



BUILDING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP WITH CONTENT

STRATEGIES, TACTICS & TRENDS



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.

Survey Respondents

Primary Marketing Channel

B2B	51%
B2C	35%
B2B and B2C equally	14%

Number of Employees

More than 500	21%
50 to 500	22%
Fewer than 50	57%

Primary role in company

Owner / Partner / C-Level	40%
Vice President / Director / Manager	40%
Non-Management Professional	20%

Building Thought Leadership with Content

Content marketing, when executed strategically, can be a critical part of a marketing program to build brand authority and thought leadership.

But how are companies using content to build thought leadership?

To help you answer this question, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded the Building Thought Leadership with Content Survey. We thank the 265 marketing professionals who responded to this survey during the week of March 2, 2020.

This Survey Summary Report, titled *Building Thought Leadership with Content*, 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.

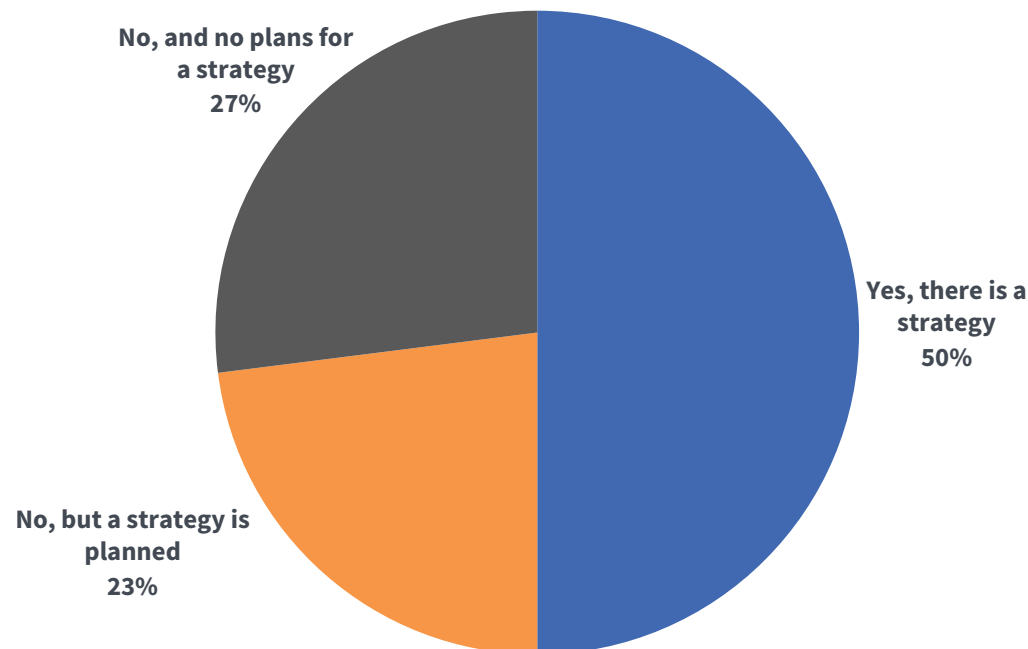
This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

Current Situation

Well-thought-out content marketing can be used to build trust and loyalty with a targeted audience.

When it comes to the thought leadership portion of content, **half of marketers report having a working strategy** behind it. About one-quarter (27%) say they have no strategy at all, presumably publishing content with no set plan or standard.

