



Content marketing trends and challenges

Based on a 2017 content marketing questionnaire survey conducted among 200 small, medium and large sized B2B and B2C companies.

Content

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Introduction

The global content marketing industry is growing and it is getting bigger than ever. More and more companies use the discipline for building long-term strategies based on strong customer relationships, by creating and distributing relevant and targeted content on a consistent basis. In fact, content marketing is projected by [PQ Medias' Content Marketing Forecast](#) to turn into a \$300 billion industry by 2019.

To learn more about what is driving the evolution we have conducted a content marketing questionnaire survey among 200 small, medium and large sized B2B and B2C companies.

Here are the key takeaways:

- Our respondents' current content marketing usage and spending is still limited and below international average, but is expected to grow during 2017
- Large sized companies with a combined B2B+B2C focus tend to spend the most resources on content marketing
- B2B companies are focusing on generating long-term brand awareness, whereas B2C aim for short-term sales
- All companies, regardless of size and industry, use Google Analytics as their preferred analytics tool, but struggle to find sustainable ways for measuring their content marketing return on investment (ROI)

In this white paper, we will analyze and cross-reference the results to identify current content marketing trends and challenges, and to pinpoint differences according to company sizes and industries.

Feel free to use the findings to benchmark your own efforts.

1. The survey

During fall 2016 and spring 2017, we conducted a content marketing questionnaire that will help pinpoint current content marketing tendencies and challenges across businesses size and focus (B2B and B2C). The survey is based on feedback from 200 clients, who have described their daily use of content marketing based on the following definition:

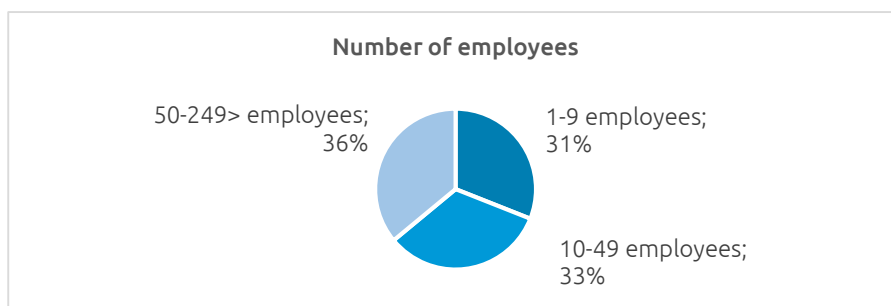
"A strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience - and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action."

To ensure realistic and interdisciplinary insights, we decided not to limit our respondents to content marketing experts or industry leaders, but have asked a vast variety of business professionals who are familiar with their companies' content marketing efforts.

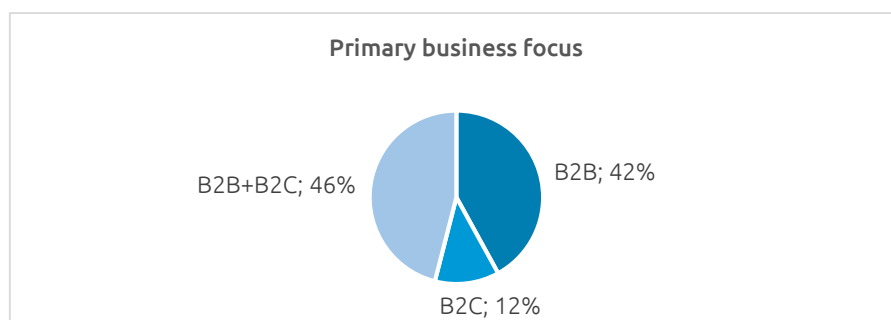
1.1 Demographics

Starting with the basics, we asked our respondents to describe their demographics in order to cross-reference the survey results and pinpoint differences according to company size and business focus.

The first graph shows that our respondents represented an even share of different company sizes, with a slight majority of large companies with 50-249 employees.



