



HubSpot and Smart Insights  
**DRIVING CONTENT  
MARKETING SUCCESS**



The European Edition



## About the Authors



### Dave Chaffey

Dr. Dave Chaffey is CEO and Co-Founder of Smart Insights, a practical marketing advice site that helps businesses improve their marketing using a planned approach based on creating strategies, 90 day plans, and optimisation.

Dave is the author of five bestselling books on Ecommerce including 'Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice', and 'Emarketing Excellence'. He has been recognised as one of the fifty marketing 'gurus' worldwide who have shaped the future of Marketing by the UK's Chartered Institute of Marketers.

@DaveChaffey

### Kieran Flanagan



Kieran Flanagan is Marketing Director (EMEA) at HubSpot, where he leads the company's marketing strategy in EMEA. Kieran is an experienced inbound marketer, having previously worked for large brands in both B2C and B2B across EMEA. He has helped create inbound marketing campaigns that have had a global impact, launching in countries like the UK, Germany, France and Japan.

@searchbrat

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## Executive Summary

### Driving Content Marketing Success - European Edition

The popularity of content marketing has grown dramatically over the last few years as more and more companies shift budget away from traditional paid advertising towards inbound marketing. Content is at the core of a successful inbound funnel. It helps to not only attract people to a website, but also to convert them into happy successful customers. In our State of Inbound Marketing report for Europe we found that 58% of companies had adopted an inbound strategy, with 42% planning to increase spend on inbound. These stats highlight the changes that are happening in marketing right now and why content is playing such a key role in today's marketing strategy. You can find out more about [inbound marketing here](#).



Content marketing will remain a key focus for marketers seeking to increase their traffic, leads, and sales. In a recent Smart Insights poll, for the second year running, content marketing was rated the top digital marketing technique thought by marketers to give the most commercial benefits. 30% rated content marketing as the best investment ahead of mobile marketing, Big Data, search personalisation, CRO and other digital marketing techniques.

To find out what drives success, we asked over 2,600 marketers across Europe, from different types of businesses about their approaches to content marketing. We explored not only the techniques they have found work best for content creation and distribution, but also how to manage the process, which is less commonly considered. In our research we uncovered a number of insights such as that 56% of European marketers are doing content marketing with no proper content plan, and measuring the ROI of content marketing continues to be a big challenge for marketers.

We hope you enjoy the report and it provides insights that help you to be more successful with content marketing.

Kieran Flanagan

Marketing Director (EMEA at [HubSpot](#))

Dave Chaffey

CEO and Publisher [SmartInsights.com](#)

## About HubSpot

HubSpot is the world's #1 marketing software platform. We help more than 10,000 companies in 56 countries attract leads and convert them into customers. A pioneer in inbound marketing, HubSpot aims to help its customers make marketing that people actually love. ([Learn more about HubSpot software and Inbound Marketing.](#))

## About Smart Insights

Smart Insights helps experts in over fifty countries plan, manage and optimise their commercial goals through practical marketing resources.

Our templates, guides and courses are based on our strategic RACE Planning approach where marketing success demands:

**Plans:** A planned approach based on clear digital strategies

**Insight:** Focus on using digital analytics and customer insight to optimise results

**Optimisation:** Continuous optimisation of inbound marketing techniques



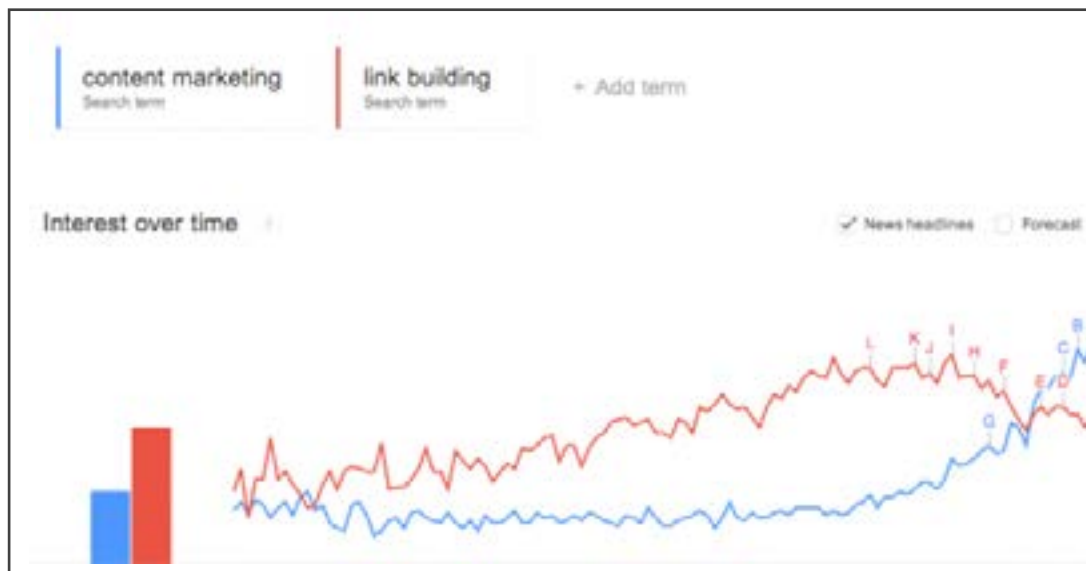
[Complete our free digital marketing healthcheck](#)

[View most popular Smart Insights resources](#)

## The Popularity of Content Marketing

The growth in content marketing this year has continued to gather pace. There is no doubt this has been influenced by the changes Google has made to their algorithm; [Panda](#), [Penguin](#), and [Hummingbird](#) have all helped to shine the spotlight firmly on the importance of content.

