



B2B Customer Experience Benchmark

Report 2016

From Content to Revenue:

Original Research on the
Marketing-Driven Customer Experience



Great Customer Experiences
Drive Revenue





Delivering a great customer experience is critical to the success of B2B organizations.

In the [Age of the Customer](#), B2B buyers are in control of their own purchase process—from evaluation through upsell and renewal. Instead of picking up the phone to request information on a company and its products, today's customers conduct the majority of their research online. These tech-savvy buyers have high digital expectations and are unlikely to complete a purchase after a bad interaction or experience, even if that company has the best product on the market. However, organizations that provide consistent, compelling interactions across the customer journey stand to win the business—and loyalty—of these buyers.



But the term “customer experience” is elusive. *Customer experience* encompasses each interaction between a customer and brand across channels (social media, website, email, sales, etc.) and technologies (marketing automation, CMS, CRM, etc.).

The B2B buyer’s journey is often long and complicated, and in today’s overwhelmingly digital and customer-driven landscape, the number of touch points from awareness to purchase has increased exponentially. To add to the difficulty, different channels, tools, and data points are managed by siloed teams within a single organization.

In this survey, only **12% of B2B marketers** rate themselves as “very effective” at delivering a great customer experience.



Learn More

The B2B Marketer's Guide to Managing CX

Get your copy of *The B2B Marketer's Guide to Managing Customer Experience*, and learn how to create a marketing-driven customer experience that drives business growth for your organization.

[Get your guide](#) 

Why? Managing—not to mention optimizing—the puzzle that is the B2B customer experience is complex, and delivering consistency requires organizations to establish alignment and visibility across departments and functions.

However, defining ownership of the customer journey is still a work in process. The majority of respondents think marketing is responsible for the end-to-end experience, but some marketers still feel that sales, customer support, or a dedicated CX team own the job.

When analyzing how the customer experience is defined, delivered, and tracked, content is the unifying piece of the puzzle. It's B2B marketers who oversee the entire content lifecycle, from strategy through optimization.

Yes, content is still king. 81% of marketers invest in content marketing, making it the top marketing investment of 2016.

Also, **85% of B2B marketers agree that consistency across content, teams, and channels is the backbone of an effective customer experience**, and the majority of marketers invest in marketing technology to support their efforts.

Furthermore, the increasing importance on investment in content has firmly established marketing as a revenue-generator, a hard contrast to the age-old perception of marketing as a “cost-center.” And marketers are embracing this role—lead generation and revenue/ROI are ranked as the top marketing priorities of 2016.

If content is the backbone of an effective B2B customer experience and businesses continue to invest in content, why are some B2B marketers falling short?

85% of B2B marketers agree that consistency across content, teams, and channels is the backbone of an effective customer experience



The top three barriers to successfully delivering a consistent and effective customer experience are:

- **Inefficient internal processes**
- **Tracking and reporting the right metrics**
- **Lack of alignment across internal teams**

Inefficient processes and lack of insight into metrics block B2B marketers from optimizing the customer journey and meeting their goals.

In this report, we examine the key drivers of effective B2B customer experience and the major barriers to success. This research serves as a benchmark for B2B marketers, providing insights for improvement in alignment, execution, distribution, and optimization of the content and programs that power the customer experience.

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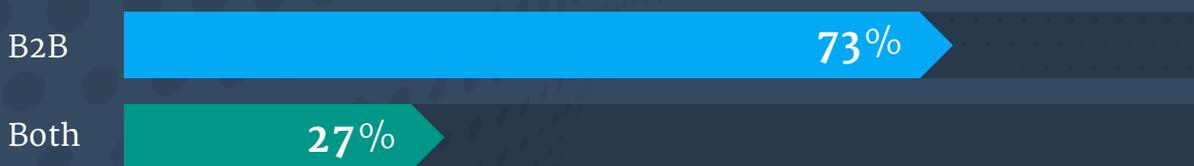
The Methodology: Benchmarking B2B Customer Experience

In Q1 of 2016, Kapost conducted an online survey to identify and benchmark the key indicators of B2B customer experience success. **This report examines the marketing trends, tactics, and technologies that drive an effective customer experience** as well as the major barriers to success.

To explore the tactical and granular aspects of the B2B customer experience, the remainder of this report delivers analysis from the filtered survey population. Here's how it breaks down:

Total Survey Respondents: 316

286 B2B Marketing Respondents:



Which of the following best describes your role?



How effective is your marketing organization at delivering a consistent customer experience?

Top performers





Key Findings and Analysis



Undoubtedly, adapting to the digital transformation and delivering a consistent, effective customer experience is imperative to B2B success, but for the majority of B2B marketers, execution is still in its infancy.

The pressure to move away from the traditional sales funnel ideology and embrace a more holistic view of the customer journey is intensifying. While the majority of B2B organizations have shifted from product-centric to customer-centric content, content is still created reactively. A lack of process for cross-functional collaboration and alignment has placed great, marketing-driven customer experiences just out of reach.

85% of B2B marketers agree that consistency across all content is the backbone of an effective customer experience

The good news: there's a clear path to success.

Only 12% of B2B marketers consider their marketing organization “very effective” at delivering a consistent customer experience



B2B marketers resoundingly agree (85%) that consistency across all content is the backbone of an effective customer experience. However, many B2B marketers still struggle to align, execute, distribute, and optimize targeted content—only 39% of survey respondents have a documented buyer’s journey that allows them to identify gaps in content targeted at specific stages. Also, **only 41% agree or strongly agree that their team is truly data-driven**, focusing resources on the most effective content, channels, and initiatives across the customer experience.

Before marketers can begin to optimize the customer experience, a comprehensive view of content within the organization is absolutely critical: **83% of top performers have a documented CX strategy in place**. Understanding how content guides the buyer’s journey, establishing tight internal alignment, and tracking the right performance metrics are the keys to successfully delivering an effective customer experience.

