

MASSIVE SURVEY OF 1600 MARKETERS:

State of Marketing Strategy Report 2018

What original research into 1,597 professional marketers from 85 countries shows us about what works—and what doesn't—in modern marketing.

MARKETERS WITH
DOCUMENTED STRATEGY ARE

4.7X MORE LIKELY

TO BE SUCCESSFUL
THAN THOSE WHO *DON'T*.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Summary	4
Key Insights	6
Questions and Answers	7
1: Is your marketing successful?	8
2: Do you set marketing goals? Are you successful in achieving them?	15
3: What is your primary key performance indicator?	16
4: Do you have a documented strategy?	18
5: Do you have documented processes to execute efficiently?	21
6: How often do you publish content?	24
7: Do you consider your content to be of higher quality than others?	27
8: How much time do you collectively spend creating a piece of content?	29
9: How often do you conduct audience research?	32
10: What is the primary type of content you create?	34
Limitations	37
Survey Demographics	38

SUMMARY

Let's Begin

This “State of Marketing Strategy Report” outlines our findings from surveying nearly 1,600 professional marketers worldwide.

Our purpose was simple. We wanted to know: “Are there factors correlated with marketing success?”

The results are in—and it turns out, there are.

Testing Assumptions

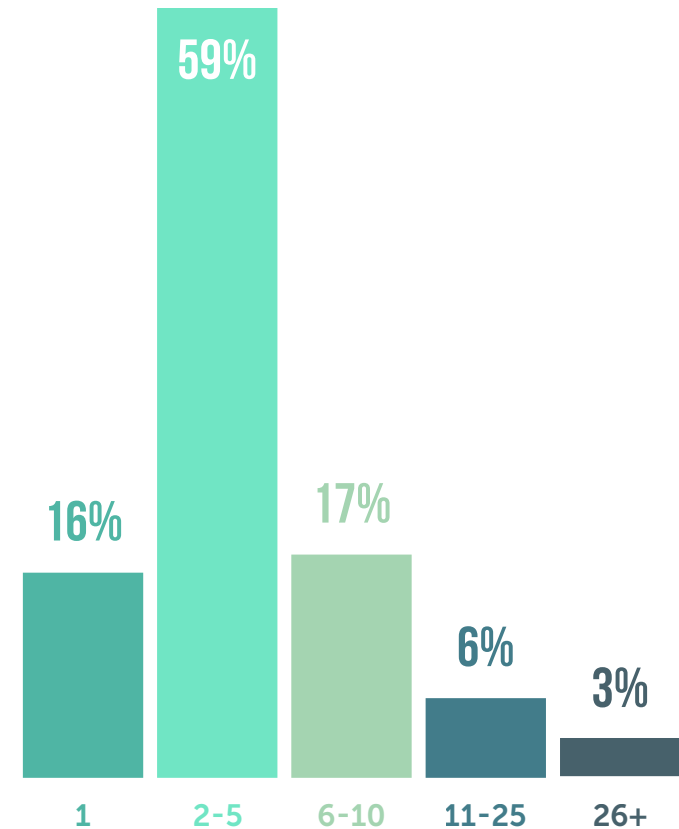
Like most marketers, we’ve made assumptions about what works in marketing strategy. We’ve operated with some common truisms. But what if these bits of standard marketing wisdom are actually myths?

Because we believe everything is anecdotal until the data backs it up, we tested our hypotheses against the numbers.

In this report, you’ll find each question along with its results and our contextualized conclusions. Our conclusions are fueled by measuring responses against one another and crunching the numbers on correlation strength.

Participant Snapshot

Here is an overview of the team sizes of those who participated in the survey.



We asked them questions to determine:

- How successful they are;
- Whether or not they document strategies and processes;
- Whether or not they set goals and achieve them;
- Their key performance indicators;
- Their content quality, publishing frequency, primary content type, and time investment in creating individual pieces of content;
- And how often they conduct audience research.

Throughout this report, successful marketers will be defined as those who responded that they either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” their marketing is successful. And elite marketers are those who “strongly agree” and “always achieve” their marketing goals “within 90% – 100%+” of the time.

Struggling marketers are defined as those who responded regarding marketing success: “neutral,” “somewhat disagree,” or “strongly disagree.”

Report Data

All report data is from a blind survey over a two-week period in August 2017. We received 1,597 responses from professional marketers. Every continent (besides Antarctica) is represented in our study; with 85 countries in total.

Because of rounding, not all percentages equal 100%. Lastly, all calculations are based upon total numbers, or a relevant sample from total numbers. Sample size is indicated as an “n = X” value.

KEY INSIGHTS

1. Top marketers document their marketing strategy.

Marketers who document strategy are 538% more likely to report success than those who don't.

2. Top marketers document their marketing processes.

Marketers who document process are 466% more likely to report success than those who don't.

3. Top marketers set goals.

Marketers who set goals are 429% more likely to report success than those who don't. And 81% of those successful, goal-setting marketers achieve them.

4. Top marketers conduct audience research.

Successful marketers are 242% more likely to report conducting audience research at least once per quarter. And 56% of our study's most elite marketers conduct research once or more per month.



