



BENCHMARK STUDY

WRITTEN BY

Signals

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Overview

Marketing practitioners and leaders alike are always striving to find the most advantageous strategies. It is often difficult to determine which strategies will generate ROI when looking to make a change, especially when thousands of studies and reports online contradict each other.

What's the solution? Rely on up-to-date metrics provided by industry leaders that use robust growth data to determine success.

The 2022 DGS Spring Benchmark study aims to identify the most popular and effective marketing strategies in the first half of 2022. We used survey results gathered from attendees of our latest Demand Gen Summit and analyzed the behaviors of 300+ companies.

We looked at more than 25 marketing and growth strategies to determine which are implemented the most, and which have been most effective for companies of various sizes and industries.

In future studies, we will conduct trend analyses, and determine how strategy usage and behavior is changing over time.

Main Sections

Demographics and high level summary

Strategy adoption & company size analysis

Strategy performance

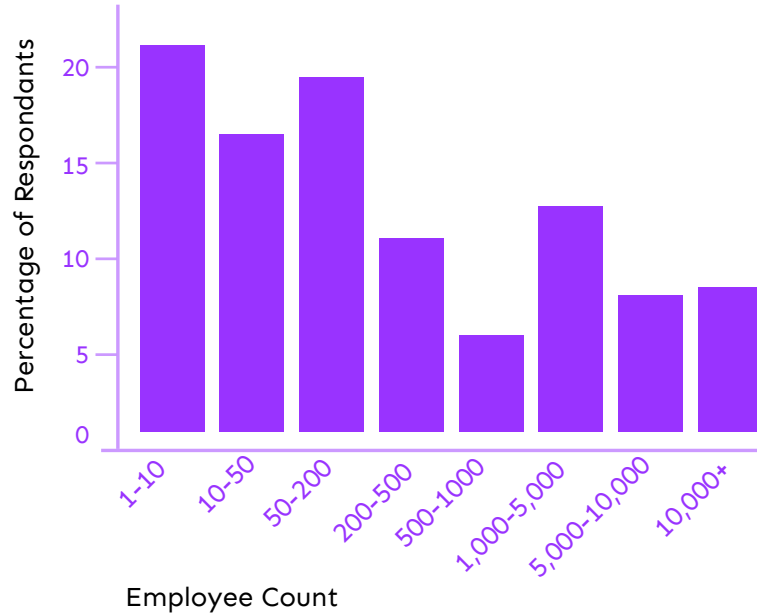
Strategies often used together

Demographics

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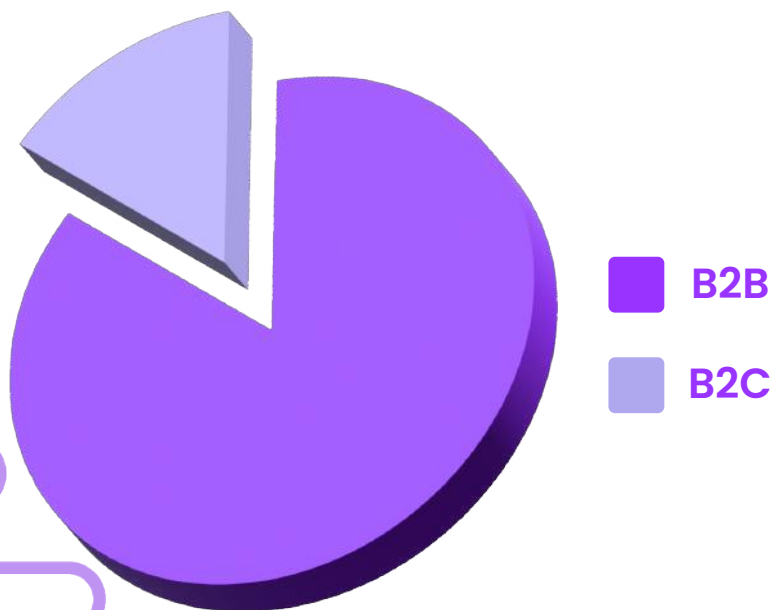
Company Size

More than half of respondents represented companies with 200 employees or less. Less than 10% of respondents were from companies with more than 10,000 employees. This distribution closely represents the demographics of Demand Gen Summit attendees.



Business Type

Most respondents work at B2B companies (87%). The Summit focused more on B2B activities, so this distribution is unsurprising. Some analysis in this study is broken out by business type to help better explain trends and behaviors.



