

Content Matters

How content teams are driving growth,
measuring what works, and thinking about the future

2022 Report

Because content matters.

The content we create connects us with our customers. Content informs, builds relationships, and drives business outcomes. Content matters.

In a recent [Forrester study](#), 60% of customers said: “I’m unlikely to return to a website that does not provide a satisfactory customer experience.” We believe that delivering this customer experience is thinking beyond one-time engagements and more toward lasting relationships. This isn’t as simple as publishing more content.

The key to great experiences comes from creation, feedback, and iteration.

With all this in mind, we asked your thoughts in our inaugural **Content Matters Survey**. It forms the basis of our exclusive report, meant to help us all better engage with our customers and drive the greatest business outcomes from our investments in content creation.

Here’s what we learned from 800+ content marketers:

- In 52% of companies, more people are creating more content—no wonder, when everyone wants to grow their customer base and improve their relationships with those customers.
- Content drives those top-of-funnel activities—meaning brands are thinking about the all-important initial connection they make with customers, wherever they are.
- There’s a deep desire to do more with video—underscoring a desire for deeper human connection.
- Almost half of us don’t know how our content is performing—so we risk wasting customers’ time (and our own) if we aren’t working with reliable feedback to guide our decision making.
- Tracking revenue back to content is hard—leaving the work of the content marketer too much to chance and gut feel.

I invite you to dive into our report. Please let us know what you think.



Nick Gernert, CEO
WordPress VIP

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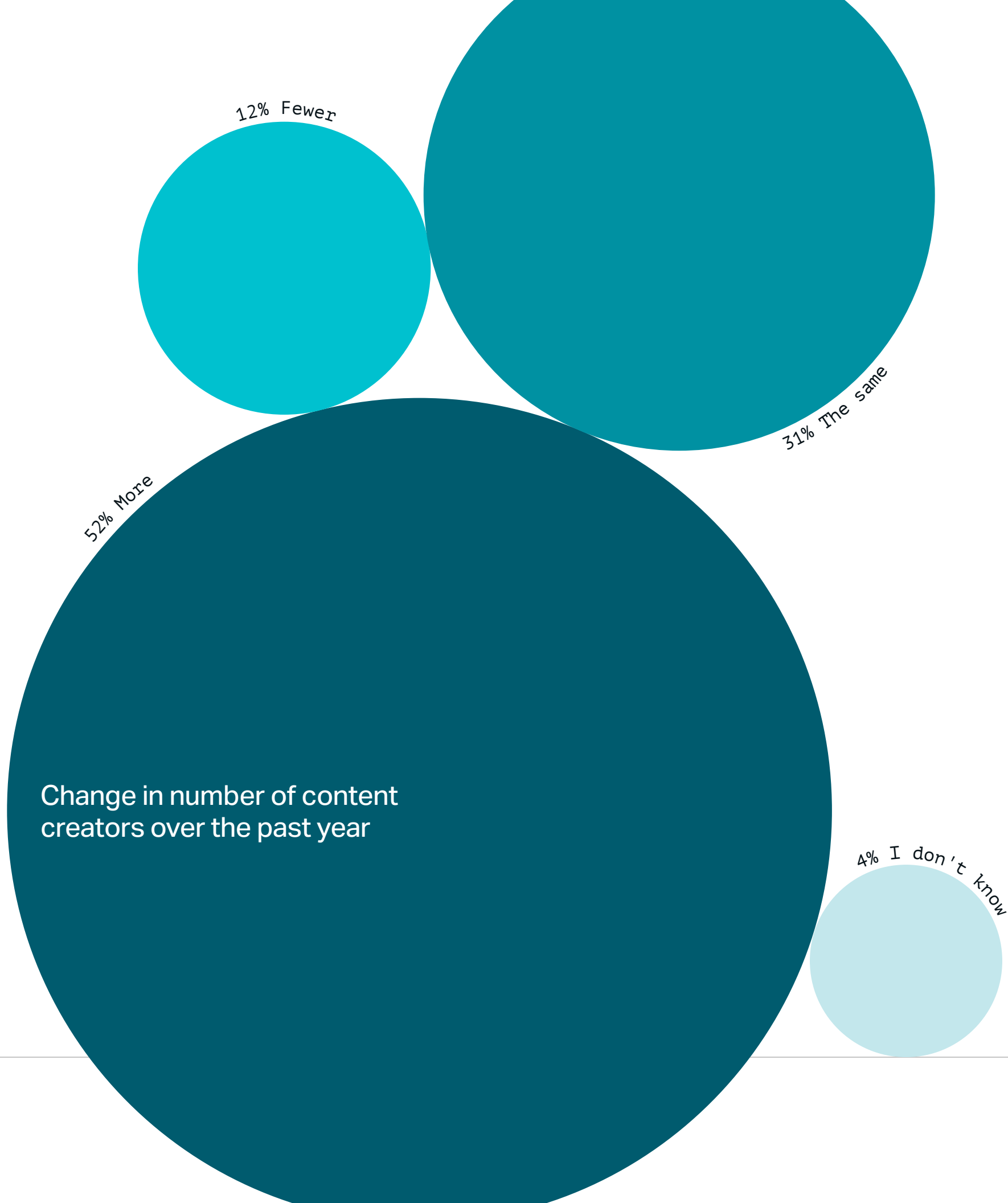
Teams & Budgets

More people are creating
more content.



More people are creating more content (and spending more money)

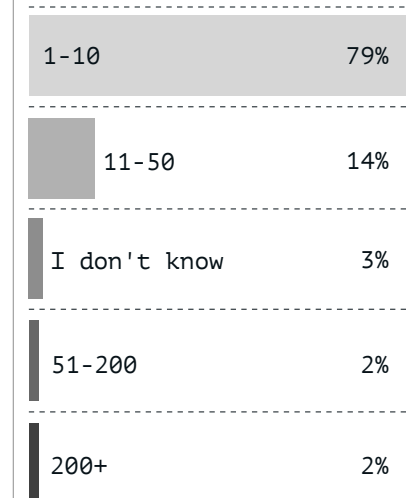
Keeping up with the increasing desire for more content is a challenge for many content teams. According to our research, organizations are creating more content than ever before, but they still aren't producing nearly as much as they'd like. The good news? Help seems to be on the way. We see most organizations maintaining or increasing their content budget over the coming years, reflecting the increasing importance of content in the marketing mix.



A common challenge across organizations is a lack of people to produce content.

Content teams across industries typically remain small, with nearly eight in 10 survey respondents managing with a team of 10 or fewer. Notably, this trend for small content teams remained consistent, even in large organizations. However, these teams are growing—more than half of respondents noted their content teams have expanded over the past year.

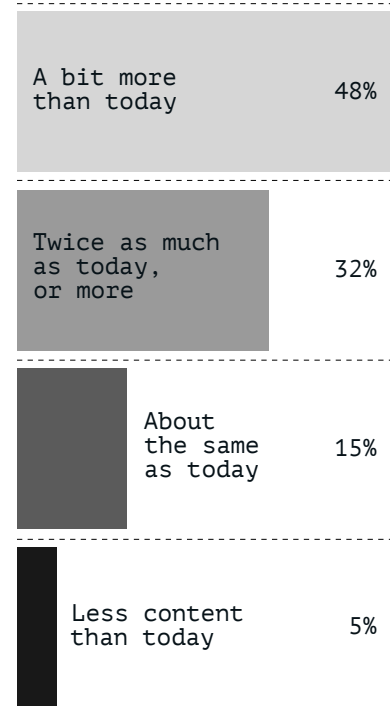
Number of people creating content



So what's driving this growth in content team size? Feeding the content beast.

Nearly eight in 10 respondents doing content marketing want to create more content than they are now—and a third said "a lot more."