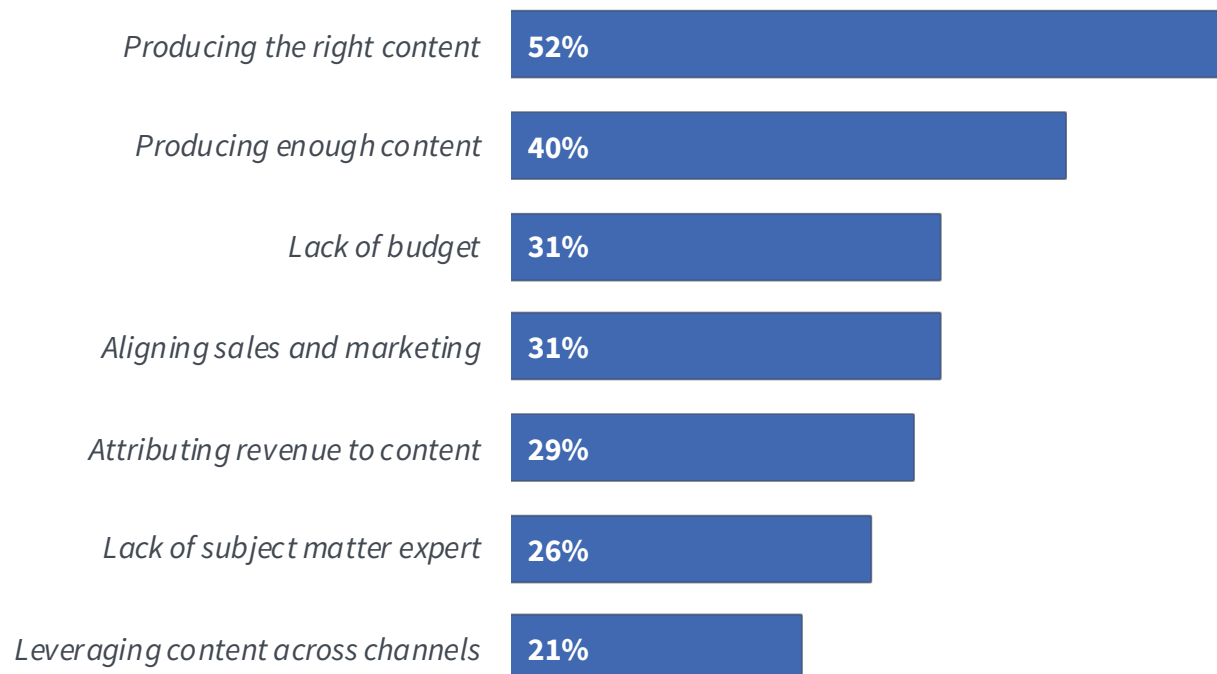
Is there currently a STRATEGY to produce thought leadership content?



Critical Challenges

Marketers are challenged by both the quality and quantity of content they feel is required to successfully build thought leadership. **Producing the right content** as well as **producing enough content** are reportedly major obstacles to overcome according to 52% and 40% of marketing professionals surveyed, respectively.

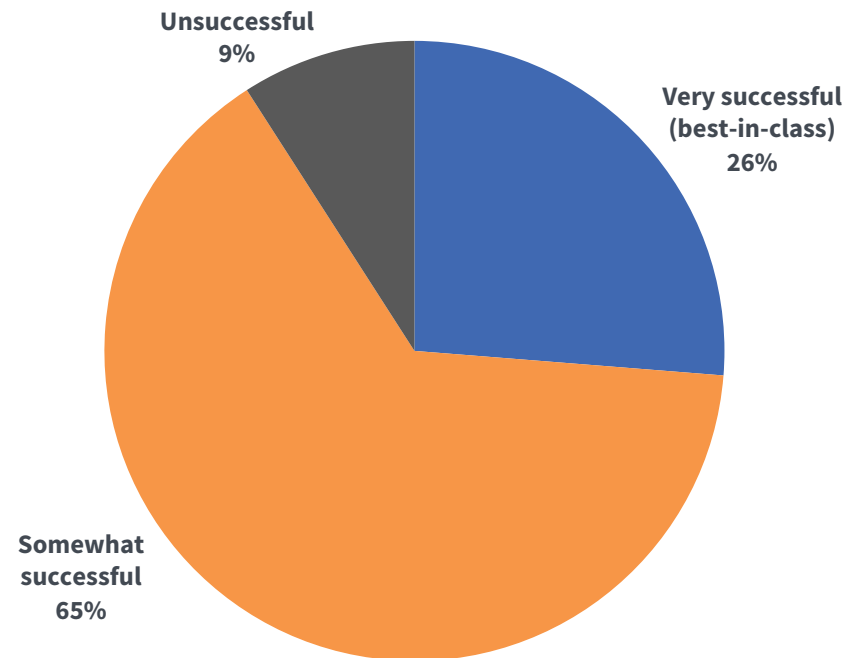
What are the most critical CHALLENGES to producing content for thought leadership?



Content Success

Despite the barriers that building thought leadership with content presents for marketers, a 91% majority report **successfully overcoming challenges** with a thought leadership content program. Over one quarter (26%) describe this success as best-in-class when compared to the competition, while nearly two-thirds (65%) report just some success.