Location



43%

United States of America



5% United Kingdom



4% India

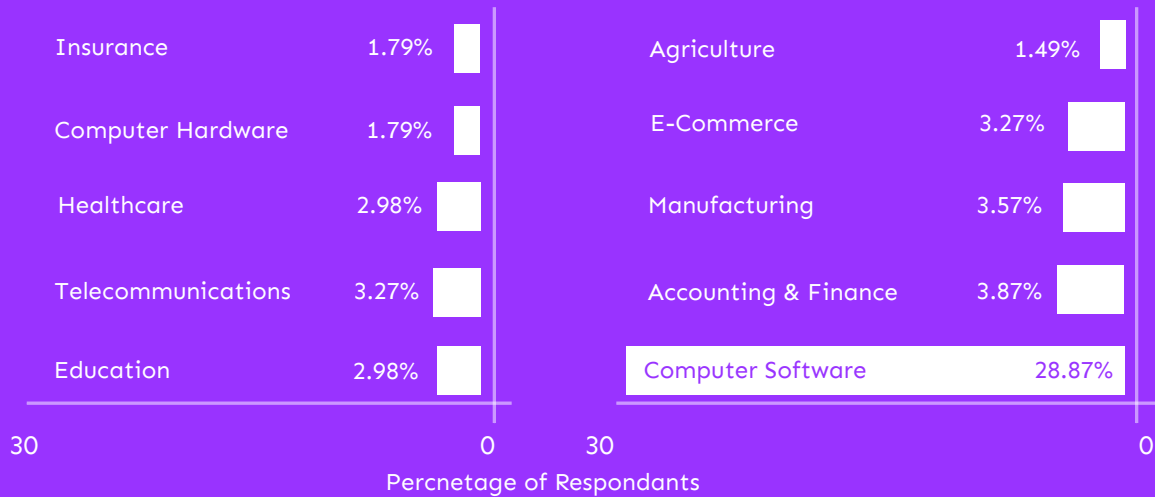


3% Brazil



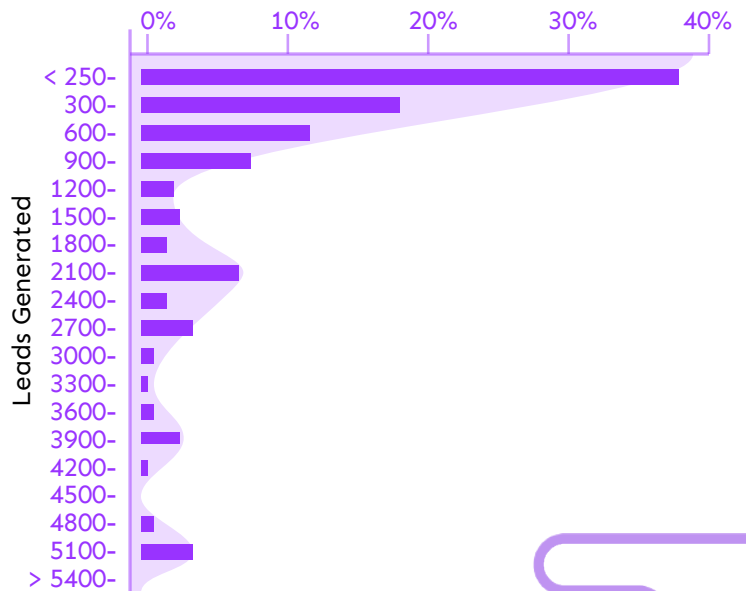
2% Canada

Industry



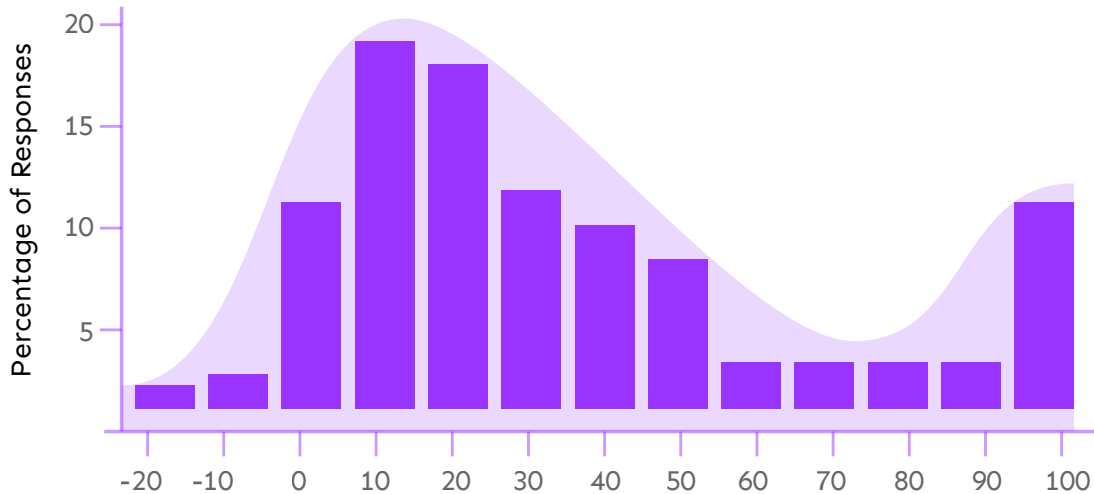
Lead Volume

Respondents reported a wide range of monthly lead volumes for their company. More than half reported less than 450 average leads generated per month, while a small minority reported upwards of 3000. The median average leads was 350, and the mean was 990 (skewed left by high outliers). This variance is likely due to high fluctuations in company size, which we will explore later.