Desired amount of content



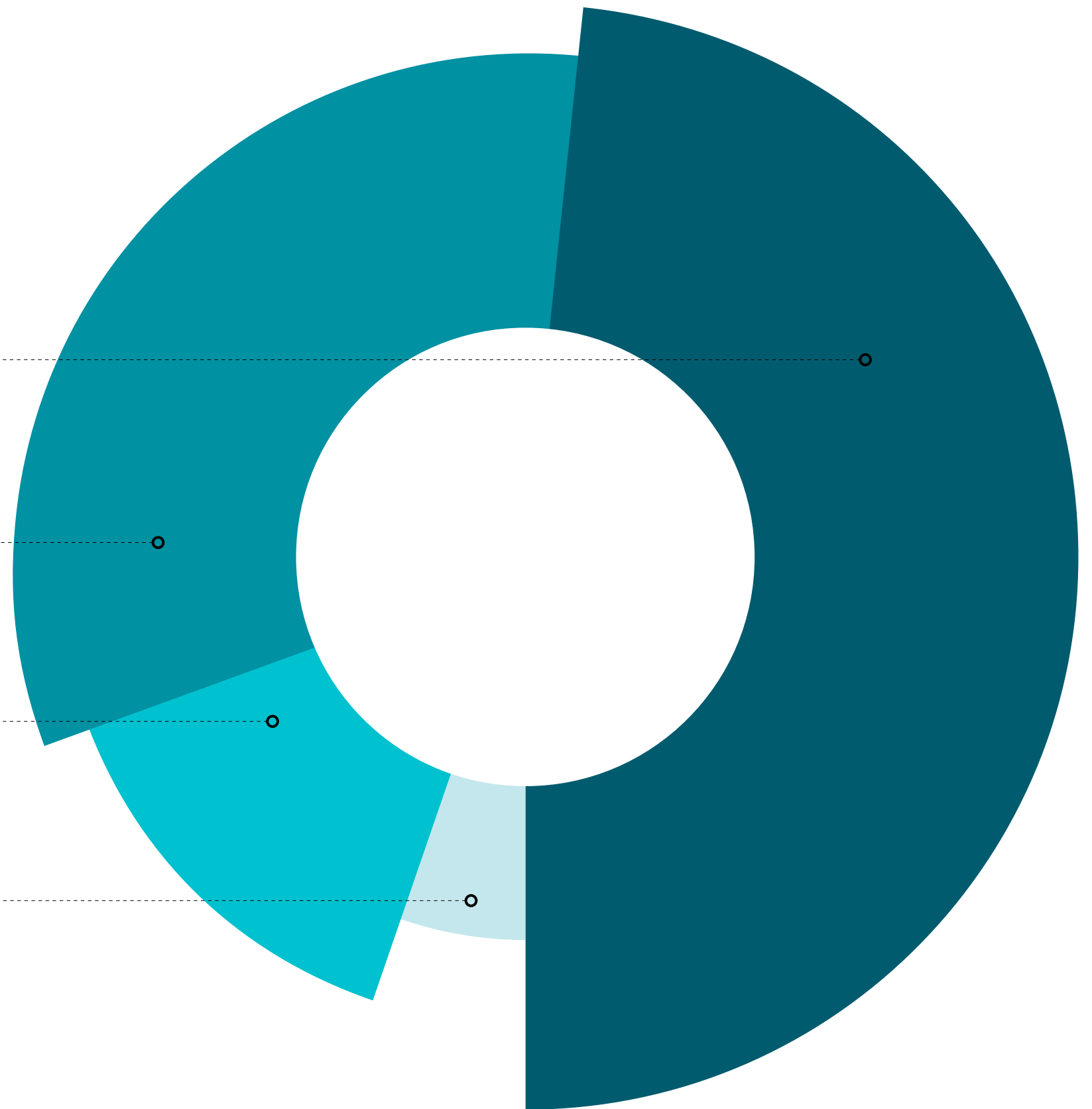
Change in amount of content created over the past year

66% More

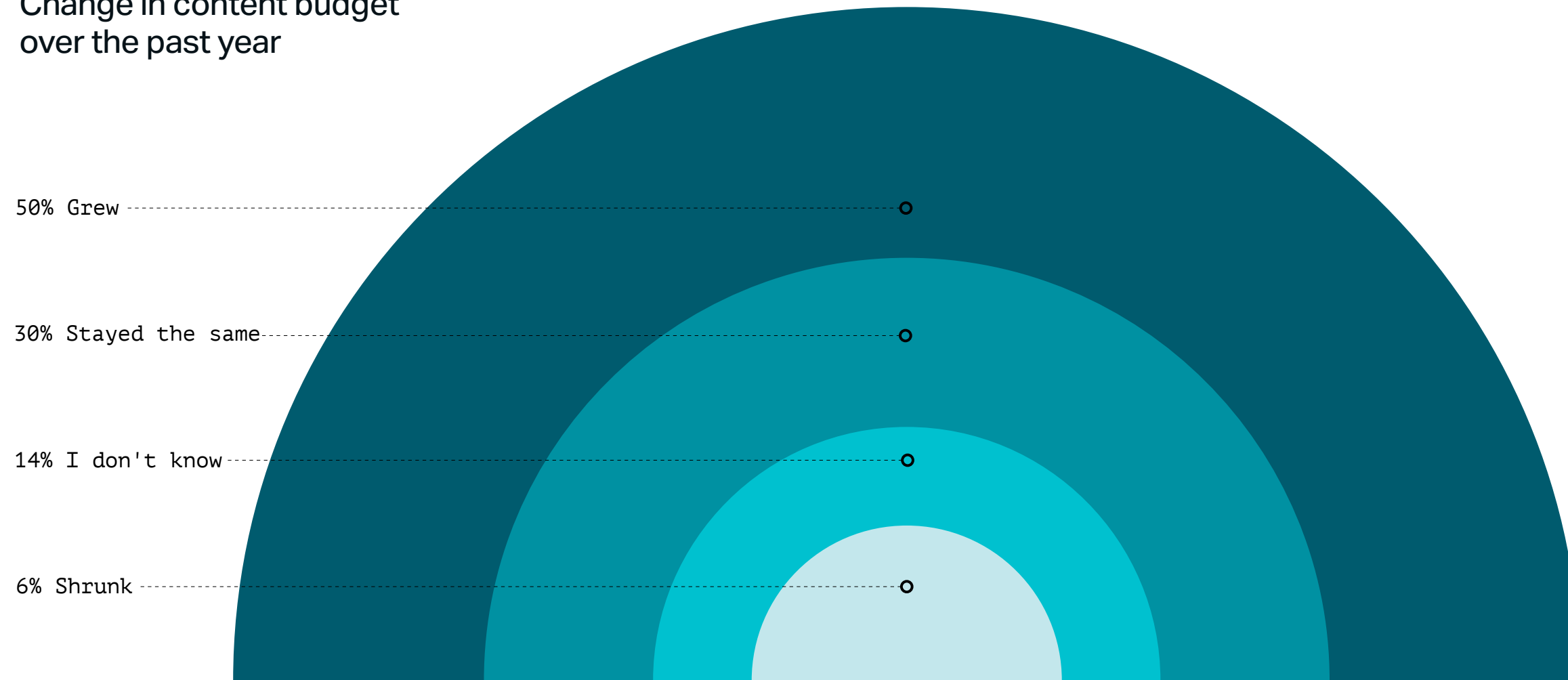
21% The same

9% Less

4% I don't know



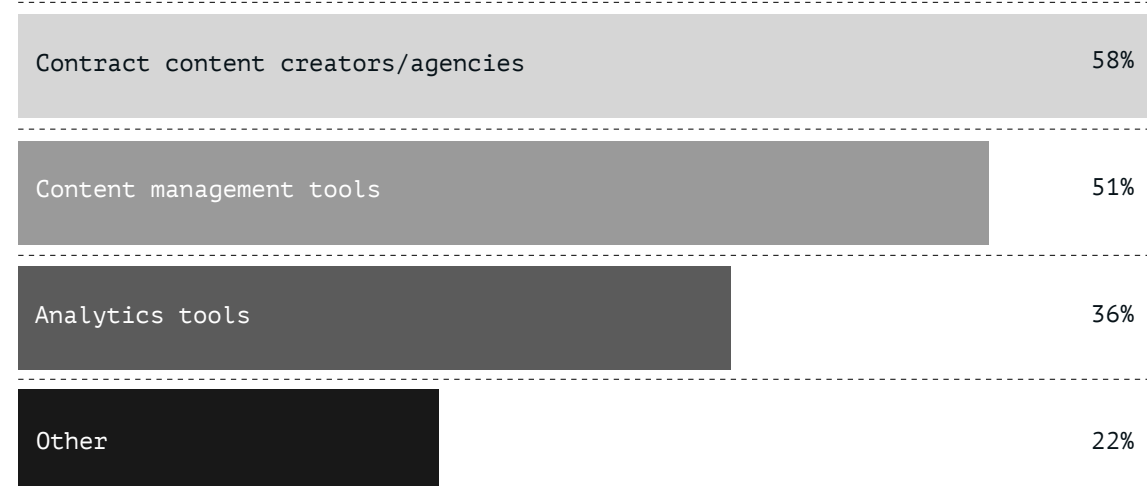
Change in content budget over the past year



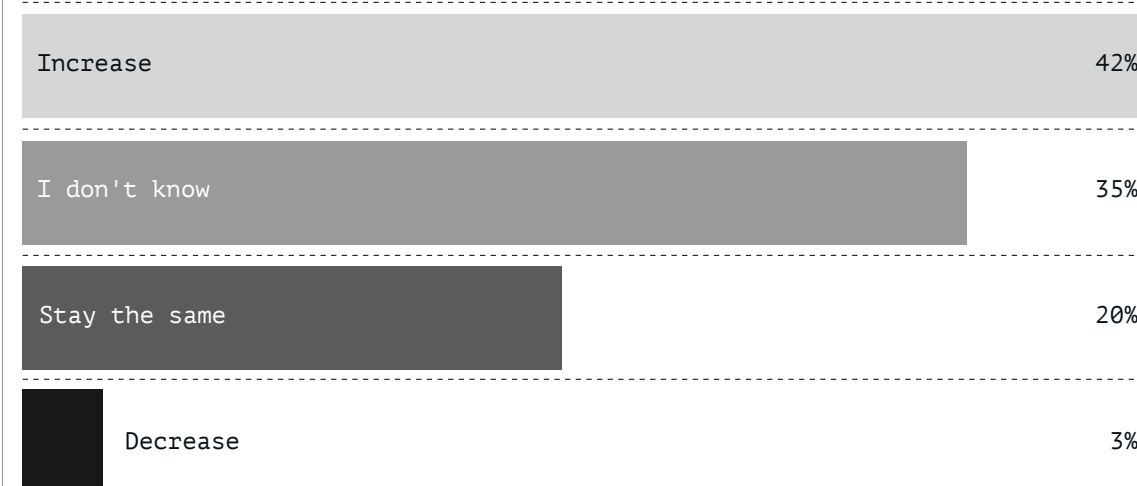
Budgets are growing.