The second graph shows that the majority of the respondents represent B2B companies, and very few represent B2C companies. To comply with the uneven share of representatives, we will not only look at business focus, but also cross-reference according to company size.



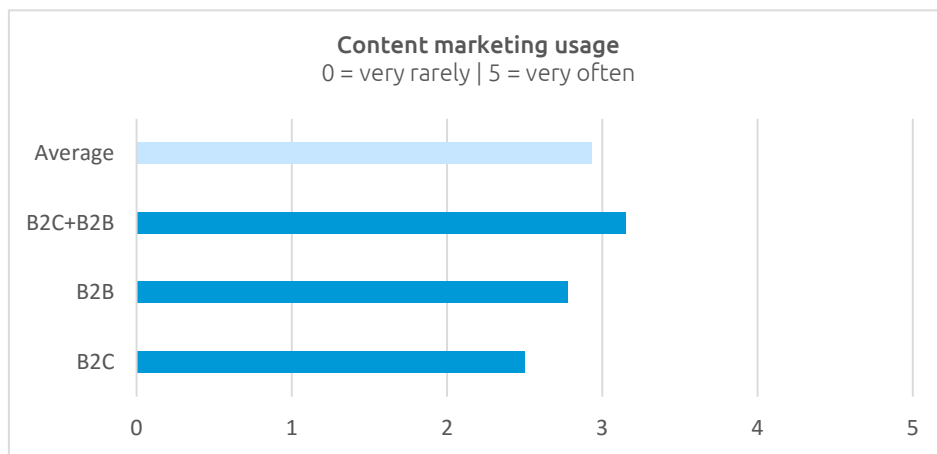
2. The current state of content marketing

Having mapped the demographics, we will now use that data to map the current state of content marketing usage and primary goals.

2.1 Content marketing usage and frequency

In general, across company size and business focus, 42% of the respondents said they only use content marketing on a rare basis, 32% use it occasionally, and only 26% use it often.

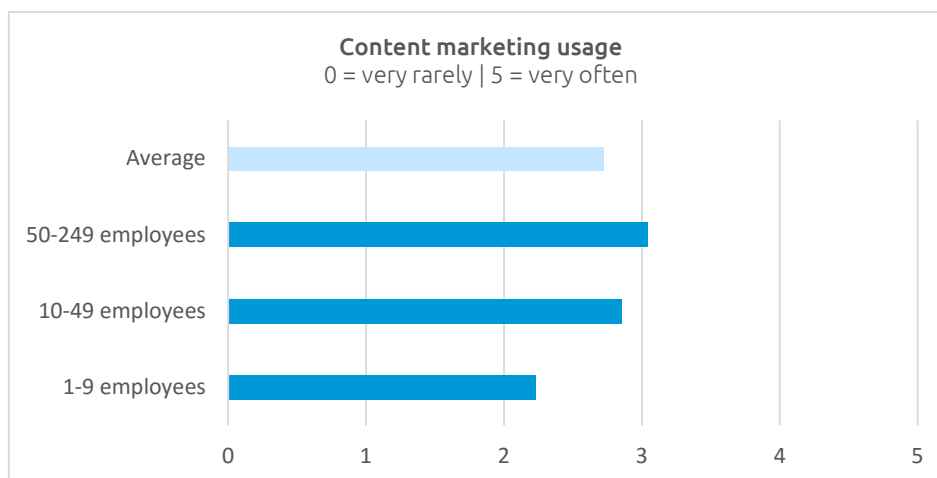
The following graph shows the usage and frequency according to business focus rated on a '0 low to 5 high frequency' score. In this case, the B2C+B2B companies take the lead against their B2C and B2B colleagues.



Key finding:

B2B+B2C companies take the lead in content marketing usage

Comparing content marketing usage to company size based on the same '0 low to 5 high' frequency score, we can see that the bigger the company – the more time is spent on content marketing. The large companies with 50-249 employees even exceeds the average.



