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# B2B Marketing Trends Report

NOVEMBER 2018



## FOREWORD

# The B2B Marketing Evolution

B2B marketing is unique, and uniquely challenging. Priorities and practicalities vary by company size and by industry. The sales cycles are long, the buyer's journey is complex, the influencers are many, and the data to drive decisions are diverse and voluminous.

As a global leader in information services and events, we at Informa Engage wanted to find out how marketers are dealing with the rapid evolution of their field.

B2B Marketing Trends 2018 is our second annual trends report, and in just one year we see how marketing professionals are taking advantage of new tools but also gaining confidence in longstanding marketing principles.

The new tools are considerable: This year we saw new technologies and industry consolidations that bring us closer to a single view of buyer intent.

But the old tools remain strong. The simple power of face-to-face engagement continues to be the beating heart of the most effective B2B marketing.

In a broad spectrum of companies and across a range of sectors and industries, we gathered candid perspectives on marketing trends, challenges, and priorities. We hope these findings will be a valuable indicator of innovation and key levers for B2B marketing strategies, and will provide a sound benchmark for companies' marketing efforts.



**Thank you for your interest!**

**Scott Harris**

Vice President of Sales Enablement  
Informa Engage, Informa

# Trends at a Glance

## B2B Video Gaining Momentum



The incredible metrics of video cannot be ignored: It's boosting email click-through rates 200-300% (HubSpot) and increasing landing page conversions rates by 80% (Hubspot). Videos highly visual storytelling activates brand interest, builds brand retention and enhances the buyer's journey. Early adopters continue to increase video usage, and as production and distribution costs become more accessible, we anticipate more marketers layering video into their strategies over the next five years.

## Email Continues to Dominate



Despite many heralding the demise of email marketing, search marketing and social media have not been able to topple it, and early signs show GDPR will not have quite the effect as was feared. Today, the smartest email marketing isn't just about reach, it's about savvy engagement that strengthens sales conversions—like personalizing relevant sought-after content, and using advanced automation and analytics to understand and better serve prospect needs every step of the journey.

## Account Based Marketing is Trending



In our survey, 62% of those who use Account Based Marketing (ABM) intend to increase their investment in it. Companies of all sizes believe in it—even marketers who don't have the dollars to automate ABM programs are exploring and developing their own manual solutions. Meanwhile, ABM technology is improving, with new techniques to monitor company-wide interests, and ways to make it easier to automate and track targeting. It's all part of a shift we see toward greater personalization in B2B marketing.

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# Marketing Tactics

Digital advances continue to expand the B2B marketer's toolkit—access to data, online video, personalization—but true effectiveness still depends on fundamental marketing tactics. This year we see B2B marketers making benefits-based decisions that reflect a growing sophistication and confidence in their approach.

Email marketing supplanted social media, last year's top marketing tactic. Data and analytics give marketers keen insights into effectiveness and marketers are fine tuning their efforts to charm and engage prospects with a better understanding of how to reach them as they move in and out of channels.

In-person events were another top tactic this year, especially for large enterprises, but in 2019 marketers plan to increase spending in video content—following audience preference for multi-media content.

Marketers need to integrate customized content marketing and ABM strategies in 2019 and to use data to identify and qualify targets upfront. Teams that fine tune their work to genuinely engage prospects with personalized campaigns will build relationships that lead to new opportunities.



## MARKETING TACTICS

# Engagement is Everything

This year, marketers demonstrated continued **emphasis on tactics that reach and engage prospects** and customers in their ongoing effort to build relationships and drive new business. To fuel engagement for businesses of any size, email marketing is a top B2B strategy. With quality behavioral data, marketers can provide audiences with relevant and timely content, offers and CTAs. It might cost more to send more emails to smaller target groups, but **the results are real**, with significantly higher engagements.

Two of the **least leveraged tactics** were live streaming and messaging (WhatsApp, WeChat, etc.)—evolving tactics being monitored for successful integration into the B2B marketing mix. Rich media and connected TV were also low on the list likely due to higher costs to execute creative.



