

B2B INBOUND MARKETING **INSIGHT REPORT**



InboxInsight 

www.inboxinsight.com

B2B INBOUND MARKETING INSIGHT REPORT

As demand generation continues to be an important area of focus, organizations are looking for more organic ways of producing leads, attracting new business and garnering trust. The growth of digital and the rise of mobile and connected devices has made it easier to access content than ever before.

Inbound marketing is a digital practice that can provide the answer to these changes. It brings together a number of techniques, including content marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimization and branding, and it describes a more internal, nurtured approach of marketing goods or services to a specific audience.

Although it's something that many brands are already doing, the practice can still be widely misunderstood. Most companies engage in inbound marketing in one way or another, whether it's through social campaigns, blogging, videos, eBooks or whitepapers - but knowing how to get results is often the difficulty.

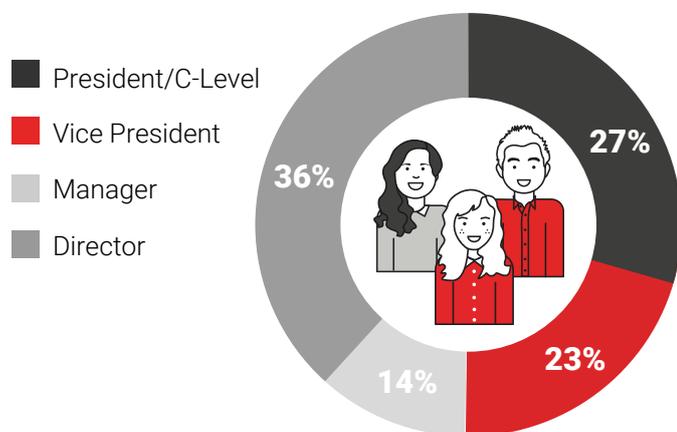
Inbound marketing has many long-term benefits but also comes with a number of challenges, so it can be useful and interesting to see how other businesses are tackling these issues. Our report looks at how companies are approaching their strategies in 2020, what tactics they are using, and how they are measuring success.

Survey sample

To get a clear picture of the state of inbound marketing right now, we spoke to 205 individuals with senior roles in B2B Marketing. All the respondents we surveyed are employed by companies with 500 employees or more, and must deploy content marketing or inbound marketing within their organisation.

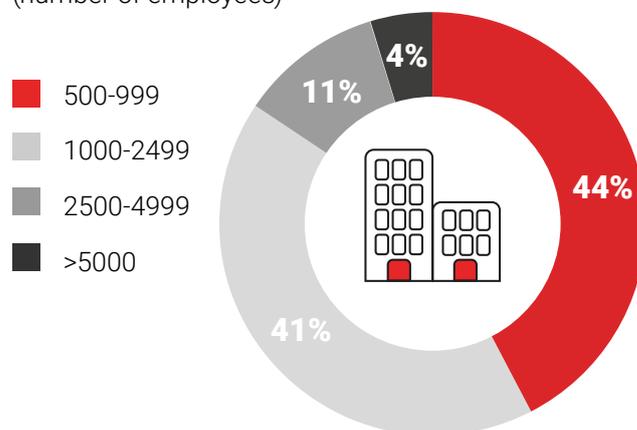
Sample size: 205 responses, must have a role in B2B Marketing, companies with more than 500 employees.

Job Role



Company Size

(number of employees)



INBOUND MARKETING & THE FUTURE

One of the main reasons for conducting this research is to understand the importance of inbound marketing and its impact on future marketing campaigns. The B2B landscape is fast evolving and as clients become better informed, better researched and more discerning in their buying choices, organizations must find new ways to delight them.

Changing expectations is disrupting business

Just like how the retail customer's needs and wants have evolved to demand faster delivery timescales, free and easy returns, and omni-channel brand interactions, the B2B customer is no longer satisfied with old hat marketing tricks.

Today's B2B customer wants a seamless service from suppliers and partners. They want useful insights, they want to grow their knowledge through the power of content sharing, and they want to spend money with companies that take a customer-centric approach. When it comes to discussing the power of customer experience (CX), much of the focus has been on B2C markets, but it's just as vital for business-to-business firms.

This is why inbound marketing is such a big topic at the moment, and why more companies are searching for ways to build their content and social media. Where traditional marketing intercepts the audience with slogans and adverts, inbound marketing takes an organic path, tempting them with things that other brands can't offer.

Customer satisfaction doesn't always convert into loyalty, and that's where inbound marketing can help to bridge the gap. It's more than just a way to organically generate leads – it's a way to nurture loyal customers through relationship-building.

The future is digital

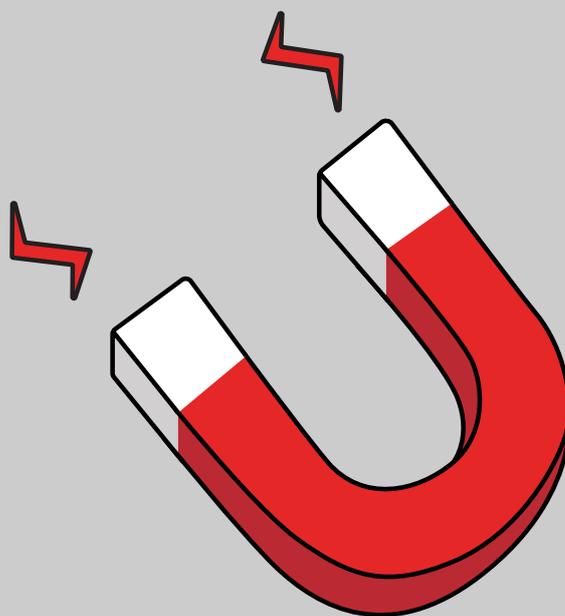
Most of the buyer journey now takes place online, and for a vast percentage of professional purchasers, the orientation phase is digital.

Additionally, more buyers will use smartphones or other devices to conduct searches.

According to *Think with Google*, mobile usage per B2B worker is expected to increase from 2 hours per day to 3 hours per day in 2020. This is driven largely by millennials and Gen Z workers, but also by the increased use of smartphones by older workers.

Millennials are predicted to make up **75% of the global workforce by 2025**. How businesses utilise technology, embrace modern communications and use content marketing to connect with their clients will be the key differentiator when it comes to brand preference.

Inbound marketing techniques will be effective for every business as digital continues to explode, but these techniques go far beyond a few blogs posts and the occasional newsletter. In order to cut through the noise and accelerate your sales cycle, a comprehensive rethinking of your marketing strategy will be required. Here we look at how other businesses are doing it.



CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

Looking at what businesses are doing right now in terms of their marketing, we can get an idea of where inbound marketing techniques sit in terms of priority.

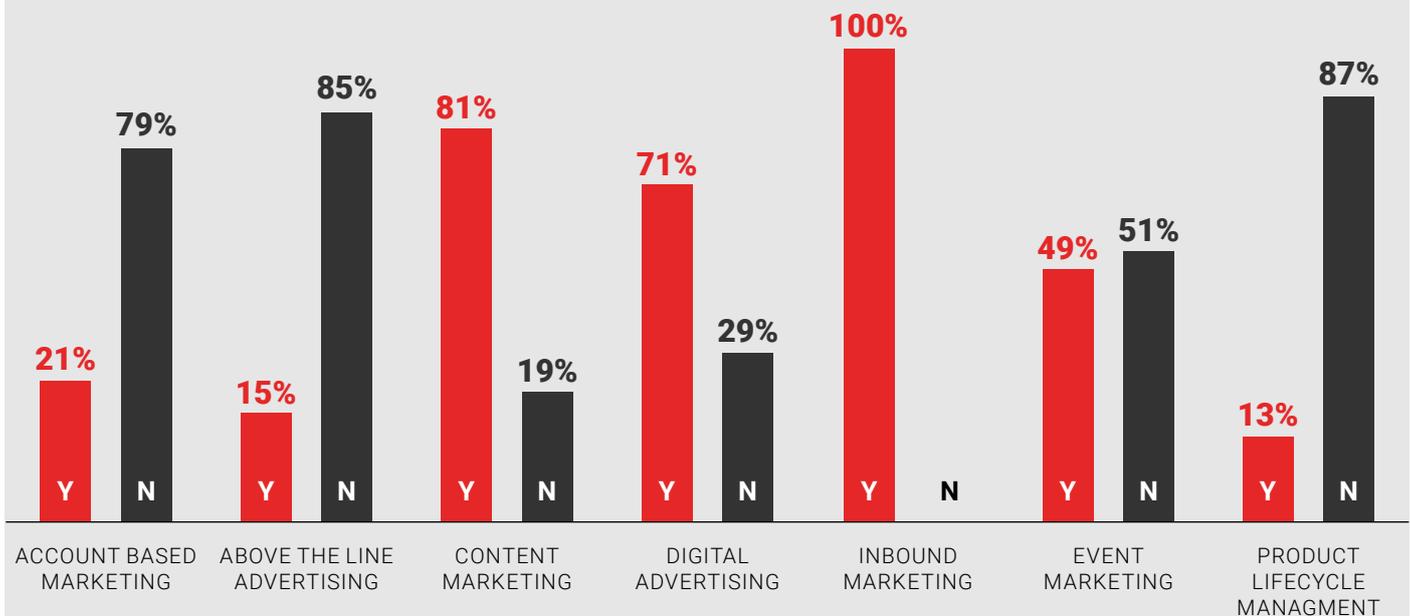
The most popular marketing strategies alongside inbound

