

# Developer Marketing Survey 2026

How technical marketers are investing, experimenting, and measuring success in the age of AI

## About this report

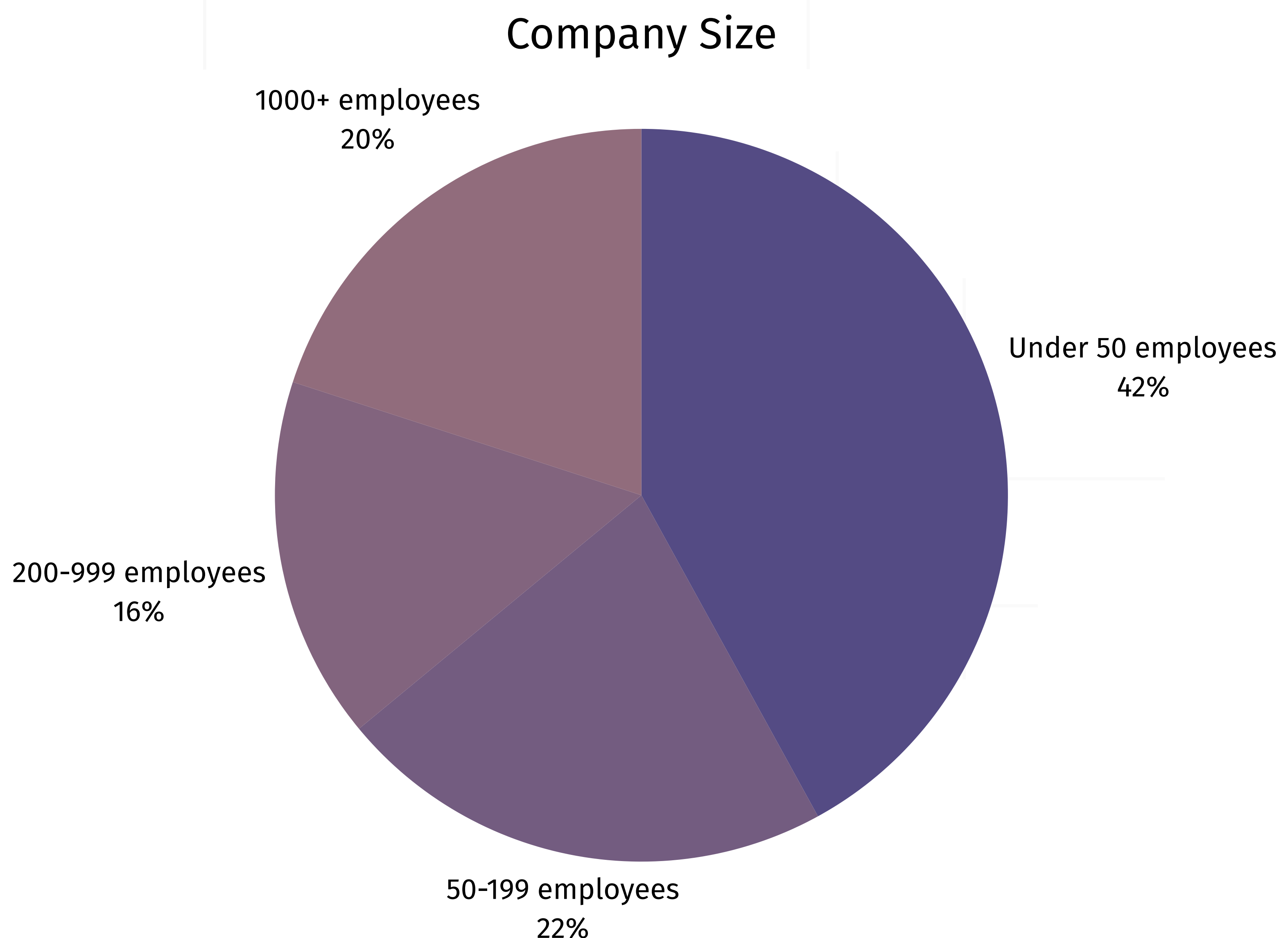
We surveyed developer marketing and DevRel leaders across the industry to find out what's actually working in 2026. Inside, you'll find where budgets are headed and how priorities shift as companies scale, which channels actually deliver ROI (and which are overhyped), why 96% of teams have tried AI but only 7% find it "very useful," what's driving experimentation with video despite weak returns, and why content creation has become the most commonly outsourced function.

## Key Findings

- **62%** of teams are increasing dev marketing budgets for 2026
- **73%** are investing more in community and events this year
- **51%** are increasing investment in content marketing and SEO
- **64%** say community and events deliver their highest ROI
- **85%** use AI primarily for content ideation and drafting
- **42%** of teams using vendors outsource content creation

# Respondent Demographics

About 60% of respondents were developer marketing leaders, ranging from C-Suite to marketing managers. Another 20% were developer relations leaders, with the remainder being founders, sales leaders, and business ops professionals.

