

LEAD NURTURING & ACCELERATION BENCHMARK SURVEY

MOVING INTO THE MODERN ERA
WITH HIGHLY-TARGETED,
ACCOUNT-BASED LEAD NURTURING

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Executive Summary

Lead nurturing is a foundational part of successful demand gen strategies, as it progresses leads from initial interest, keeps them engaged, provides them with relevant content and accelerates their buying journeys. In this year's *Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Benchmark Survey*, the results overwhelmingly pointed to the modernization of lead nurturing and the nuanced nature that comes along with its evolution. As lead nurturing and its accompanying strategies become a bigger priority, it's simultaneously becoming more challenging.

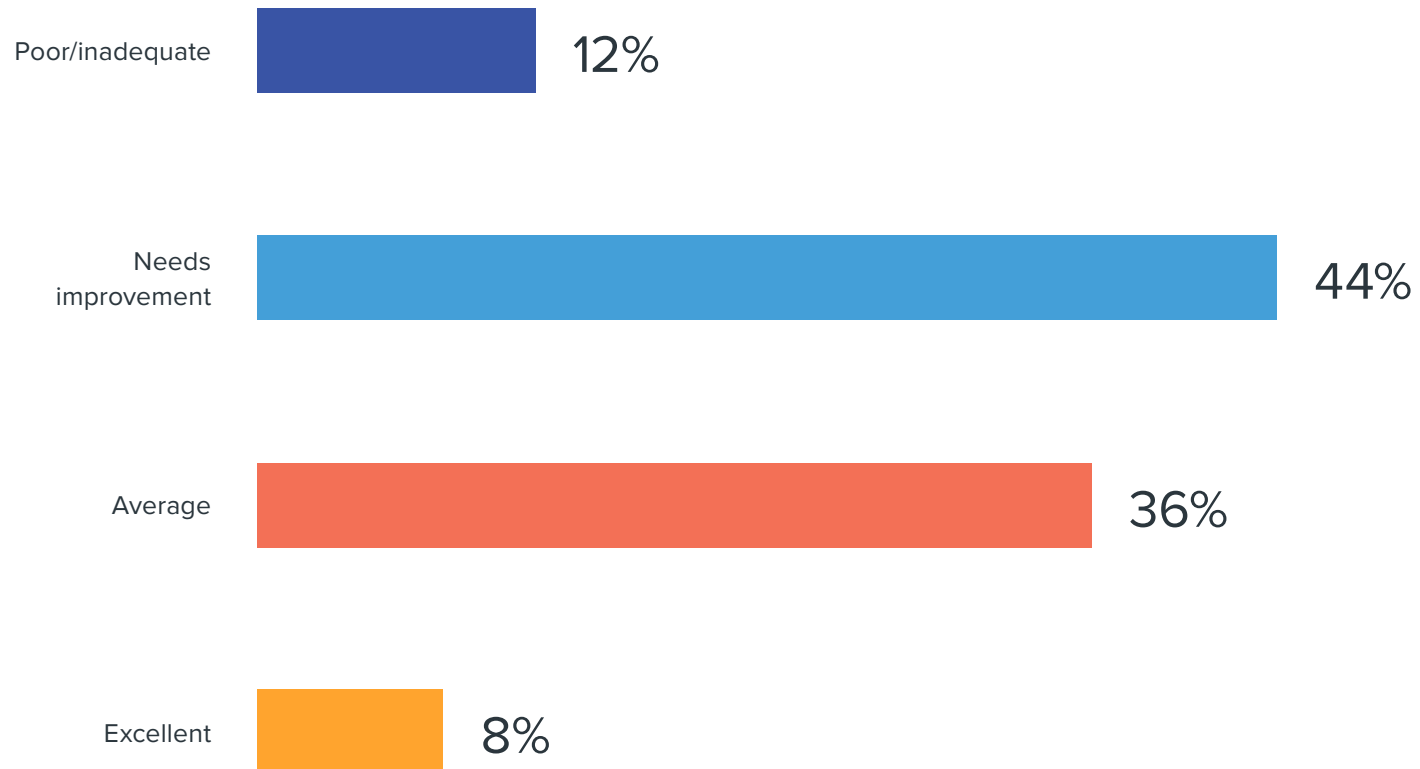
In fact, 56% of respondents said their performance is poor/inadequate or needs improvement. When asked how the challenges of lead nurturing programs have changed over the past 12 to 18 months, 60% said it was challenging while 24% indicated that it was very challenging.

This demonstrates that while lead nurturing is still a core goal and major factor in campaigns, it's growing harder to engage leads due to external factors, therefore requiring a more modern approach. With issues such as shorter digital attention spans and people being pulled in multiple directions, organizations must get creative and enhance their approach to lead nurturing with highly customized, targeted strategies.

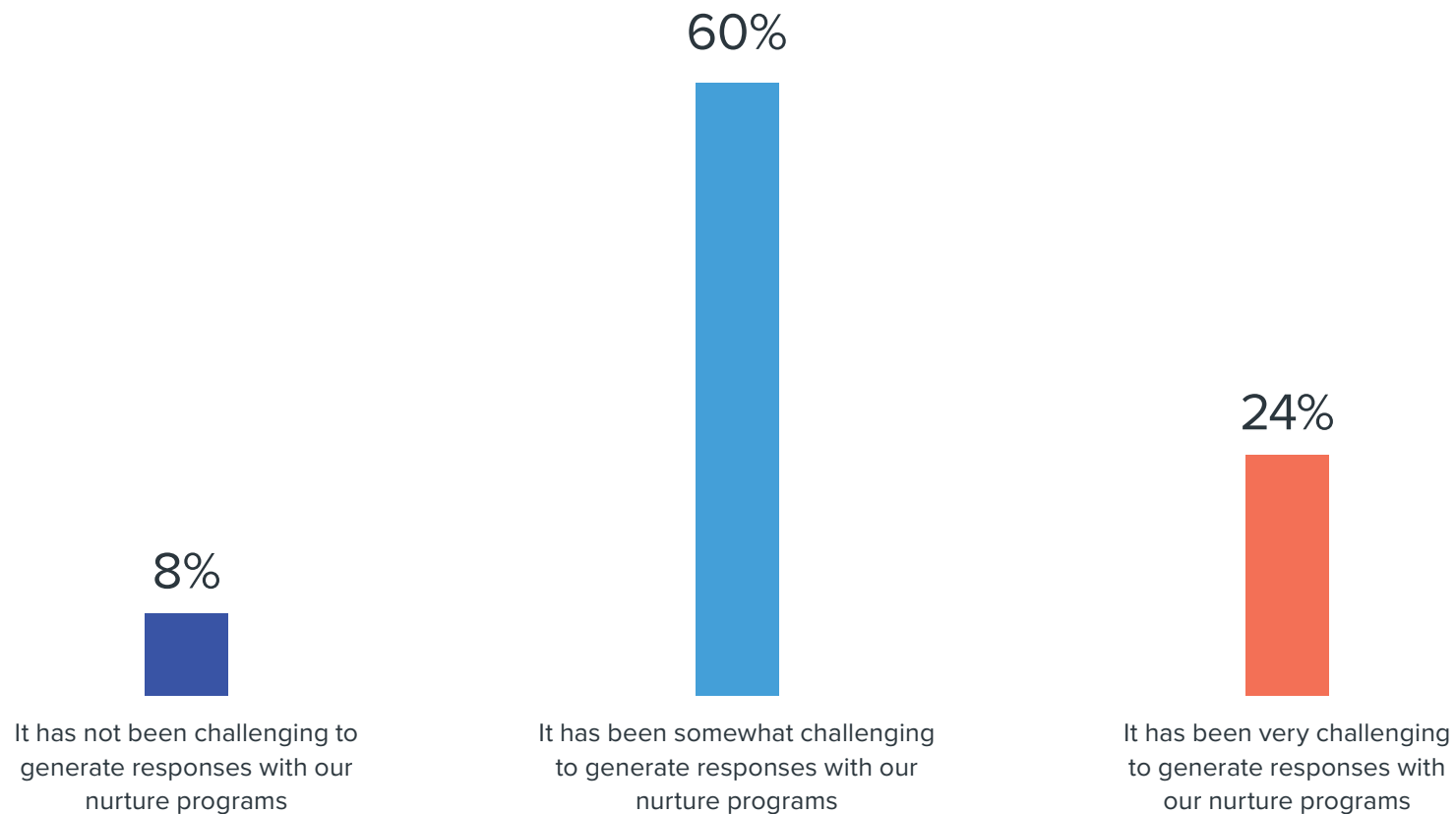
This new era of lead nurturing includes more advanced approaches that eliminate the lengthy drip campaigns of years past. The new tactics and approaches respondents are implementing with their nurture programs include:

- Social media (50%);
- Content engagement data (49%);
- Virtual, in-person and hybrid event marketing (48%);
- Account-based nurtures (44%);
- Re-targeting (40%);
- Un-gated content (39%); and
- Analyzing intent data (37%).

How would you rate your current lead nurturing initiatives?



Have you found lead nurturing programs to be more challenging over the past 12-18 months, in terms of generating responses?



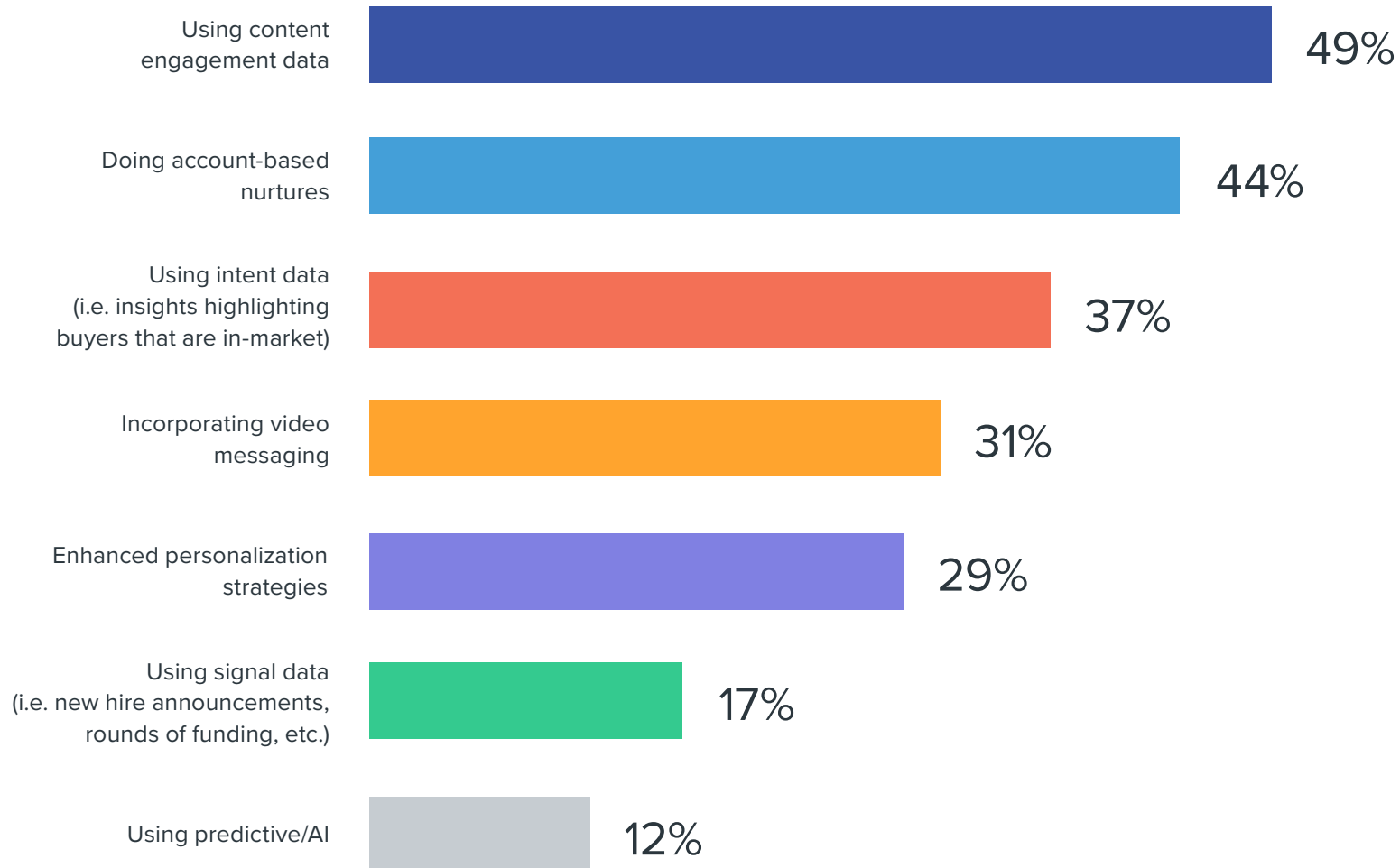


44% of respondents indicated that their current lead nurturing initiatives need improvement.

The more interesting approaches in the above list include social media, account-based nurtures and re-targeting, which demonstrates a notable shift away from traditional methods. Throughout this report, we'll dive deeper into the new world of lead nurturing, specifically focusing on:

- How to combat the challenges that emerge with a modernized sales cycle;
- The need to accurately target and engage clients at the right time;
- The shift to nurturing warmer, sales-ready leads;
- The importance of exclusive and highly relevant content to nurture campaigns; and
- The lengthening of sales cycles and increased number of touchpoints.

What new approaches/tactics have you taken with your nurture program?



