Pipeline360

RESEARCH REPORT

2026 State of B2B Marketing Content

THE CONFIDENCE GAP:

What Content Strategies Reveal About B2B Pipeline Growth

Content maturity, measurement, and authority are reshaping marketing leadership standards



Introduction

B2B marketing teams are producing more content than ever before. Yet despite increased investment, tooling, activity — and confidence in their capabilities — marketing's success at driving predictable growth remains fragile.

New research, commissioned by Pipeline360 and conducted in partnership with The Expert Network, explores this confidence gap through the lens of content. Not because content is the only factor shaping outcomes, but because it is where leadership decisions around accountability, focus, and authority become visible first.

As teams adopt AI at increasing speed, the gaps become more visible. AI does not resolve ambiguity in strategy or data; it amplifies it, accelerating both clarity and confusion depending on how systems are designed.

By examining how teams approach content maturity, measurement, data, and authority, this report provides insight into the factors that separate high-performing marketing teams from those that struggle to translate activity into predictable pipeline.

The research suggests that modern B2B content challenges are no longer rooted in scale or activity, but in precision, accountability, and trust. Many teams appear confident because they are busy, well-tooled, and highly visible. Fewer are confident because they can clearly explain how content creates movement within buying groups, advances pipeline, and contributes to revenue outcomes the business trusts.

The resulting confidence gap is not a matter of effort or intent. It reflects differences in how leaders define accountability, choose what to measure, and design content systems that reflect how buying actually happens.

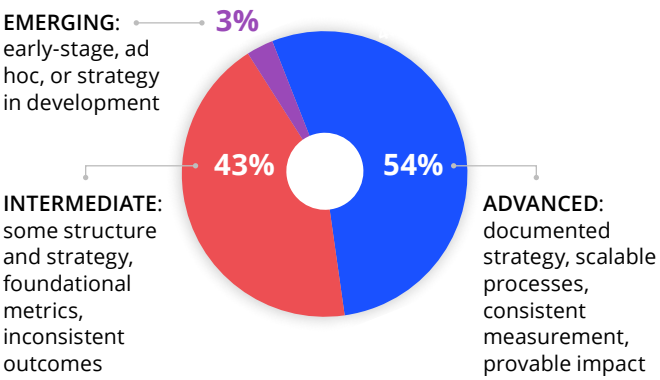


Content Maturity Separates Leaders From the Rest

B2B marketers overwhelmingly believe they have moved beyond ad hoc content execution. Most respondents place themselves at the upper end of the maturity spectrum, describing their content operations as structured, intentional, and aligned with business goals. A majority also report moderate or high confidence in content's ability to contribute to pipeline and to be measured across the buyer journey.

When examined through this maturity lens, meaningful performance differences emerge. Respondents who describe their content capabilities as advanced—with a documented content strategy, scalable processes, consistent measurement, and provable impact—consistently report higher confidence in content's contribution to pipeline and greater certainty in their ability to measure impact across the full buyer journey. They are also far more likely to expect significant increases in content budgets over the next two years, signaling confidence not just in current performance but in future returns.

