

# WHAT'S THE STORY?

THE TRUTH ABOUT CONTENT  
MARKETING IN IRELAND

256 media





***#LOVECONTENT***



# What's the story?

## The State of Content Marketing in Ireland

Ireland is a nation of storytellers so it's fitting that we've moved that tradition into the digital world and embraced content marketing.

As brands across the country adopt the mind-set of always-on publishers, more content is being created every 48 hours than from the dawn of mankind to 2003. That's a lot of content.

At this year's DMX Dublin, the Marketing Institute's huge digital marketing event, every speaker touched on the relevancy and importance of content for brands seeking to engage with their customers. If we weren't already convinced that content's day has come, there can be no mistaking it now.

There's no question that content is shaping the marketing landscape globally.

But how is Irish content marketing really doing? Is our content working as hard as it could be? How do we compare to the international norms? With these questions in mind, 256 Media, Ireland's First Content Marketing Agency, and the Marketing Institute of Ireland, the professional body for Ireland's marketing people, teamed up to survey our nation's marketers.

The goal wasn't to record a survey for the sake of info-gathering. We wanted to provide insights to really inform the practice of content marketing in Ireland. We wanted to identify gaps in knowledge and corresponding opportunities.

Read on for the results of this First Irish Content Marketing Survey. We hope you will find it as interesting as we do and join us in the conversation.



**TOM TRAINOR**  
Chief Executive  
Marketing Institute of Ireland



**KAREN HESSE**  
Managing Director  
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# The Main Findings

Two major findings quickly emerged from the survey:

1. Irish companies are placing increasing importance on content marketing as a part of their overall marketing strategy.
2. Although Irish marketers appear broadly happy with the effectiveness of their content marketing efforts, there is considerable opportunity for improvement in how they are approaching their content strategy, implementation and measurement of return in investment.

## Standout finding

79% of Irish marketers report themselves as having a content marketing strategy but only 48% have documented their strategy. Those with a documented strategy rate their content efforts as more effective than those relying on a verbal only strategy.

79% of Irish marketers rated their content marketing strategy as important or extremely important.

Yet only 67% of respondents reported having a content marketing strategy in place. 27% had no strategy, and 6% weren't sure.

Only 48% have a documented content strategy (though this figure is 10% higher than our counterparts in Australia, the UK and the US).

Customer engagement, brand awareness and lead generation/sales are the three most important outcomes (in order) sought from content marketing by Irish marketers.

75% of respondents are producing more content than in the same period of last year.

Irish marketers are spending approx. 22% of their budgets on content marketing. This compares to approx. 26% in the UK.

56% are planning to increase or significantly increase their content spend in the next 12 months. B2C companies are especially likely to considerably increase their spend.

Only 26% of Irish marketers rate their content marketing efforts as successful or extremely successful. This compares to 42% in the UK.

Those with a documented content marketing strategy are more likely to consider their efforts effective and to use personas; produce more content; increase their content spend; use external resources; have a dedicated team member responsible; use content management software; know what they are spending and measure their efforts.

86% of respondents don't use content marketing management software.

48% of Irish marketers measure the ROI on their content, while a sizeable 19% don't have access to measure their results.

Of the metrics measured, website traffic, SEO rankings, and dwell time were the most popular.

Social media is the most popular content tactic, with 92% of marketers using it.

Articles are the second most popular and video rounds out the top three.

Twitter is rated as the most effective social platform (52% rating it effective or extremely effective).

53% of respondents have a person (or team) in-house who is responsible for content marketing.

55% rely on a mixture of outsourcing and internal resources to create their content.

The biggest problem facing Irish marketers is a lack of time. Finding quality content professionals is an increasing concern too.

The most effective tactics aren't necessarily the ones that marketers are using.

There is a global need for analytically-minded creative strategic content marketers.



# The Nitty Gritty

Content marketing is  
beginning to make an  
impact with Irish marketers

**67% OF IRISH MARKETERS HAVE A  
CONTENT MARKETING STRATEGY,  
BUT LESS THAN HALF HAVE IT  
DOCUMENTED.**

67%

content  
strategy in  
place

48%

have a  
documented  
content  
strategy

**67% of respondents have a content strategy in place. 27% have no strategy, while 6% do not know.**

How does Ireland compare on an international level?

That 67% lags behind the 87% of UK firms, 82% of North American B2B, 77% of North American B2C and 83% of Australian firms that have a content strategy.

Are Irish marketers properly tracking their strategy?

48% of Irish marketers have a documented strategy. Another 48% don't. 4% don't know if their strategy is documented.

The percentage level of documented strategies puts Irish marketers right on track with their American counterparts who have had a bit of a head start in their content marketing practice.

There is a marked difference in behaviour of those with a documented strategy and those using only a verbal strategy.

# How do Irish marketers rate their content marketing effectiveness?

**3.05**  
out of 5 is the  
average rating

**48%**  
measuring return  
on investment

Irish marketers ranked the effectiveness of their content marketing efforts at 3.05 on a 5-point scale.

