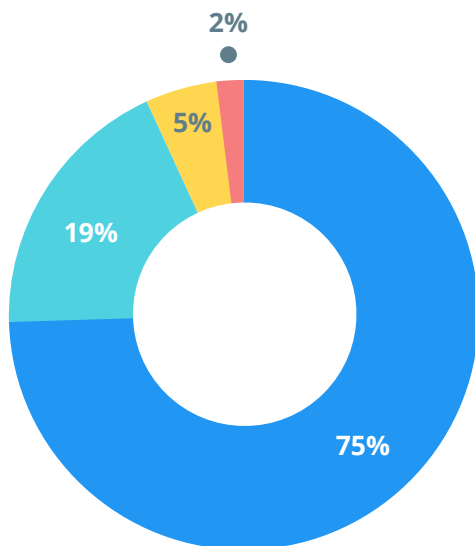
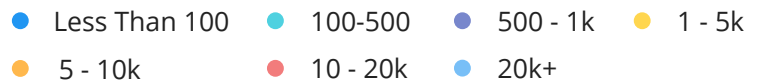
Who Took This Survey

We surveyed hundreds of B2B marketers in various roles across diverse backgrounds and organization sizes.



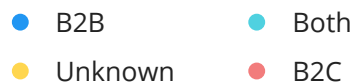
Organization Size

We heard from marketers at all sizes of companies. 36% of respondents work at the enterprise level, 30% in the mid-market, and the remaining 33% in SMBs.



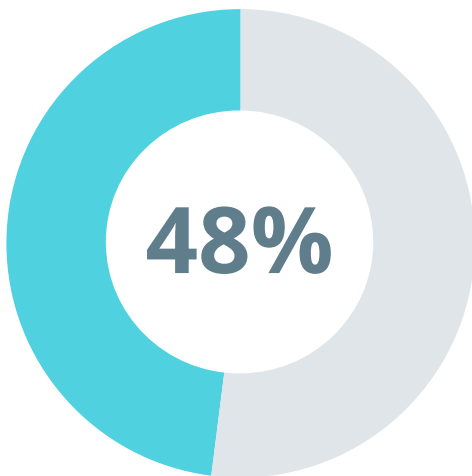
Business Focus

We primarily surveyed B2B marketers, with only 2% of respondents identifying as having a solely B2C focus.



Marketing Organization Size

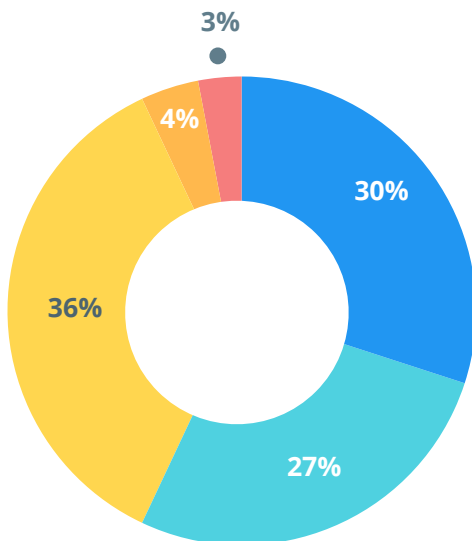
Taking a deeper dive from organizational insights to the marketers themselves, we heard from teams across the spectrum, from the small and agile to the enormous and complex, and from every member of the marketing ecosystem.



Marketing Team Size

Nearly half of marketers surveyed stated they deal with the complexity in planning, execution, distribution, and analysis that comes when their team is made up of 15+ members.

● +15 - 500 ● 1 - 14



What Best Describes Your Role?

- **Marketing Leader**
(CXO/VP responsible for driving strategy and setting priorities)
- **Content Creator**
(Manager/Writer/Designer responsible for creating and distributing marketing content)
- **MarTech**
(Operations/Analysts responsible for managing the tech stack and/or reporting on metrics)
- **Content Operations Manager**
(Directors/Project Lead responsible for managing teams and campaigns that align with organizational and marketing leaders' priorities)
- **Content Consumer**
(Sales/Success responsible for sharing marketing content with prospects and customers)





Alignment:

Prioritization & Communication

“Generating leads and improving lead conversion are identified as high priorities for companies. To accomplish both requires a strategy to create content for each stage of your marketing/sales funnel and visibility on that content. Have a clear plan: know your priorities (pick two or three), create a strategy (measure twice, cut once), and have visibility of the process (how is it getting done). With a plan in place, your success rate will skyrocket.”

-Todd Lebo, Chief Marketing Officer, Ascend2

The Essential Stats

Nearly 80% of marketers surveyed flag **generating new leads** as a highest priority, followed shortly by **improving lead conversion rates**.

Top Marketing Priorities



78%

Prioritize Generating New Leads



71%

Prioritize Improving Conversions

Top Performing Strategies

Even in the world of digital, events are holding their ground. 63% of marketers rank events in their top three most effective strategies, the same number that rank content marketing as highly effective.



