

THE STATE AND IMPACT
_____ of _____
**CONTENT
CONSISTENCY**



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Benchmark Study Report
February 2017

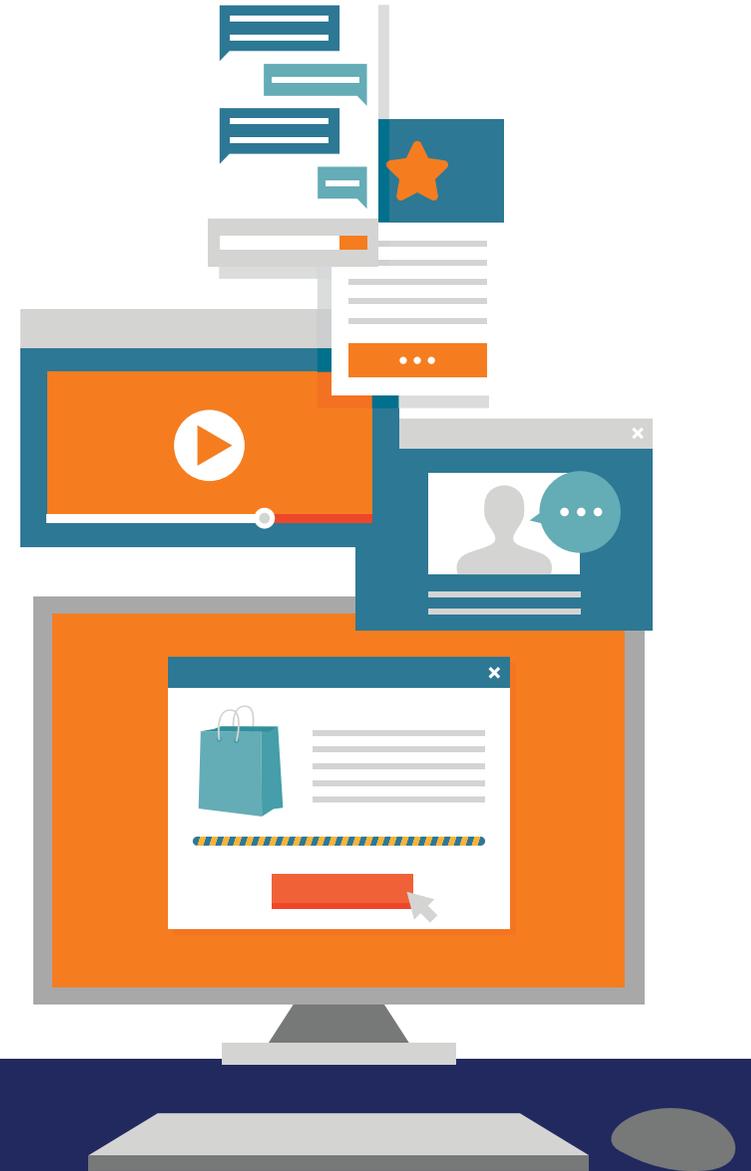


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Introduction

The creation and dissemination of content is at the heart of the modern marketing organization's work. Any digital marketing endeavor is fueled by content, and prospects who embark on a buying journey are most likely to first encounter a selling company through its content.

For content to have the greatest impact, it must consistently convey the brand and its core messages reliably. To discover the impact of content consistency, Demand Metric partnered with MarcomCentral to assess the state of content consistency and discover how inconsistent – fragmented – content impacts the sale team and revenue.

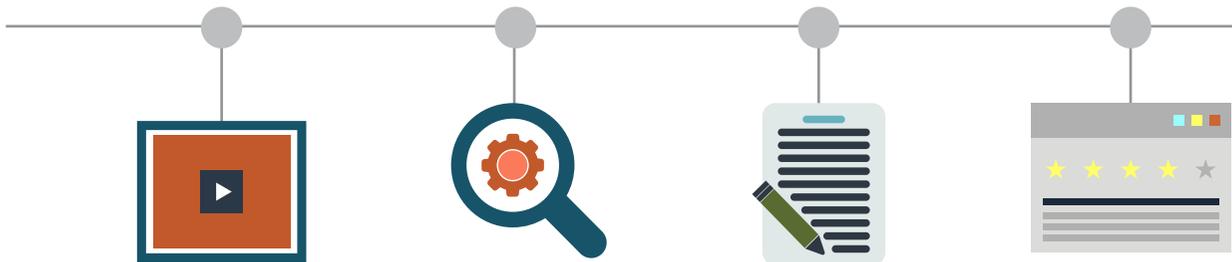
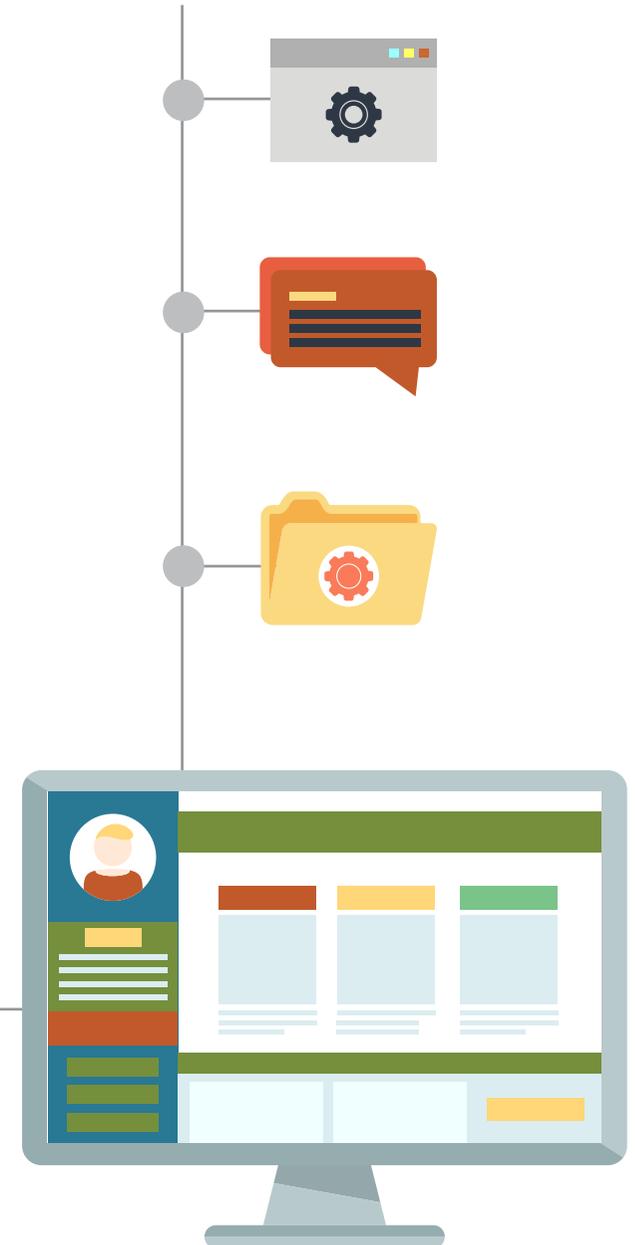
This research found that the typical customer journey has an average of just over 5 touch points, with 20 percent of study participants reporting seven or more touches.

At each of these touchpoints, customers encounter content, but for four out of 10 organizations, that content is fragmented.

Part of the reason for this fragmentation is that over half the time, marketing is slow in responding to sales team requests for content, so sales team members resort to improvising their own content.

Still, two-thirds of the organizations in this study report that they lose deals because they don't have the content they need.

This report summarizes the results of a survey used to collect the study's data, sharing the key findings and insights that came from the data analysis.





Executive Summary

Almost 80 percent of this study's participants were from primarily B2B or mixed B2B/B2C organizations, with over 70 percent reporting revenue growth during the past fiscal year. The respondents come from a diverse set of industries, with the largest segment coming from the manufacturing sector.

Just over 25 percent of the study participants come from companies with less than \$10 million in annual revenue, while one-fourth are with firms reporting revenues of \$500 million or more.

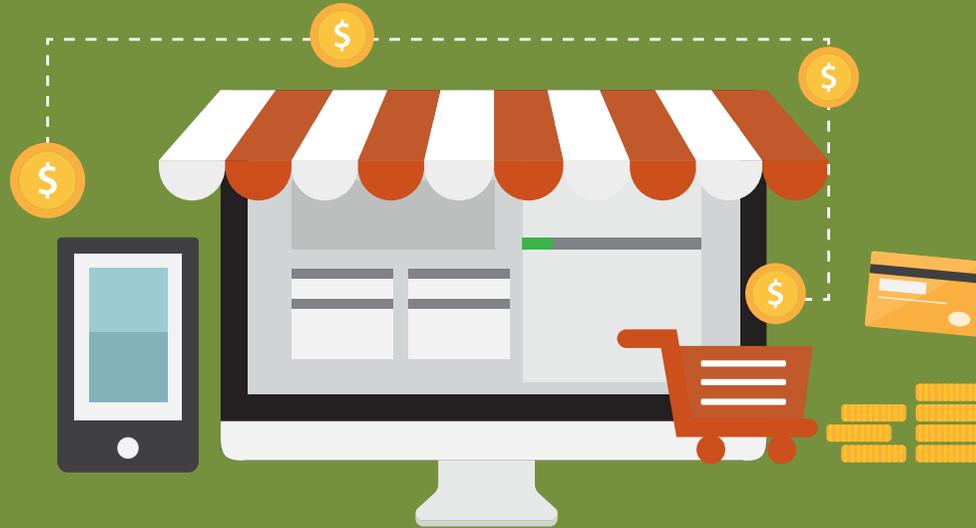
The analysis of this study's data provides these key findings:



This report details the results and insights from the analysis of the study data.