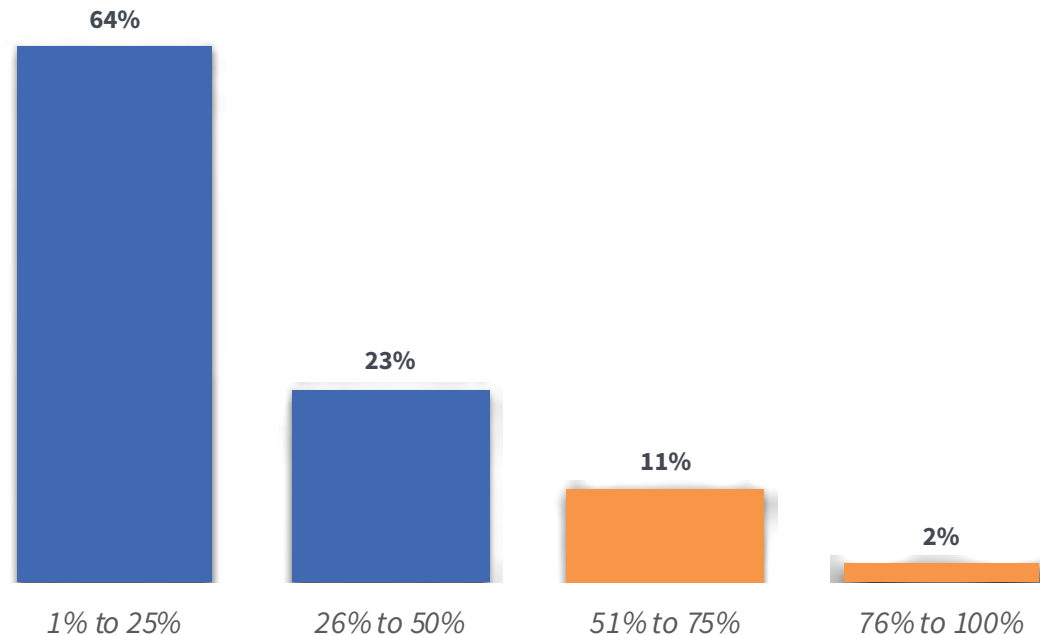
Which best describes the SUCCESS of thought leadership content at overcoming the challenges?



Budget Allocation

Most marketers (64%) report that a quarter or less of their overall content marketing budget is used for thought leadership. A much smaller percentage (13%) of those surveyed say that **over half of their overall content marketing budget** is used to produce content for the specific purpose of developing thought leadership.

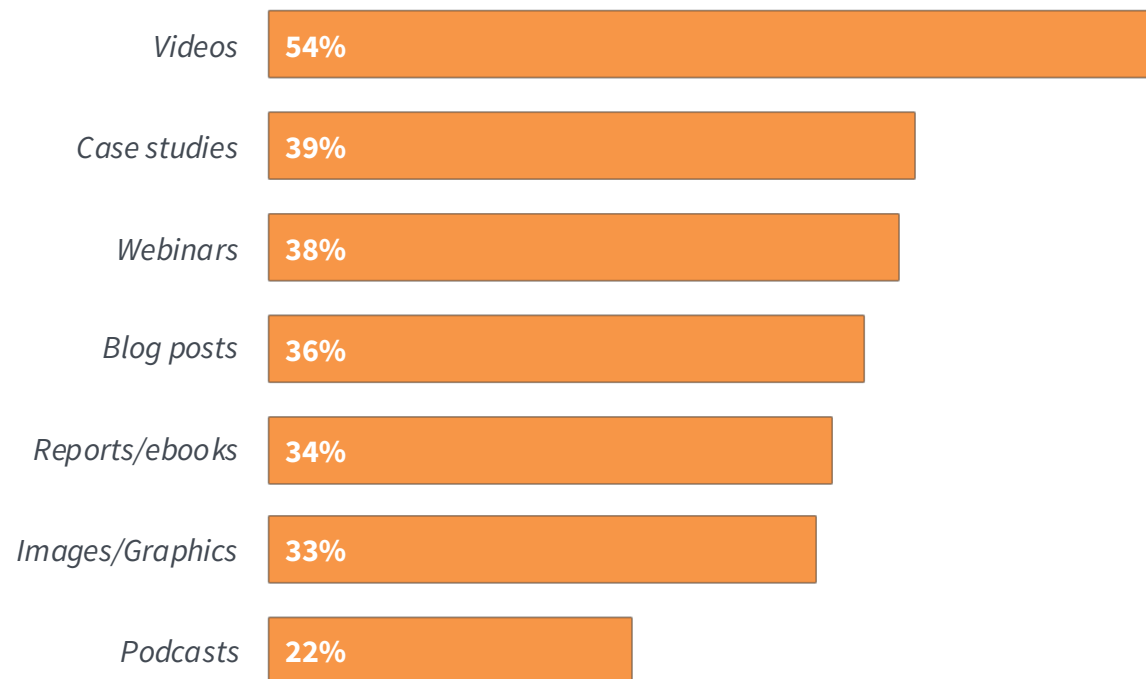
Which percentage of the content marketing BUDGET is used for thought leadership?



