AGENCY TRENDS
STRATEGIES & TACTICS

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

Ascend2
RESEARCH-BASED MARKETING
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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.
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?

- 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?

- 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 positive 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?

- Very successful (best-in-class): 42%
- Somewhat successful: 57%
- Unsuccessful: 1%

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?

- 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%
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?
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?

- 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%
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?

- 43%: Increase 1 - 10%
- 35%: Budget will stay the same
- 9%: Increase 11 - 20%
- 9%: Increase by more than 20%
- 4%: Decrease
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?

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

Agency Trends Survey.
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