For more detail on the survey participants, please refer to the Appendix.

- ✓ There is almost an even split between content that meets needs well and neutral to very poorly in buying journey stages.
- ✓ The section of the sales/marketing funnel that suffers the most from a lack of quality content is the middle section, where consideration occurs.
- ✓ The number of “touchpoints” – encounters that prospects have with marketing and sales content during their buying journeys – averages between five and six. One in five firms in this study report seven or more touchpoints on their customers' buying journeys.
- ✓ Almost 90 percent of study participants report that their sales and marketing content measurably influences revenue.
- ✓ Content fragmentation – a lack of consistency in expressing branding and key messages – is a reality for almost one-fourth of study participants. Content's impact on revenue is diminished when it is fragmented.
- ✓ When content is fragmented, only 15 percent of study participants say it meets buyer needs well during the customer journey.
- ✓ Two-thirds of all study participants lose sales when needed content isn't available.
- ✓ Over one-fourth of the sales team in this study often or always create content without waiting for marketing to do it, unknowingly contributing to content fragmentation in the process.
- ✓ On average, study participants are personalizing about one-fourth of their sales and marketing content. Those that are personalizing content find it does a much better job of supporting customers on their buying journeys.



Content and the Buying Journey



High Performance Marketing
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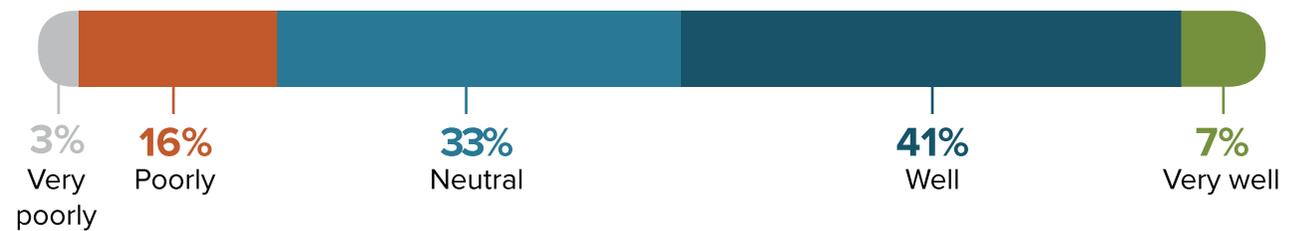
No one doubts the importance of content and the influence it has in creating a desirable customer experience: **almost 90 percent of this study’s participants affirmed that their sales and marketing content is important or very important in this role.** The firms represented in the study rated how well their sales and marketing content addresses the needs of their prospects and customers along each stage of the buying journey, and **Figure 1** shows the result.

i **90%**
of this study’s participants affirmed that their **sales and marketing content is important or very important in this role.**

FIGURE 1

MORE THAN HALF RATE CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS AT “NEUTRAL” OR LOWER.

How Well Content Meets Needs in Buying Journey Stages



Sales and marketing content plays a role in all stages of the buying journey and all sections of the marketing/sales funnel. It is rare for an organization to have enough high-quality content mapped to each journey stage or funnel section. There is often a “problem” stage or section. **Table 1** shows which funnel section suffered most from lack of quality content.

TABLE 1

THE MID-SECTION OF THE FUNNEL SUFFERS MOST FROM POOR QUALITY CONTENT.

	Top	Mid	Bottom
Funnel section suffering most from poor quality content	34%	40%	26%

Prospects and customers encounter solution providers across a variety of these touchpoints, most of them digital in nature, and each touchpoint can represent not just one but many content assets.

Figure 2 shows the data collected from study participants about how many touchpoints exists during a typical customer buying journey.

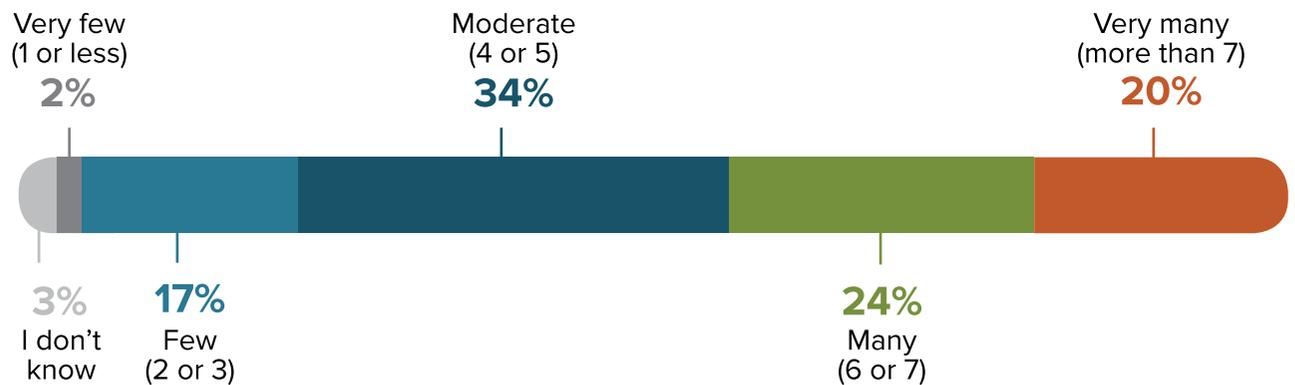
The average number of touchpoints reported by participants in this study falls between the “Moderate” and “Many” response ranges, or about five to six touchpoints.

Not surprisingly, **as the number of touchpoints increases, so does the importance attached to content for creating the desired customer experience during the buying journey.**

FIGURE 2

OVER THREE-FOURTHS OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS REPORT FOUR OR MORE TOUCHPOINTS ON THE TYPICAL BUYING JOURNEY.

Touchpoints on a Typical Customer Buying Journey



More than **50%**

of this study’s participants fall between the “Moderate” and “Many” response ranged, or about to five to six touchpoints.

This study asked participants to rate, using a scale, just how important the content that they create, publish and curate is to generating revenue.

Figure 3 shows this relationship.

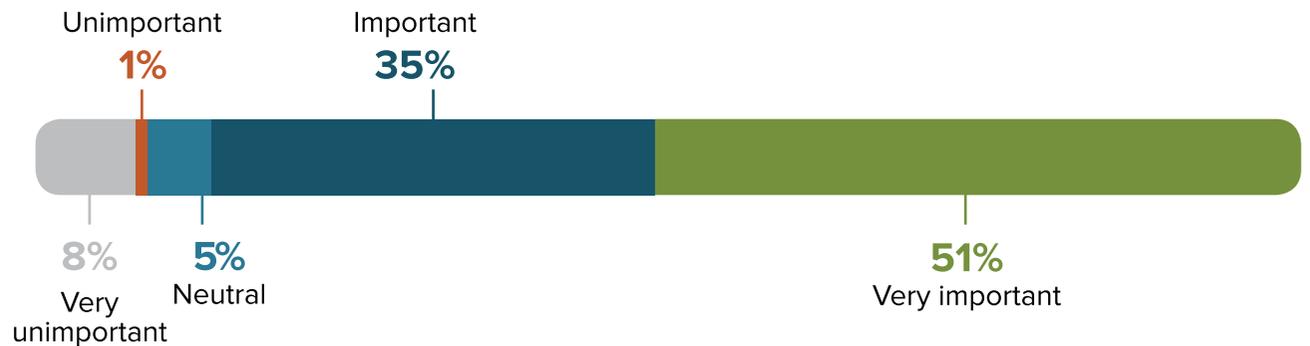
Study participants were provided with descriptions for the points on the rating scale shown in Figure 3:

- ✓ **Very unimportant:** revenue does not depend on our content
- ✓ **Unimportant:** content slightly influences revenue
- ✓ **Neutral**
- ✓ **Important:** content measurably influences revenue
- ✓ **Very important:** revenue generation depends heavily on content

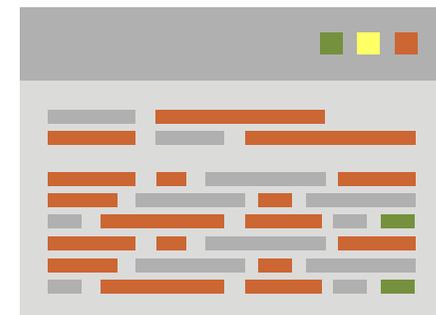
FIGURE 3

ALMOST 90 PERCENT OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS REPORT THAT CONTENT MEASURABLY INFLUENCES REVENUE.

