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Communications**

B2B technology copywriters

# Report: Barriers to great B2B content

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105 B2B content marketers told us what stops them doing great work.

They revealed 6 common obstacles.





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Communications**

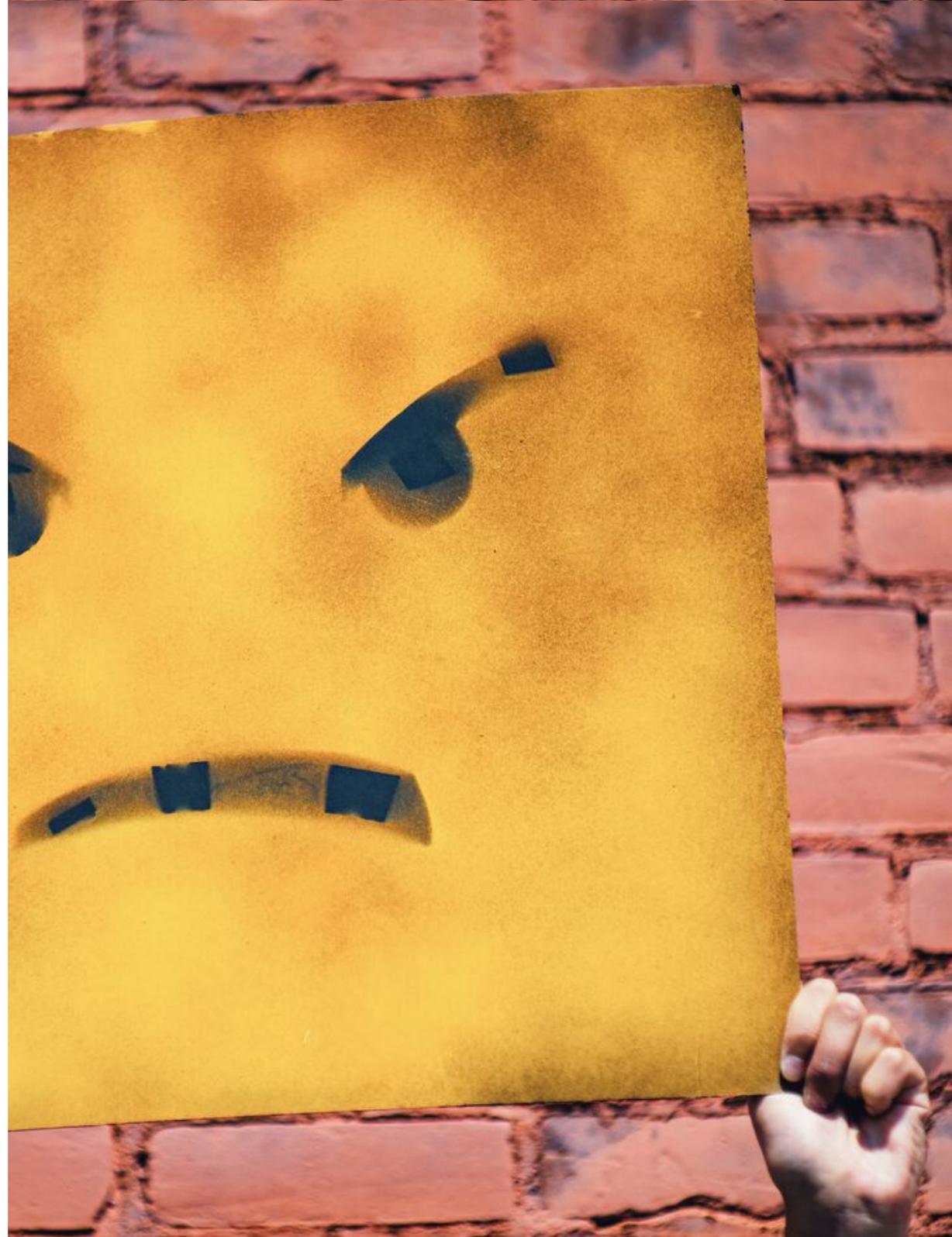
B2B technology copywriters

# 105 B2B marketers vented their anger.

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75% of B2B content marketers share the same six frustrations.

In this report, we'll tell you what those obstacles are, reveal the impact they have, and seek expert advice on what to do about them.



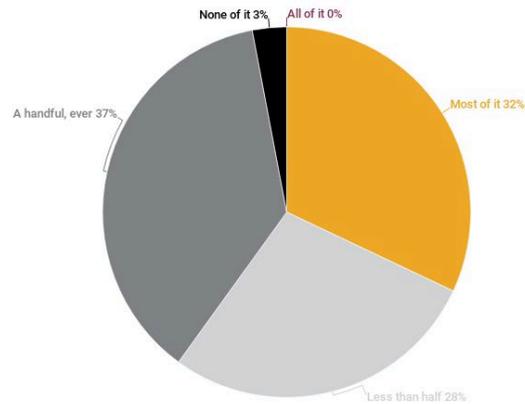
# 68% OF B2B MARKETERS ARE NOT PROUD OF THEIR OWN CONTENT.

## THEY TOLD US WHY.

## (NOW, WE'LL TELL YOU.)

In late 2019, [Radix Communications](#) gave B2B marketers a chance to vent their frustrations, anonymously, about the things that stop them creating the content they really want.

How much of your published B2B content makes you proud?



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We got 105 responses, from all over the world. Marketers of all levels, from content creators to CMOs, in businesses of all sizes. And despite that diversity, the story they told us is clear.

On the whole, B2B marketers are not satisfied with the content they publish. And most of the obstacles that prevent them from doing their best work are within their own organisations.

“

I have friends in B2C marketing and by comparison their job is a doddle. But senior B2B marketers are almost £20k behind in terms of salary.

CMO, medium-sized tech / SaaS firm, UK

### Also in this report...

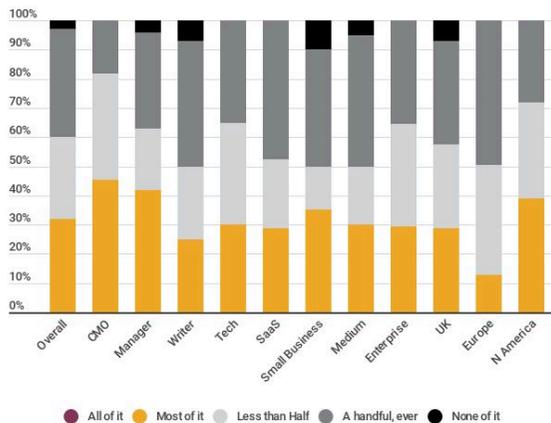
- [Content signoff issues](#)
- [Stakeholder alignment](#)
- [Quantity versus quality](#)
- [Making time to create](#)
- [Treat departments as customers](#)
- [The impact of customer access](#)

## GOOD NEWS: IT'S NOT JUST YOU.

Overall, senior marketers and respondents in North America were the most satisfied. But still, there was no major category where most of the people were proud of most of their content.

