

2021 CONTENT MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY SURVEY



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our fifth annual Content Management & Strategy Survey report.

As they reported in 2020, many content professionals are working hard on internal processes that improve their ability to connect with customers. At the same time, silos continue to get in the way (58% said communication among teams is a challenge, as did 60% last year).

Nevertheless, content professionals have made strides in working to create consistent experiences throughout the customer journey. However, they faced challenges with content production workflow and using UX design to improve customer experiences (not surprising, as teams have had to adjust to shifts brought on by the pandemic and work-from-home world).

- 49% agreed their organization creates consistent experiences throughout the customer journey (up from 39% the previous year).
- Those who cited content production workflow as a challenge increased to 45% from 27%.

- Those who cited using UX design to improve the overall experience a customer has with the organization as a challenge increased to 50% from 43%.

CONTENT AS A CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY

More respondents this year reported that their business views content as a core business strategy (81% vs. 72% last year). In addition:

- The level of proficiency with using technology to manage content increased (31% reported that their organization is expert/advanced vs. 25% last year).
- Fewer reported that having enough skilled staff is a challenge (53% vs. 63% last year).
- About the same percentage reported that their organization is extremely/very successful with content management (22%), and fewer reported minimal/no success (13% vs. 21% last year).

However, fewer respondents agreed their organization extracts meaningful insights from data and analytics (56% vs. 69% last year). In addition, 21% indicated a neutral position

INTRODUCTION

here (neither agree nor disagree) vs. 12% last year. This struggle makes sense, considering the massive shifts in online behavior coupled with the sheer volume of data generated in 2020.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON INTERNAL CONTENT MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

Like last year, around 40% of respondents said their organization isn't using its existing content technology to potential. The top three reasons cited for this: integration issues (56%), lack of training (55%), and lack of communication about capabilities (50%).

A new question in the survey asked about changes to content management technology due to work-from-home shifts caused by COVID-19:

- 67% reported few/no changes and 33% reported drastic/moderate changes.
- 57% indicated their organization has a strong/moderate desire to add new content management technology as it adapts to a post-COVID-19 world; 43% indicated little/no desire.

The desire to add new technology wasn't surprising. Last year, we predicted a much greater need for collaborative technologies and solutions, as working remotely in many ways becomes a new normal, requiring technology that enables collaboration, sharing, and agility.

CONTENT OPERATING MODEL FOCUSES ON CONTENT PRODUCTS/PLATFORMS

Another finding suggests that teams became more focused on their owned content marketing platforms (e.g., websites, blogs) versus spending so much time in reactive mode, responding to internal ad hoc requests. Consider the following:

In 2020, when we asked respondents to: *Indicate the typical approach taken by content creators in your organization:*

- 43% selected “project focused” (creating content in response to internal requests), whereas only 14% selected “platform focused” (creating specific types of content such as blogs or videos).

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, when we changed the question to: *Which one of the following most closely describes your organization's current content operating model (i.e., where the content team spends most of its time, effort, budget)?*

- 50% indicated a “content products” model (focused on content marketing platforms such as website, blog, magazine, resource center), followed by 32% who indicated a “projects/campaign” model (operating like an internal agency, responding to ad hoc internal requests).

THE SEVENTH WAVE IS HERE

Surfers say that waves travel in groups of seven as a “set.” Having the patience to wait for the biggest, most powerful seventh wave is the key to a great day in the water.

In reality, there is no seventh wave. There are bigger waves, and smaller waves, and patterns. Even so, good surfers can sense when that big wave is imminent.

It's like that for content practitioners, too. Executives are more convinced than ever that content is a strategic

function in business. But they don't quite have a feel for how it all works yet. The waves pass by.

Content production workflow has become an even bigger bottleneck, because marketing leaders know they need more content assets, but the business can't quite count the waves yet. More waves pass by.

Owned media properties (e.g., websites, blogs, magazines, resource centers) are important for enhancing customer experience. But we don't quite have the hang of managing them as products yet.

But content practitioners know that 2021 is different ... there's a swell coming.

Put simply, it's time for us to wax up the boards and teach our companies how to surf content strategy and management. The waves aren't new, but we can sense that the one we're in now is going to be massive.

Time to shoot the curl.

KEY FINDINGS

Content continues to become more strategic.

Eighty-one percent of respondents indicated their organization views content as a business strategy, up from 72% last year. In addition, there was an uptick in those describing their organization's proficiency with using technology to manage content as "expert/advanced" (31% vs. 25% last year). See pages 15 and 16.

There is greater emphasis on customer experience during the content planning phase.

Content professionals have made strides in working to create consistent experiences throughout the customer journey (49% agreed their organization is focused on this, vs. 39% last year). See page 22.

Extracting insights from data is tougher now than one year ago.

Slightly more than half (56%) of respondents strongly/somewhat agreed their organization extracts meaningful insights from data and analytics, down from 69% last year. Furthermore, 21% were neutral here (neither agree nor disagree) vs. 12% last year, suggesting teams are readjusting the ways they work with data. See page 15.

Integration, training, and communication issues are the top barriers to using content management technologies to potential.

Similar to last year, around 40% said their organization isn't using its content technology to potential. The top three reasons cited for this: integration issues (56%), lack of training (55%), and lack of communication about capabilities (50%). See page 19.

Continued on next page

KEY FINDINGS

More than half reported a strong/moderate desire to add new content management technology.

When asked about the changes their organizations made to content management technology due to work-from-home shifts during the pandemic, 67% reported few/no changes. However, 57% felt their organization has a strong/moderate desire to add new content management technology as it adapts to a post-COVID-19 world. See page 17.

Challenges have shifted.

While communication among teams remained a top challenge, fewer respondents this year reported that finding enough staff skilled in content strategy was a challenge (53% vs. 63% last year). However, more reported being challenged with content production workflow and using UX design to improve customer experiences. See page 25.

Content products/platforms are the major area of content operations focus.

Half of respondents indicated they operate within a “content products” model (focused on content marketing platforms such as website, blog, magazine, resource center), followed by 32% who indicated a “projects/campaign” model (operating like an internal agency, responding to ad hoc internal requests). See page 23.



METHODOLOGY/DEMOGRAPHICS

To better understand the approach content professionals are taking to strategically manage content, Content Marketing Institute (CMI) surveyed a portion of its subscriber database as follows:

Nature of Organization's Business (Agencies and Consultants were excluded)

- ▶ For-profit
- ▶ Nonprofit

Organization's Employee Size

- ▶ 50+ Employees

CMI's research team designed, programmed, and hosted the online survey, and collected and tabulated the data.

CMI emailed the survey invitations on April 7, 2021, and sent a reminder email on April 21, 2021. By April 29, 2021, respondents had returned 263 surveys. Seventy-eight percent (78%) indicated their organization takes a strategic approach to managing content; of those, 99% indicated they are involved (directly or indirectly) with some aspect of strategic content management in their organization.

To encourage prompt response and optimize the response rate, a random drawing was held for two \$50 Amazon gift cards, a link was included in the invitation to route respondents directly to the online survey, and the invitation and survey were branded with the CMI and ContentTECH Summit names and logos to capitalize on affinity for the brands.

METHODOLOGY/DEMOGRAPHICS

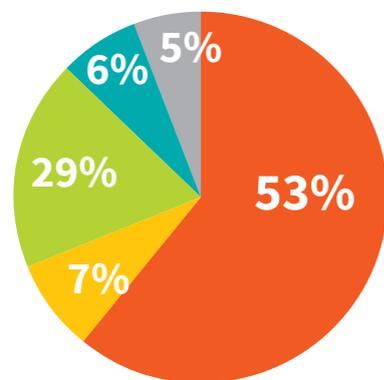
SURVEY DEFINITIONS

Strategic approach to managing content—an approach that involves setting up processes, people, and technology to better scale and deliver content with the intent to improve the overall customer experience.

A content management strategy—a strategy that addresses issues such as how your organization plans, develops, organizes, distributes, manages, and governs content.

