STATE OF INBOUND 2017

SecretSource Marketing

Welcome to the State of Inbound 2017

The way people do business has changed, and companies are increasingly visible where their audience are whether that is social media, mobile apps or web.

This year's State of Inbound report by HubSpot will give you the data you need to benchmark your activities against over 6,000 respondents while also giving you the insight to plan your future marketing and sales strategies.

We examine the new trends and channels that will affect the way we do business, and the top marketing and sales challenges and priorities businesses face today. As Inbound continues to evolve, we begin to see two major shifts take place: Marketers are making the leap into visual content creation while salespeople are slowly shifting from the hard-seller stereotype to a more trusted advisor.

While we're more than a decade in, the inbound journey is just getting started. The move toward the future requires forward-thinking ideas to be embraced, experimentation to figure out which channels work best for your business, and an openness to try new technologies and tools to foster better relationships with your customers. All of these changes will create complexity and potential stress, but the way forward is not always easy or smooth.

We here at Secret Source Marketing will be with you to tackle the challenges the future brings.
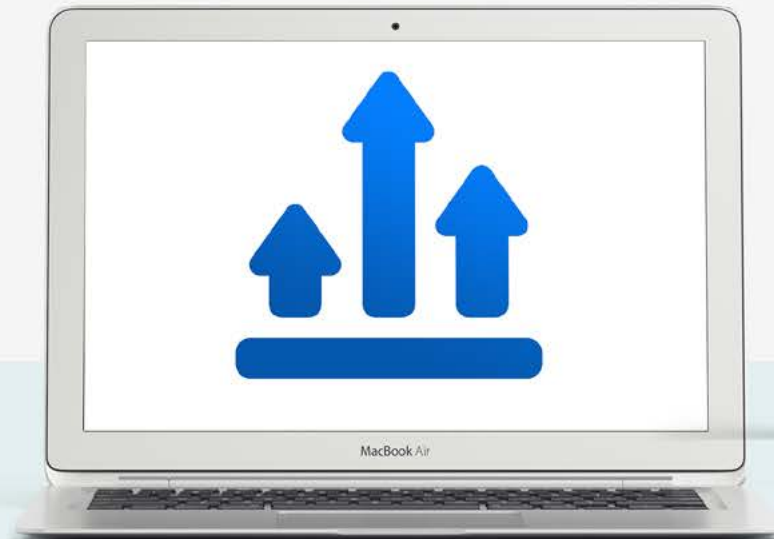
Nick Carlson
Director

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The State of Marketing and Sales

Top Marketing Priorities

The majority of marketers today focus on converting leads into customers and growing traffic to their website. There's also strong focus on upselling existing customers. Historically considered a cost center for businesses, Marketing is now measured against its ability to contribute to the business's bottom line.

Over the years, proving marketing ROI has consistently been a challenge for marketers. A marketer surveyed wrote that planning campaigns holistically enabled them to measure ROI: *"Proactive strategic planning results in measurable activities for ROI"*.

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What are your company's top marketing priorities over the next 12 months?

2%	24%	29%	39%	45%	55%	70%
Don't know/not applicable	Reducing the cost of contracts/leads/ customer acquisition	Sales enablement	Proving the ROI of our marketing activities	Increasing revenue derived from existing customers	Growing traffic to website	Converting contracts/ leads to customers

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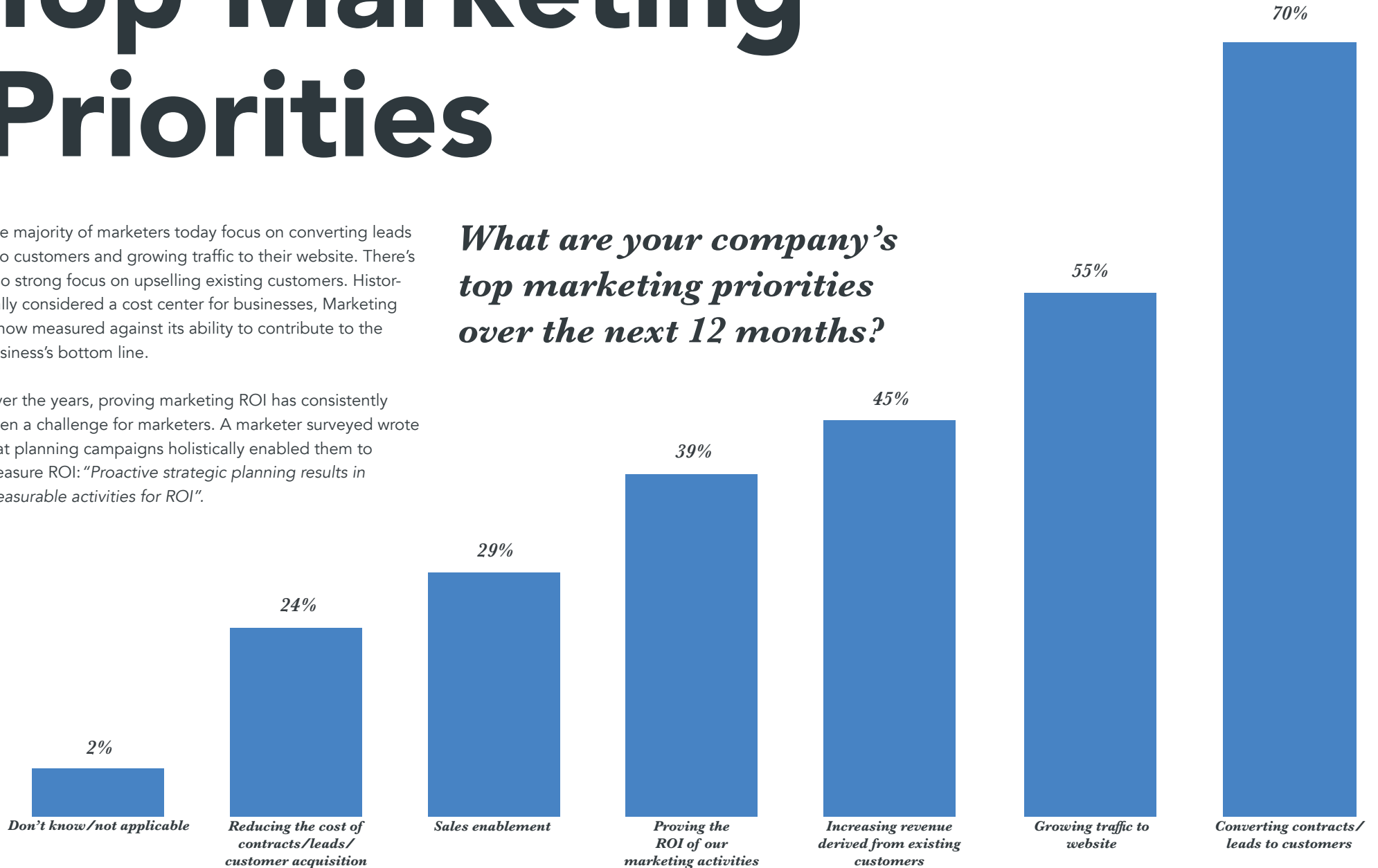
Across the globe, there are some minor differences in priorities. While all regions focus on converting leads into customers, marketers in Australia and New Zealand (ANZ) and Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) are slightly more concerned with growing overall traffic compared to their peers. ROI is less of a sticking point for Latin American marketers, but they're more fixated on upselling their existing customer base. More Asian marketers cite sales enablement as a priority; given that relationship-building is a priority in Asia, it makes sense that marketers want to partner with their salespeople. Likewise, Asia-based marketers focus more on reducing the cost of customer acquisition, likely due to the extra facetime traditionally required to close deals in region.

WHAT ARE YOUR COMPANY'S TOP MARKETING PRIORITIES OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS? (BY GEOGRAPHY)

NAM: 71%, 58%, 47%, 43%, 26%, 21%
ANZ: 73%, 65%, 42%, 43%, 31%, 20%
ASIA: 62%, 52%, 43%, 46%, 36%, 30%
LATAM: 72%, 49%, 33%, 49%, 25%, 23%
EMEA: 71%, 60%, 38%, 40%, 32%, 24%

- Converting contracts/leads to customers
- Growing traffic to website
- Proving the ROI of our marketing activities
- Increasing revenue derived from existing customers
- Sales enablement
- Reduicing the cost of contracts/leads/customer acquisition
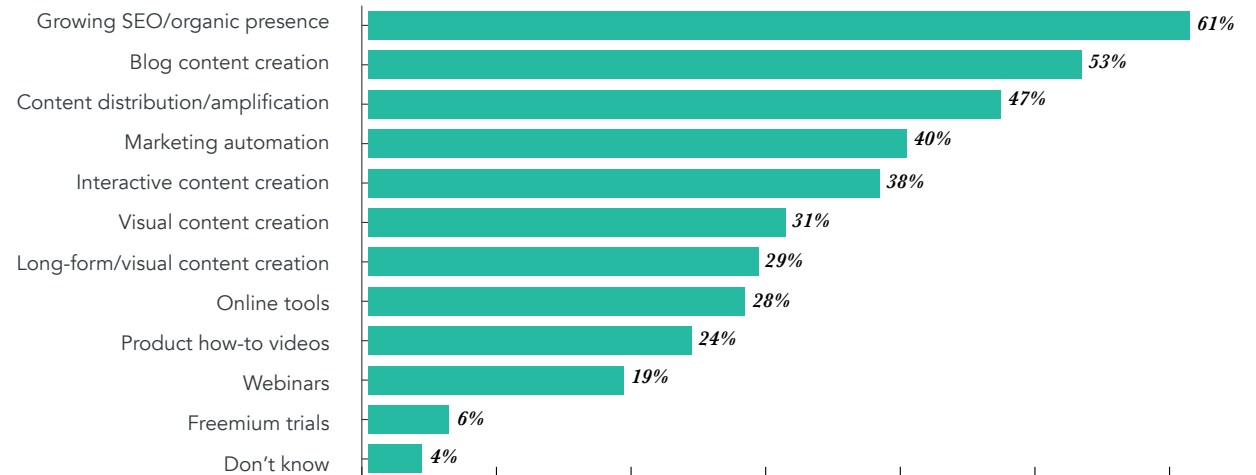
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Inbound Marketing Priorities

With respect to inbound marketing projects, marketers are focused on improving their SEO presence, creating more blog content that can be found via search, and distributing and amplifying content.

A marketer highlighted their priorities as: *"focusing more on online presence such as industry directories, fixing and improving our own website, interacting with potential customers or people within the industry through online forums ... rather than print mags which don't always reach our targets."*

With respect to SEO as the top overall priority, one respondent summed up their main challenge: *"Google makes a lot of changes to their search algorithms, and it impacts websites and SEO."* The changing technology landscape will continue to keep marketing teams on their toes.

Thinking specifically about inbound marketing projects, what are your company's top priorities?

Priority	Percentage
Growing SEO/organic presence	61%
Blog content creation	53%
Content distribution/amplification	47%
Marketing automation	40%
Interactive content creation	38%
Visual content creation	31%
Long-form/visual content creation	29%
Online tools	28%
Product how-to videos	24%
Webinars	19%
Freemium trials	6%
Don't know	4%

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Across geographies, there is much more variance on inbound priorities.

Uniformly, SEO and organic growth is at the top of the list in every region, but priorities then shift among content distribution and amplification, blog content creation, interactive content creation, and marketing automation. Latin American marketers focus more on interactive and visual content compared to others. North American marketers are tinkering with ways to distribute their content.

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Rank	NAM	ANZ	ASIA	LATAM	EMEA
1	Growing SEO/ organic presence 69%	Growing SEO/ organic presence 65%	Growing SEO/ organic presence 61%	Growing SEO/ organic presence 56%	Growing SEO/ organic presence 62%
2	Content distribution/ amplification 58%	Blog content creation 58%	Blog content creation 58%	Blog content creation 48%	Blog content creation 55%
3	Blog content creation 57%	Content distribution/ amplification 51%	Content distribution/ amplification 43%	Interactive content creation 45%	Content distribution/ amplification 50%
4	Interactive content creation 38%	Marketing automation 38%	Interactive content creation 42%	Visual content creation 42%	Marketing automation 41%
5	Long-form/visual content creation 35%	Long-form/visual content creation 30%	Marketing automation 40%	Marketing automation 40%	Interactive content creation 32%
6	Long-form/visual content creation 35%	Interactive content creation 29%	Visual content creation 39%	Content distribution/ amplification 38%	Long-form/ visual content creation 30%
7	Visual content creation 22%	Visual content creation 29%	Online tools 28%	Online tools 37%	Online tools 25%
8	Webinars 21%	Product how-to videos 27%	Long-form/visual content creation 26%	Product how-to videos 27%	Product how-to videos 24%
9	Online tools 21%	Online tools 22%	Product how-to videos 26%	Long-form/ visual content creation 24%	Visual content creation 22%
10	Product how-to videos 16%	Webinars 13%	Webinars 22%	Webinars 16%	Webinars 21%
11	Freemium trials 3%	Freemium trials 4%	Freemium trials 11%	Freemium trials 7%	Freemium trials 7%

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Overall, we see strong adoption of inbound across the globe, with room to grow investments in the methodology in Australia, New Zealand, and Asia.
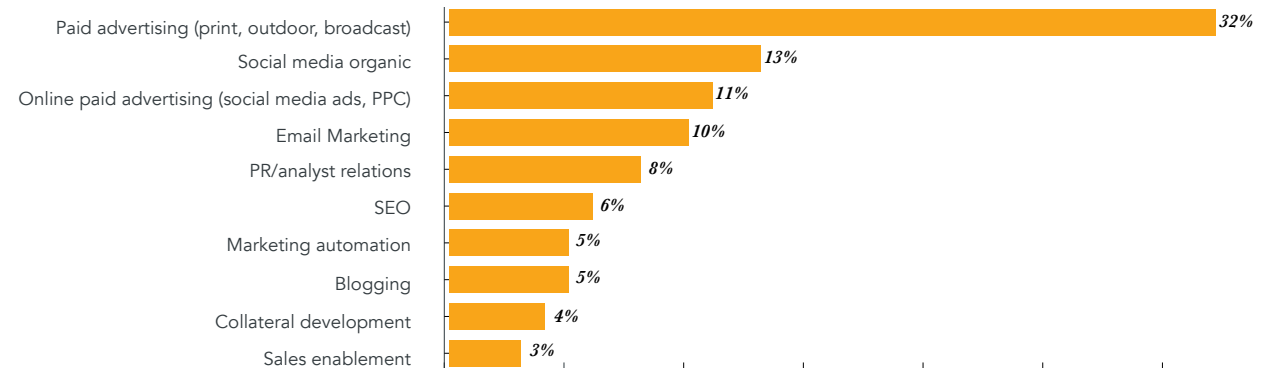
We also know what is not a priority for marketers today: traditional advertising. Once again, it's the top ranked "overrated marketing tactic".

What is your organisation's primary approach to marketing?

"We primarily conduct inbound marketing."

Global	71%
NAM	76%
LATAM	72%
EMEA	72%
ANZ	68%
ASIA	64%

In your opinion, what is the most overrated marketing tactic?

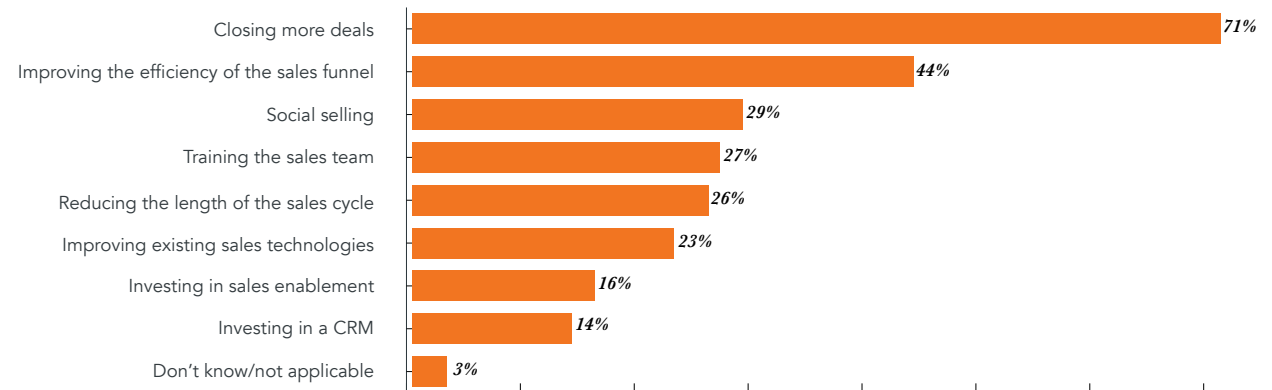|	
Paid advertising (print, outdoor, broadcast)	32%
Social media organic	13%
Online paid advertising (social media ads, PPC)	11%
Email Marketing	10%
PR/analyst relations	8%
SEO	6%
Marketing automation	5%
Blogging	5%
Collateral development	4%
Sales enablement	3%

In fact, one respondent wrote that they are completely abandoning broadcast to focus more on-demand content: *"We are abandoning the broadcast channels era to enter an individual on-demand environment, where places and things that surround users will create more useful, relevant, and customized experiences."*

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Sales Priorities

For sales professionals, closing more deals occupies the majority of their focus. This was followed by improving the efficiency of the sales funnel as a priority. Optimising the sales process requires addressing organisational complexity and adapting to new buying habits, which require major shifts for any business. Social selling, another modern sales strategy, comes in as the third most important priority.

What are your company's top sales priorities for the next year?

Priority	%
Closing more deals	71%
Improving the efficiency of the sales funnel	44%
Social selling	29%
Training the sales team	27%
Reducing the length of the sales cycle	26%
Improving existing sales technologies	23%
Investing in sales enablement	16%
Investing in a CRM	14%
Don't know/not applicable	3%

Some sales respondents also wrote in that they were focusing on "building stronger partnerships" and creating "thought leadership to start the conversation". Thought leadership is an effort that marketing teams should share with their sales counterparts. Forward-thinking content can elevate the profile of the company they serve as well as sales conversations.

Across regions, more sales respondents in ANZ indicate they are dealing with inefficiency in the sales funnel and that they need to improve their existing sales technologies. More respondents in Latin America and EMEA are looking into social selling. EMEA-based sales respondents are investing slightly more in sales enablement and CRM compared to their peers.

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What are your company's top sales priorities for the next year? (by geography)

Rank	NAM	ANZ	ASIA	LATAM	EMEA
1	Closing more deals 72%	Closing more deals 65%	Closing more deals 65%	Closing more deals 76%	Closing more deals 68%
2	Improving the efficiency of the sales funnel 54%	Improving the efficiency of the sales funnel 58%	Improving the efficiency of the sales funnel 44%	Improving the efficiency of the sales funnel 36%	Improving the efficiency of the sales funnel 46%
3	Reducing the length of sales cycle 28%	Improving existing sales technologies 38%	Reducing the length of sales cycle 29%	Social selling 33%	Social selling 31%
4	Training the sales team 26%	Reducing the length of sales cycle 27%	Training the sales team 27%	Training the sales team 28%	Reducing the length of sales cycle 27%
5	Improving existing sales technologies 22%	Social selling 27%	Social selling 26%	Reducing the length of sales cycle 24%	Training the sales team 26%
6	Social selling 19%	Training the sales team 22%	Improving existing sales technologies 16%	Improving existing sales technologies 23%	Improving existing sales technologies 24%
7	Investing in sales enablement 15%	Investing in sales enablement 15%	Investing in sales enablement 15%	Investing in sales enablement 15%	Investing in sales enablement 19%
8	Investing in a CRM 11%	Investing in a CRM 9%	Investing in a CRM 10%	Investing in a CRM 15%	Investing in a CRM 17%

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Marketing Challenges

Echoing their priorities, marketers today find generating traffic and leads to be their biggest challenge, followed by proving ROI and securing budget for marketing programs. The write-in responses show marketers are facing a very wide swath of issues, from figuring out strategy to social conversion to analytics to staffing.

