2016
CONTENT PREFERENCES SURVEY REPORT

B2B BUYERS VALUE TRUSTWORTHY CONTENT WITH DATA AND ANALYSIS

DEMAND GEN REPORT
Survey Report

INTRODUCTION

More than half (51%) of B2B buyers said they rely more on content now to research their buying decisions than they did a year ago. Respondents to *Demand Gen Report's 2016 Content Preferences Survey* told us that content that includes independent voices — thought leaders, third-party analysts and peers — resonates with them the most.

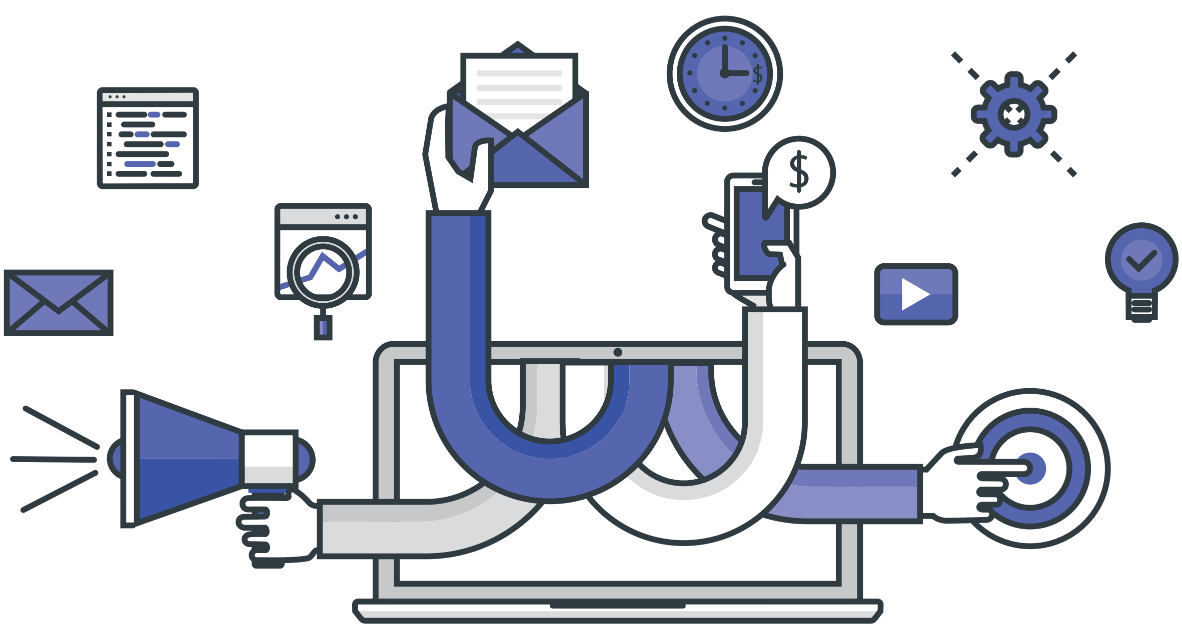
They seem to have hit a limit, though, regarding how much content they can view during the buying process. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents said that they have less time to devote to reading and research than they did 12 months ago. Shorter content formats were cited as preferred by 88% of our audience who took the survey.

When they do spend time with content, B2B buyers continue to be turned off by long content with a heavy sales pitch. They are increasingly turning to their LinkedIn and Twitter feeds to get recommendations from their peers and see the types of content that people in similar roles and with similar challenges are sharing.

While white papers and webinars remain stalwarts when it comes to capturing leads and nurturing them through the buying process, buyers said they want content that can help them benchmark their strategies and success stories from others facing similar challenges.

Read on for an in-depth analysis of the survey results.

51% of buyers are relying more on content now to research their buying decisions.



