AGENCY TRENDS

STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Research Series Conducted in Partnership with Leading Providers of Marketing Technology and Digital Marketing Agency Services.

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Table of Contents

Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing strategies, tactics and the technology that drives them with a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing professionals and marketing research subscribers.

Survey Respondents

Primary Marketing Channel

B2B	39%
B2C	41%
B2B and B2C equally	20%

Number of Employees

More than 500	16%
50 to 500	21%
Fewer than 50	64%

Primary role in company

Owner / Partner / C-Level	56%
Vice President / Director / Manager	27%
Non-Management Professional	17%

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Agency Trends

The key to having a marketing agency stand out in this extremely competitive environment is to provide services most needed by marketing professionals.

But what are clients looking for in an agency in 2020?

To help you answer this question, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded the Agency Trends Survey. We thank the 257 marketing professionals who responded to this survey during the week of February 10, 2020.

This Survey Summary Report, titled *Agency Trends*, represents the opinions of all the market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments from the survey are reported on separately and exclusively by our participating Research Partners.

This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

MarTech Trends

Businesses often rely on agencies to fill in proficiency gaps when it comes to certain trending MarTech that might fall outside of the skill sets or time constraints of in-house resources. According to 257 marketers, **online advertising or retargeting (59%)** and **personalization (56%)** are reportedly the top two trends that agencies will be used for in the year ahead.

What are the biggest MARKETING TECHNOLOGY TRENDS that agencies will be used for in 2020?

Trend	Percentage
Online Advertising/Retargeting	59%
Personalization	56%
Data/Content Visualization	41%
Automation	38%
AI	28%
Chatbots	12%
Voice Search	10%
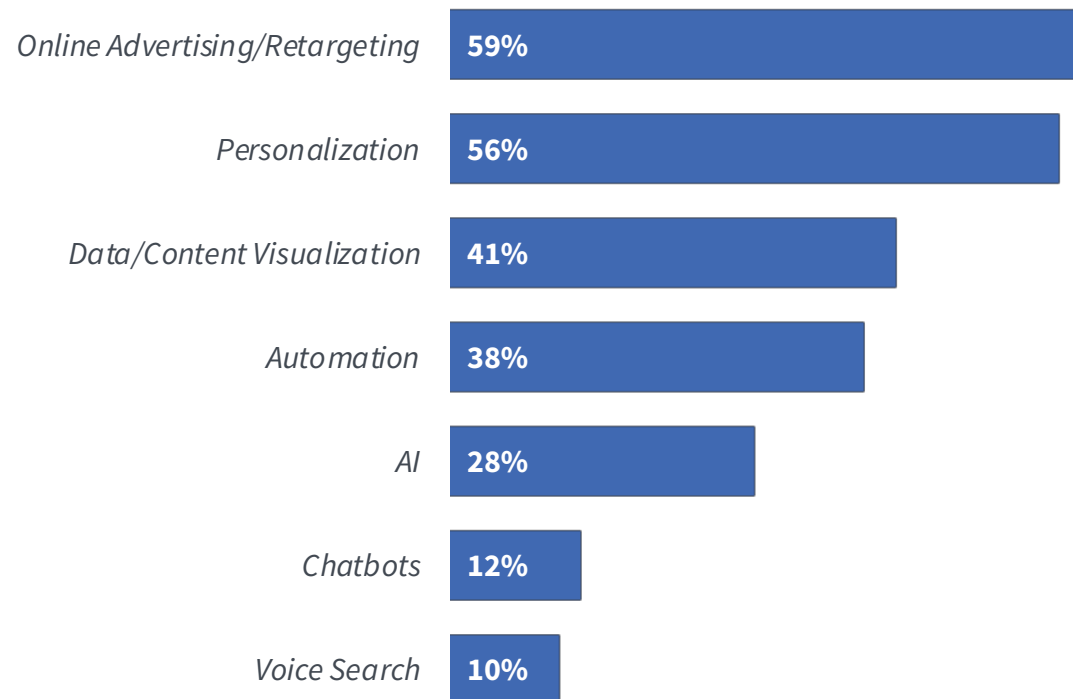
Challenging Barriers

It is critical for agencies and clients to develop a healthy relationship in order to realize the most benefit, but what are the greatest challenges they face in establishing this success? **Delivering innovative ideas** and **attributing revenue to marketing** are the top barriers to the success of a client/agency relationship according to 48% and 45% of marketers, respectively.