"Engaging the whole company to provide a disruptive marketing strategy; understanding our clients' profile, potential, and goals to develop each account in their own individual pace."

"Moving into a modern marketing strategy—our industry is wicked old school"

"Developing Content"

"Technology and analytics"

"Having the time to do our own marketing"

WHAT ARE YOUR COMPANY'S TOP MARKETING CHALLENGES?

Challenge	Percentage
Generating traffic and leads	63%
Proving the ROI of our marketing activities	40%
Securing enough budget	28%
Identifying the right technologies for our needs	26%
Managing our website	26%
Targeting content for an international audience	21%
Training our team	19%
Hiring top talent	16%
Finding an executive sponsor	7%

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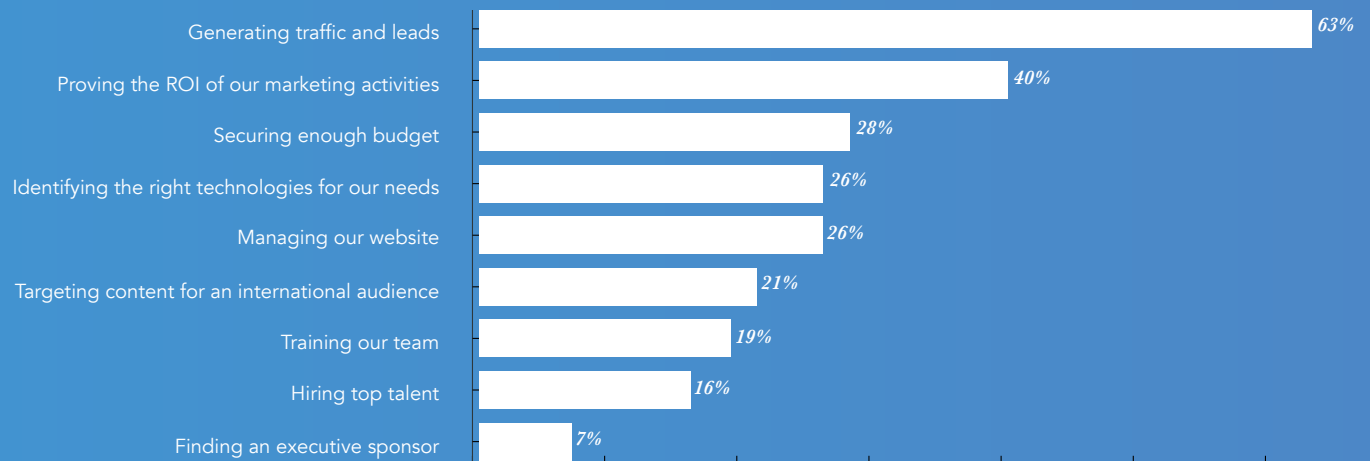
WHAT ARE YOUR COMPANY'S TOP MARKETING CHALLENGES? (BY GEOGRAPHY)

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Globally, challenges are consistent, with Asian marketers citing targeted content for international audiences and hiring top talent as strong challenges. Latin American marketers are slightly more focused on finding the right technology solutions for their teams and training.

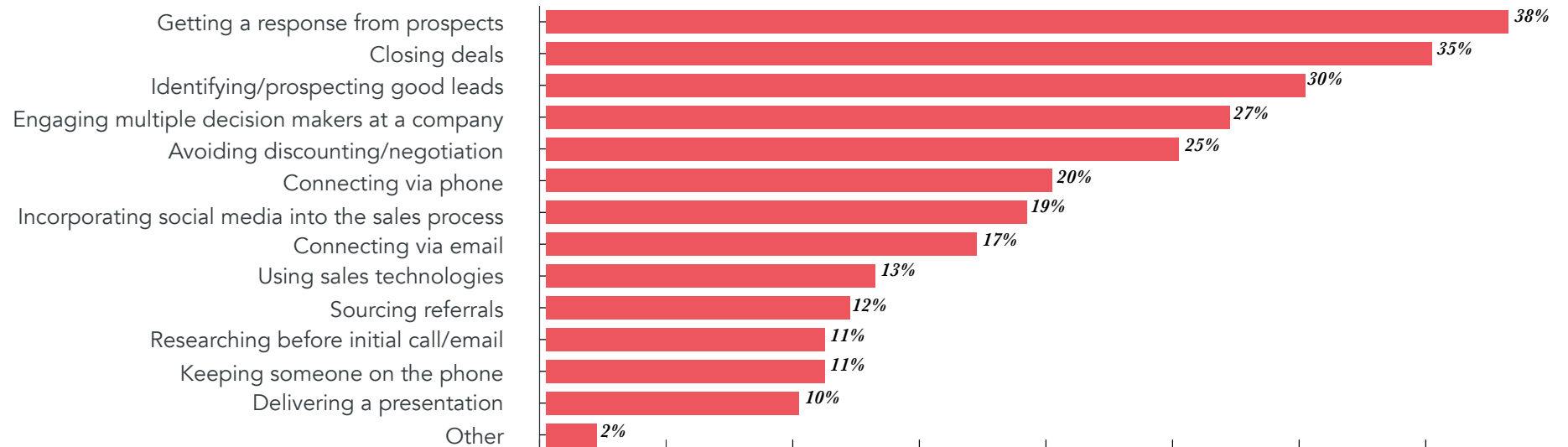| Rank	NAM	ANZ	ASIA	LATAM	EMEA
1	Generating traffic and leads 61%	Generating traffic and leads 62%	Generating traffic and leads 59%	Generating traffic and leads 66%	Generating traffic and leads 62%
2	Proving the ROI of our marketing activities 45%	Proving the ROI of our marketing activities 44%	Proving the ROI of our marketing activities 39%	Proving the ROI of our marketing activities 37%	Proving the ROI of our marketing activities 40%
3	Securing enough budget 30%	Securing enough budget 26%	Targeting content for an international audience 37%	Identifying the right technologies for our needs 32%	Managing our website 27%
4	Identifying the right technologies for our needs 24%	Managing our website 24%	Securing enough budget 29%	Securing enough budget 29%	Securing enough budget 25%
5	Managing our website 20%	Identifying the right technologies for our needs 23%	Identifying the right technologies for our needs 26%	Managing our website 28%	Targeting content for an international audience 23%
6	Training our team 13%	Targeting content for an international audience 12%	Managing our website 26%	Training our team 26%	Identifying the right technologies for our needs 22%
7	Hiring top talent 13%	Training our team 11%	Training our team 20%	Targeting content for an international audience 19%	Training our team 18%
8	Targeting content for an international audience 11%	Hiring top talent 10%	Hiring top talent 20%	Hiring top talent 18%	Hiring top talent 14%
9	Finding an executive sponsor 5%	Finding an executive sponsor 2%	Finding an executive sponsor 11%	Finding an executive sponsor 10%	Finding an executive sponsor 5%

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Sales Challenges

On the sales side, respondents tell us it's getting harder to elicit a response from a prospect, close deals, and prospect for leads. 19% also say they're struggling to incorporate social media in their sales process, and 13% think using sales technologies is now harder than it used to be.

What is more difficult to do in sales compared to 2 to 3 years ago?

Challenge	Percentage
Getting a response from prospects	38%
Closing deals	35%
Identifying/prospecting good leads	30%
Engaging multiple decision makers at a company	27%
Avoiding discounting/negotiation	25%
Connecting via phone	20%
Incorporating social media into the sales process	19%
Connecting via email	17%
Using sales technologies	13%
Sourcing referrals	12%
Researching before initial call/email	11%
Keeping someone on the phone	11%
Delivering a presentation	10%
Other	2%

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What is more difficult to do in sales compared to 2 to 3 years ago? (by geography)

Rank	NAM	ANZ	ASIA	LATAM	EMEA
1	Getting a response from prospects 49%	Getting a response from prospects 49%	Closing deals 37%	Closing deals 42%	Getting a response from prospects 34%
2	Connecting via phone 36%	Avoiding discounting/ negotiation 36%	Getting a response from prospects 36%	Getting a response from prospects 35%	Identifying/ prospecting good leads 30%
3	Engaging multiple decision makers at a company 36%	Identifying/ prospecting good leads 26%	Avoiding discounting/ negotiation 27%	Identifying/ prospecting good leads 33%	Closing deals 30%
4	Identifying/ prospecting good leads 30%	Engaging multiple decision makers at a company 23%	Engaging multiple decision makers at a company 26%	Engaging multiple decision makers at a company 28%	Avoiding discounting/ negotiation 30%
5	Closing deals 26%	Closing deals 19%	Identifying/ prospecting good leads 24%	Avoiding discounting/ negotiation 23%	Connecting via phone 25%
6	Connecting via email 20%	Connecting via phone 17%	Sourcing referrals 21%	Incorporating social media into the sales process 22%	Connecting via email 25%
7	Avoiding discounting/ negotiation 18%	Incorporating social media into the sales process 17%	Incorporating social media into the sales process 18%	Using sales technologies 19%	Engaging multiple decision makers at a company 23%
8	Keeping someone on the phone 12%	Sourcing referrals 17%	Connecting via email 14%	Delivering a presentation 17%	Incorporating social media into the sales process 18%
9	Incorporating social media into the sales process 12%	Connecting via email 15%	Connecting via phone 13%	Doing research before initial call/email 16%	Keeping someone on the phone 15%
10	Using sales technologies 11%	Keeping someone on the phone 8%	Keeping someone on the phone 12%	Connecting via phone 15%	Sourcing referrals 13%
11	Sourcing referrals 8%	Doing research before initial call/email 4%	Using sales technologies 10%	Connecting via email 14%	Using sales technologies 9%
12	Doing research before initial call/email 8%	Using sales technologies 2%	Doing research before initial call/email 10%	Keeping someone on the phone 9%	Delivering a presentation 6%
13	Delivering a presentation 2%	Delivering a presentation 2%	Delivering a presentation 5%	Sourcing referrals 8%	Doing research before initial call/email 5%

Across regions, there is variance in the pressure points for salespeople. While in North America, salespeople have a tough time connecting on the phone, Australia and New Zealand-based salespeople have a hard time avoiding discounting, and Asian and Latin American salespeople struggle with closing deals.
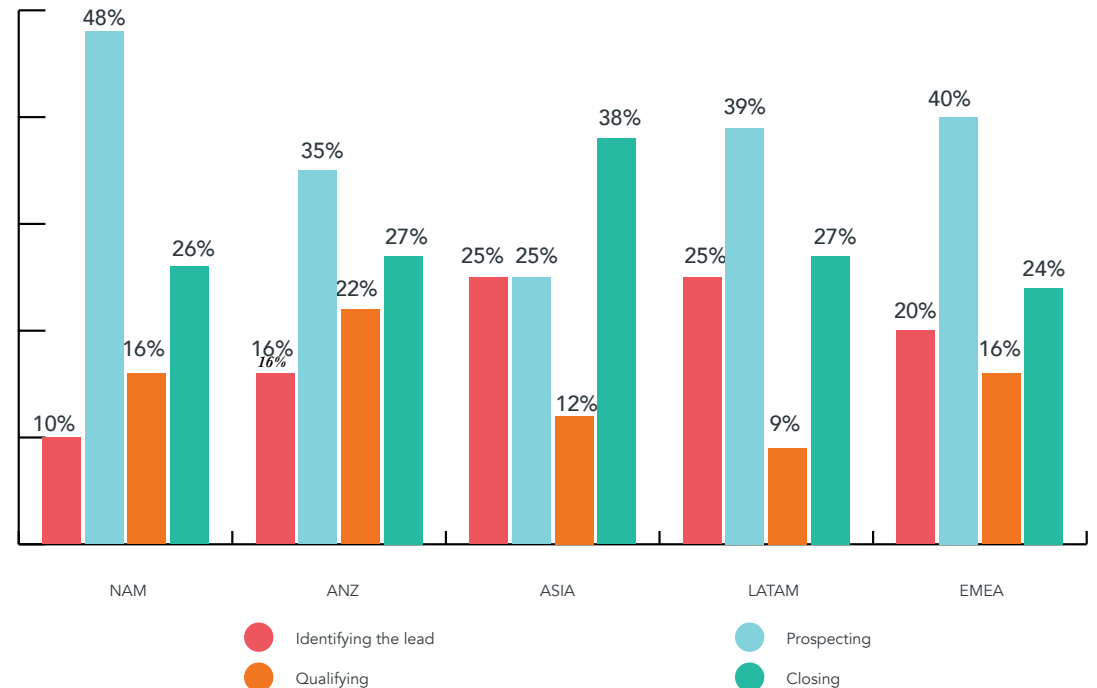
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Most agree that prospecting is currently the toughest part of the sales process. Sales teams need help qualifying leads, whether it's with more robust lead scoring or for Marketing to use better lead-qualifying actions to ensure salespeople are given accounts that are most likely to convert into customers.
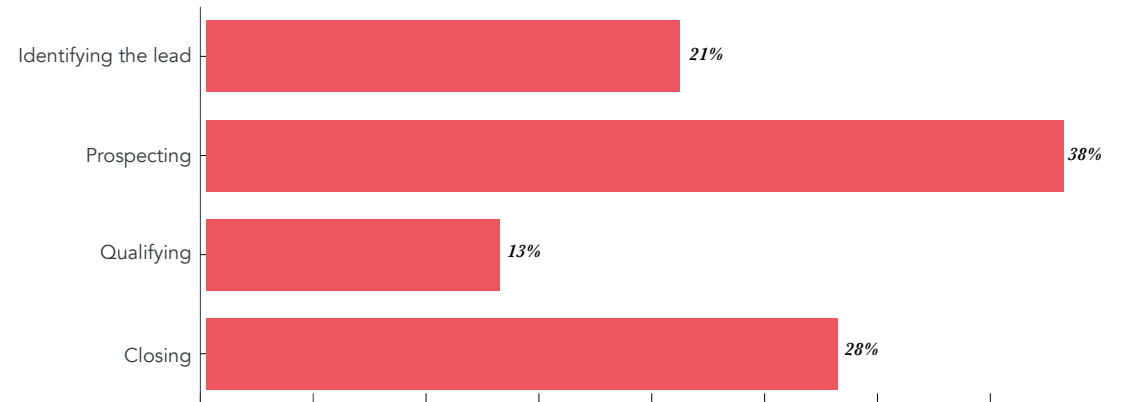
Regionally, only Asia-based salespeople opposed the trend by indicating that closing was the more difficult part of the process.

In your opinion, what part of the sales process do reps struggle with most?

Category	Percentage
Identifying the lead	21%
Prospecting	38%
Qualifying	13%
Closing	28%

In your opinion, what part of the sales process do reps struggle with most? (by geography)

Region	Identifying the lead	Prospecting	Qualifying	Closing
NAM	10%	48%	16%	26%
ANZ	16%	35%	22%	27%
ASIA	25%	25%	12%	38%
LATAM	25%	39%	9%	27%
EMEA	20%	40%	16%	24%

Identifying the lead — Prospecting — Qualifying — Closing

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And while most salespeople today use a CRM system to access and store customer records, data entry is the #1 challenge to using CRMs today, followed by a lack of integration. However, 18% of sales respondents didn't know how to answer our question on the biggest challenge in using a CRM—pointing to the fact that they might not be familiar enough with their CRM to confidently discuss what's working and what's not.

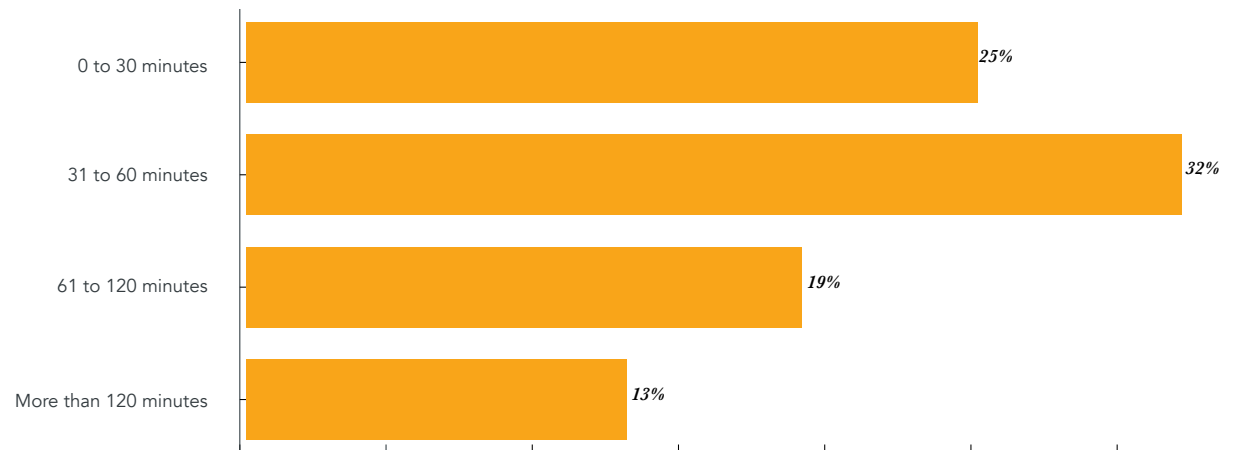When we examined the amount of time salespeople are spending on data entry, we found that 57% of respondents are spending up to an hour per day on data entry. This time inputting information—time spent not engaging with prospecting —leads to frustration and a negative view of the tools meant to make salespeople more effective and efficient.

What is your biggest challenge in using your existing crm?
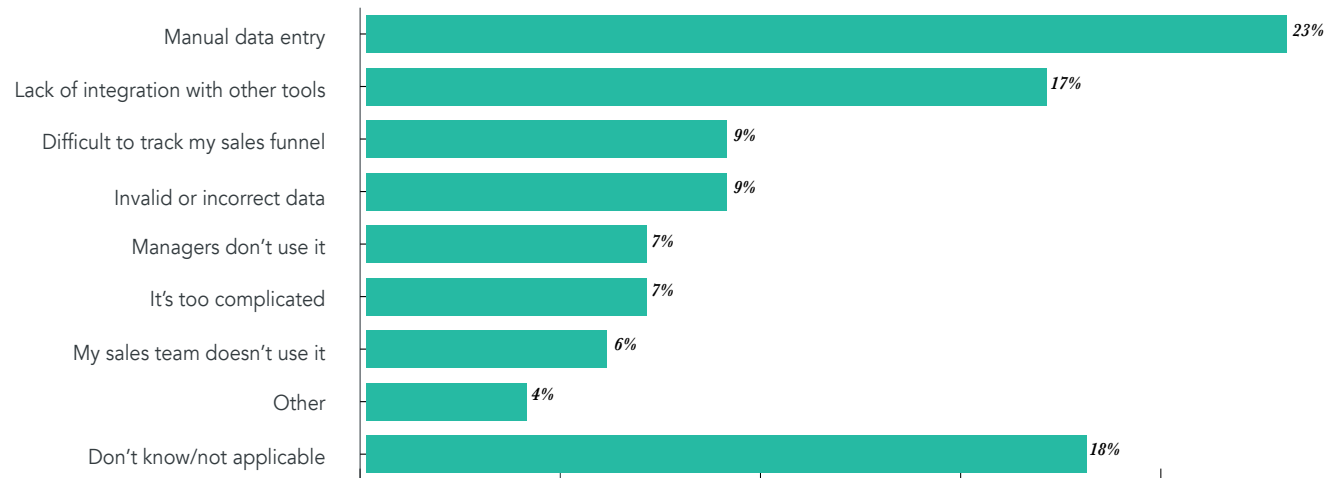
Challenge	Percentage
Manual data entry	23%
Lack of integration with other tools	17%
Difficult to track my sales funnel	9%
Invalid or incorrect data	9%
Managers don't use it	7%
It's too complicated	7%
My sales team doesn't use it	6%
Other	4%
Don't know/not applicable	18%

On average, how much time per day does your sales team spend performing data entry or other manual tasks?