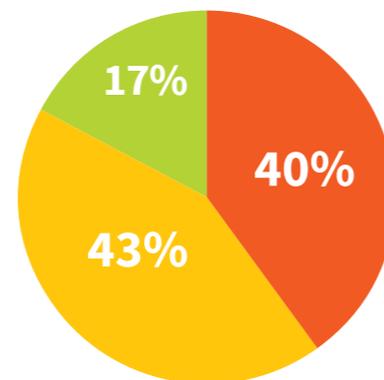
Success—achieving your organization’s overall desired/targeted results for its content strategy.

Nature of Organization



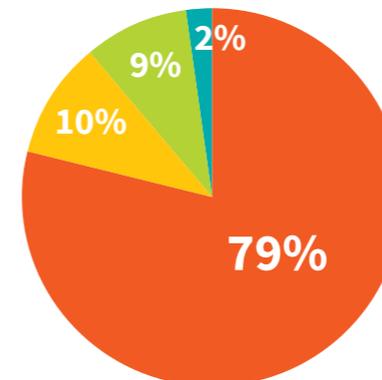
- For-profit B2B
- For-profit B2C
- For-profit B2B+B2C
- Nonprofit
- Other

Size of Organization



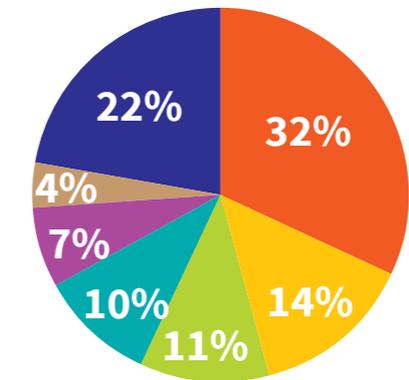
- 1,000+ employees
- 100 - 999 employees
- 1 - 99 employees

Location of Organization



- North America
- EMEA
- APAC
- South America

Industry Classification

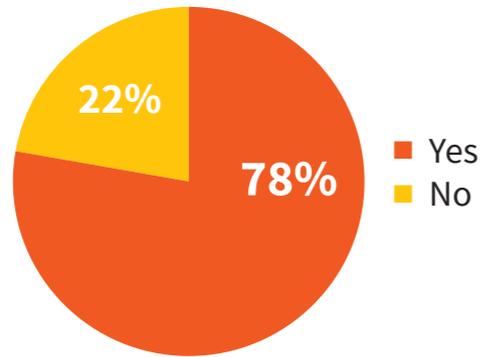


- Technology/IT/Software/Hardware
- Financial services
- Manufacturing
- Healthcare/Medical/Pharmaceuticals
- Professional services
- Publishing/Media
- Other

USE OF STRATEGIC APPROACH

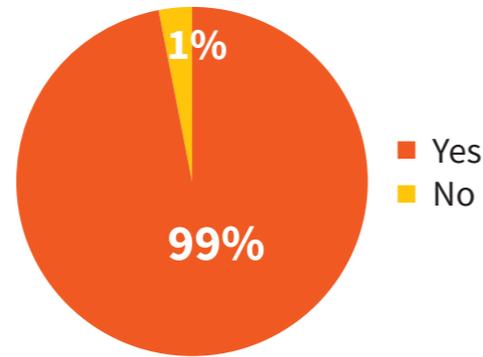
78% said their organization takes a strategic approach to managing content.

Strategic Approach to Managing Content



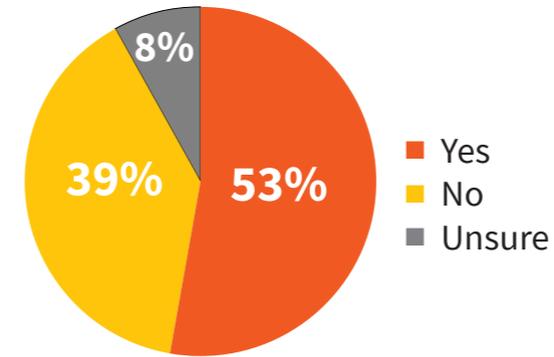
Base: All respondents.

Involvement in Strategic Content Management



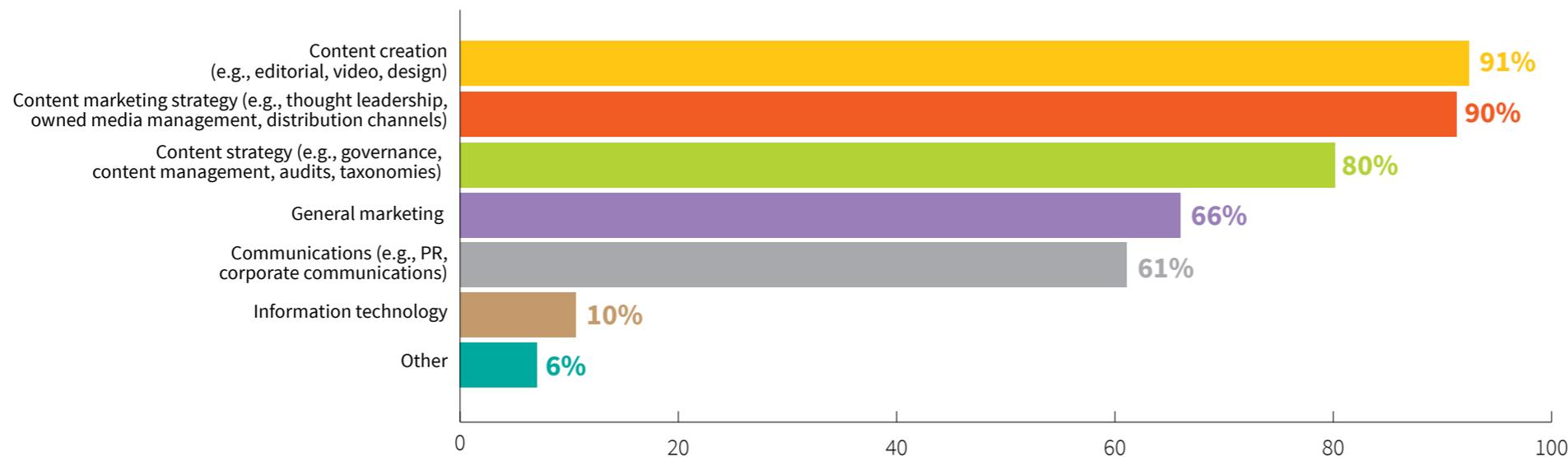
Base: Respondents whose organization takes a strategic approach to managing content.

Documented Content Management Strategy



Base: Those who are involved in strategic content management in their organization.