THE Questions



• QUESTION #1 •

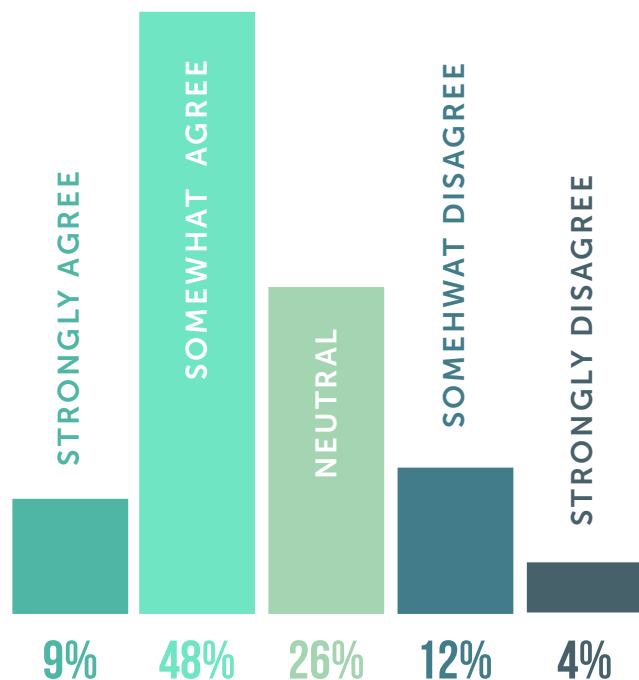
Is your marketing successful?

IS YOUR MARKETING SUCCESSFUL?

57% of Marketers Report Positive Marketing Results

Just over half of marketers reported positive results. With 48% reporting they “somewhat agree,” and 9% reporting they “strongly agree.”

This left 43% of marketers reporting either “neutral” or lackluster results.



Conclusions

We predicted:

- Content is king. Marketers who spend more time creating content will say their marketing is successful.
- Quality over quantity. Marketers who have higher quality content will say their marketing is successful.

But here's what the data *actually* say:

- There is virtually no correlation between time spent creating content and marketing success.
($R = 0.02$; $N = 1,597$; $P\text{-VALUE} < 0.0001$)
- There is some positive correlation between content quality and marketing success. But, nothing earth shattering.
($R = 0.29$; $N = 907$; $P\text{-VALUE} < 0.0001$)

First, these stats don't definitively prove quality content has been dethroned as a significant part of marketing success.

However, they do cast shade on blanket statements like our hypotheses above. And undermining the credibility of such statements was a steady theme in our study.

IS YOUR MARKETING SUCCESSFUL?

Here's a reason for this.

Data are good, but they don't always tell the whole story.

The question isn't simply, "Are you creating epic, high-quality content?"

Instead, it's, "Are you creating the right kind of epic, high-quality content?"

You can spend 30 hours or more on a single piece. But if it's not laser-focused on the right audience... Or converting traffic into customers...

It won't move the needle for your organization.

Content is not king; relevant content is. Don't simply focus on creating high-quality content. Devote yourself to creating the right kind of high-quality content.



WE ASKED JAYSON DEMERS TO WEIGH
IN ON THESE FINDINGS:

This is very interesting data, but I wonder if it reflects the ease with which perceptions can be altered by goals, rather than speaking to the objective reality of "success."

My experience strongly suggests that quality content correlates with success, so it's surprising that these results don't reflect that.

It could be because goal-setting eliminates subjective perceptions of reality, making success objectively measurable. In that context, success isn't a vague idea; it becomes demonstrable.

To me, this study shows that defining what "success" looks like, and breaking it down into quantifiable, calculable components, is essential for perceiving success in a campaign.

—JAYSON DEMERS, CEO OF AUDIENCEBLOOM

• QUESTION #2 •

Do you set marketing goals?
If so, do you achieve them?

DO YOU SET MARKETING GOALS?

The Best Marketers Set Goals (And Achieve Them)

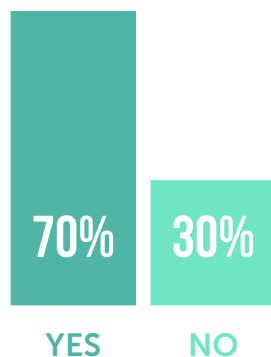
While almost two-thirds of our marketers reported success—the crowds divided sharply when it comes to goals.

It's true 70% said they set goals...

...but 81% of the “marketing goals” crowd also reported success. In fact, successful marketers are 4.3X more likely to set goals.

Our research shows marketers who set goals are 429% more likely to report success. And there is a reasonable correlation between these data, as well.

($R = 0.37$; $N = 907$; $P\text{-VALUE} < 0.0001$)



However, setting goals is not the same thing as achieving them.

So we asked the marketers who set goals this follow up question: “Are you successful in achieving your marketing goals?”

Goal setting is great. But...

...do these marketers actually hit their goals?

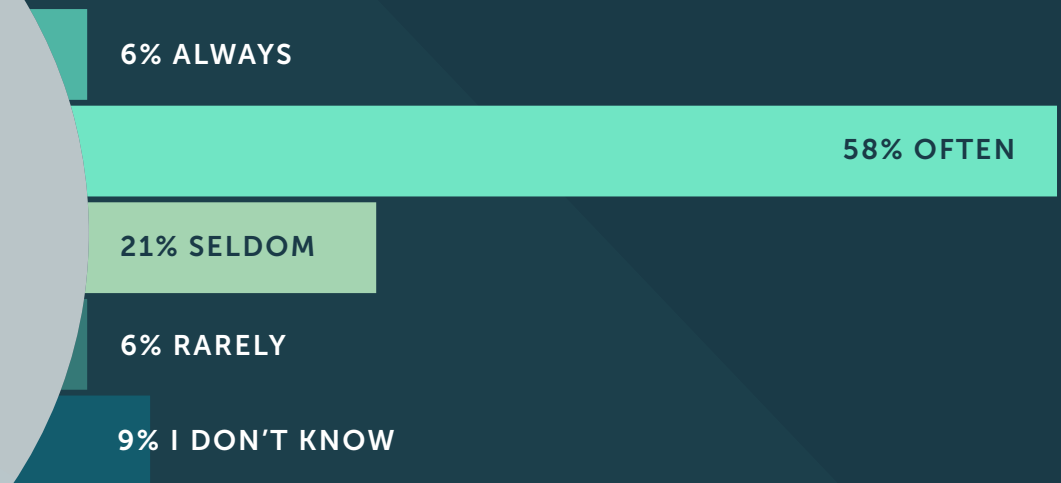
Our respondents answered:

- 58% often achieve them,
- 21% seldom achieve them,
- 9% don't know,
- 6% always achieve them,
- And 6% rarely achieve them.