Time	Percentage
0 to 30 minutes	25%
31 to 60 minutes	32%
61 to 120 minutes	19%
More than 120 minutes	13%

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An interesting theme develops when we slice the data by the respondent's title. On the whole, fewer C-level respondents think that data entry takes a significant amount of time to complete, with 21% indicating it takes an hour or more to complete each day. But in contrast, 45% of individual contributors, who are usually the ones actually doing data entry, say the same.
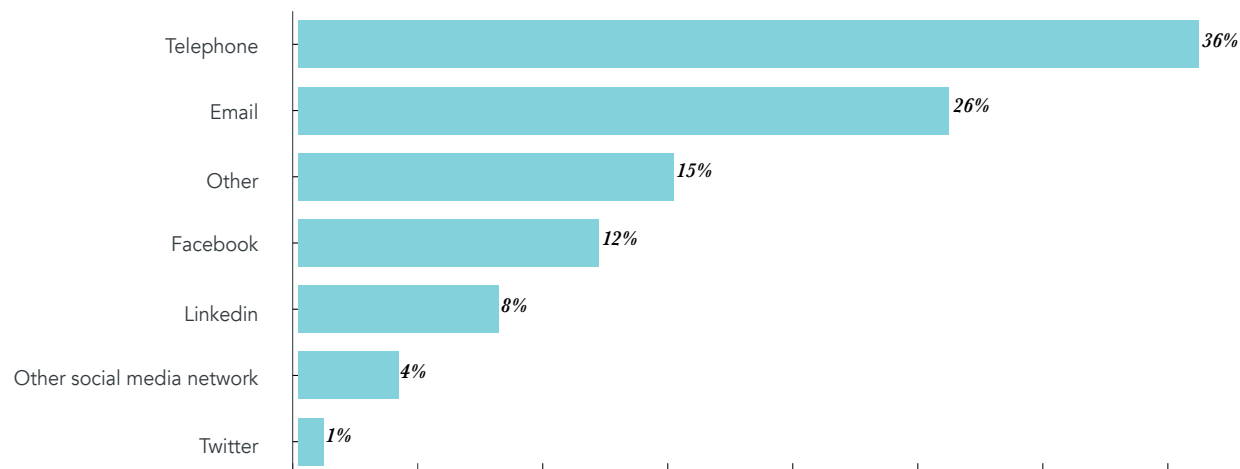
On average, how much time per day does your sales team spend performing data entry or other manual tasks? (by seniority)

Title	More than 120 minutes	61 to 120 minutes	31 to 60 minutes	0 to 30 minutes
C-level executive (CEO, CMO)	8%	13%	31%	34%
VP/Director	13%	17%	42%	23%
Manager	15%	20%	28%	26%
Individual contributor	18%	27%	28%	16%

- More than 120 minutes
- 61 to 120 minutes
- 31 to 60 minutes
- 0 to 30 minutes
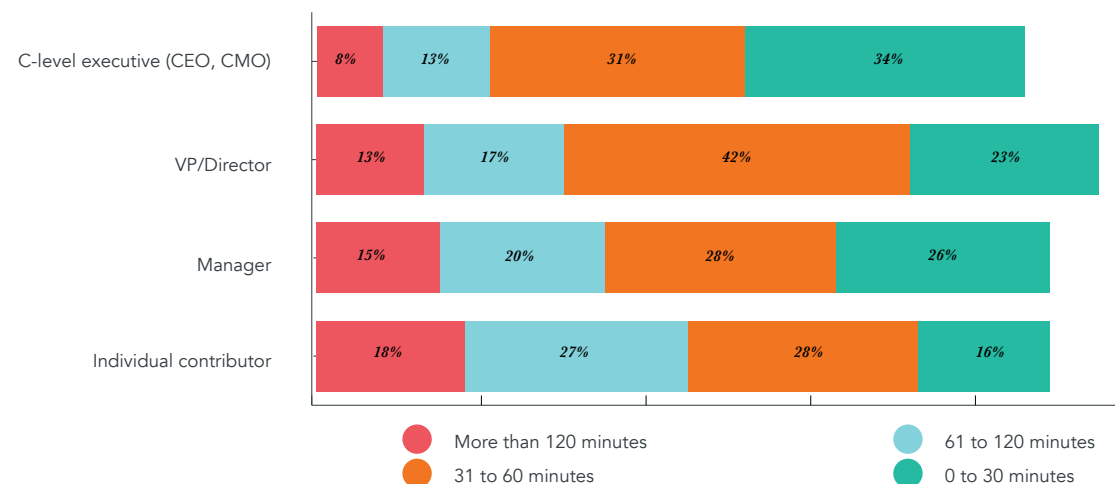
The same disconnect reveals itself when we ask respondents what channel provides the best results when connecting with prospects. Overall, the most successful are telephone and email.

What has been the most successful channel for your sales representatives to connect with a prospect?

Channel	Percentage
Telephone	36%
Email	26%
Other	15%
Facebook	12%
Linkedin	8%
Other social media network	4%
Twitter	1%

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However, when responses are broken down by title, CEOs and VPs underplay the success of the phone channel and overestimate the impact of social media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Individual contributors (sales representatives) that actually prospect see the world differently. The question is: Why is there such a large gap between senior executives and individual contributors?

What has been the most successful channel for your sales representatives to connect with a prospect? (by seniority)

C-level executive (CEO, CMO): 26%, 25%, 17%, 11%, 5%, 1%

VP/Director: 35%, 28%, 12%, 2%, 4%, 1%

Manager: 42%, 24%, 12%, 8%, 4%, 1%

Individual contributor: 40%, 27%, 8%, 8%, 3%, 1%

Legend:
- Telephone
- Email
- Facebook
- Linkedin
- Twitter
- Other social network

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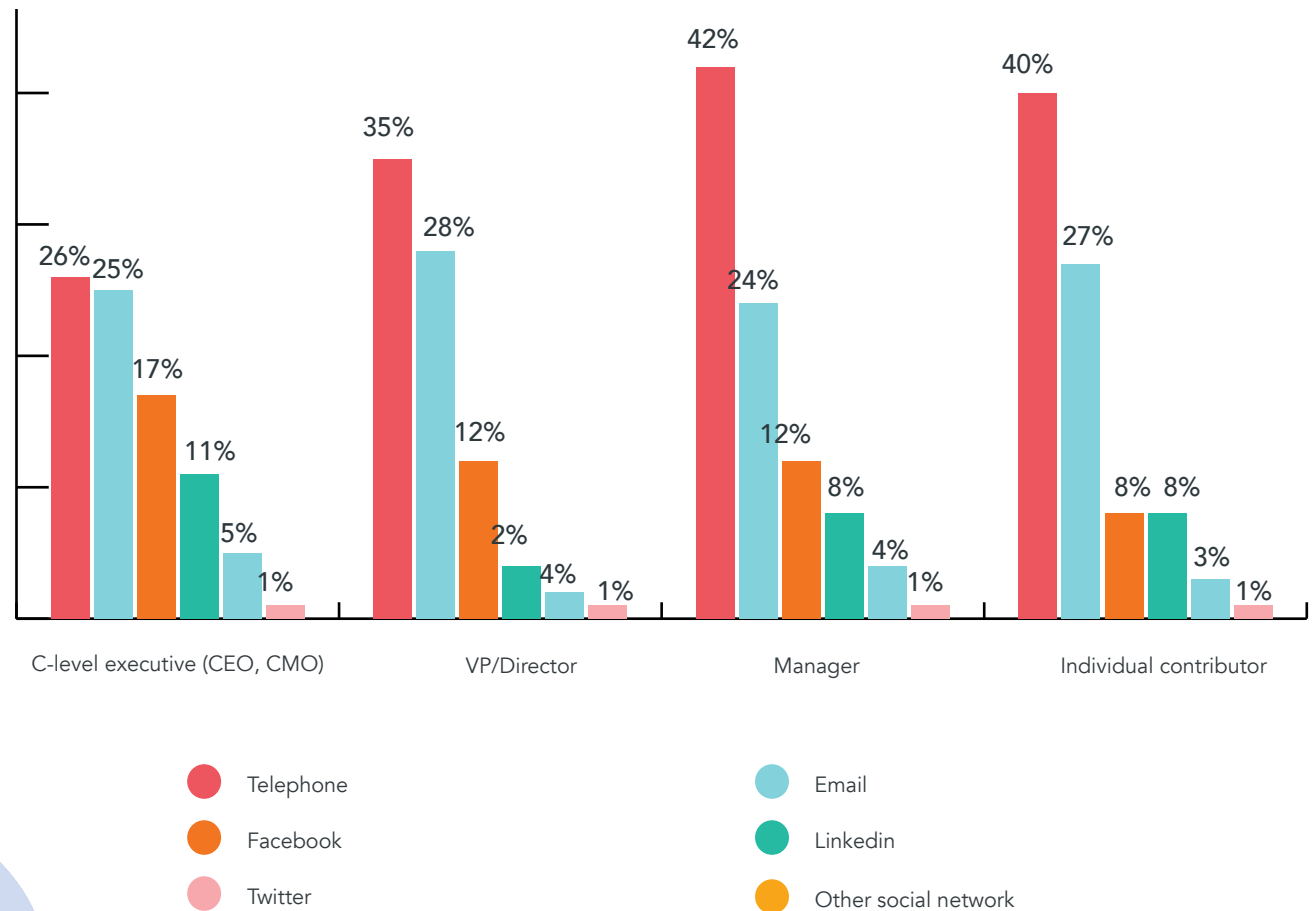
The State of the Business

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Is Marketing Effective?

We asked our marketing respondents to tell us what they really think: Is their organization's marketing strategy effective? Just 61% answered "yes" this year. One respondent wrote: "*The most disruptive force to affect my job in the next 3-5 years is the lack of research my company does when it comes to marketing strategies.*"

Echoing the disconnect between sales leaders and staff, more senior respondents had a rosier picture of the marketing organization. 69% of C-level respondents said their marketing strategy was effective compared to 55% of individual contributors.
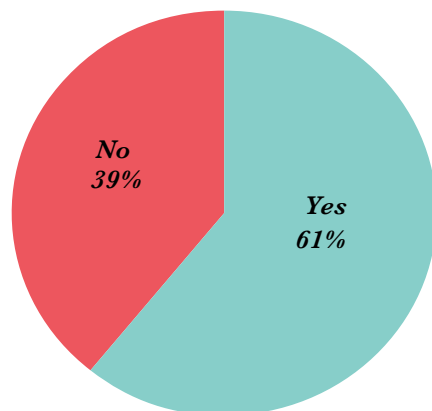
This begs the question: Are senior executives seeing benefits from marketing campaigns that are not being shared with individual teams and managers? It's possible that each individual team (consisting of a manager and any number of individual contributors) are not getting a holistic view of Marketing's performance. So, in the absence of clear results, teams are judging their organizations harshly. Or, even worse, performance is below established goals, and senior executives, for whatever reason, are blind to it. No matter the actual reason, at the end of the day there is a disconnect between leadership's view and employees' attitude. This will evolve into a larger business problem if it's not properly addressed. Clearer communication between leaders and staff is necessary in both scenarios.

Do you feel that your organization's marketing strategy is effective? (by seniority)

"YES, OUR MARKETING STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE."

Seniority	%
C-level executive (CEO, CMO)	69%
VP/Director	68%
Manager	61%
Individual contributor	55%

Do you feel that your organization's marketing strategy is effective?

No 39%

Yes 61%

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Confidence in marketing strategy also wanes in Asia and Australia and New Zealand, areas with the lowest adoption of inbound marketing.

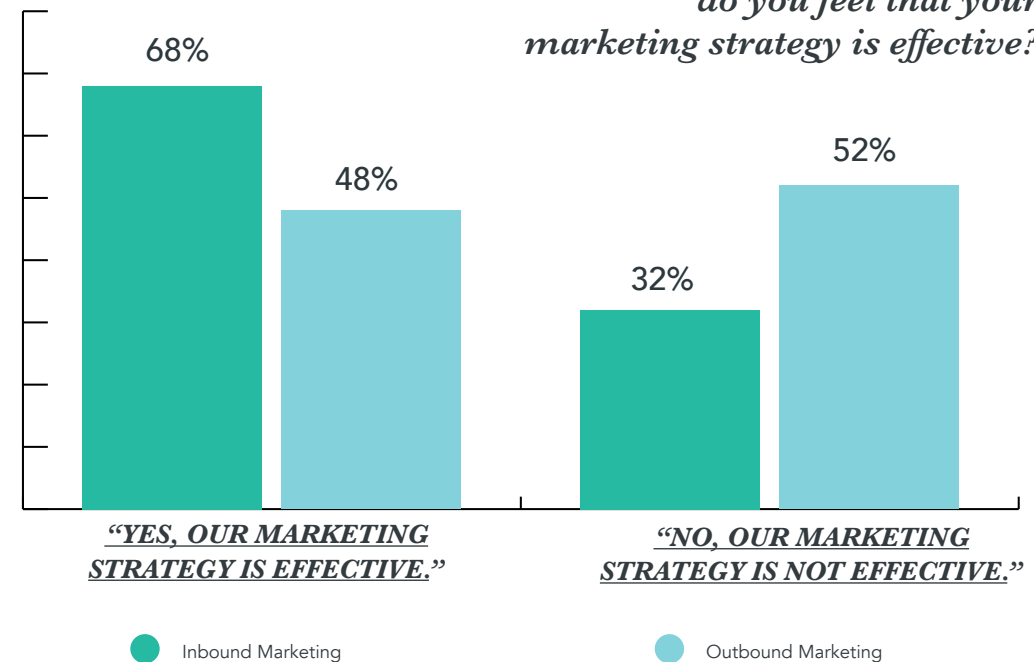Organisations that are inbound are more likely to state that their marketing strategy is effective. Indeed, the majority of respondents who are part of outbound organisations do not think their marketing strategy is effective.

Do you feel that your organisation's marketing strategy is effective? (by geography)

" YES, OUR MARKETING STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE."

Region	%
NAM	67%
ANZ	59%
ASIA	56%
LATAM	60%
EMEA	63%

Based on your organisation's approach to marketing, do you feel that your marketing strategy is effective?

"YES, OUR MARKETING STRATEGY IS EFFECTIVE."
- Inbound Marketing: 68%
- Outbound Marketing: 48%

"NO, OUR MARKETING STRATEGY IS NOT EFFECTIVE."
- Inbound Marketing: 32%
- Outbound Marketing: 52%

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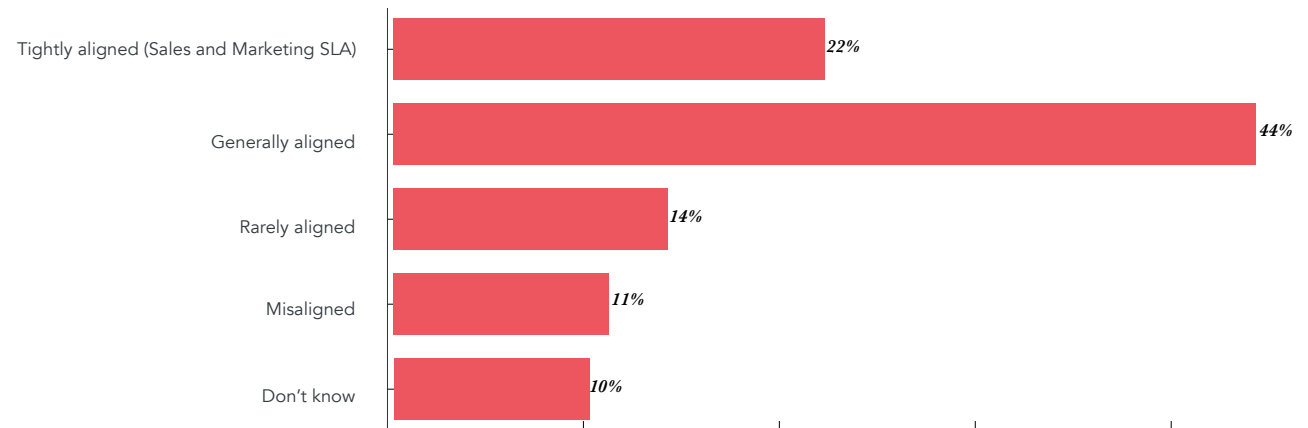
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Marketing and Sales Alignment

Most respondents report a positive relationship between marketing and sales teams. 44% of respondents say Marketing and Sales are generally aligned, while 22% indicate there's a formal SLA in place between teams. A marketer gave a specific example of how both teams work together to achieve their goals: *"[We're] getting better aligned. [We] know that when someone fills out a 'request for quote' form, our Sales team is following up."*
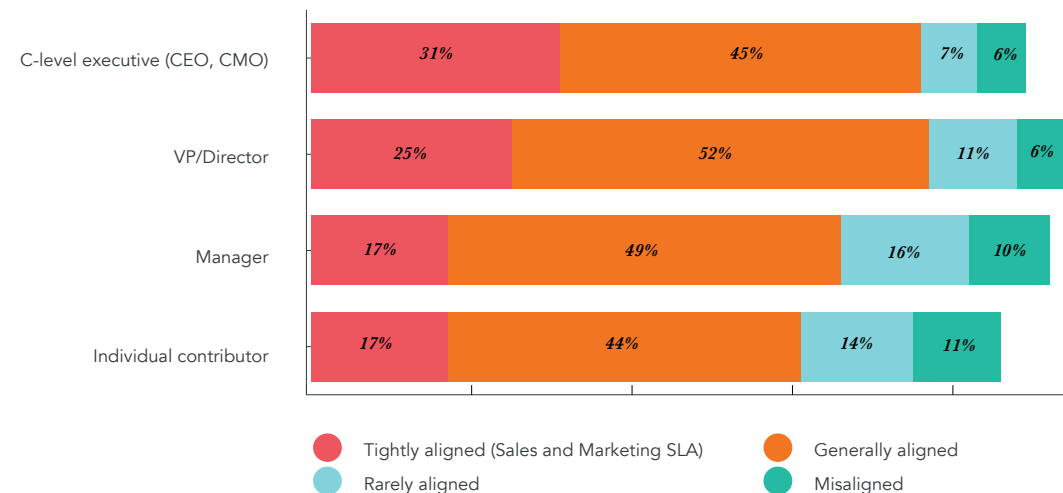
Once again, when we cut the responses by title, we see high confidence in Marketing and Sales alignment from senior executives, but not nearly as much of the same sentiment among individual contributors. 31% of C-level respondents say their organization has an SLA; just 17% of managers and individual contributors say the same.

The Sales and Marketing alignment concept (also known as smarketing) has the highest adoption in North America and is making its way around the globe. When it comes to aligning different parts of an organization, there's always room to improve collaboration, communication, and direction.