The Continued Success Of Nurture Campaigns

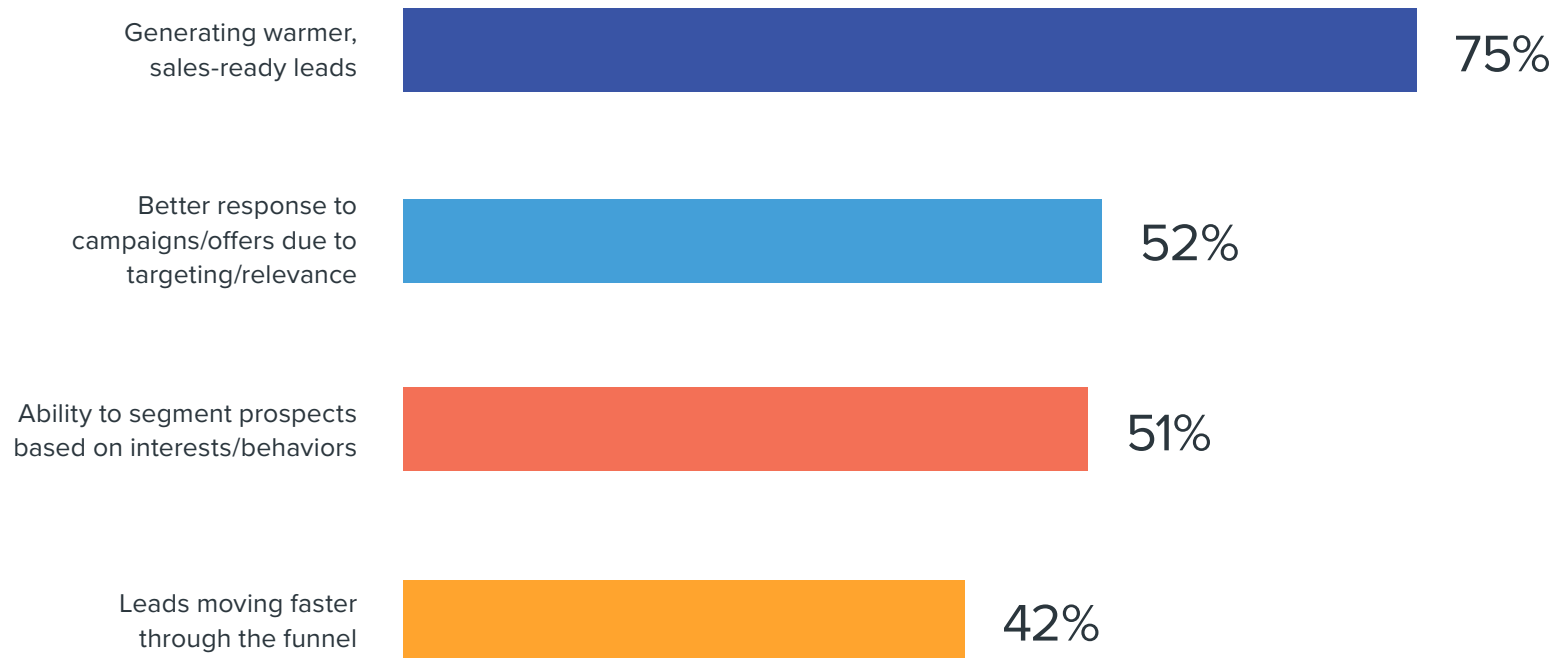
Lead nurturing is a core need of any demand generation program, and the survey reinforced the idea that people are still seeing value and return on investment (ROI) coming out of the nurture campaigns. For example, the top benefits respondents indicated include:

- Generating warmer, sales-ready leads (75%);
- Better response to campaigns/offers due to targeting/relevance (52%);
- Ability to segment prospects based on interests/behaviors (51%);
- Leads moving faster through the funnel (42%); and
- Higher acceptance of leads from sales (40%).

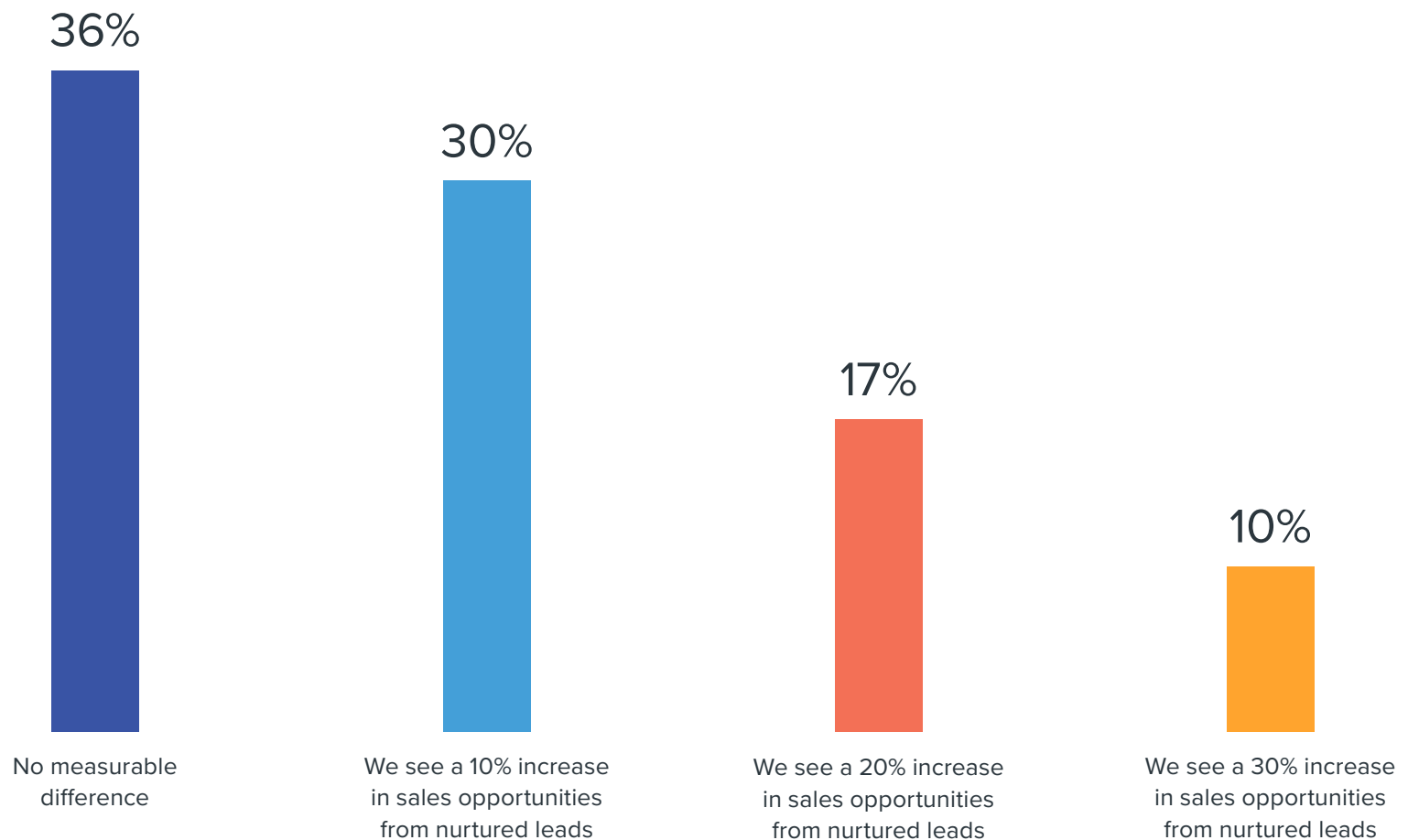
The benefits of warmer, more sales ready leads further indicate why lead nurturing is an essential part of the buyer's journey. Simply contrast it with the "old-fashioned" way, so to speak: If an organization sends a lead a white paper, whether they're in market or not, chances are the prospect won't respond or be receptive to further outreach.

