

Top B2B Lead Gen Trends

Chief Marketer's exclusive survey results reveal the challenges B2B marketers are facing—and the opportunities they're missing

The technologies continue to evolve, but the challenges remain the same. While B2B marketers are seeing increasing success with content marketing and live events, nurturing leads throughout a long sales cycle and pinpointing exactly what moved the needle to conversion still vexes many organizations, according to Chief Marketer's B2B Lead Gen Trend Survey.

"There's an adage that decisions at their core are a balance of time and money. You're seeing that in lead conversion responses—B2B marketers care how quickly they are able to convert a lead and the cost it takes to drive these actions," says Curtis Thornhill, CEO, Apt Marketing Solutions.

Data is the backbone of any strong lead generation strategy, and several experts agreed this was a major stumbling block for numerous B2B organizations.

"Bad data is killing everyone," notes John Fernandez, director, analytics and operations, Diligent Corp. "Seventy-two percent of companies have data quality issues and 60% have incomplete data. This is a massive roadblock. It means that the vast majority of marketers are spending enormous time, effort and money to find those few actionable nuggets that can improve results."

"The opportunity to better mine, cleanse and upgrade data is tremendous," adds Lauren Goldstein, vice president, strategy and partnerships, Babcock & Jenkins. "This is a great untapped opportunity for marketers."

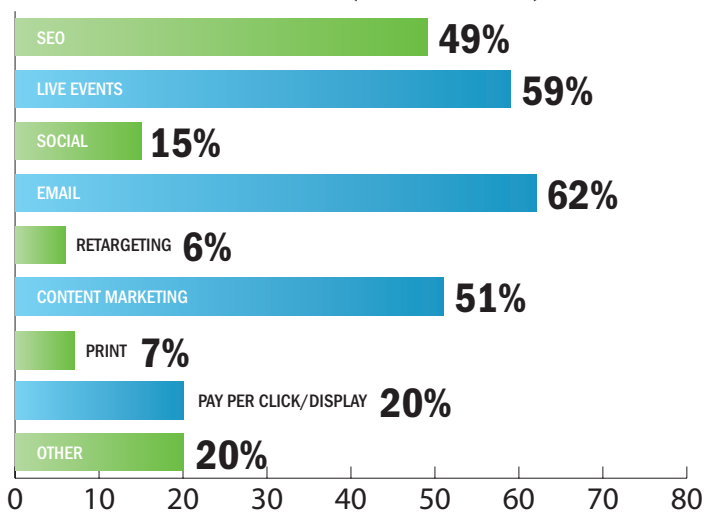
AT THE SOURCE

First party sources such as registration data, social media, SEO and email marketing are the primary sources of new B2B leads: 85% of respondents cited these as their top source of new prospects.

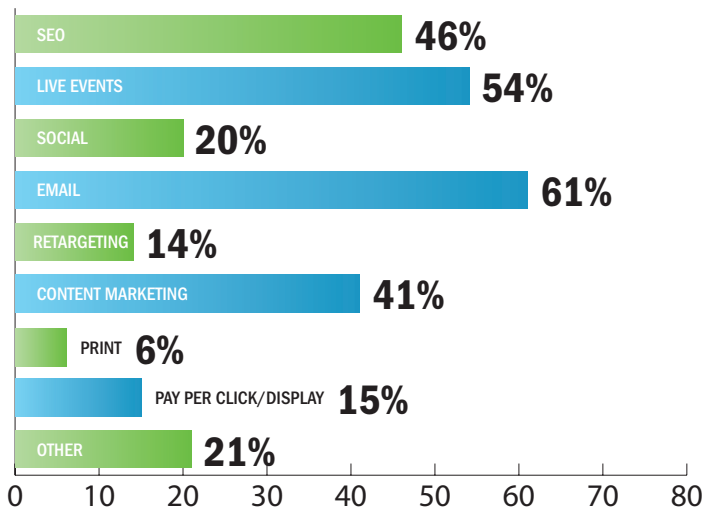
Once they have this data in hand, the top enhance-

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WHICH THREE CHANNELS PRODUCE YOUR TOP SOURCE OF LEADS? (SELECT THREE)



WHICH THREE CHANNELS PRODUCE YOUR HIGHEST ROI LEADS? (SELECT THREE)