Importance of Content to Revenue Generation



The data shown in **Figure 3** confirms what many marketers understand: content plays a critical role in the revenue cycle for most organizations. The importance of this role is all the more reason to understand what impairs this role. The next section of the report will examine one of those reasons: **content fragmentation**.





Content Fragmentation

Content consistency is best understood on a spectrum from fragmented to consistent. Sales and marketing content is fragmented when it is branded poorly, lacks key messages or expresses them incompletely, is incompatible with other content assets or all of the preceding.

Figure 4 shares the outcome of the query used to measure content consistency.

Fragmented content inhibits to some degree the generation of revenue. A correlation exists between the role/importance of content in generating revenue, as Figure 3 shows, and the degree of fragmentation shown in **Figure 4**. **Figure 5** displays this relationship.

When the content encountered during a buying journey is fragmented, its ability to impact revenue generation is diminished by 11 percent.

This difference is the result of summing the “Important” and “Very important” responses for each segment in **Figure 5**.

FIGURE 4

ALMOST ONE-FOURTH OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS SAY THEIR CONTENT IS FRAGMENTED.

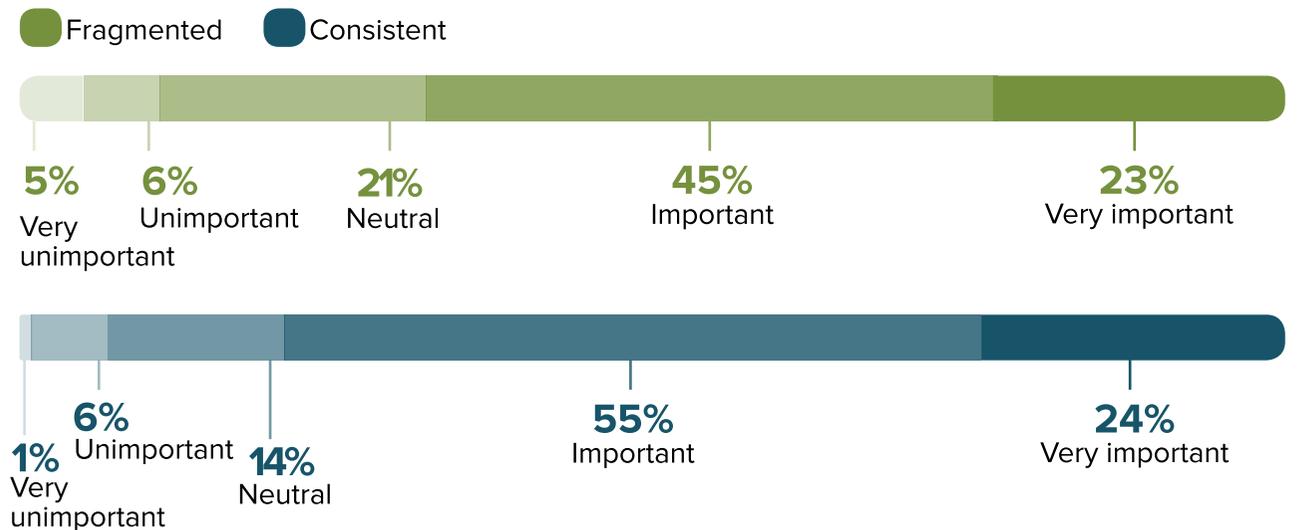
Content Fragmentation Assessment



FIGURE 5

CONTENT’S IMPORTANCE TO REVENUE GENERATION IS DIMINISHED WHEN IT IS FRAGMENTED.

Content Fragmentation and Importance to Revenue Generation



A difference of 11 percent may not seem substantial, but consider it this way: is any organization willing to leave 11 percent of the revenue it could gain on the table because its content consistency is poor? Most organizations would say “no” and opt to fix the content fragmentation problem in order to gain the revenue. **This 11 percent delta is essentially a content inconsistency tax that organizations levy on themselves when they tolerate the presence of fragmented content in the buying journey.**

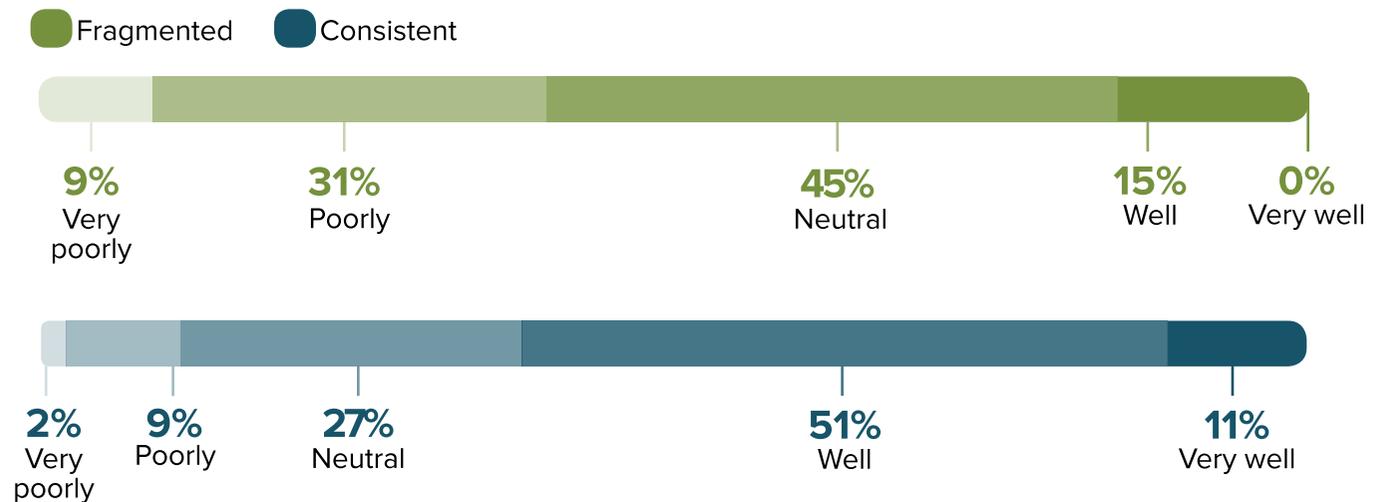
The impact of fragmented content is more pronounced when looking at it through the lens of how well content meets buyer needs in each stage of the journey. **Figure 6** shows this relationship.

An astonishing 85 percent of study participants with fragmented content assess the effectiveness of their content at meeting buyer needs in each stage of their journey as “Very poor” to “Neutral.” For those with consistent content, over 60 percent say content meets buyer needs “Well” or “Very well” – a dramatic difference.

FIGURE 6

WHEN CONTENT IS FRAGMENTED, ONLY 15 PERCENT OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS SAY IT MEETS BUYERS’ NEEDS WELL DURING THEIR JOURNEYS.

Content Fragmentation and Meeting Buyer Journey Stage Needs



i **85%** of this study’s participants with fragmented content assess the effectiveness of their content at meeting buyer needs in each stage of their journey as **“Very poor”** or **“Neutral”**.

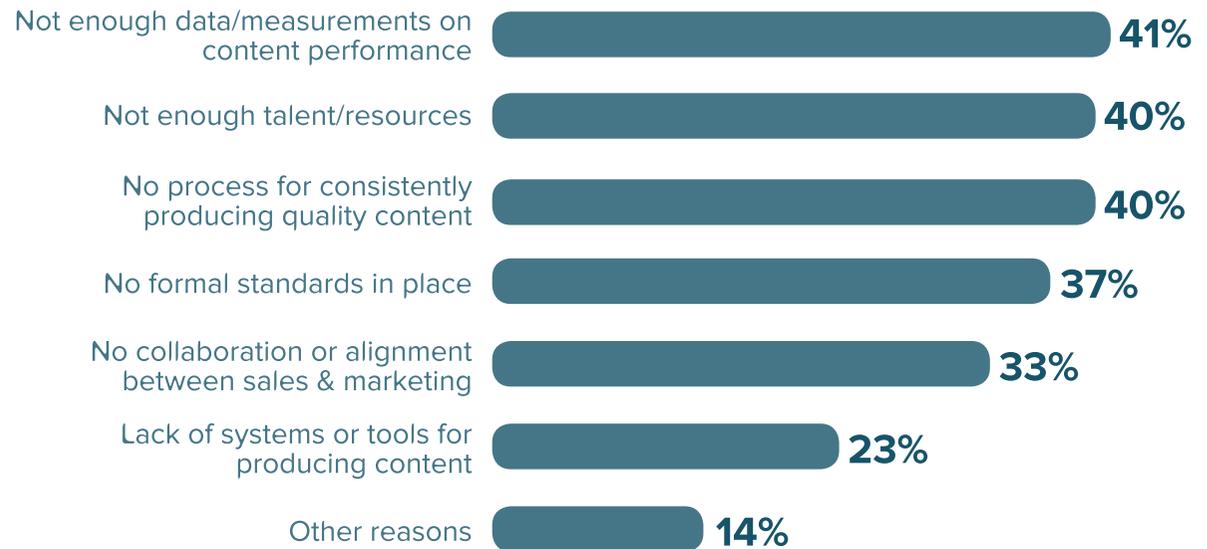
Figures 5 and 6 show that there is a real cost to exposing prospects and customers to fragmented, inconsistent content. However, no marketing organization intentionally plans to allow fragmented, poor quality content to reach customers and prospects. Study participants share in **Figure 7** the reasons why they have fragmented content.