Speaking to the success of these campaigns, 60% of respondents indicated that they are seeing a 10% increase or greater in sales opportunities. This shows that lead nurturing works, and it's a critical component of any B2B arsenal.

What have you seen as the biggest benefits of lead nurture programs?



How have nurtured leads performed within your funnel versus non-nurtured leads?



How Practitioners Are Targeting, Segmenting & Timing

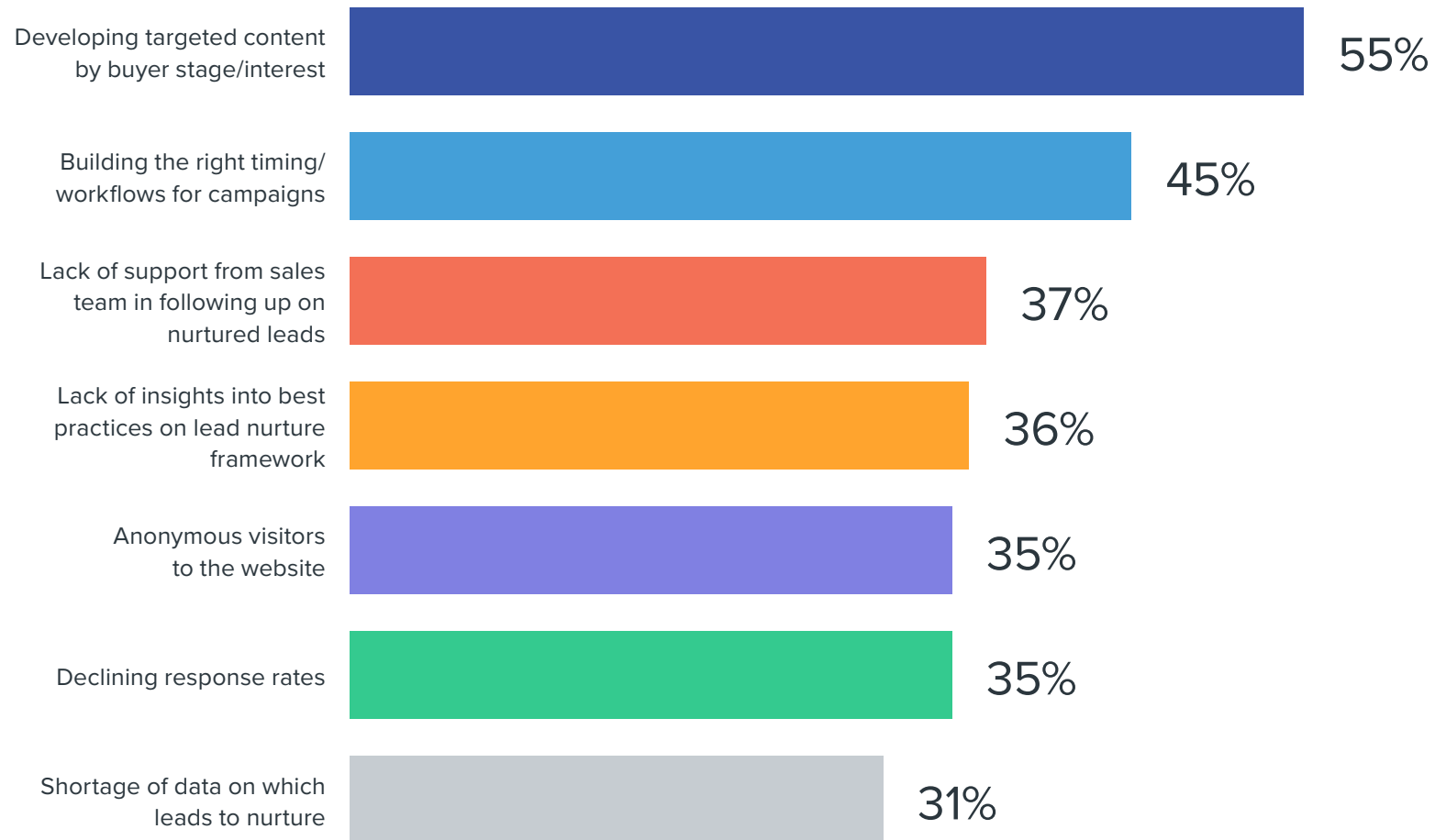
Despite the demonstrated potential for success with lead nurturing, it's not without its challenges. For example, the top difficulties respondents indicated include:

- Developing targeted content by buyer stage/interest (55%);
- Building the right timing/workflows for campaigns (45%);
- Lack of support from sales teams in following up on nurtured leads (37%); and
- Lack of insights into best practices on lead nurture frameworks (36%).

Accurately timing and targeting leads is key here, as the top two responses indicate organizations are still struggling in those areas. This emphasizes the need for marketers to focus on building these skill sets, which helps to identify the specifics of what content to send, how often to send it and on which channels.

When it comes to measurement metrics, there was a shift away from assessing response or click-through rates, as the highest percentage of respondents indicated they're now basing measurement on conversion rates (56%) to determine how leads are progressing. Additionally, a large percentage said they're looking at lead volume in sales pipeline (39%), which indicates an interest in measuring direct revenue impact.

What are your biggest challenges when it comes to lead nurture programs?





