InTech:

The state of B2B tech marketing 2015

Insights and opinion from tech marketers on the issues shaping B2B marketing strategy

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What stops B2B marketers demonstrating ROI on marketing spend? The answer might surprise you.

We might assume that measurement and investment are confused by a lack of data. A famous quote by John Wanamaker, postmaster general and early marketing pioneer supports this view.

> "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don't know which half."

It is often used in debates about marketing evaluation. If nothing else, the validity of Mr Wanamaker's comment is enduring. He died in 1922.

A recent poll of B2B tech marketers from B2Bmarketing's InTech event found that strategy and culture were the most significant obstacles to clarity around marketing ROI. As shown below, marketers are twice as likely to consider strategy and culture [collaboration] as challenges to establishing ROI than process and technology [figure 1].

In the search for technology solutions and workflows to count the cost of marketing, it appears far more 'human' factors reside at the heart of the problem.

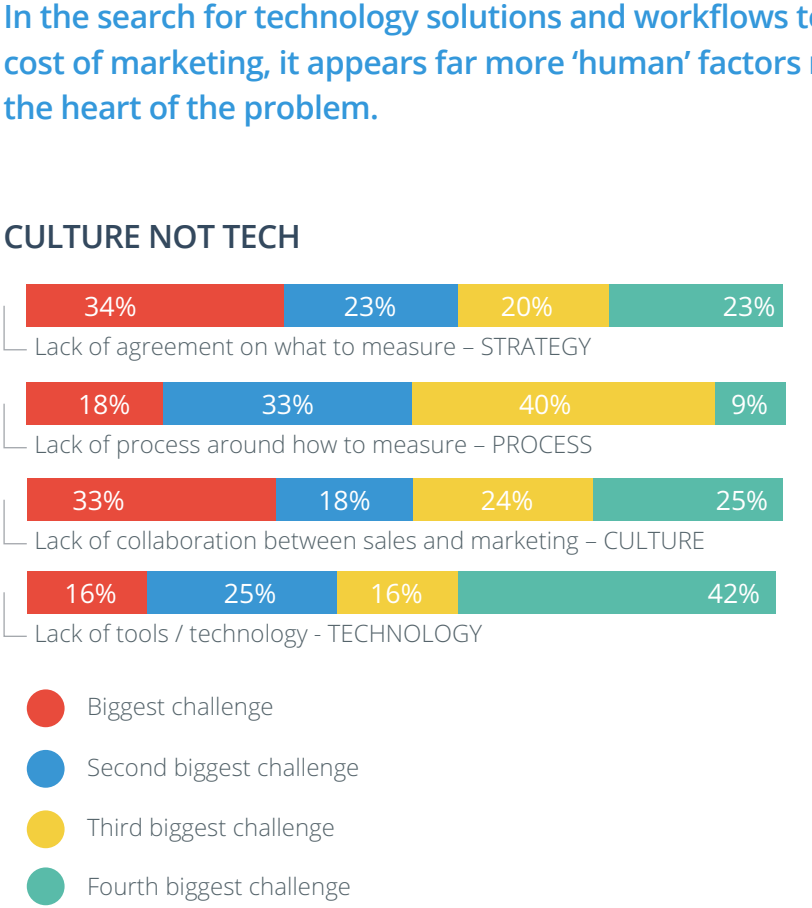
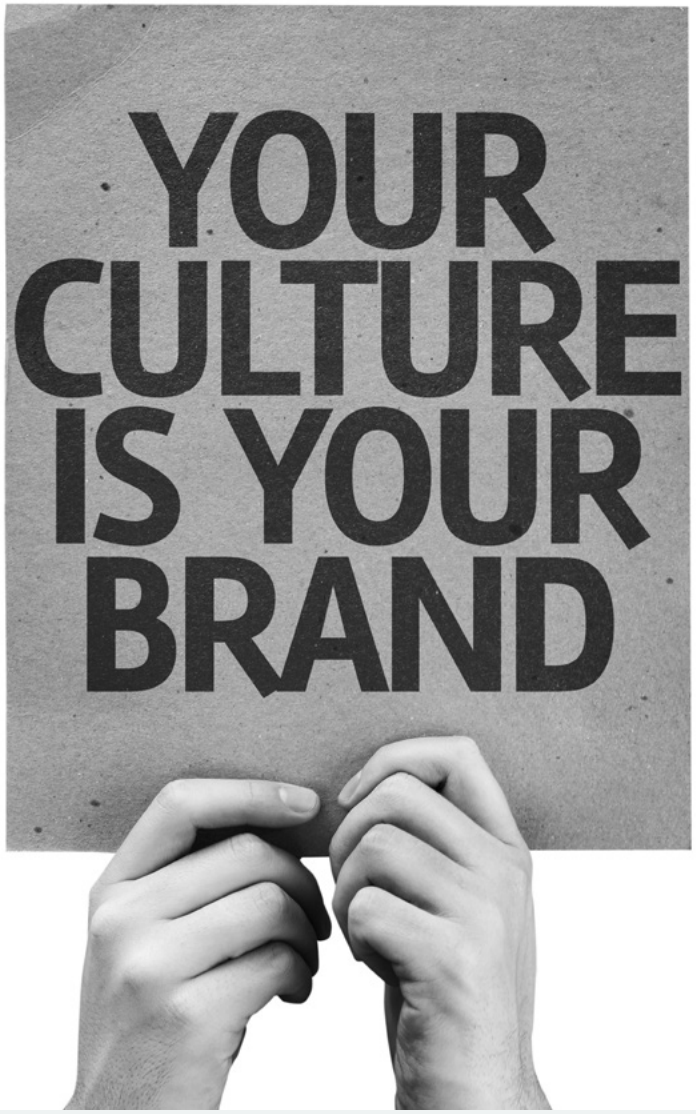


