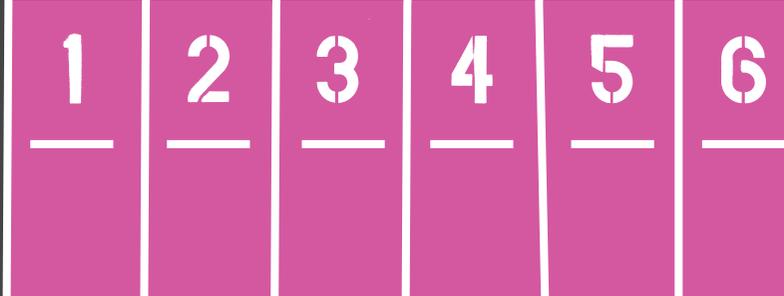


WHO LEADS?

Irish B2B Digital
Marketing Survey 2018



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INTRODUCTION

First of all, thanks to everyone who took part in Ireland's 2018 B2B digital marketing survey. Thanks also to the Marketing Institute of Ireland for their input and outreach.

We hope to shed light on who is using B2B digital marketing? For what purpose? How much budget is it commanding? How is it being resourced? Is it effective? What are the key challenges in creating and implementing a B2B digital marketing strategy? Additionally we compare Irish practice with that in the other regions and countries all over the world. This will help us benchmark how Irish marketing professionals use specific B2B digital marketing strategies against global leaders in the discipline.



Ultimately, if there is one word that sums up the world of B2B, it's leads. The race for the numbers is all that counts. We acknowledge that a comparison to global trends is not a competition - as there are all sorts of contextual variables at play - so apologies for the sensationalist title.

Nevertheless, it's always interesting to peek over at everybody else, everywhere else. This survey isn't about how the metrics match up or whose revenues are biggest. It's about how the tactics compare, where the priorities lie, and what can we learn from our peers abroad. Additionally, we've also added insights, hints and tips.

We've used Hubspot's State of Inbound 2017 as a benchmark of global trends - periodically we make the direct comparison

between both sets of information. The divergences of opinion aren't always huge - but that doesn't mean we don't have any surprises in store, either.

“Irish B2B practitioners are acutely aware of the opportunities and challenges around digital marketing. Indeed for some, digital is their only marketing activity. We hope this study and our insights and tips offer help to those planning their next campaign.”

Ian Blake

Managing Director, Squaredot



Ian Blake

welcome

KEY FINDINGS

For clarity and simplicity, we refer to our B2B audience throughout simply as Irish marketers to make it an easier read and avoid clunky ALL CAPS abbreviations.



Generating web traffic and leads is the **No. 1 challenge** for both Irish and global marketers.

Converting leads and contacts to customers is the **No. 1 priority** for Irish and global marketers.

- **39%** of Irish marketers are not using **marketing automation**; the **most popular software** for those who do is **Hubspot (38%)**.
- **Only 9%** of Irish marketers see **hiring talent** as a major challenge.
- **Proving ROI on content marketing** is a **concern** to both Irish and global marketers.
- **The content theme** most Irish marketers **want to read** about in 2018 is **marketing strategy**

- **Converting contacts** and leads to customers is the **No.1 marketing priority** for both Irish (51%) and global (70%) marketers.
- **Increasing revenue among existing customers** was second top priority (32%) for Irish marketers. International marketers gave growing website traffic second place.
- **Growing website traffic** is the third priority for the Irish (26%), whereas increasing revenue from existing customers takes third place (45%) for their international peers.
- **Sales enablement** ranked **4th marketing priority** for Irish marketers; 5th for global marketers.
- **Getting better ROI** for marketing efforts was **5th priority** for Irish marketers; 4th for global marketers.
- **Reducing the cost of leads and customer acquisition** are further down the list of priorities for both Irish and global marketers.
- **58%** of Irish marketers will **not change** their **content marketing budget** in 2018.
- **Global marketers** will **spend slightly more** on inbound this year than they spent last year. (37% in 2018 vs. 34% in 2017)
- **Global marketers** feel that more budget should be allocated for **growing SEO / organic presence**.
- **Only around 3%** of Irish marketers said they would be decreasing their digital marketing budget.