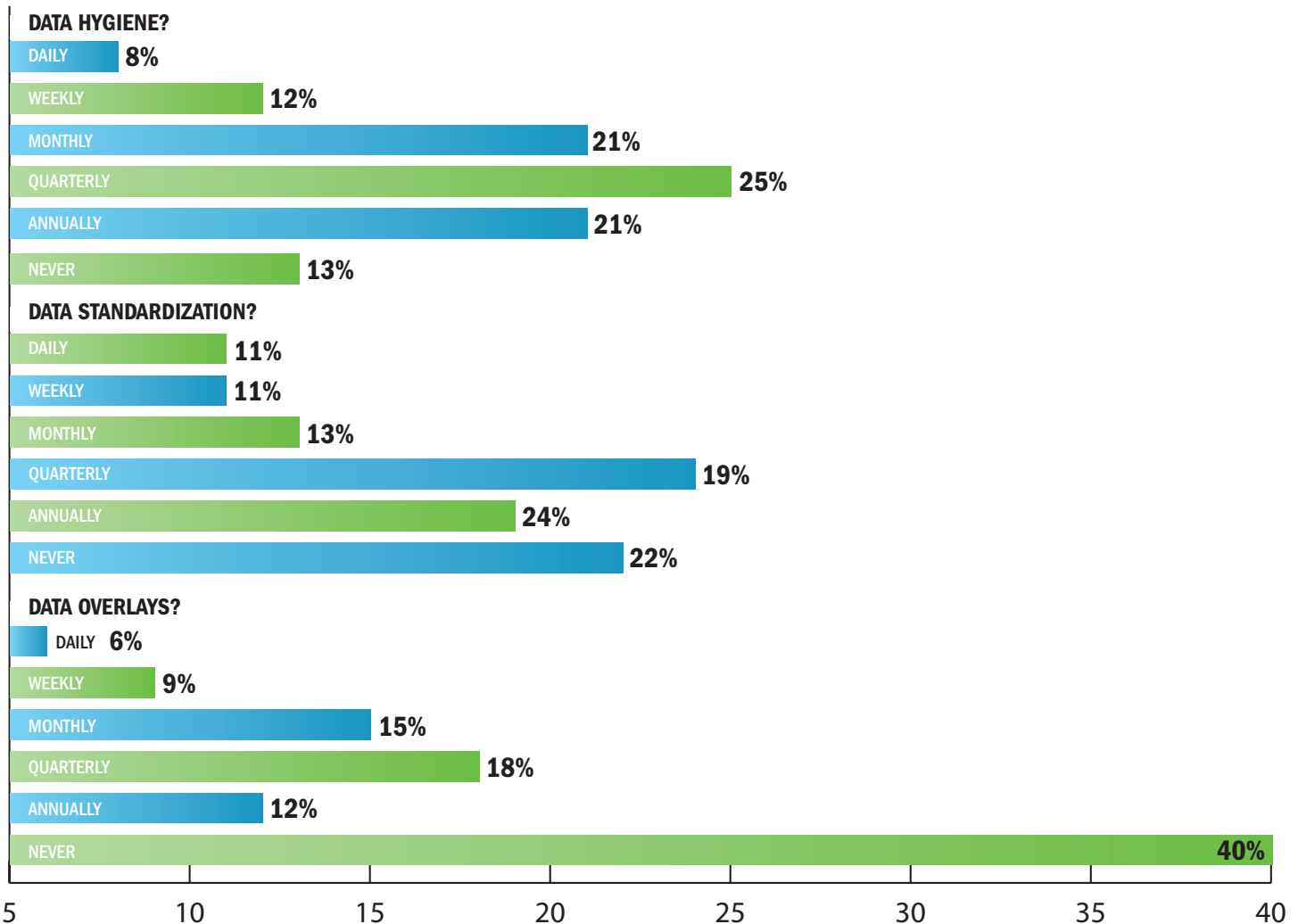
SOUND BITES

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN LEAD ATTRIBUTION?