BUYERS VALUE TRUSTWORTHINESS AND SHORTER FORMATS

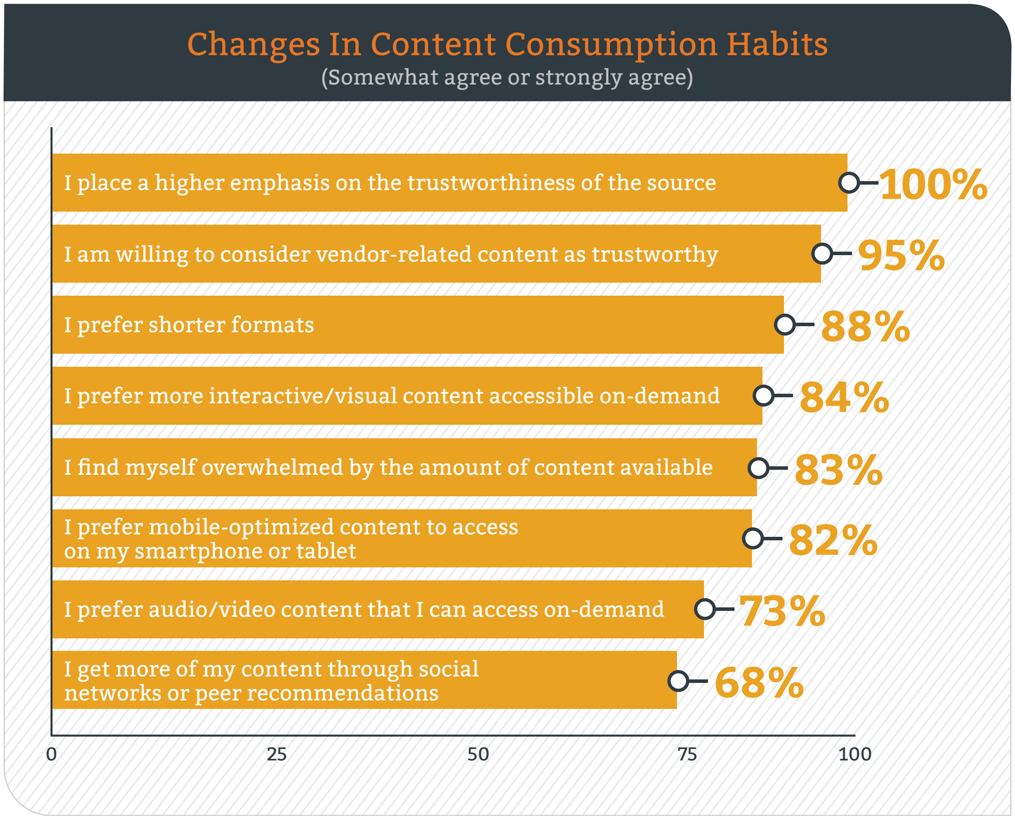
It is no surprise that buyers place a high value on the trustworthiness of their content; 100% of respondents said that their content has to come from a reliable source in order to impact their buying decision.

A surprising — and overwhelming — number of buyers (95%) are open to considering vendor-related content as trustworthy. As buyers continue to do more of their research online prior to engaging with a salesperson, they are becoming more adept at recognizing valuable content compared with content that is a straight sales pitch.

Shorter content remains a top issue for buyers, as they continue to gravitate toward more visual content and easily digestible formats such as infographics, case studies and blog posts.

Most buyers (83%) remain overwhelmed by the amount of content available, which implies that marketers may benefit from a strategy that focuses on quality over quantity.

95% of respondents are open to considering vendor content as trustworthy.