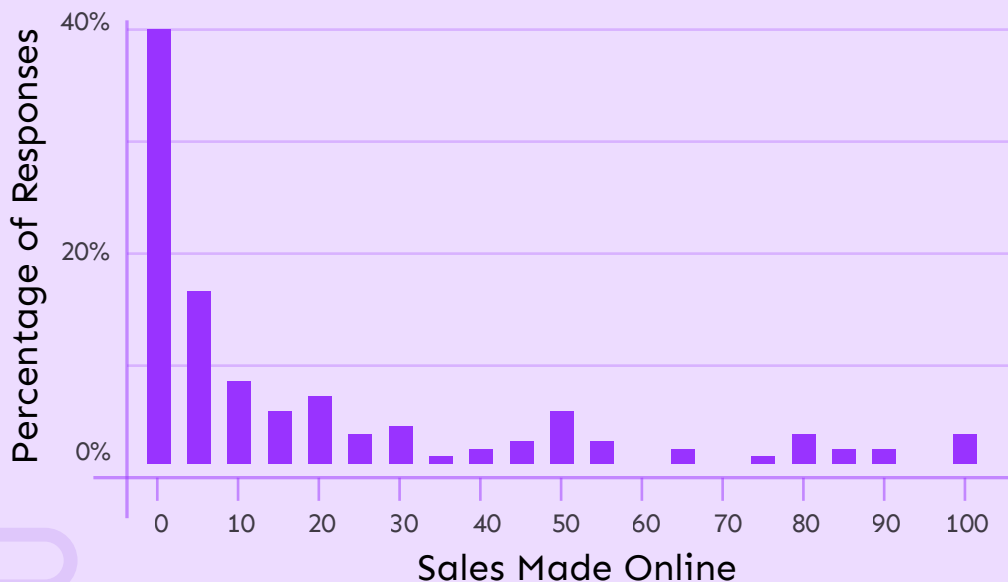
Growth Rates

A bell-shaped distribution exists around 10-20% annual growth. **About 50% of respondents indicated between 5% and 35% annual growth.** Another local maximum exists at the 100% growth mark. This could indicate bad data, or respondents who wanted to report higher than 100% growth (respondents were given a slider from 0 to 100). Growth rates will be explored in depth much later, as we attempt to predict growth based on which strategies are being used.



Sales Medium

Almost 40% of respondents indicated that their company completes little to none of their sales online. "Online Sales" are defined as those that can be completed by the buyer online with no communications with a sales rep. Very few companies had more than 40% of sales done online. On average, respondents indicated an average of 18% of their sales done online.



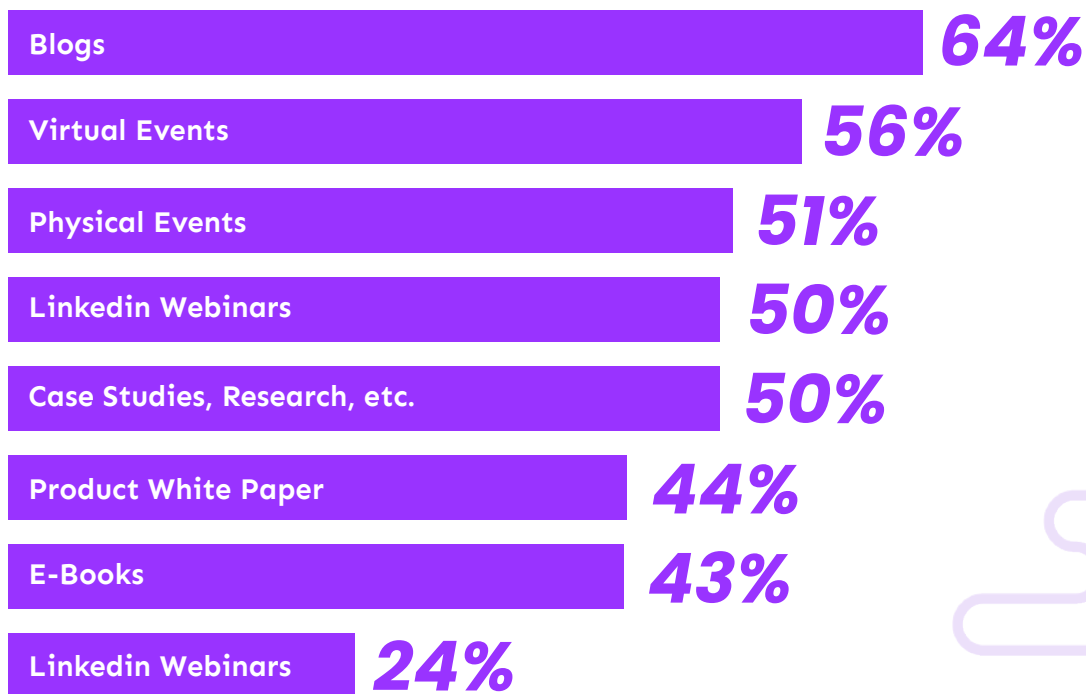
Strategy Adoption

Section Introduction

How does RevTech usage vary by industry? While a majority of respondents work at software and SaaS companies, there are some interesting differences when we break down other industries.