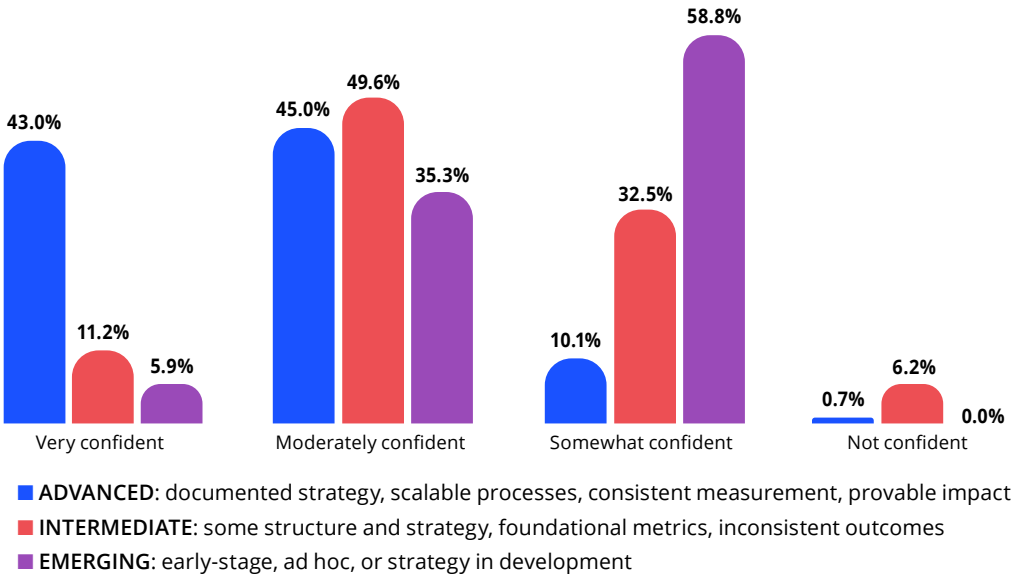
How would you rate your organization's content strategy maturity?



SOURCE: 2026 State of B2B Marketing Content

Less mature organizations tell a different story. They report lower confidence in pipeline contribution, weaker measurement capabilities, and flatter budget expectations. The divide between these groups is not incremental. It reflects fundamentally different levels of confidence in how content supports growth.

How confident are you in your ability to measure the impact of content across the full buyer journey?



SOURCE: 2026 State of B2B Marketing Content

Yet even among organizations that describe themselves as advanced, friction remains. Attribution gaps persist. Data quality issues surface regularly. Measurement systems often capture activity without fully explaining impact. The findings point to a clear gap between perceived maturity and the operational capability needed to deliver consistent, measurable performance.

"A lot of teams mistake motion for maturity," says Matt Hummel, Chief Marketing Officer of Pipeline360. "They are producing more content, using more tools, and moving faster. That does not necessarily mean they have a better understanding of what content is actually responsible for."

In practice, many teams have mistaken motion for maturity. Activity increases, but decision-making does not improve. Confidence rises, but clarity does not.

This distinction matters because maturity is not defined by scale alone. It reflects how clearly organizations define accountability, how effectively they connect content to outcomes, and how confidently leaders can make decisions based on what they see. As Hummel notes, true maturity shows up less in output volume and more in the ability to prioritize, focus investment, and decide what not to produce.

The widespread confidence reported in this research sets the baseline for the rest of the report.

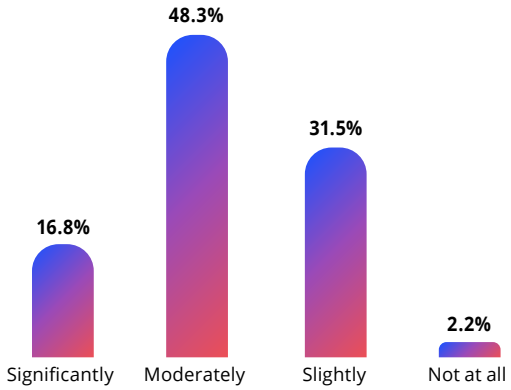


Measurement Confidence Breaks Down Under Scrutiny

Measurement has become a checkbox requirement for modern B2B marketing teams. Most survey respondents report that systems are in place to track content performance across channels and campaigns, and many describe themselves as moderately or very confident in their ability to assess content's impact across the buyer journey. However, that confidence weakens under closer examination.

For example, although marketers report confidence in measurement, more than half also acknowledge ongoing attribution gaps that limit their ability to optimize content. In practice, many measurement systems capture activity without fully explaining how content influences pipeline progression or revenue outcomes. Dashboards provide visibility, but visibility is not the same as understanding. Many teams can see what content is doing without being able to explain why pipeline moves, or why it doesn't.