We asked the 205 respondents which marketing strategies they currently deploy in their organisation. These include ABM (account based marketing), above the line advertising, content, digital, events, and product marketing.

A large majority (81%) of inbound marketers also utilize content marketing, and 71% deploy other digital techniques alongside their inbound marketing efforts. Almost half (49%) use event marketing while 1 in 5 (21%) use ABM. Account-based marketing has risen in prominence recently as a way to accelerate revenue from high priority companies that B2B organizations want to reach and convert. 79% of marketers may have chosen inbound in place of ABM, however, we have seen the strategies work well together.

For more information on ABM, and the corresponding research report, please [click here](#).

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MARKETING STRATEGIES DO YOU DEPLOY IN YOUR ORGANISATION?



To provide context, we also asked survey participants how long they had been running inbound marketing, who was involved in terms of employees/departments, and how much was being outsourced.

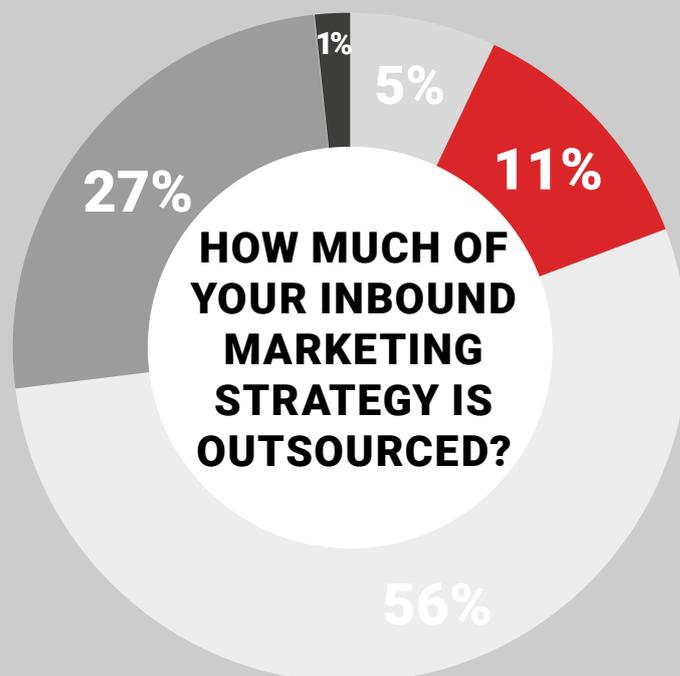


- 1-2 months
- 3-5 months
- 6-11 months
- 1-2 years
- 2+ years

Inbound marketing maturity

Over half (54%) had been running their inbound marketing efforts for more than a year, compared with 23% for 6-11 months. Only a small percentage (3%) had been running their inbound marketing for less than three months.

Overall, this shows the maturity of inbound marketing models in the wider marketing strategy and how valuable they are to businesses. **The largest proportion of businesses (29%) have been running inbound marketing for more than two years, demonstrating its integrity in the standard marketing mix.**

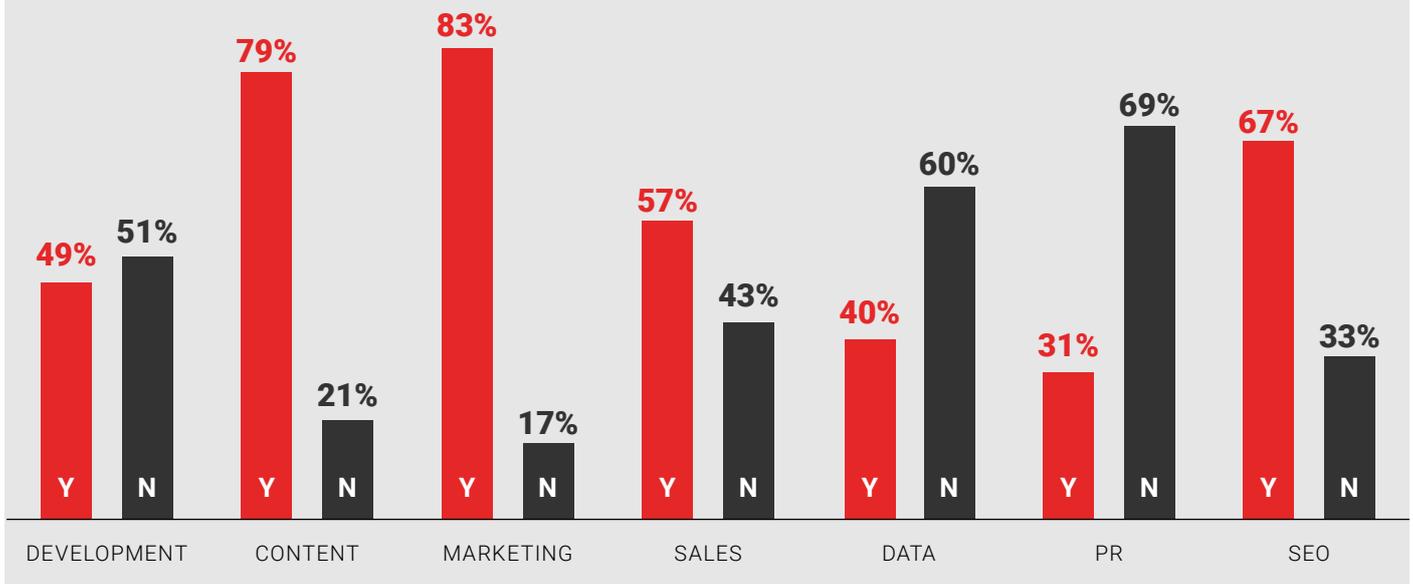


- 0-9%
- 10-24%
- 25-49%
- 50-74%
- 75-100%

Outsourcing inbound marketing

The majority of respondents (56%) outsourced around 25-49% of their inbound marketing, whilst 27% outsourced over half of their efforts (50-74%). Just 1% of respondents outsourced 75-100% of their inbound marketing, and 5% outsourced less than 10% of their strategy. This emphasizes the importance of tapping into external talent and finding reliable partners. While some businesses are able to contribute a large portion of their inbound marketing efforts internally, working entirely without a third-party is highly unusual. Businesses don't lack talent, which accounts for why some parts of the inbound marketing strategy is still maintained in-house.

WHICH TEAMS ARE INVOLVED IN YOUR INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY?

