Ouch!

Revealing the biggest pain points
in B2B Digital Marketing

idio

The world of digital marketing is filled with **unprecedented opportunities** and it plays an increasingly vital role in the commercial success of companies across all industries.

There are also numerous challenges and obstacles which can hinder a marketer's ability to succeed. We asked over a thousand marketing and sales executives to tell us their biggest digital marketing pain-point; what is it about the job that keeps them awake at night?

The most revealing responses we received were grouped into 9 themes, which fell into 3 challenge areas. They are as follows:

1

CUSTOMER
CHALLENGES

a. Data:
managing the explosion of data

b. Insight:
refining this to understand the customer

c. Relevance:
actioning this to engage and convert

2

ORGANIZATIONAL
CHALLENGES

a. Inertia:
overcoming traditional ways of working

b. Culture:
building common goals and behavior

c. Innovation:
instilling experimentation as a standard

3

TACTICAL
CHALLENGES

a. Content:
making content marketing work

b. Attribution:
building analytics for better decisions

c. Measurement:
proving ROI to the Board

Unsettling the Status Quo

Many of these challenges are caused by buyer behavior that is changing dramatically with the advent of new technologies, social connection, and information empowerment. Fundamentally, B2B buying has become:

RESEARCH LED

Buyers are able and willing to search and research their competitors, peers, problems and solutions to a degree that has never before been possible. The purchase journey is largely self-driven by educated and empowered buyers, who will often know as much as the sales person before they actually talk to them.

A TEAM SPORT

B2B purchase decisions are usually made by 5-10 individuals, each playing a role in research, discussion and sign-off. This is especially true for high value, multi-department products and services.

A COMPLEX PROCESS

The linear purchase funnel never really held true as a model of customer behavior. But in a multi-channel, multi-touch world, it can be extremely misleading. Customers choose to progress when they want, and conduct long periods of research at various stages in the funnel, outside of the control of a structured sales process.

Inside is a selection of the best and most revealing responses, as well as roadmaps to guide your next steps. We hope this ebook will do two things: help you to see that you are not alone, and that together we can find solutions to the biggest digital marketing challenges.
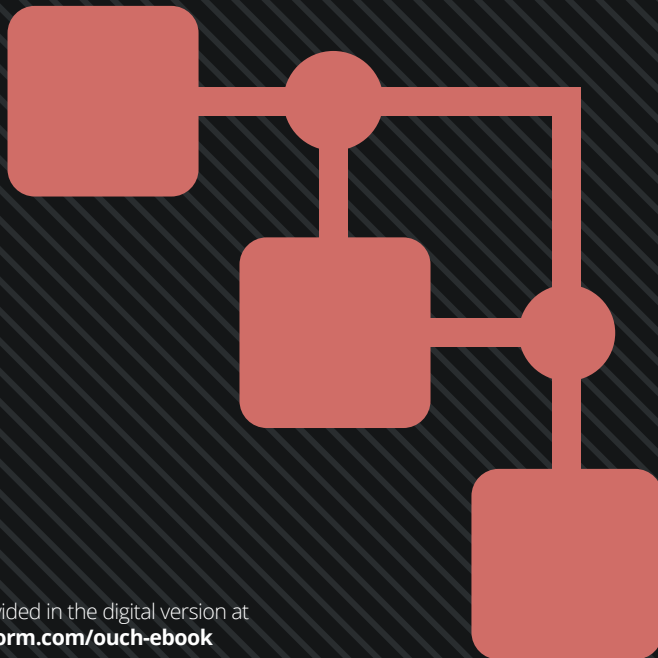
Andrew Davies, *Co-Founder and CMO of idio*

1 CUSTOMER CHALLENGES

Data

In 2015, around 7.9 zettabytes of information will be stored globally, and <u>CSC predicts</u>* a continued and dramatic rise to around 35 zettabytes by 2020. This is driven by the shift from analogue to digital storage, and the massive increase in data created by individuals and enterprises.

In order to stay ahead of the curve in today's ultra-competitive landscape, it is essential for marketers to embrace the data revolution. In B2B marketing, this explosion of unstructured and structured data requires new processes, technologies and competencies so that it can be turned from an overwhelming deluge into an asset the business can use.

In the end, it's not the data that will give you the competitive advantage; it is how you think about that data, how you derive actionable and competitively differentiated intelligence, and how you use it to drive change across your organization.

"The most pressing issues are trying to analyze the data to make educated decisions on what campaigns and content to create and then having the ability to churn it all out in a short amount of time."

Natasha Geraghty-Medved,
Demand Generation Manager at Lavante

"How do we sort through all the data being collected and what is most important? Clicks, click throughs, views, unique views, etc…"

Matthew Virgillio, *VP Global Sales and Marketing at Accutome*

"Data – that is my biggest pain point – it is EVERYWHERE, you need to identify what is important, collate it and then be able to interpret it. Once you have that you then need to know what action to take. Couple this information with multiple sales stages and a myriad of cognitive biases to make sure you are 'connecting' with your audience in the right way, at the right time and on the right platform – and voila, you have a very complicated set of information."

Andrea Wilcox, *Head of Marketing at Vertical Leap UK*

"As we expand our digital footprint, we are collecting so much data and information about our customers and their engagement with us, but we are not using it effectively and efficiently to improve our engagement with them. There are too many systems that have this data but we are not connecting those dots."

Manjeet Singh, *Senior Manager of Digital Marketing & Technologies at Hitachi Data Systems*

"In recent years our ability to capture data has exponentially increased, but our ability to analyze and consume that information really hasn't changed considerably. The result can feel like taking 'one step forward, two steps back'. This can be demoralizing because in the old world you could think 'it would be great if I had that information to make a better decision', but you don't so you move on.