Key finding:

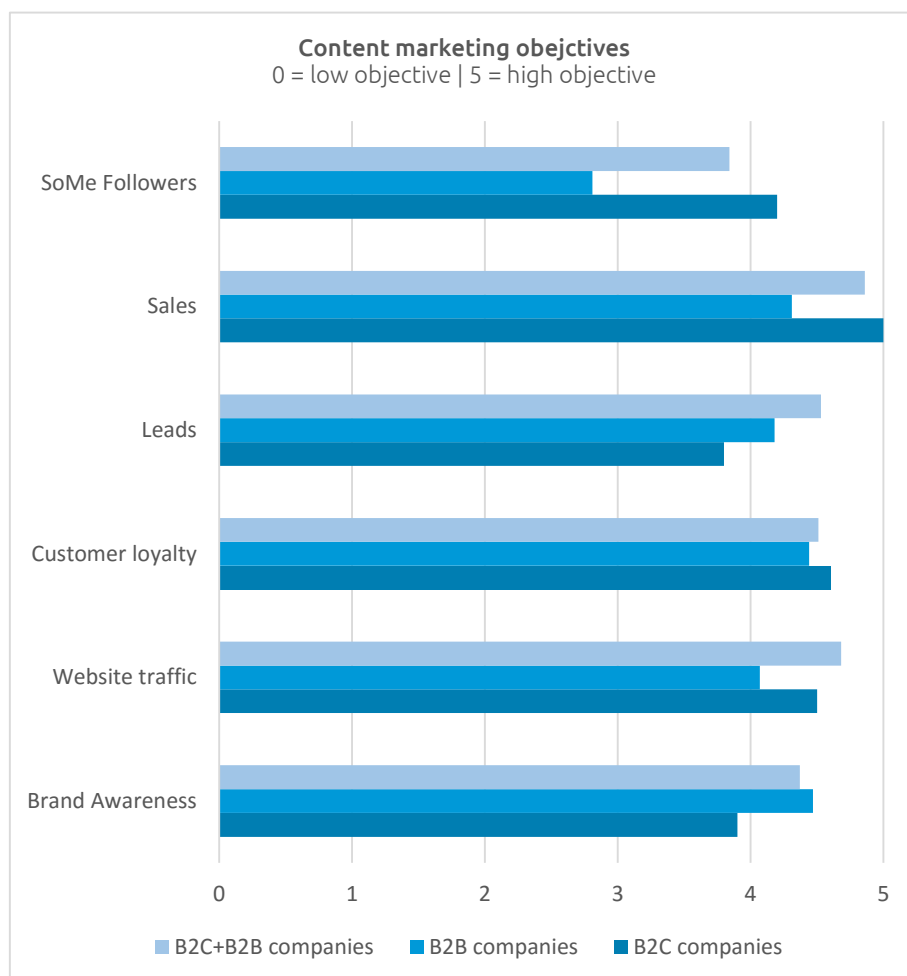
Large companies spend the most time on content marketing

The interesting thing is that the differences in content marketing usage are not reflected in current spending as 70% of our respondents, regardless of company size and business focus, spend less than 10% of their current marketing budget on content marketing.

The number is pretty low compared to other leading content marketing studies. For instance, the Content Marketing Institute's trends report, which [states](#) that on average, 29% of brands' total marketing budget, is spent on content marketing alone. The number just shows that content marketing is evolving fast, and that companies need to increase their spending during 2017 if they want to compete on a global scale.

2.2 Content marketing goals

Looking at the designated content marketing goals, we can see that 'Generating sales' takes the lead based on an overall average score. The same applies to B2C and B2C+B2B companies, who share the same top priority, whereas B2B focus more on generating brand awareness.



Key findings:

- B2C focus on sales
- B2B focus on brand awareness
- B2C+B2B focus on sales

The stats show that on the surface, the goals for marketers in B2C industries are not that different from those set out by B2B marketers. While their number one goal differ, both B2B and B2C brands think building brand awareness is important.

