

CONTENT MARKETING: UNLOCKING SALES & MARKETING PERFORMANCE

*How content bridges the divide between sales and marketing
by creating a unified view of business success*

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The Crucial Role of Content Marketing in Cementing Sales and Marketing Alignment

At LinkedIn, sales and marketing alignment is an important topic for us and for our customers. We believe achieving alignment is crucial for sales and marketing to reach their full potential. Previous global research from LinkedIn shows that 60% of respondents believed that misalignment between sales and marketing could damage financial performance. From both the sales side and the marketing side, there's broad agreement that sales and marketing alignment can boost pipeline, improve customer experience, and increase customer retention.

So the question isn't whether businesses should strive for sales and marketing alignment, but how to achieve it. This new research, which we conducted in partnership with the Content Marketing Institute, reveals a pathway to realizing sales and marketing alignment.

That pathway? Content marketing.

The numbers in the CMI/LinkedIn survey underscore the power of content in creating alignment. Eight out of 10 marketers in highly aligned companies show their salespeople how and when to use the content, compared with 25% or fewer in companies with low alignment.

Another proof point is account-based marketing (ABM), a discipline that requires cooperation between sales and marketing in the creation of content. Fifty-seven percent of highly aligned companies practice ABM, while only 28% of low alignment companies do.

The bottom line is that content can bring sales and marketing together. The most effective content understands the customer through the lens of both marketing and sales. The creation of this kind of content forces sales and marketing together. And it's for the best — for marketing, for sales, for the entire organization.

INTRODUCTION

The Rorschach Test of Sales & Marketing

Look at the picture on the right. What do you see?

If you're in marketing, you probably see something you work to optimize every day — a funnel. It's the representation of marketing process and efficiency. Your job is to put aggregate customer segments — audiences — into this funnel. It controls flow. Marketing people would say, "I see a filter."

If you're in sales, you might see something very different. You see layers of waypoints where specific target prospects sit. These are potential customers waiting for gates to open and move to the next waypoint. You see the potential to choose specific relationships to foster, for trust to be established, and doors to be unlocked. Salespeople would say, "I see a gateway."

As with any Rorschach test, both interpretations are correct. That's because marketing and sales have traditionally had fundamentally different views of the world. But now marketing and sales are working more closely together — in part because, more than ever, they have to.

The tension between sales and marketing has been well-known in B2B environments. When the tension is healthy, it creates an innovative atmosphere, where adaptation is encouraged and customer value is created. Marketing ensures that sales teams provide consistency and context to the evolution of the customer's long-term needs. Sales teams push back on content development, to ensure that individual customers are treated as partners, rather than demographic targets.

When the tension is unhealthy, the relationship festers. Fingers point. Blame is assigned. Marketing claims "we are generating more leads than sales can handle." Sales responds with "marketing's leads aren't worth our valuable time."



Over the last few years, creating and maintaining alignment between sales and marketing teams has become one of the most complex challenges for B2B enterprises. Relationships between B2B sales professionals and their prospects have fundamentally changed — which is a key reason why the relationship between sales and marketing is changing, too. Consider the following stats about today's prospective buyers:

- 92% start with an information searchⁱ
- 53% find that going online and researching is superior to interacting with a salespersonⁱⁱ
- 75% depend on social networks to learn about different vendorsⁱⁱⁱ
- 90% won't take a cold call^{iv}

Certainly, the internet has made it easy for buyers to gather information, but it's not that simple. The digital and social world has changed the entire buying process. B2B buyers face new challenges, and are under much more pressure to make the right decisions in an ever more complex marketplace.

- **B2B Buyers Are Now Self-Directed:** Because of a perception of asymmetry of information, B2B buyers are under pressure to self-educate — their colleagues and bosses expect them to be knowledgeable. Today's B2B buyers believe they have a responsibility to understand the available solutions before they even talk to a sales representative. That said, it should come as no surprise that only 12% want to meet in-person with a sales rep, and that 71% prefer to conduct research on their own (talking with a sales rep by phone or online chat only when needed).^v
- **B2B Buyers Are Teams, Not Individuals:** Today's B2B buyers are much more frequently part of a cross-functional buying committee. Nearly 70% of companies with more than 5,000 employees have four or more people involved in buying decisions.^{vi}
- **B2B Buyers Seek Trusted Advice Among Their Peers:** Today's B2B buyers use social media, search, and all kinds of digital tools to connect with colleagues, other customers, and industry experts to acquire the information they need. They want education. They shy away from pushy sales messaging and don't want overt persuasion in the content they consume.

These are some of the reasons why today's B2B buyers perform so much online research prior to talking with a salesperson. Transparent pricing, information about technical support, and thought leadership (in the form of case studies, white papers, articles, and blog posts) are among the most important types of content they're looking for on a vendor's website.^{vii} Some B2B buyers also believe that once they begin interacting with the company, the rep will be pushing an agenda rather than helping to solve a problem.^{viii}

Thus, content that provides value to these buyers and avoids overt selling has become one of the most important components for establishing and building trust.

According to Forrester Principal Analyst Mary Shea, lead author of the study B2B Buyers Mandate a New Charter for Marketing and Sales:

“The empowered B2B buyer is neither concerned with how your organization is structured and who’s responsible for the content on your website, nor are they interested in talking with a sales rep simply because they downloaded a white paper. Your buyers want contextual interactions with both human and digital assets across a holistic, but non-linear journey.”^{ix}

This brings us back to the inkblot — and the fundamentally different views that sales and marketing have about the customer journey. Both teams continue to struggle with developing a common vision for the inkblot of the funnel at a broader level.

The solution: a specific, strategic content marketing inkblot. However, most B2B enterprises still view content marketing as an experiment — some type of abstract unicorn or butterfly.

Content Marketing – The Challenge of a Common Vision

Over the last decade, content marketing, as a practice, has proven to be a profitable approach for some B2B companies. However, in many ways, a consistent, strategic, and scalable approach to content marketing has remained separate, elusive, and mostly ad hoc in many organizations.

According to CMI’s 2018 annual research, only 20% of B2B marketers describe their organizations as “extremely” committed to content marketing; 24% characterize their organizations as “extremely” or “very” successful at content marketing; and 53% say their content marketing currently consists of a “small (or one-person) team” that services the entire organization.^x

What is the reason for such a minimal commitment of investment in content marketing?

For content marketers, active, accurate measurement would be the key for building a business case for more resources. However, when CMI asked B2B marketers if they measure the ROI of their content marketing efforts, 65% said “no” or “unsure.”^{xi}

From the sales perspective, research has shown that as much as 80% of marketing content goes unused by sales.^{xii} Why? Most likely because most sales professionals say they don't understand their organization's content marketing strategy.^{xiii} In many cases, the content is wrong; it simply doesn't address the right challenge the buyer may be having. Or, it may be that the marketing group is so focused on pulling more leads into the top of the funnel, that they simply don't have content to help sales in their effort to close deals.

However, if B2B marketers understand that buyers are looking for contextual content experiences, shouldn't the focus be on providing those experiences? And if B2B sales professionals understand that by the time the buyer has contacted them, they have often become extremely knowledgeable, shouldn't they trust marketing content to do more of the initial relationship building? Why are enterprises so reluctant to invest in a strategic approach to content?

Three words: lack of alignment.

Which brings us to the question:

Can alignment between *content marketing* and sales serve as the key to a broader, more strategic alignment between sales and marketing, and ultimately drive more success?

In other words, if sales had a better understanding of content marketing — and the role content plays along each phase of the buyer's journey — could alignment between marketing and sales improve in general, provided there were things like frequent collaboration and shared incentives in place? Conversely, if marketing understood that the funnel they see as a filter is also a gate — and that prospects have specific, personal, and unique needs that sales must address — could they deliver more valuable content?

Our research indicates that the answer to all of these questions is yes.

About this Research

CMI and LinkedIn set out to study the current state of content marketing and sales alignment from the perspective of content marketers. We sought to examine the current maturity of content marketing and sales alignment, along with some of the gaps that need to be closed. We also looked at some of the biggest differences between organizations with high alignment versus those with low alignment.

For purposes of this research and report:

High alignment is defined as a self-reporting response by those who indicated their organization's content marketing and sales are "extremely" or "very" aligned.

Low alignment is defined as a self-reporting response by those who indicated their organization's content marketing and sales are "somewhat," "not very," or "not at all" aligned.

One of our primary goals was to understand the attitudes and practices of highly aligned content marketing and sales teams. Our questions included:

- What are the barriers to alignment?
- Which success metrics are used to measure alignment?
- Does account-based marketing (ABM) play a role in alignment?
- On which social media platforms are salespeople in highly aligned companies engaging with customers and prospects?
- What one factor would strengthen content marketing and sales alignment?
- What is the biggest detriment of not aligning these two practices?

