

CONTENTIV 

Reinventing B2B media & events



2018
B2B MARKETING SURVEY

KEY FINDINGS

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CONTENTS

Introduction

Methodology

Key Findings

- » Future B2B Marketing Trends
- » Key Marketing Goals
- » Investment and ROI
- » The Role of the Modern B2B Marketer
- » The Maze of Distraction

Audience Overview

Final Thoughts

About Contentive

The Rise of the Modern B2B Marketer

Marketing used to be considered an art, but technology is turning it into a science.

CMOs now have access to the largest IT budget in many organisations, while emerging martech tools are providing B2B marketers with a range of technologies, channels and tactics to test, learn and optimise their marketing strategies.

Given the explosion of data, analytics and automation tools available, B2B marketers are now in a better position than their sales counterparts to understand and determine the buyer’s journey from discovery, education and evaluation to conversion.

The modern B2B marketer owns the tools and systems to listen to the voice of the customer, learn about their motivations or buying signals earlier in the sales cycle than ever before, and using a data-driven approach they can predict a prospect’s readiness to engage with the sales team.

Developments in computing power, the internet and social media have created an ever-growing supply of digital content. For busy executives, staying up-to-date with new developments is a major challenge in the new ‘attention economy’.

With more pressure on ROI and competition from new entrants to the market, the modern B2B marketer is looking for ways to cut through the noise to distribute their marketing messages and work with trusted media partners to leverage existing marketing channels.

The challenge for the modern B2B marketer is to navigate this maze of distraction and identify the most effective

marketing channels for the best ROI and accelerate their lead generation strategy.

We surveyed our trusted community of B2B marketing leaders to understand the key marketing trends and pain points for the modern B2B marketing professional.

We learned that the modern B2B professional is constantly testing and learning which channels work for them using a data-driven multi-touch approach when planning their marketing strategies.

They are leveraging emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and personalisation to tailor their marketing messages based on buyer personas and audience segmentation.

Methodology

- » The findings of this report were compiled by Contentive, a global B2B media and events company.
- » We surveyed our community of B2B marketing professionals and the ClickZ audience.
- » The report is based on the 214 responses to the survey.

Key Findings

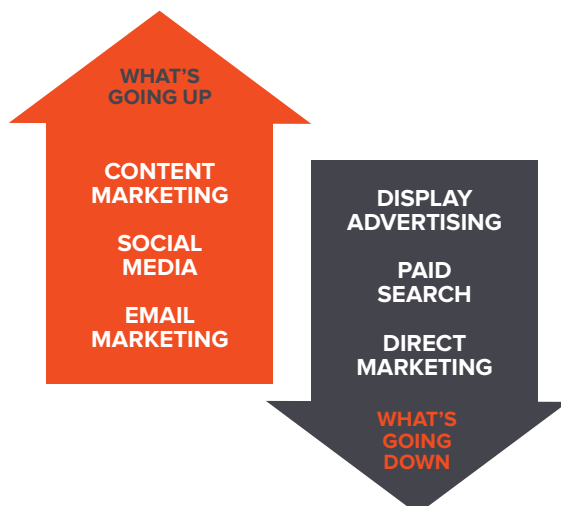
57% of B2B marketers think personalisation will have the greatest influence on their marketing strategy in the next 12 months.

48% of B2B marketers budget on an on-going basis.

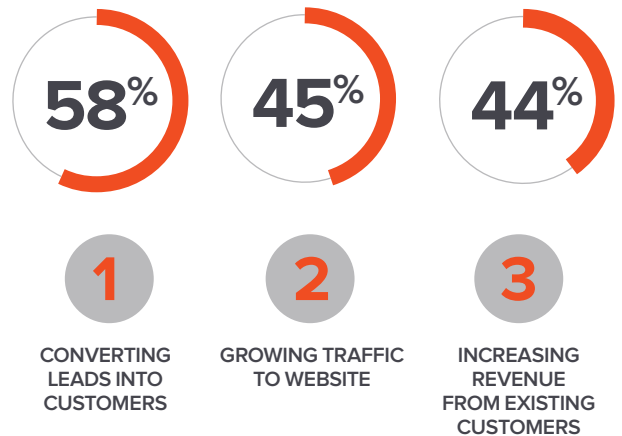
Modern B2B marketers collaborate with **five or more** colleagues to make key strategic decisions.