Especially B2B companies want to work with brands known for being good at what they do. B2B transactions often (though, not always) have a much higher “ticket value” than B2C transactions and are more likely to entail the completion of a contractual agreement. These sorts of transactions are often completed after a long, multi-stage sales process, so it drives B2B companies to strive for long-term goals based on creating content that informs and educates – that demonstrates they are one of the best, if not the best, at what they do.

B2C companies on the other hand are more likely to be concerned with short-term objectives such as generating quick sales and frequent conversions through appealing content. This kind of approach often requires more content compared to the B2B approach, since the content lifetime is relatively short.

Besides, from generating brand awareness and sales, both B2B and B2C companies define ‘Customer loyalty’ as a top priority, which seem to reflect current ecommerce tendencies described by [Forbes](#) and other business insight magazines, who argue in favor of targeting existing customers, rather than only focusing on attracting new ones.

The trend is beneficial: according to [a study by Bain & Company](#), increasing customer loyalty rates by just 5% increases profits by 25% to 95%. What is more, 82% of companies agree that retention is cheaper to execute than acquire, since people who have already bought your products or services need less processing and convincing compared to the long process of attracting and converting new customers.

At the lower end of the scale, both B2B and B2C companies agree that using Content Marketing to attract Social Media followers is less important. The reason may be that the goals of content marketing are consumption, then behavior, whereas the goals of social media are participation, then behavior.

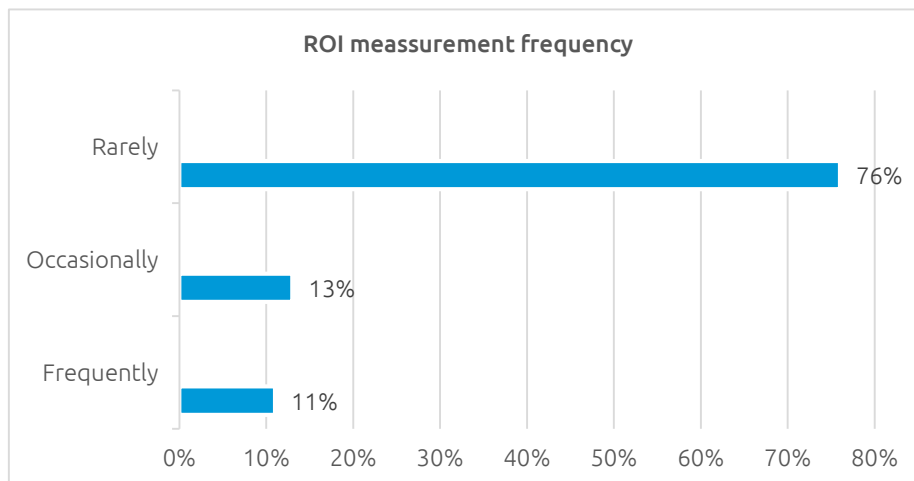


Increasing customer loyalty rates by just 5% increases profits by 25% to 95%.

- **Bain & Company**

2.3 Content marketing ROI

Finally, here is one of the most interesting findings relating to the current state of content marketing. Only 11% of the respondents tend to measure their ROI score on a frequent basis, whereas the majority seem to have adopted Content Marketing, but without any analytics tool in place.



Key finding:

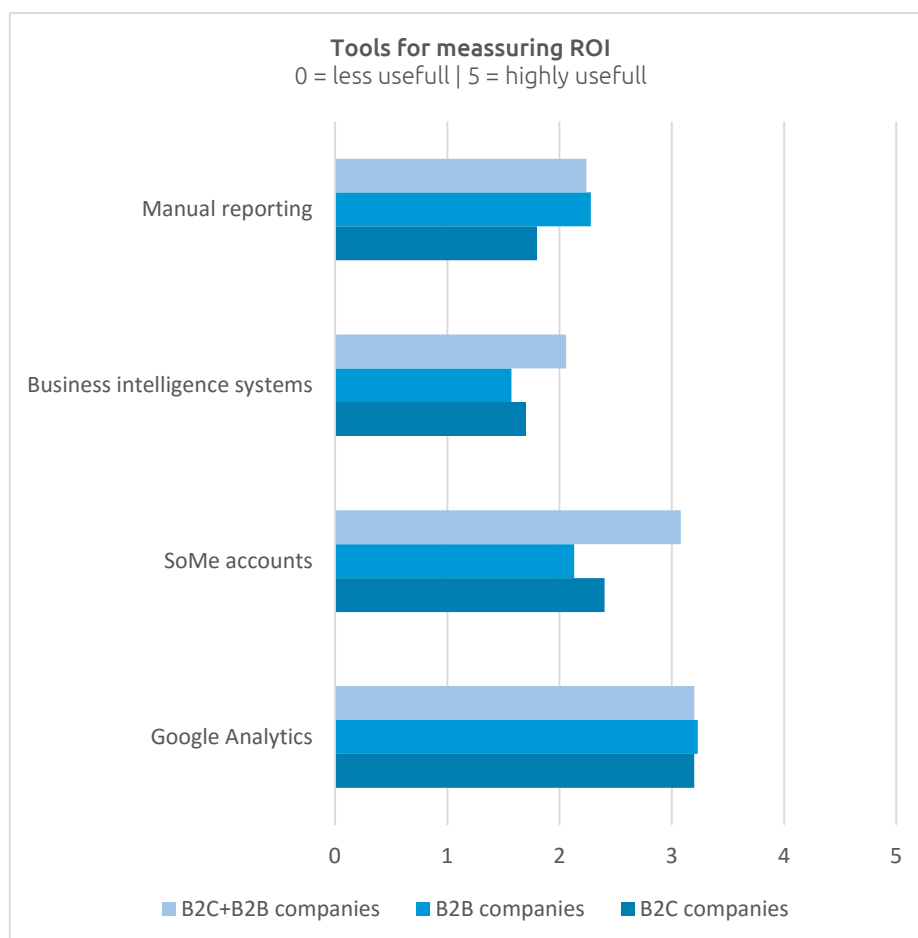
Only 11% of the respondents measure their ROI on a frequent basis

It may be that most companies are simply not interested in spending time and resources on measuring their ROI on Content Marketing. However, we previously learned that the same companies have specified clear Content Marketing goals. So why bother, if you are not able to justify your time and resources spent?

The primary reason seems to be that not all content marketing goals have specific monetary values, which then requires alternative ways of measuring the ROI, for instance through exposure, engagement etc.

To do so, companies primarily use Google Analytics, which provides general performance indicators based on number of visitors on website, page views, demographics, devices etc. combined with social media accounts like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc. that provide tools for measuring performance on each specific platform.

This following graph shows the preferred tools for measuring content marketing ROI:



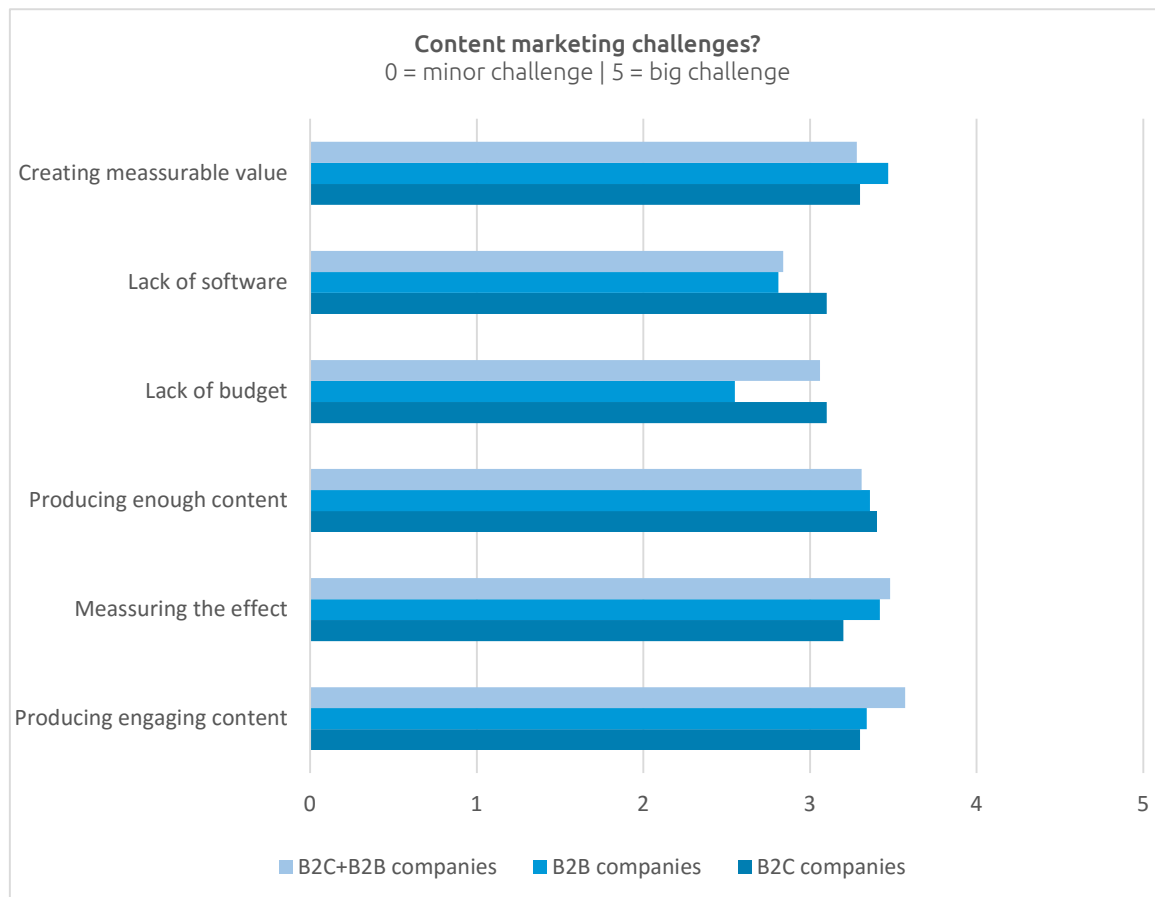
Key finding:

The majority of the respondents name Google Analytics as their preferred tool for measuring their content marketing ROI

For some companies, Google Analytics and SoMe accounts will suffice, but for others, the limited data may fall short in the long run. We will get back to that discussion later in the white paper.

3. Primary content marketing challenges

We all know that great content takes a lot of hard work and time to create, but what are the biggest challenges to content marketing? We asked our respondents to assess six central issues:



3.1 B2C content marketing challenges

Especially B2C companies are struggling to keep up with content production, since short-term relationships based on quick sales and frequent conversions require a lot of qualified content to keep the channels running.

To keep up with production and to avoid wasting time and resources, B2C companies are finding new ways of exploiting the full value and potential of their content. For instance by reconsidering their distribution methods. For example, when writing a white paper, consider prolonging its lifetime by publishing it as a blog-series. Divide it into considerable parts, publish a new part once a week, and then top of the campaign by promoting the full white paper download.

It is all about getting as much reach and attention as possible, but with a minimum amount of resources. It is a very business minded approach, and some marketers may not agree, but if you care about measuring your bottom line results, then you should start utilizing the potential in exploiting your content.

3.2 B2B content marketing challenges

According to our respondents, B2B companies are more concerned with creating content marketing value and measuring the bottom line effect, which can be difficult, especially since not all content marketing goals have specific monetary values. That means B2B companies are forced to find new alternative ways of measuring the ROI, for instance through exposure, engagement etc.