How much of your published B2B content makes you proud?

### Comparison of responses



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## 105 MARKETERS. 6 BARRIERS.

The consistency doesn't end there. The survey revealed six key content barriers, each of which are common to at least 75% of marketers:

1. Conflicting and changing priorities, or an unclear brief
2. Interference from managers and stakeholders
3. Insufficient budget and resources
4. Too much work, and not enough time
5. Lack of input and co-operation from other departments
6. Limited customer contact

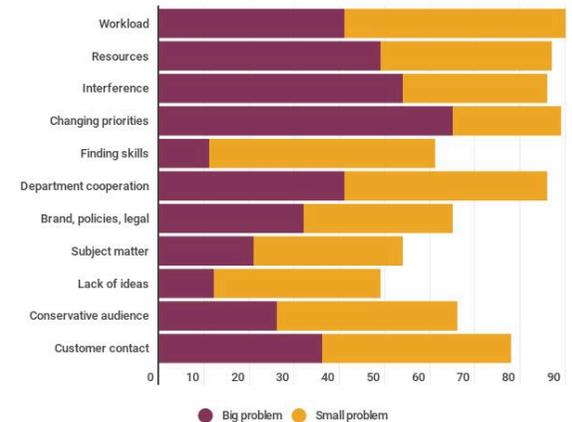
## THE WORLD'S ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT B2B ARE WRONG.

Importantly, the big six outrank issues that are generally assumed to be key obstacles for B2B, like dull subject matter, conservative buyers, or lack of ideas.

B2B marketers know what they need to do, but are being hamstrung by their own organisations.

What gets in your way when you're trying to create great content?

### Overall response



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In this report, we'll reveal the survey findings in full – and use them to illustrate the impact of these six challenges. We'll also hear perspectives from top B2B marketers, including advice on how to handle each issue, and where to find a role that enables your best work.

## INSIGHT: MAUREEN BLANDFORD SAYS IT'S (PROBABLY) NOT YOUR FAULT.

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**Maureen Blandford** VP of Marketing, Community Brands

“

Largely, people who are critical of B2B content have not had butts in seats in actual corporations.

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

**There's a whole bunch of stuff that goes into making content**, that the market doesn't acknowledge. Talent, passion and will are maybe 10% of it. Does the organisation agree on topics? Do you have a supportive team? Are sales co-operative? What about the leadership team? What kind of budget and tools do you have? How many micromanagers are there?

**The survey results absolutely nail it:** the big three obstacles are resources, interference, and changing priorities. There's always an exec who fancies himself a marketer, and is constantly getting in the way. It's way too rare to be in a situation like I'm in right now, where you can drive the team to work efficaciously and creatively.

**Corporate teams need to realise that they have to define personas and messaging up front.**

The worst thing you could do is try to decide within a tactic what you're trying to say. Otherwise, they're trying to figure out who they are, what they believe and what they're doing, as you go along. Which is why web pages, ebooks and videos get changed and changed.

“

**It's ridiculous, the constraints that most marketers are dealing with.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

**Every B2B marketer has experienced the situation** where new players come in at the end, and muddy the water. So imagine what it's like to have other people screwing things up, and then being blamed by the market when your content sucks. It's like: "If you only fuckin' knew."

# Moving goalposts

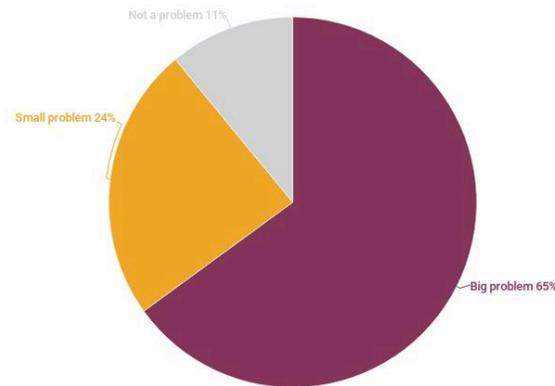
Conflicting and changing priorities. Unclear briefs. Last-minute changes and approval woes.

# 89% OF B2B MARKETERS STRUGGLE WITH CONFLICTING AND CHANGING PRIORITIES, OR UNCLEAR BRIEFS.

And 65% said it's a "big problem", making it the single biggest obstacle to good content.

So if you keep having to chop and change your content programme – or if you find work being completely rewritten in the (you had hoped) final round of proofing, take heart; you're far from alone.

Changing and conflicting priorities, and unclear briefs



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It's by far the biggest concern for content creators and marketing managers alike. And it's especially huge in small businesses, SaaS companies, and the tech sector, but is much more of an issue for respondents in the UK than their counterparts in mainland Europe.

## UNCERTAINTY OVER THE BRIEF HAS A BUSINESS COST.

All this uncertainty has a real impact. People who cite it as a "big problem" are the least likely to be proud of their content's business results – 29% less likely than the average.

In short, organisations that are unable to give marketers clear direction are harming their own outcomes.

“

**I have a whole docket of content that I've envisioned, planned, and want to see through, but it often gets disrupted by "drive-by" projects that have more urgency to them.**

Marketing manager (manufacturing), North America

# MOST B2B MARKETERS BELIEVE THEIR OWN SIGNOFF PROCESSES HARM BUSINESS RESULTS.

It's sounds crazy, but it's true. 59% agreed with the statement "If nobody else had to sign off our content, the results would be a lot better."

The statement received majority approval in almost every category, especially among B2B marketing managers (71%) and respondents in large enterprises (81%).

“

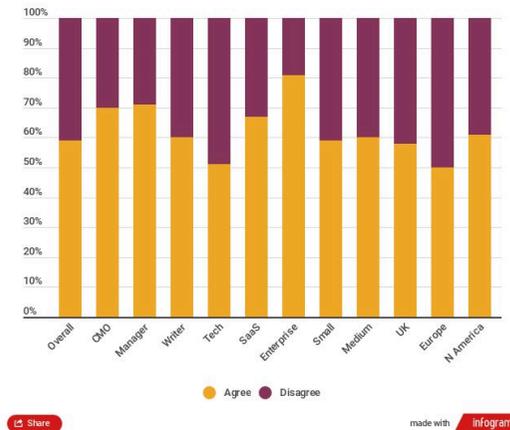
Just proofing the final doc when the CEO decides to delete some pages, add in some others (very product heavy), and edit some messaging. But we **HAVE** to publish the next day. No choice but to approve the change with small amends. Gah!

Content writer, multinational tech firm

**Listen:** At Intel, Shaema Shazleen Katib says the findings resonate with her experience in a large tech enterprise: "There can be situations where content has changed in messaging and creative appeal, simply because there are too many people involved."

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"If nobody else had to sign off our content, the results would be a lot better."