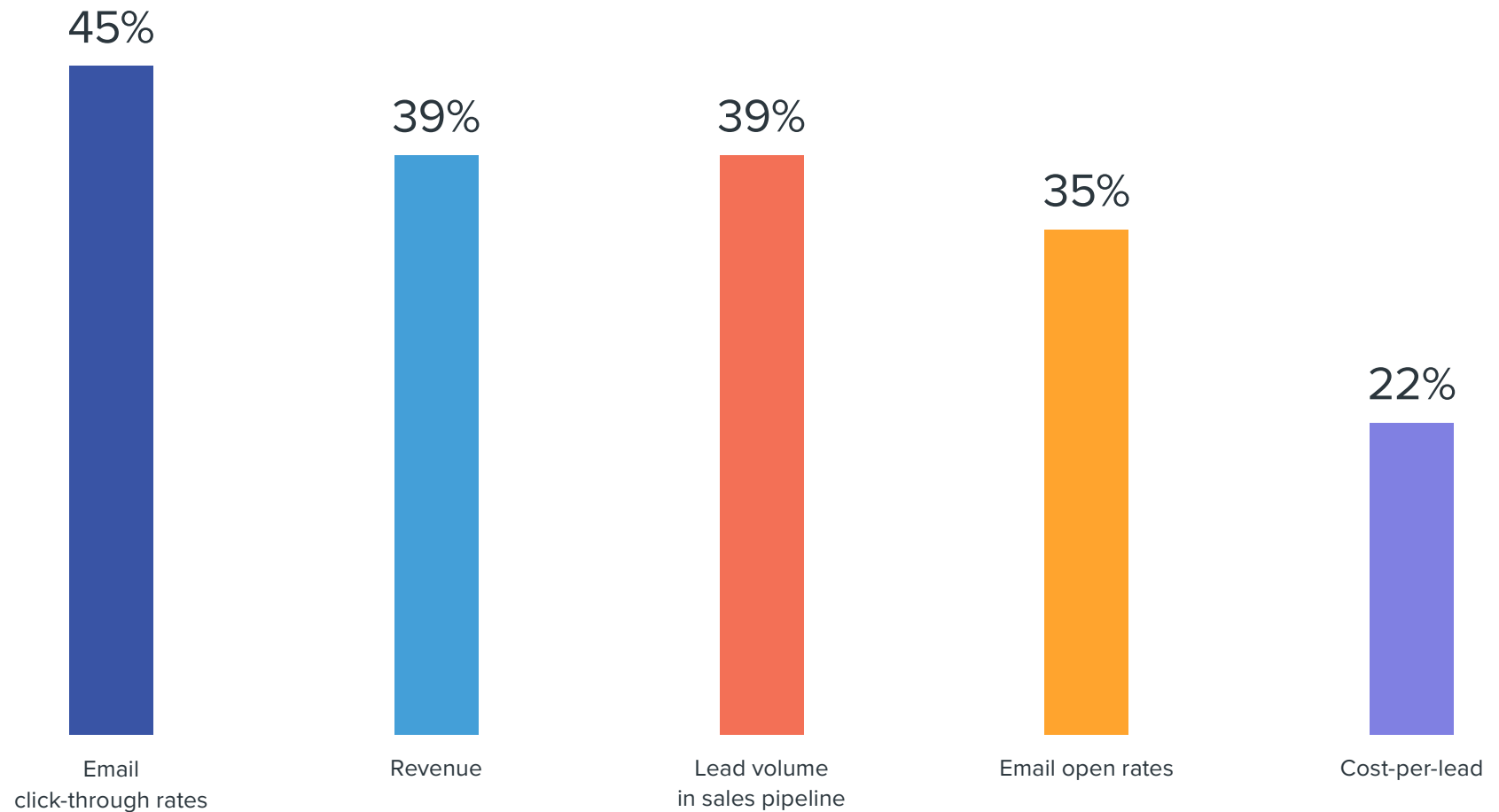
The highest percentage of respondents indicated they're now basing measurement on conversion rates (56%) to determine how leads are progressing.

Perhaps one of the biggest indicators of nurture campaign modernization was how organizations are segmenting nurture campaigns by:

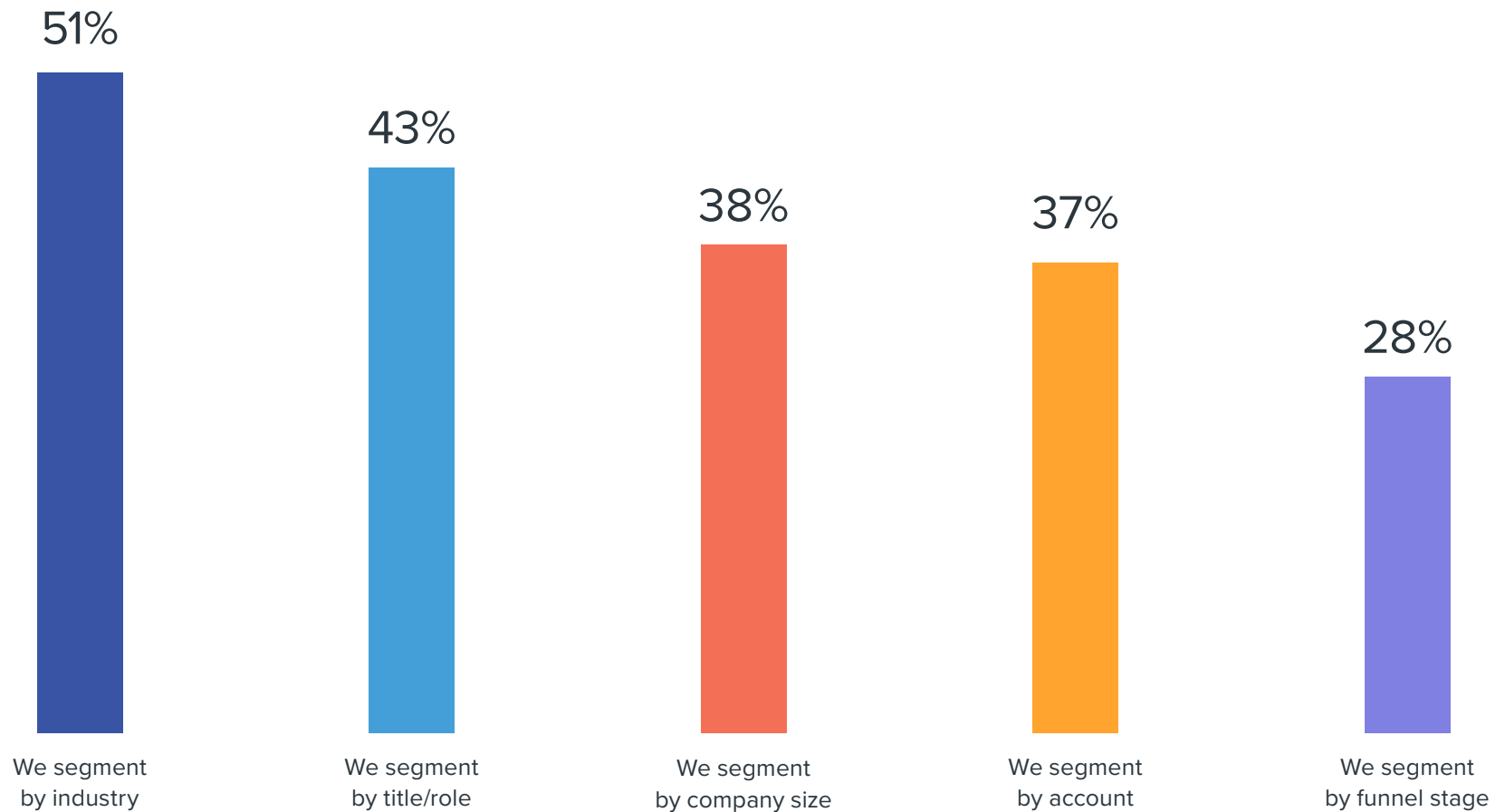
- Industry (51%);
- Title/role (43%);
- Personas (43%);
- Company size (38%); and
- Account (37%).