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Content Strategy Adoption Rates



Most content strategies evaluated were adopted by more than or near 50% of respondents. The only strategy under 40% was podcasts (24% adoption).

Marketers and revenue leaders appear to be shifting their focus to live digital content strategies, such as webinars, LinkedIn Lives, and virtual events. Webinars/LinkedIn Live adoption was right around 50%, with virtual events around 55%. Both of these strategies saw more than double the adoption of podcasts.

These digital strategies saw huge surges when the pandemic hit, and don't appear to be returning to pre-COVID adoption. Virtual events have overtaken physical events as the primary medium, and while the gap has decreased, it doesn't appear as though physical events will ever be as dominant as before. This industry trend has also brought about "premium" virtual events, where attendees pay for attendance, and can pick which presentations/sessions they want to sign up for. This structure imitates how a lot of physical summits and events operate, but without the travel and logistical hurdles.

Content Strategies

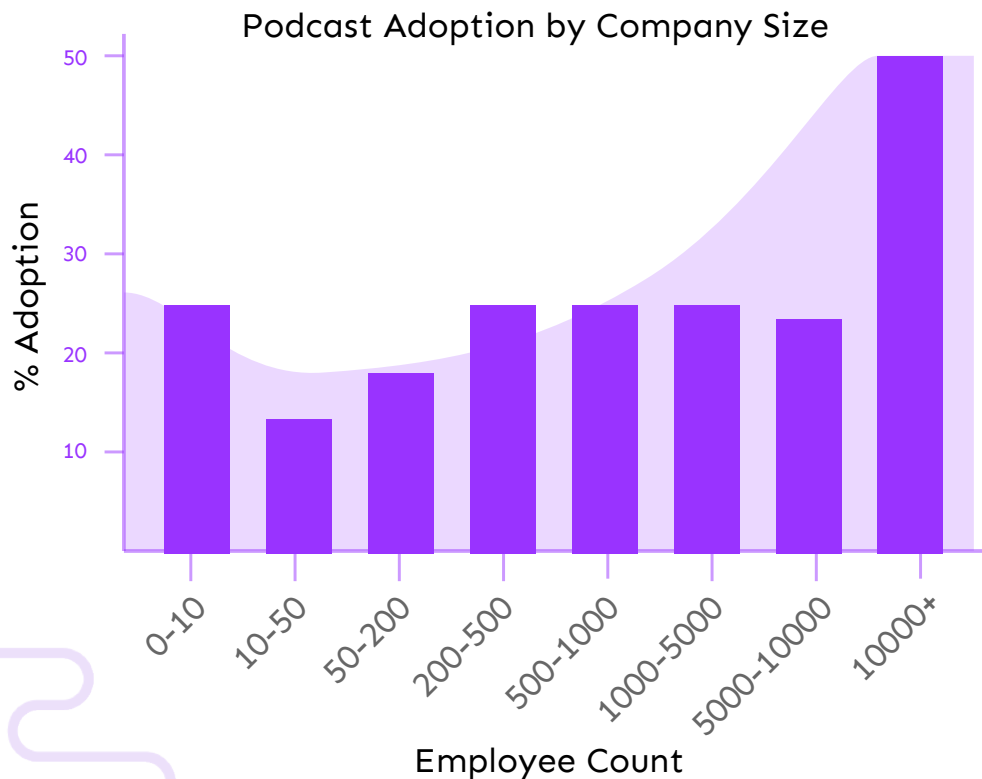
PODCAST ADOPTION

Maybe the biggest surprise here is the low podcast implementation rates. The market for business-led podcasts appears to be quite saturated, and has seen significant decline in the past few quarters. Why can't podcasts keep up with other forms of content?

Unless transcripts are created and published, podcast content provides little SEO value that written content does. Another characteristic that podcasts lack is the live accessibility of events, webinars, etc.

Podcasts are the only strategy in this category that don't have one of these attributes, and could account for the relative downfall of the strategy.

As shown below, podcasts are adopted at a significantly higher rate by companies with 10000+ employees. 50% of respondents from this category indicated that their company hosts a podcast, while no other group indicated higher than 25% adoption.



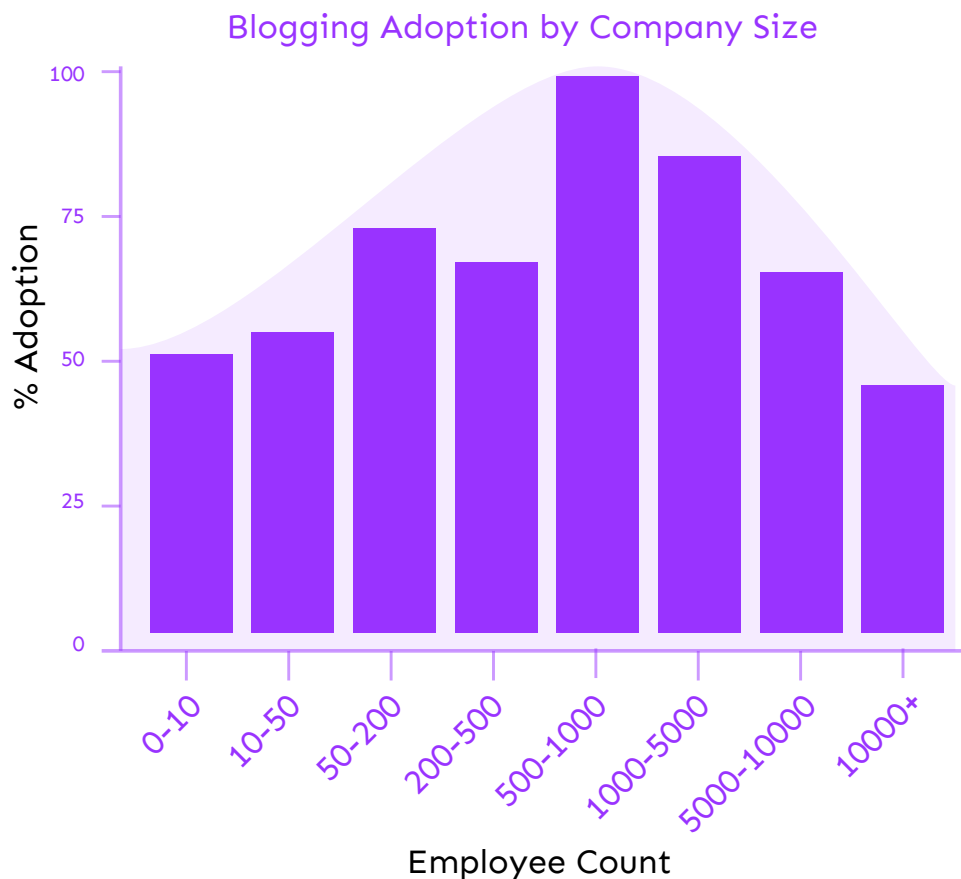
Content Strategies

BLOGGING ADOPTION

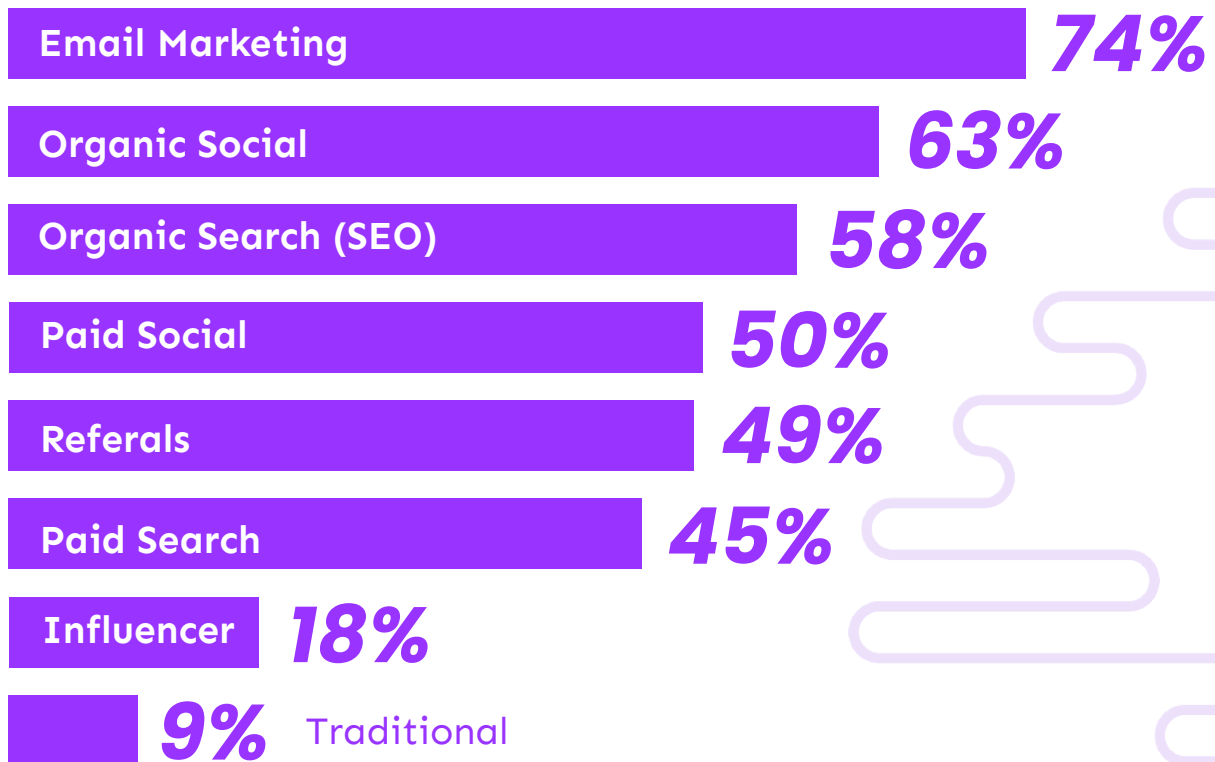
Other than blogs, all forms of written content strategies were used less than live content. More than 65% of respondents indicated that their company writes blogs, while no other written content strategy saw more than 50% adoption. Why do blogs stand out so far above these other strategies?