Looking at Google Trends you'll see a dramatic decrease in the interest of link building in favour of content marketing as a search term. A lot of SEO agencies have wisely pivoted their business model in 2013 away from link building and towards content.



Of course, the reasons for doing content marketing stretch a lot further than just acquiring links. Content helps companies generate traffic, leads, and sales. But this is just one chart that highlights how popular content marketing is becoming.

The first thing we wanted to know was how companies in Europe were embracing content marketing.



## How has your organisation embraced content marketing?

### None-limited use

We make little use of content marketing and there is little senior management support.

### Basic use of content marketing

We make some investment in content marketing, but senior management doesn't support further investments.

### Inconsistent

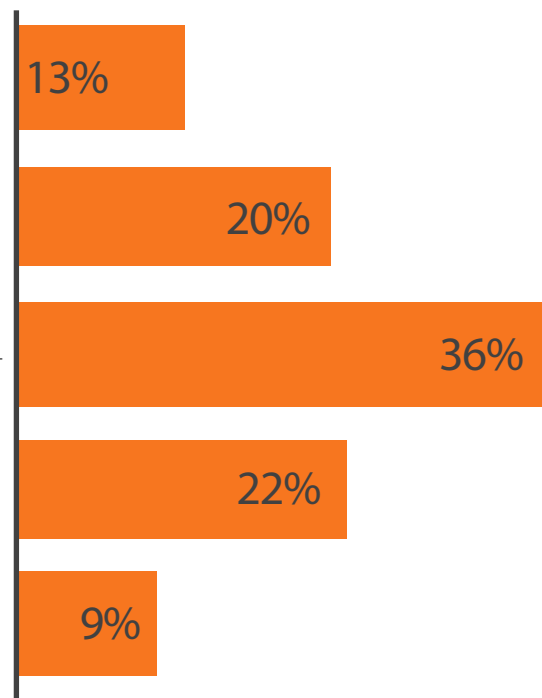
We invest sufficiently in some areas and have good capabilities with management support, but other areas aren't committed to or integrated sufficiently.

### Advanced

We invest in content marketing as needed with management support, but could optimise and integrate further.

### Optimised.

We invest in content as needed, have well-developed capabilities, and are optimising them further.



From the responses we can see that marketers are struggling with content adoption within their companies. 71% of companies' adoption of content marketing has been inconsistent or worse. Only a small percentage (9%) felt that they had their content strategy optimised. Even if we add in those who felt their company had embraced content at a basic level, that's only 29% of marketers who feel their company's use of content is basic or better.

So why is that number so low? A lot of the problems marketers have are not just around getting the initial investment to make their content marketing dreams come true, but sustaining that initial support when results take time. It's important to set the right expectations when pitching for your initial investment. Senior management teams are probably used to the timeframes of success they get from paid campaigns – or even the quick wins they had from SEO before the various Google updates of the past year. The results from content take a little longer, plus everything you do with content won't necessarily be successful. Keeping that support as marketers figure out how to make content work for their company is the difference between staying at that inconsistent level and moving towards a more optimised strategy.



The greatest challenge for content marketing is often in the Boardroom. The fear of sharing too much knowledge is a threat to content creation.

I recommend using Google Analytics or your analytics tool to show the volume of traffic completing an action, driven from your content sources. Gather an evidence base to convince the senior team.