What are the most CHALLENGING BARRIERS to the success of a client/agency relationship?

Barrier	%
Delivering innovative ideas	48%
Attributing revenue to marketing	45%
Delivering on established metrics	35%
Maintaining effective project management	33%
Understanding brand completely	30%
Making client the priority	25%
Using senior talent on accounts	14%
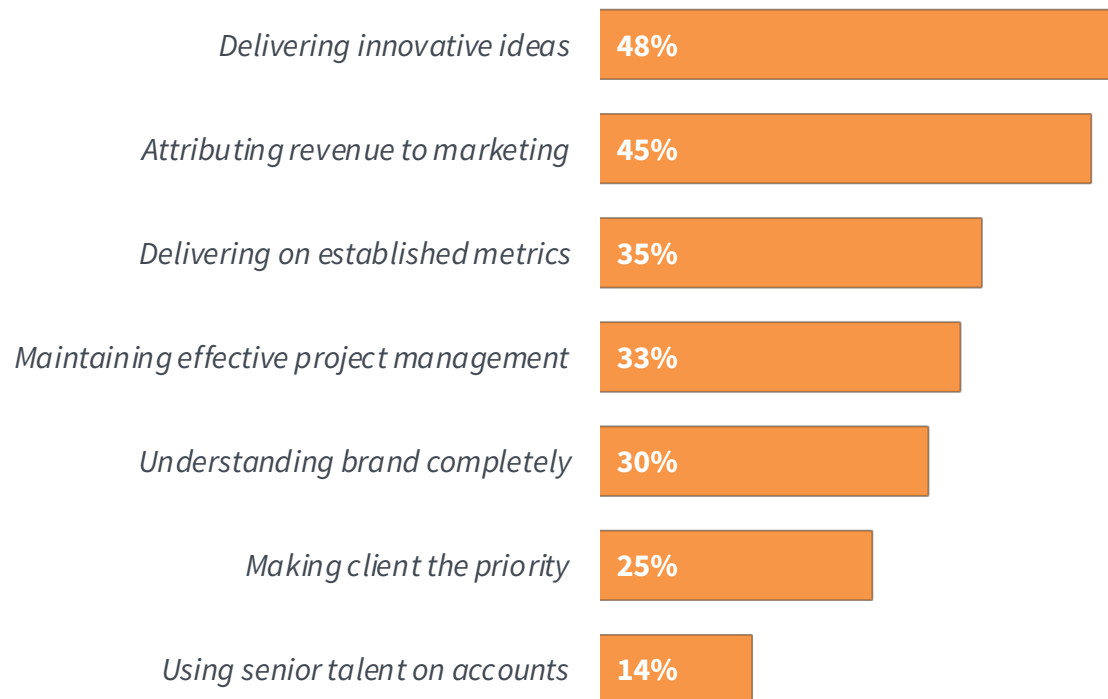
Agency Success

The overwhelming majority of marketers have a postivite outlook on an agency's ability to overcome challenges that threaten the agency/client relationship. Some success was reported by nearly all marketers surveyed (99%), with 42% describing an agency as **best-in-class** at achieving success despite the difficulties they face.

