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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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Benchmark Study Report

February 2018

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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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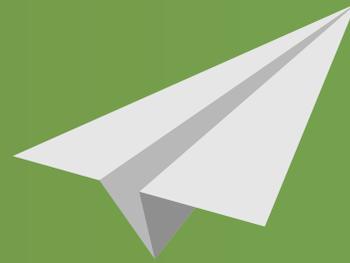
## Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	3
<b>2</b>	<b>Executive Summary</b>	5
<b>3</b>	<b>Sales Content Overview</b>	8
<b>4</b>	<b>Sales Content Distribution, Awareness and Use</b>	12
<b>5</b>	<b>Content Metrics, ROI and Revenue Attribution</b>	16
<b>6</b>	<b>Content Usage Visibility and Insights</b>	23
<b>7</b>	<b>Analyst Bottom Line</b>	27
<b>8</b>	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	30
<b>9</b>	<b>Appendix: Survey Background</b>	31

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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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# Introduction



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For as long as there has been a sales function with a marketing team that creates assets to support it, the question persists: **what kind of return comes from the investment in sales content?**

It's a question that goes largely unanswered because marketing and sales teams historically haven't had the means to determine sales content ROI with any precision.

**For most, determining sales content ROI is done by combining anecdotal information with partial data or is just pure guesswork.** If, however, an organization could determine the ROI of its sales content with some degree of precision, it would have the means to optimize the effectiveness of its content and get an even greater return.

Demand Metric and Seismic partnered to better understand the current state of B2B sales content ROI and the factors that drive it. **The research effort was guided by a key research question: does using a Sales Asset Management (SAM) platform enable a more precise understanding of sales content ROI?**

Furthermore, does SAM usage allow better attribution of revenue to content and encourage usage of a higher percentage of an organization's content assets by the sales team?

This report answers these questions, presents other insights, and provides some best practices that relate to sales content effectiveness and ROI.



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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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# Executive Summary



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**Most of this study's participants were from B2B organizations that have experienced revenue growth during the past fiscal year. Over three-fourths of the study participants have marketing job titles.** The respondents came from a diverse set of industries with technology hardware or software industries being represented the most.

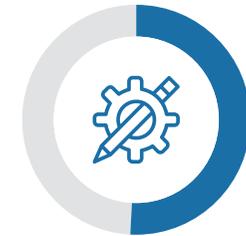
Just under half of the participants came from companies with less than \$10 million in annual revenue, and 15 percent of companies are from firms reporting revenues of \$500 million or more.

## Key Findings

- Three-fourths of the study sample **perceive sales content as important to closing sales**, and they use an average of 6.7 different types of content.



- Just over half of organizations studied report that their **sales teams are very poorly to moderately well informed** about the content that exists for them to use.



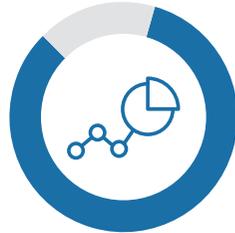
- About half of sales content distribution occurs **manually, randomly**, or is **not done at all**.



- Just over half of organizations in this study report that **less than 60 percent of their sales content actually gets used**.



- No sales content metrics were tracked by 17 percent of study participants; 83 percent **tracking some combination of basic, engagement, or financial metrics.**



- **Satisfaction** with the content creation, distribution usage and measurement process doubles when **automatic content distribution is in place.**



- Less than one-fourth of study participants **can determine sales content ROI with any precision**, and half of the participants rate their sales content ROI as very poor to neutral.



- Less than one-third of the overall study sample **can attribute well or very well content consumption to customer purchases.**



This report details the results and insights from the analysis of the study data. **For more detail on the survey participants, please refer to the [Appendix](#).**

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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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# Sales Content Overview



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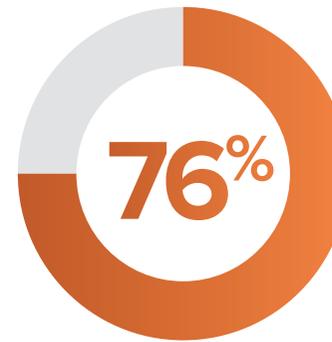
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Sales content – pitch books, case studies, presentations, product literature, videos, and other types – is created and exists to help the sales team close deals. This sales content overview begins by sharing how study participants rate the importance of sales content in helping the sales team do that.

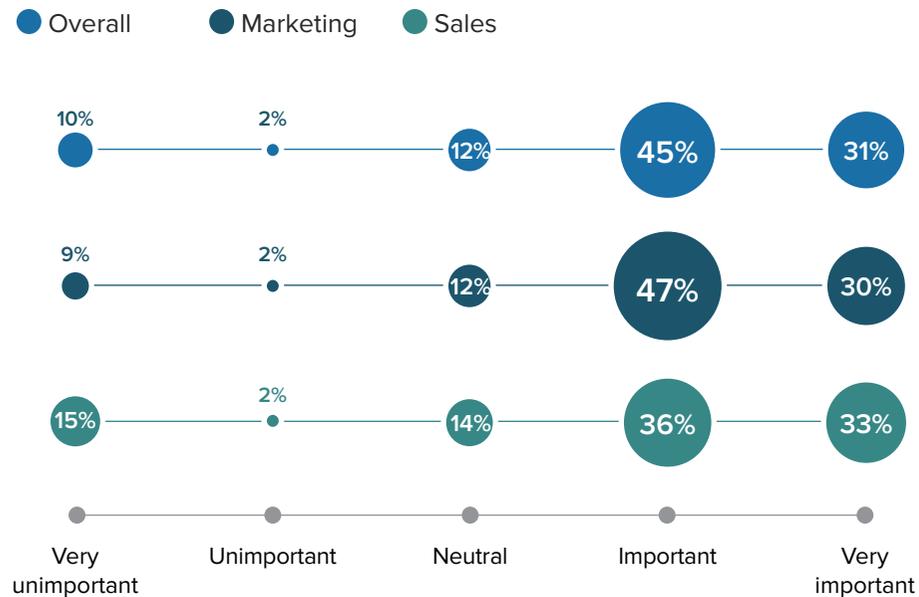
Figure 1 shows this relative importance rating for all study participants, as well as showing marketing and sales segments of the study population.



Respondents perceive sales content as **important to closing deals**.

**FIGURE 1: SALES CONTENT IMPORTANCE**

Three-fourths of the study sample perceive sales content as important to closing sales.



Predictably, **study participants in sales roles were slightly less likely to rate sales content as important to helping the sales team close deals**, compared to their marketing counterparts.

Sales content can take a variety of forms, and **Figure 2** catalogs the inventory of content types in use by study participants.

**The participants in this study, on average, use 6.7 types of content, with 19 percent using 10 or more types.** The top three types of sales content in use does vary some by size of company, as **Table 1** displays.

