

# CONTENT PREFERENCES SURVEY

2023

Personalized, Data-Backed Content Enables B2B Teams To Fast Track Buyer Enablement, Speed Up Path To Purchase



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An adept content marketing strategy is one that is treated as a living document – it must be continuously re-evaluated and enhanced to meet the ever-changing needs of B2B buyers. Yet, new research from *Demand Gen Report* reveals a sizable gap between the content today's buyers crave and what marketing teams are currently churning out.

A majority of respondents (54%) said they are overwhelmed by the amount of content available, but the findings show that quality is far too often lacking. The "2023 Content Preferences Survey Report" delves into the types of content buyers find most appealing and what factors drive them to share content with the rest of their buying team or – better yet – engage with a sales representative.

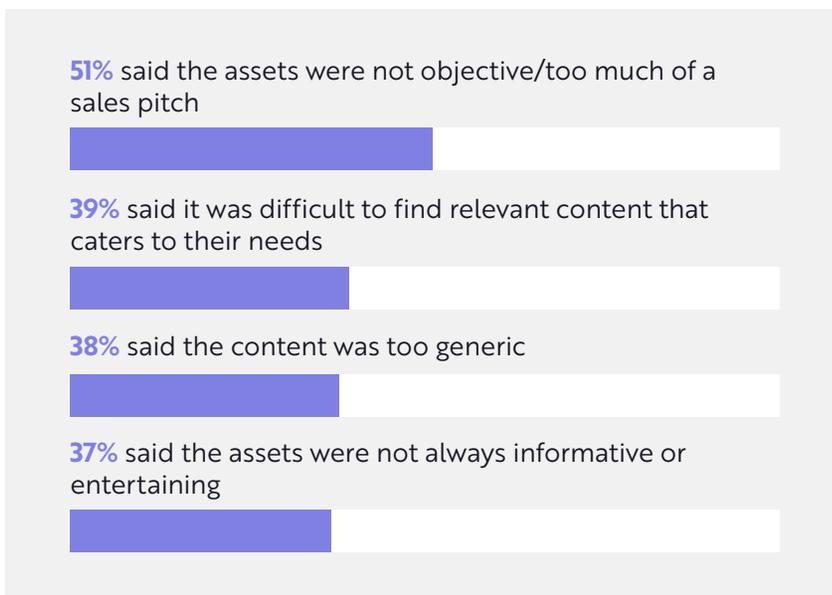
Other topics covered include:

- The role that various content formats play at the early-, mid- and late-stages of the purchasing process;
- How gated versus non-gated content impacts engagement and what types of gated content buyers are most willing to register for;
- Common issues that negatively impact the buyer's content experience; and
- Recommendations for how vendors can improve the quality of their assets and better organize content on their websites.

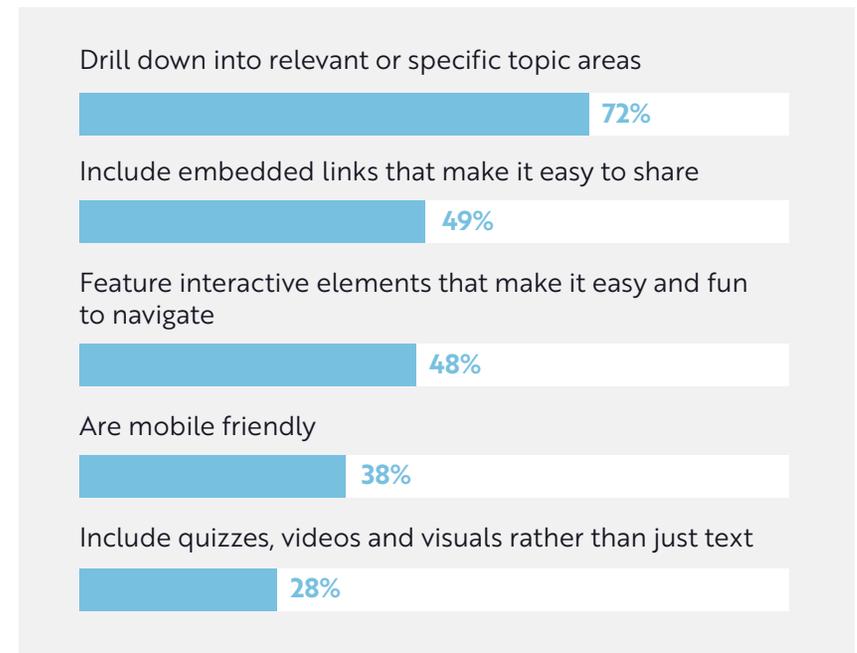
# TARGETED, HUMAN-CENTERED CONTENT KEY TO CONVERSION

The survey findings show that B2B buyers are heavily reliant on content when researching and evaluating potential business solutions. When asked about their habits over the past 12 months, 71% of participants said they downloaded and consumed multiple assets to help with the decision-making process and an equal number said they shared such content with their team members. Better yet, 46% said they increased the amount of content they consumed during this time.