We know that most of our respondents use Google Analytics to measure their general content marketing impact. However, at some point, after several months of reporting that 215 people converted into a lead last month from a PPC campaign, most executives will want to know, "Which people? And how much money did we make from them?" This is where Google Analytics tend to fall short.

Instead, some companies choose business intelligence systems like a Customer Relationship Management (CRM), because it enables them to collect extensive data on their customers and leads across different platforms. The companies then use the data to generate valuable long-term brand awareness and customer loyalty through customer segmentation and content personalization.

However, the survey shows that very few respondents are currently using a BI system and even those who do may lack the necessary integrations to keep track across different platforms.

3.3 B2B+B2C content marketing challenges

The combined B2B+B2C companies share somewhat the same challenges as the B2C companies, which is to generate content. However, the B2B+B2C are not challenged by the frequency, but by the quality and its ability to engage the target audience.

According to [Forbes](#), consumers are not swayed by advertising. The right way to get their attention is through storytelling. Provide a great story, connect with them emotionally and give them something they can relate to. For instance, by showing the real faces of the people behind your brand. Interview your customers and share the truth (which may not be as pretty as your highly spun messaging). These are the things that help consumers trust you.

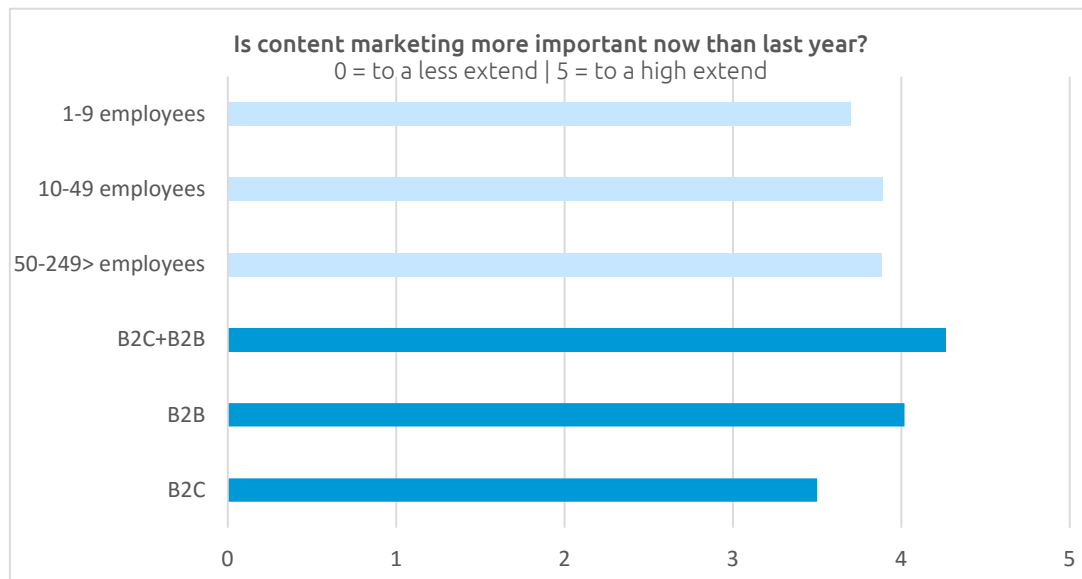


Not all content marketing goals have specific monetary values. That means B2B companies are forced to find new alternative ways of measuring the ROI