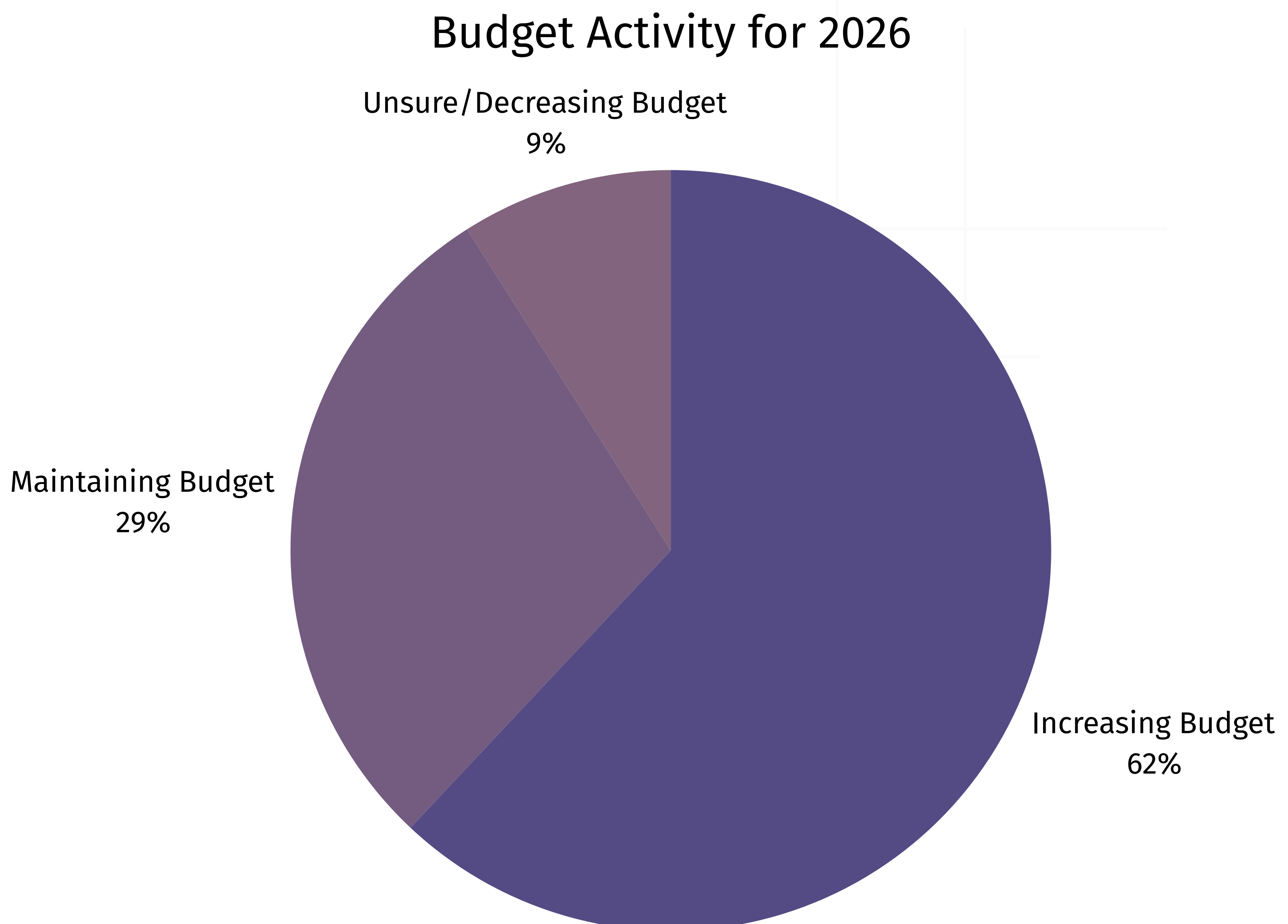


- ~**70%** say devs (or technical SMEs) are the primary audience
- ~**20%** identify developers as part of the buying cycle, but not the primary audience
- ~**10%** say devs aren't part of the buying cycle, but are users

# Are Developer Marketing Budgets Increasing in 2026?

**The short answer: yes.** Developer marketing budgets are growing across most companies.

In general, **the appetite to invest in developer marketing and relations is up from last year.** 2025 started with a lot of economic and political uncertainty across the globe in addition to uncertainty surrounding AI's role in developer marketing. Many of those fears have started to abate, and budgets are generally increasing.



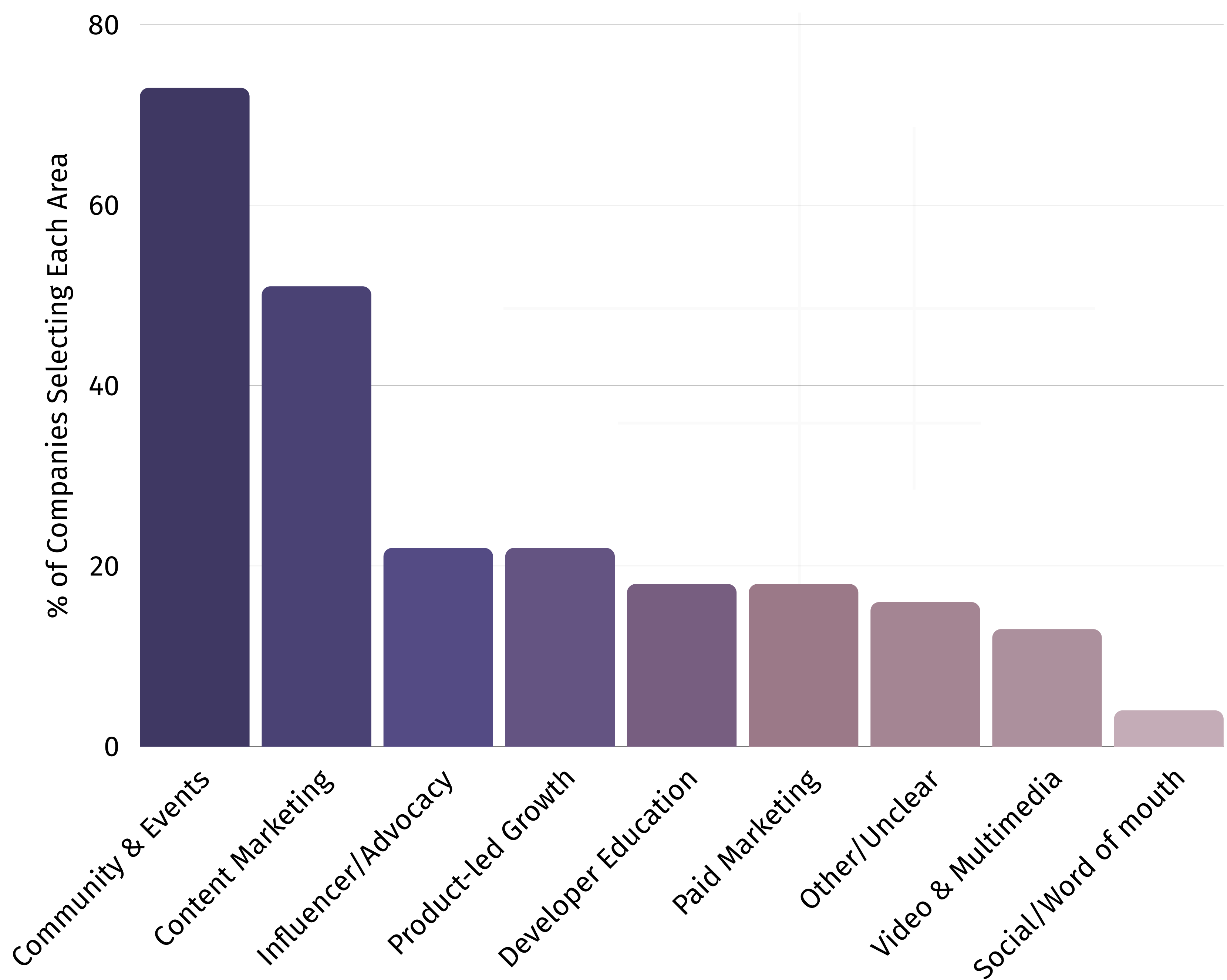
# Which Areas Are Receiving Increased Investment?

We asked which areas are receiving the most increased investment in 2026 (respondents could select up to 3).

**Community and content emerged as clear leaders.**

## Areas Where Companies Are Increasing Investment

Multiple responses allowed (up to three per company)





# Do Investment Priorities Change With Company Size?

**Smaller companies (under 50 employees)** concentrated on content as their most scalable and capital-efficient bet. These teams were building visibility and trust, with fewer resources for in-person events or consistent community programs.

**Mid-market companies (50-199 employees)** maintained a strong content focus (~40%) while keeping community investment lower than larger peers. Content remained the primary lever for growth at this stage.

**Scale-phase companies (200-999 employees)** showed the most balanced investment mix, with both community and content marketing reaching ~68%.

**Enterprise companies (1,000+ employees)** moved toward investments in ecosystems and experiences. While community and content remained important, no single category dominated for these companies.

