

HEALTHCARE  
**insight**

STATE OF  
**HEALTHCARE  
CONTENT  
MARKETING**  
2017

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



**TRUE NORTH**  
— CUSTOM —

# A NOTE FROM THE CEO

## DEAR COLLEAGUES,

Thank you for taking the time to read this year's State of Healthcare Content Marketing report. We know this will be a useful tool for your current and future marketing efforts. For those of you that participated in our survey, thank you. Your experience and insights contribute to advancing our industry each and every year.

### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

This report compares the advancements, shifts, and commonalities between responses for the last two years. It outlines where our industry is focusing, the challenges we are facing, and how we plan to overcome these challenges.

### WHY FOCUS ON CONTENT?

According to the eMarketer, **60% of healthcare marketers create at least one piece of content each day.** This number paints a clear picture of marketers' past, present, and future focus: **content.** In fact, the average marketer invested more in content in 2016 and will continue to increase their content budget in 2017.

One of the top goals for healthcare marketers this year is to increase website traffic. According to a study from Aberdeen, **year-over-year growth in unique site traffic is 7.8 times higher for content marketing leaders compared to followers [19.7% vs 2.5%].**

### Consumers crave content.

However, our industry is still having difficulty proving content's efficacy and calculating ROI. For other B2C industries, **82% of marketers see a positive ROI from their inbound marketing** [HubSpot]. To enjoy the same benefits, healthcare marketers need to choose meaningful goals, select the right metrics, and conduct thorough planning before executing content marketing campaigns.

One thing is clear: We've only seen the tip of the iceberg for content marketing in healthcare—and the future is bright. A shining example of this potential is the selection of one of our own for the nation's highest award honoring content marketers. Cleveland Clinic Director of Content Marketing Amanda Todorovich was recognized as the 2016 Content Marketer of the Year by the Content Marketing Institute. She surpassed finalists from technology, finance, and other sectors. Her success reflects the industry's progress in leveraging content marketing as an effective strategy for delivering brand and revenue growth. I expect to see more healthcare content marketers winning awards like this as that progress shows results.

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# INTRODUCTION

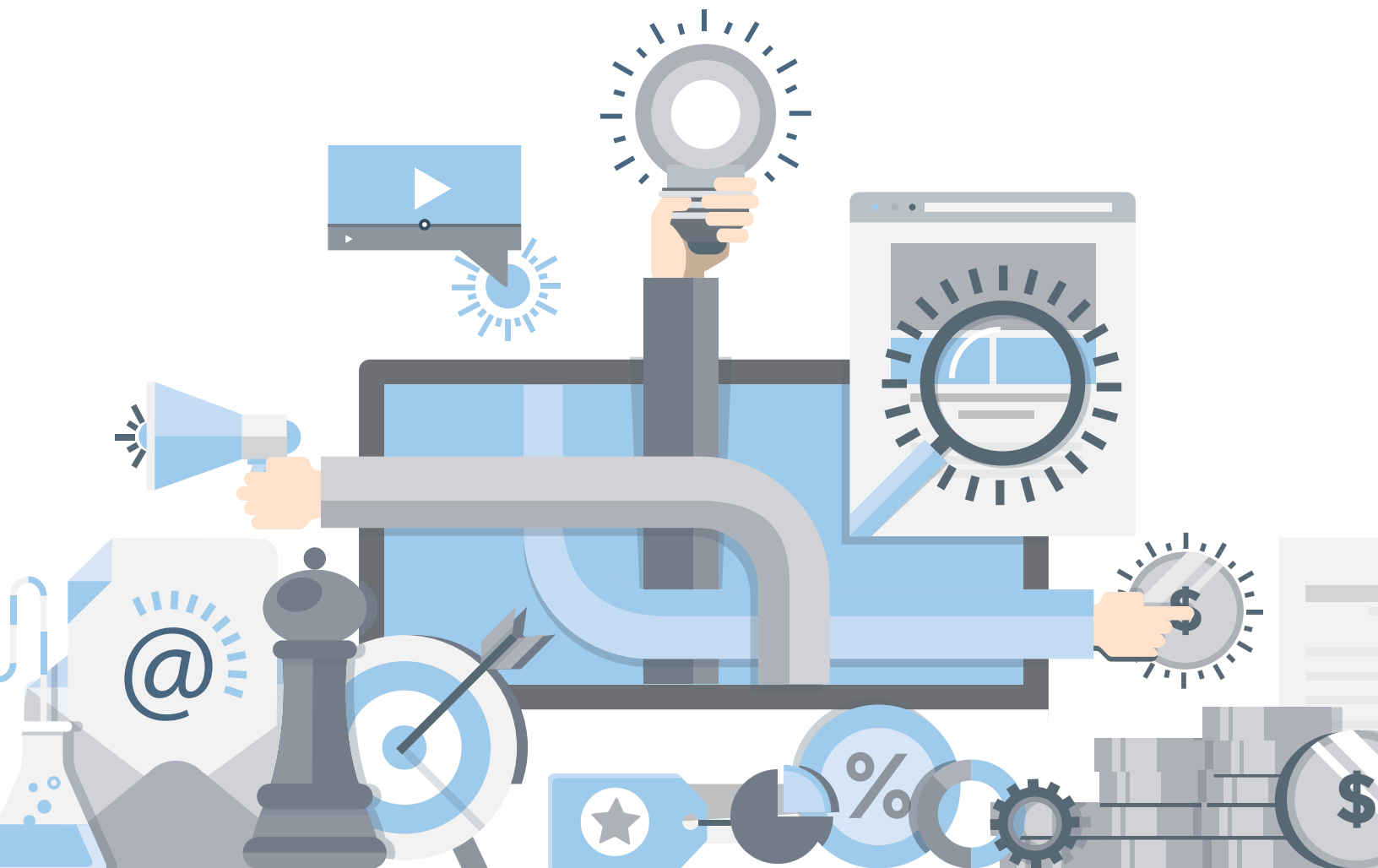
The Content Marketing Institute defines content marketing as “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience—and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.”

Although content marketing is not a new concept, it is clear that the healthcare industry is continuing to adopt measurable digital content strategies and targeted direct marketing methods. Measuring the impact of content continues to be a challenge (it was also the primary challenge in 2016’s report), as healthcare marketers continue to focus on upstream efforts, such as brand awareness, but are not yet able to tie these campaigns to downstream revenue.

*The bottom line:* While most organizations are using content marketing, they are doing so in an ad hoc fashion that may not tie into their broader business objectives.