Study participants are plagued with a series of fragmentation causes. **The top five issues listed in Figure 7 provide the recipe for content fragmentation: lack of data, resources, a process, standards and collaboration between the content creators (marketing) and users (sales).** Each of these issues were cited by one-third or more of the participants.



FIGURE 7
WHY CONTENT IS FRAGMENTED.

Reasons for Content Fragmentation

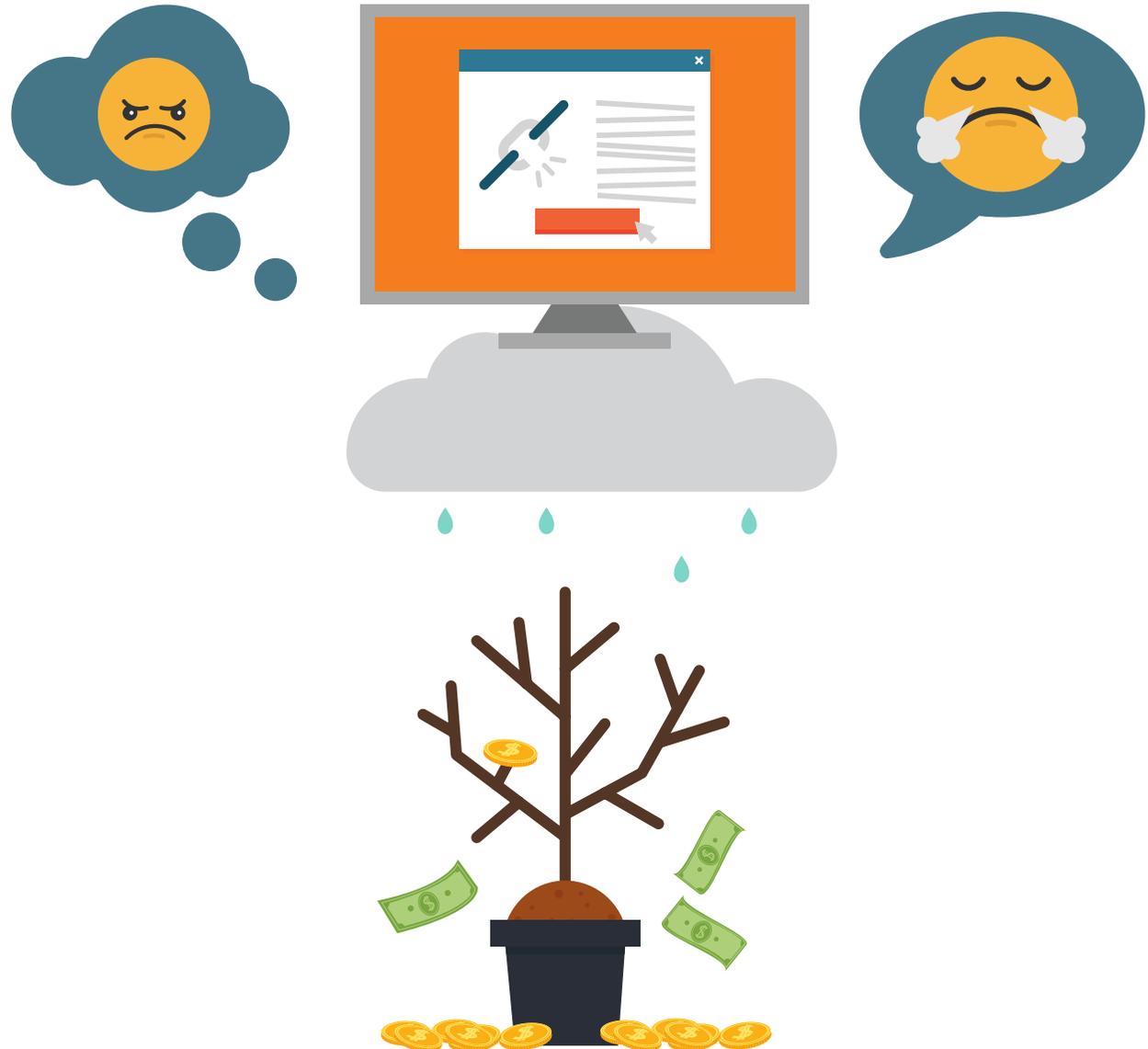


i The top **5** issues provide the **recipe for content fragmentation**: lack of data, resources, a process, standards and collaboration between the content creators (marketing) and users (sales).

Some of the “Other reasons” listed by study participants include:

- ✓ “Need to integrate planning among channels: social, PR, magazine, offline all have fragmented content planning processes.”
- ✓ “Decision-makers are not aware of the power generated through the use, maintenance and training involved to create a successful visual display.”
- ✓ “Franchise system with fragmented quality at local level.”
- ✓ “Recent brand change and customers still don’t recognize new name.”

Fragmented, inconsistent content impairs revenue generation and impacts customers negatively on their buying journeys. Sales team members are also affected, as the next section of this report will discuss.





Content and the Sales Team

The sales team often expresses the need for content assets, and sales is also the channel through which many of these assets are delivered to customers. This study took an inventory of the types of content assets the sales team asks for most often, and the results are shown in **Figure 8**.

A number of other content assets were listed by participants in the write-in area of the survey and include:

- ✓ Advertisements
- ✓ Training material
- ✓ Direct mail pieces
- ✓ Email messaging
- ✓ Catalogs
- ✓ Web content
- ✓ Marketing folders
- ✓ Product photography
- ✓ Bid submission support
- ✓ Podcasts
- ✓ Display banners

FIGURE 8

PRODUCT FLYERS/SPECIFICATION ARE ASKED FOR BY ALMOST THREE-FOURTHS OF THE SALES TEAMS IN THIS SURVEY.

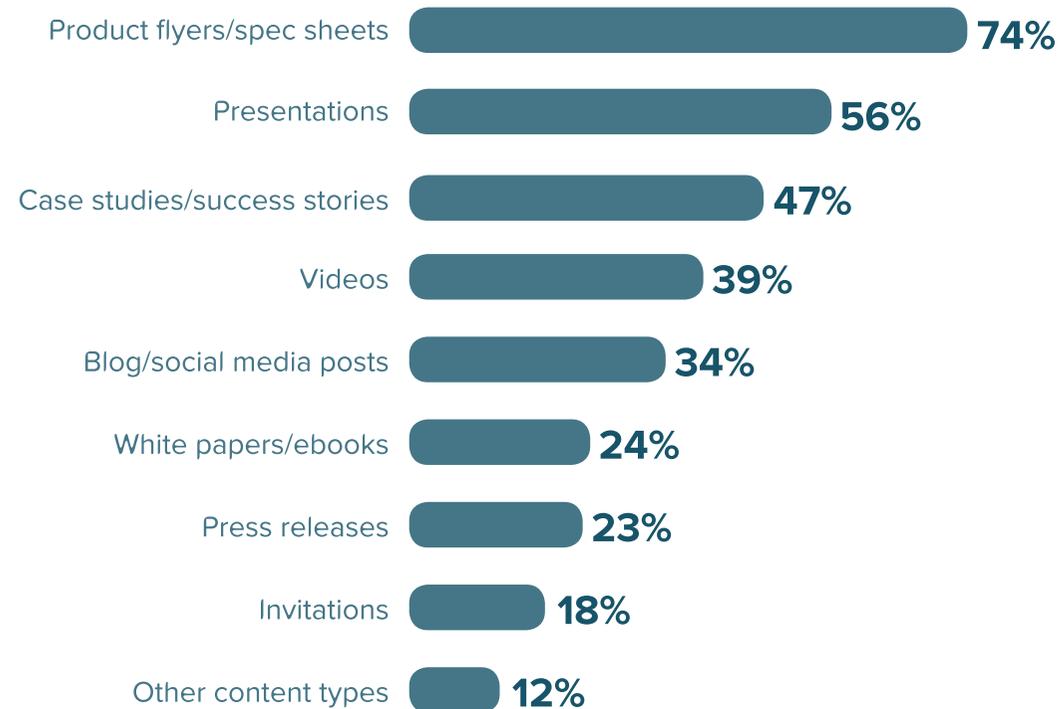
Content Assets Most Requested by the Sales Team

Figure 9 shows the relative frequency with which the sales team asks for new or modified content.

A common friction point between sales and marketing teams is the agility with which marketing is able to respond to requests for new or modified content.

Figure 10 shows what the study revealed about marketing response time to such requests.

The study data showed a strong correlation between the agility depicted in **Figure 10** and two other study variables: how well content addresses the stages of the buying journey (Figure 1) and content fragmentation (Figure 6).

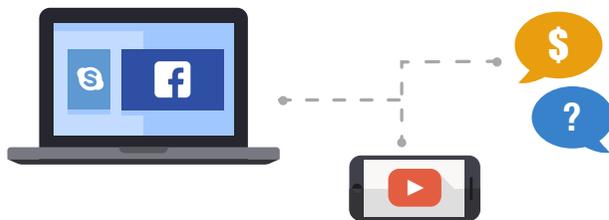


FIGURE 9

NO SALES TEAM IN THIS STUDY NEVER ASKS FOR NEW OR MODIFIED CONTENT.

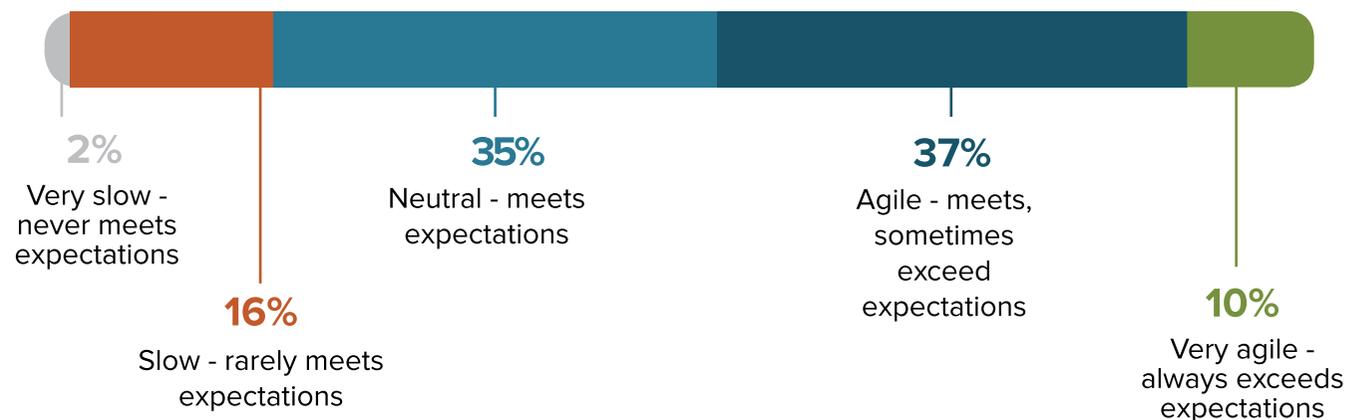
How Often the Sales Team Asks for New/Modified Content?



FIGURE 10

OVER 80 PERCENT OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS REPORT THAT THE CONTENT PROCESS MEETS RESPONSE TIME EXPECTATIONS.

Agility in Responding to Requests for New/Modified Content



As **Table 2** shows, when responsiveness is better, so too are these related variables.

The differences between lack of agility and agility in responding to requests for new or modified content as **Table 2** shows is curious.

On the surface, nothing about responsiveness to content requests should impact how well content meets needs or how consistent it is.

But the correlation in the data is very strong, and an explanation is easy to come by. **When the content process is responsive, it's a reflection of how important content is to sales success.**

Agility is the result of content being a priority, and a result of agility in this study is content that meets needs of prospects well as they move through stages of the buying journey, and content that consistently conveys brand image, messages and promises.

TABLE 2

AGILITY IN RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR NEW OR MODIFIED CONTENT PREDICTS HOW WELL IT MEETS NEEDS IN BUYING STAGES, AND HOW CONSISTENT IT IS.

	<i>Agility = Very slow & Slow</i>	<i>Agility = Agile & Very agile</i>
% sales & marketing content addresses needs in each stage of buying journey well or very well:	19%	64%
% sales & marketing content is consistent or very consistent:	37%	77%

A goal of this study was to understand what happens when the sales team doesn't have the content it needs. Study participants assessed this impact using the following scale:

- ✓ **No impact**
- ✓ **Slight impact:** sales are delayed, but not lost.
- ✓ **Moderate impact:** a few sales are lost.
- ✓ **Major impact:** key sales are lost.
- ✓ **Not sure / don't know**



Figure 11 shows the outcome the study measured when the sales team doesn't have the content it needs. **The negative impact of not having needed content is pronounced, with two-thirds of all study participants indicating they lose sales as a result.**

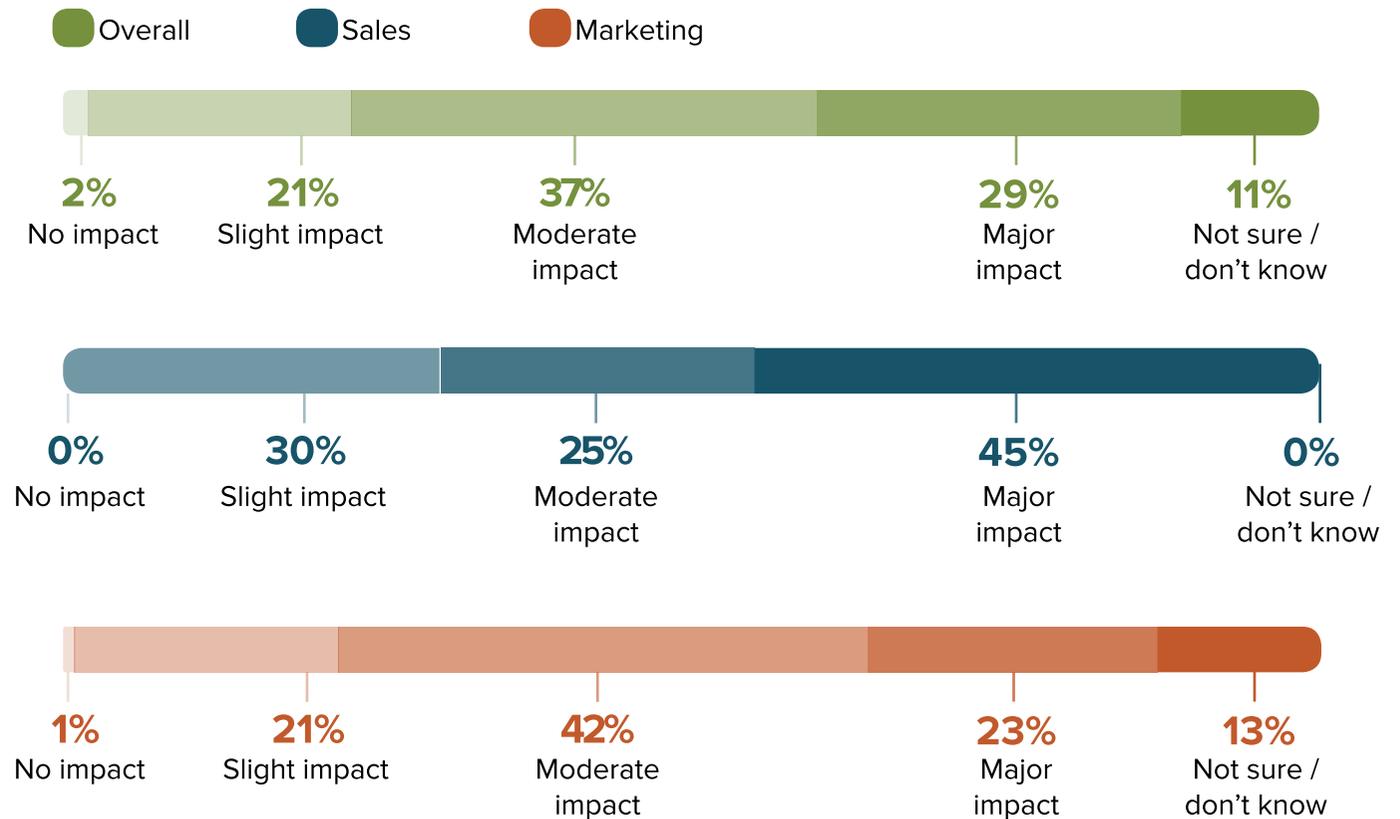
The data in **Figure 11** is segmented into sales and marketing roles, and viewed this way an alignment issue emerges: 45 percent of those in a sales role report a major impact, while just 23 percent of those is a marketing role do.



FIGURE 11

TWO-THIRDS OF ALL STUDY PARTICIPANTS LOSE SALES WHEN NEEDED CONTENT ISN'T AVAILABLE.