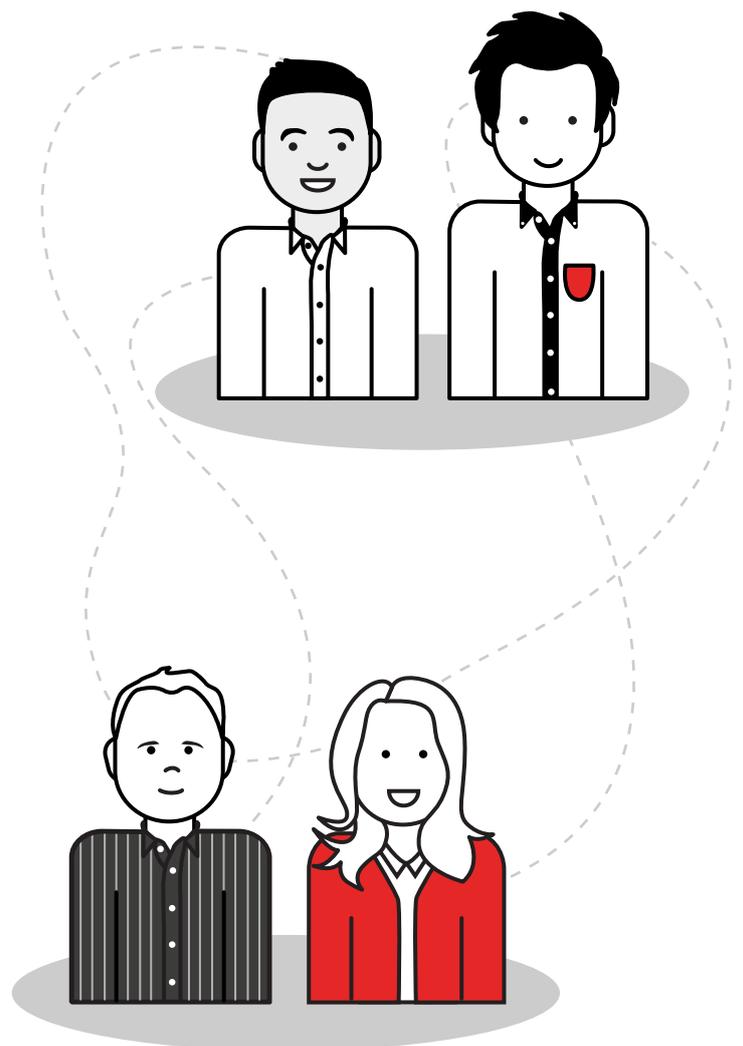


In-house teams and inbound marketing

When it comes to maintaining inbound marketing in-house, the responsibility does not sit solely with the marketing team. While marketing and content experts have the most involvement (83% and 79% respectively), there's also a lot of input from SEO teams (67%).

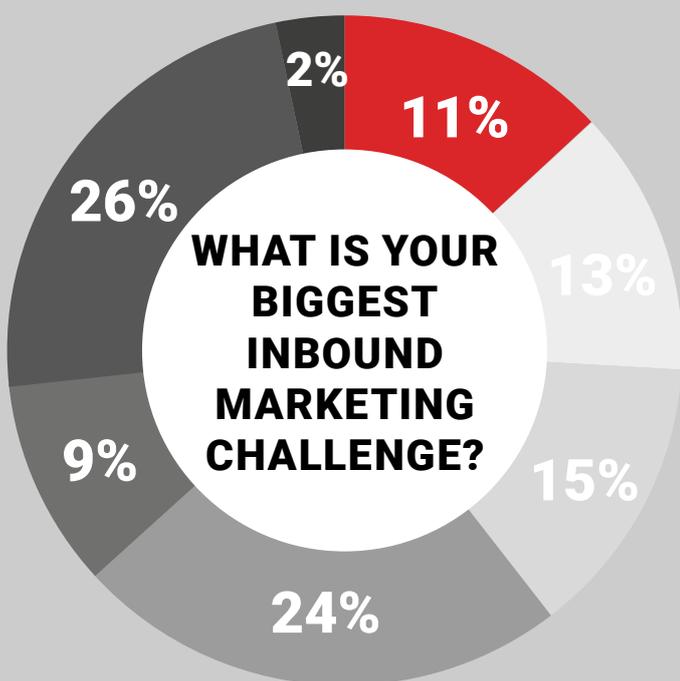
What's worth noting is over half of respondents (57%) involve the sales teams in the rollout of their marketing activity. This is a growing trend that we see with businesses, where a joined up approach is much more desirable than working in silos. Collaborative working is a vital element for success, and marketing and sales will need to bring their expertise together, share data, and learn from each other.

Sales teams often have vital information about your customers and their particular challenges. Details into customer problems can give you the edge in creating truly valuable content that answers customer questions and makes your brand look like an expert in their industry.



The challenges of inbound marketing

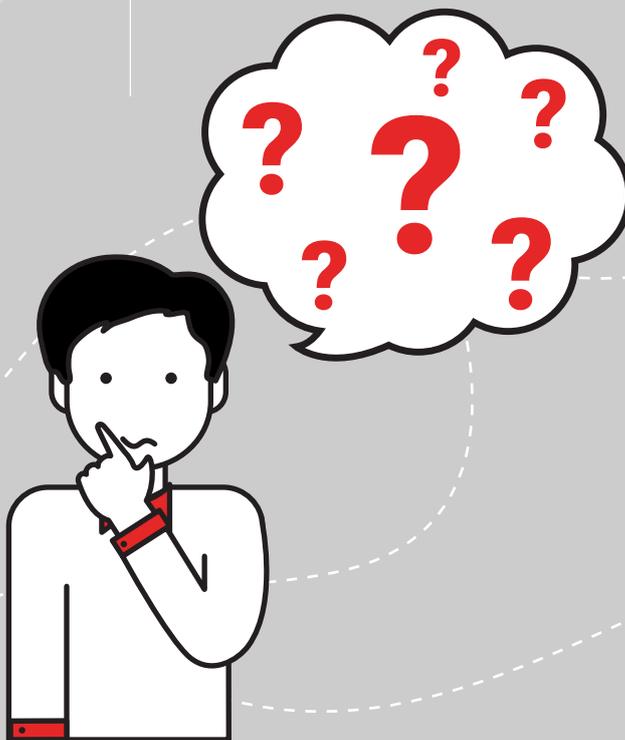
Inbound marketing isn't without its challenges and our data tells us that being able to measure, track and report ROI (26%) is the biggest issue, followed by optimizing the current strategy (24%). This is followed by keeping up with trends (15%), generating traffic or leads (13%), getting support or approval from the board (11%), securing budget (9%), and finally, poor planning (2%).