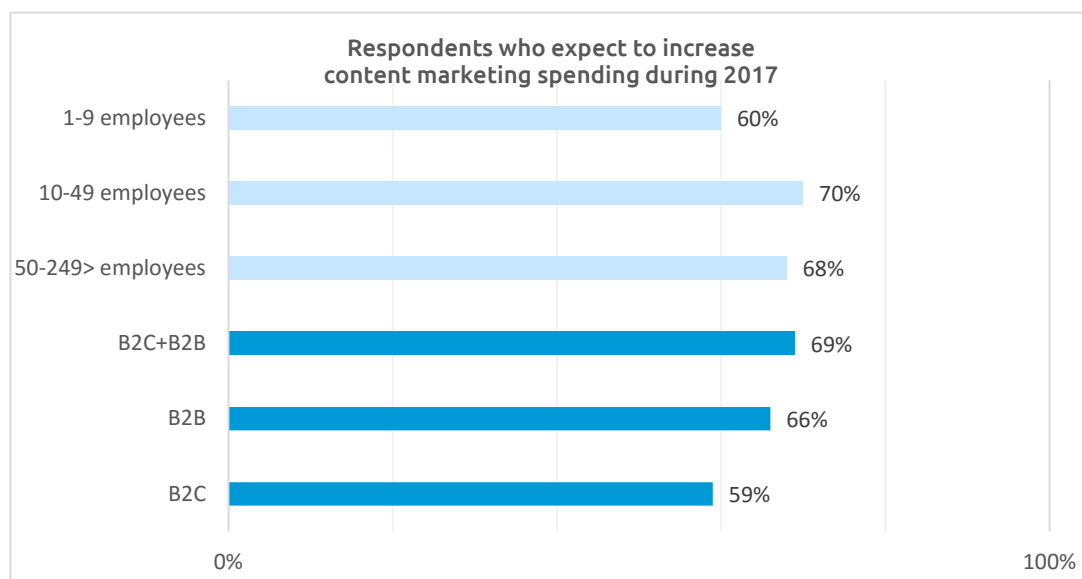
4. The future for content marketing

Looking ahead, the feedback shows that despite the current limited use of content marketing our respondents are starting to pay more attention as 2/3rds agree that content marketing is more important now than last year.

Especially the large B2C+B2B companies with 50-249> employees are preparing to step up their content marketing game in the near future:



The growing awareness seems to reflect on the expected future spending, as 2/3rds are expecting to increase their Content Marketing budget during 2017.



5. Key findings

How do they compare to your content marketing efforts?

Feedback based on company size	1-9 employees	10-49 employees	50 – 249+ employees
Budget allocated to content marketing	<10%	<10%	<10%
Content marketing frequency	Occasionally	Occasionally	Often
Primary content marketing objectives	Generate sales	Increase brand awareness	Generate customer loyalty
Primary content marketing challenges	Create actual value	Producing enough content	Measuring the effect
Preferred content marketing ROI measuring tool	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Google Analytics
Content marketing ROI measuring frequency	Rarely	Rarely	Occasionally
Is content marketing more important now than last year?	To some extent	To some extent	Absolutely
Will you increase content marketing budget in 2017?	Yes = 60% No = 40%	Yes = 70% No = 30%	Yes = 68% No = 32%

Feedback based on business focus	B2C	B2B	B2C+B2B
Budget allocated to content marketing	<10%	<10%	<10%
Content marketing frequency	Occasionally	Occasionally	Often
Primary content marketing objectives	Generate sales	Increase brand awareness	Generate sales
Primary content marketing challenges	Produce enough content	Create actual value	Produce engaging content
Preferred content marketing ROI measuring tool	Google Analytics	Google Analytics	Google Analytics
Content marketing ROI measuring frequency	Rarely	Occasionally	Occasionally
Is content marketing more important now than last year?	To some extent	Absolutely	Absolutely
Will you increase content marketing budget in 2017?	Yes = 59% No = 41%	Yes = 66% No = 34%	Yes = 69% No = 31%

Working with content in Dynamicweb

When working with content, you do not want to depend on coding and complicated templates - you just want to focus on creating and optimizing content!

With Dynamicweb, you benefit from a clean, intuitive and user friendly interface with easy navigation that enables you to work faster and smarter.

As an editor, you get all the essential editing tools for working with text and images – including A/B split testing, personalization, language versions, and SEO optimization.

Everything is wrapped in a new user interface build for speed and user friendliness, which enable you to move back and forth between different areas in Dynamicweb, e.g. CMS, File Manager and Marketing, without saving or losing content.



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