Along with team size, budgets have grown over the past year in about half of the companies surveyed; a similar number expect further growth in 2022. This budget is largely being spent on more content creators, rather than technology to make content creation more efficient.

Where budgets are being spent



Expected change in content budget over the next year



The spending gap between people and technology is striking and speaks to the relative maturity of content marketing in comparison to other marketing disciplines. Clearly, to be effective, organizations must balance people, process, and technology.

Only then can marketers create not just more content but content that produces better results, based on focusing efforts in the highest performing areas. Opting to simply hire more marketers is likely a strategy that will lead to diminishing returns.

Survey response

“We're a growing startup poised to invest more resources in content marketing—that means team, technology, and distribution.”



Purpose & Channels

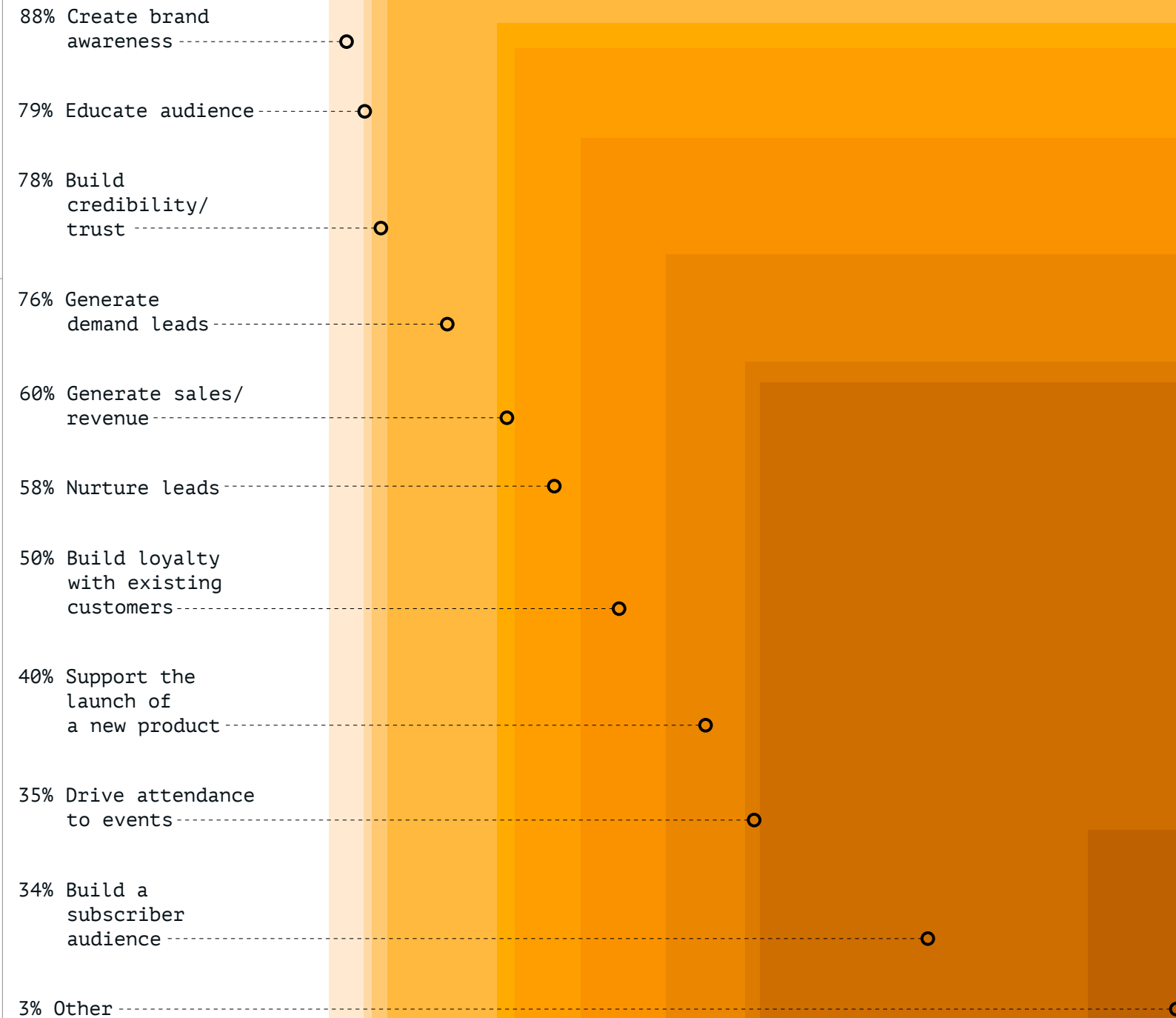
Content primarily drives
top-of-funnel activities
on owned channels.

Content primarily drives **top-of-funnel activities** on owned channels

For businesses, content marketing serves many purposes, addressing audiences at every stage of the buying journey—e.g., awareness, consideration, conversion—across a seemingly endless number of distribution channels. However, for the vast majority of organizations we surveyed, content is still seen primarily as a top-of-funnel exercise on owned channels.

Content drives growth. Even as top-of-funnel content marketing purposes like brand awareness, education, and trust building dominated survey respondents' top answers, right behind these for more than six in 10 businesses were bottom-of-funnel initiatives such as generating demand and business leads, and generating sales and revenue.

Purpose of content marketing



All types of companies agree creating brand awareness is a content marketing priority.

However, other priorities differ between B2B and B2C companies. B2B is heavily focused on content for lead generation, while B2C is focused on audience education.

B2B

- 91% Create brand awareness
- 85% Generate demand/leads
- 81% Build credibility/trust
- 79% Educate audience
- 68% Nurture leads
- 64% Generate sales/revenue
- 44% Build loyalty with existing customers
- 41% Support the launch of a new product
- 39% Drive attendance to events
- 31% Build a subscriber audience
- <1% Other

B2C

- 84% Create brand awareness
- 78% Educate audience
- 73% Build credibility/trust
- 60% Generate demand/leads
- 60% Build loyalty with existing customers
- 56% Generate sales/revenue
- 42% Support the launch of a new product
- 38% Nurture leads
- 38% Build a subscriber audience
- 13% Drive attendance to events
- 0% Other