Here's a breakdown of those values:

- Often achieve = within 70 – 89%
- Seldom = 50 – 69%
- Always = 90% – 100%+
- Rarely = 49% or less

**ARE YOU
SUCCESSFUL
IN ACHIEVING
YOUR MARKETING
GOALS?**



DO YOU SET MARKETING GOALS?

Our research shows marketers who both set goals and report marketing success accomplish 82% of those goals. There is a strong correlation between these data, as well.

(R = 0.5; N = 889; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

Further, 60% of marketers who set goals also have a documented strategy.

(R = 0.45; N = 1,101; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

AND THE TRIFECTA: 59% OF MARKETERS WHO REPORT SUCCESS BOTH SET GOALS AND HAVE A DOCUMENTED STRATEGY.

Conclusions

To set your team up for success, set goals. And do so understanding that maintaining the status quo is risky, too.

Achieving new goals will require new actions and skills. But old habits are tough to break and new ones hard to form.

Understanding the psychology behind habit formation will be helpful. When setting audacious goals, consider how your work needs to depart from the status quo.

• QUESTION #3 •

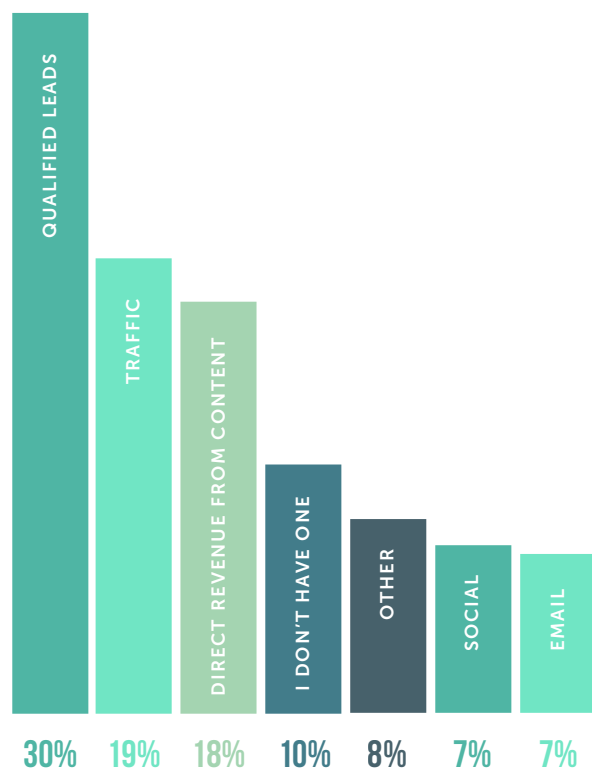
What is the primary key performance indicator on which you base your marketing's success?

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIMARY KPIS?

Marketing Success By The Numbers

We found the top three KPIs were:

- Qualified leads at 30%,
- Traffic at 19%,
- And direct revenue earned from content at 18%.



However, we found virtually no correlation between the primary KPIs tracked and marketing success.

(R = 0.15; N = 889; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

So primary KPI doesn't have much to do with success. But there's more to the story.

Interestingly, 61% of those who responded, "I don't have a key performance indicator," also answered that they do not set marketing goals.

What's more, only 4% of successful marketers said that they do not have a primary KPI.

Conclusions

While we found weak correlation between specific KPIs and success, the evidence points to measuring KPIs as a contributor to success.

Because our finding that marketers who set goals were 429% more likely to report success than those who don't, we conclude that your specific goal-driven KPI isn't the most important thing.

• QUESTION #4 •

Do you have a documented
strategy that drives all of your
marketing efforts?

DO YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED STRATEGY?