Now there is the distinct feeling that the answer is out there somewhere but you just can't necessarily get to it. **An itch you can't scratch, as it were.** The best thing to do in this situation is to go back to basics and ask "why", then use that as your compass to guide you through the data quagmire."

Kevin Li, *SVP of Product & Customer Success at idio*

WHAT NEXT?

DO A DATA AUDIT

1. Where is your data coming from?
2. Where is it stored?
3. Which data is most useful for whom?
4. What gaps do you need to fill to make better decisions?

AGREE A FRAMEWORK FOR DATA USAGE

1. Decide how you ideally want to collect, store, analyze and share data within your organization.
2. Determine how the various databases fit together, both from a technical and a user perspective.
3. Agree the high priority tasks that are required to drive value.
4. Create a work plan based on this priority and the resource available.

APPOINT AN OWNER FOR DATA

Increasingly, companies are employing Chief Data Officers to manage and drive value from the data held inside and outside of their organization. But even if this isn't a route you are taking, ensure someone on your team has the remit to explore and innovate in data collection and management, and maximize its value in your function.

These steps allow you to make sense of your various pools of data in the organizational context. Some datasets are useful as stand-alone resources, to make decisions on certain tactics. Other datasets must be integrated together as they describe different facets of a customer's behavior or preferences.

Whatever happens, start in small steps wherever and however it is easiest for you. Doing a data audit seems a tough job with little immediate pay-off, but if you don't get started, you are accumulating a data debt that you will have to pay back later!

Insight

IBM research shows that 75% of buyers now "expect organizations to understand their individual needs". Businesses both large and small are putting into place 'Know Your Customer' programs, where they are capturing and leveraging buyer insights to optimize marketing, sales and customer service efforts. Increasingly, marketing is becoming a center-point in the organization's knowledge of the customer, and their behavior.

Compared to even a few years ago, the amount of prospect and customer information available to sales reps has increased significantly to the point where they can tell not just your buyer profile and onsite interaction history, but also what you've been doing on your social networks.

Despite this, we know that sales continues to be an uphill endeavor. According to CSO Insights, 42% of sales reps feel they do not have the right information before making a sales call, whilst nearly half of companies report that their sales reps need help figuring out which accounts to prioritize.

These stats belie an inconvenient truth: despite having access to some of the best technology in the world, marketing and sales reps still lack the right information to successfully engage and convert, upsell and/or cross-sell their prospects and customers.

"We don't know what our buyers are interested in as individuals, target market segments and buyer personas. Because we don't know, content is hit or miss, a large percentage of leads fall out of the buying funnel, and we guess who is ready to be sold to and what they want."

Ellen Steinlauf,
CEO of breakoutrevenue

"We're laser-focused right now on conducting research to better understand our buyers. Working under assumptions is not a sound strategy for the growth we're hoping to achieve!"

Katie Martell,
Co-founder and CMO of Cintell

"A brand can really gain from understanding what their audience is reading."

Michael Brenner,
Head of Strategy at NewsCred

"We share customer feedback on regular basis within the internal communications team. This has meant they have to use more insight to understand what their audience wants and they have been forced to get more involved with technologies that can deliver these insights."

Michael Tirpitz, *Marketing Director for Private Banking at Deutsche Bank*

"As a B2B2C company, we are working very hard to understand how to deliver the best and most valuable digital experience to the customers we share."

Lucy Zachman, *Managing Director at Synchrony Financial*

"Content really is the best vehicle with which to understand people. But you have to take into account what the purpose of content is when coming to your conclusions about the reader."

Matt Sweezey, *Marketing Evangelist at Pardot*

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In Sales, we require as much information as possible about the leads that come our way to make sure we can have successful sales engagement. Historically, we'd work from a job title and a telephone number. Perhaps also a marketing engagement score if we had marketing automation installed.

Let me tell you from experience, it's embarrassing making that phone call because I have no clue what the prospect is actually interested in. It's even more frightening knowing marketing teams are executing their plans based on the same information.

Now that it's possible to tell what a lead's interests are from the content they are reading - that's a game-changer for me."

**Sean Barker,** *Enterprise Sales Director at idio*

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WHAT NEXT?

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CUSTOMER

This pyramid shows the different levels of data that should be captured, stored and used as part of a successful customer insight exercise.

Has your organization made it to the top?

THE HIERARCHY OF LEAD DATA

INTERESTS

INTERACTIONS

PRODUCT HOLDING

FIRMOGRAPHICS

CONTACT DETAILS
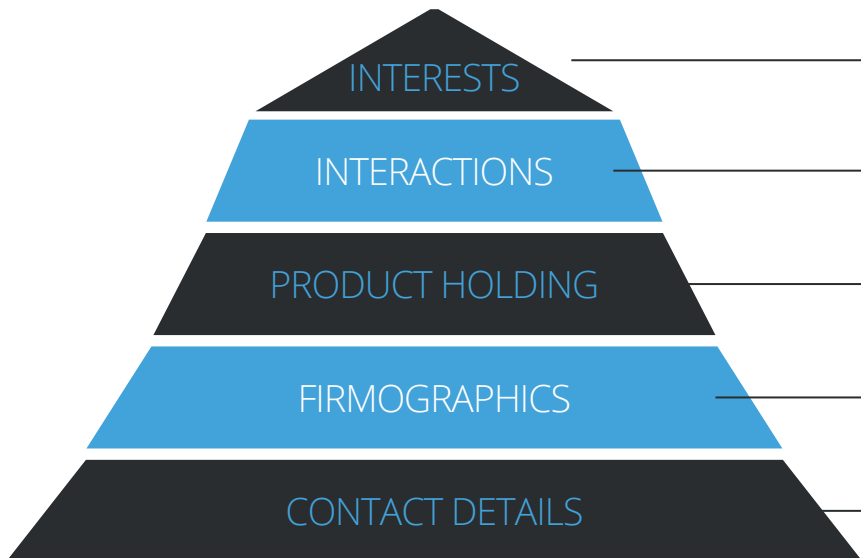
INTEREST DATA:

As an individual engages with your organization across different touchpoints and channels they leave a trail - a digital footprint or digital body language - from which you can infer their interests and likely purchase intent. The best way to capture customer interests is from tracking their content consumption habits and identifying the topics that they engage with most.

INTERACTION DATA:

Interaction data is most commonly captured by a marketing automation tool in the form of a 'lead score' - a cumulative figure based on the number of engagements with a company's website or email program. If you've had lots of engagements, you'll have a higher score. It is quite a blunt measure but is also a helpful way of prioritizing the hottest leads.

PRODUCT HOLDING DATA:

The volume and variety of this data completely depends on the type of business. Anyone looking at this will know not just the lead's contact details and the profile of the company they work for but also what this customer has previously bought.

FIRMOGRAPHICS:

Currently a B2B obsession, firmographic data refers to information such as a job title, name of company the lead works for and the sector or industry.

CONTACT DETAILS:

This is the most fundamental element of a customer profile — it constitutes a name and email address or telephone number. These are the most basic requirements for customer management. Without it, no other data is useful.

Relevance

Irrelevance is most marketers' biggest fear.

Finding relevance - the overlap between your products and services and the customer's interests and needs - is the key task of B2B marketing leaders. Today's buyers are better informed and more connected than ever before, so your message needs to be tailored to cut through the noise and influence them towards a purchase decision.

It's hard enough to gain a prospect's interest, let alone maintain it. We know from our own research that 82% of leads don't engage beyond the first click, and MarketingSherpa have found that 79% of leads never convert into sales due to 'interest abandonment'. Leads churning from your marketing funnel due to irrelevant communications isn't just a mere inconvenience, it's a massive cost to your business, and potential revenue that is lost.

"It's always a challenge to say something different. We are constantly looking to take conversations to a new level, to find an angle or point of interest that hasn't been done to death already."

Chelsea Reay, *Content Manager at Fieldworks Marketing*

"With the digital age comes the information overload so the biggest challenge is "How to get close to all those people you are targeting?"

Isabelle Geerts, *Marketing Manager Belux at Cisco*

"I worry about our messaging being too forward-thinking or irrelevant because we're too far ahead of where our audience is or what they expect from us."

Jason Miller,
Senior Content Manager at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

"It is a challenge to consistently deliver highly relevant content to our buyers and ensure that content helps build our pipeline at the same time. It's never a one to one relationship."

Erika Goldwater, *Demand Generation Manager at ANNUITAS*

"As thought leaders, it's our responsibility to push out new and fresh content that can be ahead of its time and doesn't always align with our audience's interests. It can be tough to find a balance between what our audience wants to know and needs to know."

Ashley Robinson, *Marketing Analyst at Snagajob*

"It is important we identify our key industry innovators, how many there are and efficiently deliver to them consistent brand experiences from first point of contact through the entire client lifecycle."

Keal Blache, *Director of Marketing and Branding at Insurance Office of America*

"We are now in the Age of Relevance and the best way to stay relevant is to focus on the customer and speak to the customer's pain-points.

We realized one of the keys to relevance was defining our ideal customers by creating buyer personas. Buyer personas take the focus off of you, your product, and your business. They help put you in the frame of mind of your prospect. They help you understand your prospect's world, their context and their issues.

More importantly, buyer personas help you identify areas of vision and value that will resonate with your prospect. Until you understand these, you might as well be speaking a foreign language to your prospect."

Lois Shimmen, *Marketing and PR Manager, idio*

WHAT NEXT?

THE ROADMAP TO RELEVANCE

1. LISTEN FIRST:

The best marketers are those that try to understand the true needs and interests of their audience before offering a response. There are a myriad ways that you can do this; from scouring online Q & A forums and identifying trending topics on social media to using Google Analytics to see the popular queries people are searching for. Better still, get out from behind your computer and ask your customers directly!

2. CREATE BUYER PERSONAS BASED ON THEIR PAIN-POINTS:

This takes the focus away from you, your product, and your business and puts you in your prospect's frame of mind. Make sure these buyer personas are used and applied across your sales, marketing, product and customer service departments.

## 5. COMMIT TO CONTENT MARKETING MEASUREMENT AND ITERATION:

You can't improve what you don't measure. Setting benchmarks means that even if you are currently ranking poorly for engagement, you can at least see if you're improving or not.

4. UNDERSTAND THAT CONTENT CHOICES REVEAL PAIN-POINTS:

The content we read is hugely indicative of what is most relevant to us. Trace your audience's reading arc and identify recurring themes in the content they consume.

3. USE DATA TO UNDERSTAND EVOLVING PAIN-POINTS:

Resist the temptation to treat marketing as merely an art. Data should play a crucial part in informing your ongoing strategy.
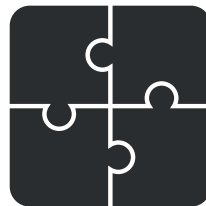
2 ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

Inertia

Even in young organizations, the tendency to build and maintain a status quo is immense. It simplifies decision making, provides stability and can increase efficiency - when it is the still best way of working. However, we are now 'living in beta', and experimentation is increasingly prized over stability as companies seek new ways of adapting to a changed market.