While the survey was global in nature, this report focuses on the responses from B2B marketers in North America. Areas where we observed notable differences between B2B North American marketers and B2B marketers outside North America are highlighted in the blue boxes throughout the report (for more information, see the Methodology section that begins on p. 24).

Our overall findings support an interesting contention:

Strategic content marketing may be one of the most important keys to creating enterprise-wide sales and marketing alignment.

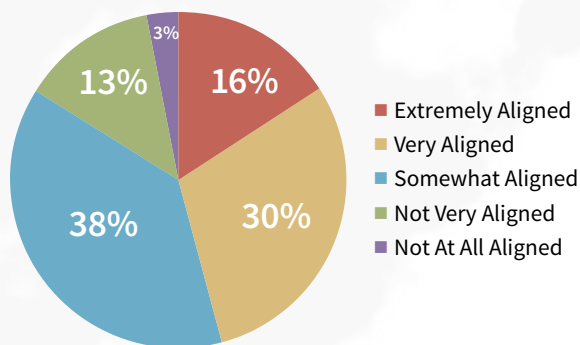
FINDINGS

The State of Content Marketing and Sales Alignment

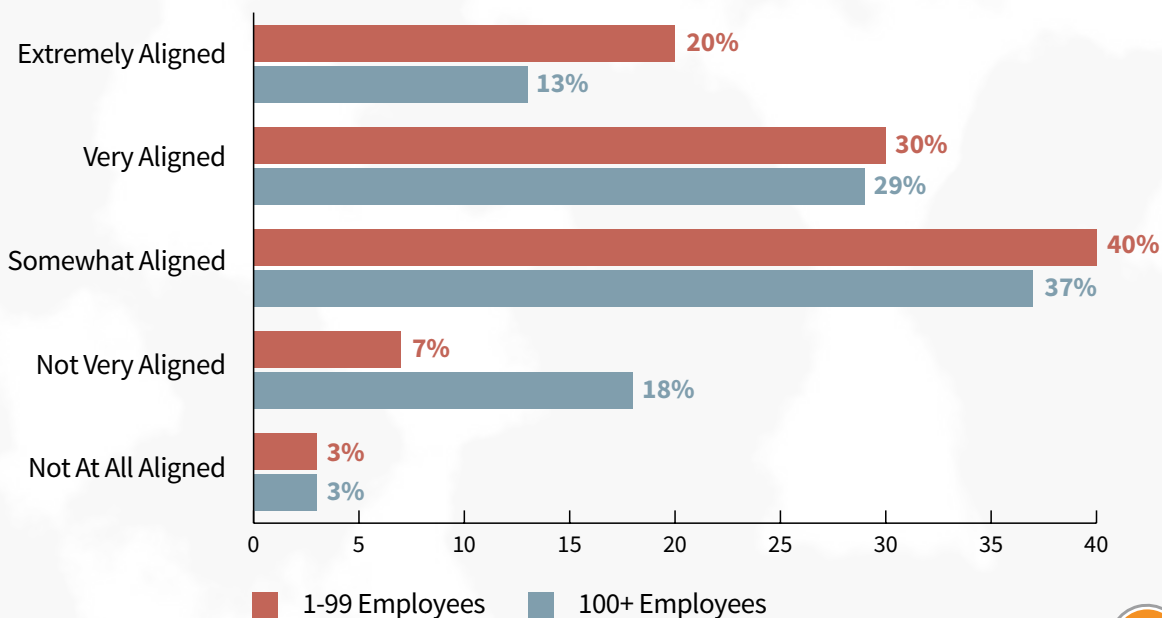
One of the first questions on the survey asked respondents, “How aligned are content marketing and sales in your organization?” Perhaps not surprisingly, fewer than half (46%) indicated they were highly aligned. In addition:

- Half (50%) of small companies (1-99 employees) reported high alignment, whereas 42% of large companies (100+ employees) reported high alignment.
- More than half (52%) of companies with annual revenue of less than \$10M reported high alignment, whereas 43% of those with annual revenue exceeding \$10M reported high alignment.

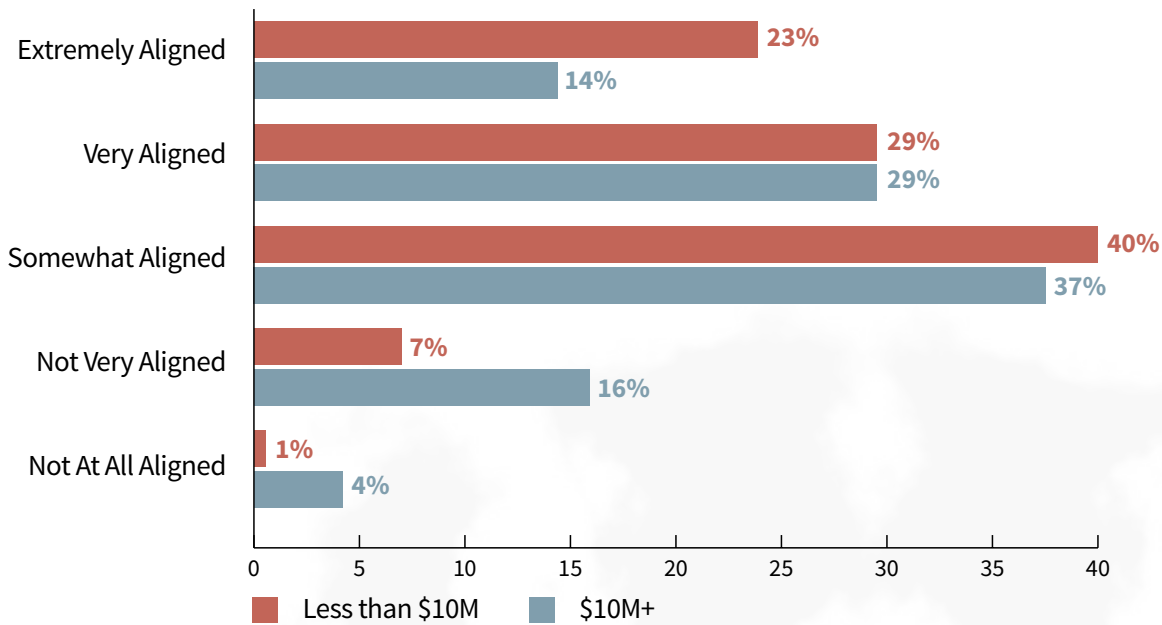
ALIGNMENT OF CONTENT MARKETING AND SALES
(B2B North America)



CONTENT MARKETING/SALES ALIGNMENT
(by Employee Size)



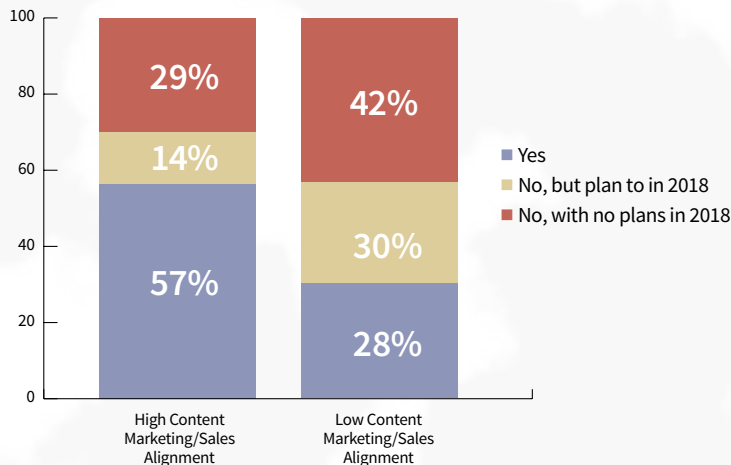
CONTENT MARKETING/SALES ALIGNMENT (by Total 2016 Revenue)



Interestingly, when we looked at the differences between the highly aligned and low aligned in terms of whether they use ABM, we saw a large gap: 57% of the highly aligned use ABM, versus only 28% of the low aligned (see the chart below for insight into nonusers' future plans).

Later in this report, we'll discuss the role that ABM may have in helping content marketing create alignment between sales and marketing.