Takeaways



Only 12% of B2B marketers rate themselves as “very effective” at delivering a consistent customer experience



Inefficient internal processes, tracking and reporting the right metrics, and lack of alignment across internal teams are the top three barriers to success



83% of top performers have a documented CX strategy in place

80% of respondents who ranked themselves as “very effective” or “somewhat effective” at delivering a consistent customer experience have a process for internally crowdsourcing ideas, compared to **only 40% of respondents** who ranked themselves as “not very effective” or “not at all effective”



56% of B2B marketers are directly responsible for revenue at their organization

Lead generation and revenue were ranked as the top two marketing priorities, yet **only 41% of B2B marketers consider their organization to be truly data-driven**



85% of B2B marketers agree that consistency across content, teams, and channels is the backbone of an effective customer experience

75% of B2B marketers take a buyer-centric approach to content



92% of top performers have a shared editorial calendar for planning marketing initiatives, compared to **11% of respondents** who are “not at all effective”

56% of B2B marketers don’t feel like they have visibility into initiatives, timelines, and deliverables across teams



Top performers are **over 3X more likely** to have visibility into initiatives, timelines, and deliverables across teams





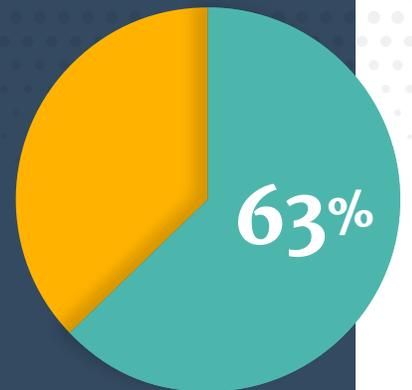
The State of B2B

Customer Experience



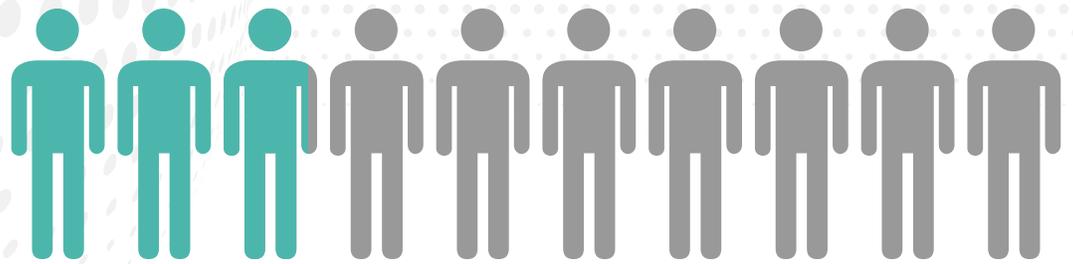


63% of top performers hold marketing responsible for managing the overall customer experience



B2B marketers understand the impending significance of delivering consistent customer experiences, and the majority of marketers are rising to the occasion. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of top performers hold marketing responsible for managing the overall customer experience.

However, many feel that customer experience is a company-wide effort. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents indicate that everyone is responsible for managing customer experience. This makes sense, as nearly every function of a business interacts with customers in some way.



29% of respondents
indicate that everyone within an
organization is somewhat responsible
for managing customer experience

The cross-functional nature of customer experience forces marketing organizations to rethink how they work and collaborate across teams and departments.

Managing the End-to-End Customer Experience

It comes as no surprise that marketing is the forerunner for managing the end-to-end customer experience. Since the dawn of digital disruption, marketers have reinvented how to market, picking up new skills, tools, and technologies along the way.

As the owners of digital channels and the content that fuels these channels, marketers already have an acute awareness of buyer preferences. In assuming responsibility over the customer experience, the greatest challenge marketers face is managing consistency in messaging across their entire organization, including hand-offs, as customer interactions move from marketing to sales to success and support teams.

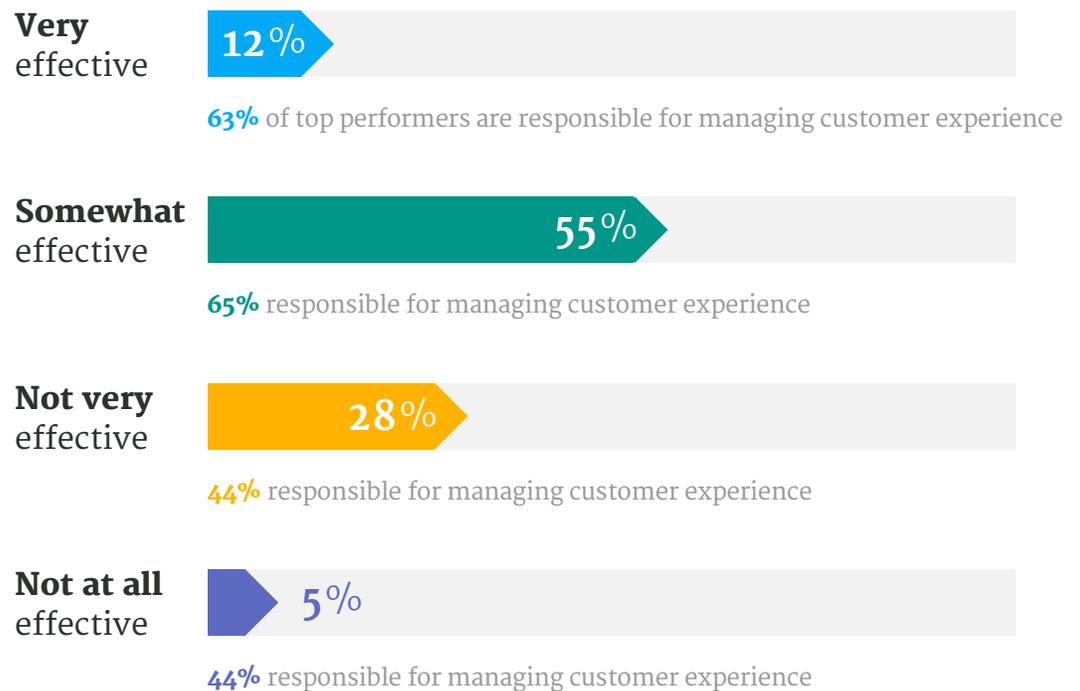
Is your marketing organization responsible for managing the customer experience?