Still, many reported shortfalls in their content experience. Specifically:



Per the findings, B2B buyers are most interested in content that is tailored to their needs, easy to consume and quick to share. When asked what types of content they're most likely to engage with, respondents pointed to assets that:



It's clear that generic, cookie-cutter content strategies will not resonate with today's buyers. In fact, one participant noted in a write-in response that they seek, "content that's made by humans, for humans, with emotions I can resonate with."

## BUYERS GRAVITATE TOWARD QUICK-HITTING, INTERACTIVE ASSETS

Digital channels are growing more crowded each year, forcing today's time-starved buyers to become more selective with the content they choose to engage with. Marketing teams that fail to tweak their content generation tactics accordingly – including everything from messaging to layout and length – will be left behind.

According to the survey results, the top content formats that B2B buyers find most appealing right now include:

Short-form content, such as infographics and blog posts

65%

Webinars and digital events

52%

Long-form/foundational content, such as white papers and E-books

50%

Interactive multimedia content

42%

Case studies/user-generated content/product reviews

42%

Audio and video content

40%

Third-party-validated resources, such as sponsored reports

33%

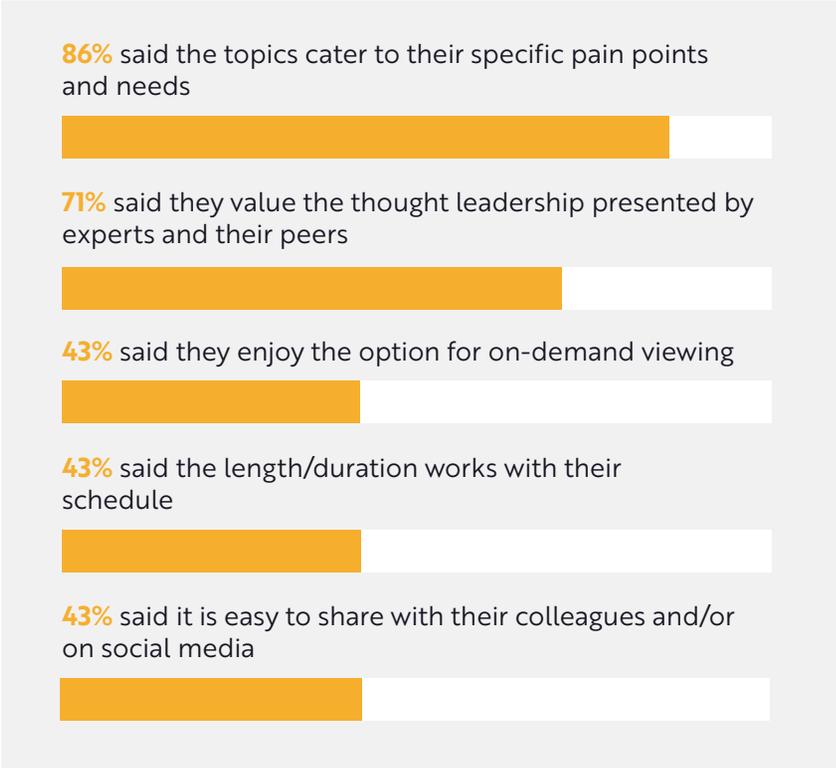
Serial content delivered on a cadence, such as podcasts and industry newsletters