- **Budget allocation** for marketing automation tools was slightly **higher** by global marketers (priority No. 4) whereas it was No. 5 for Irish marketers. **Interactive content** creation was priority No. 4 for Irish marketers.

- **Producing videos** was a subject of **interest** for Irish marketers who said they would be **dedicating** more resources **to developing** these.

- **Ranking of priorities for budget allocation**

IRISH MARKETERS

1. Content promotion / amplification
2. Growing SEO / organic presence
3. Blog content creation

GLOBAL MARKETERS

1. Growing SEO / organic presence
2. Blog content creation
3. Content promotion / amplification

- **40%** of Irish marketers are concerned about **generating web traffic and leads**. Global marketers are in agreement, with 63% believing this to be their biggest challenge.

- Both **Irish (21%)** and global (40%) marketers agreed that **proving ROI** could be **difficult**.

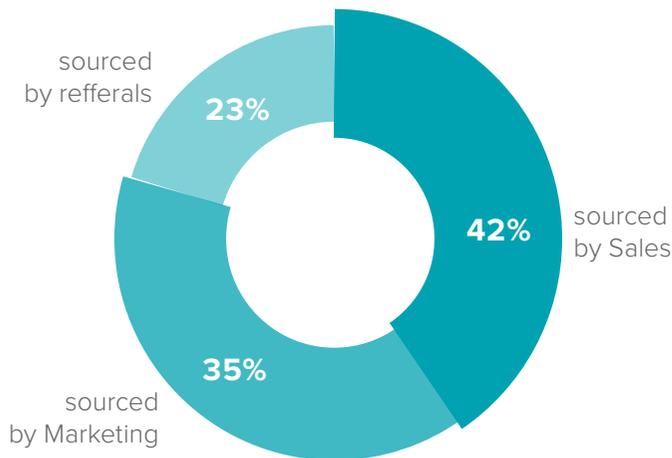
- Securing enough **budget was a challenge** to Irish marketers.

- **Managing the website** is **not** a pressing **concern** for Irish marketers, with zero respondents choosing it as the number 1 priority.

- **Targeting content** to an international audience is **somewhat challenging** for Irish marketers, but ranked as priority 6.

- **70%** of our Irish Marketers have **documented content marketing strategies** and plans.

● Irish marketing leads



● Top sources of marketing leads

BY QUANTITY

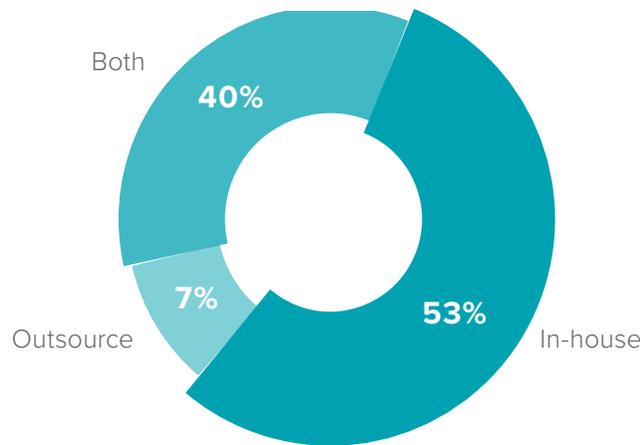
1. Inbound leads
2. Organic Web Traffic
3. Paid Search
4. Outbound
5. Paid Social
6. Direct Mail
7. Content syndication

BY QUALITY

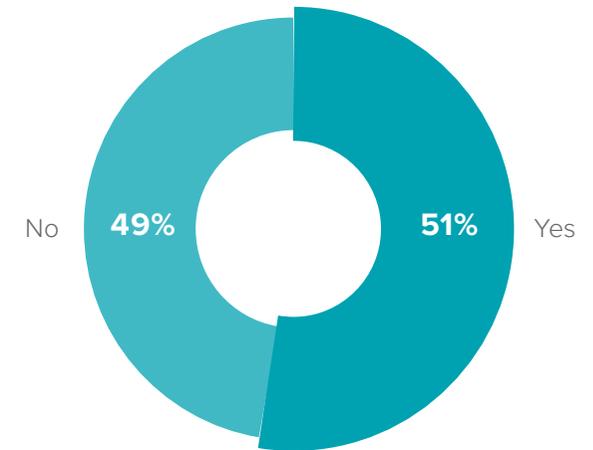
1. Inbound leads
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3. Paid Search
4. Paid Social
5. Direct Mail
6. Outbound
7. Content syndication

- **More than half** of our surveyed companies create content **in-house**; **7% outsource** their content creation tasks; **40%** do both.
- **56%** of Irish marketers are using **customer personas**
- **51%** are using **customer journey mapping**.
- **58%** of Irish marketers cite **content promotion / amplification** as their highest budget priority.