CASE STUDIES VIEWED BY NEARLY THREE-QUARTERS OF RESPONDENTS

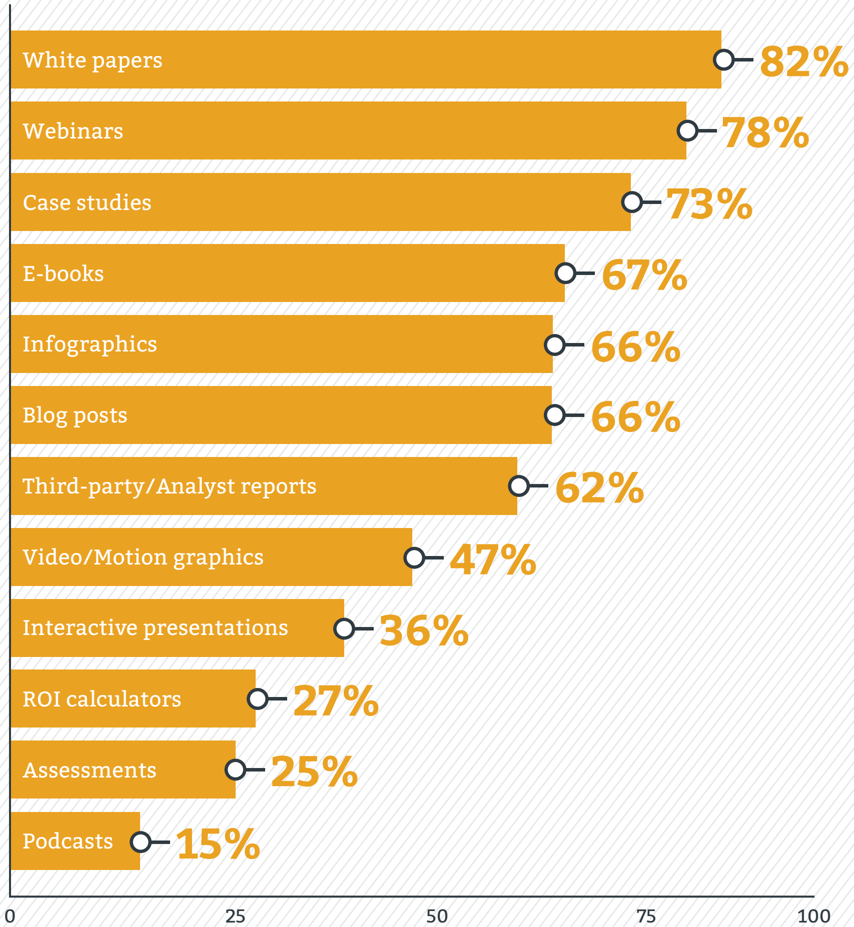
While buyers continue to rely heavily on white papers, E-books and webinars as they research purchases, case studies have cracked the top three when it comes to the types of content they have accessed during the past 12 months.

Shorter formats such as infographics and blog posts saw modest gains, each up 5% from last year's survey.

Interactive presentations, ROI calculators and assessments saw steady growth, with each gaining a few percentage points from 2015.

73% of respondents viewed a case study during their research.

Content Types Used To Make Decisions In The Past 12 Months
(Check all that apply)



BUYERS VALUE INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS

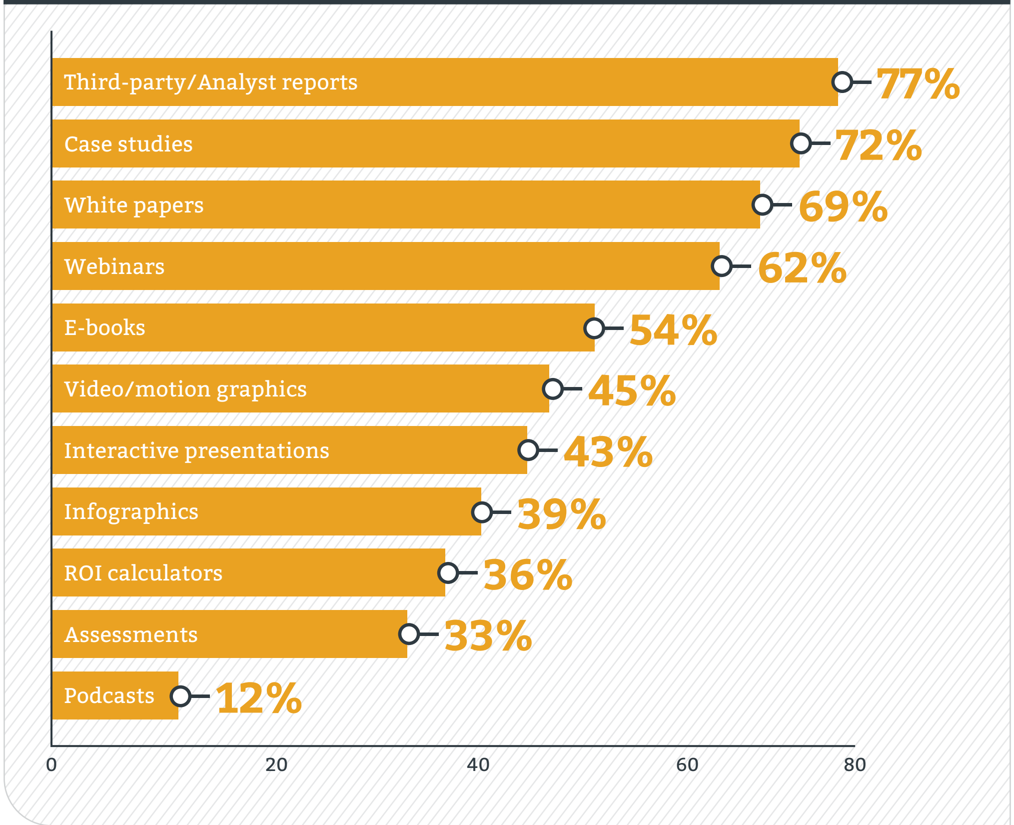
Third-party/analyst reports were cited as the most valued content type in this year's survey by 77% of respondents. Case studies, cited by 72% of respondents, were second on the list.