63%

Consider Events a Most Effective Marketing Strategy



63%

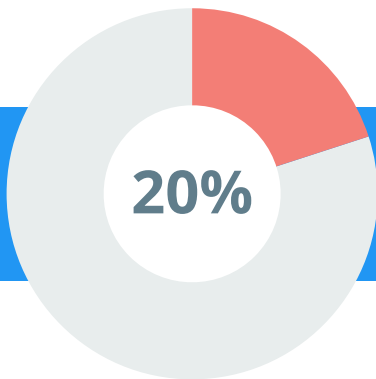
Consider Content Marketing a Most Effective Marketing Strategy



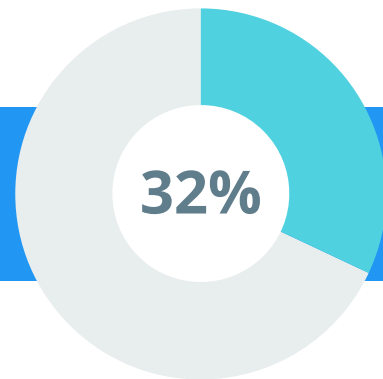
Communication Breakdown



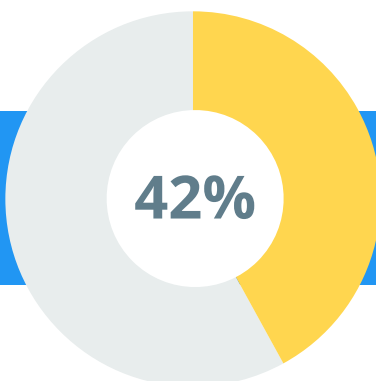
Compared to marketing leaders, content creators are three times more likely not to know whether their organization set lead generation goals. Without proper visibility into goals, how can content creators fully align their production efforts to strategic business objectives?



20% of content creators don't know if their organization met lead generation goals.



32% of content creators weren't sure if they met marketing revenue goals.



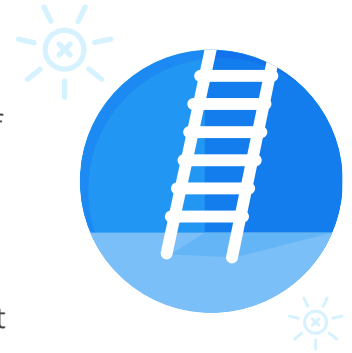
Even worse, only 42% had visibility into how content aligns to organizational priorities.



Are We Playing Telephone?

While marketing leaders and content creators are in agreement on many of the top barriers to success, there is one place they seem completely out of touch: alignment.

42% of marketing leaders don't see lack of horizontal and vertical alignment (aligning leadership strategy and marketing tactics across departments) as a barrier to success, while over 20% of content creators see it as one of the greatest barriers to success.



Greatest Barriers to Success

MARKETING LEADERS

1. Inefficient Internal Processes
2. Proving the ROI of Marketing Content
3. Lack of Sales and Marketing Alignment
4. Lack of Consistent Voice across Channels
5. Lack of Horizontal Collaboration
- 6. Lack of Horizontal or Vertical Alignment**

CONTENT CREATORS

- 1. Lack of Horizontal or Vertical Alignment**
2. Inefficient Internal Processes
3. Proving the ROI of Marketing Content
4. Lack of Sales and Marketing Alignment
5. Lack of Horizontal Collaboration
6. Lack of Consistent Voice across Channels



Is your team aligned? Even more important, do you all agree on being aligned?

Keep your team on the same page not just at quarterly planning, but each and every day. Kapost allows you to view everyone's priorities, as well as directly message about specific goals, initiatives, and even individual assets, all within one platform. [Learn more.](#)