A potential explanation is that companies primarily use blog posts for SEO purposes. Consistent, keyword-related blog posts is a leading factor for SEO growth. Other forms of written content, such as studies, whitepapers, and e-books are typically more sporadic and independent of each other.

The distribution of blog usage across company sizes is very similar to other strategies. Companies with 10k+ employees are the only demographic with less than 50% adoption. Because B2B blogs typically center around SEO and product marketing initiatives, these established firms are less incentivized to implement blogs. Usage among startups is low compared to larger companies, but remains one of the most used strategy for this group.



How are marketers driving demand to their content?



A few tactics stand out; nearly 75% of all respondents indicated using email marketing, and more than half are implementing organic social and SEO initiatives. These are strategies that typically have a very fixed-cost focused structure. Marketing teams have SEO, social, and email managers that make up a vast majority of the costs of these initiatives. Because variable costs are minimal, these strategies are very scalable, and used in some capacity by a majority of marketing teams.

75%
use
Email Marketing

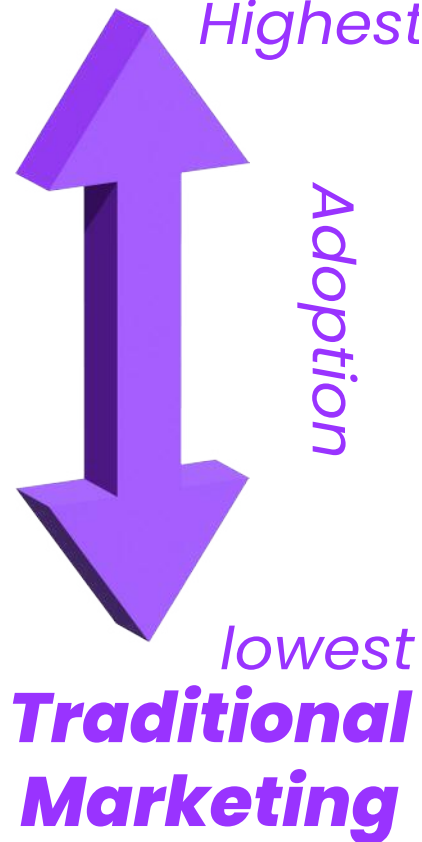
Driving Engagement

Paid strategies have a variable-cost structure, and take a lot of budget to discover underutilized keywords. Below, we broke down the adoption of paid search by company size. It can be clearly seen that companies with less than 50 employees use paid search significantly less than established firms.

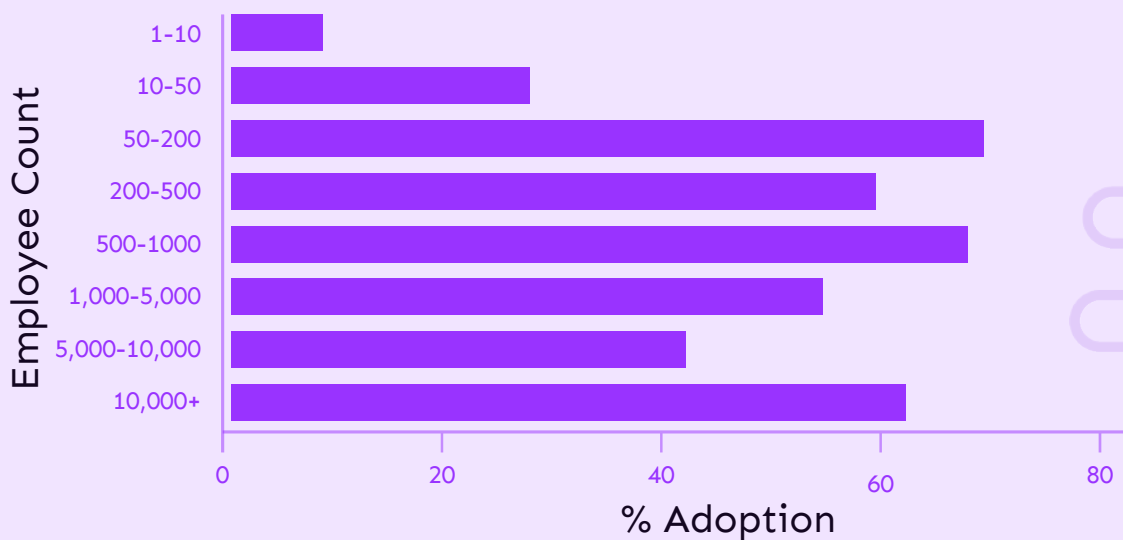
The least adopted strategy is traditional marketing, which includes billboards, print, etc. This should be unsurprising; while many companies still utilize it very well, this marketer has shrunk significantly, as newspapers, magazines, etc. have faded into obscurity.