USE OF ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING (ABM)



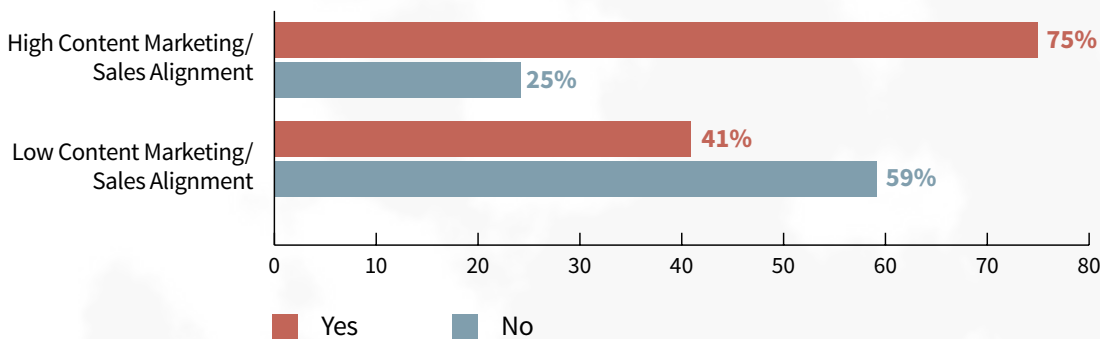
NOTE: There are few differences between B2B North American marketers and their peers in other countries in terms of reported levels of overall content marketing and sales alignment; their adoption of ABM; and the presence of a documented content marketing strategy.

We also observed a gap between content marketers whose organizations have a documented content marketing strategy and those who do not:

- Of the organizations with high alignment, 75% had a documented content marketing strategy
- Of the organizations with low alignment, only 41% had a documented strategy.

These results align with CMI's 2018 annual research, where we found that 62% of the most successful B2B content marketers have a documented content marketing strategy, versus only 16% of the least successful. ^{xiv}

HAVE A DOCUMENTED CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY



Any gaps uncovered in this research are not likely to be due to a disagreement over how helpful an aligned approach would be. More than 8 out of 10 (83%) of the total sample agreed that the alignment of content marketing and sales is important in their organization.

Furthermore, almost everyone (97%) agreed that revenue has the potential to increase when content marketing and sales work together. However, only half of the respondents agreed that sales uses the right content at the right points in the buyer's journey. Additionally, fewer than half (43%) agreed that their organization is sophisticated when using nurturing tactics.

Clearly, there is both a desire to be more aligned, and room for improving both the sales nurturing efforts and the content marketing approach.

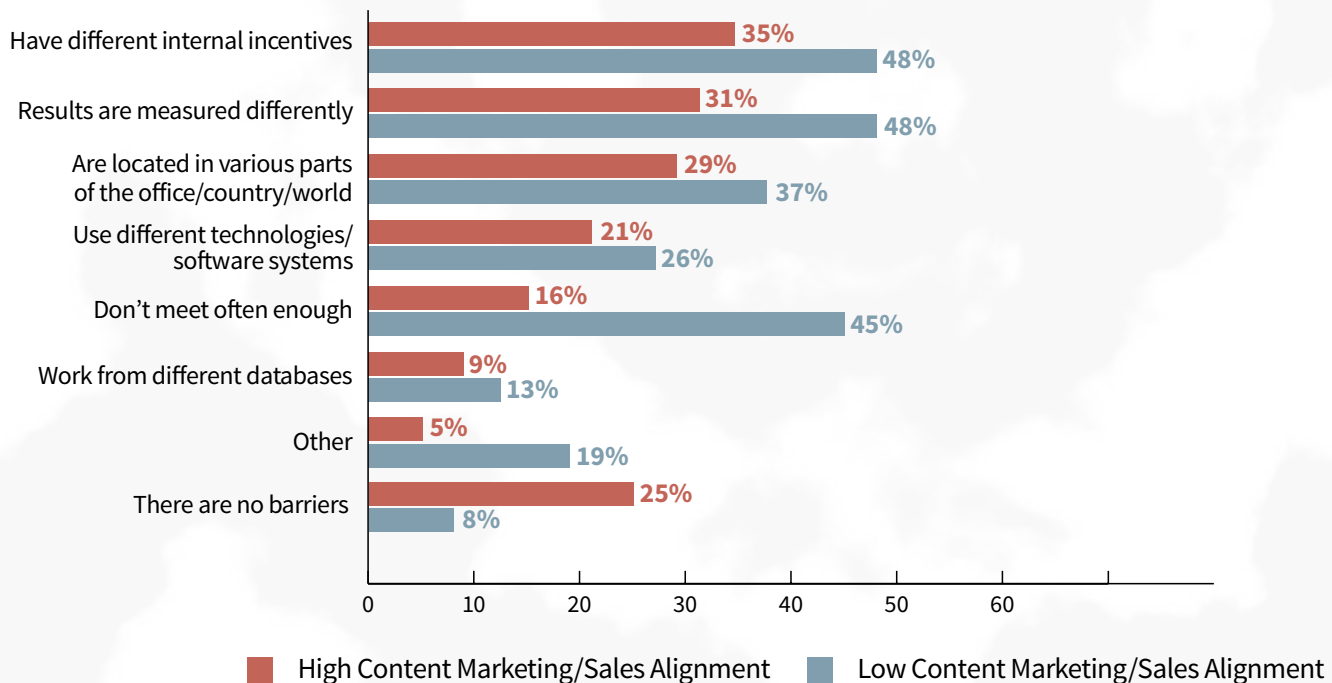
Culture & Collaboration: The Biggest Gaps In A Common Vision

If there is one word that summarizes the challenge with content marketing, it would be “culture.”

For the last two years, CMI’s B2B North America research has indicated that commitment to the content marketing approach and leadership support are two of the biggest challenges to content marketing as a strategic function.

In this study, we found similar results as we began to examine the differences between highly aligned content marketing and sales teams versus those with low alignment.

CONTENT MARKETING/SALES ALIGNMENT BARRIERS (Aided)



NOTE: The global survey data showed that B2B marketers worldwide — regardless of whether their organizations are highly or low aligned — cite the top two barriers to content marketing/sales alignment as “results are measured differently” and “different internal incentives.”

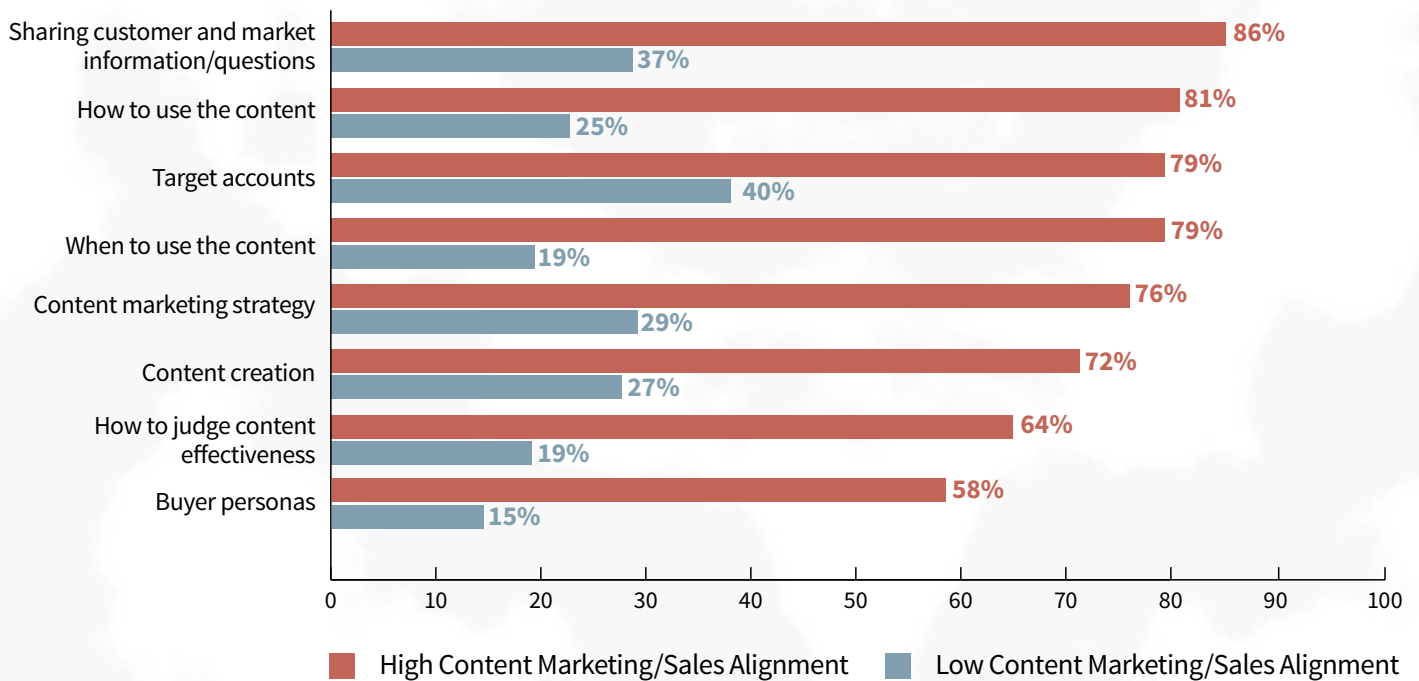
When we asked respondents about barriers to content marketing and sales alignment within their organization, “don’t meet often enough” was the area with the biggest gap between the highly aligned and the low aligned (only 16% of the highly aligned said they don’t meet often enough vs. 45% of those with low alignment).

