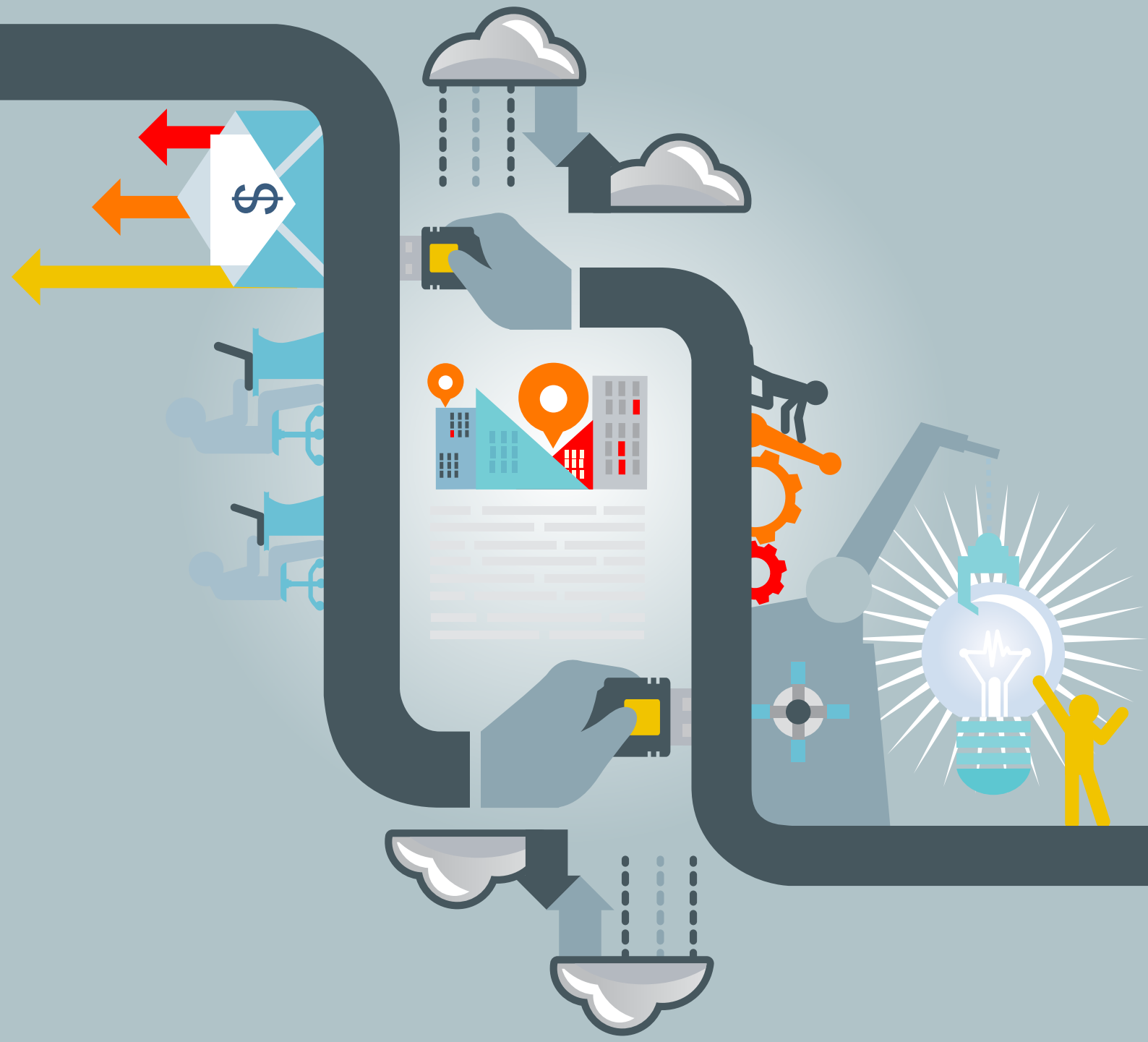
The Modern Marketer's Guide to

Connected Customer Journeys



a marketing finder white paper in association with ORACLE MARKETING CLOUD

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A customer-centric strategy was once a nice-to-have, but not a necessity. Times have changed because today's empowered consumers demand personalised and engaging experiences every time, through every channel.