How do measurement or attribution gaps limit content optimization?



SOURCE: 2026 State of B2B Marketing Content

This disconnect becomes clearer when examining how marketing teams track content performance. Respondents' most common key performance indicators focus on visibility and interaction, including page views, website traffic, and click-

through rates. These types of metrics offer insight into reach and engagement, but they provide limited understanding of buying group movement, deal momentum, or progression toward revenue.

> **Dashboards make teams feel informed.** But feeling informed is not the same as being confident. Confidence comes when you can **explain movement**, not just activity."
>
> —Matt Hummel, Chief Marketing Officer, Pipeline360

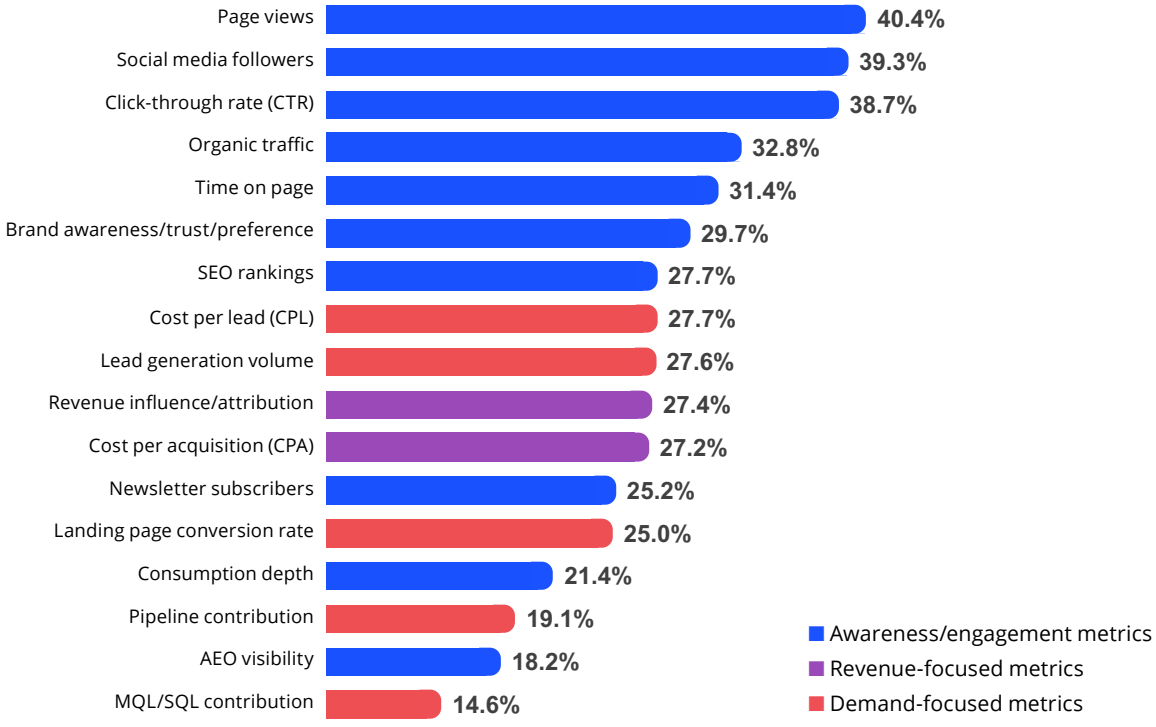
When these metrics dominate performance conversations, teams often optimize for signals that look productive internally but remain disconnected from how buyers actually make purchasing decisions.

Outcome-oriented metrics like conversion rates, pipeline contribution, and revenue influence are used less frequently. As a result, many teams report confidence based on partial visibility rather than a complete picture of how content contributes to business outcomes.

Measurement occurs for everyone, but measurement depth varies widely across teams, with many focused on content signals that don't explicitly move the needle on the business.