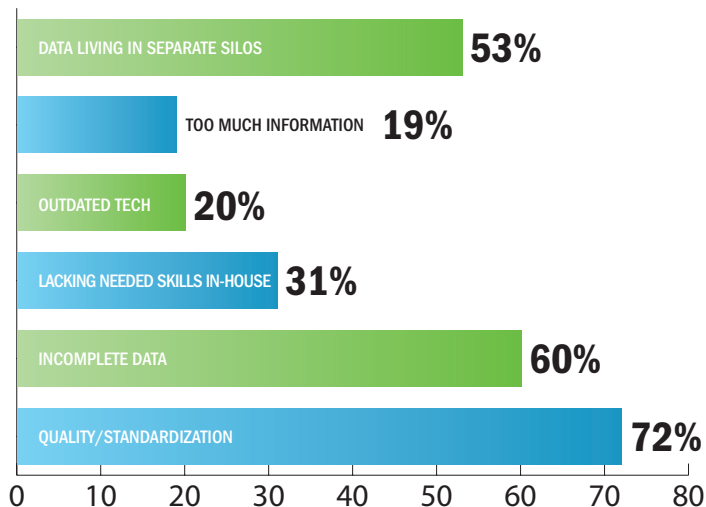
Cost of conversion and the amount of time it takes to get a lead to convert were the biggest challenges to lead attribution cited by respondents. Here's what they shared anecdotally:

- "Measuring interest level [over time]. We have a longer sales cycle than it should be."
- "No follow through. Our sales team isn't using and tracking leads."
- "Being able to track an influenced channel touch versus just a first or last touch to justify investments across multiple channels."
- "Understanding lead nurturing and where the client is in the funnel."
- "Finding the right leads for a very targeted product."
- "Using multiple systems to track different touchpoints."
- "Measuring the impact of particular pieces of content."
- "Understanding the journey that led to the purchase decision."
- "Identifying how prospects first learned about our organization."
- "Getting sales to give marketing the credit for the lead revenue generated."
- "Determining marketing impact of specific demand gen programs."
- "The length of time to convert."

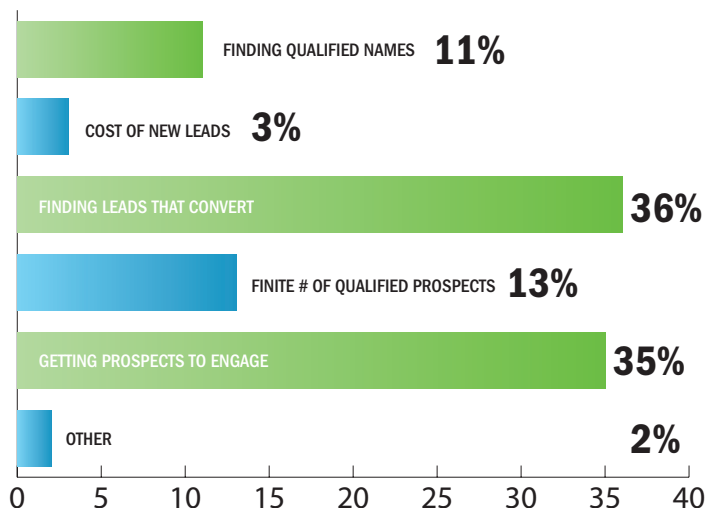
HOW OFTEN DO YOU PERFORM...



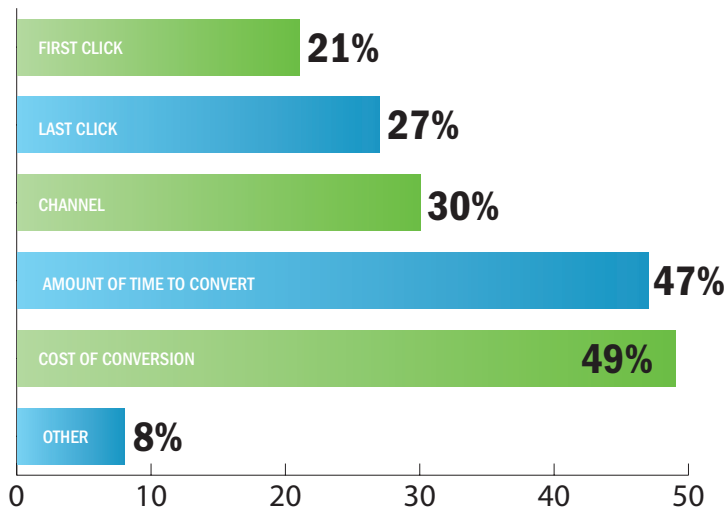
WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE BIGGEST DATA CHALLENGES? (SELECT TOP 3)



WHAT IS YOUR SINGLE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN GENERATING NEW LEADS?