## WE’VE ORGANIZED THE DATA INTO SEVEN CHAPTERS:

1. **The Current State of Content Marketing** p. 4-6
2. **Content Marketing Goals & Effectiveness** p. 7-9
3. **Content Marketing Tactics** p. 10-12
4. **Content Promotion and Paid Advertising** p. 13-14
5. **Content Budget and Resources** p. 15-19
6. **Key Takeaways** p. 20-21



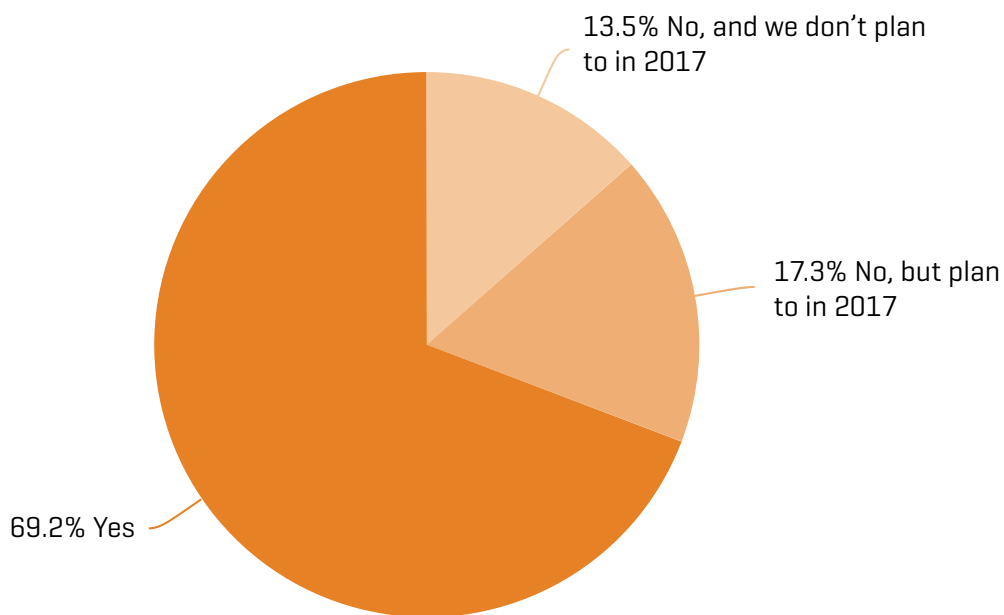
# CHAPTER 1:

## THE CURRENT STATE OF CONTENT MARKETING

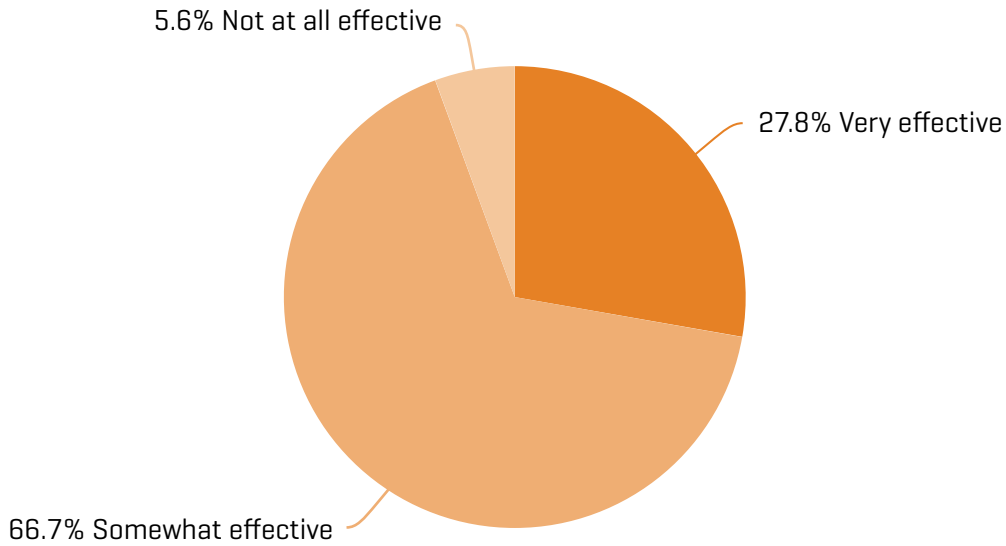
Most healthcare organizations are using content marketing, and it is a medium- to high-priority in most marketing departments. However, most find content marketing to be only somewhat effective

at achieving their business goals. This level of effectiveness could be because most organizations do not have a documented content strategy (but plan to create one in the next 12 months).

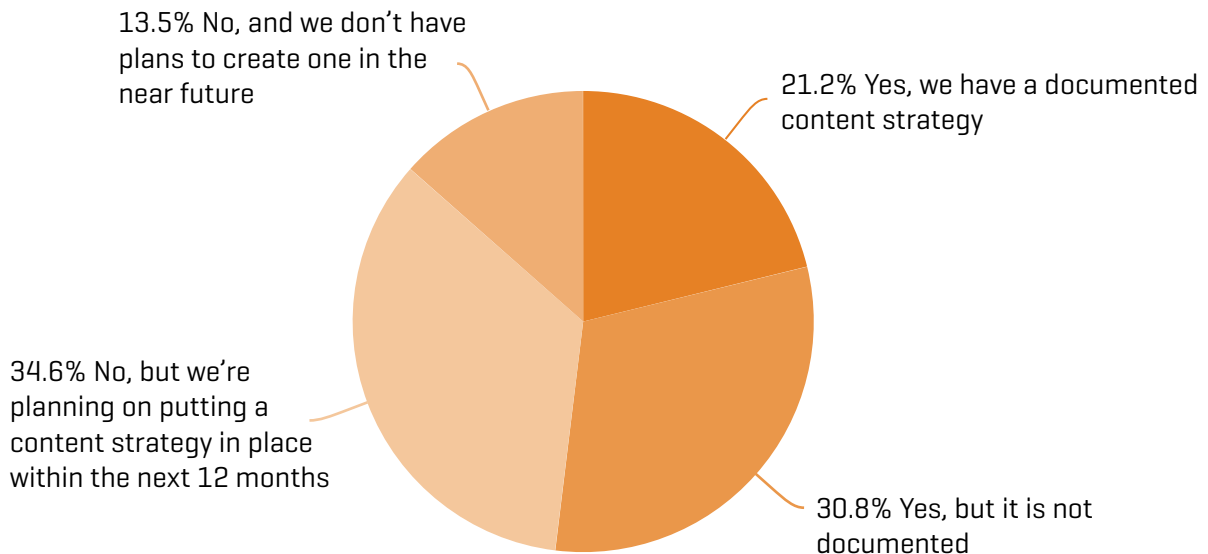
### DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION USE CONTENT MARKETING?



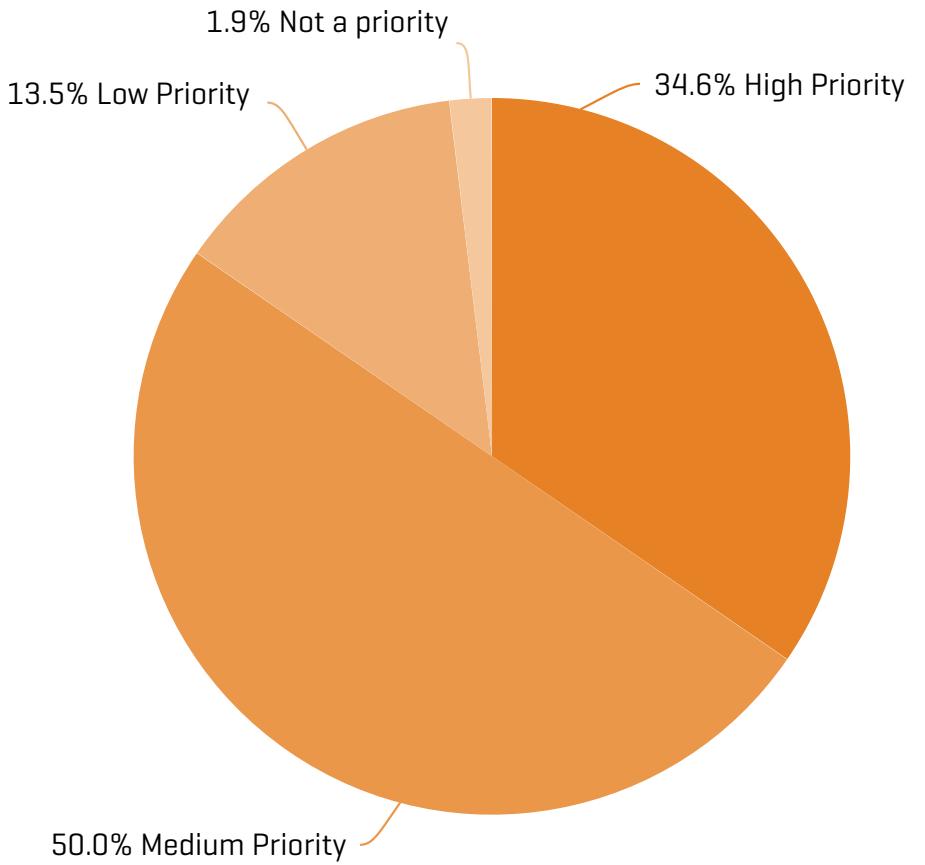
## OVERALL, HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR ORGANIZATION AT CONTENT MARKETING?