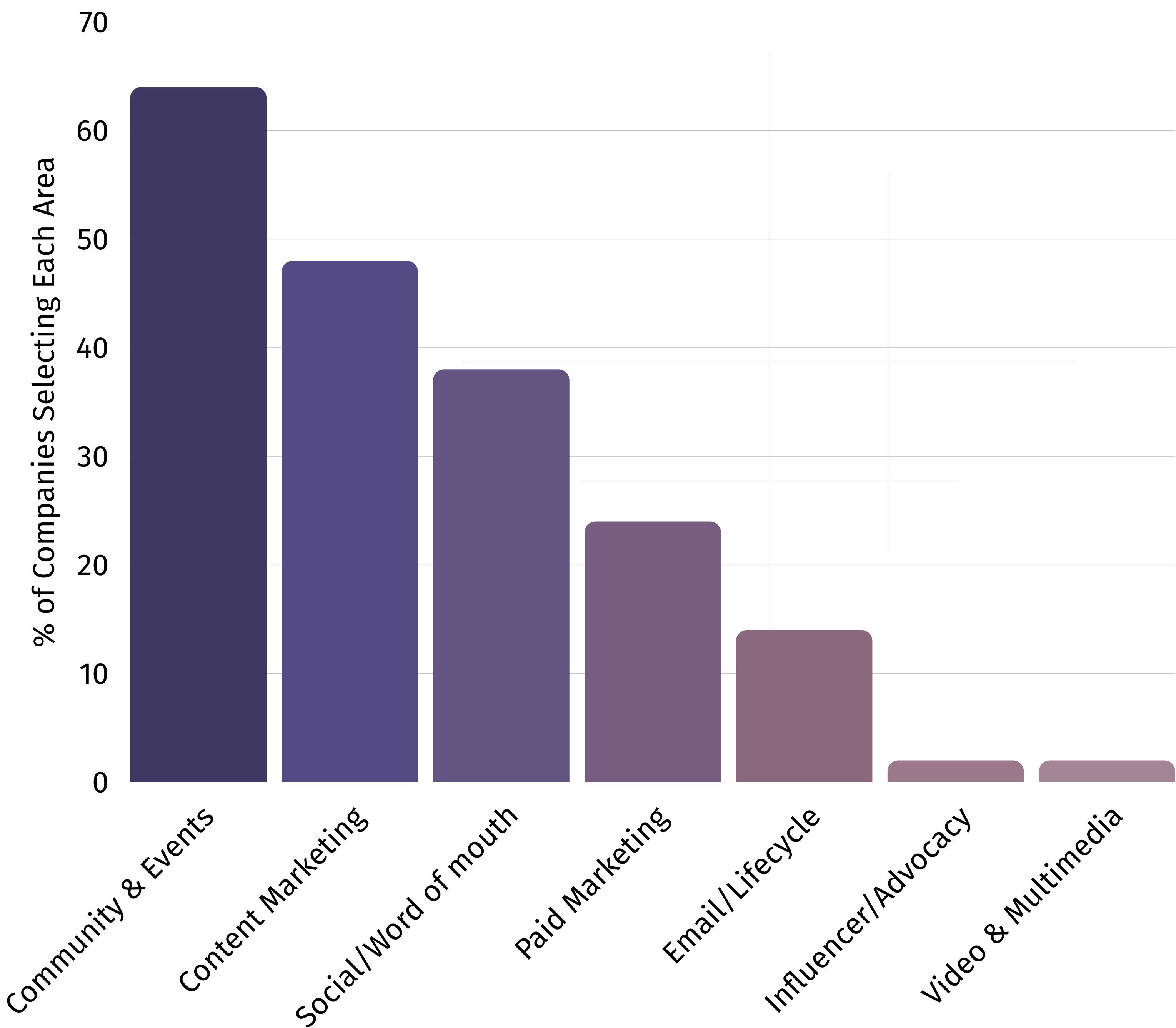
**Key takeaway:** Smaller companies are betting on content to earn attention, and larger companies invest in community, advocacy, and product experience to compound it.



# Which Dev Marketing Channels Had the Highest ROI in 2025?

When asked which channels delivered the highest returns in 2025, **community and events were cited most often**, followed by content marketing and social channels.

Areas Where Companies Saw Highest ROI  
Multiple responses allowed (up to three per company)



# Why Some Dev Marketing Channels Deliver More ROI Than Others

## Events Work Because You Can Actually Track Them

Community and events are easier to measure than other channels. When you have a booth at a conference, you can scan badges, track conversations, and run drip campaigns with clear attribution.

## Content Marketing Still Works, but the Bar Is Higher

Nearly half of respondents cited content as a top ROI channel, but it was harder to win in 2025 than in previous years due to the higher competition, longer time to see results, and the emergence of “zero-click” AI summaries.

## Why Influencer and Video Struggle to Prove ROI

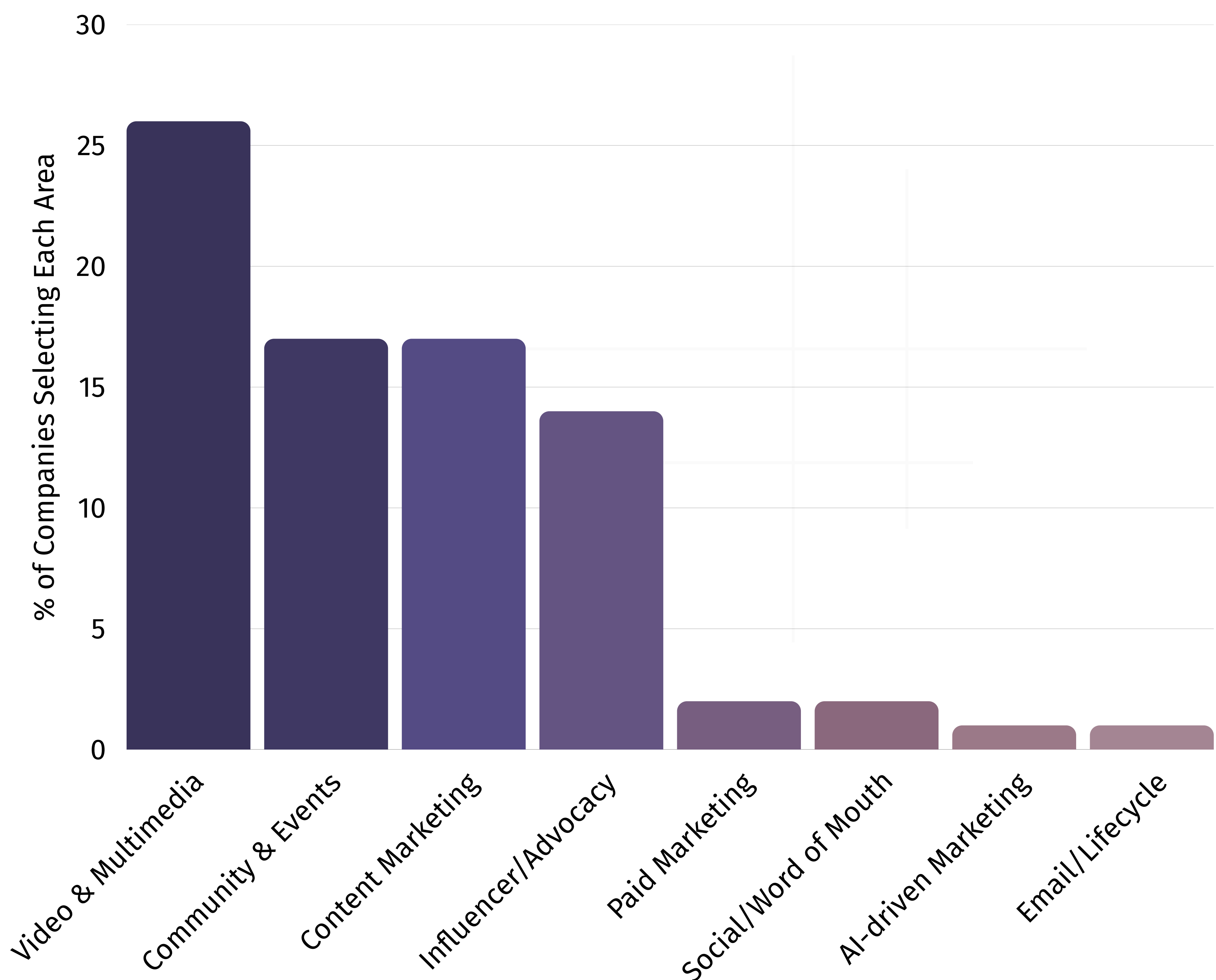
Despite industry hype, very few teams saw strong ROI from influencer marketing or video (so far). Influencer marketing is also getting more expensive as the market saturates with brands competing for a fixed number of meaningful influencers.