The pain of being trapped in an outdated yet immovable process is felt often by digital marketers that operate in large, mature businesses in traditional industries. But age and size do not have to be the determining factor in whether you maintain the status quo. Increasingly, organizations of all sizes are building a culture of reliance on data, iteration, and championing innovation.

"Here is the biggest problem we have: corporations are operating with antiquated content management systems and technologies. They are unwilling to invest in the future, so they are being left behind in the digital revolution taking place around us. It's the shortsightedness that's the biggest impediment for decades old brands to remain competitive against new stalwarts in every vertical out there."

Raj Das,
Partner at The Buffkin Group

"How can we convince traditional businesses to embrace and train their staff on inbound or content marketing, since it is so different than any marketing they have done before?"

Arnie Kuenn,
CEO of Vertical Measures

"Eliminating legacy marketing behaviors and focusing on a responsible and effective digital marketing strategy is a huge culture shift."

Anna Koustron, *Director of Marketing Communications at Dell*

"If more enterprises don't get away from the campaign-mentality and focus on building long-term relationships with prospects and customers through a valuable content experience, I'm worried they won't give content marketing the patience it needs. Content marketing is a marathon, not a sprint. Since so many enterprises are focused on hitting the quarter, it's tough to get the necessary buy-in to make CM work."

Joe Pulizzi, *Founder of Content Marketing Institute*

"More often, where I see content marketing efforts bog down is a perceived lack of executive sponsorship, when in reality the executive is expecting the organization to finish the vision with tactics. It's working their problem from two ends, and never really meeting in the middle."

Scott Pierce, *Senior Content Strategist at POP Agency*

WHAT NEXT?

THE SEVEN STAGES OF COPING WITH CHANGE

No doubt you've heard of the 'Seven Stages of Grief'. It turns out that challenging the status quo can often elicit the same responses.

Use this helpful chart below to see where your organization is and how you can help them cope with change:

Stage	What You Need To Do
Despair	Give your colleagues time to get used to the situation
Denial	Stand firm and be clear about the cost of inaction if nothing changes
Anger	Let them get it out of their system!
Anxiety	Create a roadmap to change to give guidance and a sense of security
Acceptance	Plan the training and development to follow the roadmap
Relief	Be supportive as your colleagues adapt to this new future
Motivation	Benchmark progress and encourage them as they apply new learnings

"In order to loosen the status quo and affect change, you need to be able to develop and articulate messages that drive urgency. You need to identify and introduce 'unconsidered needs': these are challenges where your prospects or customers are unaware that the issue exists, or they undervalue the size and speed of the issue and its potential effect on their business.

Demonstrate clearly why their status quo is no longer safe, tenable or acceptable, all the while convincing them that your position is the 'new safe."

Tim Riesterer,
CMO & Head of Strategy at Corporate Visions

Culture

Sales and marketing teams often have a complex, sometimes contentious, relationship. In many organizations there is a clear and tolerated divide between marketing and sales.

Both sides usually realize that they need to work together in order to meet their demand and revenue goals. But in most organizations they have different vocabularies, time-frames and approaches.

A recent Aberdeen Group study concluded that organizations with highly aligned sales and marketing teams achieved an average of 32% year-over-year revenue growth – while their less aligned competitors saw a 7% decrease in revenue. According to Forrester, just 8% of B2B companies say they have tight alignment between sales and marketing. That means that 92% of organizations have a marketing and sales alignment problem - and an alignment problem is a business problem because without alignment, a company cannot effectively execute.

Salespeople (or in the financial industry, advisors) used to be in the position of power as the information gatekeepers between customers and businesses. Today, it's more about how buyers buy than the way sales people sell. Buyers can now leverage search and recommendations from peers via social media to learn and compare products and do all their pre-purchase research without speaking with a salesperson. With prospects making 57% of their buying decision before speaking with a sales rep (according Corporate Executive Board), Sales must rely more on Marketing to attract and nurture the prospect before they're ready to connect.

	MARKETING	SALES
Method of communication	One-to-many	One-to-one
Vocabulary	Leads, audience, fans, brand, influence, reach	Hot prospects, decision makers, closed deals, sales velocity
Time horizon	6-12 months	1-3 months
Strategy	Integrated and consistent across the team, based on medium-term plans.	More reliance on individual performance, using short-term tactics.
Dependency	Rely on Sales to close deals	Rely on Marketing to generate leads

"One of our biggest challenges in digital marketing is how we integrate with the sales team and get visibility into which leads are productive, and which ones aren't useful for our sales team. We use Marketo and Salesforce for tracking everything, but sales folks see little near-term value in recording every interaction, which leaves us blind to the ultimate quality of most leads. Or whether they are even being contacted. We simply don't know."

Chuck Moxley, *Chief Marketing Officer at 4INFO*

"We have a difficult time getting our sales team to buy into a central CRM for lead management. We still have rogue sales team members keeping leads in personal spreadsheets. Building trust and teaching the sales team the value of a central repository that can be nurtured, scored, and shared has been slow."

Roger Morency, *Online Marketing Manager at Tyco*

"We've found that fostering good relations between the Sales and Marketing requires over-communication, active input from the leadership team, and a shortened feedback loop between departments.

But most fundamentally, the overall goal of marketing and sales should be the same. If marketing only carries a lead volume target, quality will suffer. Why shouldn't marketing have a revenue or pipeline goal?"

Andrew Davies, *Co-Founder and CMO of idio*

WHAT NEXT?

Build effective SLAs to guide behavior

Whenever you have a handover between departments, you have the greatest risk for inefficiency. One way to overcome this is to build Service Level Agreements that are detailed, mutually-agreed, and simple to understand. SiriusDecisions offers a simple but effective five-step process for implementing and operationalizing SLAs.

1. RUN A PILOT

Test on a small group to ensure functionality and value. This includes definition of duration, scope of the pilot, key milestones and a measurement strategy.

2. MEASURE RESULTS

Analyze the pilot to build a case for wider deployment. This includes analysis of initial findings to discover process gaps, monitoring compliance and diagnozing performance and productivity impacts.

3. PREPARE FOR LAUNCH

Develop training, messaging and a proof case to support launch efforts. This includes determining whether the roll out will be full or phased, developing a communication plan and clearly defining all parties' responsibilities to the SLAs.

4. COMMUNICATE AND ROLL OUT

Share the value of SLAs, as well as the executive buy in. This involves initiating the communication plan and evangelizing the goals and expected benefits of the SLAs.

5. REINFORCE AND ITERATE

Training, compliance management and continued alignment are key.

Innovation

Marketing is rapidly becoming one of the most technology-dependent functions in business. In 2012 the research and consulting firm Gartner predicted that by 2017, a company's Chief Marketing Officer would be spending more on technology than its Chief Information Officer. That oft-quoted claim seems more credible every day. There are now nearly 2,000 marketing software providers worldwide (as tracked by Scott Brinker on his MarTech Landscape), with offerings ranging from major platforms for CRM, content management, and marketing automation to specialized solutions for social media management, content marketing and customer-facing apps.

The flipside of this exciting expansion of marketing technology is that every organization needs someone to be on top of the potential vendor landscape, identifying opportunities to improve processes, and then procuring, integrating and using the technology solution.

According to Adobe's 2015 Digital Roadblock Report, only 48% of digital marketers feel proficient in digital marketing and 82% of digital marketers admit that they are learning on the job. Innovation necessarily leads to another inconvenient reality: nobody has done this before. The challenge of effectively managing all this technology is daunting and has serious ramifications on marketing successes and failures in the enterprise.

"Our challenge is that there are too many social platforms to follow and lead. Its hard to judge what platform to invest in. This gets even more challenging if marketers have multi-county roles since this priority list might differ depending on the country."

Isil Ketenci, *Principal Marketing Leader at Mercer*

"Too many organizations get caught up in the hype of digital channels and feel they MUST be using them rather than asking themselves a key question – 'What does my customer want from me and how do they want to consume it?' Only at that point can an organization work out what channels they need to use and why."

Richard Khan, *Senior Digital Strategy and Innovation Manager at Xerox*

"We have to constantly update technology to keep up with the new ways that visitors consume content in the digital space – and evaluating the ROI for these changes is a huge focus for the business."

Priyanka Agarwal, *Digital Marketing Manager at Hiscox*

"Our challenge is to try to balance the available marketing resources (budget, time, staff, skills, technology) against the numerous marketing tactics available today."

Anthony McLoughlin, *Digital Marketing Executive at Tone*

"With the opportunity for so much automation, real time actioning and programmatic formats, we must maintain the balance between human and machine decisions. Getting the right balance is tough."

Jez Jowett, *Global Head of Creative Technology at CAKE Group*

"So often I find companies bogged down with internal policies that simply hinder growth. Companies need to learn to be reactive to change. Especially when employing an agency to create leads and demand."

**Jonny Gedye,** *Senior Account Manager at Goldladder*

"The obsession with 'the shiny' in companies is a predictable trait. We covet technology that looks cool, can do so much, but it is either misunderstood, misused or forced upon poor innocent employees trying to earn a crust.

The fundamental paradox of the 21st century is that as the world becomes more digitalized, brands must strive to create more 'human' experiences that connect with the consumer. The sheer quantity of tech platforms or social media that a brand incorporates does not provide a barometer by which to measure their success. Instead it is the quality of the content that resonates and people dwell upon."

James Moffat, *Founder of Organic Development*

WHAT NEXT?

## 1) Creating a culture of innovation

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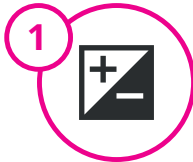
EXPOSE

Give access to innovation at all levels of your organization - not just executives or the board. Arrange outings to other companies as a means to gather first-hand insights as to how they build and maintain their culture. Create a physical space for a marketing library with the latest titles and share useful articles that you've read online.

2

TRAIN

Put budget behind formal training or, as an alternative, seek contra-deals whereby your digital marketing team can do an all-day 'knowledge share' with another team proficient in different digital disciplines.

3
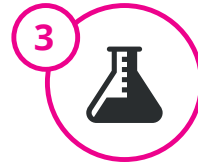
EXPERIMENT

Remove the constraints that accompany traditional work and offer a safe space for failure - this lets people try riskier things. Where possible, identify budgets that have no ROI and use them to pilot and trial new tactics, tools and talent.

2) Get reading

Here are four go-to sites that we use to keep abreast and make sense of all the innovation occurring in digital marketing right now:

Scott Brinker's Chief MarTech Blog
chiefmartech.com
It's not enough anymore to be creative; you need to combine the art of marketing with the science of technology to automate marketing campaigns and achieve business goals. Chief MarTech will help you get to grips with marketing technology.

