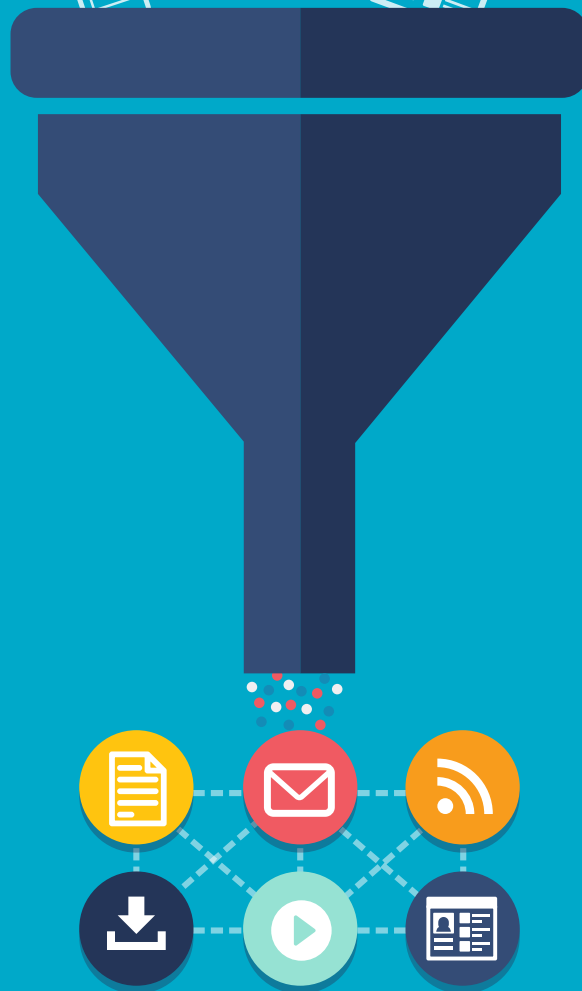


Why Your Website Fails Buyers



New Research Reveals **B2B Buyers Struggle**
to Find and **Engage** with Relevant Content
on the **Path to Purchase**

INTRODUCTION

Content is now clearly established as the fuel that drives engagement and brand preference in most B2B markets, with nine in 10 buyers saying the vendor they chose provided a better mix of content to help them through each stage of research and decision-making processes. However, while B2B brands are clearly investing in developing a broader range of content, there is a growing disconnect between buyers and brands around the delivery and accessibility of content.

Content Connection Points, an exclusive survey of 196 marketers conducted by Demand Gen Report in collaboration with LookBookHQ, found several gaps hampering marketers' ability to surface content at critical stages in the buyer journey. While the website is a central destination for content, companies' website goals and demand gen strategies are leagues apart. Sixty percent of marketers polled in the survey cited a lack of integration between the two. Instead of a cohesive approach, the result is a haphazard collection of content placed in several destinations that is difficult for buyers to navigate.

In addition, when they do find it, buyers want easy access to content, but marketers are struggling to make that experience seamless. For one thing, companies are not packaging content together in ways that make it easy for buyers to accelerate their education, despite the fact that research shows that is precisely what buyers want. An overwhelming 93% of respondents said they want marketers to package related content together, according to the Demand Gen Report (DGR) *2016 Content Preferences Survey Report*.

And while the new research revealed that B2B marketers have an understanding and a desire to gate less content, 60% indicated they are still guarding it behind registration walls. The findings also revealed marketers have no real solution for tracking buyers without gating: 32% of marketers said they have no conversion solution for ungated content. With much of B2B content hidden behind forms and difficult to locate, many marketers fall short of achieving the primary goal of educating and qualifying buyers at key stages of the buyer's journey.

This report will detail these disconnects and offer practical solutions to help marketers align content with buyer needs and preferences as it relates to content packaging and accessibility. It will cover:

- Challenges in relevant content delivery;
- Website goals vs. demand gen strategies;
- Content gating challenges and the quest to identify buyers; and
- Next-gen content approaches that close the gap.

Companies are not packaging content together in ways that make it easy for buyers to accelerate their education.

