

# B2B CONTENT MARKETING

2016 Benchmarks, Budgets,  
and Trends—North America



CONTENT  
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## WELCOME

### Greetings, Content Marketers,

Welcome to the sixth annual *B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America* report.

Over the years, we've talked a lot about content marketing effectiveness. But in your organization, is it even clear what content marketing success or effectiveness looks like? We were surprised to find that 55% don't know.

To be more effective at content marketing, you have to know what success looks like, but that's only the starting point. Best-in-class marketers are more likely than their less effective peers to have a documented content marketing strategy and editorial mission statement. They meet with their teams frequently, experiment with a broader range of tactics, and more.

Read on to learn about the state of content marketing in B2B organizations today and how the most effective marketers stand out. For access to tools to help you become more successful at content marketing, see the back of this report for ways to get in touch.

### On with the content marketing revolution!

**Joe & Ann**



**Joe Pulizzi**

Founder

[Content Marketing Institute](#)



**Ann Handley**

Chief Content Officer  
[MarketingProfs](#)

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

**One key theme that emerged from this year's B2B research is that effective content marketers do several things differently:**

**1**

**They understand what successful content marketing looks like**

**2**

**They document their content marketing strategy**

**3**

**They document their editorial mission statement**

**4**

**They communicate frequently with their team**

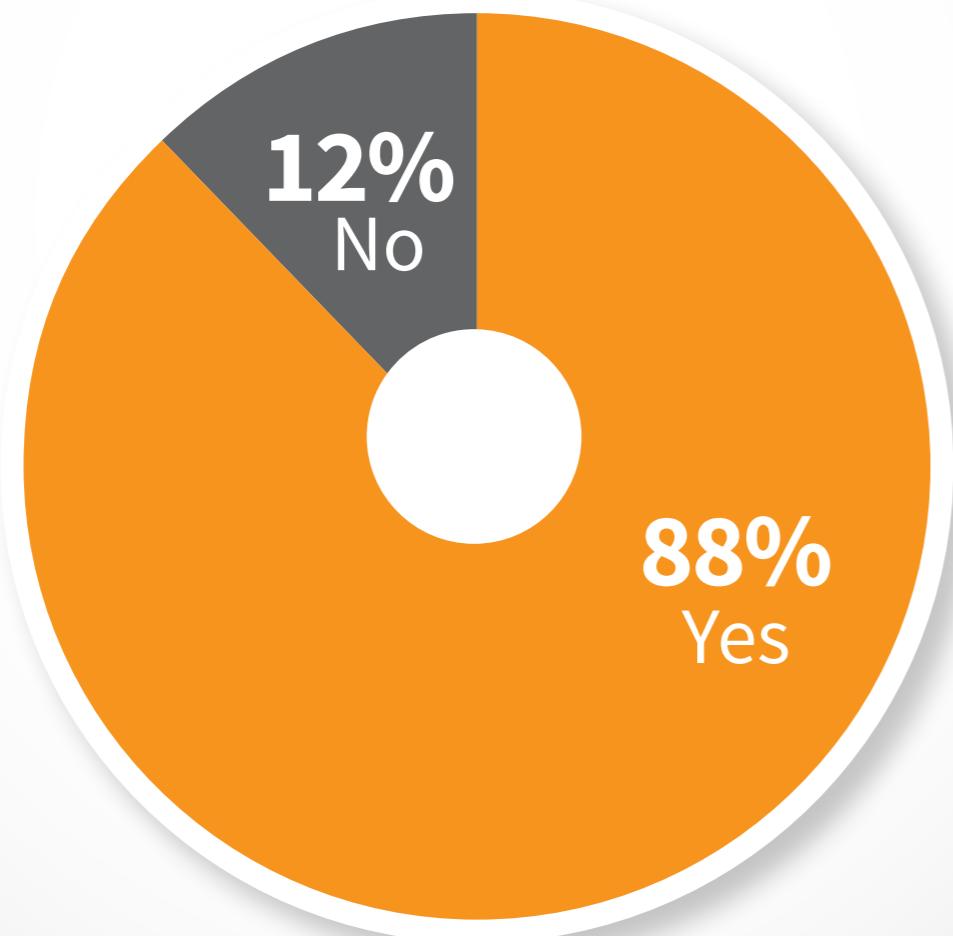
**Here are some key takeaways:**

- Only 30% of B2B marketers say their organizations are effective at content marketing, down from 38% last year. Effectiveness levels are greater among respondents with documentation, clarity around success, good communication, and experience.
- 44% of B2B marketers say their organization is clear on what content marketing success or effectiveness looks like; 55% are unclear or unsure.
- 44% of B2B marketers meet daily or weekly—either in person or virtually—to discuss the progress of their content marketing program; however, the more effective the organization is at content marketing, the more often they meet (61% of the most effective meet daily or weekly).

### Key takeaways continued:

- Fewer B2B marketers have a documented content marketing strategy compared with last year (32% vs. 35%), even though the research consistently shows that those who document their strategy are more effective in nearly all areas of content marketing.
- Respondents' content marketing maturity levels were roughly equally apportioned: approximately one-third were in the early stages; one-third, in the adolescent stage; and one-third, in the sophisticated/mature stage. In general, marketers become more effective as they gain experience, the findings show.
- B2B marketers allocate 28% of their total marketing budget, on average, to content marketing—the same percentage as last year. The most effective allocate 42%, and the most sophisticated/mature allocate 46%.
- Lead generation (85%) and sales (84%) will be the most important goals for B2B content marketers over the next 12 months.
- Over the last six years, B2B marketers have consistently cited website traffic as their most often used metric. This year, however, we also asked them to rate metrics by importance. The most important metrics are sales lead quality (87%), sales (84%), and higher conversion rates (82%).
- B2B marketers, as in years past, continue to be heavily focused on creating engaging content (72%), citing it as the top priority for their internal content creators over the next year.

### Percentage of B2B Respondents Using Content Marketing



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Does your organization use content marketing?

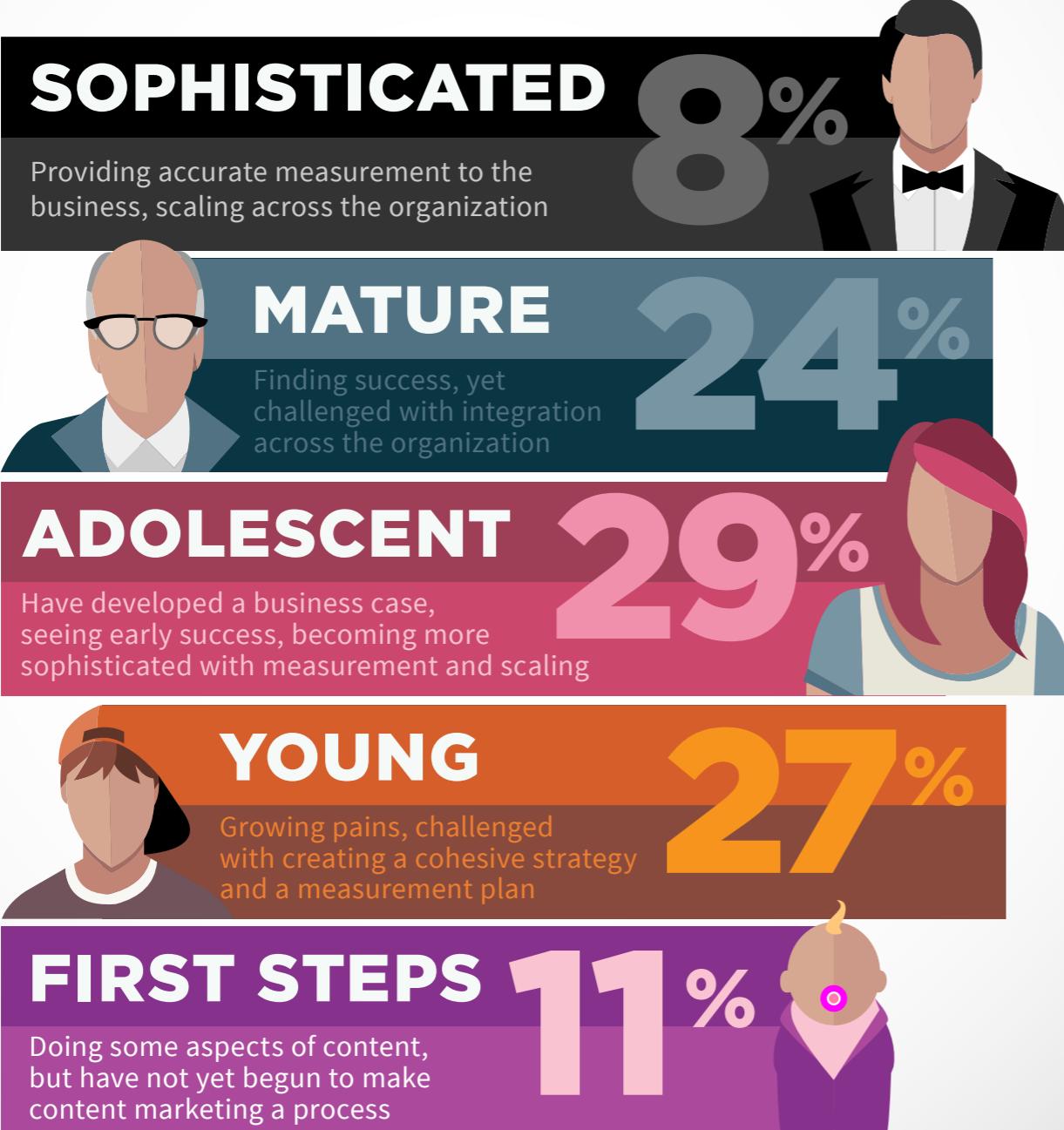
**88%** SAY YES

Last year, 86% of respondents said they use content marketing.

Content marketing is defined as “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

## USAGE & EFFECTIVENESS

### How B2B Marketers Assess Their Content Marketing Maturity Level



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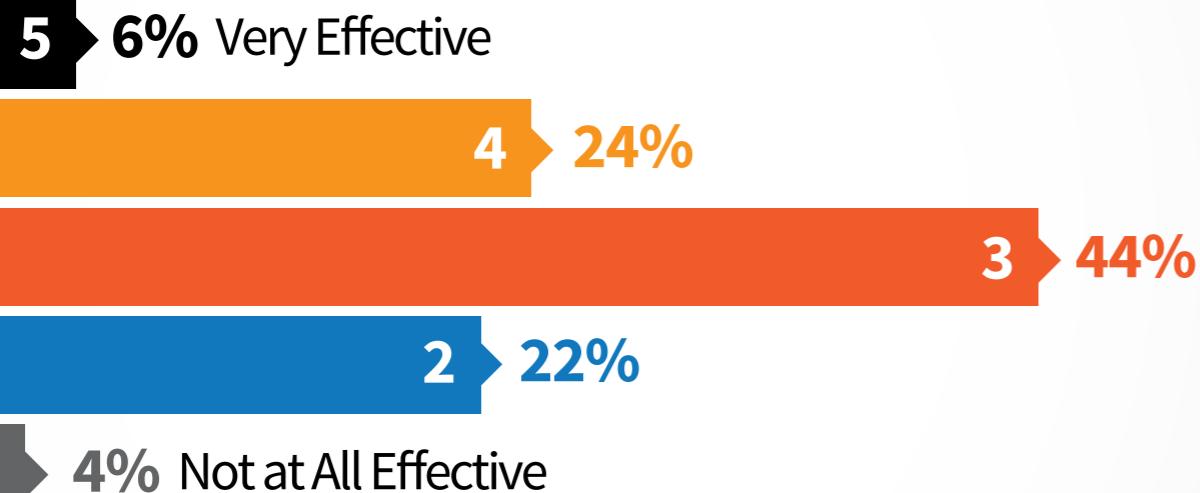
**How would you describe your organization's content marketing maturity level?**

**32%** SAY SOPHISTICATED OR MATURE

This was a new question this year. In general, effectiveness levels are greater among marketers with higher levels of content marketing maturity:

- 64% in the sophisticated/mature phase say they are effective at content marketing
- 23% in the adolescent phase say they are effective at content marketing
- 6% in the young/first steps phase say they are effective at content marketing

### How B2B Marketers Rate the Effectiveness of their Organization's Use of Content Marketing



**Note:** For this survey, we define effectiveness as “accomplishing your overall objectives.” We refer to those who rate their organizations as a 4 or 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “Very Effective” and 1 being “Not at All Effective”) as the “most effective” or “best-in-class” marketers. The 1s and 2s are considered the “least effective,” while the 3s are neutral.