WHAT METRICS MATTER MOST TO YOU IN LEAD ATTRIBUTION? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



Continued from page 1

ment, cited by 64% of respondents, was not surprisingly, contact information. Other valuable data enhancements included purchase history (34%), response (40%), demographic (24%) and behavioral (51%). Geographic or competitive enhancements scored lower, at 14% and 17% respectively.

Nancy Harhut, chief creative officer of the Wilde Agency, noted that she was surprised gender didn't pop up as a variable B2B marketers were heavily testing, or looking to add as an enhancement or overlay.

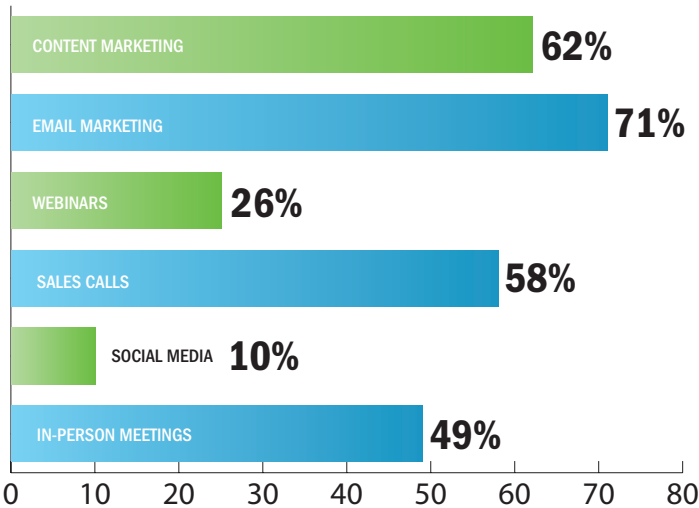
"Studies show there are differences in the way men and women make decisions," she says. "More and more of our clients are asking about it. In fact, one of our insurance clients saw an 85% lift in sales over their 'unisex' B2B control when we created a female gender version for them to test."

Over half of respondents (63%) are testing personalized messaging and content to connect with prospects. The majority of materials for content marketing for respondents is being created by marketing—82% said this team crafts content, compared to only 31% who outsourced to freelancers or third parties, and 20% which had sales creating content. One-fifth (20%) had a dedicated editorial team.

"The power of nurture-based programs and the movement toward personalization are the two messages we hear from clients most clearly," notes Thornhill. "There is a drive to enhance lifecycle campaigns, develop messages that resonate at an individual or account level, and to be in-the-moment with a lead or customer as they are engaging with your brand. We're seeing the most advanced companies focus on methods to leverage information to understand probable behaviors and actions based on similar customers, actions or events."

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WHAT TECHNIQUES ARE THE MOST VALUABLE FOR LEAD NURTURING? (SELECT YOUR TOP 3.)



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CHANNEL CONNECTIONS

Email ranked number one as both the channel that produced the most leads and the leads with the best ROI. Live events ranked second on both accounts, while content marketing was third for most leads, and search for best ROI.

Over half of respondents were cautious about flooding the inbox, contacting prospects by email only either monthly (26%) or two to three times a month (25%). Sixteen percent reach out weekly, and

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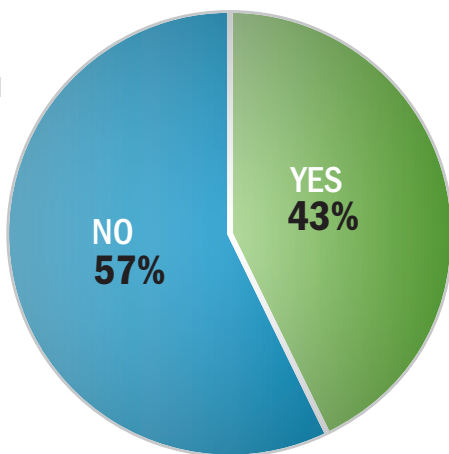
SOUND BITES

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES WHEN IT COMES TO CONVERTING LEADS TO SALES?