How would you characterize your company's Sales and Marketing relationship?

Category	Percentage
Tightly aligned (Sales and Marketing SLA)	22%
Generally aligned	44%
Rarely aligned	14%
Misaligned	11%
Don't know	10%

How would you characterise your company's Sales and Marketing relationship? (by seniority)

Seniority	Tightly aligned (Sales and Marketing SLA)	Generally aligned	Rarely aligned	Misaligned
C-level executive (CEO, CMO)	31%	45%	7%	6%
VP/Director	25%	52%	11%	6%
Manager	17%	49%	16%	10%
Individual contributor	17%	44%	14%	11%

Tightly aligned (Sales and Marketing SLA) • Generally aligned • Rarely aligned • Misaligned

SecretSource Marketing

Why focus time on Sales and Marketing alignment? Over the years, we've consistently found that marketing and sales organisations with tight alignment perform better: Marketing respondents whose organisations have a service level agreement (SLA) in place are 3x more likely to say their strategy is effective compared to those in misaligned organizations.

Likewise, sales teams benefit from SLAs with Marketing. Aligned sales organisations are more likely to grow headcount compared to misaligned organisations.

Based on how you characterised your company's Marketing and Sales relationship, do you feel that your marketing strategy is effective?

	Effective	Not effective
Tightly aligned (Sales and Marketing SLA)	81%	19%
Generally aligned	66%	34%
Rarely aligned	31%	69%
Misaligned	27%	73%

● "Our marketing strategy is effective."   ● "Our marketing strategy is not effective."
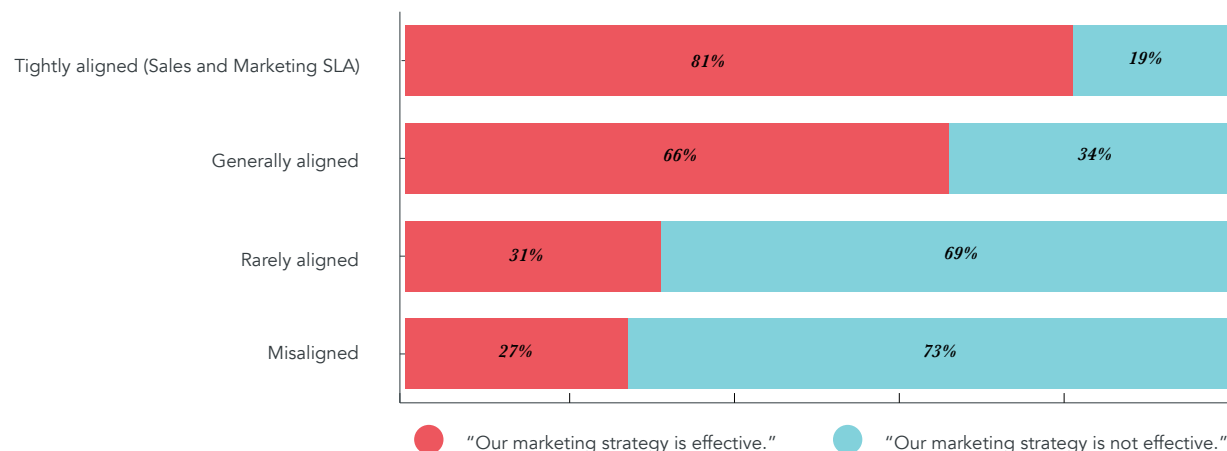
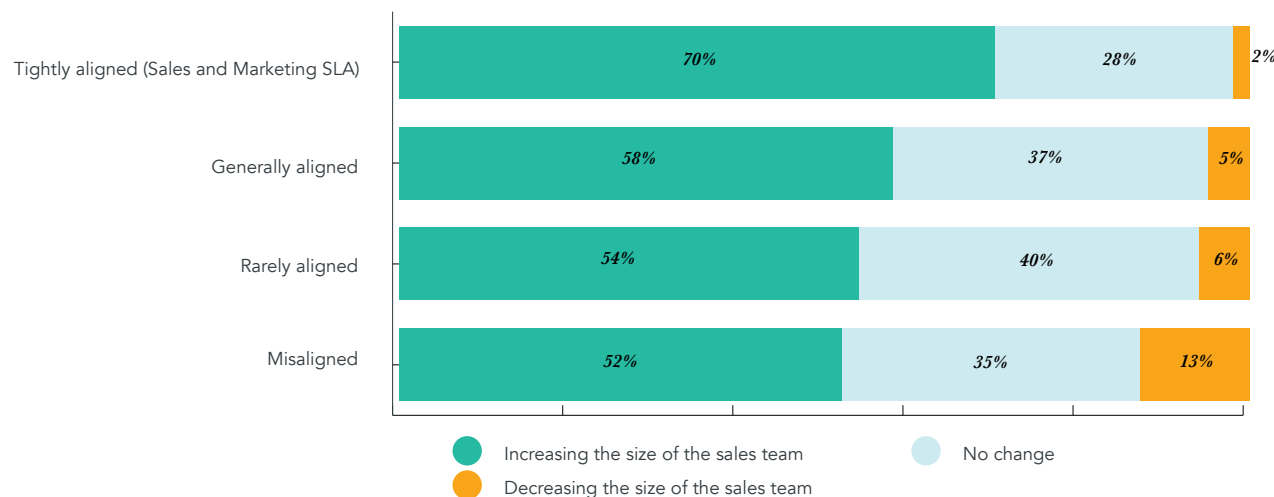**Based on how you characterize your company's Sales and Marketing relationship, is your sales team increasing or decreasing in size?**

	Increasing	No change	Decreasing
Tightly aligned (Sales and Marketing SLA)	70%	28%	2%
Generally aligned	58%	37%	5%
Rarely aligned	54%	40%	6%
Misaligned	52%	35%	13%

● Increasing the size of the sales team   ● No change
● Decreasing the size of the sales team

SecretSource
Marketing

The Sales Business

Sales respondents have a very positive outlook for their teams in the next 12 months. 55% of respondents indicate their sales team will grow, with only 5% decreasing.

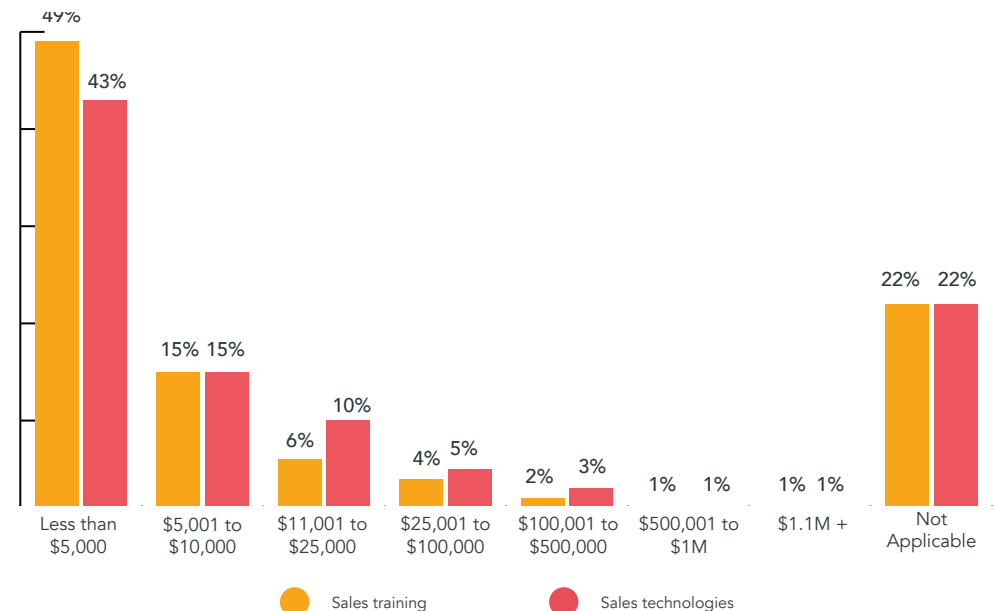Most expect to spend $10,000 or less this year on sales technologies and training. It's also impressive that investment in training is nearly on par with spend on sales technologies. Aligning Sales and Marketing is not an easy process, especially if a company is new to inbound. Training is key in changing established behaviors and requires a great deal of effort. One marketer wrote: *"Retraining the sales team in the Sales and Marketing alignment and processes is a constant challenge that disrupts the inbound marketing strategies and procedures for three to six months."*

Is your company increasing or decreasing the size of the company over the next 12 months?

Increased by more than 50%	15%
Increase 26 to 50%	9%
Increase 11 to 25%	13%
Increase up to 10%	17%
No change	34%
Decreasing team size	5%

How much will your company spend on sales technologies and sales training for the next year?

	Sales training	Sales technologies
Less than $5,000	49%	43%
$5,001 to $10,000	15%	15%
$11,001 to $25,000	6%	10%
$25,001 to $100,000	4%	5%
$100,001 to $500,000	2%	3%
$500,001 to $1M	1%	1%
$1.1M +	1%	1%
Not Applicable	22%	22%

● Sales training   ● Sales technologies
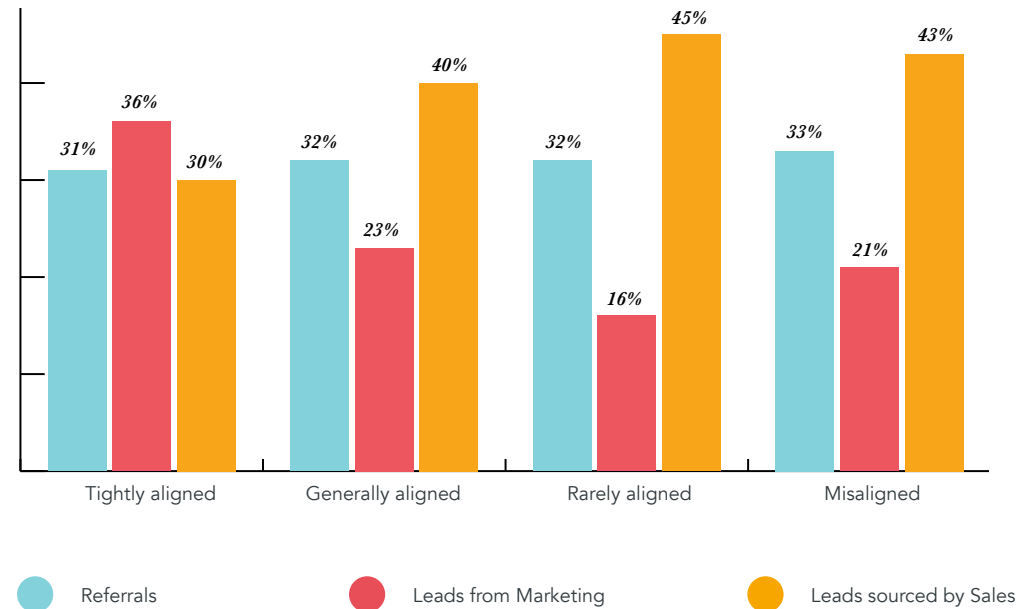
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Marketing

Salespeople find that the top sources of leads are those they source directly and referrals, not those sourced by Marketing.

Which is the top source of sales for your sales organisation?

Leads sourced by Sales	38%
Referrals	33%
Leads from Marketing	25%

However, sales respondents in organizations with an SLA between Marketing and Sales felt differently. Those respondents ranked marketing-sourced leads highest. Thanks to alignment, which sets clear expectations on the types of leads Marketing should provide and a feedback loop between departments, these sales respondents are finding much higher value in the leads Marketing generates for them.

Based on how you characterize your company's Sales and Marketing relationship, which is the top source of leads for your sales organisation?

	Referrals	Leads from Marketing	Leads sourced by Sales
Tightly aligned	31%	36%	30%
Generally aligned	32%	23%	40%
Rarely aligned	32%	16%	45%
Misaligned	33%	21%	43%

Legend: ● Referrals   ● Leads from Marketing   ● Leads sourced by Sales
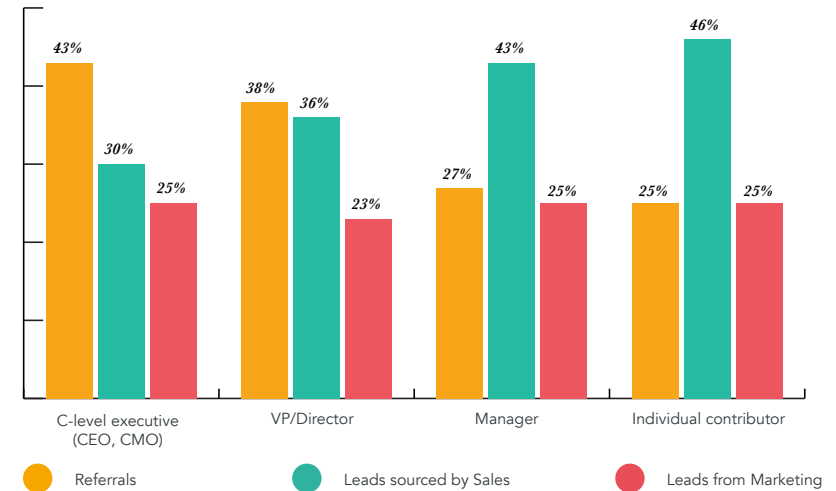
SecretSource Marketing

When we examine responses by title, once again we find differences in perception between senior staff and individual contributors. C-level executives rate referrals as the top source of leads for their organizations, while individual contributors point to sales-sourced leads.
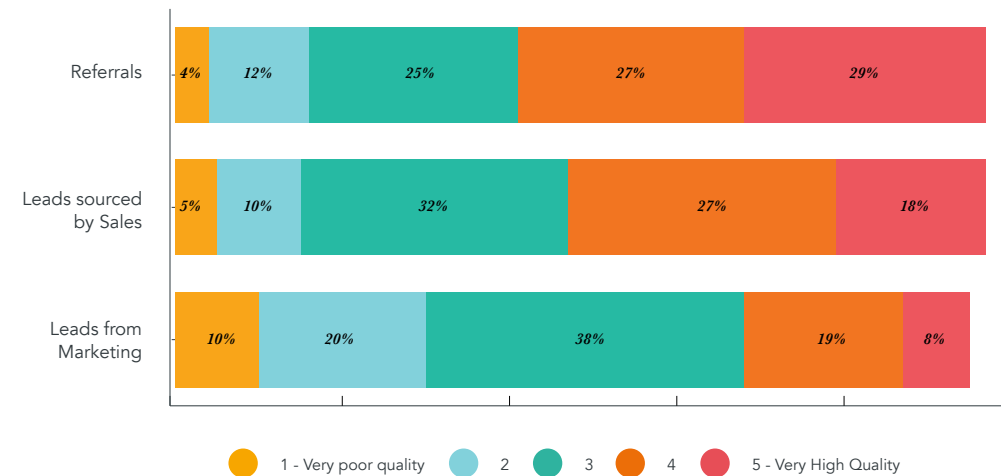
Everyone is in agreement that marketing-sourced leads rank third.

When we asked respondents to rank the quality of referrals, sales leads, and marketing leads, referrals were rated as the highest quality lead. Perhaps C-level executives and VPs think highly of referrals because they are high-quality leads, which are more likely to convert. The big question for organizations is scaling referral systems so that more get fed into the sales funnel.

Which is the top source of leads for your sales organisation? (by seniority)

	Referrals	Leads sourced by Sales	Leads from Marketing
C-level executive (CEO, CMO)	43%	30%	25%
VP/Director	38%	36%	23%
Manager	27%	43%	25%
Individual contributor	25%	46%	25%

Rate the quality of your leads from the following sources:

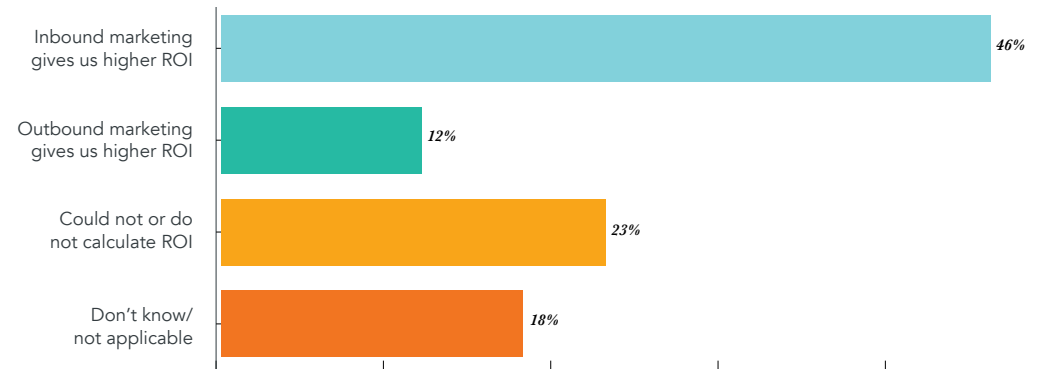|	1 - Very poor quality	2	3	4	5 - Very High Quality
Referrals	4%	12%	25%	27%	29%
Leads sourced by Sales	5%	10%	32%	27%	18%
Leads from Marketing	10%	20%	38%	19%	8%

SecretSource
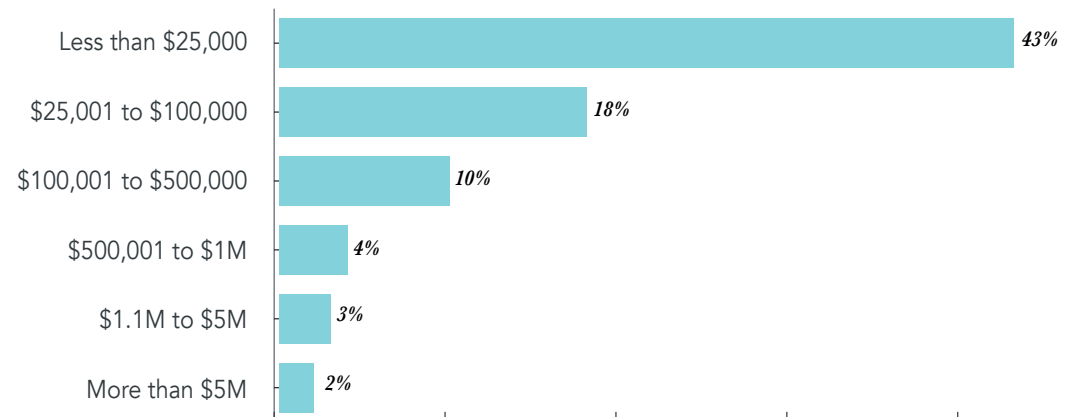Marketing

The Marketing Business

Marketing respondents found that inbound campaigns yielded higher ROI compared to outbound campaigns, yet 41% of respondents either could not answer the question or could not calculate ROI. The inability to measure ROI will be a hindrance for marketing teams trying to prove their value or advocate for higher budgets.

Most respondents will spend $25,000 or less on their marketing efforts in the next year. With limited budget, getting the highest ROI possible is crucial for marketing teams to deliver oversized impact.

Which marketing approach has given your organization higher ROI: Inbound Or Outbound Marketing?

Inbound marketing gives us higher ROI	46%
Outbound marketing gives us higher ROI	12%
Could not or do not calculate ROI	23%
Don't know/ not applicable	18%

How much will your company spend on marketing over the next 12 months?