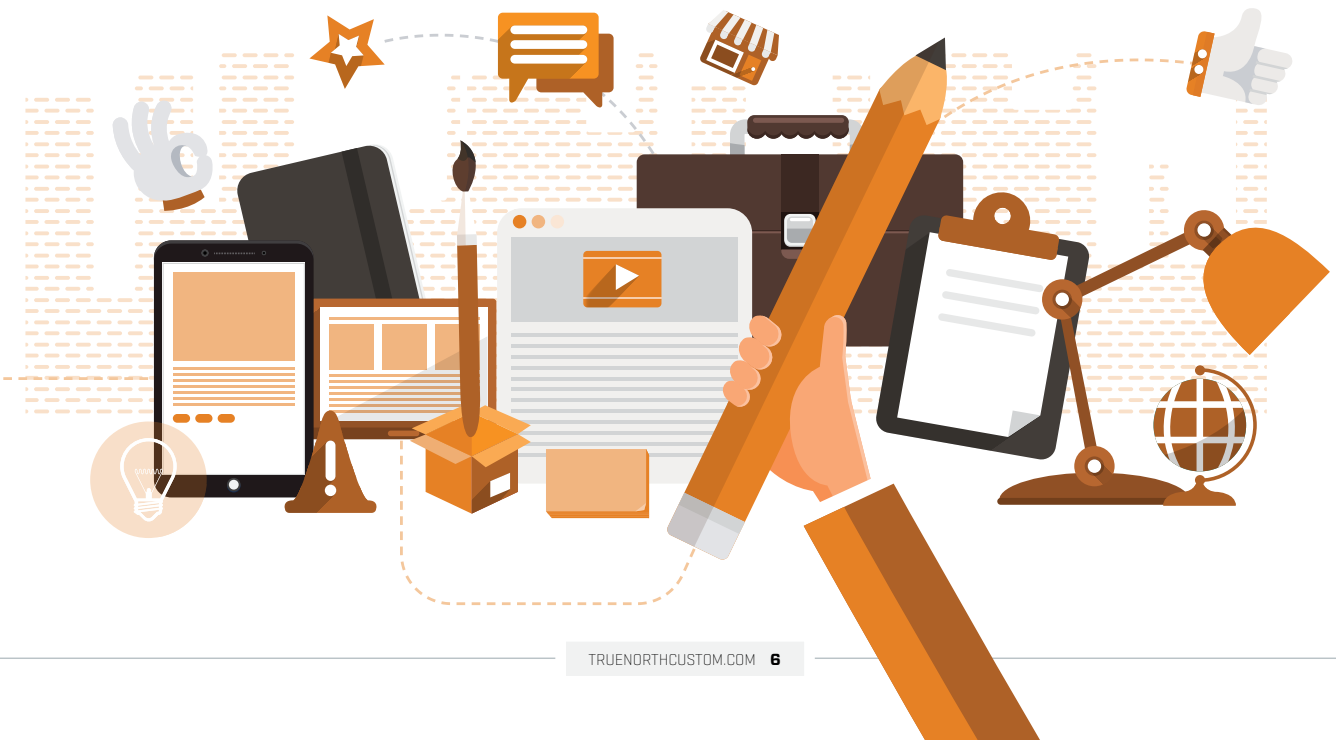
## DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION HAVE AN OVERARCHING CONTENT STRATEGY IN PLACE?



# THINKING OF ALL THE MARKETING STRATEGIES YOU EMPLOY IN YOUR ORGANIZATION, HOW LARGE A PRIORITY IS CONTENT MARKETING?



*The bottom line:* Content marketing will be only somewhat effective if you do not have a content strategy and measurement plan in place that is aligned with your business objectives.



# CHAPTER 2:

## CONTENT MARKETING GOALS & EFFECTIVENESS

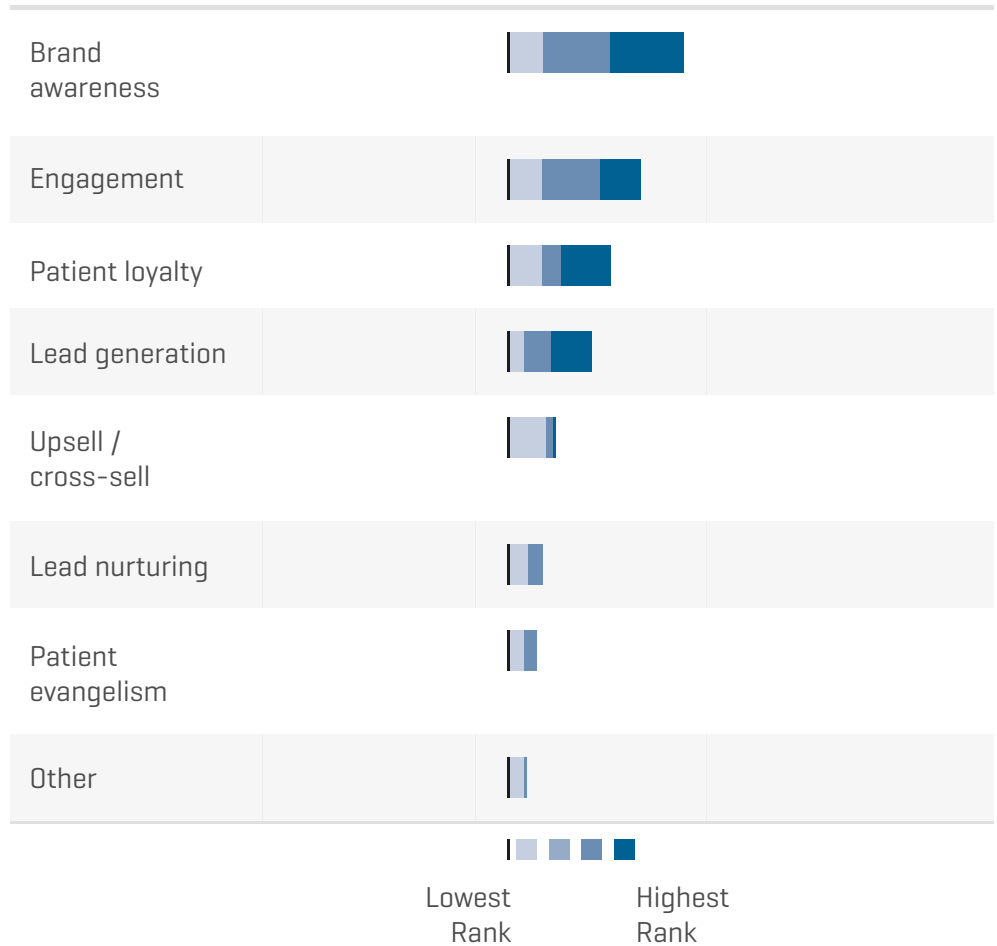
For the second consecutive year, the majority of marketing efforts focus on top-of-the-funnel goals, with few campaigns focusing on conversions and tracking generated revenue.