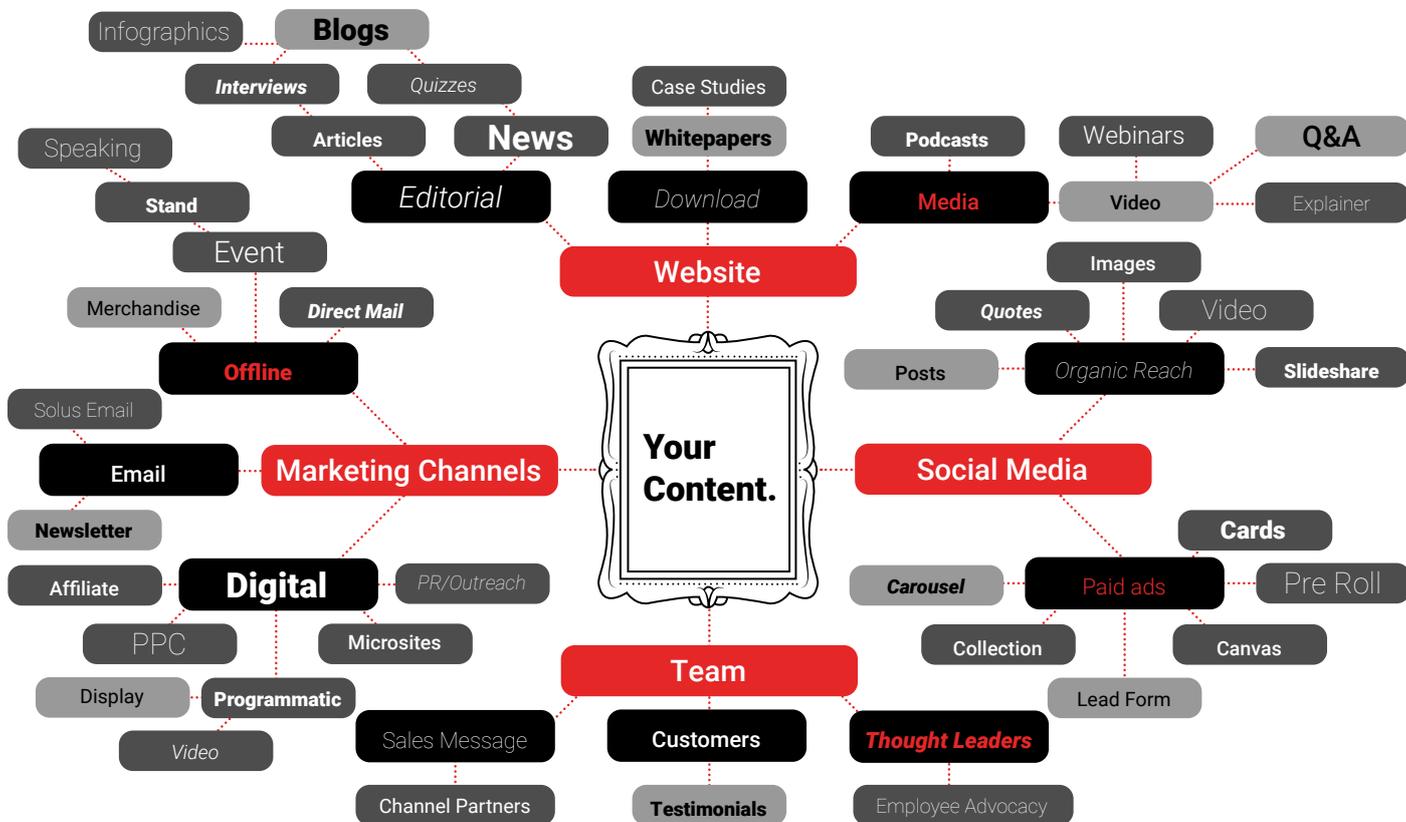
- Getting board-level buy-in
- Getting traffic/leads
- Keeping up with trends
- Optimizing current strategy
- Securing enough budget
- Proving ROI
- Having no documented plan

Measuring and tracking are definitely areas that businesses need to focus on here. The benefits of inbound marketing are not a quick win. You may find that customers don't convert on their first, second, third, fourth or even fifth visit to your website which makes it hard to measure the real impact of marketing efforts and because there are so many different ways to analyze engagement, data may not always be accurate.

One way to combat this is to model your analytics around tracking content journeys. Knowing which pieces are most popular, which drive the most conversion, and the paths between them, will allow you to string together lead nurture sequences that will speed up your results from inbound marketing.



Almost a quarter of inbound marketers (24%) are struggling to optimize their current strategy. Once a strategy has been launched, it can be tough to know where to take it next. Measuring the right metrics is only the first step in better understanding what is working, and what isn't. It's then a case of trialing new techniques and seeing whether the target audience responds better or worse. This could be something as simple as **repurposing existing content**.



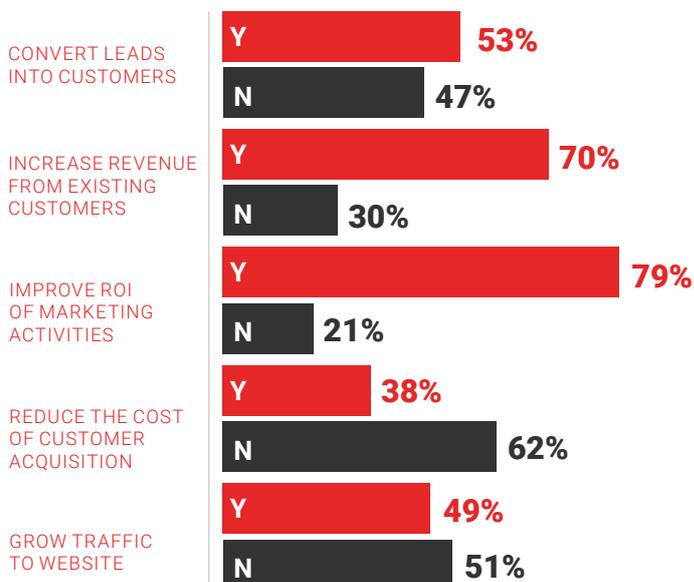
With the ever-evolving digital landscape, it's no surprise that keeping up with trends features third in the list of challenges, but it is good to see that poor planning appears at the bottom of the list. Learning from past mistakes, it seems marketers are working to document and pre-plan their strategies.

Inbound marketing plans for 2020

Looking to the future, the main focuses for companies deploying inbound marketing appear to be improving ROI (79%), boosting revenue from existing accounts (69%), and increasing lead conversions (53%).

This aligns with the data surrounding perceived challenges, so it shows marketers have not only identified their key challenges, but are also actively finding better ways of measuring ROI and tracking success this year.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP MARKETING PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTH?

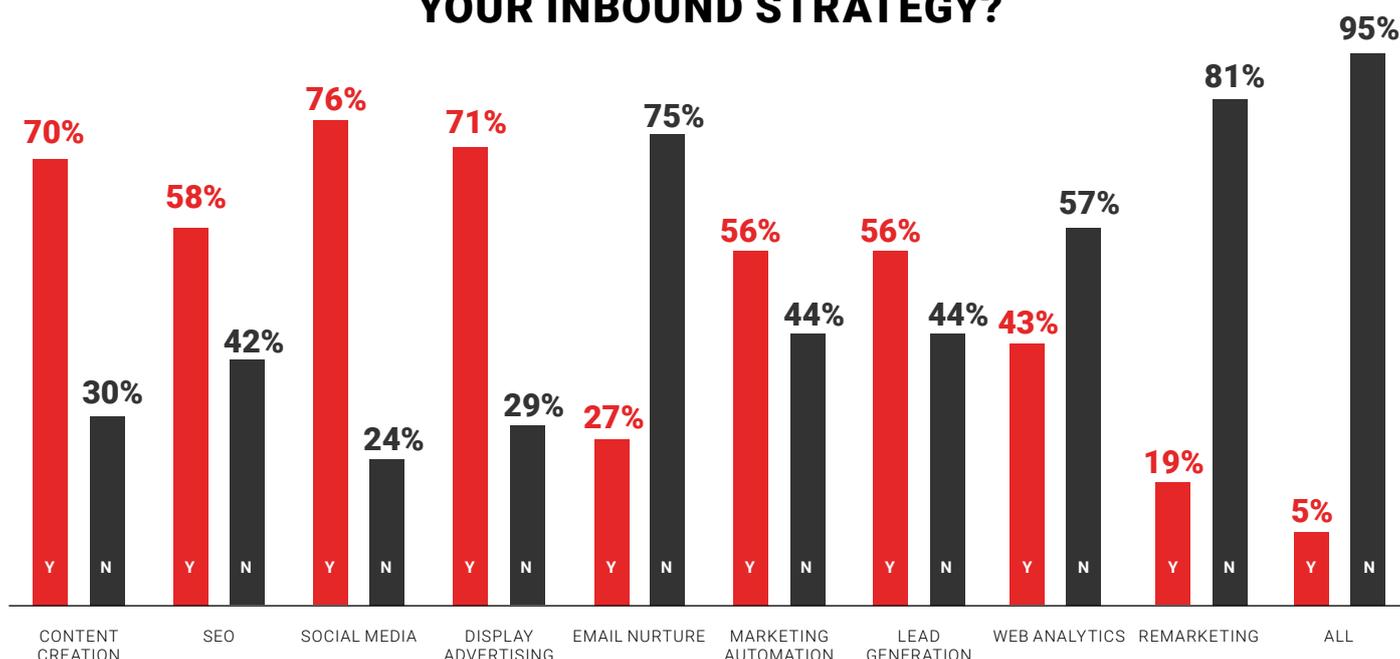


CHAPTER 2: STRATEGY & TACTICS

There are a number of tactics involved in inbound marketing, and it's important to understand that these tactics must work together in order to achieve desired goals.

When we asked our 205 respondents about the methods they used to support their strategy, the results showed a good mix of different platforms and mediums.