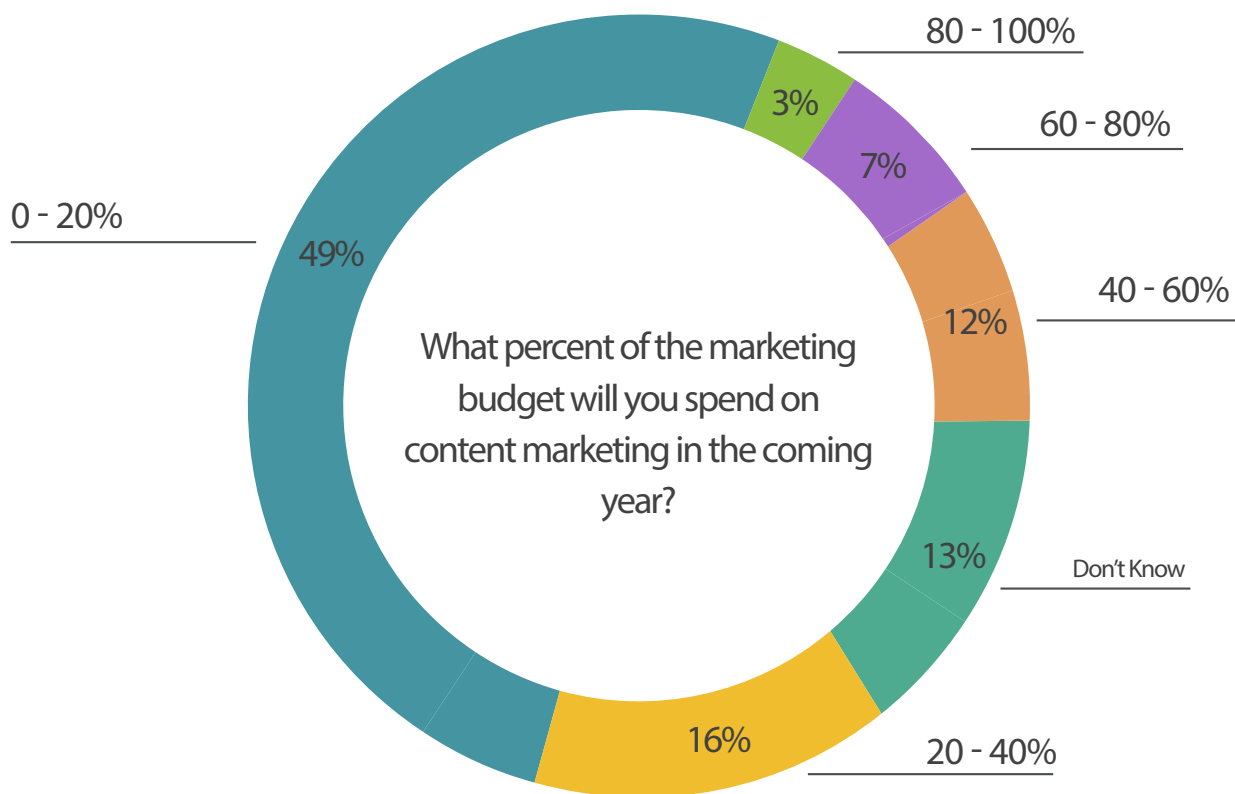


**Annmarie Hanlon**

Evonomie, @AnnmarieHanlon

Following on from that, we wanted to know how marketers were planning to improve on those inconsistencies. We asked our marketers how much of their marketing budgets will be dedicated to content in the coming year. The majority of marketers are still only spending a small portion of their budget on content marketing. 49% of respondents are spending between 0-20% of their budget on content marketing this year.

### How Much are Marketers Investing in Content Marketing?



Responses that were N/A have been removed from this chart

Marketers are planning on using their budget to bring content creation in-house, with 55% planning to increase their internal headcount. This is substantially higher than the numbers of marketers who are planning to increase spend on external content creation (40%).



Content marketing runs like a thread through a connected and integrated marketing approach. Taking into account that content marketing is an umbrella term and that the awareness is not as high in Europe as it is in the U.S, it's not surprising that content marketing budgets are low.

However, it is also related to a lack of an integrated and customer-centric view in which content intervenes at multiple levels.



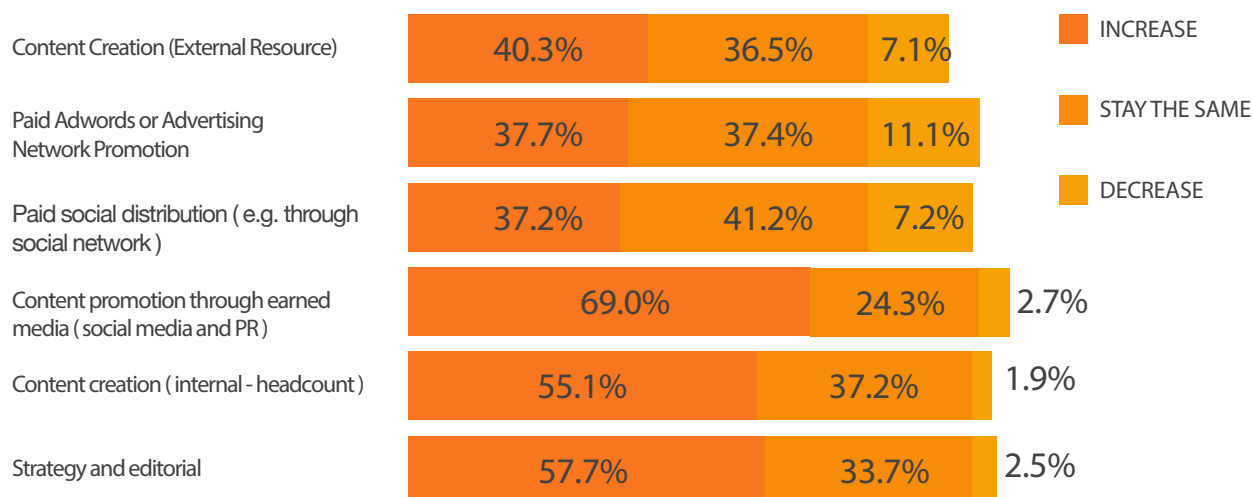
J-P De Clerck

i-SCOOP, @conversionation

## Key Content Marketing Activities Favoured by Marketers

Other interesting points are the numbers of marketers planning to increase spend on paid AdWords and paid social distribution. Our expectation would be that paid social distribution would be increasing at a higher rate, but this isn't the case. In our experience, paid social distribution is a lot more effective for seeding content. The data suggests European marketers still haven't started to move spend from traditional platforms like AdWords into social for content marketing purposes.

How will your investment in these content marketing activities changes in the coming year?



Responses that were N/A have been removed from this chart

Lastly, we are impressed by the large number of marketers who are going to increase spend in creating their own inbound machine to promote their content. 69% of respondents said they were going to increase their spend on content promotion through earned media. This means a lot more resources and budget are being spent by companies in creating an audience for their content through organic channels (search, website, social, PR etc).