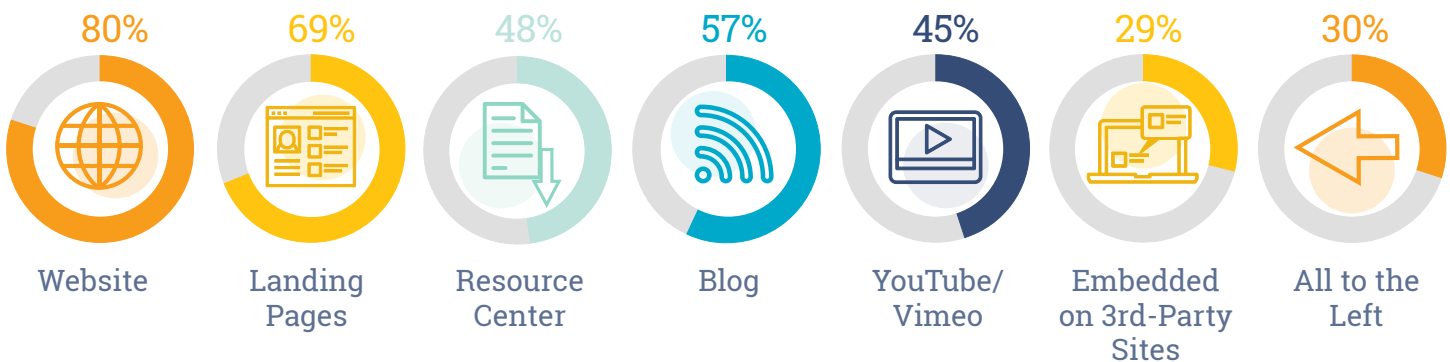
CONTENT DELIVERY IS A MAJOR CHALLENGE FOR MARKETERS

Delivery of relevant content is a significant issue for marketers. The survey showed marketers are still steering buyers toward an array of disparate locations to track down assets, and then are conversely struggling with the ability to accurately track and respond to buyer interest and needs.

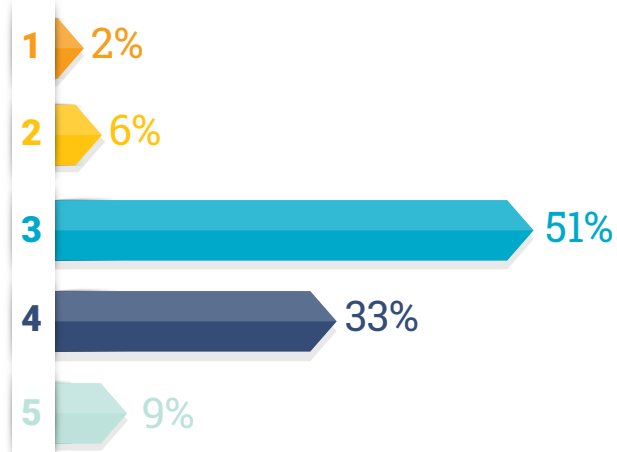
Marketers are providing content in a variety of destinations and through a mix of inbound lead gen and outbound strategies, but they're often doing so without a consistent or integrated approach.

Nearly one-third (30%) of marketers house content in several disparate places for buyers to discover within and beyond the website, including on the home page, landing pages, in blogs, on sites, such as YouTube and Vimeo, and embedded on third-party sites. In addition, less than half of marketers (48%) house content in a resource center on their websites to give buyers easier access to a menu of content in a central location.

Where Marketers Make Content Accessible



Once engaged, respondents admitted it is not easy for prospects to locate and access the next best or most relevant pieces of content they need to make a buying decision. When asked to rate accessibility of content on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "nearly impossible" and 5 being "extremely easy," close to 60% of survey respondents rated usability at 3 or below.



Ardath Albee, B2B marketing strategist and CEO of Marketing Interactions, said one of the problems is that content is often siloed.

"Websites don't make it easy to connect the dots," she said. "Content is siloed under traditional navigation, such as Solutions, Products, Case Studies, Resources. This arrangement puts the onus and the effort on our audience to traverse the website using a 'best guess'-type of approach to hunt down content that's relevant to the problem they're trying to solve."