WHICH TACTICS ARE YOU USING TO SUPPORT YOUR INBOUND STRATEGY?



Inbound marketing tactics

The majority of respondents claimed that content creation (70%), SEO (58%), social media (76%) and display advertising (72%) are areas of importance for businesses.

What needs to be noted though is that there are still large numbers who aren't deploying these tactics. 30% of respondents said they aren't doing any content, 42% said they aren't engaging in SEO, and almost a quarter (24%) completely overlook social media – a key area necessary for building a successful inbound marketing strategy. Furthermore, a 73% don't use email nurture, 46% don't leverage automated marketing, 44% don't use lead generation, 57% don't use web analytics, and 81% don't use remarketing.

All of these tactics are vital to creating a holistic inbound marketing strategy that works. Digital remarketing especially is a vital element in any strategy, as it allows you to turn first-time website visitors into eventual customers. Yet, according to our research, very few businesses are deploying this.

What's even more interesting is that less than 5% of respondents use a combination of all these tactics, demonstrating a clear gap in strategy where marketers could be doing more. In order for inbound marketing to work effectively, a combined approach is required. But whether for budgetary reasons or not seeing the value in each component of inbound marketing, many companies fail to commit to a full inbound program.

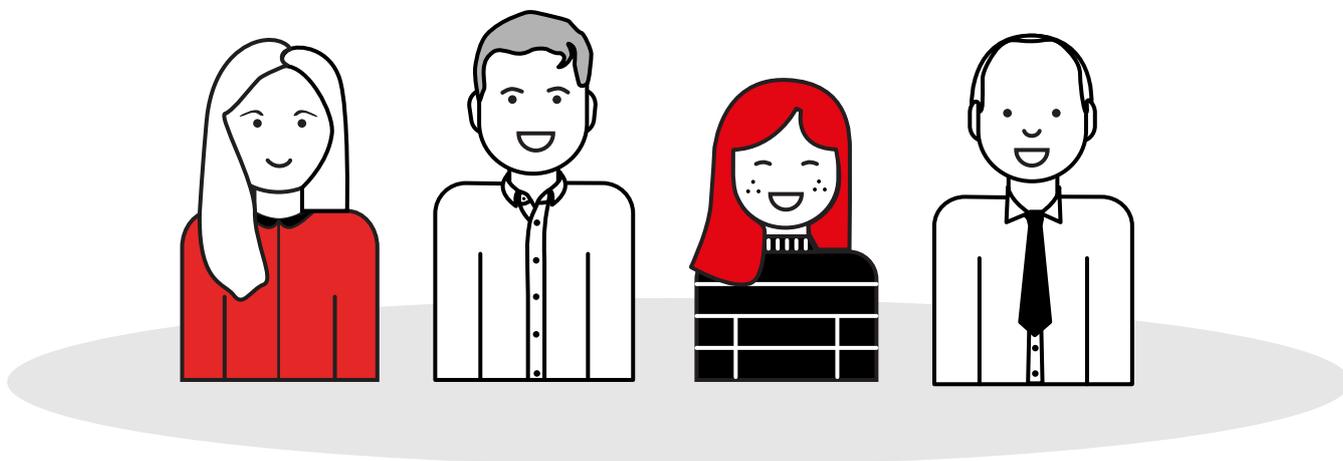
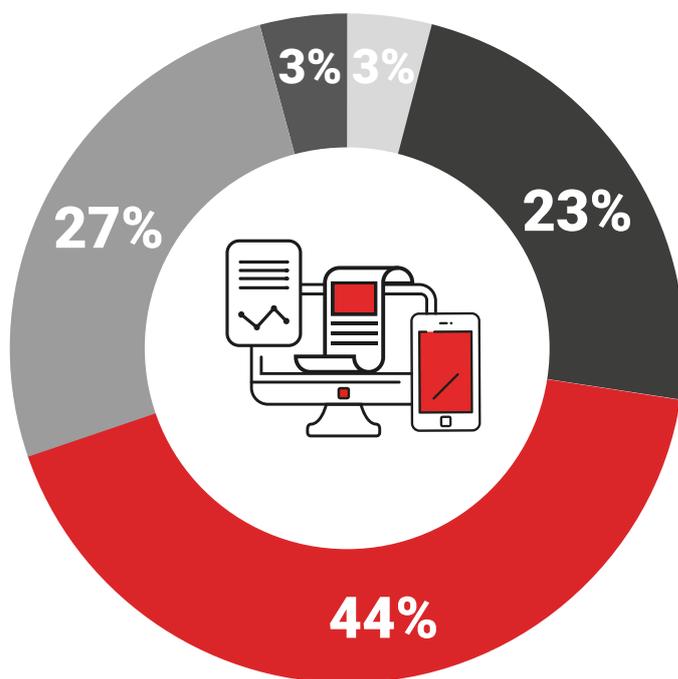
Content production for inbound marketing

One of the most important areas of inbound marketing is content creation. In terms of production volume, most companies (44%) are producing around 5-9 pieces per month. A good percentage (29%) are producing 10-19 pieces of content per month, while almost a quarter (23%) are producing just 3-4 pieces per month. Just 3% create 1-2 pieces per month, while another 3% create more than 20.

There's a broad spectrum when it comes to content production which is likely reliant on the capacity of the marketing team, with almost three quarters (74%) of businesses producing more than one piece of content a week. This is a clear indicator that content marketing is no longer a 'nice-to-have' but a key part of the overall marketing strategy. But the key question is; why are 30% of marketers still not leveraging content creation in their inbound marketing strategy?

HOW MANY PIECES OF CONTENT DO YOU PRODUCE FOR YOUR INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY PER MONTH?

1-2 3-4 5-9 10-19 20+



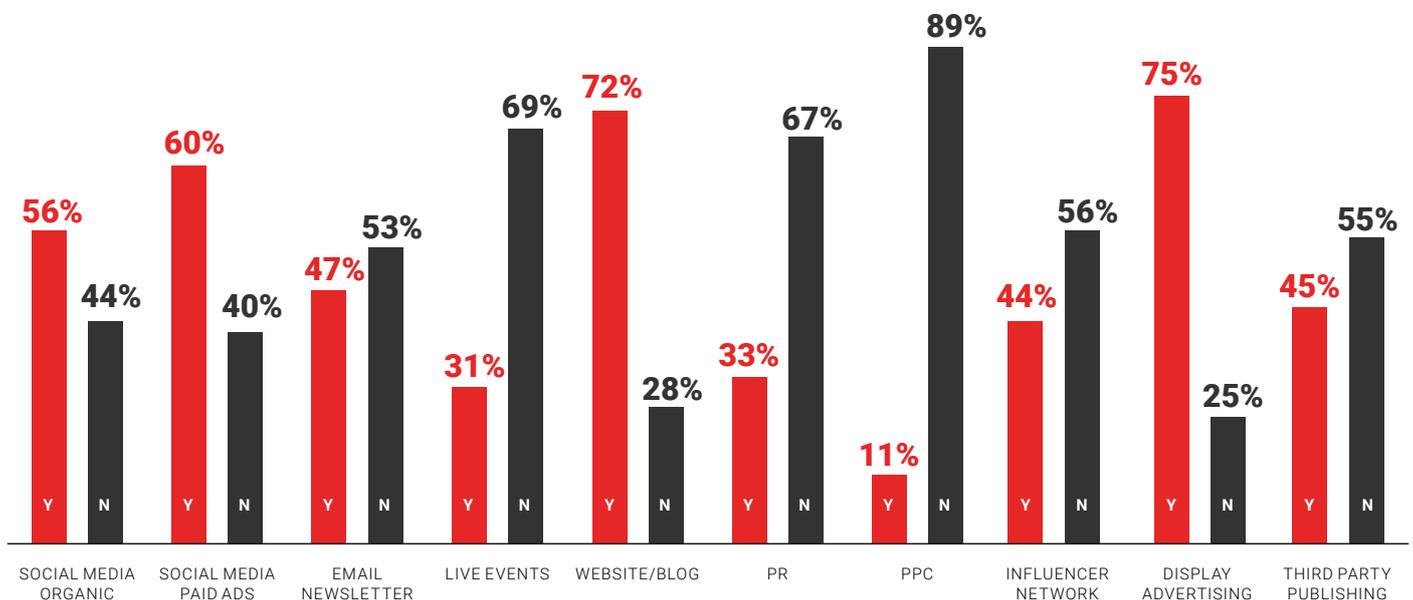
Channels utilized in an inbound marketing strategy

When it comes to the channels being used to promote content, there is a good mix of platforms, with websites, blogs, social media and advertising being the most common. Other channels and mediums used include email newsletters, live events, PR, PPC, influencer networks and third-party publishing sites.