## TOP TACTICS LEVERAGED IN 2018



78%

**Email  
Marketing**



70%

**Industry  
Events**



68%

**Social  
Media**



60%

**Content  
Marketing**



54%

**Banner  
Ads**

“For us, content is absolutely the key to escalating those MQLs to the sales teams. We need to build the content that brings in the customers who are really, truly interested.”



**MARKETING DIRECTOR FOR A  
LARGE TECHNOLOGY COMPANY**

## MARKETING TACTICS

# Content Marketing and Inbound Tactics Get Investment

Like last year, marketers will increase investments in social media and content marketing, but **video gets the top spot** this year. This indicates that **the popular consumer trend is proving its value in B2B**. Production costs are not insignificant, so it will be interesting to see if it continues to gain traction as a tactic.

The marketers we spoke to are shifting their marketing strategies to target, with greater precision and deeper reach into the funnel, with content customized for specific audiences. In addition they are increasing investment in inbound marketing tactics like SEO, SEM and Social.



### » VERTICAL SLANT

- Infrastructure **72%**
- Technology **67%**
- Financial Services **67%**
- Health & Nutrition **65%**



## WHERE B2B MARKETERS WILL INCREASE INVESTMENT IN 2019

**Video** 55%

**Mobile** 50%

**SEM** 54%

**Lead Gen** 50%

**Social** 54%

**Content** 50%

**SEO** 52%

**Audience Targeting** 50%

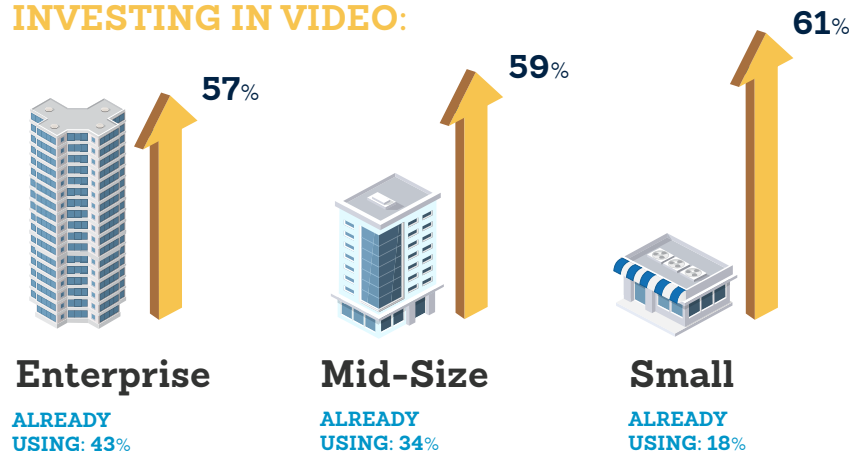


# Those That Use It Love It.

## Custom Video Creation

Across all company sizes, custom video creation is **being increased by more companies than any other tactic**. Video creation trends up to 2x higher by enterprise companies and declines with company size, but across all company size 60% of marketers will be increasing their budgets.

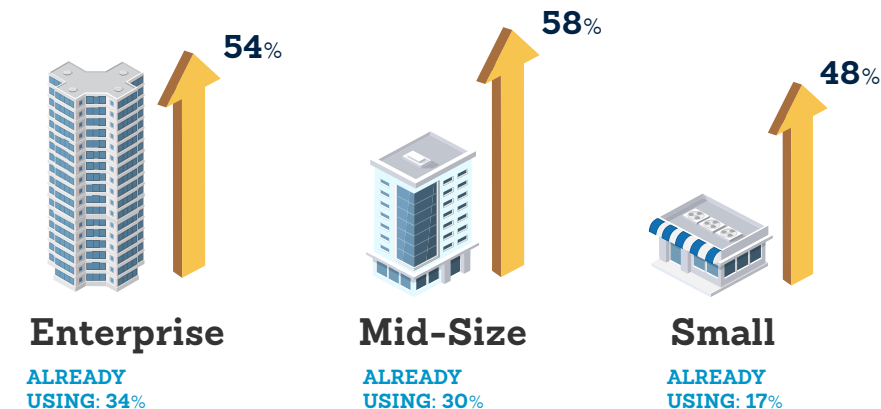
### INVESTING IN VIDEO:



## Account Based Marketing

Although ABM is largely used by larger companies, a striking 62% of those that are using it plan to increase their spend on it in 2019. Technology investments to automate ABM are high, which often inhibits smaller organizations' ability to take part.

