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# MARKETING LEADERS LOOK TO PERSONALIZED MESSAGES AND HUMAN-CENTERED APPROACH TO GENERATE EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING MESSAGES IN 2020

Regardless of whether content is generated by in-house teams or external sources, content marketing executives report a combination of successes and struggles as they seek to generate leads.

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# Content Marketing

## Successful Messaging in 2020

**It's no secret that B2B buyers use content to inform and influence their research, consideration, and evaluation stages when vetting a new technology provider, and content marketing can play a major role during each stage. In today's connected digital world, the internet and social media are flooded with content generated by both companies and other consumers that can be used to entertain, educate, and influence consumer buying habits.**

Marketers know this, and it's why any successful marketing campaign includes a heavy reliance on generating content that can put an organization in front of target buyers. It's much more than simply putting a product in front of a potential customer.

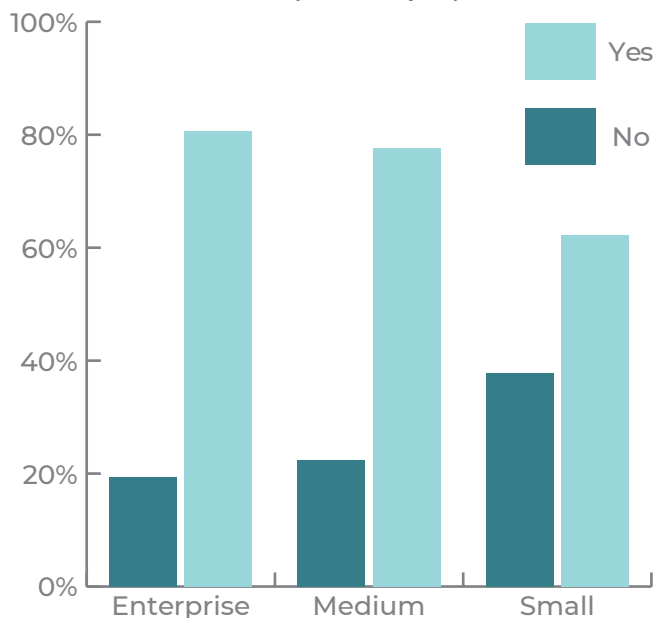
PureB2B's Digital Content Marketing Survey surveyed 548 content marketing leaders between February and March 2020 to take the pulse of the current state of content marketing, and to get an idea of the content struggles and successes that organizations face, with or without a marketing team in house.



## The Status of Content Marketing

Of the respondents to the survey, just under three-quarters said their company has a content marketing team, while the remain 25% said they did not have such a team and rely on external providers for at least some of their content creation. (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Do you have a content marketing team at your company?**



75% of content marketing leaders reported having a content marketing team at their company. Based on 548 respondents.

**“The needs of your audience are constantly evolving and you need to keep up with what they want so that you can continue to create and distribute effective and engaging content,”** according to a January 2020 report from Entrepreneur magazine.

While the market is being increasingly flooded with visual media that lets consumers connect with companies through mobile apps, videos, and social media platforms, “more and more businesses are realizing that the fastest way to move buyers through their marketing funnels is with one-on-one conversations,” the report says.

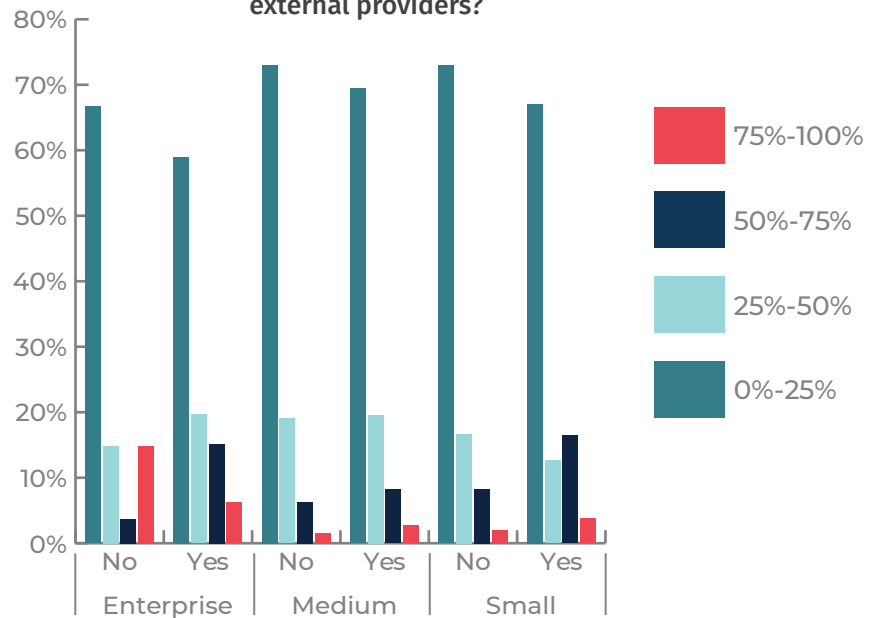
As a result, successful content marketing relies on the ability to create content that is not only visually appealing, but allows companies to connect personally with them to create a more human buying experience. Marketers are accomplishing connection with or without a content team.