Content Marketing Institute's Intelligent Content stream
contentmarketinginstitute.com
A trove of content marketing news, views and how to's; the site has recently started a dedicated area to 'intelligent content' for marketers that are interested in doing more data-driven content marketing.

David Raab's Customer Experience Matrix
customerexperiencematrix. blogspot.com
If you want to be on the cutting edge of B2B technology, look no further than the Customer Experience Matrix. David Raab cuts through the smooth sales talk of technology vendors to explain simply what each marketing technology can do for you.

Economist Lean Back Blog
www.economistgroup.com/leanback/
The Economist has carefully curated a group of leading CMOs and CIOs that write regularly their thoughts on where marketing is going next and what this means for B2B and B2C organizations. It helps that we've got a monthly column there too.

3 TACTICAL CHALLENGES

Content Marketing

Like it or not, in the digital-first world, your company's online content is your salesperson. A recent study by the Corporate Executive Board reported that B2B buyers are 57% of the way to a buying decision before they are willing to talk to a sales rep. A survey last year by DemandGen Report, reported that 77% of B2B buyers said they did not talk with a salesperson until after they had performed independent research.

B2B marketers face a difficult conundrum. They often lack the time and sustained effort required to create the content in order to execute a sophisticated, tailored content marketing strategy. However, those very content creation activities are the cornerstones of attracting new prospects in the new world of inbound marketing and social media.

"I worry about striking the right balance between quality and quantity. It's a priority to create regular content, but it's vital that the content is interesting, fun, and useful. It's a struggle to not bend to the trend of creating content just for the sake of creating it."

Ellen Gomes, *Content Specialist at Marketo*

"There's always a need to analyze, adjust and improve our content strategy. If you're not constantly adapting, you're going to lose in this game."

Jake McChrystal, *Director of Marketing Communications at Accent Technologies*

"I see there being two continuous challenges in content marketing at the moment. The first one is ensuring our content is pitched at the right level as the temptation is to go completely cutting edge theory when many of our clients are more interested in practical advice and guidance. Secondly, we need to make the most of the content we have. Whether that's legacy content or stuff we're producing at the moment. It's all valuable and we need to make sure it's getting the attention and visibility it deserves."

Nicholas Moore, *Content Marketing Manager at Experian*

"The biggest challenge is continuously reviewing our content library and ensuring that we have the right types of content appropriate for each stage in our buyers' journey. Companies often have a lot of content for one stage – such as the awareness stage. However, they often lack the necessary content for the other stages - consideration and decision. All of our content needs to help move customers through the complete buying process."

Lisa Masiello, *Founder of TECHMarc Labs*

"The challenge is how to continuously and consistently develop content of significant thought leadership value."

Clay Garner, *President of Growth Resource*

"It's the age old challenge of ensuring the timeliness and accuracy of the content we develop is focused on actually addressing a customer/market pain point and not simply self-serving marketing hype. Secondly, that the 'voice' of the content is developed specifically for each target market (vis a vis end-user vs. press vs. analyst communities)."

Douglas Gruehl, *Vice President of Gridstore*

"Content marketing has rapidly shifted from a 'nice to have' to a 'need to have' - it's now a cost of doing business in the B2B environment. Content marketing is crucial as it fuels all three components of demand generation - lead acquisition, lead nurturing and lead handover.

The new buyer paradigm demands that you create content that meets buyer needs; if you develop online content that caters to the invisible buyer, you will help customers before you even know they exist - meaning you'll work less to sell more. If you aren't providing the kind of online information that your prospects are searching for, you may be losing up to half of your sales opportunities – and you won't realize it's happening until it's too late."

Jonny Rose, Head of Content at idio

WHAT NEXT?

STEP 1 -
CONTENT CREATION

Content marketing experiments are primarily focused on content creation and editorial workflow management.

STEP 2 -
AUDIENCE BUILDING

Distribution is considered more formally. Experiments move from the creation process to working out how to get more people to view your content.
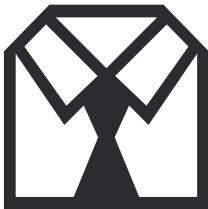
CONTENT CREATION

AUDIENCE BUILDING

The Content Marketing Maturity model

So, you're doing content marketing, but where is it taking you and your organization?

STEP 3 - RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Now your content moves from enabling 'random acts of marketing' to building relationships that generate actionable insights and Sales Intelligence.

STEP 4 - VALUE OPTIMIZATION

With content marketing integrated across channels and operationalized - double down on driving business value and use personalization to serve buyers with content that converts.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT
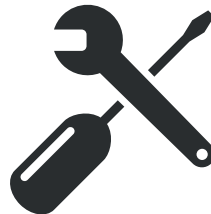
VALUE OPTIMIZATION

Attribution

Now more than ever, B2B marketers need to address the accountability issues surrounding marketing performance and expenditure. Gone are the days of inefficient utilization of scarce budget resource without scrutiny - this is where attribution comes in.

Attribution refers to the ability to tie every marketing tactic and activity to a financial return in a consistent manner. In simple terms B2B marketers face the challenge of connecting responses to their campaigns and tactics with deal revenue.

Attribution provides valuable insights into the impact of your marketing investments and the value of each customer interaction along the journey toward conversion. An understanding of attribution is useful because it is hugely influential in the outcome of debates and decisions around budget allocation, ROI calculations and strategic planning.

"I think the most difficult question for a digital marketer today is attribution. How do you most accurately measure the effect of your multi-channel digital marketing campaigns?"