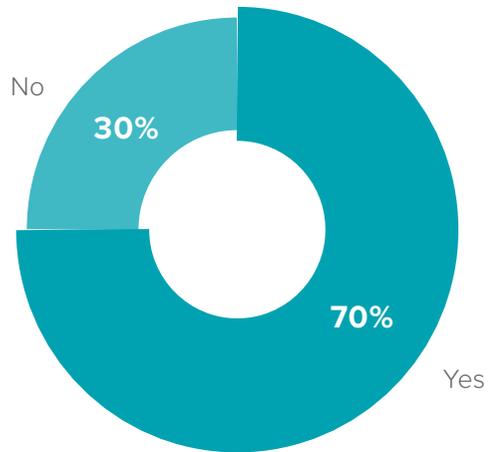
- **Do Irish marketers create content inhouse or outsource?**



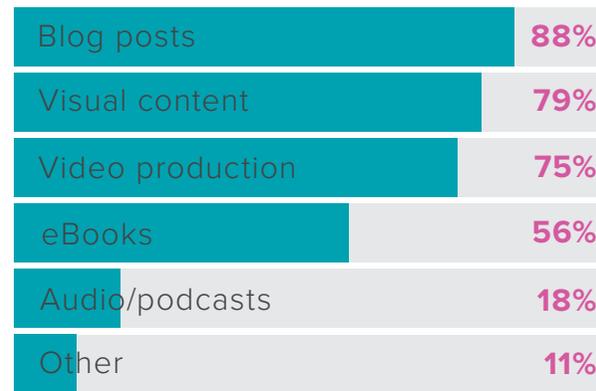
- **Are Irish marketers using customer journey mapping?**



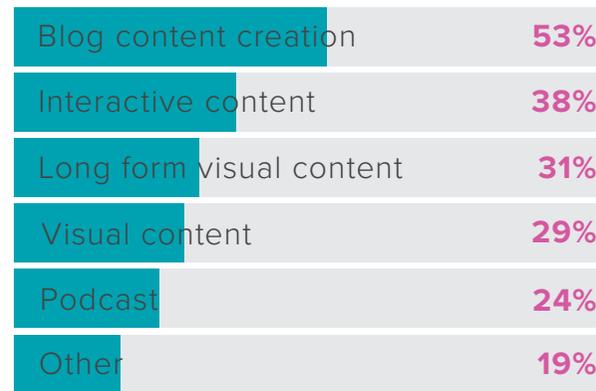
● **Do Irish marketers have a documented content strategy?**



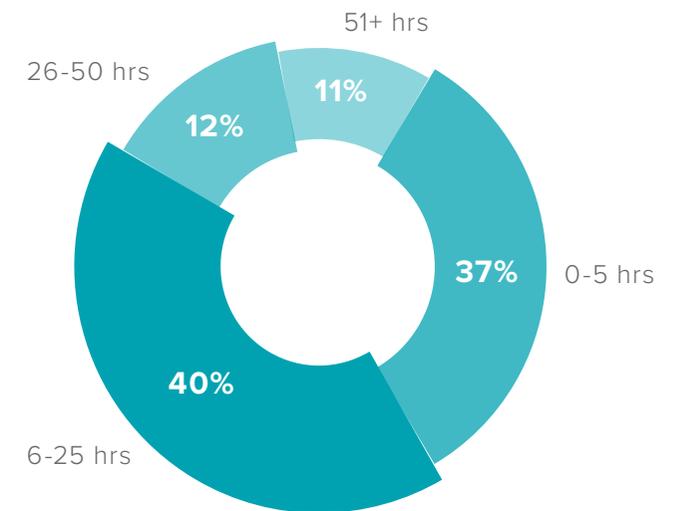
● **Content produced last year by Irish marketers**



● **Content planned for the year ahead by global marketers**



● **How many hours do Irish marketers spend on content marketing per week?**



INSIGHTS & TIPS

Presenting stats in isolation is never illuminating, even when comparing to global trends. So we're now going to delve into the topics that bubbled up from the research and offer our own insights and tips.