The most important channels for marketing strategy and budget allocation over the next 12 months.



Top business priorities for B2B marketers



50% of B2B marketers prefer leads from the top, middle and bottom of the sales funnel.

B2B marketers capture leads at all stages of the funnel, from awareness to consideration and evaluation.



Coining the term 'smarketing' for B2B sales and marketing teams, with leads being passed between marketing and sales to be nurtured across all stages of the buyer's journey.

Future B2B Marketing Trends

The key trend for B2B marketers is a focus on personalisation and artificial intelligence to tailor marketing messages based on account-based targeting.

Advancements in artificial intelligence and marketing automation have enabled B2B marketers to experiment with chat bots and personalisation to create a customer-centric experience and track the end-to-end buyer’s journey. Almost 60% of survey respondents believed personalisation will have the greatest influence on their marketing strategy in the next 12 months (Ref Fig 1).

Interestingly, B2B marketers are also focused on leveraging influencer marketing strategies, similar to how B2C marketers use brand endorsements via social media channels. Influencer marketing has been leveraged by modern B2B marketers to identify industry influencers for brand awareness or working with media or event partners, to tap into an engaged community of potential buyers.

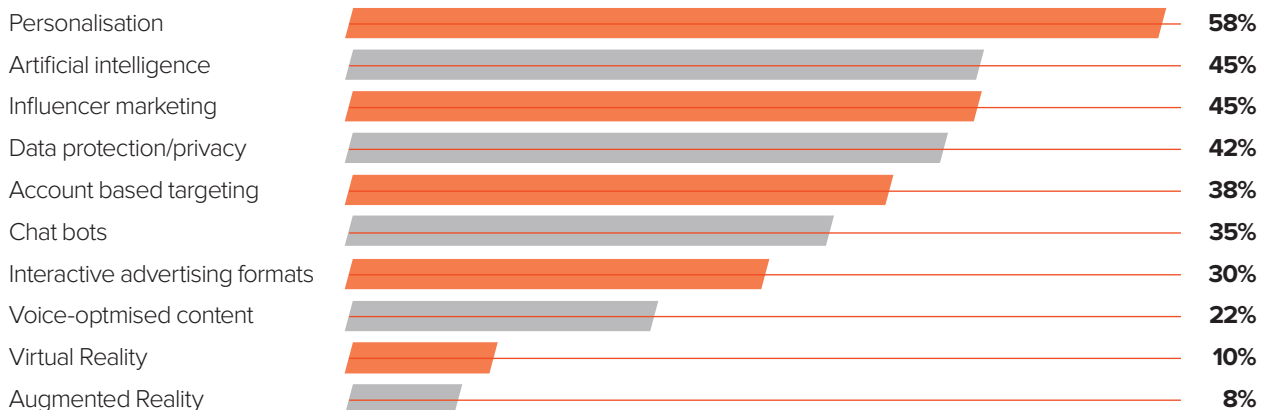
In recent years, there has been a lot of hype around emerging technologies such as virtual reality and augmented reality; however, these technologies are yet to go mainstream. Only 8% of survey respondents considered augmented reality and 10% believed virtual reality as key B2B marketing trends. This would suggest the VR/AR market needs to mature before it’s leveraged by the modern B2B marketer.

58% of B2B marketers think personalisation will have the greatest influence on their marketing strategy in the next 12 months.

With GDPR coming into effect this year, it’s no surprise that data protection and privacy is high on the agenda for B2B marketers, as well as the impact on lead generation strategies. Depending on the organisation’s approach, GDPR will influence both customer retention and acquisition strategies in the coming months.

Fig 1

Which of these emerging trends are most likely to influence your marketing plans in the next 12 months?



Key Marketing Goals

For the modern B2B marketing professional, converting marketing-qualified leads into customers has always been a top priority, with 58% of our survey respondents focussing on lead conversion as their number one goal.

These days the modern buyer is researching online and looking for information to help them find the right tools for the job. According to the CEB, 57% of the purchasing decision happens before a sales call ever takes place.

For the modern B2B marketer, lead conversion requires multi-touch points of key messages and proof points to influence their buyer’s decision-making process. Traditionally, B2B marketers were responsible for ‘top of the funnel’ leads and passing these leads directly to the sales team. Today, B2B marketers are now responsible for every stage of the buying process from awareness to consideration, conversion and retention. In fact, 50% of survey respondents demand leads at all stages of the funnel – top, middle and bottom – to nurture leads for marketing campaigns.