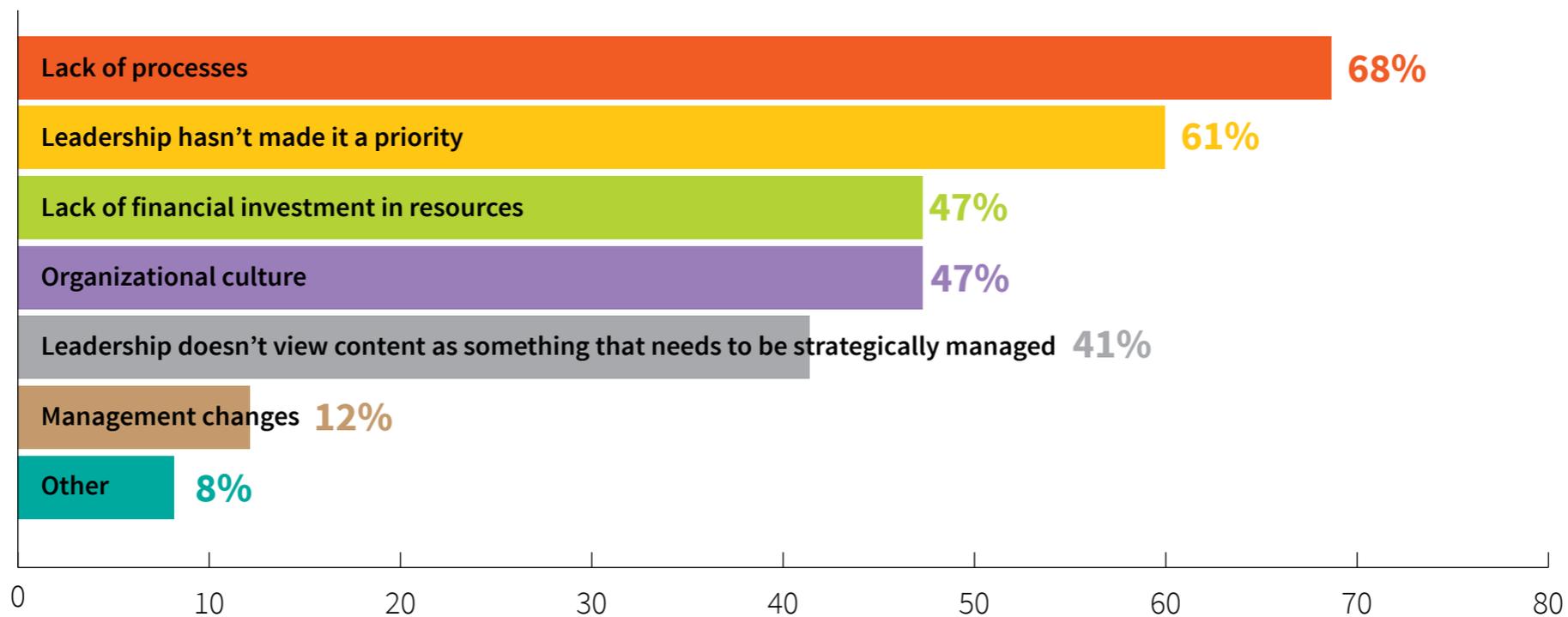
Areas of Involvement with Strategic Content Management



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; multiple responses permitted. Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

Respondents said the top two reasons why their organizations don't take a strategic approach to managing content are lack of processes (68%) and leadership hasn't made it a priority (61%).

Reasons Why Organizations Don't Take a Strategic Approach to Managing Content

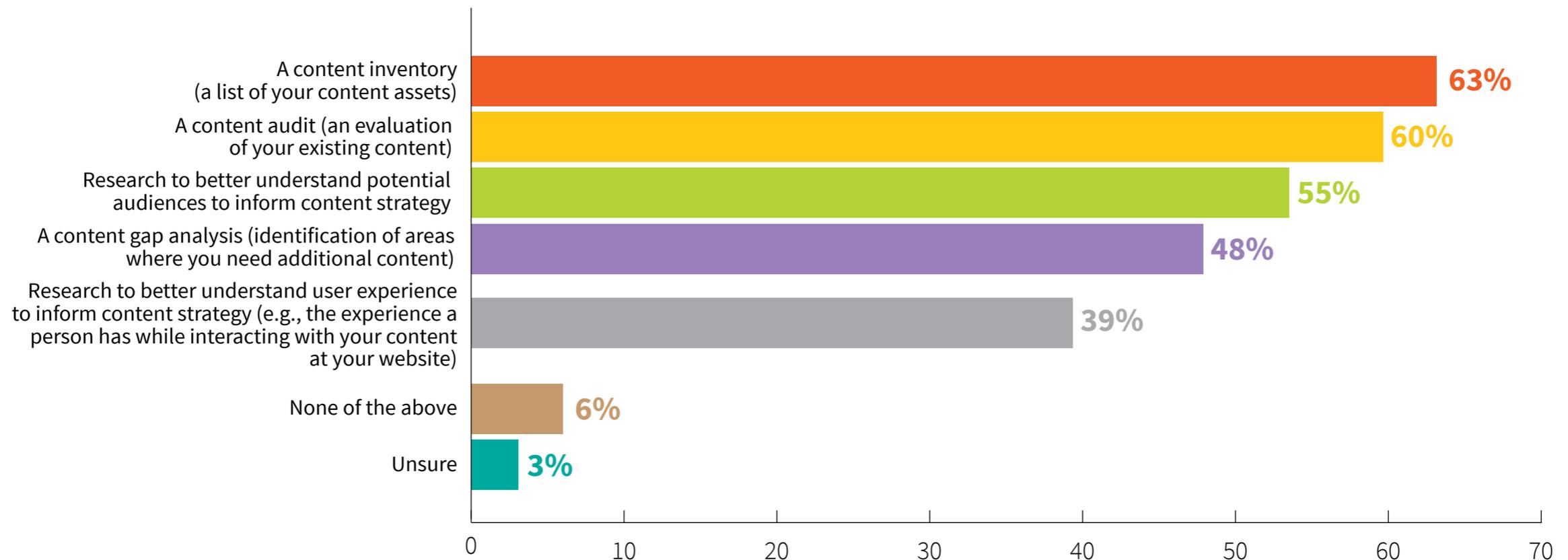


*Base: Respondents whose organizations do not take a strategic approach to managing content. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey*

Fewer reported undertaking the following content-related activities when compared with the previous year:

- ▶ Content audit (60% vs. 71%)
- ▶ Content gap analysis (48% vs. 57%)
- ▶ Research to better understand user experience to inform content strategy (39% vs. 52%).

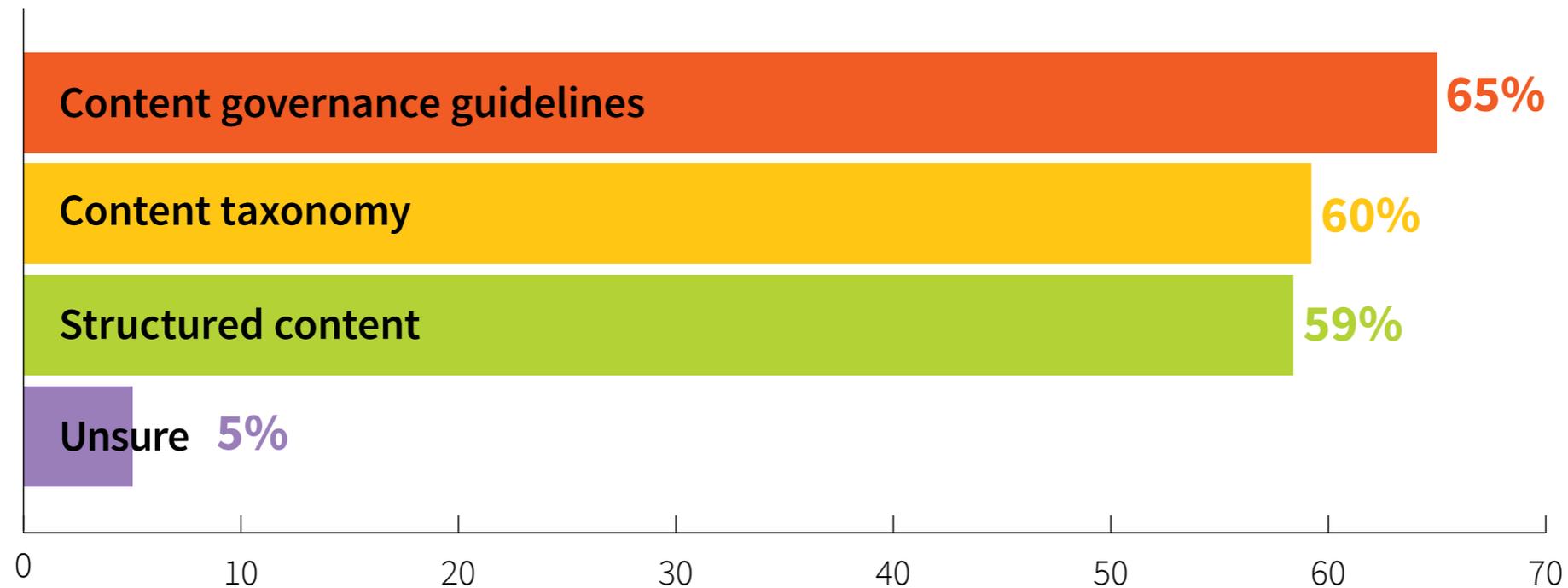
Content-Related Activities Undertaken



*Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey*

65% reported that their organization has content governance guidelines in place.