Industry segmentation was the most popular method, which makes sense as it provides more relevance than segmenting by title, role or company size. This shows that today's lead nurturing campaigns are designed to be much more targeted and relevant, which is strengthened by personas tie for second.

What metrics do you use to measure lead nurturing success?



How do you segment your database for lead nurture programs?



Content's Role In Engaging Leads

Shifting over to content, organizations must provide highly targeted and relevant assets to their leads. Although 63% of respondents admitted they don't have nurture-specific content, the more telling percentage is the amount that do. With more than 25% indicating they have exclusive content for nurtures, backed by the 12% that indicated they want to add exclusive content within the year, it's clear the category is slowly but surely moving into modernization.

Webinars remained the top content format, coming in at 48% — a 15-point increase from last year. Webinars are relatively easy to customize to meet prospects in the buyer's journey, which is a key component of nurture campaigns, making them a valuable asset. While webinars continued their No. 1 reign, other high-ranking items include:

- Thought leadership articles (41%);
- Email newsletters (40%);
- Sales emails (40%); and
- Sales calls (38%).

Do you have content offers that are used exclusively for nurture programs, or are they multipurpose assets?

No, we only have multipurpose content



63%

Yes, we have exclusive content for lead nurturing



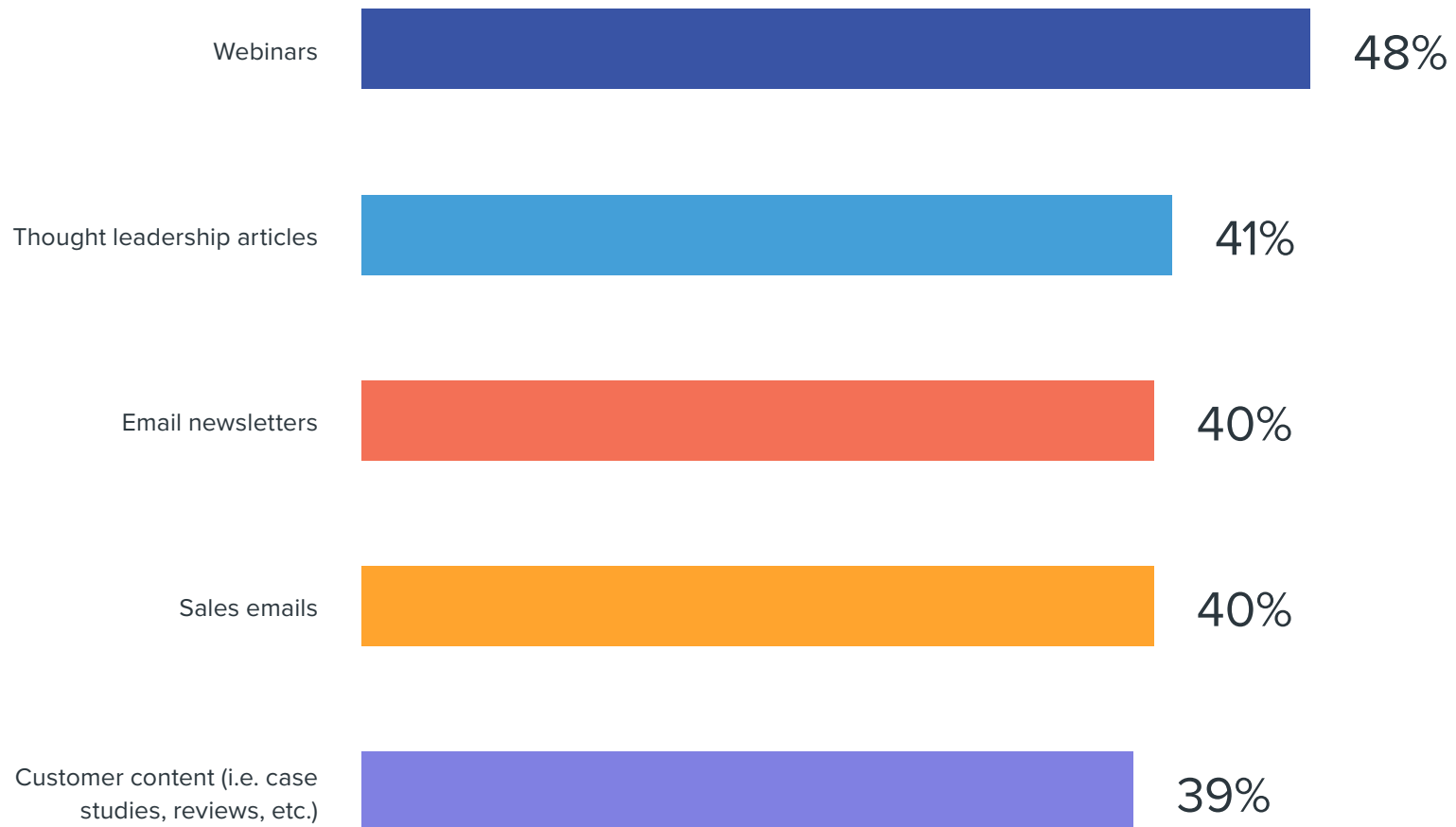
25%

No, but we plan to create exclusive nurture content within the next 12 months



12%

Which tactics have worked best within your nurture initiatives?



Percentage Of Return For Nurture

With re-targeting campaigns rounding out the top five approaches for nurture campaigns, it comes as no surprise that 69% of respondents indicated that at least 10% of their leads are returned for additional nurturing. This directly corroborates the trend of targeting warmer, more sales-ready leads, as 42% of organizations indicated that they rely on warm-up campaigns.

What percentage of your leads are returned for additional nurturing?