“

**Interference from management who want content to sell, sell, sell.**

CMO, tech enterprise, Europe

# AND GUESS WHAT?

# IT LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE RIGHT.

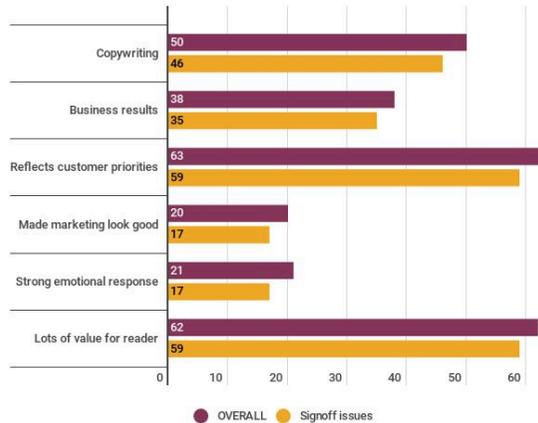
The results do show that marketers who believe their signoff process makes results worse are actually less happy with their content outcomes.

Compared to the average, respondents who agreed with the statement were less likely to be proud of their best content:

- quality of writing (-8%)
- business results (-8%)
- customer priority alignment (-6%)
- marketing prestige (-15%)
- emotional impact (-19%)
- value for reader (-5%)

Signoff issues affect content results

What is it about your best content that makes you proud?



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Notably, the greatest proportional impact is on the content's ability to resonate emotionally with the reader – a clear sign that traditional signoff processes could be preventing B2B content from evolving to a more human approach.

Potentially, this could itself harm B2B brands' ability to differentiate their own content in a crowded market.

“

Convoluting targets and goals for each piece. Key internal stakeholders with contradictory targets, unwilling to compromise or even communicate.

Marketing manager (media), UK

**Listen:** Doug Kessler says the finding is "heartbreaking", and asks: "Who's gonna fix it, if not us?"

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# Interfering stakeholders

Lack of alignment on content. Stakeholders  
who think they're marketers.

# 86% OF B2B MARKETERS EXPERIENCE STAKEHOLDER INTERFERENCE.

More than half say it's a big problem.

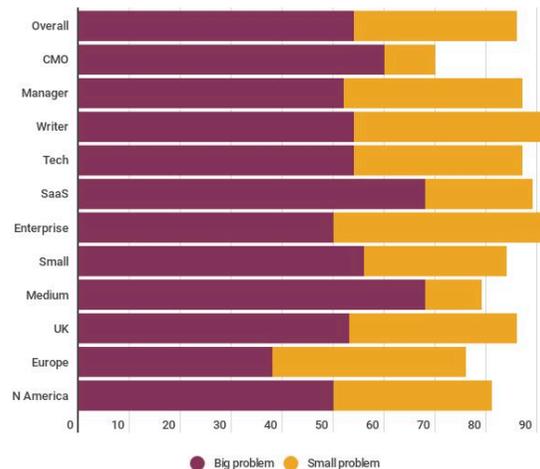
“ I'm hired to write great copy. I do. The technical MD clearly knows best though, and needs to rewrite everything a million times just to grow his ego and make marketing feel like shit.

SaaS content writer, UK

In B2B, it seems everybody thinks they're a marketer and everyone will have an opinion on the content you create. 86% of respondents say it's an obstacle to making good content; for 54%, it's a big problem.

The issue is widespread, with particular challenges in medium-sized businesses and SaaS (where it's a big problem for 68%).

Who experiences stakeholder interference?



“ I've had many projects drag on far, far longer than they needed to because we had to have 6+ stakeholders weigh in. We revise according to their feedback and put it in front of them again, only to have them find new issues or suggest something entirely different that now they're excited about and want to see.

Marketing manager (manufacturing), North America

**It's not just annoying...** Respondents who said stakeholder interference is a big problem are 26% less likely to be proud of their content's business results.

# STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT IS THE HOLY GRAIL.

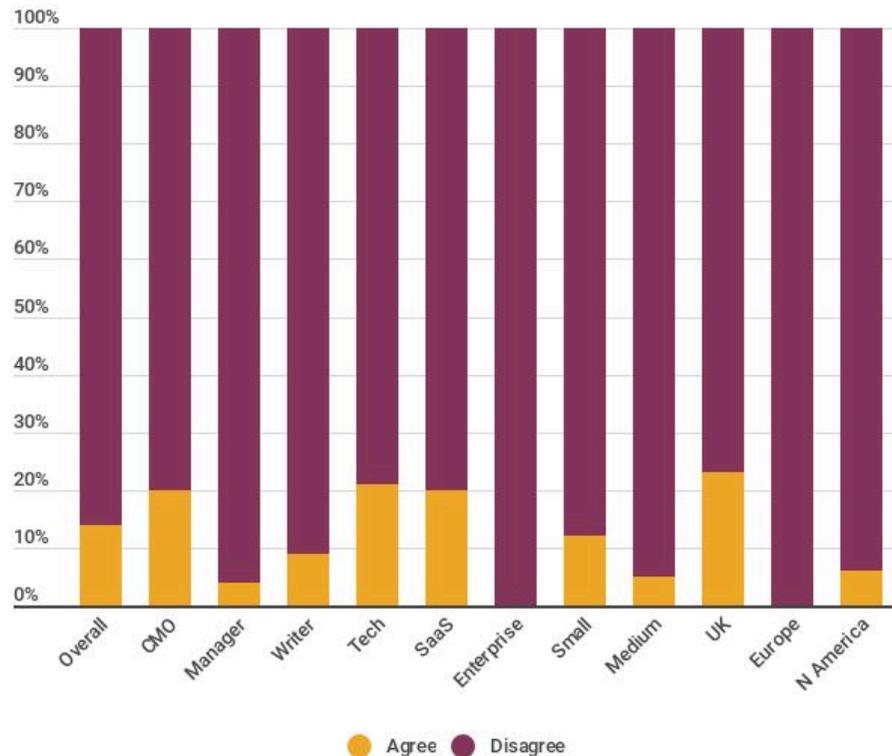
No wonder interference is such a problem. Just 14% said everyone in their organisation agrees on what good content is.

In large enterprises and on mainland Europe, it's 0%.

Without a clear, agreed standard defining what good content looks like, it's inevitable that stakeholders will go beyond their remit, and start to micromanage copywriting, strategy, messaging and design until they see something that suits their own personal taste.

So we asked Doug Kessler for his view on that.