Setting Priorities

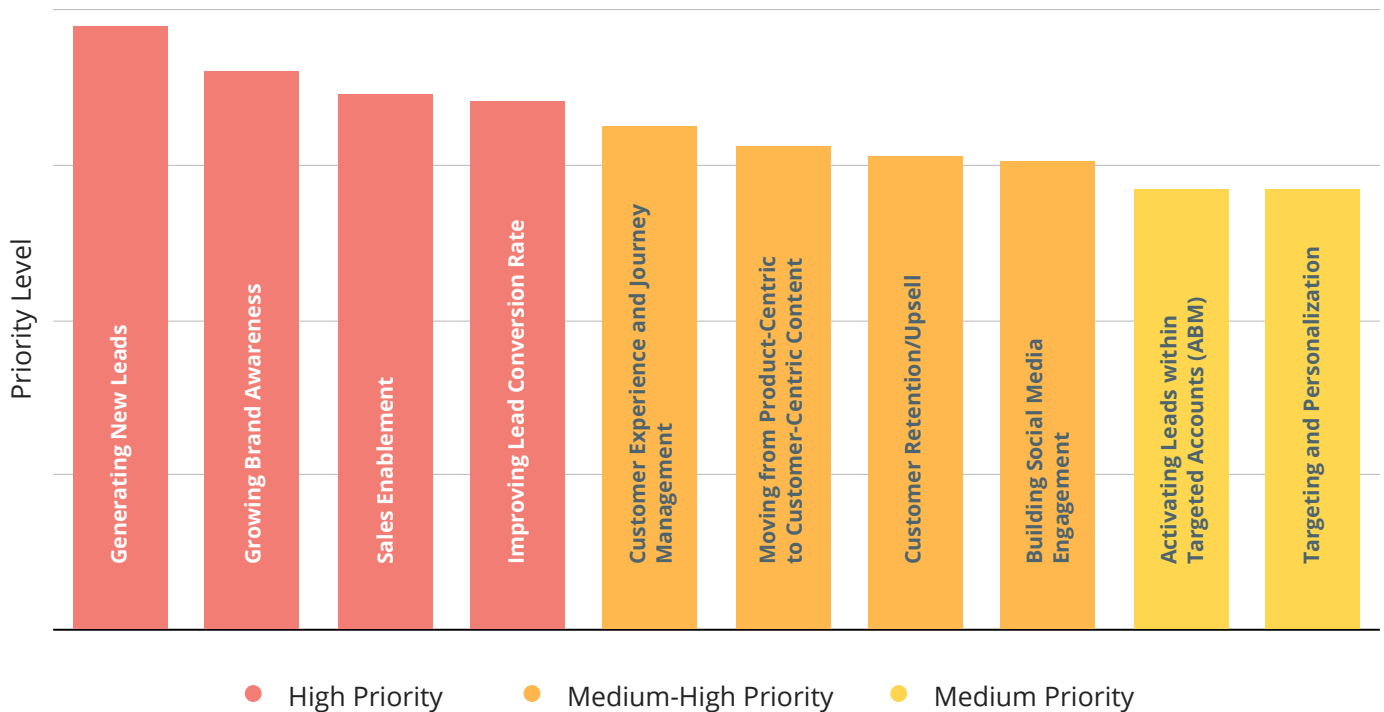
B2B marketers are struggling with prioritization. When presented with a list of priorities, only 17% of marketers were able to name anything on the list as their lowest priority.



Unfortunately, not everything can be a high priority.



Highest Priority Marketing Strategies





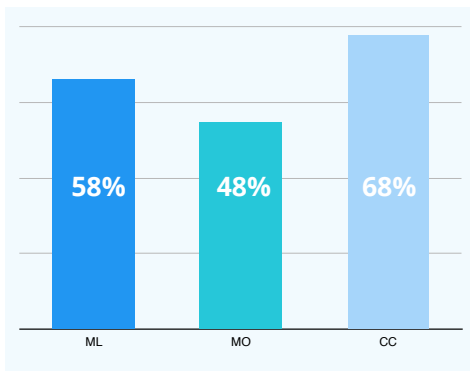
FROM THE MOUTHS OF MARKETERS

“The struggle to prioritize goes even deeper than feeling pulled in a thousand directions at once. When we don’t identify our most important work, marketers can’t act strategically. Marketing as a function appears unfocused, just racing from one looming deadline to the next. Instead, we’ve got to get comfortable with flexible planning that keeps us in touch with business objectives while still allowing us to adjust to changing audience needs.”

– Andrea Fryrear, President & Lead Trainer, AgileSherpas

How Do Leaders and Doers Compare?

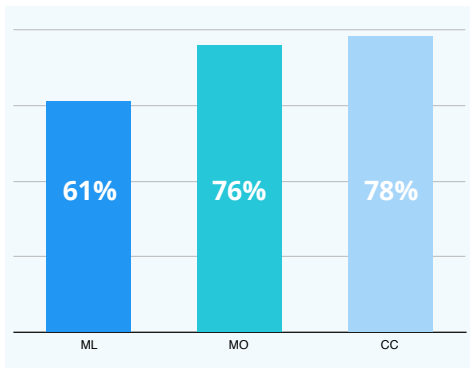
While everything seems to be a high priority, we found that the role marketers have in their organization affects how they rank key priorities.



Brand Awareness

Content creators are more concerned with growing brand awareness than marketing leaders, with 68% of content creators ranking it as a highest priority, compared to only 58% of marketing leaders.

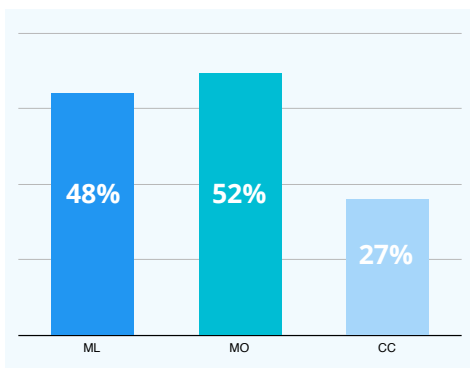
- Marketing Leaders
- Marketing Operations
- Content Creator



Improving Lead Conversion

Marketing operations and content creators agree on the importance of improving lead conversion rates, but marketing leaders just aren't as focused on this priority.