What is interesting is that driving traffic to the company website is the second highest priority, which suggests that B2B marketers emphasise the value of their ‘shop window’, ensuring their brand messages match the company’s story and mission. With access to sophisticated data and analytics, marketers can track the entire customer journey from visiting external sites and social media channels, to retargeting them back to their company website and landing pages.

Finally, the modern B2B marketer focusses on both new business acquisition and pipeline and customer retention, with increasing revenue from existing customers as a top priority.

TOP BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR B2B MARKETERS

58%
CONVERTING LEADS INTO CUSTOMERS

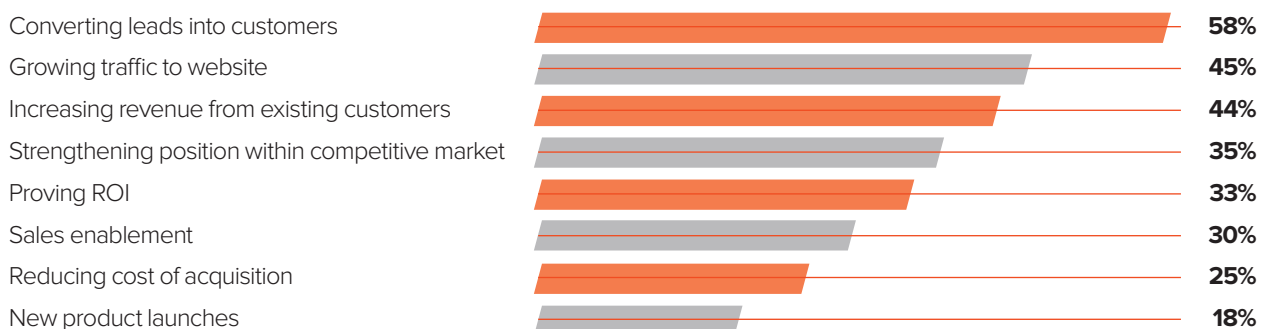
45%
GROWING TRAFFIC TO WEBSITE

44%
INCREASING REVENUE FROM EXISTING CUSTOMERS

35%
STRENGTHENING POSITION WITHIN COMPETITIVE MARKET

33%
PROVING ROI

Fig 2 What is your organisation’s top 3 marketing priorities over the next 12 months?



Marketing Investment and ROI

For the modern B2B marketer, the goal posts are constantly moving, meaning they need to budget accordingly and make decisions on where to spend budget on an ongoing basis. As marketing budgets continue to evolve, B2B marketers are held accountable on revenue metrics that directly impact the organisation’s bottom line.

The majority of survey respondents set both the budget and allocated marketing resources for their campaign strategy, with 38% of respondents responsible for both the budget and allocation of resources.

Digital marketing spend has consistently grown year-on-year with a focus on search, email marketing, content marketing and social media channels. This means businesses are shifting their marketing spend to digital strategies rather than traditional B2B marketing channels. This trend is expected to continue for the next several years.

Today, the modern B2B marketer needs to be more agile and savvy with their budget, often running pilot programmes before they commit spend.

This trend suggests that the allocation of marketing budgets depends on the company’s goals from brand awareness and thought leadership to lead generation.

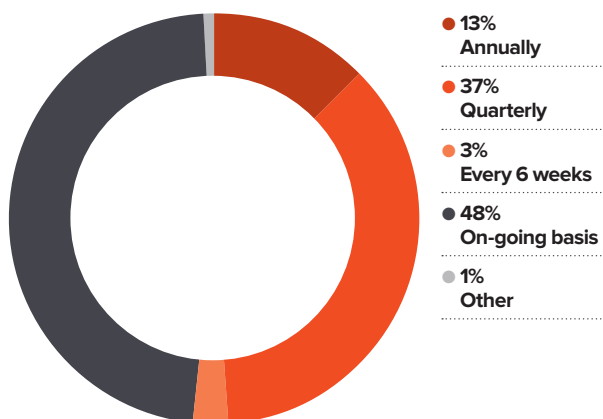
48% of B2B marketers plan their marketing budget on an on-going basis.

For traditional marketing channels, B2B marketers tend to plan on a yearly or quarterly basis, generally allocating their budget to tried and tested channels that convert into ROI.