More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents, with or without a content team, said their company used external providers for content creation up to 25% of the time. Another 18% said they look outside their doors for content creation 25% to 50% of the time. About 10% estimated that external creation is used about 50% to 75% of the time, and only 4% said they use external content creation 75% to 100% of the time (See Figure 2).

68% of content marketing leaders say up to 25% of their organization's content is created by external providers. Based on 548 respondents.

Figure 2: How much of your content is created by external providers?



## What Works and What Doesn't Work?

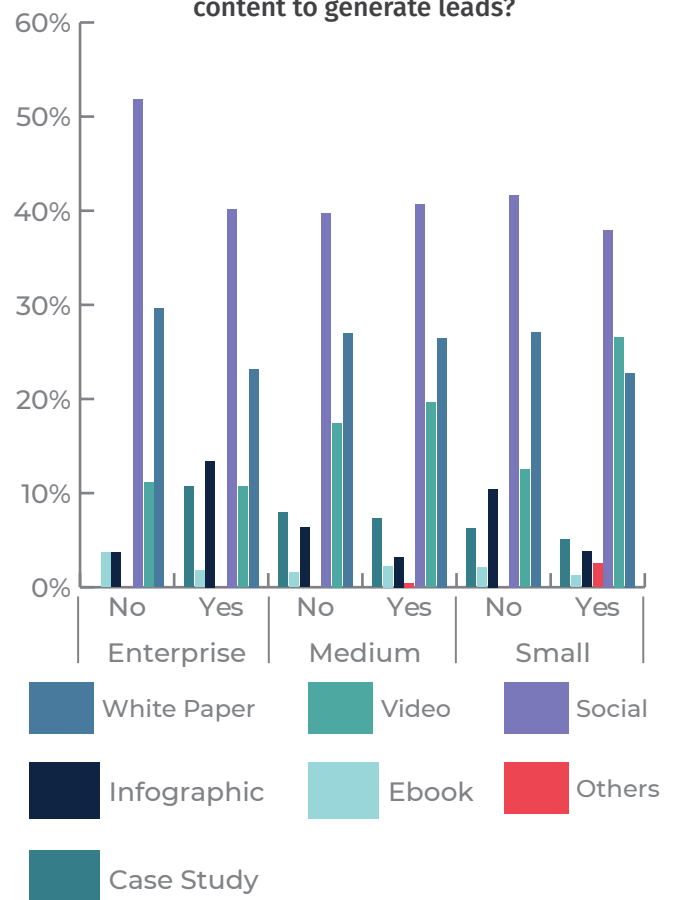
There are many types of content that can be used to generate leads. Ideally, customers want to feel connected to a company throughout the buying process. They want to read content that positions a company as a thought leader in their field, educating them in their journey from interest to final purchase. Along the way, they want to feel connected to the company they are buying from, which is why content can be used to stay in contact with past buyers and to attract future buyers.

With the proliferation of social media, user-generated content is often all that's needed to get the conversation started about a company. Organizations need to find ways to work smarter, not harder, when it comes to external content, as content marketing consultant Jay Baer says in a December 2019 blog from the Content Marketing Institute.

***“User-generated content not only engages consumers but also allows you to create more content with less resources and time as you are tapping into your community for ideas and pieces,”*** Baer says. ***“For 2020, you will need to determine what inspires your audience to create and share your story. It won't be about changing the message; it will be about changing the messenger.”***

That being said, organizations are heeding that advice. According to the respondents to the survey, about 41% say **social media** content is the most successful at it, while 26% said the trusty **whitepaper** is the way go, followed by 18% who say that **video** generates the most leads. Only 7% said the **case study** is the most successful method of generating leads, 6% prefer **infographics**, and only about 3% think that **e-books** or other methods were successful (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: What are the most successful types of content to generate leads?