Sentiments about content marketing's lack of effectiveness are correlated with the industry's focus on soft goals with nebulous metrics that are difficult to track.

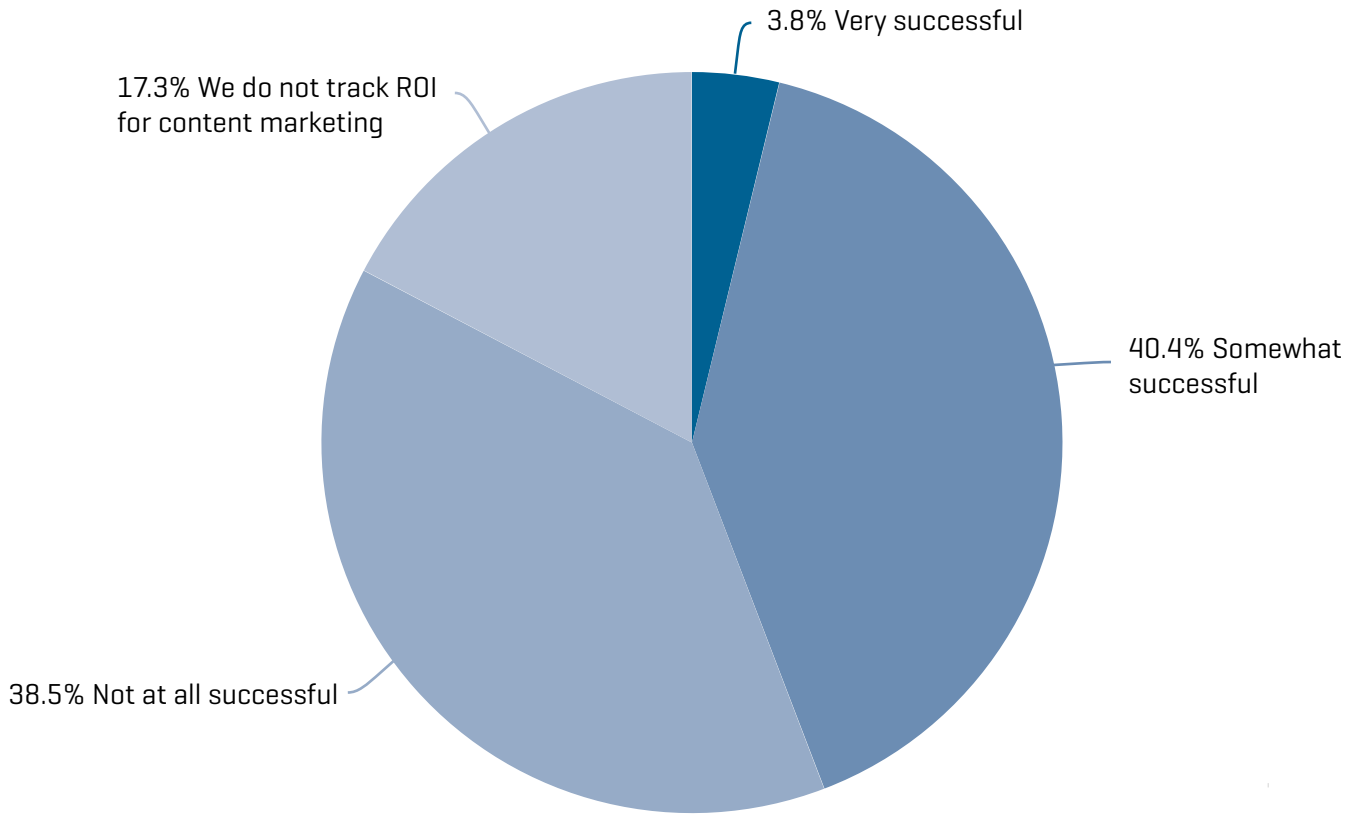
### RANK YOUR TOP THREE OVERALL GOALS OF CONTENT MARKETING WITHIN YOUR ORGANIZATION

