



B2B content consumption trends

Making sense of the data & defining what's next

Centerline Digital is a digital marketing & creative content agency with a passion for resolving complex business and marketing challenges.

Founded in 1996, Centerline Digital has proven its value in customer experience, storytelling and accountable creative solutions through partnering with Fortune500 enterprises and brands, including IBM, Lowes, GE, Spectrum and SAS.

Report purpose

Centerline Digital is on a mission to simplify digital marketing for B2B organizations.

We've analyzed the latest B2B content consumption trends and distilled those insights into key takeaways to help marketing leaders quickly adapt to the needs of today's customers.

Our focus on B2B

This report is designed for leaders in B2B marketing. We understand the importance of curating trends specifically for the B2B buying process, where there's longer, more complex sales cycles and a greater number of stakeholders involved in the decision making ecosystem.

B2B marketers are facing:

- An increasing amount of touchpoints to consider, compounded with new ways to measure and analyze those touchpoints
- Prospects who require, on average, **18 touches**¹ before becoming a consumer
- The widening “consumption gap” across audiences
- Increasing competition for credibility with an audience with deep product knowledge

What to expect

Our research is structured in response to four questions from B2B marketing leaders.

1

The Who

Who's consuming content in the B2B buying cycle?

2

The What

What kind of content are they consuming?

3

The How

How are they finding content?

4

The What Now

What does this all mean?

You'll learn

- The latest content consumption trends, curated for B2B marketers
- Myth-busting data about content consumption in the B2B space
- Key takeaways from these trends to start applying to your marketing strategy

1

The Who

Who's consuming content in the B2B buying cycle?

The Who

Who's consuming B2B content?

Understanding key audience behavior helps marketers determine the right content and targeting approach for each audience.

Many B2B marketers focus on the C-level in an attempt to fast-track their funnel. While this may seem logical at first blush, there's a better strategy.

Marketers should consider the cast of characters who directly impact *how quickly* the C-level makes decisions, and *with what data*. The manager level is not only highly influential, this group is most primed to consume *higher volumes* of content. Furthermore, individual contributors and those just below the C-level (VPs) are the *fastest to consume* content once downloaded.

Of course, the C-level still requires targeting, but, as with every audience, make it count. ***Quality over quantity.***

The Who

Data highlights

The data

C-level takes, on average, **21% longer** to read the content they've downloaded compared to managers.²

After managers, C-level is the next group most likely to request additional content—their consumption is on the rise at **11% over last year**.²

VPs and individual contributors are the fastest to consume content they requested, typically within **24 hours**.³

On average, **74% of prospects** downloading content have never downloaded content from your website before.⁴

Baby Boomers (50- to 65-year-olds) are one of the **fastest growing demographics** on YouTube.⁵

52% of B2B buyers prefer content optimized across mobile, desktop, and tablet.¹³

What this means

Assume that, on average, the higher the job title, the wider the content consumption gap.

C-level appetite for content is growing, but they have the **least** time and ability to focus. Target the supporting cast, where consumption time is fastest, to get the best bang for your buck.

Always assume you're making a first impression.

Let go of assumptions about generational preferences for channels or content.

Marketers are “always on,” so make sure your content meets them where they are, on any device.

2

The What

What kind of content are they consuming?

The What

What kind of content are they consuming?

Starting with business objectives and audience goals are well-understood first steps of any content marketing strategy. Where many, even seasoned B2B marketers feel they're "playing a guessing game" is around selecting the right content mix, matched with the right message.

Video, long-form blogs or white papers, branded content, third-party articles, infographics: there's a lot to consider for your content mix.

While the answer to these questions will vary, a snapshot of data related specifically to content preferences within B2B can get the ball rolling.

The What

Data highlights

The data

59% of senior executives **prefer to watch video** rather than reading text when both are presented on the same page.⁶

Companies that use video marketing **grow their revenue 49% faster** than those that don't.¹⁵

80% of users recall a video ad they viewed in the past 30 days.¹⁴

More than 35% of marketers use keyword analysis as their main source for generating content ideas.¹²

76% of B2B buyers listed **white papers and long-form content** as the material they'd most likely share with colleagues.¹³

The highest rated **early-funnel content** type by B2B marketers are infographics.⁷

What this means

Video and revenue generation are inextricably linked, making video crucial to your content mix.

Video content leaves a lasting impression, so make your messaging count.

Generate messaging ideas based on what your audience is already primed to consume.

Target your “supporting cast” with compelling long-form content that will be shared internally.

Since infographics are a powerful early-funnel content type, pull salient points from long-form content to create infographics.

3

The How

How are they finding content?

The How

How are they finding content?

B2B consumers are generally finding content in ways they have in years past—through email and search—coupled with continued growth on select social media platforms.

When it comes to search, an SEO strategy that includes long-tail keywords is proving to be an effective way to hook prospects who already have a self-identified need, and as a smart way to allocate marketing spend strategically.

We learned that white papers and longer-form content are often shared with colleagues via email, so it's no surprise that email remains a highly utilized channel in B2B, despite trends that point to decreasing usage in B2C.

The How

Data highlights

The data

According to one study of B2B marketers, **email is the top lead- and revenue-producing vehicle.**⁷

The **most valuable social media** platforms for businesses are Facebook (89%), LinkedIn (83%), YouTube (81%), and Twitter (80%).⁸

72% of B2B buyers turn to Google during the awareness stage.¹¹

82% of **influencers share info via email** when researching a purchasing decision.¹

eMarketer predicts **\$40B will be spent in 2019 on native advertising** alone in the US, with more companies adopting AI-driven targeting strategies.¹

What this means

Don't discount "old" channels.

Target the right message to the right platform, and use these channels to learn more about your buyers to generate content ideas.

Compete with the big players in your industry by focusing on long-tail SEO strategies.

Be sure to plan for a "share via email" option when creating content, especially long-form.

AI is allowing marketers to scale their native advertising programs like never before.

4

The What Now

What does this all mean?

What now?

Gartner reports that 77% of B2B buyers state that their latest purchase was very complex or difficult.¹⁰

B2B marketers have a unique opportunity to simplify the buying experience for an audience prone to “complexity overload,” but they have to start with their own marketing program.

Here are our final takeaways from the data to help you start simplifying your own marketing strategy.

A

Creating content alone is not enough. B2B marketers need a content mix. Then a strategy for how to target that mix.

B

Sharing a mix of content types—both original and curated—will position your brand as an authority in the industry.

C

Watch out for knee-jerk assumptions about who you’re targeting, why you’re targeting them and how they find content online.

Appendix

Sources

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