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**Overall, how effective is your organization at content marketing?**

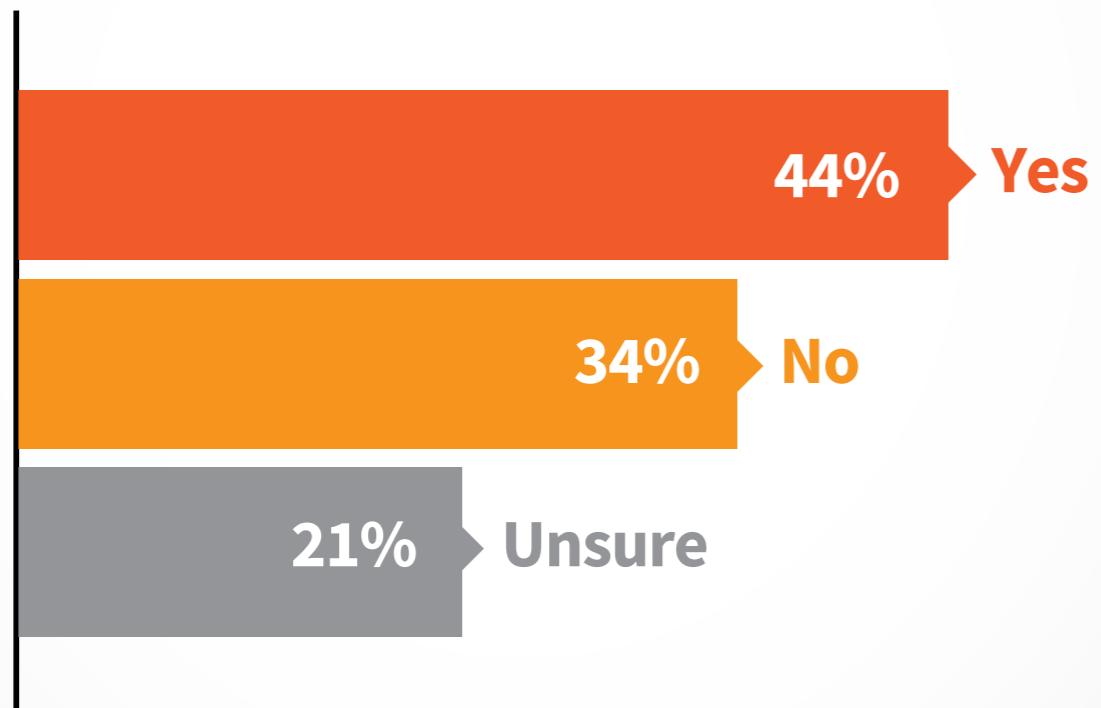
**30%** SAY THEY ARE EFFECTIVE

Last year, 38% of B2B marketers said they were effective.

Effectiveness levels increase with:

- Experience (64% of sophisticated/mature marketers say they are effective)
- A documented content marketing strategy (48%)
- A documented editorial mission statement (49%)
- Organizational clarity on what content marketing success looks like (55%)
- Daily or weekly content marketing meetings (41%)

### Percentage of B2B Marketers Whose Organizations Have Clarity on Content Marketing Success



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

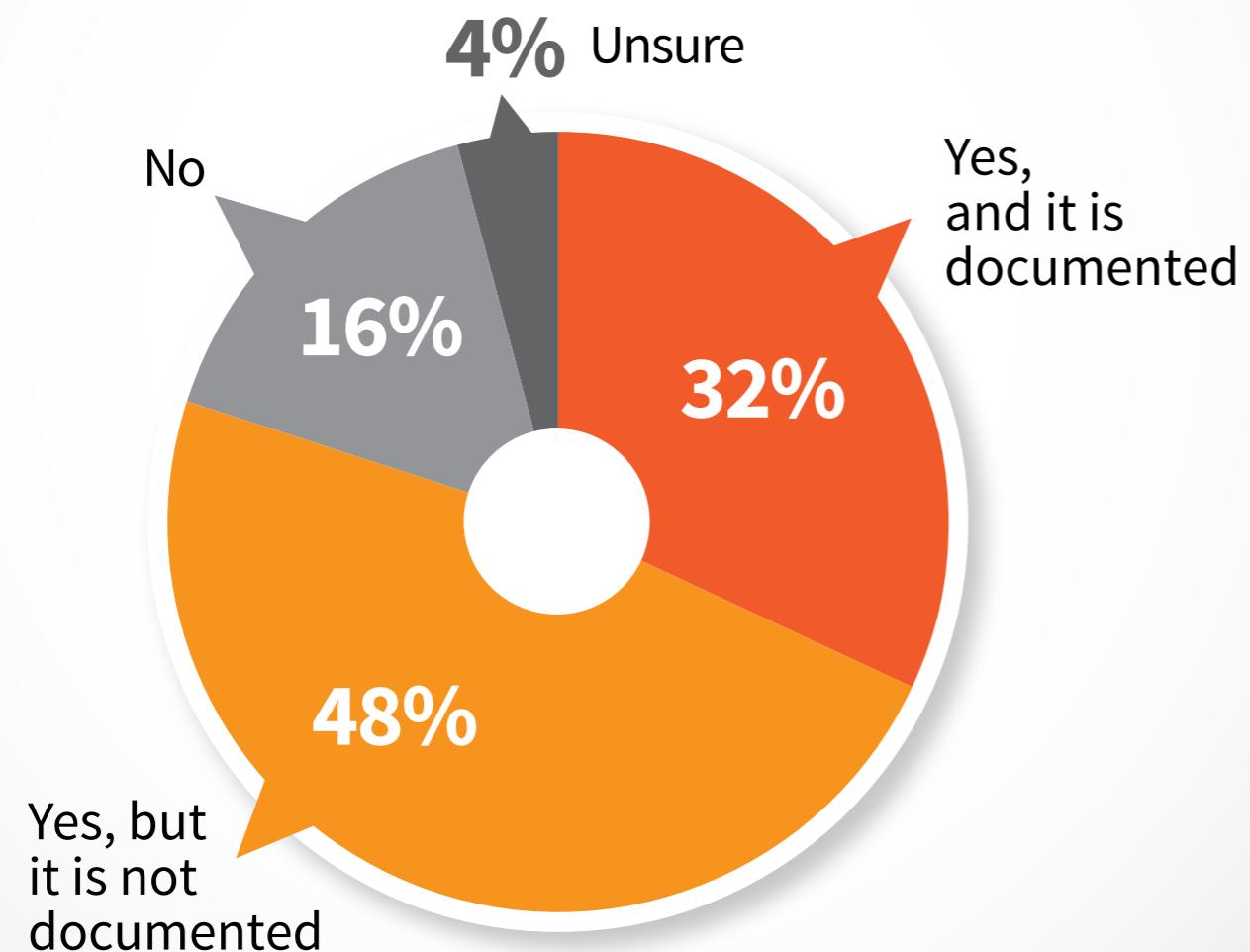
**In your organization,  
is it clear what an effective  
or successful content marketing  
program looks like?**

**44%** SAY YES

B2B marketers whose organizations have a clear vision of content marketing success are more effective than those that do not:

- 79% of the most effective marketers have clarity
- 77% of the least effective marketers lack clarity

### Percentage of B2B Marketers Who Have a Content Marketing Strategy



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

### Does your organization have a content marketing strategy?

**32%**

**HAVE A DOCUMENTED CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY**

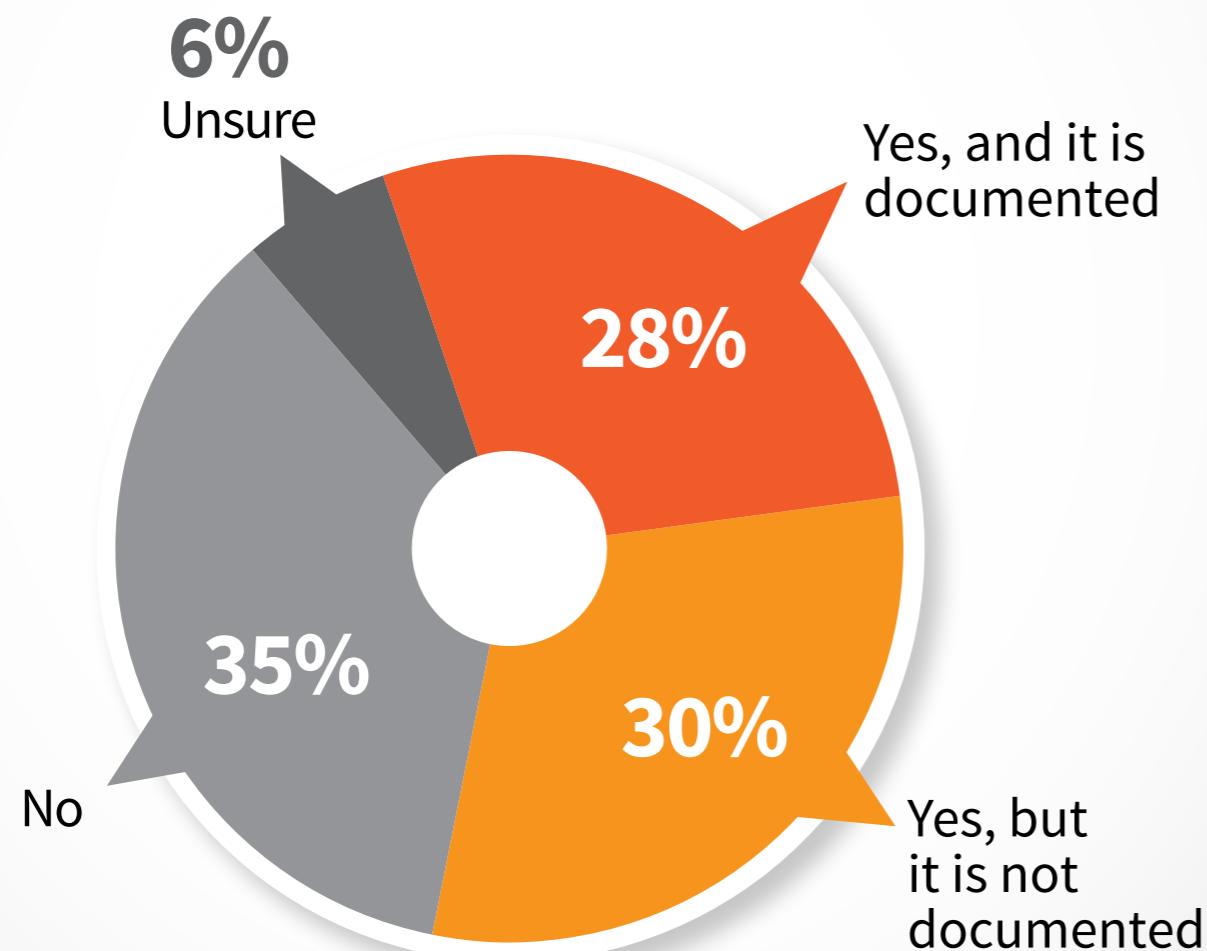
Last year, 35% of B2B marketers had a documented content strategy, 48% had a verbal-only strategy, and 14% had no strategy.