Influencer marketing usage is still low, but is rising quickly. This is especially true for B2C companies, who reported a 28% adoption rate, compared to just 14% of B2B companies.

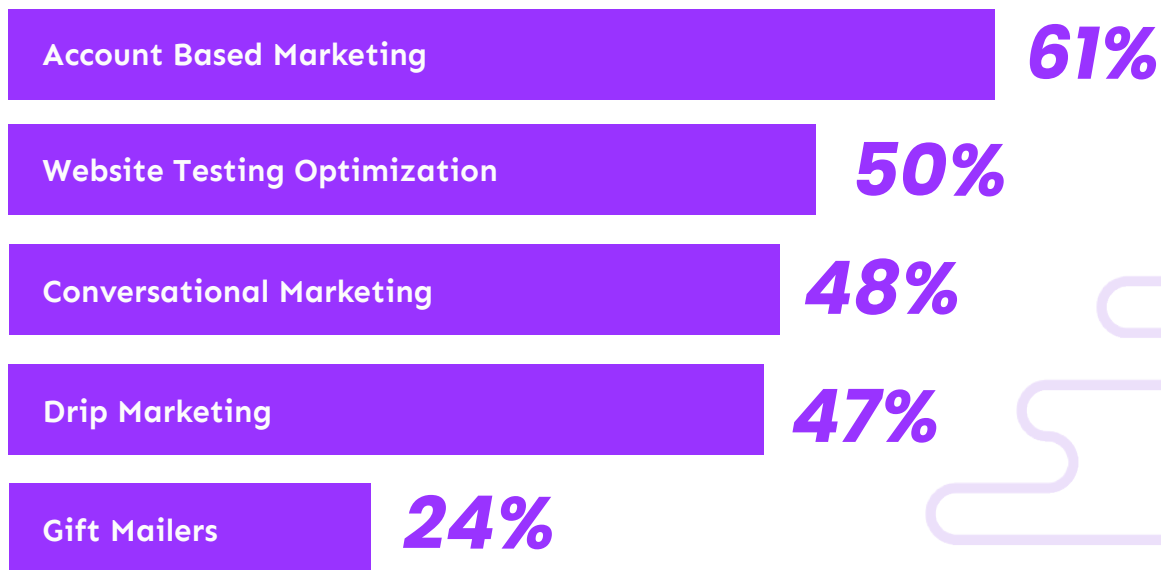
Email Marketing
Highest



Paid Search Adoption by Company Size



How are marketers engaging with and nurturing prospects?



Account Based Marketing leads the pack, with 61% adoption among respondents. For B2B companies specifically, that rate is even higher (66%). If we break this out by company size, we see that larger companies are much more likely to use ABM. In the past, this chart was represented by a bell curve; mid-sized firms who had a combination of agility and budget had the highest adoption, while large companies were slow to adopt. It appears as though those companies have surged back, however, as more than 80% of respondents from the largest companies reported using ABM.