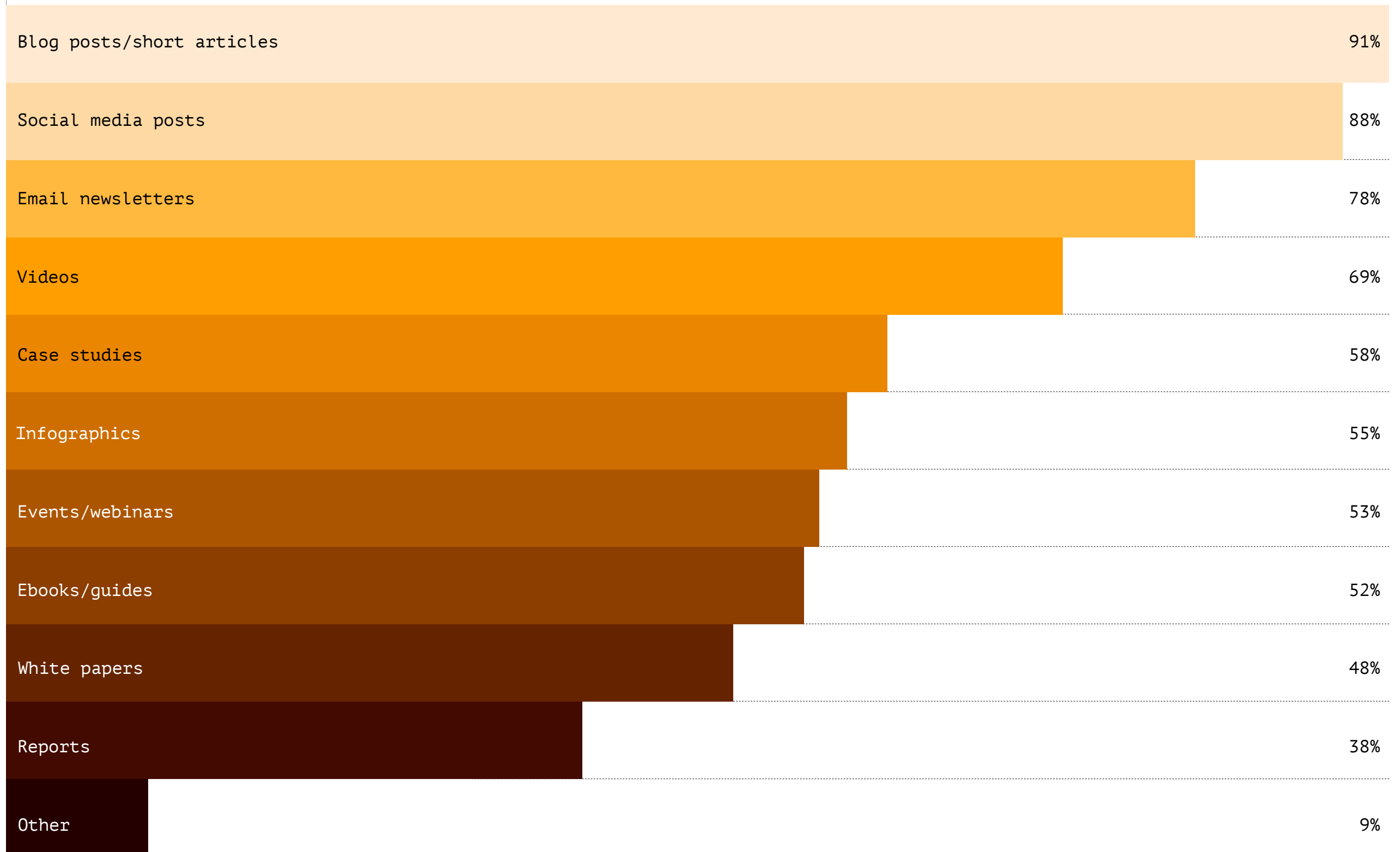
Owned channels support the largest volume of content activities—with blog posts, organic social media, and email newsletters making up the top three.

While both B2B and B2C companies activate this content across many channels, there is a strong preference for owned channels for content distribution.

Many are also using paid social media and paid search ads, though the choice of channels varies depending on company type. It's no surprise most B2B respondents share posts and run ads on LinkedIn or that Facebook is the top organic and paid social channel for B2C.

What does stand out is more than 60% of B2B companies use Facebook for both organic and paid ads, and nearly half use Instagram. Also of note: more than three in four B2C companies use LinkedIn for organic traffic but only 30% opt for paid advertising on that channel.

Content marketing activities



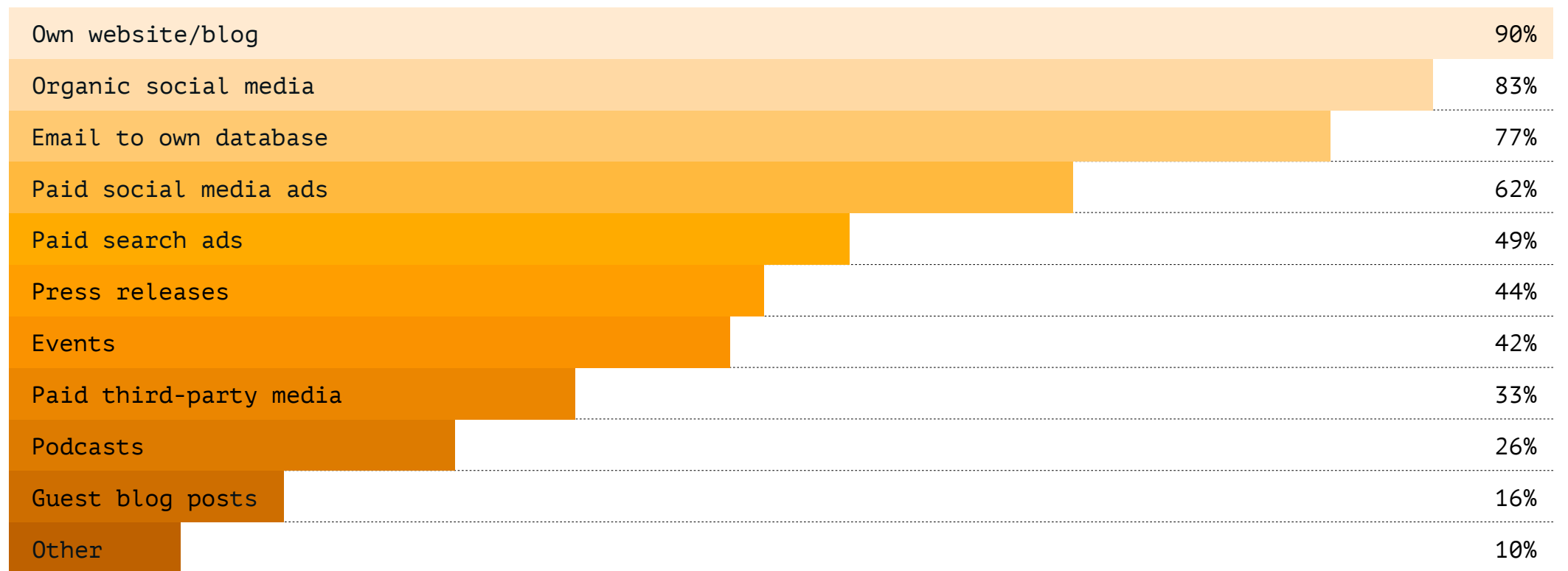
Data point

As an adjunct to Content Matters research, we looked to [Parse.ly network data](#) to see how our survey results stacked up against the social channels driving pageviews to websites on a larger scale.

Social media comprised 13-14% of pageviews to websites throughout 2021.

Of the top five social media platforms, Facebook still drives the most traffic, followed by Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

Content distribution channels



Facebook
89%

Twitter
7%

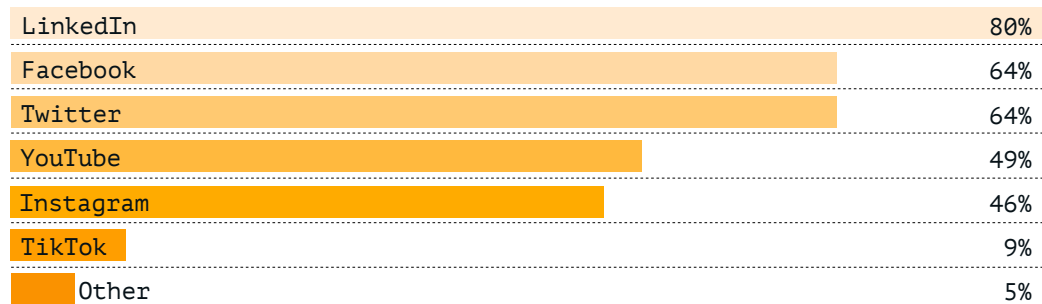
Instagram
2%

Pinterest
1%

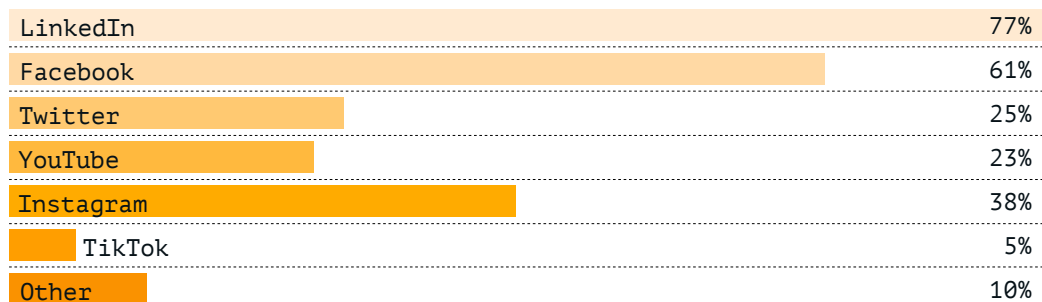
LinkedIn
<1%

B2B and B2C preferred social media platforms

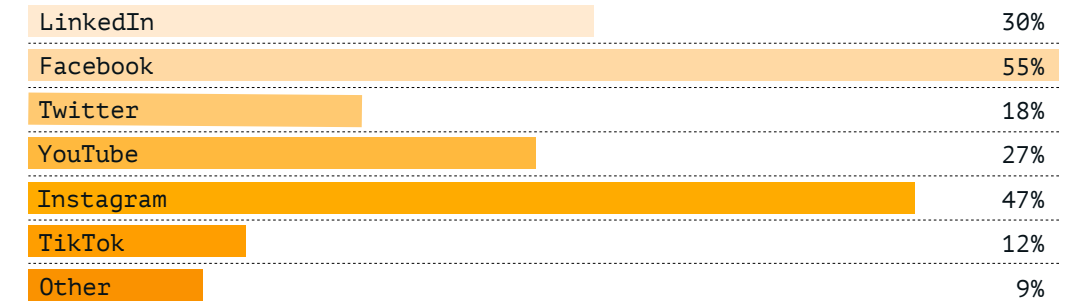
Choice of social media platform for B2B: organic