Figure1: What makes it difficult to connect marketing investment with sales and results?



The problem of showing an impact [ROI] on sales objectives from marketing activity is a significant one. Not only is it among the most important issues impacting tech marketers [figure 2], it also presents the highest level of challenge [78%]. In the context of sales alignment and culture, it is also telling that the need to integrate marketing into other parts of the organisation is considered by respondents to be another crucial issue [94%].



ISSUES IMPACTING TECH MARKETERS

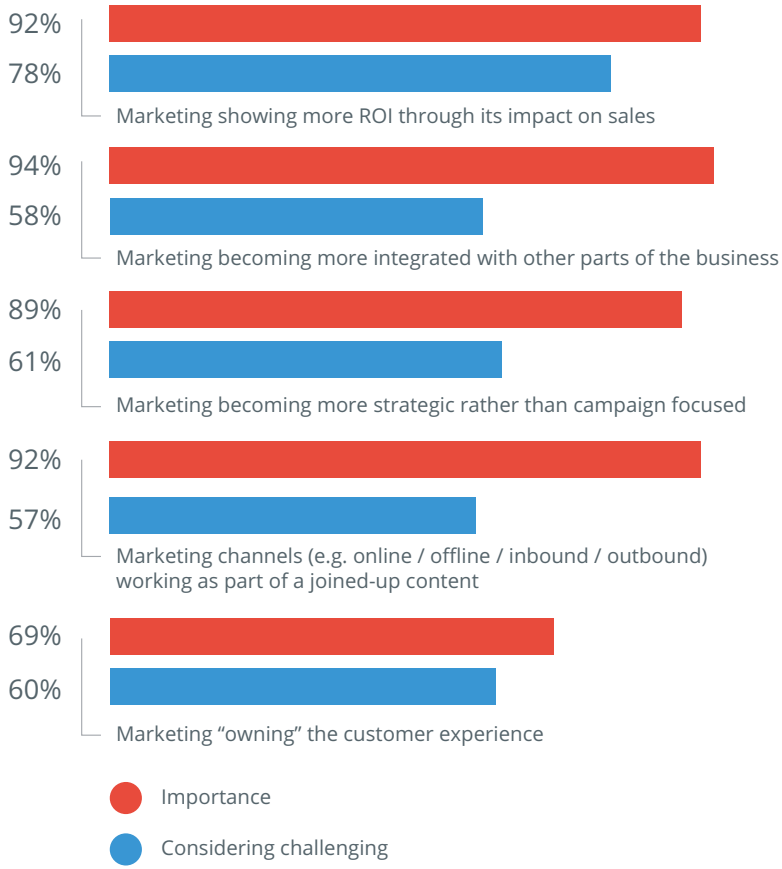


Figure 2: As a marketing professional, how important do you see each of the following in meeting your organisation's objectives? **Q:** And how challenging does your business find each of these? % shown are important / extremely important or challenging / very challenging.

When considering what changes tech marketers had experienced over the past two years, the most significant was said to be the increased pressure to generate marketing qualified leads. Meanwhile 69% of respondents stated this as a business change, more than those stating a general increase in focus on content marketing (63%) or a focus on marketing automation (37%) [figure 3].