"Dashboards make teams feel informed," says Hummel. "But feeling informed is not the same as being confident. Confidence comes when you can explain movement, not just activity."

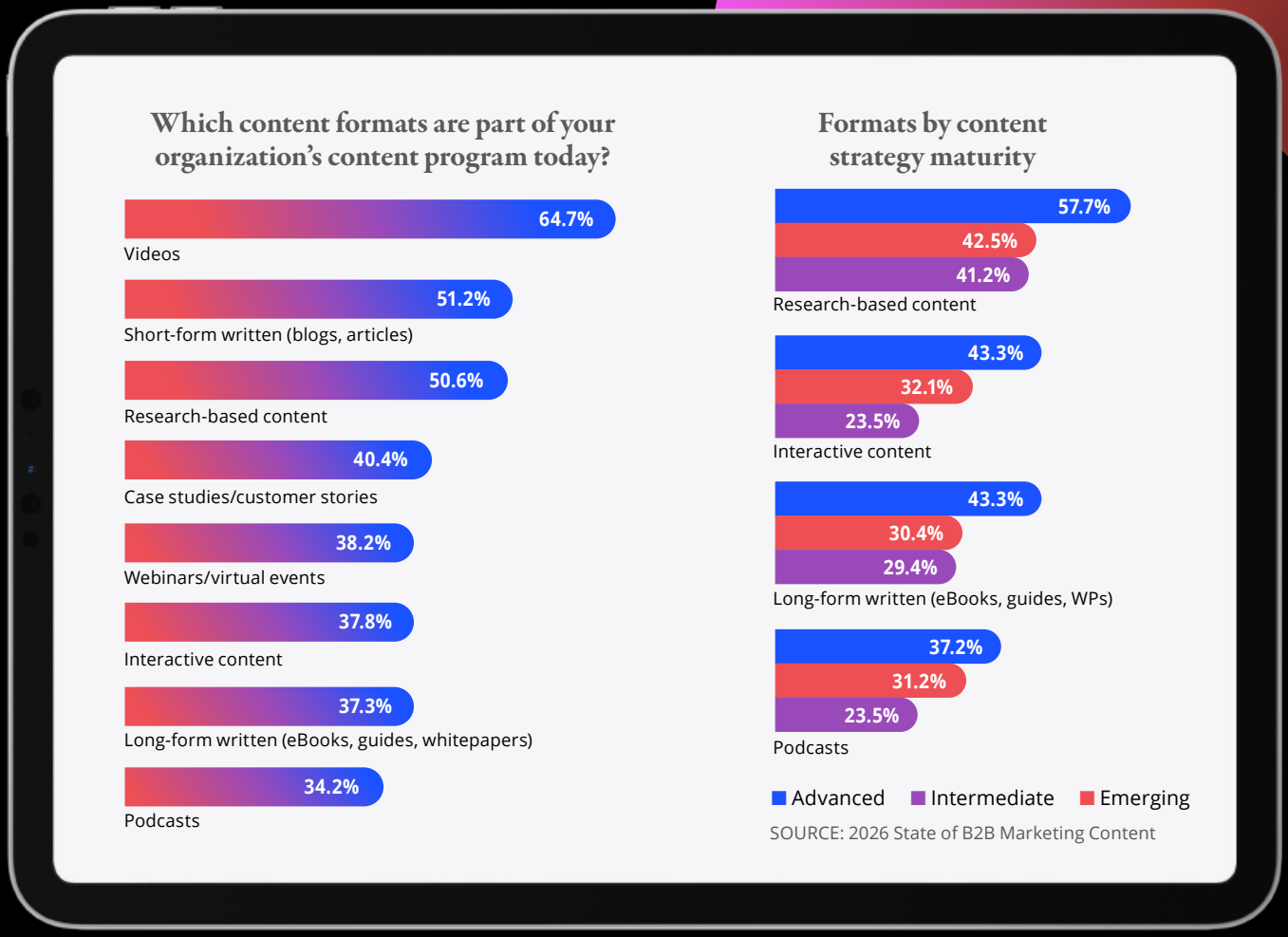
Which KPIs do you use for content performance?