When we dug deeper, and asked how often content marketing and sales *collaborate* on content-related activities, the results were eye opening. Across the board, the highly aligned content marketing and sales teams collaborate far more frequently than the low aligned. The areas where we saw the biggest gaps between the high and low aligned were:

- How to use the content (81% vs. 25%)
- When to use the content (79% vs. 19%).

FREQUENCY OF CONTENT MARKETING AND SALES COLLABORATION ON RELATED ACTIVITIES

(Top-2 Box: Always/Frequently)

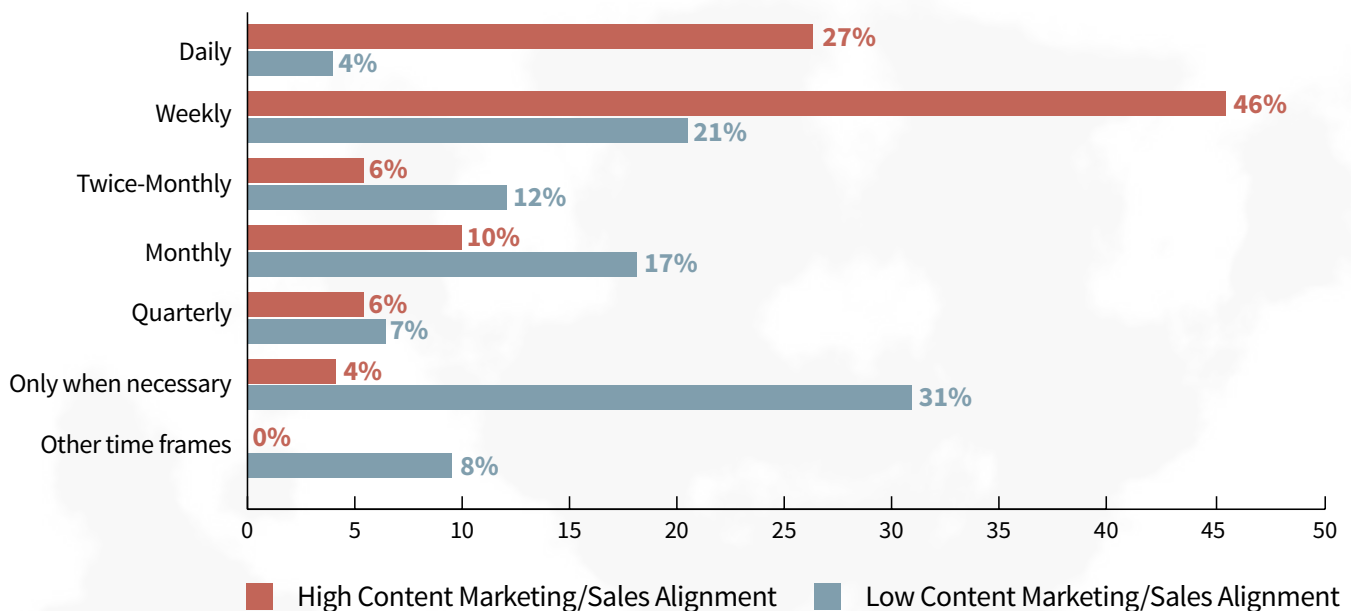


To help us get deeper insight into collaboration, we also asked how *frequently* content marketing and sales teams meet. Again, the results were telling:

- 73% of the highly aligned meet daily or weekly (vs. 25% of the low aligned)
- 31% of the low aligned meet “only when necessary.”

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND SALES

(Aided)



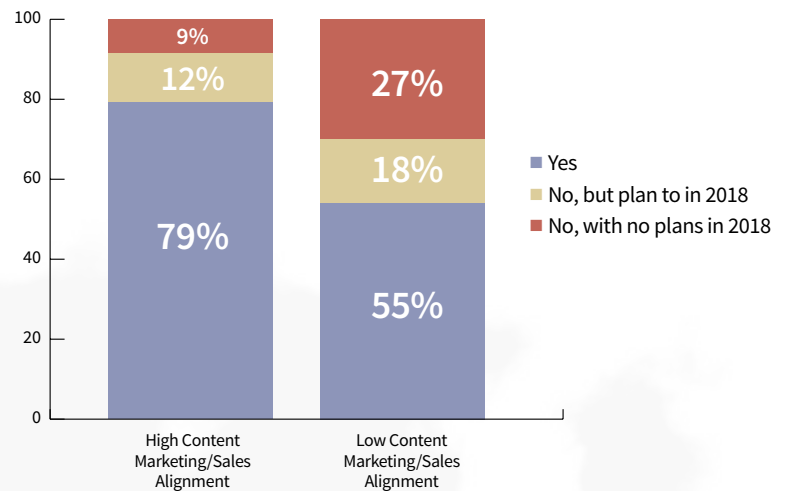
NOTE: The global survey data showed that content marketers in B2B organizations worldwide are similar in terms of how frequently they collaborate with sales on alignment-related activities, with two notable exceptions:

- **How to use content** — 81% of the highly aligned B2B North American marketers always/frequently work with sales to help them understand how to use the content vs. 70% of highly aligned marketers in other countries
- **When to use content** — 79% of the highly aligned B2B North American marketers always/frequently work with sales to help them understand when to use the content vs. 69% of highly aligned marketers in other countries.

In addition, we looked at collaboration from a content-sharing perspective, and found a gap there as well. Seventy-nine percent of the highly aligned said their organization has a central location or online repository where salespeople can access content created by the content marketing team (vs. 55% of the low aligned).

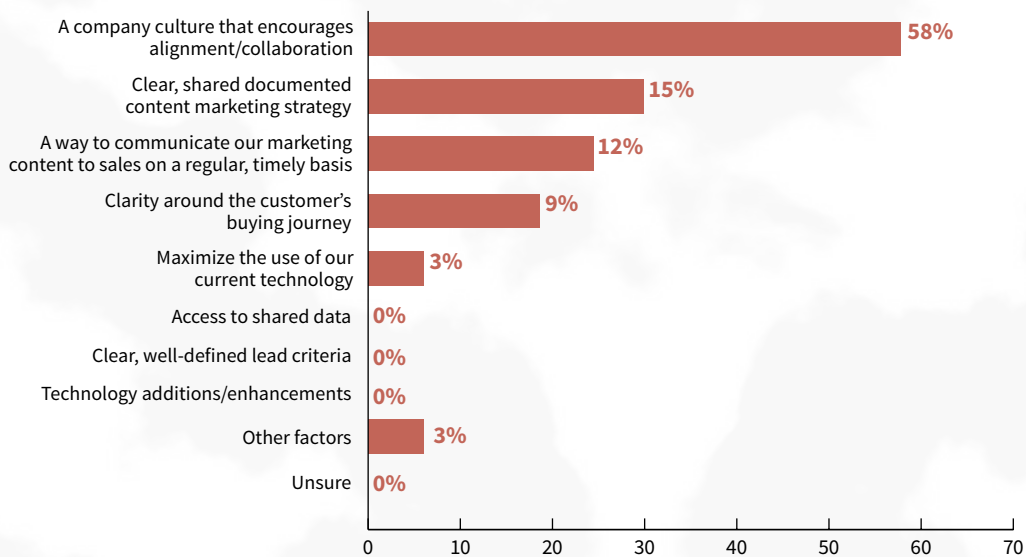
With this lack of collaboration, time together, and shared repository, it should come as no surprise that when we asked the low aligned which *one factor* would most strengthen alignment within their company, they most often cited, “a company culture that encourages alignment and collaboration” — by a longshot.