White papers, E-books and webinars were the top three in 2015 when it came to most valued content types, so this represents a significant shift toward user stories that resonate with prospects and a level of sophistication and savvy among buyers.

While traditional webinars and white papers were high on the list, a significant number of those surveyed placed a high value on shorter, more visual formats such as video/motion graphics (45%) and interactive presentations (43%).

> Buyers cite third-party research (77%) and case studies (72%) among the most valuable content types.

Most Valuable Content Viewed During Decision-Making Process
(Check all that apply)



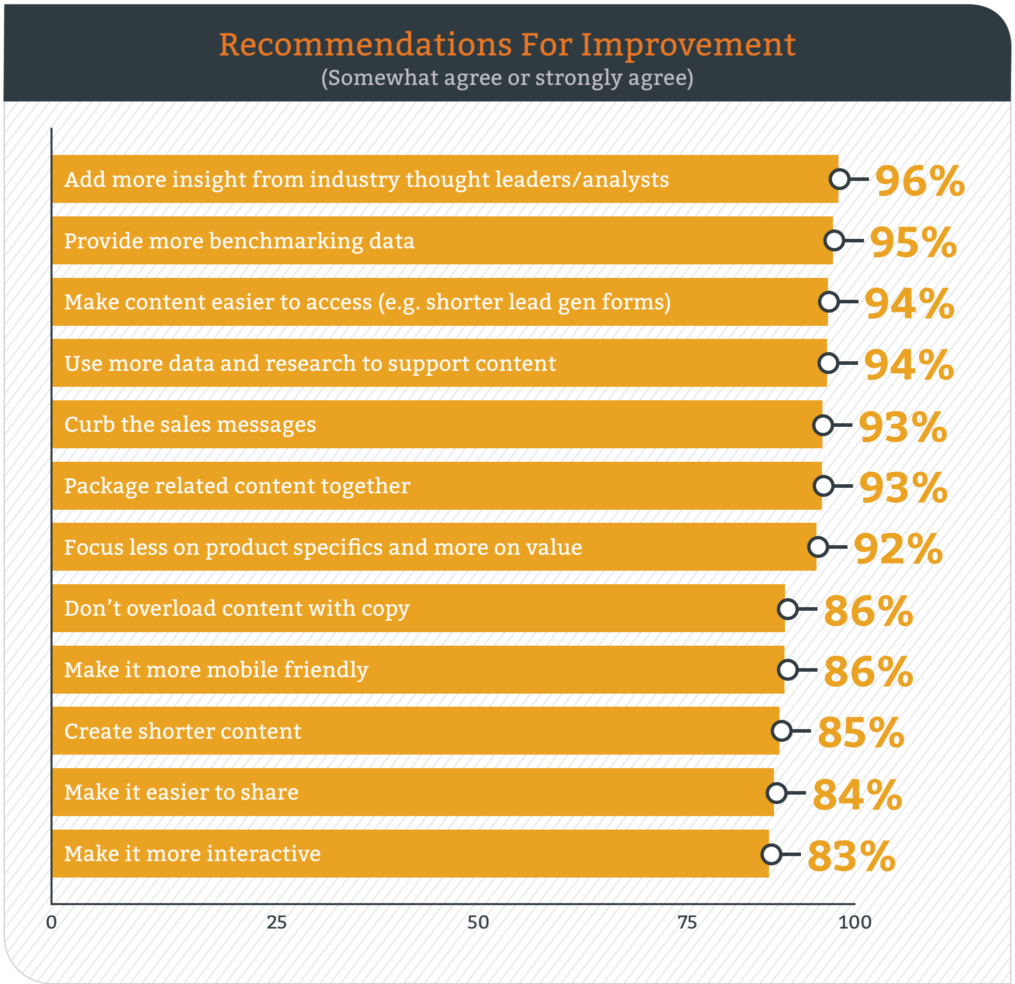
BUYERS WANT MORE ANALYST INSIGHT AND DATA