Content Formats

Content that establishes authority with an audience can come in many forms. Over half (54%) of marketers surveyed have found that **videos are the best content format** used for building thought leadership. **Case studies and webinars** are also reportedly effective when it comes to developing thought leadership according to 39% and 38% of marketers, respectively.

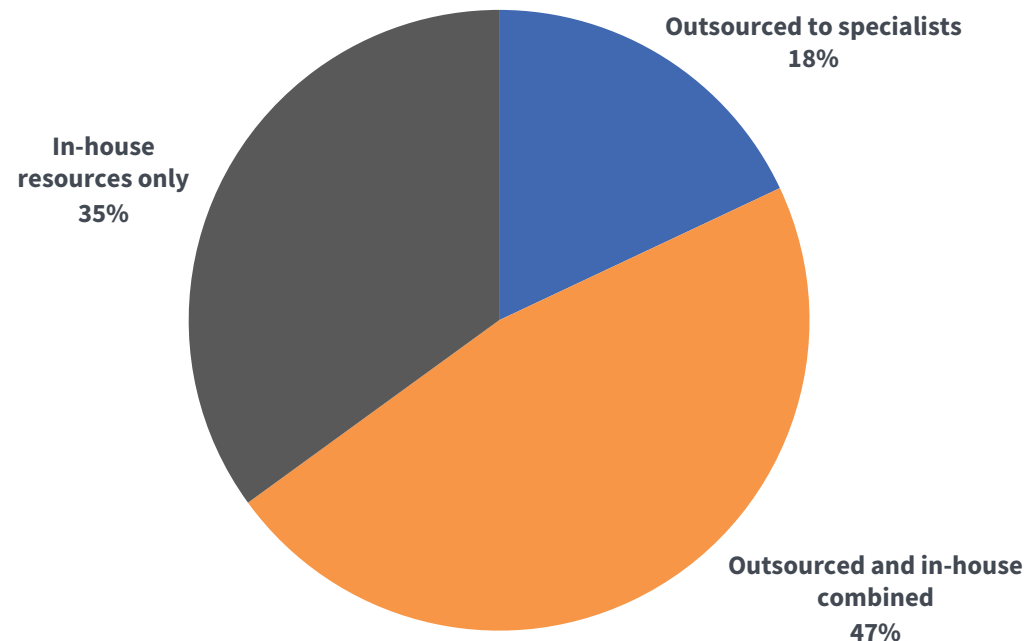
What are the BEST FORMATS used for thought leadership content?



Resource Allocation

Producing enough content to establish an expert status in an industry or niche requires an extensive amount of time and thoughtfulness. That is why two-thirds (65%) of marketers report **outsourcing at least a portion of this work to specialists**. About half (47%) of those surveyed use a combination of in-house professionals and outsourced resources.