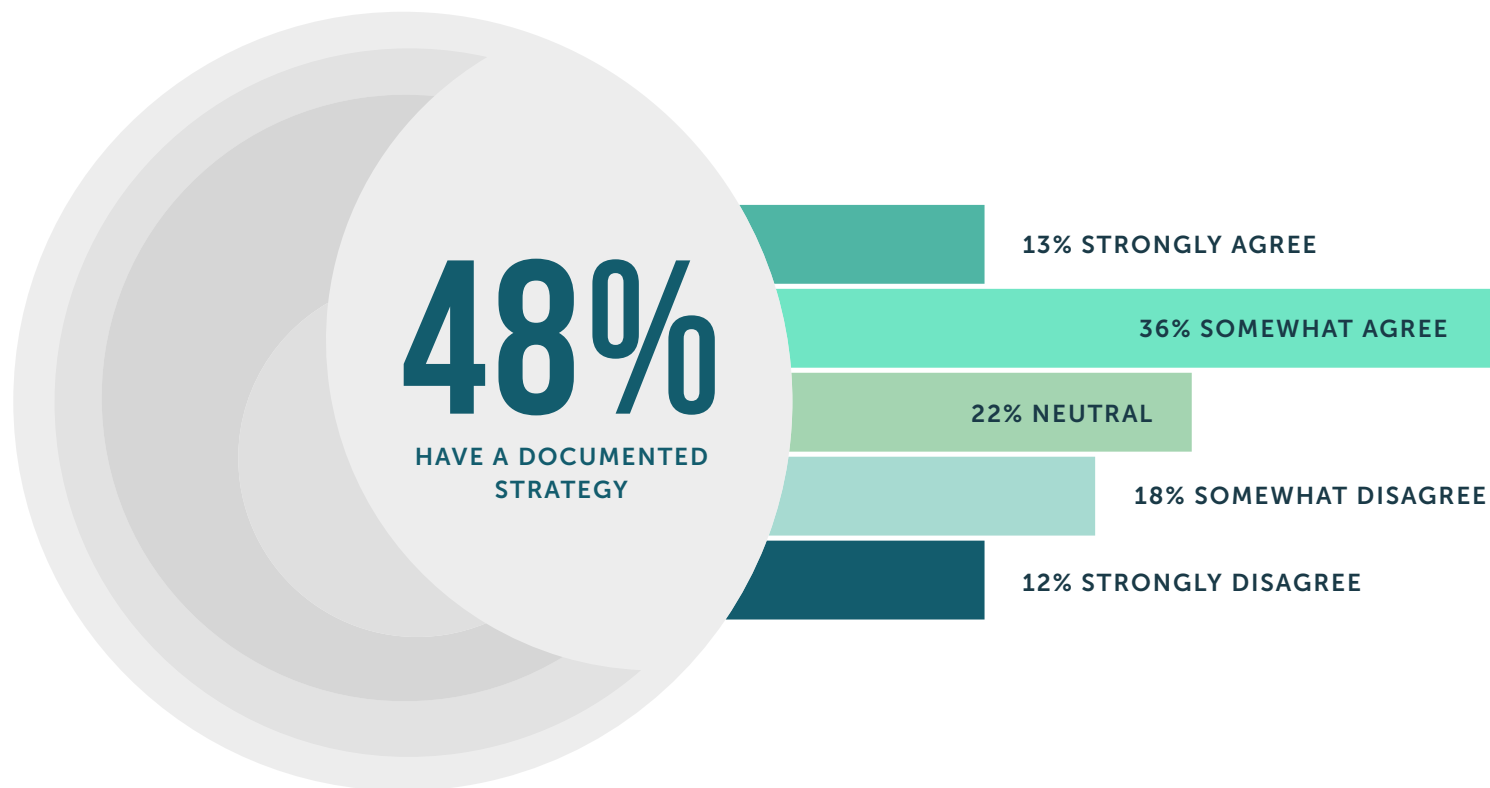
A Documented Strategy Matters

It turns out, less than half of marketers responded positively to having documented strategy, with 48% saying they did.

And this finding is where things got really interesting.

Our research shows marketers with a documented strategy are 538% more likely to report success than those who don't.

There is a definite correlation between these data, as well.
($R = 0.48$; $N = 889$; $P\text{-VALUE} < 0.0001$)



DO YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED STRATEGY?

Conclusions

84% of our survey participants work on marketing teams.

Why does this matter? Because documented strategy is an engine for clear communication.

And when you consider that 60% of marketers who set goals also document their strategy, you have a recipe for a team rowing in the same direction.

In fact, a team from MIT's Human Dynamics Laboratory documented "the behavior of teams that click."

Using what they dub "sociometric" badges, they collected data on communication behavior within teams.

One of their key findings: "Patterns of communication [are] the most important predictor of a team's success."

Documenting strategy isn't a magic panacea for your team's communication issues. But it is a centralized way ensure everyone on board knows where you're going, how you're going to get there, and what their involvement should be.

• QUESTION #5 •

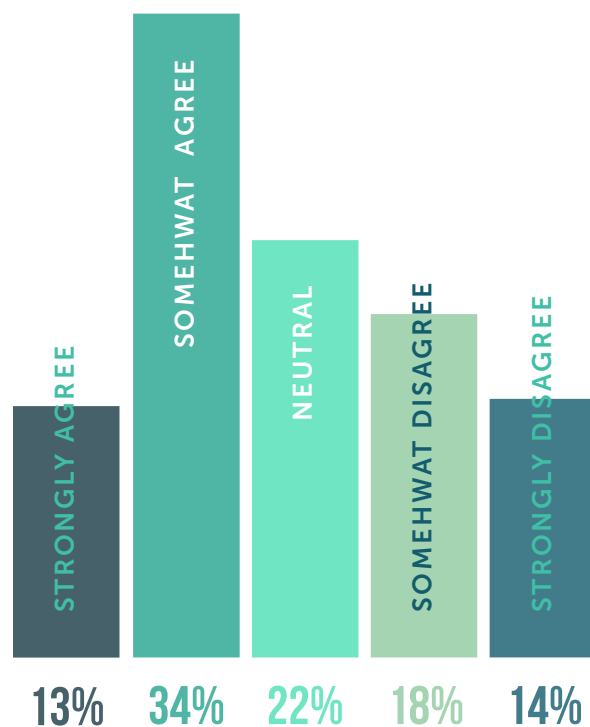
Do you have documented
workflows or processes to execute
your marketing tasks efficiently?

DO YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED PROCESS?

Your Documentation Should Get Granular With Workflows

We found 34% of marketers “somewhat agree” to documenting workflows/process. And only 13% “strongly agree.”

This figure is almost identical to the number of marketers who document their strategy.



Our research shows marketers with documented processes are 466% more likely to report success. There is a definite, positive correlation between these data.

(R = 0.45; N = 889; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

However, the hypotheses we were testing were: “Marketers who document workflows/processes publish more content. And marketers who publish more content often reach their goals.”

But...

...documented processes are weakly correlated with increased publishing frequency.