INCIDENCE OF A CONTENT REPOSITORY ACCESSIBLE TO SALESPEOPLE



ONE FACTOR THAT WOULD MOST STRENGTHEN CONTENT MARKETING/SALES ALIGNMENT

(Aided List Presented Only to Those with Low Alignment)



NOTE: Low aligned B2B marketers across the globe cited “a company culture that encourages alignment and collaboration” as the top one factor — by far — that would most strengthen their content marketing/sales alignment. However, a higher percentage of B2B North American marketers cited it when compared with those in other countries (58% vs. 48%).

We also asked the low aligned which *one factor* they see as the biggest detriment of not having their content marketing and sales teams aligned. Their top three responses:

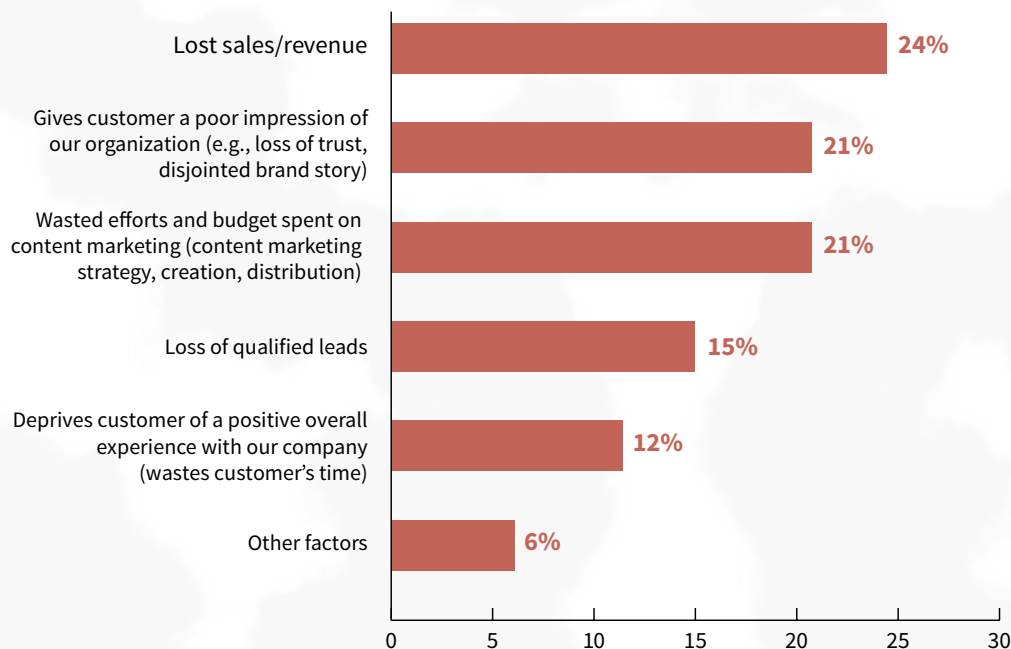
- Lost sales/revenue (24%)
- Gives customer a poor impression of our organization (21%)
- Wasted efforts and budget spent on content marketing (21%).

By contrast, the low aligned marketers outside North America responded:

- Wasted efforts and budget spent on content marketing (34%)
- Gives customer a poor impression of our organization (27%)
- Lost sales/revenue (14%).

The differences between the B2B North American marketers and the global marketers could be due to overall differences between the two in terms of content marketing focus. In its global consulting work, CMI has observed more PR and corporate communications practitioners using content marketing in B2B companies outside of North America (and in Europe in particular), whereas in North America content marketing is often tied to lead generation.

ONE FACTOR VIEWED AS BIGGEST DETRIMENT OF CONTENT MARKETING/SALES MISALIGNMENT *(Aided List Presented Only to Those with Low Alignment)*



61% of Highly Aligned Respondents Expect Their Content Marketing Budget to Increase in 2018

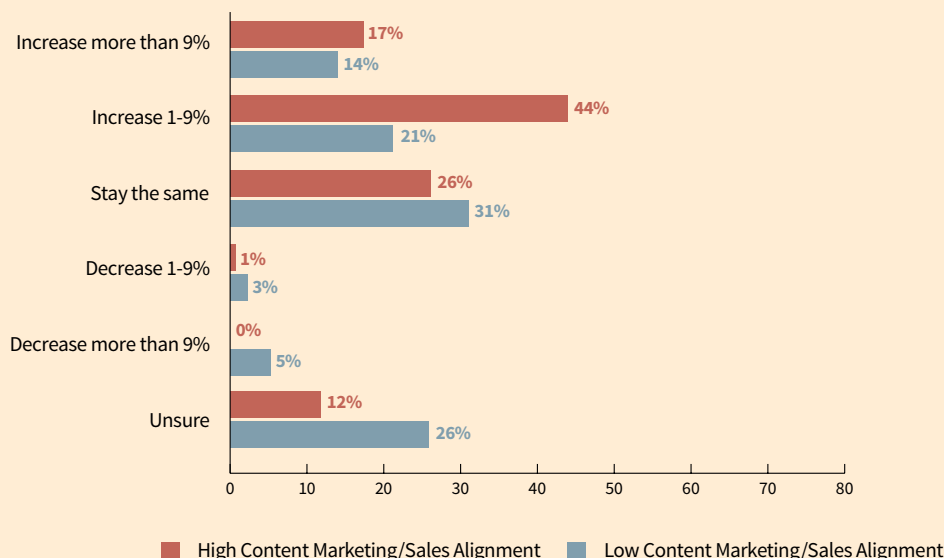
Sixty-one percent of content marketers that are highly aligned with their sales teams expect their content marketing budget to increase in 2018 compared with 2017 (vs. 35% of the low aligned).

On the other hand, 39% of the low aligned expect their budget to stay the same or decrease (vs. 27% of the highly aligned).

In terms of uncertainty, 26% of the low aligned are unsure what will happen with their content marketing budget in 2018 (vs. 12% of the highly aligned).

The takeaway: Marketers seeking new or additional budget for content marketing — for technologies, additional resources, or an expanded program — should consider their level of alignment with sales when making a request. High alignment empowers marketers to build a better business case for content marketing. In short, based on these budget findings, it's reasonable to assume that highly aligned marketing and sales teams are proving the value of their efforts, either through revenue and/or pipeline growth (which they indicated are their top two success metrics), or other ROI metrics.

EXPECTED CHANGE IN 2018 CONTENT MARKETING BUDGET COMPARED WITH 2017 (Aided)



Account-Based Marketing May Be A Bridge

As noted earlier in this report, one of the more interesting results from the research was the difference in alignment between respondents who use ABM and those who don't (see chart on page 9).

Upon a closer look, we found that 71% of the highly aligned content marketers were either using ABM, or had plans to in 2018 (compared with 58% of those with low alignment).

This rather high adoption rate of ABM reflects a general trend that the use of ABM is growing, as indicated in other research studies.

For example, according to SiriusDecisions, 62% of B2B companies that use ABM had a “full program” in 2017 (the remaining 38% had a “pilot program”). Compare that with 40% who had a “full program” in 2016, and 60% who had a “pilot program.”^{xv}

One of the prime benefits of ABM is how it uses original content to bring together the best classic marketing and sales fundamentals.

According to the authors of a September 2016 Forrester research study:

“ABM helps shift the advantage away from digitally empowered buyers by reapplying fundamental marketing principles like segmenting, targeting, developing rich customer insights, testing, aligning across channels, and acting in response to results.”^{xvi}

In other words, content marketers looking to communicate the benefits of content marketing to their sales teams may find that ABM helps provide great structure for their business case.

Furthermore, as we noted in the introduction, the B2B buying journey has more stakeholders involved now than ever. A Harvard Business Review study found that, on average, 5.4 people now must formally sign off on each purchase.^{xvii} This trend suggests that to be successful with ABM, a B2B enterprise must understand how all the people in targeted accounts would participate in the journey.

This would seem to be a chicken-and-egg challenge. ABM might be a great bridge to align content marketing and sales goals. However, if we can't yet implement (or don't have use for) ABM, we may struggle with aligning content marketing and sales.

The real alignment may lie in simply getting to a common vision between the internal incentives between those in content marketing and those in sales.