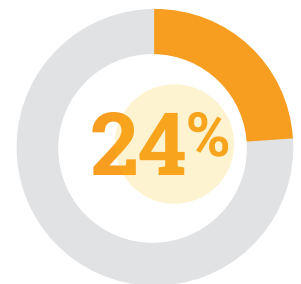
Once a buyer locates the content asset they need, marketers typically leave it up to them to figure out where to go next. This "choose your own adventure" approach to buyer education often leaves prospects struggling to find what they need

and brands falling short of doing all they can to educate and influence the buyer. Industry experts point out that connecting the dots — and the content — in ways that mirror the customer journey, is crucial.

"The solution is to create pathways, connections between content ... where accessing the 'story' from problem to solution is laid out like a buffet for easy access," Albee said. "It's also a more efficient way for demand gen teams to identify patterns of engagement, because the random clicking around has been limited."

Author and content marketing expert Rebecca Lieb agreed. "Content sequencing is an important part of content marketing," she said, adding that breaking down silos between the website constituents is critical.

Missed Opportunity



Marketers who said they package together relevant pieces of content and serve them to buyers based on specific areas of interest for first-touch content engagement

Packaging Content Assets For Buyer Consumption Not Widespread

Packaging content together gives self-directed buyers the opportunity to consume that content at their own pace and convenience, and in the order that makes sense for their particular needs. It also eliminates the need for a buyer to hunt around trying to locate the relevant information.

However, at the outset of the buyer journey, just under one-fourth (24%) of marketers said they package together relevant content based on buyers' interests.

That's an enormous disconnect between what buyers say they want and expect, and what marketers are actually doing.

According to DGR's *2016 B2B Buyer's Survey*, 88% of buyers said the winning vendor they chose provided a better mix of content to help them through each stage of research and decision-making processes.

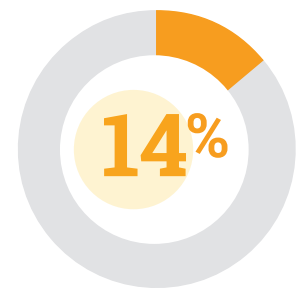
Buyers have different needs and questions, and they are looking for different kinds of information from

marketers depending on their place or stage in the buyer journey. That means that it's not only essential for marketers to provide a range of assets to buyers, but also to provide them in a way that helps the buyer progress through each stage of the journey. And that buyer can remain in the driver's seat, empowered to accelerate or slow down the pace as their needs dictate.

While mapping content to the buyer journey is the goal, marketers are falling short in their ability to do so. The good news is that a solid 40% have created multichannel lead nurturing programs to engage prospects on a continual basis, but a mere 14% said they are packaging together assets that have a logical progression of buyer requirements.

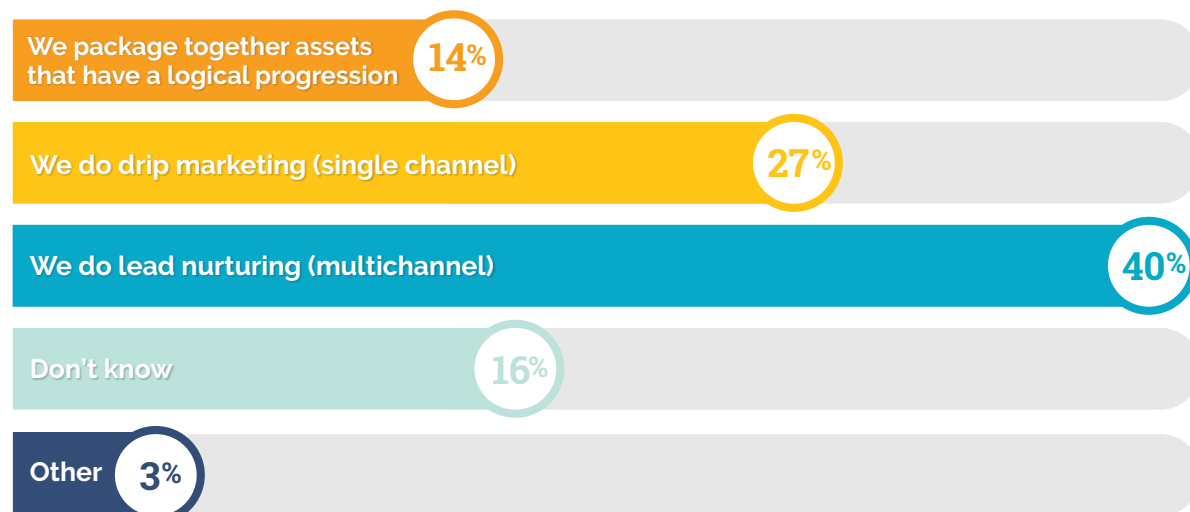
This represents a missed opportunity to more deeply engage prospects. Packaging assets into a logical progression based on the buyer's place in the journey, and creating multichannel lead nurturing pathways, will help marketers increase their effectiveness in lifecycle marketing.