### INVESTING IN ABM:



# And Those That Don't Wish They Did.

“Video is a key go-to market element for us. We use animations like “a day in the life of an operator” at the top of the funnel and then real people talking about key issues for the bottom of the funnel.”



**VP MARKETING PROVIDING IT  
FOR FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY**

## MARKETING TACTICS

# B2B Marketing Levels UP

Marketers are scaling and optimizing their content marketing and lead generation strategies based on their **growing experience and sophistication**. Savvy marketers use research and metrics to gain a deeper understanding of their audience needs, and a more specific and mature approach to targeting.

It's vital to make the pivot from "here's what I need to tell them" to "here's original content that reflects a need and provides information and insights to unique approaches." As marketers immerse themselves in understanding and responding to their audience, **ABM becomes the natural evolution of B2B marketing**. The marketers we interviewed cite a high interest in ABM, but haven't been able to get executive buy in on the budget required to execute.



## MARKETING MATURITY LEVELS

NOT USING   EXPLORING   DEVELOPING   SCALING   OPTIMIZING

### Content Marketing

9%

21%

28%

17%

25%

### Lead Generation

14%

24%

21%

18%

23%

### ABM

21%

30%

21%

16%

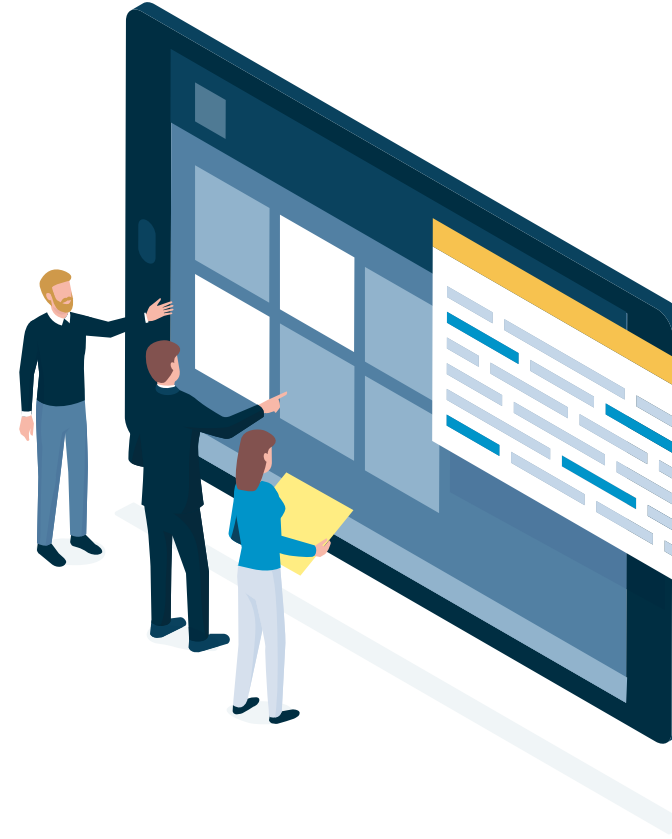
12%

# Content Marketing

Today's B2B marketers are fine-tuning content marketing—optimizing and refining approaches to deliver with certainty on specific goals. Our report shows nearly half of all B2B marketers surveyed are assured in their ability to drive traffic and capture audience attention.

The tactics depend on the goals. In indirect sales models, like in Automotive and Agriculture, marketers want to raise brand perception and loyalty to increase market share. Their approach relies heavily on in-person events, media outlets where they can make the largest imprint, social, and native content like blogs and articles. For direct sales, capturing leads to fill pipelines is a top priority, and we see these groups using more custom content marketing tools such as white papers and webinars.