29%

Thought leadership from in-person events

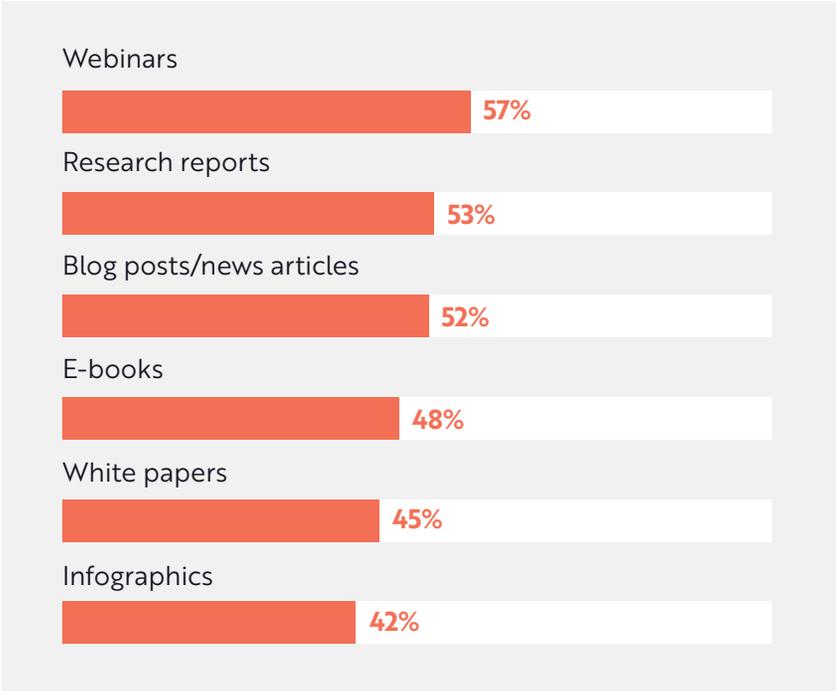
23%

It's especially interesting to see that demand for webinars and digital events remains so strong even as the pandemic wanes – so much so that it received more than double the amount of responses as in-person events. Participants attributed their continued interest in webinars and digital events to the freedom to pick and choose sessions that address their needs and fit with their schedule. Specifically:



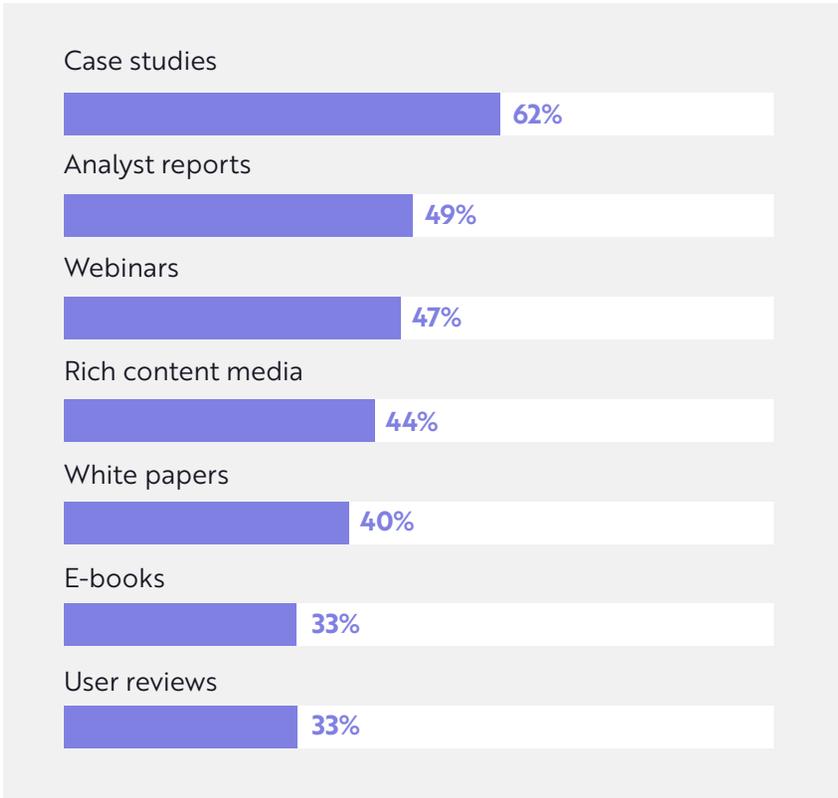
When asked about the content that is most valuable at each stage of the buyer's journey, webinars again emerged as a top format that prospects turn to throughout the process. Research, too, was named as a popular asset that prospective customers rely on particularly in the early- and mid-stages of their purchasing decisions.