- Marketing Leaders
- Marketing Operations
- Content Creator



Account-Based Marketing

Content creators haven't joined the ABM bandwagon yet with just 27% ranking it as a high priority, compared to nearly half of marketing leaders and marketing operations ranking it highly.

- Marketing Leaders
- Marketing Operations
- Content Creator





Collaboration:

Breaking Down Silos

"I think one of the big issues with marketing is that we don't take full advantage of the software available to us. It's not a problem with not enough technology; it's us using it to its full potential."

- Ian Cleary, Founder, RazorSocial

Rose-Colored Glasses of Visibility

Approximately 60% of marketers claim that less than 25% of content is redundant or duplicated by a different department. Yet less than half of teams are always able to see the content other teams are working on, which begs the question: ***Do marketers really know when duplicate content is even created?***

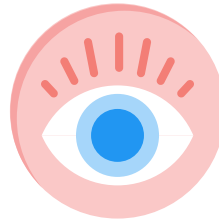
Less Than



25%

of content is duplicative work according to 60% of marketers

However



Only 44%

have complete visibility into other departments' campaigns and content

It should be something we learned in kindergarten, but over half of marketers ranked working together across departments as a massive barrier to success.



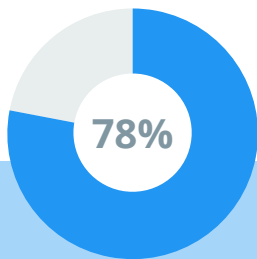
How can you cut through the complexity to deliver results faster?

Eliminate organizational silos and ad-hoc content by centralizing content creation in one system—and run efficient and effective marketing campaigns, start to finish. [Learn how Kapost accomplishes this.](#)



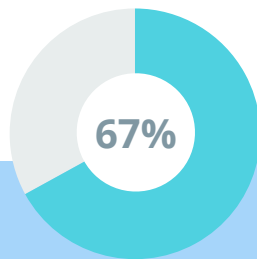
How We Think about Technology

The role of technology in marketing is constantly evolving, with new tools and technologies popping up all the time. Here's the 2017 breakdown of essential B2B marketing technology:



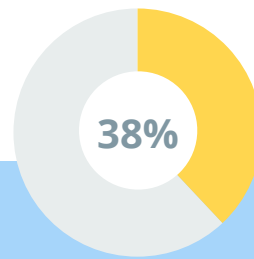
CRM

(Salesforce, Oracle, Hubspot, etc.)



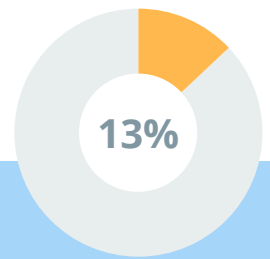
Marketing Automation

(Marketo, Pardot, Eloqua, etc.)



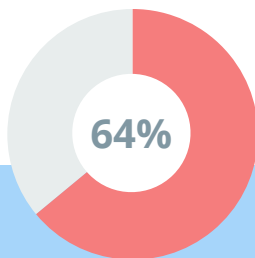
Content Marketing Platform

(Kapoost, Oracle, IBM, etc.)



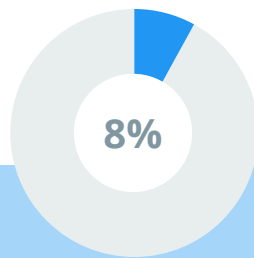
ABM Software

(Engagio, Terminus, Demandbase, etc.)



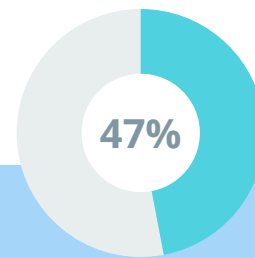
Web Content Management

(Adobe Experience Manager, Wordpress, Drupal, etc.)



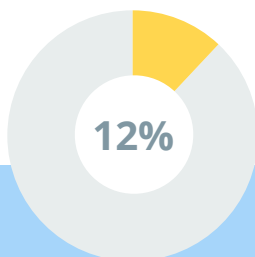
Digital Asset Management

(WebDAM, Bynder, AdobeDAM, etc.)



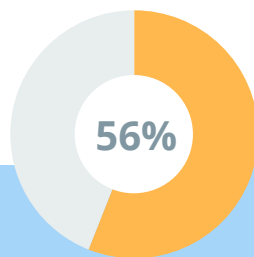
Work Management System

(Workfront, Jira, Basecamp, etc.)



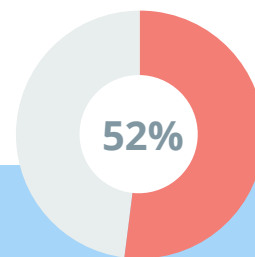
Marketing Planning Tool

(Allocadia, Hive9, Aprimo, etc.)