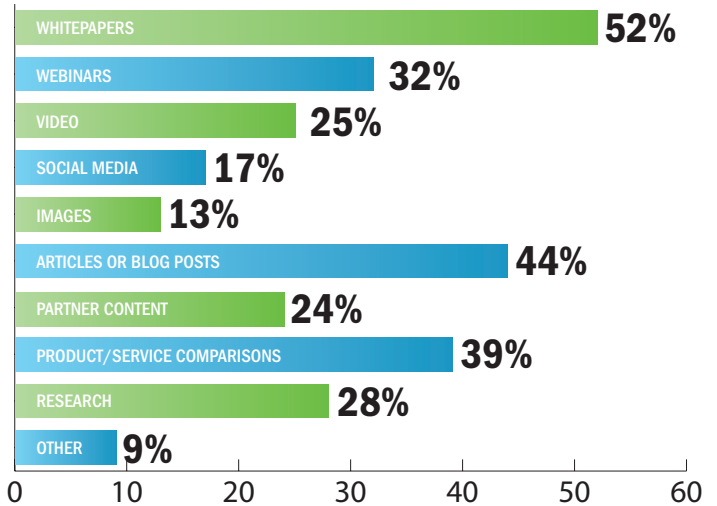
The buying cycle of respondents varied, with 12% saying less than a month, 28% one to three months, 30% three to six months, 25% six months to a year, and 5% more than a year. Hurdles to the finishing line include:

- "Getting sales to document key activities along various stages in the conversion funnel."
- "Balancing time invested with ROI."
- "Qualifying leads up front so we don't get far into the process only to find a prospect doesn't have the budget to purchase."
- "Dealing with multiple decision makers in the purchase process."
- "Making sure we're providing the right information at the right time."
- "Determining whether outside distribution partners are adequately following up on leads."
- "Separating truly qualified leads from those just looking for a quote to compare prices."

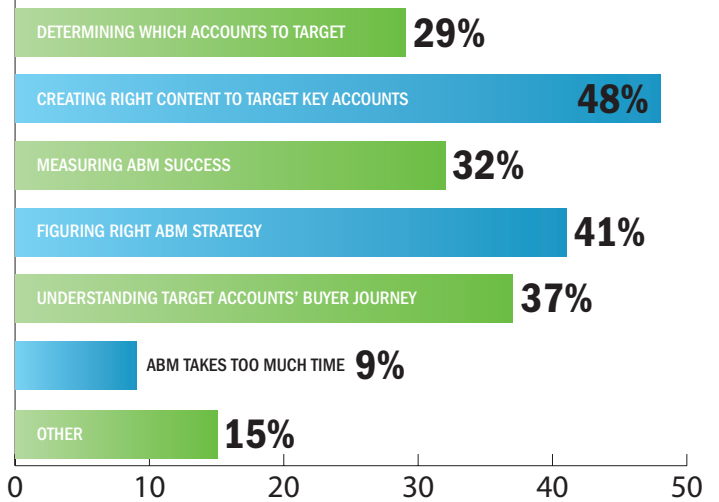
DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION DO ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING (ABM)?



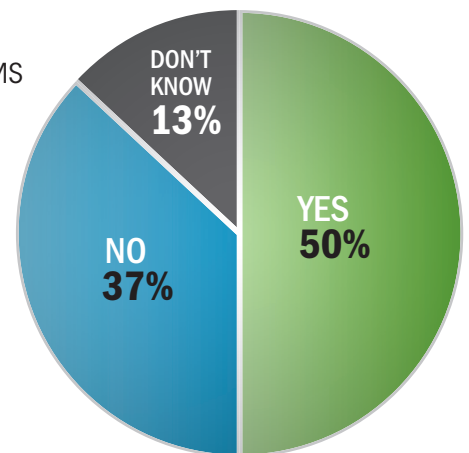
WHAT TYPES OF CONTENT ARE MOST EFFECTIVE FOR MOVING PROSPECTS THROUGH THE FUNNEL? (SELECT YOUR TOP 3)



WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN ABM? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)