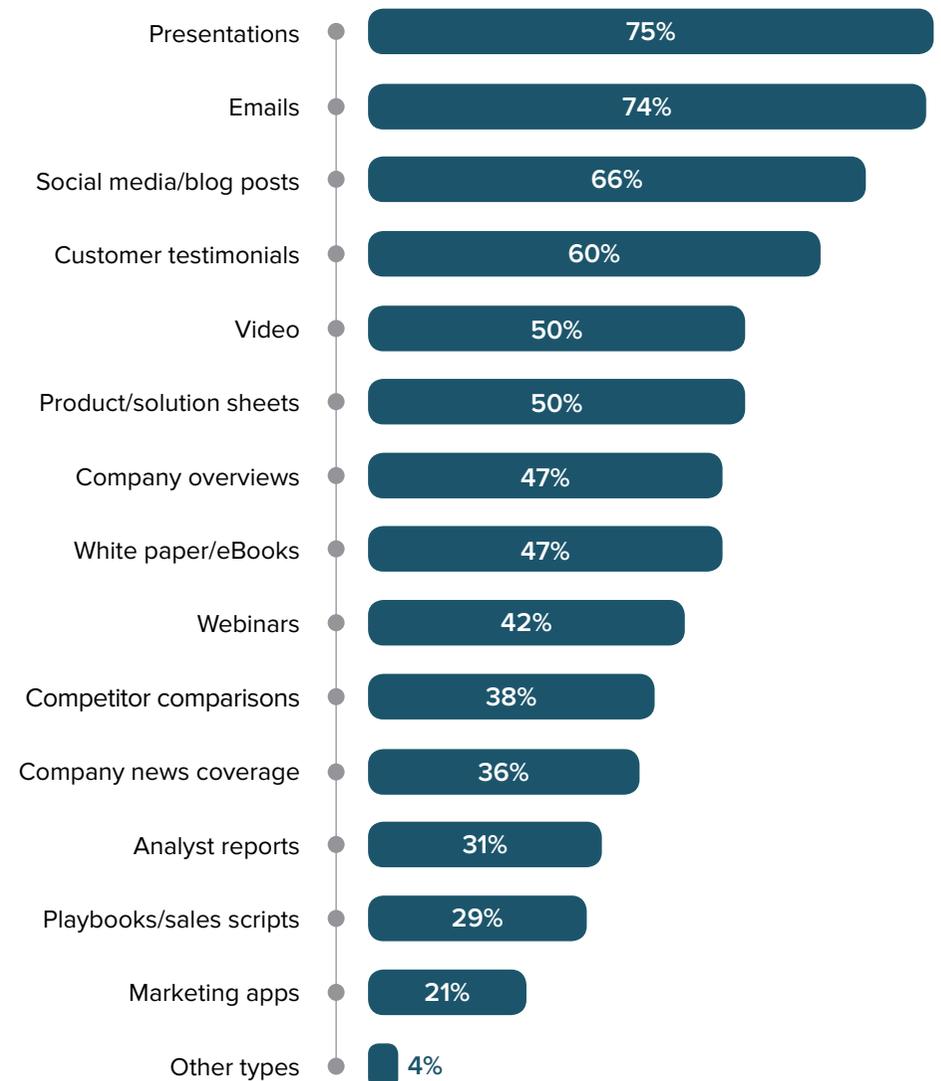
**TABLE 1**

The top three types of sales content in use by size of company.

	Small company (Annual revenue less than \$25 mm)	Medium company (Annual revenue of \$25 -\$499 mm)	Large company (Annual revenue more than \$500 mm)
<b>1</b>	Emails	Presentations	Presentations
<b>2</b>	Presentations	Emails	Product/ solution sheets
<b>3</b>	Social media/ blog posts	White papers/ eBooks	Social media/ blog posts

**FIGURE 2: TYPES OF SALES CONTENT IN USE**

Presentations and email content are the most used types.



To conclude this sales content overview section, **Figure 3** presents who is creating most of the sales content in use by study participants.

The data in **Figure 3** shows that **marketing is almost always involved in creating sales content**, with direct or shared responsibility occurring 70 percent of the time.

Sales content creation responsibility shifts based on company size:



### Small Organizations

Small organizations have the **lowest marketing ownership** (44 percent); the **highest sales** (10 percent) or **combined marketing/sales ownership** (25 percent).



### Medium Organizations

Medium organizations have the **highest marketing ownership** (62 percent) and the **lowest sales ownership** (4 percent).



### Large Organizations

Large organizations have the **lowest marketing/sales combined ownership** (4 percent); the **highest content marketing team** (13 percent) and **outside agency/resource ownership** (8 percent).

## FIGURE 3: WHO CREATES SALES CONTENT

Most of the time, marketing is involved in creating sales content.



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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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## Sales Content Distribution, Awareness and Use



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One of the key research questions that drove this study concerned how sales content is made accessible or distributed to sales teams.

A study hypothesis was that automatic distribution, as enabled by sales asset management, had a favorable impact on an organizations ability to understand the ROI, attribute revenue, and increase usage of its sales content.

To begin to prove or disprove that hypothesis, the study first examined how sales content is currently distributed, which **Figure 4** shows.

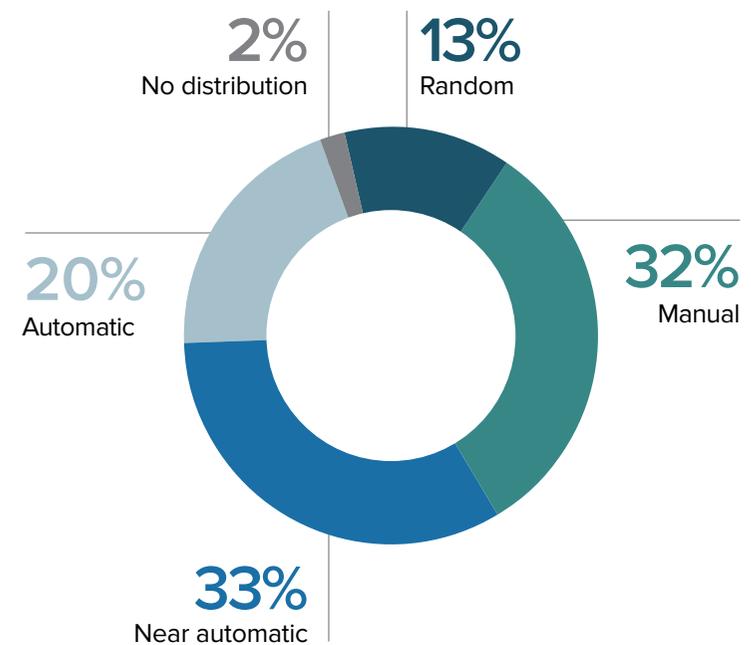
The definitions for the methods of distribution used in Figure 4 merit additional definition, such as how content is distributed correlates to many other findings in this report:

- **Automatic:** Distribution of content occurs through a CRM or Sales Asset Management platform (SAM).
- **Near automatic:** Content is stored in a central repository or multiple repositories into which sales team members can search and download assets.
- **Manual:** Content is distributed as a result of a request, and distribution typically occurs through email.
- **Random:** No uniform, consistent content distribution process exists.
- **No distribution:** No content or assets are distributed to the sales team.