However, those that had a documented content strategy ranked their efforts at 3.2 versus 2.89 for those that had a 'verbal only' strategy.

Just under half of Irish content marketers are measuring return on investment on their content marketing efforts. However, a closer look at the rates of measurement of some basic metrics, it's unlikely that ROI is being tracked through to a net return against funds invested.



# Though neutral on their own effectiveness, Irish marketers are about to invest more in Content Marketing

Asked 'how effective is your use of content marketing' our respondents were broadly neutral, scoring their efforts at 3.05 on a 5-point scale. This is lower than our international peers and may reflect that only 54% of respondents are using buyer

personas to target their content ; 45% don't have a dedicated person or team responsible for content and many are not very sophisticated in their analysis of return on investment.

Despite this, content marketing is currently commanding approx. 22% of Irish marketing budgets (compared to approx. 26% of UK budgets) and 56% intend to increase or significantly increase their spend on content marketing in the next 12 months.

The most effective content marketers were those who had a documented marketing strategy in place—and these same marketers also tended to spend more of their budget on content marketing than the overall average.

## Key findings

While the 67% with a content strategy may seem high, the figure is somewhat deceptive:

- ❶ **48% of respondents have NO documented content strategy**
- ❷ **46% of respondents DON'T use buyer personas: they're creating content but aren't quite sure who that content is for. This rises to 73% of those who don't have a documented strategy.**
- ❸ **45% don't have a dedicated person or team in charge of content marketing**
- ❹ **Despite the lack of clarity around what a content marketing strategy entails, Irish marketers appear broadly happy with their marketing efforts and intend to increase their content budget and the amount of content they're creating. This is especially true of those with a documented strategy.**

# How strategic are the 67%?

While our marketers are going full steam ahead and increasing their spend and output, there seems to be a disconnect between creating content and creating strategic content.



**SEO**  
rankings

**WEBSITE**  
traffic

**BRAND**  
awareness

# What do Irish marketers hope to achieve with their content marketing?

37% of respondents ranked customer engagement as their number 1 objective. 27% prioritised lead generation, followed by brand awareness at 20%. Thought leadership lagged behind with only 8% of respondents rating it as their most important objective.

## How does Ireland compare internationally?

**UK:** Customer engagement is cited as most important, though 85% of UK marketers really value lead generation. The amount of marketers focusing on lead gen actually tripled on the previous year.

**Australia:** Aussie marketers went with customer engagement as the most important content marketing outcome, with brand awareness in a close second. Lead generation was third.

**US:** US marketers chose brand awareness as the most important marketing outcome (86%), with customer engagement in a very close second (85%) and customer retention in third (79%).

## What content marketing metrics are Irish marketers using?

Website traffic (98%) was easily the most common metric. SEO ranking and time spent on the website came in joint second at 73%. In a close third was social media sharing at 71%.

The metrics being measured indicate that Irish marketers are still focusing on content as part of broader SEO objectives.

## How does Ireland compare internationally?

**UK:** Marketers also cited website traffic as their go-to metric, while 44% measure sales and 40% take SEO ranking into consideration.

**Australia:** The Aussies value website traffic (60%), followed by conversion rates (46%) and sales (46%).

**US:** 62% of US marketers cite website traffic as the metric they use most often, while 48% cited sales and higher conversion rates (43%) as the important metrics.



LEAD  
Generation

CUSTOMER  
Engagement

**WHILE MEASURING WEBSITE TRAFFIC IS IMPORTANT, A TREND HAS EMERGED OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTENT FOR LEAD GENERATION AND SALES.**

**Source:** All international results are from the Content Marketing Institute 2015 reports for the given country.

# What content marketing tactics are Irish marketers using?

**92%**  
on social  
media



92% of Irish marketers are on social media, while articles (74%) and videos (70%) were the next most popular. But being the most popular doesn't necessarily mean that the content tactic is the most effective.

**RANKING THE FIVE MOST EFFECTIVE CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS:**

- *In-person events (85%)*
- *Videos (41%)*
- *Social content (39%)*
- *eNewsletter (36%)*
- *Case studies (36%)*



**THE MOST POPULAR OR ACCESSIBLE CONTENT TACTICS AREN'T NECESSARILY THE MOST EFFECTIVE. MEASURING YOUR RESULTS AND ADJUSTING YOUR STRATEGY IS A KEY PART OF EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC CONTENT MARKETING.**



# How does Ireland compare internationally?

While Irish marketers see themselves as generally effective in their content marketing efforts, they rate the effectiveness of individual tactics considerably lower than their international peers. The table below shows the % of respondents by market who rated an individual tactic as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 1 was 'not at all effective' and 5

was 'extremely effective'. Note how Irish marketers undershoot the average. This begs the question as to how effectively these tactics are being used by Irish marketers. Blogging, in particular, is a content marketing staple that has been proven highly effective internationally but appears to be under used by Irish marketers.