The days of solely "push" communication, when brands sent out untargeted offers by the truckload have long since passed - today it's the consumer who is firmly in control. Marketers must ensure they know what their consumer wants, when and how they want it. In fact, brands must become truly customer obsessed in order to make sure they are visible and available in the right place at the right time. Anything less won't do, yet our research reveals that few are achieving this to any meaningful level of proficiency.

Perhaps key to understanding this poor level of proficiency is the fact that an explosion of digital channels has disrupted the market (and will continue to), leaving brands struggling

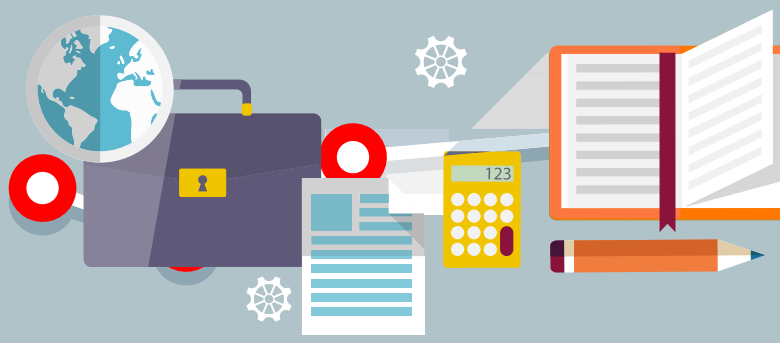
"the challenge for marketers is knowing how and when to get engaged"

to respond. As these channels mature, brands must re-engineer their marketing departments and capability in order to deal with disruption as the norm.

With the new abundance of online and offline channels, the challenge for marketers is not only keeping pace with the increasingly complex customer journey, but also knowing how and when to get engaged. The reality is that digital disruption is here to stay - the sooner an organisation can reinvent marketing to be digital-first, the faster it will be able to adapt to new technology and channels as they appear or evolve.

Oracle Marketing Cloud partnered with marketingfinder.co.uk to conduct a survey exploring how marketers are adapting to this new age of the customer and the challenges they face. This whitepaper reveals the key issues faced by marketers in this area, as well as best practices and future trends, analysis and top tips on how to get a customer-centric strategy right.

Finding the Disconnect

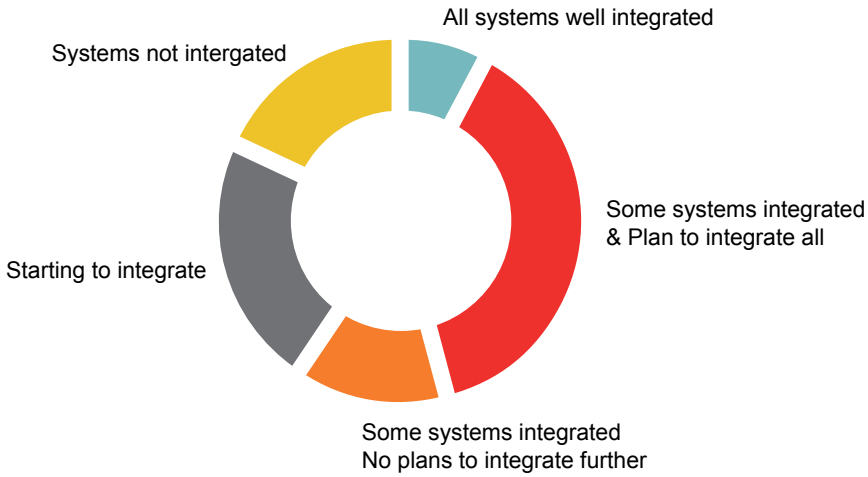


A customer's journey, at least in their own eyes, is connected. Whatever route a customer takes and whenever they come into contact with a brand, they have an ultimate goal and they take steps to achieve it. If a brand is able to respond to customers as they take these steps and identify them across each touch point, they are able to provide a more valuable and relevant customer experience. Our survey reveals however, that many organisations face a number of significant barriers when trying to connect customer journeys. Two in particular stand out:

1. TRACKING & VISIBILITY

Marketing departments are predominantly measured on brand awareness, leads and sales. As such, tracking the customer journey has never been more important, yet only 40% of marketers are able to do so across multiple channels. Without this insight, optimising marketing spend based on performance is nearly impossible.

Data & Systems Integration



Clearly this is an issue on many marketers' radar with 39% stating that they have plans to introduce this in the future.