While not shown in **Figure 4**, large companies were almost twice as likely to have automatic content distribution in place (32 percent) compared to small (19 percent) or medium-sized companies (15 percent).

**FIGURE 4: HOW CONTENT IS DISTRIBUTED/MADE ACCESSIBLE TO THE SALES TEAM**

About half of sales content distribution is manual, random or not at all.



Every marketing team can share anecdotes about creating content that is never used, often because sales team members are unaware that it exists. Sales team awareness of content correlates to how content is distributed as described in Figure 4.

Figure 5 reports the overall sales team awareness of content that exists for it to use, with segments also shown for automatic distribution of content, and manual or random distribution.

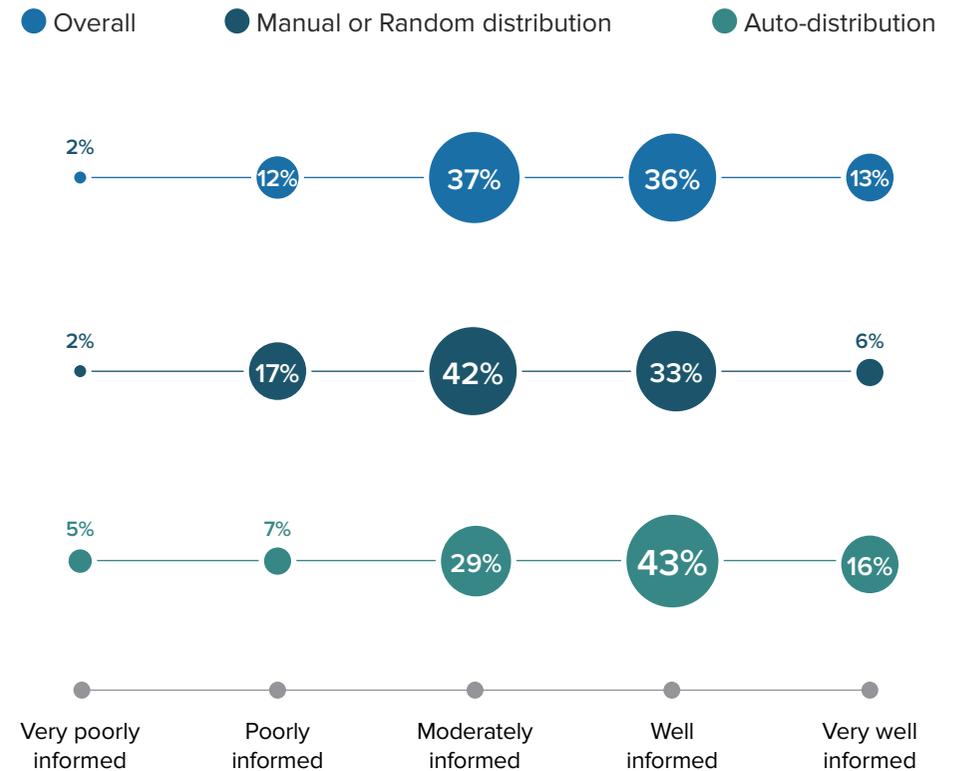
Figure 5 makes clear that the method of content distribution can either raise awareness of it or keep it hidden from the sales team.

At the high-end of this awareness scale, participants who report they are well or very well informed, the delta between automatic and manual or random distribution methods is 20 points.



FIGURE 5: SALES TEAM AWARENESS OF CONTENT

Automatic content distribution plays a major role in creating awareness of what exists for the sales team to use.



Awareness is only one potential barrier to getting ROI on sales content. Even when members of the sales team know about all the content that exists to support its efforts, not all of that content gets used.

The reasons for this vary – often the sales team simply doesn’t like a content asset – but regardless of the reason, content that is created and remains unused represents no return on that asset.

**Figure 6** shows content usage for the overall sample and segmented by distribution method.

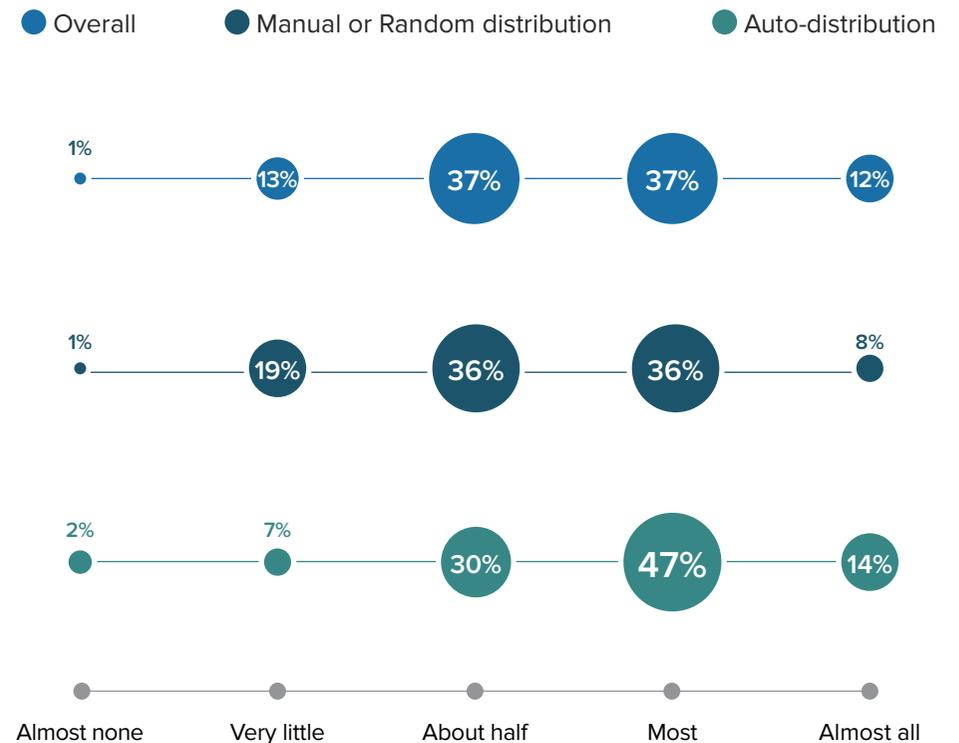
**Figure 6** provides more evidence that the method in use for distributing content has much to do with the ultimate success of that content.

**For organizations that have automatic distribution of content set up through CRM or a SAM, 61 percent report that most or all of their content gets used. By contrast, with just manual or random distribution, less than half (44 percent) of organizations in this study report the same level of content usage by the sales team.**



**FIGURE 6: HOW MUCH CONTENT GETS USED**

Automatic content distribution plays a major role in content seeing use.



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## SALES CONTENT ROI

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# Content Metrics, ROI and Revenue Attribution



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Metrics provide the basis for determining the ROI of any asset, content, or otherwise. If no metrics are available, ROI is at best, an estimate.