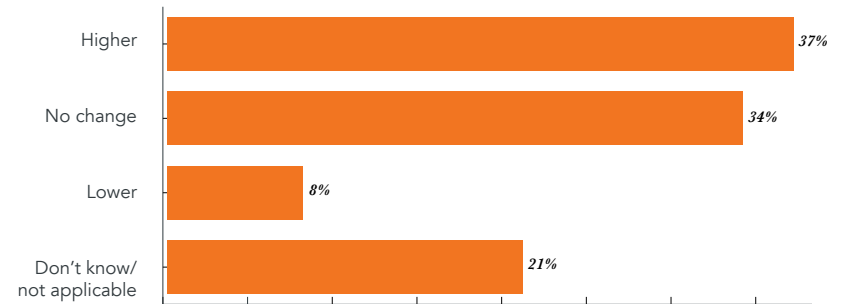|	
Less than $25,000	43%
$25,001 to $100,000	18%
$100,001 to $500,000	10%
$500,001 to $1M	4%
$1.1M to $5M	3%
More than $5M	2%

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Marketing

Budgets have either remained consistent or been increased, a good sign that businesses are growing and confident for the future.
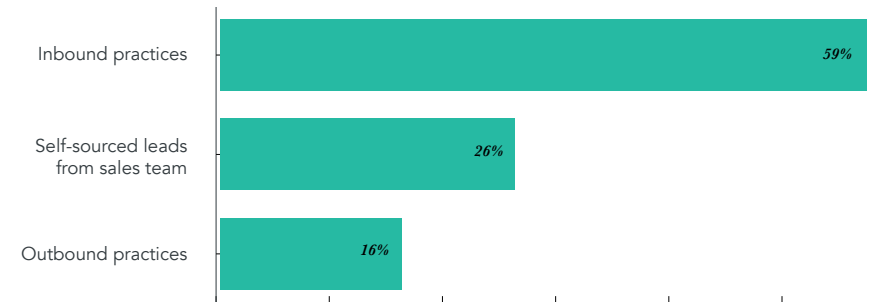
Earlier we covered how sales teams rate leads from Marketing, with 30% rating marketing leads as poor quality. In contrast, 59% of marketers believe the leads they send to sales are very high quality.

At the end of the day, there is still a disconnect between the leads Sales perceive as valuable and the leads Marketing generates. These two departments ultimately work together to achieve the same goal: create more customers. Working in tandem, or at least establishing better lines of communication, can only help both teams achieve their goals.
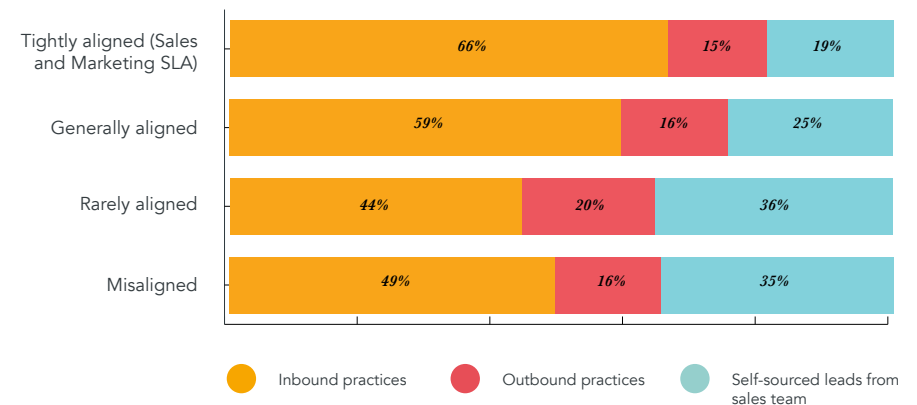
How does your company's current budget for inbound marketing compare to last years?

Higher	37%
No change	34%
Lower	8%
Don't know/ not applicable	21%

Which source provides the highest quality leads for your sales team?

Inbound practices	59%
Self-sourced leads from sales team	26%
Outbound practices	16%

Based on how you characterise your company's Sales and Marketing relationship, which source provides the highest quality leads for your sales team?

	Inbound practices	Outbound practices	Self-sourced leads from sales team
Tightly aligned (Sales and Marketing SLA)	66%	15%	19%
Generally aligned	59%	16%	25%
Rarely aligned	44%	20%	36%
Misaligned	49%	16%	35%

Inbound practices   Outbound practices   Self-sourced leads from sales team

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Looking to the Future

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The times ... they are tumultuous. When we asked respondents about future disruptors to their business, people across the globe cited the current political landscape as a source of disruption in their jobs. For the first time, we received a multitude of references to current events: Brexit, the current U.S. administration, economic crises, world politics, and even a call-out on currency fluctuations in South Africa. For business leaders, uncertainty and fear in the political and economic climate are only complicated by the speed of change in the marketing and sales industry and the speed at which new digital challenges occur.

In the past few years, we've witnessed a shift from marketing where the primary channels -- email and website -- were owned and controlled by the brand. Now, marketing across a variety of social channels and content publishing platforms is challenging businesses to redefine how they communicate with their audience and track performance. Our respondents believe that having a website and blog is no longer enough to attract the attention of their buyers. Nor is a salesperson the go-to resource for when a business needs to make a purchase. These are significant changes for multiple parts of the business. So how are people planning to address these disruptions?

"*IF A COMPANY IS SLOW TO CAPTURE A NEW MODE OF COMMUNICATION, IT MIGHT AS WELL STOP THE BUSINESS.*"

In marketing, forward-thinking respondents are prioritizing research and meeting their buyers where they "live." One respondent wrote, *"As the method to target and attract customers continues to evolve and becomes more precise, it will disrupt the way in which traditional marketing operates."*

"Online is the new mainstream, so I think we will see less of 'digital' marketers and more just 'marketers.' Competition from peers will also increase as more people become trained in digital marketing."

Because of the sheer number of channels businesses operate in today (web, mobile, social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, emerging networks such as Snapchat, WeChat, Messenger, and aggregation platforms such as Medium), marketers worry about resources and prioritisation: *"Effectively managing the rapidly growing and changing social media landscape ... warrants a significant resource allocation."*

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Main Disruptor: Video

Video is one of the top-cited disruptors in our survey. Many see video as a great channel to better connect with a prospect, while others fret that video will make their day jobs obsolete.

Here's some marketers who are betting on video:

"We're moving towards more live videos and video content on social media and adapting our approach to be less 'in-your-face' and more subtle to acquire conversions."

"We are looking more into video content and visuals. We are also want to get more into podcasting and creating relevant content that consumers enjoy looking at."

"We're going to have a vast increase in video and reduction of outbound email. Video means we're taking even more time to foster lasting customer relationships in a way that's really difficult to scale (but super important)."

"We're responding to people's desire to learn online through video as opposed to face to face."

On a more personal level, content marketers who specialize in writing and editing worry about the impact video will have on their careers: *"I MOSTLY WRITE CONTENT RIGHT NOW, BUT I'M AFRAID IT MAY BEGIN TO DIMINISH MORE AND MORE WITH VIDEO."* Others are choosing to get trained: "I'm learning new tactics (i.e., video)."

Others see video as the connecting force between a brand and their customers. One respondent argued that the move to video is a natural evolution, and the only those resistant to the change will see it as a disruption: *"Video is just going to get bigger and bigger. I think more people want raw, honest connection. They want to know you and the company in a way that feels personal. I don't see this as a disruption, but it might be for those who aren't willing to shift in this direction."*

For others, the struggle to adapt is caused by internal complexity:

"WE ARE TRYING TO INTRODUCE NEW METHODS BUT FACING A LOT OF INTERNAL RESISTANCE. EVERYONE GETS A SAY ON EVERYTHING. IF SOMETHING WORKS FOR ONE THING, IT'S ROLLED OUT FOR EVERYTHING, EVEN WHEN IT'S NOT SUITABLE."

A one-size-fits-all approach can be extremely difficult to pull off. Consider the channel, format, and the content topic.

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Marketing

Potential Disruptor: AI and VR

Artificial intelligence, augmented reality, and virtual reality are all buzzwords in the technology and marketing community. Our respondents agree it is a disrupter, but since the technologies are not pervasively available and have so many potential use cases, there's not a lot of clarity around what impact AI will have in the near future and how marketers should prepare or adjust their approach.

In response to our open-ended question on what they see as disruptors to the marketing industry, many responded:

"AI and automation will disrupt marketing."

"AI and machine learning"

"I think virtual reality will further disrupt the digital marketing industry and represents huge opportunity for sales and marketing leaders."

"Artificial intelligence and the wider adoption of big data for hyper-personalization."

Some saw an upside to the automation potential of AI and pointed to AI's ability to reduce the need for humans to do repetitive tasks:

"INTEGRATION OF AI INTO DAILY ROUTINES AND MONOTONOUS/ REPETITIVE RESPONSIBILITIES."

"CHATBOTS, AI, BOTS, AND AUTOMATION OF REPEATABLE WORK AND PROCESSES."

Others point to AI's natural language processing capabilities as a new way to generate content, though one respondent wasn't sure if it will happen.

"AN AI SOFTWARE CREATING/ CURATING HIGH-QUALITY CONTENT. (DON'T REALLY THINK THAT'S GONNA HAPPEN THOUGH!)."

"AUTOMATION OF CONTENT PRODUCTION WILL BE A DISRUPTION."

In fact, these commentators have hit on a key trend happening in the marketing technology space: content written by AI software. We are already seeing AI-generated content today. Most of today's news articles outlining sports statistics and earning reports are written by AI programs.

Constant Disruptor: Social

For some marketers, social is a necessary evil. Billions of people "live" on these networks, so businesses have to participate to expand their reach, but every year there's a new algorithm to deal with, a new type of content offering, or even a new social network to grow a presence on. On these platforms, marketers don't own the experience and have very little control, making it more and more challenging to prove ROI even while they know that a presence is necessary. So it's not surprising many respondents wrote that social is disrupting marketing.

One philosophical respondent summed up the environment: *"I think in this industry, you always have to be prepared to shift as your market shifts. As technology grows and evolves, so too will the best ways to interact with our ideal clients."*

Another honestly laid out the challenges of trying to keep up: *"We have a hard time sometimes because we work in the rapidly changing world of social media analytics. Social channels are constantly introducing and rolling out new features and metrics. We have to quickly wrap our minds around if it's important to our audience, how our audience can use it, and if we should integrate some kind of functionality into our product. It's very fast-paced and difficult to stay on top of."*

Our marketers are also keenly aware of the growth of messaging apps such as Whatsapp and the rise of Snapchat. We received many references to various apps:

"Snapchat"

"Messenger apps (WhatsApp, WeChat)."

"Look at WeChat and how it manages to retain its users within the apps for multiple purposes throughout the day: messaging, newsfeed, information about companies and products (to a much more thorough degree than what Facebook provides), and payment. "

"Whatsapp"

"The increase in apps like messenger and WhatsApp and the move away from email will disrupt the way I do my job."

Others grapple with tracking the impact of *"dark social media"* and coping with *"Facebook's constant changes to how ads work on their platform and how we reach clients."* Another bemoaned the fast-paced communication requirements that force their business to quickly adapt:
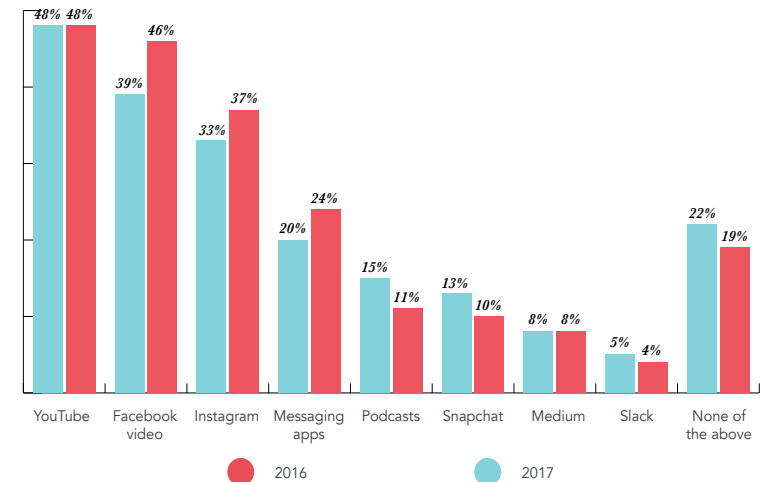
"A disruptor is the influence of instant-communications … Speed, frequency, how to respond, what channels are all shifting."

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Preparing for Disruptors

Consistent with the written feedback, marketing teams will maintain or increase their presence on YouTube and Facebook video and focus on figuring out how to market on messaging apps such as WhatsApp. Snapchat is still a mystery for many businesses, and we see a dip in focus as marketers opt to spend their time on larger emerging channels.

True to their role as forward thinkers, C-level executives lead the charge, indicating a higher preference to try and expand across emerging distribution channels. Those who are on the ground, the individual contributors, are a bit more muted and pragmatic in their assessment. Facebook video is the top focus for individual contributors.

What content distribution channels do you plan to add to your marketing efforts in the next 12 months?

Bar chart comparing 2016 and 2017:
- YouTube: 48% / 48%
- Facebook video: 39% (2017), 46% (2016)
- Instagram: 33% (2017), 37% (2016)
- Messaging apps: 20% (2017), 24% (2016)
- Podcasts: 15% (2017), 11% (2016)
- Snapchat: 13% (2017), 10% (2016)
- Medium: 8% / 8%
- Slack: 5% (2017), 4% (2016)
- None of the above: 22% (2017), 19% (2016)

● 2016   ● 2017

What content distribution channels do you plan to add to your marketing efforts in the next 12 months? (by seniority)

C-level executive (CEO, CMO): 52%, 50%, 43%, 32%, 14%, 13%, 9%, 6%

VP/Director: 50%, 43%, 35%, 23%, 10%, 11%, 5%, 6%

Manager: 49%, 47%, 37%, 23%, 11%, 9%, 10%, 3%

Individual contributor: 42%, 43%, 31%, 20%, 10%, 8%, 8%, 3%

● YouTube   ● Podcasts
● Facebook video   ● Snapchat
● Instagram   ● Medium
● Messaging apps   ● Slack

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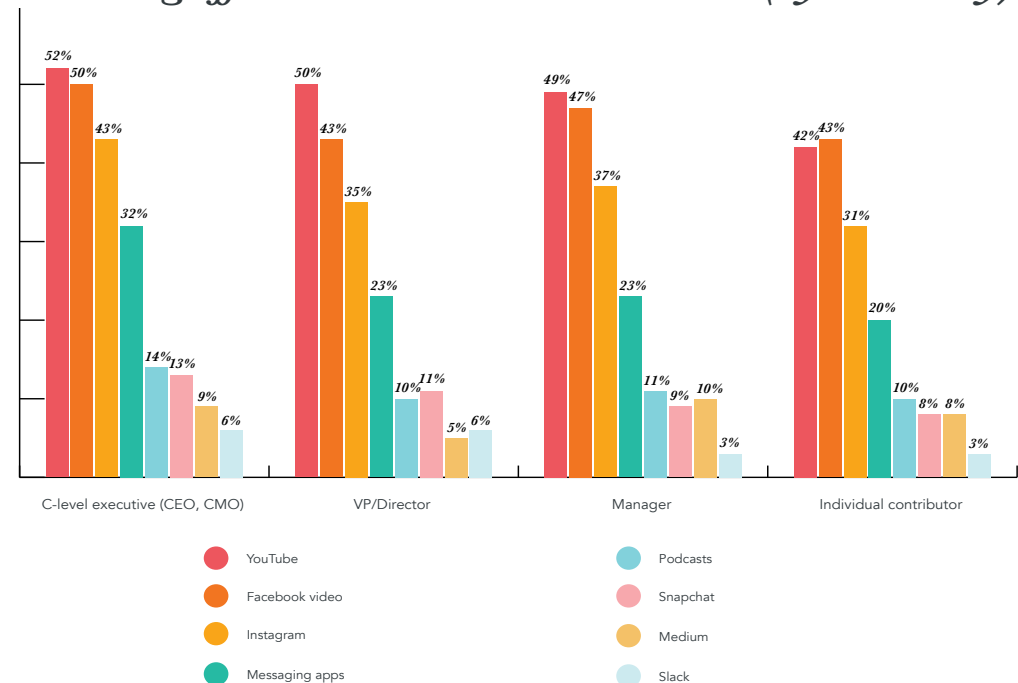
Sales Disruptor: Changing Preferences

Many people consider sales to be a job function that will never change or evolve. Selling, as a process, has not undergone the same rapid change that marketing or IT departments have. But we are seeing inklings of change and concern from our sales respondents. Salespeople acknowledge that buyers nowadays are more independent and often bypass the salesperson completely. Some are looking to shift their sales role into that of an advisor or concierge to better service their prospects.

Here's what some salespeople wrote in when we asked what would impact how they do their jobs in the future:

"Our industry is going through a seismic shift. Gone are the days of the salesperson being the gatekeeper for information. Our website has now become our primary mode of marketing where it used to be our brick-and-mortar locations. I think in the next three to five years we will see a shift to brand selling and concierge-like service."

"We see increasing smartness and competency levels in our B2B buyers."

"Decentralization of decision-making units/more decision makers involved in buying decisions"

"There's a generational change away from personal service and direct communication fed by a growing preference for technology—not people."

"Clients are more interested in doing digital purchases. They don't spend time meeting with a salesperson."

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Understanding the Modern Buyer

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Understanding the Modern Buyer

"We need to get closer to our customers."

We heard this theme loud and clear from our survey respondents when we asked how their marketing team is adapting to changing consumer behaviors. Trying to track and understand target customers across multiple channels is a complicated and challenging endeavor for many organisations.

"The amount of research and analysis that goes in before employing a particular strategy has increased manifold and constant checks on the trends of consumer behaviour are changing as well."

"We're testing the field to observe the response and if it doesn't result effective in a determined period of time [we] find [an]other strategy."

"Now we're actively reaching customers where they want to be met."

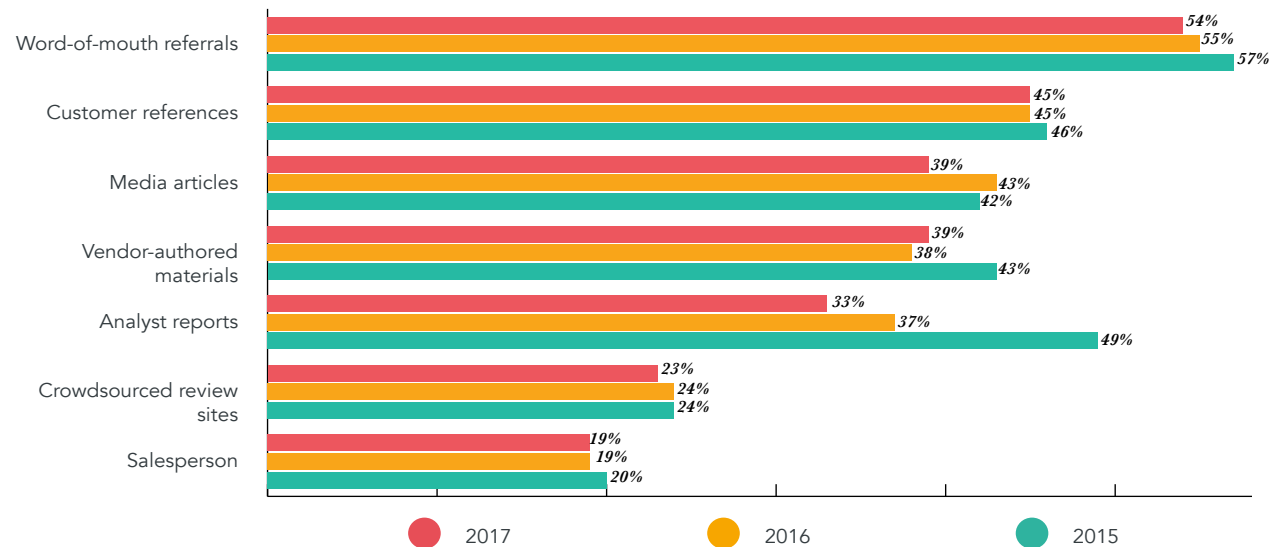"We tap into the channels that customers mainly use to communicate."