What's interesting is the high percentages of companies omitting certain channels altogether. Just under half of respondents (44%) aren't using organic social media and 40% aren't using paid ads on social. Over half don't use email campaigns (55%) to share content with subscribers, and over a quarter still aren't publishing content on their website or blog.

By not leveraging a full inbound model, this could explain why 24% are finding optimizing their strategy as a key challenge. Without being able to correctly use different channels interconnectedly, marketers will struggle to reach all of their potential customers at the right moments in the buyer journey and fail to convert.

WHICH CHANNELS DO YOU USE TO PROMOTE CONTENT?

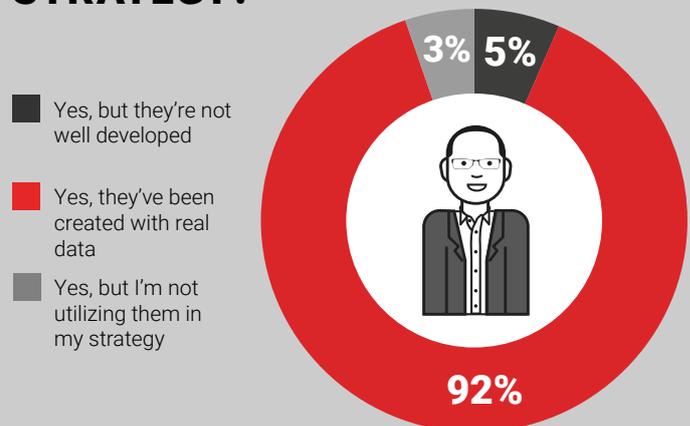


Understanding your audience

When it comes to creating content, the first step is to define the personas in your audience. Who are you targeting? What are their wants and needs? How can your product/service/expertise help them achieve their goals?

While all of our respondents have buyer personas in place, how they are created can vary, although the majority (92%) claim to have used real data during the creation process. 5% have poorly developed personas, while an even smaller percentage (3%) have them but don't use them.

DO YOU HAVE BUYER PERSONAS FOR YOUR INBOUND MARKETING STRATEGY?



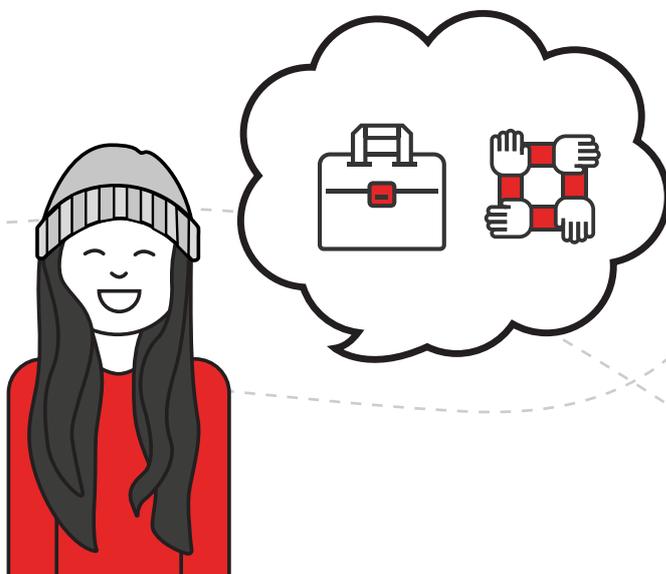
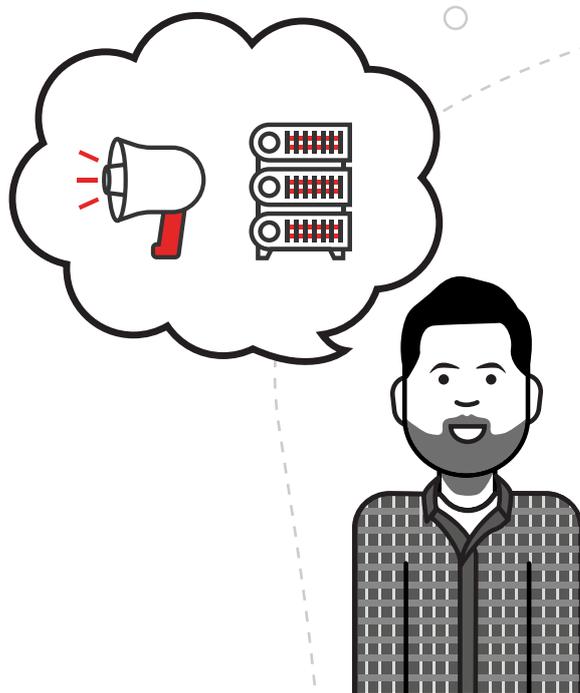
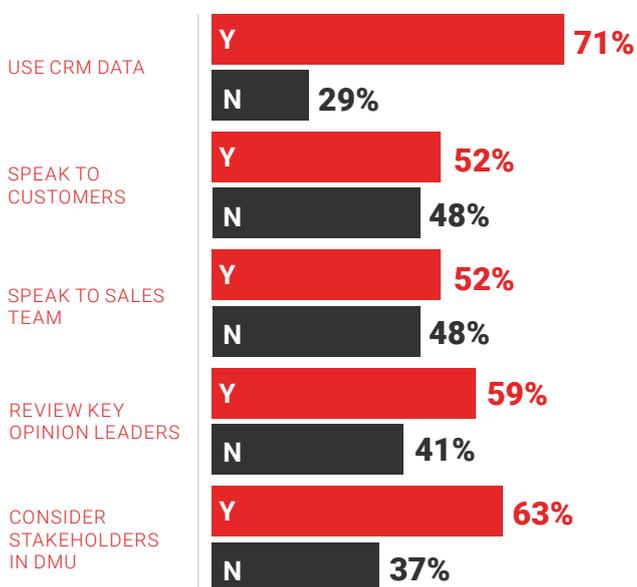
So how are brands defining their audience personas? There are many ways that this can be done and our results already tell us that real data is critical.

71% of marketers use CRM data, 52% gather data direct from customers in conversation and feedback, and 52% gather data from the sales teams. There was also a high percentage of respondents (63%) considering stakeholders in the decision-making unit, while 59% review key opinion leaders.

What we gather from this data is that using multiple data sources for building an ideal customer profile is considered to be the most effective. It's not enough to rely on one data source to create the most relevant and up-to-date personas, especially when it comes to reaching new customers and audiences.

However, there seems to be a worryingly high number of missed opportunities with 29% not using CRM data and almost half (49%) not speaking to their customers. 48% don't speak to their sales teams, which could create dangerous team silos within a business and seriously impact the effectiveness of any marketing efforts.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE AUDIENCE PERSONAS?



