

“We’re spending more but struggling with justification and delivery.”

THE STATE OF

**CONTENT
MARKETING**

2017

CONTENTS

CONTENT MARKETING'S MAINSTREAM YEAR

PAGE 3

THE FIVE KEY FINDINGS

PAGE 4

01. CONTENT WORKS

PAGE 4

02. IN PAID... SOCIAL WINS ...AND TWITTER IS BOSS!

PAGE 4

03. ENGAGEMENT, ENGAGEMENT, ENGAGEMENT

PAGE 5

04. SUCCESS THOUGH IS A DIFFERENT THING...

PAGE 6

05. 23% MARKETING BUDGET AND GROWING

PAGE 6

WHERE ARE WE STRUGGLING?

PAGE 7

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

PAGE 8



CONTENT MARKETING'S MAINSTREAM YEAR

It's been quite a year for content. While the concept of serious content investment has been on the agenda for several years, it has only truly been embraced in 2016.

There have been amazing stories of success in this time but more often the outcome has been abject failure.

Why? Well, according to the findings from our exclusive annual survey of the nation's marketers the challenge is the ability to produce integrated content strategies that span brand, acquisition and other teams seamlessly and consistently deliver quality content.

It's a surprising fact given that many brands are investing serious amounts of money in content – and plan to plough in even more in 2017.

So, what are we struggling to get to grips with and where are we actually winning? This ebook is designed to walk through the key findings from the exhaustive survey process and spend a little time leaning towards where the answers to the biggest questions may lie...

So, grab a coffee, a pen and some peace and quiet and let's delve into the State of Content Marketing in 2017...



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Penson is the founder and managing director of Zazzle Media, one of the globe's first and foremost pure-play digital content marketing agencies.

THE FIVE KEY FINDINGS

01. Content works!

79% say it works – only 8% say not effective

While content is obviously utilised across all channels the investment is going straight into digital - and when it does it works.

Of all those questioned only 8% said it wasn't effective. Considering the challenges that the industry has with measurement (a little more of that later) this suggests that the power of the medium is only just beginning to be understood.

As we can see from the visualisation below the nation believes in content marketing but perhaps struggles to put an absolute number on it.

This is a very general question, of course, and there are still those who sit on the fence but overall the picture is a positive one, fuelling what we see as a continuation of growth in the discipline.

HOW EFFECTIVE WOULD YOU SAY CONTENT MARKETING IS?

● Very effective ● Quite effective ● Not sure ● Not very effective ● Not effective at all



02. In paid... social wins... and Twitter is boss!

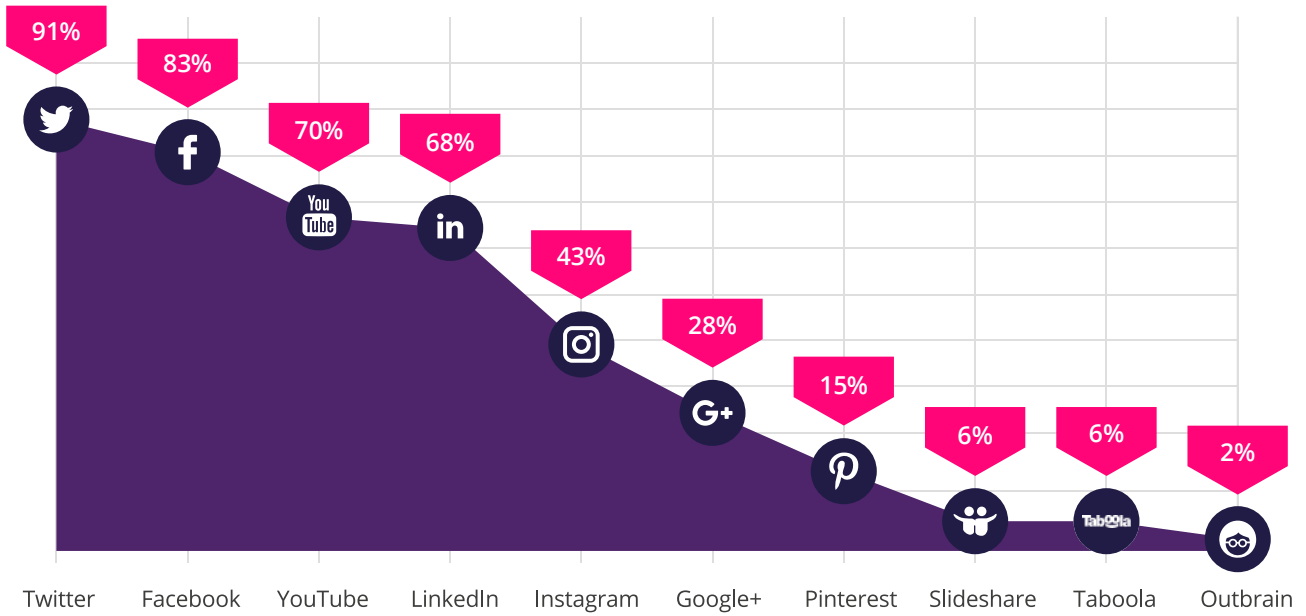
Paid channels are a key part of the marketing mix and social ads are where the majority of focus lies. To those using them they are even more effective than earned methods such as PR and blogger/influencer marketing.