According to the survey results, B2B buyers find the following content formats most valuable in the early stages of their journey, when they are focused on gathering a wide range of information:



Moving to the middle stage of the buyer’s journey, respondents cited a need for valid sources, such as case studies and analyst reports, that offer a third-party perspective on the products they are evaluating. Webinars and rich media content also ranked highly at this stage, demonstrating that buyers still desire video and immersive assets as they dive deeper into their search – despite these content formats typically being cast as top-of-funnel tactics.

Specifically, they pointed to:



In the final stages of evaluation, participants said they rely most on demos, user reviews, ROI calculators and case studies that provide insights into how the solution will work for their organization and their specific needs. Responses include:



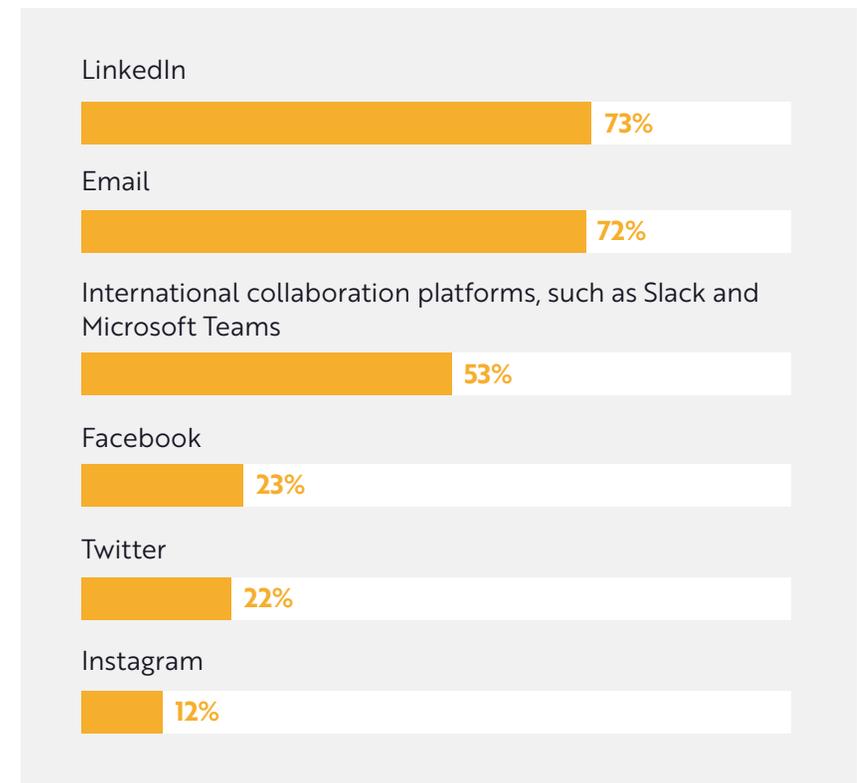
## RESEARCH-BACKED CONTENT DRIVES SHARES, SALES FOLLOW UP

A common theme throughout the results is the importance buyers place on assets that are packed with stats and data. In fact, this is a leading indicator of whether the content will be passed along to the rest of the buying committee and/or lead the prospective customer to contact sales.

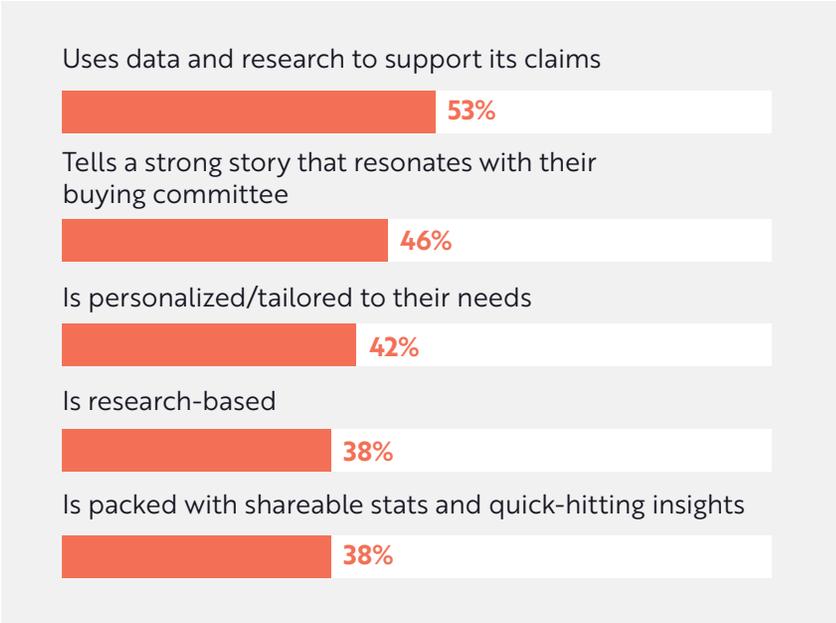
Per the survey results, the key drivers for sharing content are:



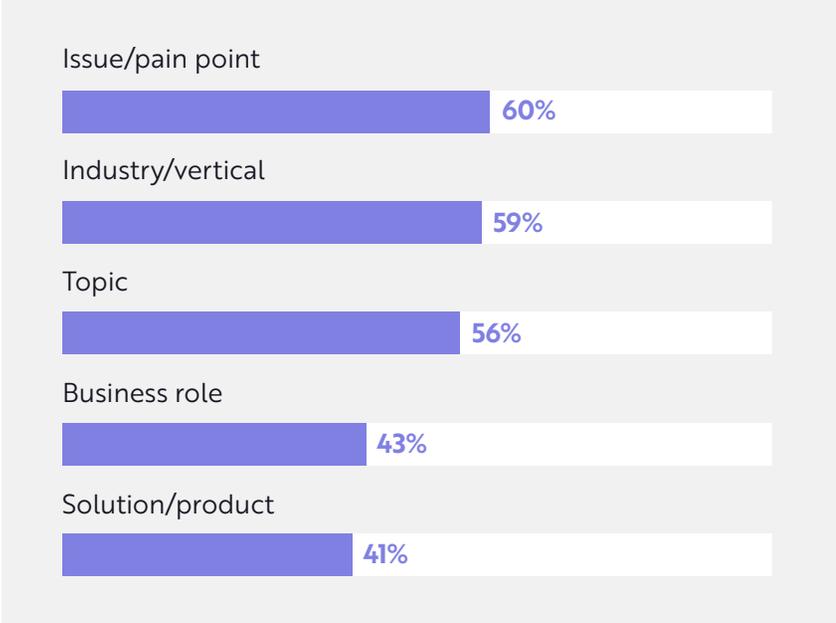
When asked which channels they use to share business-related content, participants pointed to:



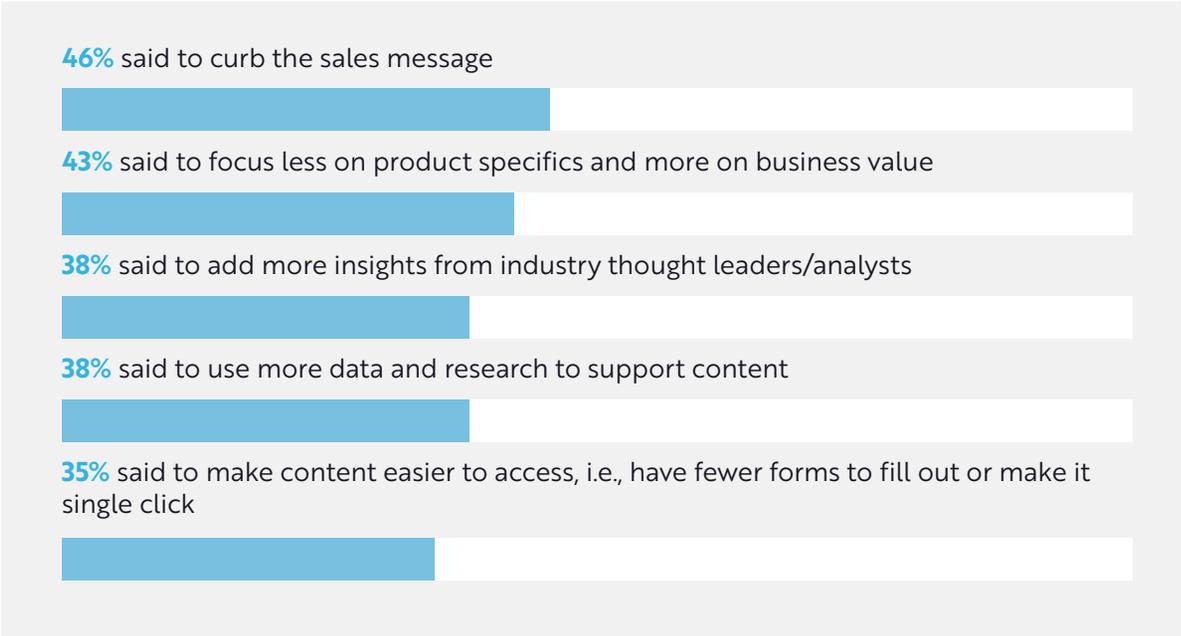
Coaxing prospective customers into raising their hands and connecting with sales is key to building a strong pipeline and minimizing missed opportunities. Here, too, data takes the lead for driving results. Per the survey, buyers are most likely to engage with a sales rep if the content:



To make content more discoverable, respondents urged B2B vendors to ditch the traditional style of organizing assets by content type, such as videos, reports, blogs, etc. Instead, they suggested taking a more advanced approach where content is sorted by:



Other recommendations for improving content strategies in 2023 and beyond include:



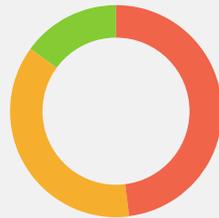
In the write-in section, one respondent again stressed the importance of quality over quantity by urging marketers to, “invest time in creating *unique* content I can’t find anywhere else.”

Today’s tech-savvy B2B buyers have high expectations of what the customer journey should be like. Serving them slapdash content that is regurgitated from other sources is sure to turn them off far before sales has a chance to reach out.

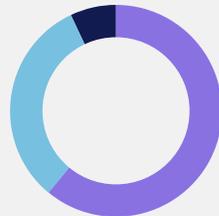
## SHOULD CONTENT BE GATED?

Marketers have long debated the value and risks of gating content. Supporters argue that it is a critical component of capturing and converting leads. Meanwhile, those in opposition believe locking content up behind lead gen forms can scare prospects away early and do more harm than good.

According to the survey results, nearly half of B2B buyers (**48%**) are somewhat willing to fill out a form if an asset is gated. An additional **37%** said they were very likely to complete the form for high-value content. Only **15%** said they were unlikely to do so.



The numbers are slightly higher for non-gated content, which **61%** of participants said they were very likely to click on and engage with. Meanwhile **33%** said they were somewhat likely to do so, and **7%** said it was not likely at all.



However, it's important to note that not all gated content is treated equally. When asked what types of assets they are most willing to register and share information for, respondents pointed to:

Webinars and digital events



Long form/foundational content



Short-form content



Serial content delivered on a cadence



Interactive and multimedia content



Third-party-validated resources



## CONCLUSION

The adage “content is king” only applies if the content in question is expertly tailored to current buyer preferences, speaks to specific pain points and is packaged in the right formats. Assets that fail to deliver on these fronts are sure to drive subpar results. Yet, findings from the “2023 Content Preferences Survey Report” reveal that many B2B buyers are frustrated by the high volume of poor-quality content that currently saturates the market.

Organizations looking to level up their content marketing strategies in the year ahead would be wise to lean into creating targeted, data-backed assets such as webinars and research reports that are in high demand today. Doing so will not only improve the overall content experience, but will help speed up the path to purchase by increasing the likelihood that prospective buyers share content with the rest of their buying team and sooner engage sales reps.

### About the Survey

The “2023 Content Preferences Survey Report” includes responses from 120 B2B marketing professionals representing a broad range of roles, industries and company sizes. Among the respondents, 32% are at the director level, 29% are managers, 20% sit in the C-suite and 8% are VPs. Their industry backgrounds are varied, including high tech (26%), professional services (20%), business services (12%), financial services (8%), media/entertainment (8%), healthcare (8%) and manufacturing (7%). In terms of annual revenue, 26% reported making less than \$25 million, 32% bring in between \$25-\$100 million, 18% make between \$100-500 million and 24% earn more than \$500 million.

# CONTENT<sup>4</sup> DEMAND

Content4Demand (C4D) is a business-to-business content strategy and content creation agency. Our team of content marketing experts specializes in two main areas: creating turnkey content to reach B2B buyers at all stages of the buyer's journey and developing foundational marketing strategies including persona creation, content messaging development and nurture campaign design. Our ultimate goal is to construct buyer-focused content and marketing strategies that drive leads and stimulate demand for your business. C4D works with B2B companies across a variety of industry verticals including: technology, financial, manufacturing, media, healthcare and more. For more information and content samples, visit [content4demand.com](http://content4demand.com).



*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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