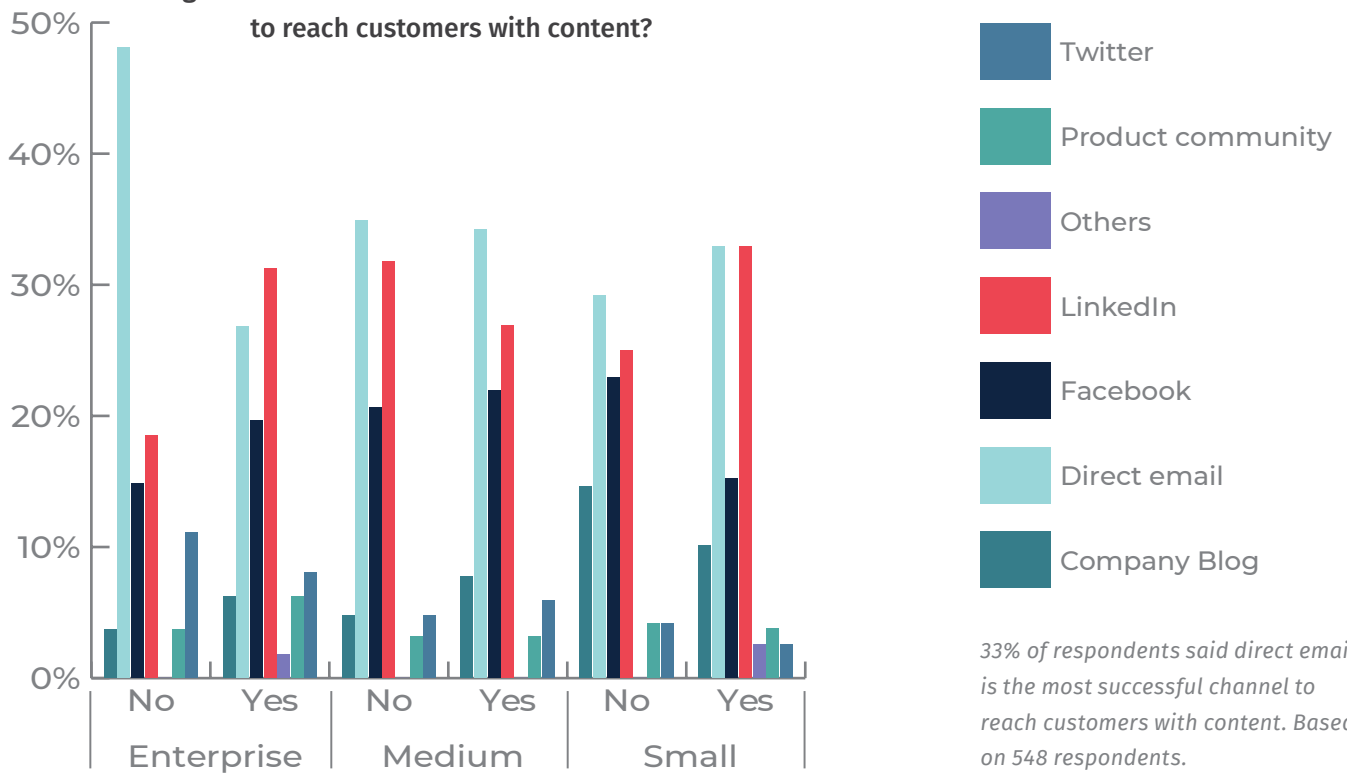


41% of content marketing leaders said social media is the most successful type of content to generate sales leads. Based on 548 respondents.