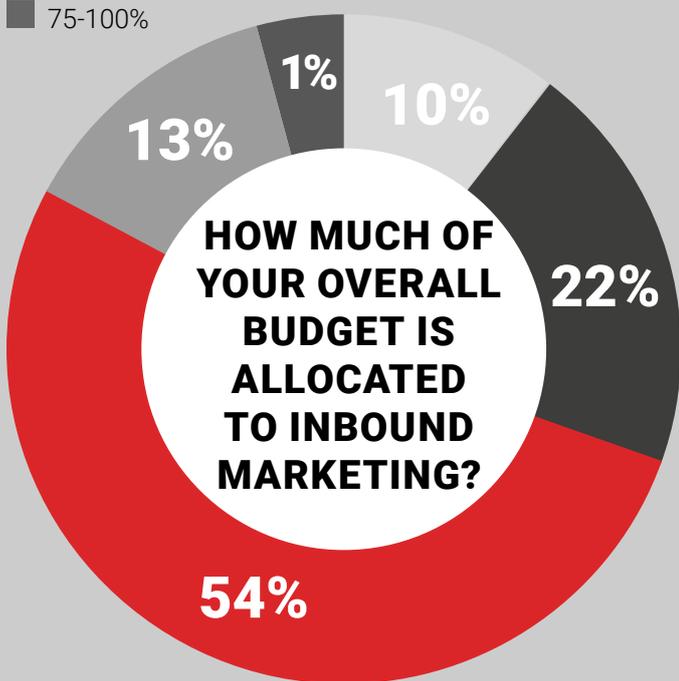
CHAPTER 3: BUDGET ALLOCATION

Almost 10% of the companies asked said that securing enough budget for their inbound marketing program was the main challenge they faced. It can be problematic distributing the budget across other areas of marketing, and knowing how to do this effectively.

By looking at how much other companies are spending in proportion to the rest of their marketing, we can get an understanding of how current businesses are prioritizing money and resource for inbound.

Over half (54%) of respondents are committing 25-49% of their budget to inbound campaigns, while under a quarter (22%) are allocating 10-24%. A small percentage (13%) are allocating around 50-74%, while an even smaller number (10%) are allocating less than 10%.

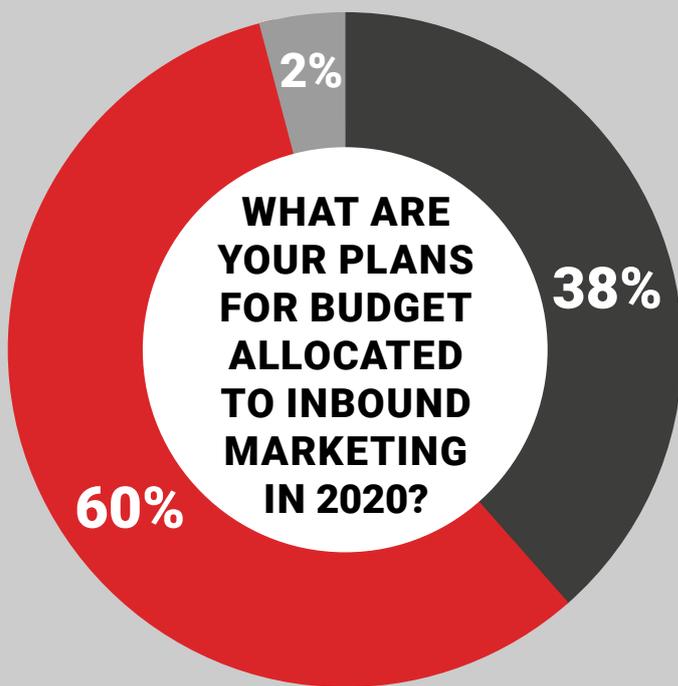
0-9% 10-24% 25-49% 50-74% 75-100%



The vast majority of respondents seem to be spending somewhere between 10-49% of their budget on inbound marketing but as we saw earlier, only 9% of marketers see securing enough budget as a key challenge which shows that if inbound

marketing can be correctly justified then seeking additional budget will not be a problem. However, the majority of respondents (60%) said they would be increasing the amount of budget allocated to inbound strategies in 2020, which seems at odd with this conclusion.

Same spend Increase spend Spend less



With the changing landscape in marketing, and the importance of customized marketing messages, it's more likely that marketers are adequately able to secure the budget they need and have begun to realize the true value of an inbound strategy, thus resulting in increasing their spend in this area.

A moderate 38% said they would keep budget allocation the same, and only a very small sample (2%) said they would be reducing budget.

This aligns with the overall growth trend of digital technology, social media usage, mobile usage, and IoT-connected devices. The way people are accessing information and connecting with brands in B2B is changing, so it's crucial for businesses to meet their customers on their chosen platforms and find new ways to deliver content and information.

CHAPTER 4: MEASURING SUCCESS

More than a quarter (26%) of marketers have said that proving ROI is their biggest challenge. This comes down to not having clear goals from the start, setting up the right KPIs, or finding the best ways of measuring different marketing activity.

To gain insight into how this is currently being done, we asked how marketers are measuring their inbound marketing. While a variety of measurements and analytics are being used by businesses, there are still certain methods that are being ignored.

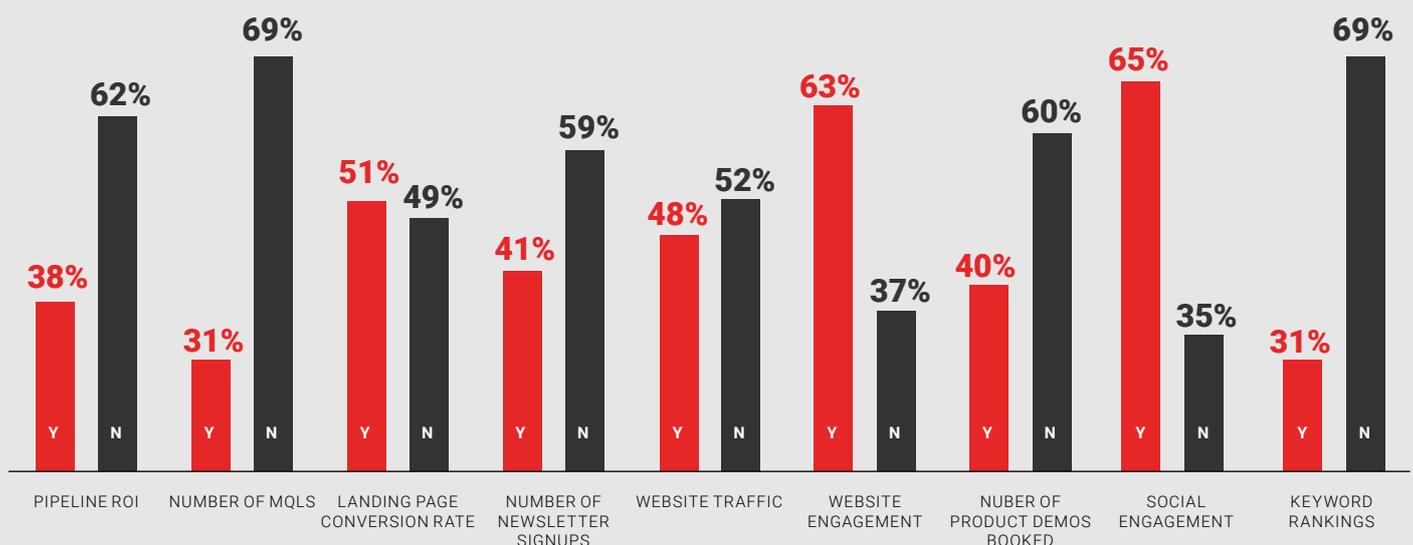
Metrics and KPIs for measuring inbound marketing

More than two thirds (69%) don't use keyword rankings, suggesting that search engine

optimization isn't being effectively gauged. A similarly high number (70%) also said they don't monitor the number of marketing-qualified leads (MQLs). While over half (51%) said they used landing page conversion rates as a measurement, the other half said they didn't.

The most popular forms of measurement include social engagement (65%) and website engagement (63%). This emphasis on engagement clearly indicates a key focus for marketers. Where other strategies may focus more on conversion, it seems many marketers are leveraging the power of inbound to connect with customers and potential customers to build longer-lasting relationships; it's no longer about the single-touch purchase, it's more about an ongoing connection.

HOW ARE YOU MEASURING YOUR INBOUND MARKETING EFFORTS?