Marketing-Driven Customer Experiences Are More Effective

Only a small margin of B2B marketers rank themselves “very effective” at delivering consistent customer experiences, but the majority of “very effective” and “somewhat effective” marketers are responsible for managing the end-to-end experience.

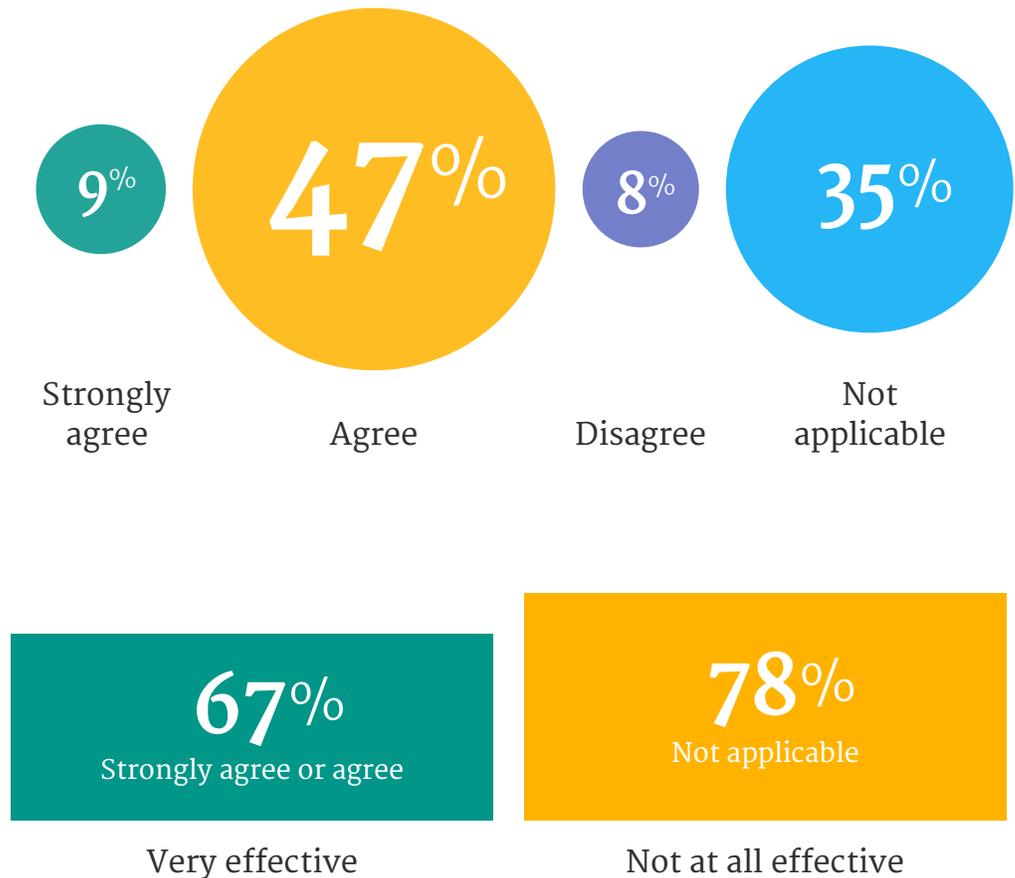
How effective is your marketing organization at delivering a consistent customer experience?