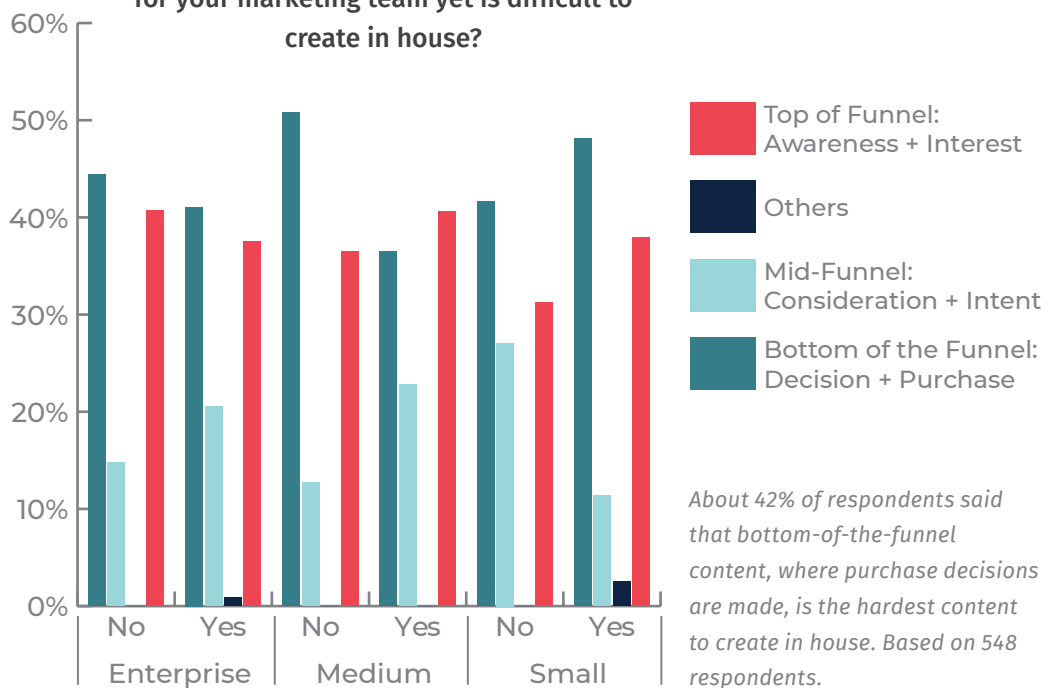
In today's digital world, there are many different ways to reach customers. About a third (33%) of respondents to the survey said that email was the most successful channel to reach customers, while LinkedIn was close behind (29%) followed by Facebook (20%). Another 8% say that company blogs are the most successful channel, which Twitter won 6% of the vote. Word of mouth through product communities and other channels made up another 5% of successful channels, according to respondents (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4: What are the most successful channels to reach customers with content?**



Respondents to the survey felt that certain content can be especially successful, yet is difficult to create in house. Just under **42% said that bottom-of-the-funnel content**, where purchase decisions are made, is the hardest content to create in house, followed by top-of-the-funnel (38%) where awareness and interest are generated. Another **20% of respondents said that middle-of-the-funnel**, where consideration and interest in a product or company are generated, is successful but difficult to create in house (See Figure 5). Of the 25% of content that marketers are generally outsourcing to vendors, these efforts are focused on bottom and top of funnel.

**Figure 5: Which type of content is most successful for your marketing team yet is difficult to create in house?**





# What's in the Future for Successful Content Marketing?

*Expect to see some changes in 2020, in terms of what kinds of content B2B marketers will be creating with or without a content team. For one, messages will become much more personalized instead of the traditional “one-to-many” marketing methods utilized in media such as radio, TV, and newspapers.*



“When was the last time (if ever) you received an email addressed to “Dear Sir/Madam/Subscriber?” And when was that last time you didn’t delete such an email with record-breaking speed?” according to a blog from Content Stack. “After all, if a company doesn’t even know enough about you to know your name, how could they possibly have anything of personal value to offer you?”

Look for more personalized tactics such as email marketing, live customer support, customer success programs, and Facebook Messenger marketing to increase in popularity. With artificial intelligence (AI) becoming more advanced, lifelike applications such as chatbots are only going to get better at having conversations with consumers.

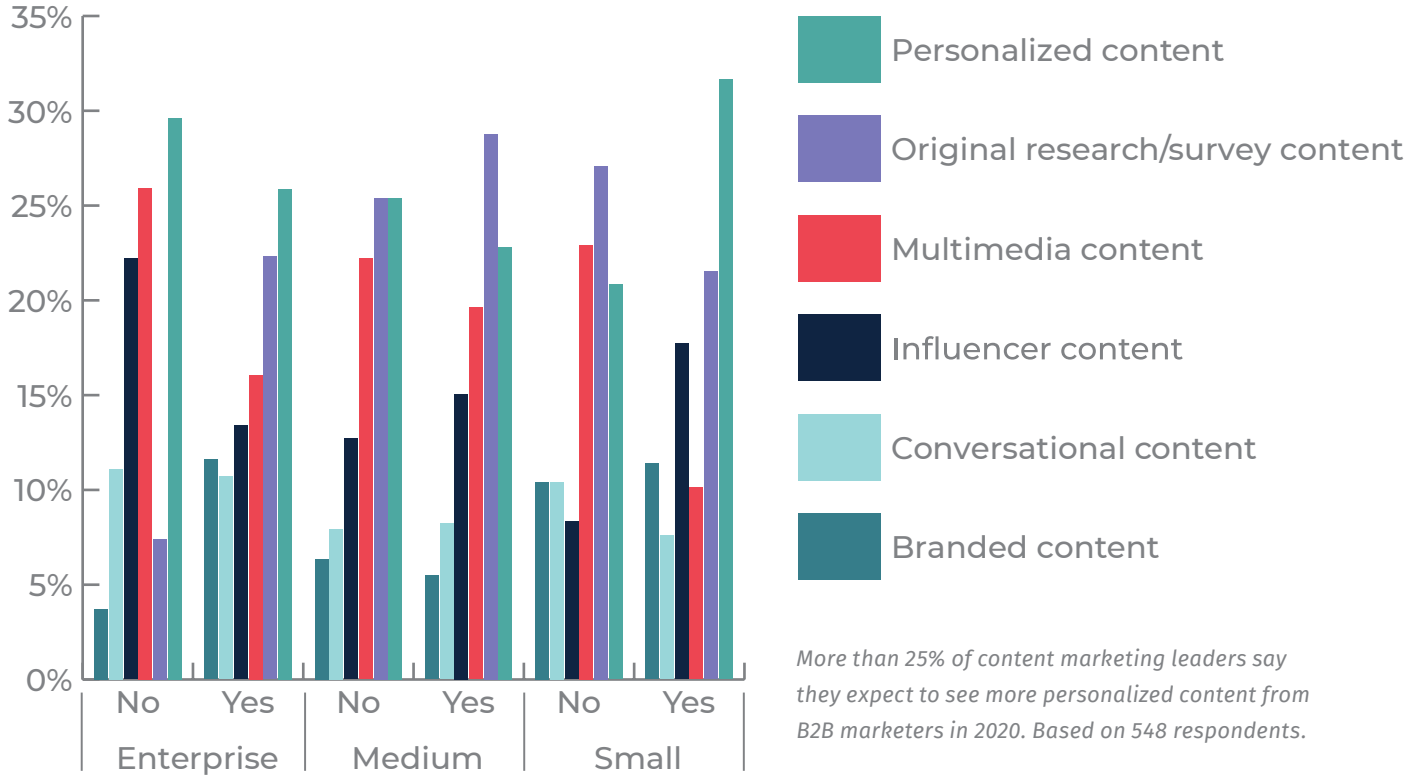


In addition, ***expect the proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) devices to expand the number of data points that can be gathered from consumers about their spending habits.*** By utilizing these technologies, companies can learn a lot about their buying audience, which can then help them create more relevant content and marketing messages in the future.



According to respondents of the survey, just over 25% said they expect personalized content to increase, while another 25% said original research and survey content will take more center stage. Another 19% expect to see more multimedia content, while 15% said influencer content will increase. Further, 9% said they expect to see more conversational content, and another 8% said branded content will increase (See Figure 6).

**Figure 6: What types of content do you expect to see more of from B2B marketers in 2020?**



The future of content marketing will be exciting as marketers strive to make deeper connections with potential customers that will lead to long-lasting business relationships. The digital options available will make this easier to do, especially with an increasingly tech-savvy consumer audience used to making connections through social media and other internet-based applications. Marketers can still be successful without a full in-house content team.

While the channels used to reach buyers may be increasingly digital, the messages they demand and the connections they crave won't change. They want companies to understand them, talk with them, and walk them through the buying process like a good friend.

But it won't be easy. To succeed, organizations will need to create genuine, personalized messages that make buyers feel like they aren't just a target, but a partner, and that will take a combination of efforts made in house as well as outside the box. The result will be business partnerships that thrive as a result.

*This survey of 548 content marketing leaders was conducted by PureB2B between February and March 2020, using the PureB2B intent-based survey engine, which is a customized survey program designed to connect directly with optimal decision makers to help clients uncover valuable insights and drive better business decisions.*





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*Spring 2020 Digital Content Marketing Survey. Global survey of 548 marketing professionals (directors to C-level) conducted by PureB2B, LLC from February 2020 to March 2020.*