**Key takeaway:** Events require major investments (booths at large conferences can cost tens of thousands of dollars) but can give the best measurable ROI. Dev marketers should try various event types, such as small local meetups, large industry conferences, or speaking opportunities.

# What Marketing Tactics Are Teams Experimenting With?

When asked which tactics they are actively experimenting with, teams showed a strong bias toward newer or less-proven channels like video and influencer marketing.

Percent of Companies Experimenting with Each Tactic  
Multiple responses allowed (up to three per company)





# Why Experimentation and ROI Don't Line Up (Yet)

## Video Leads Experiments

Video is clearly the experimentation playground, ranking first for testing but last for proven ROI. Nobody has cracked the format-distribution-measurement problem (so far) in any of the company-size demographics. Teams are struggling with both Short-form video and Long-form/deep technical content.

## Mature Channels Don't Need Reinvention

Community and content show some experimentation despite high investment and high ROI. This shows maturity, not uncertainty. These channels are known quantities that teams are optimizing, not figuring out.

## Influencer Marketing Remains an Open Question

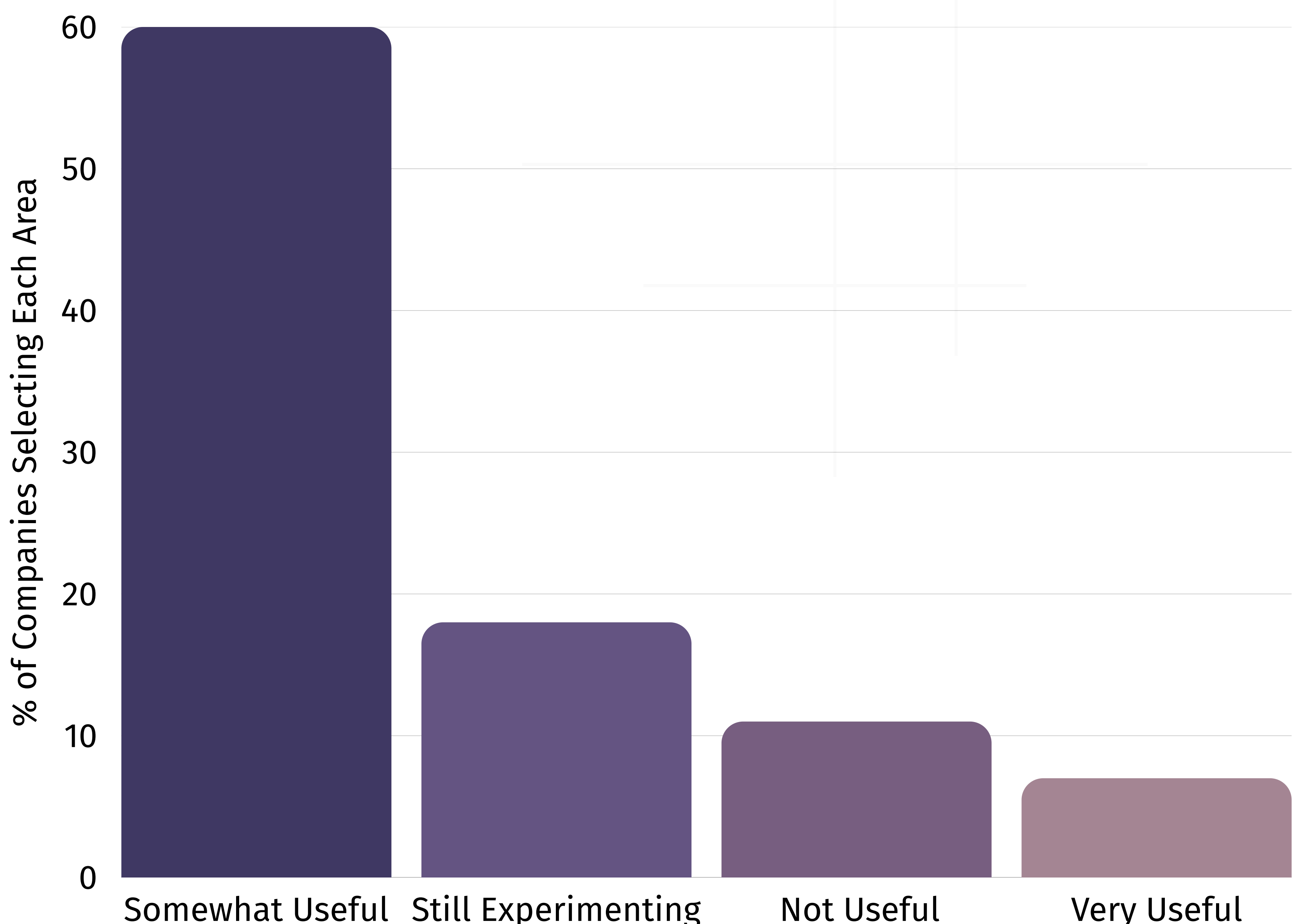
Video and influencer marketing attract experimentation because teams are still searching for repeatable, scalable ROI. In contrast, community and content see less testing because they already work well.