Social Engagement Platform

(Sprinklr, Percolate, Spreadfast, Hootsuite, Oktopost, Social Studio/Radian6, etc.)



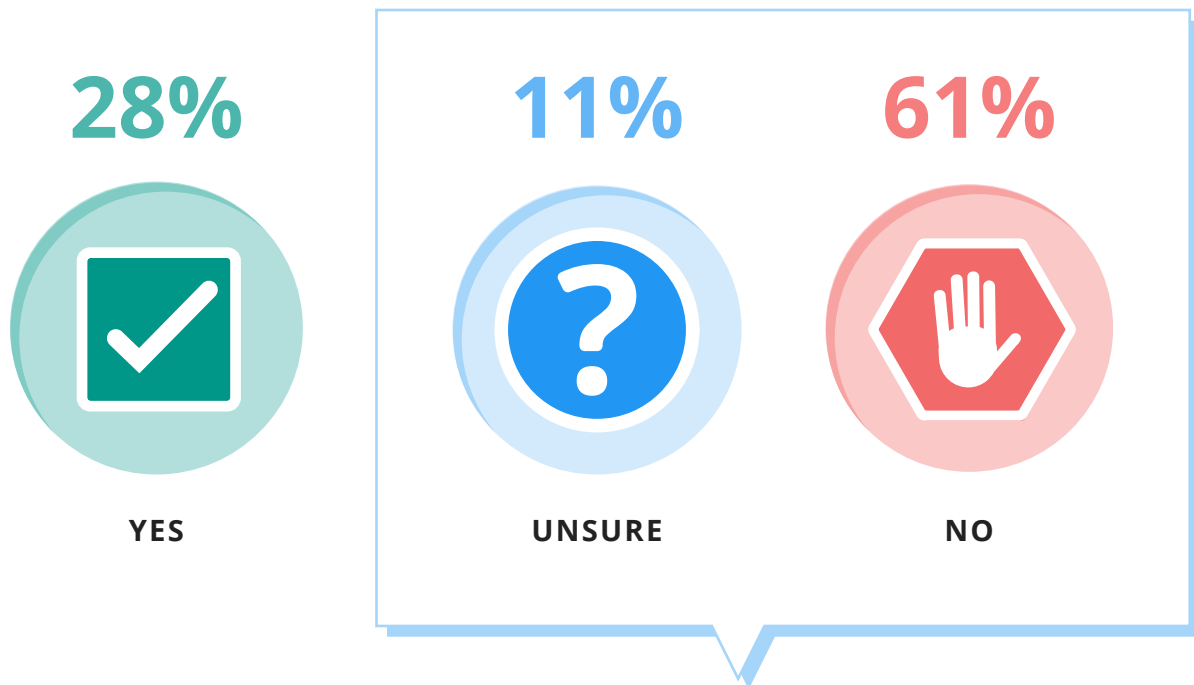
Other

(Slack, Trello, Uberflip, Buffer, Gitlap, etc.)



Our Technologies Are Disconnected

Do content planning and creation happen in the same platform?



Planning is hard enough. On top of that, 72% of marketers are doing their planning in a completely different ecosystem than where they create the actual content. This leaves content creators uncertain how to position their day-to-day work with broader business priorities and marketing leaders wondering what campaigns are in flight to address their top priorities.



Do you have to switch between technologies to get full visibility?

Kapost allows you to organize your editorial calendar, post directly to your channels, and access shareable content, all within one platform that integrates with your other tools. Support alignment and visibility across your entire content operation. [Learn more.](#)





Accessibility:

Organization & Distribution Strategies

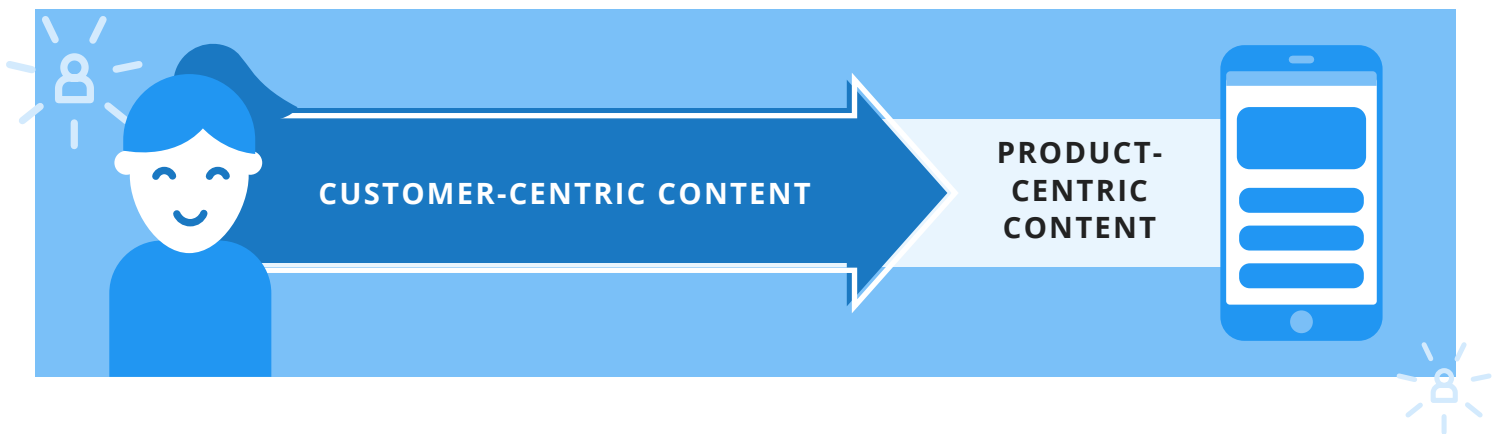
“Digital has empowered the customer, and as marketers, we must invest in and leverage technology to provide the right content to the right customer at the right time. If we do so, we will improve the buying experience, improve conversion, and accelerate revenue. If we fail to do so, however, we will fall behind our digital competition and suffer revenue contraction.”

-Toby Murdock, CEO, Kapost

Content for the Customer

Is the battle of product-focused vs. customer-focused content over?

With just over 53% of created content being customer-centric, marketers are making the move towards full-funnel content to satisfy the entire customer journey.



Even with the transition to delivering full-funnel content, internal teams still don't know where to find it. 78% of marketing organizations are using multiple systems to store and organize their finalized content.



Avoid the content-waste trap with a single source for content truth

The days of getting lost in the shared drive are gone. Robust metadata and powerful search ensure marketers and customer-facing teams find the right piece of content every time. [Learn more.](#)



Building a Mature Taxonomy

Tagging has taken flight among B2B marketers in 2017 with 85% tagging at least some strategic contexts. Here are the top tags making their way into the B2B marketing taxonomy:



59%
Persona



54%
Buying Stage



52%
Product Line



43%
Channel



39%
Vertical



36%
Region



16%
Team



22%
Language



4%
Other

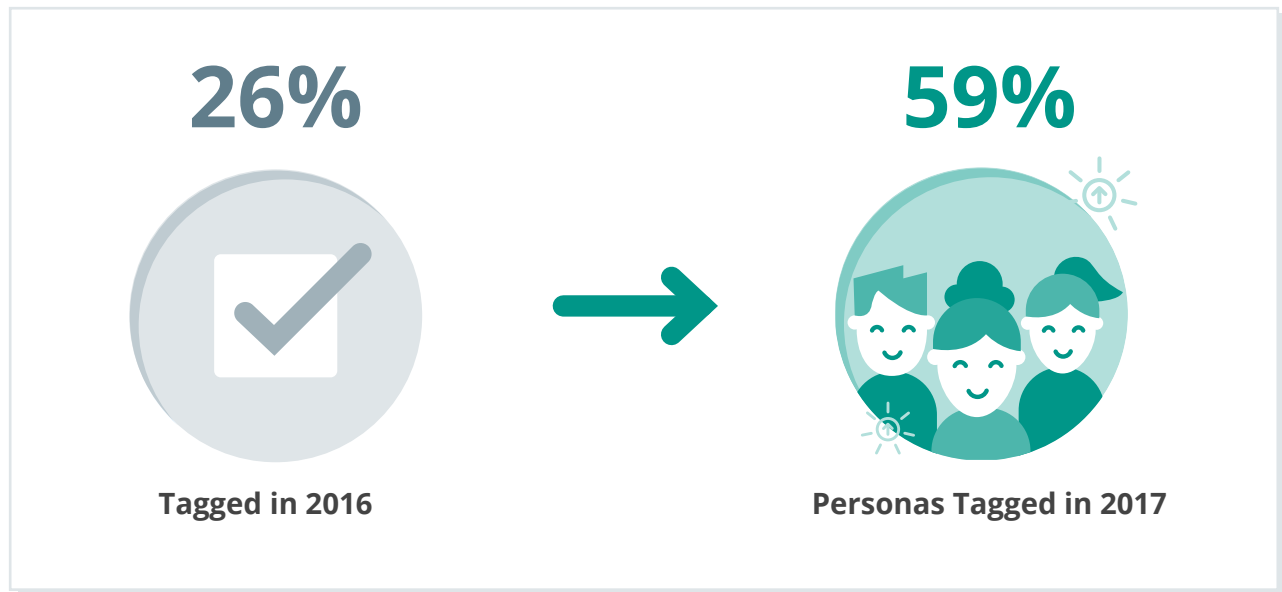


15%
We do not tag our campaigns
or content



Right Content, Right Context

Knowing your target audience is key to creating content that moves buyers down the funnel. Just last year, only 26% of marketers tagged their content by key buyer personas.* That number jumped to under 60% in 2017.