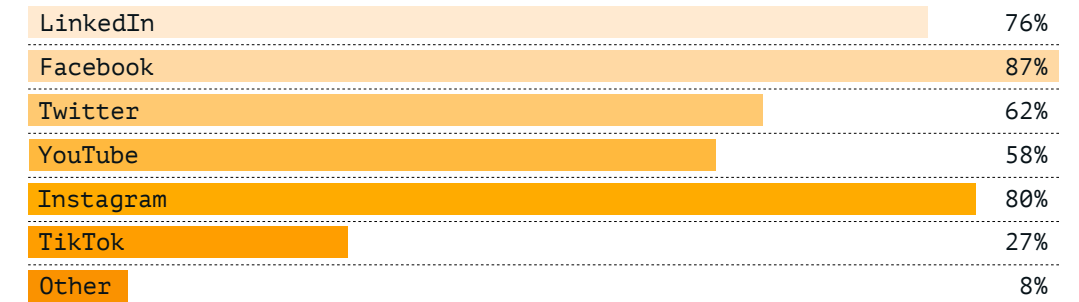
Choice of social media platform for B2B: paid



Choice of social media platform for B2C: paid



Choice of social media platform for B2C: organic



To drive top-of-funnel conversions, content is the fuel that energizes a wide variety of channels—an average of four to seven in play for most businesses we surveyed. While most decidedly favor leveraging channels they own (e.g., website/blog), paid channels are still part of the mix for more than half of our respondents. *With so many avenues to address and seed, it's little wonder that the demands for content and content budgets continue to grow.*

Number of content distribution channels used	
1	7.5%
2	6.4%
3	9.6%
4	15.1%
5	13.3%
6	15.4%
7	14.6%
8	8.2%
9	5.6%
10	3.2%
11	1.1%

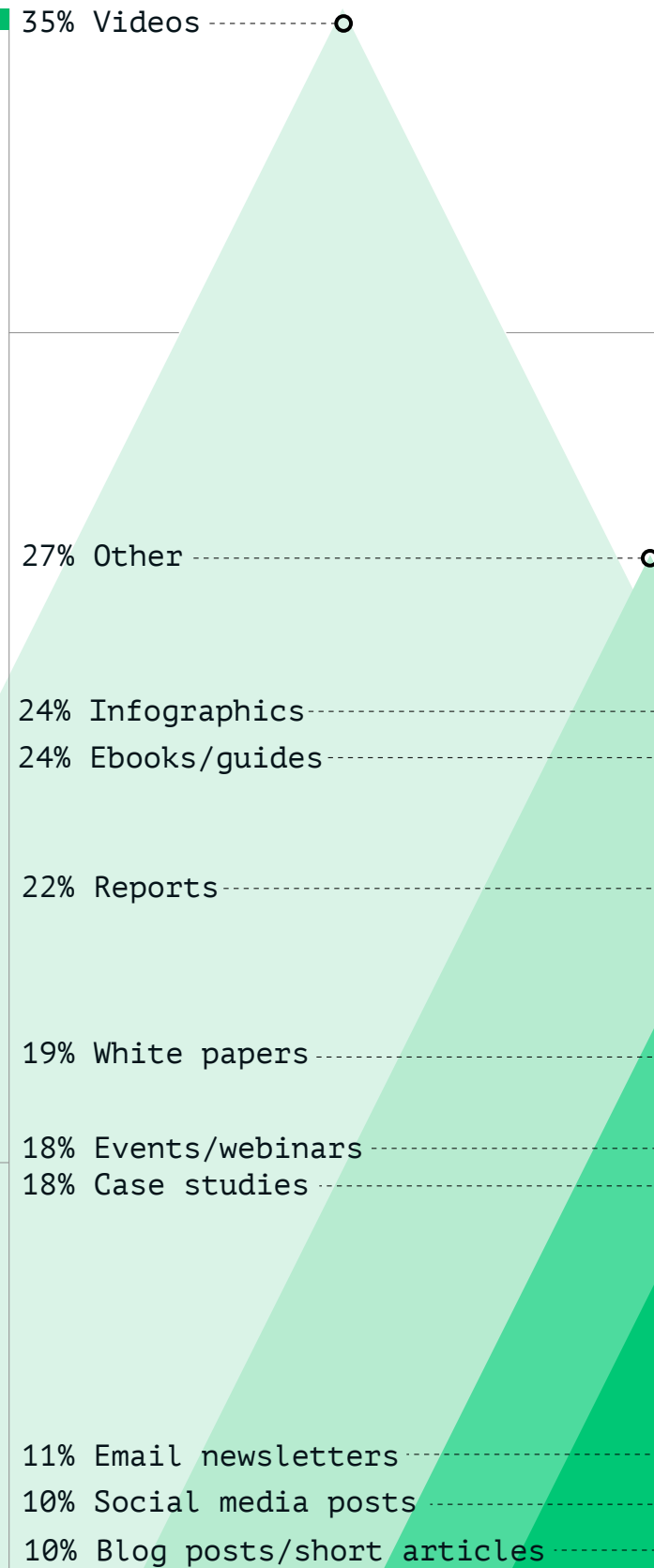
Content Types

Everyone wants to do more video, if they only had the resources.



Video, infographics, and longform content top content marketers' "if we only had the resources" wish lists

Video isn't just for young, glam consumer brands today. Businesses of all sizes, across industries and segments want to get in on the action—and no wonder, considering the higher audience engagement levels that come with video.



Longform is preferred over social and blogging.

As marketing teams grow, they want to bulk up their content marketing resource libraries with infographics and traditional in-depth content like white papers, reports, ebooks, and guides.

Meanwhile, the shine is off doing more blog and social media content, even if the current output level of these content types is consistently high across industries.

Top type of content to create were more resources available



Expect 2022 to be the year video takes a greater starring role in enterprise and B2B content marketing circles. For one, as smartphones and handhelds continue to close gaps in video quality and editing capabilities, it wouldn't surprise us to see content teams take a DIY, guerilla marketing approach to video shoots and production to promote assets, webinars, events, and more. Like Dorothy, these teams may already have the resources to get them home.

Survey response

**“Video!
Podcasts!
Webinars!
Content always...
No new team
members to help
accomplish the
growing lists of
things that need
to be done.”**



Content Performance

Despite having metrics,
almost half still don't
know how their content
is performing.



Almost half don't know how their content is performing

Marketing teams aren't short of measurement tools—more than three in four survey respondents use metrics to measure their content performance. But are they using the right metrics and the right tools? Page views and email clicks, so-called "vanity metrics," offer little hard analysis of how content is performing, and don't tell the full story of a customer's lifecycle journey. No surprise that nearly half our respondents are left wondering if they have a clear picture of how their content is really performing.

Content marketers today largely rely on metrics like clicks or views.