10%-25%



25%-50%



More than 50%



Analyzing Campaign Types To Demonstrate Most Success

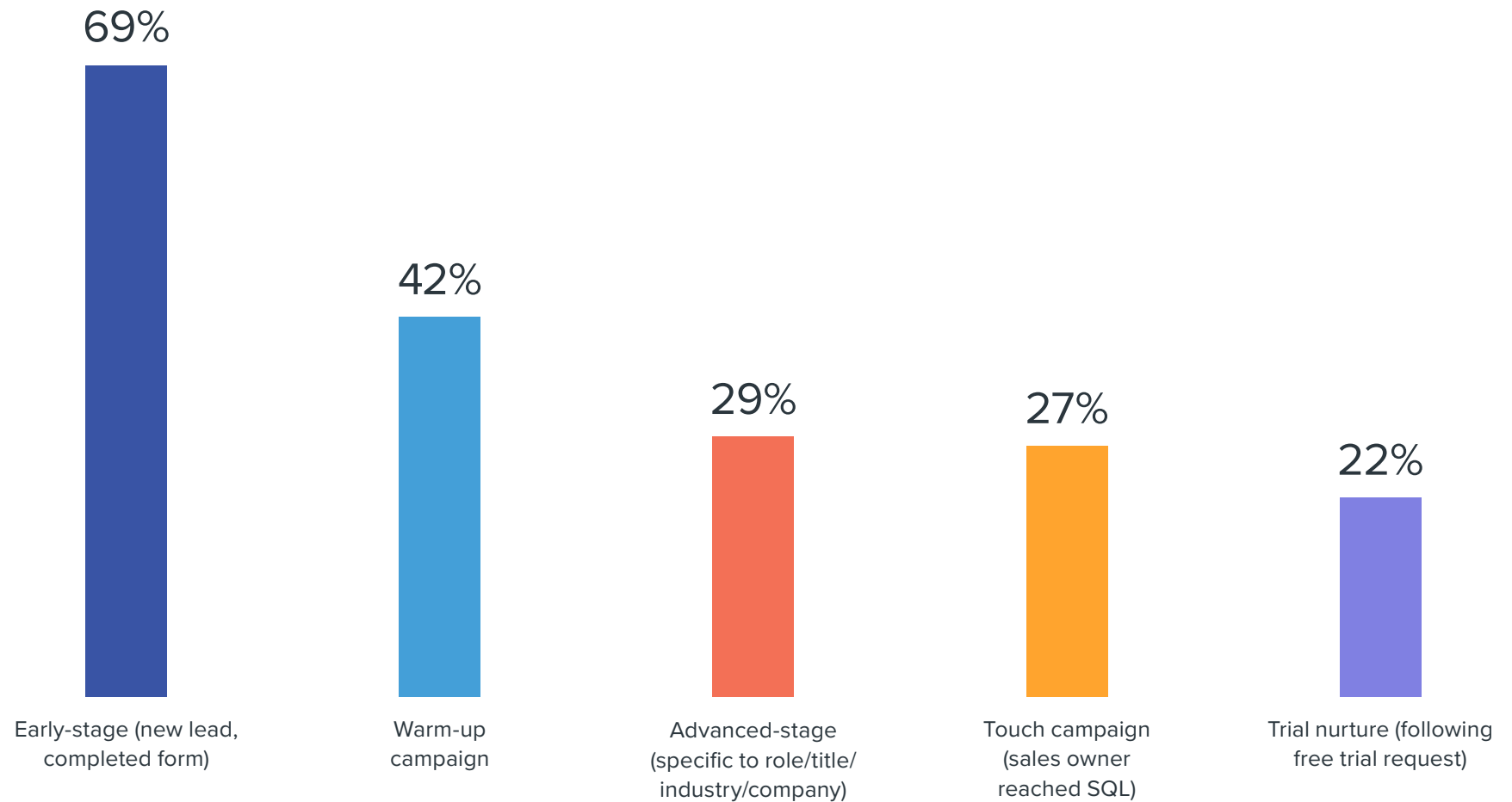
Instead of focusing on one tried-and-true method, it appears that organizations are relying on a mixed bag of nurture campaigns. Specifically:

- Early-stage (new lead, completed form) (69%);
- Current client (upsell and cross-sell) (49%);
- Warm-up campaigns (42%); and
- Touch campaigns (sales owner reached SQL) (27%).

It's interesting that more than 1/3 of respondents are actually nurturing existing clients, especially by tying cross-sell and upsell opportunities into nurture campaigns. It indicates an advanced step forward and opens the door for ABM components.

Additionally, the survey indicated that more than 1/3 of respondents are running 11-20 different types of programs and including more touches within them. This makes it easier for buyers to self-navigate their journeys, supplies them with a variety of different resources and accelerates the nurture cycle.

Which types of lead nurturing campaigns do you currently have?





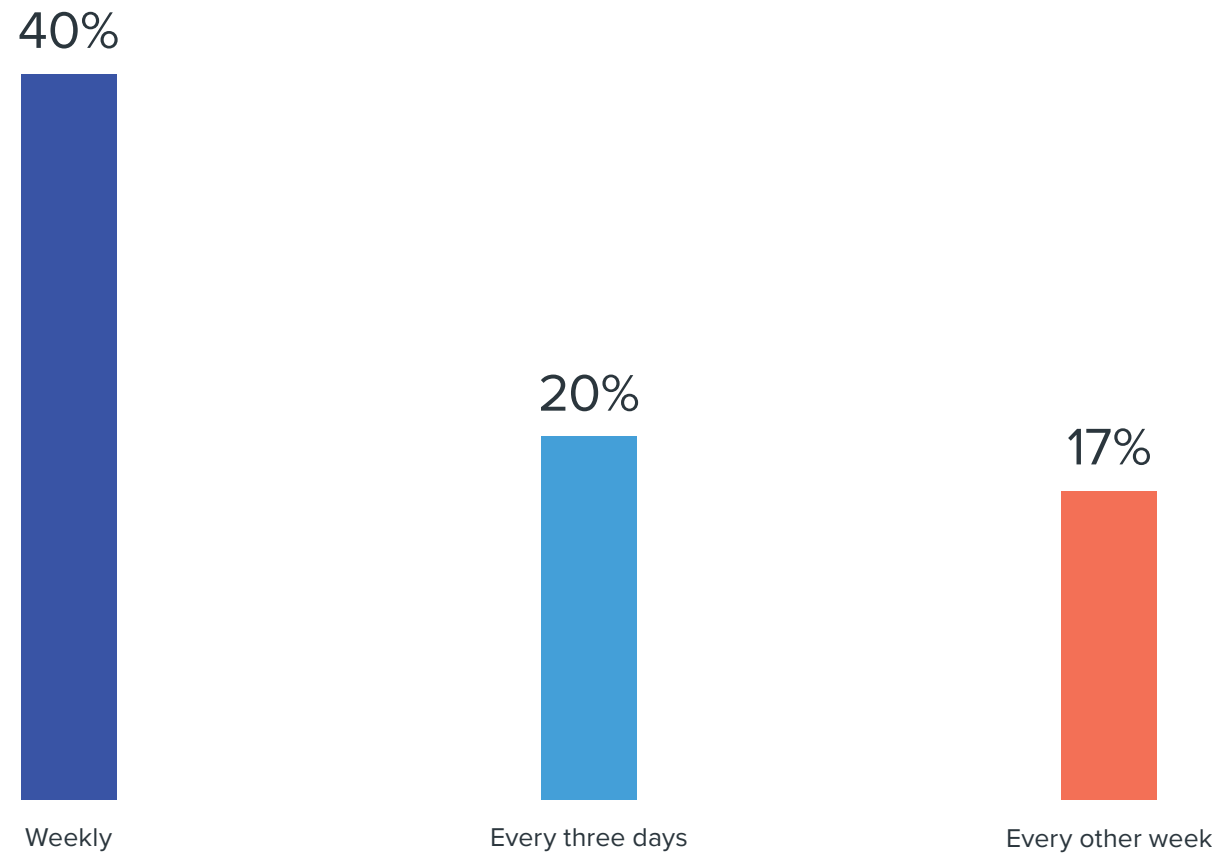
25% of respondents are including between six and 10 touches, while almost 1/3 are including four to five.