Impact of Sales Team not Having Needed Content



When the sales team doesn't have the content it needs, it is unlikely to simply do without. Sales representatives will improvise their own materials to fill a content void. **Figure 12** displays the relative frequency with which the sales teams do this.

The data in **Figure 12** is related to the agility (Figure 10) with which new or modified content is produced. **Table 3** shows this relationship.

The lack of agility in the creation of new or modified content causes the rate at which the sales team creates its own content to almost double. This increases the level of fragmented content, because the sales team doesn't always share the sensitivity of the marketing team for rendering the brand and the key messages associated with the brand consistently.

Figure 6 shows that fragmented content is far less likely to meet the informational needs buyers on each stage of their journey.

FIGURE 12

OVER ONE-FOURTH OF THE SALES TEAM IN THIS STUDY OFTEN OR ALWAYS CREATE CONTENT WITHOUT WAITING FOR MARKETING TO DO IT.

How Often Sales Creates its Own Content

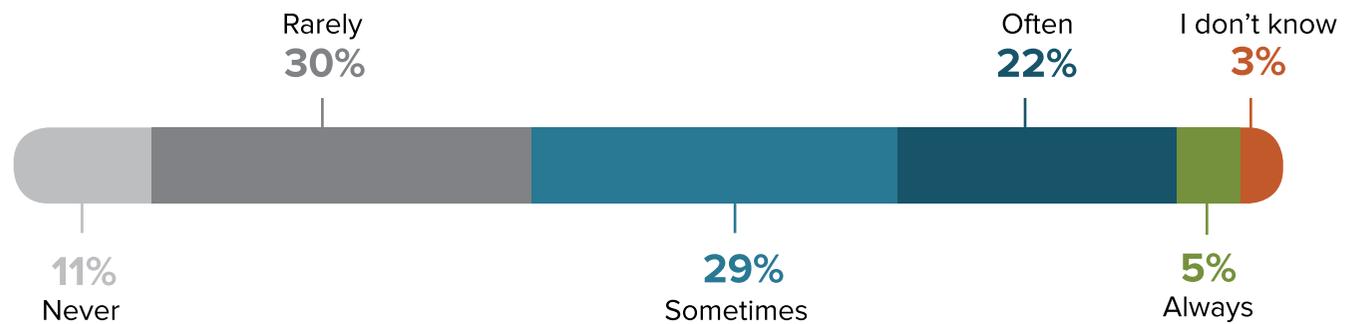


TABLE 3

MORE AGILE CONTENT CREATION PROCESSES RESULT IN LESS SALES-CREATED CONTENT.

	<i>Agility = Very slow & Slow</i>	<i>Agility = Agile & Very agile</i>
% sales creates its own content often or always:	40%	21%

There is no intent to harm the brand when the sales team improvises its own content; it is simply trying to meet a need. But the unintended consequence of improvised content is fragmentation.

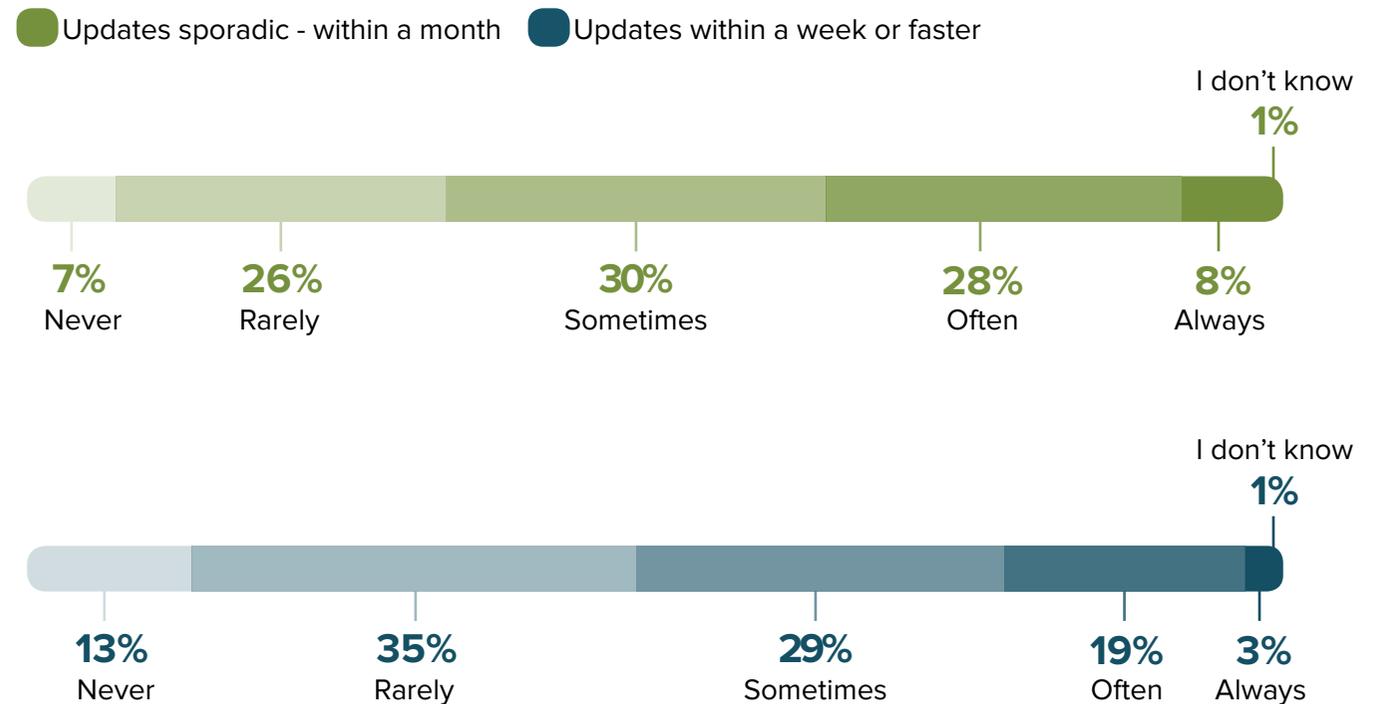
Another factor that can cause sales team members to “go rogue” and create their own content is the length of time it takes for new or modified content to make its way through the internal bureaucracy and update or become available on the “official” content repository. **Figure 13** shows the impact on improvised sales content of long and short lead times for updating the content repository.

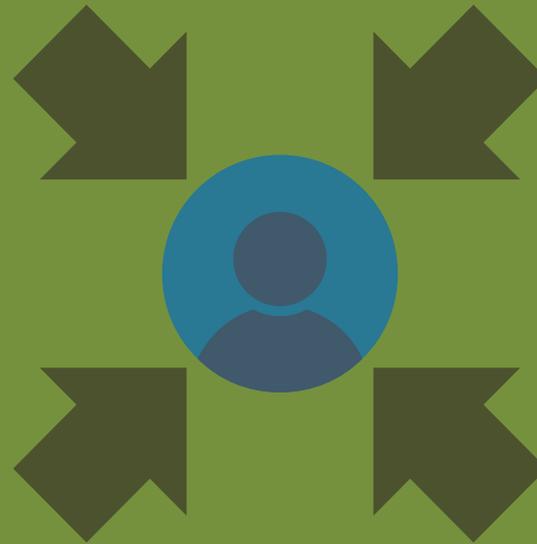
When new or modified content takes a long time to update the sanctioned content repository, over one-third of sales teams often or always create content on their own. However, when updates are timely – within a week or faster – almost half of sales teams do not improvise their own content.

FIGURE 13

FASTER UPDATES OF THE CONTENT REPOSITORY WITH NEW/MODIFIED CONTENT HELPS CUT DOWN ON THE AMOUNT OF SALES-IMPROVISED CONTENT.

Sales Created Content and Update Frequency





Content Personalization & Distribution

Marketers have discovered the value of personalizing content, and in this study, **it is estimated that on average participants are personalizing just over one-fourth of their marketing and sales content.** Figure 14 summarizes personalization efforts that study participants report.

Well over one-fourth of the participants that indicate they are personalizing content are using a completely manual process to do so, while just four percent are using a completely automated process.

Personalized content works better. **Figure 15** shows how content supports customers on their buying journeys in two segments: when there is little to no personalization and when much or most content is personalized.

FIGURE 14

VERY FEW STUDY PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT PERSONALIZING CONTENT TO SOME LEVEL.