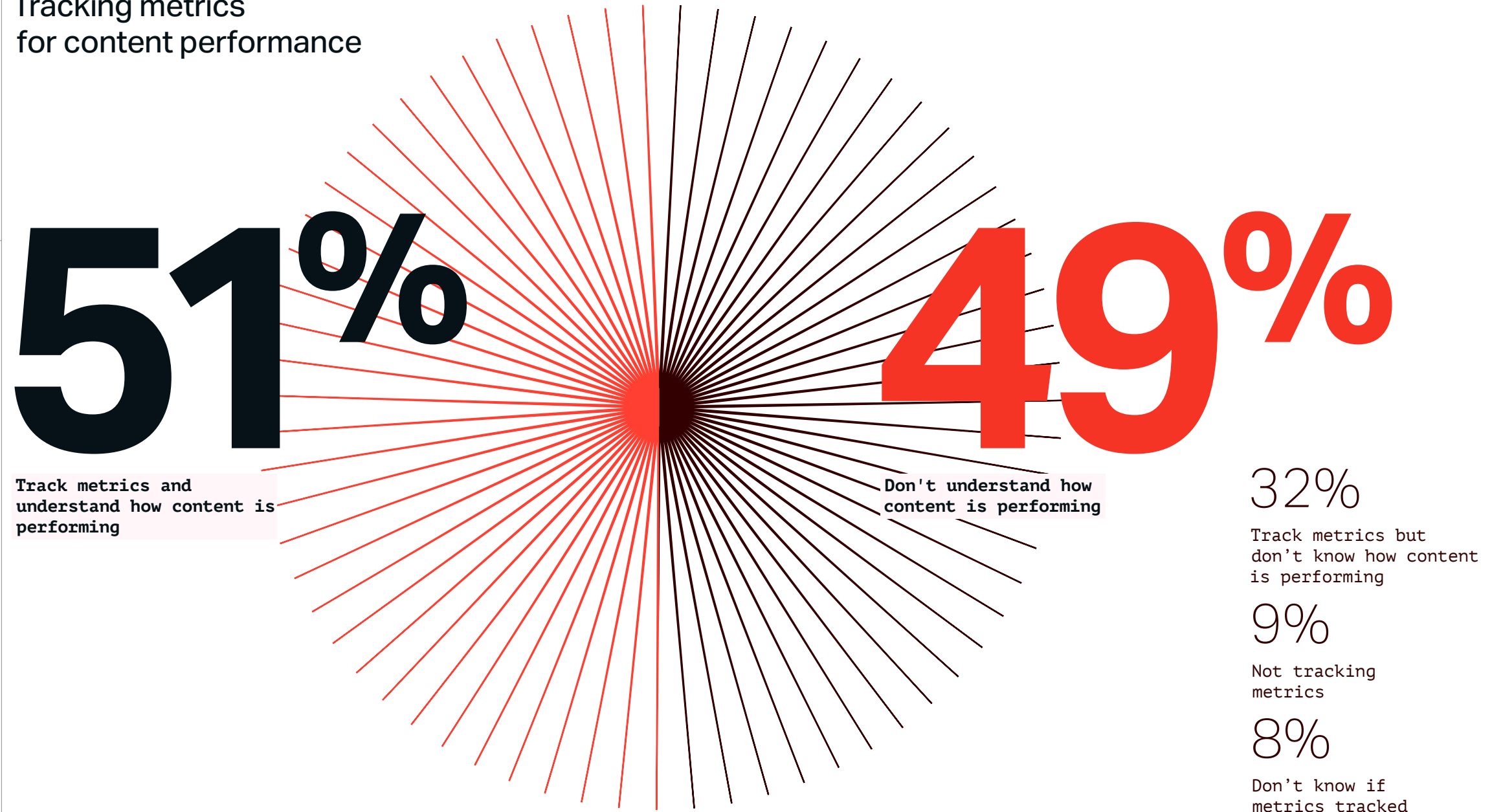
The No. 1 metric to track content performance is page views, trailed by email metrics (e.g., opens, clicks), social media metrics (e.g., likes, comments), and website engagement,

which may include time spent reading the content. Fewer still directly link their content to broader business metrics such as conversions, leads, or cost to acquire a customer.

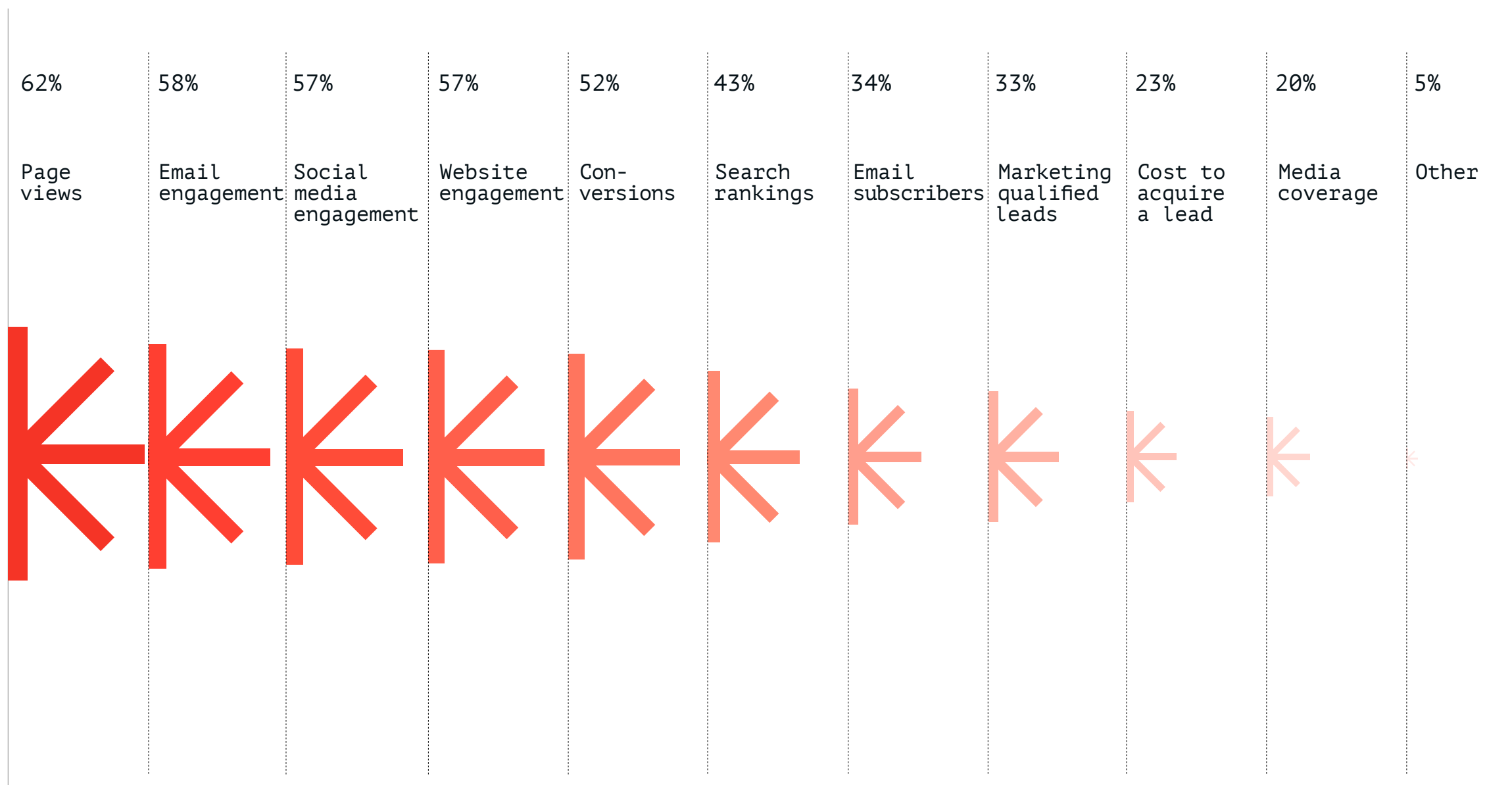
Survey response

"Our biggest challenge is measuring the impact of content to justify further investment."

Tracking metrics for content performance



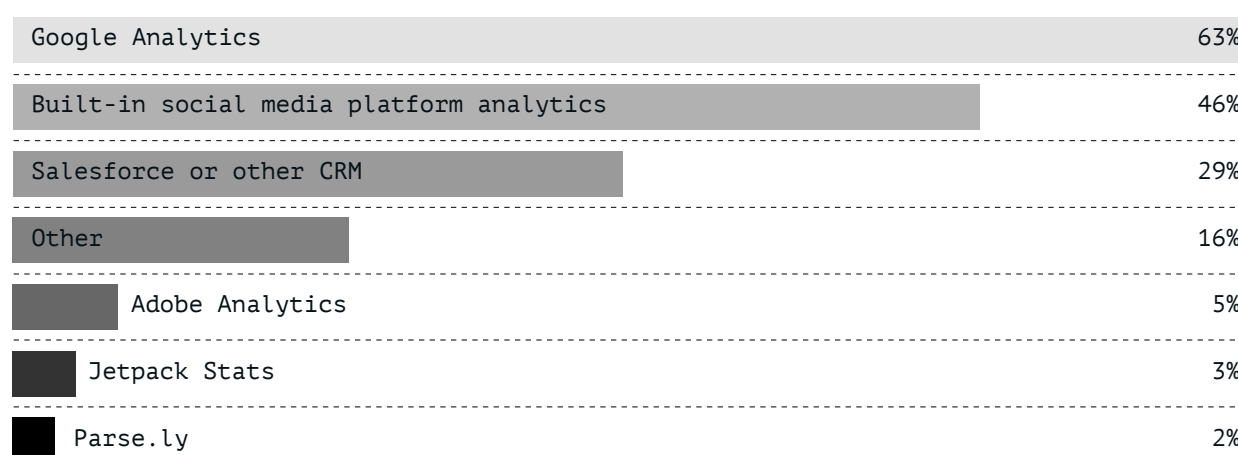
Metrics tracked by content marketers



The tools used to measure performance reflect this bias towards web, email, and social click metrics. Google Analytics is used by three in five, followed by built-in social and CRM tools.

Given this reliance on click-type metrics from generic, legacy analytics tools, it's unsurprising that even though 83% of respondents track metrics, **almost 50%** don't know if their efforts are working.