2. SINGLE CUSTOMER VIEW & SYSTEMS INTEGRATION

A single customer view, which integrates all channels and customer touch points, is absolutely vital when it comes to connecting customer journeys. Just 8% of those questioned were able to say that all of their data and marketing systems were well integrated. 38% reported that some of their systems were integrated, with plans to integrate the rest, while a massive 22% are just starting the process. 18% lack any system integration altogether. If your

"just 8% of those questioned were able to say that all their data and marketing systems were integrated"

organisation can't join the dots internally, then customer interactions and behaviours can only be analysed retrospectively, making true personalisation nearly impossible.

In order to find the disconnect and overcome these barriers, marketing leaders need to respond with a strategy. If two of the key measures of marketing success are leads and sales, then a connected customer journey becomes ever more important. It is easy for marketing ROI to be underreported if leads or sales are not associated with acquisition information.

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Be More Than Email

For many, email is the cornerstone of demand generation and has been for some time. With low barriers to entry, good market penetration and easy reporting, it's hardly surprising that email is often a prime marketing channel. Our survey reveals however, that additional channels are developing as strong performers in today's multi-channel demand generation environment (see chart "Which of the following channels do you find most effective for generating business").

"The answer is not email, mobile or social - the first step is to know your customer"

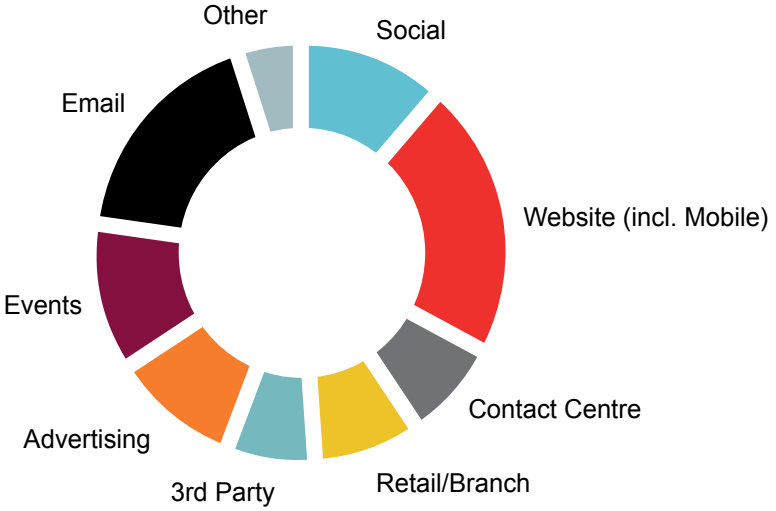
One of the key considerations when talking about demand generation is a brand's own web properties - whether via mobile or desktop, an inbound (potential or existing) customer will often start here. Web properties are also a key conversion or capture component for many channels, which rely on landing pages to carry the baton over the finishing line. Investment here, including work to improve usability or ensure that omni-device experiences are seamless, can go some way to improving the customer experience and your ROI.

53% of respondents rate social media as "average" or less when asked about its importance to their organisation and 46% of organisations don't even have a social strategy. Perhaps key to understanding this is the fact that 55% of respondents struggle to demonstrate social ROI. Without being able to link social marketing (of any kind) to the bottom line, marketers may struggle to gain management buy-in or hesitate to invest significant resources or budget in developing social or integrating it into their core marketing proposition. The reality however is clear - this is a mistake. Social is mature, as over 1.2 billion monthly users on Facebook or 255 million on Twitter can tell you. Social has, in fact, become a key channel for many with 54% of respondents making use of it for lead generation.

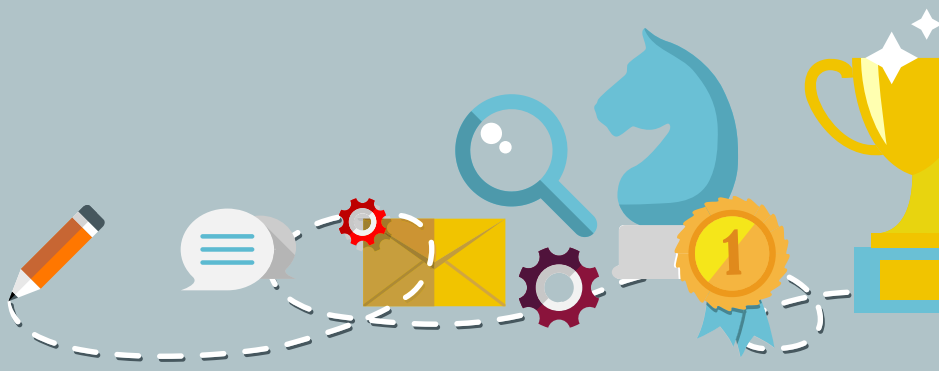
The answer however, doesn't lie in individual channels, but in a holistic strategy. The solution is not email, mobile or social - the first step is to know your customer. Unsurprisingly, being "customer-obsessed" starts with the customer - what do they want and what are they doing.