While the survey revealed marketers are attempting to address the desire for multiple resources through lead nurturing, there are significant limitations to this strategy because the flow and cadence of content offers is still dictated by predetermined schedules controlled by the marketer. It also assumes the buyer will see or pay attention to the communication.



Marketers who said they package together assets that have a logical progression of buyer requirements to encourage buyers to progress through the journey

How Marketers Guide Prospects To Content As They Progress Through The Buyer Journey



The research also revealed that less than a third of marketers have developed a strategy around the need for relevant, interest-based content for buyers. The majority (70%) are missing the mark by not delivering content aligned to buyer interests. Meanwhile, only 31% of marketers drive buyers to landing pages or the website.

Because the first offer or call to action is often a key trigger to building a dialogue with buyers, industry experts suggest the limited ability to address distinct buyer stages and serve a progression of relevant offers is often a breakdown in the engagement.

Engaging buyers with relevant and compelling content requires a deep understanding of the customer journey. However, the survey pointed to a troubling 41% of marketers who said they don't know how often potential buyers were apt to return to the website during the time they are considering a purchase.

By not understanding those basic buyer activity metrics, many marketers are assuming too much about how buyers will locate and consume the content necessary to make a purchase decision. That gap likely contributes to poor conversion rates, sales and

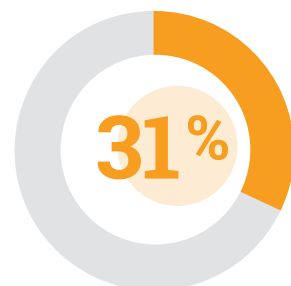
marketing alignment issues, and an overall lack of buyer readiness.

For content “bingers” — those buyers who may be in a mode to consume a lot of information in one session — many of the marketers polled said they do serve up additional content in the moment to buyers seeking more information in the same session.

However, close to one-third (31%) don't do so at all. And a surprisingly small minority (8%) of content marketers dynamically promote additional content to prospects in the same session using a content recommendation engine. By not harnessing the power of technology to serve these related content journeys, marketers are creating a lot of unnecessary and time-consuming work for themselves, and not driving the type of meaningful engagement that is possible.



Marketers who package together relevant pieces of content for first-touch engagement and serve them to buyers based on areas of interest

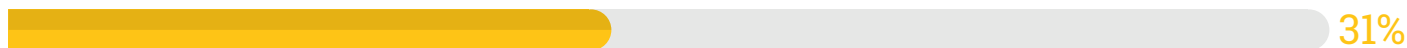


Marketers that drive buyers to specific landing pages or website



How Related Content Is Served To Buyers Seeking More Info In The Same Session

We don't.



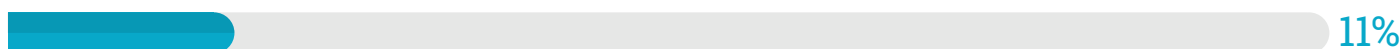
We hard-code "recommended" or "related" pieces of content on selected webpages.



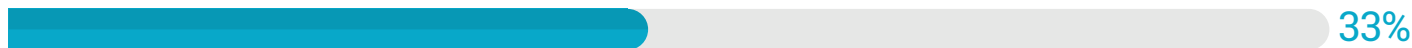
We promote "recommended" or "related" pieces of content on selected webpages based on what the original content is.



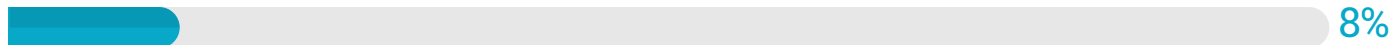
We promote "recommended" or "related" pieces of content on selected webpages based on who the visitor is.