While marketers are making clear progress in tagging and organizing content, there remains a limited visibility into how content fits in the buyer's journey. 67% of marketers claim to have limited or no visibility into their coverage and gaps across key attributes like persona, buying stage, and product line.



*Read the 2016 Customer Experience Benchmark to discover the strategies and tactics behind world-class CX. [Download now.](#)



Insight:

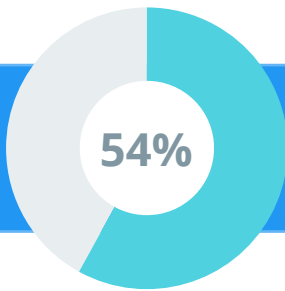
Determining the ROI of Marketing & Technology

“Content ROI is a catch-22, no? You feel the pressure to articulate content ROI and yet, you’re not operationally mature enough to get the data and take the time to explore the right formula. Ironically, the ability to calculate content ROI requires at least some investment in content intelligence. The return? The ability to understand your content’s past effectiveness, return on investment, and predict what will make your content more effective in the future.”

–Colleen Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Content Science

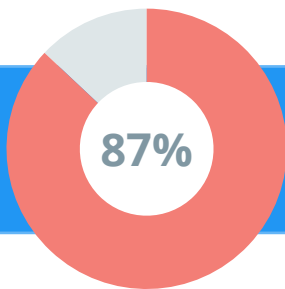
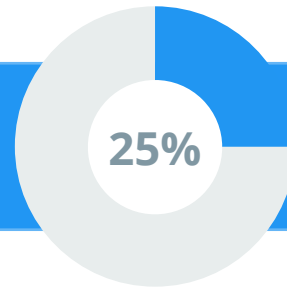
(Mis)Calculating ROI

54% of marketers ranked “proving the ROI of content marketing” as one of the greatest barriers to success. However, nearly 25% of marketers are not using any metrics to assess ROI.



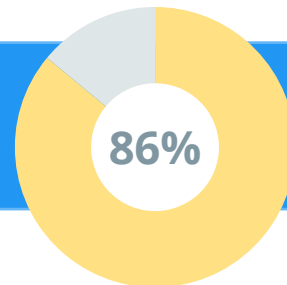
54% of marketers rank proving ROI of marketing content as one of the greatest barriers to success.

25% of marketers do not set marketing revenue goals.



87% of marketers use web traffic to determine marketing ROI.

86% of marketers use time on page to determine marketing ROI.



Vanity Metrics Are Stealing the Show

Marketers list web traffic and time on page as most important metrics for proving the ROI. But what is that really telling you?



Which Metrics Really Matter

While vanity metrics are useful as early indicators of interest, if your traffic isn't turning into revenue, is it really yielding a return on investment? Instead of simply tracking site views, marketers need to shift focus to the metrics that directly correspond to ROI.



Marketing organizations that met or exceeded their revenue goals track the following:



**Revenue Driven by
Marketing Leads**



Lead Quality



**Number of
Leads Created**



Conversion Rates

"If marketing wants to be taken seriously, we need to embrace revenue responsibility and measure the sales and revenue impact of our efforts first and foremost. Yes, that requires more complex reporting and adds more risk for marketers, but that's the only way we will survive and thrive in B2B organizations moving forward."

–Matt Heinz, President, Heinz Marketing

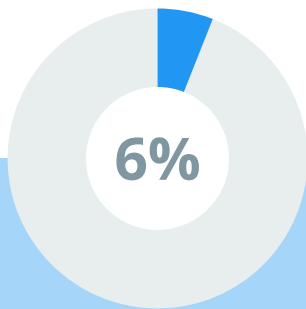


Technology ROI? Tough to Say...

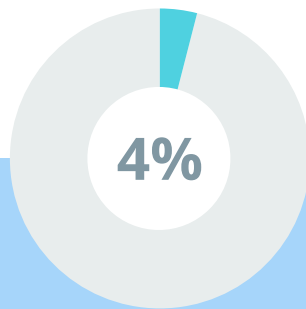
The only metric marketers ranked as “most important” in determining technology ROI was increased funnel conversions—and that was less than 20% of those surveyed.