A documented content marketing strategy impacts effectiveness:

- 53% of the most effective marketers have a documented content marketing strategy
- 40% of the least effective marketers have no strategy at all.

B2B marketers who have a documented content marketing strategy get better results from their content marketing tactics, social media platforms, and paid methods of content distribution (i.e., they rate them as more effective when compared with their peers who don't have a documented strategy).

### Percentage of B2B Marketers Who Have an Editorial Mission Statement



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

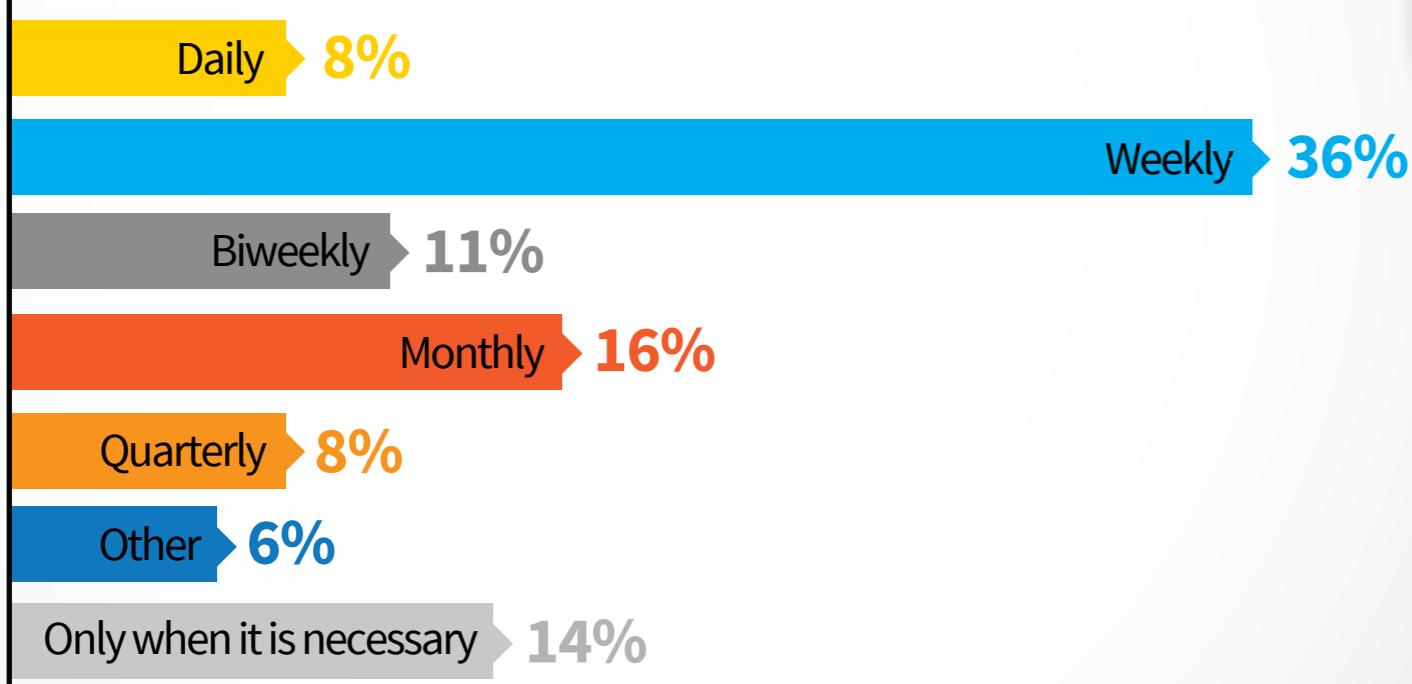
**Does your organization have an editorial mission statement for the primary audience you target?**

**28%** HAVE A DOCUMENTED EDITORIAL MISSION STATEMENT

This was a new question this year. The likelihood of having a documented editorial mission statement increases if the marketer also has a documented content marketing strategy (56% of those with a documented content marketing strategy also have a documented editorial mission statement).

In addition, 48% of the most effective marketers have a documented editorial mission statement.

### How Often B2B Marketers Meet to Discuss Their Content Marketing Program



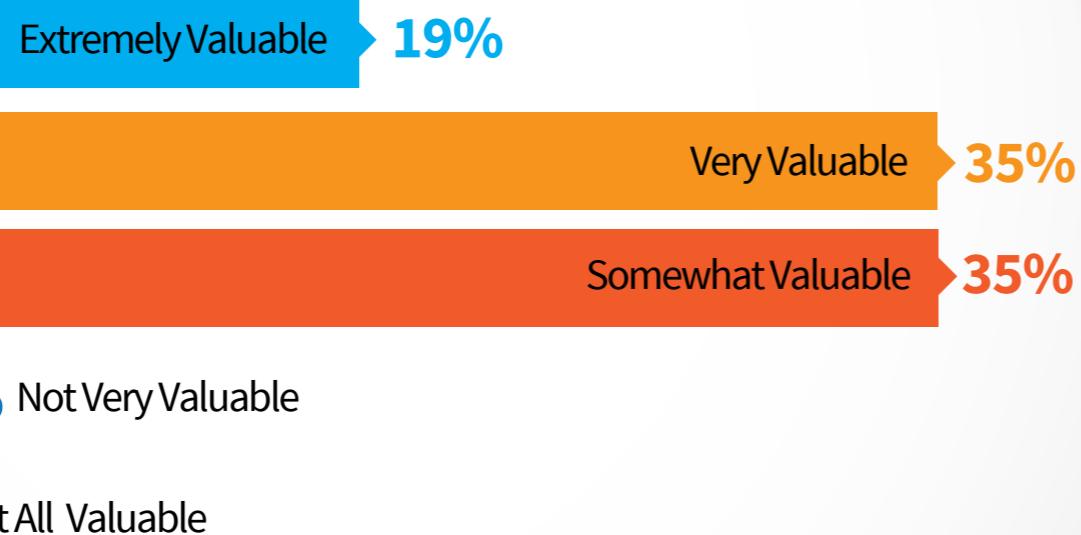
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**How often does your team meet (either in person or virtually) to discuss the progress/results of your content marketing program?**

**44%** SAY DAILY OR WEEKLY

Effectiveness is greater among teams that meet more frequently (61% of the most effective B2B marketers meet daily or weekly).

### How B2B Marketers Perceive the Value of Internal Content Marketing Meetings



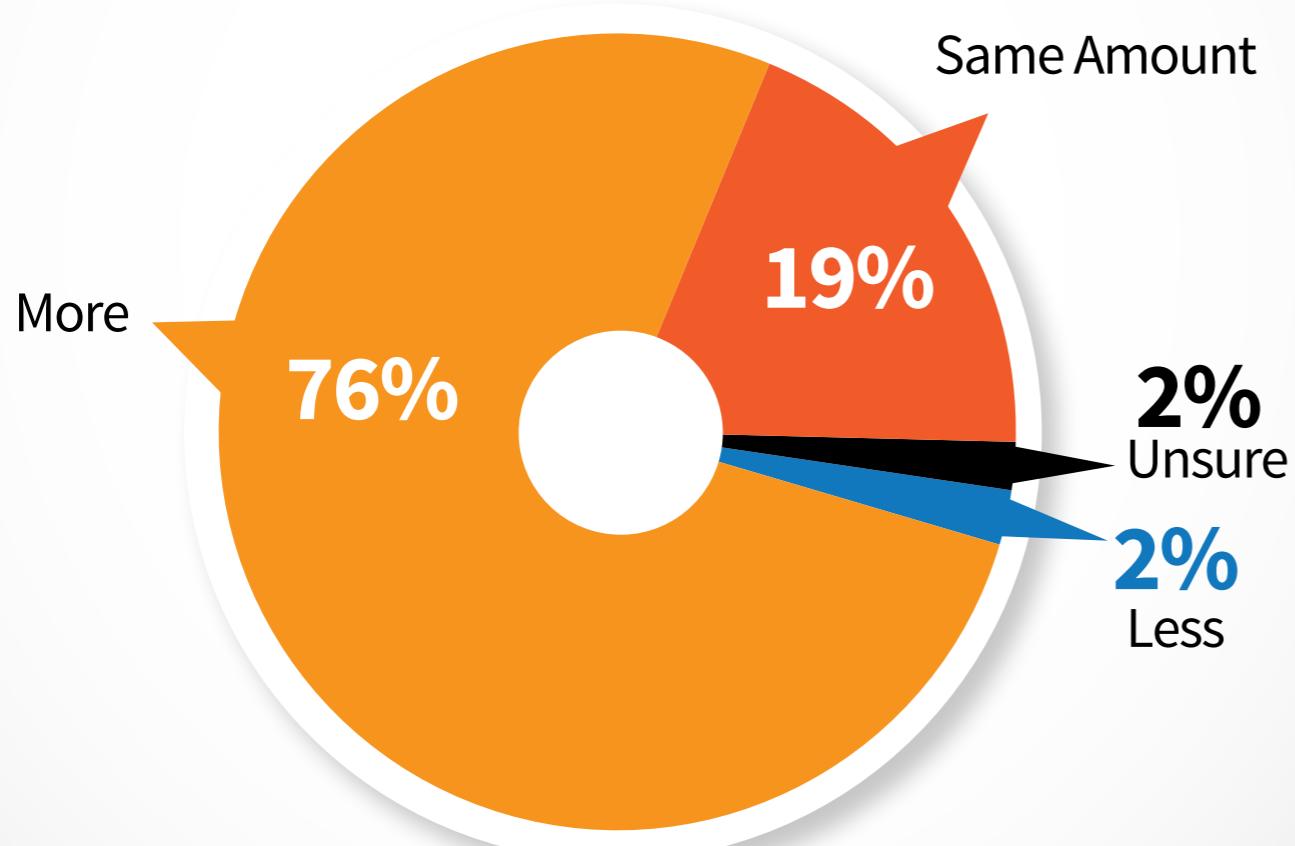
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**How valuable are team meetings in helping your organization to be more effective at content marketing?**

**54%** SAY MEETINGS ARE VALUABLE

B2B marketers who meet daily or weekly are more likely to consider meetings valuable (70%) than those who meet biweekly or monthly (49%).