Building on the theme of content that engages and informs — rather than sells — respondents indicated that they want content with more insight from industry thought leaders and analysts. An overwhelming majority (96%) said they strongly agree or somewhat agree with that sentiment.

Buyers are also interested in content that will help them compare their efforts with their peers. Among their top recommendations were more benchmarking data (95%) to enable them to measure effectiveness against industry standards.

Not surprisingly, they also want access to content without having to fill out long lead gen forms, a recommendation cited by 94% of respondents. Leading marketers are responding to this trend with progressive profiling — asking for a few more pieces of information with each interaction — and data augmentation tools that use information from additional sources, such as the web and social media, to supplement customer records.

96% of respondents want content with more input from industry thought leaders.



STRONG PREFERENCE FOR PRESCRIPTIVE AND PREDICTIVE CONTENT

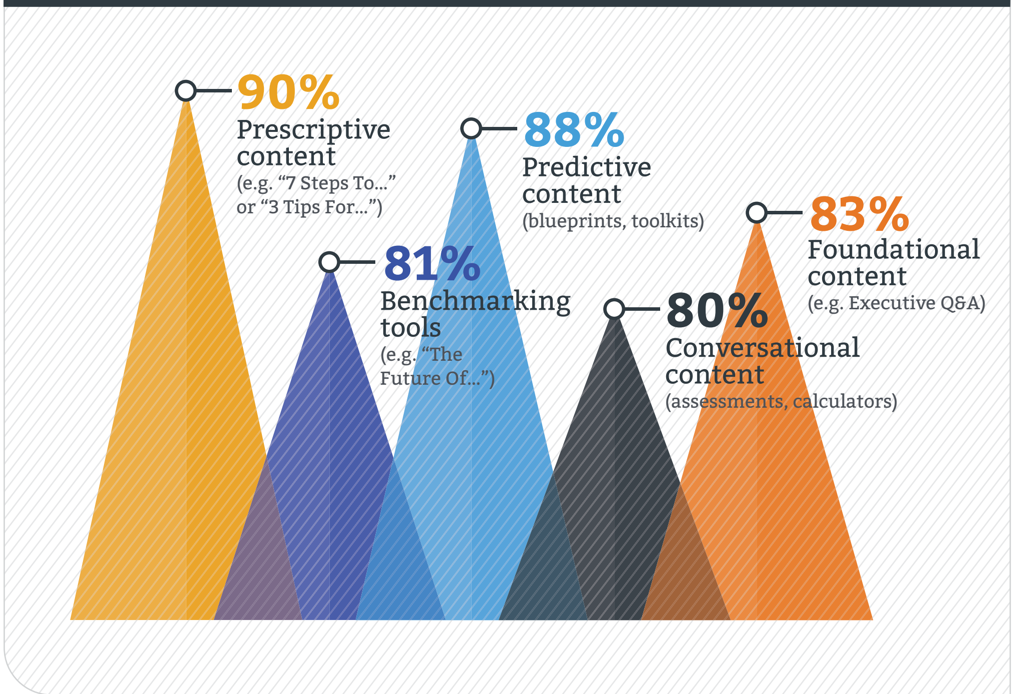
When evaluating general content types, respondents had the highest preference for prescriptive content, with 90% who said they prefer this type of content.

Just a few percentage points behind, at 88%, was predictive content, mirroring the results of our 2015 survey.

Foundational content, such as toolkits and blueprints, came in third, with 83% who expressed a preference for this content type.

Foundational content such as blueprints and toolkits were preferred by **83%** of respondents.