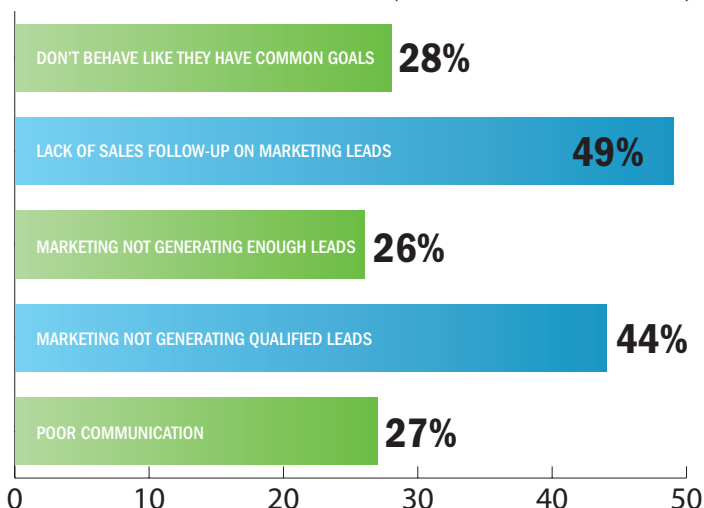
DO YOU FEEL YOUR SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY?



METHODOLOGY

The annual Chief Marketer B2B Lead Generation Survey was conducted in June 2016 via email; 270 responses were received, 244 of which market primarily to businesses. Agency or marketing services firms comprised 22% of respondents; 19% identified themselves as manufacturers, while another 19% said they were business/professional service organizations. Six percent were marketing technology companies, 7% were insurance/financial services and 5% wholesalers/distributors. The remaining respondents' business types included media, utilities, nonprofits and education. Twenty-five percent of respondents had fewer than 20 employees, 27% had 20-99 employees, 12% had 100-249 employees, 10% had 250-499, five percent had 500-999, 6% had 1,000-1,499 and 15% had over 2,000 employees. Thirty-two percent had director level titles, 23% were managers, 21% president/c-suite and 18% SVP/VP. Twenty-one percent reported annual marketing budgets of \$1 million+, and 21% had \$250,000-\$999,999. Nineteen-percent reported \$100,000-\$249,999, 23% had budgets less than \$100,000 and 16% less than \$25,000

WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST SALES AND MARKETING INTEGRATION CHALLENGES? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



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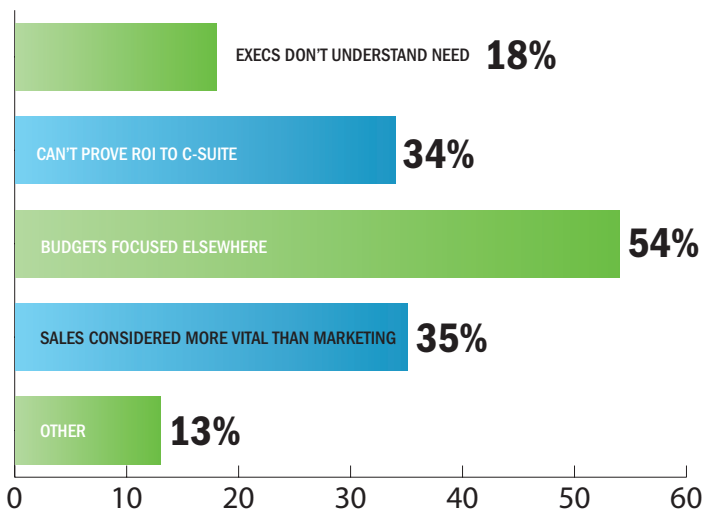
13% two to three times a week. Only 5% are emailing daily, and only 11% less than once a month. The remainder said less than annually or never.

Just over half said email had improved as a nurturing tool in the last year. Other channels on the rise included content marketing (55%), social (33%), live events (40%) and search (25%).