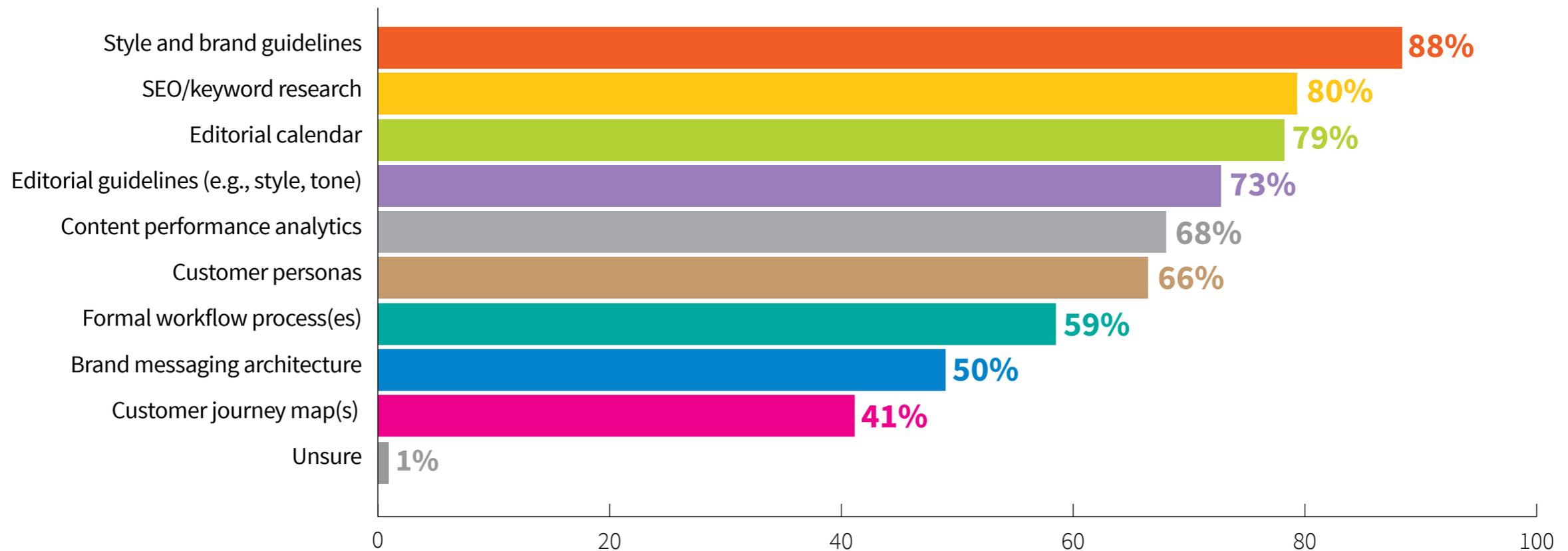
Content-Related Structures in Place



*Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey*

88% said their organization has style and brand guidelines in place.

Content Development Aids Currently in Use



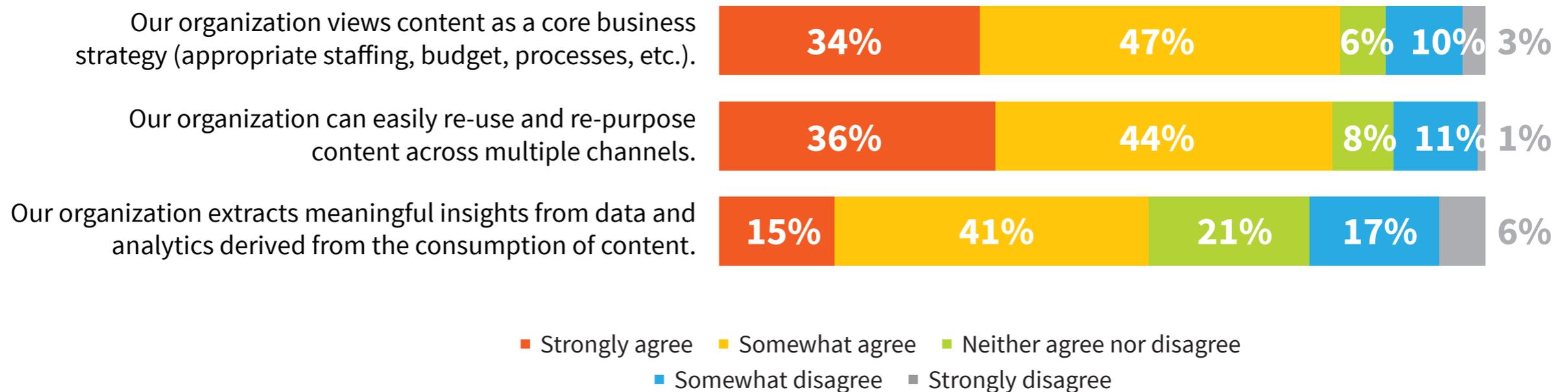
Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

81% agreed their organization views content as a core business strategy, up from 72% the previous year.

- ▶ 56% agreed their organization extracts meaningful insights from data and analytics derived from the consumption of content, down from 69% the previous year. Those indicating a neutral position increased to 21% from 12% the previous year.

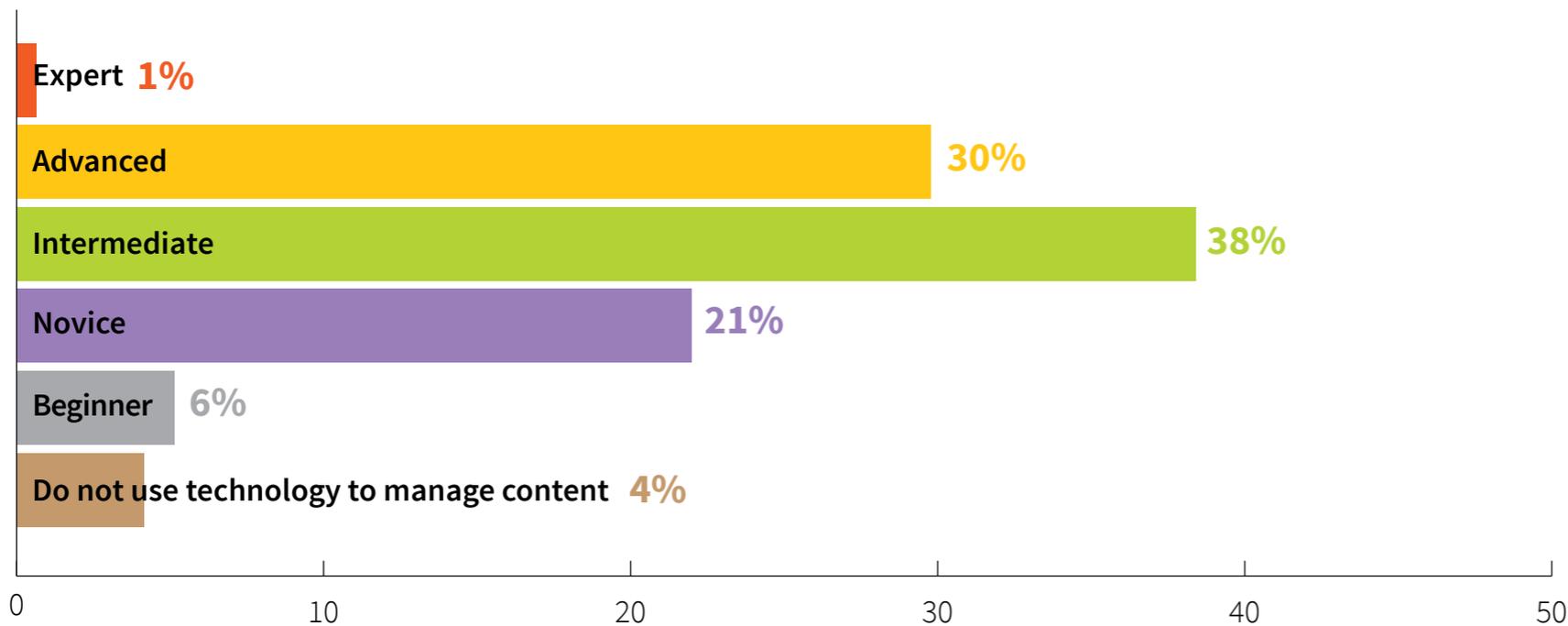
Opinions About Content Management



*Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization who answered each statement. Aided list.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey*

31% described their organization's level of proficiency with using technology to manage content across the enterprise as expert/advanced vs. 25% the previous year.