That may be surprising to many, including us, but it appears UK marketers like the immediacy and measurability of the channel.

Interestingly print media also plays a part in the mix with almost half of those questioned stating they still reached out to magazines and newspapers to get coverage.

And of the platforms used most it is Twitter and not Facebook that gets the most thumbs up, with 91% using it for content distribution. Facebook is still a healthy second but it is the 'blue bird' that attracts most interest and interaction.

HOW IS CONTENT DISTRIBUTED?



03. Engagement, engagement, engagement

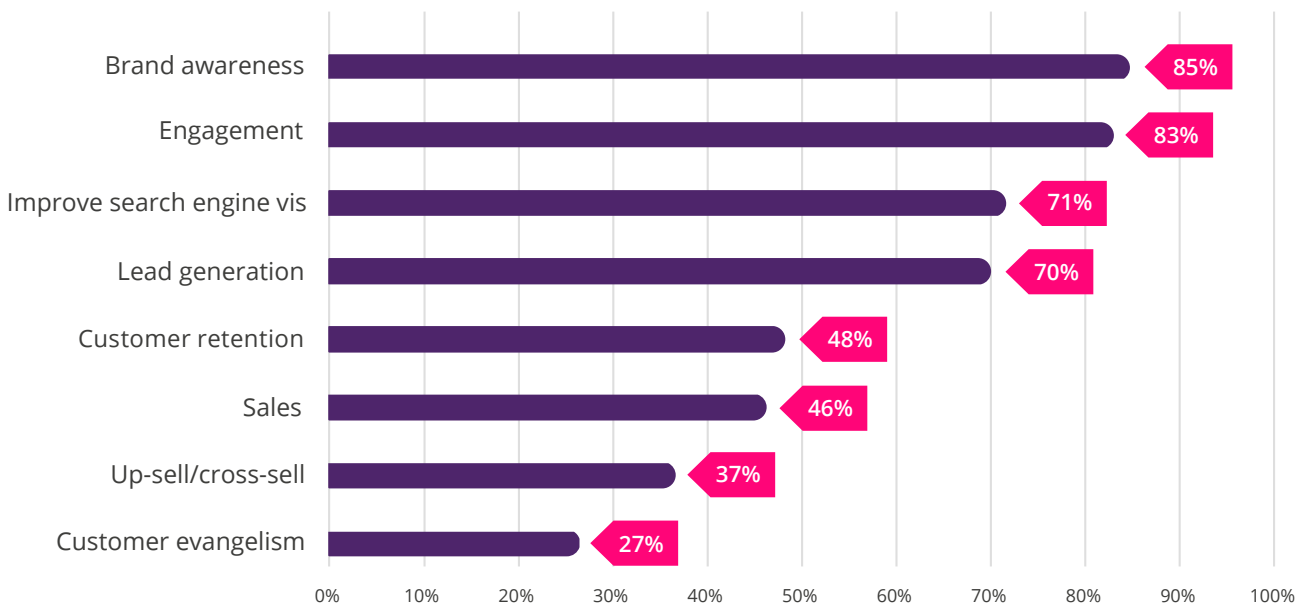
While marketers have been increasingly more focused on harder metrics over recent years it is refreshing to see that there is now buy in for what are traditionally seen as softer measures too.

Our respondents told us that it is engagement and brand awareness that leads

the charge, usurping the usual 'revenue' 'sales' and 'SEO visibility'.