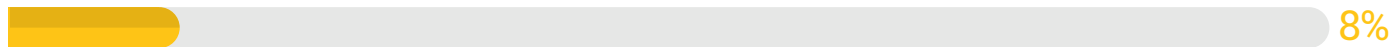
We email people that download a content asset with related content or promote related content on a "thank-you-for-downloading" page.



We design content experiences that include hard-coded, manually curated "recommended" or "related" content asset(s) accessible in the same session.



Our content experiences dynamically promote additional content to prospects in the same session across all of our content using a content recommendation engine.

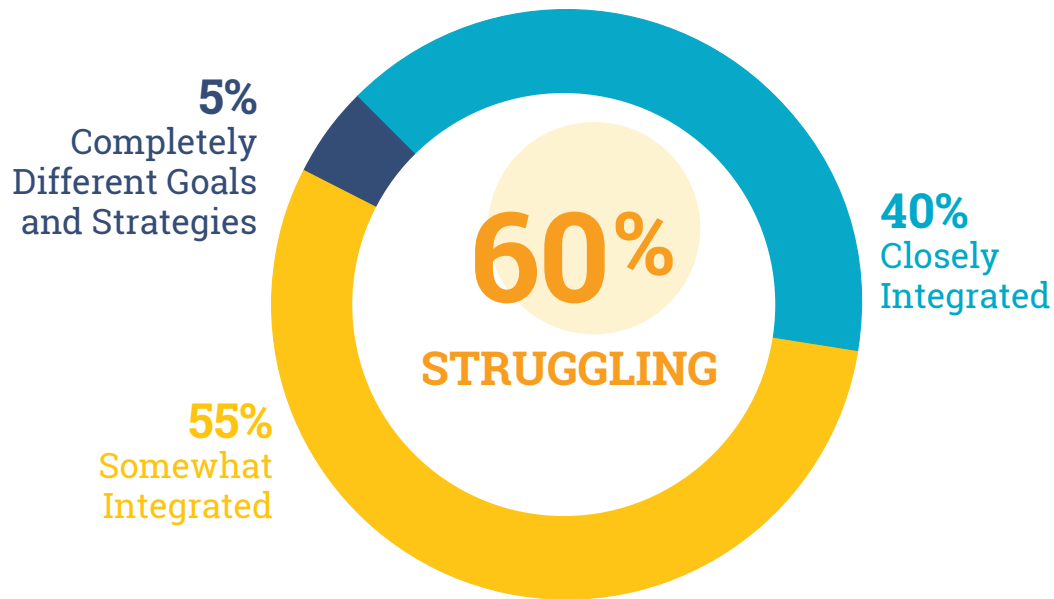


SURVEY SHOWS WEBSITES NOT ALIGNED WITH DEMAND GEN

The website is a critical destination for buyers, many of whom are directed to a marketer's website from search and targeted ads. All inbound traffic comes to the site as a first step. Despite that central role, there are disconnects in strategy and execution for many companies. B2B buyers aren't able to easily access and navigate through related relevant content.

While many marketers realize the need for improvement, the research revealed that website strategy is often not aligned with demand gen goals. A high percentage of companies indicated a lack of integration, which feeds the friction in the buying process.

How Related Content Is Served To Buyers Seeking More Info In The Same Session



"Many companies have a disconnect between their website and demand gen strategies, even though the website is a critical destination for content," Lieb said.

The danger in this scenario is a disjointed experience for potential buyers who come to the site for information or to re-engage with a brand.

"The biggest risk to demand gen goals — if the website is not aligned — is a fragmented, irrelevant experience for potential prospects," Albee said.

The lack of integration and disconnect can, in turn, impact the bottom line due to lost opportunities.

Forrester Research is in the process of reviewing B2B websites from the

perspective of how engaging they are, an audit it conducts yearly. For the yet-to-be published report, which includes 60 websites in 12 different industries, only six passed their review.

"That tells me they're focused on the 'what' rather than on the 'why' buyers should care," said Laura Ramos, VP-Principal Analyst at Forrester Research. The content is focused on what they do and not on helping customers to self-identify or solve problems. She said buyers are getting "buyer's sheets" rather than real information. "It's not surprising," she added. "A lot of B2B marketers are not using retargeting either. There's a lot of opportunity there to do so."