Money

Conversion of leads into customers is considered the number 1 marketing challenge universally

Conversion

The good news is that if your main priority is conversion, then your pipeline must be in decent shape. But just how do you persuade those who have expressed interest in your product or service to become customers?

To start with:

1. Define what an MQL, SQL or SAL (sales accepted lead) is for your company. Sales and marketing should now be in agreement on what leads are to be handed to Sales.
2. Define rules and a process for handing SQLs that don't close, back into the nurturing pot.

3. Have regular calls/meetings with your sales team (minimum weekly) to get feedback on the leads being generated and accepted. In addition to checking that the handover of leads both from marketing to sales and sales to marketing is working.
4. Check, categorise and qualify all leads generated.
5. Make sure your follow-up is systematic and tracked.

You can automate this to a degree with lead scoring and progressive profiling (asking more questions each time a visitor returns to your site and requests a download) however there is nothing like having a dedicated lead qualifier to manually check each new contact.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Make sure your energies are focused on the right leads.

shot

Never stop selling



Sales enablement was the 4th marketing priority in our research, which isn't surprising considering it solves priority number 1: converting leads into customers

Sales Enablement

Sales enablement is the technology, processes, and content that empower sales teams to sell efficiently at a high velocity. It's implementation is mainly the responsibility of the sales function, however marketing plays a key role in helping to initiate meaningful sales conversations.

This is achieved through understanding the needs of the buyer and the creation of content to support those needs. It's important too to think about where the buyer is on their journey, as this will inform

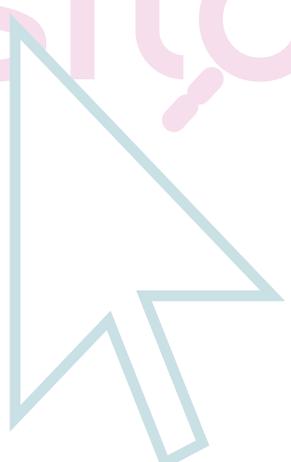
the type of content collateral you need to create.

In the B2B world, when leads are categorised as SQLs they will have consumed some of your content already and be fully engaged with your brand and some way down the buyer's journey.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Marketing can directly help sales with middle of the funnel content like RFP builders, explainer videos and case studies.

Site visitors



Priority number 3 for Irish Marketers are concerns about growing website traffic

Growing website traffic

The key to growing website traffic is to have as many channels feeding your website traffic as possible; organic search, organic social, referrals from other sites, direct traffic, paid search, paid social, and email are the most common.

Once you have all of these channels firing, assess the analytics dashboards and work out which ones perform best from a visit and conversion perspective. Then make informed decisions on where to place your budget.

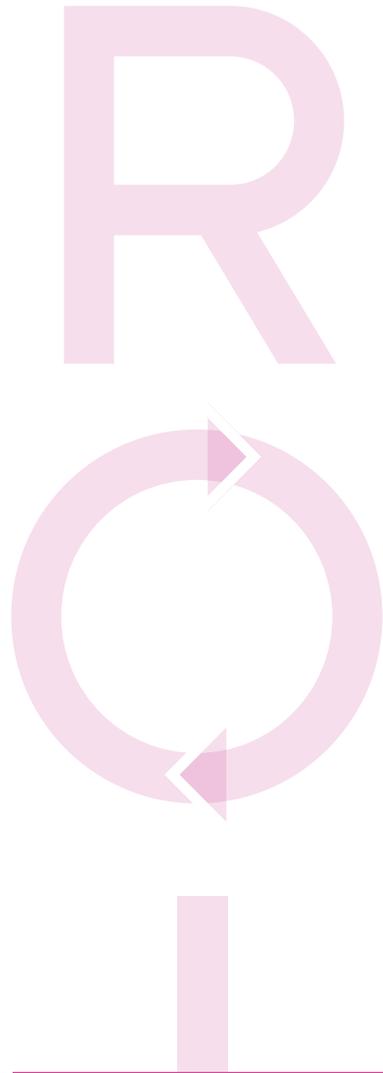
Of course the common denominator on all of these channels is to offer valuable, educational content, written for your

audience and specific to the channel in question.