SOURCE: 2026 State of B2B Marketing Content

Content Mix Reveals Strategic Sophistication

How marketing teams allocate content development offers a clear signal of content maturity. Across the full respondent base, most B2B marketers rely on a common set of scalable formats, led by video and short-form written content, reflecting an emphasis on reach and distribution efficiency.



When content usage is examined by maturity level, however, meaningful differences appear. Advanced organizations are significantly more likely to invest in higher-effort formats such as research-based content, long-form written assets, interactive experiences, and podcasts. These formats support deeper buyer education, decision-making, and authority building over time.

Intermediate and emerging organizations show lower adoption of these immersive formats, indicating continued reliance on efficiency-driven production over depth. The divergence reinforces content mix as a practical indicator of strategic sophistication and leadership expectations for what content is meant to accomplish.

Data Confidence vs. Data Reality

Most B2B marketers in our survey report confidence in the quality of the data supporting their content and demand generation efforts. Many believe the right inputs are in place to support targeting, personalization, and measurement across the buyer journey.

But that confidence does not fully align with outcomes: Three-quarters of respondents report that poor data quality negatively affects campaign performance occasionally (56.0%) or frequently (19.6%). These issues occur regularly, not as isolated exceptions. Targeting breaks down. Personalization falls short. Attribution becomes unreliable.

This disconnect highlights a recurring challenge across the research. Confidence in data readiness does not always translate into data that is clean, consistent, or actionable, particularly as content strategies become more complex and more tightly linked to revenue outcomes. As expectations for precision increase, the cost of unreliable data becomes more visible.

"When leaders do not trust the data, everything slows down," says Hummel. "You end up debating the numbers instead of making decisions. That lack of trust shows up quickly in missed opportunities and delayed action."

Reducing the impact of poor data quality requires stronger governance, validation, and data-integration practices. This is one area where AI can provide significant benefits (see sidebar).

Improving data quality can have a direct impact on both investment decisions and pipeline performance. Organizations that report high confidence in their data are more likely to expect marketing budget increases, and they are far more likely to consistently generate qualified pipeline from content. Conversely, top pipeline performers are also significantly more likely to express very high confidence in their data vs. average and low performers. The relationship reinforces data quality as a leading indicator of pipeline performance—and marketing credibility.

Together, these findings position data quality as a foundational driver of executive trust, investment confidence, and measurable performance. As content strategies evolve from activity-focused execution to outcome-driven systems, data discipline becomes less of an operational concern and more of a leadership requirement.