### Expected Change in B2B Content Creation (2015 vs. 2016)



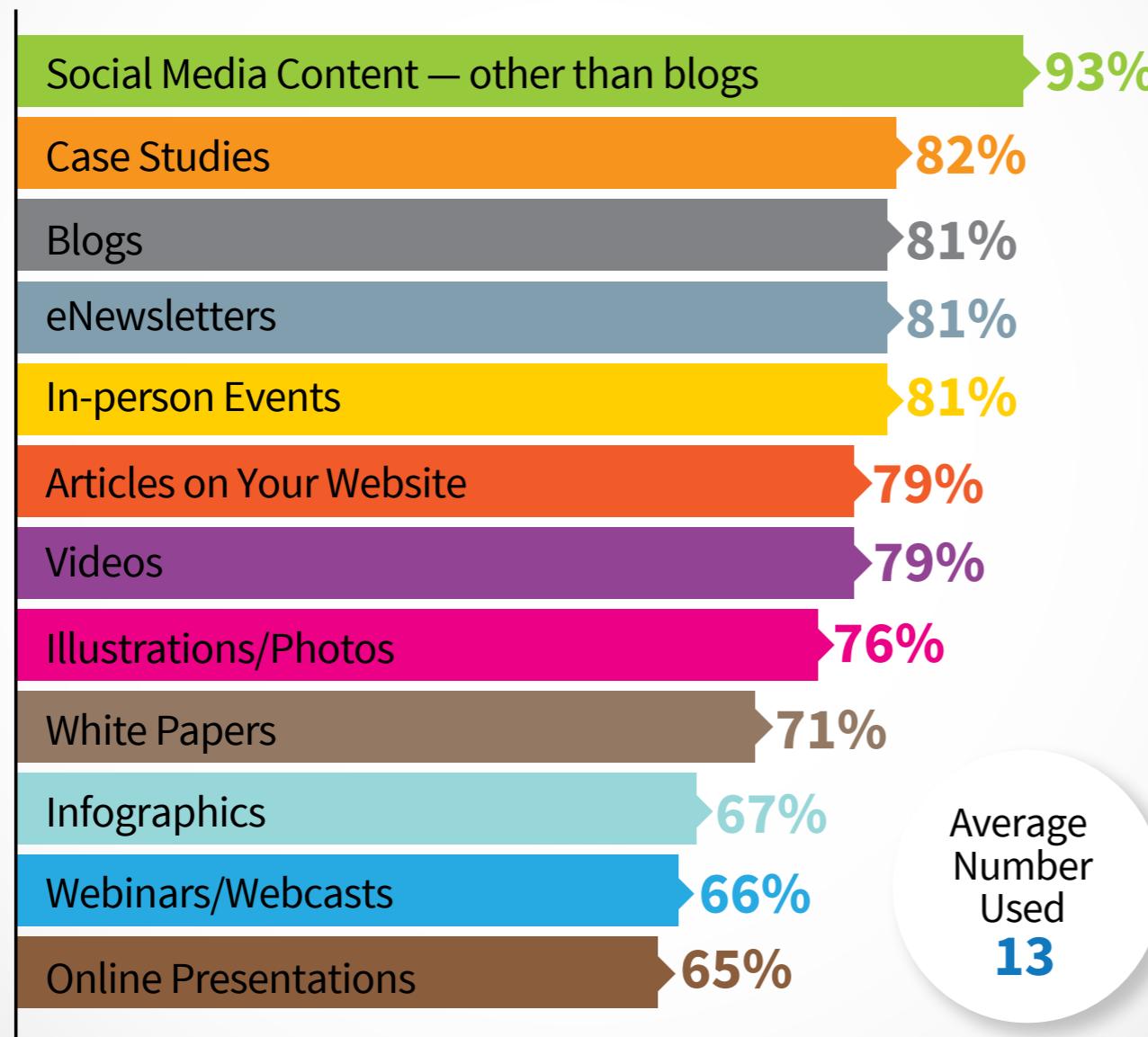
2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

Compared with 2015,  
how much content  
will your organization  
produce in 2016?

**76%** SAY THEY WILL PRODUCE MORE

While 73% of the most effective B2B marketers plan to produce more content, the least effective plan to produce even more (81%).

### B2B Content Marketing Tactic Usage



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

### Which content marketing tactics does your organization use?

**93%** USE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

These results are similar to last year's findings. Illustrations/photos was the tactic with the biggest jump in usage (from 69% last year to 76% this year).

**Note:** Fewer than 50% of B2B marketers said they use the following tactics: Research Reports (49%), Microsites/ Separate Website Hubs (47%), Branded Content Tools (42%), eBooks (39%), Print Magazines (36%), Books (30%), Digital Magazines (29%), Mobile Apps (28%), Virtual Conferences (25%), Podcasts (23%), Print Newsletters (22%), and Games/Gamification (12%).

### Effectiveness Ratings for B2B Tactics



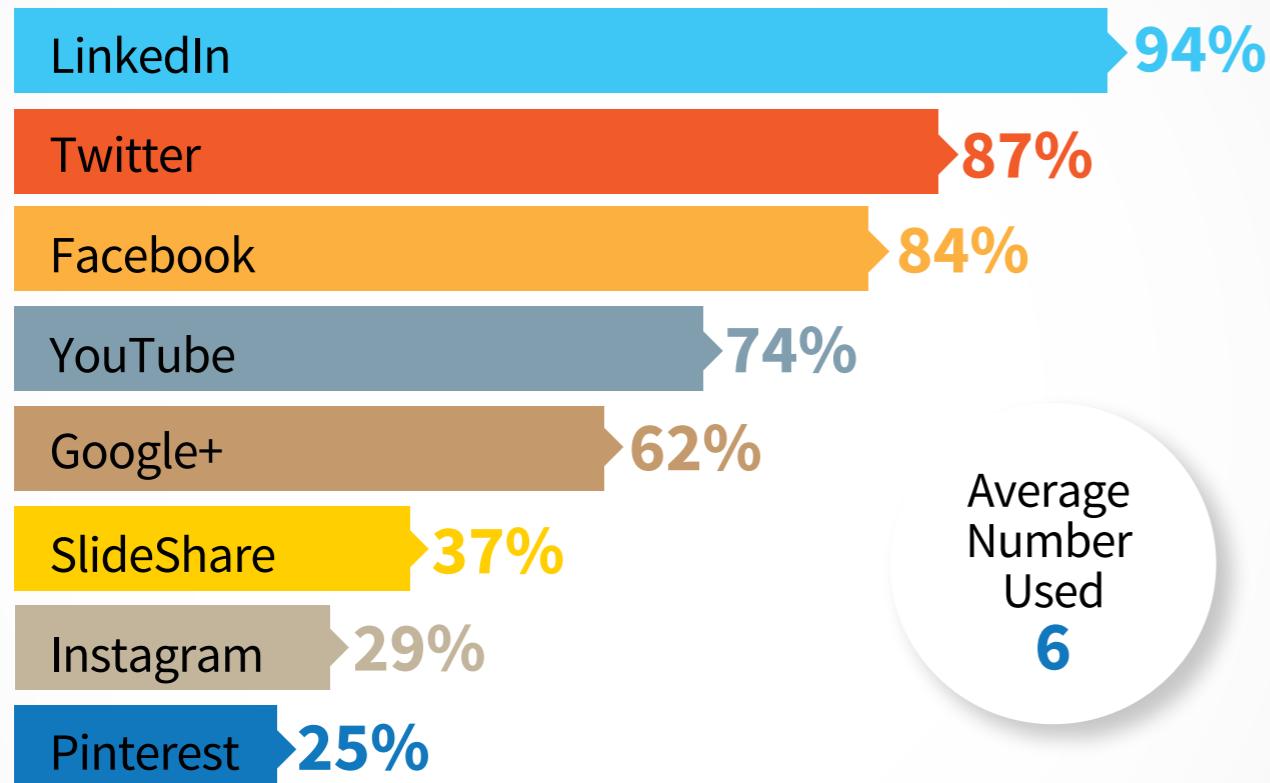
2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

### How effective are the tactics your organization uses?

**75%** SAY IN-PERSON EVENTS ARE EFFECTIVE

In-person events, which has been rated the most effective tactic for the last six years, increased from 69% to 75%. Effectiveness ratings increased for all the other tactics shown here as well, except for blogs (60% last year vs. 59% this year). The biggest increase was for infographics (50% last year vs. 58% this year).

### B2B Content Marketing Social Media Platform Usage



**Note:** Fewer than 25% of B2B marketers said they use the following social media platforms: Vimeo (21%), iTunes (10%), Tumblr (9%), Vine (7%), Medium (6%), Periscope (6%), and SnapChat (5%).

2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

### Which social media platforms does your organization use to distribute content?

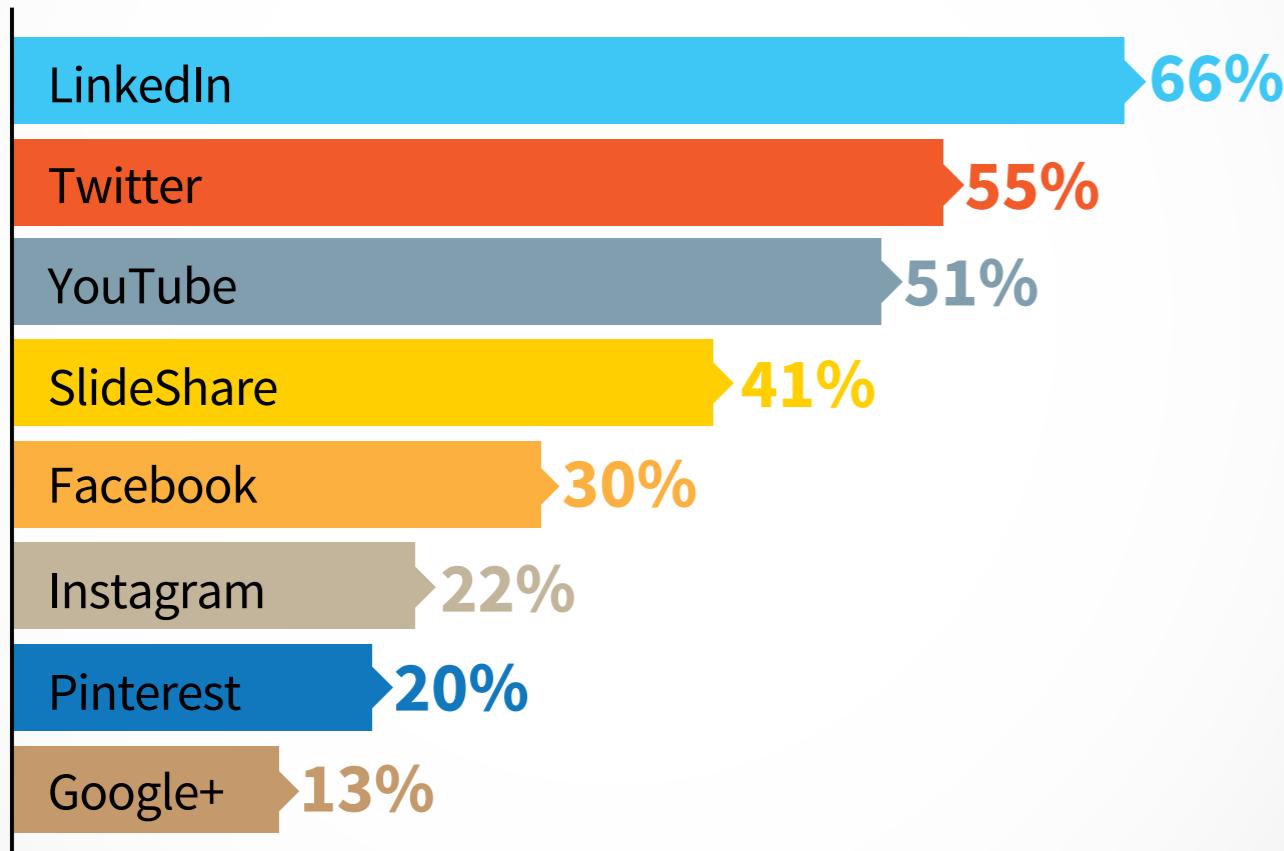
**94%** USE LinkedIn

LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube remain the top 4 social media platforms. Compared with last year, there haven't been major increases or decreases in their use.