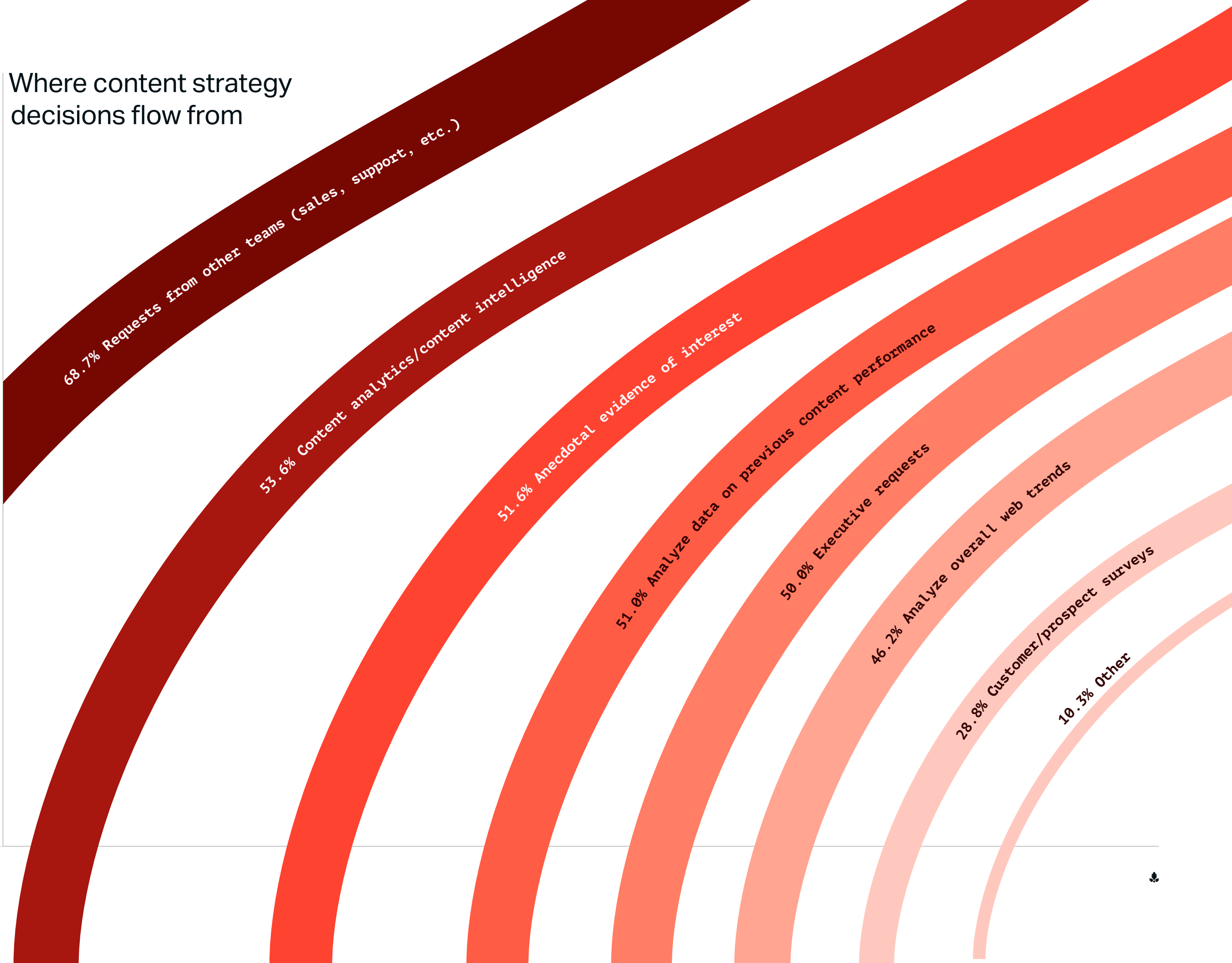
Tools used to measure content performance



Content strategy decisions are ad hoc.

In the absence of clear, understandable content insights from their analytics solutions, how do content marketers prioritize their investments? Unfortunately, the answer seems to be "listen to whomever is screaming loudest." The No. 1 driver of content marketing is requests from other teams, with anecdotal evidence and executive requests also featuring prominently in decision making.

Where content strategy decisions flow from



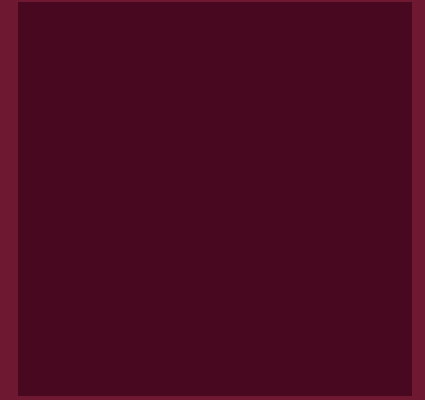
Clearly, legacy analytics tools haven't caught up with the modern content marketing approaches companies now favor. Because content is seen as a valuable tool for revenue growth, brand awareness, customer education, and building trust, those vanity metrics like page views and clicks simply don't cut it in 2022. It's time to move beyond content strategy decisions arrived at by holding a finger to the wind.

Survey response

“One of the biggest pain points for the content team is lack of resources to be able to understand the reach of our content and how to do better.”

Revenue

Tracking revenue back to content is hard.



Tracking revenue back to content is hard. Really hard.

Are your organizations' revenue goals tied to content?

53% No

20% I don't know

27% Yes

Most organizations don't have specific revenue goals tied to content.

Not only are many content marketing teams struggling to measure the results of their content, they aren't planning with results in mind either. While many organizations haven't tied their content to revenue, for those that do, the need to use content to drive revenue is ever increasing.

We're heartened to see so much investment in content marketing and some executives starting to see a return. That said, when content's impact is hard to track, it's easy to fall back on established (and simple) advertising or impressions metrics to prove its value. But those don't tell the whole story of how content is contributing to the bottom line.

If revenue goals are tied to content, is this need increasing?

Increasing	78%
Not increasing	13%
I don't know	9%



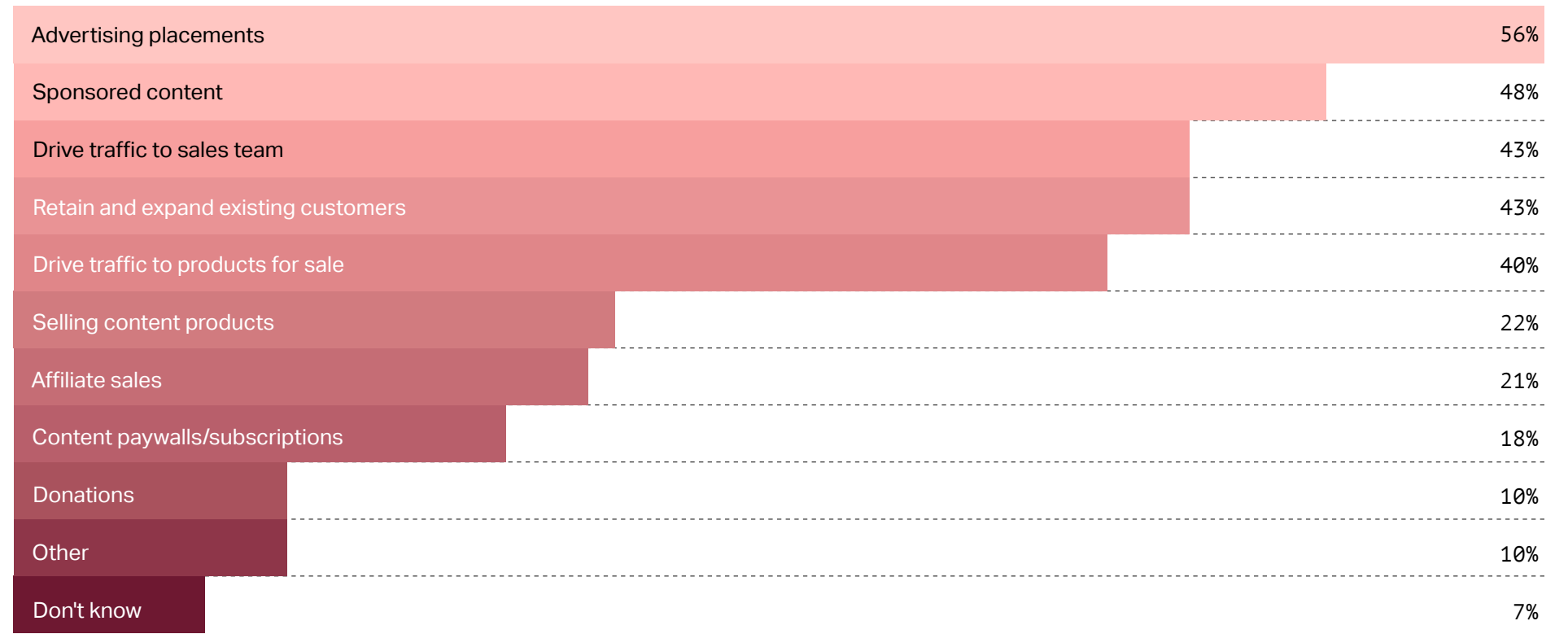
Advertising is still king.