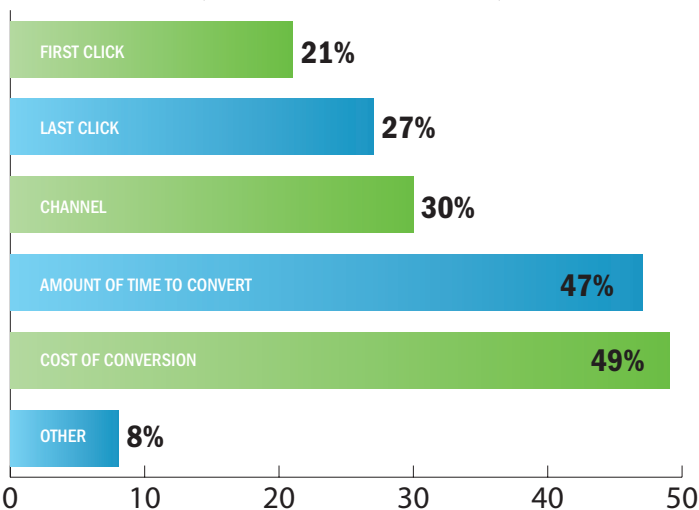
"Live events continue to be an important part of the demand generation mix for almost all of our clients," says Goldstein. "While just a few years ago marketers were trying to reduce or eliminate spend on events, now they need to be positioned as part of an organization's nurture strategy. Events are a 'moment in the conversation' between a brand and its buyers. When marketing can incorporate events into the overall nurture conversation, the results are optimized."

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WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST HURDLES TO GETTING C-SUITE APPROVAL FOR MARKETING EXPENDITURES?



WHAT METRICS MATTER MOST TO YOU IN LEAD ATTRIBUTION? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



SOUND BITES

WHAT IS THE ONE THING YOU WISH YOUR C-SUITE BETTER UNDERSTOOD ABOUT MARKETING?

Fifty-five percent of respondents said budget was their biggest hurdle to getting c-suite approval for marketing expenditures, and 35% said marketing just wasn't considered as important as sales in their organization. Here's what they wished their c-suite would figure out:

- "How vital the role of a brand is, and how to nurture our brand reputation in a nuanced way."
- "Measuring marketing success is a long term investment."
- "Marketing's role in the sales process and the complexity and nuance of individual successful campaigns."
- "The importance of generating content to be viewed as a thought leader for our industry."
- "Direct response trumps branding."
- "The impact on ROI marketing drives."
- "That the entire organization should be involved in the marketing of our products and services."
- "We're not a band aid—if the product isn't relevant or focused, no amount of marketing can change that."
- "The importance of marketing operations and data management."
- "Marketing's job is to find buyers and create pipeline. Sales has to be accountable for the close."
- "It's an ongoing cost of business—reducing it for short-term profitability hurts long-term revenue growth."

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SOCIAL STRATEGY

Over half of the respondents (54%) said social media was a major part of their B2B lead generation and nurturing strategy. The top three social channels used were not surprisingly LinkedIn (used by 87%), Twitter (68%) and Facebook (67%). YouTube is utilized by 29%, and 9% are using Google+. Less than six percent are employing Instagram or Pinterest in their campaigns.

About a third are posting two to five times a week to social, while 22% are posting two to three times a day

and 16% once a day. Sixteen percent are posting less than once a week and 12% admitted their social posting is sporadic. The remainder don't engage socially.

"We're still seeing huge dissonance in social media," says Fernandez. "When 54% of respondents define social media as a major part of a B2B lead generation strategy, but only 15% say it is one of the top 3 lead channels, and only 20% say it is one of the top 3 ROI channels, there's a very clear signal there that the majority of B2B marketers haven't figured social out."

"Video, without a doubt, should be more heavily invested in," says Goldstein. "Ninety-one percent of B2B buyers prefer visual/interactive content throughout the buying cycle. Marketers should be using more video and other engaging and interactive formats."

TECH TRENDS

When we asked about the next piece of marketing technology their organization planned to purchase, the answers were varied. Many cited tech to support CRM and account based marketing strategies, while more advanced content marketing platforms and social tools were also mentioned.

"Hopefully, we will see a shift away from buying new technologies, and more effort on extracting maximum value from the technology solutions that are already in place," notes Fernandez. "When Scott Brinker's Marketing Technology Landscape shows 3,874 different marketing technology solution providers, that just means death for most marketers—they will never find the budget to buy every technology solution they could need, nor will they have the in-house bandwidth and expertise in order to deploy and get maximum value for these technology investments."

Goldstein notes that she expects B2B marketers to be looking for tech that supports uncovering buyer insights and journey mapping, as well as creating a more integrated view for both sales and marketing. "This is an ideal business case for ABM for many of our clients," she notes. **!**



Beth Negus Viveiros
Managing Editor, Chief Marketer
bnegus@accessintel.com
[@CMBethNegus](https://twitter.com/CMBethNegus)

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