How Much Sales/Marketing Content is Personalized

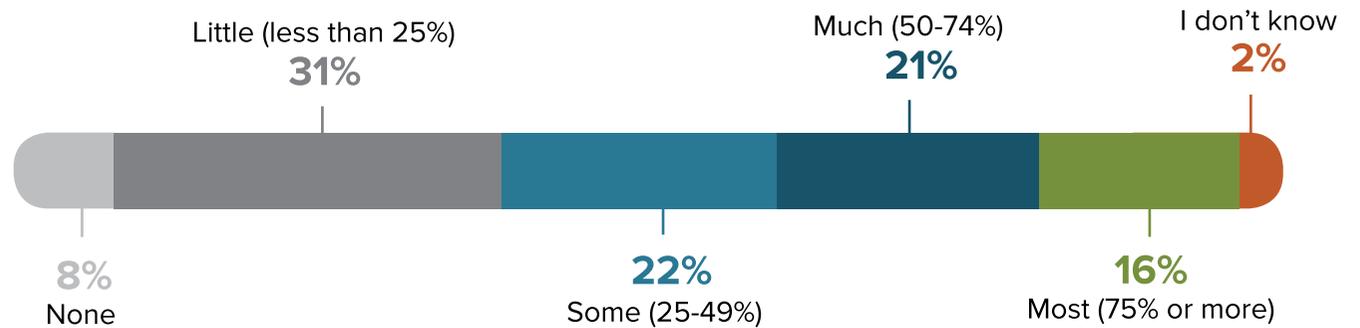
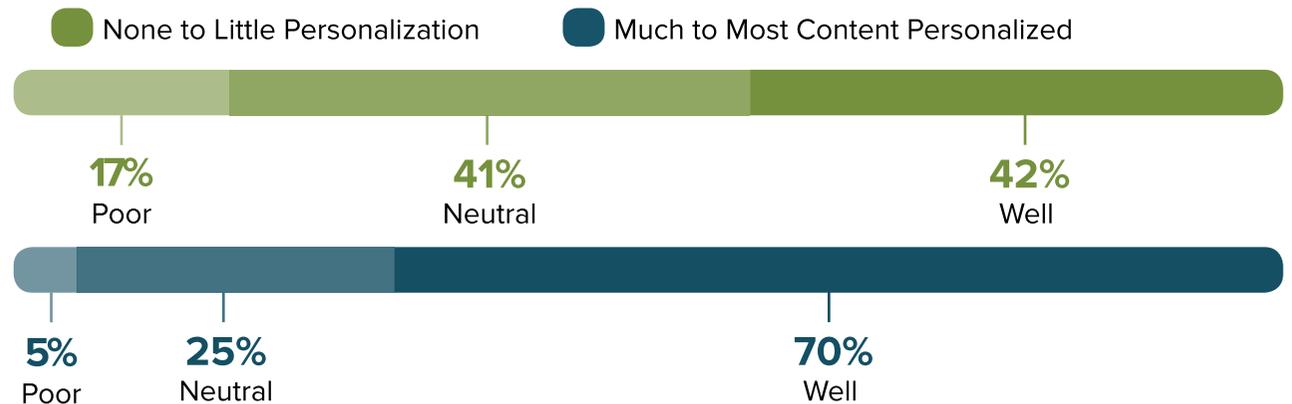


FIGURE 15

PERSONALIZED CONTENT DOES A MUCH BETTER JOB OF SUPPORTING CUSTOMERS ON THEIR BUYING JOURNEYS.

Personalization & Content Effectiveness



Personalized content has an effect on content fragmentation.

The more personalization an organization employs, the more consistently that content conveys brand image, messages and promises, as **Figure 16** shows.

Half of the content that has none to little personalization is rated fragmented to neutral.

Conversely, **almost three-fourths of the content is rated “consistent” when it also enjoys a high-degree of personalization.**

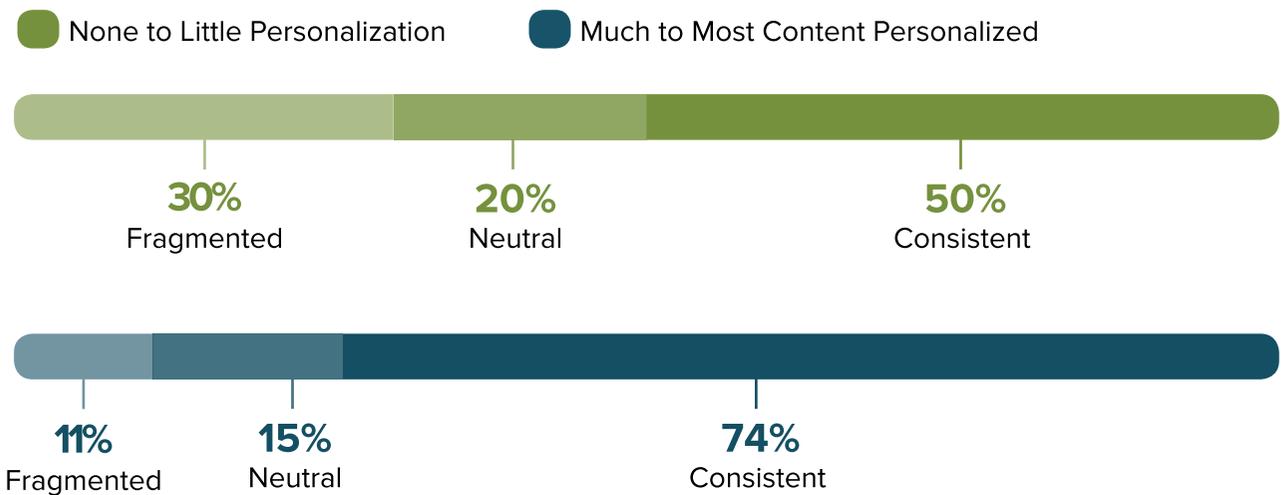
Not only does personalized content engage prospects better, but it is also a catalyst for consistency.



FIGURE 16

PERSONALIZED CONTENT IS FAR MORE LIKELY TO ALSO BE CONSISTENT.

Personalization & Content Fragmentation



i **3/4** of the content is rated **“consistent”** when it also enjoys a **high-degree of personalization**

The way that content is distributed to the sales team may seem like an afterthought, but the **distribution mechanisms themselves can help or hinder content to fulfill its ultimate purpose.**

Figure 17 shows how study participants distribute content to the sales team.

When the sales team creates none or little content on its own, distribution via attachments to group email sends becomes the primary way of distribution, with 44 percent of participants opting for this method.

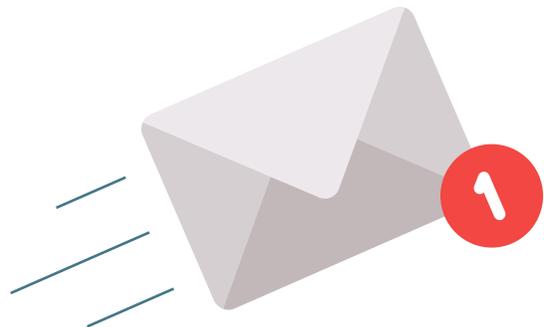
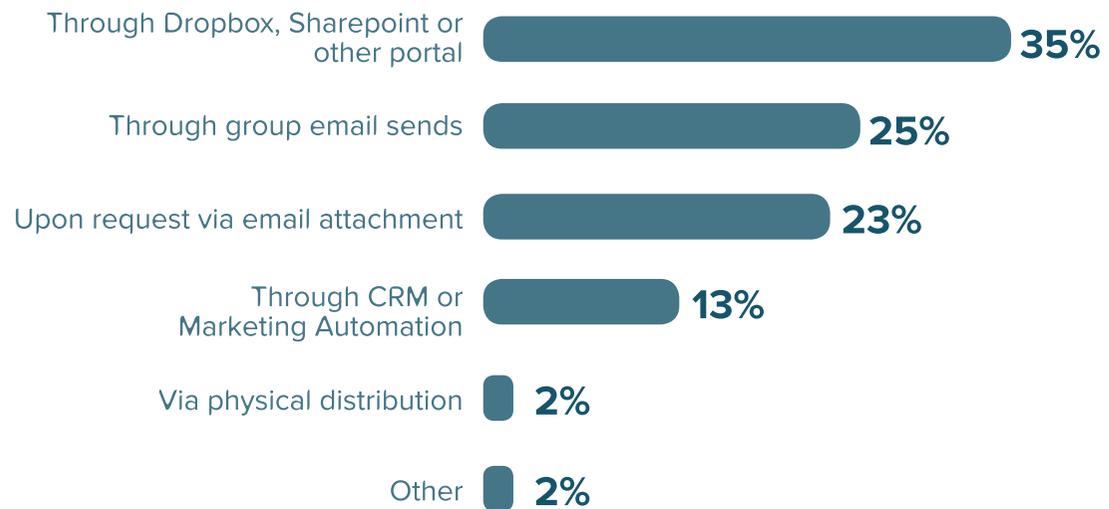


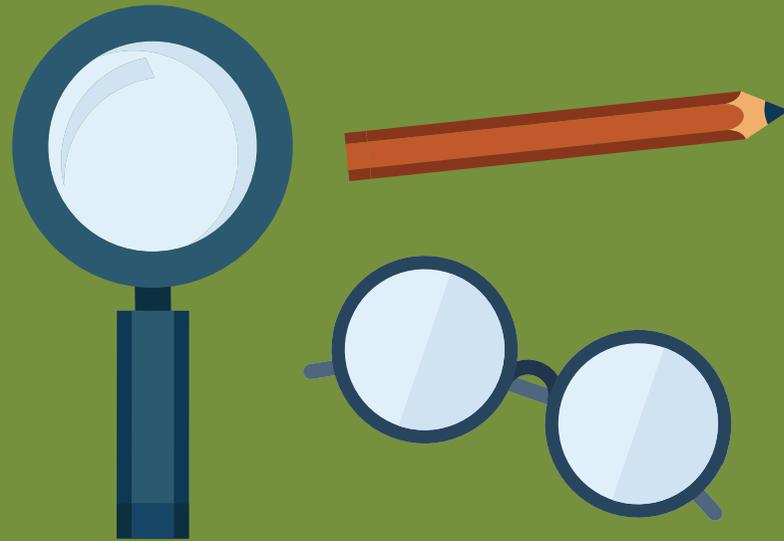
FIGURE 17

DIGITAL REPOSITORIES OR PORTALS ARE THE PRIMARY MEANS OF CONTENT DISTRIBUTION TO THE SALES TEAM.