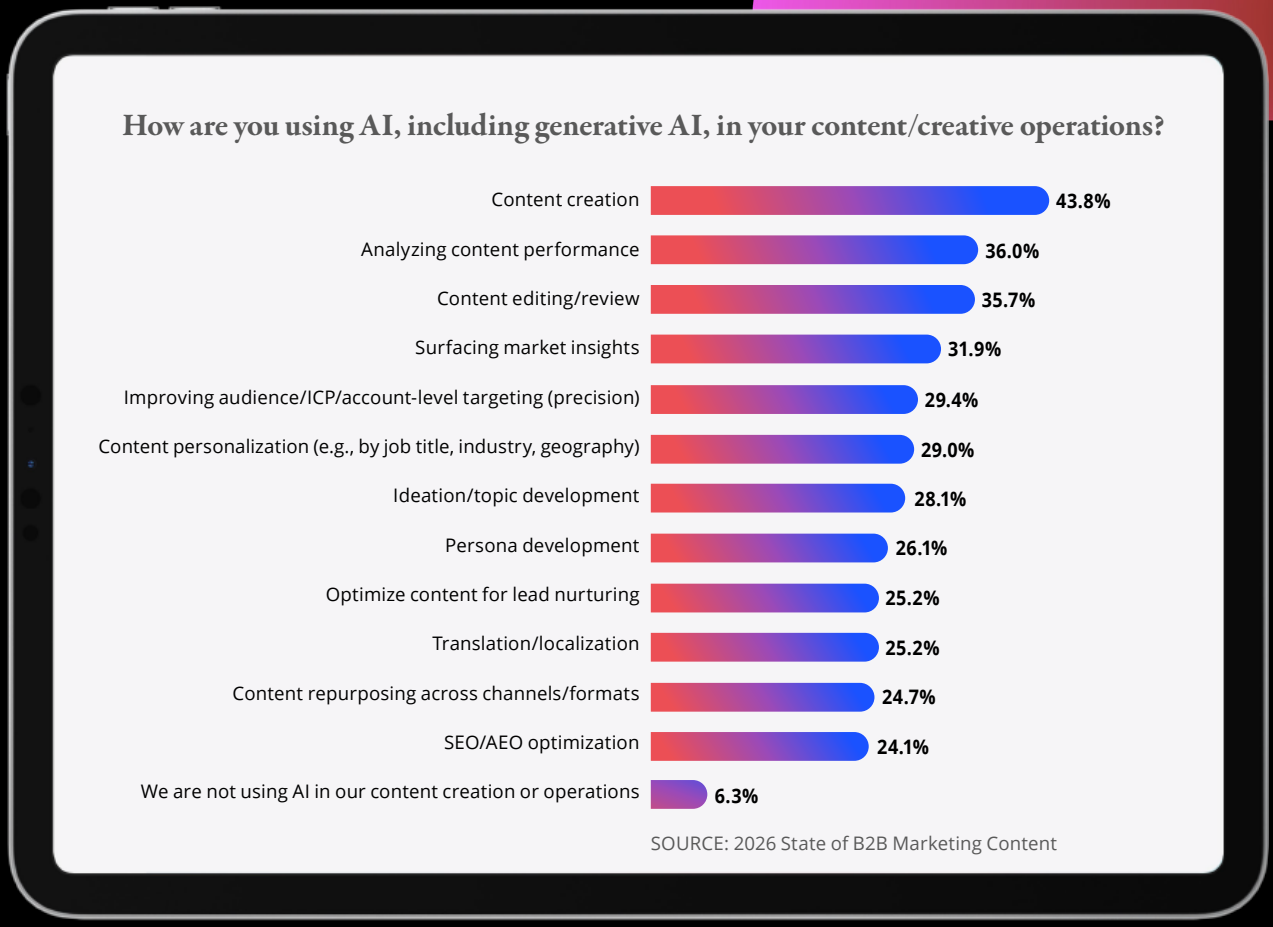
How would you rate your team's ability to consistently generate qualified pipeline from content?
Segmented by confidence levels in the quality of marketing data



SOURCE: 2026 State of B2B Marketing Content

AI Adoption, Opportunities, and Risks

AI adoption is widespread across B2B marketing organizations, but how teams use it varies sharply by content maturity. Current applications remain concentrated in production-oriented tasks such as content creation, editing, and summarization, reflecting a focus on efficiency and speed.



More advanced applications, including account-level targeting, content personalization, and lead-nurturing optimization, are less common. This gap highlights a clear divide between organizations using AI primarily to increase output and those applying it to improve precision, insight, and performance.

Despite reported gains in speed and efficiency from AI tools, marketers cite the rise of low-quality content as their top concern related to AI adoption. The tension underscores the importance of applying AI within clearly defined systems, with trusted data and human oversight guiding its use.

This divide is not between teams using AI and those that are not. It is between organizations applying AI to accelerate production and those applying it to improve precision, insight, and decision-making across the buying journey.

What Content Maturity Reveals About Leadership Choices

While our research focuses on content strategy and execution, the patterns it reveals point to broader leadership decisions that show up most clearly through content. Among organizations reporting higher confidence and predictability, content is not treated as an output to optimize. It is treated as a system that reflects accountability, focus, and authority across the buying journey.

