



BACKGROUND

For more than a decade, The Content Council has established leadership through exclusive research projects. We have regularly tracked and measured key trends and best practices for our rapidly expanding and evolving industry. For the future, our intent is to regularly field new research efforts in order to assess and report on trends, freshen industry insights and identify implications for the strategies of our member base and their clients.

We are pleased to present the findings from The Content Council 2015 survey, which was developed to establish a new benchmark of the size and shape of our industry. The study is designed to quantify the recent past and present and to establish a clear sense of near future directions for content marketing. This report brings together information and opinion from brand, agency and media executives. The research was conducted in conjunction with Advertising Age, which surveyed leaders in the industry to define the state and direction of the content marketing industry.

The Content Council is the leading non-profit organization for content marketing in North America. Our members include the industry's top publishers, media companies and marketing agencies who create quality, multi-channel strategies for North American and global brands. Our mandate is to promote the continued growth and vitality of the content marketing industry by advocating best practices, fostering thought leadership and commissioning research on the use and effectiveness of content marketing as a discipline.

Advertising Age is the leading global source of news, intelligence and conversation for marketing and media communities.

METHODOLOGY

Advertising Age secured third-party research firm Advantage Business Research to conduct an online research study for The Content Council. Advantage Business Research was responsible for all phases of the online research, including programming, coding and tabulation.

The final survey findings are based on 448 total respondents who qualified after answering the screening questions and completed the full survey. The 448 respondents were made up of 48.2% agencies, 35% marketers and 16.7% media.

The survey fielded December 5, 2014 and officially closed on December 12, 2014. The margin of error for the total of 448 respondents of the survey, at a 95% confidence level, is +/- 4.6% percentage points.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our survey points to a steady increase in commitment to content marketing by marketers, agencies and media. The future looks bright: Budgets have seen robust growth during the past two years and that growth is expected to continue and accelerate in the years ahead. As client commitment increases and content marketing becomes a mainstream tactic for virtually all marketers, it will continue to earn an increasing share of more and more marketing budgets.

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If there is one negative challenging this clearly positive scenario, it is increasing demand by clients to account for content marketing's return on investment more effectively. That is no easy task. Because the term "content marketing" is widely applied to many types of content, seeking a range of outcomes, success measures and KPIs vary widely depending on the stage in the customer journey that an individual piece of content engages its audience. And, although the ability to measure is definitely improving, a clearer alignment of content to client business goals will be required in order to foster the confidence required to support the desired commitment.

Beyond its creation and production, content marketing requires multiple internal disciplines working together (technology, analytics and distribution). These make increasing demands for resources. Attention must be paid to identifying and executing adjustments to our organizations that will drive consistency and efficiency at the same time that challenges and limitations on resources dominate. It's a tricky, but necessary, balance.

In sum, content marketing remains a strong ingredient in modern marketing programs. It fits the changing environment of brand communications very well. Our clients themselves are actively investing in content marketing across channels and working hard to improve its measurability.

So, all signs point to growth based on the continued effectiveness of the content itself and on its increased measurability. And, marketers are not alone in allocating larger budgets to their efforts, traditional and digital agencies alike also see the potential and continue to add their expertise to serve their clients' demands.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

BELIEFS ABOUT CONTENT MARKETING

- 76% of respondents predict that their already strong or extremely strong commitment to content marketing will increase 36% in the next two years.
- 58% believe that content marketing is truly measureable.
- But, only 30% believe that their content goals align "extremely well" to their overall business objectives.

GOALS & CHALLENGES

- The 3 most important goals of content marketing are to acquire new customers/members, increase brand engagement and improve brand perception.
- The biggest challenges confronting content marketing are creating quality engaging content (63%), lack of budget (53%), lack of time (50%), and proving ROI (49%).

TRENDS & EXPECTATIONS

- The percentage of total marketing budgets allocated to content marketing has increased from 13% two years ago, to 23% currently, and is expected to account for 33% two years from now.
- Measurement/Analytics and Strategy are likely to see the largest increases in budget.
- Although existing social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) have and will continue to represent the dominant share of the content marketing budget allocation, video and new social channels are showing steady increases.
- As a channel of distribution Partnerships with Established Media Brands is also on the rise and is predicted to see a significant increase of almost 14% in the next two years.

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ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

- 48% of respondents are from agencies, 35% client-side marketers and 17% from media
- Respondent companies have been involved in content marketing for an average of 10.2 years.
- Respondent companies have average estimated revenue of \$218M and 1,328 employees.
- Respondents are highly involved in the decision-making for content marketing's major processes with almost 50% of all respondents being the sole decision maker, or the primary decision maker, for Strategy, Measurement/Analytics, Content Development/Production and Distribution.