## The most effective tactics - where Ireland sits

Market	In-person events	Blogs	Other social	Videos	eNewsletters
UK	72%	67%	64%	57%	58%
Ireland	62%	23%	39%	42%	37%
USA (B2B)	69%	60%	N/A	60%	58%
USA (B2C)	63%	54%	58%	54%	66%
Australia	65%	62%	53%	65%	62%

% of respondents by market who rated an individual tactic as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale where 1 was 'not at all effective' and 5 was 'extremely effective'.



# The most effective social media platforms

Irish marketers found Twitter to be the most effective. 44% found LinkedIn to be effective or extremely effective, while 42% found Facebook to be effective or extremely effective. Snapchat and Vine were considered the least effective.

**UK:** Twitter ranked as the most effective social platform for UK marketers too, with 75% rating it as most effective. LinkedIn came second with 61% of the vote, with YouTube in third with 50%.

**Australia:** LinkedIn (57%) ranked as the most effective social media platform among Australian marketers, followed by Twitter (53%) and then YouTube (48%).

**US:** The comparison of the most effective social media platforms in the US is much tighter, with marketers rating Twitter highest at 52%. LinkedIn was next with 50%, and YouTube rounded out the trio with 48%.



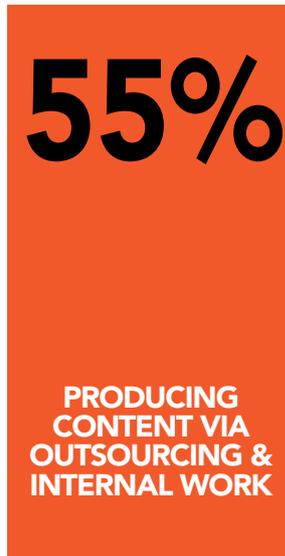
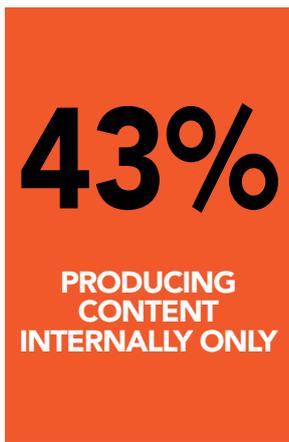
Considered 'effective or very effective' by country

**Source:** All international results are from the Content Marketing Institute 2015 reports for the given country.

# What problems face Irish content marketers?

While the stats clearly show that Irish content marketing is claiming increased attention and spend, there are still a number of issues holding marketing efforts back.





## How are Irish marketers developing content?

Given that just under half the respondents don't have a dedicated person or team in-house in charge of their content strategy, the number of marketers producing content in-house is higher than might be expected. 43% are producing their content internally only, with 55% producing content via a mix of both outsourcing and internal work.

Design is the function most often outsourced, with 80% of companies outsourcing design work versus 35% outsourcing writing. Given that almost half of our respondents couldn't or didn't measure ROI, it's no surprise to see that 23% of outsourcing is for measurement and analytics purposes.

Interestingly, only 14% of respondents are using content marketing management software like Hubspot and Marketo. 65% of those using content marketing management software had 10 - 99 employees, while none of the companies smaller than that used such software.

A future trend might see more Irish marketers using content marketing management software to better understand their analytics, their buyer personas, and their ROI.

**What are Irish  
content  
marketers  
struggling  
with?**



## Lack of time is the biggest issue for three-quarters of Irish content marketers.

Producing engaging content, at **56%**, is the second biggest concern. Only **28%** found producing enough content to be an issue, so difficulties seem to lie with producing content of a high enough standard.

**43%** also cited the inability to measure the effectiveness of their content marketing as an issue—which further highlights the need for Irish marketers to adopt a more strategic approach.

A solid fifth also raised concerns with finding trained content marketers, which falls in line with the concerns of our international counterparts.

## How does Ireland compare internationally?

**UK:** Producing engaging content ranked as the biggest challenge for UK marketers followed by producing content consistently.

**40%** of UK marketers found measuring content effectiveness to be a challenge, up **12%** on 2014. Finding sufficiently trained content marketers was also a problem in the UK at **27%**, up **14%** on 2014.

**Australia:** Producing engaging content again ranked as the biggest challenge, followed by a lack of budget. **44%** of Australian marketers found measuring content effectiveness to be a challenge.

Keeping with the trend, **31%** of Australian marketers thought finding trained content marketing professionals was an issue, which was up **22%** on 2014.