Rather than prescribing a single model or set of steps, the findings surface a set of observable decisions that appear consistently among more confident, higher-performing teams. These decisions involve tradeoffs. They require clarity. And they shape how content contributes to pipeline outcomes the business actually trusts.

> These are not tactical differences, **they are leadership choices**. Content just happens to be where the consequences show up first."
>
> —Matt Hummel, Chief Marketing Officer, Pipeline360



LEADERSHIP DECISION 1: DEFINING WHAT CONTENT IS ACCOUNTABLE FOR

More confident organizations do not evaluate content performance in isolation. They define accountability in terms leaders already recognize, including pipeline progression, movement within buying groups, and contribution to measurable outcomes.

Content is not assessed primarily on volume, engagement, or production efficiency. Instead, it is tracked in the context of how well it creates momentum, supports decision-making, and advances opportunities through the buying process.

"You cannot look at content in a vacuum," says Hummel. "If you are not seeing progression within the buying group, then all you are really measuring is activity."

This shift in accountability changes how success is defined. Fewer assets are celebrated for motion alone. More attention is paid to whether content supports real movement across accounts and buying groups in practical, observable ways.

"When you see content working, it's creating conversations," says Hummel. "Look at it in the sense of, is it opening doors with customers and prospects? Is it helping you get meetings?"

In practice, this shift changes how teams work together. Marketing, sales, and revenue operations spend less time debating whether content "performed" and more time examining where it created momentum, where buying groups engaged, and where opportunities advanced or stalled. Content performance discussions move out of dashboards and into pipeline reviews, account conversations, and post-campaign analysis. Accountability becomes shared, not because functions collapse into one another, but because content is evaluated as part of a system that supports real buying decisions.

THE TRADEOFF
Reducing emphasis on activity-based metrics that are easy to report.

THE PAYOFF
Clearer accountability tied to pipeline outcomes rather than content outputs.



LEADERSHIP DECISION 2: CHOOSING WHICH CONTENT SIGNALS MATTER

More confident teams do not try to measure everything. They are much more deliberate about which signals they trust.

Rather than starting with available metrics, these organizations begin with intent. They ask what content is meant to change. Is it shifting perception? Is it helping buying groups move closer to a decision? Measurement follows meaning.

This approach reflects a broader mindset shift, resulting in a narrower but more trusted set of signals tied to behavioral change, engagement quality, and account progression. Broader visibility is deprioritized in favor of clarity. Content is no longer measured as a standalone function—it is assessed as part of a connected system that spans marketing, sales, and customer engagement.

Operationally, more selectivity reduces internal friction. Teams spend less time reconciling dashboards or debating the meaning of marginal metrics and more time acting on a shared set of trusted signals. Measurement discussions shift from reporting completeness to decision relevance: what indicates buying group movement, where engagement quality is changing, and which signals warrant action.

As a result, leaders gain faster, clearer insight into what is working and why, without being buried in data that looks impressive but fails to guide decisions.

THE TRADEOFF
Less comprehensive reporting.

THE PAYOFF
Greater trust in what the data actually represents and stronger alignment between marketing insight and leadership decision-making.



LEADERSHIP DECISION 3: INVESTING IN CONTENT THAT BUILDS AUTHORITY OVER TIME

The research reveals a clear separation between teams focused on short-term activity and those investing in authority-building work. More confident organizations consistently prioritize depth, originality, and domain expertise, even when those efforts take longer to show results.

This includes greater investment in research-driven content, long-form analysis, and formats grounded in real human insight rather than scaled production alone.

“Research grounded in real human opinion carries weight,” Hummel says. “It signals credibility in a way that scaled content simply does not.”