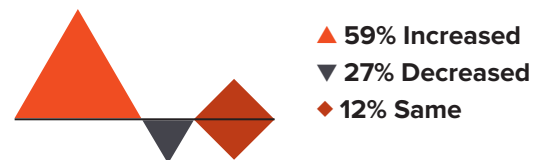
Marketing spend for B2B marketers

Marketing budgets are expected to increase year-on-year: 59% of survey respondents said their market budget increased this year, and 68% believe their marketing budget is expected increase next year.

Fig 3 How frequently do you plan your marketing activity



Has your budget increased or decreased this year?



Do you expect your budget to increase or decrease for next year?



The Role of the Modern B2B Marketer

The roles and responsibilities of the modern B2B marketing professional are evolving, with new skills required to negotiate the purchasing decisions as part of a consensus sell, with five or more colleagues influencing the buying decisions.

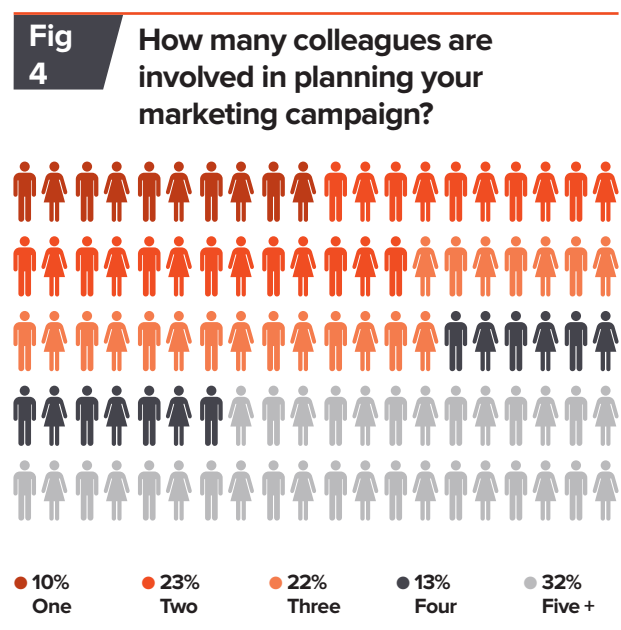
The skill set of the modern B2B marketing professional is ever-expanding and their role is to not only harness the power of brand to fuel growth (i.e. competitive positioning, product messaging and industry marketing), but also to understand how leveraging new technologies can help automate, scale and optimise sales and marketing processes for the business.

It's also important that the modern B2B can translate the value of marketing spend to the senior leadership team on key business metrics such as customer lifetime value, sales team response time, cost of customer acquisition and not just page impressions, unique website visits, brand engagement and brand building activities such as events.

Modern B2B Marketers work closely with the technical and product teams to make data-driven decisions that are based on experiments and not just gut feelings. They measure and monitor customer engagement and feedback, to not only help drive the product roadmap but also act as the 'voice of the customer' to ensure there is a product/market fit.

32% of B2B marketers work with five or more colleagues when planning campaigns.

The modern B2B marketer champions collaboration and knows how to work well with sales, product, engineering, and operations to efficiently and effectively drive the business forward. Specifically, the modern B2B marketer works with the sales team to form part of the 'smarketing' sales and marketing team to work in tandem with aligned business goals. It's critical that the modern B2B marketer understands the customer's needs, and that they collaborate with the sales team to communicate shared KPIs and objectives.



The Maze of Distractions

For the modern B2B marketer, adopting a multi-channel approach means that there is a maze of distraction when evaluating the most effective strategy for lead generation activity. With an array of digital channels to choose from, the modern B2B marketer can be overwhelmed by choice, as they are constantly experimenting with different channels and content formats.