Last year, the use of Google+ had risen 9 percentage points from the previous year. This year, it decreased slightly (from 64% to 62%).

SlideShare and Pinterest use decreased (by 4 and 8 percentage points, respectively). Instagram use increased from 24% to 29%.

### Effectiveness Ratings for B2B Social Media Platforms



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

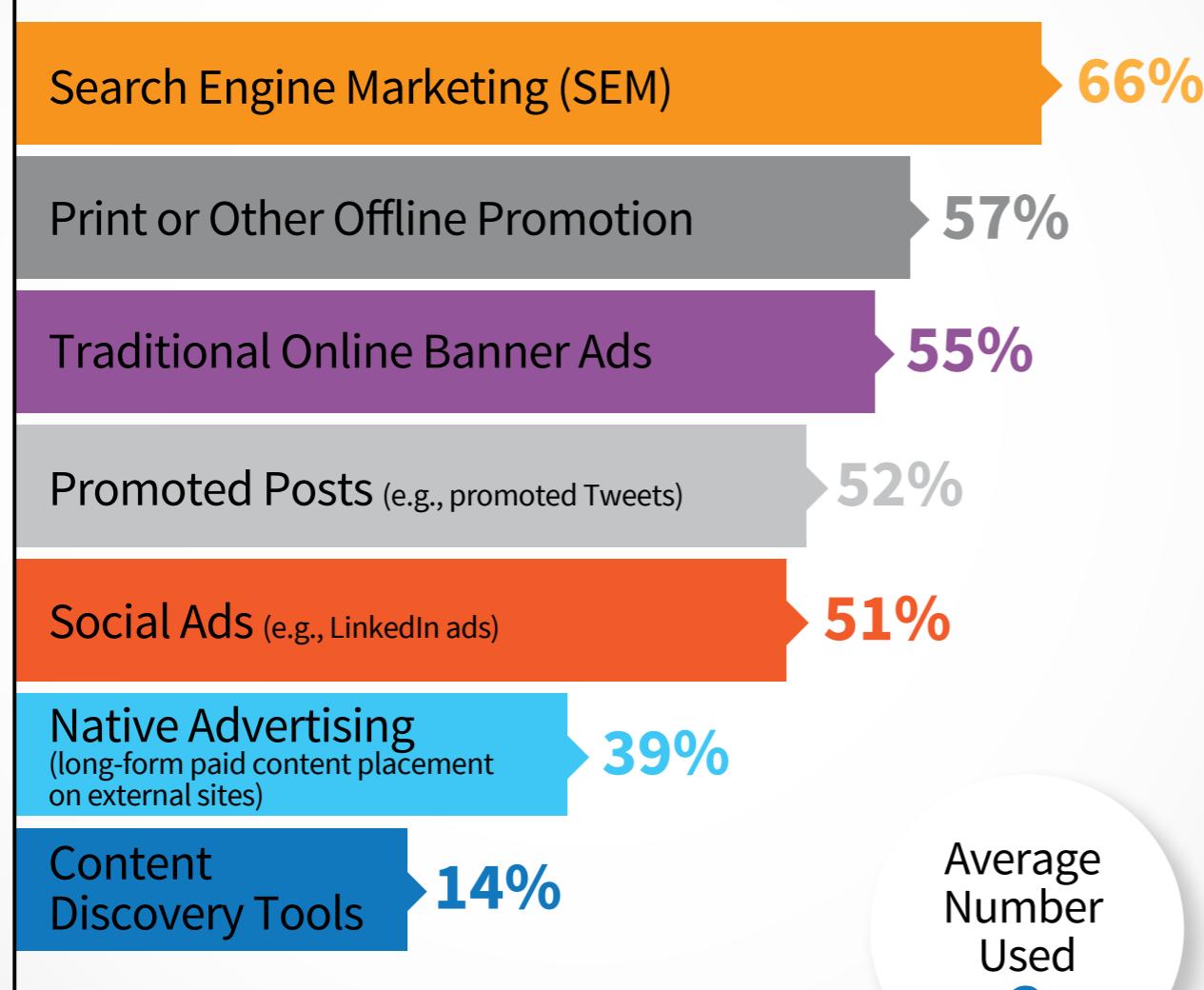
**How effective are the social media platforms your organization uses?**

**66%** SAY LinkedIn IS EFFECTIVE

Once again, B2B marketers rated LinkedIn most effective (64% last year vs. 66% this year). The effectiveness ratings of YouTube and Instagram also increased slightly, and Twitter's rating stayed the same.

The effectiveness rating of Facebook decreased slightly over the last year. The ratings of Pinterest (-5%) and Google+ (-7%) decreased most.

### B2B Paid Advertising Usage



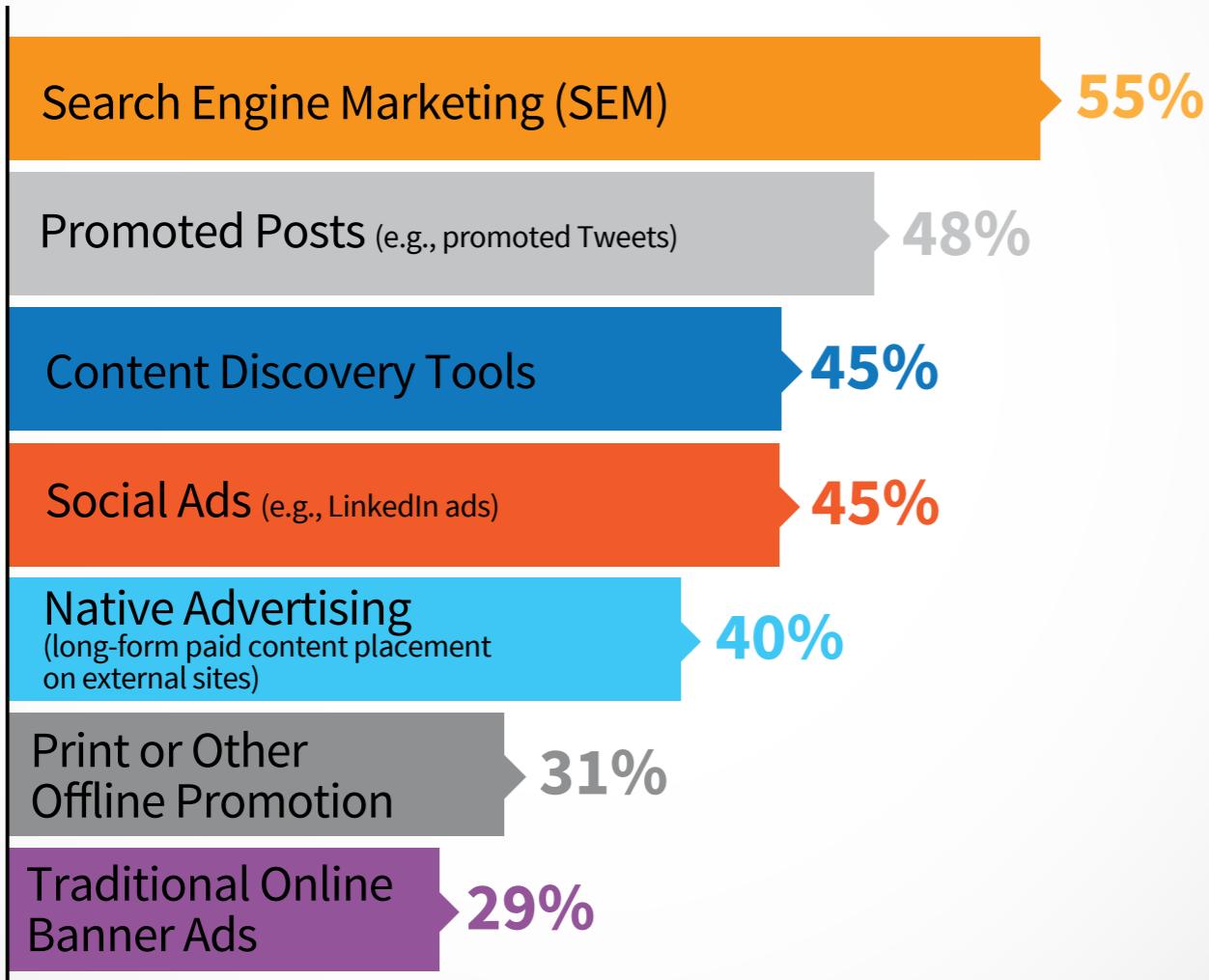
2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

**Which paid advertising methods does your organization use to promote/distribute content?**

**66%** USE SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM)

For the second consecutive year, search engine marketing (SEM) is the paid method that B2B marketers use most frequently. The use of all of these methods has increased over the last year. The largest increase was for promoted posts (42% last year vs. 52% this year).

### Effectiveness Ratings for B2B Paid Advertising Methods



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

**How effective are the paid advertising methods your organization uses to distribute content?**

**55%** SAY SEM IS EFFECTIVE

Once again, B2B marketers say search engine marketing (SEM) is the most effective paid method for promoting/distributing content.

The effectiveness ratings for all of these paid methods have increased over the last year. The largest effectiveness rating increase was for content discovery tools (36% last year vs. 45% this year).

### Content Offers B2B Marketers Ask Audience to Subscribe to



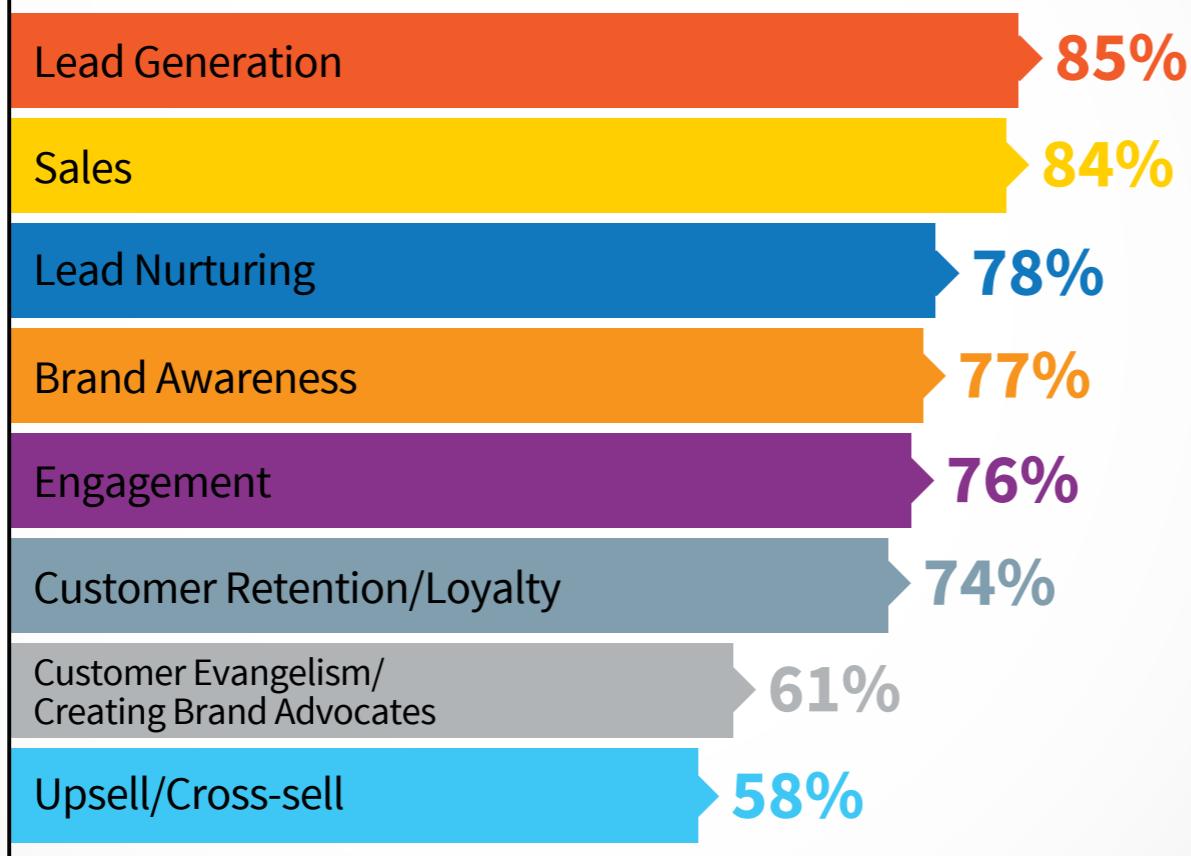
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**Which content offers does your organization ask its audience to subscribe to?**