Clearly, these kind of pressures and changes influence the role of the tech marketer. In light of these pressures and an evident appetite for content marketing, delegates prioritised the following factors as skills and attributes that are required to be a successful tech marketer today [Figure 4].

CHANGES IN THE MARKETING ROLE



Figure 3: Which of the following changes have you seen in your business / role in the last two years?

SKILLS FOR TODAY'S TECH MARKETER

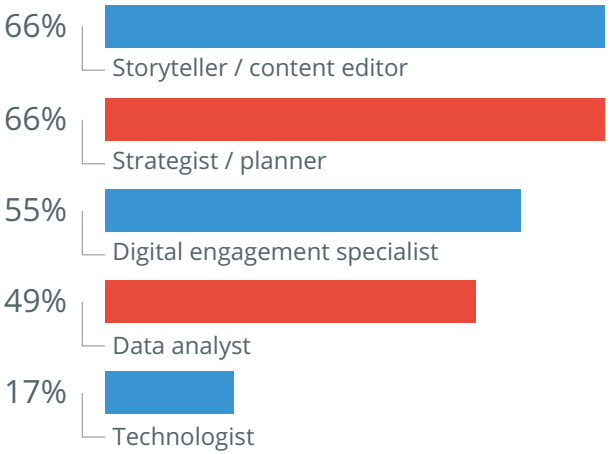


Figure 4: Which of the following elements of the marketing role do you think need to be emphasised for people to operate as successful tech marketers today?

The focus on content is an understandable one as businesses learn more about how buying decisions are influenced by information consumed online. Technology, whilst important, ranked relatively low as a skill required to deliver success [figure 4].

Respondents are also faced with the legacy of a need for content to focus on products in order to sell – 69% agree that their 'content could focus less on product / service and more on providing insightful help' [figure 5].

MORE INSIGHT, LESS PRODUCT

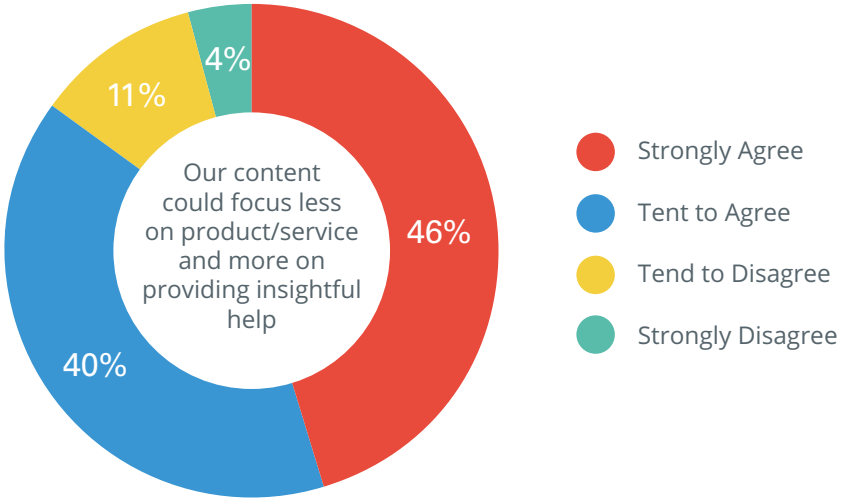


Figure 5.



A content evolution is clearly in progress and content-related skills and best practice are at the forefront of tech marketing considerations. Figure 6 (right), shows that there is lots of content-based activity to support lead generation and sales. However, this appears to be at the expense of some vital elements of planning and management, namely marketing automation and persona development.

68% of respondents are investing in content for lead generation, with 13% looking to do so in the next 12 months. However, only 37% have invested in persona development – a critical element of content planning. It is encouraging that more companies (23%) plan to do so in the next 12 months, but there is still room for improvement.