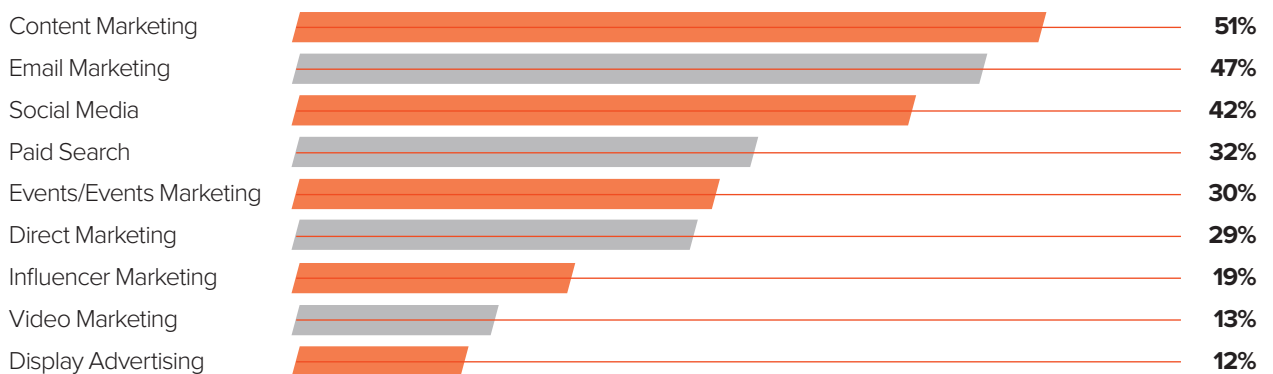
When asked which channels provided the best ROI for their marketing strategy, content marketing, email marketing and social media channels were the top results (Ref Fig 5). These channels continue to be important within the B2B marketing mix, with favoured content formats including social media posts, case studies and video marketing, followed closely by white papers and industry reports (Ref Fig 6).

51%
CONSIDER CONTENT MARKETING AS THE BEST CHANNEL FOR ROI

56%
PRODUCE CONTENT IN-HOUSE RATHER THAN OUTSOURCING TO AN AGENCY

52%
ARE ONLY MODERATELY SATISFIED WITH THEIR CONTENT MARKETING EFFORTS

Fig 5 Which marketing channels provide the best ROI for your business?



The Maze of Distractions

A key challenge continues to be around planning the customer journey via multi-touch points, generating sales-qualified leads and finding the right distribution partners.

Most survey respondents were ‘getting there’ or finding it ‘really tough’, reflecting the trend that the modern B2B marketer is never truly satisfied and looking to constantly iterate and achieve more with their marketing strategy.

TOP 3 CONTENT MARKETING FORMATS

65%

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

49%

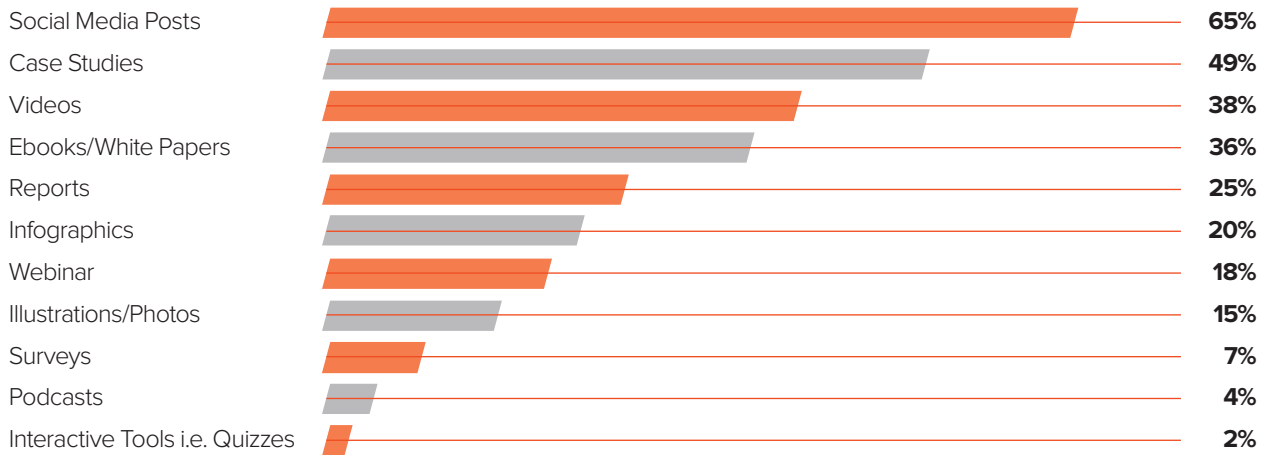
CASE STUDIES

38%

VIDEO MARKETING

Fig 6

What are your top 3 content marketing formats?



