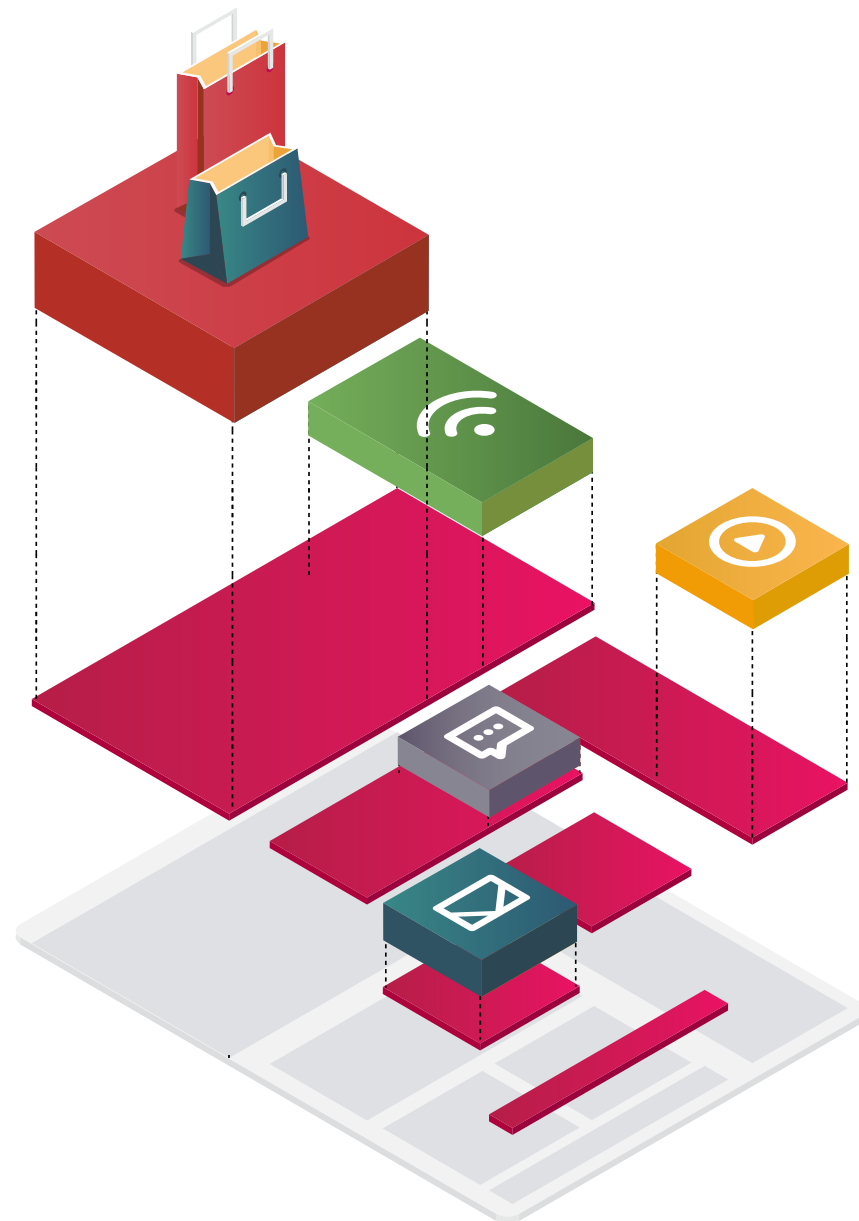

CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Benchmark Study Report

February 2018

CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

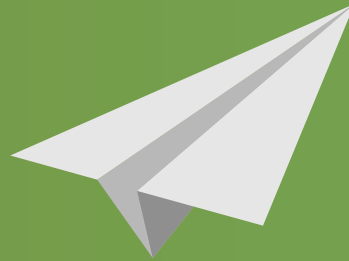
— AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY —

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CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

— AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY —



Introduction



DEMAND METRIC

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In 2014, Ion Interactive and Demand Metric conducted a survey to explore how effectively marketers were using content to influence and support the buyer's journey, which has continued to materialize as a key success factor in marketing.

At the time, cost and technology barriers to deploying interactive content were falling fast, and interactive content was the recommended approach for companies looking for higher levels of audience engagement.

The Content Experience Impact and the Buyer's Journey study is now in its second edition.

In addition to exploring how the use of content within the buyer's journey has evolved, we sought to determine whether **companies that are experiencing revenue growth are leveraging content in different ways and what advantages they are realizing as a result.**

These study results provide insights and data useful for comparison, planning, and improving the content marketing process.



CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

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Executive Summary



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Over 70 percent of this study's participants are from primarily B-to-B or mixed B-to-B/B-to-C organizations, with more than two thirds reporting a modest or significant increase in revenue during the most recently completed fiscal year. The respondents are from a diverse set of industries, with the largest segment coming from the manufacturing sector and a sizeable segment from software or technology.

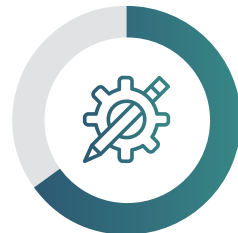
More than one quarter of study participants rate their content assets as slightly or very interactive. Just over 20 percent of the study participants come from companies with more than \$100 million in annual revenue, while 35 percent are with firms reporting revenues of \$10 million or less.

Key Findings

- Over half of study participants report that budget constraints are their biggest barrier to content marketing, followed by staffing/resource constraints (48%) and technical skills (37%).



- Almost two-thirds of study participants have only basic or no measurements of content marketing effectiveness.



- 96% of study participants believe that content interactivity impacts buyers' decisions as they go through their journey.



- Compared to passive content, interactive content is more likely to be effective at educating buyers and differentiating from competitors, and more likely to be shared frequently.



- Companies that are using **interactive content are more likely to**

- have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey;
- have measures of engagement or interest;
- understand how content influences awareness or consideration.



- Comparing revenue-growth companies to revenue-stagnant companies, **companies that are growing revenue are more likely to**

- produce content that is more likely to be very interactive and highly engaging;
- have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey;
- have measures of engagement and measures of how content influences awareness or consideration.



- **Interactive content is more effective in the middle stage (consideration)** of the buyer's journey than passive content.



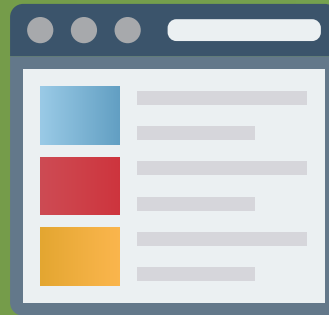
- Revenue-growth companies are more likely than revenue-stagnant companies to report **their content is most effective in the middle and late stages of the buyer's journey.**



This report details the results and insights from the analysis of the study data. **For more detail on the survey participants, please refer to the Appendix.**

CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



Content-Type Effectiveness and Performance



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Today, marketers have to do more than simply produce content. The content produced has to stand out from the crowd. **Top performing companies are doing an effective job of using content to differentiate from their competitors and to help educate buyers.**

However, many marketers are still struggling with delivering the right piece of content, through the right channel, at the right time in the buyer's journey.

As in 2014, one of the primary research goals of this study was to determine the **relationship between content type and effectiveness.**

The content types used in this study were:



Passive content

That which stimulates little or no engagement. It is generally static, and a text-based white paper is an example of this type of content.



Interactive content

That which invites or requires some level of interaction or engagement.

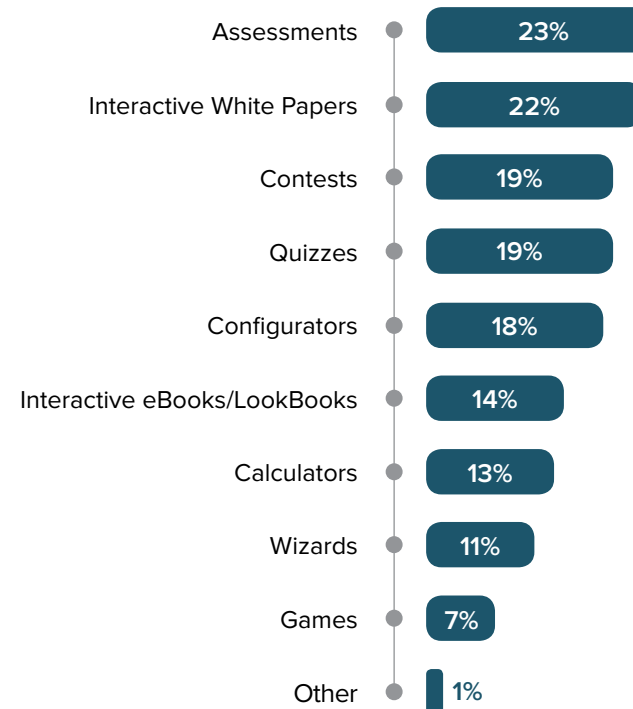
A wide variety of interactive content types and formats exist, and this study conducted an inventory to determine **which types are currently in use:**



What types of interactive content or apps are you currently using?

FIGURE 1: CURRENT TYPES OF INTERACTIVE CONTENT

Assessments remain the most popular type of interactive content.



Assessments remain the most popular type of interactive content (23%) in our 2014 study and 2018 edition. Use of Interactive White Papers (22%) and Quizzes (19%) have increased while Calculators (13%) drops from a previous top-three position, as shown in Figure 1.

Since interactive white papers are generally considered middle-stage content, we will explore their relationship to effectiveness and the buyer's journey later in this report.

To determine the relationship between content type and effectiveness, participants were first asked to categorize their content as either passive or interactive, and the following category options were provided for this rating:

- **Very passive:** content produces little or no engagement with the buyer
- **Somewhat passive:** content produces slight engagement with the buyer
- **Moderate:** content produces some level of engagement with the buyer
- **Slightly interactive:** content produces measurable engagement with the buyer
- **Very interactive:** content produces highly engaging experience with the buyer.

The results of this content-type rating are presented in **Figure 2:**

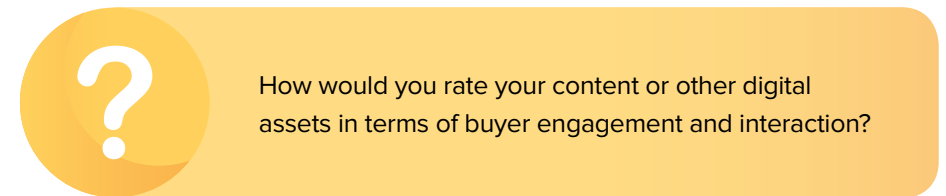
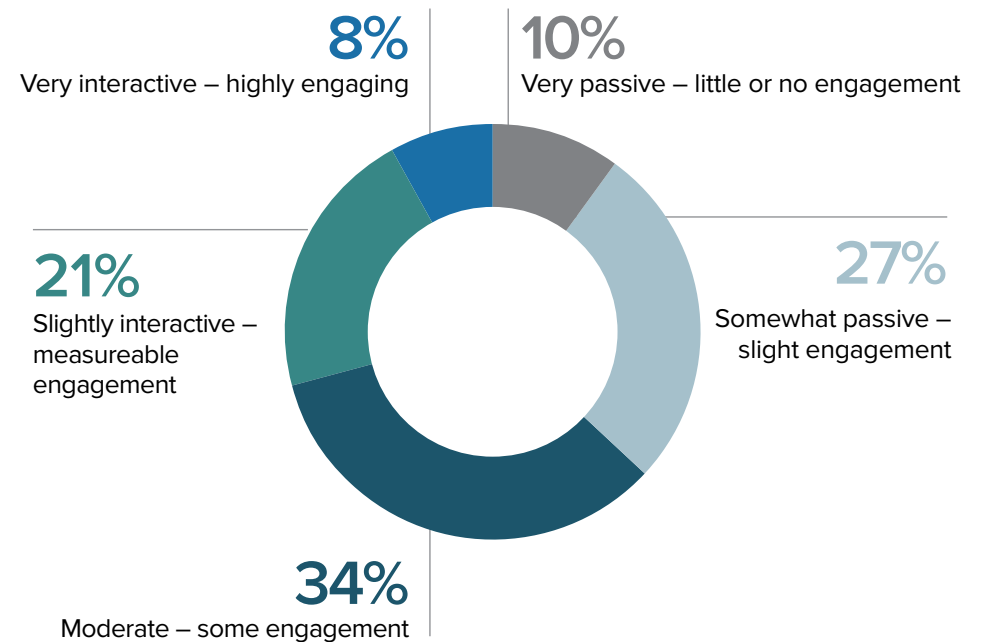


FIGURE 2: CONTENT TYPE RATING

Just 29% of content rated in this study is interactive.

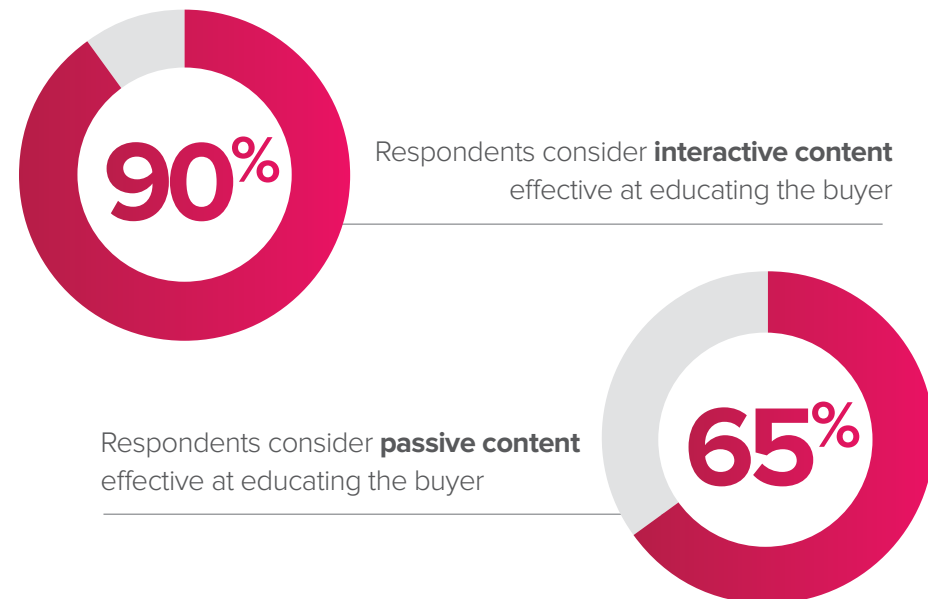


This year, **29% of study participants report using content that is slightly or very interactive**, compared to only 25% of in our 2014 study.

While interactive content is being used more frequently, there is still much to be desired from an adoption perspective.

The division of content into passive and interactive categories remained one of the most valuable filters through which to analyze and view other data collected in this study.

Once again, for the analysis that follows, responses to the content-rating question were grouped into two broad categories: the passive-content category, which includes the “very passive”; “somewhat passive” and “moderate” responses; and interactive, which includes the “slightly interactive” and “very interactive” responses.



Using these categories for further analysis yielded some valuable insights, beginning with **the impact of these two content type categories on educating the buyer**:

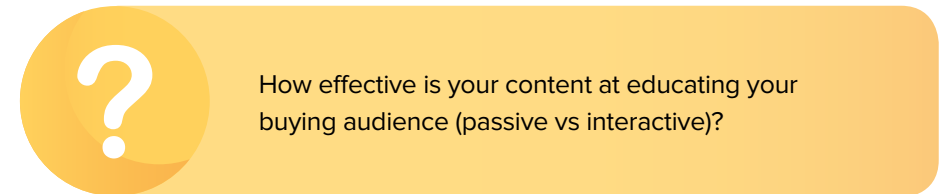
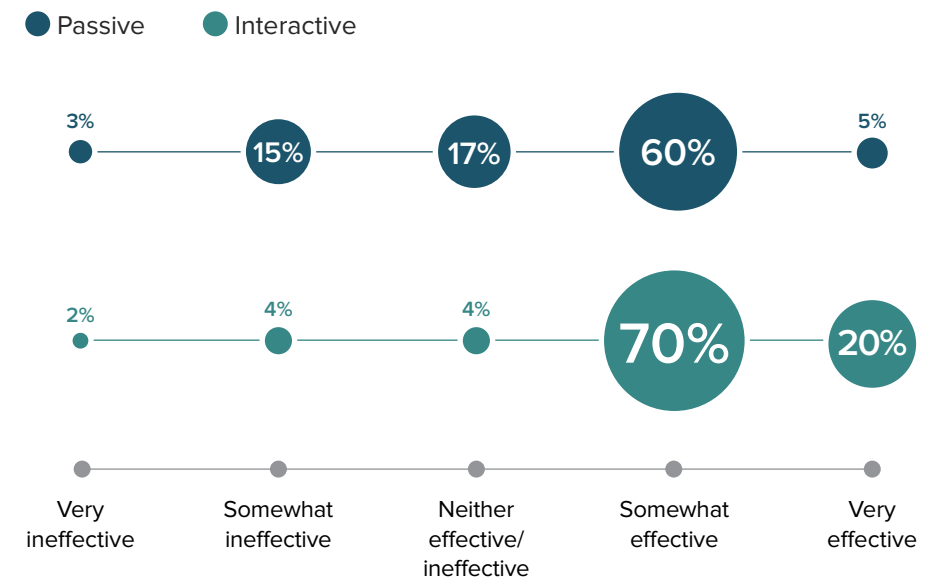


FIGURE 3: COMPARISON OF CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS AT EDUCATING THE BUYER

Interactive content is far more effective at educating buyers.