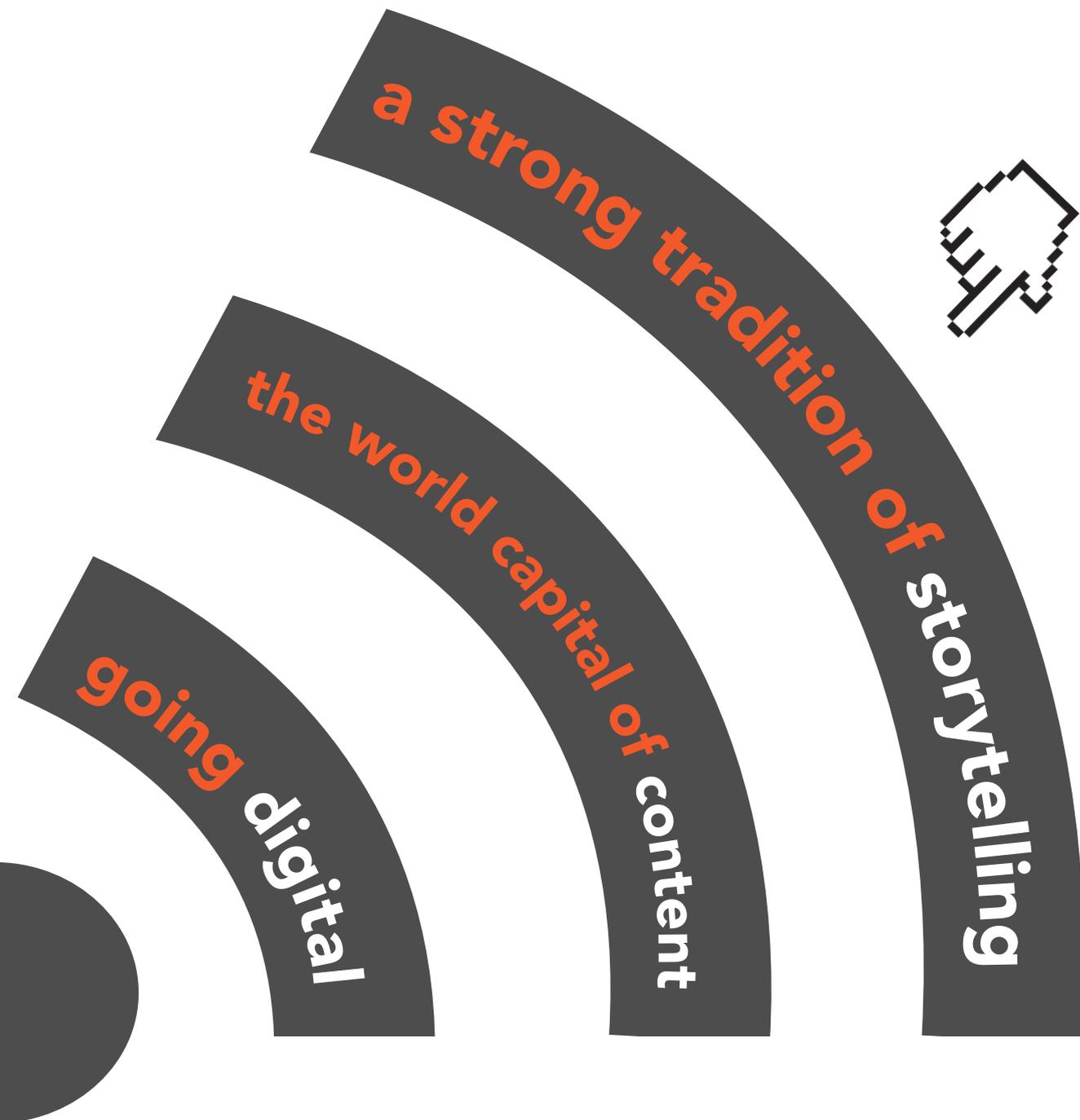
**US:** **54%** of B2B marketers chose producing engaging content to be their biggest challenge. Measuring content effectiveness was a problem too, up **16%** on the year before to **49%**. Finally, finding trained content marketing professionals was a big issue for **32%** of B2B marketers.

**// A LACK OF TIME, BUDGET, AND RESOURCES ARE PROVING TO BE A BIG DRAIN ON CONTENT EFFORTS AND MARKETING TEAMS THE WORLD OVER ARE CRYING OUT FOR TALENTED CONTENT CREATORS WITH STRATEGIC MINDS AND CREATIVE FLAIR.**

**//**

**So what can  
we take away  
from all these  
facts and  
figures?**





## The Opportunity

Irish marketers have gone digital and are actively embracing content marketing. The stats speak for themselves: Irish marketers are enthusiastic about content and they are creating great work — but there is a disconnect around what a content marketing strategy actually is.

Given that marketers are prepared to invest time and budget in creating excellent content, it's time to start utilising a more strategic and long-term approach.