Common Goals Point to Opportunity For A Common Vision

Four areas of commonality

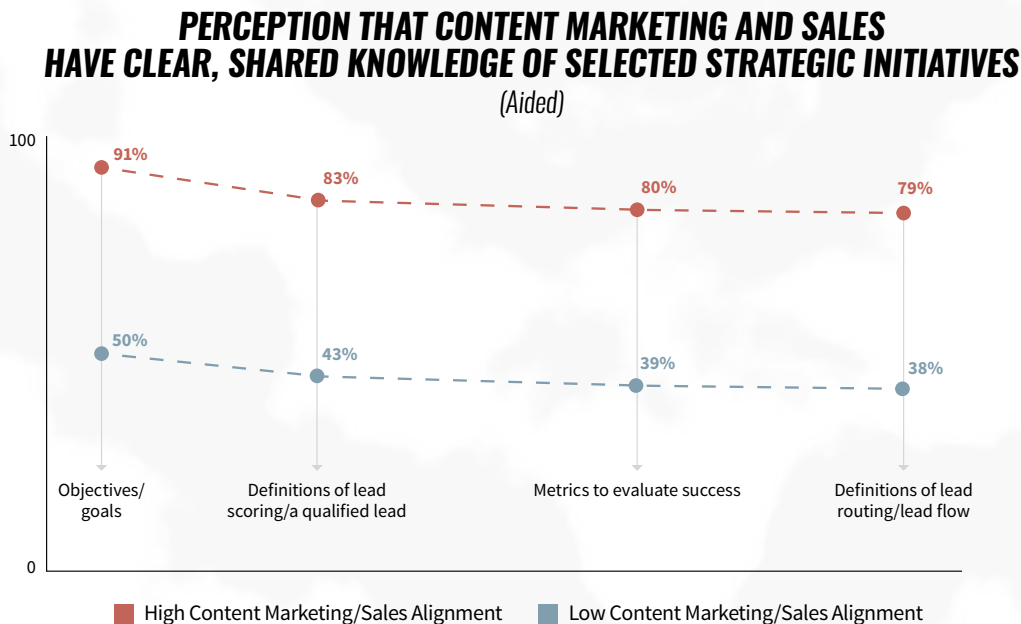
So far, we've highlighted some of the differences between highly aligned and low aligned content marketing and sales teams. Now we'll review some similarities. Both groups:

- Place more emphasis on *having clear, shared objectives/goals* than other alignment-related initiatives
- Share the same *top five metrics* to measure the success of content marketing/sales alignment
- Use the same *top four digital technologies* to manage their content marketing efforts
- Report similar use of social media among their salespeople.

Clear, Shared Objectives/Goals

When we asked respondents if they believe their content marketing and sales teams have clear, shared knowledge of four specific strategic initiatives, the highly aligned were far more likely than the low aligned to say yes (see chart below).

However, both groups prioritize clear, shared **objectives/goals** above the three other initiatives. In addition, both groups prioritize all three subsequent initiatives in the same order — and the degree to which they prioritize each initiative is almost the same (note how the lines in the chart mirror each other).



NOTE: Highly aligned B2B marketers in North America and their global peers are alike in that the majority report their content marketing and sales teams have clear, shared objectives/goals (91% and 89% respectively). They are different in that the highly aligned in North America appear to believe their content marketing and sales teams have better clear, shared knowledge of “metrics to evaluate success” (80% vs. 66%) and “definitions of lead routing/lead flow” (79% vs. 61%).

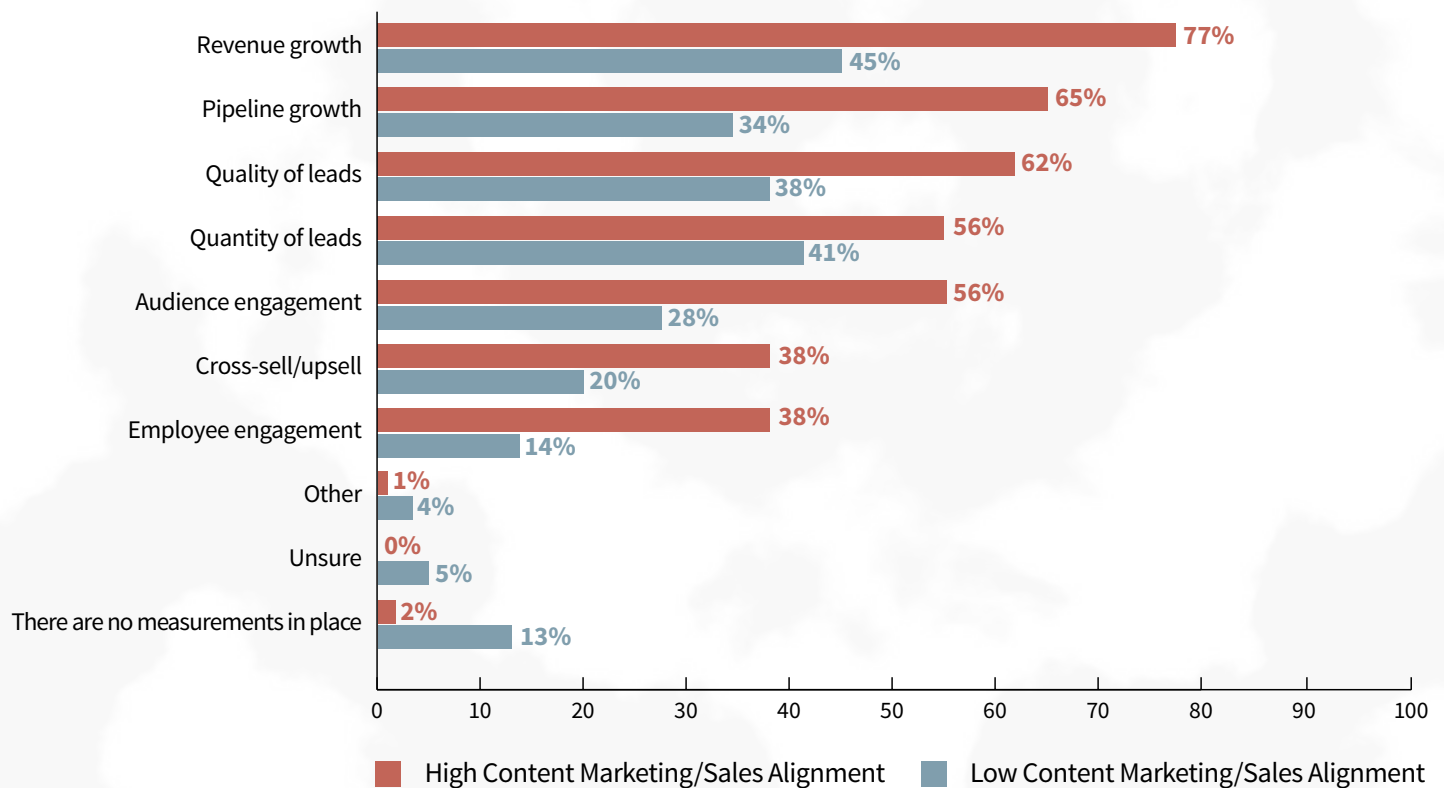
Same Ways to Measure the Success of Alignment

Moreover, when we asked about success metrics, we found:

- Both groups cited revenue growth as their top metric
- Both groups share the same top five metrics (revenue growth, pipeline growth, quality of leads, quantity of leads, and audience engagement), although not in the same order
- A higher percentage of the low aligned reported they measure success based on quantity of leads, citing it as their second top metric.

SUCCESS METRICS USED TO MEASURE THE ALIGNMENT BETWEEN CONTENT MARKETING AND SALES

(Aided)



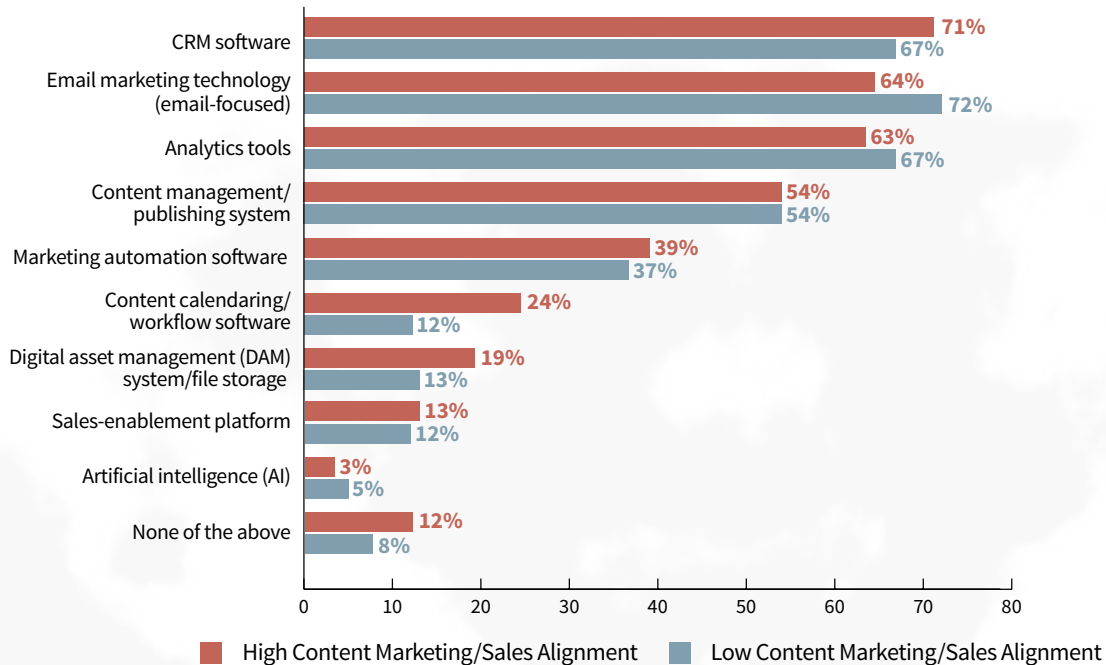
NOTE: Highly aligned B2B North American marketers and their global peers have different top two success metrics for measuring alignment between content marketing and sales. In North America, the top metrics are revenue growth (77%) and pipeline growth (65%). Outside of North America, quality of leads (69%) and audience engagement (65%) top the list.