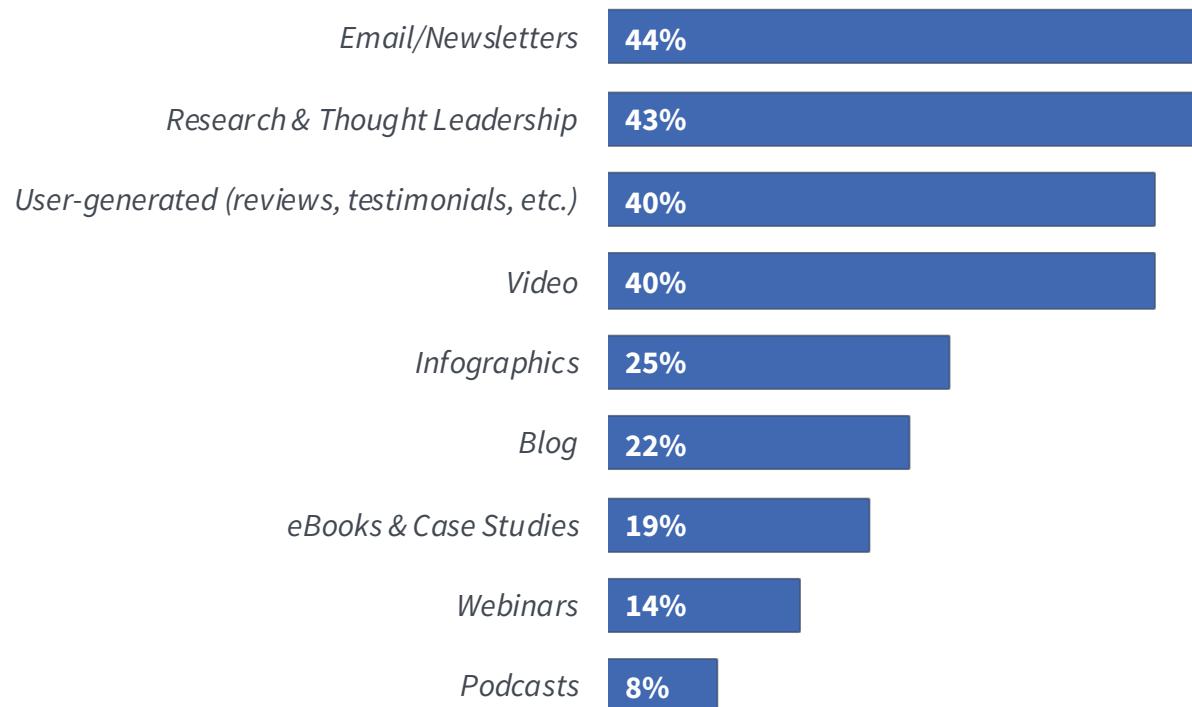Which best describes the SUCCESS of an agency at overcoming the challenging barriers?

