

The background of the entire page is a detailed architectural blueprint. It features various lines, dimensions, and symbols typical of a technical drawing. A prominent dark blue horizontal band spans across the middle of the image, serving as a backdrop for the main title.

Blueprint For Using Content To Connect With Buyers

New Research Highlights The Growing Relationship Between Content & Success Driving Digital Dialog With Prospects

Content has emerged as a key ingredient to digital marketing. To gauge how industry leaders are addressing this growing need for content, DemandGen Report recently polled industry leaders to identify best practices around measuring content's impact on demand and the steps companies must take to build digital dialog with their prospects. The following white paper provides a blueprint to help BtoB marketers with critical steps including:

- Building buyer personas;
- Conducting a content audit;
- Mapping content to specific buyer stages;
- Creating assets that feed nurturing campaigns;
- Measuring the success of content campaigns.

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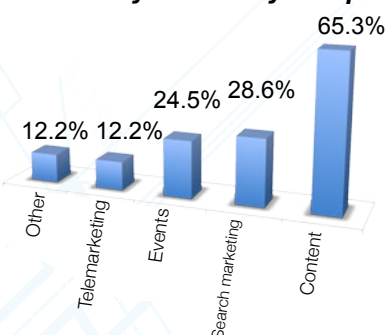
Marketers now have powerful tools available to automate the creation and delivery of campaigns to different prospect audiences. However, in order to connect effectively with today's changing BtoB buyer, it is now essential that marketers have a menu of content that speaks to the needs of the buyer.

Therefore, content has emerged as a key ingredient to digital marketing. Since it is still a relatively new discipline, it has also become one of the most challenging areas for marketers. To gauge how industry leaders are addressing this growing need for content, DemandGen Report recently polled 50 early adopters of marketing automation technology. The survey identified key learnings and best practices for creating a "content roadmap" and using content to create digital dialog.

Key findings of the survey included:

- Insufficient content ranked as one of the top challenges in demand generation;
- Content-based offers ranked as the most successful campaigns in terms of lead gen and prospect engagement;
- Content far outranked other sources as an area of desired spending for 2012; and
- The payback from content investments has been seen in improved results in lead gen, lead nurturing and sales enablement.

If you were able to increase your budget in 2012, where would you most likely increase your spend?



"When you assign each content asset with a takeaway and a progressive call to action, you have the ability to **use marketing automation to monitor the results** from each piece and refine as needed to create the momentum necessary to turn prospects into buyers."

- **Ardath Albee**, CEO,
Marketing Interactions

With marketers now seeing such a clear connection between content and demand generation, the survey also revealed growing interest in the ability to measure the impact specific content pieces are having on engagement and revenue.

For example, 25% of respondents said they are currently considering the role of content in win/loss analysis, while 27% said they are planning to include this analysis over the next 12 to 24 months.

Ardath Albee, CEO of content consultancy Marketing Interactions, emphasized that measurability of content is becoming a more important factor as its role in demand generation increases. "The litmus test for custom content is **whether or not your prospects respond** by taking next steps," Albee said. "When you assign each content asset with a takeaway and a progressive call to action, you have the ability to **use marketing automation to monitor the results** from each piece and refine as needed to create the momentum necessary to turn prospects into buyers."

The following white paper will provide a deep dive into the survey data and also offer a blueprint for how industry leaders are building content strategies that drive initial engagement all the way to close deals.



Insider's Guide To Building Buyer Personas

Building buyer profiles or personas is seen as a critical step for formulating a successful channel strategy and enabling segmentation. Based on the feedback from the survey audience, the suggested steps for creating personas included:

- Start by determining your core target audiences.
- Avoid being too broad. For example, don't just build profiles around broad titles such as CIOs.
- Determine what their pain points are/what is keeping them up at night?
- Drill down into common characteristics and needs for different buyer segments.
- Identify attributes and preferences for these various profiles and segments.

Through this analysis, the paper will provide a step-by-step guide to addressing key areas such as:

- Building buyer personas;
- Conducting an audit of existing content, identifying gaps, etc.;
- Mapping content to specific buyer needs and stages;
- Creating assets that feed lead nurturing campaigns; and
- Measuring the success of content campaigns.

The Critical Role of Content

As adoption of marketing automation tools increases and success with content-based offers in driving demand spreads, the need for more content and expertise in coordinating and measuring that content is on the rise.

When asked which campaigns have been most successful over the past year, content-based offers ranked far ahead of other traditional lead generation techniques. Content offers were cited as the top lead gen/engagement source by 55% of respondents, compared to 43% for events and 25% for search marketing and 8% for telemarketing.

Looking specifically at where an expanded library of content has provided the greatest payback, respondents pointed to:

- Sales enablement initiatives (43%)
- Improved results from lead nurturing campaigns (41%)
- Improved results from lead gen offers (37%)
- Increased web traffic (33%)
- Better insights into buyer behavior (20%)

The positive results in call-to-action offers come as no surprise to some of the industry's top content advocates. "The development of custom content is an opportunity to show prospects and customers that you know about and understand their needs, comprehend their challenges and possess the expertise to mitigate their exposure to risk," said Albee.

Cari Baldwin, Partner and Founder of Silicon Valley-based marketing consultancy Blue Bird Strategies, pointed out that significant changes in BtoB buyer behavior are dictating that content become a bigger part of the engagement process. "As we become more aware of our prospects' needs during the search for a new

Insider's Guide To Conducting A Content Audit

Based on the feedback from the “power users” who participated in the content poll, the common recommendations that emerged for conducting a content audit, included:

- Build a complete list of your current content assets, including web content, sales presentations, case studies, etc.
- Try to map out the assets visually corresponding with different buyer phases, including awareness, education, consideration and validation.;
- Assemble a list of both potential content contributors, include both internal and external options, such as media partners, consultants, analysts, etc.

service or solution, it naturally becomes more important to engage them in a way that is relevant to them,” Baldwin said.

Respondents also showed growing confidence in content as a top wish-list item as they begin to craft their 2012 budgets, with 65% saying they would likely increase spending on content next year, followed by 29% planning to up their investment in search and 25% in events.

Content Building Blocks

Industry experts commonly point to content audits and the development of buyer personas as two of the key steps toward building a successful content strategy. The survey supported the positive impact these steps are having for power users of marketing automation, with 47% ranking content audits as somewhat or highly valuable and 39% citing buyer personas in the same category.

However, the survey also revealed significant gaps that still exist in deploying and utilizing these foundational strategies. For example, 33% of experienced marketing automation adopters have still not conducted content audits and 43% have yet to develop buyer personas.

Baldwin pointed out that the limited staff and resources available to most BtoB marketing teams has prevented them from key steps such as conducting audits and developing

buyer personas.

“It’s unfortunate that marketers don’t complete content audits and develop buyer personas. The marketers that we work with are super smart and know this is a deficit, but there is the matter of

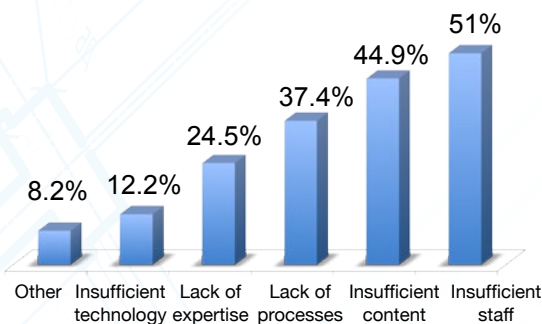
numerous priorities and limited bandwidth that plagues them every day,” Baldwin said.

Baldwin’s assessment was supported by the survey findings as insufficient staff was cited as the top challenge (51%) in optimizing demand generation efforts, followed by insufficient content (45%), lack of processes (35%) and lack of expertise (25%).

She added, however, that as sophistication and experience grows, foundational steps such as conducting content audits and developing buyer personas will become more commonplace.

“As companies adopt marketing automation, it becomes more of a priority to take stock in their content assets,” Baldwin said. “They realize that in order to be more effective in nurture marketing, they need to understand who the buyer is – not just from a demographic standpoint, but really what motivates them, what sources do they turn to for information and how to forge deeper connections with them.”

What would you say are your greatest challenges in creating and optimizing your demand generation efforts?



Mapping And Nurturing

Once organizations get past the initial phases of developing a content strategy, the next goal is building out that library to be able to map content to the different stages of the buyer's journey. As companies become more experienced using marketing automation tools and they roll out lead nurturing campaigns, aligning with buyer needs has proven to be a significant competitive differentiator.

Creating assets and offers that align with the lifecycle of a prospect was cited as somewhat or highly valuable by 60% of respondents, and mapping content to buyer needs was called out as a valuable exercise by 59%. However, there is still a gap that exists in this area, as 29% of respondents said they are still not mapping content to buyer needs.