Similar Use of Technologies & Social Media Platforms

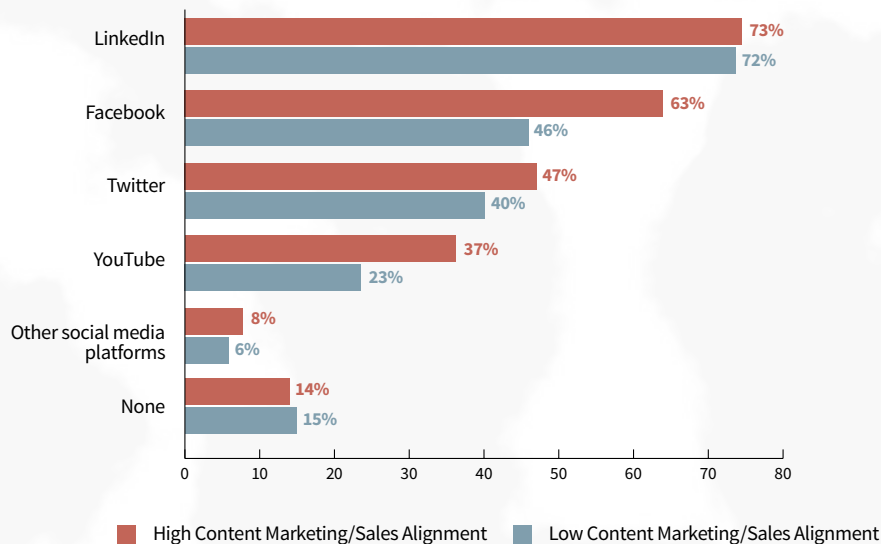
The digital technologies both groups use to manage content marketing efforts, as well as the social media platforms their salespeople use to engage with prospects/customers, are also similar.

In fact, in terms of marketing technology, there was almost no appreciable difference between the highly aligned and low aligned groups.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES USED (Aided)



SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS SALESPEOPLE USE TO ENGAGE WITH CLIENTS/PROSPECTS (Aided)



This suggests that the differences between the highly aligned and low aligned content marketing and sales teams do not lie in the technology and social media platforms used.

Rather, as we illustrated in the previous section, there seems to be an opportunity to use the ideas within ABM to provide the basis of an alignment between content marketing and sales. Content marketers should focus on common principles such as client centricity; solving problems as opposed to overt selling; tailoring content programs to specific personas/accounts; and enabling technologies that can help them develop insights and deliver the right content to the right people at the right time.

NOTE: Regarding digital content marketing technology and social media use, we observed two notable differences among highly aligned global marketers:

- ***Top technology used*** — 71% of highly aligned B2B North American marketers cite CRM software as their top digital technology, whereas highly aligned marketers in other countries cite analytics tools (81%)
- ***Social media use*** — 86% of highly aligned B2B North American marketers say their salespeople use social media to engage with prospects and customers, compared with 95% of highly aligned marketers in other countries.

CONCLUSION

The Rise Of One-To-One B2B Content Marketing

How do we get to a strategy where marketing and sales share a common interpretation of the inkblot funnel?

As I explained in my book *Experiences: The 7th Era of Marketing*, we started the 2000s with a vision of using customer relationship data to optimize the trust we built from the time we first met a prospect to the time they became a customer.

Innovative technology, coupled with the use of data, would usher in this new era of “one-to-one marketing.” The promise was that we could develop one, common view of every customer, and ensure that every experience was consistent, relevant, and delivered value.

Almost two decades later, most B2B enterprises still struggle with this vision. New, disruptive channels, legacy processes, and an attachment to old ways of operating have hindered many marketing and sales strategies from evolving into this common vision.

The technology is here. Implementing it can be tricky; however, there are no excuses that prevent us from joining together relevant, digital, content-driven experiences meant to deliver trust to our customers. And, as we noted in the beginning, content today is unlimited. It is, in fact, almost infinite.

Today’s consumers browse less, and search more. We have come to expect hyper-personalized, helpful experiences at every step along our journey. E-commerce delivers exactly what we need, as online services cater to our every entertainment wish. We interact with this content on any device we choose, in all sizes, shapes, and capacities.

There is no reason to doubt that B2B buyers expect the same. How can we meet those expectations? Here are three observations, along with actionable insights:

Content marketing and sales alignment requires more than understanding each other’s strategy. True alignment requires integrating into one, cohesive strategy. Sales teams need to develop clarity around their definitions. Marketing teams need to sharpen their focus on where and how to apply content to the customer journey. ABM may be a bridge, but one thing is clear: frequent and

true collaboration among the teams is key. Certainly, as we learned from the research findings about budgets (see sidebar on page 16), alignment is helpful when you're looking to justify increased budgets and resources.

- Schedule frequent, standing meetings for marketing and sales, during which the content marketers and salespeople can actively collaborate. Agree on shared metrics to measure performance — ideally revenue, pipeline, or similar yardsticks.

Businesses need to leverage data to understand the buyer through all lenses. The critical benefit of content marketing and sales alignment is to pull trust forward and develop a well-rounded and rich information set on prospects and customers.

- Put the right systems and technologies in place to help draw the bridge between the marketing data being gathered about prospective customers as they transform into leads and opportunities. Develop a single view of the customer that enables teams to act quickly and decisively to deliver more value.

Aligned teams are more open to innovative approaches and techniques. It's easy for sales and marketing to get “stuck in their ways” because “this is what has always worked.” A true partnership between content marketing and sales will enable both sides to continually challenge the assumptions being made about how customers buy, and how the team finds, engages, and closes prospects.

- Iterate often and create enthusiasm for controlled experiments that can inform process changes and investment decisions.

One of the biggest challenges in B2B marketing is how teams are siloed from each other. Sales notwithstanding, marketing teams can be walled off from one another. Demand gen, brand management, public relations, digital, and content marketing teams often compete to deliver more value to the organization.

Content marketing, as a new practice, is often just established as the latest silo in an already stratified enterprise. If, however, a strategic approach to content marketing is taken — perhaps infused with the principles of ABM — there is a better opportunity to create alignment between sales and the content marketing silo, which may also be the key to a broader sales and marketing alignment within the enterprise. Moving forward, content marketing and sales alignment might just be what enables true marketing success and revenue growth.

Methodology

This research was conducted by CMI, in partnership with LinkedIn, to explore the alignment between content marketing and sales teams in B2B companies.

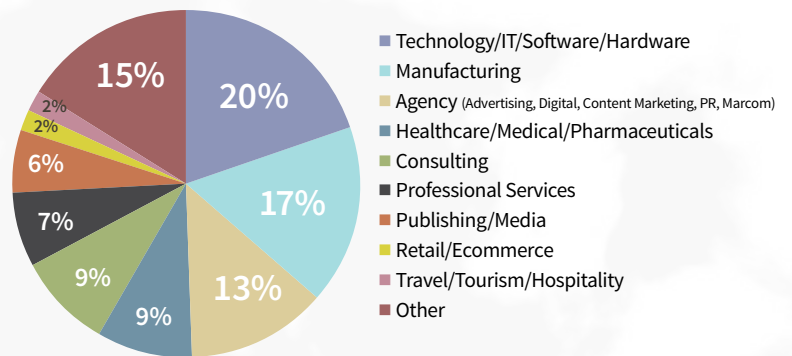
In October 2017, CMI and LinkedIn emailed invitations to the following, requesting participation in an online survey:

- CMI emailed invitations to names involved with B2B that were randomly selected from the broader CMI opt-in subscriber list.
- LinkedIn emailed invitations to names on its North America list with titles at CXO, Director, Partner, Senior, and VP seniority levels, as well as to names on the LinkedIn EMEA list.