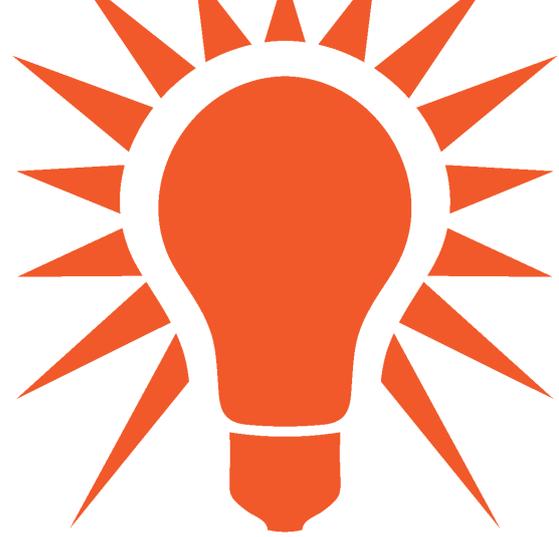
If our content marketing efforts are considered effective in circumstances where the strategy

is quite ad hoc, then consider how effective content marketing could be with a strategy that is aligned to business objectives, persona-based, integrated and quantifiable in terms of return on investment.

A strong tradition of storytelling and creative skills runs through our blood - it's what put us on the map for literature, music, animation, and gaming.

It makes sense that Ireland can be a location for excellence in content marketing too.

**The world capital of content!**



## About The Marketing Institute

The Marketing Institute is the professional body for Ireland’s marketing people, in operation since 1962. With a mission to strengthen the profession of marketing in Ireland, the Institute aims to deliver in three key areas: (1) enhancing professional effectiveness through the provision of insights and expert content; (2) building the community of marketers through access to networks; and (3) providing professional career development to members through training and education. Content, Community and Career are the three themes that underpin all Institute activities.

For exclusive industry trends updates, visit the Marketing Institute’s website on [www.mii.ie](http://www.mii.ie). You can also find us on Twitter: [@irishmarketers](https://twitter.com/irishmarketers)



# 256<sup>media</sup>



## About 256 Media

256 Media is a dynamic Dublin based strategic content marketing agency. As Ireland’s first content marketing agency, we are proud content natives and have publishing in our DNA. We help clients to create content strategies aligned with their business and marketing objectives. We then create and execute the plans across print, digital, and social channels to give life to those strategies.

Quality is really important to us both for our process and our outputs. So much so that we recently became the first content marketing agency in the world to be certified for ISO9001 Quality Assurance Management. Blush!

If you’d like to join the content revolution or need help with your content strategy find us on [www.256media.ie](http://www.256media.ie). Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more content marketing wisdom.



# Notes on the Survey Methodology

The survey was conducted online from February to June 2015 and had 73 respondents. All the respondents are based in Ireland and the vast majority of them work in marketing.

In terms of company size, our respondents were a real mixed bag, with 20% of them working in companies with less than 10 employees, and another 46% in concrete skyscrapers with somewhere between 100 and 1000+ employees.

- ④ 35% of the respondents were B2C.
- ④ 46% marketed to consumers and other businesses.
- ④ Respondents worked in a broad range of sectors, from the media to department stores, and colleges.

A big thanks to all our respondents for taking the time to participate in our survey and helping to shed light on the landscape of content marketing in Ireland.

In terms of the survey, we based our questions on existing research in the US, UK, and Australia to allow us to benchmark Irish performance against international norms. The stats used to benchmark Ireland against our international competitors came courtesy of the Content Marketing Institute and four of their studies:

- ④ Content Marketing in the UK 2015: Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends
- ④ Content Marketing in Australia, 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends
- ④ B2B Content Marketing 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends – North America, paired with B2C Content Marketing 2015 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends – North America.

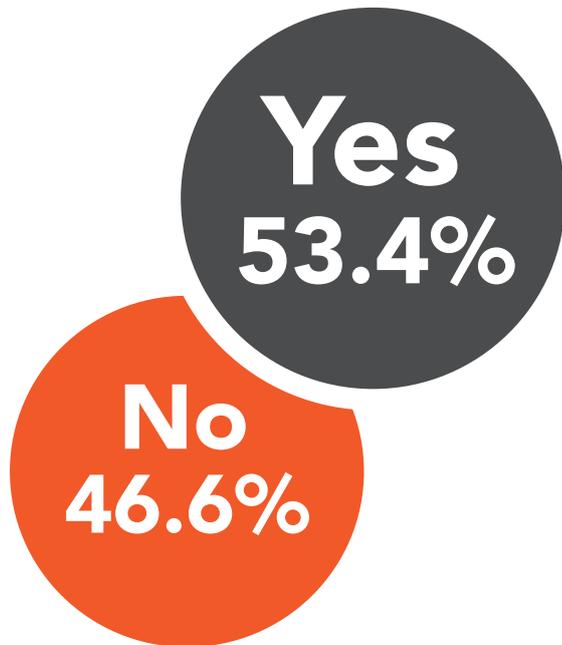
A huge thanks to the Content Marketing Institute, their partners Marketing Profs, CMA, DMA, the ADMA, and the sponsors of the studies. Their stats were an integral part of making our survey as robust as possible.