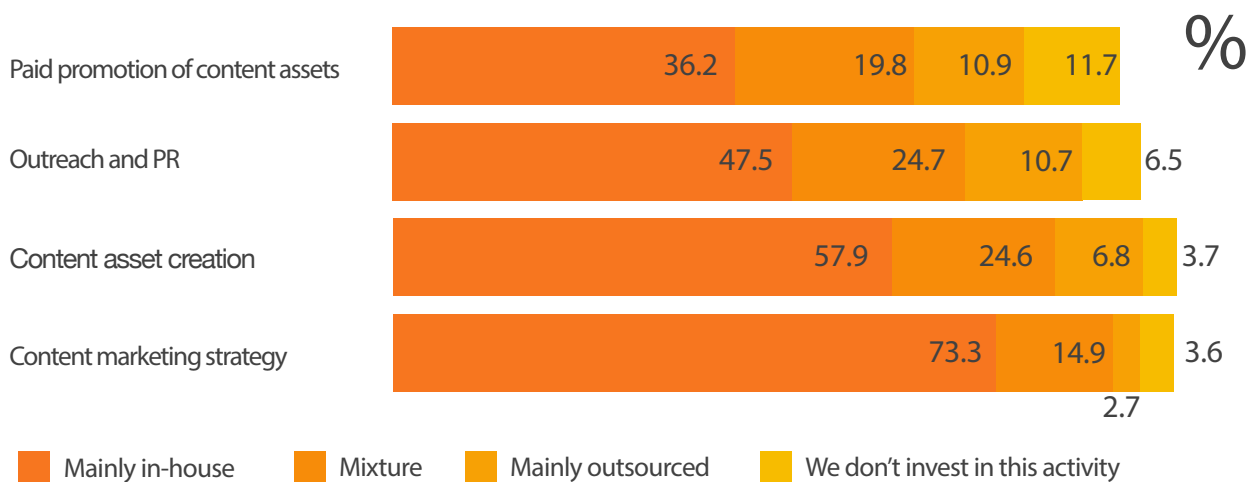
Next, we wanted to know more about how marketers were leveraging both internal and external resources to help with their content marketing efforts.

## Approaches to Resourcing Content Marketing

The majority of marketers are using internal resources to create their content marketing strategy and assets. The skew towards in-house resources could reflect the growing strategic importance of content. Successful content is created with both the audience and brand in mind.

An internal content team can understand each of these elements a lot better than someone who is external. However, with so many companies use of content being inconsistent or worse, leveraging external specialist skills around content strategy, creation, and distribution can help to make an internal content team more successful in the long term.

### How do you resource these Content Marketing activities?



Responses that were N/A have been removed from this chart



When developing an internal resource, success depends on whether the company can attract, motivate, and retain an editorial team. There is a big question for brands about who they should trust to make the most of the content marketing opportunity.

Naturally, we would say that the best partner is an editorial expert who only 'does' content and whose primary concern is your brand and your audience, not theirs.



**Kevin Sutherland**  
Seven, @AgencySeven



## Key Takeaway #1 Using the Right Resources

The majority of marketers do not feel their company is using content effectively, but are still planning to increase their investment in a number of key areas. If you are going to succeed at content marketing, hiring the right people both internally and externally is critical. To help you with both of these you can download:

[How to find and hire the perfect Inbound Marketer](#)

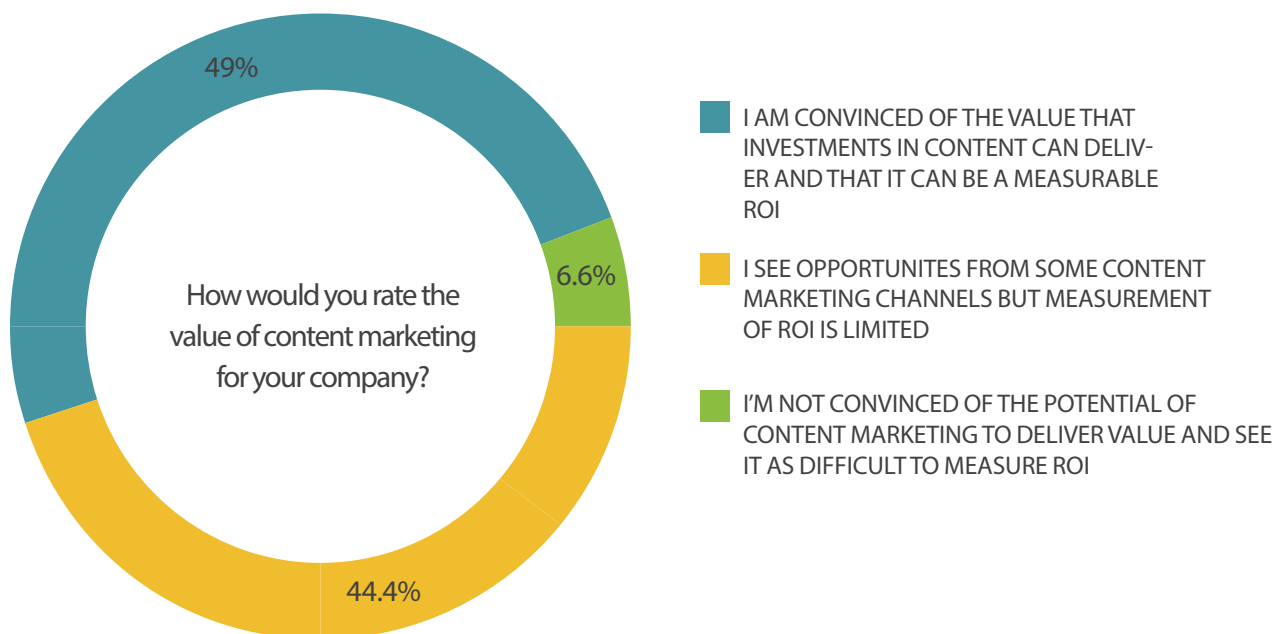
[The Ultimate \[Printable\] Marketing Agency Report Card](#)

[Digital Marketing careers article \[Smart Insights\]](#)



## Making Content Marketing More Effective

The next part of our survey looked into how effective content marketing was for marketers in Europe.