Advanced teams tend to work from the outside in rather than the inside out when creating in-depth, high-impact content. They start with how buying actually works, what buyers need to understand, and where trust is earned or lost. Content is designed to support and inform that experience, not simply to fill a calendar or feed a channel.

In practice, this investment changes how content is used across the organization. Authority-building assets tend to travel further inside buying organizations, are reused by sales teams, and resurface in later-stage conversations. Over time, this reuse reinforces content as a decision-support asset rather than a one-time launch tactic, strengthening trust in content’s role in supporting pipeline performance.

THE TRADEOFF
Slower initial returns and fewer launch-driven spikes.

THE PAYOFF
Trust that compounds over time and content that supports sustained confidence in pipeline performance.



From Confidence to Capability

Taken together, these patterns suggest that content maturity is less about adopting new tools or producing more assets and more about how leaders define accountability, trust signals, and authority within their marketing systems.

Organizations that report higher confidence and predictability tend to operate with fewer silos, clearer ownership, and stronger alignment between content, data, and revenue outcomes. Content functions as a through line rather than a disconnected activity.

The confidence gap identified in this research is not simply a matter of execution, or a tooling problem. It is a leadership and operating model challenge. The findings reflect differences in how leaders choose to design and govern their marketing data and systems. Content is where those choices become visible first, and where their impact on pipeline confidence becomes hardest to ignore.

B2B marketers can no longer rely on confidence alone. The organizations that outperform their peers are improving data quality, reducing operational friction, and aligning content, analytics, and AI around pipeline outcomes leaders trust. Those are the real confidence builders for modern B2B marketing teams.



Pipeline360 works with marketing leaders to REBUILD CONTENT, DATA, AND DEMAND SYSTEMS around precision, accountability, and measurable pipeline outcomes the business trusts.

LEARN how Pipeline360 helps teams move from activity-driven execution to revenue-connected performance.

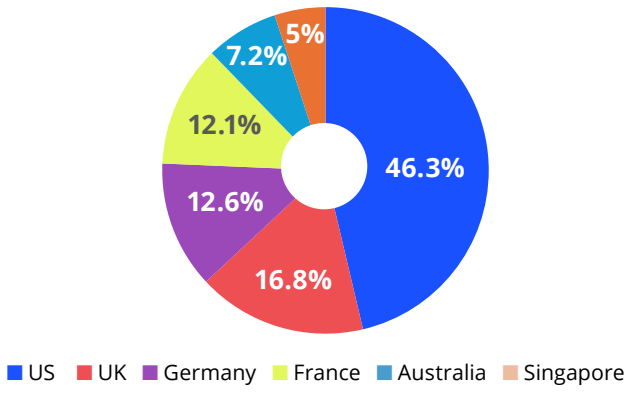
About the Survey

This report is based on a survey of 555 B2B marketing professionals commissioned by Pipeline360 and fielded by Centiment. Analysis, writing, editing and design was performed by The Expert Network, a fully managed network of content creators that specializes in insight-driven content that creates awareness and builds demand for clients.

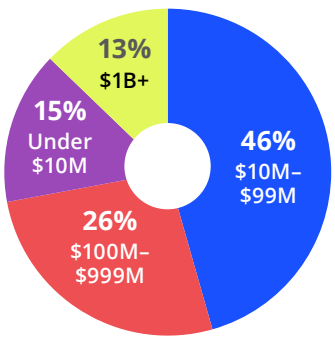
Respondents represented a broad mix of roles across marketing and revenue teams, spanning six countries and a wide range of company sizes.

RESPONDENT	ROLE
Marketing manager/specialist	27.2%
Marketing director/senior manager	20.0%
Marketing leadership (CMO, VP, Head of Marketing)	15.5%
Content marketing lead/manager	11.9%
Sales or sales enablement	10.3%
Product marketing	6.5%
Creative/design lead	4.7%
Demand generation lead/manager	4.0%

Respondents by country



Respondent company annual revenue



SOURCE: 2026 State of B2B Marketing Content