(R = 0.21; N = 1,597; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

Additionally, there is an even weaker frequency between publishing frequency and achieving marketing goals.

(R = 0.19; N = 1,597; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

DO YOU HAVE A DOCUMENTED PROCESS?

Conclusions

Documenting processes is strongly correlated with success—and even holds a 4.7X greater likelihood of success.

To supercharge your marketing success, document processes and workflows.

A process is made of a series of tasks. To document process means to outline the tasks needed to complete a given process...

...plus documenting each task.

Here's a simple task documentation formula:

- 1. Task description.**

Name the task in this schema: {strong action verb} + {overview of task details}. For example: "Research keywords and LSIs."

- 2. Definition of done.**

Unambiguously define what the task will look like when complete. For example: "Find keyword with difficulty of 60 or lower with a volume of at least 100 searches per month."

- 3. Person responsible.**

Simply put, who is going to do the work?

- 4. Deadline.**

When must the work be complete by?

- 5. Estimated time to complete.**

Providing an estimate for how long a task should take is a major boost to productivity and getting past roadblocks. For example: "Keyword research should take 30 minutes or less."

• QUESTION #6 •

How often do you
publish content?

HOW OFTEN DO YOU PUBLISH CONTENT?

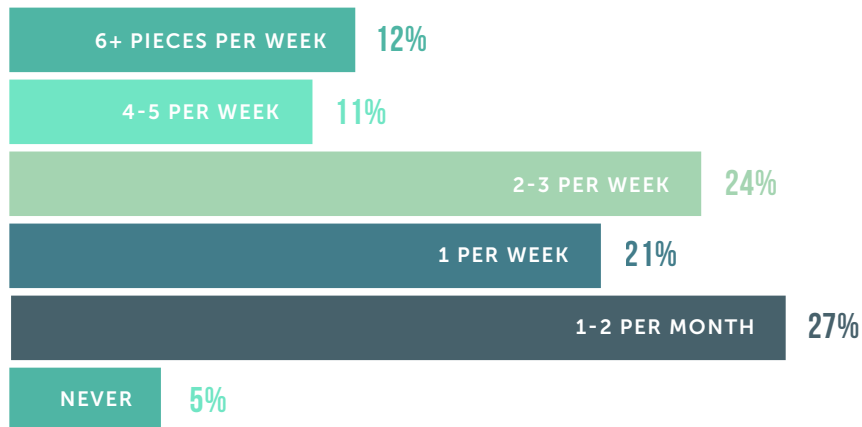
Does Publishing Frequency Really Matter?

Most marketers publish at least once per week:

- 24% publish 2–3 pieces per week
- 21% publish 1 piece per week
- 12% publish 6+ pieces per week
- 11% publish 4–5 pieces per week

That's a whopping 68% of pro marketers publishing four or more times per month. With 57% of respondents publishing 2 times or more per week!

...but the million-dollar question is what kind of results are these full publishing schedules generating?



Our research surprised us. There is a weak correlation between publishing frequency and marketing success.

(R = 0.2; N = 910; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

And a slightly weaker correlation between publishing frequency and achieving goals.

(R = 0.19; N = 910; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

Conclusions

The key takeaway here is that a stat like frequency should be a guidepost rather than gospel.

Results in our survey showed that 52% of successful marketers publish content 8+ times per month. But the correlation strength simply isn't there to give a blanket statement that high publishing frequency equals better results.

For example, what if only one or two pieces of content are responsible for the lion's share of those results?

Instead, if you experiment with increasing your publishing frequency, continue to measure the effectiveness of individual pieces of content as well.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU PUBLISH CONTENT?

After all, the more content you produce, the greater your chances of hitting a homerun...

...so long as you publish the right stuff.

But the true benefit would be discovering the patterns that exist throughout your most successful pieces.

What if you could find a way to increase success while actually decreasing the volume of content you publish?

At CoSchedule, we increased our publishing volume by four pieces per month. And do you know what increase in results we saw?

Virtually none.

Our conclusion: increase publishing frequency as a test, not as a rule.

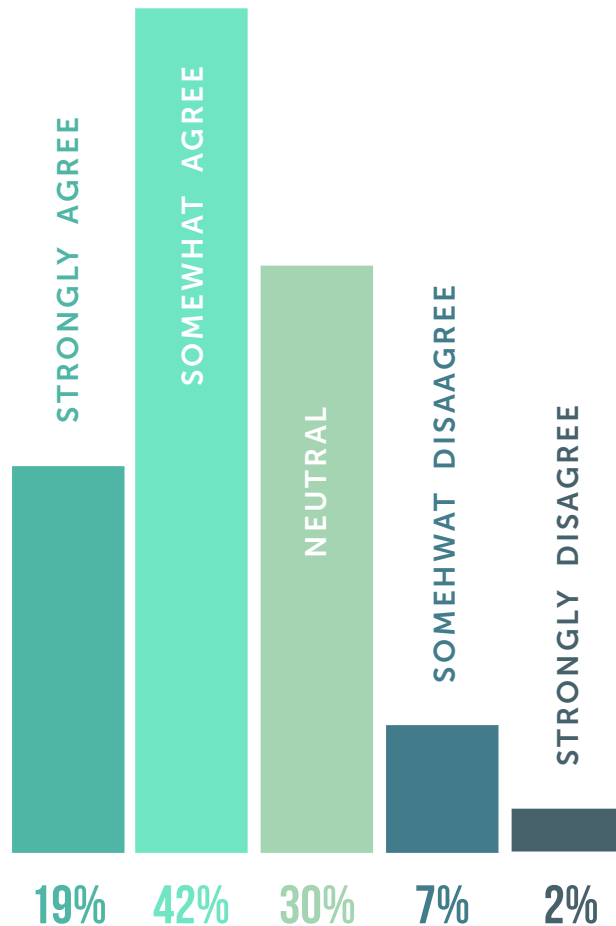
• QUESTION #7 •

**Do you consider your content to
be higher quality than your
competition's content?**

DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR CONTENT AS BETTER?