We asked our marketers how valuable content marketing was for their organisations, and found that almost half of respondents were already getting a return on their investment.

### Marketers See the Value in Content Marketing, but Measurement of ROI is Challenging

Very few marketers are not convinced by the potential of content marketing (6.6%), but a large percentage of marketers are struggling to put a value on content as they can't measure the ROI of it (44%). This inability to measure the ROI of content is going to be an issue for marketers who want to make content a more consistent part of their strategy. This is evident in our first section where most companies' use of content was inconsistent at best.

There are many variables to content marketing that define whether or not you



Those organisations that develop content marketing within a measurement focused strategy have the greatest chance of achieving their desired business objectives. An ad-hoc and scattered approach to content marketing will become increasingly unlikely to work as the market matures.



Daniel Rowles

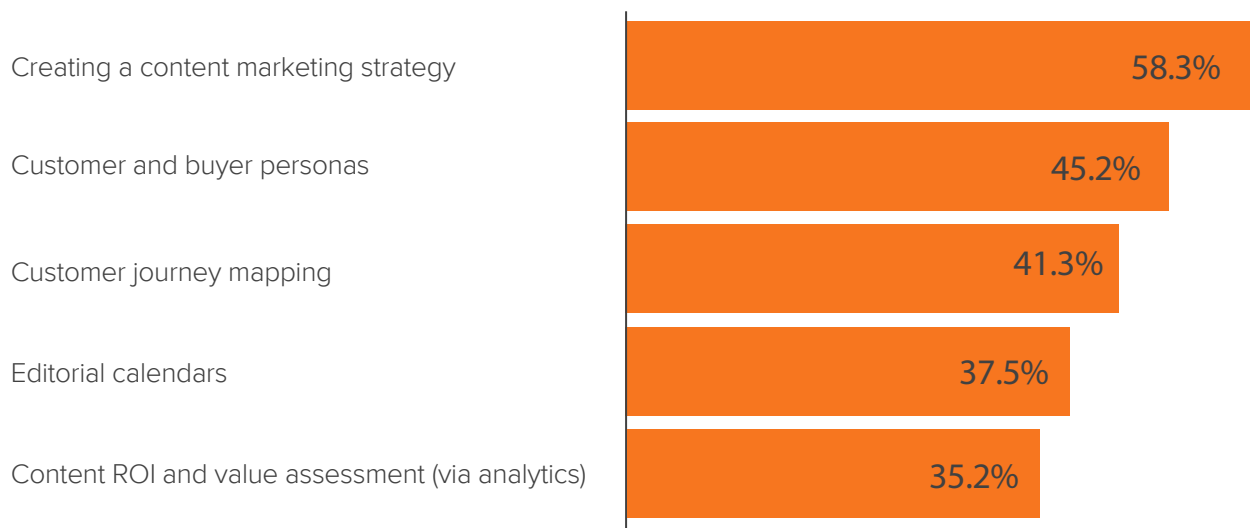
Target Internet, @DanielRowles

will see success with it. In order to get the balance right, it is essential to have a solid plan and strategy in place. Creating a content marketing strategy is a clear winner when looking at what content marketing techniques marketers have found to be effective in their experience. The next most effective is properly measuring the ROI of your content. Both of these techniques are a critical part of being successful with content.

### The Most Effective Content Marketing Techniques

It seems there is a lot of potential for marketers to make better use of planning as part of their content marketing efforts. 56% of marketers are doing content without what they feel is a proper plan.

How would you rate the effectiveness of these content marketing techniques?





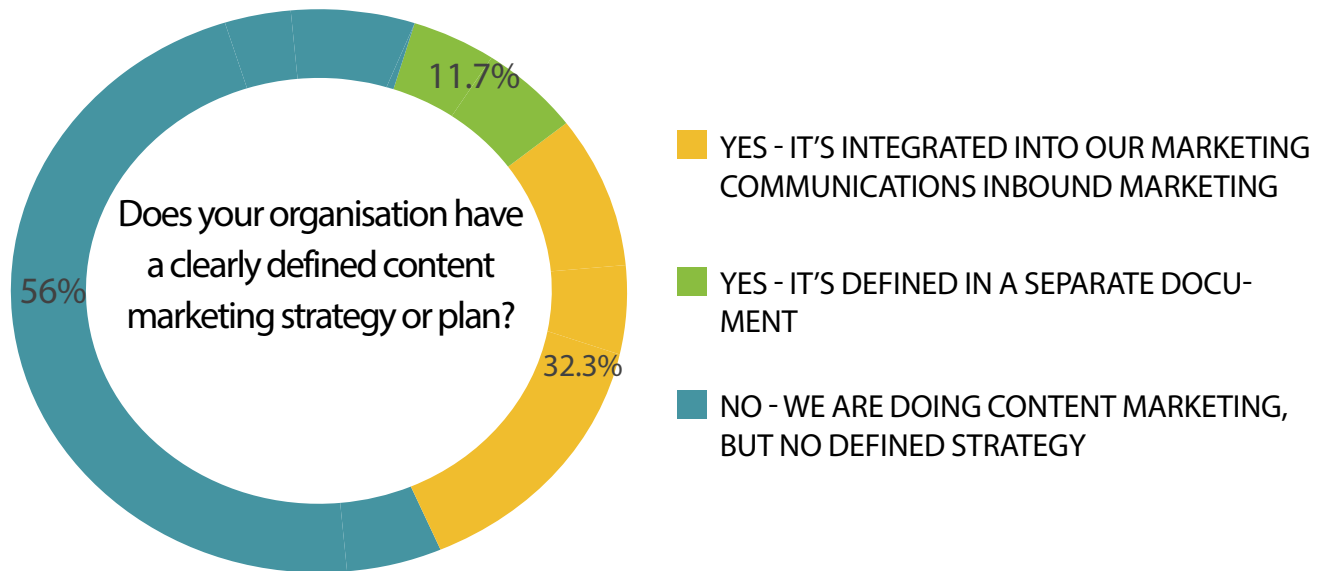
Every facet of successful content marketing has its own blueprint. The blueprint for evaluating content marketing ROI is no exception, but it remains a holy grail for most marketers.