For this reason, the study examined the types of sales content metrics participants collect and use, and a summary of this data is shown in **Figure 7**.

Examples of the types of metrics summarized in **Figure 7** are:

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**Basic**  
Downloads, impressions or reach.
- 

**Engagement**  
Viewing time, shares or comments.
- 

**Financial**  
Conversions, contribution to revenue or ROI.

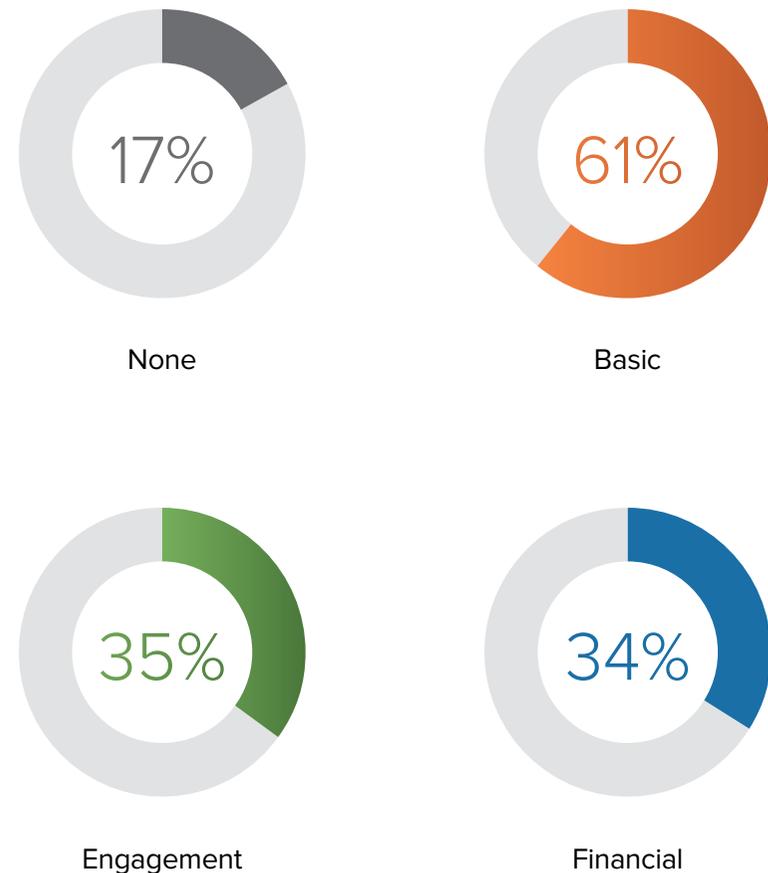
In an era where most content assets are in some digital form, it is surprising that **17 percent of organizations in this study don't track any metrics for their sales content.**

Failing to track any metrics is a deliberate choice to remain ignorant of content effectiveness.

As for study participants that do track metrics, **on average, they track 1.6 of these three types of metrics, with 38 percent tracking two or all three types.**

**FIGURE 7: SALES CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS METRICS TRACKED**

More than half of study participants track basic metrics.



Basic metrics only measure potential exposure to content, not how content is influencing the target audience, and for this reason basic metrics are not useful for determining ROI.

**To determine ROI, it is necessary to collect financial and engagement metrics, and the use of CRM or a SAM platform enables collection of this data.**

For this reason, organizations should aspire to collect these two metric types, and **Table 2** shows that those who have automatic content distribution set up are doing so at a much higher rate.

**TABLE 2**

Organizations using automatic content distribution are about twice as likely to track the metrics necessary to determine content ROI.

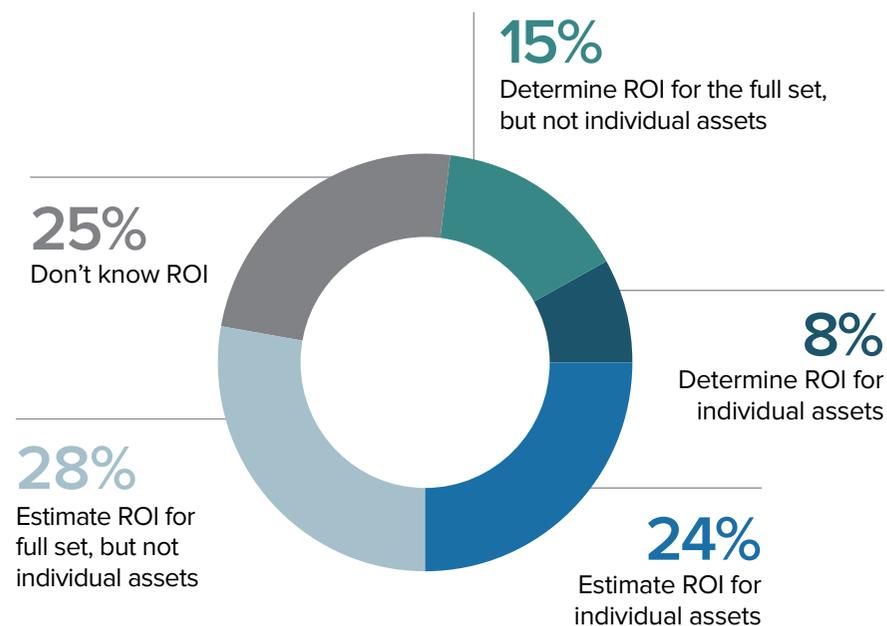
Metrics Tracked	Manual or Random Content Distribution	Automatic Content Distribution
Basic metrics	57%	64%
Engagement metrics	27%	50%
Financial metrics	23%	48%

The data presented so far in this report has hinted at ROI, and will now address it directly beginning with what kind of understanding study participants have of their sales content ROI. Can organizations have a precise understanding of ROI at the individual content asset level, or, is estimating ROI the best they can do for the entire set of sales content?

**Figure 8** provides the answer to these questions, and shows the relationship of metrics to knowing ROI.

**FIGURE 8: LEVEL AT WHICH SALES CONTENT ROI IS UNDERSTOOD BY METRICS TRACKED**

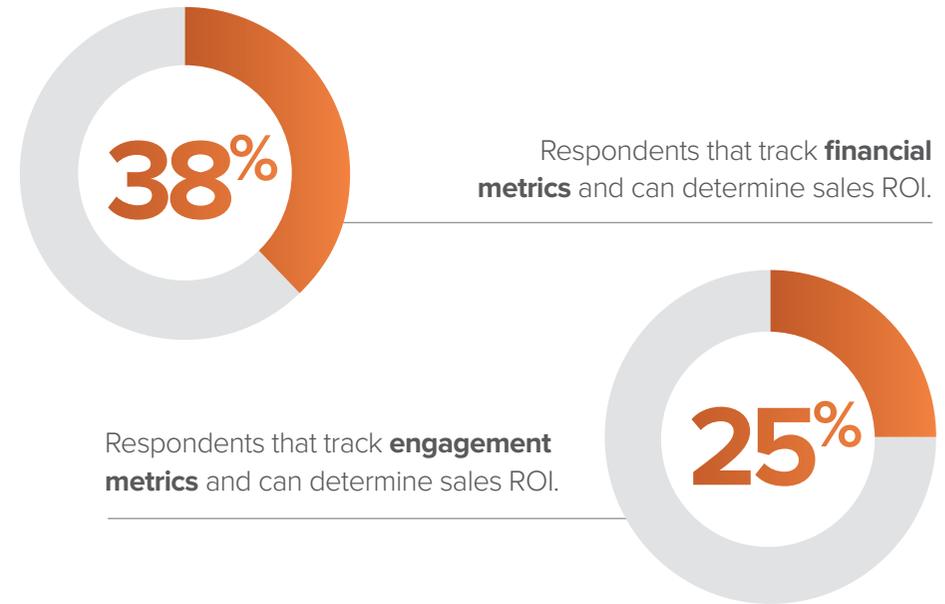
Less than one-fourth of study participants can determine sales content ROI with any precision.