#### Marketing Goal

#### Rank Distribution

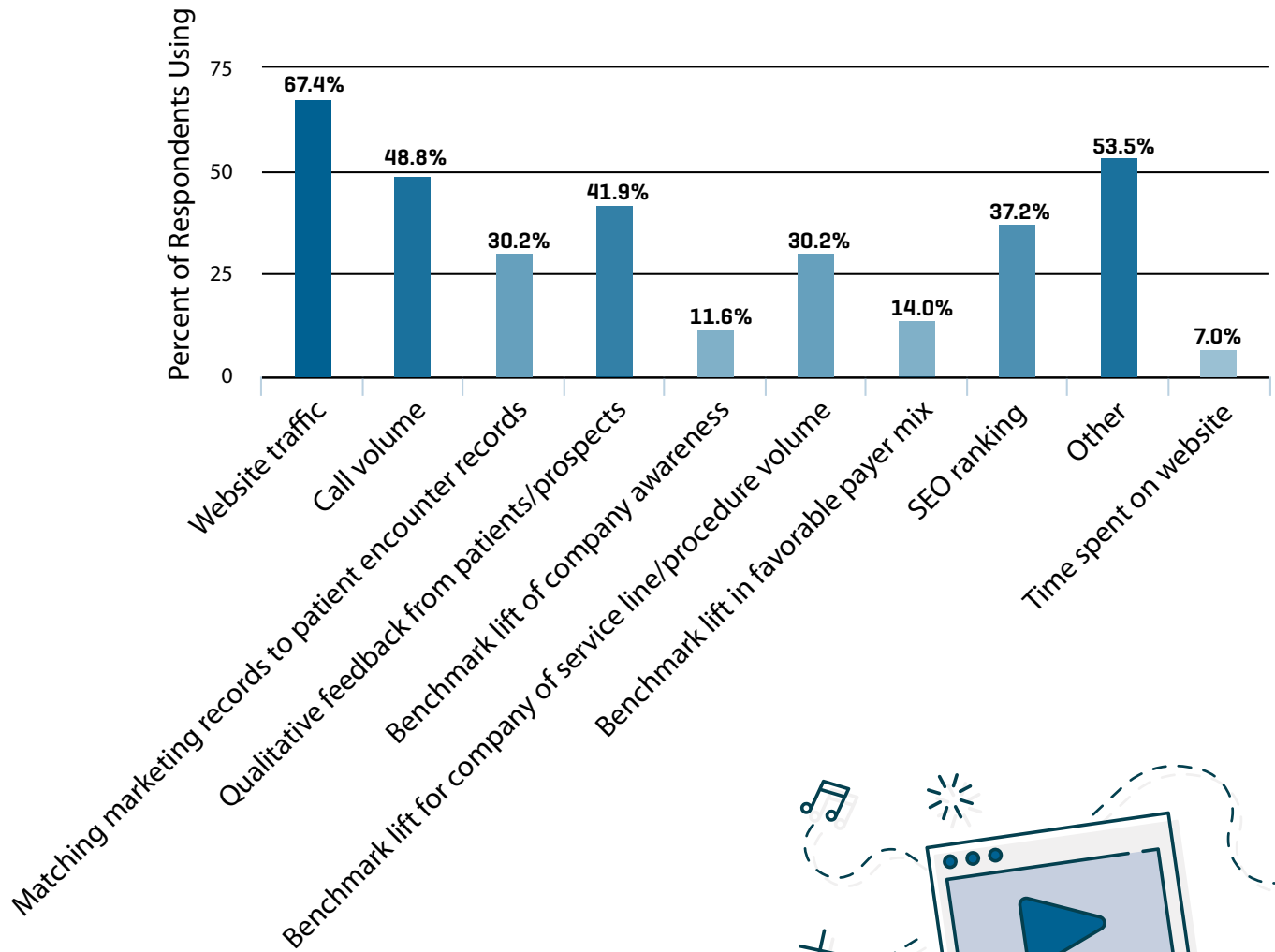


# HOW SUCCESSFUL IS YOUR ORGANIZATION AT TRACKING THE ROI OF ITS CONTENT MARKETING EFFORTS?





# WHAT METRICS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION USE TO ASSESS CONTENT MARKETING SUCCESS?



## The bottom line:

**1.** There are incongruencies between the metrics respondents indicate are important for measuring effectiveness and the goals the industry is focusing on.

**2.** Marketers value metrics like website traffic, time spent on website, and call volume, but they work toward goals that measure metrics like benchmark lift of company awareness.

**3.** In order to be effective, key performance metrics need to directly align with marketing goals.



# CHAPTER 3:

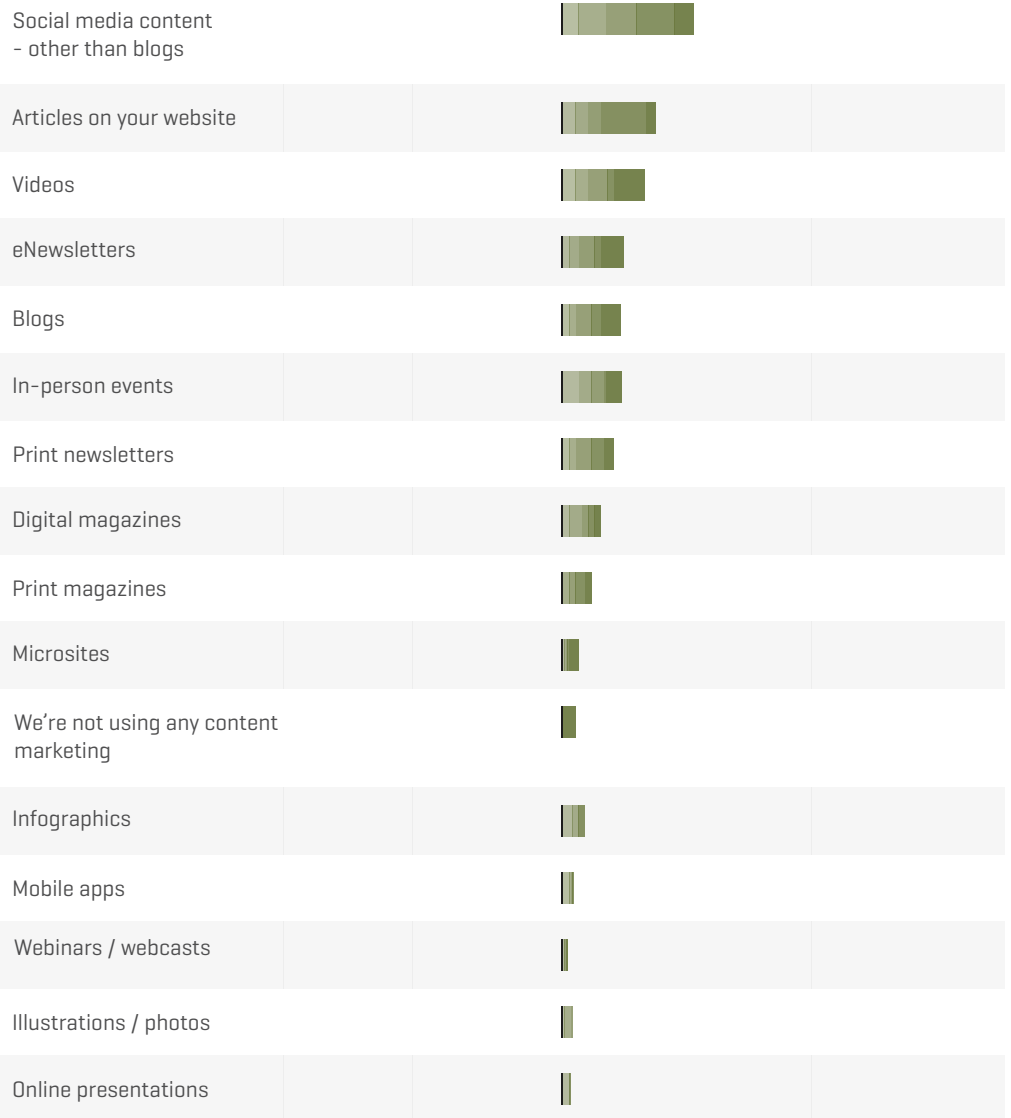
## CONTENT DISTRIBUTION TACTICS

Marketing tactics continue to move toward the digital space, where marketers can track how engaged their audience is, iterate and update quickly, and connect upstream content marketing efforts to downstream revenue.