These study results clearly indicate that interactive content does a much better job of educating the buying audience, with **90% of study participants reporting that interactive content is somewhat or very effective in this role**. This contrasts with 65% of passive-content users reporting the same level of effectiveness, as shown in **Figure 3**.

The comparison for how well these types of content help differentiate the content owner from its competitors was also examined.

As with effectiveness at educating buyers, interactive content is also more effective at helping differentiate the content owner from its competitors: **84% of interactive-content users report it is somewhat or very effective at differentiating, while 58% of passive-content users report the same level of effectiveness**, as shown in **Figure 4**.

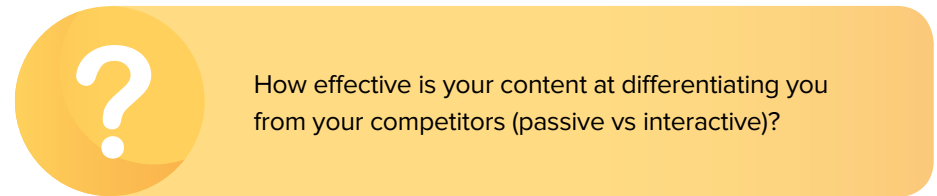
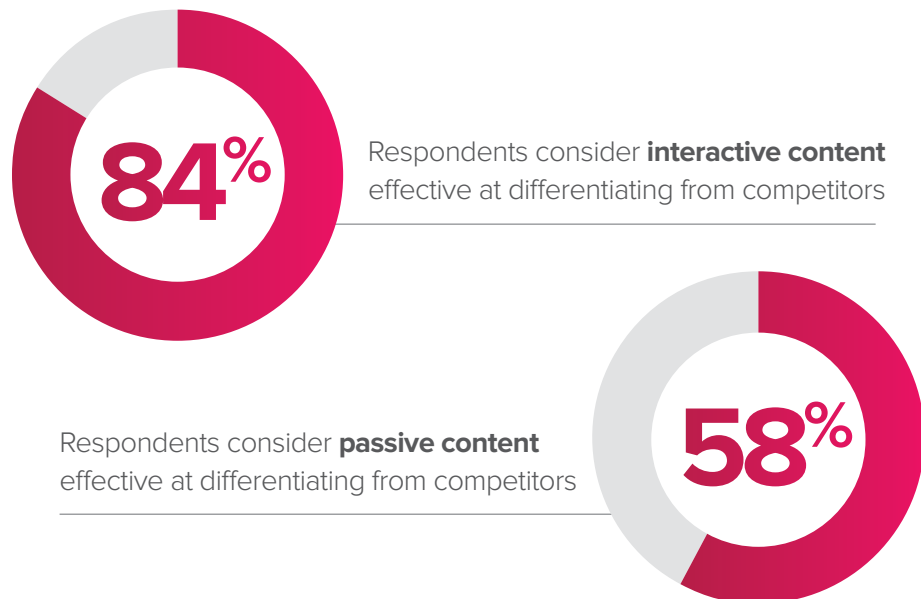
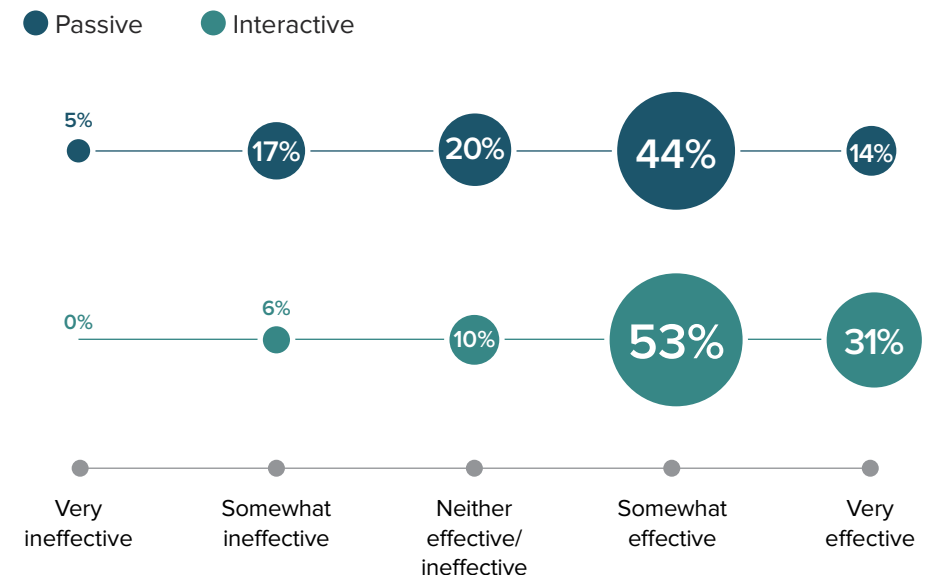


FIGURE 4: COMPARISON OF CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS AT DIFFERENTIATING FROM COMPETITORS

Interactive content is better at differentiating from competitors.



An important indicator of content value is the frequency with which it is shared. There is a marked difference in how passive and interactive content is shared.

If the sharing of content is influential in supporting business objectives, then once again interactive content has the advantage, with **over 63% of study participants reporting their interactive content is frequently or very frequently shared.**

Just 32% of passive content is shared with this frequency, as shown in **Figure 5.**

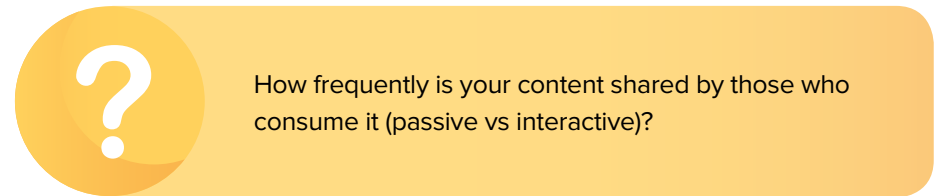
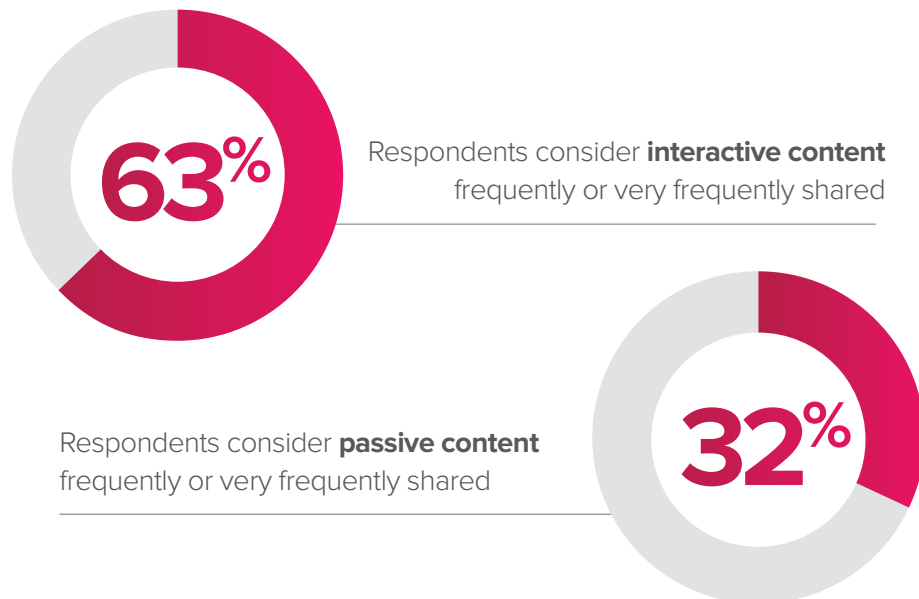
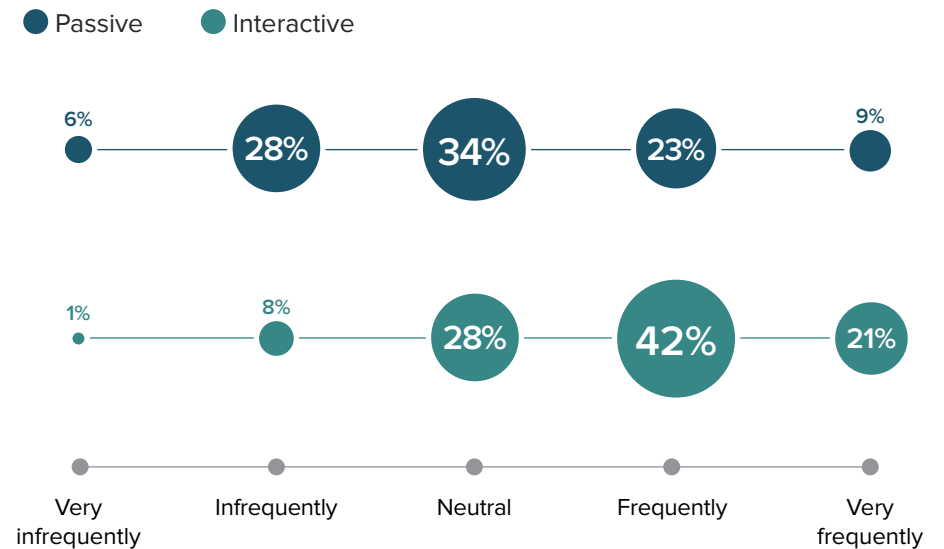


FIGURE 5: SHARING FREQUENCY OF CONTENT TYPES

Interactive content is shared more often than passive content.



Each of the comparisons examined in this section clearly shows that interactive content educates buyers more effectively, creates better competitive differentiation, and is more widely shared.

For the first time in this study, **revenue was also used to analyze content effectiveness and view other data collected in the study.**

To determine the relationship between revenue and content effectiveness, participants were asked to rate their revenue status in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, with the following category options provided for this rating:

- **Significant decline** in revenue growth
- **Modest decline** in revenue growth
- **Flat, or no growth:** content produces some level of engagement with the buyer
- **Modest increase** in revenue growth
- **Significant increase** in revenue growth.

The results of this revenue rating are presented in **Figure 6.**

The vast majority of survey participants (68%) described revenue growth at their company as modest or significant increase, 17% rated it as flat or showing no growth, and 15% rated their revenue growth as modest or showing significant decline, as shown in Figure 6.

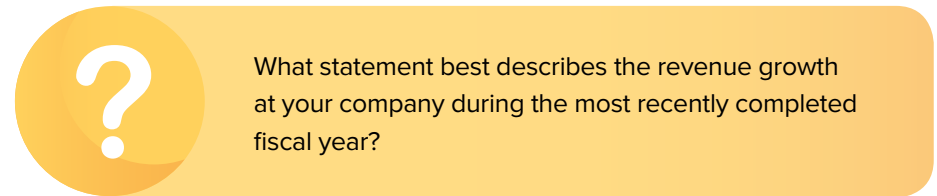
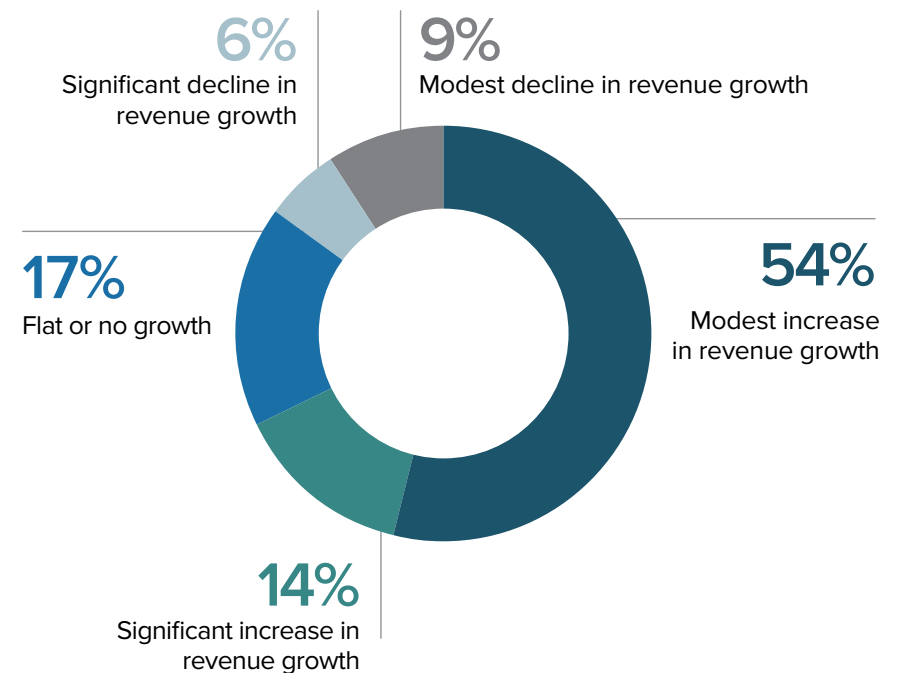


FIGURE 6: ANNUAL REVENUE GROWTH IN FY2017

68% of companies in this study experienced a modest or significant increase in revenue growth last fiscal year.



For the analysis that follows, responses to the revenue question were grouped into two broad categories: the revenue-stagnant category, which includes the “significant decline in revenue growth,” “modest decline in revenue growth,” and “flat, or no growth” responses; and the revenue-growth category, which includes the “modest increase in revenue growth” and “significant increase in revenue growth” responses.

Using these categories for further analysis yielded some valuable insights, beginning with the impact of these two revenue-type categories on educating the buyer.

These study results indicate that **revenue-growth companies are over two times more likely to be very effective at educating the buying audience**, with 11% of study participants reporting that they are “very effective” in this role. This contrasts with **4% of revenue-stagnant companies reporting the same level of effectiveness**, as shown in Figure 7.