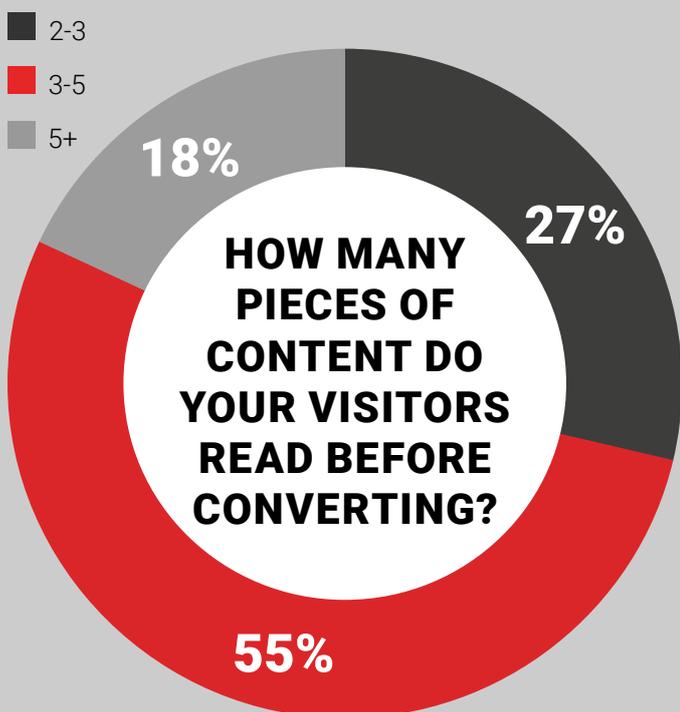


Content in the customer conversion journey

In finding ways to measure success, it's also important to look at the entire customer journey. Inbound marketing is about getting customers to organically convert, not after the first time they interact with your brand, and maybe not even after the second or third, but often somewhere further down the line.

Inbound is all about establishing and nurturing relationships, creating trust, and positioning your brand as a knowledgeable, experienced and helpful thought leader. Content shouldn't be seen as quick wins, but a way to build credibility through the funnel. So how many pieces of content can you expect to create before visitors begin to convert?

Over half of businesses said that 3-5 pieces was usually enough, while 27% said it took 2-3 pieces, and 18% said conversion only happened after 5 or more pieces.



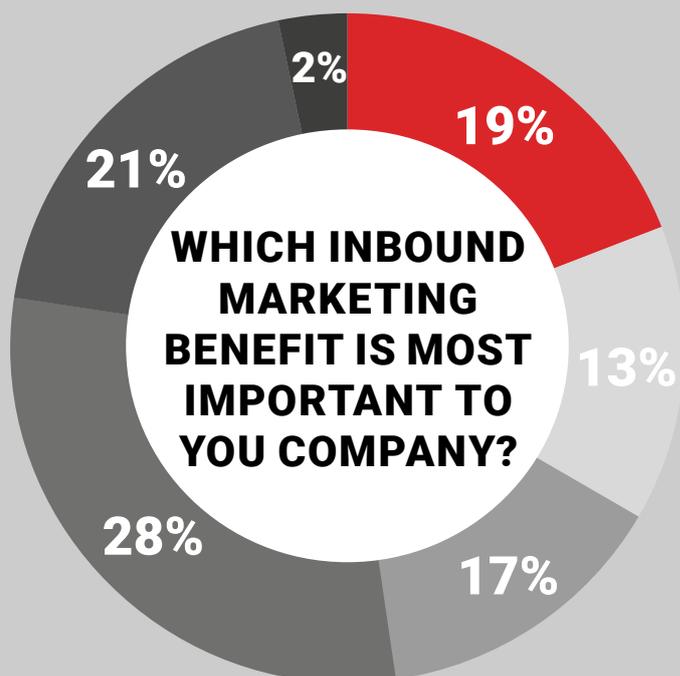
Benefits of inbound marketing

When it comes to the long-term benefits of inbound marketing, there seems to be an almost even split of people claiming that higher ROI, better quality leads,

higher conversions, better brand awareness, and reaching new markets are the reasons they invest in inbound strategies.

While a lower cost per lead is often one of inbound marketing's biggest selling points, very few companies (2%) value this as a major benefit.

The highest percentage (28%) consider higher ROI to be the key benefit. Proving ROI is also considered to be a key challenge while improving ROI of marketing activities is the top priority for 2020, so finding effective ways to measure returns generated from inbound marketing efforts is going to be a constant theme throughout 2020. In order to tackle this, inbound marketers need to be accurately attributing MQLs back to their inbound sources, which could be why this is proving to be such a challenge. Without a successful attribution model, it will be impossible to track lead engagement and prove the ROI of any strategy.



- Higher conversion rate
- Reaching new markets & audiences
- Increasing visibility & brand awareness
- Higher ROI
- Generating more qualified leads
- Lower cost per lead

OUR FINAL THOUGHTS

Inbound marketing is a key part of the modern marketing mix, but there is a clear need for better reporting and tracking, a better understanding of ROI and a better understanding of the long-term benefits. Alongside this, marketers are also going to need to focus on improving strategy and using different tactics more effectively, as well as keeping up with the latest trends in such a fast-moving industry.

As technology drives industry forward, altering the customer landscape and how they communicate with brands, the need for digital inbound marketing techniques will increase, and this is evident with most of our respondents planning to spend more money in 2020 compared to 2019. Companies across all industries and sectors are recognizing this, with the majority bolstering their resource and efforts for the next 12 months.

Surprising, though, is the number of missed opportunities. This is seen not only in the types of content being used and the channels they are being shared on, but also with how things are being measured. The main challenge identified in our research is proving ROI, so how we track, measure and report is key. Not only is this valuable financial

information, but in order to secure the necessary budget for future campaigns, it's essential that marketing teams get CEO, board and stakeholder buy-in.

What we know so far about inbound campaigns is that a comprehensive approach needs to take place. This sees the marriage of different content types and the use of multi- and omni-channel to promote them. The same can be said for gathering data and insights, with a major need for businesses to collaborate better in the sharing of information. Sales and marketing need to cooperate at every stage of the process, from building the ideal buyer personas and strategizing to reporting.

As inbound marketing grows and more brands realize the benefits of applying a holistic, organic approach to their marketing efforts, it will become essential to bring on board the best possible talent to run campaigns, report effectively and make the most out of data, platforms and collaboration between people. It will also be vital for companies to keep up to date with current trends, making partnerships with external marketers and specialist consultants extremely valuable.

ABOUT

This research report was created by Inbox Insight in partnership with Insights for Professionals.

About **Inbox Insight**

Inbox Insight promote the best B2B content marketing practices enhanced by a data-driven approach. We believe putting audience insights at the heart of every digital campaign, drives superior experiences for both our business communities and clients.

It's about continuously leveraging audience intelligence to understand what they want to hear, and translating this into thoughtful demand generation campaigns that resonate with decision makers across the full buyer journey.

About **Insights for Professionals**

IFP gives you access to the latest business knowledge that's customized for you.

We provide high quality, credible and relevant resources for senior professionals in one place. An easy to access and personalized library to help you when you are researching specific topics, seeking practical advice, or simply want to stay ahead of what's happening in your industry. To do this we gather the best content from suppliers, brands and industry experts, as well as doing our own research.



“ We can support your B2B marketing with a series of optimized demand generation products based on your objectives ”

Ready to build your own success story?



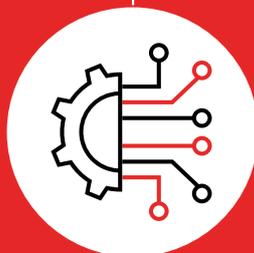
Inbox**ENGAGE**

Identify your audience, activate their interest and generate qualified engagements through our optimized multi-channel campaigns.



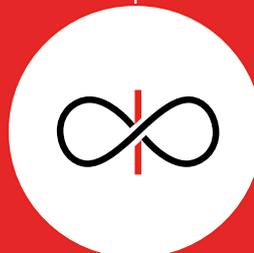
Inbox**NEXUS**

A blend of targeted email marketing and the latest programmatic advertising technology to achieve superior audience reach, relevancy and scale.



Inbox**INTEGRATE**

A powerful end-to-end content amplification solution built around creating seamless digital experiences and optimized reader journeys.



Inbox**INBOUND**

We curate your best content, and optimize it using insight, then drive a relevant audience to the hub with multiple digital touchpoints.



Inbox**CREATE**

A suite of content writing and creative services dedicated to crafting outstanding content that strikes a chord with your target audience.

Get the ball rolling today: Email info@inboxinsight.com UK +44 (0)800 161 5511 US +1-508-424-5330