The data from Figure 8 yields more of its secrets when segmented by the type of metric study participants track.

**Table 3** shows the percentage of participants that can determine (not estimate) sales content ROI either for the full content set or individual assets, based on the type of metric that they track.

**All study participants should aspire to determine, not just estimate, the ROI of their content assets.** Those who are tracking financial metrics are the closest to this goal.



**TABLE 3**

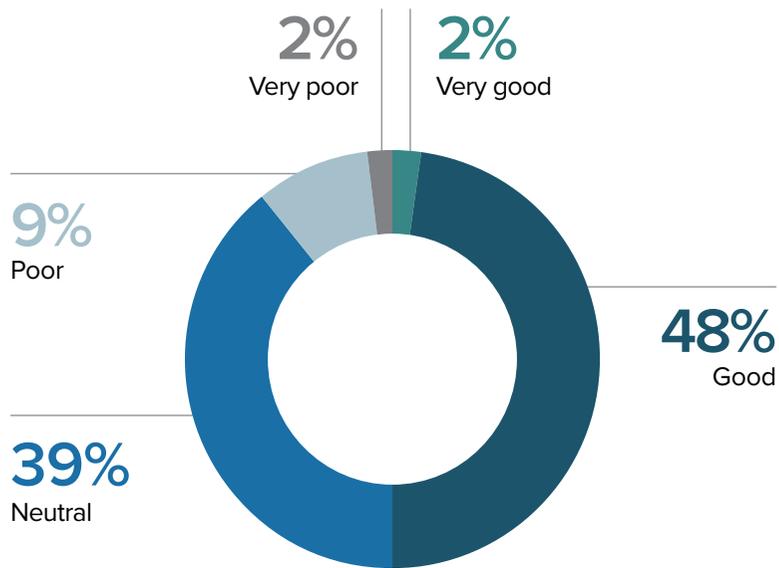
Almost 40 percent of study participants that track financial metrics can determine sales content ROI with precision.

Metrics Tracked	Estimate for full set	Estimate for individual assets	Determine for full set	Determine for individual assets
Basic metrics	18%	22%	19%	9%
Engagement metrics	30%	35%	20%	5%
Financial metrics	8%	31%	<b>19%</b>	<b>19%</b>

Figure 8 shows how well study participants have the ability to know their sales content ROI. **Figure 9** reports their rating of how good they think their ROI is.

**FIGURE 9: RATING OF SALES CONTENT ROI**

Half of study participants rate their sales content ROI as very poor to neutral.



Respondents rate their sales content ROI as **good or very good**.



Respondents rate their sales content ROI as **very good**.



The type of metric an organization tracks strongly correlates to how it assesses the ROI it gets from its sales content. **Table 4** shows the differences in ROI based on the type of metric in use.

Marketing and sales teams should take careful notice of the data summarized in **Table 4: when financial metrics are tracked, 80 percent of study participants assess their sales content ROI as good or very good** – a 30-point increase compared to the overall study sample shown in **Figure 9. Having a SAM that enables capturing and tracking these metrics is therefore essential to content marketing success.**

**TABLE 4**

80 percent of study participants that track financial metrics assess their sales content ROI as good or very good.

Metrics Tracked	ROI very poor	ROI is poor	ROI is neutral	ROI is good	ROI is very good
Basic metrics	0%	15%	48%	35%	2%
Engagement metrics	0%	0%	44%	56%	0%
Financial metrics	5%	0%	15%	<b>75%</b>	<b>5%</b>



Respondents tracking **basic metrics** assess their content ROI as neutral.



Respondents tracking **financial metrics** assess their content ROI as neutral.

It is ideal for marketers and sales team to understand how to attribute the consumption of sales content to customer purchases because accurate attribution data makes it possible to improve sales content effectiveness.

This study examined how well participants can make this attribution, while also discovering that the ability to do so correlates to how sales content is distributed.

Study participants were asked to assess how well they can make this attribution, using the following scale:

- **Very poorly:** no ability to link content to revenue
- **Poorly:** can link **few** content assets to revenue
- **Neutral:** can link **some** content assets to revenue
- **Well:** can link **many** content assets to revenue
- **Very well:** can link **most** content assets to revenue

Figure 10 shares this attribution analysis.

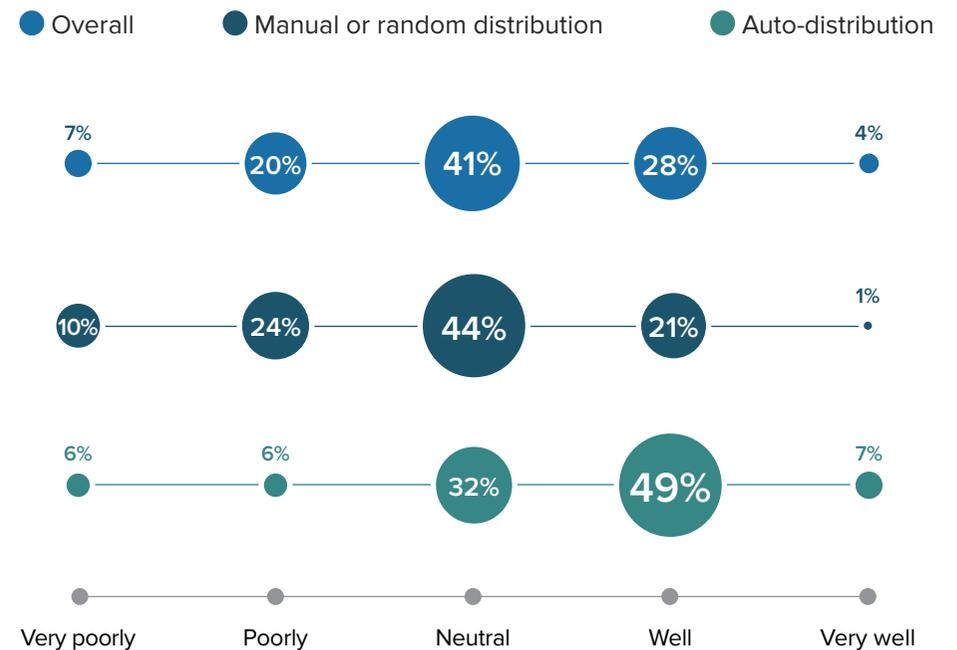


Figure 10 shows again the importance of having tools and systems in place to enable sales content distribution and metrics tracking.