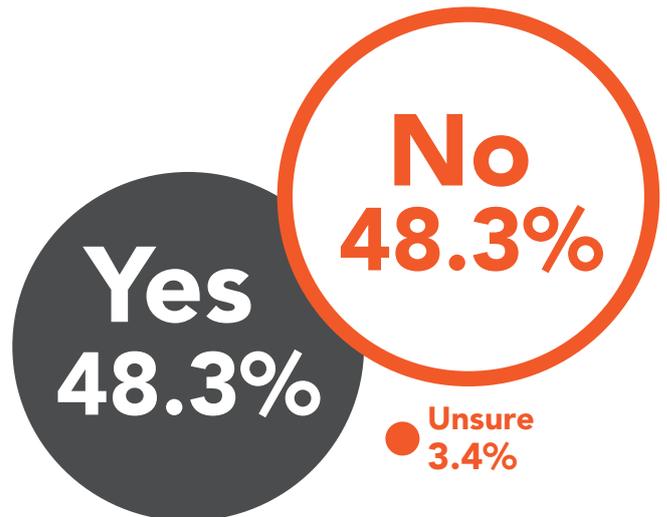
# CONTENT MARKETING IN IRELAND

## RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Do you use "buyer personas" to tailor your content?



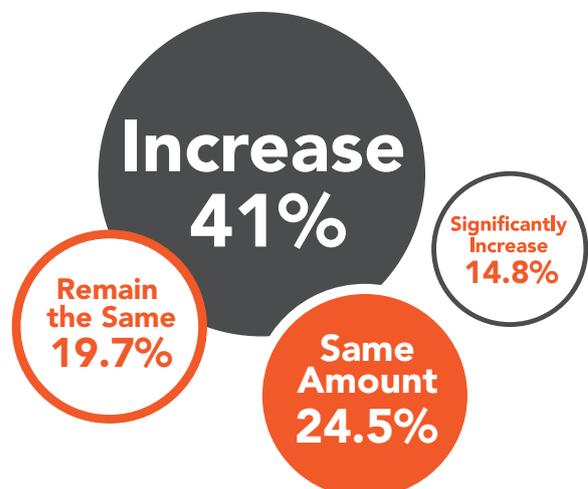
Do you have a documented content marketing strategy?



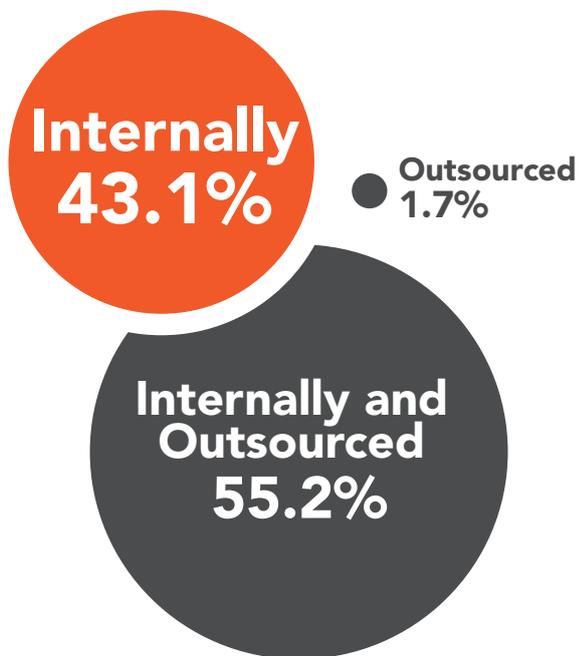
Are you producing more content than you did one year ago?



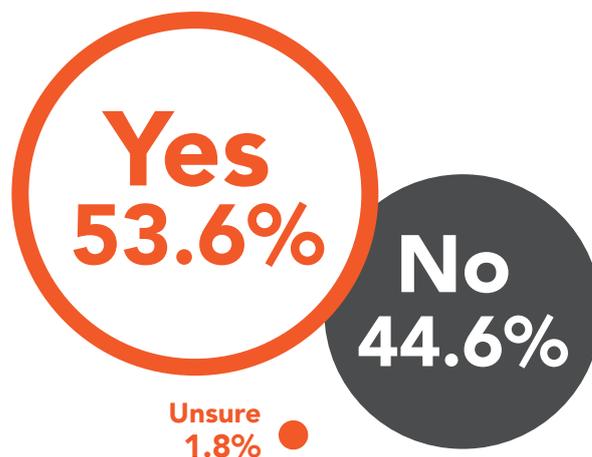
Are you planning to increase your content marketing budget over the next 12 months?