**Key takeaway:** Developer marketing teams outsource execution-heavy work like content, design, and paid media, while keeping high-ROI and high-trust functions like community and events in-house.

# Where AI Helps and Where It Still Falls Short

AI adoption is high across all company sizes, but the impact has been modest so far. Nearly 85% have tried using it for content ideation and first drafts, though actually integrating AI into day-to-day workflows or existing tools remains rare. There's potential to leverage LLMs for more personalized marketing and content, but the practical use cases thin out quickly as teams run into AI's limitations.

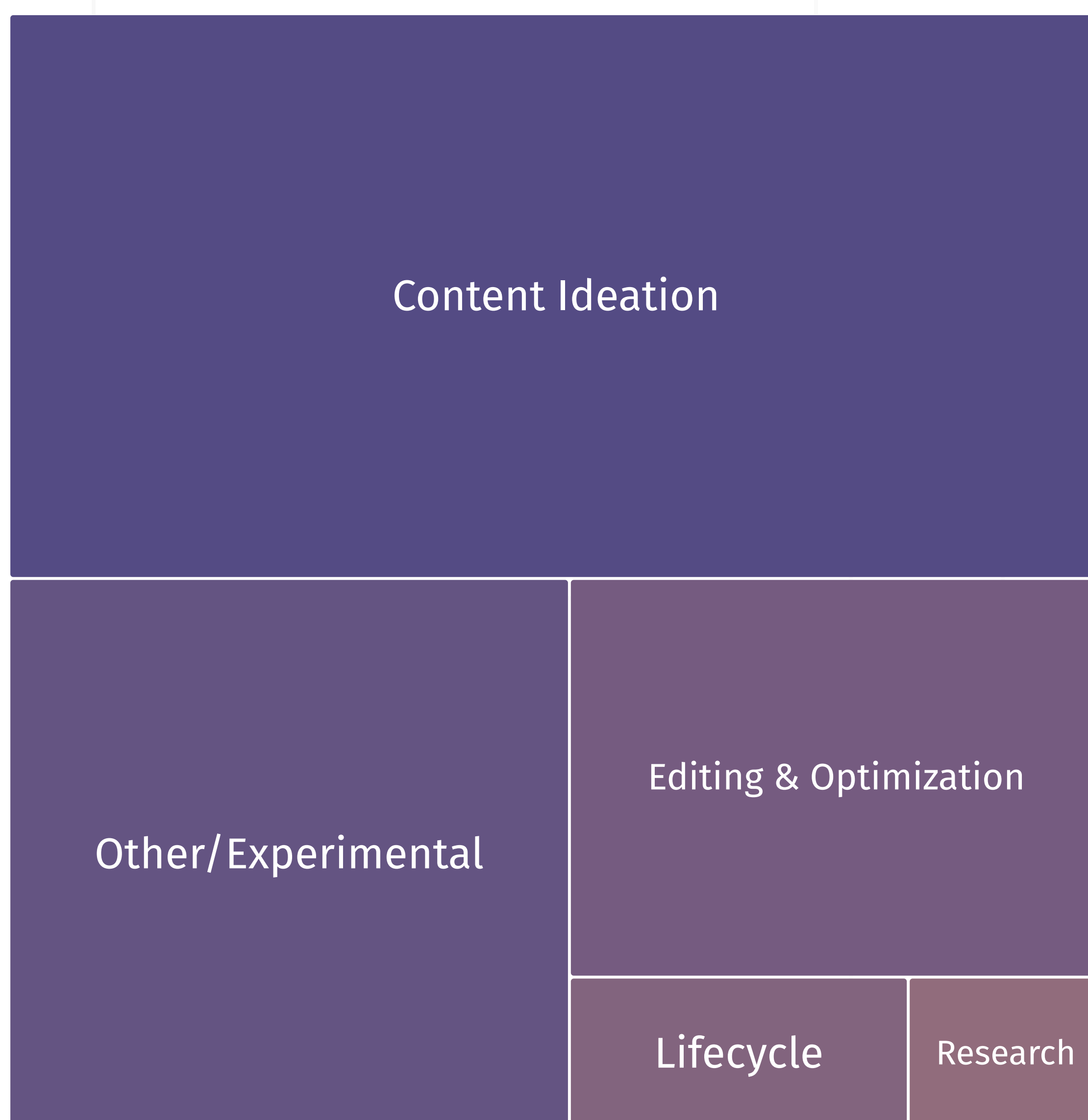
## Perceived Usefulness of AI Among Dev Marketers