Stephen Ebbet, *Chief Digital Officer at Assurant*

"Content marketing has an attribution problem. Attribution modelling is still tough for us. How can we best and accurately score a piece of content depending on where it enters a sales cycle?"

Kyle Lacy, *Director Global Content & Research at Salesforce Marketing Cloud*

"Our most significant digital marketing challenge is around attribution. We use digital marketing to create awareness and engage clients and prospects, but our business model allows for minimal online conversion. As a result, it is challenging to figure out how an interaction in any channel may or may not have been influenced by content, and even more challenging to connect that activity to an eventual sale or conversion that might occur months or even years later."

Charlotte Mooney, *VP, Private Wealth Management Marketing at SunTrust Bank*

"Given the diverse mix of digital media, offline events, sales/ marketing in person mashups, and offline/telephone media all going into a very sophisticated omni-channel demand generation program, exact attribution of every dollar spent continues to be an area of focus."

Kevin Akeroyd, *General Manager at Oracle Marketing Cloud*

"With attribution you will likely get caught in the chasm between information overload and oversimplification which can result in spurious results. The key is to design a framework that is easy to understand but also has a lot of depth in terms of its data sources. This will likely be a model that combines first touch, last touch, cohort analysis and multi-touch attribution frameworks and allows you to answer specific questions associated with business outcomes."

Balint Sipos, *Digital Marketing Manager at idio*

WHAT NEXT?

1 STEP 1:
Set measurable marketing goals aligned with business outcomes.

2 STEP 2:
Determine a scoring model (see next page) that ensures that there is coverage across the path to conversion so that no touch points are omitted.

- Weight scores based on critical and noncritical events (aligned to sales goals)

- Consider time (decay) in your models so that you can discount for interest abandonment

3 STEP 3:
Create dashboards that allow for real time analysis of campaigns against goals.

4 STEP 4:
Review and refine.

Choose your model

There are various models that have been employed in attribution. The four most popular types are first touch, last touch, cohort analysis and multi-touch attribution.

First touch

attribution explores what initial interaction or action first exposed the prospect to your brand, product or service resulting in them converting into a customer at some future date.

Last touch

attribution similarly explores what last interaction or action the prospect had with your brand, product or service just before converting into a customer.

Cohort analysis

can be broadly defined as a dissection of the activities of a group of people who share a common characteristic, over time. This common characteristic could be the "sign up date" for a webinar or event. This will help to answer questions such as "of the people that signed up for a webinar this month, how many became MQLS?" for example.

Multi-touch

attribution is the process of understanding and assigning credit to various marketing channels that eventually lead to conversions. Christoph Janz of Point Nine Capital simplifies multi-touch attribution with a football analogy. He observes that "multi-touch attribution gives the credit for a goal to not only the scorer but also (gives some credit to) the players who prepared the goal, too. Soccer player statistics often calculate scores based on the goals and the assists of the players.

That means the statistics are based on what could be called a double-touch analysis that takes into account the last touch and the touch before the last one.

Measurement and ROI

John Wanamaker said in the 19th century, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half." Measurement continues to trouble digital marketers, even though we operate in the most transparent and measurable environment.

Partly, this is caused by the proliferation of new channels, techniques and the breakneck speed at which they are adopted, tweaked and blended. And it is certainly exacerbated by the fact that marketers have been trumpeting digital as eminently measurable. We now face the reality of living up to this promise.

Everyone is asking the 'how do I calculate and prove ROI?' question. But usually, when you get into the intention behind that question, it's not actually what marketers want to know. What they want to know is how they can measure, and whether those measurements are going in the right direction. It's less about proving ROI, and more about improving it.

"My most pressing digital marketing problem – continuing to evolve the relationship and understanding between content and ROI."

Diane Clay, *Director of Product Marketing at ownCloud*

"The truth is that I just don't know how to measure what we do. I can pay some vendors and get the numbers I ask for (numbers they think pleases me so I keep buying from them). Numbers that the bosses might like. It is really hard to get numbers that are trustworthy and actionable - and that concerns me."

Rob Le Gesse, *VP of Social Strategy at Rackspace*

"The primary digital marketing challenge I've had to deal with when working with brands is the ambiguous relationship between marketers and passive, non-ROI focused drivers like branded content."

Kunal Robert,
Digital Director at MEC Global

"In an industry with declining marketing investment, it's of paramount importance to be able to deliver tangible value."

Ravinder Saund, *Senior Marketing Planner at Hitachi Data Systems*

"Whilst clicks, likes, views, dwell time and bounce rates are all valid metrics that tell you how well your audience is engaging, they do not necessarily mean prospects have an intention to buy. Unless there is a clear path to revenue, engagement metrics are interesting but not useful. We should also be cognizant that 'response' to marketing does not equate to 'demand'.

We need new metrics to connect content to ROI. We must use journey analytics to ensure that the content being produced is contributing to the journey and whether specific pieces of content and journeys are performing better than others in terms of driving the target audience forwards to the commercial goal."

**Munya Hoto,** *Head of Demand Generation at idio*

WHAT NEXT?

BEAT THE CONTENT MARKETING COST-BENEFIT LAG

It's easy to calculate the ROI of a campaign:

ROI = (Gain from investment - Cost of investment) / Cost of investment

However, sustainable ROI is all about scale and time.

An 'inconvenient truth' about content marketing (and all) ROI is that the gains lag behind the upfront costs of producing that content. Many B2B marketers are experiencing the natural time-lag between cost and gain.