### RANK YOUR TOP 5 CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS USED BY YOUR ORGANIZATION

#### Marketing Goal

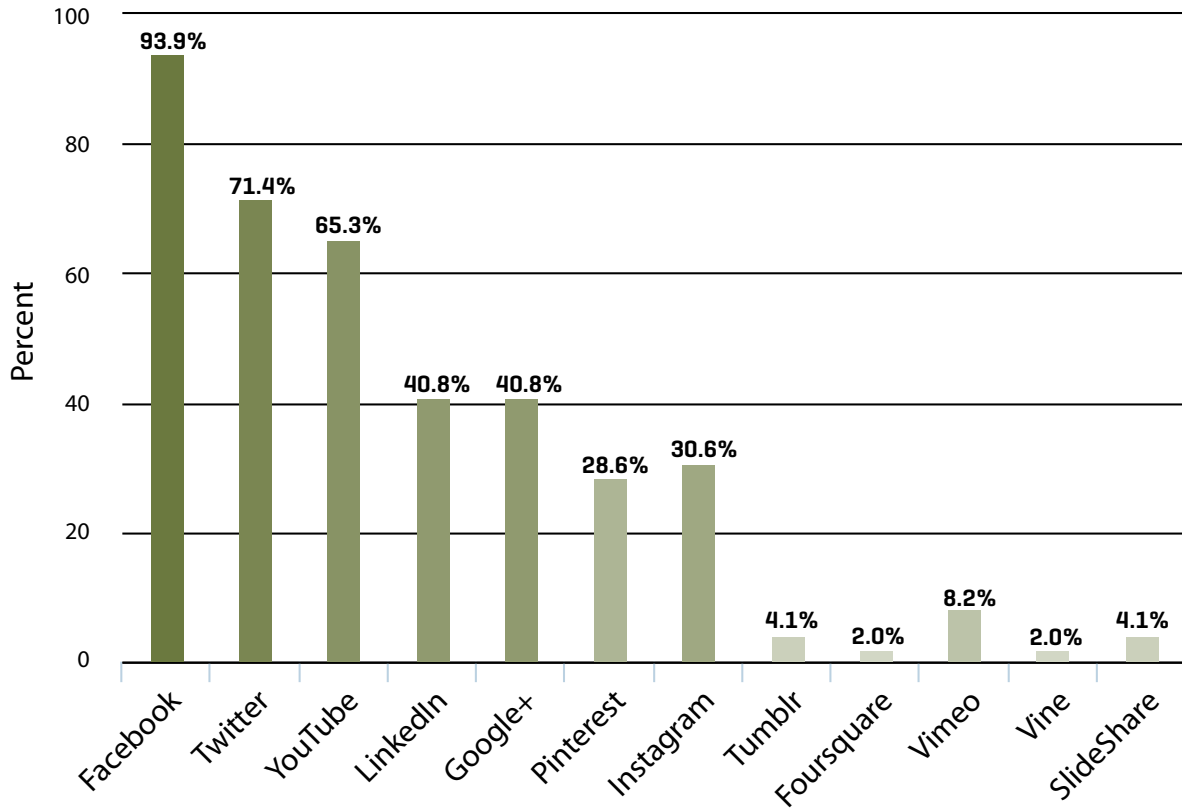
#### Rank Distribution



The top content marketing tactics changed only slightly this year. Blogs replaced print magazines in the top five.

Lowest Rank Highest Rank

# WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION USE TO DISTRIBUTE CONTENT?



The top social media platforms for healthcare marketers have not changed in the past year.

## HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION PUBLISH NEW CONTENT ACROSS THE FOLLOWING CHANNELS?

	<Monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Social media	8.2%	2.0%	36.7%	53.1%
On your website	14.3%	38.8%	34.7%	12.2%
On your blog	38.8%	28.6%	26.5%	6.1%

Respondents are posting more frequently to social media this year than they were last year [53.1% compared to last year's 41.5%], but they seem to be posting more frequently on their websites than on their blogs.

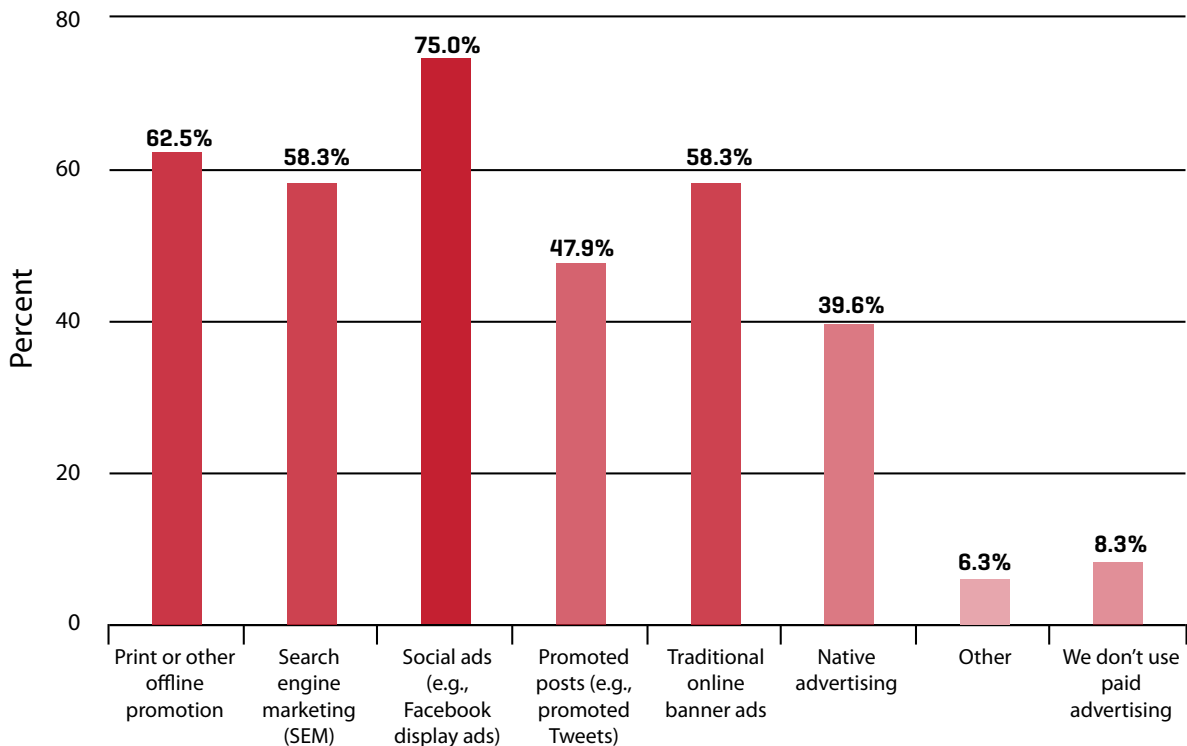


# CHAPTER 4:

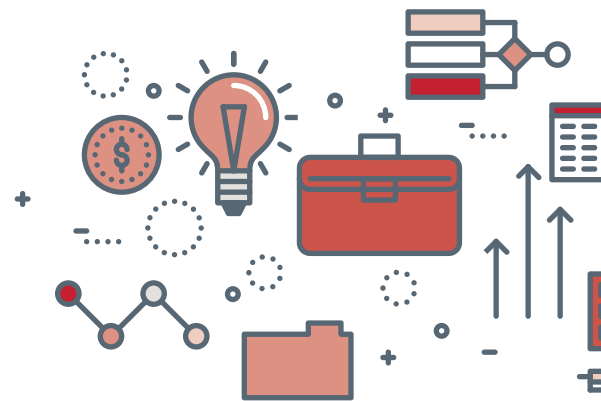
## CONTENT PROMOTION AND PAID ADVERTISING

While print and traditional methods are still used to generate leads, the highly targeted and trackable social media ad has taken the most popular spot. Social media and search engine advertising are the most targeted and trackable methods for content promotion. Because these tactics are so inexpensive, marketers can scale efficiently and get results quickly.

### WHICH PAID ADVERTISING METHODS DO YOU USE TO PROMOTE/DISTRIBUTE CONTENT?



Compared to last year, social media replaced print or other offline promotion as the top paid advertising method. Print replaced banner ads in the number two position. Search engine marketing and banner ads are now tied for the third most popular advertising strategy.