Those that have a system for automatically distributing content are more than twice as likely (56 percent) to attribute sales content consumption to customer purchases as those who only have manual or random distribution (22 percent).

FIGURE 10: SALES CONTENT ATTRIBUTION TO CUSTOMER PURCHASES

Less than one-third of the overall study sample can attribute content to purchases well or very well.



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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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# Content Usage Visibility and Insights



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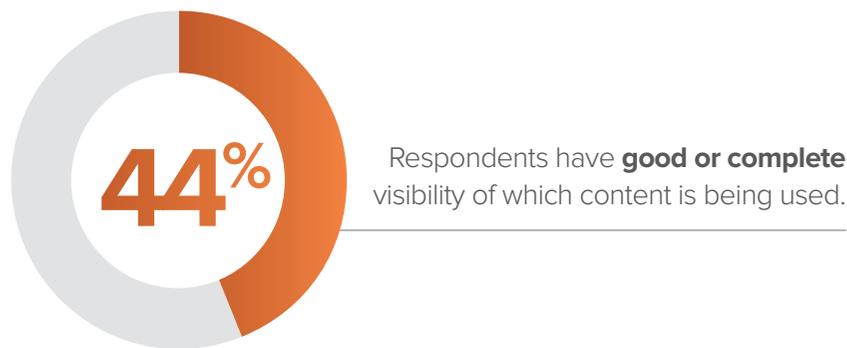
Content creation from a marketing’s perspective is often like putting a message into a bottle and throwing it into the ocean: marketing creates content, distributes it, and then never sees it again or hears from those who consume it.

It is important for marketing to have complete visibility into which content gets used, so that it can continuously improve the content it creates.

**Figure 11** shows the visibility marketing has into which assets it creates actually get used.

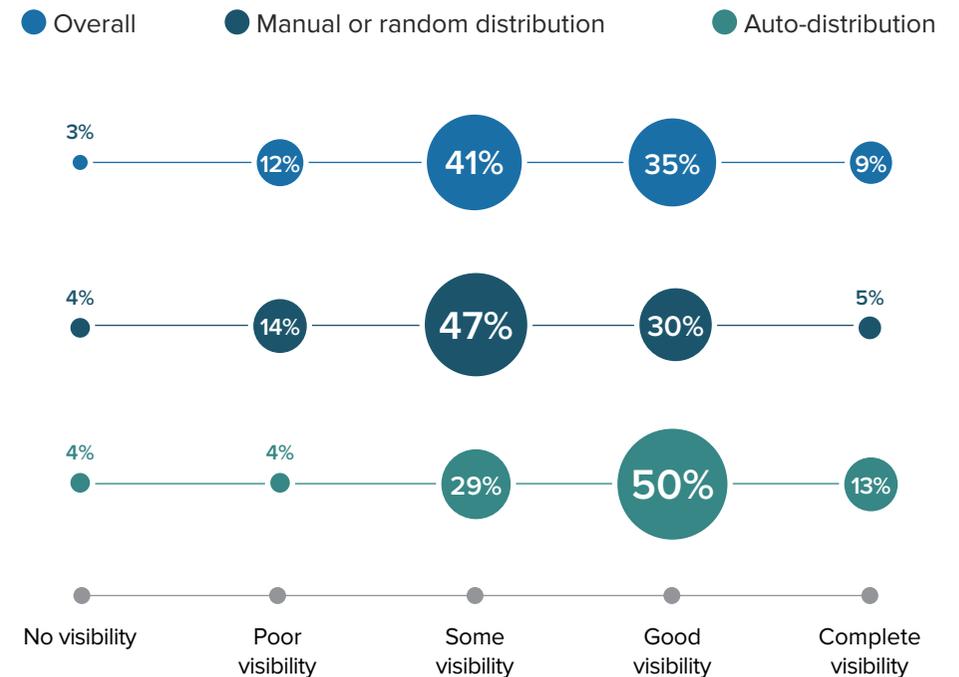
As has been true for much of the data presented in this report, the method of sales content distribution correlates to a key outcome, in this case, marketing’s visibility into which content is used.

**When automatic content distribution is in place, almost two-thirds of study participants report that marketing has good to complete visibility, but when manual or random distribution is the norm, barely over one-third do.**



**FIGURE 11: MARKETING’S VISIBILITY INTO CONTENT USE**

Less than half of the overall study sample have good or complete visibility into which content is used.



The relationship between how much sales team feedback is conveyed to marketing based on the method of content distribution is even more pronounced as **Figure 12** displays.

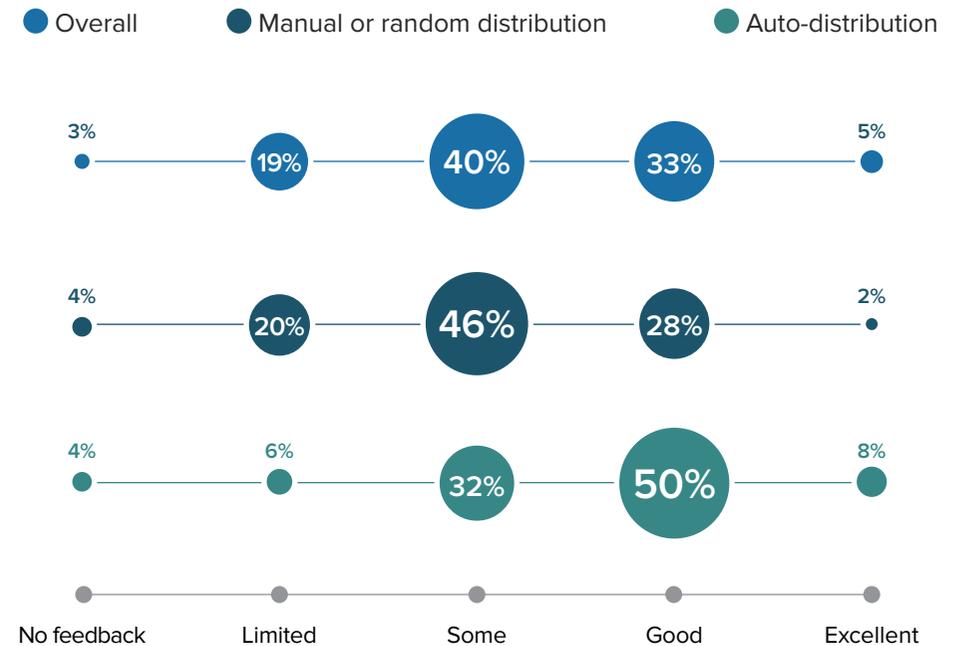
Once again, the impact of content distribution method is impossible to miss: **when automatic distribution is in use, almost 60 percent of study participants say that marketing gets good to excellent feedback from sales on content effectiveness.**