Level of Proficiency With Using Technology to Manage Content Across the Organization



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

Descriptors used for each level of proficiency:

EXPERT

Content fully automated across the business; scaling across the organization; experiencing the benefits

ADVANCED

Finding success, yet challenged with fully integrating content technology into our business culture and operations

INTERMEDIATE

Have developed a business case for using technology to manage content; identified or are using a content management platform; seeing early success

NOVICE

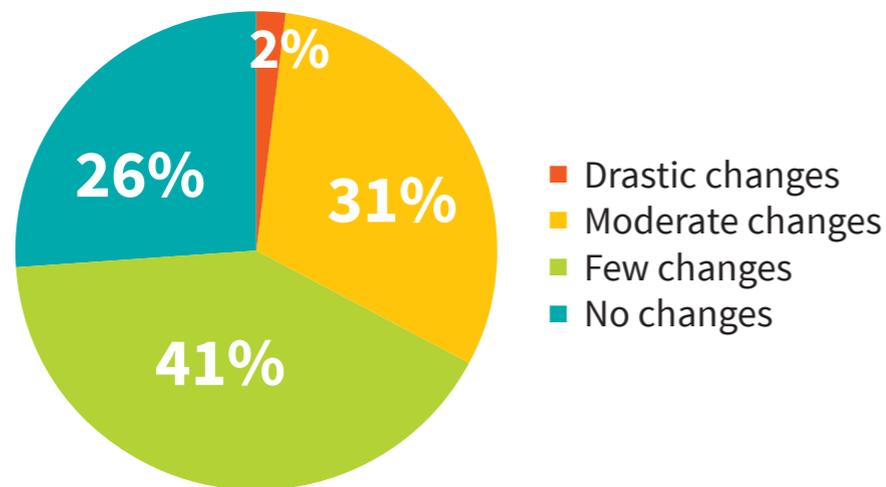
Growing pains; building a team and business case for using technology to manage content, yet challenged with the changes required

BEGINNER

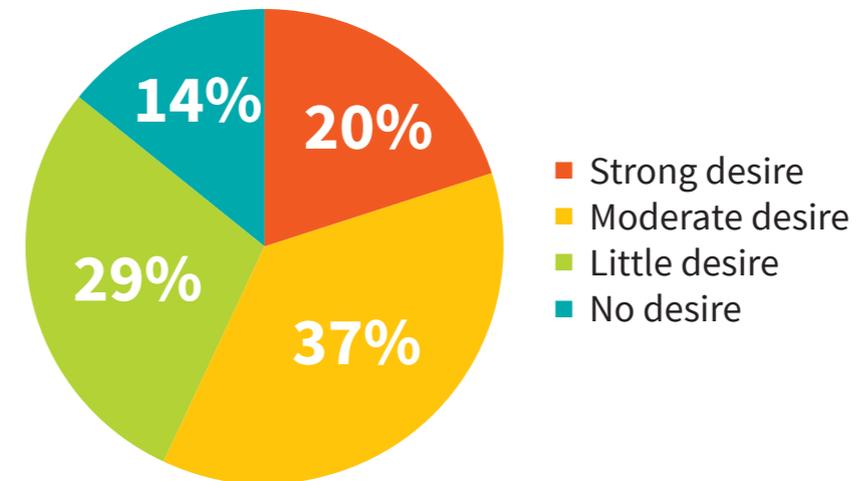
Starting to address aspects of using technology to manage content

67% of respondents said their organization made few/no changes to content management technology due to the work-from-home shifts caused by COVID-19. However, 57% felt that their organization has a strong/moderate desire to add new content management technology as it adapts to business in a post-COVID-19 environment.

Changes Made to Content Management Technology Due to Work-from-Home Shifts Caused by COVID-19



Organization's Desire to Add New Content Management Technology as It Adapts to a Post-COVID-19 Environment



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management at organizations that use technology to manage content. Aided list.

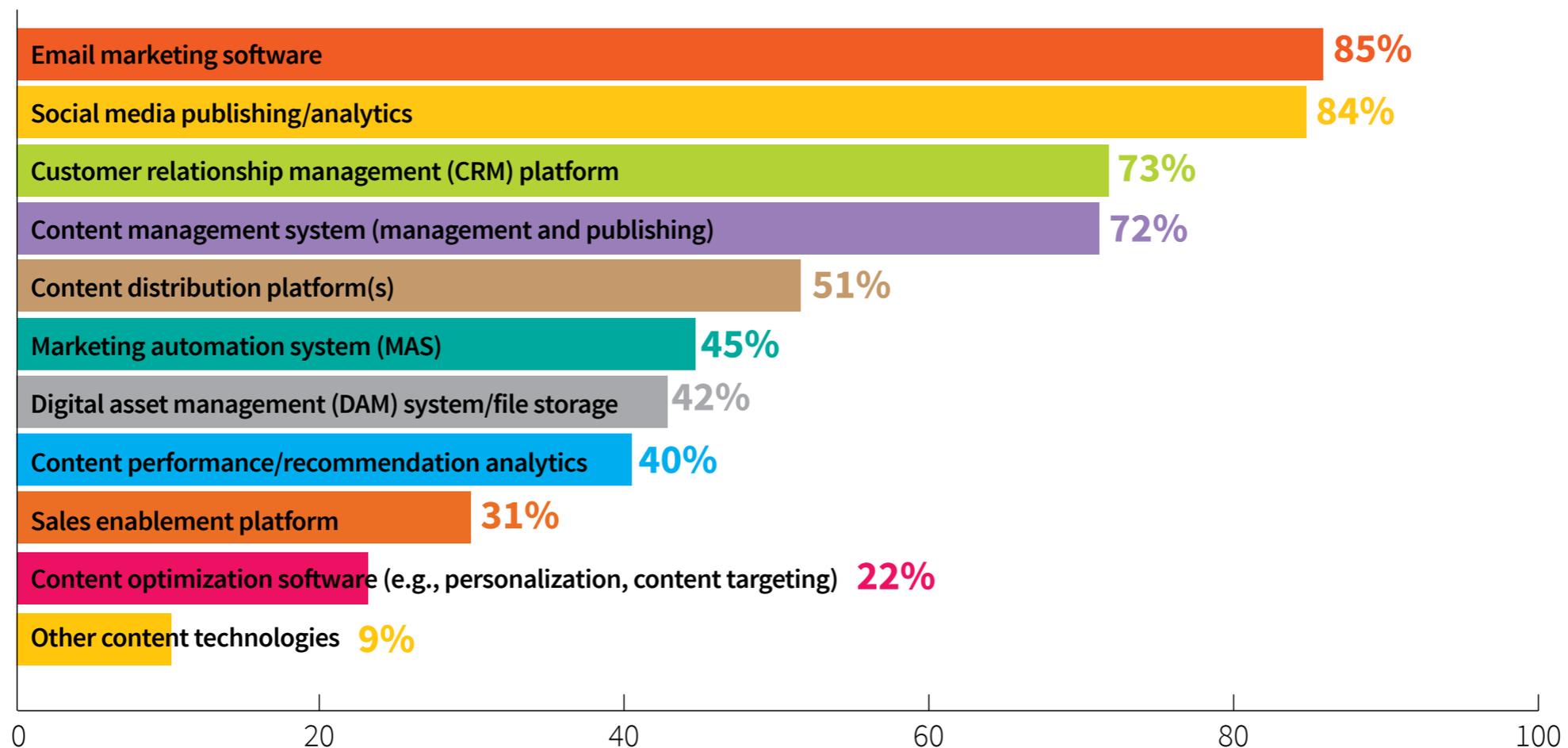
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management at organizations that use technology to manage content. Aided list.

Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

The top two content technologies respondents said their organizations have in place are email marketing software and social media publishing/analytics.

