



2016

CONTENT MARKETING

PLAYBOOK

SHOOT, SCORE, AND WIN WITH 24 EPIC CONTENT IDEAS

PLAY TO WIN

If you want your content marketing to take your business closer to its goals, it helps to have a game plan – a strategic selection of plays you can rely on to help you beat the competition and score points with your target audience.

Each year, our Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends research reveals which tactics marketers are currently using. And while it's clear that certain platforms and plays are likely to cycle in and out of popularity over time, we've noticed an alarmingly consistent trend that seems to impact nearly all of them: Content marketers are experiencing a large gap between using a tactic and getting effective results from it.

Our newest Playbook aims to help all content marketers better understand the value proposition of content marketing tactics and achieve greater success with their efforts. On the following pages, you'll find:

- ▶ Descriptions of 24 popular content marketing tactics
- ▶ The latest stats on their usage across multiple industry segments
- ▶ Insights that will help you decide whether a given tactic should play a part in your strategic plan
- ▶ Targeted tips to help you optimize your content's performance
- ▶ A best-in-breed example that we hope will inspire you to achieve greater success in the year to come

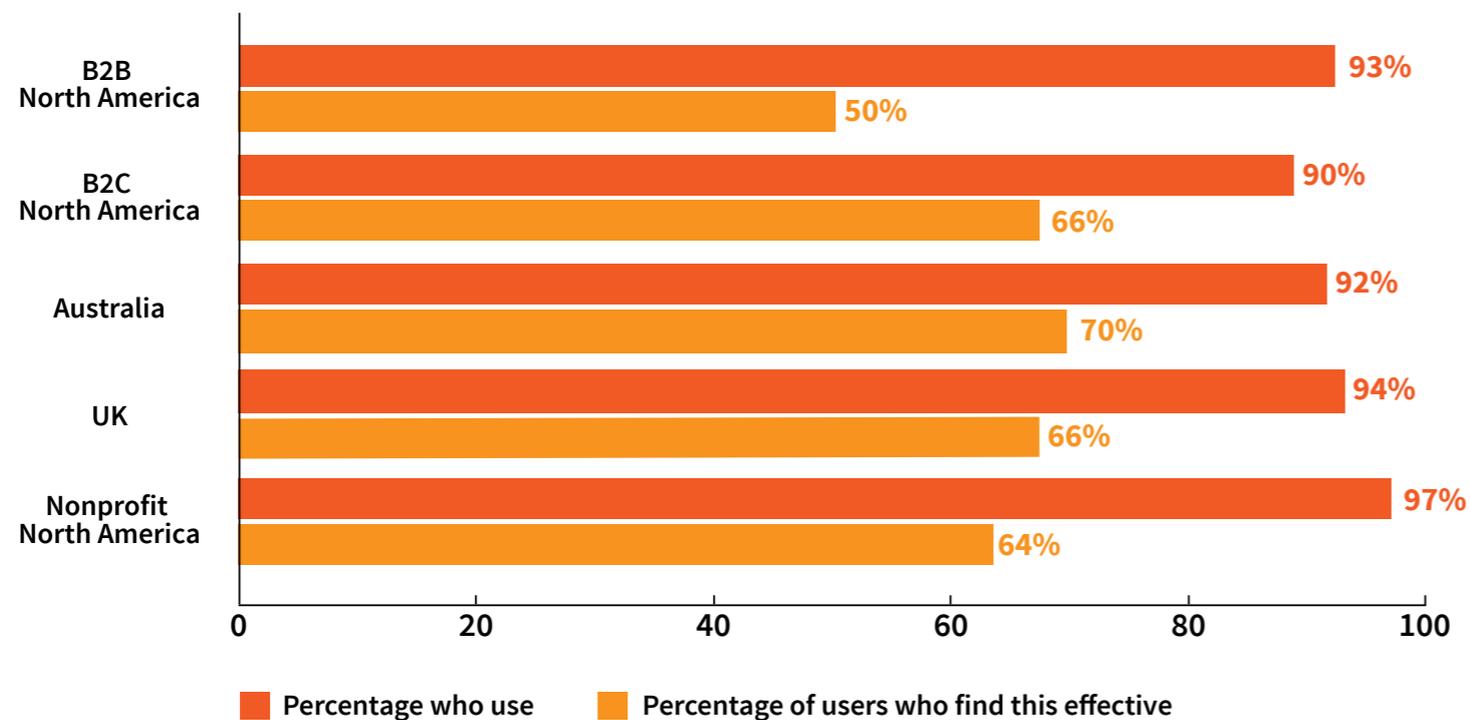
Now, take the court, and learn how to make every content marketing play a winner.

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

THE PLAY:

For the second year in a row, the top tactic content marketers are leveraging is social media content – no surprise, considering how entrenched social networks have become in the lives of consumers and brands alike. No matter what the special interest is, chances are there’s a devoted social community out there somewhere, just waiting for content worthy of their attention – making this channel ideal for engaging them in meaningful, relevant brand conversations.

Content Marketing Play: Social Media Content



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Before planting your brand flag on a particular social playing field, follow these guidelines to make sure your efforts are positioned for optimal content marketing success:

1. **Carefully cultivate your social soapboxes:** Understand the unique characteristics of each social platform you consider working with, and decide on a case-by-case basis whether it's a good fit for your outreach intentions.
2. **Listen and learn:** Spend time joining conversations and building relationships before you start to share your content; and be prepared to join in the banter without sounding uninformed, self-promotional, or out of touch with other members of the social community.
3. **Don't be afraid to get creative:** Instead of just pasting in pieces of your typical business content, try creating something original and less formal, such as a peek behind the scenes at one of your company's social functions, or an informal photo tour of your office facilities.



Case studies that earn extra points:

MINI Answers

MINI USA leverages a variety of content creators and techniques to promote the iconic car brand and its passionate community of drivers. For example, MINI created a series of Instagram videos in which fans can ask questions, and the MINI Cooper S automobile itself offers the answers. Cleverness, humor, and great production quality make this series stand out and provide plenty of content to engage the company's social media followers.

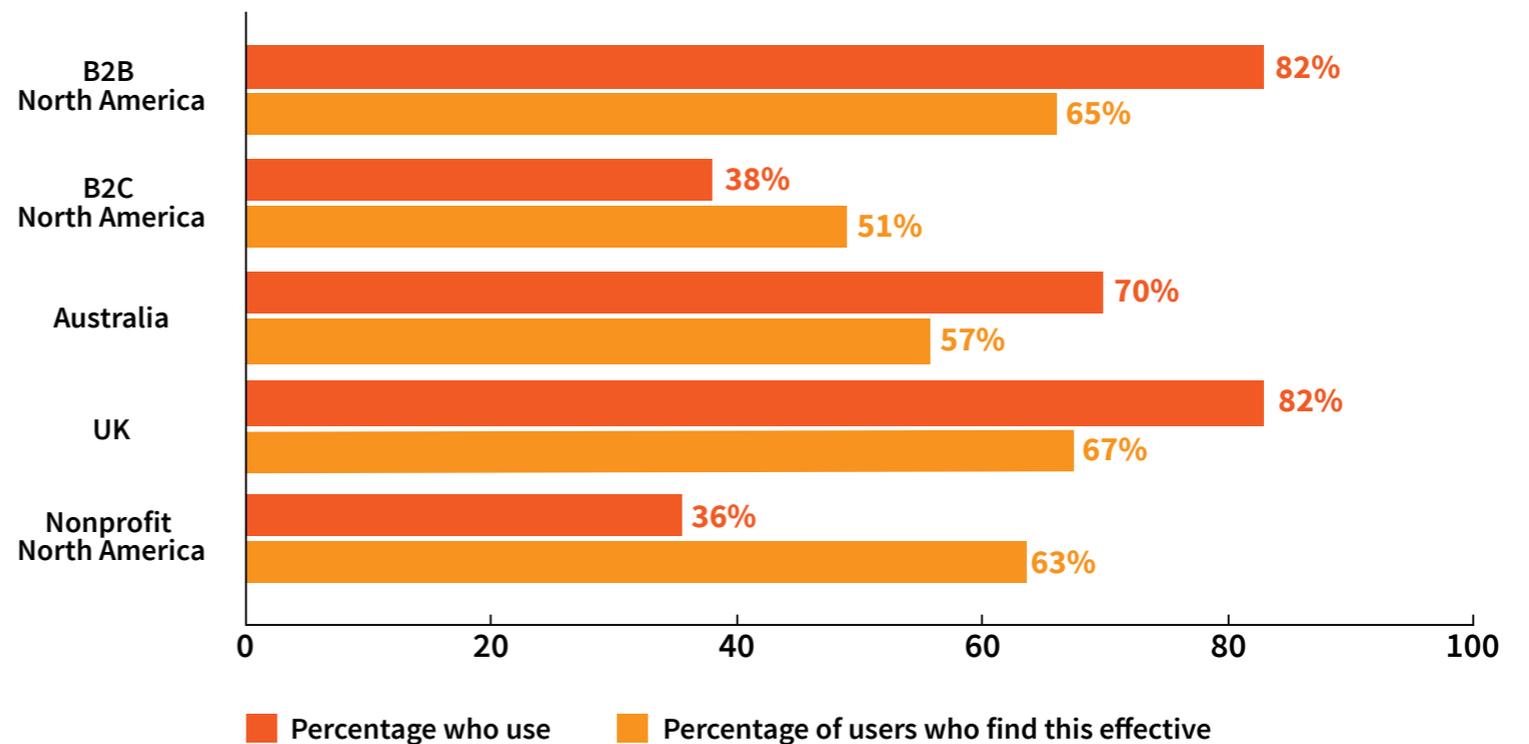
CASE STUDIES

THE PLAY:

Case studies were a marketing mainstay long before the internet was even a twinkle in the eye of Tim Berners-Lee. But despite the maturity of this tactic, there's still a lot of wisdom to be had in leveraging examples of the great work your company has produced. These benefits aren't lost on over 80% of B2B marketers in North America and the UK, as case studies still feature prominently in their content marketing mixes.



Content Marketing Play: Case Studies



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

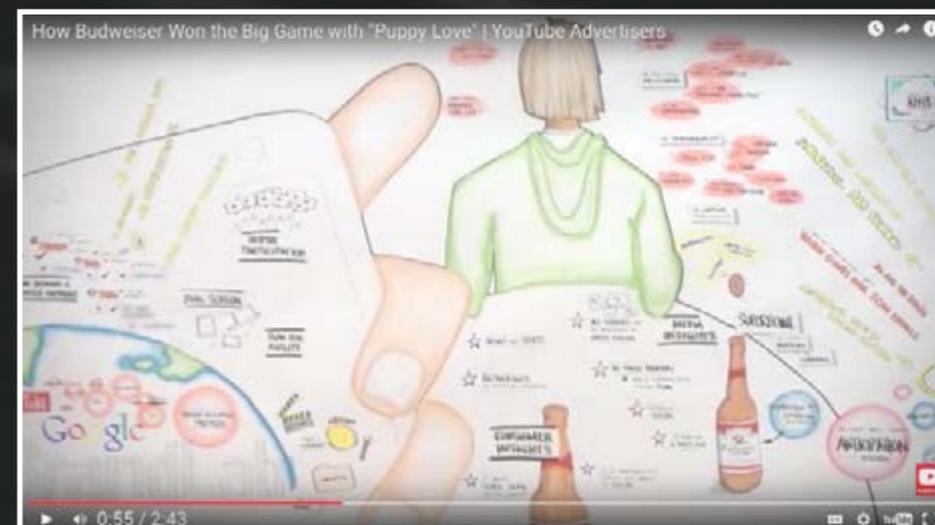
CASE STUDIES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

A good marketing case study not only highlights outstanding work, it can also serve as a teaching tool that gives readers a better understanding of the ways your products and/or services can help them achieve success.

Here are [some tips for making case studies](#) easier to create while also making them more interesting and impactful:

- ▶ **Start by interviewing a real, live person:** Case studies have narrative storytelling value, but need to be rooted firmly in the experience of the customer – something that’s easier to understand if you spend time talking to one.
- ▶ **Use photos or videos:** Multimedia can make your case studies more engaging and give you a way to connect with auditory and visual learners.
- ▶ **Sprinkle in how-to tips:** Instead of just explaining how your customer implemented your solution, offer advice on how others can do the same.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[Think With Google](#)

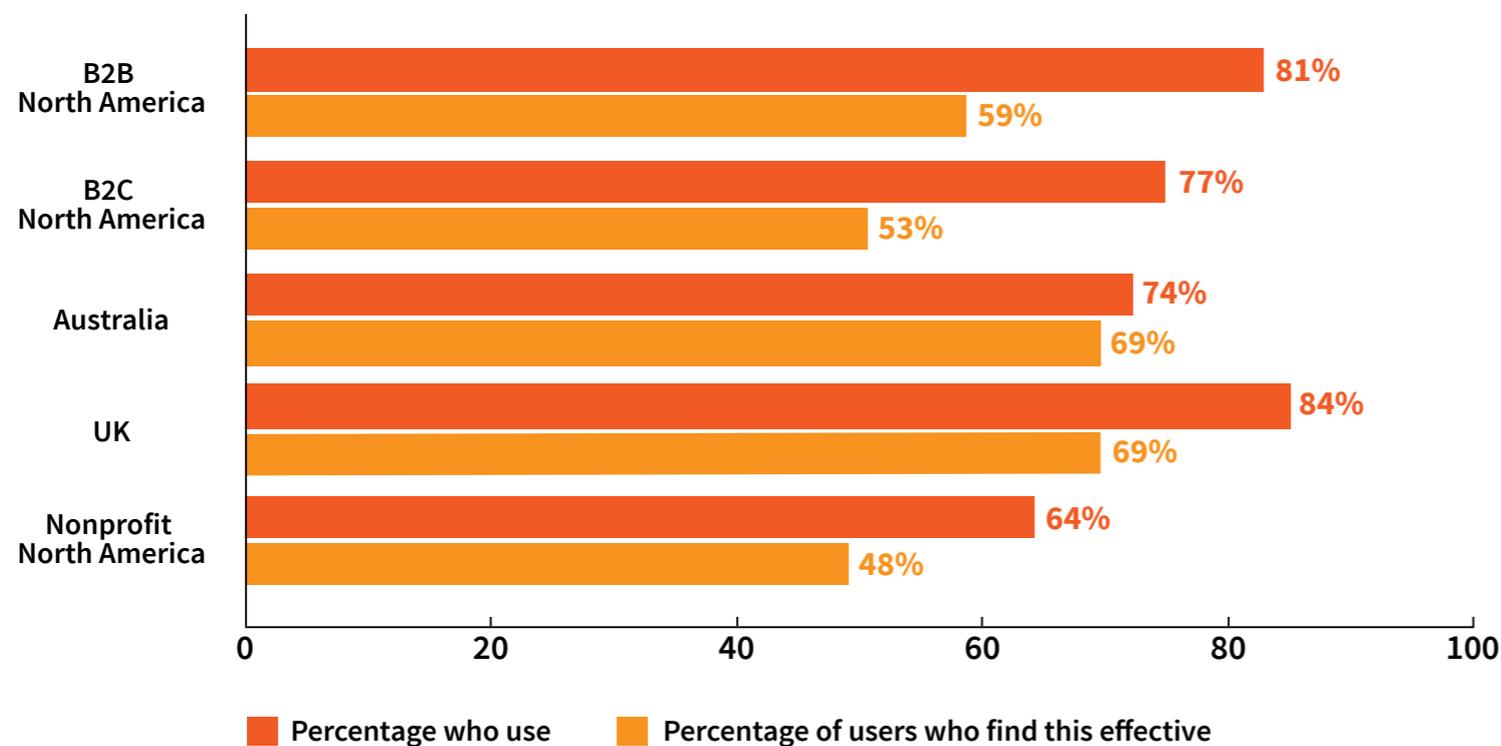
Google has played a role in many of the most innovative marketing campaigns; yet Google itself relies on the tried and true case study to offer testimony to its marketing prowess. With its straightforward approach, Google highlights the need-to-know takeaways of each campaign – its goals, approach, and results – then uses video to take viewers deeper inside the strategy, execution, and other dynamics that led to its success.

BLOGS

THE PLAY:

Blogging is one of the most fundamental points of entry into the content marketing game: It's a versatile technique with a lot of creative possibilities; and although it takes hard work to produce and maintain a successful blog, it doesn't require a lot of complicated equipment or technological know-how to get started. It's also a powerful means of building an audience for your brand and sustaining their interest over time. Perhaps these benefits are why 81% of [B2B marketers](#) in our 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends study say they are blogging as part of their content program, with other sectors reporting similarly high usage rates.

Content Marketing Play: Blogs



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



BLOGS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

While you shouldn't expect today's time-constrained visitors to read every word of your blog posts, the trick is to create content that's intriguing enough to compel them to return, again and again.

Consider these tips from [Neil Patel](#) on how to communicate so that your point comes across whether readers skim, scan, or savor your article:

- ▶ **Write a strong headline** to spark their interest.
- ▶ **Summarize the main point in the beginning.** A lot of people skim the beginning of the article and then fizzle out.
- ▶ **Reinforce your message** with the images you choose to accompany the post.
- ▶ **Restate your points in bulleted or numbered lists** to make it easier for skimmers to absorb the information.
- ▶ **Use subheadings** to emphasize the supporting points of your argument.
- ▶ **Summarize your main point at the conclusion**, for readers who jump right to the end.

A hot wife, two fabulous kids, 14 Rwandan sons and daughters, a cool dog and a crooked federale sent to kill me kind of makes up the Saddleback story. And here's how it happened.



Case studies that earn extra points: [Saddleback Leather](#)

It takes a tough leather company to create a blog full of tender-hearted tales. Focused on topics of interest to founder Dave Munson – like family, philanthropy, solid craftsmanship, and travels he took with his faithful dog, Blue – the Saddleback Leather blog doesn't just talk product, it highlights the aesthetic of adventure and the love of a life well-lived. Not only does this content position Saddleback as a purveyor of high-quality, ethically-sourced leather goods that will help travelers go the distance, it demonstrates just how far its employees will go to live and breathe the causes they support.

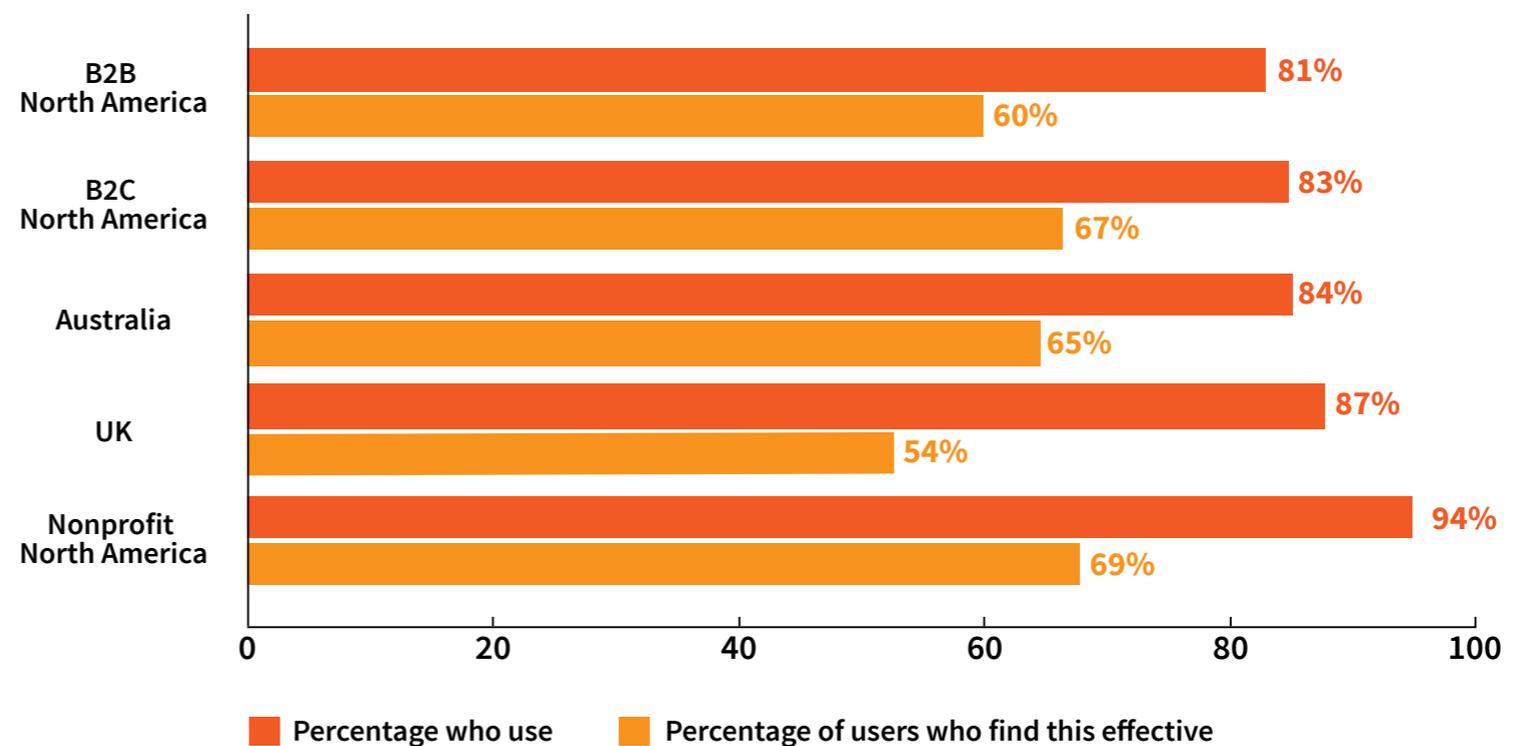
E-NEWSLETTERS

THE PLAY:

Email is an essential structure that supports and strengthens all your other content efforts. It's also one of the best techniques for building a subscriber base – which helps foster deeper engagement and lasting brand loyalty. But, just like any critical system, success with email is tied to proper maintenance and upkeep – if you fail to keep pace as consumption trends shift, even your most faithful followers may start to overlook your e-newsletters in their crowded inboxes, or opt out altogether.



Content Marketing Play: E-Newsletters



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

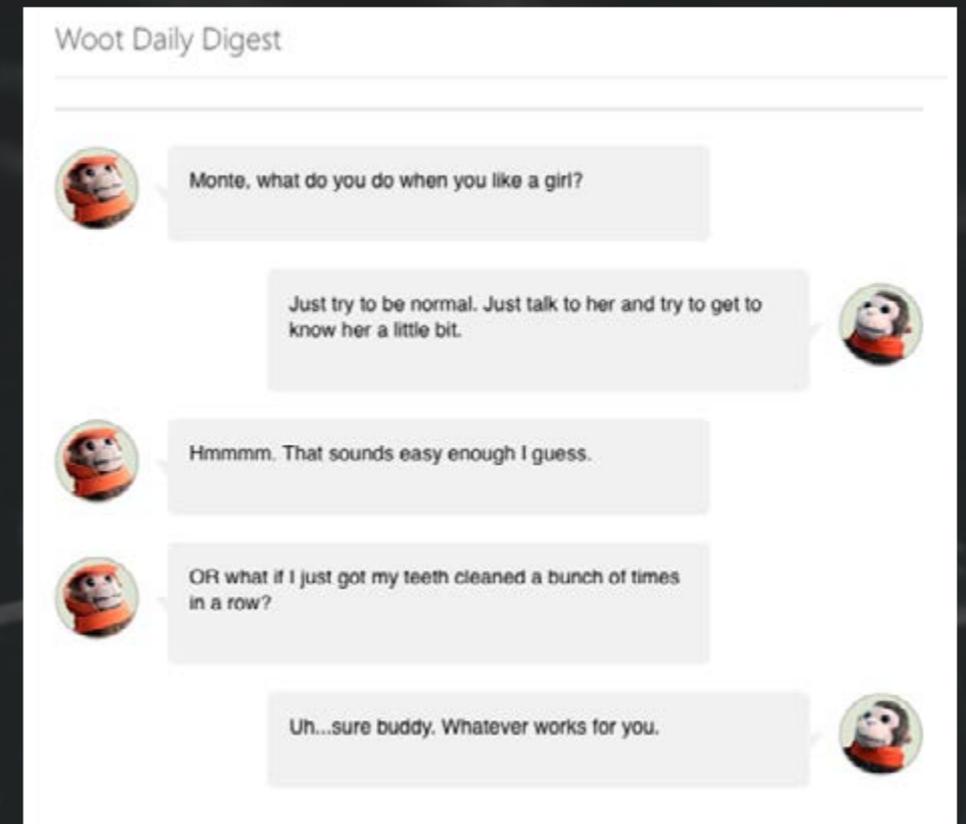
E-NEWSLETTERS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Like blogs, your e-newsletters need to be published consistently and should be customizable to each subscriber's delivery preferences. But it's also a good idea to incentivize reader interest by offering them something of value in exchange for the personal information they provide.

Here are a few ideas for stellar e-newsletters:

- ▶ **Foster a sense of belonging among your readers:** Publish your favorite reader comments, give shout-outs to top customers, or highlight other ways they can get involved in your brand and the community it serves.
- ▶ **Provide exclusive content or benefits that aren't available anywhere else:** Give them access to discounts, downloads, insider-only information, or other special assets and offers.
- ▶ **Use progressive profiling:** Slowly and unobtrusively collect additional data on your subscribers; then, use that information to customize your email experience to better suit their needs and interests.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[Woot! Daily Digest](#)

What makes the content from daily deal site Woot! stand out from the competition? It comes down to one word: monkeys. The company's website and daily newsletter are crawling with them, telling jokes, offering product advice, and adding a bit of humor and personality that transforms each email from a product-focused alert into an entertaining conversation.

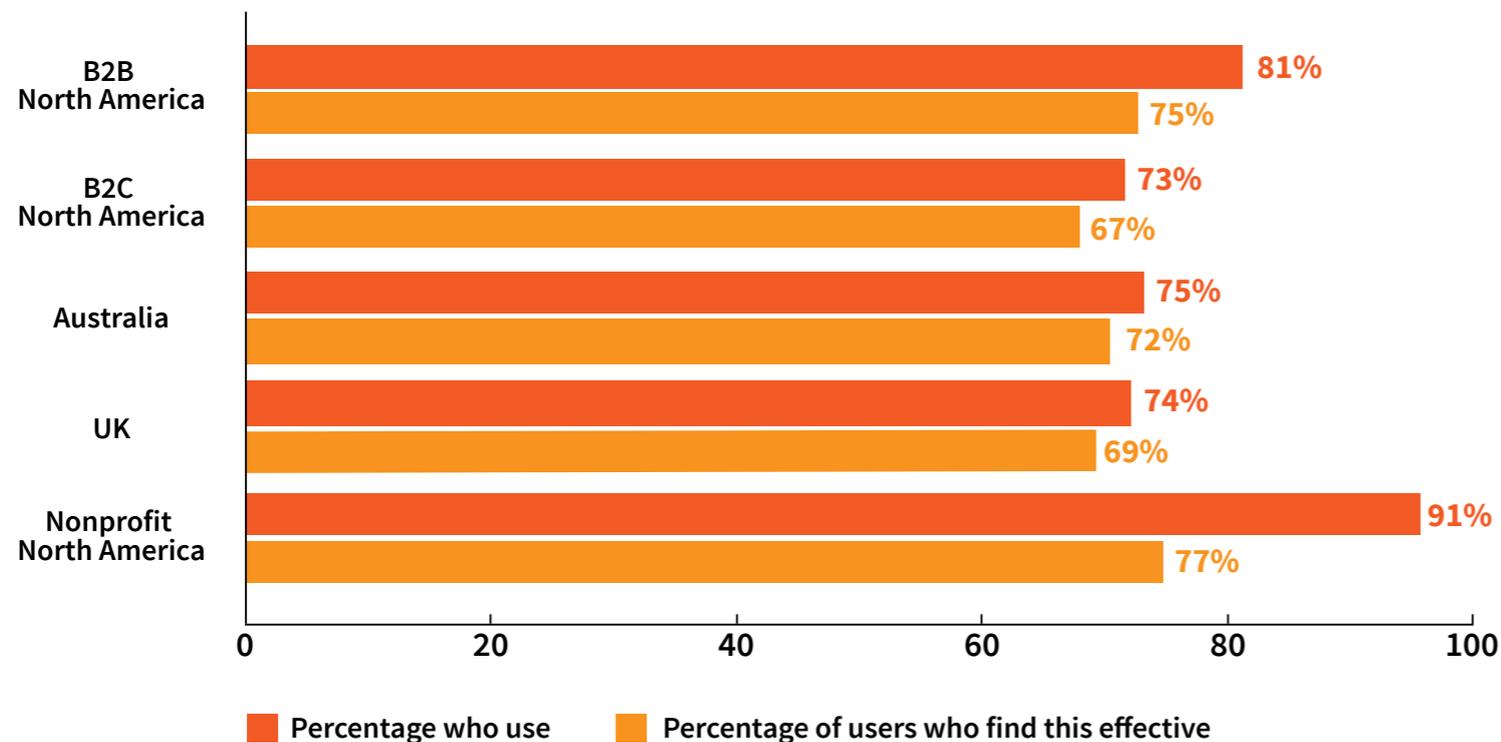
IN-PERSON EVENTS

THE PLAY:

While marketers tend to spend much of their time in cyberspace, there's simply no substitute for providing tangible, memorable experiences IRL (in real life) or engaging in authentic, face-to-face interactions with your audience.

In-person events such as conferences, master classes, networking events, and other live experiences help brands demonstrate their insights and extend their influence while creating a space where like-minded consumers can gather, interact, learn, and further their passions.

Content Marketing Play: In-Person Events



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



IN-PERSON EVENTS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Not only can live events help marketers create real-world value that goes beyond a brand's products and services, they can also serve as a platform for additional online content creation – increasing the impact and relevance of each event and helping keep your business top-of-mind for longer periods of time.

Here are a few tips for transforming events into powerful content generation engines:

- ▶ **Engage prospective attendees online before they arrive.** Share travel tip lists, event maps, mobile apps, or other tools that will get them excited about your event and make the experience easier for them to manage and enjoy.
- ▶ **Find ways to keep the conversation going** after the event takes place, such as publishing photos from your networking events or offering on-demand access to popular sessions
- ▶ **Repurpose conference presentations** into videos, e-books, social media posts, and other forms of content that can help them remember what they've learned, or catch up on what they may have missed.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[Williams-Sonoma Cooking School](#)

At the Williams-Sonoma Cooking School, small groups of students prepare, cook, and share meals together in a fully outfitted kitchen. Open to gourmets of all skill levels, classes range from cooking quick and easy summer meals to crafting a traditional French bistro-style meal. By offering a fun, relaxing, and educational environment in which foodies can master their craft, Williams-Sonoma brings passionate patrons in the door, and sends them away feeling full of culinary inspiration.

Read more: [Live Experiences Reinvent the Way Customers Interact With Brands](#)

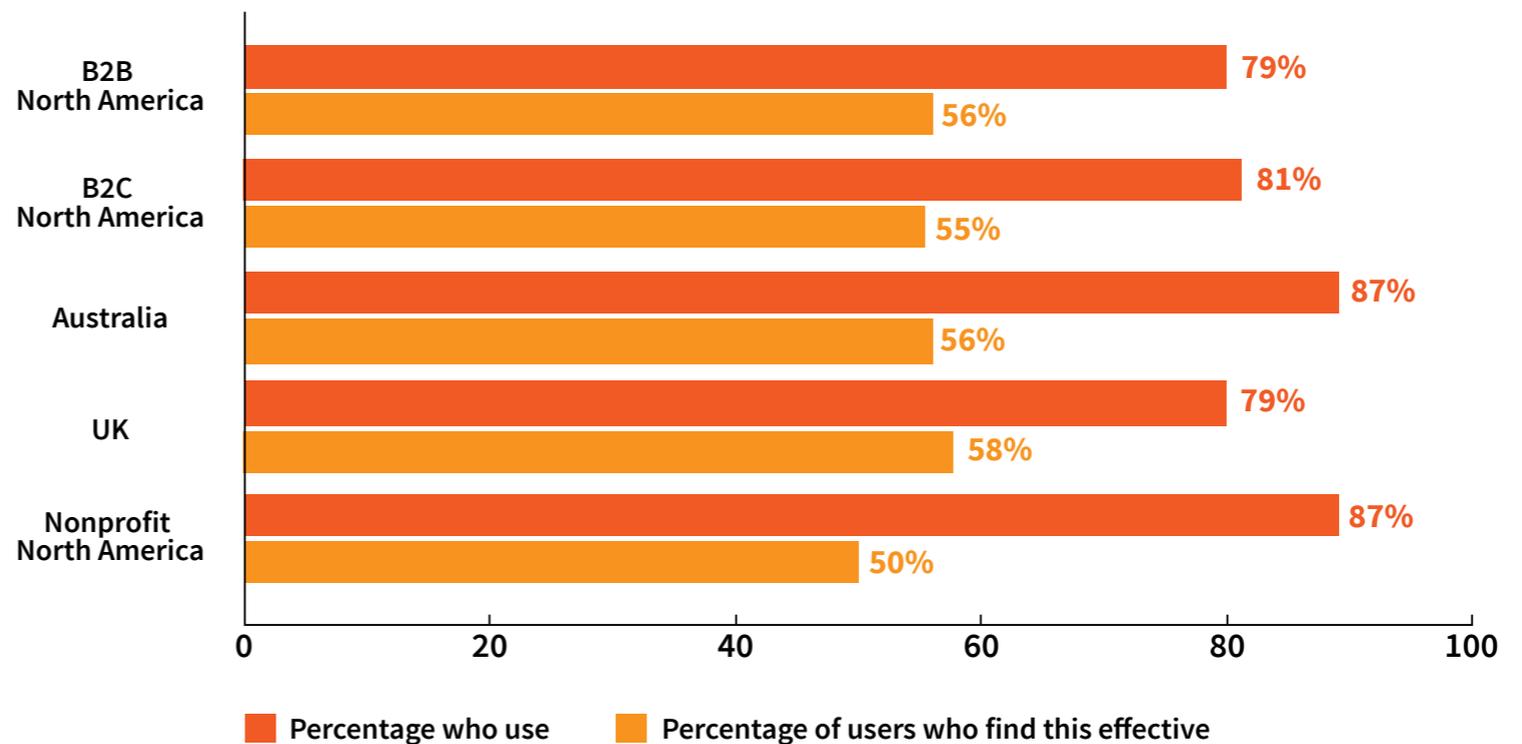
WEBSITE ARTICLES

THE PLAY:

Your website is your home turf – the place where your best content, your brand advantage, and your unique business perspective should all come together to demonstrate your worth to consumers. Every article you publish on your site should reflect the value proposition you offer, and should strive for optimal engagement. Though your site visitors may only represent a small component of your content marketing audience, if you use the platform to deliver a memorable experience, they'll recognize the benefit of spending their precious time with your business.



Content Marketing Play: Website Articles



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

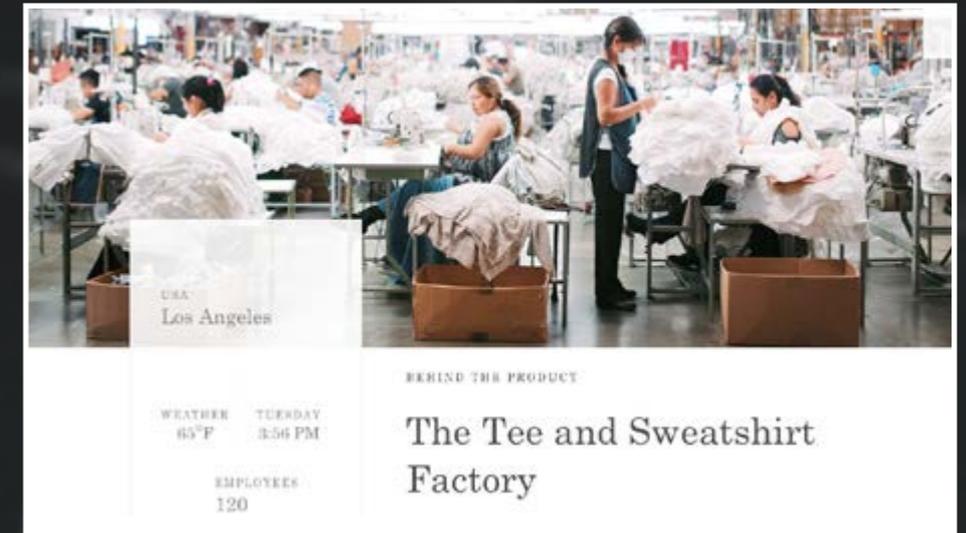
WEBSITE ARTICLES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Using your website articles to tell a fascinating story about your business is a great way to attract the attention of readers. But unless you also have a plan for converting those delighted readers into qualified leads and loyal customers, there will be no happy ending in terms of reaching your marketing goals.

Here are a few tips Bumbl's [Greg Miles suggests](#) for helping your website articles move the needle in the right direction:

- ▶ **Write a compelling call to action:** Opt for more creative and original choices that speak your customers' language.
- ▶ **Add click triggers:** Product ratings, testimonials, or other bits of text that foster trust can reassure visitors about their decision to work with you.
- ▶ **Simplify your lead forms:** Make the process of converting as simple as possible for your customers – even if it means sacrificing some of the information you would like to gather.
- ▶ **Optimize for mobile:** Use responsive article design and streamline your website experience to make it easy for visitors to read your articles, navigate through your site, and take action when working on small screens.



Case studies that earn extra points: [Everlane's Factory Tours](#)

Every item on the Everlane website includes the story about the factory where that particular item of clothing was manufactured. As you read the stories, you'll learn details about how long the factory has been in existence, how Everlane came to work with it, what materials it uses, information about the owner, and how many people work there. It's this type of transparency that helps Everlane's consumers feel confident that they are supporting a company that cares about ethical working conditions.

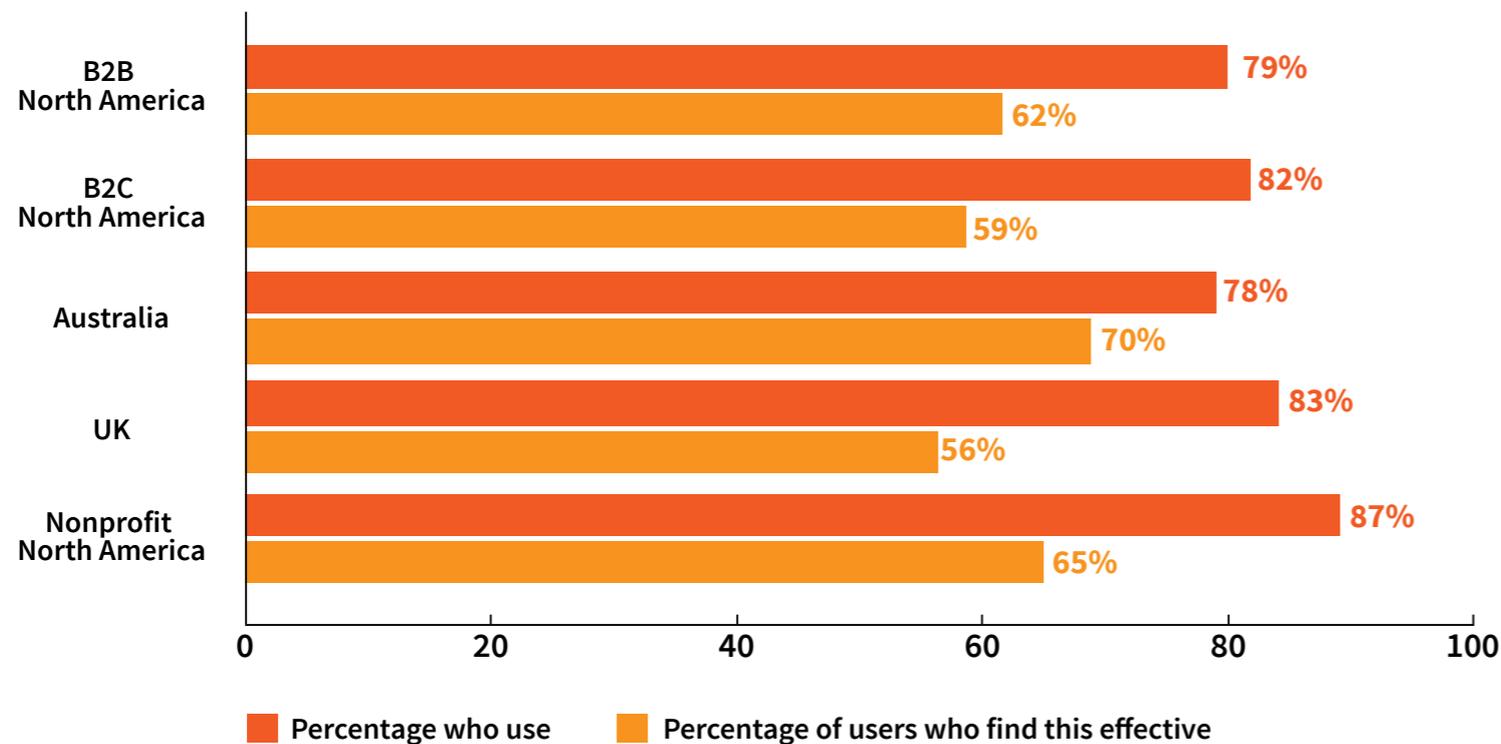
Read more: [3 Ways to Use Transparency in Content to Cut Through the Noise](#)

VIDEOS

THE PLAY:

Video is a powerful storytelling medium, helping to bring your brand's mission, vision, and values to life in an attention-grabbing way. But just because you film it, doesn't mean the customers will come flying to your door (talking heads rarely have an impact). The video competition is tough, so your offerings need to be relevant, memorable, strategic, and purposeful – not just entertaining – if you're going to see any returns on your video investment.

Content Marketing Play: Videos



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

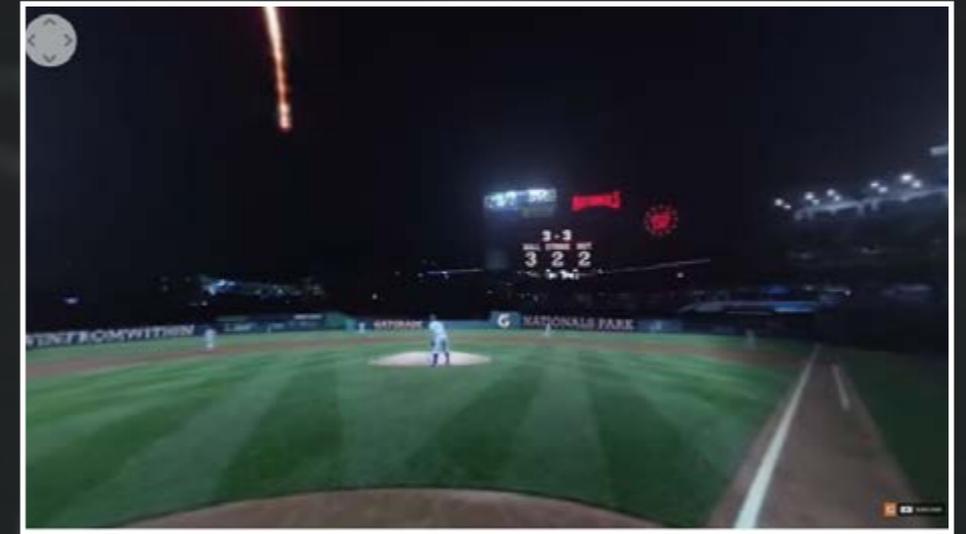


VIDEOS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

A widely-viewed viral video is often thought of as the holy grail of marketing success. But beyond YouTube, there are plenty of other ways to use the combination of sound, motion, and emotional resonance to drive deeper, more satisfying interactions with your brand. Here are a few ideas:

- ▶ Help customers overcome their practical challenges with a helpful demo.
- ▶ Educate viewers on the issues relevant to your business by offering a video tutorial on the topic.
- ▶ Include a video on the About Us page to give website visitors a glimpse of what makes your team unique and special.
- ▶ Record your responses to sensitive public relations issues. Video press releases can convey the appropriate emotional tone in a way that text alone just can't manage.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[Gatorade's 360-degree Bryce Harper Virtual Reality Experience](#)

To allow baseball fans to experience what it feels like for a Major League Baseball player to step up to the plate, Gatorade created the 360° Bryce Harper Virtual Reality Experience. Using YouTube 360, this three-minute video puts viewers inside the head of Washington Nationals star Bryce Harper as he goes to bat with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning of a tie game. Created using a combination of real-action video and computer-generated imagery, the video isn't just immersive, it's interactive – fans can click and drag the screen to see what a clutch play looks like from Harper's full perspective. *(Read more in the [February 2016](#) issue of Chief Content Officer magazine.)*

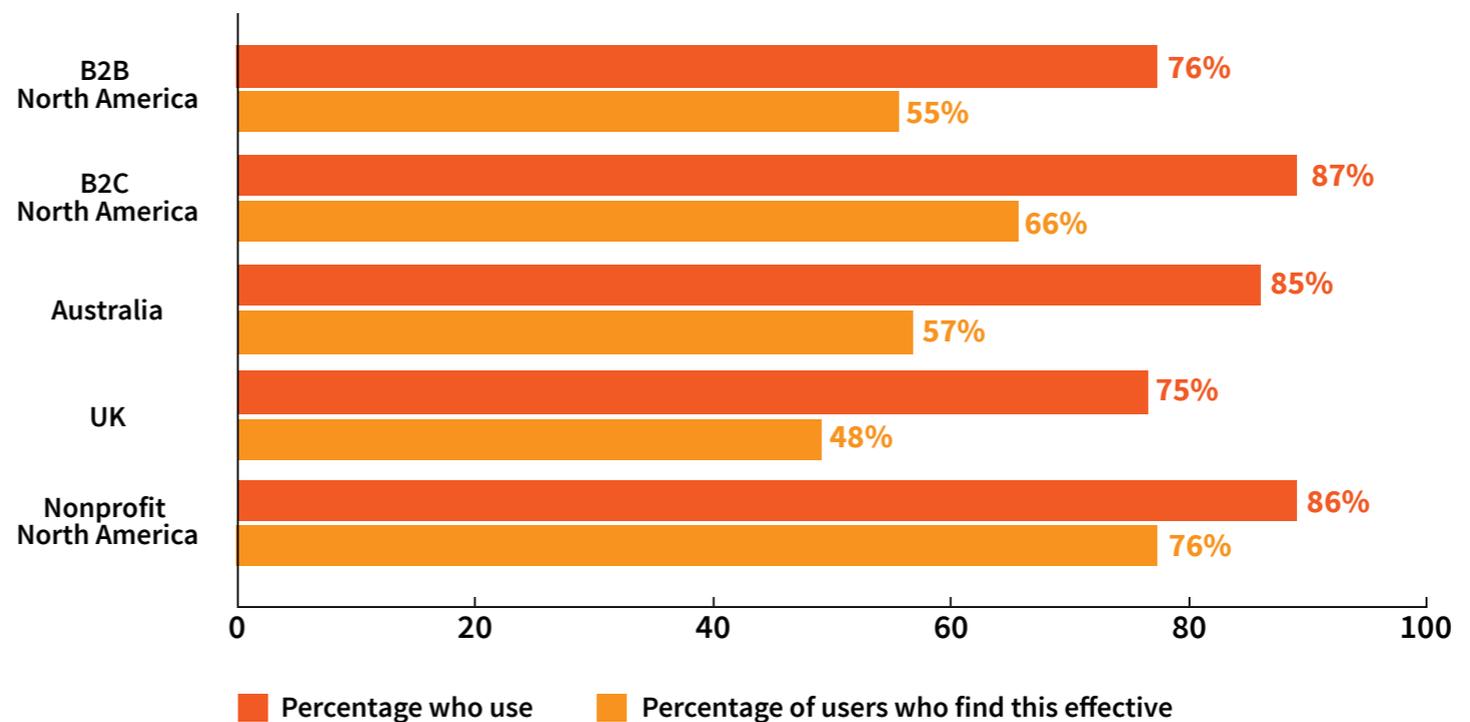
ILLUSTRATIONS/PHOTOS

THE PLAY:

Anyone who has seen a picture of a cave drawing knows that humans have a long history of communicating with pictures and illustrations. But with today's shorter attention spans coupled with the need for businesses to stand out in a noisy, crowded marketplace, these visual messaging vehicles have become more essential than ever when it comes to conveying a message that your audience will want to consume.



Content Marketing Play: Illustrations/Photos



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

ILLUSTRATIONS/PHOTOS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Here are a few techniques that [Neil Patel recommends](#) for maximizing the power and impact of your photos, illustrations, and other visual assets – on social networks or any other content platform:

- ▶ **Use a featured image at the beginning of every article** or blog post you publish – and make sure it's included in the snippets that appear on your blog page.
- ▶ **Break up long blocks of text** by adding one image for every 350 words.
- ▶ **Create a signature style for your visual content**, which becomes part of your brand's familiar look and feel.
- ▶ **Add your logo and/or a link to custom images and illustrations**, so viewers can trace it back to your brand, no matter where it gets shared.
- ▶ **Add the proper alt tags to every image**, so your images will be more likely to display in search results.



Case studies that earn extra points: [The Geek's Guide to London](#)

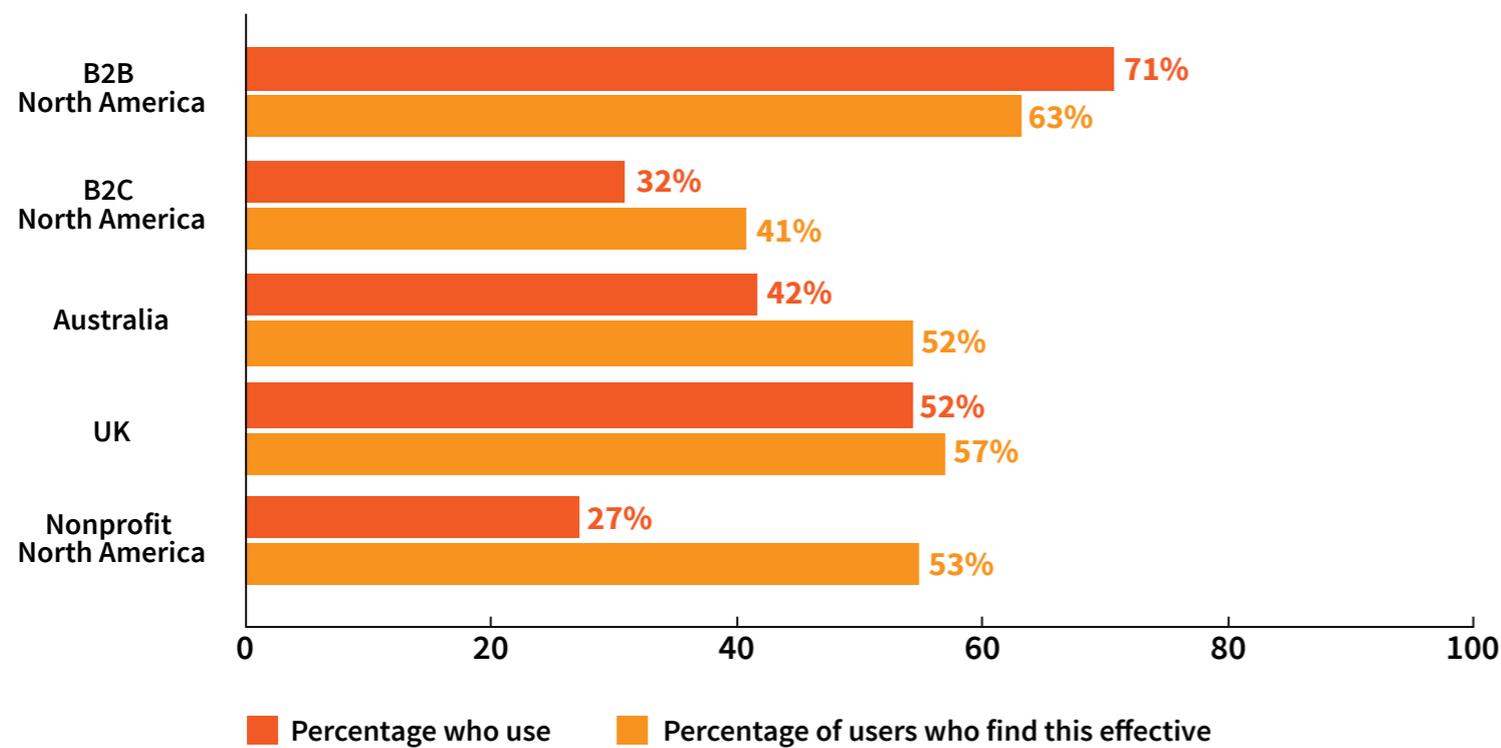
London Technology Week stands as a celebration of tech innovation and entrepreneurial talent. To connect with the event's tech insiders, Ion Interactive created an online map of London's hidden science and technology gems – from museum exhibits, to virtual reality experiences, to walking tours. By including an interactive event planner for events, eateries, and social soirees all over the city, the guide also helped London's tech elite speak geek without getting lost. (Read more in the [December 2015 issue](#) of Chief Content Officer magazine.)

WHITE PAPERS

THE PLAY:

Rich, substantive content that educates, rather than sells – this is the cornerstone of a successful content marketing program, and white papers offer it in spades. Though they may not be as exciting as a video or as socially sharable as a photograph, what white papers may lack in viral virility, they more than make up for in their ability to drive the kind of lasting – and lucrative – value that can have a measurable impact on your brand’s bottom line.

Content Marketing Play: White Papers



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

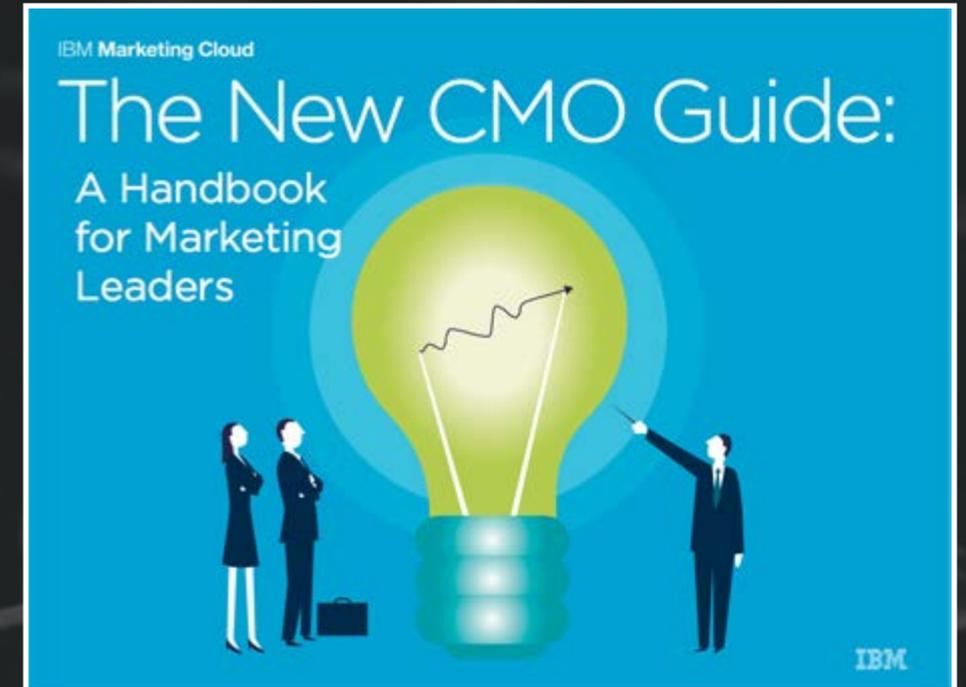


WHITE PAPERS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

White papers enable brands to offer highly detailed, fact-focused conversations that few other formats can manage. Follow these tips from Farland Group's [Roanne Neuwirth](#) to meet your marketing goals while delivering on your consumers' informational needs:

- ▶ **Jettison the fluff:** Scattershot ideas, poorly researched perspectives, rehashed promotional materials, and other low-quality, self-serving content will earn your white papers a time-out – in the trash can.
- ▶ **Select the right topic and point of view:** Carefully choose topics that will enable you to highlight your unique expertise while proving to readers that you are a credible voice on the issues at hand.
- ▶ **Use it as a jumping-off point:** Once your paper has established your perspective on the topic, you can build a range of accompanying content pieces to expand on key themes and drive separate-yet-related conversations.
- ▶ **Consider collaborating with your customers:** Clients can play the role of expert research panel, adding unique fodder to enhance and strengthen your perspective.



Case studies that earn extra points: [IBM Marketing Cloud White Papers](#)

It can be hard to get enthusiastic about the standard white paper – by nature they are highly detailed and crammed with important data; but this means they can often come off as stuffy and stiff instead of imaginative and engaging. Yet IBM's white papers manage to defy the stereotypes without sacrificing the deep insights and analysis that CMOs need in order to understand the complexities of the today's marketing landscape and manage the tasks at hand. Using a fresh, conversational tone and vivid visuals, IBM illustrates essential information without intimidating its audience.

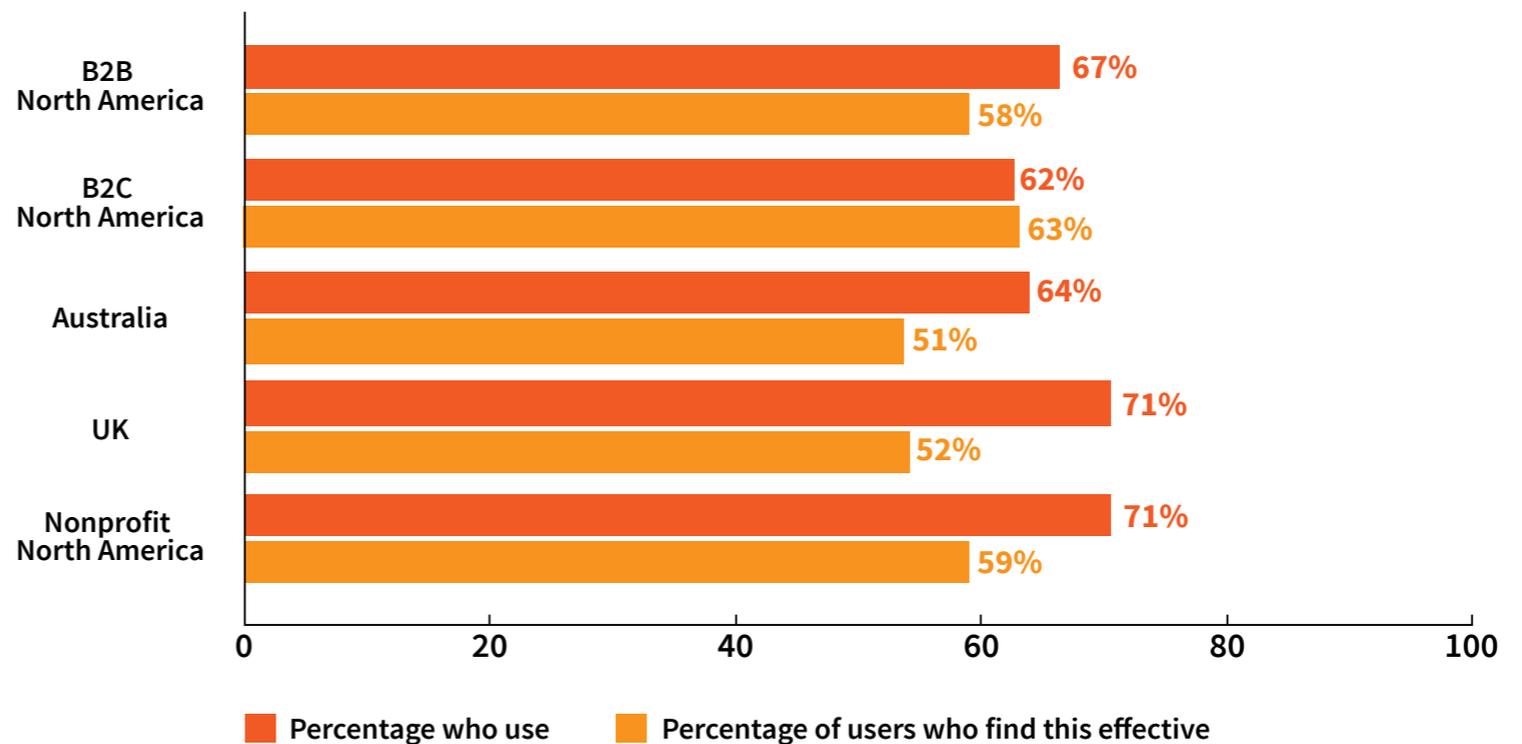
INFOGRAPHICS

THE PLAY:

Part picture, part data, and all-powerful, infographics are an ideal format for demystifying even the most complex concepts, as well as for distilling large volumes of information into stimulating, memorable, and highly shareable conversations. Furthermore, when well designed and executed, these versatile content pieces can be used to fuel your social media and demand-generation programs, or attract relevant link-backs – a great way to build your brand influence.



Content Marketing Play: Infographics



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

INFOGRAPHICS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Beyond posting them on your blog posts and social channels – here are some additional channels [LinkedIn's Jason Miller recommends](#) leveraging if you want your infographics to reach a receptive and relevant audience:

- ▶ **SlideShare:** This presentation-sharing platform can be used to host, display, and share infographics right from your company's profile page.
- ▶ **Infographic directories:** These allow you to display and then track traffic from your infographic back to your website or other call-to-action destinations.
- ▶ **Press releases:** Creative visual renderings of information are more likely to attract the attention of story-seeking journalists than standard, text-based coverage requests.



Case studies that earn extra points: [The Author Rank Building Machine](#)

Think infographics are all checklists and cartoony graphics? This example from Vertical Measures will have you thinking again. Using GIF animation, the graphic brings the idea of a productive content engine to life, while walking viewers through all the technical steps that factor into the ranking process. Though more complex to create, the eye-catching effects – and deeper engagement potential – make it well worth the effort.

Read more: [Go Beyond Infographics: Here's How to Make a Bigger Impact With 'Gifographics'](#)

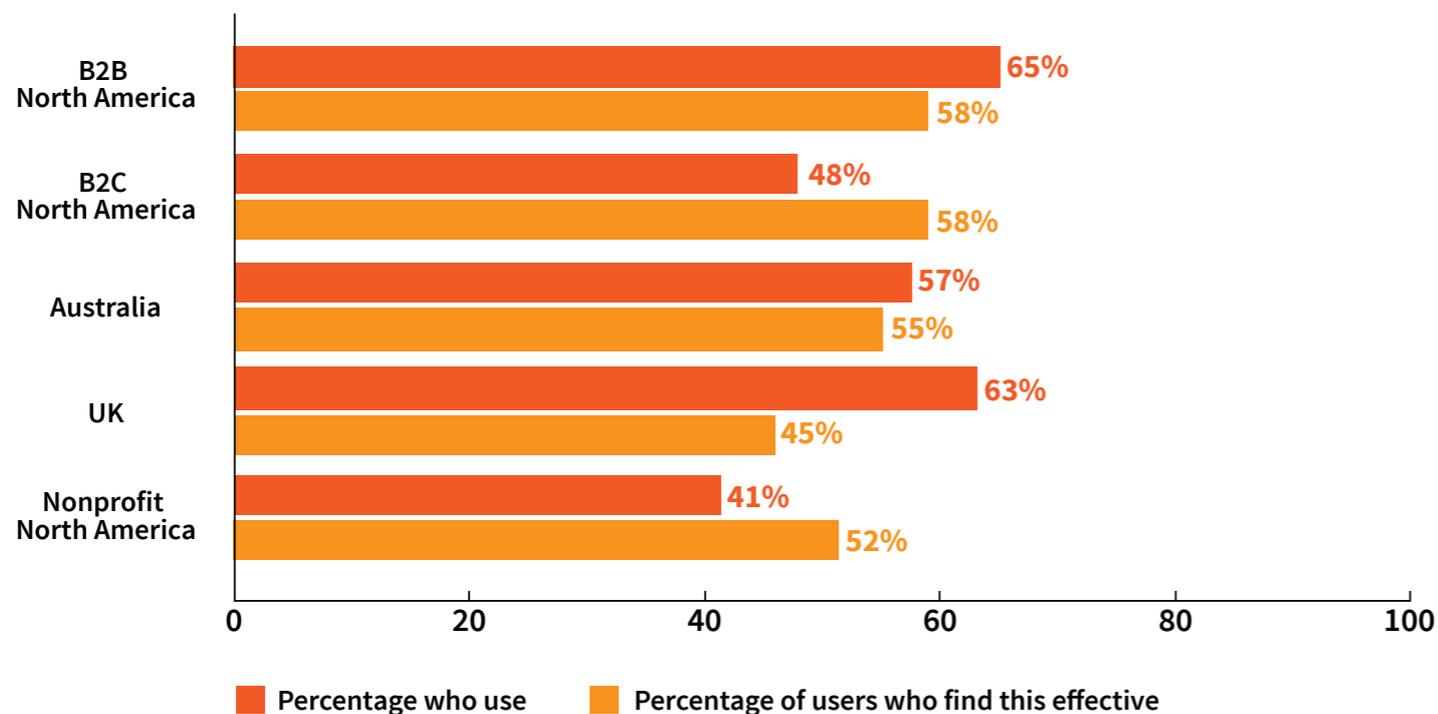
ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

THE PLAY:

Online presentations can be built from practically any content assets you have on hand – including blog posts, video clips, sound clips, animations, photos, live event transcripts, and more. They also help make every story more easily scannable, enabling your business to dig deeply into the details of complex topics without requiring readers to pore over long blocks of text before they reach your key messages and takeaways.



Content Marketing Play: Online Presentations



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

The world's highest-traffic online presentation site is SlideShare. It's over 70 million users consume a lot of business content; yet [with over 18 million uploads](#), there's also a lot of competition for their attention. Try a few of these SlideShare secrets to help stack the decks in your favor:

- ▶ **Grab attention right off the bat** with a powerful headline.
- ▶ **Keep your story simple and concise** so readers don't lose interest before they reach the last page.
- ▶ **Emphasize imagery over text** by incorporating video, infographics, photos, and other static images.
- ▶ **Insert a clickable call-to-action link** in your slides to make it easy for the user to take the next desired step.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[The Evolution of a Salesperson](#)

Salesforce takes full advantage of the storytelling potential of SlideShare with this imaginative presentation on how its connected selling solutions can help teams overcome the complex challenges of selling in the digital age. Designed using 8-bit-style animation, viewers rapidly click through the slides to simulate a story being told in the style of a flipbook. It's an artful example of how to deliver useful, practical information that the audience can quickly scan through without missing a single detail.

Read more: [SlideShare Secrets to Stack the Decks in Your Favor](#)

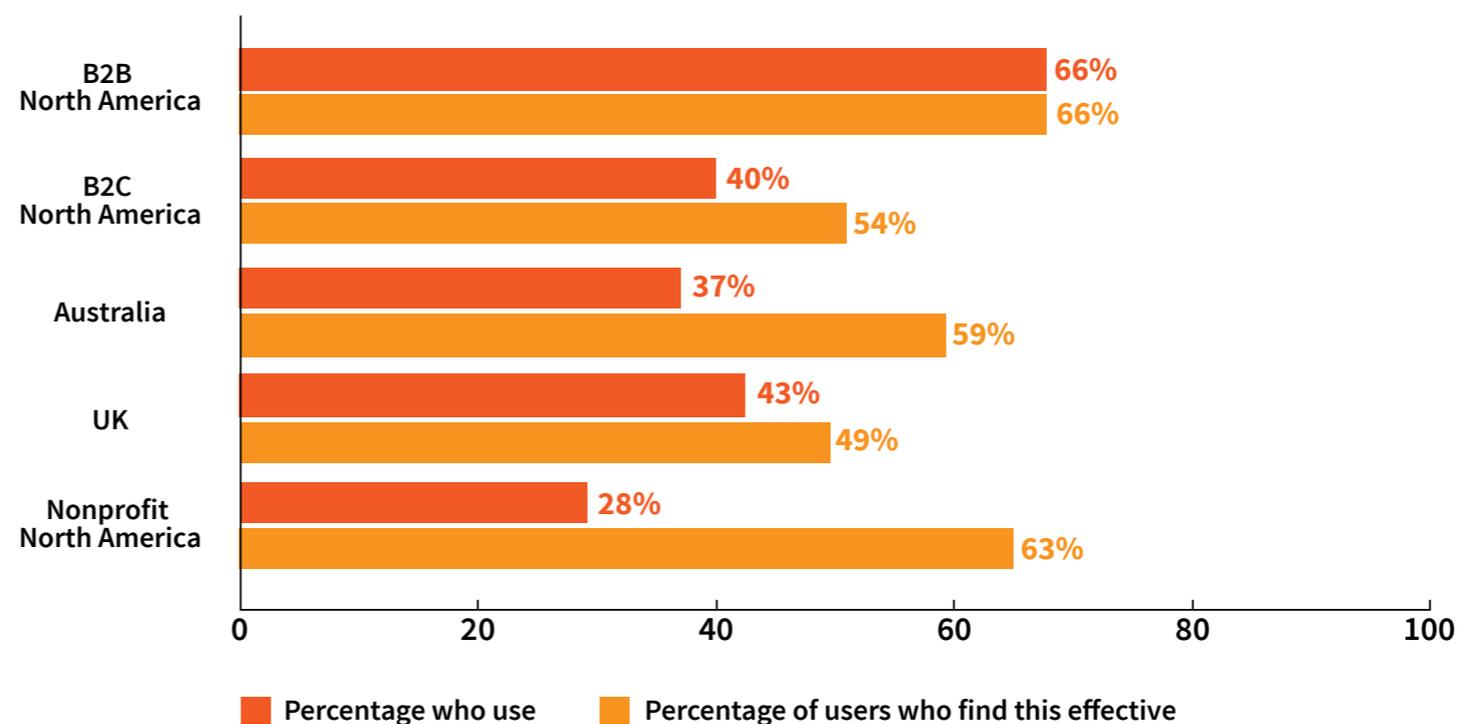
WEBINARS/WEBCASTS

THE PLAY:

Like online presentations, webinars let viewers do a deep dive into a topic without the expense of travelling to a conference. They are also among the more responsive content marketing vehicles available, since these targeted, topical conversations truly start to come alive once they are launched in real time – when participants can put their own questions and concerns up for discussion.



Content Marketing Play: Webinars/Webcasts



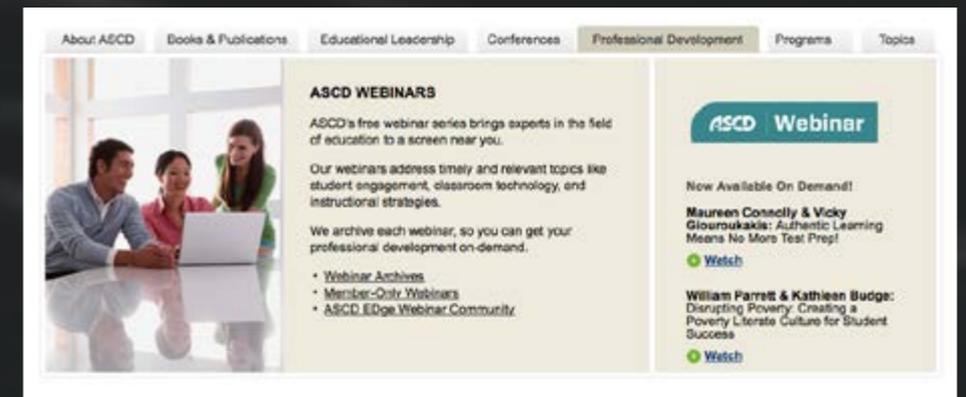
Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

WEBINARS/WEBCASTS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Because their interactions take place at a designated place and time, webinars are one of the few content formats that have an innate urgency. But that doesn't mean their value can't be extended by repurposing the various components into more evergreen formats and discussions:

- ▶ Questions posed by participants can become topics for additional content creation.
- ▶ The main talking points of the presentation can be repurposed into a SlideShare deck.
- ▶ Video webinars can be edited into multiple clips you can post to your YouTube channel, or add to relevant blog posts.
- ▶ The audio track can be turned into a podcast.
- ▶ You can archive past webinars on your site, and offer on-demand access.



Case studies that earn extra points:

ASCD

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) is a global community dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading. Given its education focus, it's no surprise that webinars are featured prominently among its content meant to help members stay at the head of the class (so to speak).

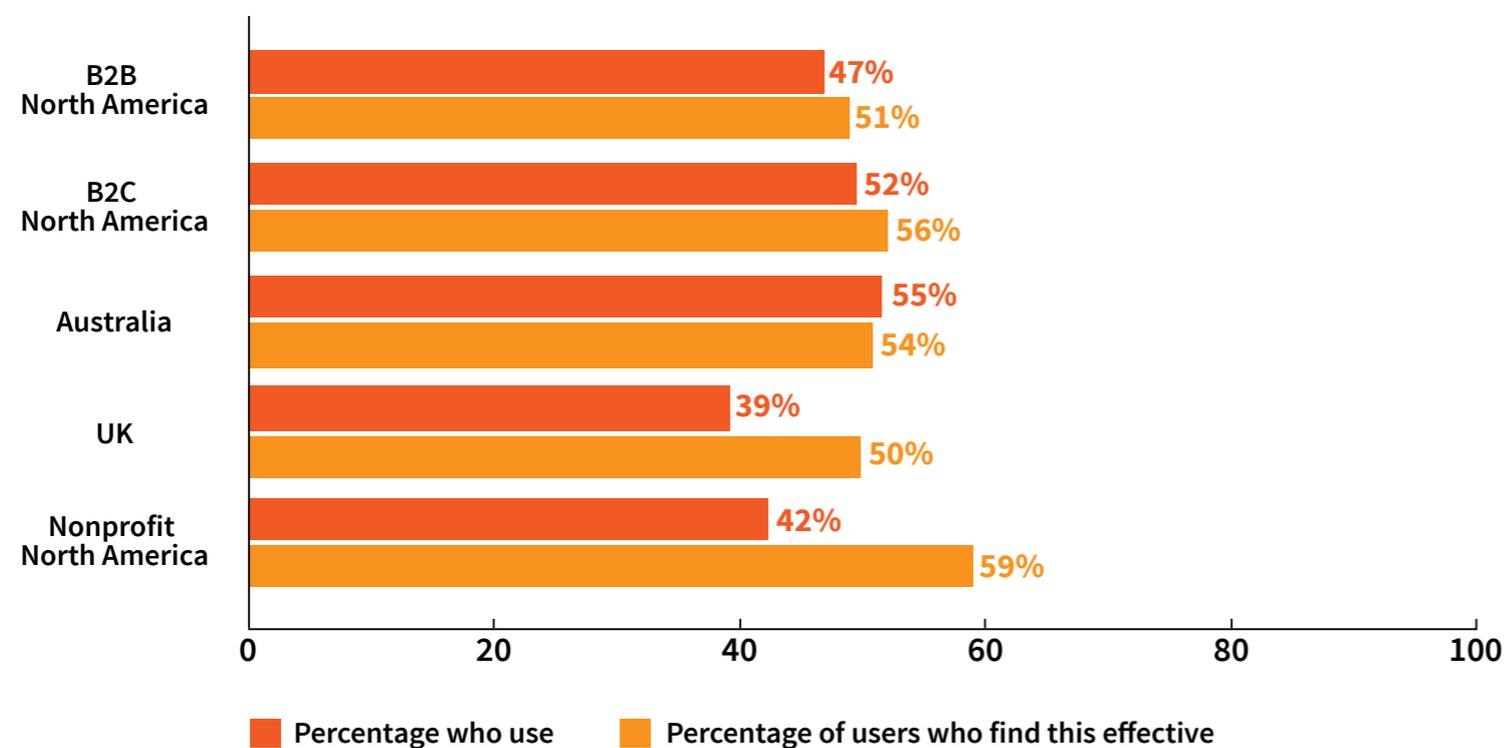
The organization's robust professional development online resource center features a rich collection of webinars addressing timely and relevant topics like student engagement, classroom technology, and instructional strategies. By offering these learning opportunities for free – including its open access events, as well as members-only lessons – ASCD is promoting the value of life-long learning, and is teaching that lesson by example.

MICROSITES

THE PLAY:

Part branding site, part independent online experience, microsites are ideal when exploring a topic that's highly relevant to a specific component of your audience but isn't necessarily about your business itself. With looser ties to your core operations than an official company website can get away with, microsite content represents a way to freshen things up creatively and pivot in an exciting new direction.

Content Marketing Play: Microsites



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



MICROSITES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

While microsites can be imaginative, experimental, and even whimsical at times, they still need to reflect your brand value and help further your business goals. Here are some important considerations to keep in mind when creating these content assets:

- ▶ **Focus on your key buyer personas.** Each microsite should have a clear idea who it's targeting, and why, and should keep the content focused on feeding consumers' unmet needs and interests.
- ▶ **Include features to drive participation:** Microsite content works best when it's aligned with your audience's passions. Enabling them to contribute their own ideas, images, and inspirations makes the experience more personally rewarding, which will make them more willing to take action.
- ▶ **Keep the customer's needs in focus.** Successful microsites aren't built on content that's focused on your brand's product or service; they should be carefully constructed to feed a consumer's unmet needs and interests.
- ▶ **Don't abandon the audience you attract.** Like any content, a microsite is a content promise to your customers. So don't just build a microsite if you aren't dedicated to seeing it through – create a strategic plan for publishing consistently, and on an ongoing basis!



Case studies that earn extra points: [Visit California's Road Trips](#)

Capitalizing on iconic images of the California coast, mountains, and vineyards, Visit California's Road Trips microsite offers sample itineraries for travelers interested in exploring the diverse natural landscapes the state has to offer. Combining jaw-dropping photography, inside information about each stop on the journey, and links for more local information, Road Trips is just the right balance of useful information and inspiration – a distinction that earned the campaign both a [Content Marketing Award](#) for Best Integrated Program and a [2015 Webby Award](#). (Read more on Page 35 in the [December 2015 issue](#) of Chief Content Officer magazine.)

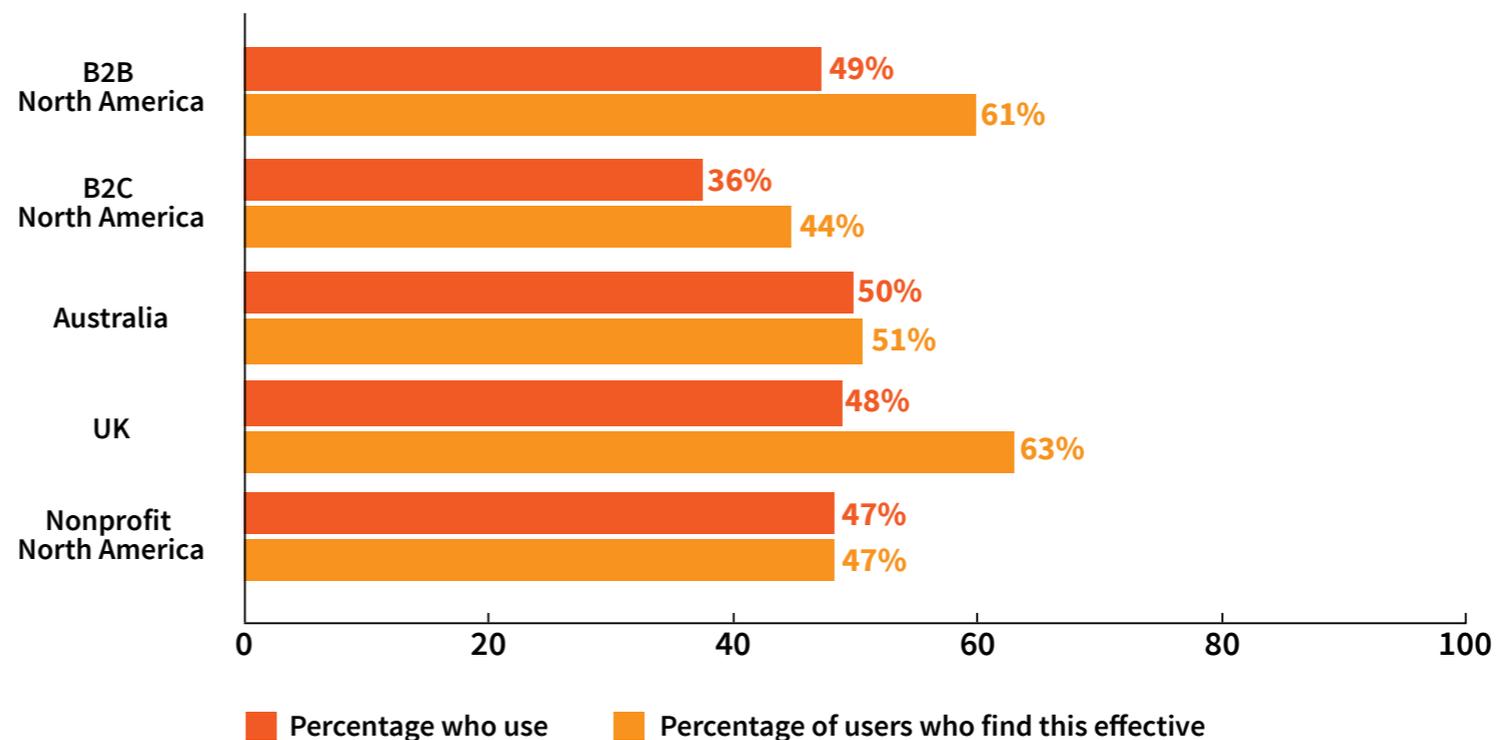
RESEARCH REPORTS

THE PLAY:

Few tactics showcase a brand's authority, insight, and influence as powerfully as original research reports. Their benefits don't come cheap, and they need to be rigorously designed and scientifically sound. But in return for the time and effort you put in, you'll be rewarded with increased credibility, trustworthiness, and plenty of data-driven proof that your brand can deliver on the informational and educational needs of your industry.



Content Marketing Play: Research Reports



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

RESEARCH REPORTS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Research reports are high-value content assets in and of themselves. But the data you generate by conducting surveys, polls, interviews, and other statistically significant methods can also be repurposed into myriad other content formats and used for multiple marketing purposes. For example:

- ▶ Use visualization techniques like charts, graphs, heat maps, and infographics to place your data into a relevant and easy-to-understand context.
- ▶ Write a blog that teases out the top-line results of your research, and link to the full study for readers who want to explore the data more deeply.
- ▶ [Publish your research](#) findings as a gated e-book to help with lead generation.
- ▶ Combine your statistics on a particular topic with other relevant data and [create a guidebook](#) of relevant facts on a given topic.



Case studies that earn extra points: [PwC's Annual CEO Surveys](#)

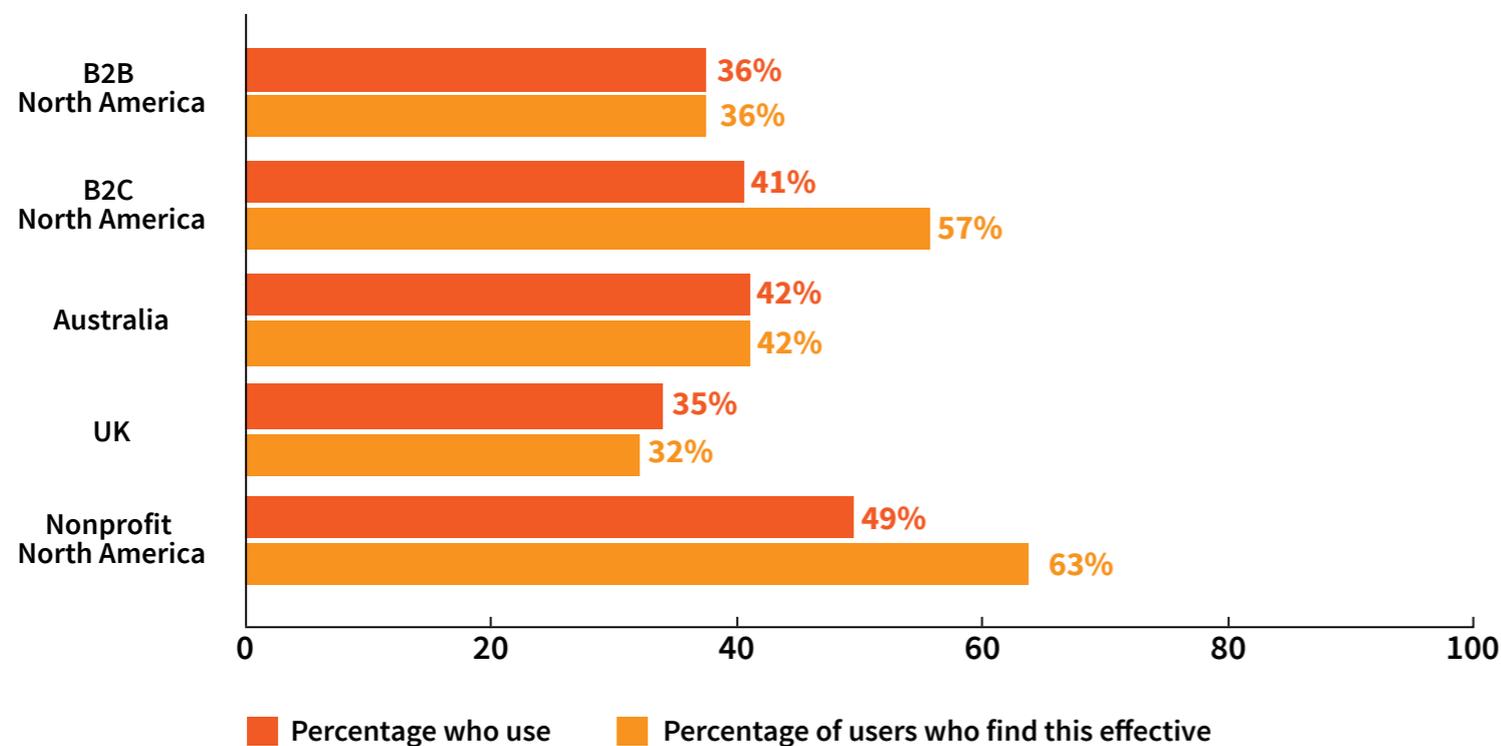
Released at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos each year, the PwC CEO Survey provides access to insights from more than 1,000 business and government leaders. But it's also a stellar example of how a brand can repurpose the data it generates from a single research activity into dozens of different content options – from full reports, data charts, and video roundtables to key findings summaries, statistics snapshots, microsites, and custom research projects.

PRINT MAGAZINES

THE PLAY:

With businesses increasingly shifting their focus, and funding, to delivering content online and on mobile devices, print magazines have become a wide-open playing field. Given the opportunity to capture attention with vivid visuals and high-quality writing, and the ability to accommodate a wide range of creative storytelling techniques, it may come as a bit of a surprise to see that so few marketers are taking advantage of this powerful and proven content marketing tactic.

Content Marketing Play: Print Magazines



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

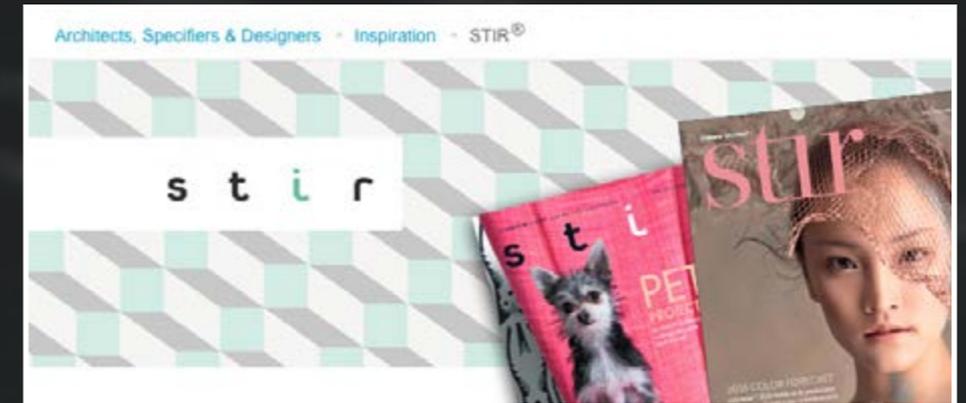


PRINT MAGAZINES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Given the comparatively less-crowded playing field, print magazines represent a tremendous opportunity for marketers to stand out from the competition and create a delightful content experience to an engaged audience of eager recipients. But remember: Creating “hard-copy” content is hard work, so prepare to deliver on these expectations:

- ▶ **Design and visuals:** The look and feel of your magazine doesn't just need to be compelling and eye-catching; it must align with all the qualities readers would expect from your brand.
- ▶ **Relevance:** Make sure you are covering topics that are timely and in step with the topics readers are likely to be thinking about when they receive your magazine in the mail.
- ▶ **Size and scope:** Aim for issues to be large enough to tackle a few subjects that are important to your audience, without expecting them to have to absorb too much information if they decide to read it while on their morning commute or afternoon lunch break.
- ▶ **Easy access to digital assets:** Tie your print content to what you are publishing on your other channels, and use techniques like short-links and PDF versions to make it as easy as possible for readers to go back and forth between your content worlds.



Case studies that earn extra points: Sherwin-Williams' STIR

This Cleveland-based paint-and-coatings powerhouse has a long legacy of quality content marketing. The company launched its first monthly print magazine, Home Decorator, in 1910 to inform customers about contemporary design and decorating trends. Though it shelved the magazine in the 1950s in favor of other forms of promotion, Sherwin-Williams resurrected it in 2004 as STIR, and never looked back. Today, the magazine is available in both print and digital formats, and is focused on the needs of decorators and design professionals.

Read more: [2016 Will Be the Year of Content Marketing M&A](#)

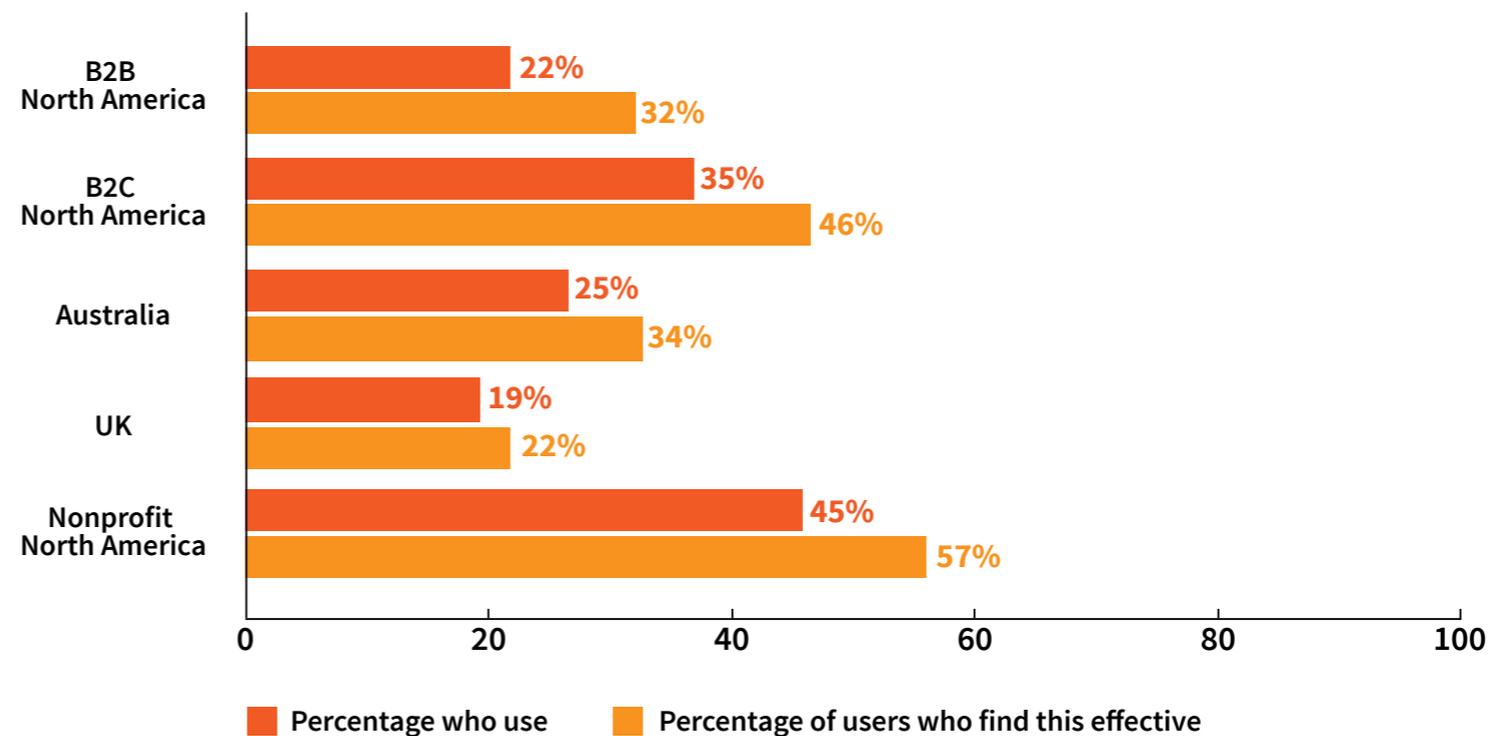
PRINT NEWSLETTERS

THE PLAY:

Print newsletters enable marketers to achieve many of the same competitive advantages and marketing benefits as print magazines offer, but with fewer production resource requirements and greater ease of delivery. However, despite being versatile and cost-effective, they are among the least-used tactics by marketers who operate outside the nonprofit space.



Content Marketing Play: Print Newsletters



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

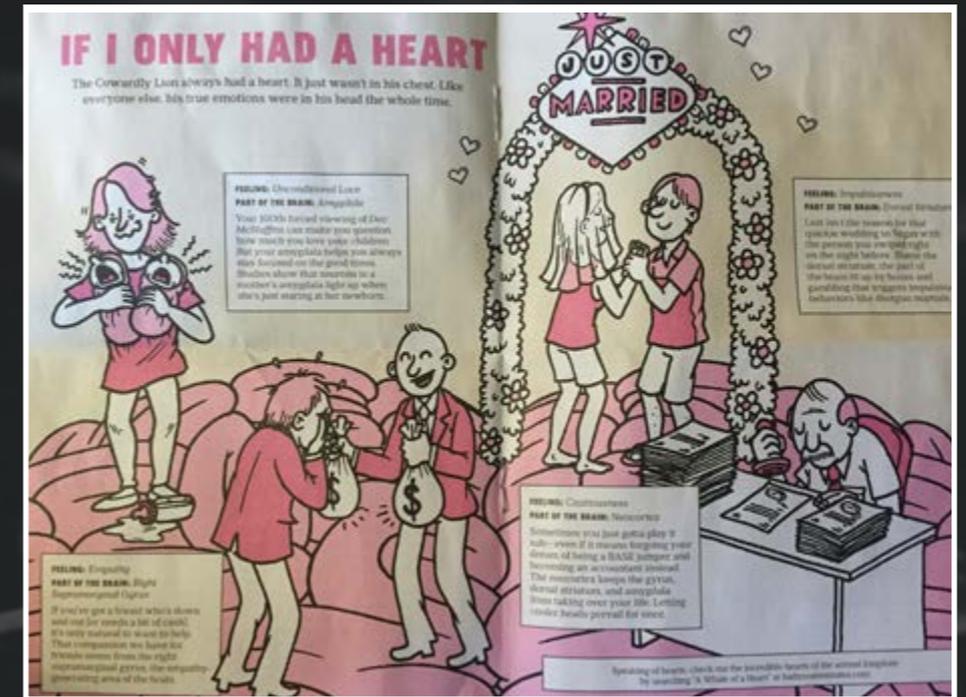
PRINT MAGAZINES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

While print magazines can explore a wide variety of topics in each issue, print newsletters are more appropriate for serving a single, narrowly focused point of interest to your audience.

Consider creating a print newsletter when you need a way to:

- ▶ Discuss your brand's unique perspective on common industry issues
- ▶ Offer advice on specific customer challenges your audience might typically encounter
- ▶ Introduce a new product line or service offering to your current subscriber base
- ▶ Test out new creative ideas to see if they are worth developing further
- ▶ Explore relevant topics that may lie a bit outside of your brand's usual purview



Case studies that earn extra points: The Bathroom Minutes

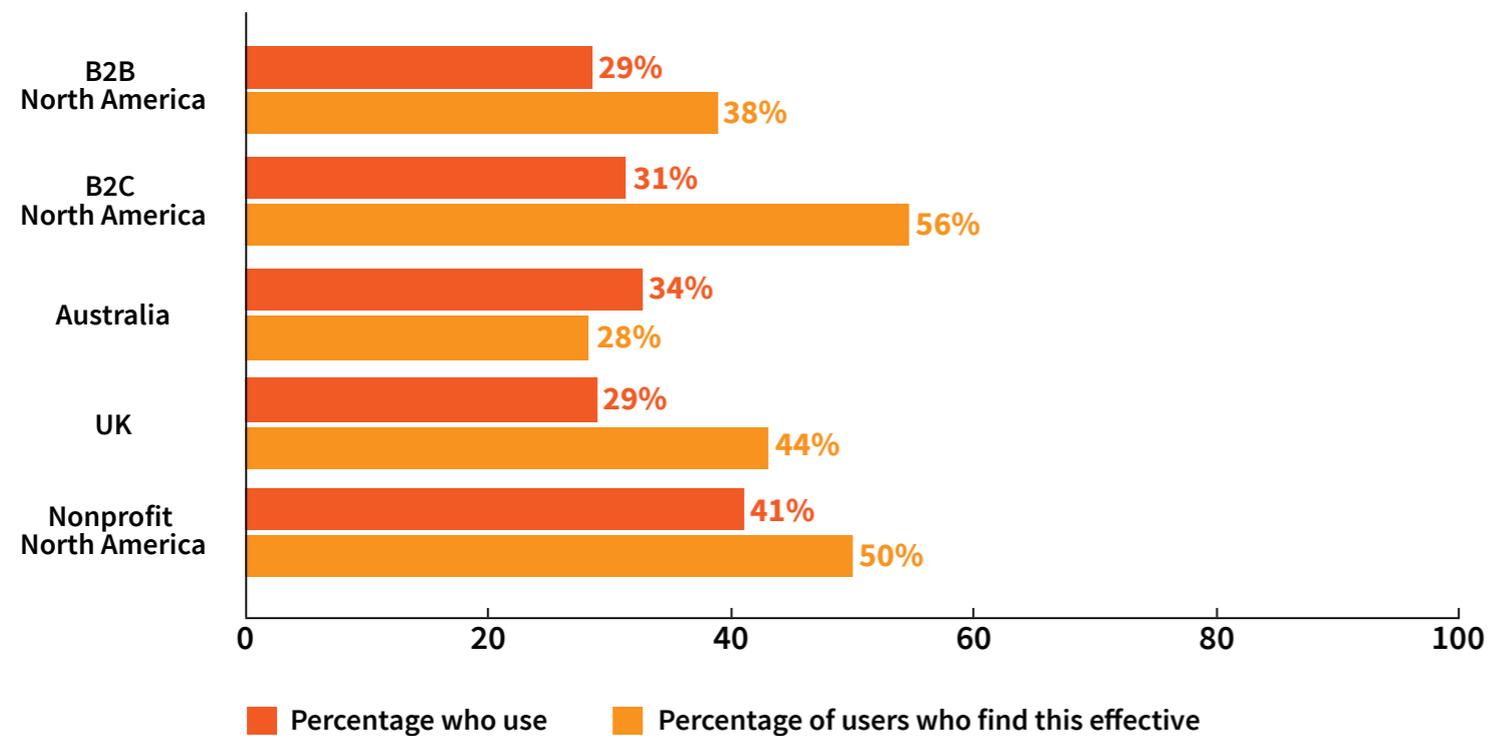
What better way for Dollar Shave Club to extend its influence over men's grooming habits than to give its razor service subscribers an entertaining read that's perfectly suited for use during their daily "me" time? Full of grooming tips, puzzles, and hygiene-related factoids, the monthly print newsletters also give special recognition to some of its customers' personal interests, as well as their notable achievements (i.e., those that take place outside the confines of the water closet).

DIGITAL MAGAZINES

THE PLAY:

Whether they're meant to be consumed online or on phones and tablets, digital magazines can be customized to suit nearly every marketing purpose and reader personality. More than just words on a page, articles can incorporate multiple media formats – like audio, video, gifs, and graphics – and are easily shareable on social media.

Content Marketing Play: Digital Magazines



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



DIGITAL MAGAZINES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Though many digital magazines have evolved from their print-based counterparts, their versatility allows brands to branch off in new creative directions, as well. Here are some possibilities to explore:

Consider creating a print newsletter when you need a way to:

- ▶ **Digital magazines don't always have to mean original content.** Content on a particular topic or theme can be curated from around the web and compiled into a one-stop collection of need-to-know info your audience will truly appreciate.
- ▶ **Go off on a relevant topical tangent.** Magazine content doesn't have to be directly related to the products and services your brand offers. Consider building your editorial around things like current events and issues that impact your industry or social causes that your audience might be interested in.
- ▶ **Help your stories leap off the page:** Just because you call it a magazine doesn't mean it has to look or feel like those things you flip through at the dentist's office. Liven up your text and images by adding gifs, sound, video, or other interactive components.



Case studies that earn extra points:

Van Winkle's

Mattress retailer Casper launched a web-based magazine (and a companion e-newsletter) devoted to all things sleep-related – from reporting the latest scientific findings on dreaming, to investigating the things that keep us awake at night. Cleverly named Van Winkle's, it operates completely independently of its e-commerce parent, avoids any overt promotion of Casper's products, and is managed by a talented team of experienced journalists who take an eye-opening and newsworthy approach to “exploring sleep with our eyes wide open.”

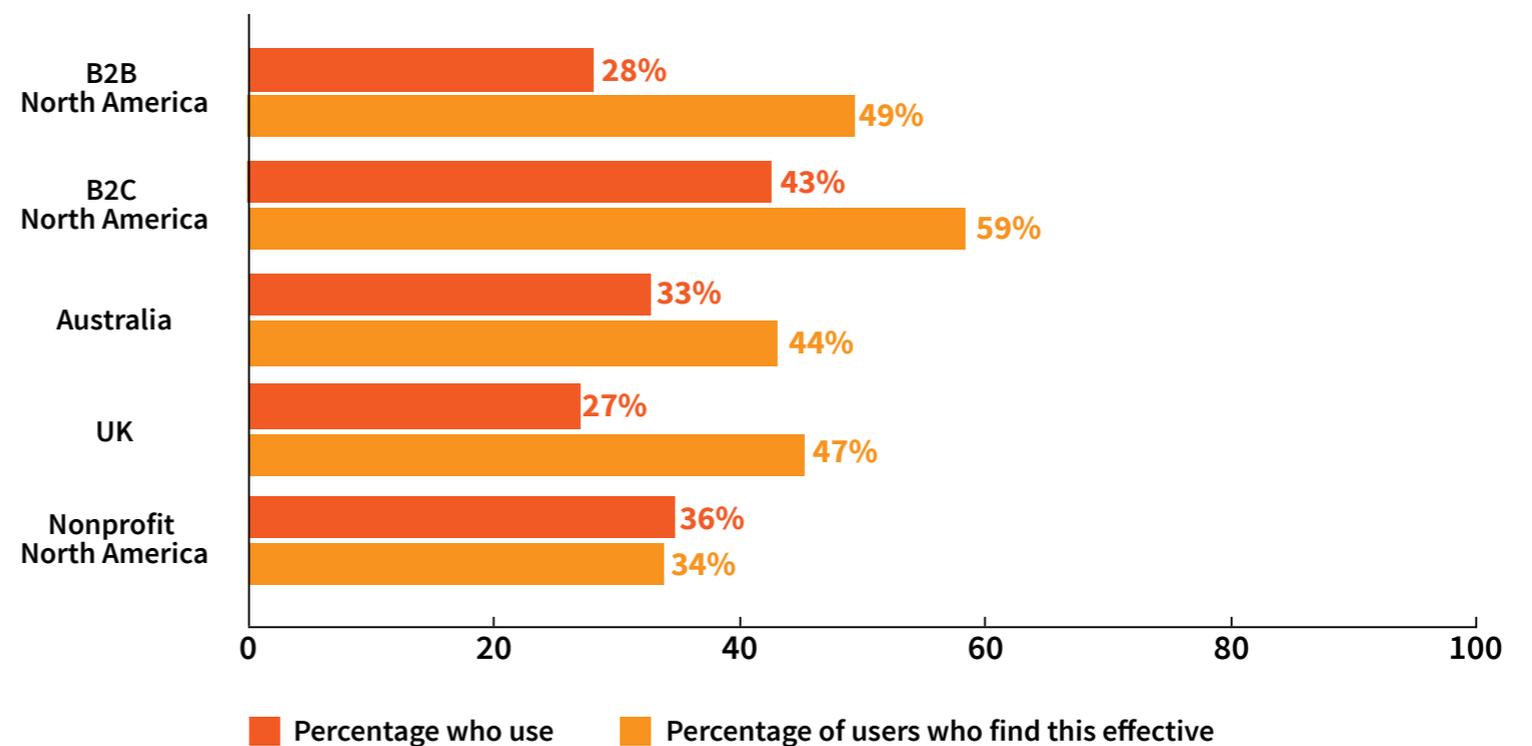
MOBILE APPS

THE PLAY:

Think of mobile apps as ever-present content companions – tiny tools that enable on-the-go consumers to access helpful information, interact with friends, accomplish necessary tasks, and engage in whatever interests them, whenever and wherever they want to do so. By providing a fast track to achieving their goals, apps give brands the chance to play the hero in the customer’s journey of discovery. And since every download is an opt-in invitation to engage, the impact of your content marketing is more measurable.



Content Marketing Play: Mobile Apps



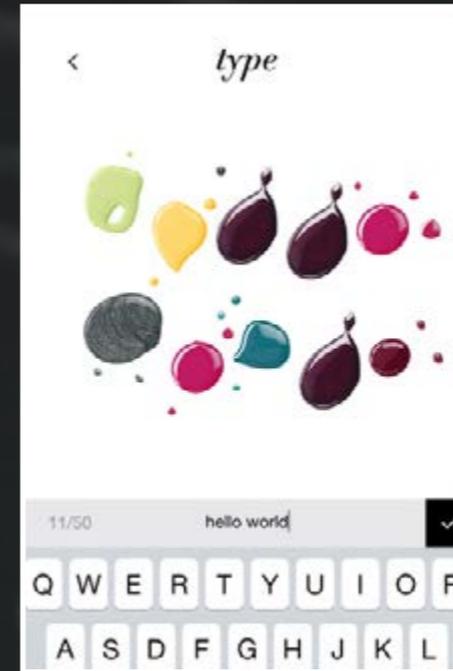
Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

MOBILE APPS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

It can be time-consuming, expensive, and technologically challenging to develop a killer mobile content app, let alone get it into the hands of the right audience. So before you jump in, make sure your effort will be aligned with your brand's strategic goals – and well worth your users' limited cellphone space.

- ▶ **Play to the platform's strengths:** Build your experience around easy-to-accomplish actions – like tapping, swiping, viewing photos, or voting – rather than requiring users to do a lot of typing or tasks that can be tedious on the small screen.
- ▶ **Enable your app to play on all devices:** Though availability on iOS is de rigueur, remember that Apple (and its app store) isn't the only player in the app economy.
- ▶ **Remember it's not all about play:** While a branded parody of the latest trendy game may give you some temporary street-cred, providing real-world utility – things like maps, to-do lists, on-demand advice, product comparison tools, or helpful hacks – is a surer path to long-term engagement.



Case studies that earn extra points:

OPI's ColorChat

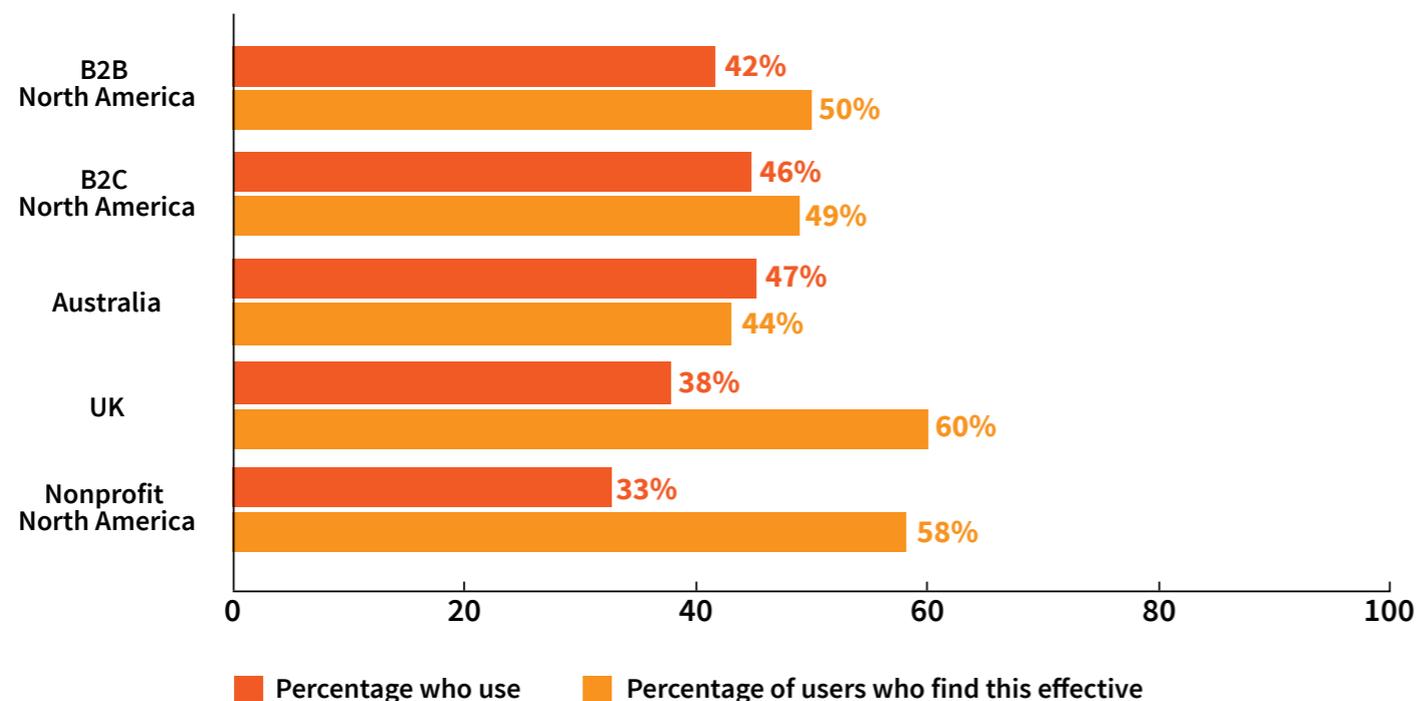
When the success of your cosmetics line depends on its ability to communicate through color, even the most-subtle distinctions between shades can speak volumes about the wearer. So OPI smartly developed its ColorChat smartphone app to help nail polish-obsessed fans engage in IM conversations and raise self-expression to a unique and colorful art form. Through the app, each letter and character typed in a text message gets transformed into a colorful drop of nail polish in one of OPI's signature shades. The abstract shapes form an alphabet that can be used to write coded messages – perfect for enabling nail artists to share their trade secrets with one another. (Read more on Page 69 in the [August 2015](#) issue of *Chief Content Officer* magazine.)

BRANDED CONTENT TOOLS

THE PLAY:

Putting your brand name on a clever, useful convenience tool – like a map that’s pre-loaded with points of interest, an auto-response generator, a product configurator, or even a personalized set of emoji that helps speed up your instant messages – invites consumers to think of you in a favorable light every time they use it.

Content Marketing Play: Branded Content Tools



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



BRANDED CONTENT TOOLS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

This form of content works best when businesses emphasize the “tool” part of the equation, rather than the “brand”:

- ▶ **Add value, not vanity:** Focus on creating something people will want to use or share with others again and again, regardless of where it came from.
- ▶ **Make it a hype-free zone:** If it’s more self-serving than customer-serving, you’re doing it wrong.
- ▶ **Enable personalization:** Let users take your original idea and add their own flair to make it something they’ll truly want to share with others.



Case studies that earn extra points:

Westin's Out of Office Generator

Out of office emails started as a simple way to manage the expectations of clients, customers, and other contacts during rare times when you may not be able to respond right away; but they have grown to become a de facto way to creatively express your personality in absentia. Trying to conceive of just the right message can pile on the pressure – especially when your pre-vacation to-do list is already a mile long. Thankfully, you can easily cross off this creative task with a little help from Westin. By partnering with the master humorists at McSweeney's, the travel brand's helpful tool provides clever little anecdotes that can be used to suit any out-of-office experience, and do so with memorable style.

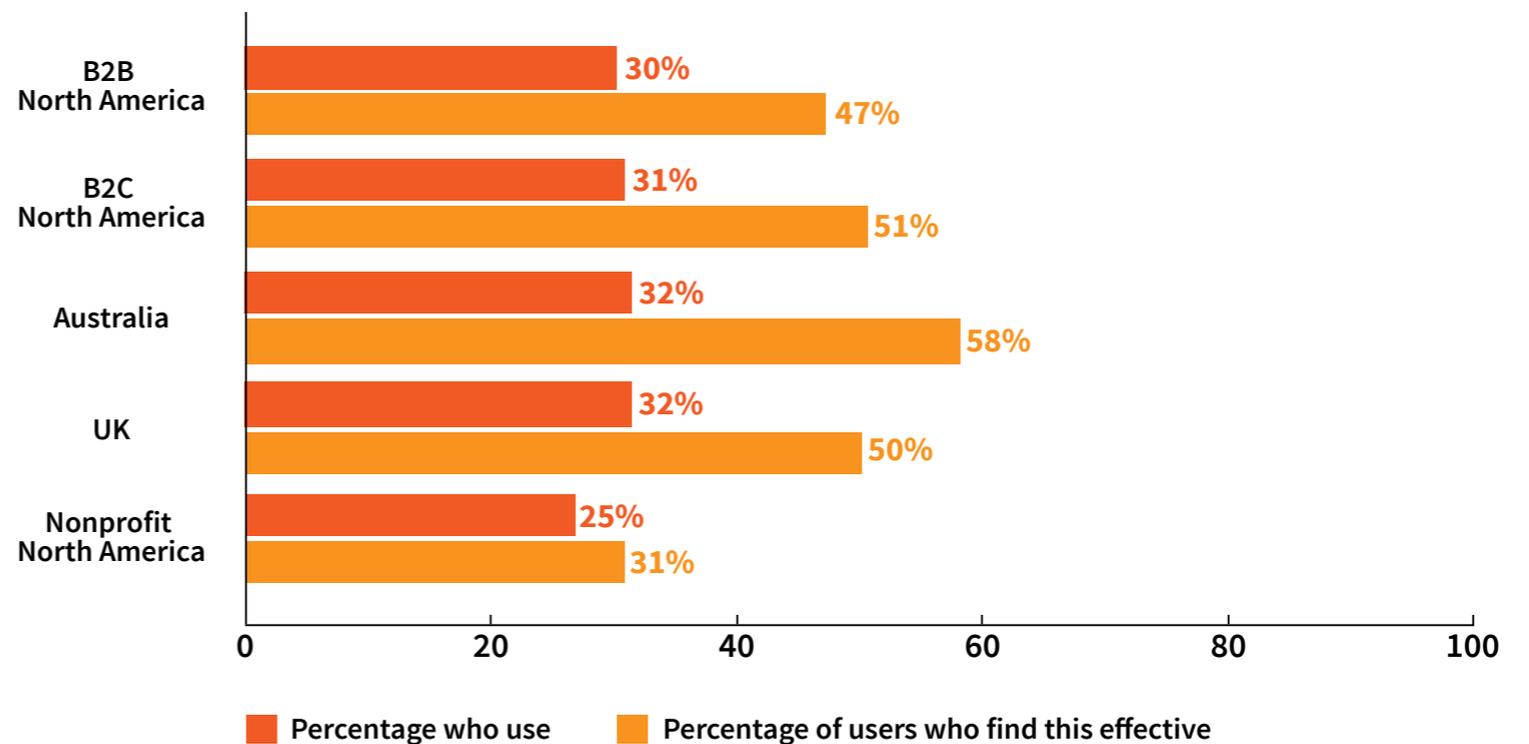
BOOKS

THE PLAY:

Writing a book takes a tremendous amount of time, effort, dedication, and know-how. But if you are looking to become THE authority and market leader on a particular topic of interest to your audience, there's no substitute for being the brand that "wrote the book" on it. Not only will a published tome make a strong impression on your audience, books also create a deep well of content assets you can draw from and repurpose for years to come.



Content Marketing Play: Books



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

BOOKS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Want to give your book a boost when it comes to securing shelf space? Here are some suggestions from [Jim Kukral](#), founder of the [Author Marketing Institute](#):

- ▶ **Consider self-publishing:** Unless you are looking to take your book on tour, you'll have the same shot at getting sales whether you have a publisher or go the DIY route.
- ▶ **Invest in a good editor** who specializes in your genre.
- ▶ **Create a killer cover design:** When readers can browse dozens of book choices on Amazon in a matter of seconds, an eye-catching cover will give you an edge at getting discovered.
- ▶ **Go for a series:** Instead of one long book, certain topics work better when they are broken down into micro-content. Alternately, if your advice applies across multiple areas of expertise (think the ...For Dummies series), consider writing multiple books, each targeted to a different industry.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[Tealium's Taming the Digital Marketing Beast](#)

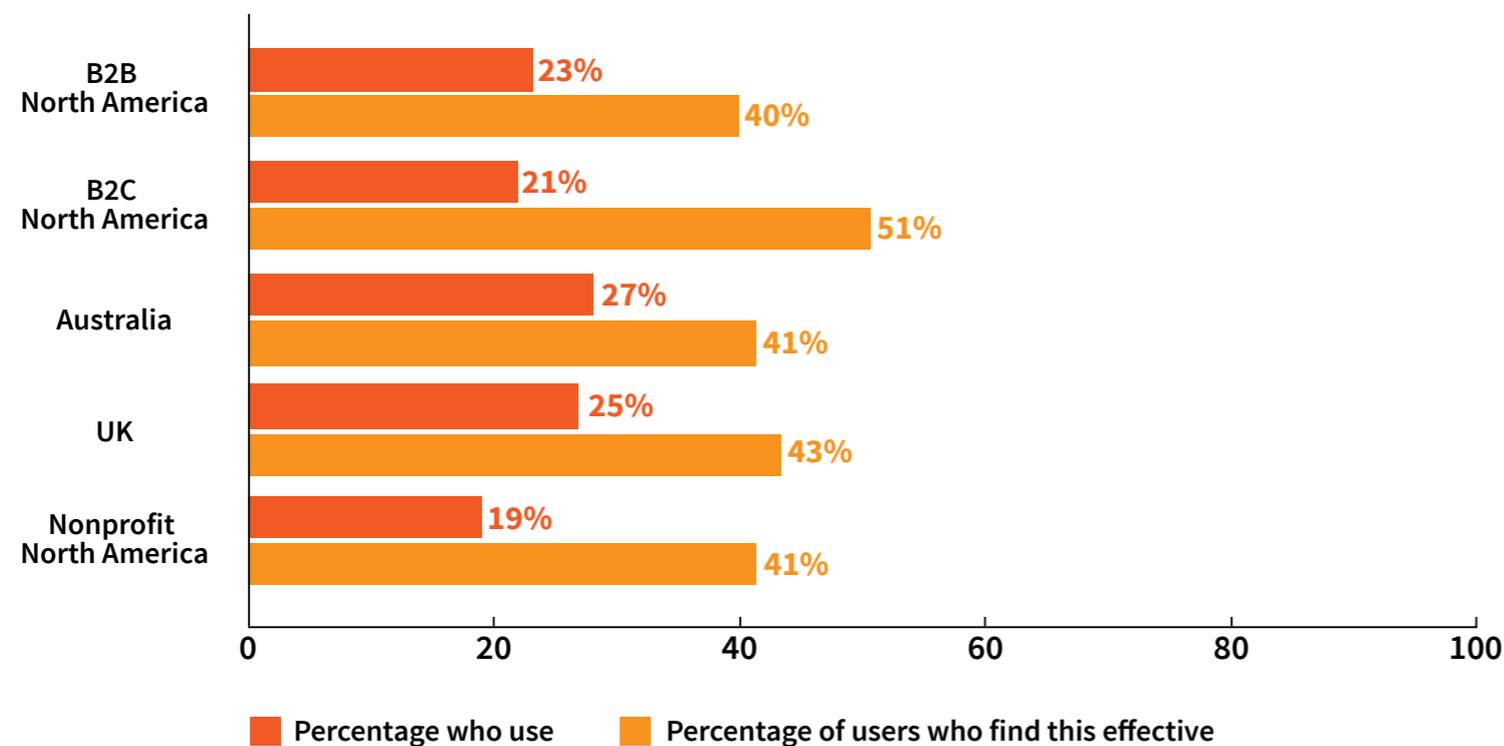
Enterprise tag management provider Tealium found a fun, retro way to cut through the content clutter: a children's book. The company launched Taming the Digital Marketing Beast to give away at industry trade shows. The book is meant for attendees to take home to their kids, and includes a reference guide for adults on how the company's digital marketing technology streamlines complexity and helps unify marketing applications and data.

PODCASTS

THE PLAY:

What do you get when you combine sound, expert insights, a little food for thought, and a distinct brand voice (literally)? You get the podcast, a stimulating, strategic content format that listeners can take with them wherever they go – online or off. Focus your podcasts on a niche topic that your brand is uniquely passionate about, and you'll create a one-to-one conversation that your audience will truly look forward to immersing themselves in, again and again.

Content Marketing Play: Podcasts



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research



PODCASTS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

High quality podcasts are easier than ever to produce and distribute, thanks to the availability of inexpensive recording software and sound equipment. But if you want your show to make it to the top of this increasingly popular trend, here are some tips Lush Digital Media's Sarah Mitchell recommends following:

- ▶ **Be ready to make a long-term commitment:** You can't build an audience if you quit after only a few episodes.
- ▶ **Publish consistently:** If you want your audience to keep your show on their listening schedule, each episode needs to arrive at the designated time.
- ▶ **Use text transcripts:** Audio-only content doesn't get indexed by search engines.
- ▶ **Set up a Twitter feed for your show** to prompt listeners to tune in. Include a photo for each episode in your tweets to improve engagement.
- ▶ **List your podcast in as many directories as possible:** In addition to iTunes, try Stitcher, Libsyn, SoundCloud, and smaller directories, too.



Case studies that earn extra points:

GE's The Message

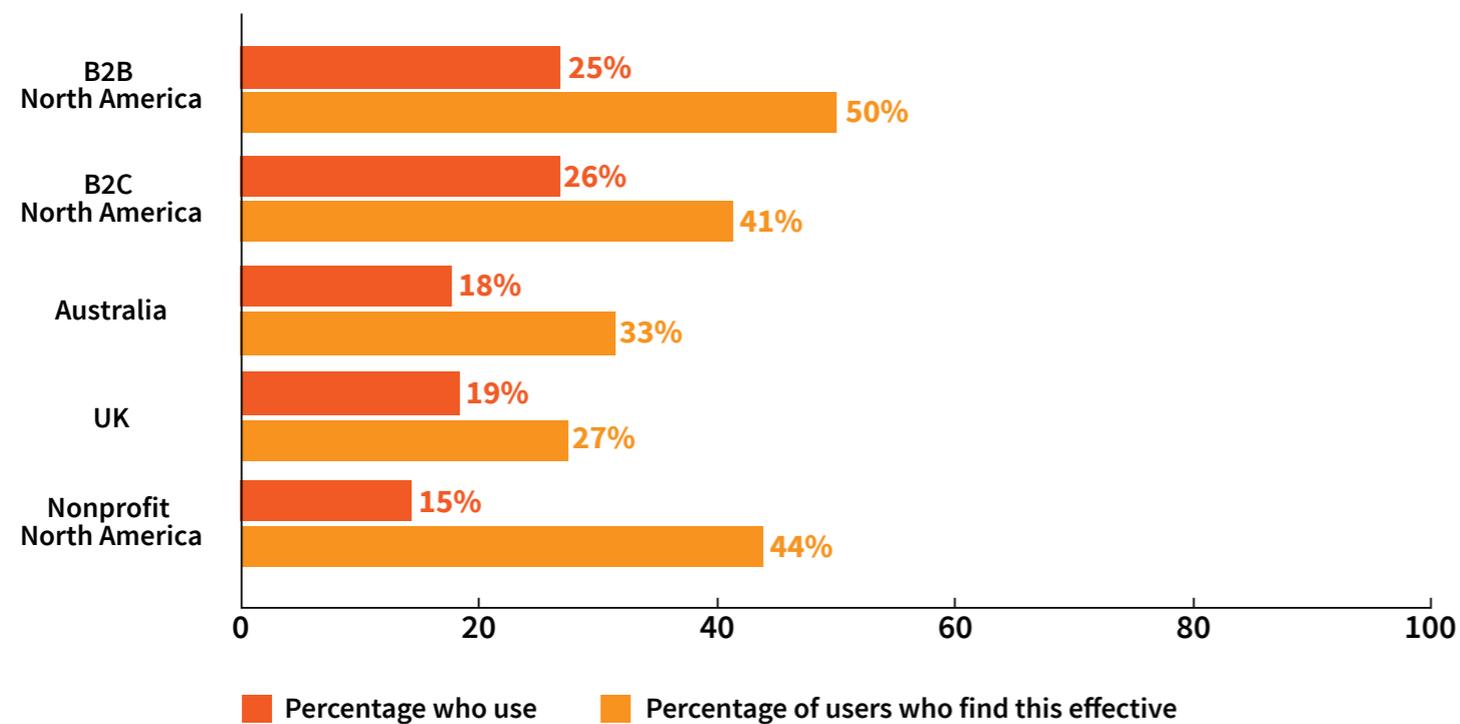
To raise its profile among a younger, tech-savvy audience, GE produced an eight-episode sci-fi podcast called The Message. The story follows a 70-year-old message that came from outer space, the decoding of which is achieved by the members of Cypher – a fictional encryption think tank, whose experts rely on real ultrasound technology (developed by GE) to get the job done. Andy Goldberg, GE's global creative director, astutely describes the effort as “science fiction meets real science.” (Read more in the [February 2016](#) issue of *Chief Content Officer* magazine.)

VIRTUAL CONFERENCES

THE PLAY:

There are some complex subjects that require a more immersive educational experience than the typical live conference allows for. That's where virtual conferences come in handy. They allow eager participants from all over the world to come together, focus their time and attention on the topic at hand, gather helpful insights from renowned experts... and then get right back to business without skipping a beat.

Content Marketing Play: Virtual Conferences



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

VIRTUAL CONFERENCES

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Though running a virtual conference means you don't have to worry about buying blocks of hotel rooms, securing a large enough venue, or providing evening entertainment, there are still plenty of logistical details to pay attention to. Make sure attendees have a memorable experience – for all the right reasons:

- ▶ **Book, and confirm, your speakers as early as possible** to avoid potential scheduling conflicts.
- ▶ **Double-and triple-check your technology.** Nothing frustrates attendees more than poor sound quality, weak video feeds, or other technical difficulties that keep them from getting the content they signed up for.
- ▶ **Take multiple time zones into account.** If you want both East and West Coasters to attend, make sure your event doesn't start too early, or end too late in the day
- ▶ **Extend the experience** by offering on-demand access to those who were unable to participate at the time of the live event.



Case studies that earn extra points:

ContentTECH

While the content marketing industry's largest event, [Content Marketing World](#), covers a lot of ground when it hits Cleveland each year, CMI realized that there are some tech-related topics that require a much deeper dive for marketers to master confidently.

Enter ContentTECH, a free virtual conference that enables attendees to immerse themselves in the mechanics of content marketing – without ever having to venture into the daylight. Held each February, keynote speakers bring attendees up to speed on the latest technological trends and advances impacting the industry, while a series of live webinars offers insights and advice on more-practical aspects of working with today's marketing tools.

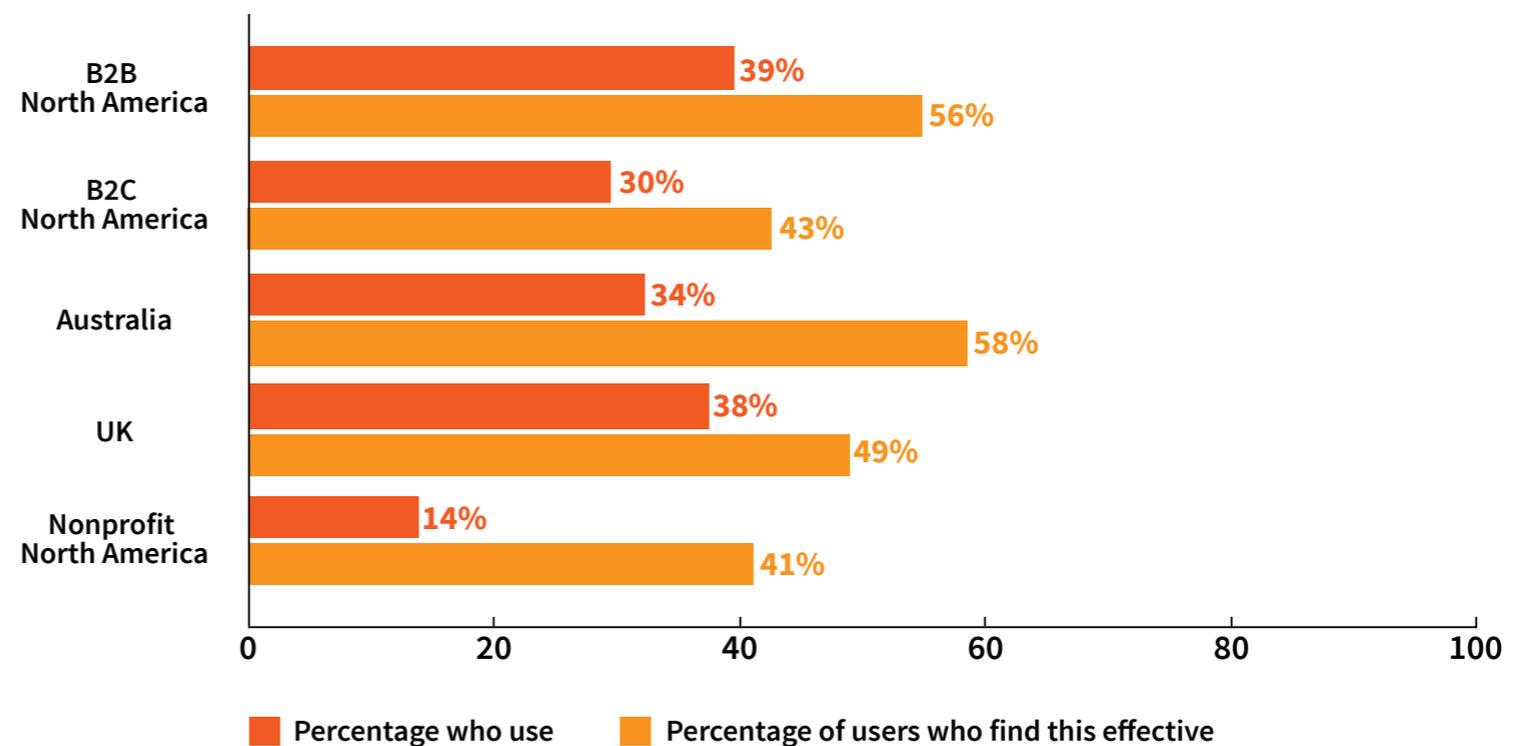
E-BOOKS

THE PLAY:

E-books enable you to sell your story directly to an audience without first having to shop it around to a publisher. While a crowded market for business-focused books means physical shelf space in your content niche might be at a premium, e-books can be downloaded from just about anywhere, and are available immediately after purchase, providing instant gratification as a reward for your online audience's interest.



Content Marketing Play: E-Books



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

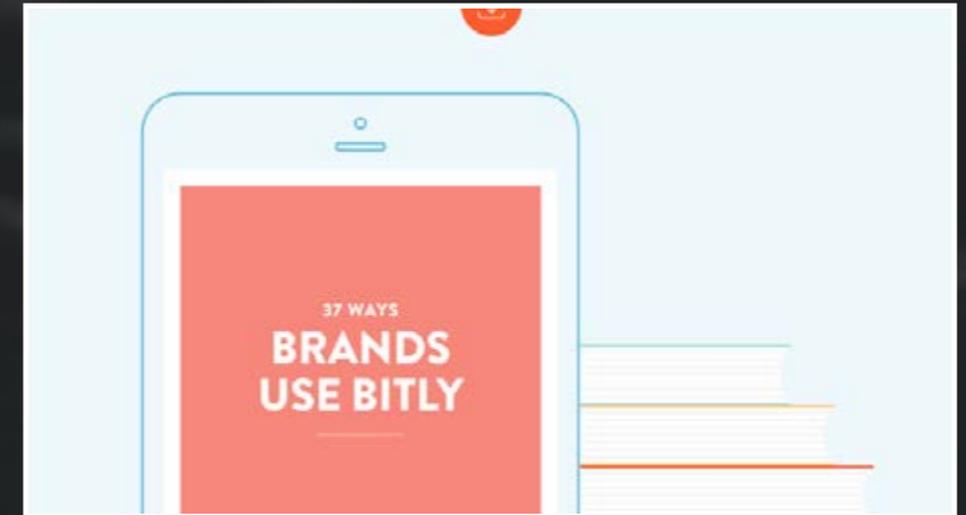
E-BOOKS

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Because e-books are typically highly detailed long-form efforts, they are ideally suited to being broken up and turned into additional content assets. The resulting micro-content can then help you cross-promote your e-book – and your overall insight on the topic – in multiple ways.

Here are a few [top-of-the-funnel promotion ideas](#) to get you started:

- ▶ Post the first chapter on SlideShare as a teaser for the full version.
- ▶ Record someone from your team reading selected chapters and launch the recording as a podcast or audio book.
- ▶ Compile some of the e-book's useful tips and tricks into an infographic.
- ▶ Turn your best quotes into tweets, with a link to your landing page.



Case studies that earn extra points:

[37 Ways Brands Use Bitly](#)

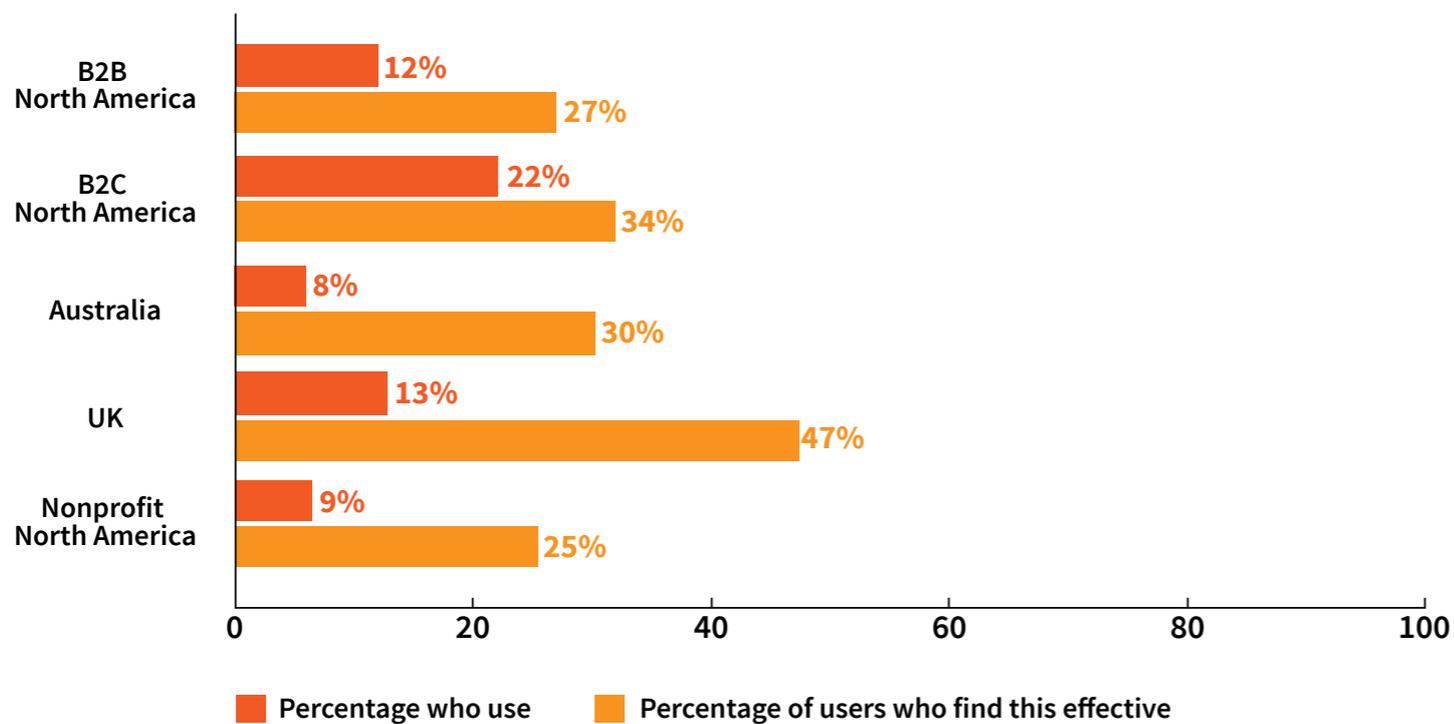
We all know how useful link shortener Bitly is when we need to cram a few extra characters into a tweet or add an easy-to-type URL into a graphic we plan to share on social media. But did you know it can be used to help marketers track leads, or even find the best channel to push a particular product promotion to? Bitly leveraged the e-book format to highlight the unexpected ways its little links can be used to make a big impact on branding, social media, metrics and content marketing efforts. By including over 30 third-party examples, along with perspectives from marketers who are personally using the service for their business, the company makes a pretty compelling case for marketers to buy-in to Bitly.

GAMES/GAMIFICATION

THE PLAY:

Gamification puts your audience directly at the center of the action, using interactive activities like games, quizzes, contests, and social media challenges to drive interest and engagement. Personalized gaming experiences are a win-win for both marketers and fans alike: Players get to have a little fun with the content you create, while your business gets a platform for building customer conversations your audience will be passionate about.

Content Marketing Play: Games/Gamification



Source: Content Marketing Institute 2016 Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends Research

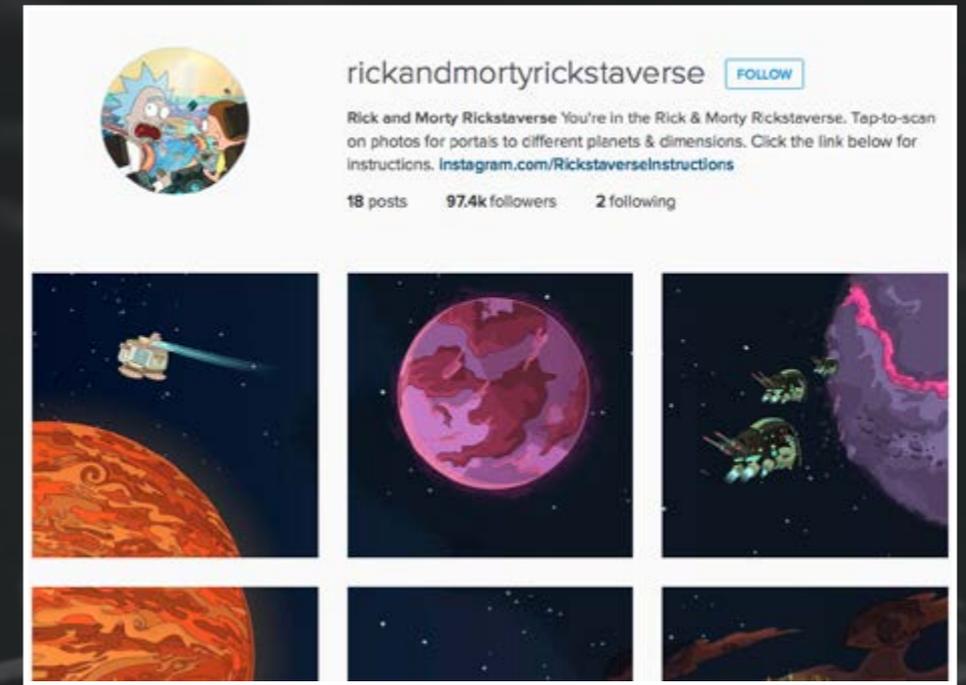


GAMES/GAMIFICATION

HOW TO USE IT TO SCORE A GOAL:

Though they can be expensive and time consuming to develop, when pulled off well, this tactic can take the concept of immersive content to a whole new level. Here are some ideas to explore:

- ▶ **Expand the story of familiar characters.** If you have a company mascot, or characters your fans would be familiar with, games are a great way to let fans go deeper into their backstories.
- ▶ **Consider tying your game play to rewards players can earn in real life.** For example, Entertainment Weekly's Front Row community earns points for answering survey questions, which can be redeemed for gift cards from Amazon or iTunes.
- ▶ **Make it easy for players to bring friends in on the fun** by including sharing tools in your game interface, or providing the ability to "ask a friend" for help advancing their game play.
- ▶ **Use a leaderboard** to let fans track their progress against other players.



Case studies that earn extra points: [Rick & Morty's Rickstaverse](#)

Part interactive photo album, part hidden object game, part Choose Your Own Adventure-style experience, this innovative Instagram effort enables fans of the subversive Adult Swim cartoon, Rick and Morty, to join the intrepid intergalactic imbeciles on an exploration of 11 different planets. Built through a web of linked Instagram accounts, the game lets fans dive in and out of photo-powered versions of locations seen on the show and access a galaxy's worth of exclusive content, Easter eggs, and hidden in-jokes.



For more expert advice from leading B2B and B2C brands on how to increase your content marketing success, join us for Content Marketing World 2016. **Register using the code PLAYBOOK for \$200 off main event** and all-access passes.



CONTENT
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ABOUT CONTENT MARKETING INSTITUTE

[Content Marketing Institute](#) is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching enterprise brands how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. CMI's [Content Marketing World](#) event, the largest content marketing-focused event, is held every September in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and the [Intelligent Content Conference](#) event is held every spring. CMI publishes the bimonthly magazine [Chief Content Officer](#), and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. CMI is a 2012-2015 Inc. 500/5000 company. Watch this [video](#) to learn more about CMI.

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