Is Content Quality A Marker Of Success?

74% of our study's successful marketers consider their content higher quality than their competition's.



However, our research shows surprisingly little correlation between time spent creating content and the quality of their content.

(R = 0.17; N = 1,121; P-VALUE <0.0001)

Additionally...

There is an even weaker correlation between those with self-reported "high-quality content" and achieving their marketing goals. This was surprising.

(R = 0.15; N = 1,121; P-VALUE <0.0001)

So, even though three-fourths of marketers say they have better content than their competitors: Time spent creating it has no impact on its quality. And its quality has little correlation to achieving their goals.

Additionally, content quality was only mildly correlated with self-reported marketing success.

(R = .29; N = 1,121; P-VALUE <.0001)

Another is that content quality and the time invested in creating it are weakly correlated as well.

(R = .17; N = 1565; P-VALUE < .0001)

(Continued on page 30)

• QUESTION #8 •

On average, how much time do you collectively spend creating a single piece of content?

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO CREATE?

Does Time Spent Guarantee Results?

Let's go further down the rabbit hole with a related question:

"On average, how much time do you collectively spend creating a single piece of content?"

Our hypothesis was more time spent creating content would directly influence its reported quality.

Did this hold true?

There is a pretty weak correlation between a marketer's time spent creating a single piece of content and the reported quality of that content.

(R = 0.17; N = 1,597; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

This was surprising. Also surprising was this finding...

Our research shows a very weak correlation between time spent creating content and achieving marketing goals.

(R = .08; N = 1,597; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

Conclusions

So do these marketing statistics mean content quality is irrelevant? And that it's pointless to spend loads of time creating content?

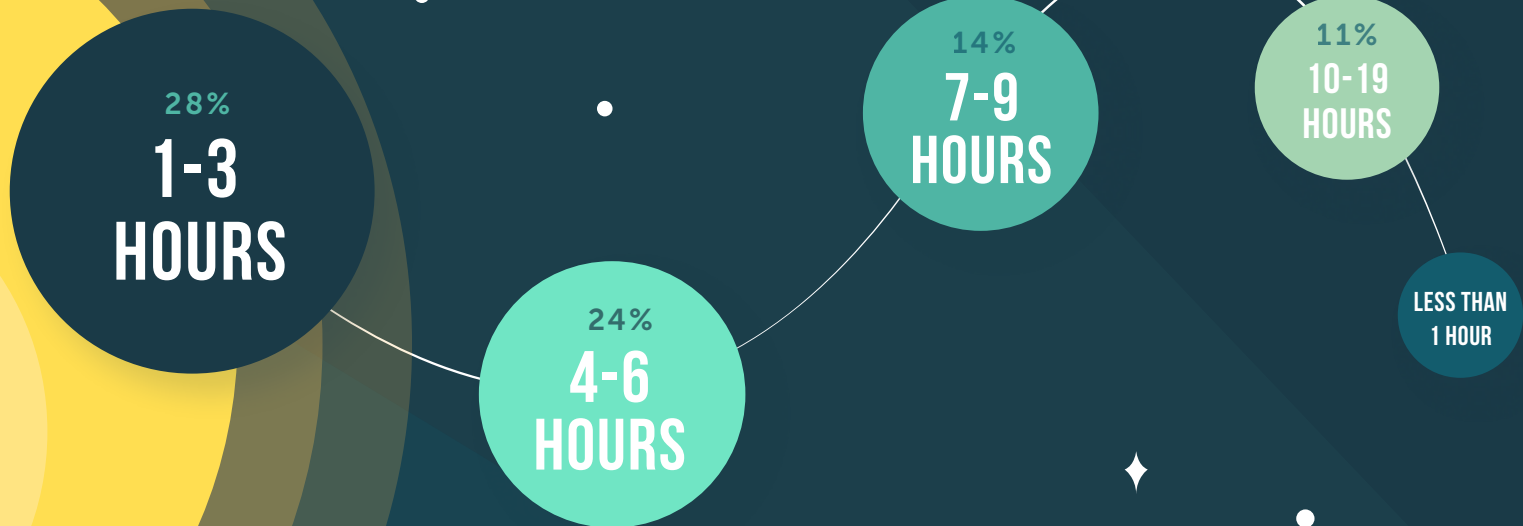
We don't think so. But, it does mean that a simple "quality over quantity" mindset won't cut it. And that sinking loads of time into content creation doesn't equate to rock-solid results.

There was a slightly positive correlation between content quality and marketing success. But nothing earth shattering.

(R = .29; N = 1,101; P-VALUE < 0.0001)

Instead, what these stats indicate is we may have an epidemic of marketers creating the wrong kind of content.

TIME SPENT ON A SINGLE PIECE OF CONTENT



• QUESTION #9 •

What is the primary type
of content you create?