The cost investment is early

gain

cost

$

but the benefits lag

 # content items
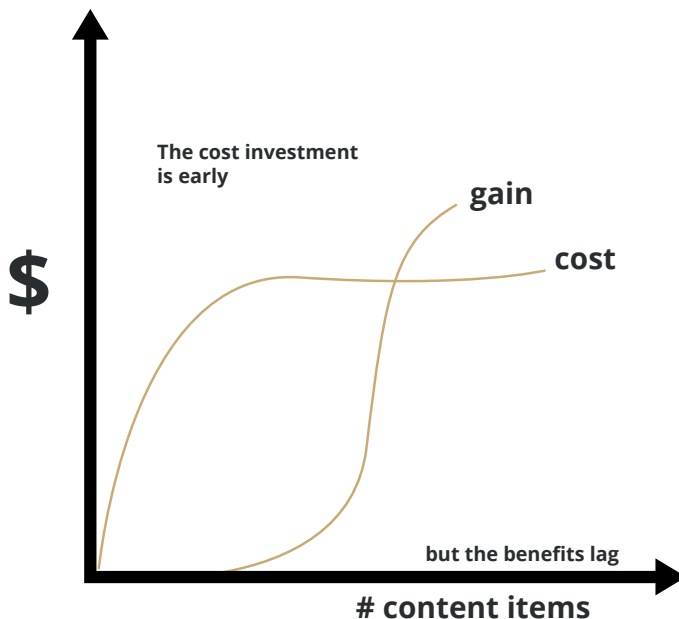
Sustainable ROI is all about reducing the lag as best as possible.

1) Measure the right metrics

Content	Insight	Engagement
How much is being produced?	How much is the content being engaged with?	What are the conversion rates linked to the content?
What is the cost of content production?	What conversions are linked to content marketing?	Email open rates?
What are the topics we are creating content around?	What are the most popular topics within that content?	Demo requests?
Where is the content being promoted?		Dwell time on site?
	What are the least popular topics?	Newsletter subscriptions?
What is the cost of content promotion?		Purchases?

2) Review the lead handover process

The majority of lost revenue occurs at the handover of a content marketing generated lead to the sales team. It is at handover point that leads either go cold, are rejected or simply forgotten. A solid lead management process that is well-defined (including agreed sales stages and the criteria for a qualified lead at each stage), supported by the right technology and adhered to by personnel in both sales and marketing will pay dividends.

3) Track content consumption to provide lead context to the Sales team

Content consumption reveals who people are, what they are interested in and what pain-point they have. Harnessing this is of huge value for sales reps that need to work from the best and most insightful lead data to get inside of their prospect's mind and understand what is motivating and driving them. Knowing their marketing automation lead score or job title alone will not do this.

4) Connect Sales team to marketing content

Up to 60% of content created in B2B organizations goes unused (according to SiriusDecisions). Salespeople are time poor - they don't have time to fumble around across a litany of marketing folders to find a relevant piece of content for a prospect. Content marketers can fix this by making sure content is well categorized, optimized for relevance, and visible at all times.

As always, it comes down to people

As these pains are solved by an array of approaches and tools, a more fundamental battleground will emerge; one of talent attraction and retention. Although some respondents noted that finding, training and keeping top team members was a pain point, this will emerge as a prime issue - especially in organizations that have not changed their ways of working to empower experimentation and rapid iteration.

New tools, new approaches and new datasets are resulting in new job roles being created in marketing every year. We are past the point of being able to hope that a period of disruption will settle into a new normal. In an increasingly global, flat, connected, and competitive marketplace, disruption is the new normal.

Whilst firefighting the attribution, data, and relevance challenges that you face, don't lose sight of the longer term talent challenge.

Andrew Davies, *Co-Founder and CMO of idio*

Conclusion

When we read through the responses to our survey we found the results to be both revealing and reassuring.

It turns out that even in the heady world of digital marketing there is nothing new under the sun. Although we may be at the cutting edge of innovation, our concerns remain largely unchanged: Are we doing the right thing?...What are our competitors doing?... How can I prove that I'm doing my job well?

THE MODERN BUYER HAS CHANGED

The modern buyer is harder than ever to understand: they are 'cross channel', 'multi-screen' and 'always on'. They are also more difficult to pigeonhole than their demographic segmentation, purchase history or firmographic information might have us believe.

However, although modern buyers increasingly confound, one particular behavior is proving predictably consistent: their increasing desire for content. It is upon this reality that digital marketers can find some solid ground.

No one company, technology or strategy will be able to solve every digital marketing pain.

Increasingly, marketers are able to build loosely connected marketing execution tools around a robust data and reporting layer. This is enabled by the almost pervasive use of APIs (Application Protocol Interface) in modern technology that enable interoperability.

idio's core thesis is 'You Are What You Read': we believe that the content your prospects and customers choose to read is highly indicative of their interests and desires. This insight is something organizations can use to predict, understand and influence their audience's purchase path.

We deliver this as three products; **Insight,** which helps marketers understand which topics drive action, and predicts what to write about next; **Engage,** which personalizes the content experience to every prospect on a 1-2-1 basis to move them towards purchase; and **Sales Intelligence**, which tells sales teams what to say to a prospect before they pick up the phone.

As marketing technology becomes plug-and-play, our customers want to connect idio into their existing marketing stacks seamlessly, and so we work hard to pre-integrate with major CRMs, marketing automation systems and other tools.

idio

We'd love to have a chat...

Let's talk about **the challenges you are facing and the ways we can help.**

If you'd like to find out more about how idio can work for you, email us on
sales@idioplatform.com or visit **idioplatform.com**

idio

sales@**idio**platform.com

idioplatform.**com**