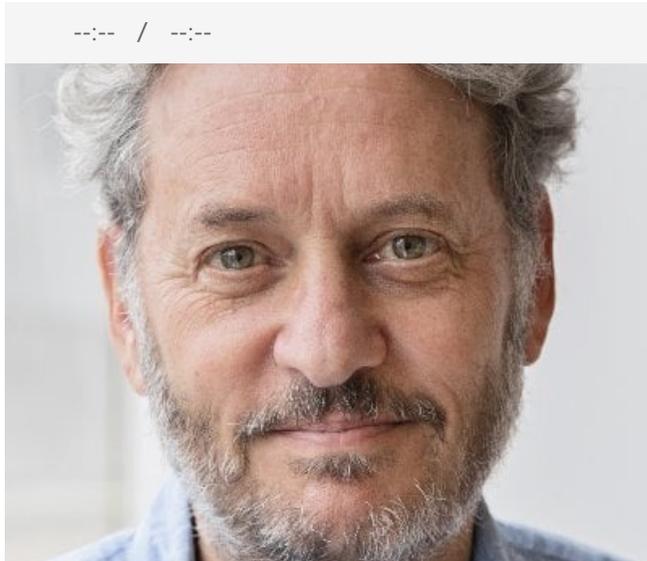
"In my organisation, everybody agrees on what good content is."



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## INSIGHT: DOUG KESSLER ON STAKEHOLDER ALIGNMENT



**Doug Kessler** Creative Director, Velocity Partners

**The number one job for marketers now is aligning stakeholders.** Stakeholders are still the big obstacle, and that comes through loud and clear in the research. But maybe there's a sign that people are starting to take that seriously as part of their jobs. I certainly hope so.

“  
**Creating stakeholder alignment is not an obstacle to doing our job. It is our job.**”

Doug Kessler, Creative Director, Velocity Partners

**We've all got great graveyards, full of fantastic ideas that failed.** And we blame the person who killed them – we don't take it on board ourselves.

**The research suggests the more stakeholders are involved, the worse the content is,** and that's probably true. But it may be a reflection of our misuse of our own stakeholders.

**Stakeholders should make stuff better.** A product expert should be able to keep us more accurate. Salespeople should be able to help us find things that resonate with prospects. So the fact that we don't feel that's true, is, I think, a fundamental symptom of misalignment.

**If we can get aligned on strategy** and what great content looks like, the rest should fall into place. And we may find that stakeholder involvement becomes a positive thing.

**Admit that the work of creating alignment is part of the job.** Don't bring strategies, tactics, or ideas for approval until you've got solid alignment from everyone. Until that work is done, the chances of you sending up a clay pigeon, and having everyone miss their shot, are pretty slim.

**Take the alignment work outside the daily process** of approval cycles and establish your foundation before you move forward.

“  
**If your stakeholders are not in alignment, nothing is possible. And if they are, almost anything is.**”

Doug Kessler, Creative Director, Velocity Partners

# Limited resources

Budget challenges. The impact of cheap content. Balancing quantity and quality.

# 87% OF B2B MARKETERS SAY BUDGET IS A PROBLEM.

Almost 1 in 2 (49%) say it's a "big problem", and 80% face a trade-off between content quality and quantity.

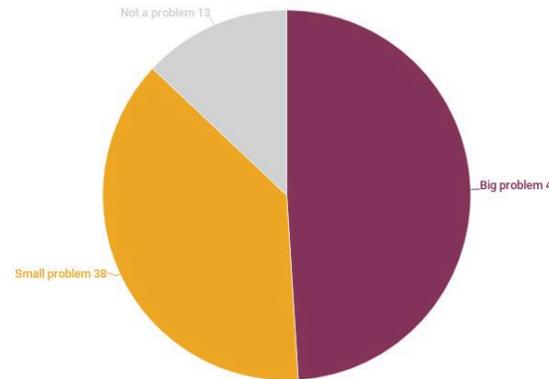
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Senior management doesn't have an f'ing clue and still sees all marketing as cost, not investment.

Marketing manager, law firm, UK

It's no shock that limited resources appears among the top content obstacles. The surprise is that it only appears at #3.

Are limited marketing resources a problem?



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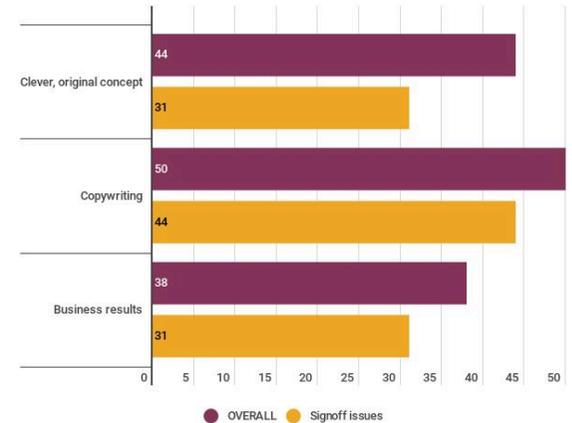
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## CHEAP CONTENT HURTS BUSINESS RESULTS.

The comparative lack of angry verbatim quotes might show that this is not seen as an important issue for debate. But it's worth pointing out that marketers who are less constrained by budgets are also happier with their content results.

How budget affects content results

What is it about your best content that makes you proud? (Budget "big problem" v overall)



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The survey suggests that budget constraints are reflected in a lack of originality and writing quality... and that this harms business results.

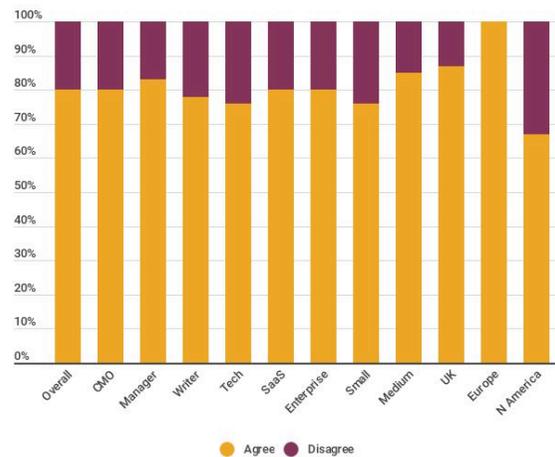
Respondents who said resources are a "big problem" are 18% less likely to be proud of their content's business results.

## INSIGHT: SHAEMA SHAZLEEN KATIB ON BALANCING QUALITY AND QUANTITY



**Shaema Shazleen Katib** Content Marketing and Automation Analyst, Intel

"There's always a trade-off between creating enough content, and keeping quality high."



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**I was surprised** that all the respondents from Europe – and most of them in the UK – feel there's a trade-off between creating enough content and keeping quality high.

**High-quality content is necessary** to maintain the audience's interest, and build a strong online reputation.

**A quantity of content is necessary too**, to ensure you're communicating enough with all your audiences.

**“The most successful marketers are those who find a balance between creating enough content and keeping quality high.”**

Shaema Shazleen Katib, Content Marketing and Automation Analyst, Intel

**The most successful marketers manage to find that balance.** It takes a lot of careful planning and organisation to make sure the balance between the elements is just right.