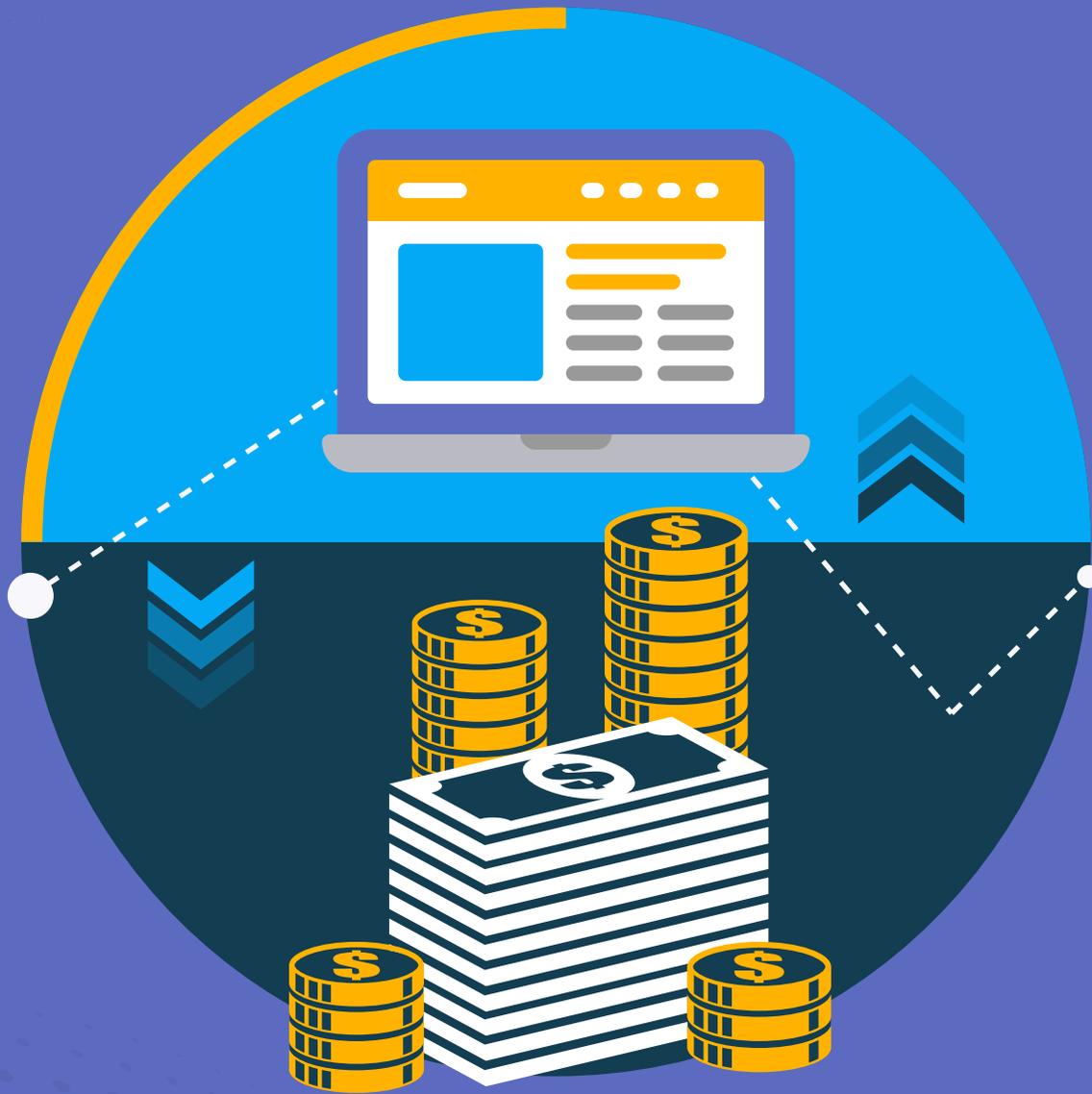


Furthermore, 67% of top-performers agree that marketing-driven CX has improved their lead quality.

What's even more telling is that 78% of respondents who rank themselves as "not at all effective" are also not responsible for managing customer experience. These insights tell us that when marketing teams are empowered to take the reins on CX, they are much more likely to deliver it effectively.

Since adopting marketing-driven customer experience, lead quality has increased.





The Key to Success:

Connect Content to Revenue





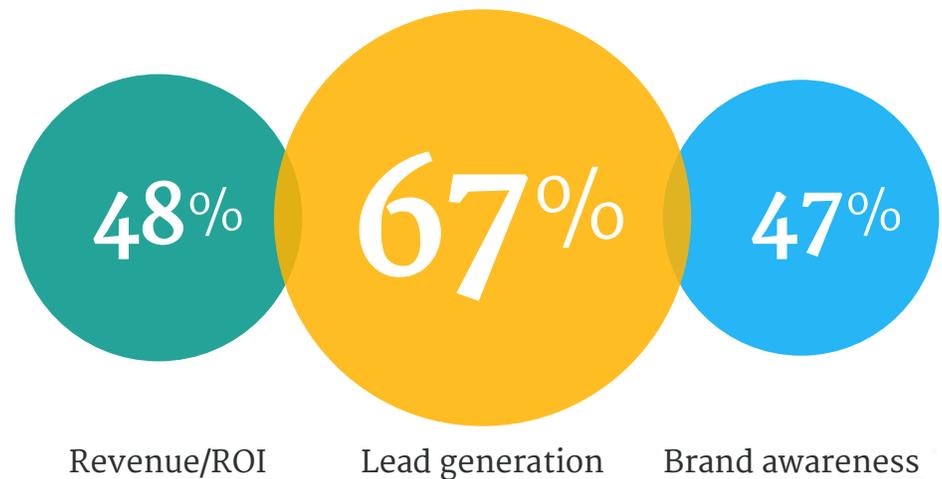
The Key to Success: Connect Content to Revenue

When it comes to delivering and optimizing great customer experiences, B2B marketers are focused on two things: content and revenue. **81% of survey respondents reported content marketing as a top investment in 2016.** Lead generation, revenue/ROI, and brand awareness ranked as the top three marketing priorities. This data shows marketers are thinking more strategically about the role of content and its impact on business growth.

Which marketing programs are you investing in this year?



What are your top three marketing priorities?



Consistency across Content Is Key

Content drives great customer experiences and executives agree—**82% of C-level survey respondents say that consistency across content, teams, and channels is the backbone of an effective customer experience.**

Consistency across content, teams, and channels is the backbone of an effective customer experience.



Key internal stakeholders agree that inconsistency across content and messaging has a negative impact on the customer experience



Consistency across content is the final milestone marketers should aim to achieve to successfully deliver an effective customer experience. But first, B2B organizations have a lot of work to do to overcome process inefficiencies and internal misalignment, the two biggest barriers to content consistency.

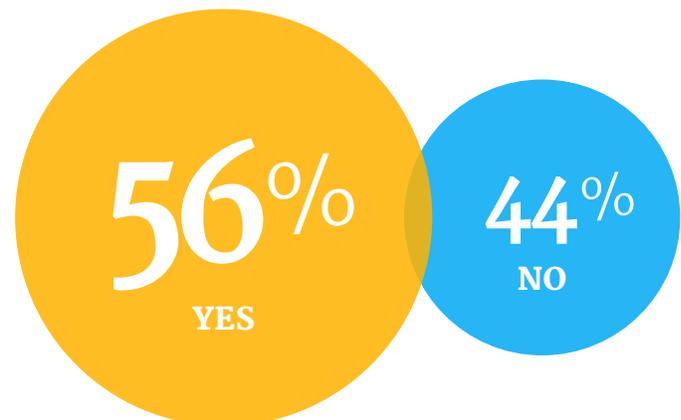
Revenue Is a Priority for B2B Marketers

With content ranked as the top investment, and lead generation and revenue/ROI as the top priorities, marketers understand that content serves the entire buyer's journey, and they are eager to know content's impact on revenue.

More than half of B2B businesses hold marketing accountable to revenue and with good reason—70% of marketers responsible for revenue at their organization met or exceeded their revenue goals.

Is marketing directly responsible for revenue at your organization?