The long and complex journey for B2B buyers makes it difficult to know the effect of individual content and tactics. Anecdotally, we hear about companies tracking sales value to specific content, but for the majority of marketers tracking content marketing ROI is still a struggle.



# One Size Does Not Fit All

Every industry has its marketing nuances. Some are highly focused on branding and awareness; social media and blog posts fit squarely in this camp. Markets like Technology, Infrastructure and Financial are focused on lead generation, so white papers and webinars are favorites. Media partners that own **rich behavioral and intent data** can help marketers plug directly into **individuals' needs** as they move through the buyer's journey.

## MOST SUCCESSFUL CONTENT MARKETING TACTICS FOR...



### DRIVING AWARENESS

- 57% **Social**
- 50% **Articles**
- 45% **Blog Posts**
- 43% **Video**
- 39% **Newsletters**
- 39% **In-Person Events**



### GENERATING LEADS

- 55% **In-Person Events**
- 43% **White Papers**
- 40% **Webinars**
- 34% **SEO**
- 33% **Case Studies**
- 28% **SEM**

### >> VERTICAL SLANT

#### White Papers

- Infrastructure: 55%
- Technology: 60%
- Financial Services: 53%

#### Webinars

- Infrastructure: 42%
- Technology: 67%
- Financial Services: 57%



“Traditionally the objective has been brand awareness, but now we are trying to identify the role of content marketing in creating a lead or converting a sale.”



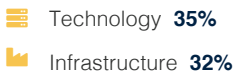
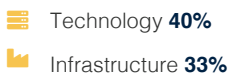
**MARKETING MANAGER FOR LARGE  
MANUFACTURER SERVING AVIATION**

# Confidence Highest with Top of Funnel Tactics

B2B marketers see themselves as doing a pretty **good job at getting eyeballs on their content** and in capturing audience attention. They know their business well and can effectively communicate the value of their products and services to those who are looking for it. We anticipate they will continue to leverage their in-market expertise to develop more types of content and implement them through more complex content marketing strategies in the future.

## » VERTICAL SLANT

Industries that rely on content marketing for lead generation score higher at driving traffic and producing quantities of content.



## WHAT MARKETERS ARE DOING WELL:



**Driving traffic to content 31%**

**Capturing audience attention 31%**

**Developing, implementing, and deploying content strategy 30%**

**Producing adequate variety of content 27%**

# Tracking Content Marketing Effectiveness is Still a Challenge

The inability to measure program success and ROI continues to be a struggle. The range of influencers on buying decisions, the complexity of the options to be weighed, high price tags and the often long-term effect a purchasing decision will have on the company all play into a very long and complex sale cycle. As marketers move towards more personalized content and marketing approaches, they are also struggling with the increased cost of time and resources.

“ We do content marketing even though we can't effectively measure it. Long B2B sales cycles, make managing all the pieces and tracking specific metrics to specific tactics challenging.”

—VP of Marketing for Small Healthcare Company

## BOTTOM OF THE "WHAT WE DO WELL" LIST

- » Time & resources
- » Access to measurement tools
- » Realistic performance expectations

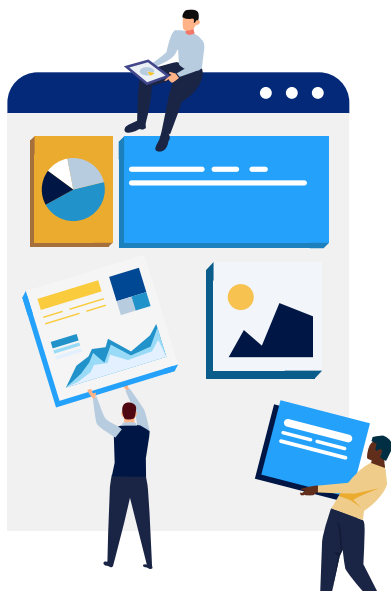




## CONTENT MARKETING

# Quality Content Means Quality Leads

The good news is that B2B marketers are finding that on the whole, content marketing works. It strengthens brand positioning in the marketplace, builds engagement and generates marketing qualified leads. When it's done well, **content marketing engages individuals on their own terms**, and is available and relevant where audiences live.