MARKETERS STRUGGLE WITH CONTENT-GATING STRATEGY

The traditional path many marketers have used to identify "hand raisers," or prospects interested in the challenges they can help solve, is by placing a "gated" form that requires a contact to provide at least a limited amount of information before they can access the content.

The survey revealed that many companies are still struggling with the basic ability to utilize their content as a value exchange by placing high value content behind forms.

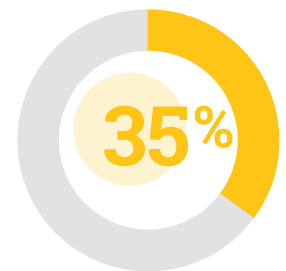
Another challenge for marketers is that in the world of social sharing, buyers are increasingly expecting content assets to be more immediately and easily accessible. So, while the core value exchange of a form-fill for a high-value content asset is foundational to most demand generation strategies, there is a growing need for marketers to be able to strategically mix in gated offers with immediately accessible links.

The survey showed marketers are gating less content today, with more than a third (35%) of marketers indicating they have reduced the amount of gated content as buyer behavior has evolved.

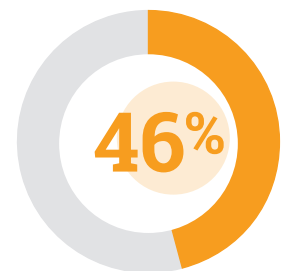
However, while they see a need to better manage the use of gated content, the survey revealed most companies are struggling to move in that direction because many feel they still need to show activity in traditional ways. According to the survey, close to one-third of marketers lack a gating strategy and say they have no solution to convert prospects to the next stage in the buyer's journey.

One marketer respondent wrote, "We gate some content, but [there is] not much logic to it." Another indicated, "We're working on gating mechanisms," while a third said, "We only gate some marketing content for lead gen."

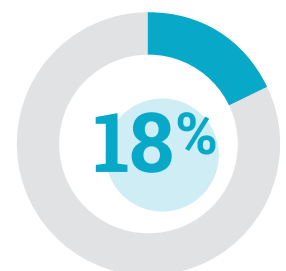
One-Third Of Marketers Gate Less Content Today



Reduced the amount of gated content as buyer behavior has evolved



Gating the same level of content as they have in the past



Not sure

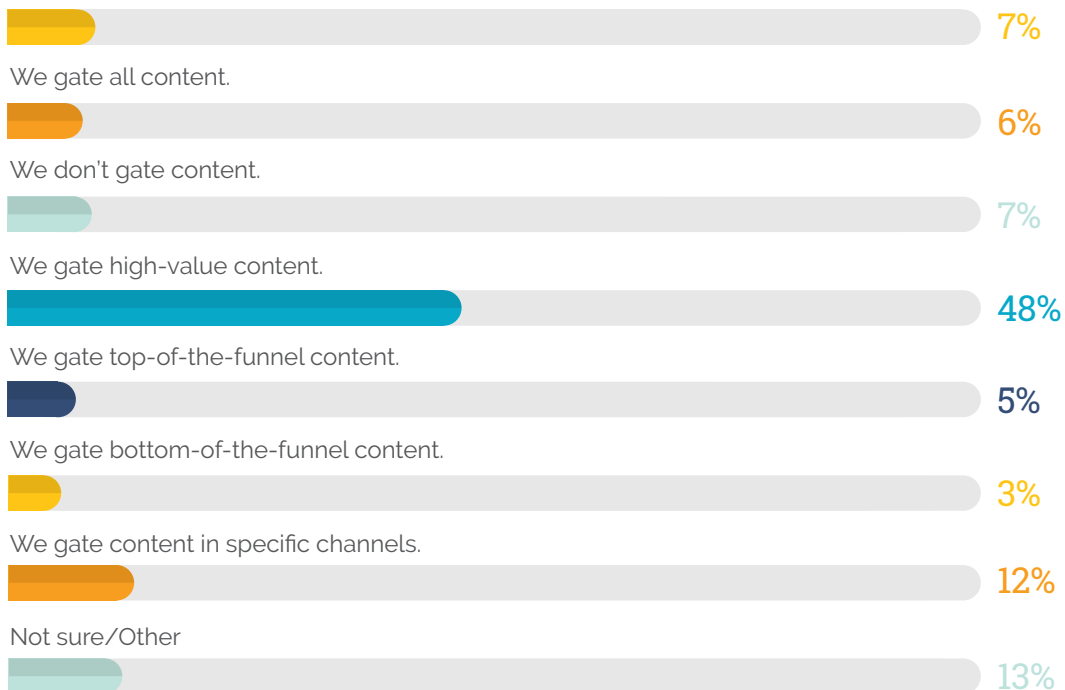


Another common pain point emerging in this area is companies building their strategies around gating “high-value content,” such as E-books or research reports. While this makes sense in terms of a value exchange, it often acts as a deterrent for the prospects that are trying to engage with these assets, because they are repeatedly being asked to fill out forms.