By integrating systems and achieving a single view of the customer, reporting and insight can begin to show you which channels are performing and help you to balance spend with results. If your customers move towards one channel, you can be there waiting - on their terms - and not only in their email inbox.

Most effective Channels: Generating Business



Content Comes First



As you keep hearing, marketing has changed - sales pitches and repetition are no longer good enough to sell products. In the modern marketing landscape, brands must deliver something of value and be thought-leaders as an intrinsic part of their communication. As such, content should be at the heart of every marketing strategy, but the challenge is to create content that is relevant and useful to your customers.

In order to rise to this challenge, marketers need to look to their data. For many brands however, bringing data together from multiple points is proving difficult, as highlighted by 33% of those questioned. Making sense of that data and gaining insights from it is the second biggest challenge at 23%. This goes some way towards explaining why marketers struggle to know what kind of content to create and how to get it to the right consumer.

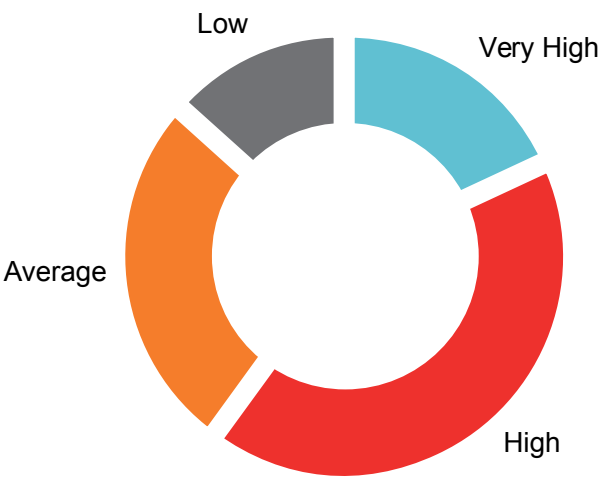
Unsuprisingly then, there are still a lot of brands for whom using data to drive marketing activity is proving difficult. 26% in fact rated their marketing activities as only "very slightly data-driven".

According to the survey results, content marketing is a priority for most organisations, with 42% rating it as high, and 18% as very high. Beyond that, the majority rate their company's ability to provide timely, relevant and personalised communications as average or above. Interestingly, around half (49%) are actively creating content based on buyer persona, and 72% create specific content for different channels. Perhaps enouraging, until you consider that customers don't view your organisation in terms of channels. Your content needs to be engaging and useful to grab their attention, and by creating a content plan around personas and/or stages of the buying cycle you make your organisation more relevant.

"the challenge of how to attribute ROI to content marketing is a significant barrier"

In summary, the biggest barriers to content marketing do seem to be a lack of resources (58% of respondents singled this out) and cost (at 35%). 34% find that the challenge of how to attribute ROI to content marketing is also a significant one. The creation of targeted, relevant, and timely communications demands not just budgets and resources, but insight gained from customer data.

How much of a priority is content marketing for your organisation?



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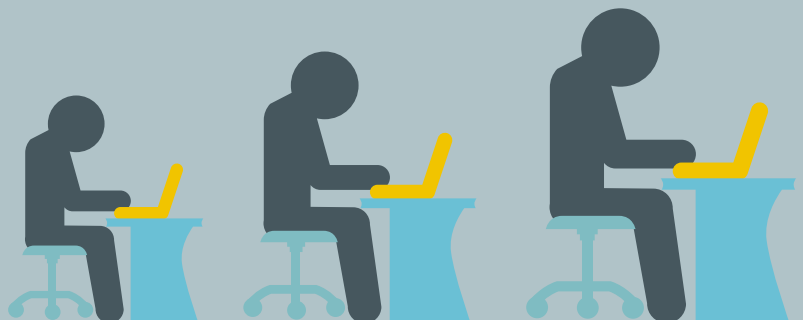
Struggling to Process



Our survey points out that although the majority of respondents are somewhat confident in the numbers they report, “accurate reporting” is currently the exception rather than the norm with less than half of respondents having adequate resources to report effectively. Worse still, only 26% are benchmarking their current activities both internally and externally.