Types Of Content Preferred



BUYERS VARY IN CONTENT CONSUMED BEFORE SALES ENGAGEMENT

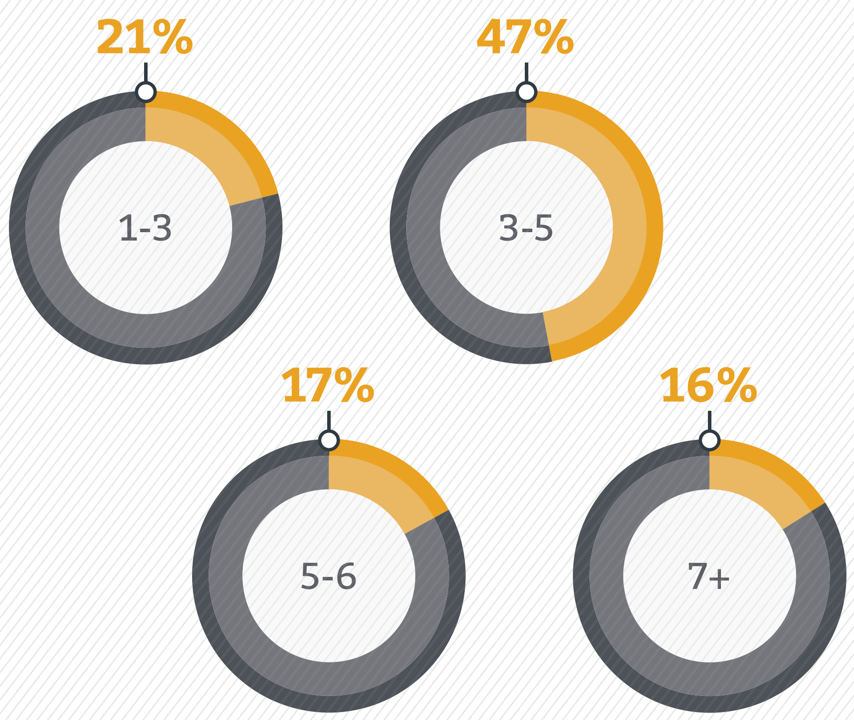
Close to half (47%) of respondents reported that they consumed three to five pieces of content before engaging with a salesperson, which is on par with our 2015 results.

There was a slight shift to buyers consuming fewer pieces of content, with 21% of respondents reporting that they consume one to three pieces of content prior to engaging with sales, compared to 16% in 2015.

This points to an underlying trend that buyers continue to do the bulk of their research online prior to reaching out to a salesperson, but they are being a bit more selective in the amount of content that they download prior to engaging with a sales rep.

47% of buyers viewed three to five pieces of content before contacting a sales rep.