ALL CONTENT NO PLAN

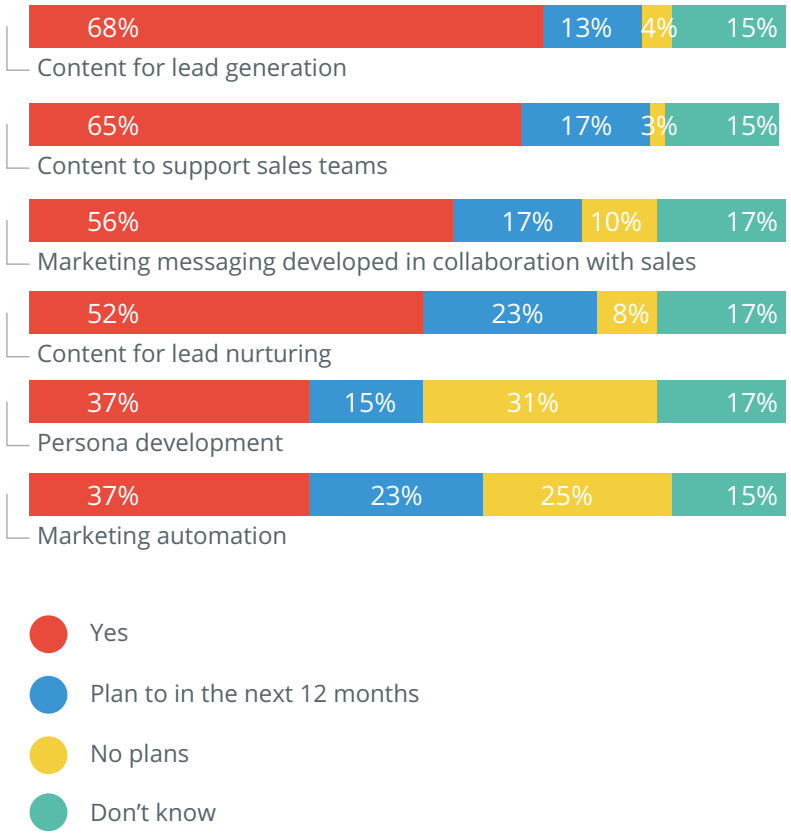


Figure 6: Has your organisation invested in any of the following to better connect brand / marketing efforts to sales results?

Summary

The InTech research has revealed that culture and strategy are the biggest factors influencing marketing investment and its impact on sales results. Technology and processes are considerably less important.

This suggests that tech businesses need to seriously consider the marketing function and its relationship to sales. There is a legacy of the relationship between marketing and sales that is being swept aside by a wave of content-based marketing and changing buyer behaviours.

Whilst there is an appetite for content-driven marketing to meet performance goals amongst the InTech delegates, this too is hindered. Tech marketers are keen to execute on content activity. But they are less focused on the planning and infrastructure elements that would, ultimately, improve performance and the ability to demonstrate effectiveness (ROI). This may be influenced by strategic and cultural challenges that respondents experience with sales and measuring investment.

To address the issues identified in this report, Octopus Group and B2Bmarketing have provided the following 5 tips to get sales, marketing and content all lined up.

Strategy Building

Marketing strategy often focuses on how to engage the market what activities that will involve. The consideration of what is going to constitute success and the consensus on that between sales and marketing can get overlooked. Equally, marketing can define its success in a vacuum.

A marketing strategy must have strategic sales input and measurement must work back from the required sales results to provide an objective view of success. Without this, problems are inevitable.

ROI Roadblocks

With a consensus on where the value of a marketing strategy resides, a sensible ROI model can be put in place. The emphasis here should be on the commercial goals of the business and the areas where marketing can most effectively support that need. Workflows, technology and data capture are all part of measurement execution, not the strategy from which marketing will deliver a return.

Inside Marketing

The presence and visibility of marketing within the organisation is another key requirement of the marketing function. As the demands for marketing and sales alignment continue to grow, the need to extend out to employees, executives, technology stakeholders and finance functions also increases.

CMOs need to think about how the internal perception and reach of the marketing can support the overall strategy. Beyond communications, other roles in the business are now critical for optimising marketing performance.

Customer-First Content

Content that is too focused on products is a symptom of failing to consider the customer first. Product roadmaps can dictate a lot of marketing activity. This must be balanced by an emphasis on customer-driven content.

Audit how much content on your website or in your campaigns is about your business. Content should prompt your audience to think first and buy later...maybe much later. If your content doesn't achieve that goal, opportunities will be missed.

Planning Value

Planning content with the customer in mind is a great habit to get into for tech businesses. Persona planning is a valuable device for bringing sales and marketing people together. Your sales people have more prospect contact than anyone else and their insights form an important part of the customer picture.

Targeted content, based on personas improves response rates and ROI. Building accurate, meaningful personas demands that marketing and sales collaborate. This process is an easy step towards fulfilling wider integration initiatives.

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Methodology

The InTech: The state of B2B tech marketing 2015 is provided from data gathered via an online and in-person survey of 72 of the UK's leading technology marketers. All participants contributed as a result of B2Bmarketing's 2015 InTech event. The research was conducted and analysed by Loudhouse Research, an Octopus Group research business and authored in partnership with B2Bmarketing.