Specifically, 25% of respondents are including between six and 10 touches, while almost 1/3 are including four to five, indicating the practitioners' realization that leads require a breadth of resources.

Additionally, modern nurture campaigns don't just rely on monthly or quarterly reach-outs; instead, they're quickly becoming more frequent, timely and relevant. Most respondents indicated they operate with weekly cadences (40%), followed by every three days (19%).

When examined through the lens of the lengthening sales cycle (29% of respondents indicated six to nine months, compared to last year's 18%), it's more important than ever that leads remain engaged with multiple touchpoints and cadences to keep the opportunity at their top of their minds.

What is the typical cadence of your nurture campaigns?





Conclusion:

The Vision Of Modern Nurture Programs

Looking into the future, the results indicate that lead nurture campaigns will become more ABM-centric — as indicated through the increase priority given to warm leads — as well as more sculpted around data. With an eye on modernization, let's examine the future goals and priorities respondents indicated for their nurture programs.

Increasing conversion rates led the charge, as 70% of respondents indicated it as a priority. Given that the premise of lead nurture campaigns revolves around guiding leads through the sales cycle in the hopes they'll become customers, this is the logical No. 1 answer.

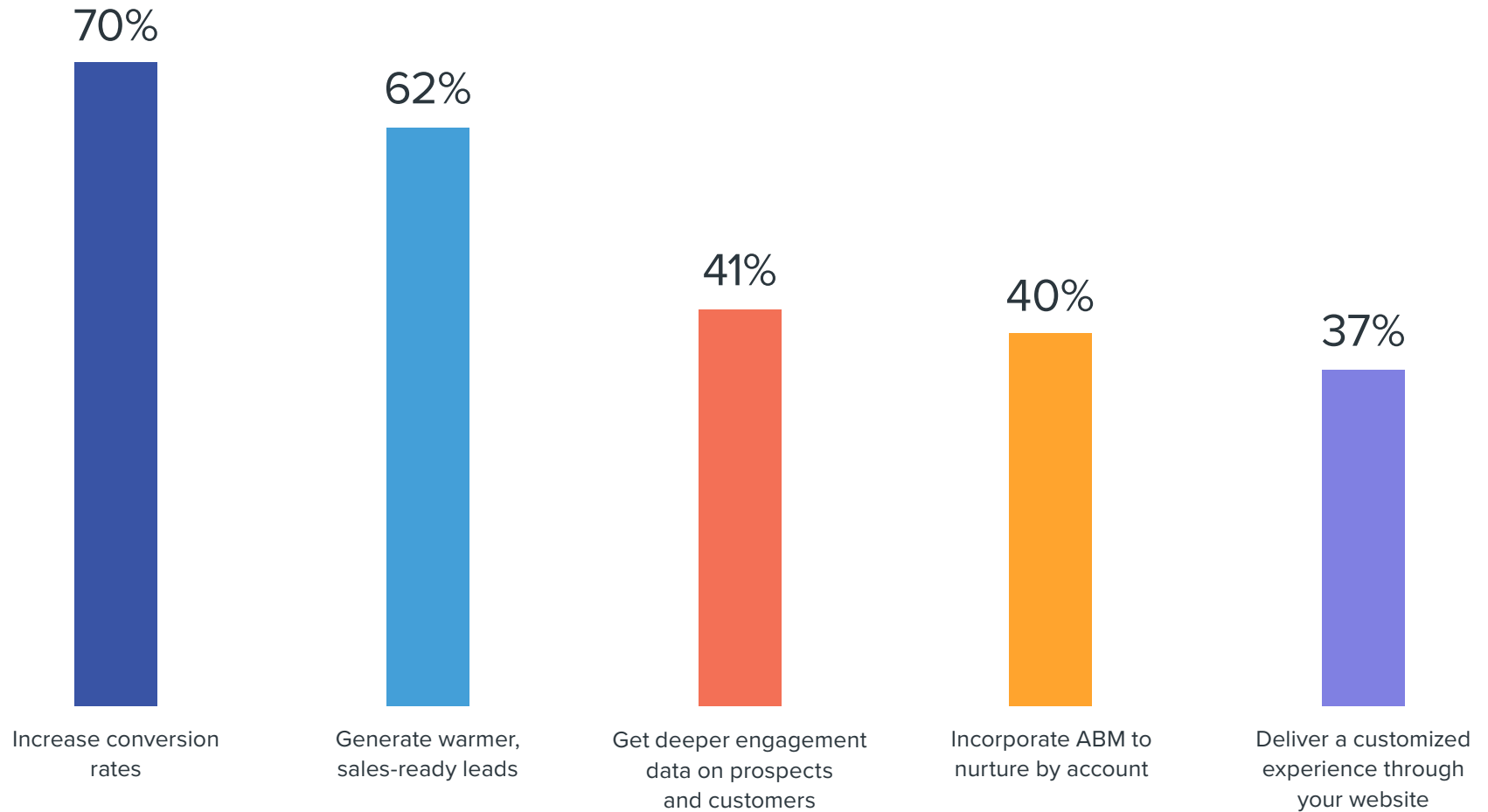
Closely following increased conversion rates was the desire to generate warmer, sales-ready leads (62%). Rather than searching for new leads and hoping they're impressed with the content they receive, it's often more beneficial for organizations to target leads that either went silent at some point during the sales cycle or focus on engaging existing clients with cross-sell and upsell opportunities.

Complementing the anticipated move toward lead nurture-exclusive content is the finding that 41% of respondents indicated they want to get deeper engagement data on prospects and customers. If organizations can create a larger data pool to draw insights from, it will enable them to create more targeted, customized content that's more relevant to leads.

It also appears that ABM is continuing to strengthen its grip on the B2B industry, as 40% of respondents indicated the desire to incorporate ABM strategies. This couples nicely with the desires for more data and targeting warm leads or current clients.

To wrap up on a customization note, 37% of marketers want to deliver a more customized experience through their website in the coming months and years. As websites house primarily all the information and assets leads are looking for, it's more important than ever that organizations' webpages are ready for the challenge.

What are some of your future goals/priorities for your lead nurturing programs?



About The Survey

The *2021 Lead Nurturing & Acceleration Benchmark Survey* includes responses from 161 B2B marketing, sales and IT executives from July through to mid-August of 2021.



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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