**72%** SAY eNEWSLETTERS

87% of respondents extend at least one offer. Even the most effective marketers and those whose content marketing level is sophisticated/mature tend to focus most on eNewsletters and blogs.

### Organizational Goals for B2B Content Marketing



**Note:** Percentages comprise marketers who rated each goal a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 5 = "Very Important" and 1 = "Not at All Important."

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**How important will each of these content marketing goals be to your organization in the next 12 months?**

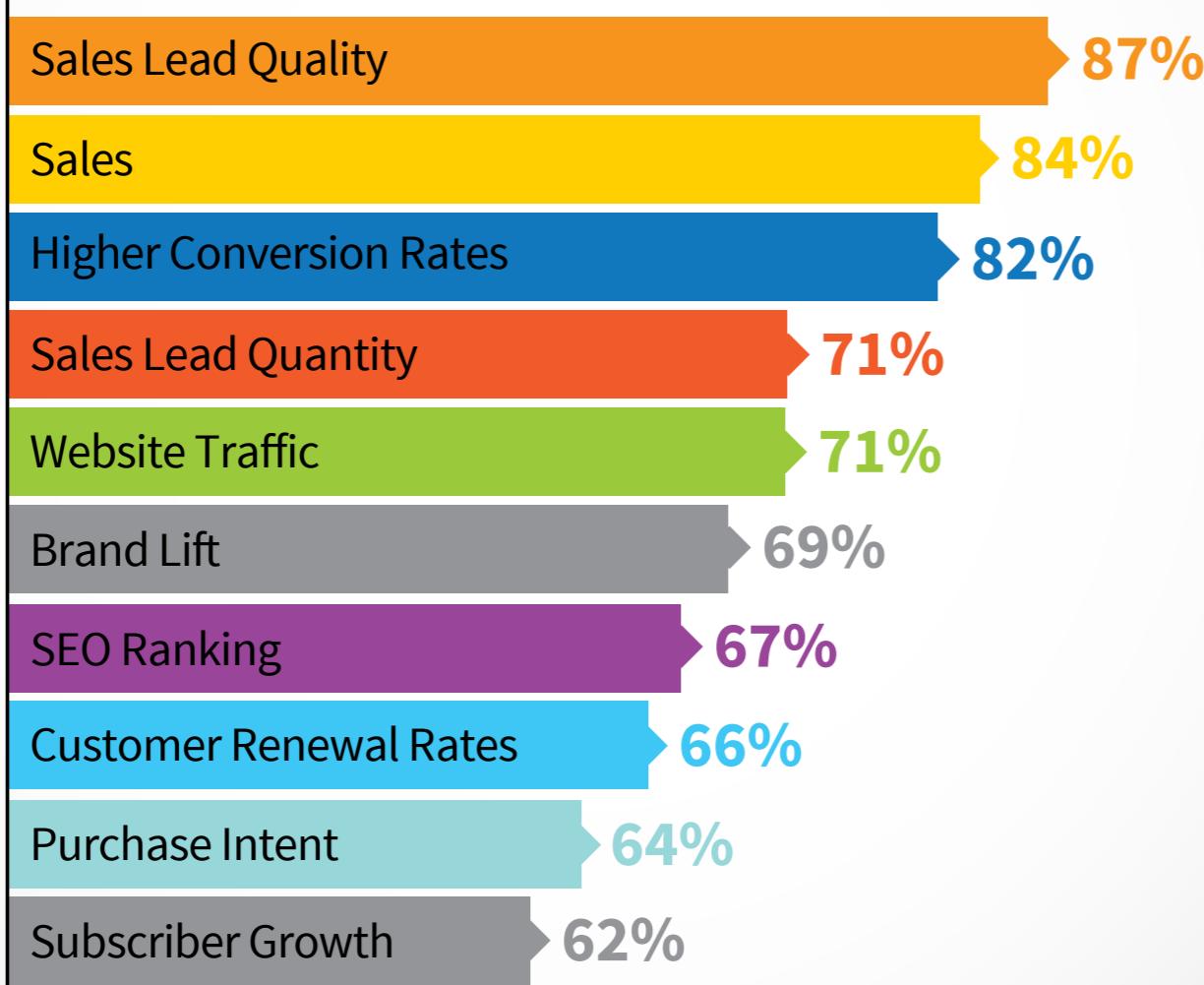
**85%** SAY LEAD GENERATION IS THE MOST IMPORTANT GOAL

Lead generation and sales, in that order, are the two most important content marketing goals of most B2B marketers, no matter what their effectiveness level is or whether they have a documented strategy and editorial mission statement.

The exceptions:

- Organizations that are in the first steps of their content marketing program place greater emphasis on sales (85%) than lead gen (78%).
- Enterprise marketers (1,000+ employees) say engagement is their most important goal (82%), followed by sales (81%), and lead gen (79%).

### Most Important Metrics B2B Content Marketers Use



2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

## How important are the metrics your organization uses?

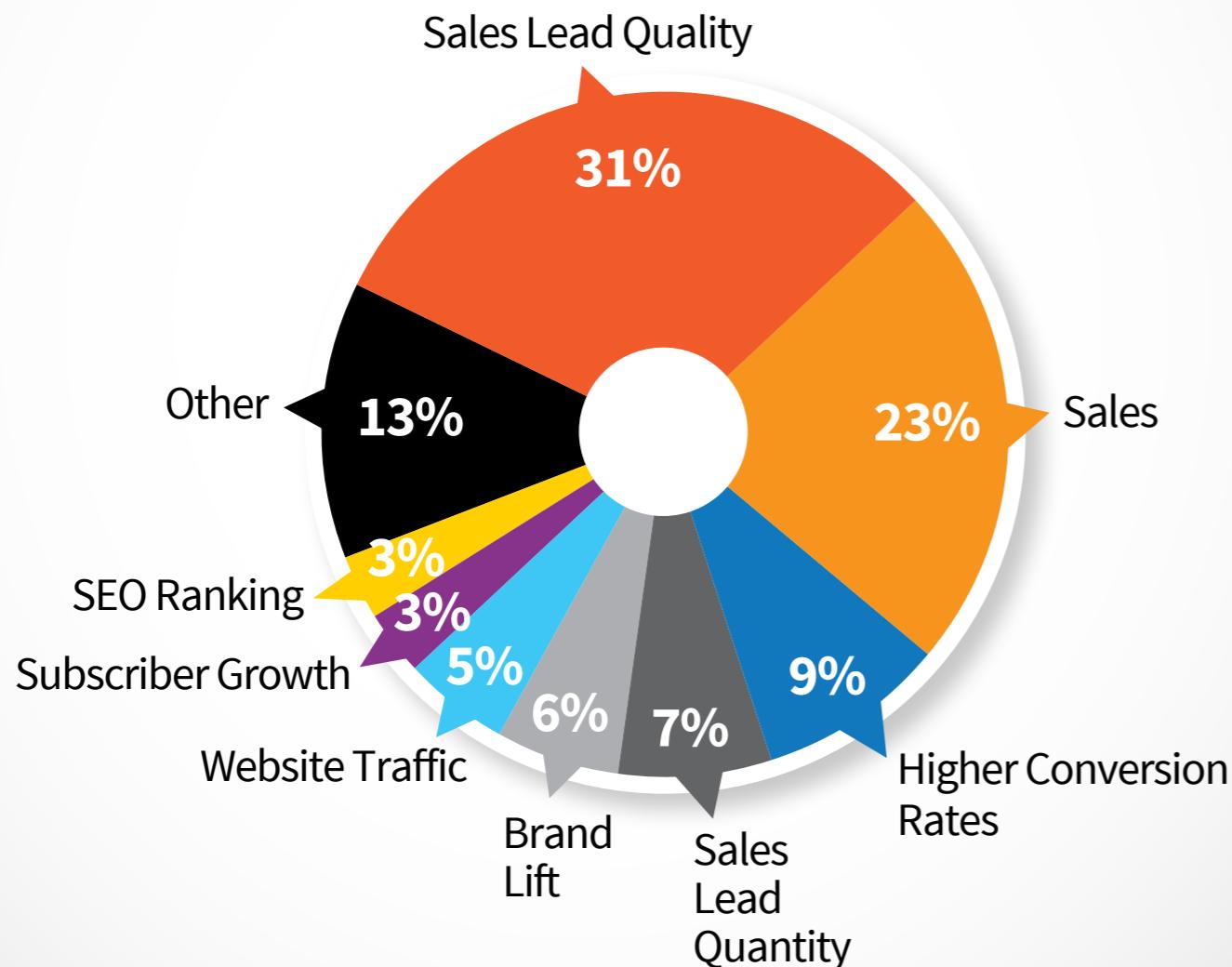
**Sales lead quality, sales, and higher conversion rates top the list**

Regardless of how effective they are at content marketing, B2B marketers consistently cite sales lead quality, sales, and higher conversion rates as the top 3 most important metrics.

**Note:** Percentages comprise marketers who rated each metric a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 5 = "Very Important" and 1 = "Not at All Important."

**Note:** Additional metrics rated as important were Qualitative Feedback from Customers (61%), Data Capture (60%), Time Spent on Website (59%), Inbound Links (54%), Social Media Sharing (50%), and Cost Savings (36%).