# How Are Developer Marketers Using AI in 2025?

Most respondents noted that their experimentation with AI is not operationalized. Almost all use a company-sponsored LLM account, but very few have standardized processes that integrate AI.

## How Teams Are Using AI

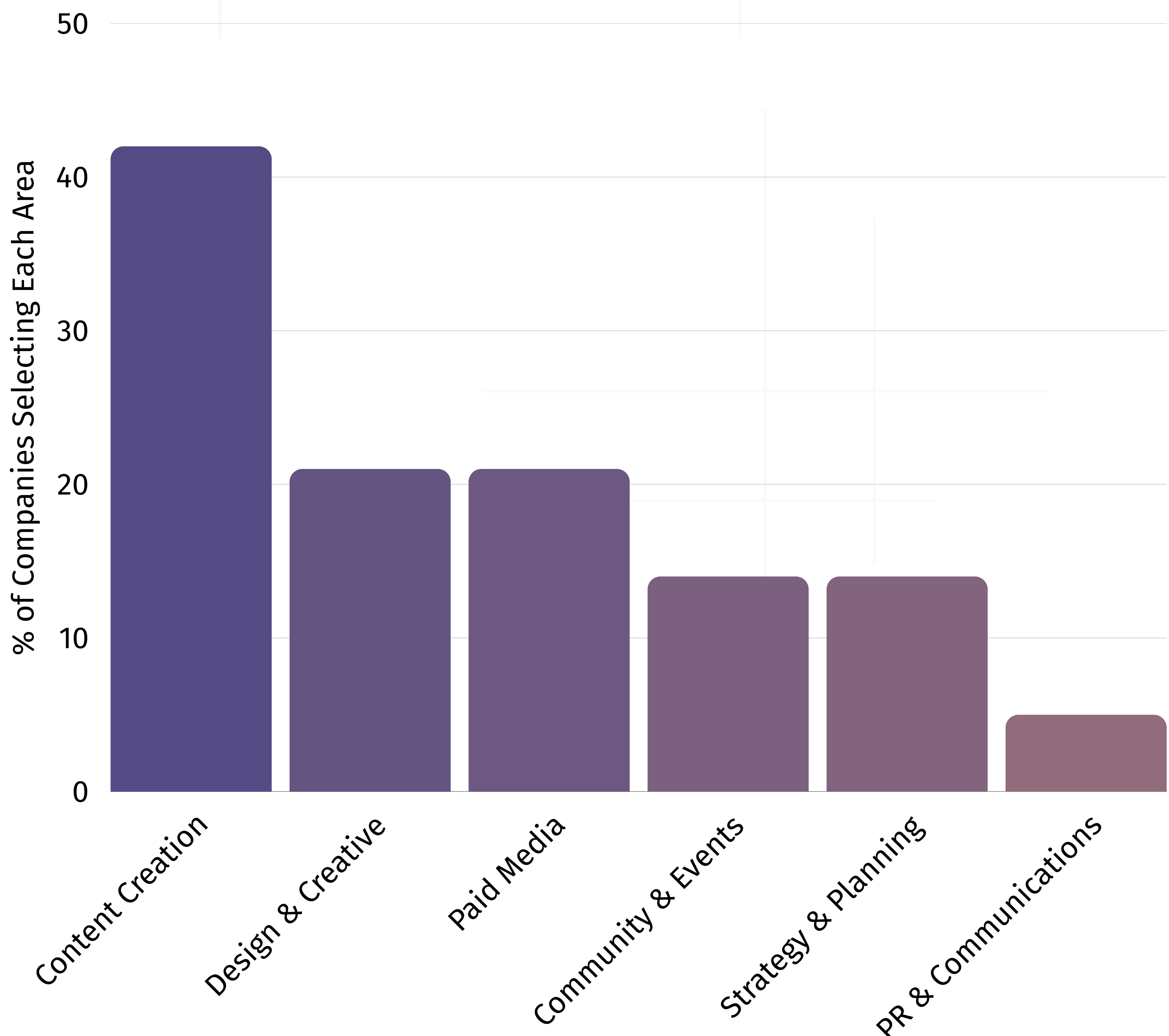


**Key takeaway:** AI helps teams move faster, not think better. Competitive advantage still comes from people with practical knowledge and experience.

# What Developer Marketing Teams outsource

Most teams we surveyed rely on external help for at least some marketing functions: 64.4% currently use external vendors (software and services), and 75% plan to use vendors in 2026.