**We need to keep trying to innovate** our creative appeal, or messaging, as our competitors grow stronger. We've got to keep evolving to make sure that we remain the best in the industry.

# Too much work

Workloads evenly spread. Lack of time prevents innovation. Making room for creativity.

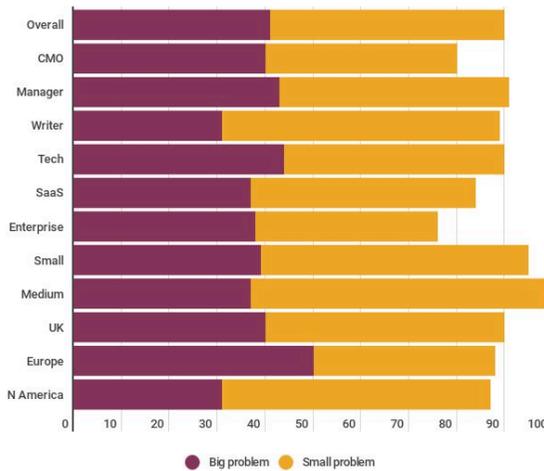
# 9 OUT OF 10 B2B MARKETERS SAY WORKLOAD GETS IN THE WAY OF GREAT CONTENT.

But most only class it as a "small problem".

Too much work and not enough time seems to go with the territory. But does it prevent innovation?

The issue seems to be roughly equal across all job roles, locations and company types. Everybody noticed it, but few seemed particularly worried.

How much of a problem is your workload?



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Workload is slightly more of a serious problem for European respondents, marketing managers, and marketers in tech companies. Content creators and American respondents have an easier time.

But importantly, workload does have an effect on content. The research suggests the need to get stuff done leaves little time for creative ideas.

“

The marketing team was growing, but they all had to funnel through a tiny content team that was being pulled every which way. We were constantly asked to check emails, event invites, flyers, presentations, the whole lot. Content is more than just the team's writers and grammar experts, so give them the space and resource to do their job.

B2B content writer, UK

## Too busy to innovate?

Respondents who cited workload as a "big problem" were 25% less likely to say their best content had a clever, original concept.

## INSIGHT: MAT HARPER ON MAKING ROOM FOR IDEAS



**Mat Harper** EMEA Marketing Chief of Staff, Palo Alto Networks

“

**I see people stop in the idea creation phase, because it's near impossible to justify an idea that came naturally. There's no point in starting.**

Mat Harper, EMEA Marketing Chief of Staff, Palo Alto Networks

**The idea phase of content creation is brilliant.** I get to dive into a project I'm passionate about. But soon it gets a reputation, and suddenly it's like all these people are putting gambling chips on what you're creating.

**As the stakes get higher,** ideas get interrogated. You need to predict the business benefit, or the pipeline, and justify yourself on all these levels, which is not where the idea came from. It's demotivating.

**Creative content leads to better engagement,** but it's not necessarily easy to measure that.

**Creativity can be realistic,** but a lot comes down to performance. Palo Alto Networks is a hyper-growth company, and in my early years there was a lot of freedom to be creative, because we were hitting our number and exceeding it. As the numbers get bigger, that's more difficult.

**You can build space to be creative.** There's one manager here who doesn't like job titles; your role is based on an outcome, and how you get there is up to you. So you can come up with an idea, and go and create the content.

“

**Marketeers are always trying to justify their place in the company, so it's difficult to spend time on something that isn't easily measurable.**

Mat Harper, EMEA Marketing Chief of Staff, Palo Alto Networks

# Internal politics

Unco-operative departments. Treat internal contacts like customers.

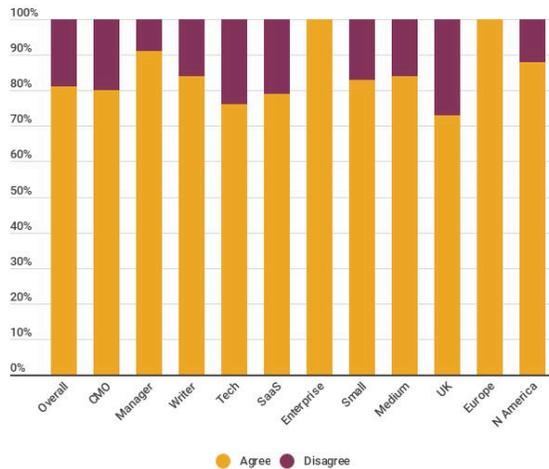
# 86% HAVE A PROBLEM WITH DEPARTMENTAL CO-OPERATION.

Creating great B2B content takes a village. Other departments are key to getting customer and product insights. But 41% say that's a big problem.

“It's not just senior marketers who are in the way anymore. Sometimes, it's everybody else.”

Doug Kessler, Creative Director, Velocity Partners

"I sometimes have to fight hard to publish content I'm happy with."



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As Doug Kessler points out, senior marketers need to fight just as hard as everyone else.

Co-operation matters. Marketers can't produce content in a vacuum, and this is born out in the results. Respondents reporting a big problem with co-operation see worse outcomes: concepts, writing, feedback, business results and customer alignment are all below average.

“Lack of interest or help from other departments that could actually really improve our content. Marketing is at the bottom of the list and they don't realise its importance for the business performing well.”

IT marketing manager, UK

## Customer insights need co-operation

Marketers who have a big problem with internal departments are 24% less likely to produce content that reflects customers' priorities.

## INSIGHT: MAUREEN BLANDFORD TREATS INTERNAL COLLEAGUES LIKE PROSPECTS.



**Maureen Blandford** VP of Marketing, Community Brands

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**Everyone thinks they're a marketer, so I use sales techniques, and ask questions.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

**In most cultures, it's challenging to work with colleagues in other functional areas.** I don't think I can code better than the software developers or do F&I better than the CFO; that's not a thing. But everyone thinks they can do marketing.

**I treat internal stakeholders like customers and prospects.** I anticipate their objections, and what their values are. I'm never going to pitch our Head of Sales on some fancy-schmancy thing I want to do, or talk about colours. I'll ask about her conversion rates, and where she wants to do better. Then I'll frame projects to her business objectives.

**I've worked for five tech companies in Europe and the US**, and the experience is exactly what Harvard Business School would say. There's a huge difference in working with teams who are collaborative, and who trust. The work and the results are both much stronger when the leaders actually know how to lead, than when they're micromanaging jerks.

**When I'm mentoring colleagues, I tell them we're planting seeds.** The first or second seed you plant may not grow or sprout ideas in their minds, but after a couple they start to understand your perspective.

“

**I can tell you hands down: results follow great leadership.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

# Access to customers

Customer viewpoints a priority. Customer voice  
and content performance.

# 72% SAY THE CUSTOMER'S VIEWPOINT IS ESSENTIAL.

# (BUT 78% SAY ACCESS IS A PROBLEM.)

Across the board, B2B marketers say that the customer's view is the most important part of content.