70%
of marketers
responsible for
revenue met or
exceeded their
revenue goals

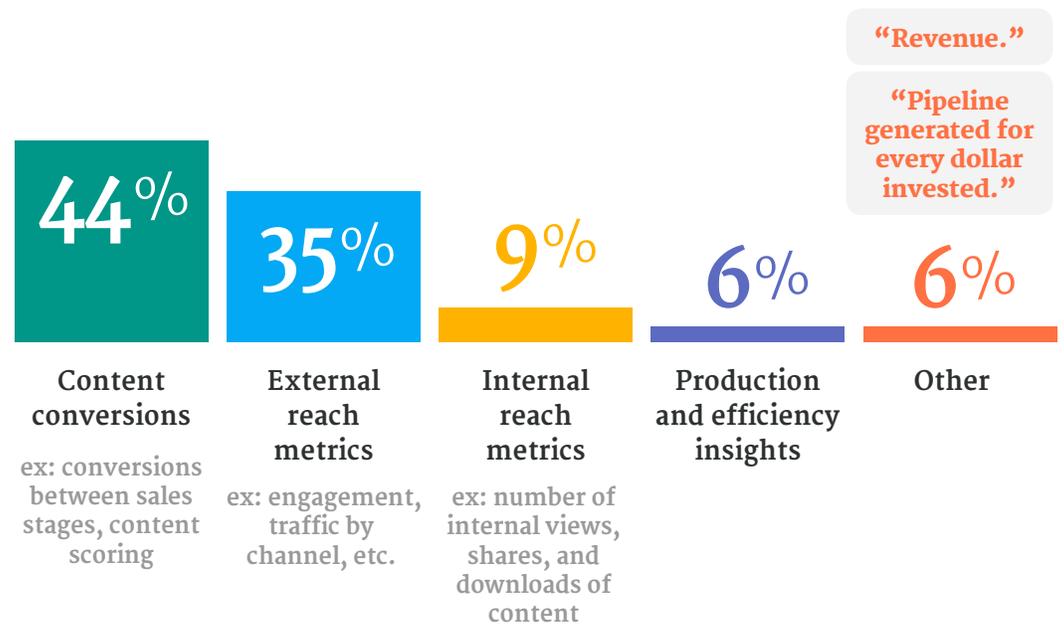


Interestingly, 19% of survey respondents that self-reported as directly responsible for revenue didn't have measurable goals in the last year. This nuance alludes to the fact that tracking and reporting the right marketing metrics is still a huge barrier that even revenue marketers and top performers haven't completely figured out.

Content Conversions Are the Most Important Metrics

Content conversions between sales stages are the most important metrics to measure for a complete performance review of the end-to-end customer experience. Marketing organizations that have the right infrastructure to accurately track content conversions at every stage of the buyer's journey have a clearer view of how content works and are better positioned to identify opportunities for optimization.

Which metric is most important to you?



Understanding how content impacts business metrics (i.e. revenue) and getting a clear picture of the content that drives results are critical for organizations aiming to deliver, measure, and optimize great customer experiences.



Overcoming Barriers:

People, Process, and Technology





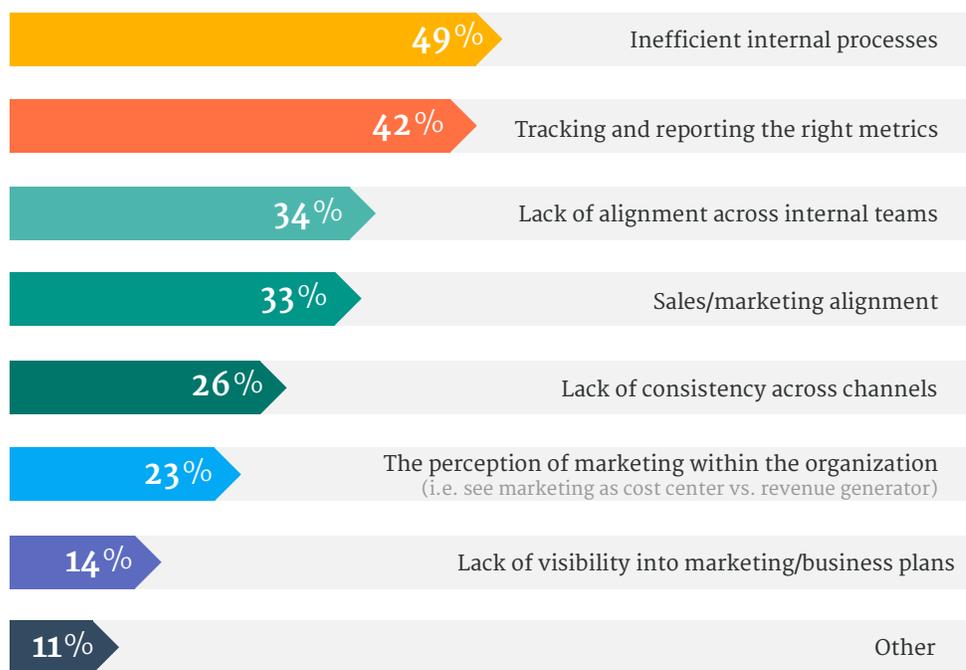
Overcoming Barriers: People, Process, and Technology

We've identified the elements of a successful customer experience strategy—marketing-driven, consistent across all content, and trackable—so let's take a closer look at the obstacles to success.

B2B marketers report inefficient internal processes, inadequate data insights, and lack of alignment across internal teams are the greatest barriers to delivering effective customer experiences.

Managing the B2B customer experience isn't easy. It requires a complete shift in thinking about the role of marketing within an organization. B2B marketers understand the needs of their customers and the strategies and tactics to deploy, but execution falls flat due to siloed teams, channels, and technologies.

What are your greatest barriers to success?



“Scaling our marketing process.”

“Lack of an integrated content management tool.”

Execution falls flat due to siloed teams, channels, and technologies



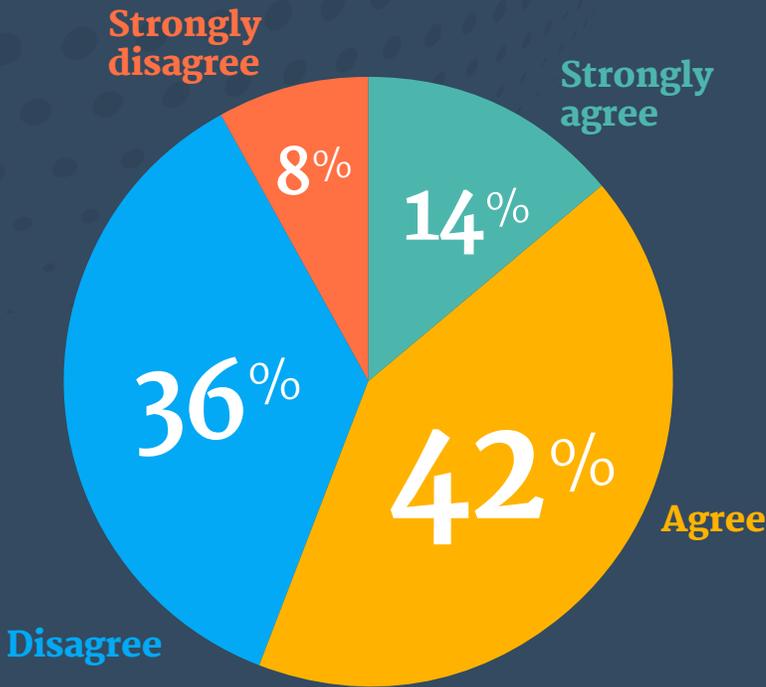
B2B Marketers Are Eager for Visibility and Alignment