Marketers know this is a problem however, with 67% saying that although they currently lack benchmarking capabilities, they aspire towards being able to do this. Where benchmarking does take place, a long list of tools is currently used, including spreadsheet reports, historical organisational data and published, sector-specific external data such as Nielsen, Kantar or Dunnhumby, as well as EPOS data and bespoke research.

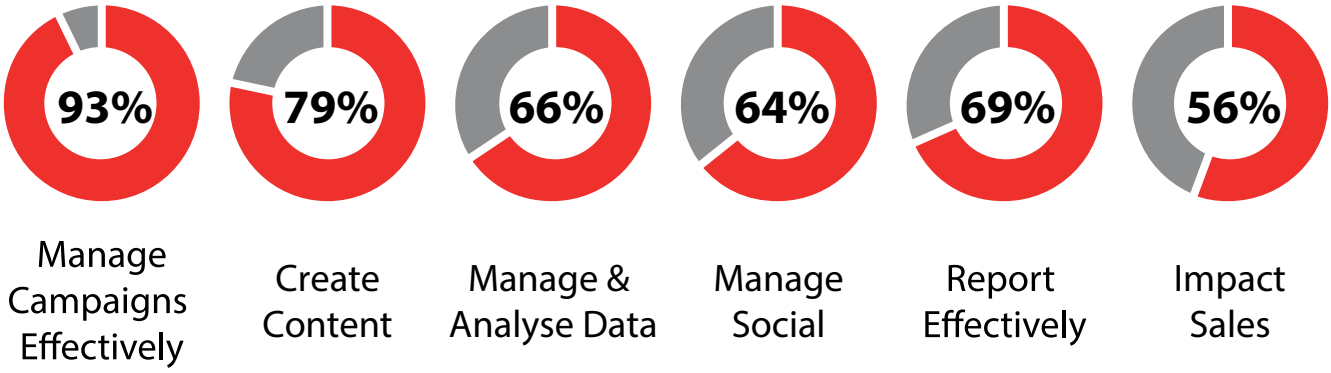
Generally, it seems that too little emphasis is placed on proving the value of marketing activity, which results in an under-appreciation of marketing’s contribution to the bottom line. Perhaps this is understandable when 29% of respondents are still using cumbersome manual processing to prepare reports and as many as 65% are having to use a mixture of manual and automatic processing.

When so few organisations are able to track and measure activity, it comes as little surprise that the research has also identified a significant skills gap, not only of technical and channel skills within the department, but also particularly when it comes to the more quantitative side of marketing.

In fact, many marketing departments admit that the skills they most lack are data and marketing technology skills, including the ability to analyse campaign results, followed by channel-specific skills, such as those required to address the challenges of mobile and social. Bringing data together from multiple points and making sense of it are the biggest data challenges, with more than half of respondents highlighting these as their top concerns.

Resources, or the lack of them, are also a common problem. Over half of marketing departments don’t have the resources they need to manage or analyse data properly. Many also struggle to manage social and create content, which may serve to push these important areas out of focus.

Does your marketing department have the resources it needs to:



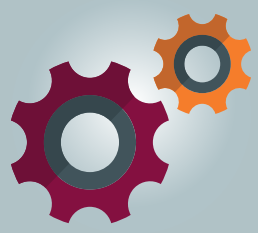
The Way Forward

The modern marketing landscape has changed irrevocably. Customers expect flawless experiences which deliver personalised, high quality content via any channel, when they want it.

With a content strategy in place, unified data, unified systems and a subsequent ability to visualise customer journeys and report effectively, brands can see significant improvement in marketing ROI. To make this happen, marketing leaders need to create an action plan:

1. Integrate

Unify customer information and bring every channel into the mainstream. Your customers view you as one organisation, not as separate channels.



2. Automate

Invest in automation in order to engage with customers in a personalised, timely and relevant manner, based on behaviour.