### WAYS CONTENT MARKETING IS EFFECTIVE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

**67%** Increasing brand awareness

**64%** Increasing audience engagement

**37%** Generating marketing qualified leads (MQLs)

### » VERTICAL SLANT

Organizations that are effective at generating marketing qualified leads (MQLs) use more white papers and webinars.

#### **Technology 49%**

WHITE PAPERS 60%

WEBINARS 67%

#### **Financial 47%**

WHITE PAPERS 53%

WEBINARS 57%

#### **Infrastructure 37%**

WHITE PAPERS 55%

WEBINARS 42%

vs.

#### **Aviation 32%**

WHITE PAPERS 19%

WEBINARS 21%

#### **Health 25%**

WHITE PAPERS 16%

WEBINARS 16%

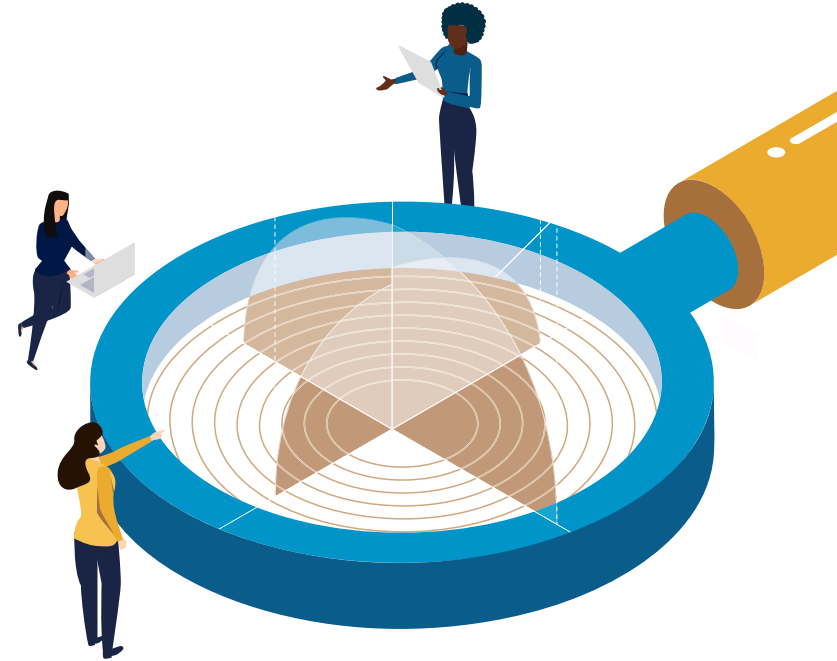
# Lead Generation

Lead generation is all about quality, but less than one-third of marketers surveyed expressed a belief that they are doing it well. So how do we improve? With up to 93% of the buying journey starting with an online search, don't overlook social media and search marketing strategies.

People are more likely to purchase from companies they trust, so it's smart to establish thought leadership through content marketing and to leverage media partnerships that align your business with established, credible brands.

Also, collaborate with your sales team. A surprising obstacle to lead conversion was a lack of alignment between sales and marketing. Marketers report that they are challenged to deliver specialized content to bring in more sales qualified leads.

So what is working? The good old personal touch: Make your marketing tactics feel like they are genuinely created by a human, and create authentic experiences like face-to-face events. These have been proven to yield the highest quality leads.



# The Biggest Obstacle? Aligning Sales and Marketing

In B2B, where sales cycles are longer and investments higher, **it's important for marketing and sales to work together towards a common goal**. Marketing technology can help automate the information flow between marketing and sales, but none of that matters if there isn't a clear understanding of expectations on both sides. The information flow must go both ways, and formal agreements—to **define what triggers a lead to go to sales and when leads are pushed back to marketing**—can make all the difference.

Orchestrating this collaboration takes time and budget, so it's no surprise to see these challenges top the list.