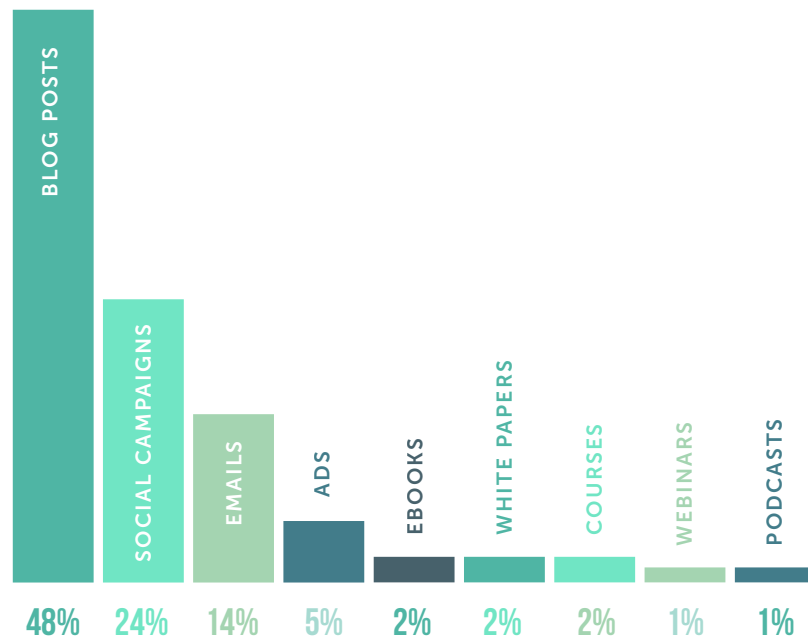
WHAT TYPE OF CONTENT DO YOU CREATE?

The Blogosphere Is As Crowded As Ever

Overwhelmingly, marketers are creating:

- Blog posts at 48%,
- Social media campaigns at 24%,
- And email campaigns at 14%.

This left just 14% of marketers focusing on content types like ebooks, courses, webinars, and similar.



Conclusions

There is no correlation between type of primary content created and marketing success.

However, blogging is a priority for marketers across the board. Three things stand out here.

First, the blogosphere will continue to be one of the most crowded publishing arenas. After all, there are 80 million new Wordpress posts published every month.

Second, blogging is a competitive, full-contact sport. But, it's also a low-barrier to entry activity with a high potential reward—when done well.

Third, consider adding lower-competition content to your mix. Pilot a podcast or write an ebook. Then measure your ROI against your other content.

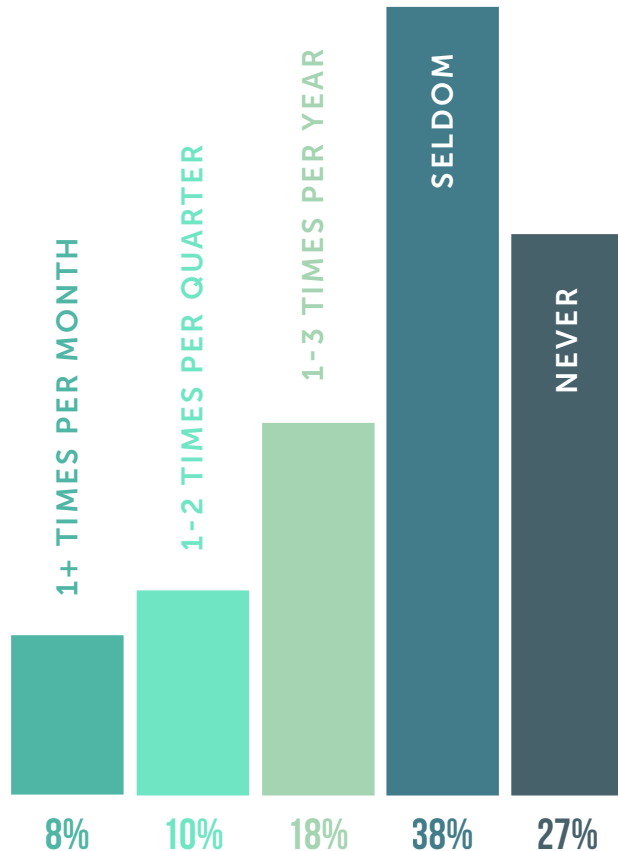
• QUESTION #10 •

How often do you conduct
audience research such as surveys
or customer reviews?

DO YOU CONDUCT CUSTOMER RESEARCH?

Audience Research Is A High-Value Activity

The majority of marketers rarely conduct research, with 65% reporting seldom to none at all.



What impact does research have on the 35% who do?

Our research found successful marketers are 242% more likely to report conducting audience research at least once per quarter (when compared with those who don't).

And marketers who do so at least once per year or more are 303% more likely to achieve their marketing goals (80% of the time or more).

Additionally, 56% of marketers who "strongly agree" their marketing is successful conduct audience research once or more per month.

These methods could be anything from a survey to customer interviews.

What is compelling is that elite marketers are research-fueled and data-focused.

How can your team get into the same game?

DO YOU CONDUCT CUSTOMER RESERACH?

Conclusions

There is definite value in conducting research.

For content marketers, an angle to consider is using audience research to create user personas.

As one study conducted by Cintell on audience personas found:
“Companies who meet or exceed revenue goals are 2.4X as likely to be effective or very effective at using personas than those who mislead and revenue goals.”

This closely pairs with our findings. And even sheds more light on surprisingly weak correlation between content quality and success.

To create the right kind of content, you need to deeply understand your audience. And research is a prime way to do so.

LIMITATIONS

Before You Go Wild...

A final note before you go wild applying these findings.

These data points are guide posts. Keep in mind there are often caveats the numbers themselves don't tell us.

Whenever you come across a report like ours, it's always important to keep a few things in mind.

- 1. Correlation does not equal causation.**

Just because two data points are correlated doesn't necessarily mean one causes the other.

- 2. Contextualize all findings to your marketing goals.**

Resist the urge to blindly follow data. Be smart in learning from our study. Apply the key findings like we have. Then measure your results to ensure they work for you.

- 3. There are limitations to even the best survey data sets.**

We've crunched the numbers on the marketing stats... But numbers don't always tell the full story. So be a savvy marketer and assess our conclusions for yourself.