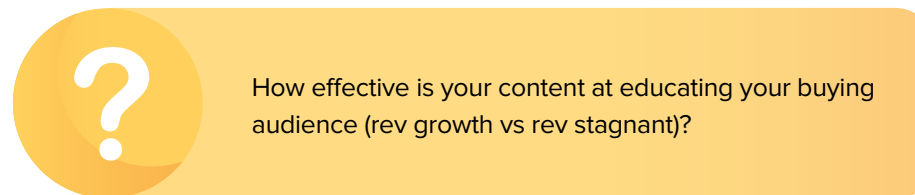
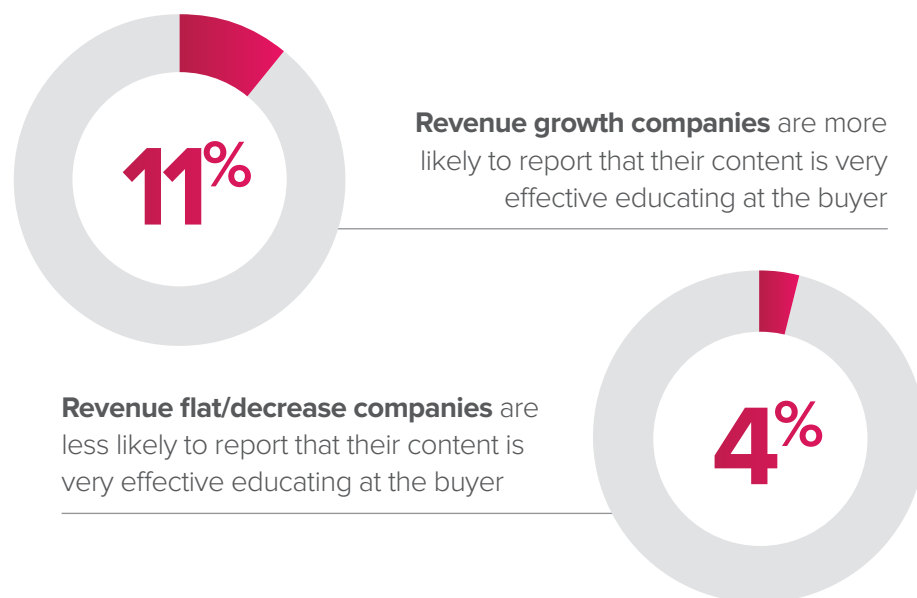
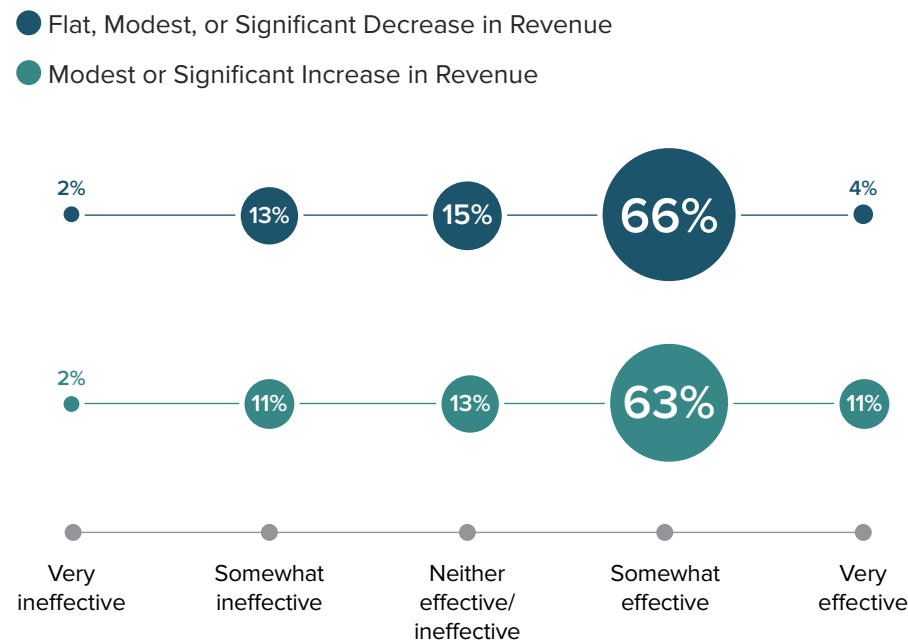


FIGURE 7: REVENUE COMPARISON: EFFECTIVENESS AT EDUCATING THE BUYER

Revenue growth companies are more effective at educating the buyer.



A comparison of revenue-growth and revenue-stagnant companies was made to determine how effective their content is at differentiating from their competitors, as shown in **Figure 8**.

As with effectiveness at educating buyers, revenue-growth companies are also more likely to report that their content is very effective at differentiating from their competitors (22%), while only 12% of revenue-stagnant companies report the same level of effectiveness, as shown in **Figure 8**.

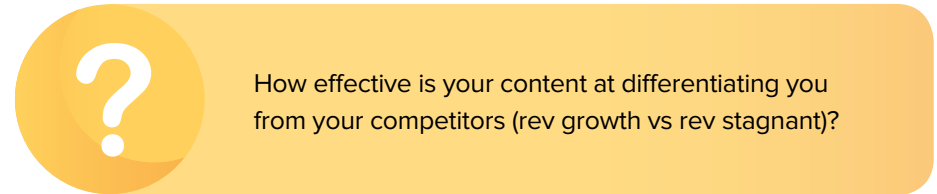
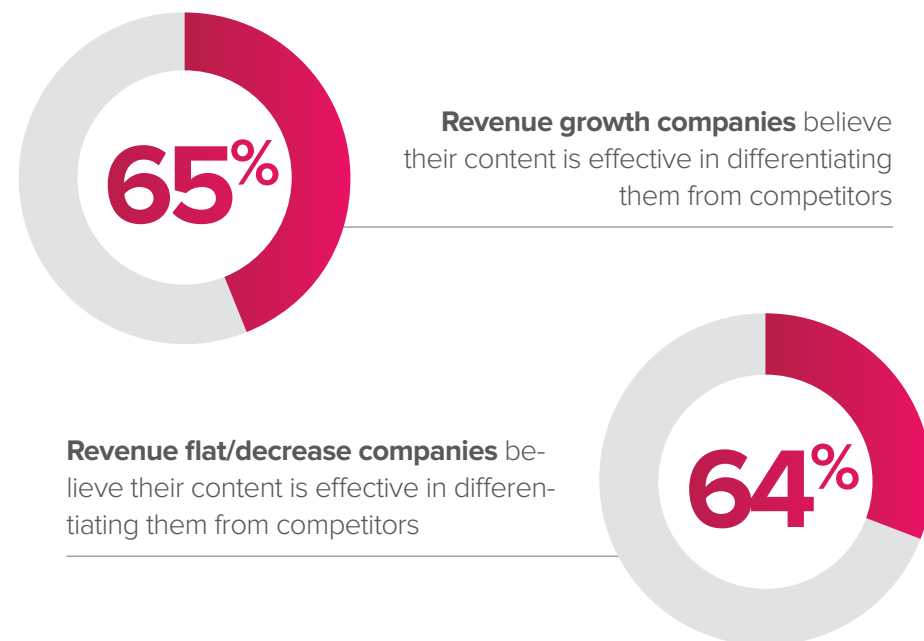
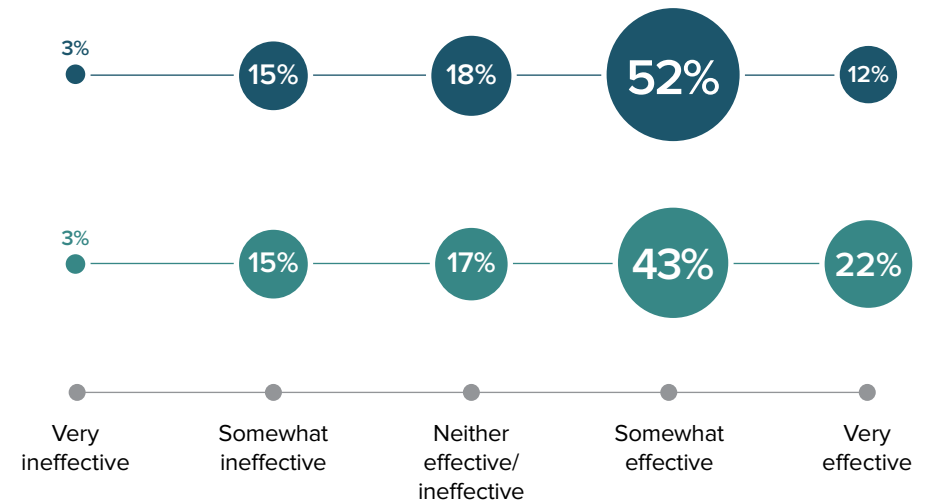


FIGURE 8: REVENUE COMPARISON: CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS ON COMPETITOR DIFFERENTIATION

Revenue growth companies are more likely to be very effective at differentiating from competitors.

● Flat, Modest, or Significant Decrease in Revenue

● Modest or Significant Increase in Revenue



The division of revenue into stagnant and growth also shows a clear difference in how frequently content gets shared, as shown in **Figure 9**.

These study results indicate that **revenue-growth companies are nearly 1.5 times more likely to have their content shared, with 44% of study participants reporting their content is shared frequently or very frequently**. This contrasts with 31% of revenue-stagnant companies reporting the same level of sharing.

Content sharing is an effective technique for marketers who are struggling to cut through the clutter since content shares often come from a trusted source.

Therefore, it is important to reduce the friction by ensuring that content can be shared with ease.

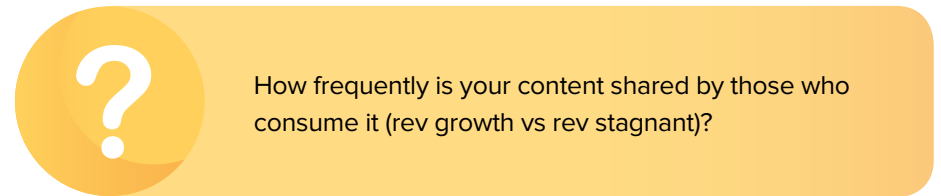
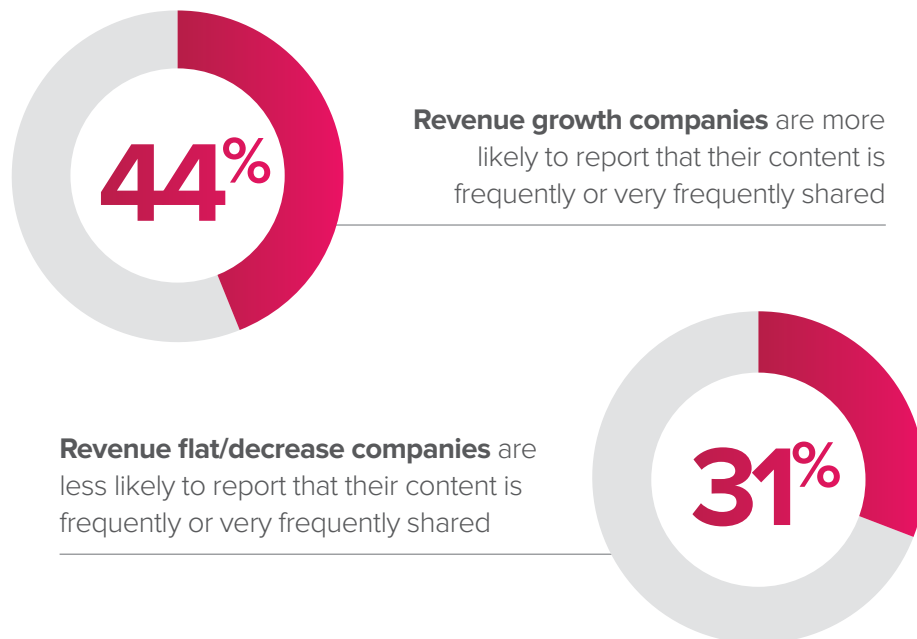
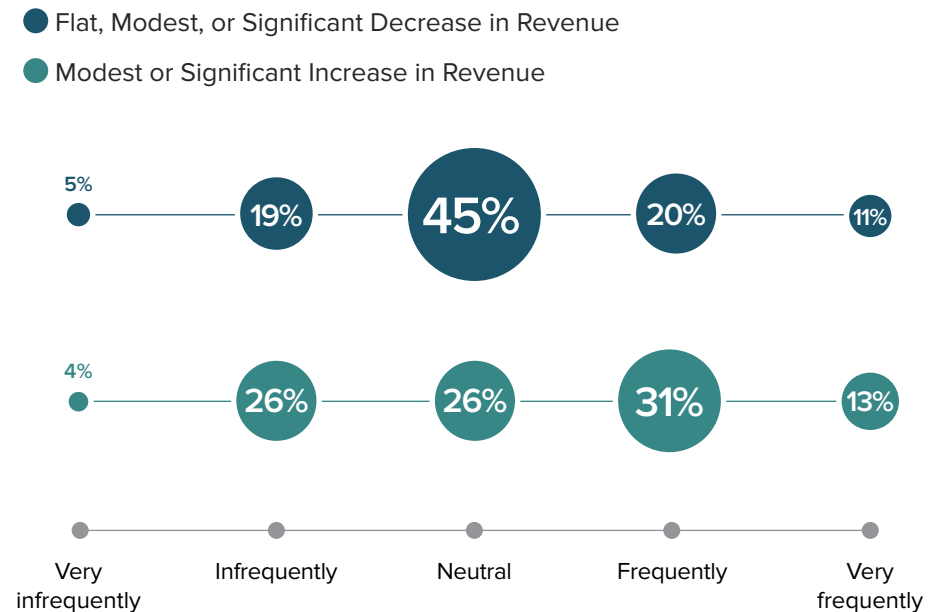


FIGURE 9: REVENUE COMPARISON: SHARING FREQUENCY OF CONTENT PRODUCED

Content produced by revenue growth companies is shared more frequently.



Finally, the comparison for how revenue-growth companies rate their content or other digital assets in terms of buyer engagement and interaction was examined.

Revenue-growth companies are more likely to produce content that is interactive, with over 30% reporting that their content is slightly or very interactive. Conversely, revenue-stagnant companies are more likely to report that their content is moderate, somewhat passive, or very passive, as shown in **Figure 10**.

It is undeniable that revenue growth has some type of relationship to interactive-content adoption. **Although the extent of this relationship was not fully explored, companies that are growing revenue are 3 times more likely to use content that is very interactive-highly engaging.**

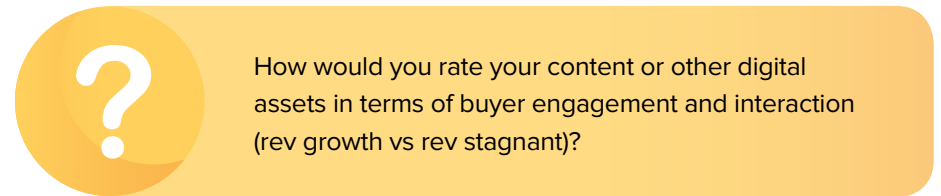
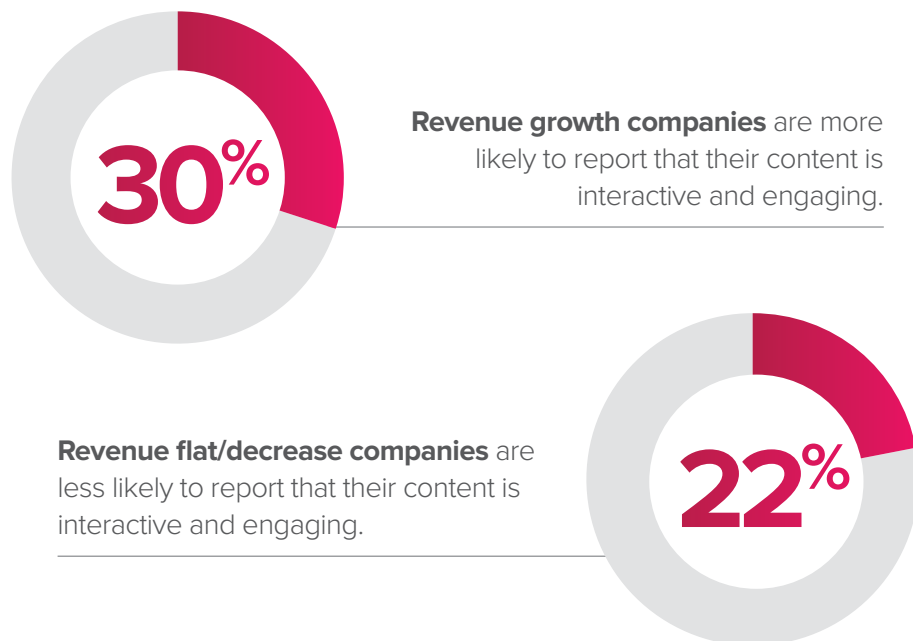
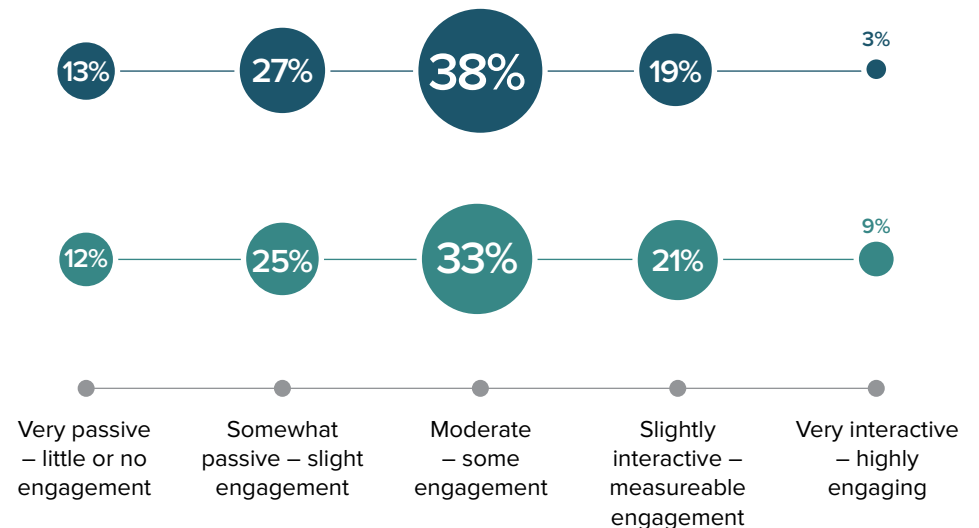


FIGURE 10: REVENUE COMPARISON: CONTENT RATING FOR BUYER ENGAGEMENT & INTERACTION

Revenue growth companies produce content that is more likely to be very interactive and highly engaging.