## TOP OBSTACLES IN CONVERTING LEADS TO SALES

34% **Alignment between sales and marketing**

34% **Budget**

31% **Time and bandwidth**

21% **Quality data for targeting**

21% **Strategic direction**

“We’ve got to start kicking up the content, which is absolutely the key to escalating those MQLs to sales. We haven’t had a great mechanism yet to be able to do that.”



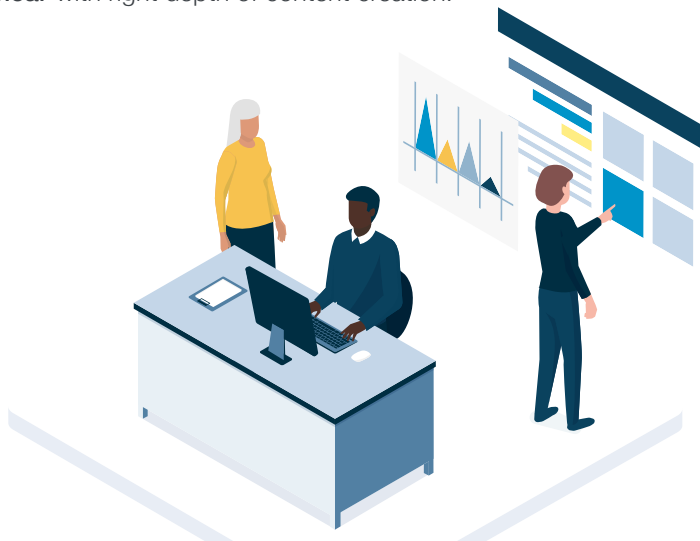
**DIRECTOR AT LARGE DESIGN  
AND ENGINEERING FIRM**

## LEAD GENERATION

# Users First, You Second

Nearly half of the marketers surveyed are communicating product value in their content. Today's digital world, with its 280-character limit, short attention spans and analytic proof, has forced them to be clear and concise with messaging—to focus on value and benefits, not features.

The streamlined messaging doesn't always create lead generating success, however. Fewer than a third of marketers are confident in their abilities to generate high quality leads. They will **succeed when they can effectively strike a balance between what they want to talk about, and what the market wants to hear** with right depth of content creation.



## LEAD GENERATION: WHAT DO YOU DO WELL?

- 48% **Communicating product value**
- 31% **Generating high-quality leads**
- 27% **Marketing to a growing number of influencers/decision makers**
- 26% **Lead generation across multiple media**
- 26% **Marketing to a longer sales cycle**

### » VERTICAL SLANT

- ✈️ Aviation **59%**
- 🏠 Infrastructure **48%**
- 🏢 Technology **38%**
- 🥗 Health & Nutrition **48%**
- 💰 Financial Services **46%**

## LEAD GENERATION

# People Prefer People

Now we state the obvious: meeting people face-to-face is a truly effective way to build your business.

When it comes to lead generation, B2B marketers tell us that **nothing beats face-to-face communication** for establishing and building new relationships. In-person events and trade shows are the most effective lead gen tactic for a whopping 61% of you. Even though it's pricey, one-third of all marketers plan to increase spending on events in 2019.

The company's website is sometimes called the front door to a business, and this pathway is also cited as a top way to net new leads, especially when fueled by demand gen and content marketing.

## MOST EFFECTIVE LEAD GENERATION TACTICS



**Events/Tradeshows** 61%



**Company's Website** 48%



**Email Marketing** 44%



**Content Marketing** 34%



“To my sheer and utter shock, trade shows have been our most effective means of generating quality leads, and delivering the best cost per opportunity ratio. I’m a huge digital advocate, so this was a surprise and a bit of a disappointment.”



**VP OF MARKETING FOR  
SMALL START-UP COMPANY**

# Events

Events are a top tactic for 70% of B2B marketers. In-person events are long-standing winners for branding and awareness, but now 61% of B2B marketers say that they are using them for new lead generation, too.

**It's not just the event, however, that lands the leads.** It's the multi-faceted campaigns marketers build around the event, with multi-touch pre- and post-show marketing efforts to surround attendees with relevant attention. Pre-show efforts can include social outreach to establish connections and to promote event activities and exposure. Afterwards, social can provide useful takeaways and assets, and email marketing can build and nurture relationships.