Primary Way Content is Distributed to the Sales Team



44% of study’s participants use **group emails** as the primary way of distribution when the sales team creates none or little content on its own.



Analyst Bottom Line

This study has assessed the current state of content fragmentation and estimated the impact that inconsistent content has on the buying journey. Almost everyone who participated in this study agrees that content measurably influences revenue, yet more than half rated their content effectiveness at “Neutral” or lower. Two factors this study examined that impair revenue generation are fragmentation and a simple lack of content.

Content fragmentation occurs when sales and marketing content is branded poorly, lacks key messages or expresses them incompletely. When content is fragmented, only 15 percent of study participants say that content meets buyers’ needs well during their journeys.

Two-thirds of all study participants report that they lose sales when needed content isn’t available. In response to lack of needed content, over one-fourth of the sales team often or always create content without waiting for marketing to do it. In the course of doing so, they often contribute to the content fragmentation problem.

This study identifies some ways to eliminate content fragmentation and ensure that sales and marketing content has the greatest possible impact on revenue:

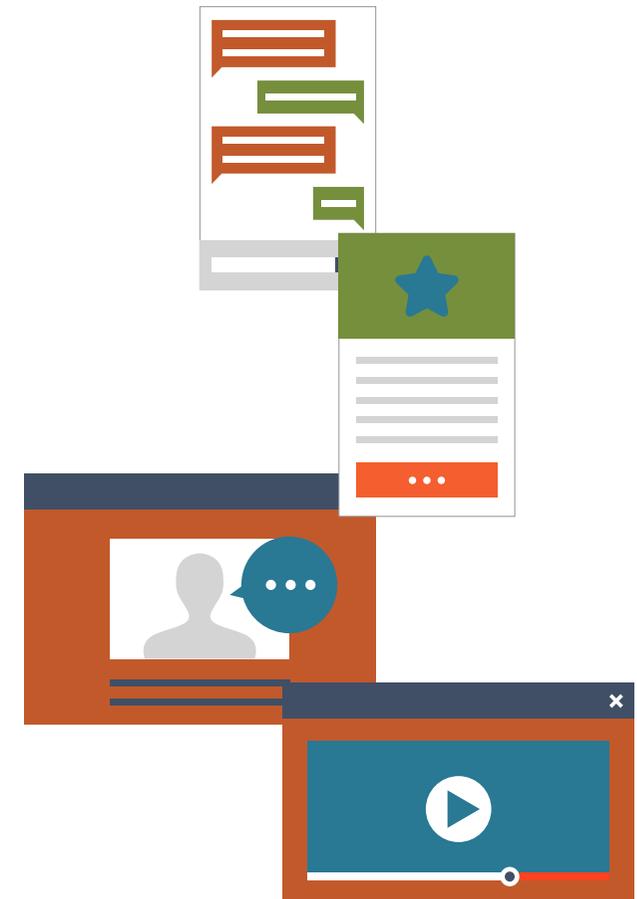
1 **Eliminate fragmentation.** The recipe to eliminate fragmentation has five key ingredients:

- ✓ **Data:** identify and track metrics that reveal how each content asset performs in terms of engagement and revenue influence.
- ✓ **Resources:** commit adequate resources to the development of new and maintenance of existing content assets.
- ✓ **Process:** have a process and set of tools defined that makes it easy to reliably produce quality, consistent content for all stages of the customer buying journey.
- ✓ **Standards:** govern the content development process with standards that describe how the brand and key brand messages are expressed.
- ✓ **Collaboration:** ensure that sales team and customer input heavily influences the content development process.



- 2 Agility.** Specific to the content development process, this study has shown that having a responsive process is critical to developing content that is consistent and meets buyer needs in every stage of the journey. Consider implementing a service level agreement that spells out what kind of responsiveness the sales team can expect on its requests for new or modified content.
- 3 Personalization.** Content that is personalized does a much better job of meeting the needs of buyers during their journeys. The content development process should exploit the organization's data and use tools that facilitate produce more personalized content. A further benefit is that when content is personalized, it is also less fragmented.
- 4 Distribution.** The content development process can work beautifully until the final step, where distribution to the sales team occurs. The most popular approach is to use an online portal or document repository to make content assets available to the sales team, and this is highly recommended. Streamlining the distribution of content is one way to reduce content fragmentation and minimize the need of the sales team to improvise its own content.

Content plays a crucial role in the revenue cycle for most organizations. The purpose of content is always to convey expertise, create confidence and help the consumer of that content proceed smoothly along to the next stage in the buying journey. This study confirms that fragmented content impairs the revenue cycle, while consistent content enhances it. **For this reason, organizations that use sales and marketing content are smart to care deeply about how consistently their content expresses their brand, key messages and promises.**





Acknowledgements

Demand Metric is grateful to MarcomCentral for sponsoring this research, and for those who took the time to complete the study survey.



About Demand Metric

Demand Metric is a marketing research and advisory firm serving a membership community of over 70,000 marketing professionals and consultants in 75 countries.

Offering consulting methodologies, advisory services, and 500+ premium marketing tools and templates, Demand Metric resources and expertise help the marketing community plan more efficiently and effectively, answer the difficult questions about their work with authority and conviction and complete marketing projects more quickly and with greater confidence, boosting the respect of the marketing team and making it easier to justify resources the team needs to succeed.

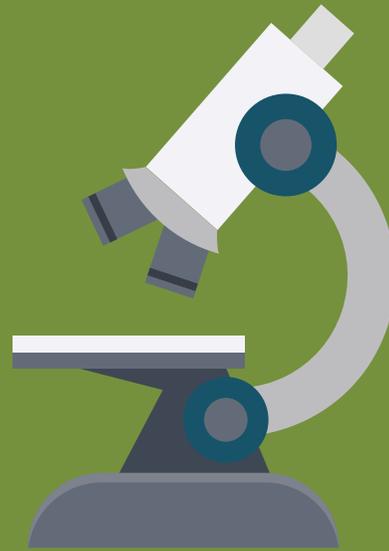
To learn more about Demand Metric, please visit:

www.demandmetric.com.



About MarcomCentral

MarcomCentral, formerly PTI Marketing Technologies®, is a leading provider of cloud-based Marketing Asset Management and Variable Data Publishing. MarcomCentral encompasses three core products, MarcomCentral Enterprise Edition for corporate marketing organizations, MarcomCentral Web to Print Edition for service providers and FusionPro VDP for businesses requiring personalization software. MarcomCentral manages and customizes marketing material across entire organizations enabling brand control and asset distribution with anytime, anywhere access. Fortune 100 companies count on MarcomCentral's powerful platform to scale their marketing asset development and build their brands worldwide. To learn more about MarcomCentral, please visit www.marcom.com.



Appendix: Survey Background

This 2017 Content Consistency Benchmark Study survey was administered online during the period of January 18th through February 12th, 2017.

During this period, 328 responses were collected, 250 of which were complete. Many of the partial responses were complete enough to use in the analysis.

Only valid or correlated findings are shared in this report.

The representativeness of this study’s results depends on the similarity of the sample to environments in which this survey data is used for comparison or guidance.

Summarized to the right is the basic categorization data collected about respondents to enable filtering and analysis of the data:

Type of organization:

Primarily B2B	47 percent
Primarily B2C	22 percent
Mixed B2B/B2C	31 percent

Primary role of respondent

President, CEO or owner	7 percent
Marketing	68 percent
Sales	8 percent
Finance/accounting	3 percent
Other	14 percent

Annual sales:

Less than \$10 million	26 percent
\$10 to \$24 million	16 percent
\$25 to \$99 million	15 percent
\$100 to \$499 million	18 percent
\$500 to \$999 million	7 percent
\$1 billion or more	18 percent

Revenue growth environment in most recent fiscal year:

Significant increase	17 percent
Slight increase	54 percent
Flat	18 percent
Slight decline	9 percent
Significant decline	2 percent



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