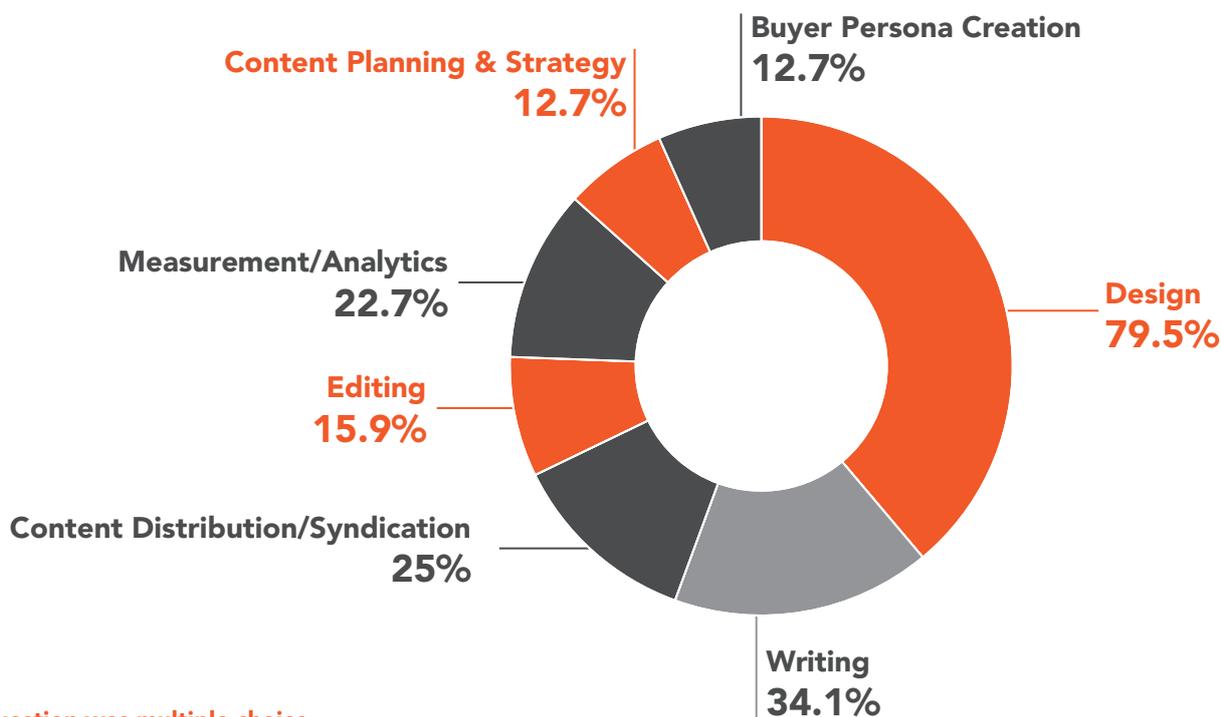
### How do you develop content?