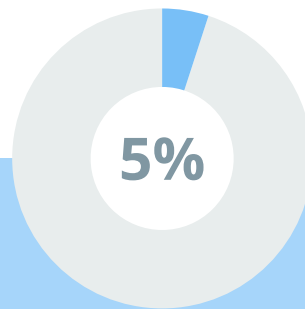
There doesn't seem to be a consensus on how best to measure technology ROI, but here's what marketers are using in 2017:



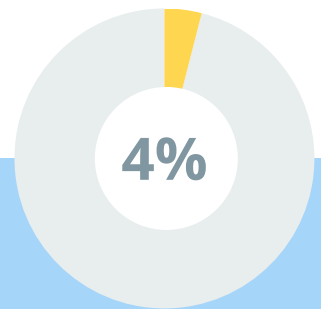
Productivity gains during content creation



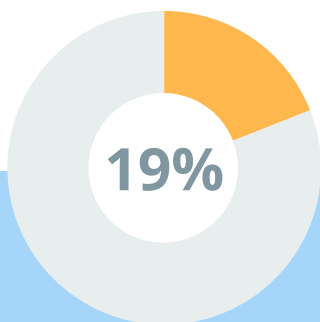
Productivity gains during content planning & communicating status



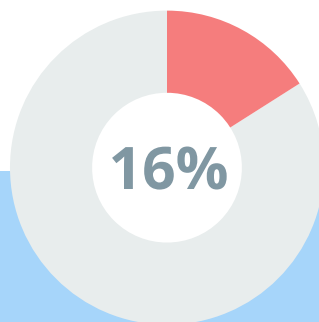
Productivity gains for content consumers



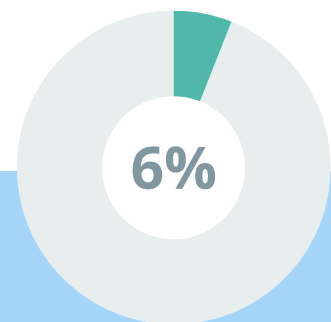
Cost savings from reduced creative agency spend



Content impact: improved funnel conversions



Content impact: improved funnel velocity



Headcount offset
(e.g., tools decrease the new hires needed for increased production)





The Future of B2B Marketing

“While marketers’ ambitions are high, their apparent understanding of how to prioritize the strategic activities that will get them there are not in sync with the modern buyer.

Marketers must understand their audience intimately and use content to create connected, progressive experiences. Increasing lead conversion rates will be a herculean task without also prioritizing and addressing each customer’s unique buyer journey management with targeting and personalization.

To be valued as a corporate asset, rather than viewed as a cost center, marketers need the visibility that allows for a holistic view of the entire content ecosystem and how the experiences they create with content impact the momentum and intent to purchase of their buyers. This becomes more critical with many marketers expected to drive at least 25% of company revenues.”

- Ardath Albee, CEO & B2B Marketing Strategies,
Marketing Interactions, Inc.

What it Takes to Succeed

Of our survey respondents who met or exceeded their revenue goals, we found some not-so-surprising commonalities.



High-performing marketing organizations:



Rank sales enablement and alignment between sales and marketing as top priorities



Set and meet lead generation goals



Are responsible for generating at least 26% of overall company revenue



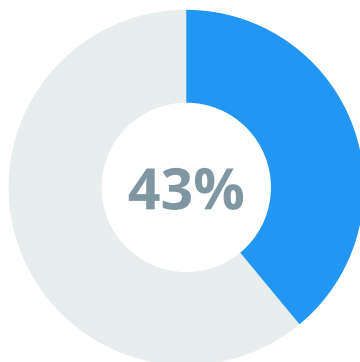
Evaluate ROI of marketing tactics based on lead conversion rates



Store and organize content in fewer than three systems



Have less than 25% of content going to waste



43% of marketing organizations surveyed do not have a system or methodology in place to account for marketing's contribution to revenue. Those that do find themselves responsible for a quarter of total revenue, which is key in justifying their annual investment in a content operation.

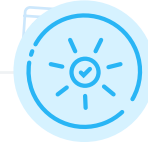


How Kapost Can Help



Canvas Visualizes Your Content Strategy

- ✕ Align campaigns and content for complete coverage across key attributes like persona, buying stage, geography, and more using Matrix Charts.
- ✕ Map programs, events, and campaigns in Timeline to see resource allocation across weeks, months, or quarters.



Studio Enables Collaboration within & across Teams

- ✕ Streamline content production with a central editorial calendar, initiative-level templates, and custom reports.
- ✕ Drive efficiency and consistency with workflow templates, smart deadlines, @mentions and annotations, attachment and version management, and more.



Gallery Creates a Single, Centralized Source of Truth

- ✕ Tag your entire content inventory with buying group, product line, or any custom context for quick findability.
- ✕ Ensure the right content is easily accessible with automated content recommendations and pinned, favorited content.



Insights Offers Metrics that Matter

- ✕ Configure and save boards to share relevant insights with key stakeholders—from content scoring for the CEO to conversion metrics for demand gen.
- ✕ Identify coverage and gaps across your entire content inventory by strategic contexts like persona and buying stage.





Whether your team is beginning to think about a content operation as a core competency or to optimize processes, Kapost's consulting services team can help you assess and design the content operation you need while the Kapost Platform enables you to manage that vision year over year.

The recognized B2B leader adopted by IBM, GE, Lenovo, and others, only Kapost ties together every aspect of the content operation, from content planning through production and distribution, to offer unique analytics and insight about the effectiveness of your content investment.

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