Many B2B marketers still live in the content chaos stage of the [content maturity model](#). In this stage marketers struggle to execute a marketing strategy and an aligned customer experience due to siloed departments and missed hand-offs between teams.

Two of the three highest ranking barriers to success—inefficient internal processes and lack of alignment across teams—directly address the need for an updated system that facilitates cross-functional collaboration. Outdated, siloed organizational structures simply do not support effective customer experience strategies.

Top performers are more than 3X more likely to have visibility into initiatives, timelines, and deliverables across teams

We have visibility into initiatives, timelines, and deliverables across teams.



Top performers



Agree or strongly agree

Not at all effective



Agree or strongly agree

Some marketers have made calculated strides to attain greater visibility and alignment within their organization—75% of top performers report having visibility into initiatives, timelines, and deliverables across teams. These top performers are also 2X less reactive about content creation than respondents who self-report as “not effective.”

Visibility makes planning ahead not only possible but also efficient. Internal content consumers and creators can find and use content, senior-level marketers can see how campaigns are tracking toward completion, and teams can avoid working reactively or creating ad-hoc content.

Alignment across Teams

Once visibility is achieved, teams can plan cross-functionally to align their content, people, and initiatives to a unified strategy, shared business objectives, and revenue goals.

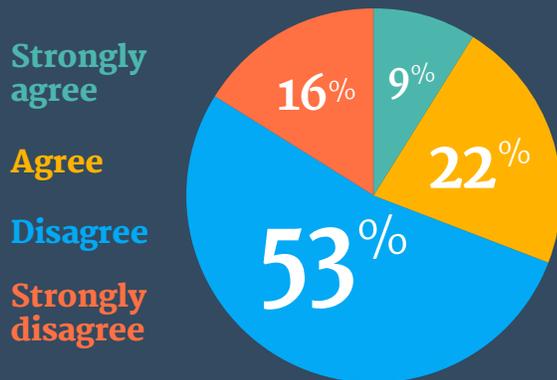
To deliver effective customer experiences, different teams managing content through various channels and technologies at each stage of the buyer's journey need to tell a consistent story:

“Customers are exposed to the content they are exposed to. They don't care what department created it and they don't care if sales and marketing are misaligned. They really are just frustrated because they are looking for information and not able to find it. When they find it, it's incongruent.”—Scott Abel, Global Content Strategist, [“How Content Creators Burn Money: An Interview with Strategist Scott Abel”](#) >

Marketing organizations that are strongly aligned with shared business objectives are 3X more likely to be effective at delivering consistent customer experiences

Marketing organizations that are strongly aligned with shared business objectives are 3X more likely to be effective at delivering consistent customer experiences, and 83% of top performers have a documented customer experience strategy.

The marketing organization is tightly aligned to shared business objectives.



Top performers



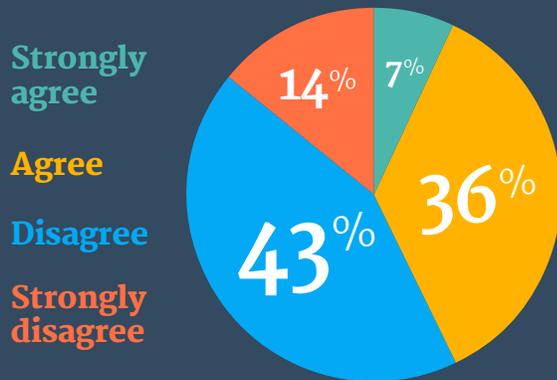
Agree or strongly agree

Not at all effective



Agree or strongly agree

We have a documented strategy in place for delivering a consistent customer experience.



Top performers



Agree or strongly agree

Not at all effective



Agree or strongly agree

Planning: Mission Critical for B2B Marketers

A documented strategy is critical to delivering a consistent customer experience—83% of top performers have a documented strategy, compared to 0% of those who rated themselves as “not at all effective.” And marketing experts agree:

“As you start adding in different product groups, regional offices, functional elements—basically, as the enterprise gets larger—the process becomes more complex...Those that are actually creating a written strategic document for the management of their content are those that are succeeding with it. Maybe that sounds like a ‘duh.’ It’s such a simple thing, but so important. It makes it a real function of the business.”—Robert Rose, Content Marketing Institute,

[Planning Problems May Be Where Your Content Crumbles: An Interview with CMI’s Robert Rose”](#) >

Developing a customer experience strategy is a concerted effort. The only way to deliver a great customer experience is to strategize around the perspective of the customer as they move from one touch point to the next. However, each stage of the buyer’s journey is likely managed and tracked by different teams, and even different technologies.

In order to plan an effective strategy, B2B organizations need to enable internal stakeholders to align, track, and collaborate on content in a centralized location.

Plan, Track, and Collaborate on Content All in One Place

Kapost B2B marketing platform is the only solution that allows you to align, execute, distribute, and optimize your entire B2B customer experience.



[Learn More](#)

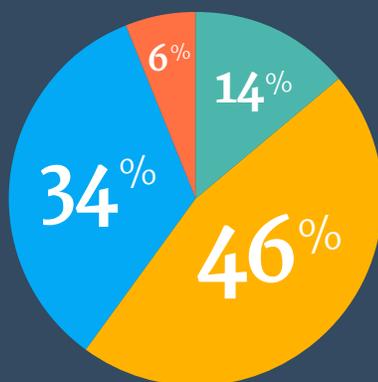
We have an established feedback loop around shared objectives and data exchange.