## What Do Developer Marketing Teams Outsource?





# The Role of External Vendors in Developer Marketing

## Most Teams Use External Vendors

The majority of dev marketing teams rely on outside help for at least *some* functions. Companies that avoid vendors typically have strong "not invented here" cultures that extend across the entire organization. For these teams, it's not that vendors can't meet their needs; they just default to building internally.

## Content Creation Dominates Outsourcing

When we asked what teams outsource, content creation led by a wide margin at 41.9% of respondents. This reinforces that content is central to developer marketing, but internal teams are capacity-constrained. Many content types don't need to come from in-house to deliver value.

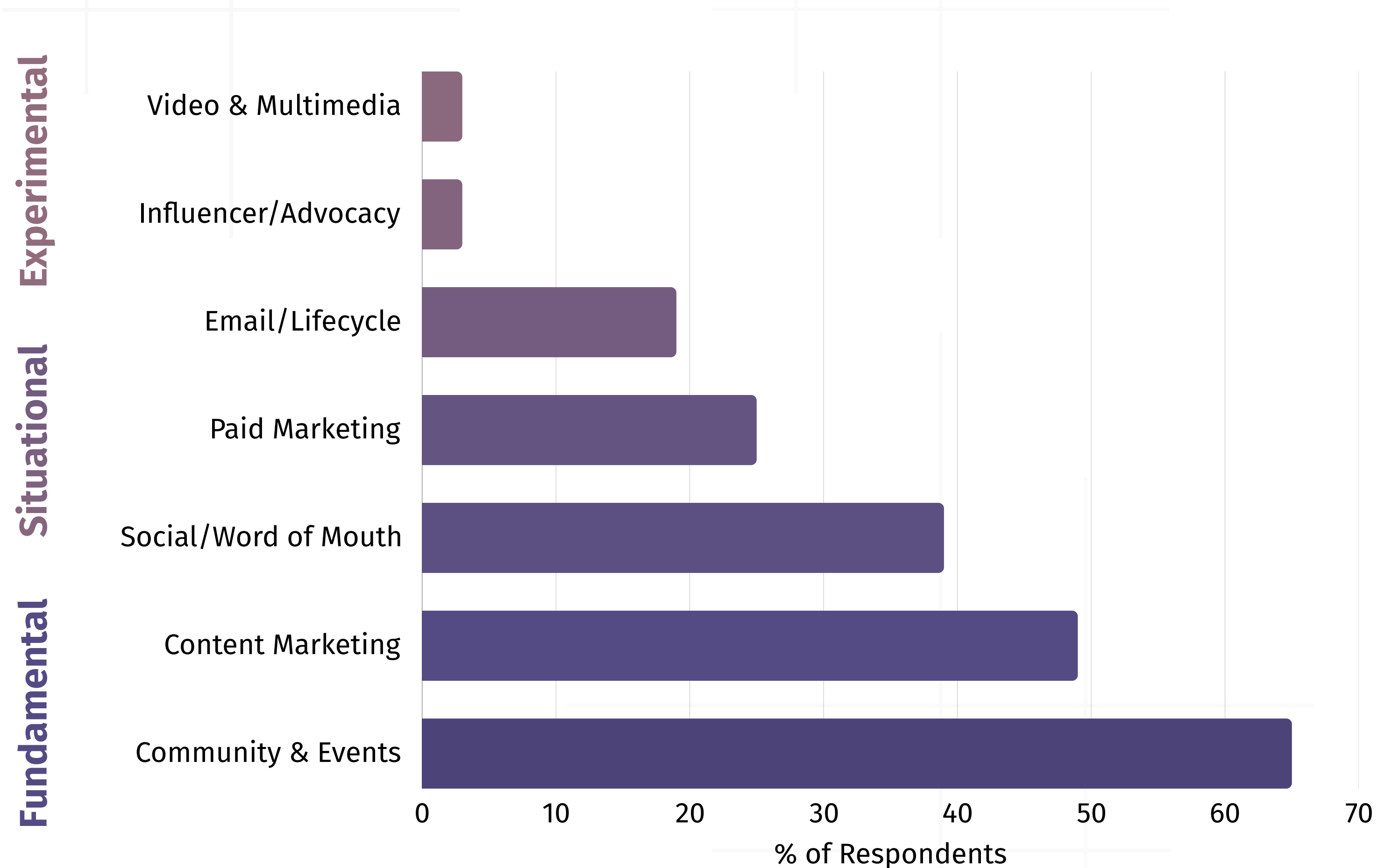
## Community and Events Stay In-House

Community and event management is rarely outsourced, despite strong ROI signals elsewhere in the survey. Teams may want to own these functions because in-person interactions often require people who are fully "bought in" to the company's mission.

**Key takeaway:** Developer marketing teams outsource execution-heavy work like content, design, and paid media, while keeping high-ROI and high-trust functions like community and events in-house.

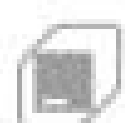
# Which Channels Drive the Best Measurable ROI in Dev Marketing?

In 2026, developer marketing leaders are **doubling down on content and community** as durable growth engines. The strongest returns come from trust-driven channels that scale knowledge, support community, and compound value over time.



This survey was funded and conducted by Draft.dev. We've built and contributed to content growth engines for 100+ developer tools and platforms, giving us unique insight into this market and a vested interest in making this kind of educational material widely available. [Learn more at Draft.dev.](#)

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