Unsuccessful
1%

Very successful (best-in-class)
42%

Somewhat successful
57%

Agency Trends Survey.
Conducted by Ascend2 and Research Partners.
Published March, 2020.
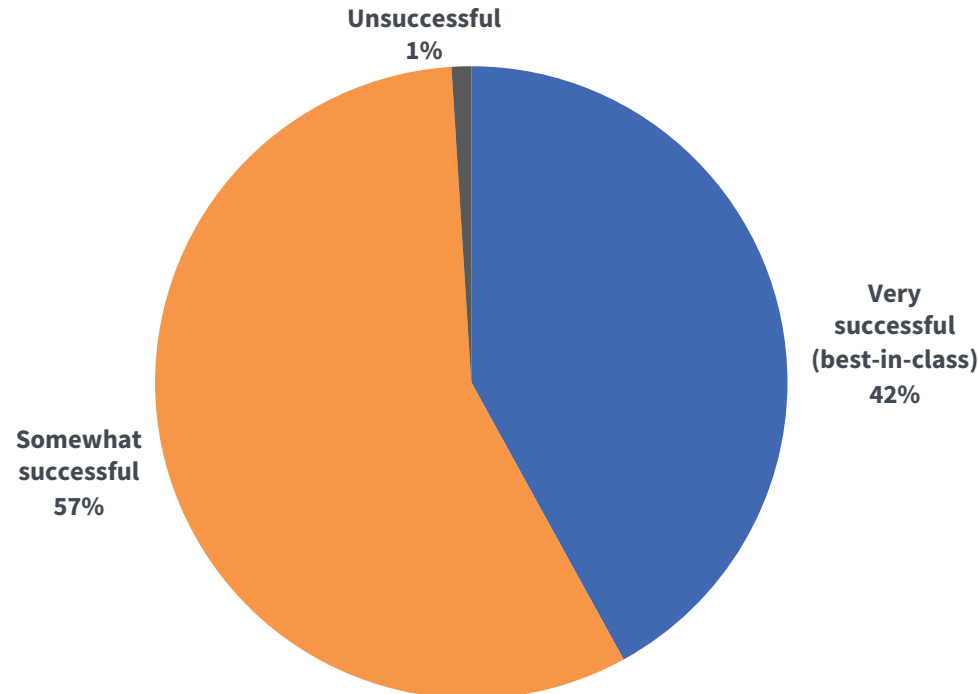
Types of Content Required

Developing an effective digital marketing strategy usually requires a strategic mix of content intended to drive business. While some of this content may be produced in-house, marketers report that there is high demand for **email and newsletters** (44%) and **research and thought leadership** (43%) which often require additional expertise that an agency can provide.

What are the TYPES OF CONTENT REQUIRED most often from an agency?

Content Type	Percentage
Email/Newsletters	44%
Research & Thought Leadership	43%
User-generated (reviews, testimonials, etc.)	40%
Video	40%
Infographics	25%
Blog	22%
eBooks & Case Studies	19%
Webinars	14%
Podcasts	8%

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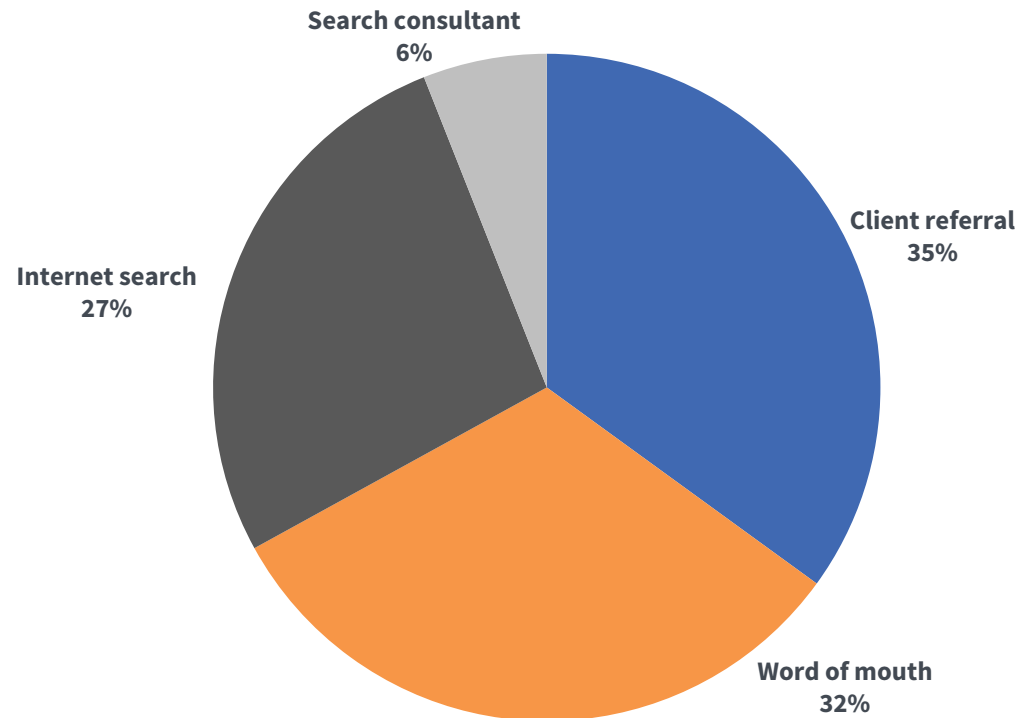Published March, 2020.