Also within organic search, marketers should be aware of the growing importance on techniques such as knowledge panels; related questions; featured / rich snippets / quick answers and reviews. The way these vary across the top 3 to 5 positions can make a big difference in the volume of visits from informational searches.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Get all your channels firing and feeding your website.



Providing ROI on content marketing is a concern to both Irish and global marketers

Marketing ROI

The problem with calculating ROI on content is the timeframe for analysing performance. Marketers tend to run campaigns and make immediate judgement calls to measure MQLs, SQLs and the resulting sales (or lack thereof) and move onto the next campaign.

However the passage of time often distorts immediate snap judgements. The old adage that a customer needs to see your brand 7 times before they remember you rings true here. Our advice for proving ROI is to firstly have an always on approach, and to take a holistic view and track marketing spend and revenue generated on an ongoing basis.

By all means assess campaigns in realtime and A/B test where appropriate. But remember that the digital campaign you just ran; the ebooks, blogs, infographics and webinar you painstakingly put together will continue to provide ROI as long as it's live on your site.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Don't make snap judgements. ROI from downloadable assets can take time.

Don't
stuff
it up

88% of Irish marketers named blogs as their most common content output

Blogs

It's no surprise that blogs are the most common content output. Indeed we have seen that consistent blogging (written on the back of solid and informed SEO research) results in a consistent uplift in relevant website traffic.

Every blog you write is another digital signpost that will attract inbound leads. With that in mind, be sure to conduct keyword research before you write a word. Study your competitor's keywords - what are they doing, but more importantly, what are they missing? Think about your customers' pain points and the type of questions they might have. Don't shoehorn keywords into places they don't look

natural - and don't keyword stuff.

Make an effort to review and update old content with relevant keywords.

There is a place for ad hoc blogs, where you spot a story or a trend and have a time sensitive opinion. Just write and publish it. If it rings true and you offer an interesting angle, or a valuable insight, or actionable advice, you can stand out and get noticed.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Ad hoc blogs are great for offering timely and topical advice.

The bomb



Content Clusters

Ad hoc blogs can work but best practice is a thought-through 'cluster' approach. This is where you identify a central topic, or pain point of your target personas, and make the connection to a keyword which has both relevance and search volume.

You then write several further blogs on the subject, highlighting the keywords you aim to rank for and a subset of complementary keywords. Ultimately all this should inform the blogging briefs.

The idea is to create one 'anchor' page and any number of complementary articles: all optimised and interlinking, and all pointing back to, the anchor page. Ideally the anchor page should be stacked with multimedia content to engage personas and reduce bounce rates.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Blog clusters are SEO magnets.

Content /Ampli- fication

58% of Irish marketers will prioritise promotion in their budget

Content Outreach

Think of all the blood, sweat and tears that went into the creation of that beautiful infographic last week. Think again of its paltry number of engagements. What about next week's blog? The next slideshare? Without promotion it can sometimes feel like you're playing symphonies in your own bedroom, right?

We hear you.

Organic promotion of content for brands that have a modest social media audience of followers is a challenge. In an ideal world, you would have enough time to build relationships with influencers, editors, journalists, bloggers, peers and

publications. Organic amplification requires a lot of digital elbow grease. You've got to dog it out, put in the hard yards, build the relationships, and over time, you'll reap the rewards.

In the meantime, as our study confirms, many marketers (58%) will prioritise budget for this.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Develop and nurture contacts in the world of online publishing.



The most popular platform according to the Irish survey is Hubspot (37%)

Marketing automation platforms

Many B2B businesses benefit from marketing automation platforms like Hubspot, Marketo or Eloqua for example. It's a life saver to use one of these platforms for all your digital activities, rather than spread out into countless excel spreadsheets, gantt charts and social media plugins - not least from an analytics point of view. Segmentation, behavioural email workflows and personalisation are other features of these all-encompassing automation platforms.