My advice to marketers struggling with implementing successful inbound content marketing is simple: Start planning, and stop feeling that you've got to get your next piece out.



Stephen Bateman  
Concentric Dots, @ConcentricDots

### Companies with Marketing Plans are Still in the Minority

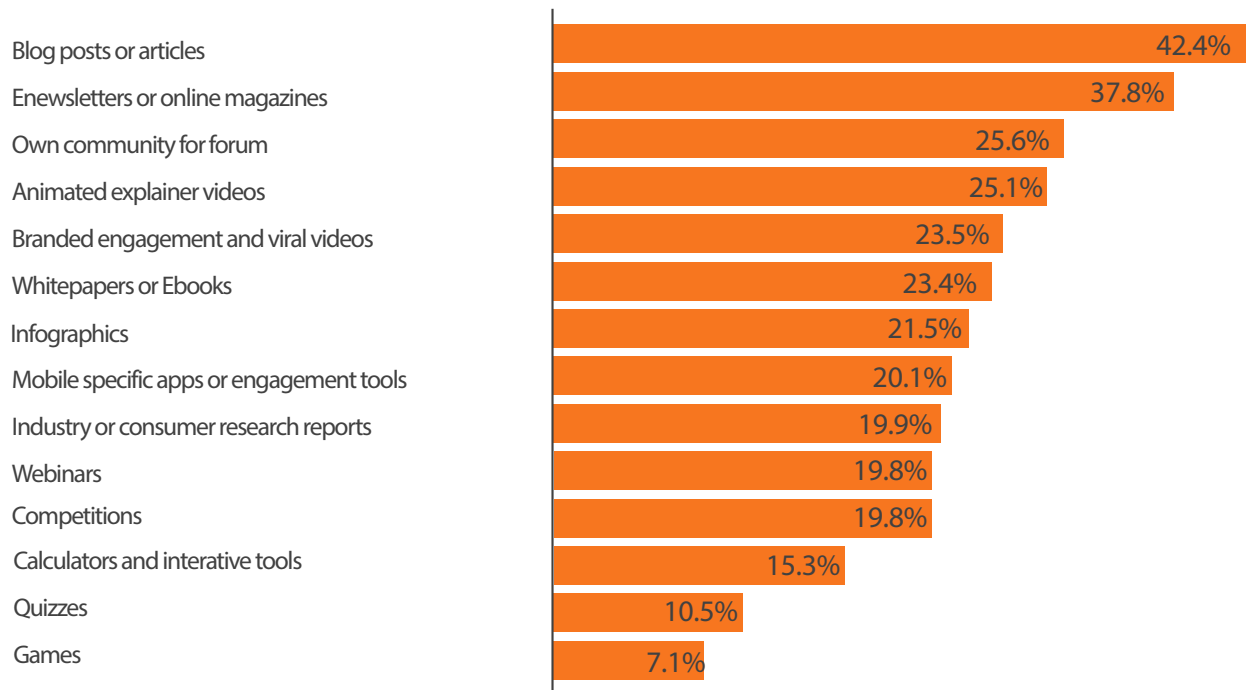


This again could be a contributing factor to those numbers we saw in the first section. Without proper planning of content, it's difficult to prove the ROI and move towards an optimised strategy.

When we looked at what types of content were generating leads and customers for marketers, blogs and articles were the clear winner (42%). After this, 38% have generated leads and customers through eNewsletters and online magazines. This just goes to show that you shouldn't confine your thinking around content to only a few different types of formats. You should always test what topics and formats work best for your audience.

## Which Content Formats Work Best?

How would you rate content marketing assets by the volume of leads or sales generated?



Responses that were N/A have been removed from this chart



Blogging is the core of any content marketing program – but it’s often not the thing that generates leads directly. It tends to be higher in the funnel, leading folks towards content that is more likely to generate a lead. Marketing automation helps you build an attribution model that will show the value of a blog even if it’s not the number one lead generator.