3. Create

A modern brand must be a publisher in its own right: Learn to deliver outstanding, relevant content to prospects and customers.

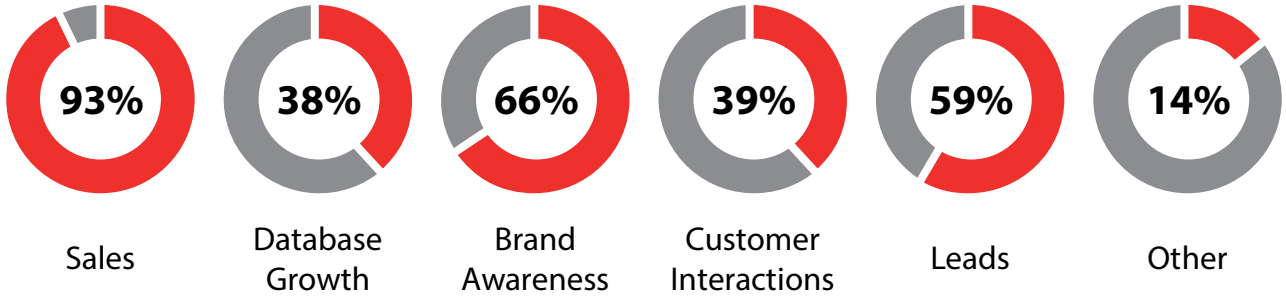
4. Demonstrate

Effectively report marketing ROI in line with your business goals, and benchmark against your industry. 68% of survey respondents lack benchmarking capabilities, so benchmarking can gain you a significant advantage.

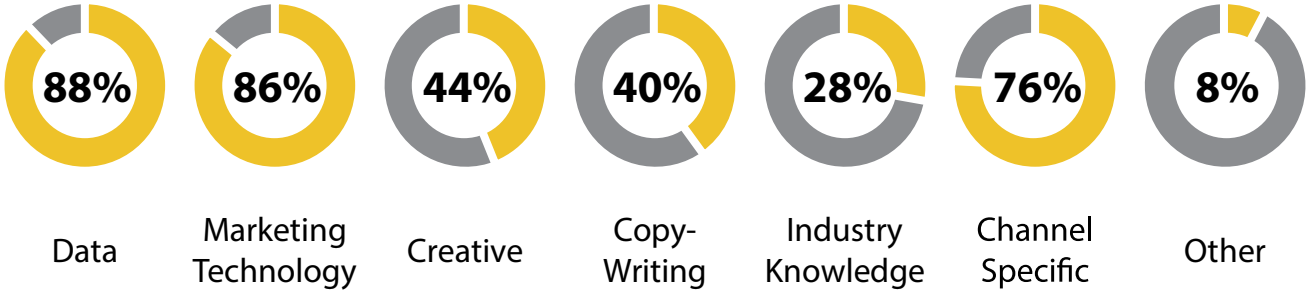
Whilst connecting customer journeys and taking a holistic view of the customer have both become fundamental to business success, there are a number of barriers stopping a significant proportion of businesses from implementing either. Combine this with a need to deliver high quality, highly personalised content and we find that there is evidently still much work to be done if organisations are to become truly “customer-obsessed”.

Appendix: The Facts

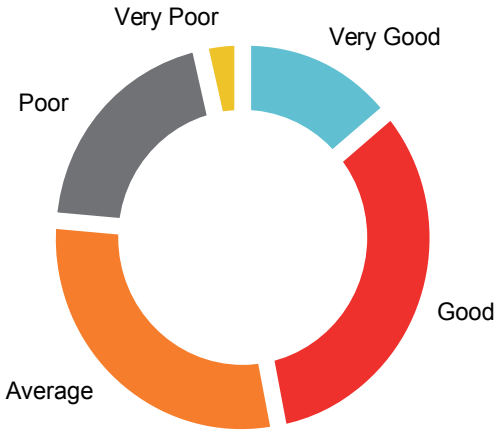
How is your marketing department measured?