Reader value (62%) and alignment with customer priorities (63%) are the qualities that define their best work.

But talking to customers is a problem.

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I don't always know what terminology to use with the target audience, or what level of knowledge they already have.

B2B content writer, UK

## THE HIDDEN BARRIER TO HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT

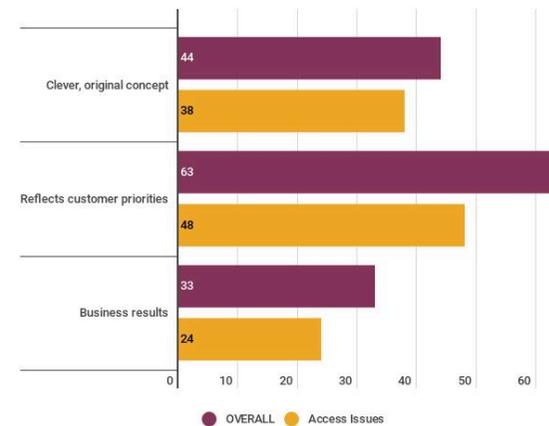
36% reported a big problem with customer contact, saying they don't know what customers want. A further 42% called it a small problem.

The issue is especially acute in large enterprises, and on mainland Europe: a big problem for 62%, and a small problem for a further 38%.

And it has an important impact on results.

The impact of customer access

What is it about your best content that makes you proud? (Access "big problem" v overall)



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Predictably, a lack of customer access reduces marketers' satisfaction in their content's customer alignment (by 24%).

But surprisingly the impact is proportionally greater on business results (27% lower).

## INSIGHT: SHAEMA SHAZLEEN KATIB SHARES EVIDENCE THAT CUSTOMER STORIES WORK



**Shaema Shazleen Katib** Content Marketing and Automation Analyst, Intel

**We believe customer viewpoints are powerful. But what evidence is there?**

Knowing what content works is literally Shaema Shazleen Katib's job. So we asked her what the data shows.

It confirms our respondents are right: the customer's story can make all the difference.

**In the B2B space, certain content formats perform better than others.**

At Intel, we've seen things like infographics, social media content and videos get higher views and interactions.

What's important is finding the right format, length, structure and tone – and that's a matter of knowing your audience well enough.

I've seen so many B2B marketers look at B2C and go, "Why do they get all the fun?" But if it's

“

Our best-performing content has that credibility factor – things like statistics, customer success stories, and testimonies. These things have always performed the best on a global scale.

Shaema Shazleen Katib, Content Marketing and Automation Analyst, Intel

done right, B2B content can certainly match the creativity and appeal of the best of B2C.

**We have a clear standard of what good content is, based on historical performance.**

These are our safe bets – content pieces we know will always work: for example, case studies.

Our best-performing content has that credibility factor from things like statistics, customer success stories, and testimonies.



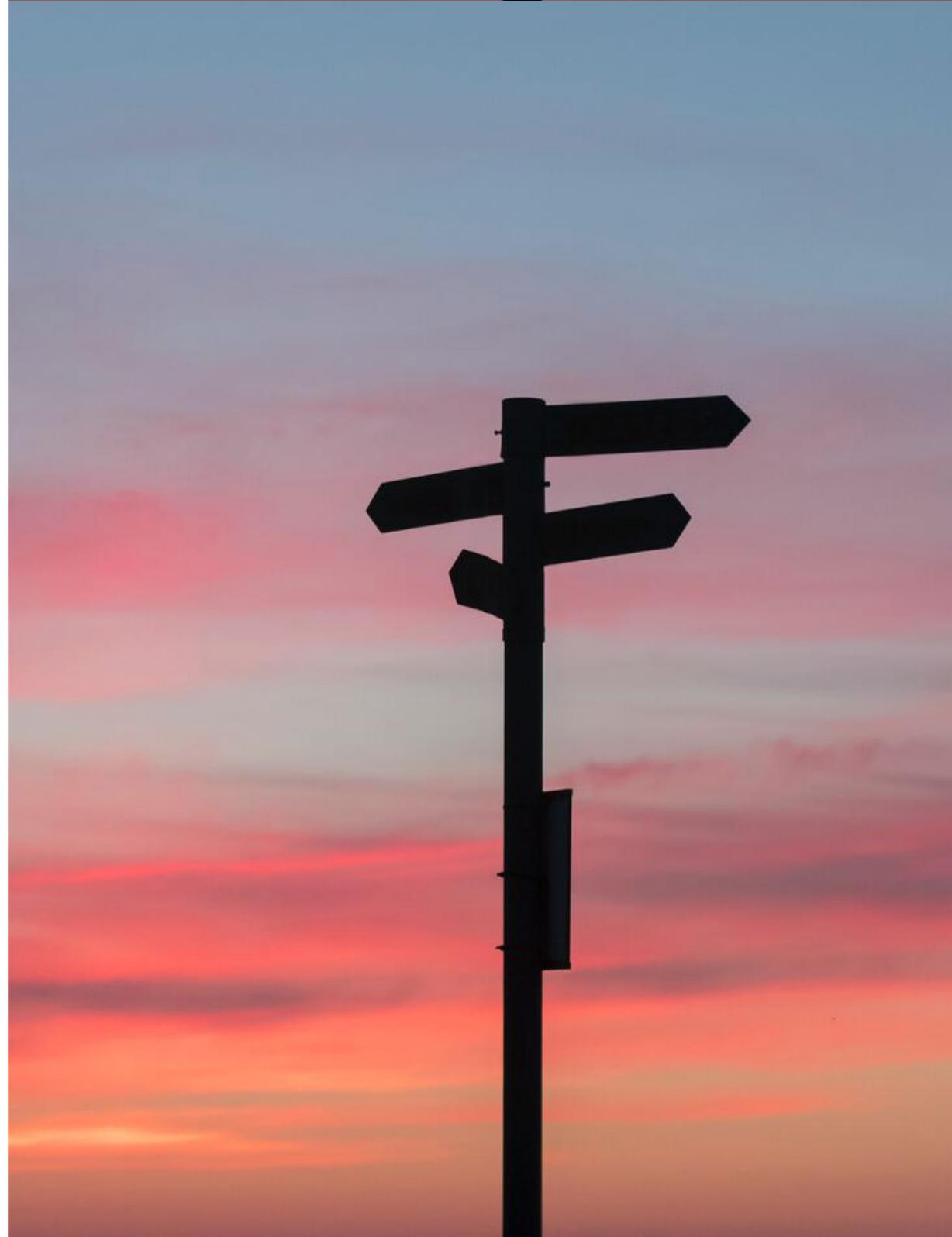
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# What can we do about it?

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6 suggestions to help you  
overcome B2B content's big  
challenges.