Events are costly, and expanding the purpose to include lead generation increases success and enhances ROI.



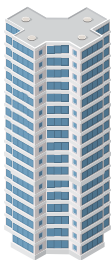


## EVENTS

# You've Got to Show Up to Blow Up

Yes, **live events** are pricey, but **nothing** offers as much potential upside. Event participation offers unique opportunities at multiple levels: Strengthen relationships with current clients, make a personal connection with already engaged prospects, discover new leads, and of course showcase your company's unique value proposition, perspective and personality. B2B marketers of all sizes are participating in multiple events with 67% of all companies planning to participate in five or more events per year.

## PARTICIPATING IN 5 OR MORE EVENTS



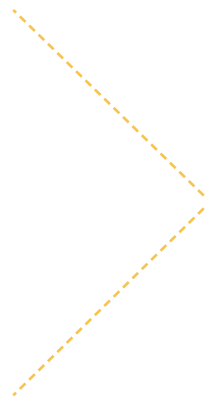
Enterprise  
**81%**



Mid-Size  
**62%**



Small  
**39%**



**67%**

**of all companies  
will participate in  
five or more events**



## EVENTS

# Live Events are the Linchpin to B2B Marketing

There is no question that events have an impact on the overall success of an organization's marketing strategies. Our research shows that **a combination of offline and online event activities are essential** to the B2B marketer's game plan. Enterprises are able to invest more money in events for both branding and to acquire and engage new customers, because the expectation is that they gain access to a pool of prospects and customers that will spend more money with them in the long run.



## IN-PERSON EVENTS — WHAT B2B MARKETERS ARE DOING WELL:

**Increasing brand/  
product awareness** 69%

**Engaging existing customers** 60%

**Generating leads and meeting  
new prospects** 54%

**Introducing new products  
and services** 42%



“Events are an orchestration. About 3-4 months in advance we start the direct marketing campaign, then build out digital, after that you build out ABM programs on the back of digital, and then you actually meet people at the event.”



**VP MARKETING PROVIDING IT  
FOR FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY**

# Methodology

Informa Engage invited contacts within its international database of B2B companies to participate in an online survey about marketing challenges and trends between August 1-31, 2018, and conducted interviews September 19-25, 2018. The 850 respondents, represent a range of industries, company sizes and job responsibilities.

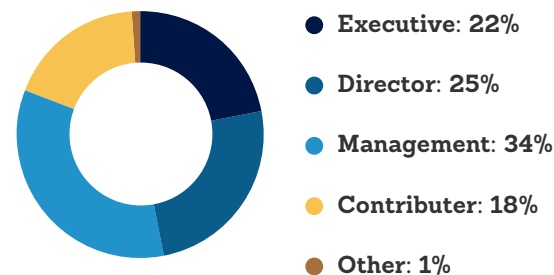
## INDUSTRY COMPOSITION OF SAMPLE



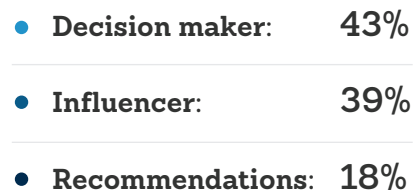
## COMPANY SIZE



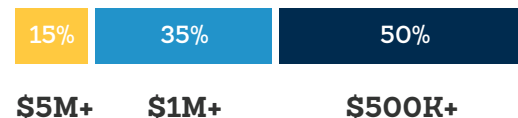
## JOB ROLE



## DECISION INVOLVEMENT



## 2018 ANNUAL MARKETING BUDGETS



# informa engage

## GLOBAL REACH TO 30+ MILLION BUSINESS DECISION MAKERS.

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Through our deep understanding of our customer's behaviors and changing needs, Informa Engage connects marketers to customers as they move from discovering a problem to identifying features and functionality of a solution to selecting a provider and making a purchase.

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INTELLIGENCE  
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EVENTS

180+

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