So of those organizations that do have goals tied to revenue, how do they use content to achieve them? Advertising, sponsored content, driving traffic to sales, retention and expansion are the most popular revenue-driving content activities.

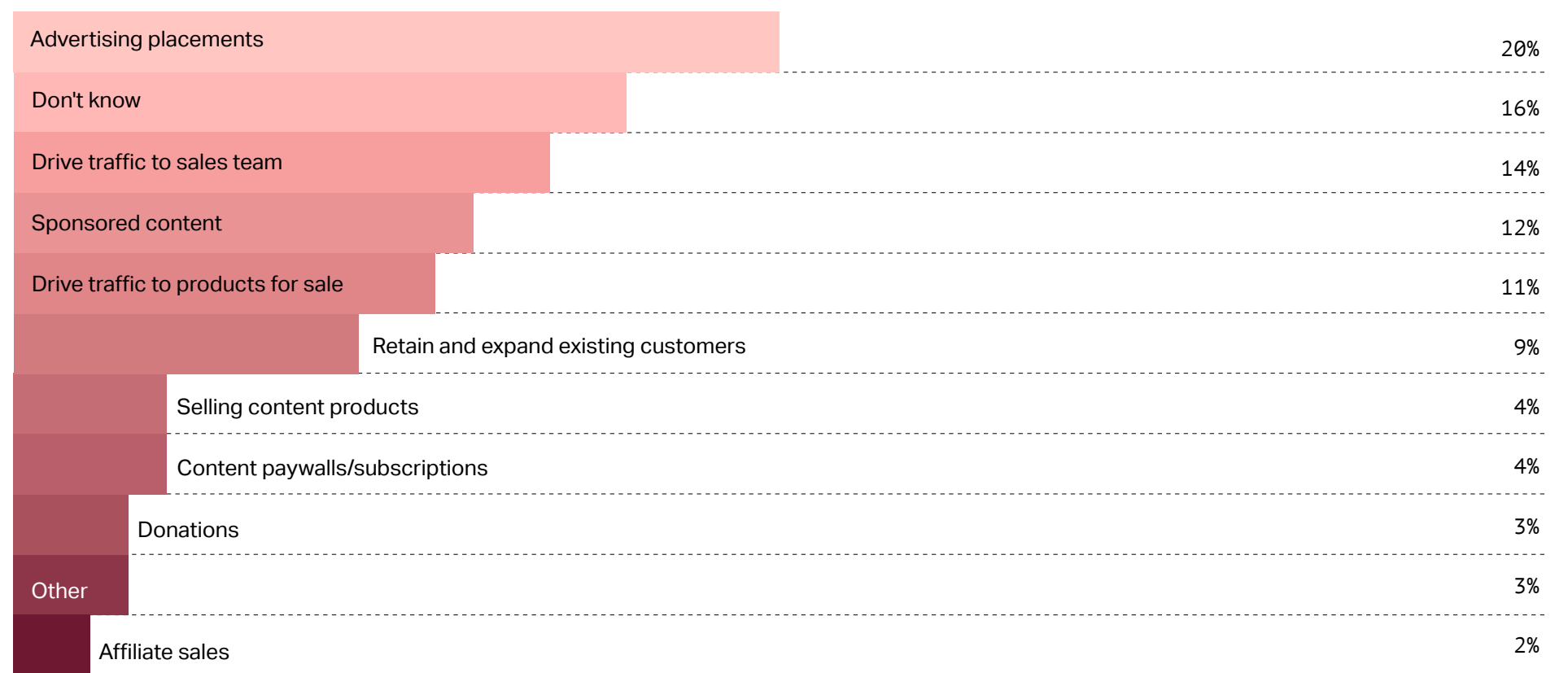
Advertising is not only the top choice for driving revenue with content, it's also cited as the most effective. Notably, however, one in six don't know their most effective driver of revenue.

If only proving the business value of every content channel could be as reliable as advertising placement reporting.

How are organizations using content to drive revenue?



What is the most effective revenue driver?



Nineteenth Century retail magnate John Wanamaker famously noted, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don't know which half." Today, thanks to analytics, marketers operate with less uncertainty. However, as a newer marketing discipline, content marketing has not reached the same maturity of more traditional forms, relying on guesswork and gut feel. As content marketing teams and their budgets grow but technology investments are deferred, Wanamaker's gripe may still ring true for those content marketers.

Survey response

"Personally, I'm struggling with executive buy-in to prioritize content marketing strategies and invest in the right people to drive them."

Methodology & Demographics



Because content does matter

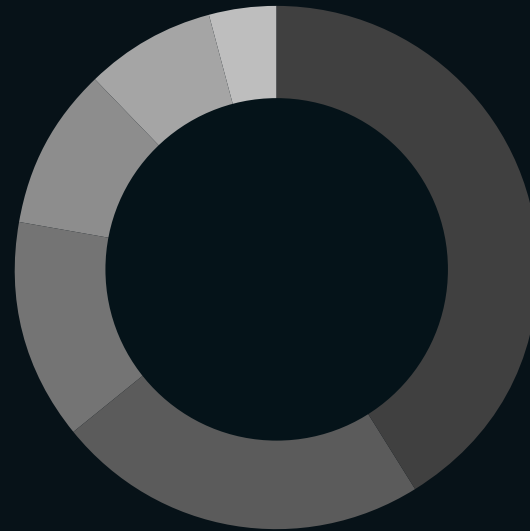
Our goal with this survey and report was to understand the role content and content marketing plays in today's organizations.

We wanted to learn how these businesses are using content for growth, how much they're spending on that content, what channels they want to pursue next, what technology they're integrating with, and trends they see heading into 2022.

We sent out digital surveys, designed and built on the Crowdsignal platform, in November 2021. We asked a series of content marketing-focused questions related to marketing activities and budgets, marketing technologies, distribution channels, metrics, and revenue.

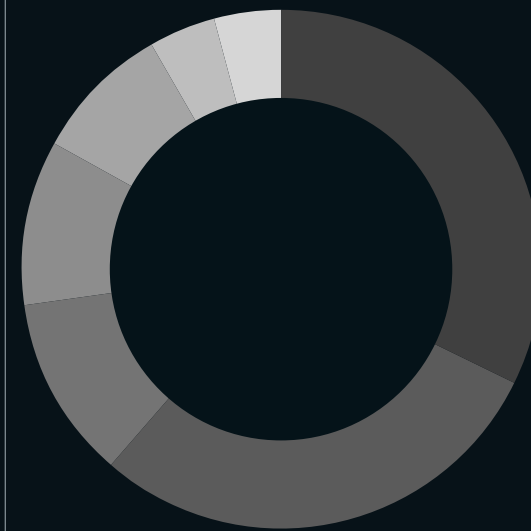
There were 832 unique respondents across various roles, industries, company types and geographic location. B2B technology companies (26.5%) were by far the most well-represented, with seven in 10 survey respondents indicating they work in the US.

Industry



- 41.3% ● B2B
- 23.0% ● Both B2B and B2C
- 13.6% ● Media
- 10.1% ● B2C
- 7.9% ● Nonprofit
- 4.1% ● Other

Company Size



- 32.3% ● 51-100
- 29.3% ● 0-50
- 11.4% ● 401-1000
- 10.2% ● 1,000+
- 8.7% ● 201-400
- 4.1% ● I don't know
- 4.0% ● 10,000+

Role

- 15.9% Director/VP of Marketing (not content marketing)
- 15.4% Manager of Marketing (not content marketing)
- 12.3% Other
- 10.8% Manager of Content Marketing
- 7.5% Other C-Level
- 7.3% Director/VP of Content Marketing
- 6.3% Individual Contributor Content Marketer
- 5.9% Developer
- 4.4% Editor
- 3.5% Individual Contributor (not content marketing)
- 3.5% CMO
- 3.5% Analyst
- 2.6% Product Owner
- 1.1% Journalist

Industry

- 34.3% Technology
- 13.6% Media, Publishing
- 13.3% Agency, Research, Consulting
- 7.9% Education, Arts, Humanities
- 5.9% Other
- 5.6% Healthcare, Pharmaceuticals, Life Sciences
- 5.0% Retail, Ecommerce
- 3.7% Financial Services
- 2.9% Hospitality, Food, Travel
- 2.3% Consumer Packaged Goods
- 1.2% Consumer Electronics
- 1.2% Transportation, Logistics
- 0.9% Energy, Utilities, Telecommunications
- 0.8% Public Sector, Government
- 0.6% Sports
- 0.5% Agricultural, Forestry, Mining
- 0.3% Religious Organization



About Parse.ly

Parse.ly is the analytics platform built for content creators.

Parse.ly gives creators, marketers and developers the tools to understand content performance, prove content value, and deliver tailored content experiences that drive meaningful results.

With Parse.ly, your writers and marketers don't have to turn to the analyst team for answers—they can be data-driven themselves.

[Learn more about Parse.ly](#)