- Flat, Modest, or Significant Decrease in Revenue
- Modest or Significant Increase in Revenue



CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



The Buyer's Journey



DEMAND METRIC

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As buyers continue to self-educate, moving farther down the purchase consideration path before revealing their interest to businesses, it has become increasingly important for marketers to influence buyers early in their journey.

What is the current belief in the marketing community about the importance of influencing buyers earlier in their journey?

Study participants rated this importance.

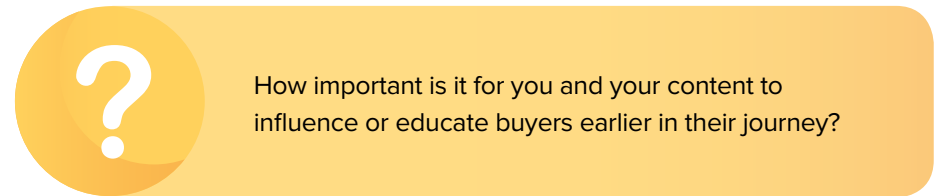
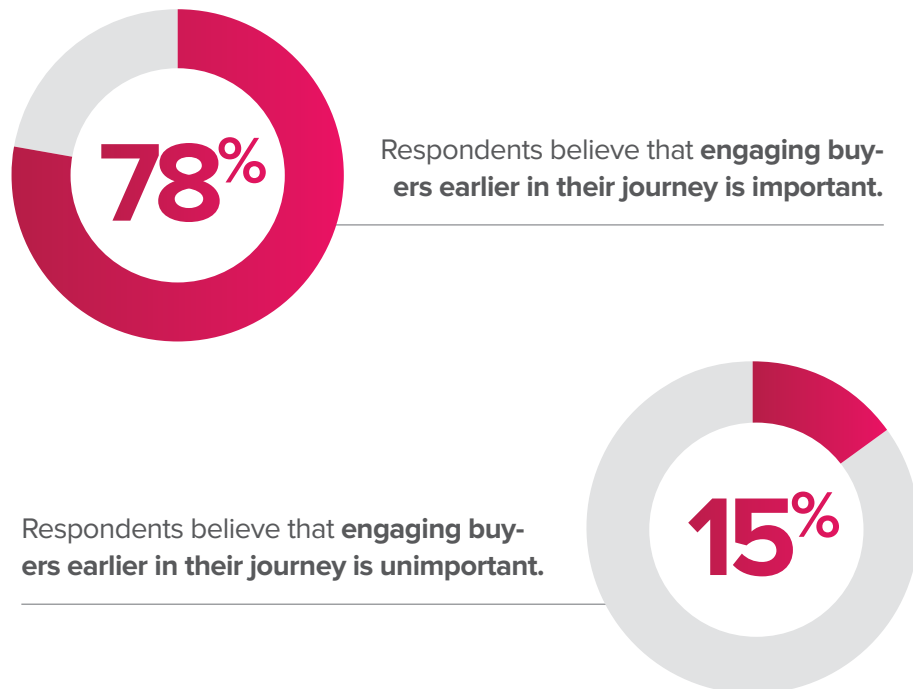
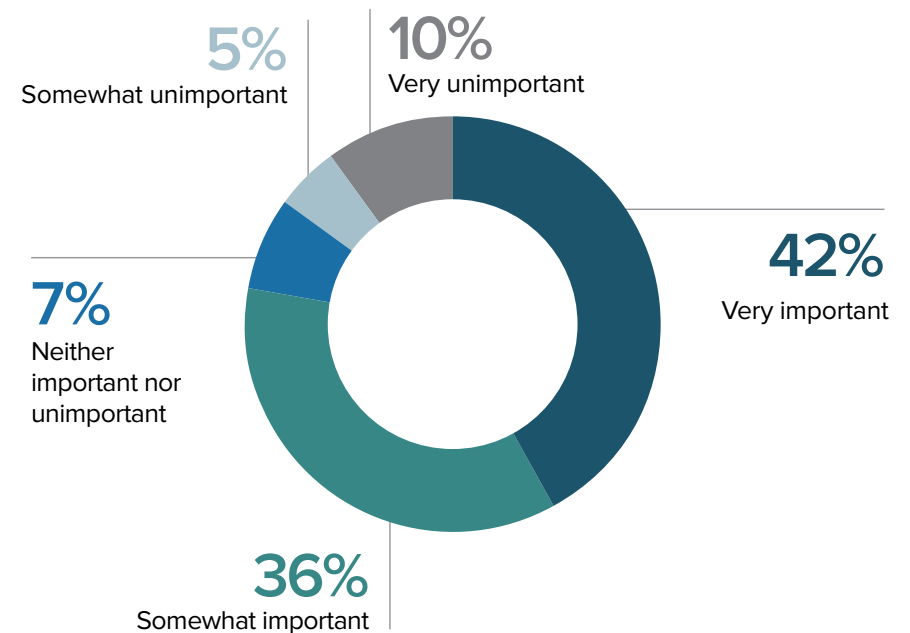


FIGURE 11: IMPORTANCE OF INFLUENCING BUYERS EARLY IN THEIR JOURNEY

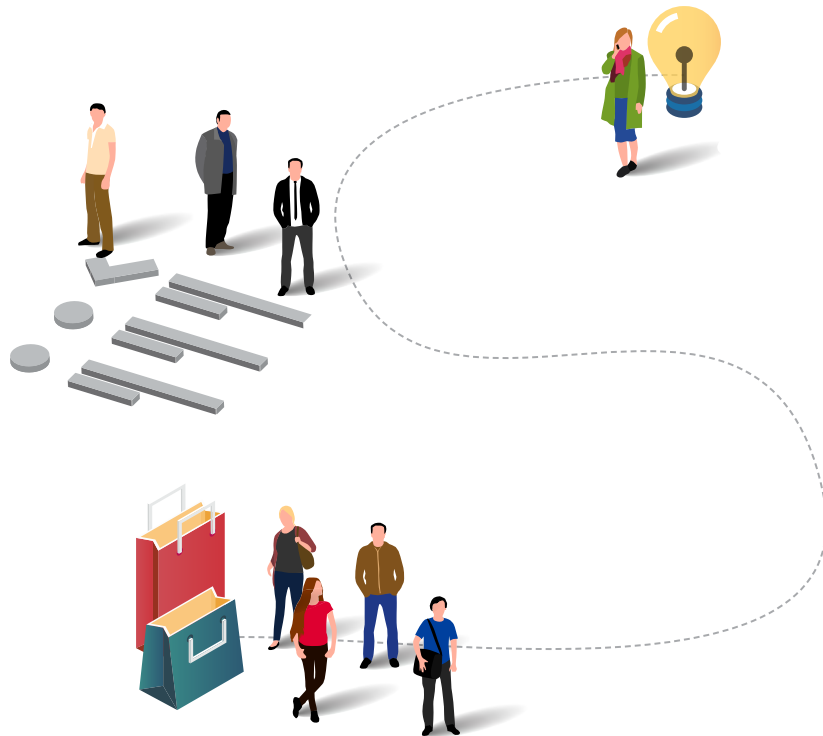
78% of study participants believe that it is somewhat or very important to engage buyers earlier in their journey than is currently occurring.



The vast majority of survey participants believe that it is still important to influence buyers early in their journey. This study also looked at the current situation with respect to when buyers reveal themselves to businesses during their journey, as shown in **Figure 12**.

During their journey, **37% study participants report that buyers reveal their interest to businesses early in their journey.**

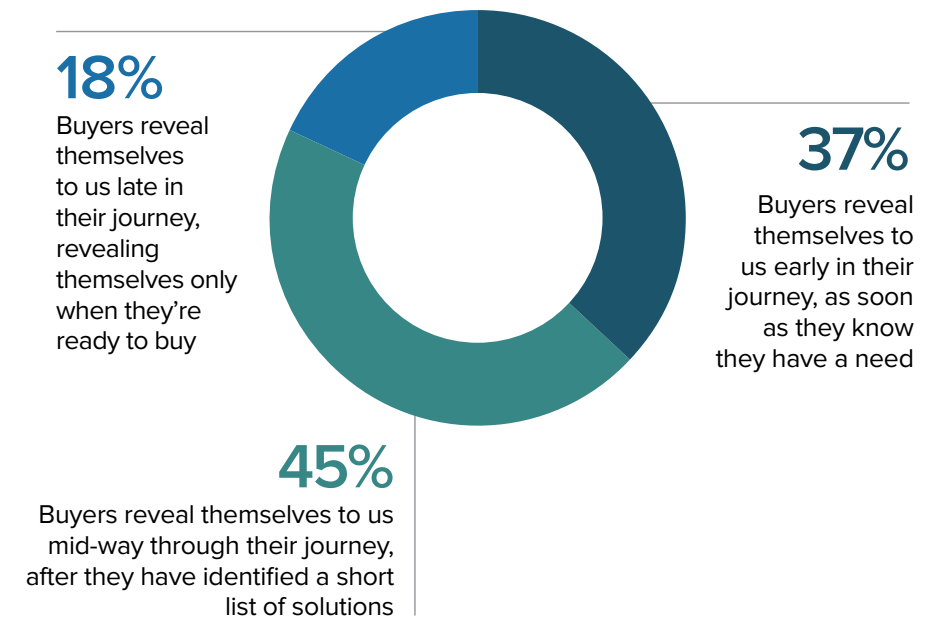
This represents a dramatic increase from the results of our 2014 study, where only 25% of study participants reported that buyers reveal their interest to businesses early.



Which of the following statements best describes your current buyer's journey?

FIGURE 12: STAGE AT WHICH BUYERS REVEAL THEMSELVES

37% of buyers reveal their interest to vendors early in that journey.



Increasingly, marketers realize the importance of engaging with buyers early in their journey. However, does this positive trend lead to more revenue? We wanted to find out.

A comparison of revenue and when buyer's reveal themselves in their journey was examined.

Companies that are experiencing revenue growth are more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey (40% versus 30%), as shown in **Figure 13**.

This validates what many marketers already know: that it is important to ensure buyers reveal themselves as soon as they know they have a need. However, it begs the question, **are interactive content users also more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey?**

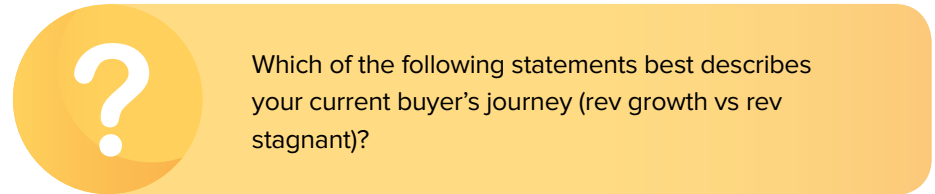
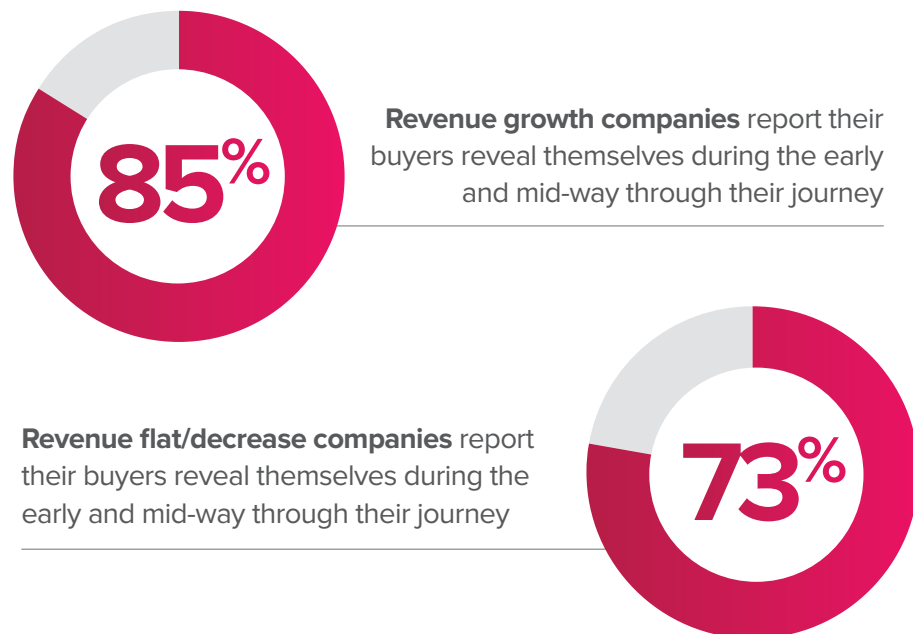


FIGURE 13: REVENUE COMPARISON: STAGE AT WHICH BUYERS REVEAL THEMSELVES

Revenue growth companies are more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey.

- Flat, Modest, or Significant Decrease in Revenue
- Modest or Significant Increase in Revenue



Using the same “passive-content” and “interactive-content” categorization described earlier, **a comparison of interactive content and when buyers reveal themselves in their journey was examined.**

Companies that are using interactive content are also more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey (40% versus 35%), as shown in **Figure 14.**

This does not necessarily mean that interactive content performs best in the early stage of the buying process. We will examine that correlation later in this report.

However, what is clear is that revenue-growth companies are more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey.

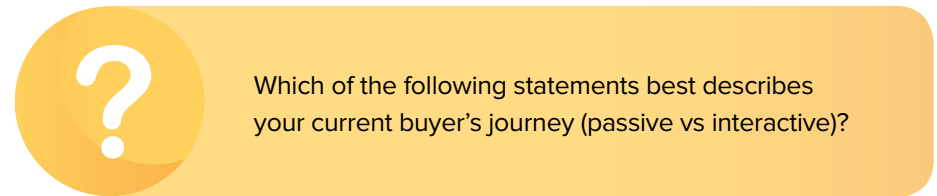
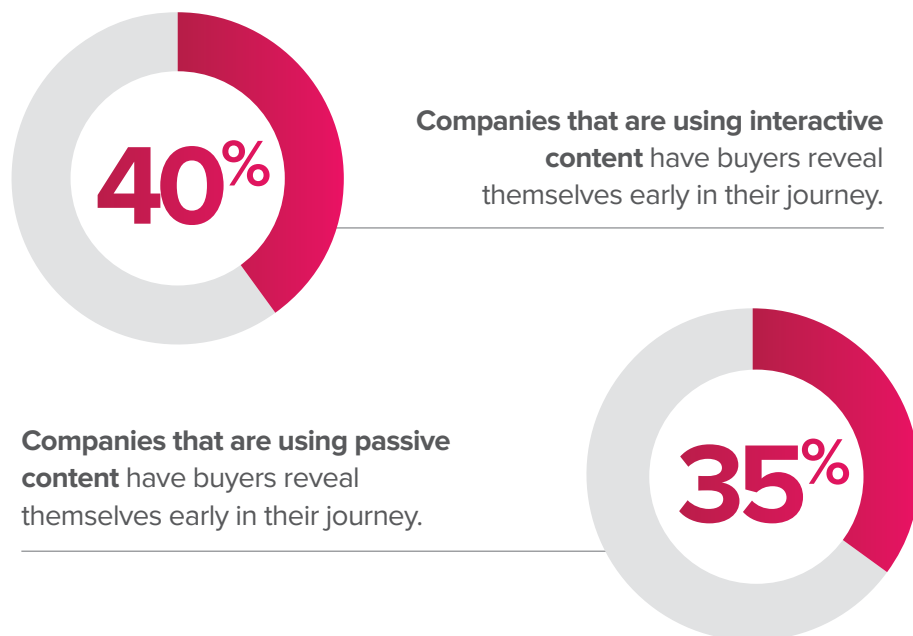
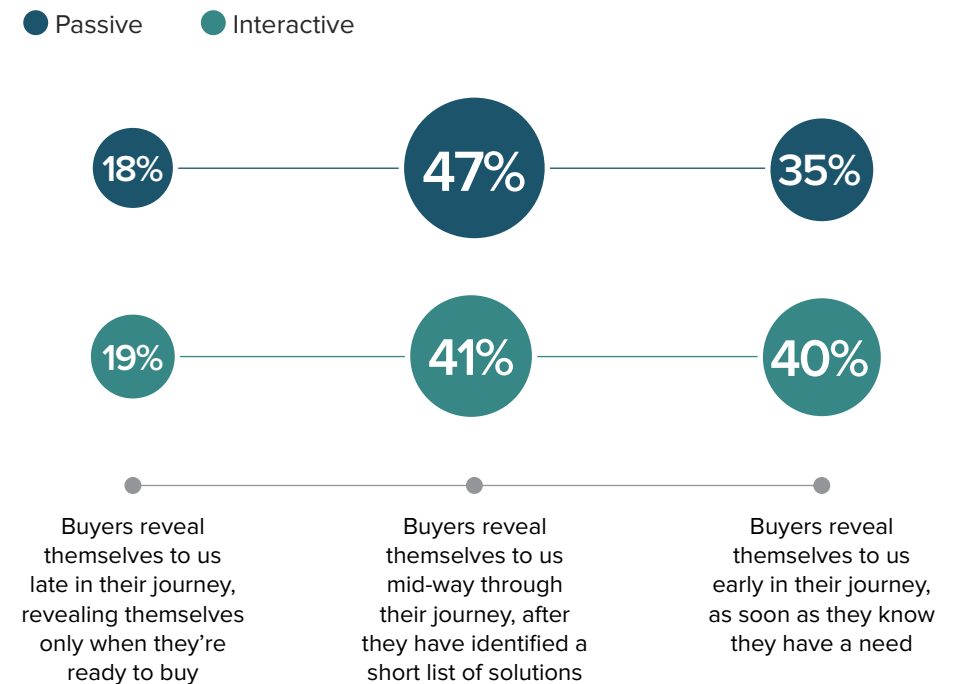


FIGURE 14: CONTENT COMPARISON: STAGE AT WHICH BUYERS REVEAL THEMSELVES

Companies that are using interactive content are more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey.