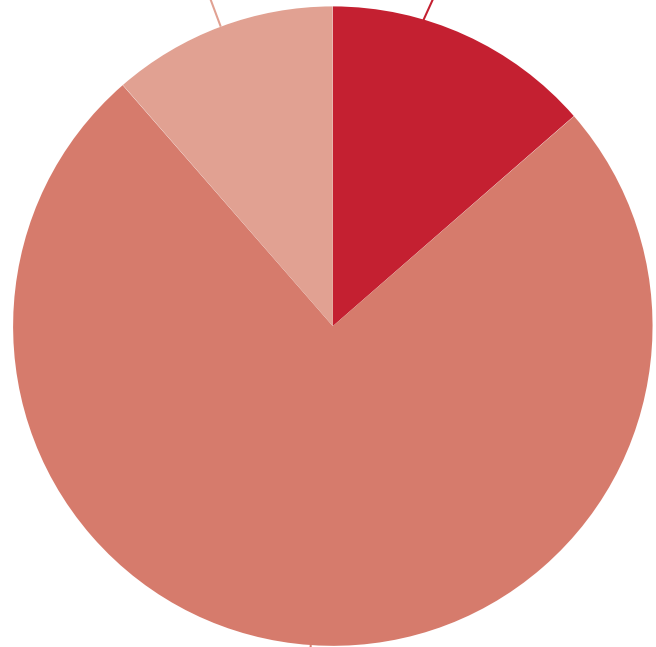
# HOW EFFECTIVE IS YOUR OVERALL CONTENT PROMOTION STRATEGY?

Most find their content promotion strategy somewhat effective. While social media ads are easy to attribute to downstream revenue, print or offline advertising and banner ads can be hard to measure, as they frequently are used to build brand awareness.

Again, there is a disconnect between what the industry finds effective [hard metrics and revenue] versus the kinds of marketing campaigns they are running [brand awareness].

11.4% Not at all effective

13.6% Very effective



75.0% Somewhat effective

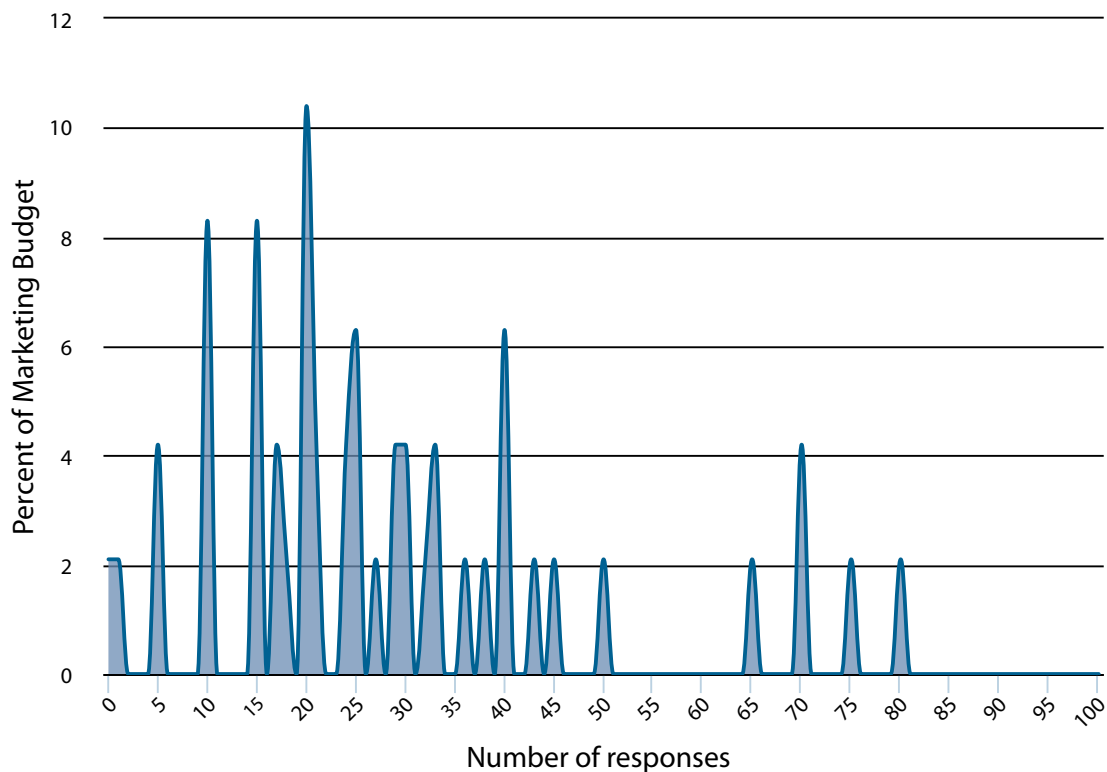


# CHAPTER 5:

## CONTENT BUDGET AND RESOURCES

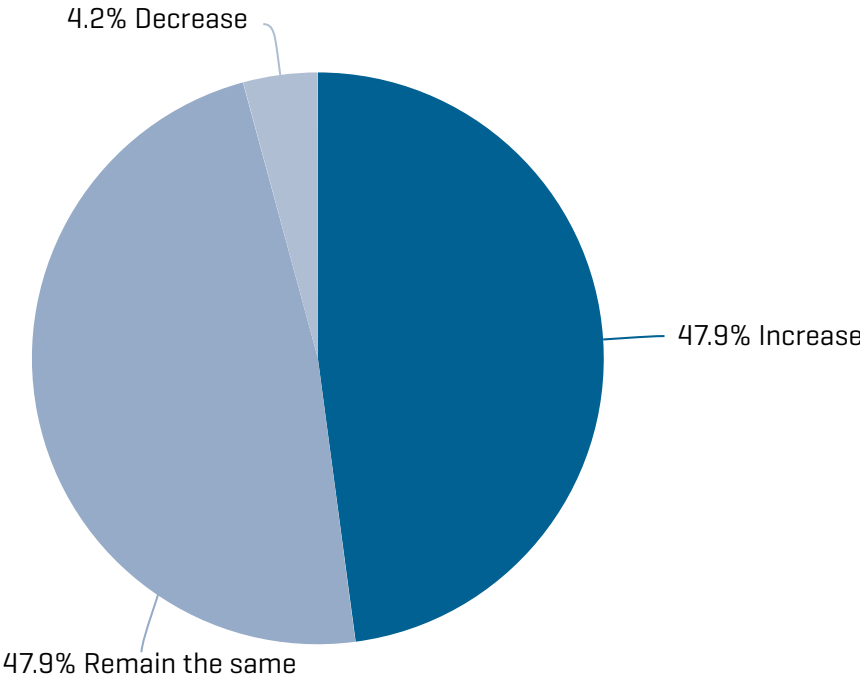
Most marketing departments allocate 25 percent or more of their budget to content marketing, and the majority of departments will either increase or sustain this amount. Most teams have two to five members on staff to support content products, but most are wearing multiple hats.

### APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR BUDGET IS ALLOCATED TO CONTENT MARKETING?



# HOW DO YOU EXPECT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR CONTENT MARKETING TO CHANGE IN YOUR NEXT BUDGET CYCLE?

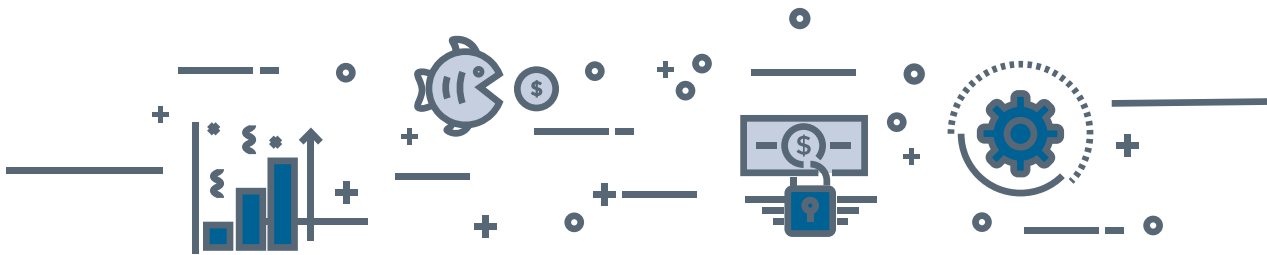
Most marketing departments expect their budget allocation for content marketing to either increase or remain the same.