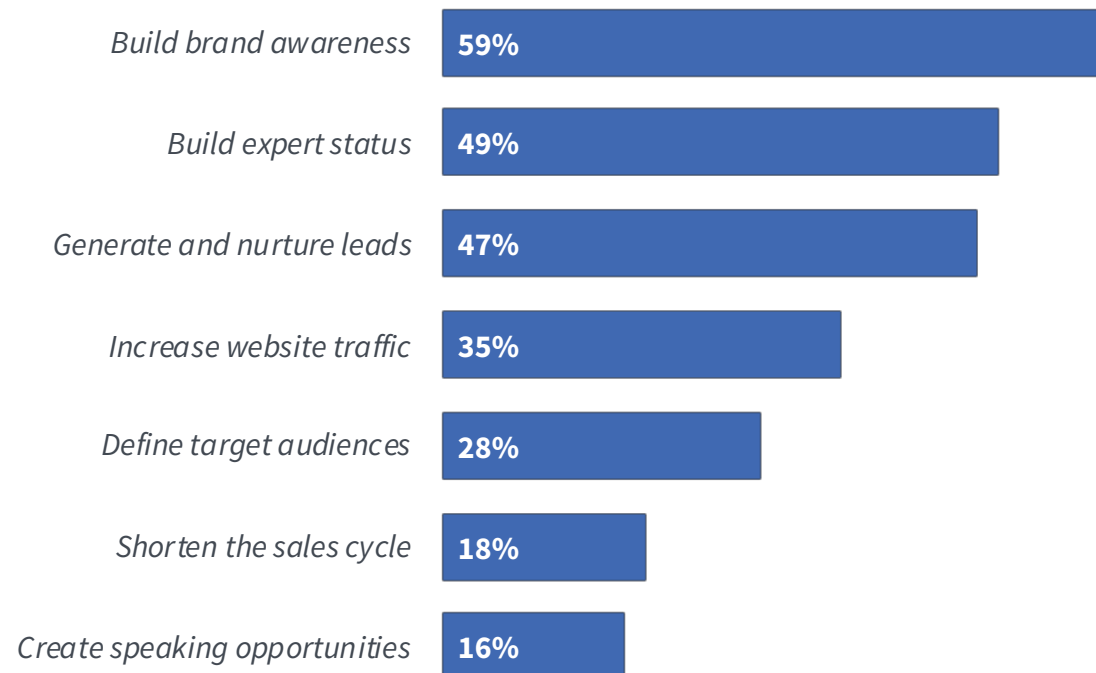
Which best describes the RESOURCES USED to produce thought leadership content?



Content Performance

According to marketers, thought leadership content is used to enhanced a content marketing program because it **builds brand awareness (59%)** and **builds expert status (49%)** most effectively. It also is an effective tactic for **generating and nurturing leads** according to nearly half (47%) of marketing professionals surveyed.

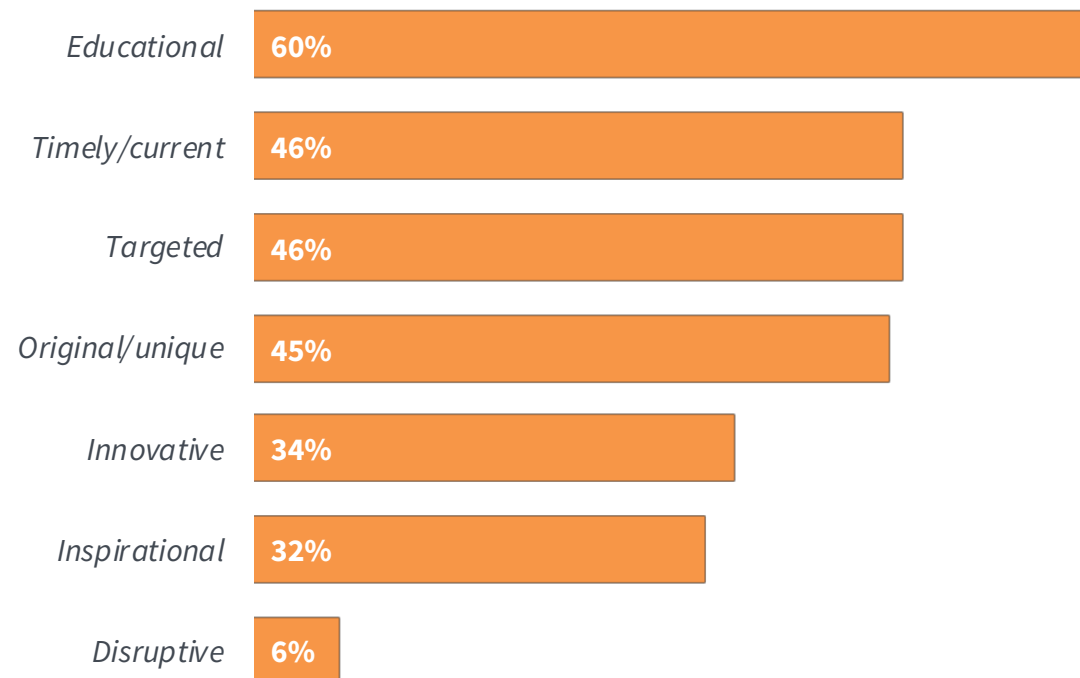
What does THOUGHT LEADERSHIP CONTENT do most effectively?



Content Characteristics

60% of marketers agree that establishing thought leadership requires providing **educational** content to their audience. It is also important for thought leadership content to be **timely or current (46%)**, and **targeted and relevant to a specific audience (46%)** according to those marketing professionals surveyed.

What CHARACTERISTICS are most important for thought leadership content?





RESEARCH-BASED MARKETING FOR MARKETING TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

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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