**When random or manual distribution is the rule, the percentage drops by almost half to 30 percent.**



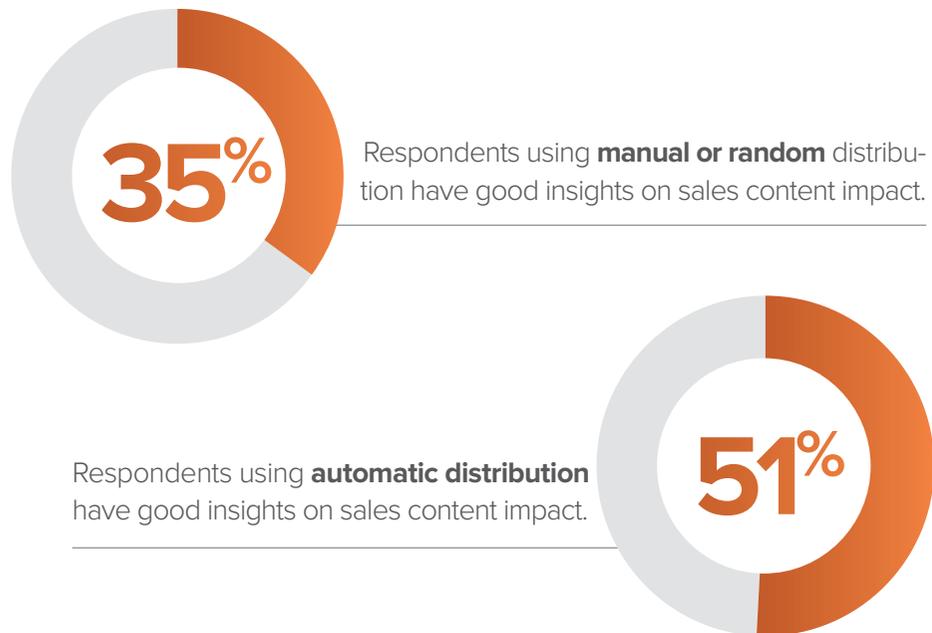
**FIGURE 12: SALES FEEDBACK TO MARKETING ON CONTENT EFFECTIVENESS**

Less than 40 percent of the study sample indicate that marketing gets good or excellent feedback on sales content effectiveness.



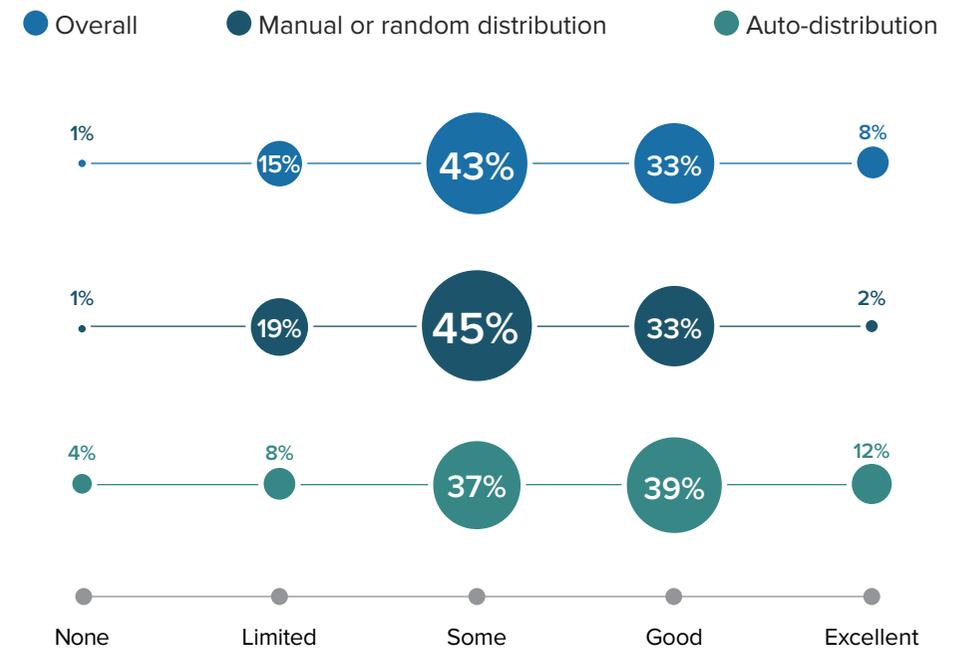
It is critically important that the marketing team have feedback and usage insights on content. It is arguably more important that the sales team also have insight into the customer impact of the content it is using, and **Figure 13** shows what study participants shared about this.

In this final chart, the value of having a system for automatically managing and distributing content is again on display, **with just over half (51 percent) of the study’s respondents reporting the sales team has good to excellent insight into how content impacts customers and prospects. For those with just manual or random distribution, the level drops to 35 percent.**



**FIGURE 13: SALES TEAM INSIGHT INTO IMPACT OF CONTENT ON CUSTOMERS**

On the whole, less than half of study participant sales teams have good visibility into the impact of content on customers.



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# SALES CONTENT ROI

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## Analyst Bottom Line



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## Analyst Bottom Line

**For B2B marketing organizations, producing a steady stream of high-quality sales content is a perennial requirement.** Marketing and sales teams agree that getting the right content in front of prospects helps drive conversions and sales.

But agreement often ends there. Views differ on which content is most effective, and the degree to which content in general, or specific assets, are linked to sales, because information about content performance is simply unavailable.

There's a sales content effectiveness understanding gap, because no data is tracked to make precise determinations.

Here's why it is so important to close this gap: **over half of study participants estimated a revenue increase of 20 percent or more if the needed sales content was always available to the sales team at the right time at each stage of the sales cycle.**

Marketers are eager to provide the needed sales content at the right time at each stage of the sales cycle, but they lack the data they need to do so. Instead, they often just keep producing assets, launch them into the void, and hope that they land somewhere and do some good.

What they need is data – financial metrics – that let them determine how content is influencing revenue and what ROI it is delivering.

With this data, they can manage their content to maximize its impact, culling out content that isn't effective and learning which content to invest more in based on its effectiveness.

However, this study shows (Figure 7) that just over one-third of marketers are collecting financial metrics.

The primary recommendation of this study is therefore simple: **track the proper metrics to allow ROI determination of content at the individual asset level.**



Implementing this recommendation, however, hasn't been easy for marketers. The easiest way to do this is with a system for managing and distributing content, yet just one-in-five organizations in this study (Figure 4) are doing so.