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree



Top performers



Agree or strongly agree

Not at all effective



Agree or strongly agree

When we dig deeper into the difference between top performers and all respondents, clear patterns emerge.

Only 57% of total respondents have a shared editorial calendar for planning marketing initiatives, compared to 92% of top performers. A shared editorial calendar is critical to align internal teams around marketing content, campaigns, and initiatives.

Do you have a shared editorial calendar for planning marketing initiatives?



Do you have a process for crowdsourcing ideas across your organization?





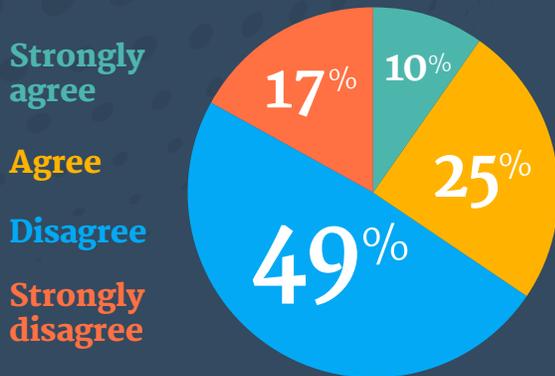
More Efficient Processes for Collaborative Execution

The number one roadblock to delivering consistent and effective customer experiences is a lack of internal processes for managing content across the content life cycle.

Marketers who ranked themselves as “not effective” have neither a unified strategy nor clear business objectives. Because of this lack of planning and foresight, execution of content falls short. 77% of “not effective” marketers feel reactive to immediate needs, leading to ad hoc content creation—more than half reported that they often experience missed hand-offs between internal teams leading to delays in execution.

Top performers are nearly 2X less likely to feel reactive and ad hoc about content creation

We are often reactive to immediate needs, leading to ad hoc content creation and duplicative efforts.



Top performers



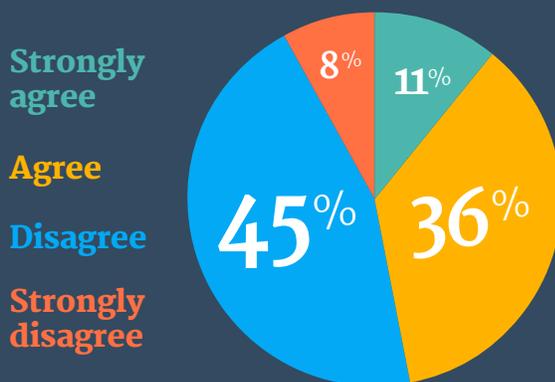
Agree or strongly agree

Not at all effective



Agree or strongly agree

There are often missed hand-offs between internal teams that lead to delays in execution.



Top performers



Agree or strongly agree

Not at all effective



Agree or strongly agree

A Centralized, Single Source of Content

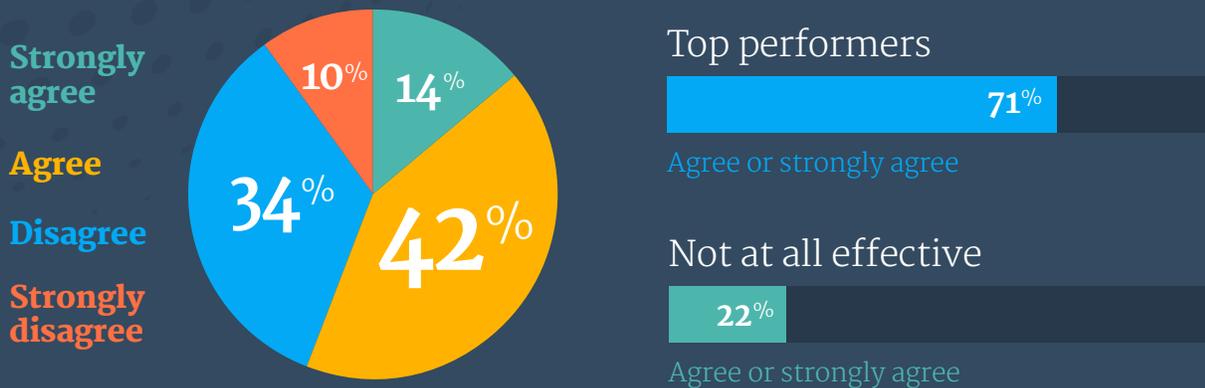
Strategic distribution of content shapes the customer experience.

“Quite often, B2B marketers think, “Okay I have these five or six channels and I need to put content in them,” and they go throw content out there. But they don’t connect any of the dots, so they don’t know if they are engaging people correctly. They’re not giving anybody anything to do to take action. So they’re not creating any intent or commitment.

Part of the problem is they don’t really know what it means when they encounter a buyer in a particular channel who engages with a piece of content. They haven’t created the strategy. So, they don’t know that a particular piece of content is answering a question a buyer might have when they’re at a specific stage in the buying process.”—Ardath Albee, [“You Think You’re Talking To? An Interview with Strategist Ardath Albee”](#) >

Each social post, email, or sales pitch is part of a larger story that guides buyers to an end solution. To ensure consistency in content as it is distributed across multiple channels, a centralized content hub is essential—83% of [top performers use a content hub](#) where all stakeholders can access the most relevant and up-to-date content.

Relevant, up-to-date content is easy for internal teams to find, access, and use.



Do you have a content hub where all stakeholders can access the most relevant and up-to-date content?