Content Technologies in Place

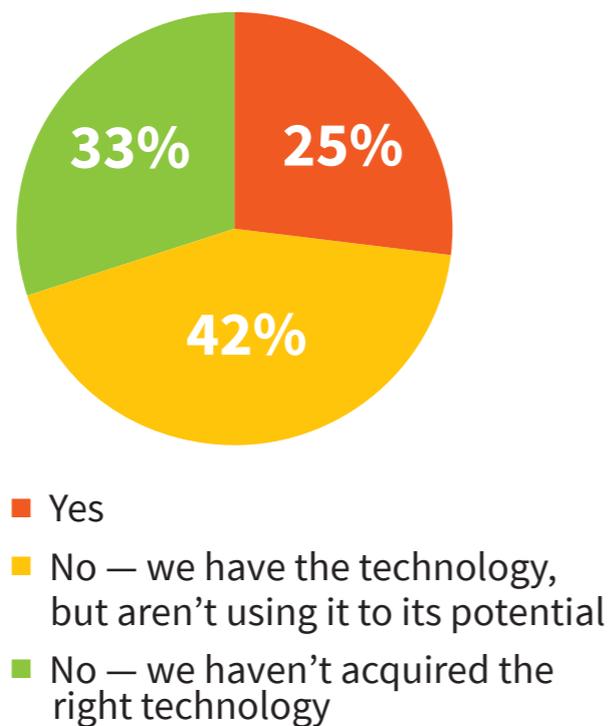


Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management at organizations that use technology to manage content. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

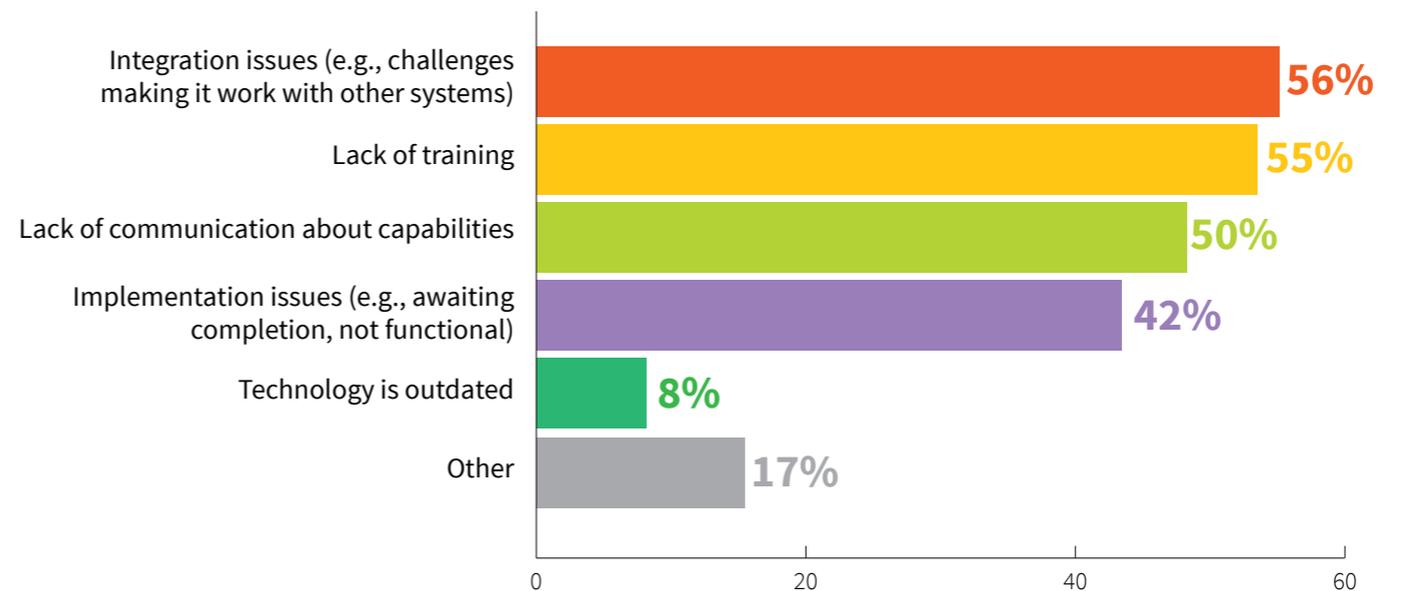
42% said their organization doesn't use its technology to full potential, which is nearly identical to last year's finding. This year, we also asked what is standing in the way. The top three answers were integration issues, lack of training, and lack of communication.

The Right Technology in Place to Manage Content Across the Organization



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management at organizations that use technology to manage content. Aided list.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

Reasons Why Organizations Aren't Using Technology to Its Potential



NOTE: The fill-in responses to the "other, please specify" option often referred to a lack of time and/or budget.

Base: Respondents who indicated their organization has technology but isn't using it to its potential. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

What capability is your organization most lacking that you feel technology would help with?

This was a fill-in question we asked respondents who said their organization had not yet acquired the right technology to manage content across the organization (33%). Several respondents mentioned organization/communication tools, the customer journey, and analytics. Some of the verbatim responses are shown on this page and the next.

- ▶ A centralized view of content, related assets, and performance across different channels.
- ▶ A project management tool to manage workflows.
- ▶ Ability to see publishing across channels and project manage.
- ▶ Being able to measure content-influenced revenues and tracking content usage and effectiveness.
- ▶ Orchestrate a digital customer journey per industry (we serve several).
- ▶ Consistency and organization. Our salespeople are often using outdated documents in their work while those of us in marketing have been using the latest for some time. Even though we have a content management and storage system, it doesn't alert people when things are updated. A system better prepared for that could improve our workplace communication overall.
- ▶ Marketing stack is still not giving us a clear view of the customer experience.

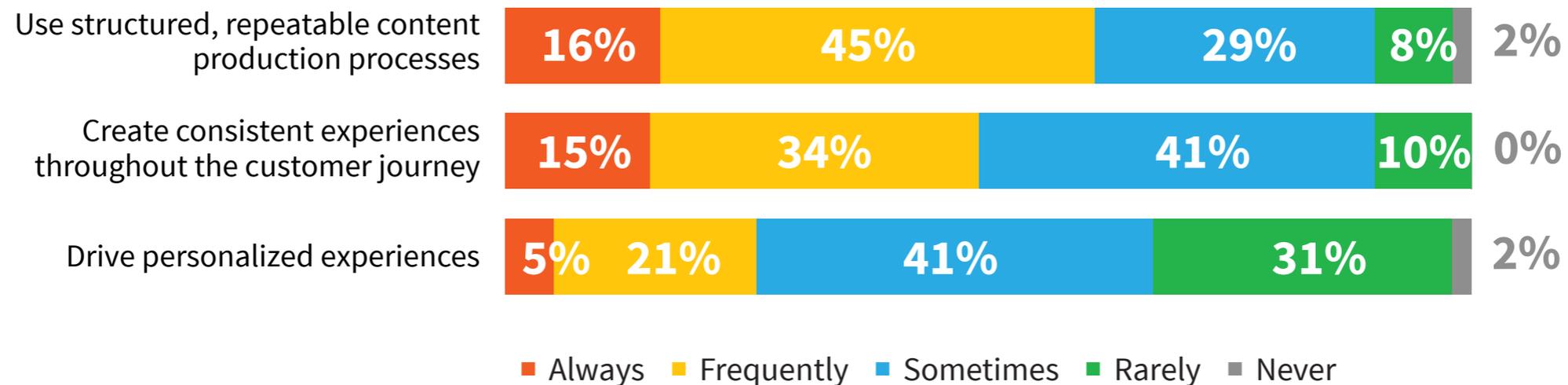
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- ▶ Omni-channel product(s) and strategy.
- ▶ Auditing and proper personalization.
- ▶ Taxonomy, better understanding of personalization and how to use tech to aid in that.
- ▶ Content distribution and analytics.
- ▶ We need an enterprise editorial calendaring and management system that can be used across the organization as well as by outside vendors and writers. We are still at the Excel stage and it is painful.
- ▶ Integrated full-journey analytics from anonymous to known, on gated/ungated interactions, DAM, CMP.
- ▶ Tracking user interaction with our content.
- ▶ It's more of an organizational culture — siloed, no C-suite support for content quality and standards. If there's technology that can help that, please let me know!
- ▶ Interactive content creation to improve engagement and personalization on-the-fly; better tracking analytics.
- ▶ Being able to create leads and keep them organized where it is beneficial for both the sales team and the client.