## Analyst Bottom Line

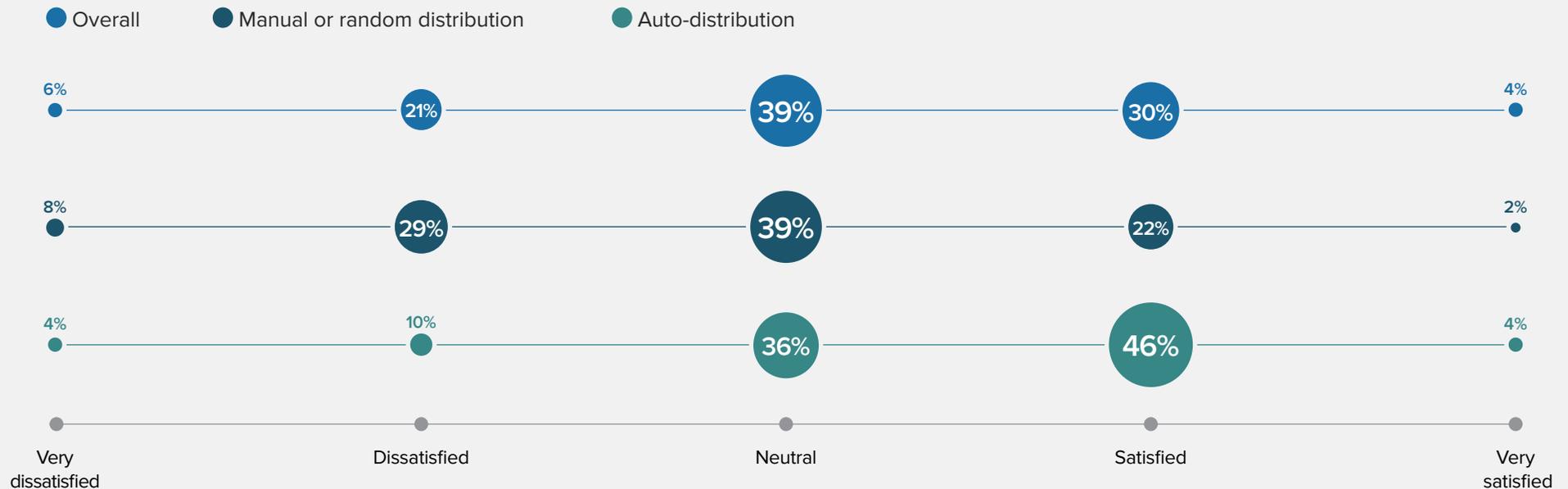
Companies that are following the proposed recommendation are seeing substantially higher overall satisfaction with their process for creating, distributing, using and measuring sales content effectiveness, as **Figure 14** reveals.

Organizations that rely on sales content to help drive revenue are naturally highly motivated to invest in ways to boost content effectiveness.

**This study makes a compelling case for investing in a Sales Asset Management platform to better manage and automatically distribute sales content.**

**FIGURE 14: OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH SALES CONTENT CREATION, DISTRIBUTION, USAGE AND EFFECTIVENESS MEASUREMENT**

Satisfaction doubles when automatic content distribution is in place.



## Acknowledgements

Demand Metric is grateful to Seismic for sponsoring this research, and for those who took the time to complete the study survey.



**Demand Metric** is a marketing research and advisory firm serving a membership community of over 120,000 marketing professionals and consultants in 75 countries.

Offering consulting playbooks, advisory services, and 500+ premium marketing tools and templates, Demand Metric resources and expertise help the marketing community plan more efficiently and effectively, answer the difficult questions about their work with authority and conviction, and complete marketing projects more quickly and with greater confidence — thus boosting the respect of the marketing team and making it easier to justify resources the team needs to succeed.

To learn more about Demand Metric, please visit [www.demandmetric.com](http://www.demandmetric.com)



**Seismic** is the leading global marketing and sales enablement solution, improving close rates and delivering larger deals for sales while increasing marketing's impact on the bottom line. Large enterprises use Seismic to increase sales productivity through the automatic distribution of relevant information and personalized content to reps for any buyer interaction. Powerful content controls and visibility into usage ensures brand integrity and reduces risk.

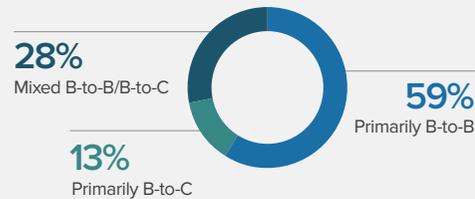
Seismic's machine learning and analytics capabilities continuously improves the entire enablement process for large enterprises, increasing the ROI of sales content and tying it directly to revenue. Headquartered in San Diego and with more than 300 employees across the globe, Seismic is privately held by its executive team and investment firms General Atlantic, JMI Equity, and Jackson Square Ventures.

To see how Seismic is being used by firms in your industry, visit <http://www.seismic.com>.

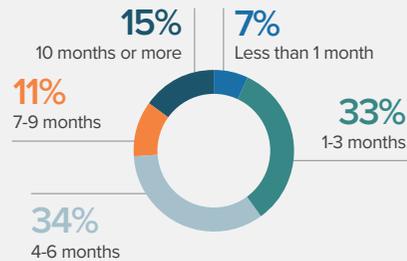
## Appendix: Survey Background

This 2017 Sales Content ROI Benchmark Study survey was administered online during the period of November 10 through December 8, 2017. **During this period, 314 responses were collected, 300 of which were qualified and complete enough for inclusion in the analysis. Only valid or correlated findings are shared in this report.**

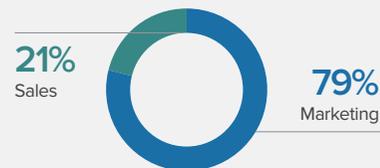
### TYPE OF ORGANIZATION



### AVERAGE LENGTH OF SALES CYCLE FOR FLAGSHIP PRODUCT/SOLUTION



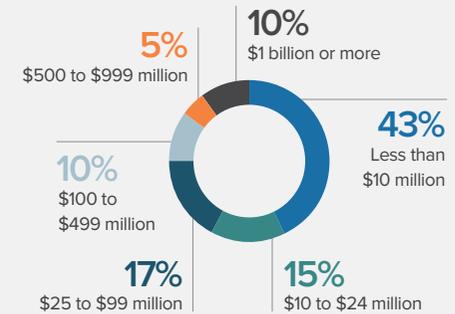
### PRIMARY ROLE OF RESPONDENT



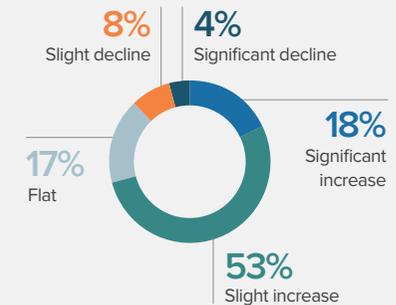
The representativeness of this study's results depends on the similarity of the sample to environments in which this survey data is used for comparison or guidance.

Summarized below is the basic categorization data collected about respondents to enable filtering and analysis of the data:

### ANNUAL SALES



### REVENUE GROWTH ENVIRONMENT IN MOST RECENT FISCAL YEAR





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