Pieces Of Content Consumed Prior To Engaging With A Salesperson



LINKEDIN, FACEBOOK RISE AS CONTENT SHARING PLATFORMS

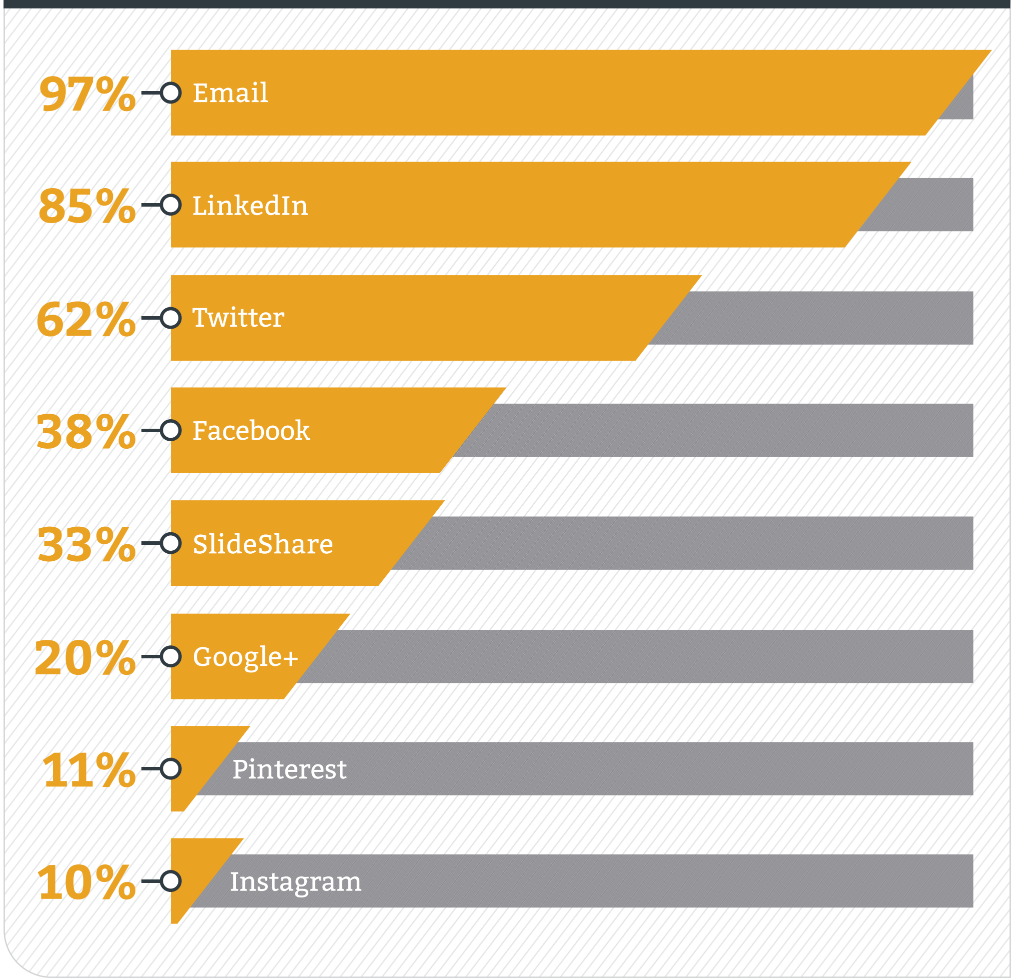
LinkedIn has always been the go-to platform for sharing content with colleagues and business connections, and its role as the social network for business continues to solidify. This year, 85% of respondents noted that they occasionally or frequently share content on LinkedIn, compared to 74% in 2015.

Facebook also saw a significant bump, further evidence of the blurring lines between the content consumption habits of B2B and B2C buyers. In 2016, 38% of respondents said they shared content with business associates through Facebook, compared with 27% the previous year.

Twitter also saw a slight bump as a business content-sharing platform, with 62% of respondents saying they frequently or occasionally used the platform, compared to 58% in 2015.

At **85%**, LinkedIn remains the top platform for sharing business-related content

Top Channels For Sharing Business-Related Content
(Choose all that apply)



MARKETERS SHARE MIX OF CONTENT TYPES

When it comes to sharing content with their colleagues, respondents gravitated toward a mix of content types.

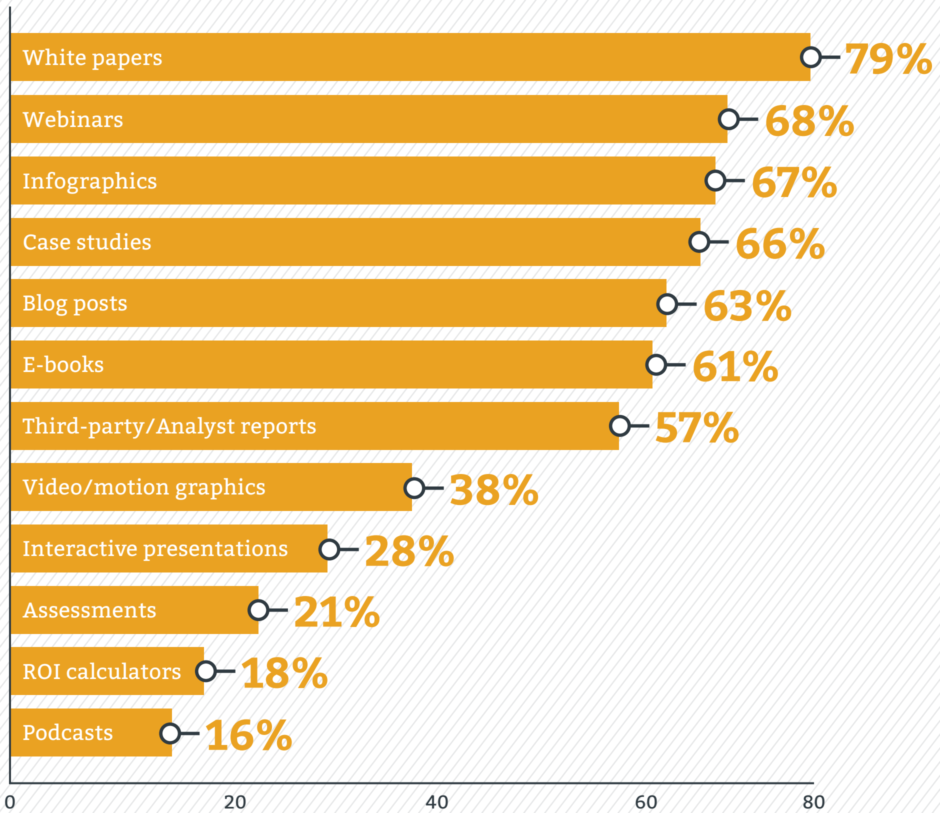
Following the trend of shorter content types with a vendor-agnostic tone, 63% of respondents said blog posts were the content type they were most likely to share with colleagues. That is up significantly from 36% in 2015.