Inadequate Data Insights Cripple Performance Analysis

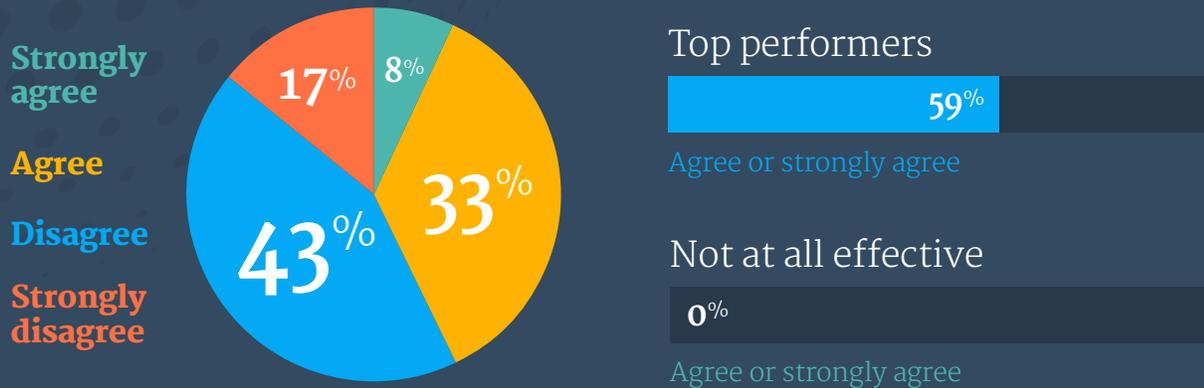
Effectively measuring the end-to-end customer experience continues to elude even the savviest marketers. Only 59% of top performers feel their marketing team is truly data-driven. Unsurprisingly, 0% of those who rate themselves as “not effective” also self-report as “data-driven.”

The second greatest barrier to success is tracking and reporting the right metrics, an area where marketers can improve across the board. The majority of B2B marketers do not have a documented buyer’s journey to identify gaps in content for specific stages or personas. Without this insight, it’s nearly impossible to optimize content at each stage or accurately measure conversions.

Michael Brenner

“The ROI of most marketing investments is hard to track, but it’s not impossible.” ➤

We are a truly data-driven marketing team, focusing resources on the most effective content, channels, and initiatives across the customer experience.



Do you have a documented buyer's journey, allowing you to identify gaps in content targeted at specific stages?



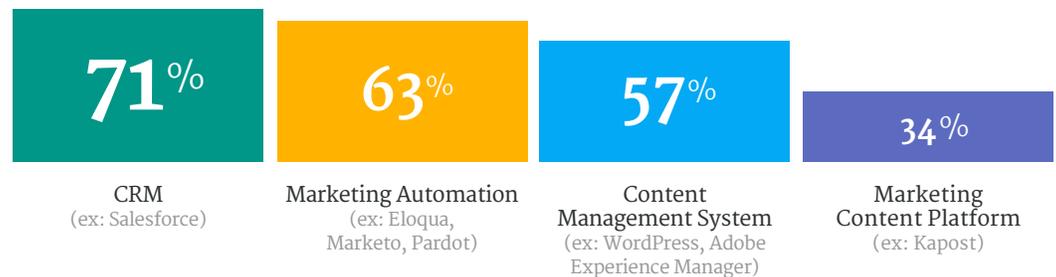
Do you have a process for identifying content gaps by persona?



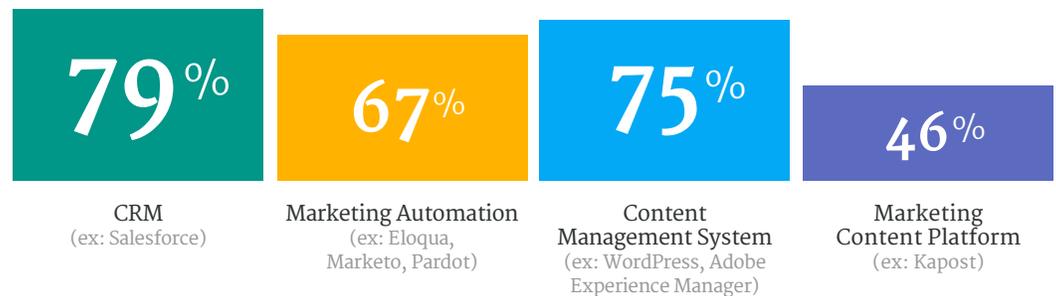
Investing in the Right Marketing Technology

By now, the majority of B2B marketers know they need technology to carry out marketing initiatives. While a CRM, marketing automation, and CMS are widely used across the board, top performers are increasingly adding a marketing content platform into their technology stacks to integrate tools, content, channels, and data into one place.

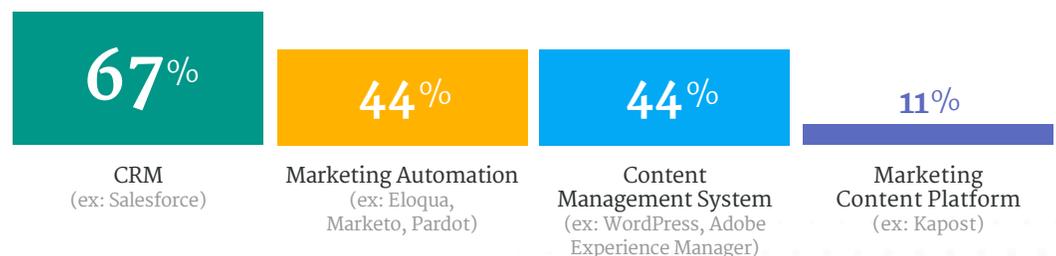
In 2016, we have already invested, or are planning to invest, in the following technologies:



Top performers



Not at all effective



Top Performers Use Kapost

Kapost customers are 2X more likely to rate themselves as “very effective” at delivering consistent customer experiences than non-Kapost users.

81% of B2B marketers who use Kapost ranked themselves as very effective or somewhat effective at delivering a consistent customer experience and are tightly aligned to shared business objectives.

Ready to Deliver a Best-in-Class B2B Customer Experience?

Kapost Suite offers our complete stack of features to manage the strategy, execution, distribution, and optimization of your B2B marketing content. Only Kapost ties your B2B content directly to revenue.



Explore Inside
Kapost



Get a Live
Demo

“Kapost is the one stop shop that brings all aspects of marketing together. I can’t imagine being a marketer, going forward, without Kapost!”

Global Digital Lead, FTSE Global