Baldwin called this out as a potential pitfall for companies who try to fast-forward their content strategy with tracking and understanding the real needs of their buyers. "We see this often – where companies are sending awareness content to

prospects who are in the consideration phase, or providing product information to prospects who are just starting to realize there may be a solution for their pain," she added. "Whether it's via automated nurture programs, social media or top of the funnel demand generation, there is nothing more magical than that moment when a prospect feels like you were reading their mind, so marketers should make this a priority for success."

With 41% of respondents citing improved results from lead nurturing as their top payback from an expanded library of content, the survey showed a clear correlation between content and the ability to engage and accelerate a longer-term buyer.

"As companies adopt marketing automation, it becomes more of a priority to take stock in their content assets."

- **Cari Baldwin**, Partner and Founder of Blue Bird Strategies

Insider's Guide To Mapping Content To Buyer Stages

Once organizations have conducted an audit of their existing assets, the next stage in a content strategy is identifying the gaps that exist. Content veterans point to several steps to increase the effectiveness of building a content map. Based on the feedback from the survey audience, the suggested steps for creating personas included:

- Identify gaps in the current menu of assets to determine the buyer phases where you are light on content and build plans to create new assets.
- Develop content offers that address the unique needs of prospects at different stages of the buying cycle.
- Early stage content should start a conversation and address business issues.
- Later stage content should be more product specific and focus on purchasing concerns, such as ROI and competitive analysis.

Insider's Guide To Creating Nurturing Content

The reality for BtoB marketers is that the majority of buyers are longer-term buyers who can often take 12 to 18 months before they are ready to sign. Therefore, creating content to feed nurturing campaigns is another critical part of a broader content strategy. The content leaders we polled for this survey provided the following guidance for developing nurturing content:

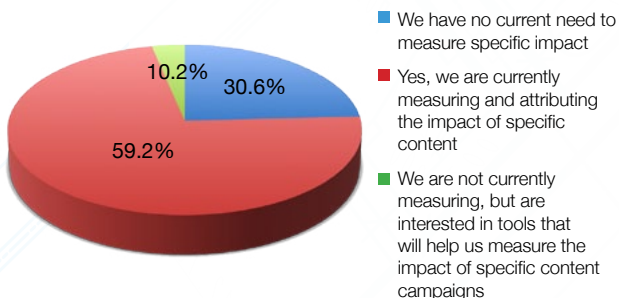
- Think about multiple formats and channels for your messaging; don't become over-reliant on email messaging alone.
- Consider your cadence; you don't want to contact prospects so often that you become a burden, but you also don't want to be forgotten about.
- Develop content offers that will help progress and accelerate prospects through the buying cycle.
- Don't jump too quickly to pricing and ROI, start out with research and case studies until they are ready to talk terms.

Leading industry analysts stressed that finding the right formula for nurturing content is a formula many marketers are still trying to figure out. "Lead nurturing can help qualify prospects and prepare them for more meaningful interactions with sales," said Ian Michiels, Principal Analyst at Gleanster Research. "But, finding the unique combination of content, channel and messaging is no easy task. It requires a very robust measurement and analytical process."

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Gleanster Research

Are you currently or are you interested in measuring the impact of specific content pieces on various phases of the sales funnel?



Measuring The Impact Of Content

Although content marketing is still a new discipline for many BtoB marketers, they are already actively tracking the impact offers have on pipeline. The early metrics are primarily focusing on lead generation and driving web visits, but there is also growing interest in the influence content has on sales and revenue generation.

Insider's Guide To Measuring Content Impact

Just as marketing automation solutions allow companies to measure the impact of specific campaigns, marketers should also be thinking about the results driven by specific offers. The advance marketers we surveyed pointed to following tips for developing metrics around content:

- Track inquiries generated by offer; evaluating how many raw leads are driven by different pieces of content will provide an indication of which topics are resonating with your prospects.
- Examine web traffic to determine the topics that are driving the most clicks and longest stays on your site.
- Evaluate the rate of conversion within the sales funnel, from inquiry to qualified lead and opportunity will dig deeper into which content is drawing the “right” audience.
- Consider including the content analysis as part of your win/loss reviews.