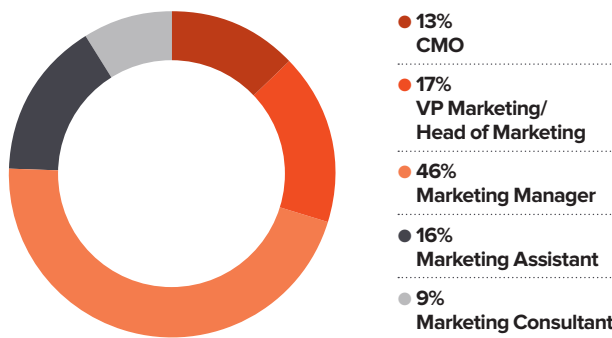
Audience Overview

Below is a snapshot of the survey respondent demographics and firmographics.

Job role

The majority of survey respondents were marketing managers, with one third of respondents in a senior leadership position (CMO, VP Marketing or Head of Marketing roles).

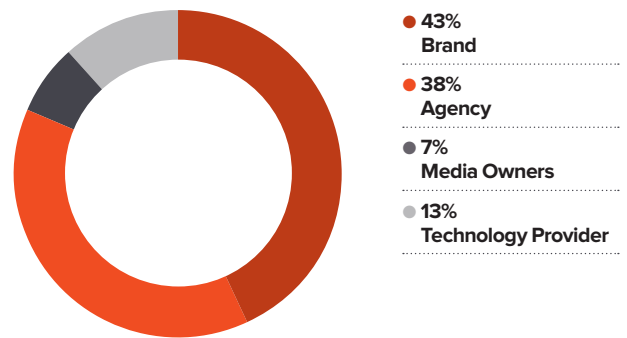
What is your job role?



Type of company

The majority of survey respondents were either working in-house for a brand or agency.

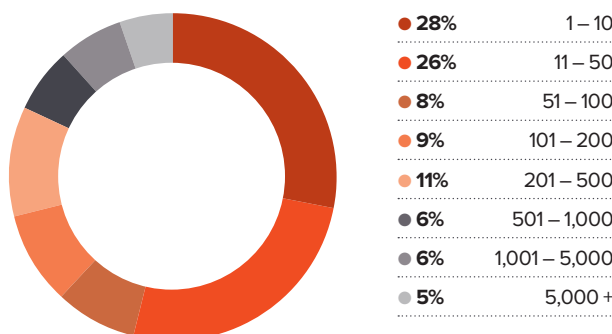
Which category best describes your company?



Size of company

The majority of survey respondents worked for small to medium-sized companies i.e. a company that had 1-50 employees.

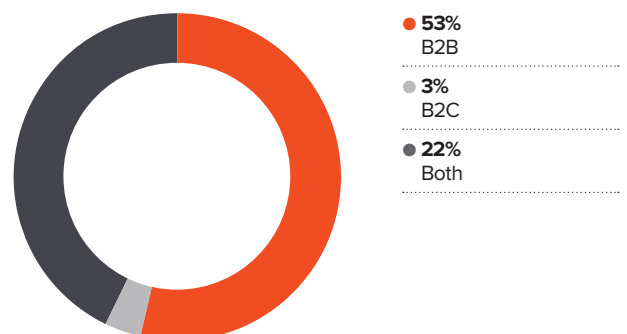
How many people are in your organisation?



Type of customers

The majority of survey respondents sold to B2B organisations; however a large portion also sold to both B2B and B2C companies.

Do you sell to businesses, individuals or both?