As such, we wanted to explore the extent to which content interactivity influences buyers' decisions as they go through their journey, as shown in **Figure 15**.

The vast majority of survey participants (96%) believe that content interactivity impacts the buyer's decisions as they go through their journey.

The implications of this result not only validate the use of interactive content throughout the buyer's journey, but they should also **sound the proverbial alarm for any company not currently using interactive content.**

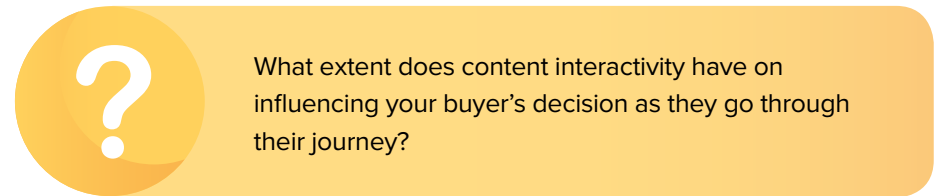
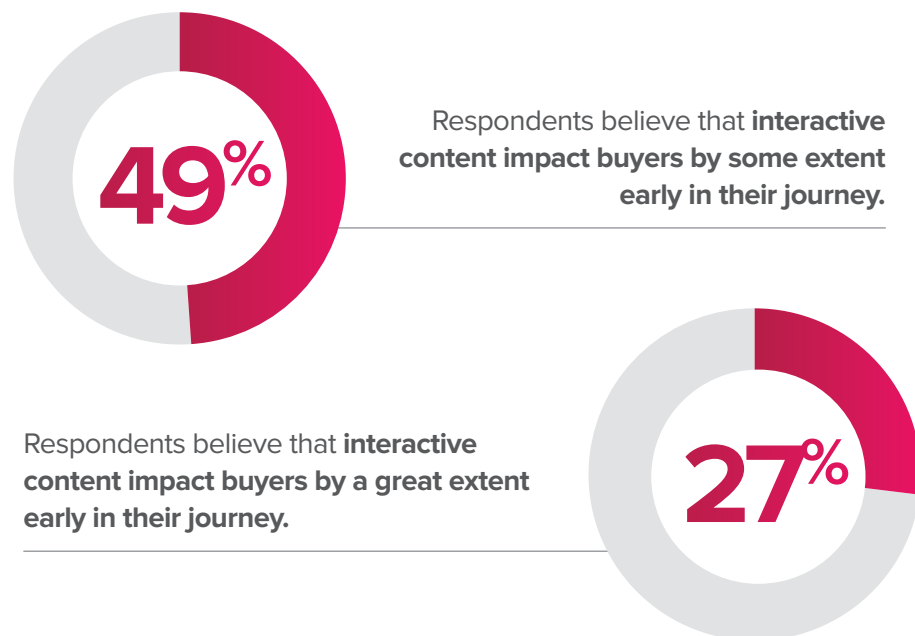
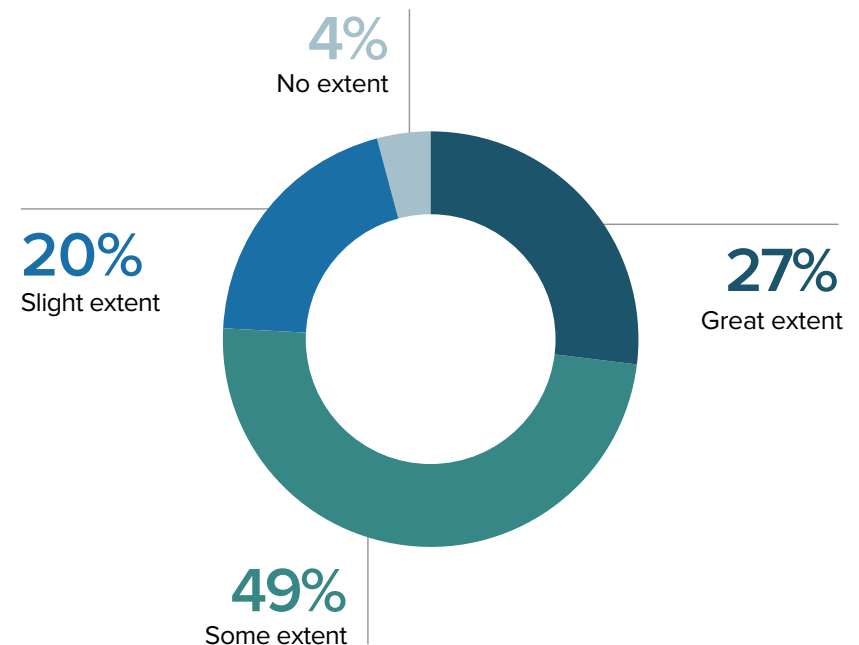


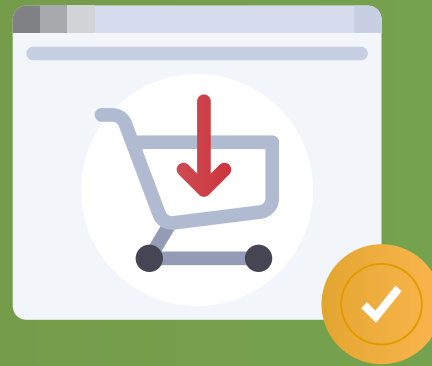
FIGURE 15: INTERACTIVE CONTENT INFLUENCE ON BUYERS EARLY IN THEIR JOURNEY

96% of study participants believe that content interactivity impacts buyer's decisions as they go through their journey.



CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



Buying Stage Content Effectiveness



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As content marketing continues to evolve, the importance of deploying the right content at the right time has intensified. In which stage of the buyer's journey is each content type most effective? The study asked questions to find out.

The stages used in this research were

- **Early stage:** when buyers become aware of their need and begin a process of discovering solutions
- **Middle stage:** when buyers begin purchase consideration of solution alternatives
- **Late stage:** when buyers have enough information and are ready to make a purchase decision.

Using this framework, study participants indicated the stages of the buying process in which their interactive and passive content was most effective.

Marketers clearly understand the power of making strong, early impressions, with 46% of survey participants reporting their content is most effective in the early stage (informational, need awareness, discovery) of the buying process.

Furthermore, when asked which buying stage content is least effective, 56% of survey respondents reported their content was least effective in the late (transactional, decision) stage of the buying process.

The study data seems to indicate that marketers lack confidence in the effectiveness of their late-stage content.

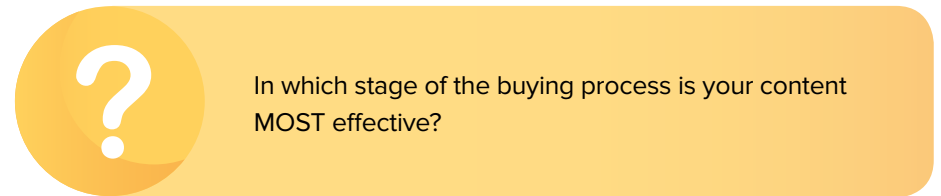
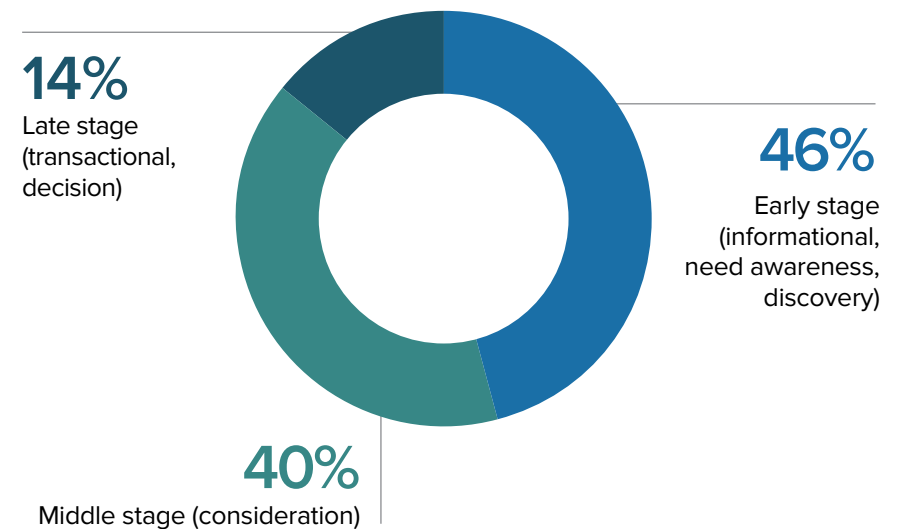


FIGURE 16: BUYING STAGE AT WHICH CONTENT IS MOST EFFECTIVE

Survey participants report their content is most effective in the early stage of the buyer's journey.



For the first time, this study compared revenue and overall content effectiveness to determine if revenue growth companies are more confident in their mid to late-stage content.

These results indicate that revenue growth companies are more effective at producing content for the middle (consideration) stage and the late (transactional, decision) stage of the buying process.

56% of survey respondents reported their content was least effective in the late (transactional, decision) stage of the buying process.

The study data seems to indicate that marketers lack confidence in the effectiveness of their late-stage content, as shown in **Figure 17**.

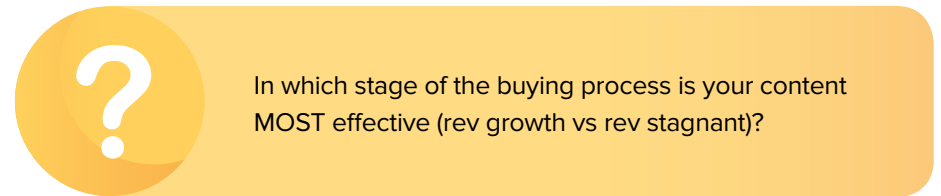
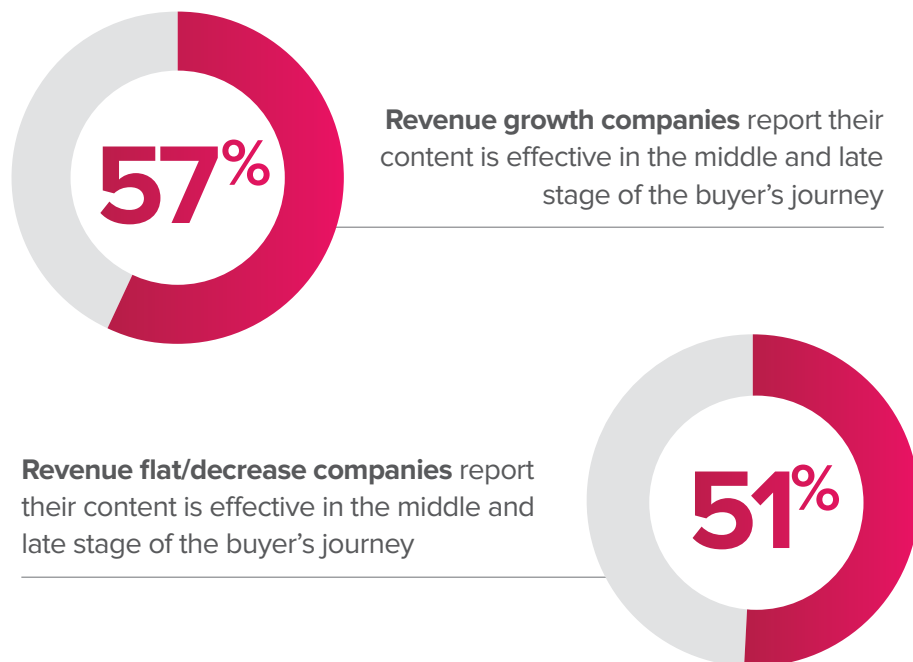
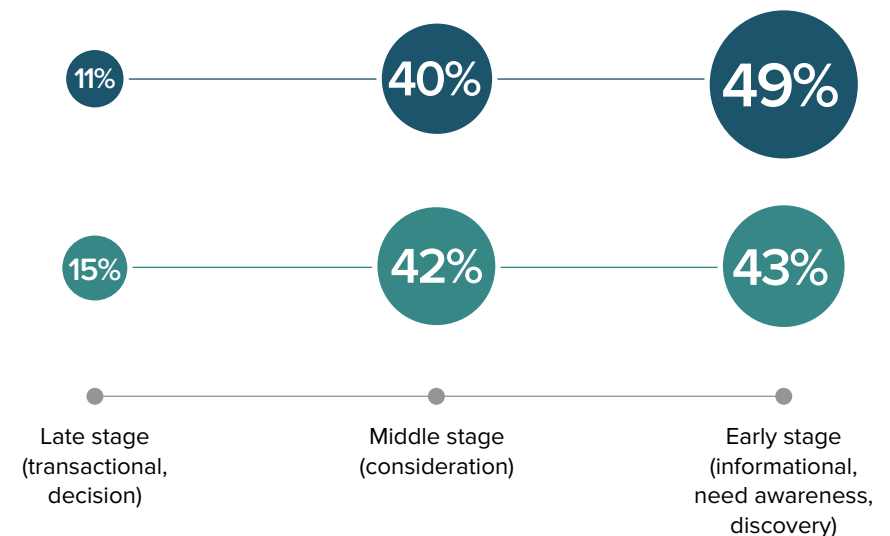


FIGURE 17: REVENUE COMPARISON: CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS IN BUYERS JOURNEY STAGE

Revenue growth companies are more likely to report their content is most effective in the middle and late stage of the buyer's journey.

- Flat, Modest, or Significant Decrease in Revenue
- Modest or Significant Increase in Revenue



Effective content marketing requires more than simply making strong impressions early in the buying process; it is also important to leverage the right content type at the right stage.

For this reason, a comparison of interactive content and effectiveness at each stage of the buyer's journey was examined.

Interactive content is far more effective in the middle (consideration) stage, with 45% of survey respondents reporting their content is more effective.

Contrast this with only 38% of passive content reporting effectiveness in the same stage, as shown in **Figure 18**.

When buyers reach the consideration phase, there is a good chance that they are already engaging with content from multiple businesses. Interactive content can be leveraged at this point to help differentiate from competitors and to educate buyers.