### The Most Important Metric B2B Content Marketers Use



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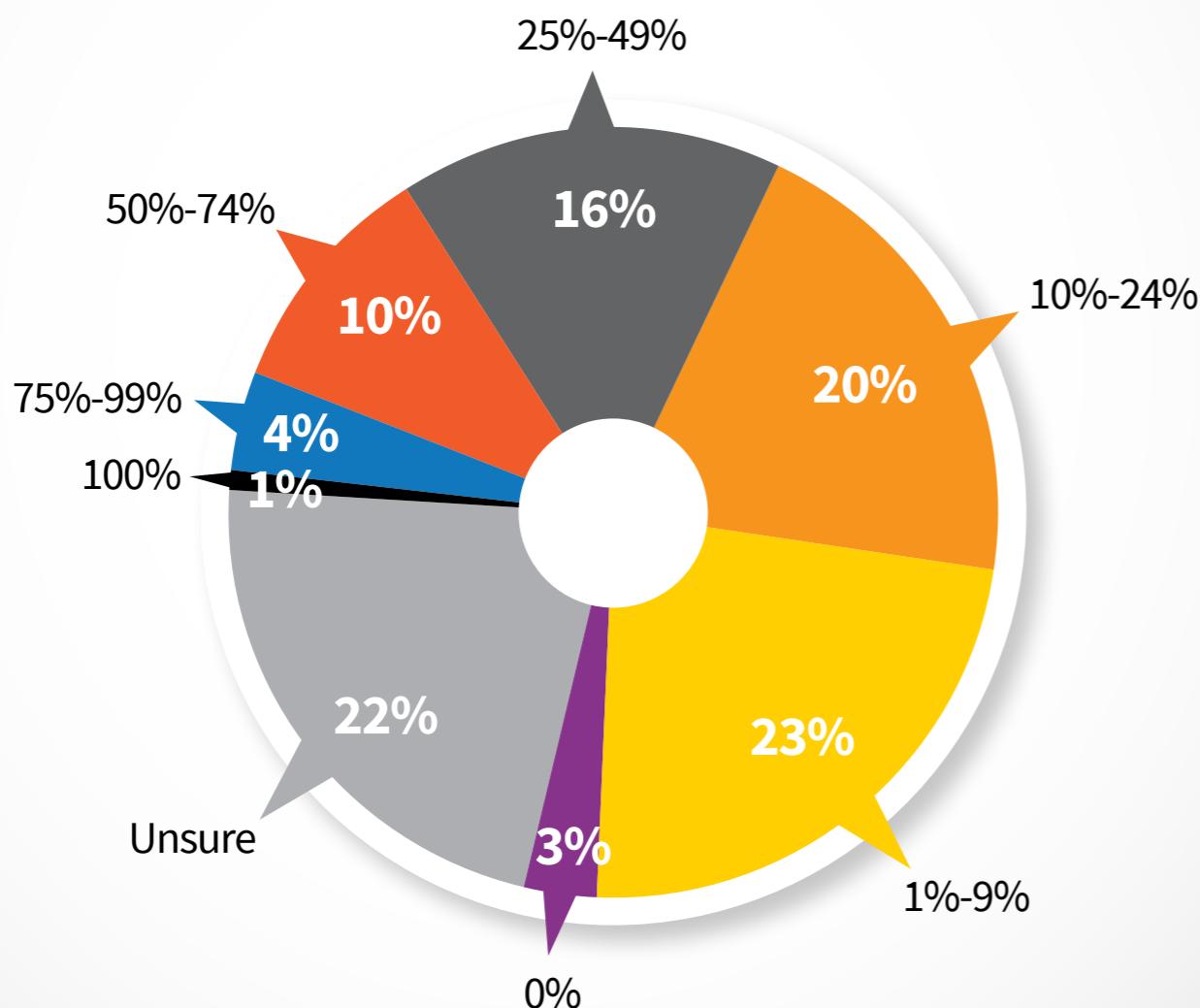
**What is THE MOST important metric your organization uses?**

**31%** SAY SALES LEAD QUALITY

Most B2B marketers say sales lead quality is the most important metric. The exception is micro-size organizations (1-9 employees), which are more focused on sales (32%) than sales lead quality (24%).

## BUDGETS & SPENDING

### Percentage of Total Marketing Budget Spent on B2B Content Marketing



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**Approximately what percentage of your organization's total marketing budget (not including staff) is spent on content marketing?**

**28% IS THE AVERAGE**

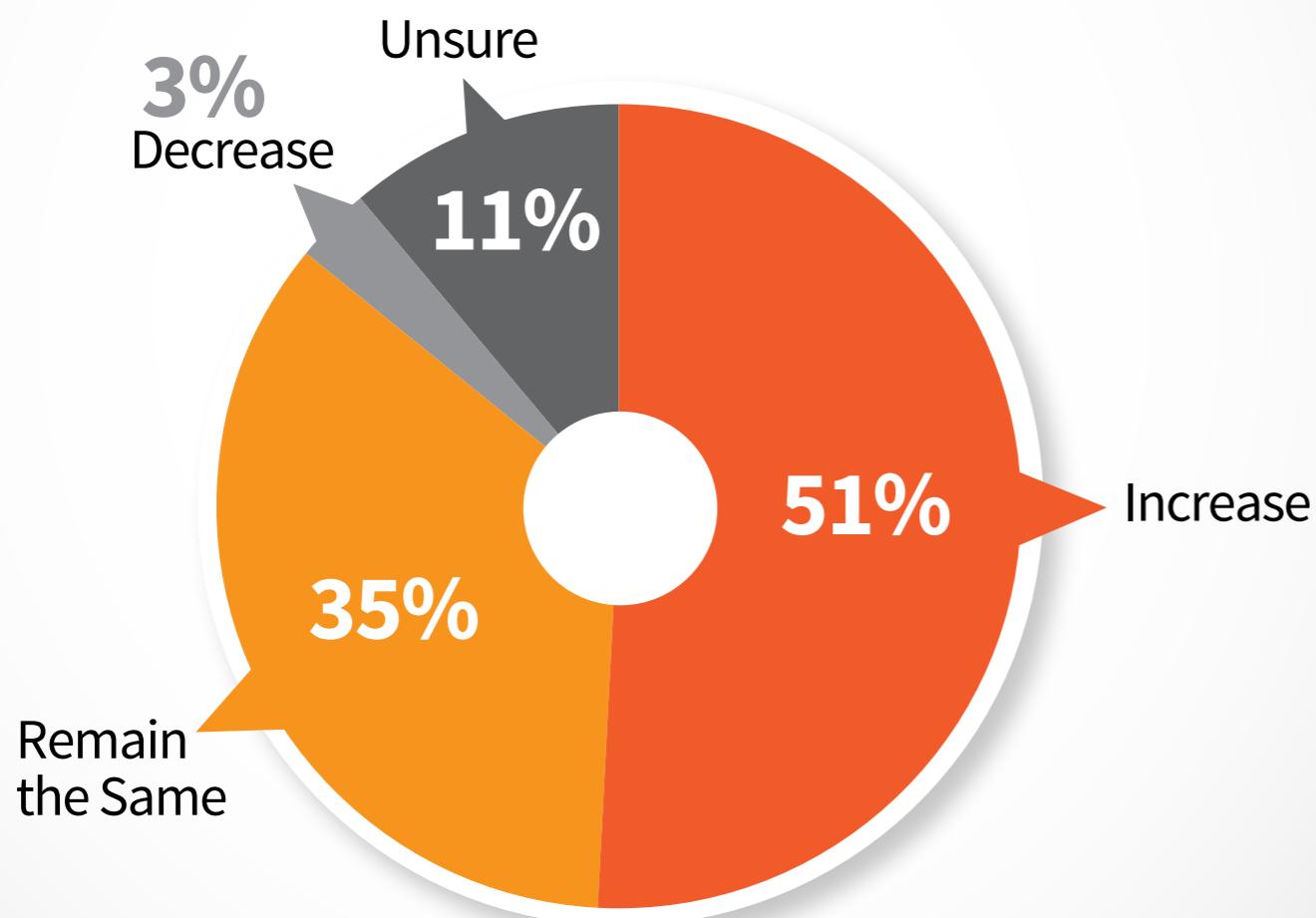
The average proportion of total marketing budget allocated to content marketing last year was also 28%.

There is a correlation between effectiveness and the amount of budget allocated. The most effective B2B marketers allocate 42%, on average (up from 37% last year), whereas the least effective allocate 15% (down from 16% last year).

B2B marketers whose content marketing maturity level is sophisticated allocate the most (46%).

## BUDGETS & SPENDING

### B2B Content Marketing Spending (Over Next 12 Months)



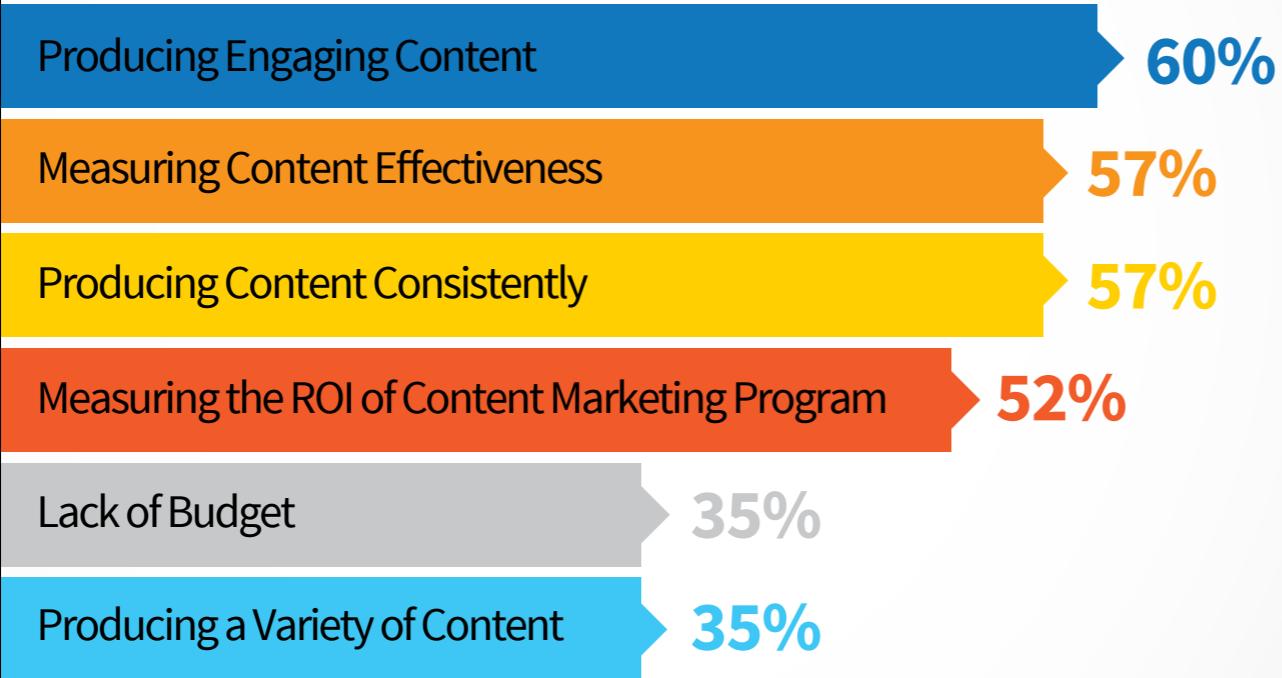
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**How do you expect your organization's content marketing budget to change in the next 12 months?**

**51%** SAY THEY WILL INCREASE SPENDING

More than half of B2B marketers plan to increase their content marketing budget. Even 57% of those who are least effective at content marketing plan to increase their budget.

### Top Challenges for B2B Content Marketers



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### What are your organization's top five content marketing challenges this year?