49% of respondents said they always/frequently take creating consistent experiences throughout the customer journey into account during the content planning process, up from 39% last year.

- ▶ Those indicating they always/frequently drive personalized experiences stayed about the same compared with the previous year.
- ▶ This was the first time we asked about using structured, repeatable content production processes.

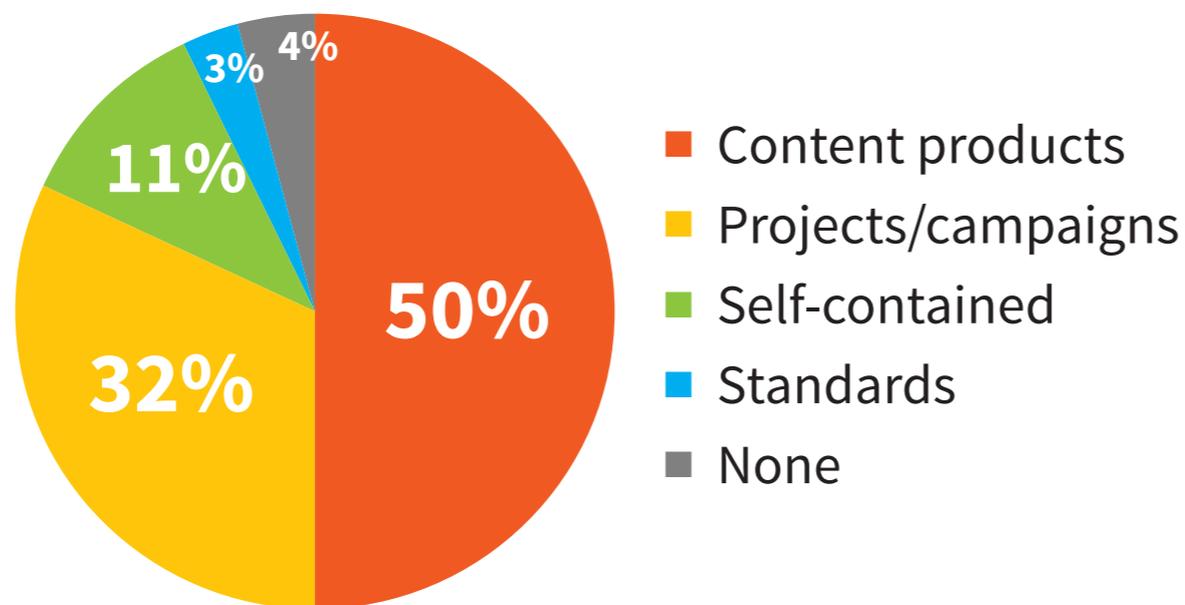
Factors Taken Into Account During Content Planning Process



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

50% of respondents said their current content operating model is focused on content products (e.g., owned content marketing platforms such as websites, blogs, magazines, and resource centers).

Current Content Operating Model/Place Where Content Team Spends Most of Its Time



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; select one.
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

CONTENT PRODUCTS

Our operating model is focused on owned content marketing platforms, e.g., our website, blog, magazine, resource center.

PROJECTS/CAMPAIGNS

Our operating model looks like an internal agency, responding to ad hoc internal requests.

SELF-CONTAINED

Our operating model is completely self-contained; we operate as a separate team within the business.

STANDARDS

Our operating model is focused on providing standards and guidelines, e.g., SEO keywords, translation, CMS management, and other technical or structural assistance.

NONE

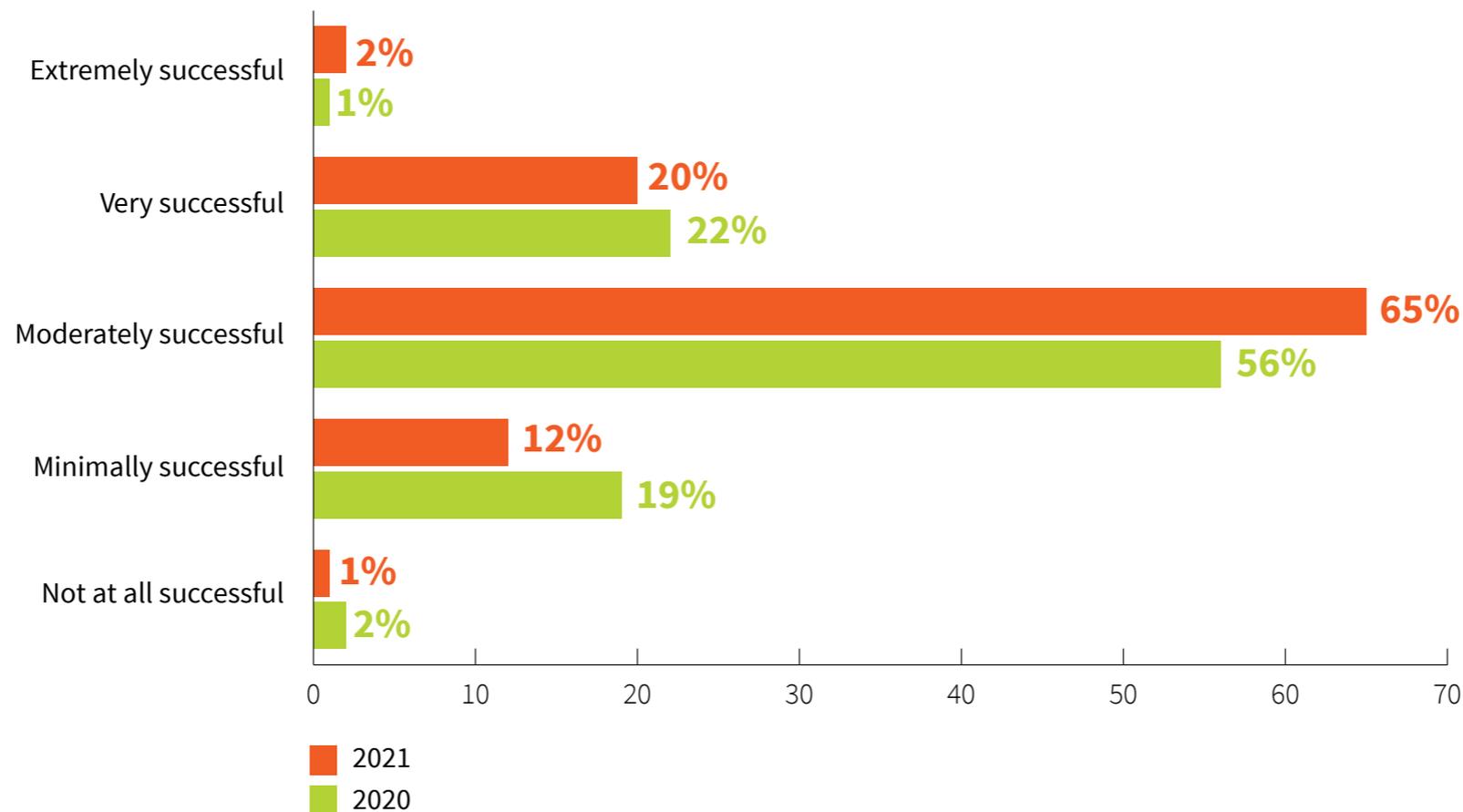
We have no defined operating model; we're just trying to keep up with doing what we can.

OVERALL SUCCESS

22% said their organization is extremely/very successful with strategically managing content across the enterprise.

- ▶ The percentage of those indicating moderate success increased to 65% from 56% the previous year.

Overall Success With Strategically Managing Content Across the Organization



Note: The survey defined success as "achieving your organization's overall desired/targeted results for its content strategy."

Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

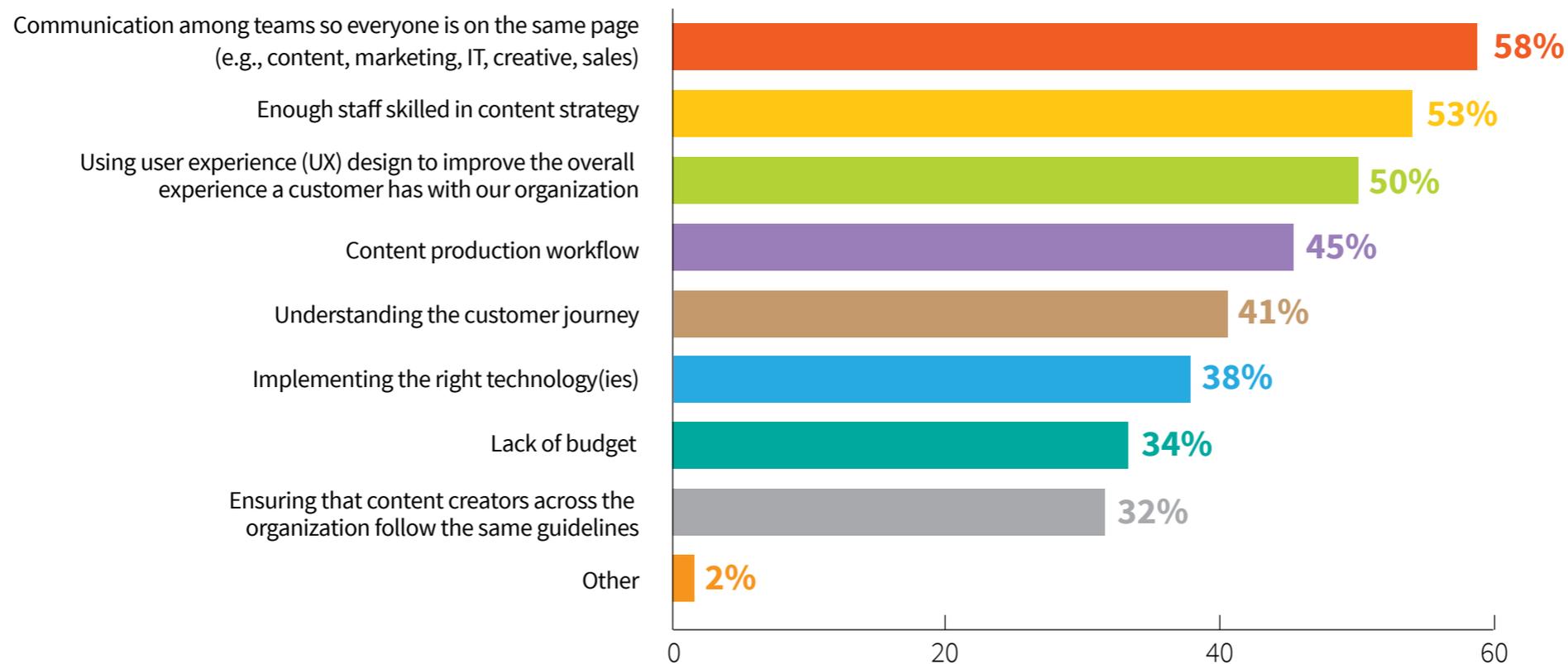
Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

STRATEGIC CONTENT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

Like last year, respondents said their top two challenges were communication among teams and having enough skilled staff. However, the percentage of those who said skilled staff was a challenge decreased to 53% from 63%. In addition:

- ▶ Far more cited content production workflow as a challenge this year compared with last year (45% vs. 27%).
- ▶ The percentage of those challenged with using UX design to improve the customer's overall experience increased to 50% from 43%.
- ▶ Three new challenges were added to the list this year (understanding the customer journey, implementing the right technology(ies), and ensuring that content creators across the organization follow the same guidelines).

Strategic Content Management Challenges



Base: Respondents involved with strategic content management in their organization. Aided list; multiple responses permitted.

Content Marketing Institute 2021 Content Management & Strategy Survey

If there was one thing you could do to improve your organization's success with managing content across the entire organization, what would it be?

This was a fill-in question. Recurrent themes included process issues, ROI, and the customer journey. Here are some of the verbatim responses:

- ▶ An understanding of priorities and a comprehensive strategy, together with improved communication across all marketing activities (remove all silos).
- ▶ Have a content platform to keep everything organized.
- ▶ A singular content management system across the organization that would provide transparency and collaboration, and an editorial platform for planning.
- ▶ Implement a content editorial process and ensure all content is archived/tagged in the DAM for easier access across the organization.
- ▶ Have a visible dashboard into our content queue that anyone across the organization could access. While we have a Google doc and asana to track it, these views are too in the weeds for people in different departments.
- ▶ Repeatable content structures for repurposing existing content.
- ▶ Bring AI capabilities to augment our creative resources.
- ▶ More automated publishing of content and integration between our work management tool and our content system of record. The ability to automatically port taxonomy tags from creation, to cataloging, to publishing would be amazing!

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STRATEGIC CONTENT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

- ▶ Ensure that everyone is using consistent information and formatting. It's a bit like the Wild West at my workplace currently. While many within the organization do a lot of good work, it's not always on the same page with others and can lead to messaging issues that marketing has to work around and fix.
- ▶ I wish we would include personalization and automation as part of our strategy. Everything is done "by hand" and it is sometimes difficult to manage without massive spreadsheets and long hours of analysis.
- ▶ Consistent martech systems that work together and don't require so much manual data entry or analysis.
- ▶ We currently have underdeveloped tech with inaccurate data on content engagement. Looking forward to improving this.
- ▶ An understanding of the end-to-end customer journey.
- ▶ Customer journey tracking respective to our owned properties and self-promoted content. I'd like to utilize UX tools, backed by a robust CRM system, to better understand content consumption in an effort to calculate a more actionable content ROI.
- ▶ Be able to quickly and easily show ROI on our content program.
- ▶ Currently our organization is very siloed—working together and communicating so we are on the same page would help to improve the content management. Also, training on the systems we have and how to use them more productively.

Action Steps

By Robert Rose, Chief Strategy Advisor, Content Marketing Institute



Assess your content operating model.

There's a good chance that your content team has been operating in triage mode over the last 12 months—or maybe it has been all along. If

you're suffering from too many demands, bottlenecks of asset production, or the inability to measure content effectiveness, you probably lack a clear charter and operating model for your content team.

Put simply, in a world without standards, there can be no improvement.

So, assess your content team's current operating model and create a road map for how to get where you believe you should be. The gaps that appear in where you are now and where you want to be are the priority initiatives to focus on.

De-silo the customer's journey.

When and where you can, start using technology to connect digital experiences for your customers. De-siloing the marketing organization may be impossible. But exploring how your content technology can begin to connect and create one “source of the truth” for your audience/marketing database will pay huge dividends—it's also the first step toward having groups like sales, marketing, demand gen, and brand teams work together.

Manage your owned-media properties like products.

Your website, blog, resource center, or digital magazine is as important to your customer's journey as the products and services you put into the marketplace—treat it as such. Each owned property deserves a managing editor, and to be budgeted and measured as a digital product.

ABOUT

Thanks to all the survey respondents and everyone who disseminates these findings to professionals concerned with the effective use of technology that helps create, manage, deliver, and scale enterprise content and marketing.

About Content Marketing Institute (CMI)

Content Marketing Institute is the leading global content marketing education and training organization, teaching Technology 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 fall in Cleveland, Ohio, and ContentTECH Summit event is held every spring in San Diego, California. CMI publishes Chief Content Officer for executives and provides strategic consulting and content marketing research for some of the best-known brands in the world. Content Marketing Institute is organized by Informa Connect. Learn more at ContentMarketingInstitute.com.

About Informa Connect

Informa Connect is a specialist in content-driven events and digital communities that allow professionals to meet, connect, learn, and share knowledge. We operate major branded events in Marketing, Global Finance, Life Sciences and Pharma, Construction and Real Estate, and other specialist markets, and connect communities online year-round.