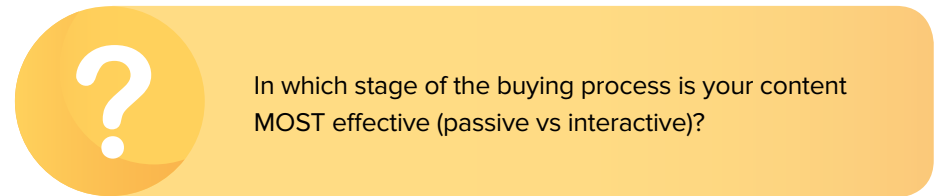
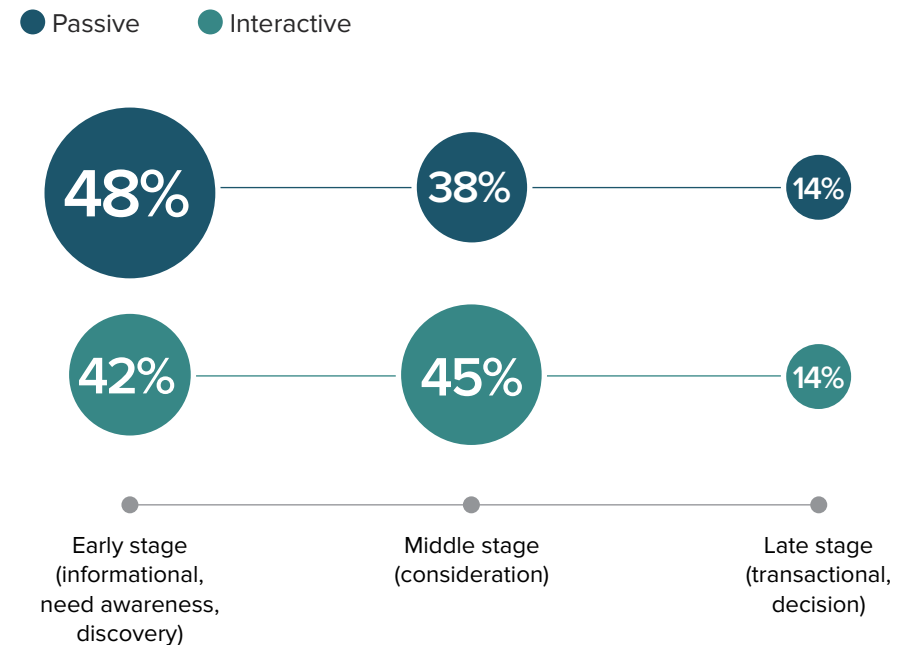


FIGURE 18: CONTENT COMPARISON: STAGE IN BUYERS JOURNEY

Interactive content is most effective in the middle stage (consideration) of the buyer's journey



CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



Content-Marketing Challenges



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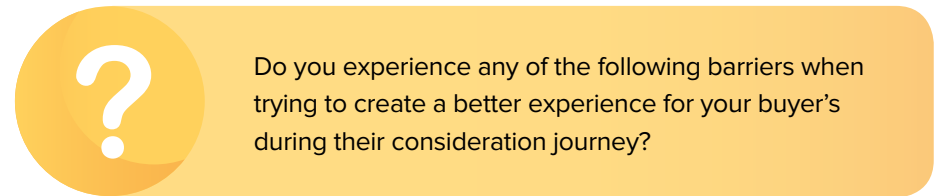
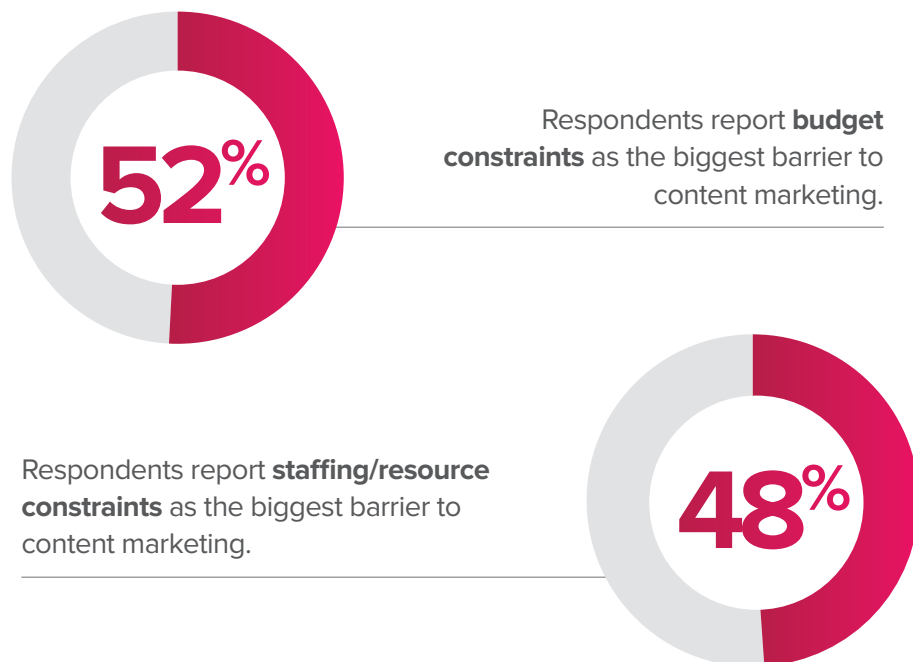


A ScribbleLive Solution

What is preventing companies from creating a better experience for buyers during their purchase-consideration journey?

The study participants provided this feedback about the barriers they encounter.

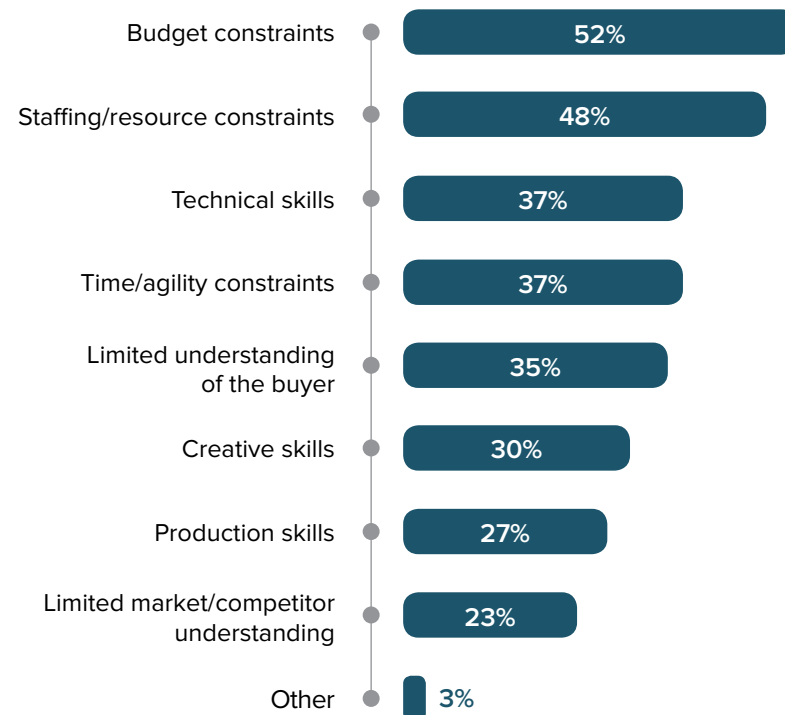
Over half of study participants report that budget constraints are the biggest barrier to content marketing when trying to create a better experience for their buyers during their consideration journey, followed by staffing/resource constraints (48%) and technical skills (37%).



Do you experience any of the following barriers when trying to create a better experience for your buyer's during their consideration journey?

FIGURE 19: CONTENT MARKETING BARRIERS

Over half of study participants report budget constraints are their biggest barrier to content marketing.



As marketing continues to become more technical in nature, a strong set of technical skills is can be instrumental in delivering value to the organization. However, the available pool of talent is limited, and as the technology landscape continues to evolve, it is becoming harder and harder for marketers to cultivate their technical skills.

For this reason, more survey respondents have reported technical skills as a barrier to success than ever before.

Study participants were provided a list of known content-marketing challenges and were asked to select those that they are experiencing:

In 2018, one challenge area – **“Content doesn’t create enough opportunities for interaction and engagement”** – exists for 41% of survey respondents, as shown in **Figure 20**. This represents a dramatic decrease when compared to 2014 survey results, where over half (58%) of survey respondents reported it as a challenge.

Although this challenge still remains the most frequently reported in 2018, **the 17% delta reflected in the 2014 and 2018 survey results indicates that many marketers seem to have overcome this challenge in the past four years.**

Another challenge area – “Prospects are reluctant to surrender contact information to get ‘gated’ content” – has moved into second place in 2018, with 40% of survey participants reporting it as being a challenge, as shown in **Figure 20**.

In 2014, only 27% of survey participants reported that prospects are reluctant to surrender contact information to get “gated” content. **As content-marketing continues to evolve, marketers must continue to think of creative ways to engage buyers and to capture their information.**

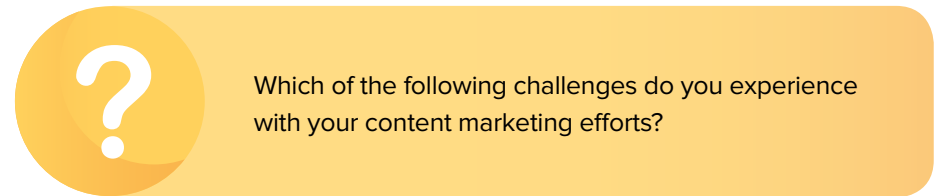
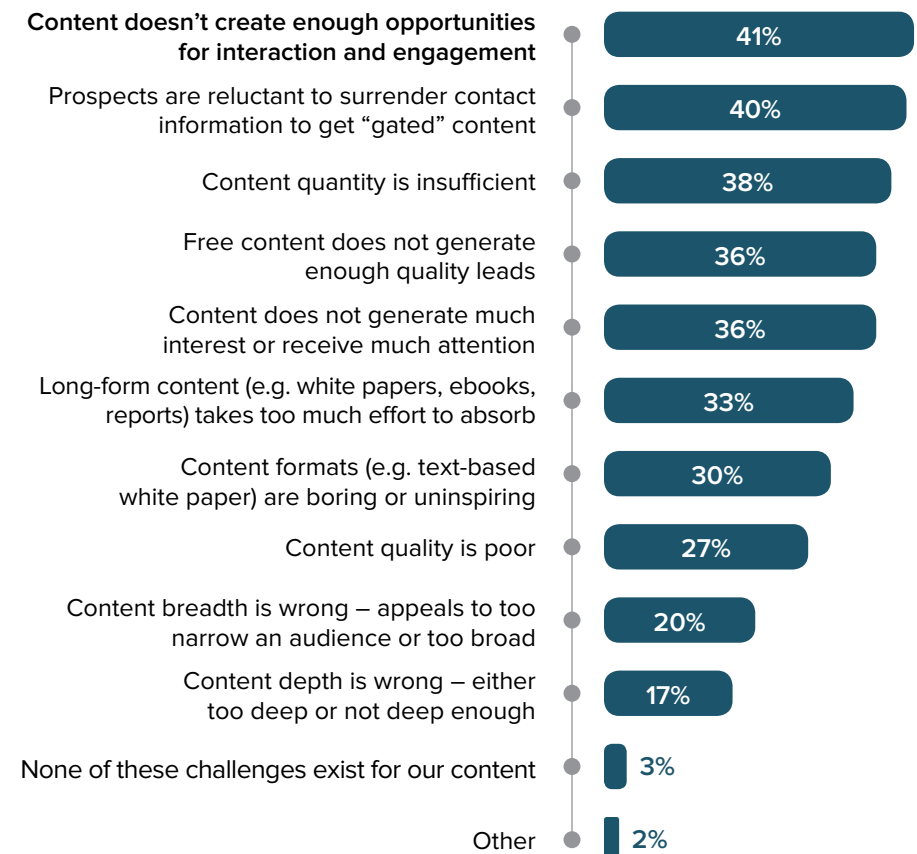


FIGURE 20: CONTENT MARKETING CHALLENGES

41% of the study’s participants report their content doesn’t create enough interaction or engagement.



Further analysis of these content-marketing problems was conducted to determine to what extent, if any, interactivity of content changed the frequency with which they are experienced.

This analysis yielded five statistically valid relationships.

- 1 Content doesn't create enough opportunities for interaction and engagement.
- 2 Content quality is insufficient
- 3 Content is not generating much interest or getting much attention.
- 4 Content formats (e.g. text-based white papers) are boring or uninspiring.
- 5 Content quality is poor

Passive content users are over 1.4 times more likely to have challenges with content quality and over 1.3 times more likely to have challenges with formats, as shown in **Table 1**.

They are also more likely to report that content does not create enough opportunities for interaction, engagement, and attention.



Which of the following challenges do you experience with your content marketing efforts?

TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF REPORTING CHALLENGES BY CONTENT TYPE

Statistically valid problem relationships to content type (passive or interactive).

Challenge	Passive content	Interactive content
1. Content doesn't create enough opportunities for interaction and engagement.	43%	37%
2. Content quality is insufficient	42%	26%
3. Content is not generating much interest or getting much attention.	40%	25%
4. Content formats (e.g. text-based white papers) are boring or uninspiring.	32%	24%
5. Content quality is poor	30%	21%

Further analysis of these content-marketing problems was conducted to determine to what extent, if any, revenue status changed the frequency with which they are experienced.

This analysis yielded three statistically valid relationships.

- 1 Free content does not generate enough quality leads
- 2 Prospects are reluctant to surrender contact information to get “gated” content
- 3 Content formats (e.g. text-based white papers) are boring or uninspiring.

Revenue-stagnant companies are nearly 1.5 times more likely to report that content does not generate enough quality leads and over 1.2 times more likely to report that prospects are reluctant to surrender contact information, as shown in **Table 2**.

They also report that content formats are boring or uninspiring more frequently than do revenue-growth companies.

Since revenue-growth companies are less likely to report that content formats are boring and uninspiring, content interactivity certainly seems to address this challenge head on.

Any revenue-stagnant company that is challenged with boring and uninspiring content should consider using interactive content.



Which of the following challenges do you experience with your content marketing efforts?

TABLE 2: FREQUENCY OF CHALLENGES BY REVENUE

Statistically valid problem relationships to content type (revenue stagnant or revenue growth).

Challenge	Revenue Stagnant	Revenue Growth
1. Free content does not generate enough quality leads	46%	31%
2. Prospects are reluctant to surrender contact information to get “gated” content	47%	39%
3. Content formats (e.g. text-based white papers) are boring or uninspiring.	35%	28%

CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



Budget and Metrics



DEMAND METRIC

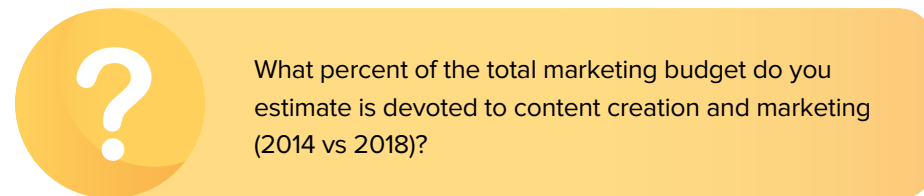
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Marketing budgets often reflect priorities. The way initiatives are funded is an excellent indicator of their perceived value within a company.

Figure 21 summarizes the percent of total marketing budget devoted to content creation and marketing.