When asked how they currently measuring the effectiveness of content campaigns, respondents cited:

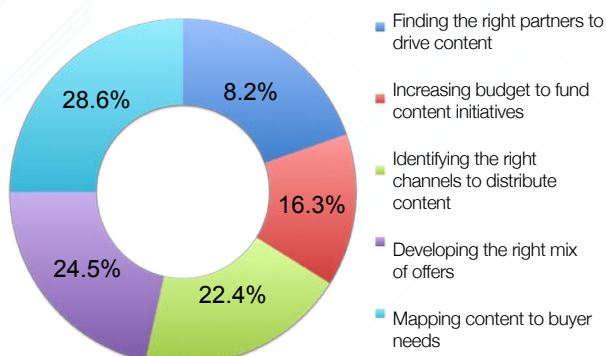
- Number of leads generated (76%)
- Number of qualified opportunities (74%)
- Traffic driven to web site (49%)
- Feedback from sales team (33%)
- Activity generated via social media (16%)

The survey showed a growing interest in measuring the impact of specific content pieces on various phases of the sales funnel, with 31% saying they are currently measuring and attributing the impact of specific content and 59% saying they are interested in tools that can help measure the impact.

A growing number of advanced companies are going as far as tracking the role of content on influencing purchase decisions. A quarter of the respondents said they are considering the influence of content during win/loss analysis, and 27% said they are planning to include that analysis in win/loss reviews over the next 12 to 24 months.

Looking beyond the influence on closed business, the other core values of measuring content marketers cited included: improving the ability to map content to buyer needs (29%), developing the right mix of offers (25%), identifying the right channels to distribute content (22%) and increasing budget to fund future content initiatives (16%).

As you evaluate your current content programs, where do you see the greatest opportunity to improve your results?



Cracking the Content Code: An Ongoing Journey

Like any new or cutting edge marketing practice, developing the right mix of content to drive demand is a learning curve for most organizations.

More than half (51%) of the survey respondents ranked their organization as “needing improvement” in creating content that speaks to each phase in the buyer’s journey, while 31% gave their team an average score and 12% got an excellent grade.

The practice of measuring and tracking the impact of content campaigns is also a relatively new process, as 1/3 of respondents said they have been active in measuring their campaigns for 2 years or less, and 8% are still not tracking.

Conclusion

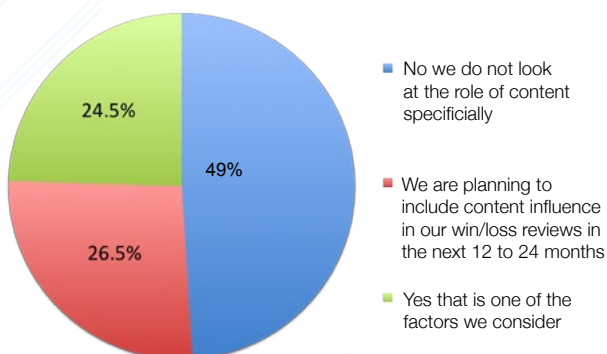
The survey results clearly show that marketers are seeing clear payback from their investments in content, both in terms of engagement and lead generation. However, the survey also underscored that like any marketing tactic, content campaigns need to be actively measured and tracked to have maximum impact.

Jay Gaines, Service Director for Demand Creation Strategies at SiriusDecisions, illustrated this point during a keynote session at the recent SiriusDecisions Summit, when he stressed that most BtoB companies are lacking accountability, strategy and measurement when it comes to content.

“If content is king, then people treat that king pretty badly,” Gaines said. Supporting this gap, Gaines conducted a poll of the audience that found 76% of attendees cited content as critical to their demand creation efforts. However, responding to a follow-up question, 41% of attendees said lack of budget and resources or the lack of a content strategy provided significant hurdles to their efforts.

As the survey data supports, this disconnect between talking about content and prioritizing it is quickly changing for progressive marketers. Leading BtoB organizations are realizing that an extensive menu of content now only helps to support lead generation programs, but also makes buyers more confident and comfortable in working with a particular solution provider.

As you conduct win/loss analysis of your pipeline, do you currently measure the role content plays in influencing your customer’s purchase decisions?



These new dynamics are making content creation and measurement a competitive necessity in most BtoB markets. “Companies that don’t invest in content are missing the opportunity to become the trusted advisor,” Baldwin said. “Today’s buyers are more sophisticated and don’t want to be sold to. They want a service or solution provider that understands their pain and can provide a solution. And if you can’t do that, they will find someone who can.”



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About Manticore

Manticore Technology enables organizations to build relationships with buyers by consistently delivering the right message to the right person, at the right time. Our marketing automation platform helps marketers digitally communicate with leads in a personal and effective way throughout their entire buying cycle, while delivering invaluable insight to sales improving interactions and lead-to-close ratios. Manticore Technology has enterprise customers around the globe, including, UPS, Sharebuilder 401(k) and Yamaha. For more information please visit the company's web site at www.manticoretechnology.com or call (512) 241-3780.



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About DemandGen Report

DemandGen Report is a targeted e-media publication spotlighting the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.