# SO MUCH FOR PROBLEMS.

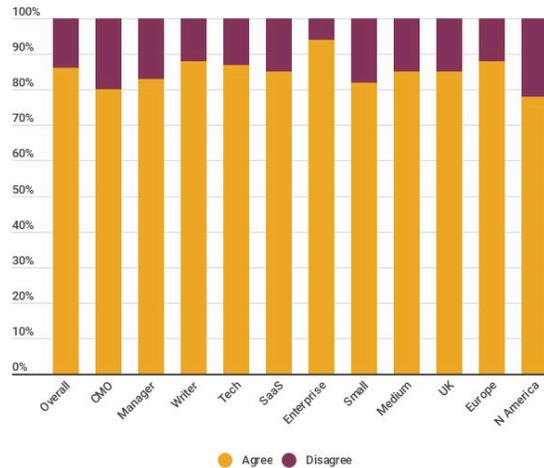
# WHAT ABOUT SOLUTIONS?

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Content is not understood (beyond "chucking up a few blog posts"). So it's not valued – and neither are its creators. This doesn't stop everyone having an opinion, however, despite not being able to actually create, plan, implement or measure content themselves.

Communications manager (business insurance) UK

"Great content makes the marketing team look good."



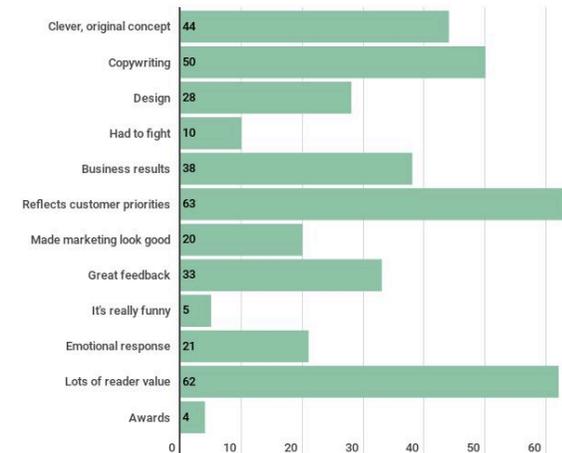
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Ultimately, all six barriers come down to one thing: marketing has yet to win the respect and trust it needs.

Hence: departments are reluctant to give their time and customers details. Budgets and headcount are squeezed. And everyone thinks it's OK to dictate what marketing should do.

What is it about your best content that makes you proud?



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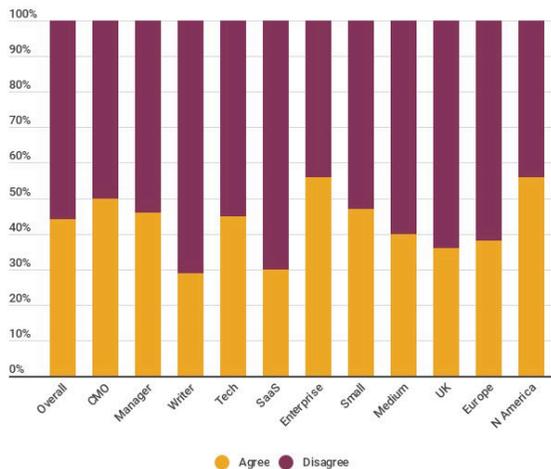
If you're an ambitious content marketer, that's a vicious circle. 86% agree that great content can help to win friends and influence people, but only 20% are currently able to produce content that actually does so.

In the next couple of pages, we'll explore six ideas that might help you break that cycle.

## IDEA #1: DEFINE GREAT CONTENT BY ITS RESULTS.

The best content is the most effective.

"The best content usually gets the best results."



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“ There shouldn't be this tension between the well-crafted, beautiful content and the effective content. If we don't start by defining great content as that which has the most impact, we're never going to succeed.

Doug Kessler, Creative Director, Velocity Partners

**Doug Kessler says:** "For most of my career, the status of marketing in B2B was deservedly low. People felt empowered to weigh in because marketing hasn't been that accountable – and that's changing fast.

But there's something in the research that concerns me, and I think it contributes to the problem. And it's the idea that great content is a different thing than effective content.

Roughly 50% don't agree with your statement,

"The best content usually gets the best results". Well, for me it's a definition issue: the best content *is* that which gets the best results; that's what we're here for.

Our deep belief is that smart, useful, meaningful, intelligent, well-crafted content works better than lame, middle-of-the-road, timid stuff. We prove it over and over when we're measuring our clients' results.

If we can start by defining great content as that which has the most impact, it becomes a lot easier to align people – because what's great, what's effective, and what's wonderful should really be the same thing."

**Radix adds:** For early-funnel content, it's important to think carefully about what success looks like, and how you measure that. Otherwise you can create content aimed at what's easy to measure, rather than what really achieves your goals.

## IDEA #2: CHANGE THE CONVERSATION WITH DATA AND A/B TESTS.

Don't bring opinions to a data fight.

**Shaema Shazleen Katib says:** "At Intel, we often A/B test stuff, whether it's creative or just subject lines. So we know what kind of tone and messaging excites the audience's interest, and what they interact with most.

It's a test-and-learn approach: you keep testing to see what the audience likes, and implement that in your future cycles of content.

I'd like to think that changes the conversation with stakeholders. We feed the results back, so the results are reflected in the next discussion about that type of content, from a creative or messaging standpoint. We've had some success, but when you're starting with a blank slate it's more difficult."

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**We test to see what the audience likes, and feed those results back to stakeholders.**

Shaema Shazleen Katib, Content Marketing and Automation Analyst, Intel

**Radix adds:** If you can stay away from subjective discussions with stakeholders about content quality, they're less likely to interfere.

Instead, try to show them evidence that a certain approach is proven to work; it stops the conversation being your opinion versus theirs.

(Because every stakeholder thinks they're an expert in marketing.)

“

**An outstanding piece of content (that actually brings commercial value, other than the number of likes) is increasingly hard to quantify. All evidence is qualitative, which makes it difficult to argue positive performance even in the best of circumstances. Creating something truly fantastic – that drives conversion – that's the golden goose. And it's always hard. It's always a struggle.**

Tech CMO, UK

## IDEA #3: DEVELOP AN OBJECTIVE STANDARD.

For example, a quality checklist.

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**Take the work of alignment outside the daily process of approvals cycles. Establish your foundation before you even move forward.**

Doug Kessler, Creative Director, Velocity Partners

Most of your stakeholders are probably used to dealing with clear quality standards for products and services.

If you can establish something similar for your content, then approval hopefully becomes more manageable; you're working to a clear set of pass/fail criteria, rather than a rolling free-for-all.

Seek agreement on the list before you start.

(This is easier if you have already explored ideas 1 and 2. When you have established what kind of content is most effective, and can support that with data, it gives an obvious rationale for your standard.)

If you can get alignment around a content checklist, you should have fewer last-minute changes. You can also use the list to keep stakeholders focused where they add value.

Sadly, it's not a silver bullet. But we've found that having a quality framework does give those conversations more structure, and makes them easier to manage.