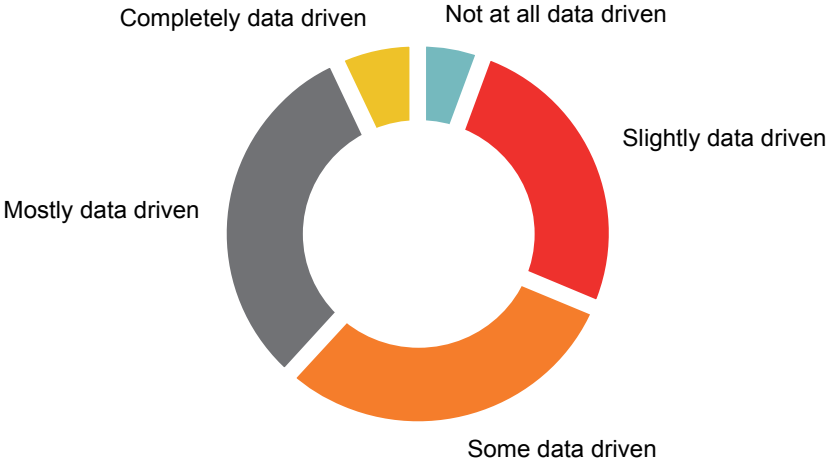
What skills is your marketing department lacking?



How would you rate your company's ability to provide timely, relevant, personalised communications to your customers?



How data driven are your marketing activities?



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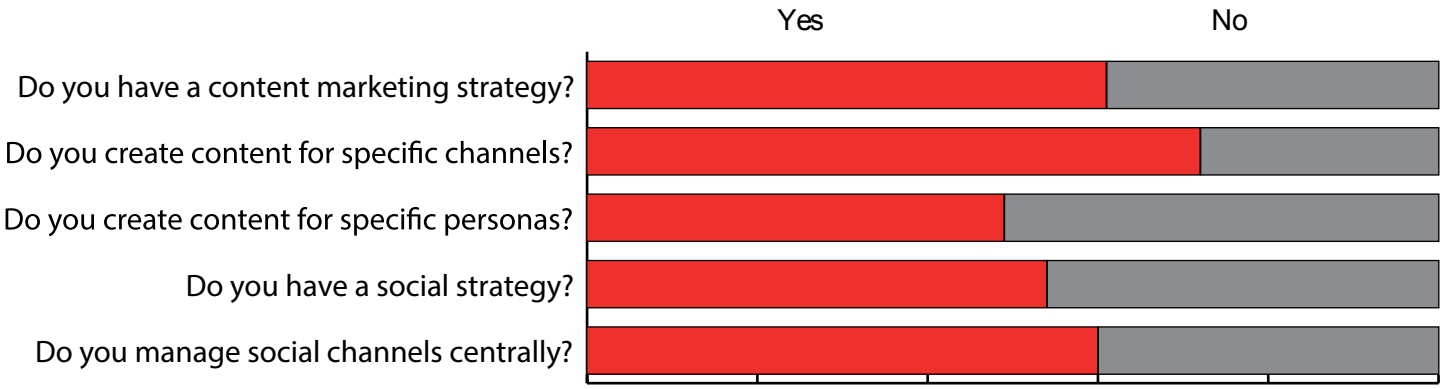
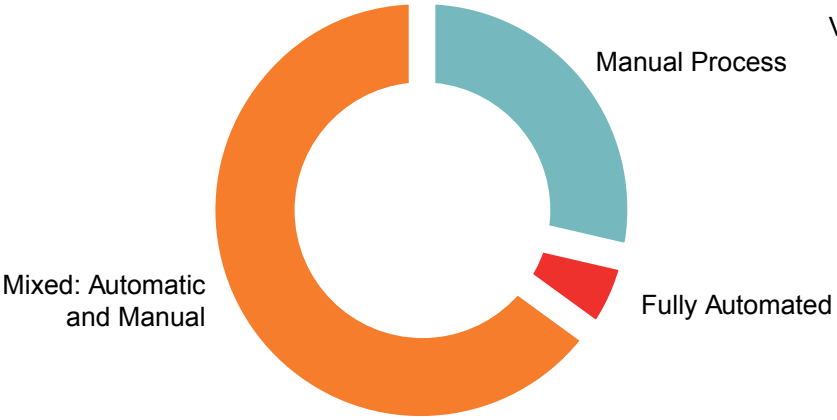
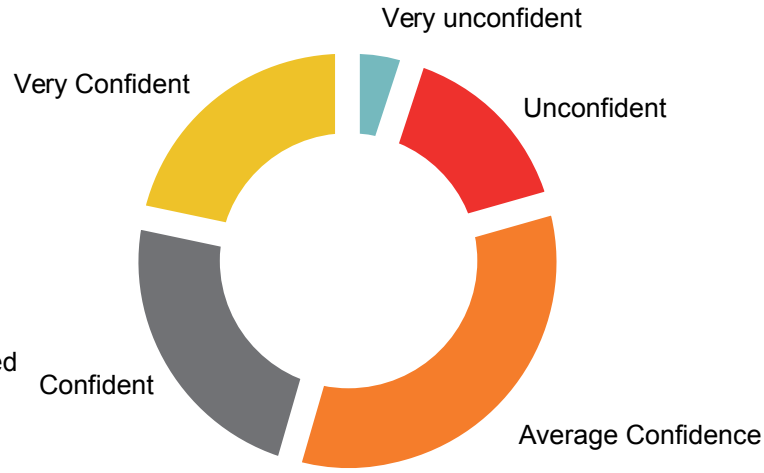