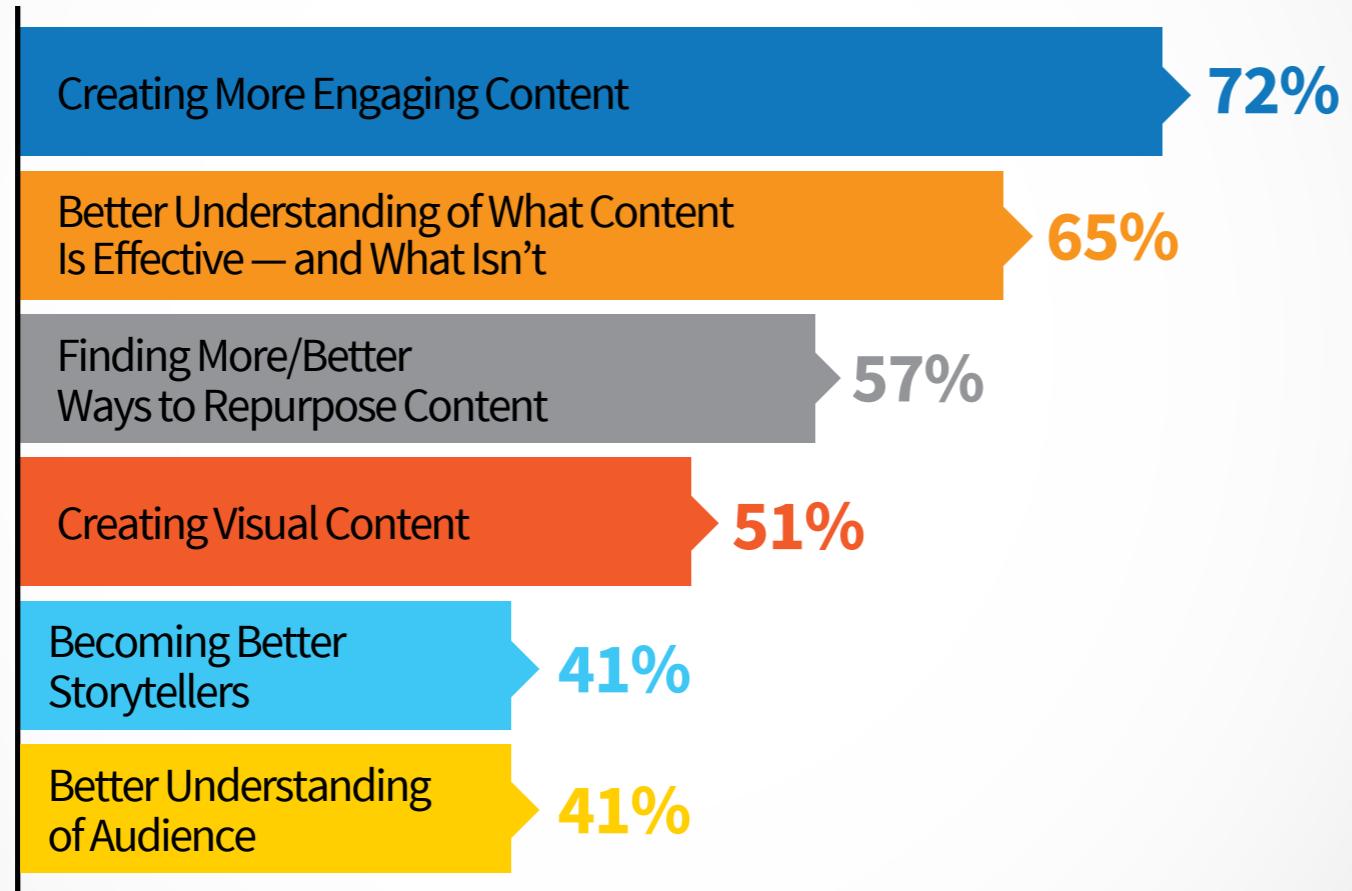
**60%** SAY PRODUCING ENGAGING CONTENT

This year, we asked B2B marketers to select their top 5 challenges from a list that also included the following:

- Gaps in knowledge and skills of internal team (25%)
- Understanding/choosing technology that we need (24%)
- Lack of integration across marketing (23%)
- Finding or training skilled content marketing professionals/content creators (21%)
- Lack of buy-in/vision from higher-ups (19%)
- Implementing the technology that we already have in place (18%)
- Other (6%)
- No challenges (1%)

The most effective B2B marketers are more challenged with measuring content effectiveness (53%) than they are with producing engaging content (49%). The same is true for those who are sophisticated/mature in content marketing (54% vs. 51%).

### Top Priorities for B2B Content Creators



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**What are the top five priorities that your organization's content creators will focus on this year?**

This year, we asked B2B marketers to select their top 5 priorities for internal content creators from a list that also included the following:

- Content optimization (38%)
- Content curation (22%)
- Content personalization (20%)
- Becoming stronger writers (19%)
- Other (3%)
- No priorities this year (2%)

Creating more engaging content was also the top priority last year, no matter how effective the marketer or what size the company.

Creating more engaging content is an even bigger priority for those who are in the first steps of their content marketing maturity program (82%); that group is highly focused on producing engaging content, with their second priority (better understanding of what content is effective) trailing far behind (64%).

## COMPARISON CHART

# Profile of a Best-in-Class B2B Content Marketer

	Most Effective	Average/Overall	Least Effective
Organization is clear on what an effective or successful content marketing program looks like	79%	44%	23%
Describes organization as sophisticated/mature	70%	32%	4%
Meets daily or weekly to discuss content marketing program	61%	44%	25%
Finds meetings extremely or very valuable	72%	54%	38%
Has a documented content marketing strategy	53%	32%	13%
Has a documented editorial mission statement	48%	28%	14%
Average number of tactics used	15	13	11
Average number of social media platforms used	7	6	5
Average number of paid advertising methods used	4	3	3
Percentage of total marketing budget allocated to content marketing	42%	28%	15%
Plans to increase content marketing budget in next 12 months	48%	51%	57%

**Chart term definitions:** A “best-in-class” content marketer (aka “most effective”) is one who rates his or her organization a 4 or 5 in effectiveness on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “Very Effective” and 1 being “Not at All Effective.” Those who rate their organization a 1 or 2 are “least effective.” The numbers under “average/overall” represent total respondents.

2016 B2B Content Marketing Trends—North America: Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs

## COMPARISON CHART

# Differences Between B2B and B2C Content Marketers

	B2B	B2C
Uses content marketing	88%	76%
Considers organization effective at content marketing	30%	38%
Organization is clear on what an effective or successful content marketing program looks like	44%	43%
Describes organization as sophisticated/mature	32%	37%
Meets daily or weekly to discuss content marketing program	44%	48%
Finds meetings extremely or very valuable	54%	59%
Has a documented content marketing strategy	32%	37%
Has a documented editorial mission statement	28%	39%
Average number of tactics used	13	12
Average number of social media platforms used	6	7
Average number of paid advertising methods used	3	4
Percentage of total marketing budget allocated to content marketing	28%	32%
Plans to increase content marketing budget in next 12 months	51%	50%

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## DEMOCRAPHICS

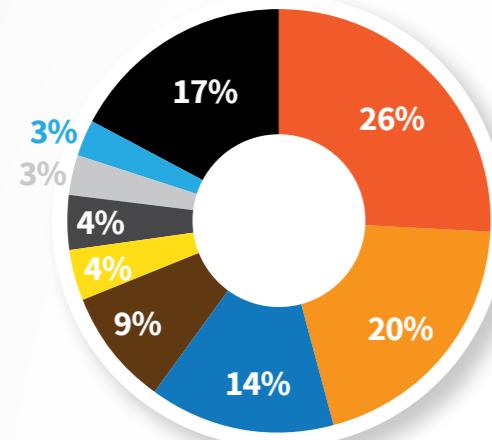
B2B Content Marketing: 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends—North America was produced by **Content Marketing Institute** and **MarketingProfs** and sponsored by **Brightcove**.

The sixth annual content marketing survey, from which the results of this report were generated, was mailed electronically to a sample of marketers using lists from Content Marketing Institute, MarketingProfs, the Business Marketing Association (BMA), Blackbaud, The Association for Data-driven Marketing & Advertising (ADMA), *Industry Week*, *New Equipment Digest*, and WTH Media.

A total of 3,714 recipients from around the globe—representing a full range of industries, functional areas, and company sizes—completed the survey during July and August 2015. This report presents the findings from the 1,521 respondents who said they were B2B marketers in North America (1,334 of whom said, “yes, our organization uses content marketing”), producing a +/-2.5% degree of accuracy at a 95% confidence level.

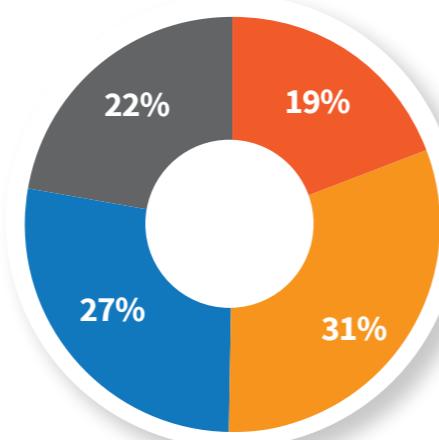
The B2C percentages shown in this report (p. 30) derive from the same research study. The full findings for B2C North America are available in a separate report.

### B2B Industry Classification



- Technology
- Advertising/Marketing
- Manufacturing
- Consulting
- Publishing/Media
- Banking/Accounting/Financial
- Healthcare/Pharmaceuticals
- Engineering/Construction/Architecture
- Other

### Size of B2B Company (by Employees)



- Micro (Fewer than 10 Employees)
- Small (10-99 Employees)
- Midsize (100-999 Employees)
- Large (1,000+ Employees)

### B2B Content Marketing Roles



## ABOUT

**Content Marketing Institute and MarketingProfs thank all the survey respondents and distribution partners who made this survey possible.**

### About Content Marketing Institute (CMI)

**Content Marketing Institute** is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multi-channel storytelling. CMI's **Content Marketing World** event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and the **Intelligent Content Conference** event is held every spring. CMI publishes the bi-monthly magazine **Chief Content Officer**, and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI has been named an Inc. 5000 company for the last four years. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about CMI. View all CMI research at [www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/research](http://www.contentmarketinginstitute.com/research).

### About MarketingProfs

**MarketingProfs** offers real-world education for modern marketers. More than 600,000 marketing professionals worldwide rely on our free daily publications, virtual conferences, **MarketingProfs University**, and more to stay up to date on the most important trends and tactics in marketing—and how to apply them to their businesses. Visit [MarketingProfs.com](http://MarketingProfs.com) for more.

### About the Business Marketing Association (BMA)

For more than 90 years, the **Business Marketing Association (BMA)** has dedicated itself exclusively to the discipline of business-to-business marketing. A division of the **Association of National Advertisers**, the BMA enriches the lives of B-to-B marketers by providing them with a forum to learn about new trends and network with peers to exchange ideas. As the largest organization in the world dedicated to B-to-B marketing, the BMA's 17 chapters and 2,500 members represent corporate professionals, agencies, small businesses, and suppliers committed to advancing the practice of B-to-B marketing. To learn more, visit [www.marketing.org](http://www.marketing.org).

### About Brightcove

**Brightcove Inc.** (NASDAQ:BCOV) is the leading global provider of powerful cloud solutions for delivering and monetizing video across connected devices. The company offers a full suite of products and services that reduce the cost and complexity associated with publishing, distributing, measuring, and monetizing video across devices. Brightcove has more than 5,000 customers in over 70 countries that rely on the company's cloud solutions to successfully publish high-quality video experiences to audiences everywhere. To learn more, visit [www.brightcove.com](http://www.brightcove.com).