The most popular platforms according to the Irish survey:

- 37% Hubspot
- 11% Pardot
- 5% Marketo
- 4% Eloqua
- 2% Infusionsoft
- 14% Other (Sharpspring, Act-On, Unica, Silverpop, and Click Dimensions.)

SQUAREDOT TIP

Marketing automation platforms help you manage bulk communications without compromising on personalisation.

Orange is the new

black

SQUAREDOT TIP

Integration of data analytics is the big 'behind the scenes' advantage of marketing automation platforms.

38% of Irish B2B marketers are using no marketing automation platform

Manual marketing drawbacks

The only response to rival Hubspot's popularity is 'no automation at all' - although this is probably misleading. It's more likely that Irish marketers are using a wide range of niche tools to track their email opens and website analytics, as opposed to a single, centralised platform.

The problem with this is the lack of integration between the tools, and the extra steps required of the marketing professional.

Exporting data and assembling Excel sheets to draw conclusions and insight can get messy. With an automation platform like Hubspot, your analytics' dashboards

present everything on a silver/orange platter.

Disclaimer:

Squaredot is a Hubspot Gold Partner

Full disclosure:

We also like other platforms

How sharp are your other tools?



SQUAREDOT TIP

With the world of digital constantly evolving, you should consider annual in-house training and upskilling.

9% of Irish B2B marketers consider hiring top talent a challenge

Talent & training

Interestingly, hiring top talent is not considered a priority challenge for the majority of Irish marketers - only 9% ranked it number 1.

Training was not selected by any marketers we surveyed.

This then opens up interesting possibilities because there are valid claims to question whether Ireland leads the world with educational and/or experiential talent, or if there is a little complacency creeping into the Irish marketing psyche?

Perhaps you are biting off more than you can chew by trying to do everything in-

house, but if this is your preference, there are any number of course available to upskill your in-house talent, not least the many digital marketing courses on offer by the Marketing Institute of Ireland.



SQUAREDOT TIP

Anecdotally, many B2B marketers are reporting the benefits of including Facebook and Instagram in their social media strategy.

63% say LinkedIn is most effective social media channel

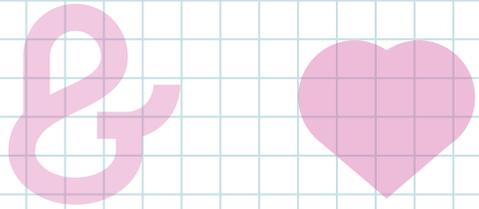
Social Media

It's of no surprise that the two platforms which dominate the B2B social media landscape and which B2B marketers say are most effective are LinkedIn (63%) and Twitter (55%).

The landscape is constantly shifting across social media channels. Because of the growing usage and benefits in social media marketing, having a presence has become a necessity rather than an afterthought for B2B organisations. It's easy to set up an account, but it requires plenty of effort to run it effectively. New trends and apps appear all the time. Existing channels change their rules all the time, with Facebook being the latest to restrict

organic brand presence. Stay curious and keep up with the news and the trends.

Alive



kicking

SQUAREDOT TIP

Content is your marketing voice and your pulse. Don't stop producing it or you'll flatline!

40% of Irish marketers are spending up to 25 hours per week on content marketing, with 12% spending up to 50 hours p/w and 11% spending over 50% p/w

Marketing pulse

With many Irish marketers spending a considerable amount time and effort regularly on content, it's clear that its importance is understood. Indeed you could say content gives a voice to the brand. You'll need content on your website, and social media channels, for any personas to take you seriously as an authority and trust you. Without these resources, you're unlikely to get noticed or make a good first impression if you do. But it's not just a voice. It's your marketing pulse too. It will keep things ticking along, nurturing leads through the funnel.

Content of all trades master of none

SQUAREDOT TIP

Don't forget to advertise whatever it is you're marketing. Create content that has cut through. Try to be different. Don't be afraid to peek outside the box, too. Even humour works surprisingly well in the B2B space.

The content theme most Irish marketers want to read about in 2018 is marketing strategy

Strategy

Just over 70% of our respondents have documented content marketing plans. But just how battle-hardened are these plans? Their effectiveness could be called into question since the content theme most people want to read about in 2018 is marketing strategy. There is a clear desire to do things better.