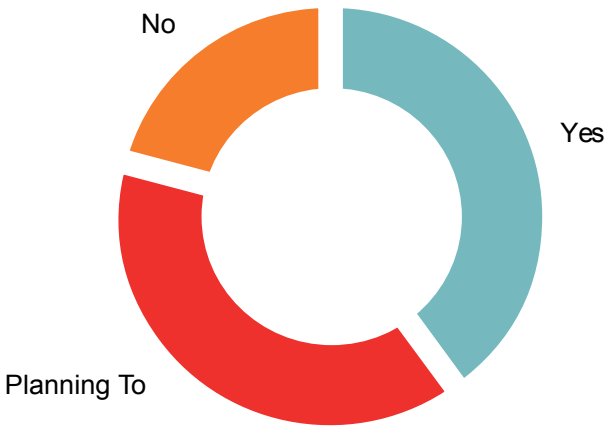
How do you collate data for reporting?



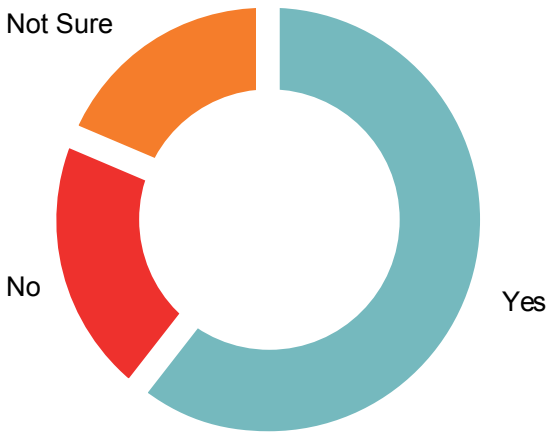
How confident are you in your marketing performance reports?



Are you able to track your customer's journey across channels?



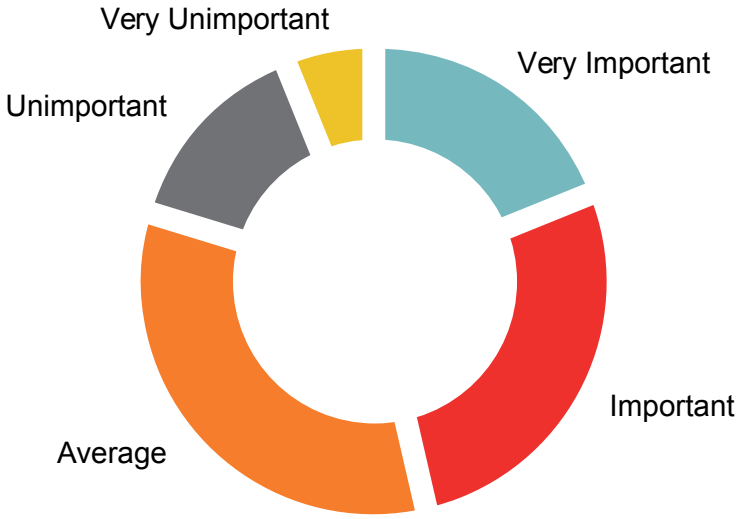
Do you have to provide a regular marketing report to internal teams?



Appendix: The Facts

Which channels do you use for lead generation?

How important is social media to your organisation?



Do you struggle to demonstrate return on investment in social?

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