### Do you have a dedicated team member(s) who is (are) responsible for your company's content marketing strategy?

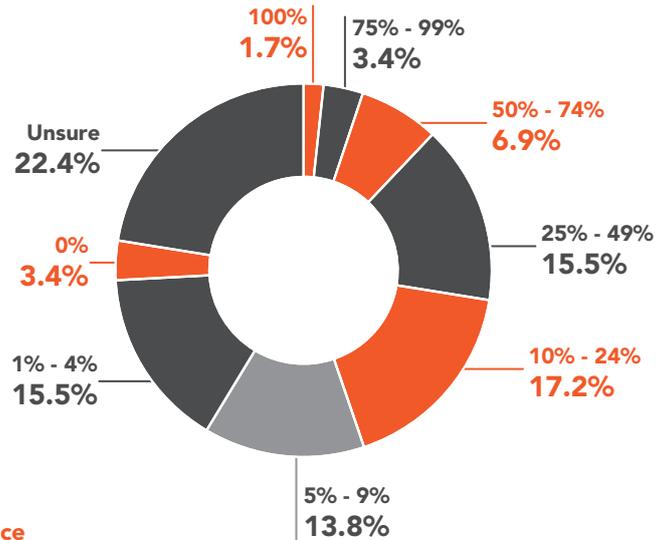


### Which of the following functions do you generally choose to outsource?\*



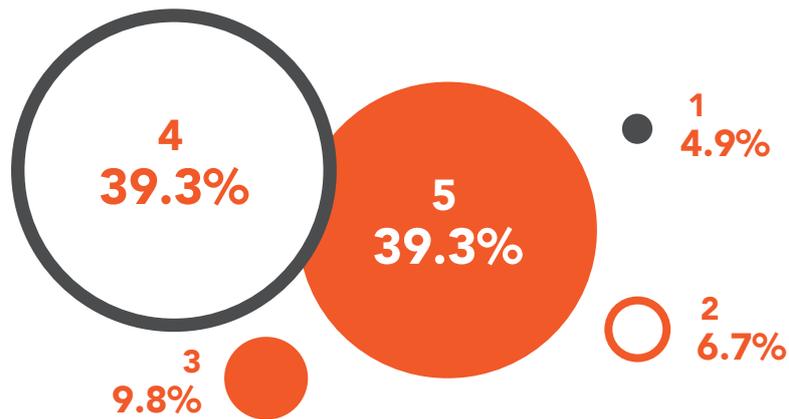
\*This question was multiple choice

## What percentage of your total marketing budget do you spend on content marketing?\*



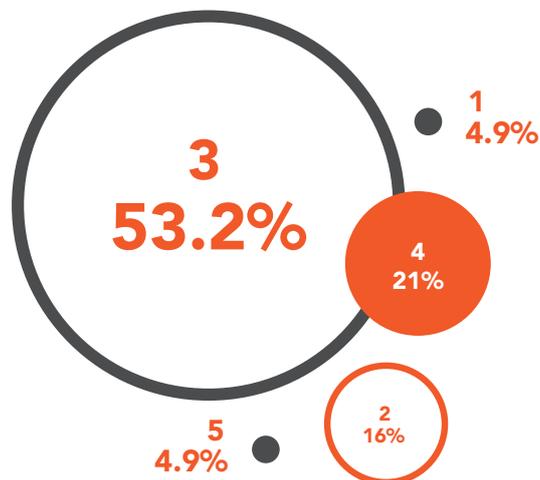
\*This question was multiple choice

## On a scale of 1 - 5\* , how do you rate content marketing in line with your overall marketing effort?



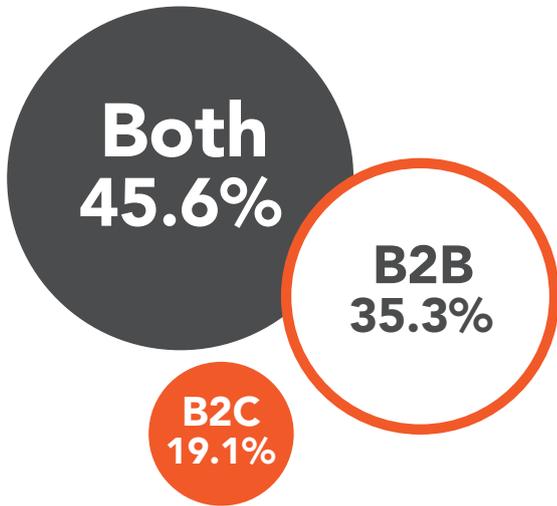
\*1 represents not at all important - 5 represents critically important

## On a scale of 1-5\*, how effective is your use of content marketing?

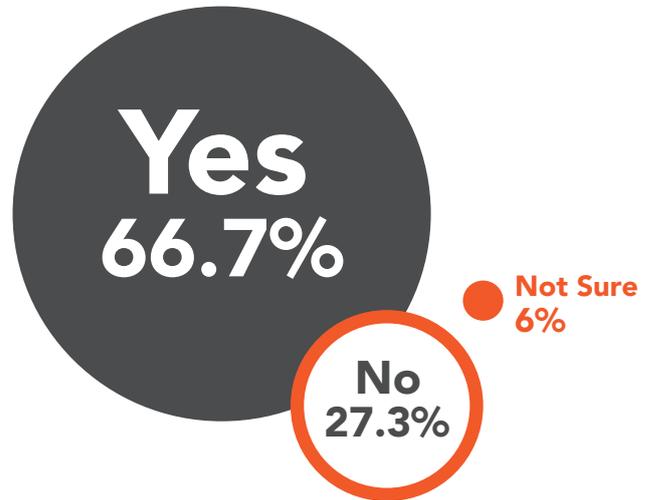


\* 1 represents not at all -5 represents extremely

Is your company B2B or B2C?



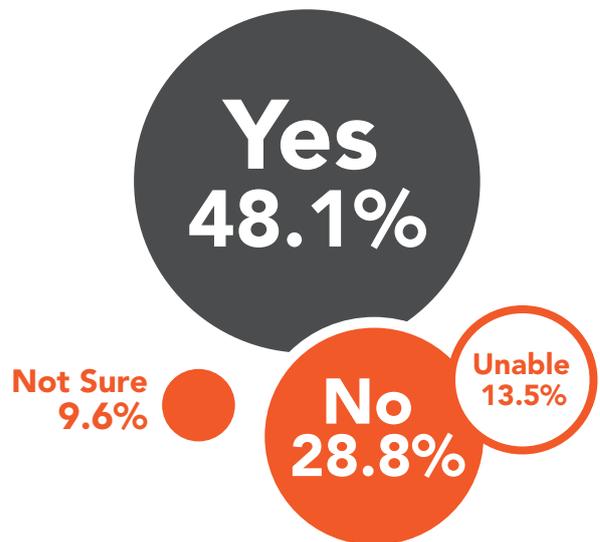
Do you have a content marketing strategy in place?



Do you use content marketing management software (e.g. Hubspot, Marketo, Eloqua, etc)?



Do you measure ROI on your content marketing activity?



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