# WITH REGARD TO CONTENT MARKETING, HOW CHALLENGED IS YOUR ORGANIZATION WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING?

	Not at all challenged	Moderately challenged	Very challenged
Measuring content effectiveness	8.5%	42.6%	48.9%
Producing engaging content	19.1%	66.0%	14.9%
Lack of budget	23.4%	59.6%	17.0%
Producing content consistently	21.3%	57.4%	21.3%
Producing a variety of content	17.0%	66.0%	17.0%
Gaps in knowledge and skills of internal team	23.4%	63.8%	12.8%
Lack of integration across marketing	19.1%	61.7%	19.1%
Finding trained content marketing professionals	21.3%	61.7%	17.0%
Technology-related challenges	25.5%	57.4%	17.0%
Lack of buy-in / vision from higher-ups	37.0%	50.0%	13.0%



## WHICH CONTENT MARKETING INITIATIVES ARE YOU WORKING ON?

Most marketing departments are working on all initiatives, which demonstrates how quickly healthcare marketers must pivot and shift priorities.

	Not a priority	Beginning within 6 months	Working on now
Better converting visitors on website	17.1%	29.3%	53.7%
Creating more engaging / high-quality content	7.3%	22.0%	70.7%
Becoming better storytellers	17.1%	17.1%	65.9%
Optimizing content for search	19.5%	34.1%	46.3%
Marketing automation / lead nurturing	39.0%	26.8%	34.1%
Measuring content marketing ROI	12.2%	31.7%	56.1%
Better understanding of what content is effective — and what isn't	7.3%	24.4%	68.3%
Leveraging patient- or fan-generated content	29.3%	46.3%	24.4%
Creating visual content (infographics, video, etc.)	4.9%	17.1%	78.0%
Better understanding of audience	7.3%	34.1%	58.5%
Finding more / better ways to repurpose / integrate content	7.3%	31.7%	61.0%

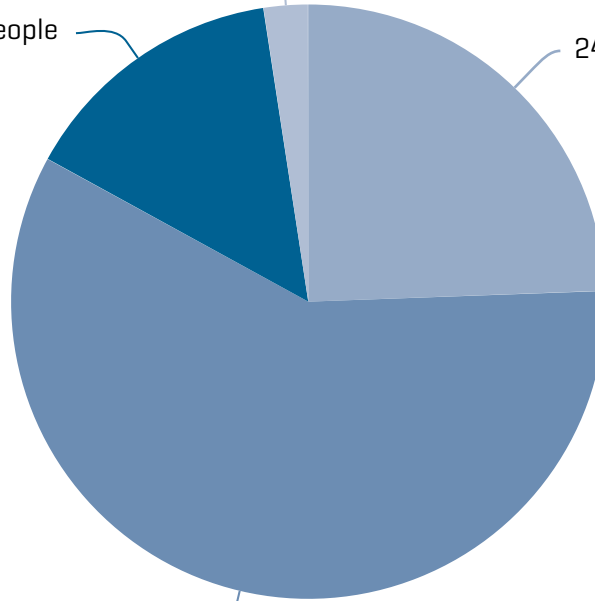
## WHAT IS THE SIZE OF YOUR IN-HOUSE CONTENT TEAM?

2.4% We outsource our content creation

14.6% 6-10 people

24.4% 1 person

58.5% 2-5 people



*The bottom line:* Departments are straining to produce a variety of content and account for gaps in knowledge or skill of their small internal teams. Respondents do not have a specific focus, and most say they are working on all initiatives simultaneously. With an overwhelming number of initiatives and limited resources, it is hard to achieve content marketing effectiveness and tactical results.



# CHAPTER 6:

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

While content marketing still has a significant share of budget and resources, marketing departments are having difficulty measuring the effectiveness of their campaigns and aligning their campaign goals with business objectives.

2

The data show that goals do not align with key performance indicators or the most important industry metrics, that departments do not have the resources or skills they need to scale content marketing efforts, and that marketing departments are focusing on an impossible number of marketing initiatives simultaneously.

3

This lack of industry best practices and inability to focus are making content marketing only somewhat effective.

4

However, the industry is innovating, and clear leaders—like Cleveland Clinic—are emerging.

So now what?





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# YOUR CHECKLIST FOR EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING

CLICK BOX TO COMPLETE THE TASK

## INSTALL GOOGLE ANALYTICS ON YOUR WEBSITE

- It's easy, it's free, and it comes with preloaded dashboards to get you started. [Learn more about Google Analytics.](#)

## GET YOUR CRM/PRM IN ORDER

- Self-reported health data and other health and wellness data can be used to encourage targeted prospects to download a guide, complete a health assessment, or book an appointment.
- We wrote [this guide](#) to help you use patient data to inform your marketing strategy.

## IDENTIFY WHICH TYPES OF CONTENT AND CALLS TO ACTION ARE PERFORMING BEST

- Use Google Analytics and your social media reports to see which content gets the most views, engagement, and shares.
  1. Which web pages are most popular?
  2. Which blog posts are getting the most traffic and shares?
  3. Which calls to action are getting the most conversions?

## LEVERAGE MARKETING AUTOMATION BASED ON LIFE EVENTS AND USER BEHAVIOR

- When a web visitor converts on your page, continue the conversation with automated emails and customized outreach.
- Life events—such as birthdays—are a great opportunity to proactively reach out to patients for yearly exams or other maintenance visits.

## CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

- Give web visitors the opportunity to subscribe to your content on your blog or homepage, but be clear about what they will receive and how frequently they will receive it.
- You can also ask patients to opt-in at office visits to keep your brand top of mind and continue to be a helpful health and wellness resource. Be sure to follow up quickly so they remember what they signed up for when they receive your email.

## OPTIMIZE, MEASURE, AND REPEAT

- Use this data to refine your content strategy and give your audience more content that compels them to take your desired action.

READY TO GET STARTED? YOU CAN USE THIS HANDY CHECKLIST TO QUICKLY SET UP A DIGITAL CAMPAIGN THAT TRACKS MEANINGFUL METRICS AND CLEARLY SHOWS YOU THE RETURN ON YOUR MARKETING INVESTMENTS.



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## ABOUT THE TEAM

**Author**

Kayla Anderson

**Report Designer**

Emily Sewell

**Site Design**

Eric Clarkson

**Survey Creation**

Tikedra Kellum and  
Donny Stiefel

**Editor**

Rich Bailey

**Project Manager**

Lauren Knight

## ABOUT TRUE NORTH CUSTOM

*Healthcare Insight and the 2017 State of Healthcare Content Marketing Report* are produced by True North Custom. With over 25 years in content marketing and over 500 hospital and health system clients, we know what works to move consumers to action with custom content. Our speciality is getting the right message to the right audience at the right time, in the right channel, and within your timeline and budget.