"The further diversification of media and how/where people spend their time consuming content. Being able to not only create content, but also target it for those various platforms is a constant evolution."

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Marketing

Trusted Sources of Information

Referrals, customer references, media articles, and vendor-authored articles have consistently been the most reliable sources of information for our decision-makers. Word-of-mouth is a powerful influence in a purchase decision: A business's most important marketing asset is their customer base, who can advocate on their behalf. Word-of-mouth and customer case studies, the top two information sources, go a long way in impacting a decision-maker's purchase decision. Our data also shows that a business's content goes just as far as a media article or an analyst report. So lower profile organisations can still invest in content to influence their potential buyers. It's key to focus on middle and bottom of the funnel stories that will resonate with an organization's buyer personas.

Lastly, remember your salespeople are at the bottom of the ladder. Savvy businesses can make the best of lowered buyer expectations by outfitting their sales staff with helpful insights that buyers cannot unearth from media articles or case studies. Transform your salespeople into trusted advisors so that they make the best impression possible when they finally connect with a buyer.

What sources of information do you rely on when making a purchase decision for business software?

Source	2017	2016	2015
Word-of-mouth referrals	54%	55%	57%
Customer references	45%	45%	46%
Media articles	39%	43%	42%
Vendor-authored materials	39%	38%	43%
Analyst reports	33%	37%	49%
Crowdsourced review sites	23%	24%	24%
Salesperson	19%	19%	20%

When it comes to seniority, the same information sources rank high in the purchasing decision. C-level executives strongly rely on personal recommendations and tend to be more attuned to media coverage. The word-of-mouth factor is key because on the business side, more C-level respondents rate referrals as the highest quality leads for Sales. Their personal preferences influence their idea of what a top lead is. Both the individual contributor and the C-level executive rank salespeople lowest in terms of influence.

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What sources of information do you rely on when making purchase decisions for business software? (by seniority)

Regionally, Asian and Latin American respondants are less enthusiastic about referrals compared to their global peers. They rate formal customer references nearly as high as word-of-mouth in terms of importance and are less likely to use review sites as an information source. Compared to other regions, North American respondents depend more on salespeople, by five to seven percentage points.

Legend:
- Word-of-mouth referrals
- Customer references
- Media articles
- Vendor-authored materials
- Analyst reports
- Crowdscourced reviewd sites
- Salesperson

C-level executive (CEO, CMO): 59%, 49%, 44%, 43%, 33%, 26%, 18%
VP/Director: 57%, 43%, 39%, 40%, 35%, 23%, 20%
Manager: 54%, 49%, 38%, 40%, 35%, 25%, 21%
Individual contributor: 52%, 40%, 36%, 36%, 32%, 22%, 17%

What sources of information do you rely on when making purchase decisions for business software? (by Geography)

Legend:
- Word-of-mouth referrals
- Customer references
- Media articles
- Vendor-authored materials
- Analyst reports
- Crowdscourced reviewed sites
- Salesperson

NAM: 62%, 44%, 39%, 37%, 32%, 32%, 24%
ANZ: 66%, 44%, 41%, 39%, 30%, 25%, 18%
ASIA: 48%, 43%, 37%, 36%, 37%, 30%, 19%
LATAM: 48%, 47%, 41%, 41%, 32%, 18%, 17%
EMEA: 59%, 45%, 37%, 39%, 32%, 22%, 19%

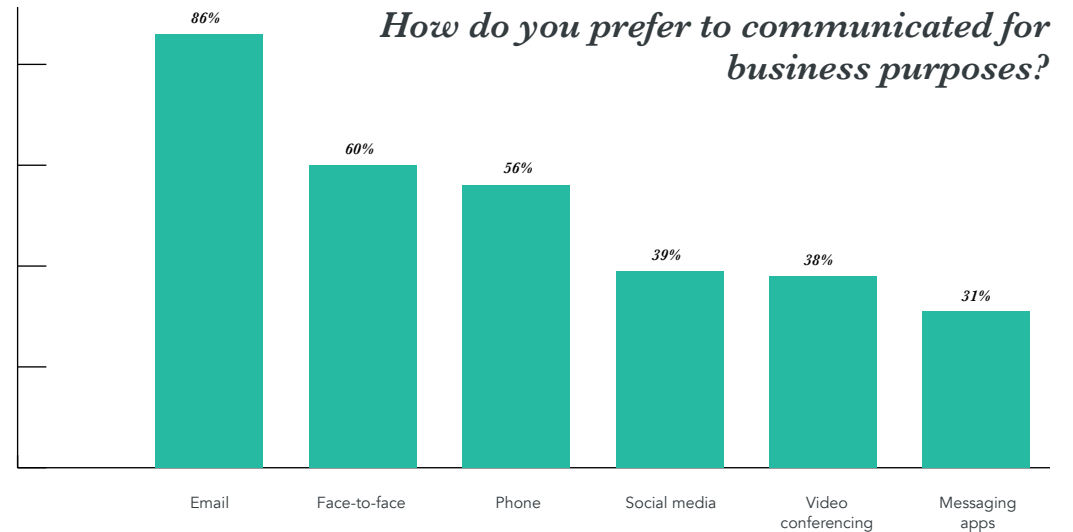State of Inbound 2017

SecretSource Marketing
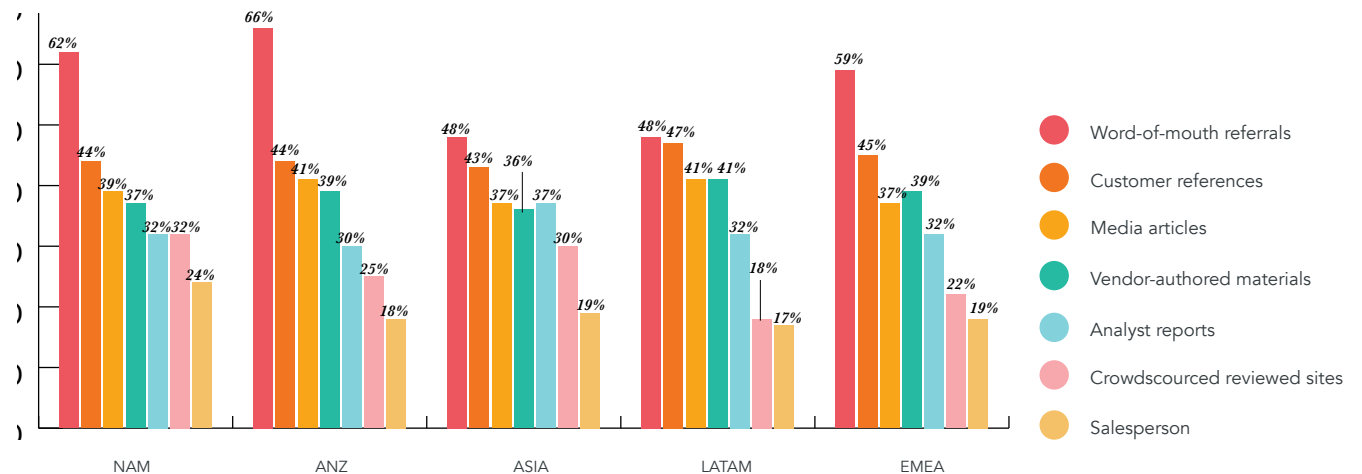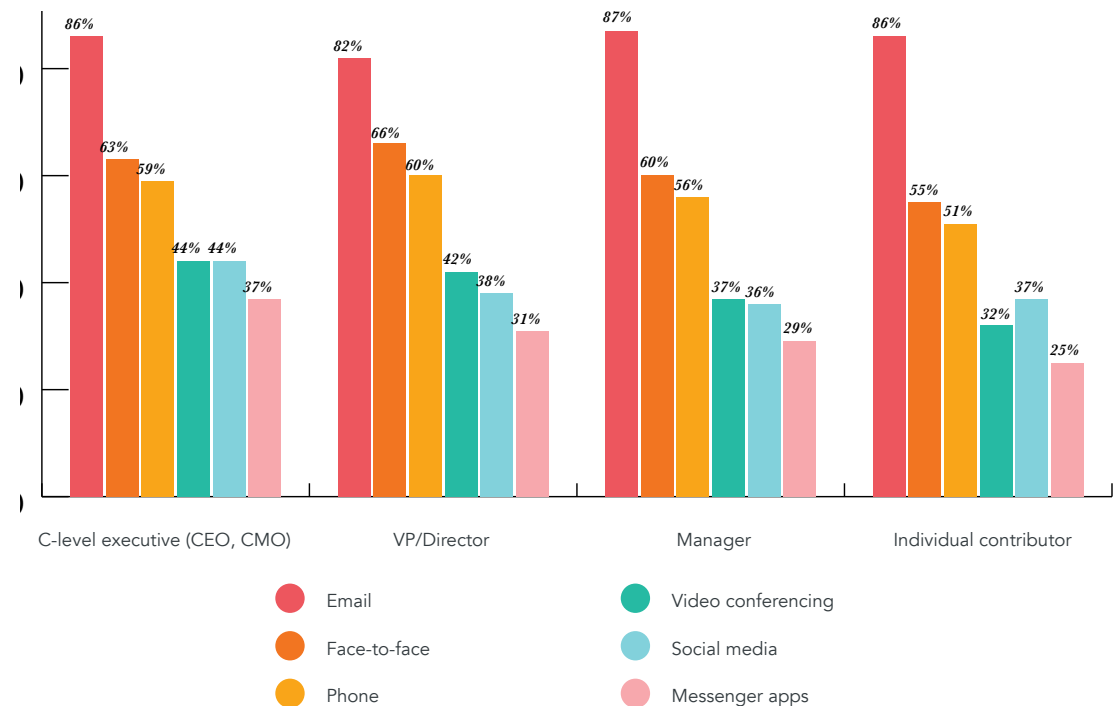
How People Like to Communicate

When it comes to communication channels, email is the clear winner. Face-to-face and phone conversations still rank high for our respondents in comparison to relatively newer channels such as social media and video conferencing. However, adoption of new technologies can be swift.Chatting through messaging apps is now an ingrained part of business life for 31% of our respondents. We asked specifically about communicating for official business purposes to see if traditionally "personal" channels, such as social media and messaging apps, have crossed over into people's business life. For over a third of responses, social media and messaging apps are part of how they communicate professionally.

In a breakdown by title, it's noteworthy that C-level executives are social media and messaging power users, with 44% preferring to communicate via social media and 37% on messaging apps.

For senior leaders who need to keep on top of the next big trend, it makes sense that they are more keen to try and test new technologies, especially those touted as the next big thing. Additionally, as executives tend to be on-the-go more often and in a position to dictate requests, these new channels allows them to communicate quickly and informally to members of their team.

How do you prefer to communicated for business purposes?

Channel	Percentage
Email	86%
Face-to-face	60%
Phone	56%
Social media	39%
Video conferencing	38%
Messaging apps	31%

How do you prefer to communicate for business purposes? (By seniority)

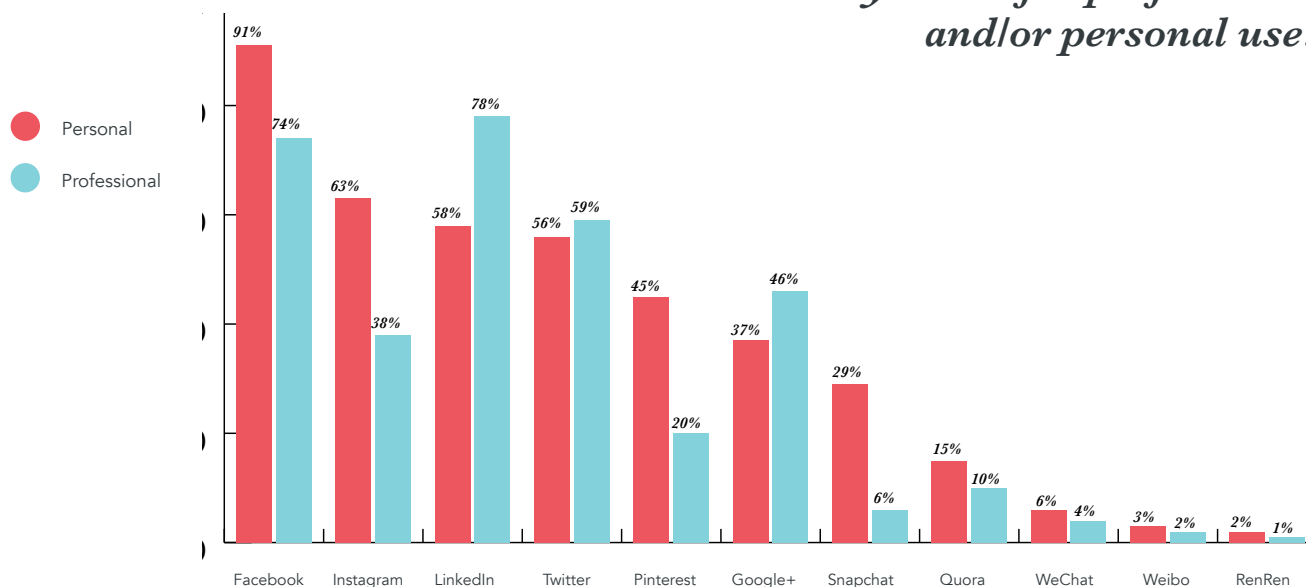|	C-level executive (CEO, CMO)	VP/Director	Manager	Individual contributor
Email	86%	82%	87%	86%
Face-to-face	63%	66%	60%	55%
Phone	59%	60%	56%	51%
Video conferencing	44%	42%	37%	32%
Social media	44%	38%	36%	37%
Messenger apps	37%	31%	29%	25%

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Outside of North America, there's higher use of newer communication channels such as social media and messaging apps. While only 15% of North America respondents use messaging apps for business purposes, 45% of Latin American and 37% of Asian respondents do. Latin American-, Asian-, and EMEA-based respondents also more actively use social media for business communications compared to North America.

The adoption of social media has further blurred the line between personal and professional. Today, the majority of our respondents use what we think of as traditionally "personal" social networks such as Facebook and Twitter for professional purposes. 74% of respondents use Facebook professionally, just shy of the 78% who use LinkedIn, a network designed for professional use. Indeed, more people are using Twitter for professional purposes over personal purposes (59% versus 56%). In contrast, many use Instagram for personal reasons, but fewer leverage the network for professional purposes.

How do you prefer to communicate for business purposes? (By Geography)

Legend:
- Email
- Face-to-face
- Phone
- Video conferencing
- Social media
- Messenger apps

NAM: Email 91%, Face-to-face 62%, Phone 57%, Video conferencing 33%, Social media 29%, Messenger apps 15%

ANZ: Email 89%, Face-to-face 69%, Phone 61%, Video conferencing 34%, Social media 34%, Messenger apps 16%

ASIA: Email 89%, Face-to-face 60%, Phone 61%, Video conferencing 42%, Social media 39%, Messenger apps 37%

LATAM: Email 80%, Face-to-face 66%, Phone 52%, Video conferencing 39%, Social media 46%, Messenger apps 45%

EMEA: Email 88%, Face-to-face 62%, Phone 57%, Video conferencing 37%, Social media 38%, Messenger apps 22%

Which social media channels do you use for professional and/or personal use?

Legend:
- Personal
- Professional

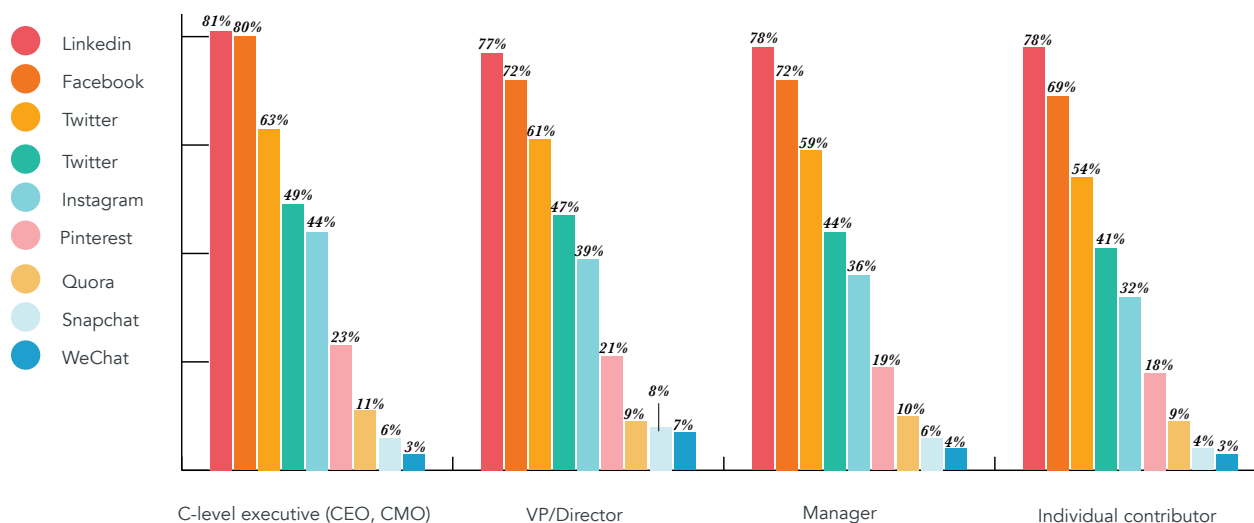| Channel	Personal	Professional
Facebook	91%	74%
Instagram	63%	38%
LinkedIn	58%	78%
Twitter	56%	59%
Pinterest	45%	20%
Google+	37%	46%
Snapchat	29%	6%
Quora	15%	10%
WeChat	6%	4%
Weibo	3%	2%
RenRen	2%	1%

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When we look across regions at social networks used for professional purposes, we see Facebook outstripping LinkedIn in Latin America. The biggest users of Twitter live in North America and EMEA. Instagram is popular in Latin America and North America, while Quora surges comparatively in Asia. Asian respondents also are more active on WeChat, the dominate messaging social network hybrid in the region.