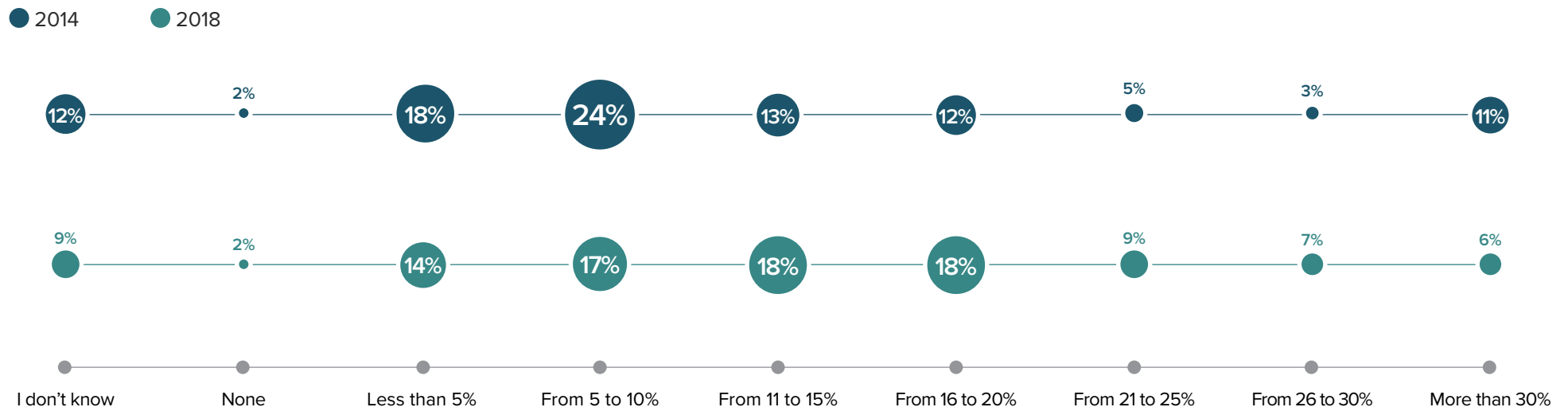
Although fewer companies are allocating more than 30% of their overall budget to content marketing in 2018, **we see a significant uptick in the percentage of companies allocating <11% to >30% of their overall marketing budget to content marketing compared to 2014**, as shown in **Figure 21**.

Marketers also appear to be doing a better job of understanding where their marketing dollars are being spent.

In 2014, 12% of survey participants did not know what percent of the total marketing budget was devoted to content creation and marketing. In 2018, only 9% of survey participants did not know.

FIGURE 21: % MARKETING BUDGET SPENT ON CONTENT MARKETING

The percentage of companies allocating <11% to >30% of their overall marketing budget to content marketing increased since 2014.



Once again, **we looked for a correlation between higher spending and content marketing effectiveness, but the correlation between spending and content marketing effectiveness remains elusive.**

The study asked participants to select which of the following statements best describes how they measure the effectiveness of the content, information, or digital assets used to influence the buyer's journey:

- 1 We do not have measurements for this
- 2 We have basic measurements of consumption, such as views, downloads, clicks, etc.
- 3 We have some measure of interest in our content
- 4 We have some measure of how our content influences awareness or consideration
- 5 We have some measure of the engagement our content produces.

These response options represent a hierarchy, with option #1 representing no measurements, option #2 the most basic level, and option #5 the highest level of measurement.

Figure 22 summarizes the current state of content-marketing measurement efforts:

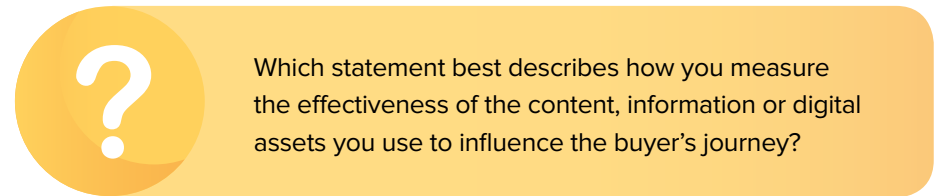
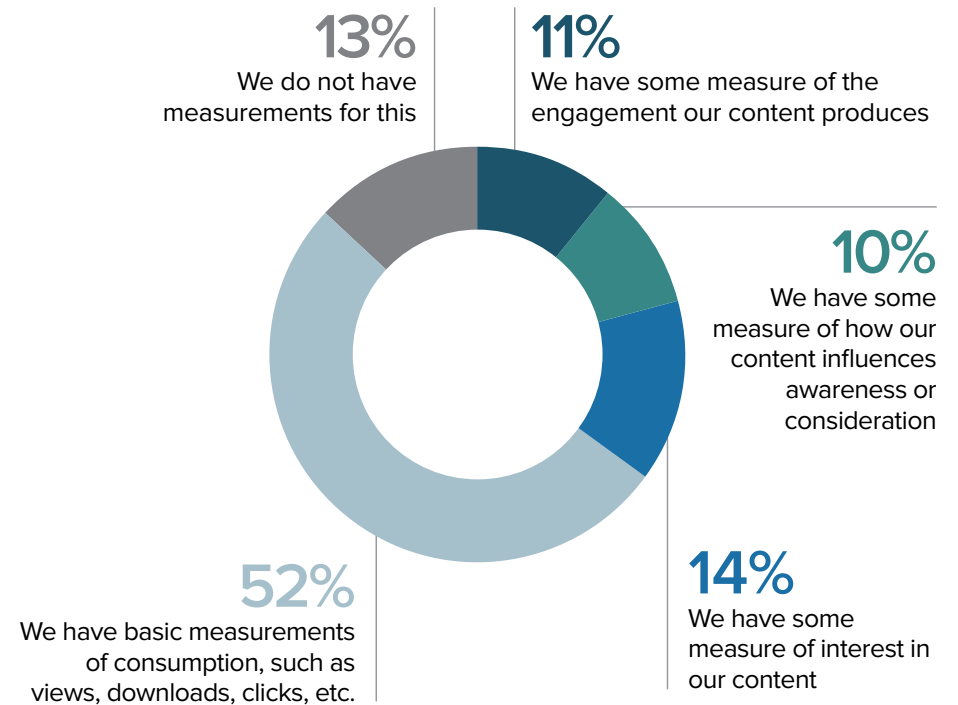


FIGURE 22: CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS MEASUREMENTS

Almost two-thirds of study participants have only basic or no measurements at all.



As shown in Figure 22, over 60% of survey respondents report using basic measurements of consumption or no measurements at all.

How can marketers justify an investment in content marketing if they can't measure the value being created? **Marketers must do a better job of understanding the value their content efforts produce.**

To support this notion, a comparison between revenue growth and content effectiveness metrics was examined.

Comparing companies that are growing revenue to those that are not, revenue-growth companies are more likely to have measures of engagement (14% versus 6%) and measures of how content influences awareness or consideration (11% versus 5%), as shown in Figure 23.

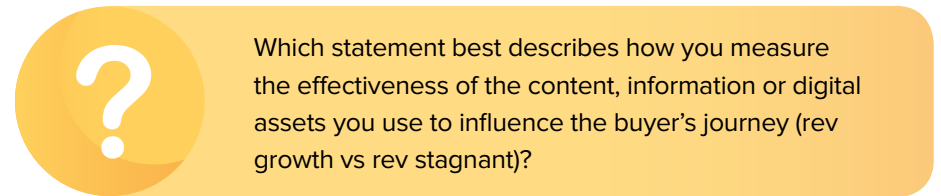
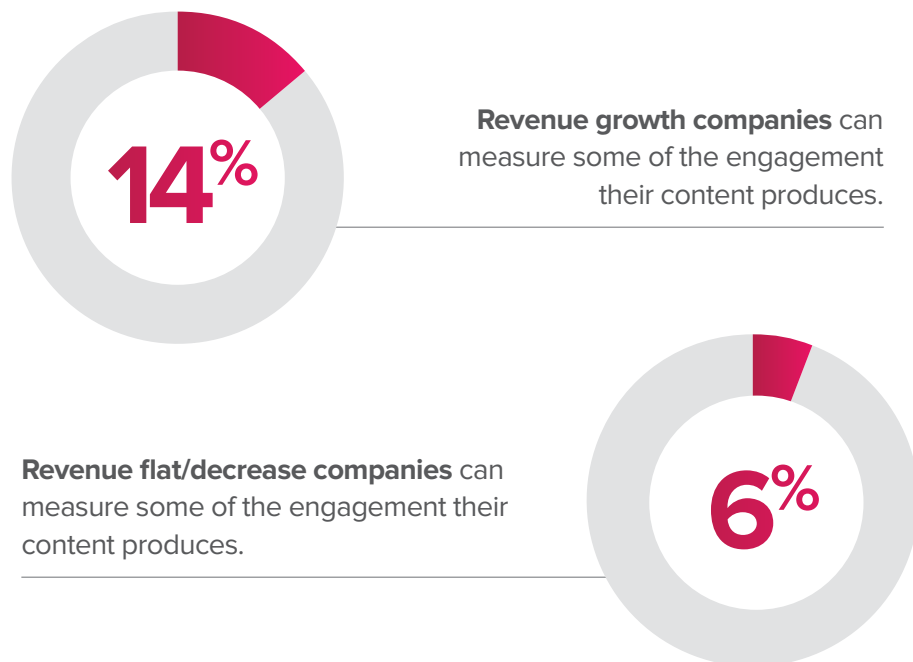
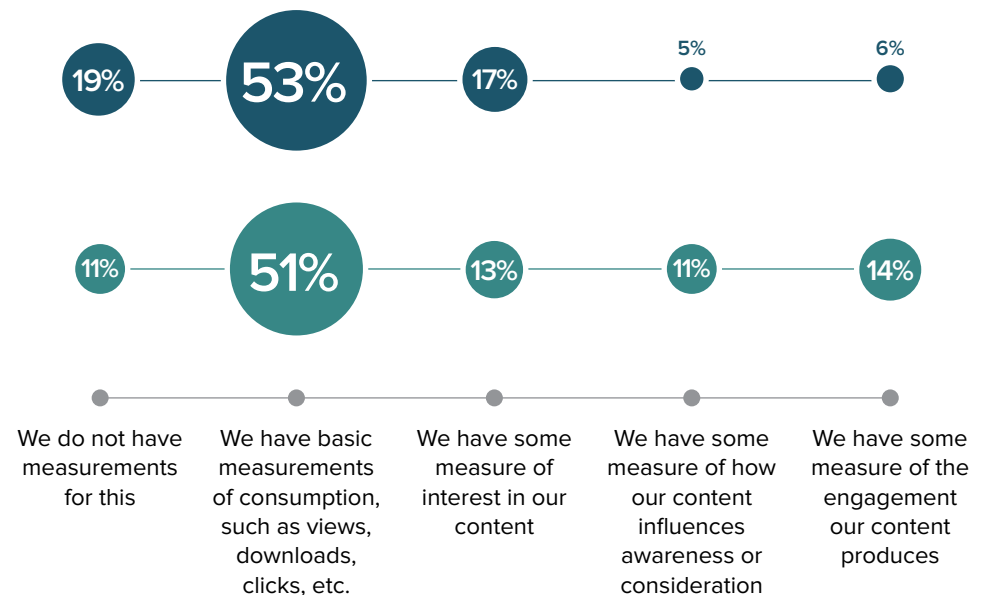


FIGURE 23: REVENUE COMPARISON: METRICS FOR MEASURING CONTENT EFFECTIVENES

Revenue growth companies are more likely to have measures of engagement and measures of how content influences awareness or consideration.

- Flat, Modest, or Significant Decrease in Revenue
- Modest or Significant Increase in Revenue



Since measures of engagement and how content influences awareness or consideration are leading indicators, **revenue-growth companies are more likely to be doing a better job of understanding the value their content efforts produce.**

A comparison between content type and effectiveness metrics was also examined.

Comparing interactive to passive content, interactive content users are more likely to have measures of engagement (21% versus 8%), measures of how content influences awareness or consideration (19% versus 6%), and measures of interest (20% versus 11%), as shown in **Figure 24**.

Once again, for the top three tiers in this measurement hierarchy – interest, influence and engagement – **organizations that report using interactive content are far ahead in measuring content effectiveness.**

A full 60% of the organizations with more interactive content use measurements in these top three tiers, compared to just 25% for organizations deploying primarily passive content.

The reason is simple: **interactive content enables higher levels of effectiveness measurements, because the method to capture the data is often built into the content itself.**

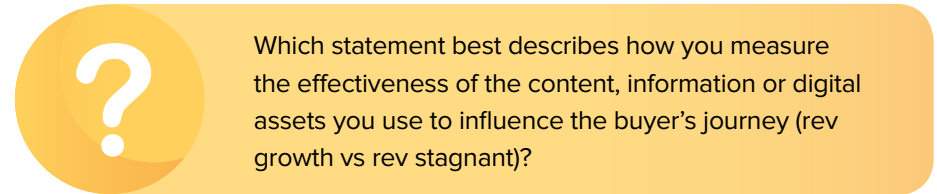
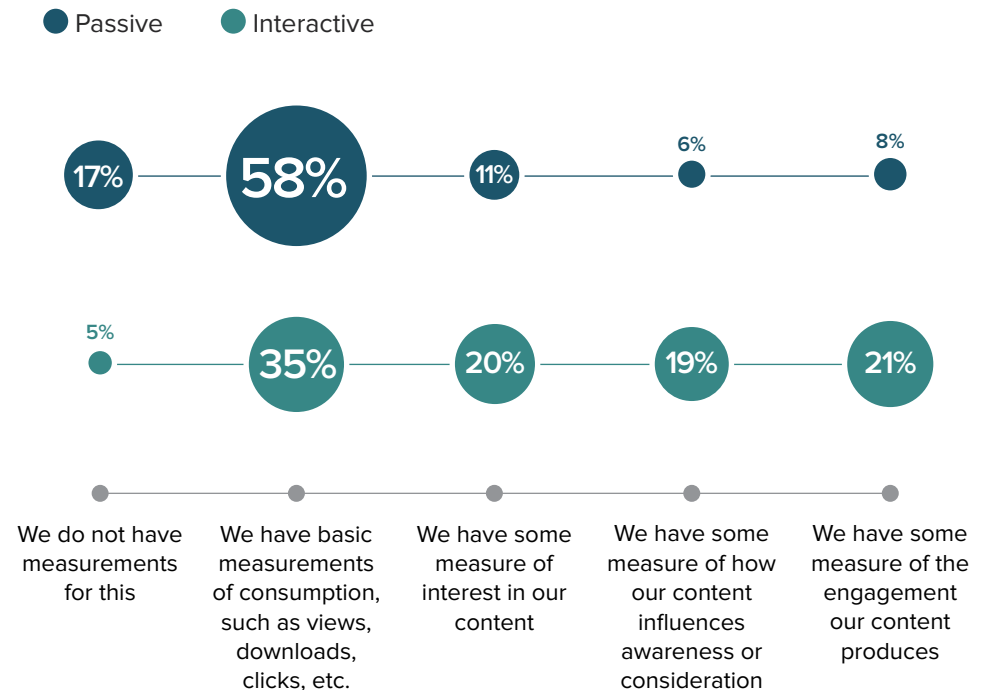


FIGURE 24: CONTENT COMPARISON: METRICS FOR MEASURING CONTENT EFFECTIVENES

Interactive content users are more likely to have measures of engagement, how content influences awareness or consideration, and measures of interest.



A new question was introduced in this study to better understand which advanced metrics are being tracked, as shown in **Figure 25**.

The three most frequently measured metrics reported by survey participants are website traffic, sales lead quantity, and SEO ranking.

These metrics are poor indicators of business value since they are considered volume metrics that do not directly indicate revenue impact.