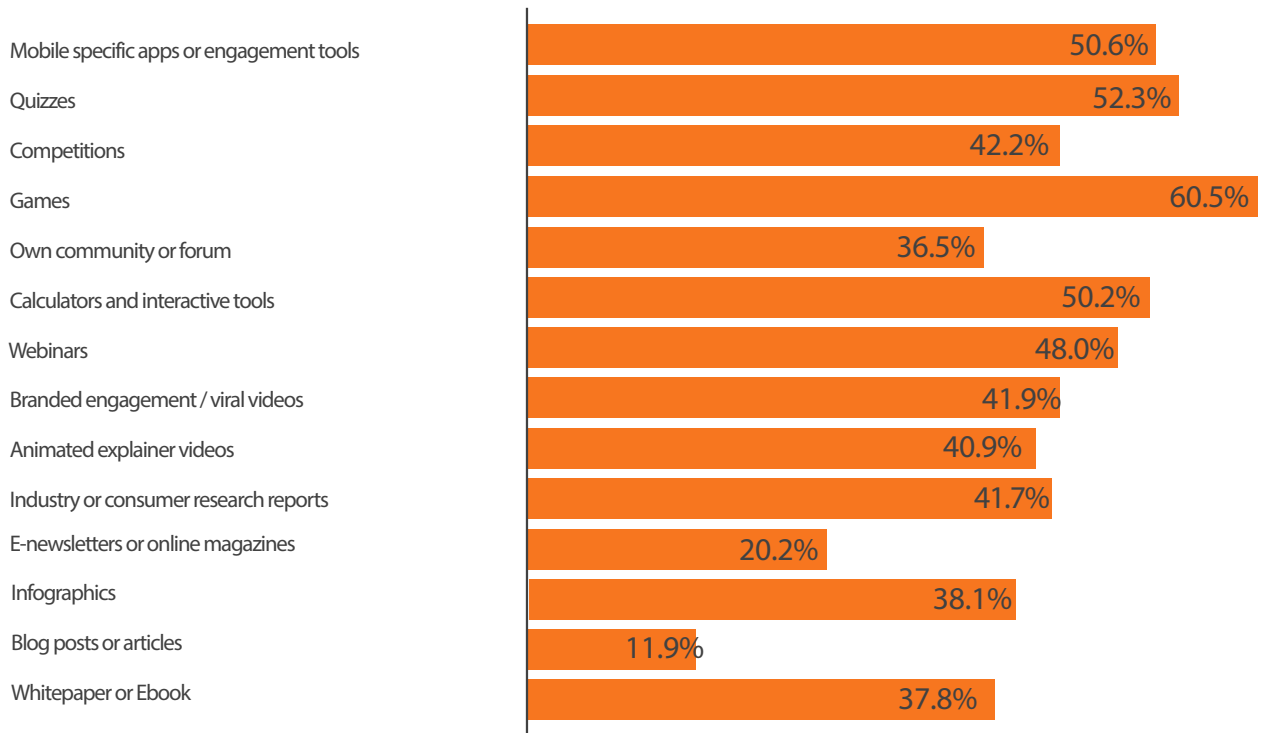


Doug Kessler

Velocity Partners, @DougKessler

## Some Content Formats are still Under-used

People who answered "Don't use" or "Not relevant"



It's extremely important to think outside of the content formats everyone else is doing. As the number of companies investing in content continues to grow, it's going to become even more challenging to stand out from the crowd. Understanding how you can leverage all types of content for your audience will give you a unique advantage over your competitors.





## Key Takeaway #2: Optimise a range of content formats

Looking at the data it would seem European marketers know how important it is to have a content strategy as part of their process, but a large percentage still don't implement one. It also looks as if marketers simply aren't trying out different content formats for their audience.

Although they are having success with formats like blogs, articles and eNewsletters, there is a reluctance to try new things. To help you create a content strategy for your business and experiment with new formats, you can download:

[A Practical Guide to Building a Killer Content Strategy](#)

[A Treasure Chest of Remarkable Content Ideas & a Guide to Create Your Own](#)

[Selecting the right content using the Content Marketing Matrix \[Smart Insights\]](#)

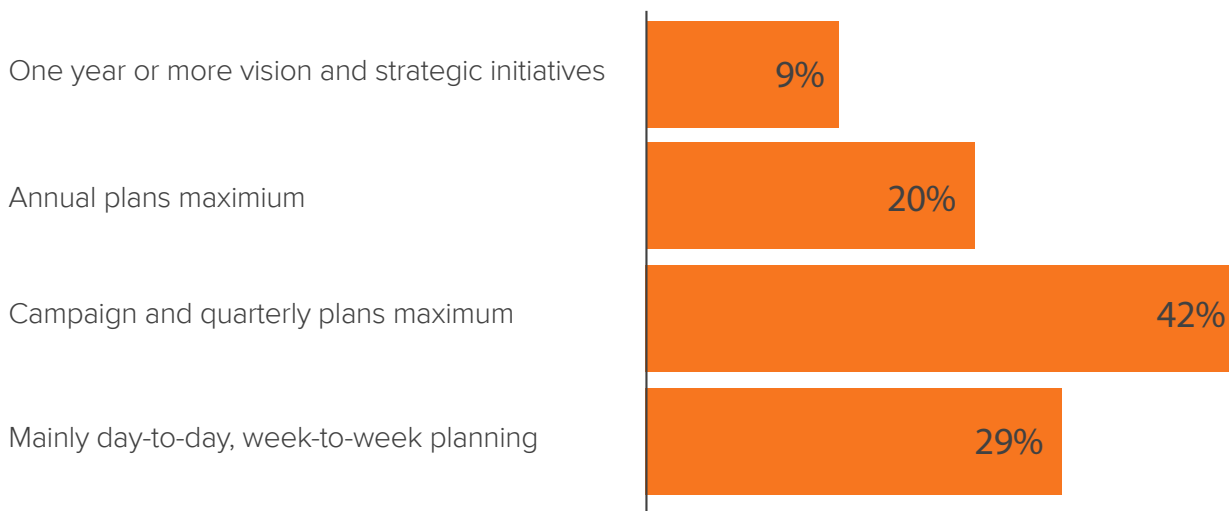
## Planning for Success with Content

To get content marketing right, there are multiple variables to be considered. We need to get really good at forward planning, execution, promotion, and measurement of the ROI of each campaign.