Agency Sourcing

Over two-thirds of marketing professionals surveyed report that new business to agencies is coming from organic sources such as **client referral (35%)** and **word-of-mouth (32%)**. Another 27% of marketers say that **internet search** is an effective mechanism for sourcing an agency while only 6% of those surveyed utilize a **search consultant**.

Which best describes the SOURCE USED to find an agency?

Search consultant
6%

Internet search
27%

Client referral
35%

Word of mouth
32%

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Capabilities Required

Creating a strategic approach to reaching prospects and converting them into customers is best outsourced, according to 45% of marketers who say that an **overall marketing strategy** is a capability most often required from an agency. More definitive services such as **content creation (33%)** and **lead generation (32%)** are also reportedly top requirements of an agency.
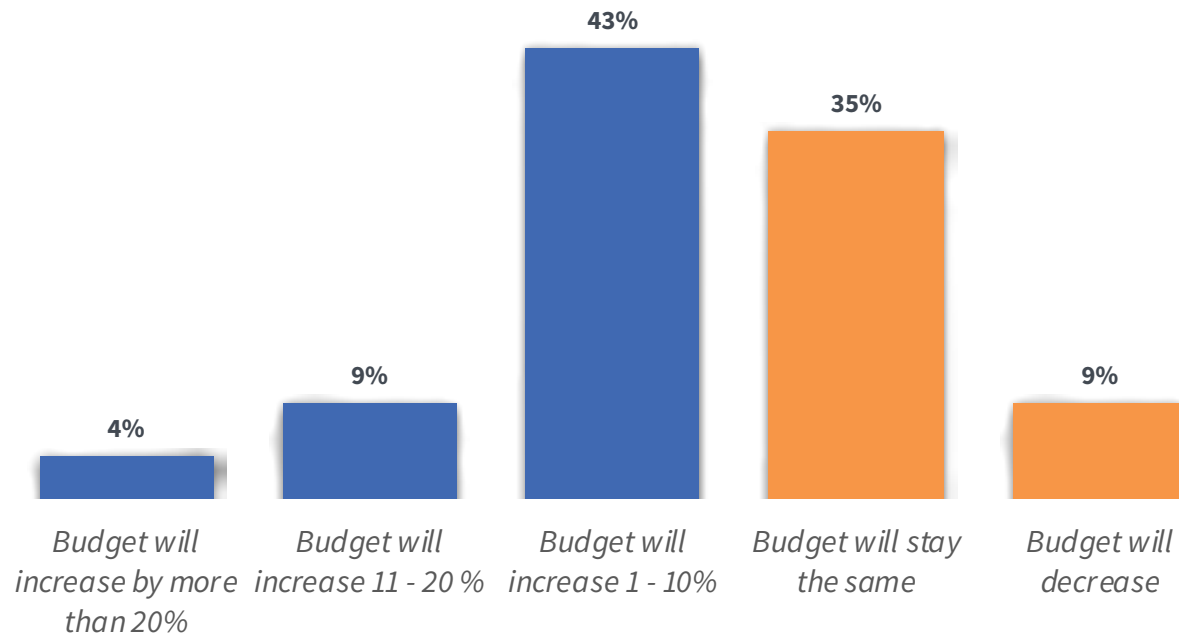
What are the CAPABILITIES REQUIRED most often from an agency?