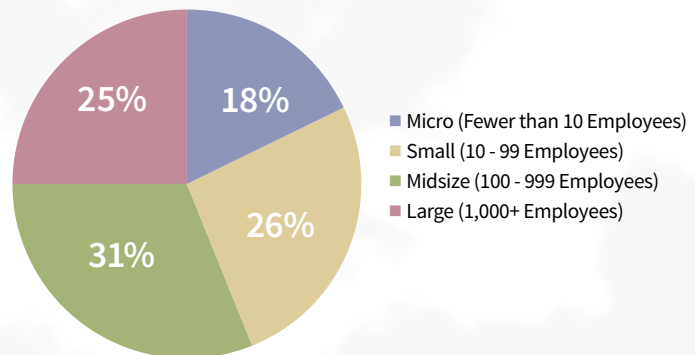
The online survey was hosted by Readex, an independent, third-party research firm, which also was responsible for programming, coding, data tabulation, and cross-tabulation generation. A total of **1,246 global responses** (representing 95 countries) were qualified for analysis. Qualified respondents were defined as those who indicated they are a content marketer (or are involved with content marketing in their organization) working in a for-profit organization that employs a sales function. Qualified respondents represented a full range of industries, functional areas, and company sizes.

B2B Respondent Profile (North America)

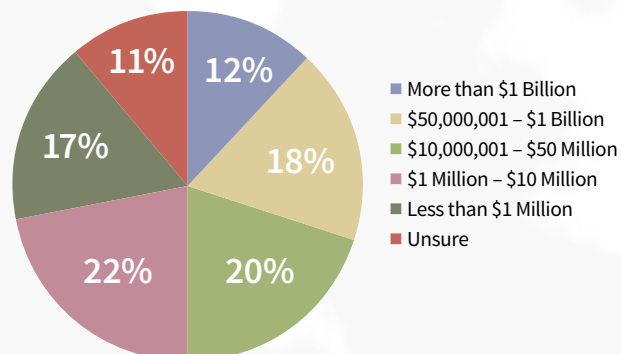
INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION



SIZE OF ORGANIZATION



TOTAL 2016 REVENUE

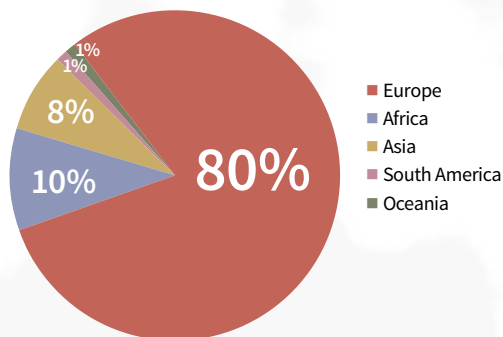


This report focuses mainly on the **208 qualified B2B North American respondents who took the survey**. These respondents indicated their organization primarily sells products/services to businesses in North America (90% United States plus 10% Canada). Throughout the report, these respondents are referred to as B2B marketers or B2B North American marketers.

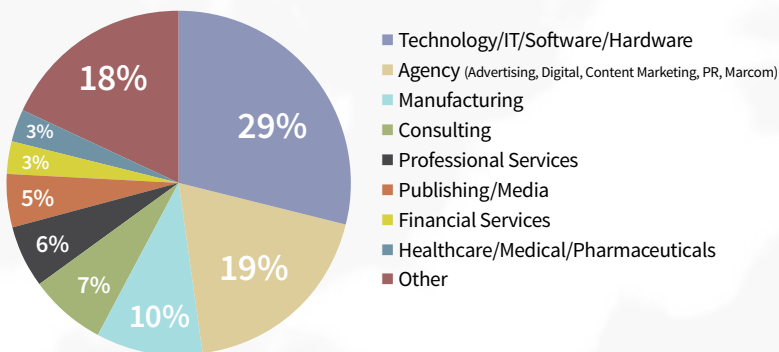
In some areas, where we observed notable differences between the B2B North American marketers and their global peers, this report refers to the findings from the **426 qualified B2B respondents from countries outside of North America who took the survey**. These respondents indicated their organization primarily sells products/services to businesses in countries outside of North America (80% Europe plus 20% other continents). Throughout the report, these respondents are referred to as B2B marketers from countries outside of North America or B2B marketers from other countries.

B2B Respondent Profile (Outside North America)

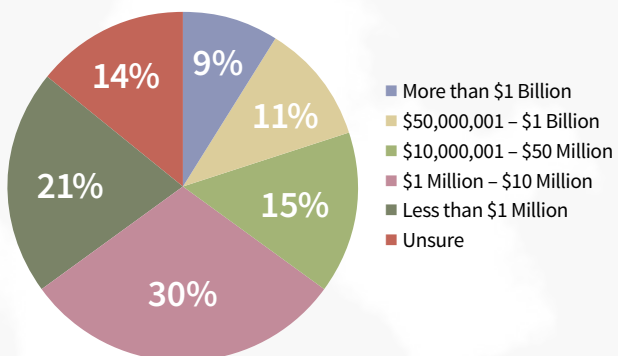
GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (Outside North America)



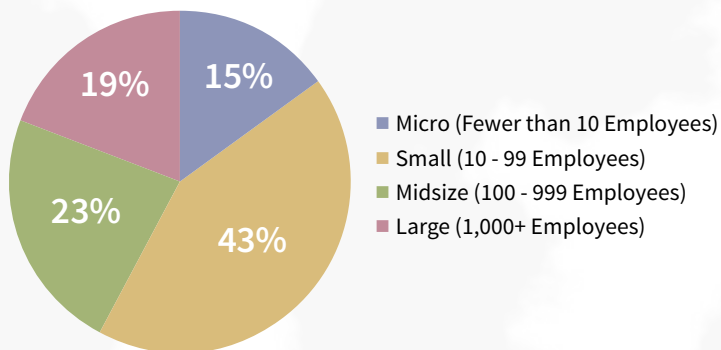
INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION



TOTAL 2016 REVENUE



SIZE OF ORGANIZATION



Response Motivation

To encourage prompt response and increase the response rate overall, the following marketing research techniques were used:

- A drawing was held for two \$50 Visa gift cards
- Live links were included on the email invitations to route respondents directly to the online survey
- Follow-up invitations were sent to those who did not respond to the initial invitation
- The invitations and survey were branded with Content Marketing Institute and LinkedIn names and logos to capitalize on affinity for the brands.

Endnotes

- i) Q4 2012 Forrester Global Executive Buyer Insights Online Survey.
- ii) Q4 2014 Forrester/Internet Retailer B2B Buying and Selling Online Survey.
- iii) Ibid.
- iv) Ibid.
- v) 2014 State of B2B Procurement Study: Uncovering the Shifting Landscape in B2B Commerce. Accenture Interactive, Point of View Series. <https://acntu.re/1KzZL3J>
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- ix) Shea, Mary. B2B Buyers Make the Case for Better Marketing and Sales Alignment. January 16, 2017. <http://bit.ly/2BnzuuD>
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- xi) Ibid.
- xii) Welch, Patrick. Sales to Marketing: TMI! Cutting Through the Clutter to Work Smarter. April 1, 2014. <http://bit.ly/2BmGZSL>
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- xv) 2017 State of ABM Study Findings. SiriusDecisions. <http://bit.ly/2BIRLIW>
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- xvii) Schmidt, K., Adamson, B., and Bird, A. Making the Consensus Sale. March 2015. <http://bit.ly/1DCr2Si>

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About Content Marketing Institute

Content Marketing Institute is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's **Content Marketing World** event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and the **Intelligent Content Conference** event is held every spring. CMI publishes the quarterly magazine **Chief Content Officer**, and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. Watch this **video** to learn more about CMI. Content Marketing Institute is organized by UBM plc. UBM is the largest pure-play B2B events organizer in the world. Our 3,750+ people, based in more than 20 countries, serve more than 50 different sectors. Our deep knowledge and passion for these sectors allow us to create valuable experiences which enable our customers to succeed. Please visit www.ubm.com for the latest news and information about UBM.

About LinkedIn

For the first time in the history of media, you can reach the world's professionals all in one place. More than 530M people worldwide gather on LinkedIn to stay connected and informed, advance their careers, and work smarter. Together they comprise the largest global community of business professionals. These are the decision-makers, influencers, and the leaders of today and tomorrow—precisely the people you want to target.

For more information, visit marketing.linkedin.com.