This is a good sign because it is clear that purse string holders are beginning to look past immediate results and towards building long term audience.

HOW IS CONTENT MARKETING MEASURED?



04. Success though is a different thing..

When it comes to measuring 'success' however, we take a very different view on life.

Any suggestion of brand measures have gone and are replaced with the harder stuff.

It isn't a picture made entirely of opposing views though. Sales, once again, is well down

the list and instead the focus is on earlier stage attribution measures, such as traffic subscriber growth and rankings in search.

The downside is the lack of importance put onto brand measures and intent, probably due to the ongoing challenges with measurement. Something we come back to time and time again.

DEFINING MARKETING 'SUCCESS'



06. 23% marketing budget and growing

It's amazing to think that just a few years ago tactical marketers were struggling to get any budget at all for content. In a short space of time we've seen it climb from the depths to becoming a serious chunk of the overall marketing plan.

And for good reason too.

On average our respondents told us that they plan to allocate 23% to content marketing alone this year – and that's before you look at overall content strategy.

It's likely therefore that number could be close to 50% by the time all content generation is taken

into account and with paid always likely to take the lion's share this is big news indeed.

A whopping 70% expect that number to rise even further too as we work through the year thanks to extra budget for campaigns.

INCREASING INVESTMENT IN CONTENT MARKETING



WHERE ARE WE STRUGGLING?

We may have spent the last few pages applauding the positives but from the responses we have seen it's clear it hasn't been all plain sailing.

And those areas of struggle haven't been insignificant either. In fact, the very fact they exist suggests we still have a VERY long way to go before content marketing claims any further budget.

That may be a bold statement but let's look at the facts for a second.

Topping the list of concerns is not having enough of the right staff or agency support

to deliver the perfect plan. That comes ahead of the usual bottlenecks such as internal politics and budget, suggesting that there is a knowledge or skills gap out there in being able to deliver.

This view is supported when we look at the greatest pain point too. 'Producing engaging content' and 'producing content consistently' sit right up there as the biggest challenges of all and this is concerning news indeed as it suggests an inability to deliver full content strategies. And if you fail to do that then the ROI will also fail to add up, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy of underperformance.

BIGGEST CONTENT MARKETING CHALLENGES YOUR COMPANY HAS FACED?



Adding further depth to that rather concerning picture is the fact that only 6% of marketers claim

to be clear on best practice. That means 94% of marketers don't really know what 'right' looks like.

WOULD YOU SAY YOUR TEAM IS CLEAR ON HOW BEST TO RUN CONTENT MARKETING?



less than 10% of content marketers claim to be 'definitely clear' on best practices in this channel

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

All-in-all then, there is still much work to be done. While much progress has been made in winning over the heart and minds of the purse-string holders the challenge now is rewarding that commitment with results.

With the fight for budget won, focus has to shift to delivery and the news is not good here.

Lack of resource or a crystal clear idea of what a truly great content strategy should look like are threatening to put the brakes on performance and with it create blockades to further investment.

It's a big problem and one we must fix fast. But how?

It starts and finishes with education; an industry-wide effort to share best practice and learnings through greater sharing of results and strategic approach.


It's something we have committed to over the last seven years, writing and sharing dozens of articles across everything from [how to create the right flow](#) of content to ensuring that you maximize the chances of success from [content campaigns](#).

And most importantly of all, especially in light of the issues with consistently delivery, Constant Content is key. Creating the odd off-page campaign here and there just won't cut it any more, you must have an 'always on' strategy that entertains, informs and adds value to your audiences' lives. Do that and you'll win. Before your competitors do.

BRAND AS PUBLISHER

FREE EBOOK

All of this is captured in our [Brand as Publisher Guide](#) and for those looking to make the jump from simple 'content marketing' to fully fledged strategy, reading it is a great place to start.



GOOD LUCK and keep an eye out for next year's survey - **The State of Content Marketing 2018.**

Thank you!

We hope that you find the results of our annual survey as interesting as we did, with the results giving you an insight into the minds and strategies of some of the UK's finest marketing teams.

We pride ourselves in producing thought leading surveys, tools, guides and eBooks in the content marketing space and 2017 is no different.

If you have any questions about the survey results or would like more information about the results please get in touch via info@zazzlemedia.co.uk.

Brought to you by the team at:

