

A SMARTSHEET REPORT:

3 New Ways to Win at Marketing



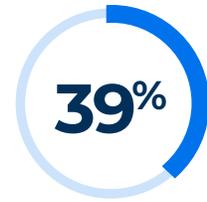
The tide is turning for marketers. According to a recent McKinsey study, 83% of global CEOs now believe marketing can be a [major driver of growth](#).¹ Once thought of by CEOs as a niche business unit that runs ads, marketing departments may now benefit from a shift in mindset at the highest levels of an organization.

But with that high-level buy-in comes significant pressure, and marketing organizations are increasingly under scrutiny to prove they're delivering value to the bottom line. Expectations are high: Marketers should aim to contribute a quarter of total company revenue, according to consulting firm [Sales Benchmark Institute](#).² First they need to do it, and then they need to prove it, which isn't always easy: Data from Hubspot indicates that "39% of marketers say proving the ROI of their marketing activities is their [top marketing challenge](#)."³ And though the majority of CEOs believe in marketing's potential to drive revenue, nearly 23% percent don't think marketers are delivering, according to [McKinsey](#).⁴

There's a lot riding on your marketing organization's ability to deliver measurable results in an increasingly complex landscape. Competition moves quickly, and customers are ever more difficult to engage in a rushing torrent of marketing messages. In this environment, marketing misfires can be costly: Experiences with your brand — positive and negative — spread like a virus via social platforms.

Add to that the imperative to adapt to a new work dynamic, brought on by an explosion of new technologies that enable marketing organizations to compete at a speed and on a scale never before possible. New ways of working have emerged, with organizations increasingly breaking work down into parallel streams handled by multi-disciplinary teams. In the new work dynamic, everything is a project and everyone is a project manager. The old ways of working won't cut it; to be successful, marketing needs a new approach.

When all eyes are on you to deliver, you need to bulletproof your efforts. Here are three of the newest ways to win at marketing.



*of marketers say proving the ROI of their marketing activities is their [top marketing challenge](#).*³

1, 4. McKinsey & Company, 2019. [Marketing's Moment is Now: The C-suite Partnership to Deliver On Growth](#).

2. Sales Benchmark Institute, 2020. [2020 Annual Planning: How Will You Forecast Marketing's Contribution to Revenue?](#)

3. Hubspot, 2018. [Hubspot, State of Inbound Report](#).

Embrace emerging technology — and connect the tech you have.

Marketing technology has exploded, and is now a critical element for successful marketing teams. According to [Gartner's 2019 Marketing Organization Survey](#),⁵ 26% of marketing budgets are dedicated to martech, yet nearly a quarter of respondents feel that marketing technology strategy, adoption, and use is “one of their top three weaknesses in their company’s ability to drive customer acquisition or loyalty.” Getting martech right is an ongoing challenge that can make or break the success of marketing organizations.

With thousands of technologies spanning everything from advertising and promotion solutions to content and experience solutions, to social media and relationship-building solutions, it’s enough to make your head spin. But the proliferation of technology means marketers have options.

Most marketing organizations will invest in some variety of the basics: a marketing automation tool for email; a customer relationship management (CRM) system that provides flexible segmentation capabilities, simplifies automation, and is intuitive enough for novices to grasp quickly to support marketing efforts throughout the sales funnel; a content management system (CMS); an analytics platform.

But two relatively new arrivals to the vast marketing technology landscape warrant a closer look, as they have the potential to drive significant competitive advantage:

AI and machine learning

Touted as a boon across industries from healthcare to automotive, and functions from finance to customer support, artificial intelligence (AI) is now seen as a significant business advantage by 72% of business executives, according to a [PwC AI report](#).⁶ It’s time for marketers to jump on the bandwagon and reap the benefits.

AI marketing allows you to become a modern-day soothsayer. By taking insights from data, AI marketing (with the help of machine learning) can help marketers predict activity — your customer’s next move — and deliver more meaningful customer interactions. This enables you to deliver messages where and when your customers will be most receptive, and deliver an experience that feels personalized and relevant.



Artificial intelligence (AI) is now seen as a significant business advantage by 72% of business executives.⁶

5. Gartner, 2020. *CMO Spend Survey 2019–2020: CMOs Double Down on Digital Channels and Analytics, but Fail to Plan for Tough Times Ahead.*

6. PwC, 2017. *Bot.Me: A revolutionary partnership*

AI marketing can inform and improve nearly all aspects of a marketing organization. It can help advertisers optimize targeting, and create more valuable content experiences on websites. Machine-learning technology can also help you spot and target disengaged customers – before they leave you for a competitor.

Collaborative work management

Orchestrating effective marketing campaigns, events, and shared services requires constant coordination, across an organization and with external vendors and agencies. Siloed tools and teams can cause costly delays in the form of lengthy content creation and approval processes, version-control issues, blown-out budgets, and missed opportunities. Collaborative work management (CWM) technologies tear down those silos, giving marketing organizations a single source of truth across all teams and activities.

The best of CWM technologies integrate and connect with existing technologies and streamline workflows. They automate approval processes, and combine them with proofing capabilities to get stellar content across the finish line. They simplify workflows and speed execution, and they're flexible enough to improve the efficiency and impact of everything from campaign management, to event management, to shared services management, and more.

There are many CWM technologies available today; marketing organizations should look for a platform that integrates with other technologies, and offers powerful pre-built solutions for marketers. Most CWM applications work well at the task level; look for one that's flexible enough to run projects, programs, and processes across your organization.

As you identify the solutions and platforms you need, you should also ensure interoperability and alignment between your technologies, or you risk ending up with a Frankenstack of solutions held together with luck and high hopes. If your technology doesn't play nice, neither will your people and processes. When your martech solutions jive, you'll benefit from real-time insights and increased agility. For example, you can optimize and adjust your tactics and approach in real time if you've just launched a campaign and see that it isn't landing.

Nicolás Vargas, head of research at Online Marketing Gurus, offers six steps for designing and building the right martech stack for your needs: Define what you need, conduct an audit, develop a requirements list, plan technology needs, run a gap analysis, and implement your [suite of solutions](#).⁷ However you approach it, with the right martech solutions, your teams can do more, faster, because they're not bogged down tracking details and analyzing data. Automating those repetitive, time-consuming tasks allows your team to focus on innovation and strategy, driving the business results your C-suite expects.



Collaborative work management (CWM) technologies give marketing organizations a single source of truth across all teams and activities.

7. Vargas, Nicolás, 2019. [How To Design A Martech Stack](#).

Think like sales and build relationships.

CMOs now spend more than CIOs on technology solutions, with marketing budgets totalling over 10% of company revenue, [according to Gartner](#).⁸ With such a considerable spend, it's critical for CMOs to work with IT to ensure martech interoperability and success with other business technologies.

A 2018 McKinsey study found that when CMOs worked closely with IT, they were more successful at reaching company goals, and were able to grow their revenues 10% a year, twice the average rate of the [S&P 500](#).⁹ By contrast, 52% of companies with the lowest rates of growth revealed that the CMO and CTO/CIO rarely interacted.

Beyond IT, marketing leaders are building bridges across leadership, growing in their ability to influence and impact the business at large. McKinsey calls these CMOs “unifiers,” and they are masters at [cross-functional collaboration](#).¹⁰ These unifiers “ensure that marketing has a clearly defined role in the eyes of C-suite peers; they adopt the language and mindset of other C-suite executives; and they articulate how marketing can help meet the C-suite’s needs.” These marketers play a role in defining the company’s broader strategy. They take part in important decisions, and increase the influence of their marketing organization as a whole. In McKinsey’s study, one CMO reported having “shifted the entire C-suite’s view of marketing spend from a P&L expense to an investment the company is making in its future.”

When these cross-functional leadership relationships are mirrored by their teams, it can have a dramatic magnifying effect. Marketing teams that are empowered and encouraged to work across team silos can create “agile squads” that combine skill sets and optimize collaboration toward a common goal. Creatives come together with data analysts, who can more easily crunch numbers and explain insights that lead to more effective designs and collateral. Collaborating with IT results in faster, more seamless marketing technology rollout and adoption. And campaign managers sync with sales for more relevant calls to action, and a more fruitful funnel.

Though a healthy partnership with sales is critical, in most marketing organizations there is room for improvement. An OpenView survey of more than 500 SaaS marketing leaders found that less than a quarter (22%) of those surveyed admit to being completely [aligned with sales](#).¹¹ Since marketing owns as much as 70% of the buyer journey, it's vital to an organization that they understand all there is to know about sales as a function, and stay informed about sales practices, goals, and priorities.



of companies with the lowest rates of growth revealed that the CMO and CTO/CIO rarely interacted.⁹

8. Gartner, 2020. *CMO Spend Survey 2019–2020: CMOs Double Down on Digital Channels and Analytics, but Fail to Plan for Tough Times Ahead.*

9. McKinsey & Company, June, 2018. *The Most Perfect Union: Unlocking the next wave of growth by unifying creativity and analytics.*

10. McKinsey & Company, 2019. *Marketing's Moment is Now: The C-suite Partnership to Deliver On Growth.*

11. OpenView, 2017. *Real-world Strategies for Strong Sales and Marketing Alignment.*

Debbie Qaqish, Ph.D., principal partner and chief strategy officer of The Pedowitz Group suggests the marketing-sales relationship should be referred to as a “[revenue partnership](#),”¹² the benefits of which can be significant. By breaking down silos, sales can inform marketing’s approach, and marketing can in turn influence sales’ approach in prospecting and outreach. A fully informed sales department can draft on a marketing event with CTAs that drive to consultation or trial, for example, resulting in conversions that matter to the business. And a marketing team that understands the pain points of sales can create collateral, thought leadership, and targeted campaigns that soften the beaches for sales.

The marketing and sales partnership can be enhanced further with components from your martech stack. For example, a CWM platform that integrates with your CRM can be instrumental in breaking down silos, as teams across disciplines can coordinate and consolidate efforts with real-time visibility, and refer to a single source of truth as everyone executes on aligned goals.

3.

Win hearts and minds with streamlined production of strategic content.

Content remains king, especially when building brand affinity and awareness, not to mention helping to drive sales. It’s an increasingly worthwhile investment, especially for a millennial audience that’s expected to reach more than [\\$1.4 trillion in spending power this year](#).¹³ According to Demand Gen’s 2016 Content Preferences Survey Report, nearly half of B2B buyers consume at least three pieces of content before even [talking to a sales person](#).¹⁴

Quality content has a snowball effect. From improving search rankings and inbound links to influencing purchase decisions, high-quality brand content can impact everything from awareness to revenue. Content marketing is effective, and everybody knows it. According to research from the Content Marketing Institute, 91% of B2B brands and 86% of B2C brands do some kind of content marketing.

But just because your department creates blogs, infographics, videos, runs a TikTok channel, and posts Instagram stories doesn’t mean the right people are seeing them. Just over a third of the brands surveyed (37% in B2B and 38% in B2C) have a [documented content marketing strategy](#).¹⁵ Creating one is worth the time and investment: content marketing returns triple the number of leads delivered by paid search advertising, according to the Content Marketing Institute.



According to Demand Gen’s 2016 Content Preferences Survey Report, nearly half of B2B buyers consume at least three pieces of content before even talking to a sales person.¹⁴

12. Qaqish, Debbie; ChiefExecutive, 2019. [Creating A Successful Sales And Marketing Partnership](#).

13, 15. Content Marketing Institute, 2019. [2019 B2B Content Marketing Research: It Pays to Put Audience First](#).

14. Demand Gen, 2016. [Content Preferences Survey Report](#).

A content strategy is a strategic road map for how you will use content to attract, engage, convert, and retain your customers. It goes beyond channel strategy to provide a unified plan for what story you'll tell, when, to whom, and on which platform. If different teams "own" your channels and platforms – if social, website, blog, SEO, and other paid media opportunities aren't all under the same leader – your strategy will need to be a collaboration. The goal is to arrive at a coherent vision for your brand storytelling, so that you speak with a single voice in the marketplace.

Once you've articulated your content strategy, it's crucial to rapidly deliver quality content at scale in order to gain (or maintain) traction in the market – and quickly respond to breaking news, trends, and customer needs.

In companies of all sizes, the volume and velocity of content creation is increasing. Digital marketing, including social media, online advertising, and email, has given all companies the ability to reach customers directly with a comparatively low budget. Yet digital marketing demands both a volume of content and turn-around times for that content that didn't exist with traditional advertising. Brands need a way to quickly create content, send it for review, get it approved, and published out in the market.

As the pace of production for creative work accelerates, production, review cycles, and approval times need to speed up accordingly. Marketers and creatives should consider a CWM platform with easy-to-use automated workflows that greatly simplify the approval process and incorporates proofing capabilities, so feedback is captured in real time in one place. To streamline production, they may also want to look for a CWM platform that integrates with software creatives already use – like Adobe Creative Cloud – so they can quickly find assignments and manage proofs and approvals directly from Adobe Creative Cloud applications.

Similarly, creating an editorial calendar or a campaign calendar in your collaborative work management platform can keep teams across the marketing organization and vendors aligned. The right CWM platform not only helps with strategic planning and execution, but also enables real-time visibility, helping you keep track of critical KPIs and surface your success to leadership.

If you're not already measuring your content, get started immediately, benchmarking performance and setting goals for the results that matter to your brand. Some common content KPIs include:

- Reach (often measured in unique visits, geography-specific visits, and device type)
- Engagement (scroll depth, video completion rate, bounce rate, time on page, heat maps, and comments and shares)
- Referrals back to your website and conversions to trial or purchase



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Once you define your KPIs, consider building a dynamic dashboard to surface metrics to leadership and key stakeholders in real time. Make sure you don't measure too much; it's easy to get lost in a sea of data and lose focus on the results that matter the most. Likewise, make sure you're not measuring just to prove out the ROI of your content program; you're also measuring for valuable insights about what your audience cares about enough to read to the end or share with a friend.

Given the cacophony of content available to consumers, many brands do well when they take a "less is more" approach. In most cases, it's a better use of resources — and better for the brand — to land fewer, high-value stories well. Invest in research about what your audience wants, and where they want to find it. And make sure you're keeping up with what's new in content marketing; your competition probably is. Here are several trends to watch in 2020:

User-generated content (UGC). According to AdWeek,¹⁶ 85% of people trust content created by other users more than by brands. Enabling your customers to share their experiences with your brand creates valuable third-party validation, as well as a community of informal brand "ambassadors." When you give your most engaged and passionate customers a platform, you create a conversation that benefits your brand while deepening customer loyalty. And UGC content can provide valuable insights about your brand, products, and services, surfacing issues in real time, rather than waiting for customer satisfaction surveys.

Interactive content technologies. From simple quizzes, polls, and calculators to immersive 360-degree content environments, interactive content is on the rise, and for good reason: Besides the "cool factor" of some of the emerging technology, at its core, interactive content creates a two-way conversation with your brand. Instead of passive consumers, your audience is actively engaging with your content, making it "stickier" — leaving a lasting impression — and more shareable. When you combine interactive content with personalization, you deliver a brand experience that feels engaging and relevant.

Video and live streaming. Already a major component of many content marketing strategies, video is only going to get bigger in the coming year. New platforms such as TikTok and Twitch, along with the global dominance of YouTube, are driving sustained appetite for video. Customers prefer video to other types of content, and brands report that video works in driving engagement and awareness. In a 2019 Wyzowl survey,¹⁷ 68% of people say they'd most prefer to learn about a new product or service by watching a short video, and HubSpot reports that 54% of customers want to see their **favorite brands produce more video content**.¹⁸ Long successful on Facebook and Instagram, video is on the rise on LinkedIn, and increasingly, brands are getting involved with live video on Facebook Live and Instagram Live.



According to AdWeek,¹⁶
85% of people trust
content created by other
users more than by brands.

16. AdWeek. *Why Consumers Share User-Generated Content*.

17. Wyzowl, 2019. *Video Marketing Statistics 2019*.

18. HubSpot, 2017. *Content Trends: Preferences Emerge Along Generational Faultlines*.

In the coming years, new technologies will drive everything from AI-generated content to voice-search optimization. Not all of this will be right for your brand (and some will be completely wrong for it), but it's a valuable exercise to evaluate emerging technologies and be ready to evolve to include them.

When you bring in better technology, and build new systems for better collaboration and content, you can realize exponential improvements in marketing impact. Your organization is freed up from app sprawl and approval churn to be more strategic and drive innovation. Your big initiatives get to market faster, and with better results. You reach the right people with the right message at the right time. And your marketing organization delivers real value against overall business priorities. By streamlining your efforts, you can deliver rock-solid results. And those results will help you not only justify your marketing budget, but make a case for the potential of powerful marketing to impact the bottom line.

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