Which social media channels do you use for professional purposes? (By geography)

Legend:
- Linkedin
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Quora
- Snapchat
- WeChat

NAM: 84% 77% 71% 46% 40% 22% 9% 7% 2%
ANZ: 85% 72% 53% 44% 35% 18% 8% 4% 5%
ASIA: 77% 66% 52% 49% 30% 24% 25% 6% 10%
LATAM: 71% 77% 50% 45% 42% 19% 4% 7% 3%
EMEA: 81% 72% 67% 44% 36% 20% 9% 5% 4%
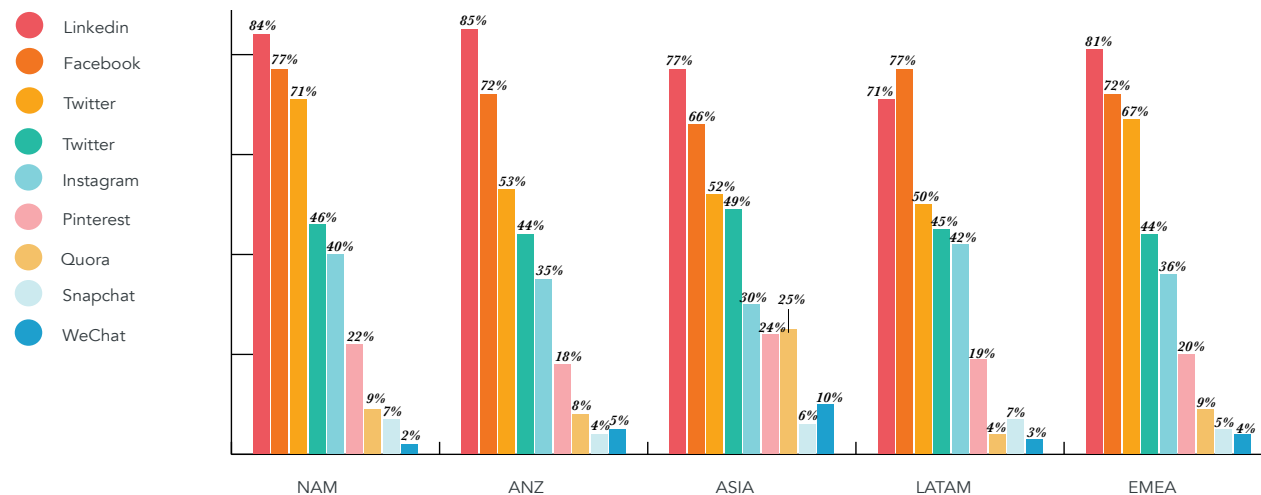
Consistent with the usage data above, C-level executives are the most active on various social networks for professional purposes. Senior leaders tend to have the widest professional networks, so it's not entirely surprising that they actively use these platforms to keep up with peers.

Which social media channels do you use for professional purposes? (By seniority)

Legend:
- Linkedin
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Pinterest
- Quora
- Snapchat
- WeChat

C-level executive (CEO, CMO): 81% 80% 63% 49% 44% 23% 11% 6% 3%
VP/Director: 77% 72% 61% 47% 39% 21% 9% 8% 7%
Manager: 78% 72% 59% 44% 36% 19% 10% 6% 4%
Individual contributor: 78% 69% 54% 41% 32% 18% 9% 4% 3%

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Evolution of the state of inbound

We have been tracking the goals and priorities of inbound organizations for the past nine years and have assembled trending data from previous reports in this chapter. Our data has remained remarkably constant. This is to be expected, as the driving forces for marketing and sales activities -- generating more leads, converting more customers, etc., remain the same, but there have been a couple of interesting shifts over the years on the sales side.
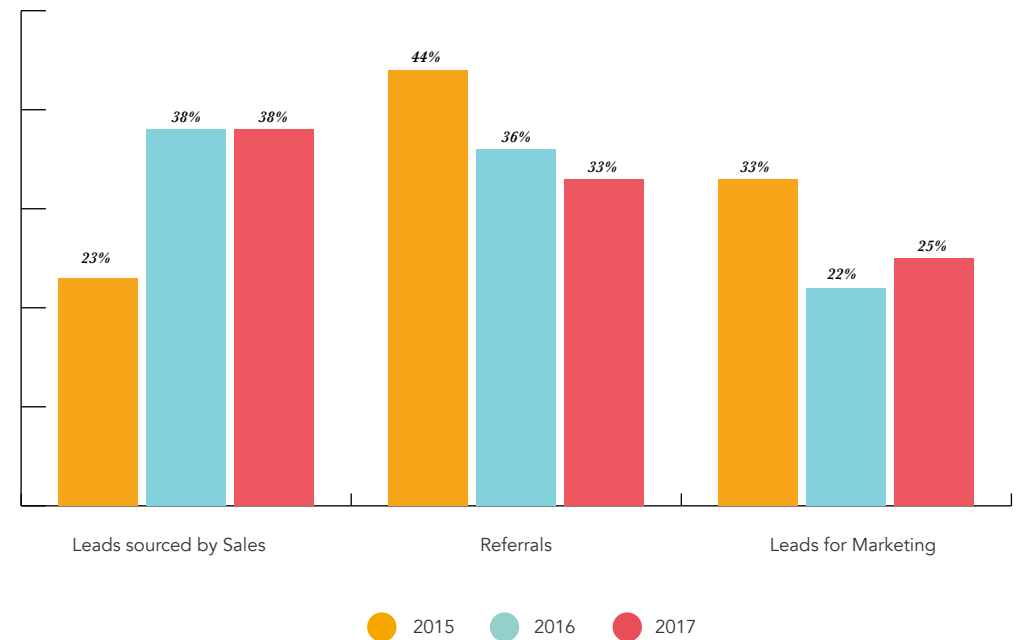
Sales Is Evolving

In 2015, salespeople indicated that referrals were their top source of leads. That has dropped 11% in the past two years. Today, leads directly sourced by Sales are ranked in the top position. Additionally, Sales' assessment of marketing-sourced leads dropped 8%. This trend suggests sales thinks they can hunt much better leads than inbound marketing can bring in—this is a perception and trust issue for marketing leaders to address.
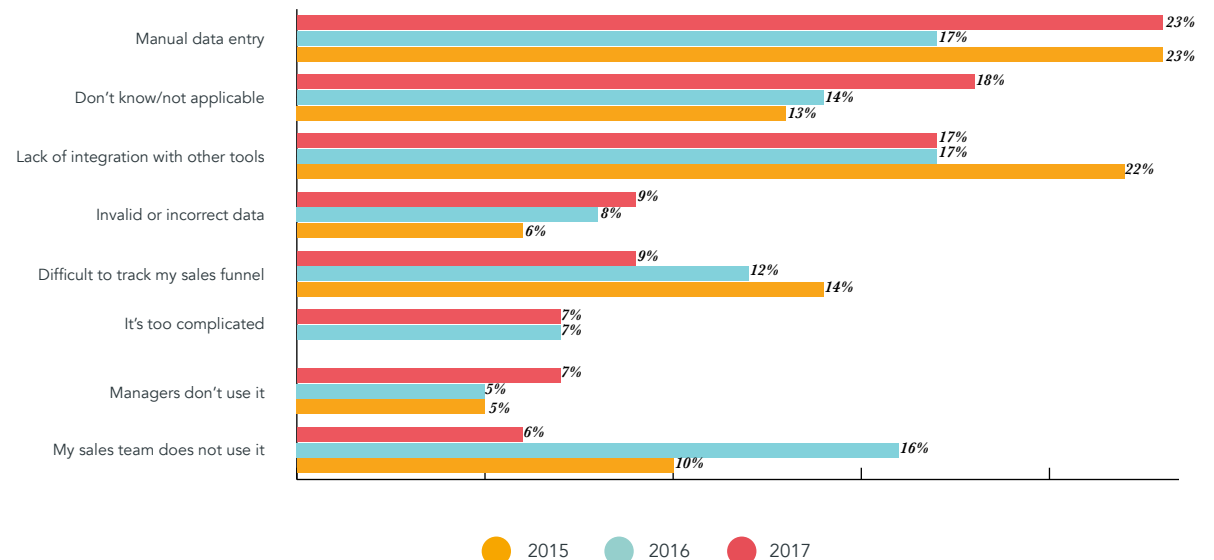
We've also seen some interesting shifts on the biggest challenges for using a CRM. In the past, up to 16% of sales teams didn't bother using their existing CRM. Now, adoption is much higher (only 6% reported that their team didn't use a CRM), but as a result, manual data entry is a headache. Incorrect data is another growing concern.

Many CRM software companies have made strides to solve the integration problems that first plagued the systems, causing a 5% drop in complaints around integrations. And, true to it's purpose, tracking the sales funnel is less of an issue for teams, dropping from 14% in 2015 to 9% today.

State of Inbound 2017

Which is the top source of leads for your sales organisations?

Leads sourced by Sales: 2015 23%, 2016 38%, 2017 38%
Referrals: 2015 44%, 2016 36%, 2017 33%
Leads for Marketing: 2015 33%, 2016 22%, 2017 25%

● 2015   ● 2016   ● 2017

What is your biggest challenge using the CRM?

Manual data entry: 2017 23%, 2016 17%, 2015 23%
Don't know/not applicable: 2017 18%, 2016 14%, 2015 13%
Lack of integration with other tools: 2017 17%, 2016 17%, 2015 22%
Invalid or incorrect data: 2017 9%, 2016 8%, 2015 6%
Difficult to track my sales funnel: 2017 9%, 2016 12%, 2015 14%
It's too complicated: 2017 7%, 2016 7%
Managers don't use it: 2017 7%, 2016 5%, 2015 5%
My sales team does not use it: 2017 6%, 2016 16%, 2015 10%

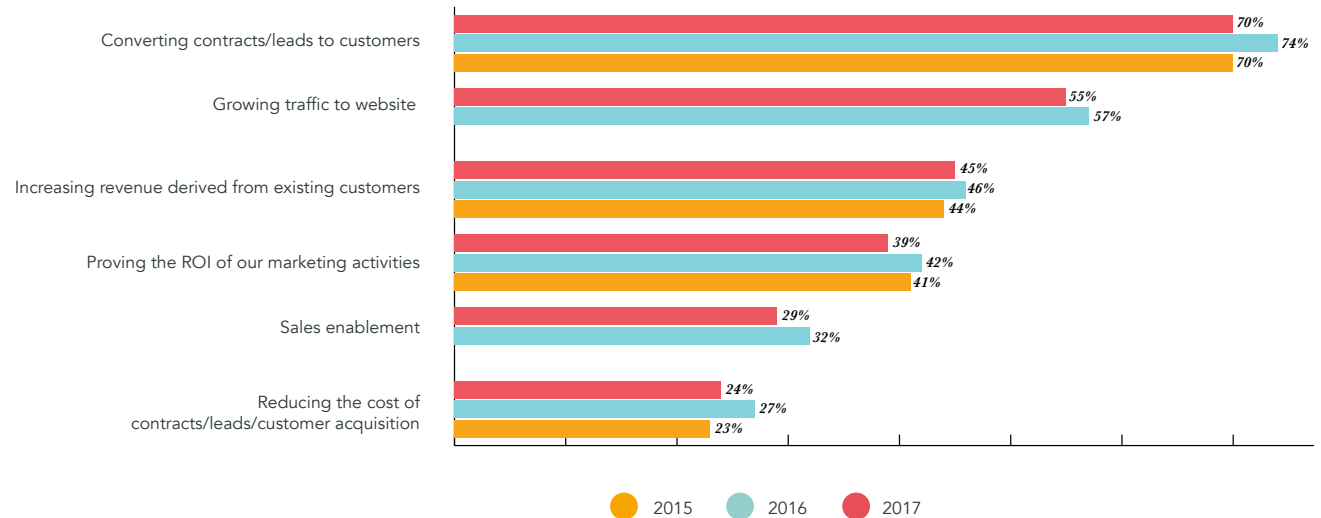● 2015   ● 2016   ● 2017

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Marketing

Priorities Remain Consistent

Priorities and challenges have seen only small shifts over the years. Converting leads into customers is a continual focus for marketers.
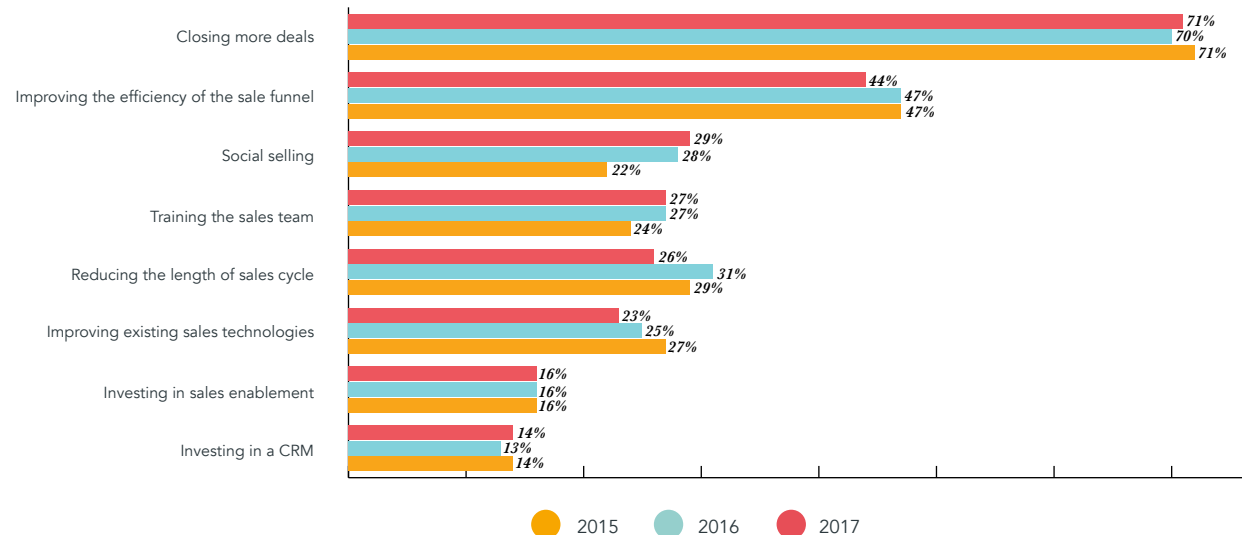
Likewise, salespeople continue to focus on closing more deals. Social selling has gained ground though; it's now the third highest priority in 2017 after ranking near the bottom of our list in 2015. Teams are less focused on improving sales technologies, which may indicate maturity of these tools in enabling sales teams. We came to this conclusion based on the fact that making the sales funnel more efficient and reducing the length of the sales cycle has gone down slightly in tandem.

Marketers still rate inbound marketing leads as the highest quality year over year. As we saw earlier, their contributions aren't valued by their counterparts in Sales as these respondents consistently rate marketing-sourced leads as the lowest quality compared to referrals and sales-sourced leads.

What are your company's top marketing priorities over the next 12 months?

Converting contracts/leads to customers
- 2017: 70%
- 2016: 74%
- 2015: 70%

Growing traffic to website
- 2017: 55%
- 2016: 57%

Increasing revenue derived from existing customers
- 2017: 45%
- 2016: 46%
- 2015: 44%

Proving the ROI of our marketing activities
- 2017: 39%
- 2016: 42%
- 2015: 41%

Sales enablement
- 2017: 29%
- 2016: 32%

Reducing the cost of contracts/leads/customer acquisition
- 2017: 24%
- 2016: 27%
- 2015: 23%

● 2015 ● 2016 ● 2017

what are your company's top sales priorities over the next 12 months?

Closing more deals
- 2017: 71%
- 2016: 70%
- 2015: 71%

Improving the efficiency of the sale funnel
- 2017: 44%
- 2016: 47%
- 2015: 47%

Social selling
- 2017: 29%
- 2016: 28%
- 2015: 22%

Training the sales team
- 2017: 27%
- 2016: 27%
- 2015: 24%

Reducing the length of sales cycle
- 2017: 26%
- 2016: 31%
- 2015: 29%

Improving existing sales technologies
- 2017: 23%
- 2016: 25%
- 2015: 27%

Investing in sales enablement
- 2017: 16%
- 2016: 16%
- 2015: 16%

Investing in a CRM
- 2017: 14%
- 2016: 13%
- 2015: 14%

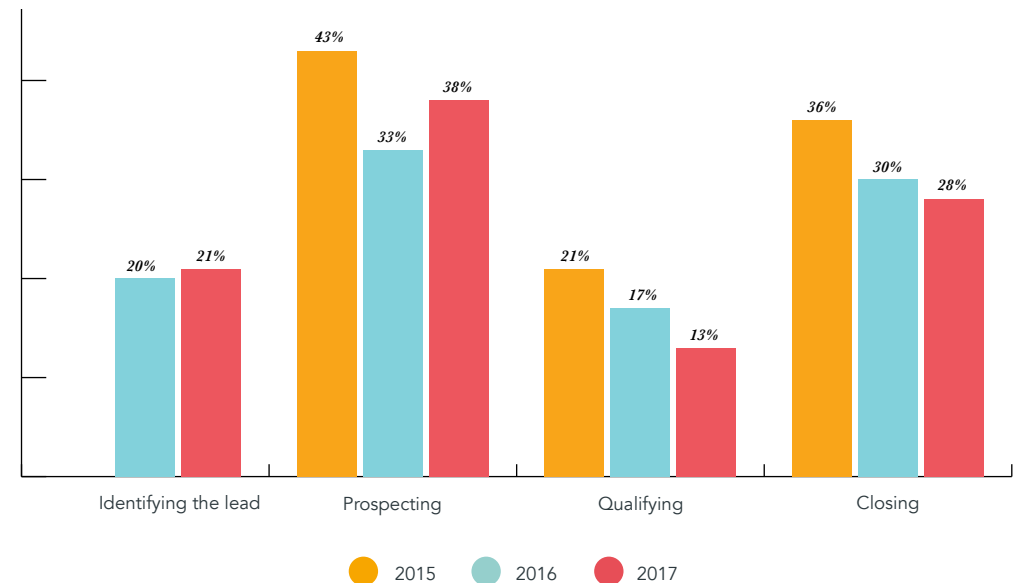● 2015 ● 2016 ● 2017

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Sales challenges remain consistent year over year. Salespeople continue to face problems getting a response, closing a deal, and prospecting.

what is more difficult to do in sales compared to 2 to 3 years ago?

Category	2016	2017
Getting a response from prospects	40%	38%
Closing deals	34%	35%
Identifying/prospecting good leads	27%	30%
Engaging multiple decisions makers at a company	27%	27%
Avoiding discounting/negotiation	23%	25%
Connecting via phone	20%	20%
Incoporating social media into the sales	22%	19%
Connecting via email	14%	17%
Using sales technologies	14%	13%
Sourcing referrals	11%	12%
Keeping someone on the phone	11%	11%
Researching before initial call/email	12%	11%
Delivering a presentation	8%	10%

● 2016   ● 2017

For Sales, the early phases of the sales cycle prove to be the biggest challenge. Compared to 2015, closing is more manageable. Improvements in the qualification phases through better lead scoring software may be making salespeople more confident in the closing phase.
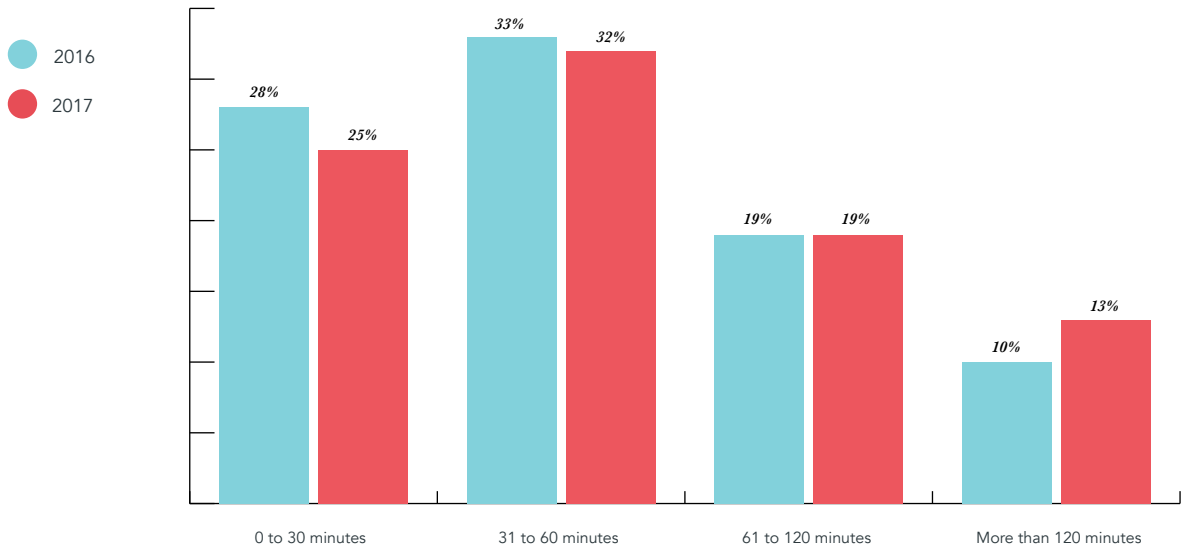
In your opinion what part of the sales process do reps struggle with most?