SURVEY

Demographics



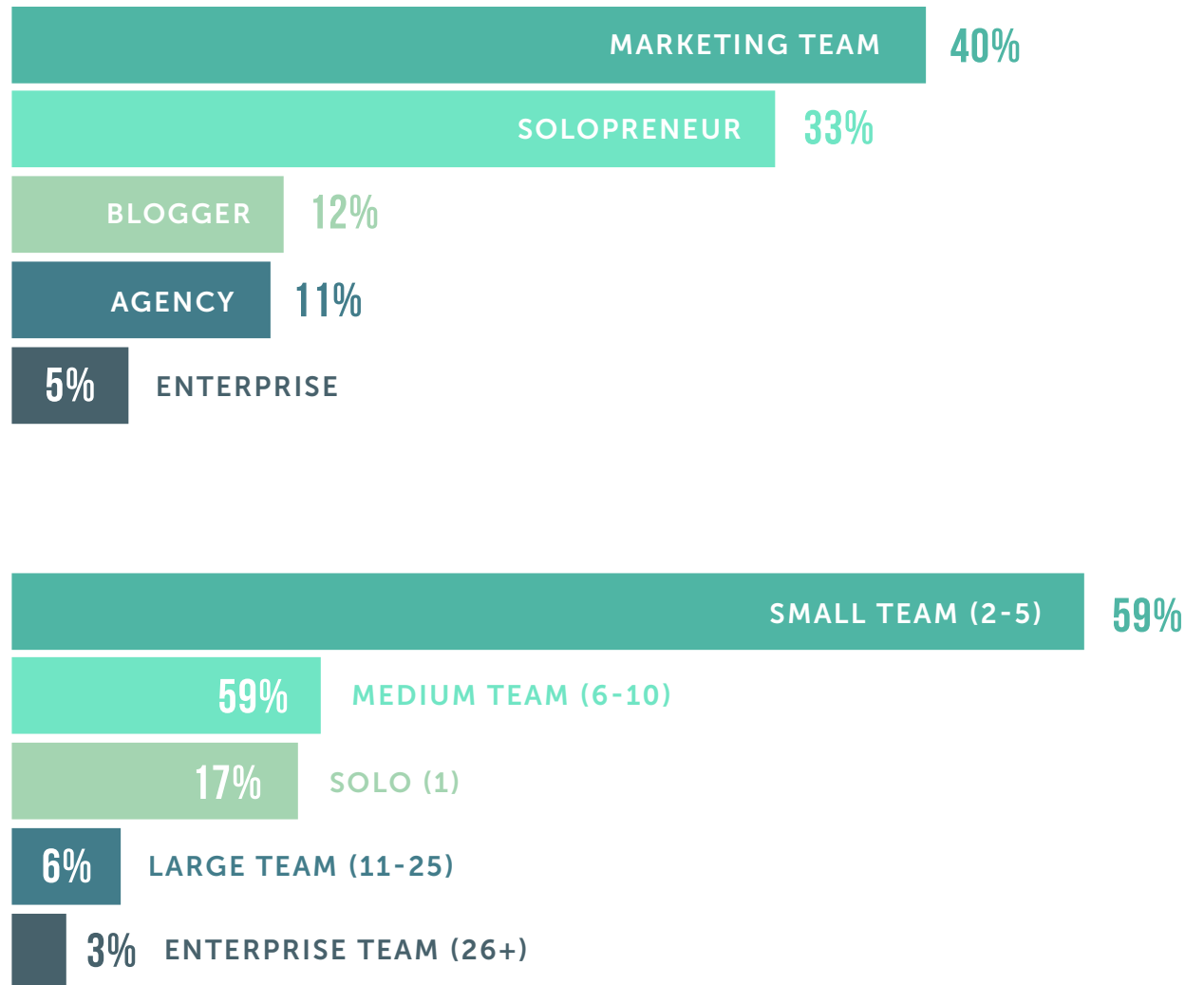
WE SURVEYED 1,597 PROFESSIONAL MARKETERS FROM 83 COUNTRIES.





ALBANIA	GHANA	PERU
ALGERIA	GREECE	PHILIPPINES
ARGENTINA	GUATEMALA	POLAND
ARMENIA	HONG KONG	PORTUGAL
AUSTRALIA	HUNGARY	PUERTO RICO
BAHAMAS	ICELAND	ROMANIA
BAHRAIN	INDIA	RUSSIA
BANGLADESH	INDONESIA	SERBIA
BARBADOS	IRELAND	SINGAPORE
BELGIUM	ISRAEL	SLOVAKIA
BOTSWANA	ITALY	SLOVENIA
BRAZIL	JAMAICA	SOUTH AFRICA
BULGARIA	JAPAN	SPAIN
CANADA	KAZAKSTAN	SRI LANKA
CHILE	KENYA	SWEDEN
CHINA	KOREA, REPUBLIC OF	SWITZERLAND
COLOMBIA	MALAYSIA	TAIWAN
CROATIA	MALTA	TANZANIA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF
CYPRUS	MAURITIUS	THAILAND
CZECH REPUBLIC	MEXICO	TURKEY
DENMARK	MOROCCO	UGANDA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	NAMIBIA	UKRAINE
EGYPT	NETHERLANDS	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
EL SALVADOR	NEW ZEALAND	UNITED KINGDOM
ETHIOPIA	NIGERIA	UNITED STATES
FINLAND	NORWAY	URUGUAY
FRANCE	PAKISTAN	VENEZUELA
GERMANY	PANAMA	

WHO PARTICIPATED?



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**CoSchedule is the #1 marketing tool
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your team completely organized.**

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