The classic B2B marketing playbook rules of engagement are to research personas and develop ongoing content pain point by pain point, mapped out along your persona lifecycle. But is this enough to stand out from the crowd? Sure isn't everybody else doing the same?

Maybe take a step back, indeed a step up, see the bigger picture, and how you can stand out. Aim for campaigns with a strong identity that communicate a little bit sharper; where all outputs, formats and messaging all sing from the same hymn sheet with a consistent look, feel, and tone.

The Defibrillator & the sawdust

The big idea

In addition to your marketing pulse, we would also recommend a campaign 'defibrillator' to announce your presence, unify your messaging and kickstart momentum in getting people landing on your site and investigating your offer.

It could be anything: a YouTube viral, a publicity stunt, a social media campaign, a DM targeted campaign, a B2B survey in conjunction with the Marketing Institute of Ireland... anything. It just needs to get noticed, make an impression and kickstart inbound curiosity.

It's important to squeeze everything you can out of your bigger content investments. This means atomising it, grinding it down to

the sawdust to make a whole heap of micro content out of your bigger piece.

For example, expect plenty of social media activity on the Squaredot account around this very survey. One piece of original research can lead to any number of slideshares, infographics, ebooks, videos, podcasts, blogs, tweets, gifs...you get the idea.

SQUAREDOT TIP

Squeeze every drop of juice out of your content e.g. one ebook can generate any number of social media assets.

CONCLUSION

Who leads?

Numbers are the name of the game in B2B marketing. Numbers of leads, contacts, opens, clicks, visits, and all manner of metrics. Our survey generated more numbers and we compared the stats with similar global trends.

While all these numbers are interesting, they don't reveal all the answers. Nor do they reveal anybody 'leading' per se. What works for some, won't for others. Trends charts, best practice guides and case studies are all very well, but replicating

the success of others requires more than a 'cut and paste' approach.

Fully embracing the move towards the future requires a period of adjustment, recalibration of strategies, and willingness to experiment with which channels work best for your business. Concentrate on where your opportunities lie, how to offer value to your personas through compelling and unique content and work out the best channels and budgets, in the most cost effective manner...

Nobody ever said this was easy.





**KEEP
CALM
AND
LEAD YOUR
MARKET**

WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

57 people took the Irish B2B Marketing Survey



● **What is your level in the company?**

Manager	49%
Director	16%
Executive	16%
C level	14%
Vice president	5%

● **What is your company's average annual revenue?**

€10 - €499	37%
€1m - €9m	25%
€1b +	14%
€250k - €999,999k	11%
Less than €250k	11%
€500m - €999m	4%

● **What industry do you work in?**

IT	21%
Marketing agency	16%
Financial service	16%
Software	14%
Consumer products	7%
Education	5%
Media publishing	5%
Manufacturing	5%
Healthcare /Tourism	4%
Telecommunications	4%
Non profit / Government	2%
Research	2%

METHODOLOGY

Squaredot used SurveyMonkey to gather and analyse data. In total, 57 Irish B2B Marketers completed the survey.

We asked 20 questions, including demographic questions; single-answer multiple choice; multiple-answer multiple choice, and one open-ended question.

In cases where we compare how respondents ranked their preferences, ranking score is taken as the most accurate result for occurrence of a particular order. We use simple percentages wherever possible. Percentages are rounded to nearest whole number for ease and clarity.



SQUAREDOT

Squaredot are an Irish B2B digital agency with global ambitions. We generate demand by connecting brands with the modern B2B buyer. Squaredot use research and data to inform targeted marketing collateral, combined with award winning design and copywriting to craft engaging content that converts attention into leads. Squaredot's services include research, strategy, persona development, content production design and promotion.



SQUAREDOT



MARKETING INSTITUTE OF IRELAND

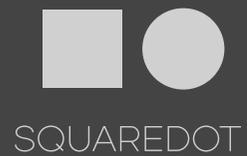
The Marketing Institute is the professional body for Ireland's marketing people. It exists "to enable marketers to build great brands and great careers". It does this by sharing best practice, insights and expert content, building the community of marketers, and aiding marketers in career progression.

The three themes of content, community and career underpin all Institute activities. The Marketing Institute also owns and operates the All Ireland Marketing Awards, the CMO Summit, and DMX Dublin, Ireland's largest marketing conference.



The
Marketing
Institute





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