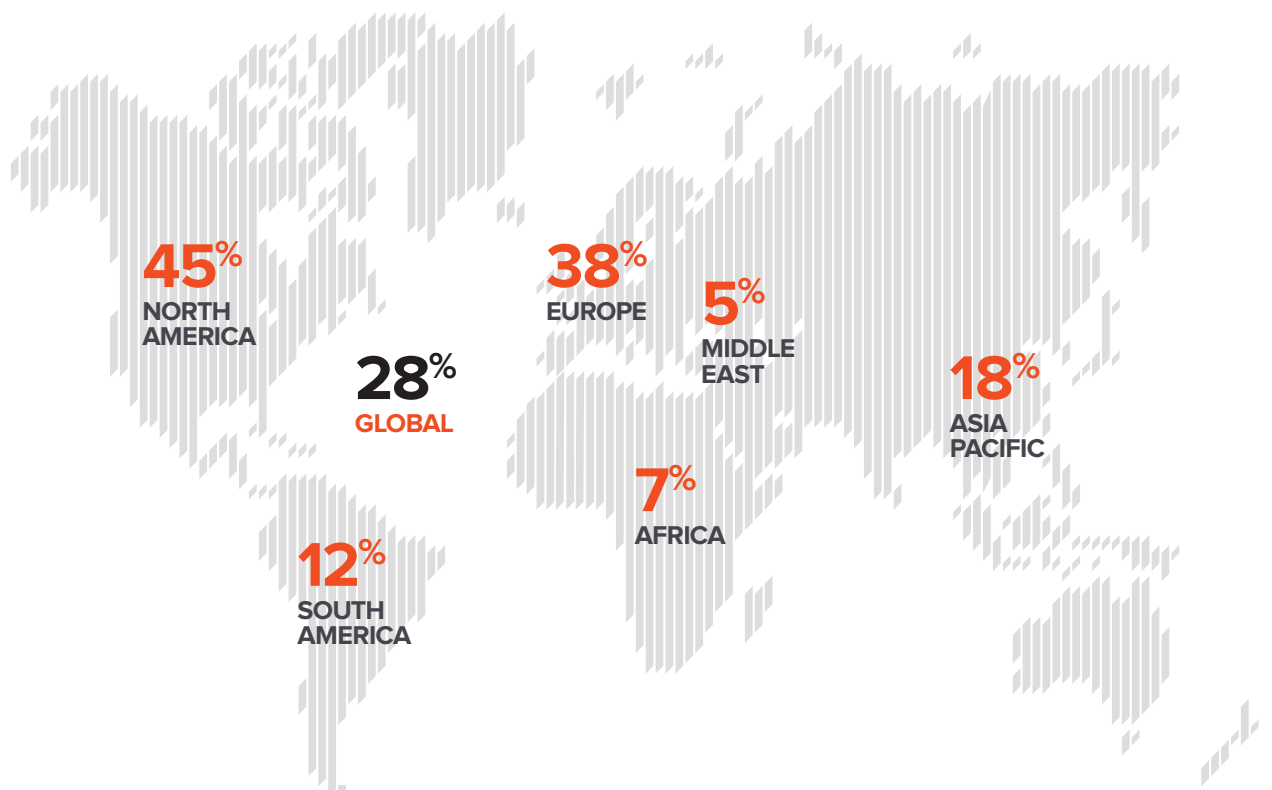


Audience Overview

Business region

The majority of survey respondents were either based in North America or Europe, and some identified as having global operations.

Which region does your business operate within?



Type of business

Most survey respondents were a service-based business rather than product-based.

What is your primary business?



Final Thoughts

For the modern B2B marketer to succeed, they need to have a blend between the art and science of marketing. What's clear from our survey findings is that the modern B2B marketer has more opportunity than ever to understand and define the buyer's journey.

It's critical that they understand both the art side – the less tangible items in the marketing mix such as brand awareness, competitive positioning, PR and messaging - while delving into the nitty gritty science side, using data and trackable lead generation campaigns and activities.

In essence, the modern B2B marketer needs to understand customers' motivations and buying behaviours to inform their marketing strategy, so they can reach and engage them at every point of the sales cycle.

It's about finding this balance to ensure the modern B2B marketing professional is optimising on all marketing channels and working with trusted partners to accelerate their lead generation activity.



**THE MODERN B2B
MARKETER EXPERIMENTS
WITH THE ART AND
SCIENCE OF MARKETING
TO CONVERT LEADS INTO
CUSTOMERS.**

ABOUT CONTENTIVE

Contentive is a global B2B media and events company, helping professionals and businesses excel in a digital world. We provide an engaging mix of news, insights and thought leadership, events and intelligence, across Digital Marketing, Accounting & Finance, HR and other business verticals.

Our products and services help senior executives excel in a world being transformed by digital transformation – and our content marketing and event solutions provide B2B marketers with access to an engaged audience of business professionals.

Founded in 2012, we have offices in London and New York. Our London team is located in the I-HUB in White City, a state-of-the-art building host to a hotbed of innovation-focused, high-growth companies. Contentive is backed by the Blenheim Chalcot group, leading active investors with annual sales of over £350M.

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CONTACT US

If you'd like to learn more about our marketing solutions, then get in touch:

Emily Mackenzie

Media Sales Director

emily.mackenzie@contentive.com

+44 (0)20 8080 9198