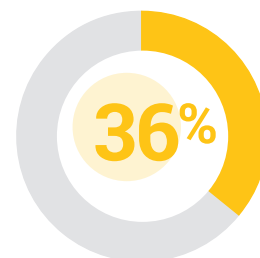
Rather than making decisions on whether or not to gate based on asset type or by the perceived value of content, industry experts suggest marketers should evolve their strategies and capabilities by thinking about where to gate content based on the sequence of offers provided.

Marketer Strategy For Gated Vs. Ungated Content

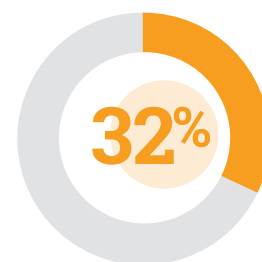
What strategy?



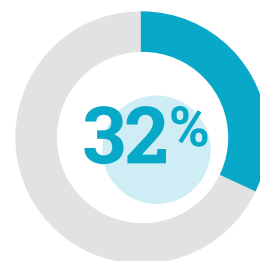
One-Third Of Marketers Have No Conversion Solution For Ungated Content



We send them follow-up emails with other content assets and assess engagement.



We prioritize them for sales based on scoring all relevant activity.



No current solution.

MINDING THE GAP: NEXT-GEN APPROACHES

Marketers have the opportunity to address the buyer's desire to self-navigate and consume content at their own pace, while still tracking activity and measuring impact.

In order to mind the gap and address the challenges uncovered by the study, industry experts suggest marketers focus on the following five core strategies:

1. Address disconnects between website content access and demand gen goals.

With only 40% of marketers indicating their website strategy is closely aligned with their demand generation strategy, there is still a significant gap for marketers to optimize what is often the first point of contact with a new prospect. Instead of having competing goals between website and demand gen teams, many modern marketers are focusing on serving up distinct paths and experiences for prospects that give them easy access to relevant content.

2. Make it easy for your prospects and customers to find and access content.

More than half of the survey respondents gave their companies a 3 out of 5 when asked to rate the accessibility of their content. That is essentially a C average and barely a passing grade. With most marketers saying their content is housed in a variety of places and platforms, they realize prospects often have to hunt around to find the relevant resources they need. This is obviously not ideal, so there is clear movement to simplify this process and present collections of content that are easy to access and can help accelerate prospects through the education process.

3. Align content to specific buyer needs and stages.

Just 14% of survey respondents indicated they are packaging together assets that have a logical progression of buyer requirements. Marketers attempting to address the need for multiple resources through lead nurturing are

limited as well, since content offers are confined to the cadence and schedules they've set without taking the buyer into account. However, marketers are beginning to realize that aligning the content in ways that mirror the buyer's journey is critical to maintaining engagement and adapting their strategy accordingly.

4. Create a gating strategy. One-third of marketers lack a gating strategy and have no solution to convert prospects, according to the survey. More than a third (35%) of marketers have reduced the amount of gated content on their sites as buyer behavior has evolved, but the research revealed they still struggle in terms of managing the amount and types of content to gate. Rather than focus on content types and their relative value, industry experts said marketers are starting to evolve their gating strategy by thinking about where to gate content based on the sequence of offers provided.

5. Cede control to buyers. For content bingers interested in consuming a lot of information in one session, many of the marketers polled said they do serve up additional content in the moment, but close to one-third (31%) don't do so at all. Just 8% of content marketers dynamically promote additional content to prospects in the same session using a content recommendation engine. Savvy marketers are now concentrating on harnessing technology to serve up related content journeys that can be controlled by buyers to drive greater engagement.

Want to learn more?



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