	2015	2016	2017
Identifying the lead		20%	21%
Prospecting	43%	33%	38%
Qualifying	21%	17%	13%
Closing	36%	30%	28%

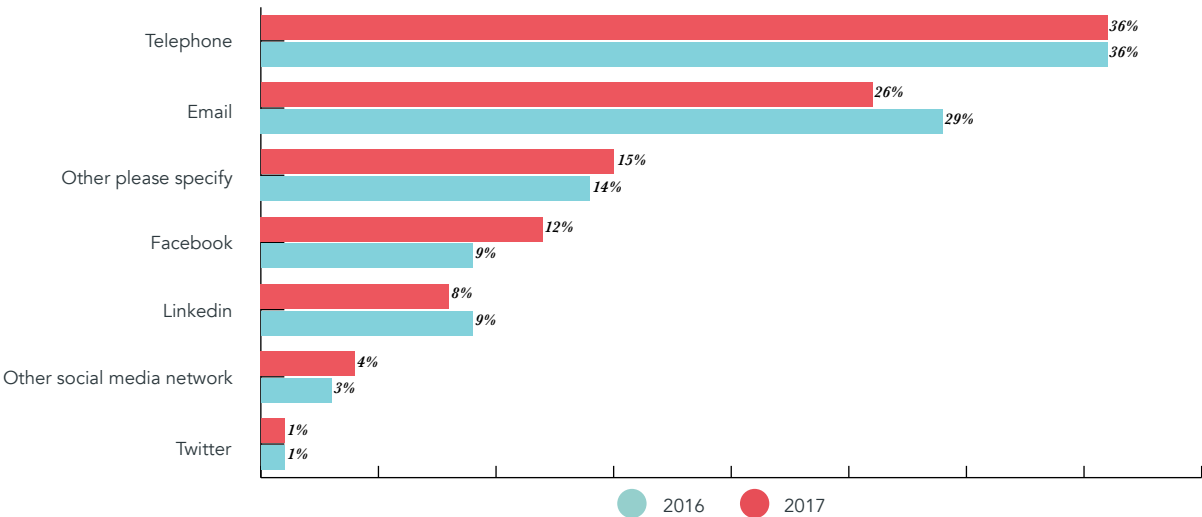● 2015   ● 2016   ● 2017

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Concerning is that fact that, salespeople are spending more of their valuable time on data entry compared to last year.

Phone is the best channel for sales to connect, but we see a slight dip in the success rate of email.

On average, how much time per day does your sales team spend on performing data entry or other manual tasks?

- 2016
- 2017

	0 to 30 minutes	31 to 60 minutes	61 to 120 minutes	More than 120 minutes
2016	28%	33%	19%	10%
2017	25%	32%	19%	13%

what has been the most successful channel for your sales representatives to connect with a prospect?

	2017	2016
Telephone	36%	36%
Email	26%	29%
Other please specify	15%	14%
Facebook	12%	9%
Linkedin	8%	9%
Other social media network	4%	3%
Twitter	1%	1%

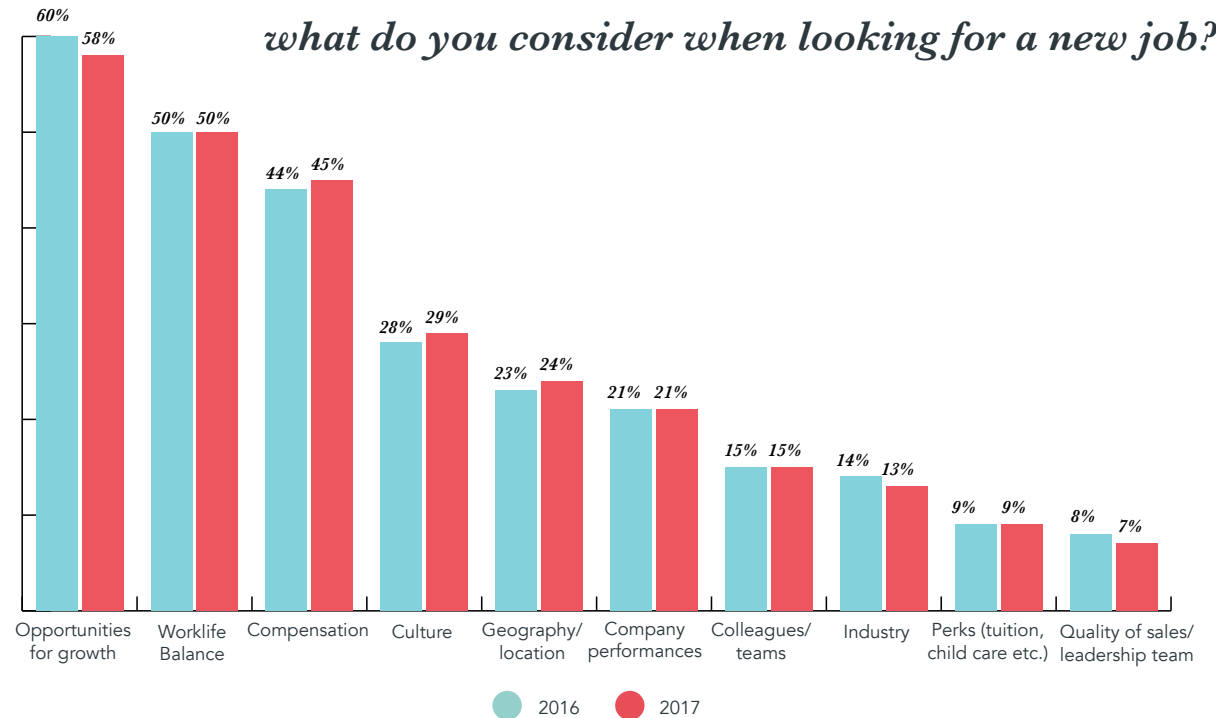- 2016
- 2017

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Year over year, we see slight decreases in people's prefer-ence to communicate on nearly all channels. Phone stayed static and messenger apps were the only channel to grow, from 29% to 31% preferring it in 2017.
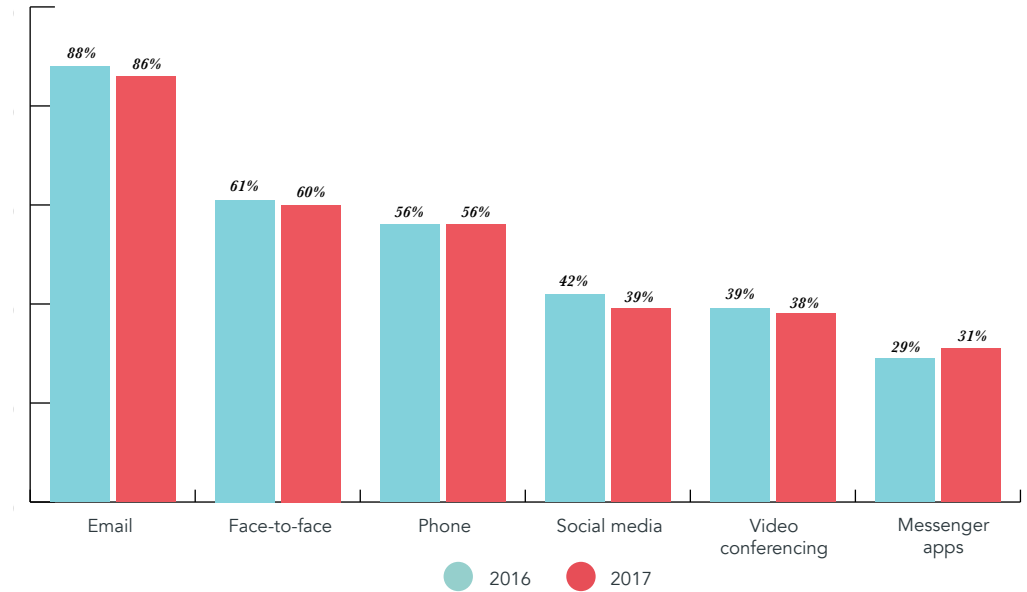
Finally, our respondents across the globe consistently seek out opportunities for growth in a new job, followed by work-life balance, and compensation.

How do you prefer to communicate for business purposes?

Channel	2016	2017
Email	88%	86%
Face-to-face	61%	60%
Phone	56%	56%
Social media	42%	39%
Video conferencing	39%	38%
Messenger apps	29%	31%

● 2016   ● 2017

what do you consider when looking for a new job?

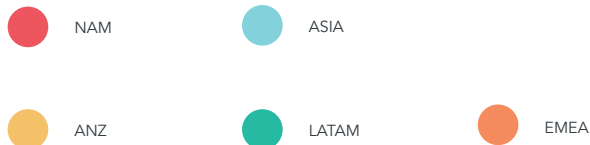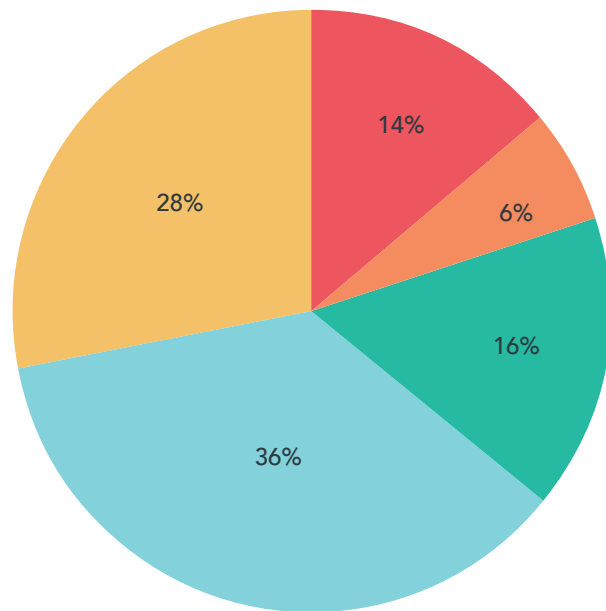| Consideration	2016	2017
Opportunities for growth	60%	58%
Worklife Balance	50%	50%
Compensation	44%	45%
Culture	28%	29%
Geography/location	23%	24%
Company performances	21%	21%
Colleagues/teams	15%	15%
Industry	14%	13%
Perks (tuition, child care etc.)	9%	9%
Quality of sales/leadership team	8%	7%

● 2016   ● 2017

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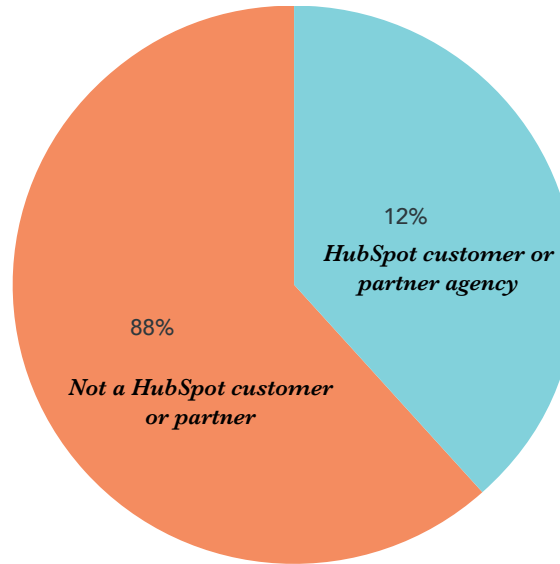Marketing

Who We Surveyed

Who We Surveyed

This year's State of Inbound survey had the largest number of global respondents: 6,399 professionals in 141 countries. Here's the breakdown of the respondents:
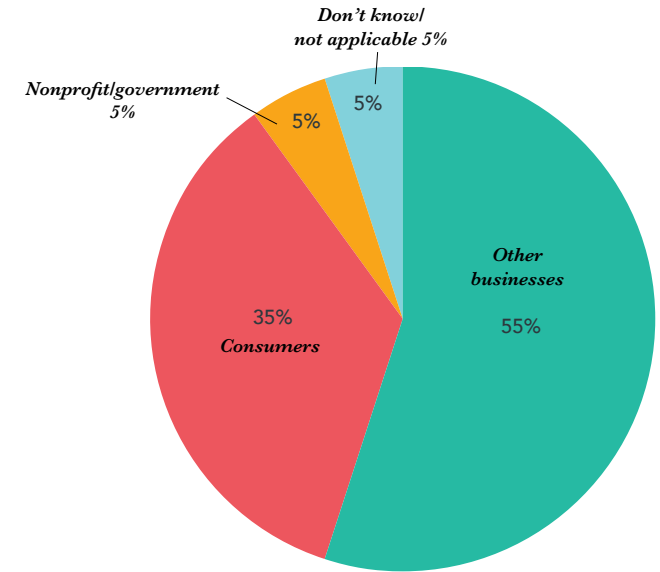
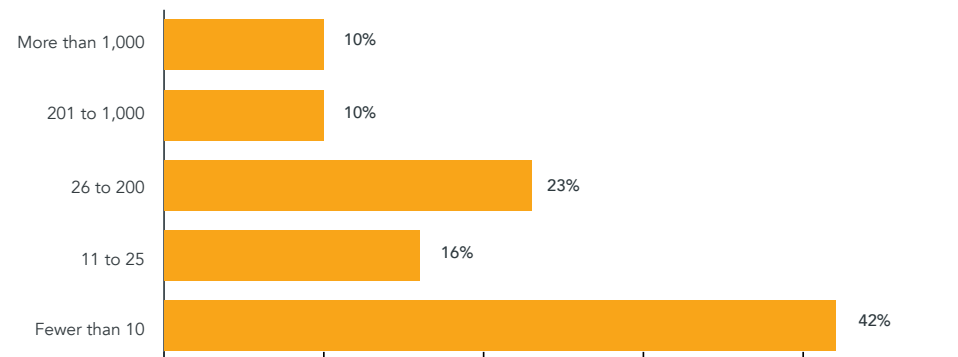## Is your company any of the following?

12%
HubSpot customer or partner agency

88%
Not a HubSpot customer or partner

To whom does your company primarily sell?

Don't know/ not applicable 5%

Nonprofit/government 5%

5%

5%

Other businesses
55%

35%
Consumers

Where are you based?

14%

6%

16%

36%

28%

- NAM
- ASIA
- ANZ
- LATAM
- EMEA

How many full-time employees does your company employ?

More than 1,000	10%
201 to 1,000	10%
26 to 200	23%
11 to 25	16%
Fewer than 10	42%

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What best describes your company's average annual revenue?

Revenue	Percentage
$1B or more	3%
$500M to $999M	2%
$10M to $499M	10%
$1M to $9M	16%
$250,000 to $999,999	14%
Less than $250,000	32%
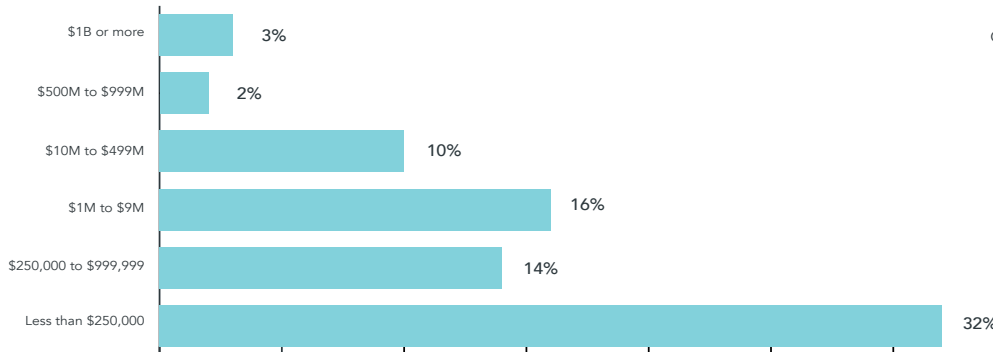
What best describes your level in your company?

Level	Percentage
C-level executive (CEO, CMO)	23%
Vice President	3%
Director	11%
Manager	27%
Individual contributor	28%
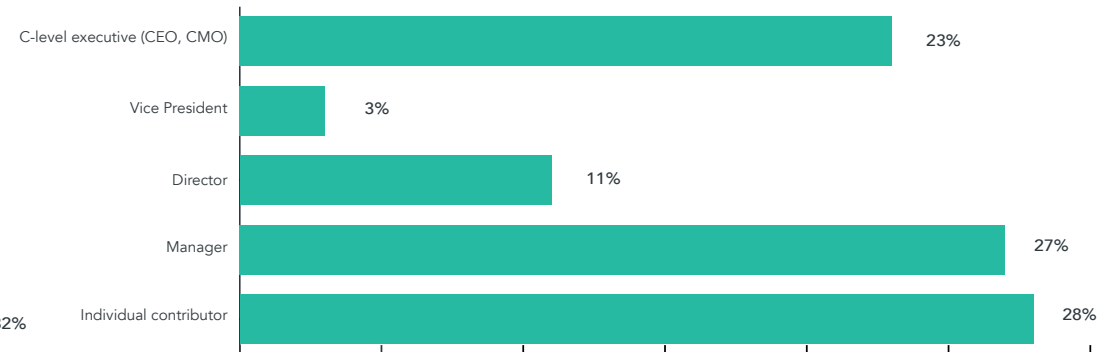
Which of the following best describes the principal industry of your organisation?

Industry	Percentage
Marketing Agencies	18%
Other	15%
Information Technology and Services	10%
Education	8%
Consumer Products	7%
Industrial and Manufacturing	6%
Software	5%
Media and Publishing	5%
Nonprofit/Government	4%
Ecommerce	4%
Financial Services	4%
Healthcare and Medical	4%
Travel and Tourism	4%
Telecommunications	2%
Sports and Recreation	1%
Research	1%
Staffing and Recruiting	1%

State of Inbound 2017

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Ready to start your Inbound journey?

Our Source-In plan helps you to centre your marketing activity around your market and buyers, so that your inbound marketing is effective.

Do more of the right things, waste less budget and have a more predictable pipeline and brand strategy. Source-In gives you the answers; what marketing activity and when is best for your company.

1
Your Mission
Whatever your business and marketing objective, we identity and understand the mission first.

2
Your Audience
Understanding your audience, their behaviours and needs, we set the path for the right marketing activity.

3
Why You?
We get to your 'why'. Why your company exists, what you do and how you do it, so your customers know why to buy from you over your rivals.

4
Content
We produce content and evidence that informs, educates, and builds trust at every stage of your audience's journey.

5
Execution
Whether they start online or you need to proactively engage with buyers, we blend traditional and digital marketing and make it easy to find and select you.

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www.secretsourcemarketing.com
info@secretsourcemarketing.com
01522 700266

To start building your Source-In plan for your business, get in touch and book your personal consultation today.

We'd love to learn more about your business and start generating more awareness, more pipeline and more market share!