White papers, which were cited by 78% of respondents last year, topped the list with 79% citing them as content they are most likely to share.

At 68%, webinars were also on par with last year, when 67% of respondents reported sharing webinars with their colleagues. Many content marketers have adopted a strategy of sending attendees links after the webinar has concluded, making it easy to view on-demand and pass along to peers.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents share blogs, a significant increase from last year.

Content Most Likely To Share With Colleagues

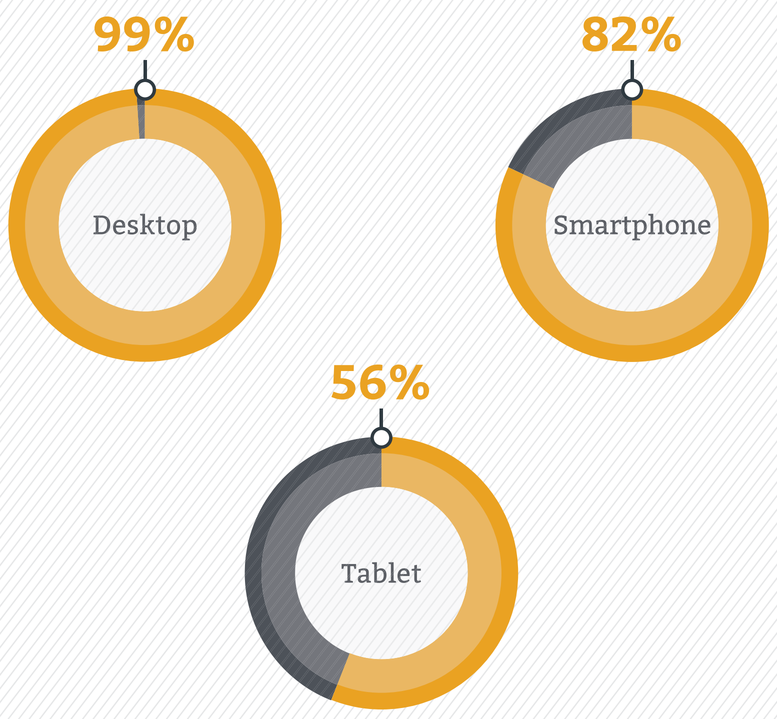


MORE BUYERS FREQUENTLY ACCESS CONTENT ON MOBILE

Buyers are using mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, to access business-related content while they are out of the office, with each seeing steady gains from last year's survey. A significant number (82%) of respondents also cited mobile-optimized content as one of their recommendations for improvement in the quality of content in the coming year.

50% of marketers frequently use smartphones to access business-related content.

Devices Used To Access Content
(Occasionally or frequently)



ABOUT THE SURVEY

The 2016 Content Preferences Survey polled 208 buyers of B2B products and services about their use of content in making purchasing decisions.

Nearly one-third (32%) offer business services/consulting, and 29% serve the technology/software industry. Fifty-nine percent of respondents were from companies with annual revenue of more than $10 million.

Approximately 34% of the respondents hold C-level or VP-level positions at their companies.

ABOUT DEMAND GEN REPORT

Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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