**Bonus tip:** Where possible, use objective measures, like word count, sentence length, or [Flesch-Kincaid readability score](#).

This stops you from having conversations criticising someone's writing style. Instead you can say objective things like: "This is an F-K grade 15, we need it to be more like a 10."

## Want a head-start on your checklist? Steal ours...

At Radix, we work with a [15-point content quality checklist](#).

You're more than welcome to purloin our list, and use it as the starting point for one of your own.

[Grab the checklist here](#)

## What would help you more?

- Objective quality standards
- Materials to give stakeholders

[See results](#)

## IDEA #4: BUILD BRIDGES (DON'T ASK FOR ANYTHING).

Invest in relationships outside content.

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**When I meet stakeholders, I already know what their hair is on fire about.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

Sometimes, one or two friendly faces in key departments are all you need.

But, as our experts have pointed out, those relationships are best nurtured outside of the content approval process.

Instead, try to take an active interest when you're not asking for their time. Find out what their concerns and goals are. See where marketing can help, without asking for anything back.

As the old song says, "It's not just sentimental"; those initial conversations are about more than brownie points. You're scouting.

In any department, there'll be a variety of characters and attitudes. Sure, sales as a whole might dislike marketing, and your engineers might think it's all spin. But often, you'll find one or two individuals who are a little more open-minded. These are your bridgehead.

Once you have befriended a few experts in other teams, you have a way in – for example, to sense-check key content, introduce you to customers, or give you just enough co-operation to test new content ideas, and prove what works.

Ideally, you can prime the pump, and start to create a little of the content that wins marketing new friends in turn.

But be careful not to overload your new friends. Crucially, their colleagues will be watching; you want them to see how easy you are to work with, and how much kudos (or how many leads) they could get as a result.

## Who are Radix Communications anyway – and why do you care about all this?

That's a fair question.

Radix is a specialist B2B writing agency. We write marketing content for B2B tech brands, and we wanted to know about the obstacles our customers face.

(Selfishly, we also love writing ambitious, high-quality work, and we figure the kind of person who reads this might also be the kind who'd send us that kind of brief.)

If you'd like to know more, drop us a line at [\*\*info@radix-communications.com\*\*](mailto:info@radix-communications.com).

## IDEA #5: BUILD A CONTROLLED SPACE FOR CREATIVITY.

What's an experiment and what's not?

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**Unless we try new things, how will we innovate? We've got to keep evolving to remain the best in the industry.**

Shaema Shazleen Katib, Content Marketing and Automation Analyst, Intel

It's not realistic to divorce marketing content from expectations around results. If marketing wants to be taken seriously, it needs to become more accountable, not less.

But given marketers' tight workloads, this leads to a pressure to focus on tried-and-trusted methods – the "safe bets" Shaema spoke about.

The opportunity cost of that decision is all the great new ideas you didn't try that could have been better than business as usual. Maybe they would have attracted more attention, or generated more leads, precisely *because* they were different.

At some point, you need to try new things.

The problem is, this is an easy argument to make in abstract. It's much harder in the moment, when you have deadlines and budgets and impatient stakeholders to deal with.

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**Corporate rules are inflexible, so every piece of content must fit into a predefined template (even if you are trying to create something new).**

B2B Tech Marketing Director, North America

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**It's difficult to talk about the business results of creativity. You have to test, and get empirical data to say.**

Mat Harper, EMEA Marketing Chief of Staff, Palo Alto Networks

That's why it's important to define a space for experiments and testing in your marketing plan. But to maintain credibility, you also need control:

1. Don't try things at random; be clear about what idea you're testing, and why
2. Try to encourage ideas that answer a defined problem
3. Be rigorous about collecting the results

Start small (for example, subject lines or headline formats), collect data, and build from there. As Mat Harper says: "You can build space in an organisation to have creative freedom."

## IDEA #6: IF ALL ELSE FAILS, BE PREPARED TO LEAVE.

Life's too short to do work you hate.

**Maureen Blandford says:** "Most cultures are challenging; it's never easy to work with colleagues in other functional areas. But some environments are toxic – for example, if the CEO encourages lying and cheating, or they're always hustling and hacking.

If the leadership is belittling and demeaning and arrogant, you're not going to change a culture that toxic. Just get out.

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**I can't tell you how many marketing colleagues I know right now who are in super-painful roles.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

“  
**If the leadership is belittling and demeaning and arrogant, the culture is toxic. Just get out.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

Unfortunately, it's really hard to truly understand a culture until you get there. The important thing is not to feel ashamed about it; you did your best.

Alternatively, you could look for a company where you know someone who can give you the straight scoop.

I can't tell you how many marketing colleagues I know who are in super-painful roles right now. Dealing with crazy CEOs who have unclear priorities, or heads of marketing in Europe for US tech companies who are indicating weird strategies because they don't understand the landscape.

I got some crazy – but really good – advice from a mentor of mine: the first day of your job search is your first day on a job. And for marketers in this climate, my recommendation is to always be networking, and thinking about your next role.

We need to be ready to vote with our feet. And to do that, you have to be continually marketing yourself."

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### Would you switch jobs if you could do better work?

- Absolutely
- Maybe
- No way

See results



**Radix  
Communications**

B2B technology copywriters

# The fightback starts here...

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How to use these results



# YOU HAVE THE EVIDENCE. IT'S TIME TO USE IT.

For starters, let's stop blaming marketers for bad content.

Despite what the content marketing blogs may tell you, B2B marketers know their audience is human. They clearly want to put the customer first. They have plenty of ideas. They're brave.

What they lack is the support from their organisations to execute that content. And that lack of support has a business cost.

Our findings show that every barrier to B2B content comes at a cost. And often, that cost is impaired business results.

We've always known this anecdotally, and because it's common sense. But now, this survey provides the beginnings of some evidence.

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We should be shouting these results from the rooftops. Because if we know that marketers aren't delighted with the work that they're doing, the question then becomes, "why?"

**Because the answer is that next chart: what's getting in the way, and I can attest to that being the reality for most marketers.**

Maureen Blandford, VP of Marketing, Community Brands

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We hope this evidence will help you to change the conversation. We hope you can use these numbers with your stakeholders, as well as in refuting lazy criticism of marketers online. And we hope you'll write blogs of your own.

## Heartfelt thanks...

Huge thanks to our expert commentators, Maureen, Doug, Shaema and Mat, for your time and insights.

Thanks also to everyone who took the time to complete and share the survey.

And thanks to you, for taking the time to read this. We hope you find it helpful.

## FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS...

We don't pretend this report will instantly convince all your stakeholders. But it's a start. If we can help you to create even one piece of content to be proud of, that's a win.

And if you ever need someone to write that content for you? [You know where to find us.](#)

**Thank you, and good luck.**

Thank you for reading

# Barriers to great B2B content 2020

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