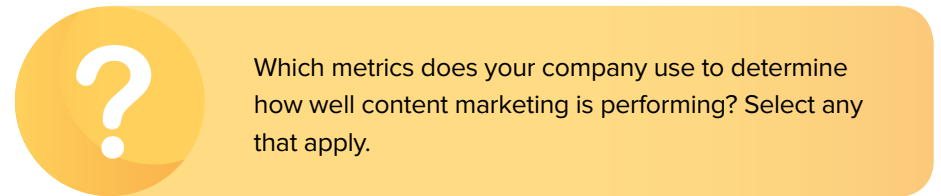
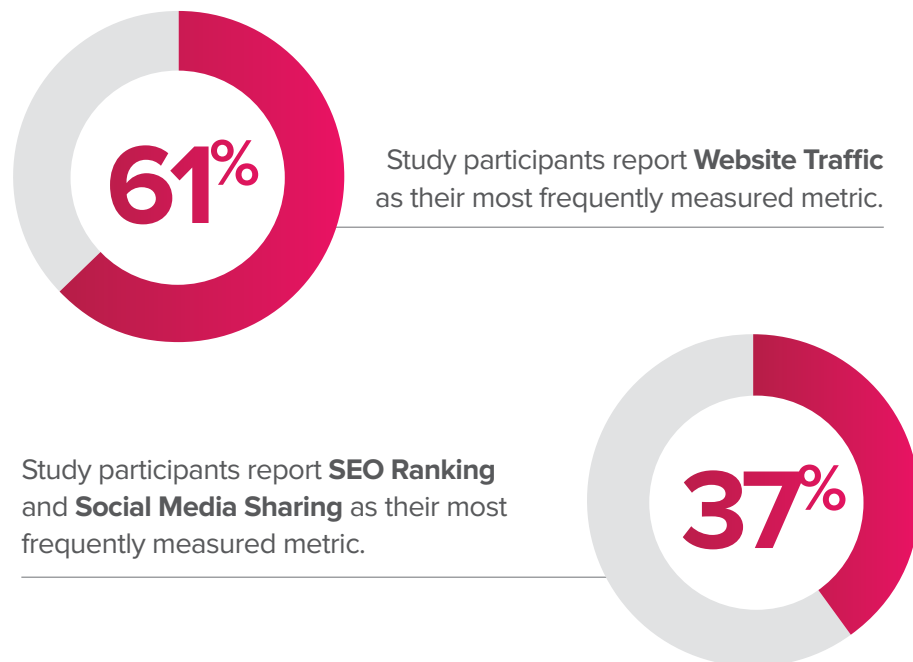
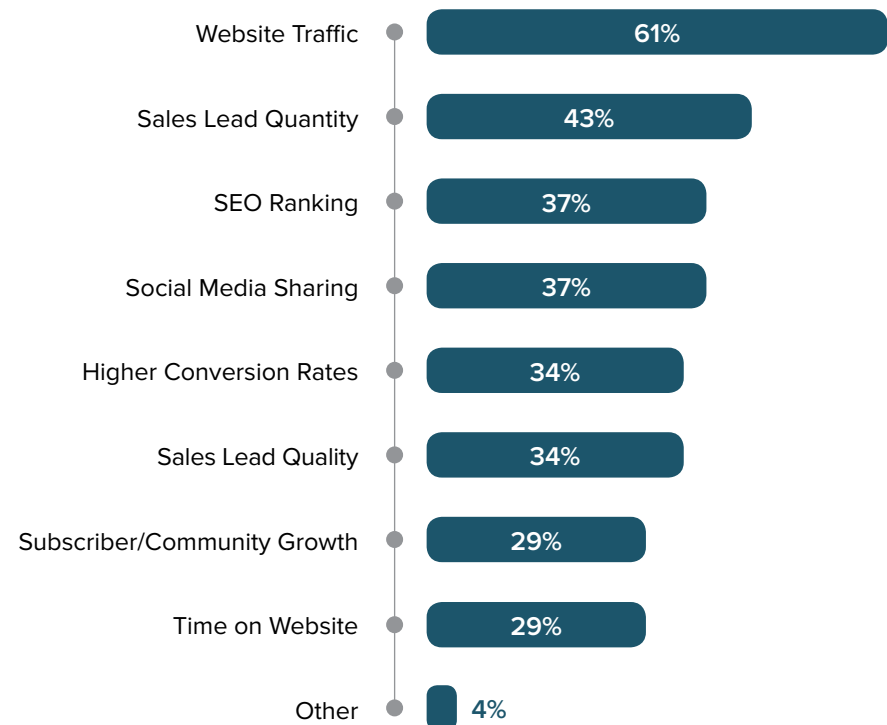


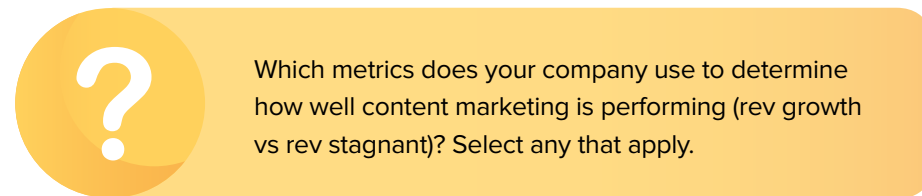
FIGURE 25: ADVANCED METRICS USED TO MEASURE CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS

The most frequently measured metric are website traffic, sales lead quantity, and SEO ranking.



For this reason, we decided to take a closer look at which advanced metrics revenue-growth companies are measuring.

The findings are shown in **Figure 26**.



Comparing companies that are growing revenue to those that are not, revenue-growth companies are more likely to use conversion rates, lead quality, and subscriber/community growth, as shown in **Figure 26**.

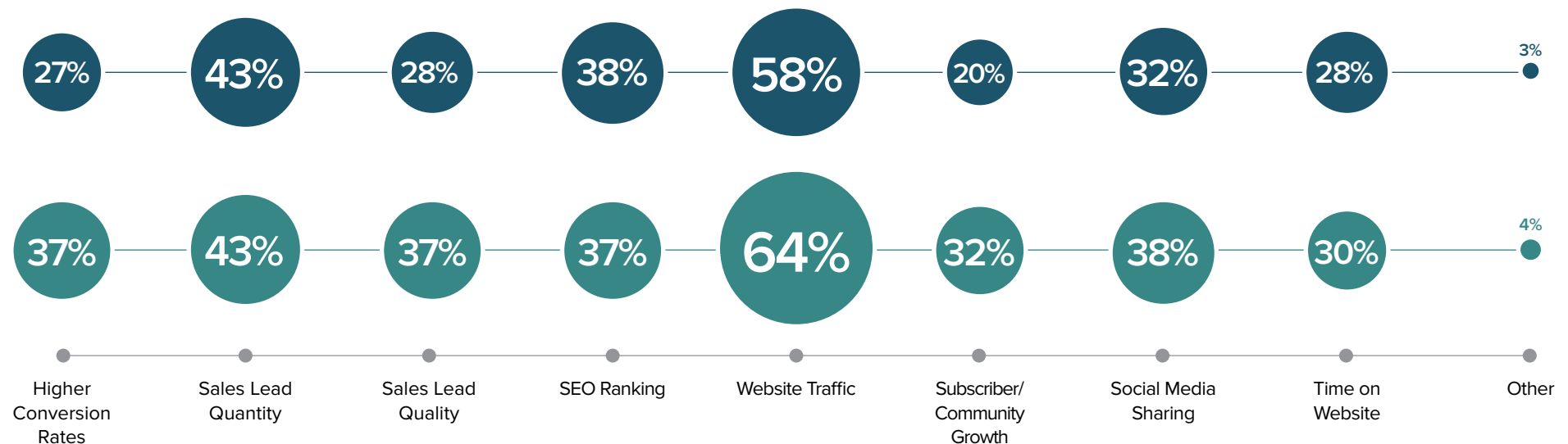
These advanced metrics allow revenue-growth companies to measure the value they are providing to the business.

FIGURE 26: REVENUE COMPARISON: ADVANCED METRICS TO MEASURE CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS

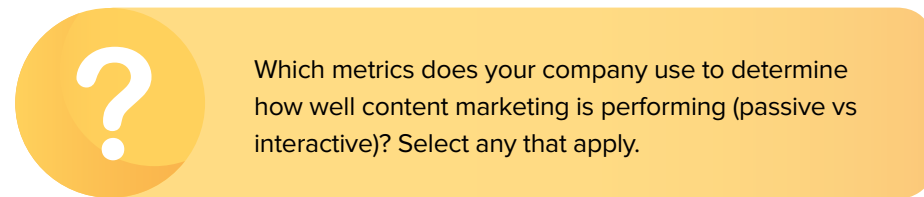
Companies growing revenue are more likely to use conversion rates, lead quality, and subscriber/community growth.

● Flat, Modest, or Significant Decrease in Revenue

● Modest or Significant Increase in Revenue



A comparison between content and advanced metrics was also examined. Comparing interactive to passive content, interactive-content users are more likely to use almost all of the advanced metrics to determine how well content marketing is performing, as shown in **Figure 27**.



The only metric that was used more frequently by passive-content users was website traffic.



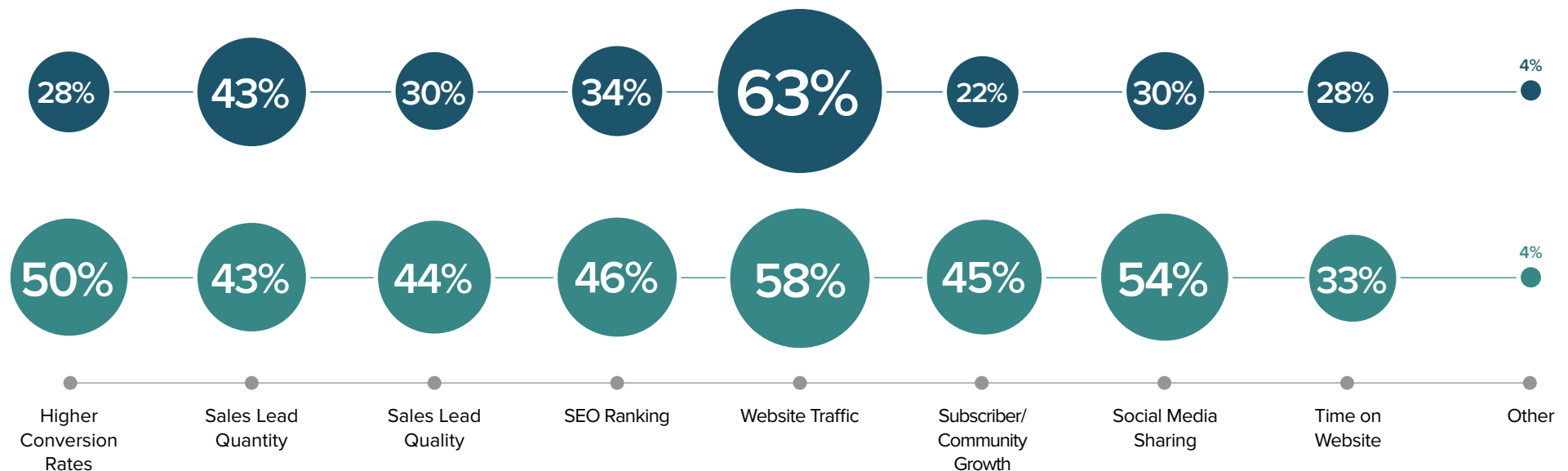
In contrast, 45% of interactive content producers measure subscriber community growth.

This finding further magnifies one of the main challenges that users of passive content are facing; passive content types are difficult to measure.

FIGURE 27: CONTENT COMPARISON: ADVANCED METRICS TO MEASURE CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS

Interactive content users are more likely to use advanced metrics to determine how well content marketing is performing.

- Passive
- Interactive



CONTENT EXPERIENCE IMPACT

AND THE BUYER'S JOURNEY



Analyst Bottom Line



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This study has explored how effectively marketers are using content to influence and support the buyer's journey and how companies that are experiencing revenue growth are leveraging content in different ways.

Almost everyone in the study agrees that content, specifically interactive content, impacts buyers' decisions as they go through their journey, yet fewer than one third of study participants are using content that is either slightly or very interactive.

1

Engage buyers early in their journey.



Over 75% of study participants believe that it is somewhat or very important to engage buyers earlier in their journey than is currently occurring.

Since companies that are growing revenue are nearly 1.3 times more likely to have buyers reveal themselves early in their journey, **marketers have to innovate and experiment with different content types in order to capture their prospects' attention early in their journey.**

A few content types that tend to perform well in the discovery stage include quizzes, infographics, assessments, and calculators.

Marketers who want to leverage content marketing in the most effective way and produce the highest possible return should implement the following recommendations:

- 1 Engage buyers early in their journey.
- 2 Use content to educate and differentiate.
- 3 Make content sharing easy.
- 4 Deliver the right content at the right stage.
- 5 Track the right metrics.

2

Use content to educate and differentiate.



Top-performing companies are doing an effective job of using content to educate buyers and differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Since content is one of the primary ways that prospects educate themselves before they are ready to buy, it is important to ensure that your content serves as a point of differentiation.

One way to stand out from the crowd is to use interactive content, since when comparing interactive to passive content, interactive content is almost 1.4 times more effective at educating buyers and over 1.4 times more effective at differentiating from competitors.

3 Make content sharing easy.



Because content shares often come from a trusted or known source, content sharing is an effective technique for marketers who are struggling to cut through the clutter.

Since companies that are growing revenue are nearly 1.5 times more likely to report their content is shared frequently or very frequently, it is important to reduce the barriers by ensuring that content can be shared with ease.

This can be accomplished by leveraging the features and functionality available in most content-display platform solutions.

5 Track the right metrics.



Advanced metrics are the only metrics that can accurately tell marketers the revenue impact any of their content is having.

Measures of engagement, how content influences awareness or consideration, and measures of interest in addition to conversion rates, lead quality, and subscriber/community growth are all types of metrics content marketers should track. Tracking the right metrics is necessary because the insights gained help to inform decisions about what type of content to produce, what to remove, and where to spend valuable content marketing dollars.

4 Deliver the right content at the right stage.



Failing to deliver the right content asset at the right stage of the buyer's journey can have a negative impact on your bottom line. Therefore, **a deep understanding of your buyers and how they interact with the content that you produce at each stage of their journey is crucial to success.** As buyers continue to self-educate, there is a good chance that they are engaging with content from multiple businesses by the time they reach the consideration phase.

Since interactive content is 1.2 times more effective in the middle stage of the buyer's journey than passive content, try using eBooks, white papers, solution finders, and configurators during this stage of the consideration journey to separate yourself from the rest of the pack.

Content plays a vital role in the buyer's journey. This study confirms that marketers using interactive content to influence and support the buyer's journey are reaping the rewards. **By implementing these recommendations, marketers can take their content-marketing efforts to the next level of effectiveness.**



Acknowledgements

Demand Metric is grateful to ion interactive for sponsoring this research, and for those who took the time to complete the study survey.



Demand Metric is a marketing research and advisory firm serving a membership community of over 120,000 marketing professionals and consultants in 75 countries.

Offering consulting playbooks, advisory services, and 500+ premium marketing tools and templates, Demand Metric resources and expertise help the marketing community plan more efficiently and effectively, answer the difficult questions about their work with authority and conviction, and complete marketing projects more quickly and with greater confidence — thus boosting the respect of the marketing team and making it easier to justify resources the team needs to succeed.

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We are **ion**, experts in interactive content. Our enterprise SaaS platform and services empower marketers to engage, target, and convert high-quality leads using code-free, data-driven interactivity.

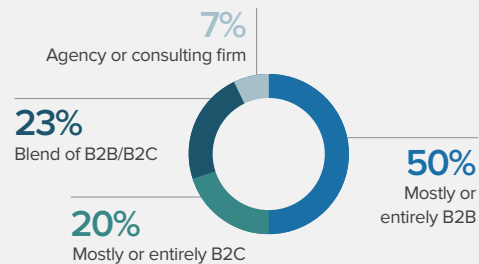
Our interactive content platform enables rapid creation, A/B testing, and measurement of self-assessments, configurators, calculators, quizzes, lookbooks, eBooks, interactive white papers, and infographics — without costly, complex, and time-consuming development.

With ion, marketers can cut through the content-marketing clutter with data-driven relevance and dynamic personalization — making the buyer's journey highly specific and personal.

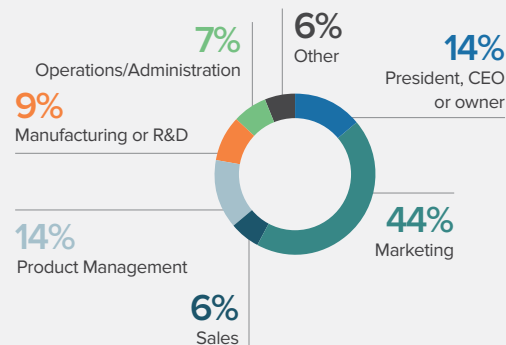
Learn more about interactive experiences @ www.ioninteractive.com.

This Demand Metric Content Effectiveness and the Buyer's Journey Benchmark Study survey was administered online during the period of January 3, 2018, to January 21, 2018. During this period, 428 responses were collected, 290 of which were complete enough for inclusion in the analysis. Only valid or correlated findings are shared in this report.

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION



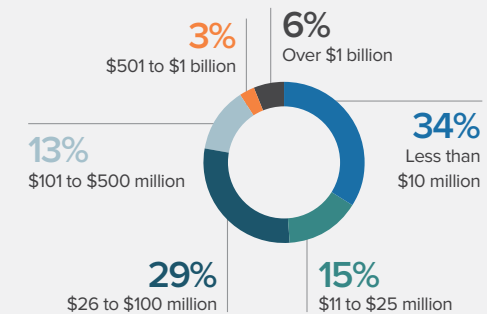
PRIMARY ROLE OF RESPONDENT



The representativeness of this study's results depends on the similarity of the sample to environments in which this survey data is used for comparison or guidance.

Summarized below is the basic categorization data collected about respondents to enable filtering and analysis of the data:

ANNUAL SALES





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