In our previous section we saw how marketers felt that having a content strategy/plan was the most effective technique in their experience. Our survey found that the majority of European marketers (42%) are planning their content on a campaign level or across the quarter. This isn't a bad number and would suggest that marketers are making some progress with implementing a content plan for their company. Although 56% of our respondents did say they didn't have any plan for their content marketing, these stats would suggest they are doing some form of planning, at least at a campaign level.

### Most companies don't have a long-term view of Content Creation.

How far into the future is content marketing planned?



Responses that were N/A have been removed from this chart



We perhaps need to move away from the online marketing silver bullet – the click – and reconsider the more subtle ‘view’ as the metric to measure. We just need to find the other meaningful metrics that the view can tie to.



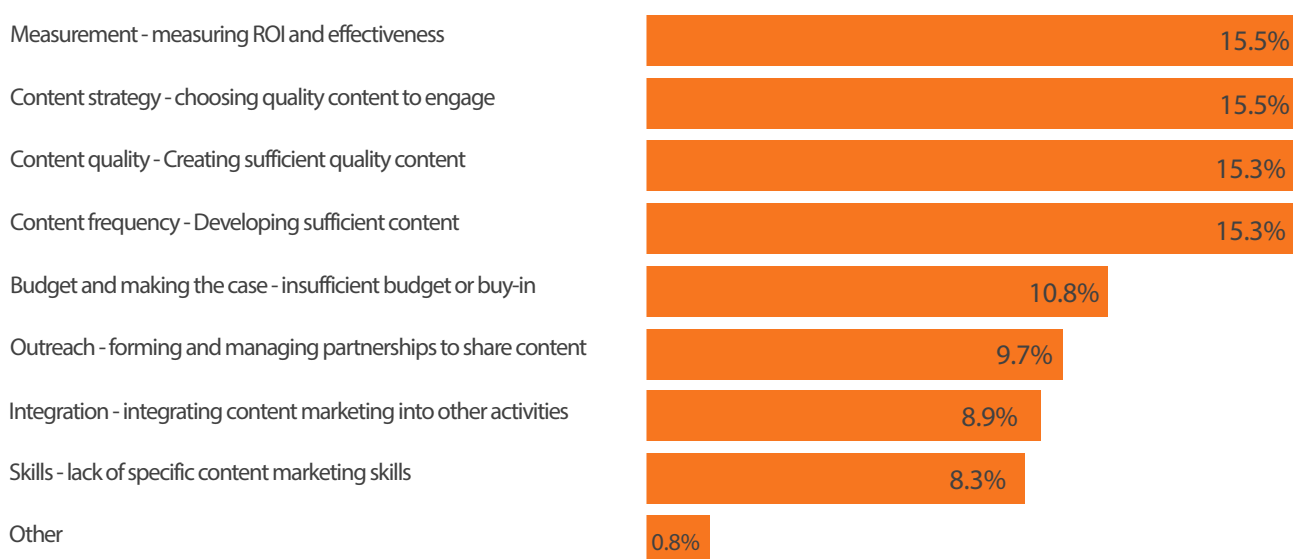
James Carson

Carson Content, @MrJamesCarson

Their top challenge is measuring the ROI of their content marketing efforts, but closely followed by creating enough content and creating quality content. All of these different challenges add to a company’s struggle to embrace content to a high level (as we saw in section one, most are inconsistent at best).

### Challenges Faced by Content Marketers

What are some of the major challenges with content marketing?



Responses that were N/A have been removed from this chart

In order to really reap the results of content marketing, we need to have well defined targets, understand who we are trying to attract to our site, a clear distribution plan to maximise our content’s reach, and a method for tying the results back to the initial goals set for the company. These are the areas marketers will need to focus on in the coming year if they want to join the 9% who feel their content marketing efforts are well optimised.



So who should you trust to develop your content strategy? Well, there is an analogy that is often cited when commentators talk about the essentials of developing content strategy for your brand. They compare the task and the necessary expertise to that of the editor of a magazine or newspaper; planning, creating and managing content across multiple pages or publications to ensure a rewarding, consistent and varied experience for the reader. So it is this editorial experience and expertise that brands really need - simply applied across all your content in all your channels.

Kevin Sutherland  
Seven, @AgencySeven





### Key Takeaway #3 Define your KPIs to Measure Content ROI

Measuring the ROI of content and producing enough content of a high quality are two of the biggest challenges we hear consistently from marketers when discussing content marketing. To succeed long-term at content and make it a viable part of a company's strategy; marketers will need to solve these puzzles. To help, we've gathered some additional resources that will help you in these areas:

[Everything Marketers Need to Measure and Prove Content ROI](#)

[How HubSpot created a Content Machine \[SlideShare\]](#)

[Creating a Content Machine \[Ebook\]](#)

[KPIs for measuring content marketing article \[Smart Insights\]](#)



## Methodology

This research was completed in December 2013 by recruiting customers and subscribers to Hubspot and Smart Insights. There were 2688 responses from marketers throughout Europe, showing a fantastic level of interest in how to get the most from content marketing – thank you if you took part!

Senior marketers such as business owners, marketing managers and digital marketing were the 3 main types of respondent as would be expected from a report on managing content marketing.



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