Capability	%
Overall Marketing Strategy	45%
Content Creation	33%
Lead Generation	32%
Social Media Management	31%
Advertising / Retargeting / PPC	29%
Branding	26%
Overall Technology Strategy	18%
Email Campaigns	18%
PR / Reputation Management	17%
Marketing & Sales Automation	17%

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Budget Trends for Agency Work

The need for marketing agency work is trending up according to our research on budget trends. Over half (56%) of marketers surveyed report there will be an **increase in budgeting** used toward agency work in the year ahead. A 43% majority say that increase will be under 10%. About one-third (35%) of marketing professionals report **budgets for agency work will remain the same** in 2020.
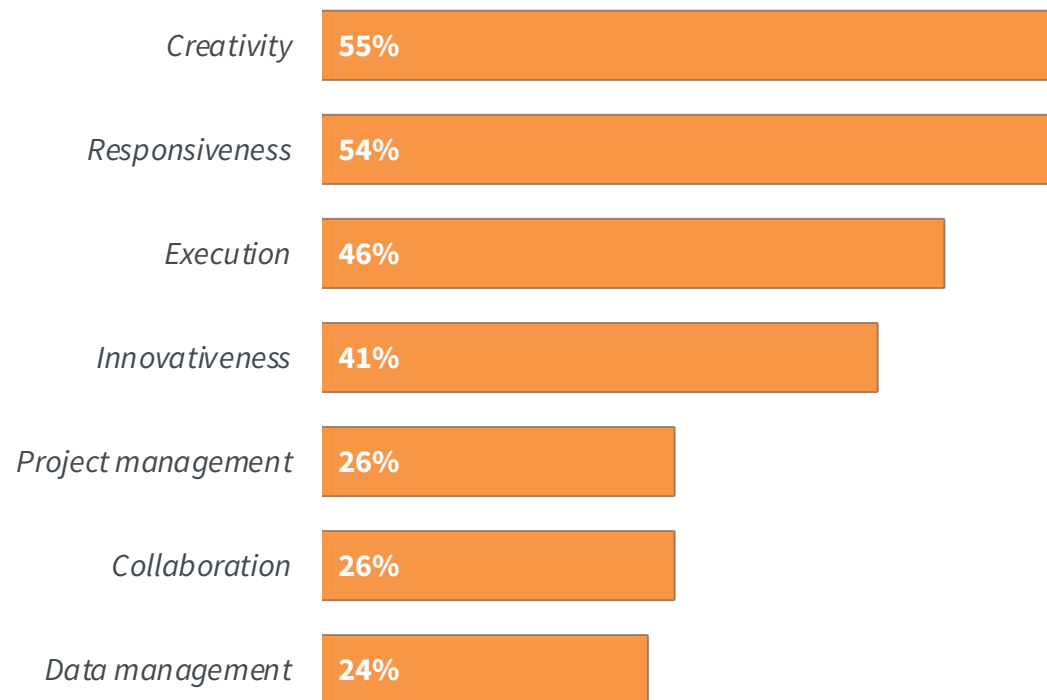
How are the budgets used toward AGENCY WORK TRENDING for the year ahead?

4%	9%	43%	35%	9%
Budget will increase by more than 20%	Budget will increase 11 - 20 %	Budget will increase 1 - 10%	Budget will stay the same	Budget will decrease

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Most Desired Attributes

When searching for an agency, marketers see the most value in key differentiators like **creativity** and **responsiveness** according to 55% and 54% of those surveyed, respectively. **Execution** is also an important attribute for agencies to possess for 46% of marketing professionals who value the logistics of how a strategy is carried out.

What AGENCY ATTRIBUTES are most desired by clients?

Attribute	%
Creativity	55%
Responsiveness	54%
Execution	46%
Innovativeness	41%
Project management	26%
Collaboration	26%
Data management	24%

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Receive a *Research-Based Content Blueprint* that provides proven strategies on how to demonstrate thought-leadership, engage prospects, acquire new customers, and generate media coverage.

Research studies by BuzzSumo, MarketingProfs, and eMarketer finds that original research is the #1 type of content to engage prospects and convert leads to sales. Find out how you can add research to your marketing mix.

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