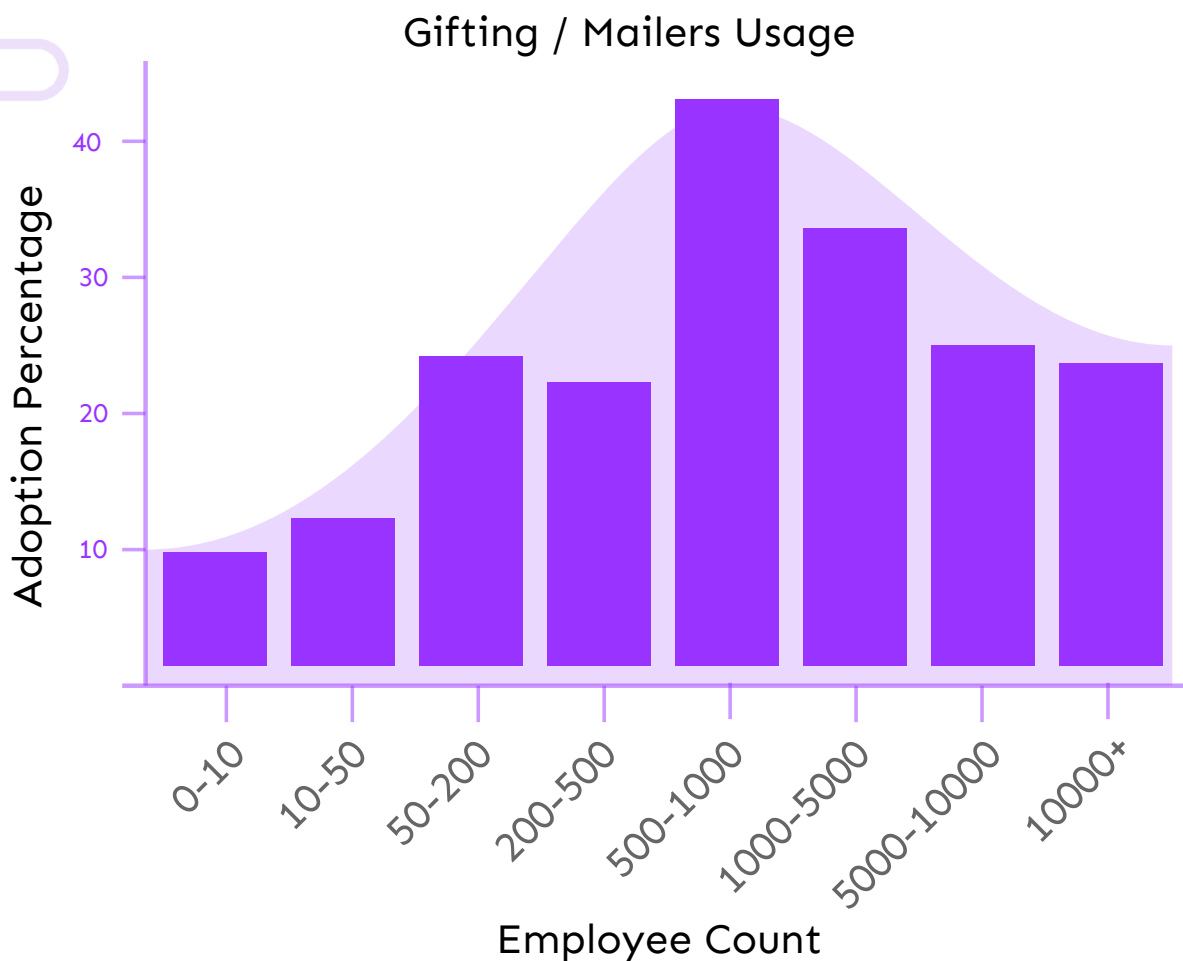
While adoption among startups remains low, we expect this to rise significantly by the time our next Study is conducted in the fall.

Website Optimization/Testing, Conversational Marketing, and Drip Marketing all have around 50% adoption. Conversational Marketing has made a big surge in recent years, as it allows for live, proactive communication with live site visitors. While many other engagement strategies are reactive in nature, by not engaging until after the visitor is gone, conversational marketing has allowed marketers to leverage prospects who would've gone otherwise unknown.

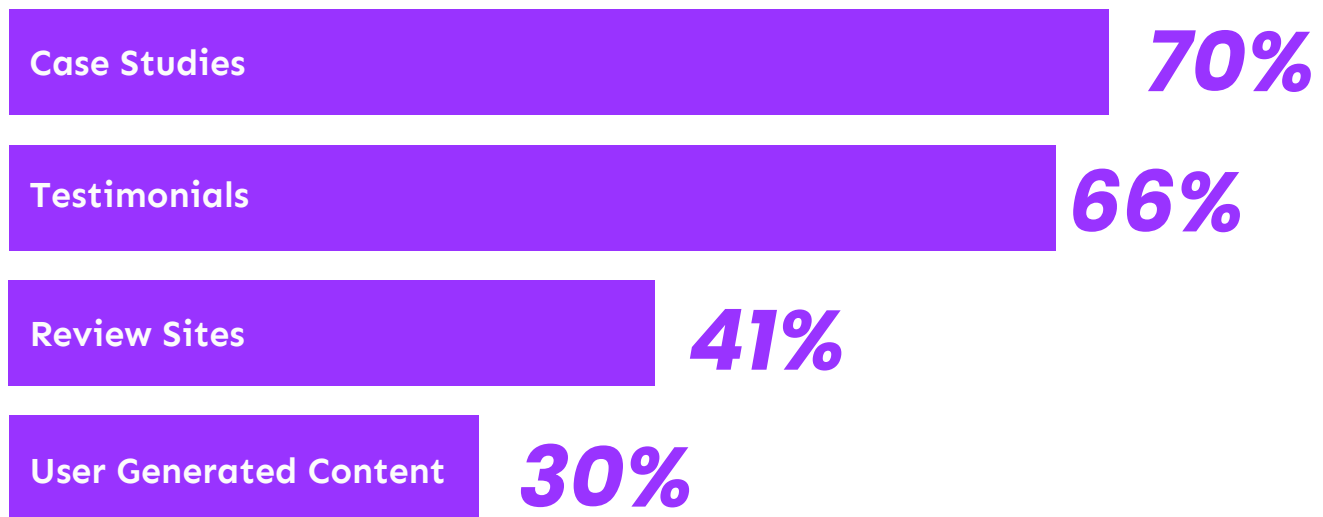
Engaging Demand

Later in the study, we will see how combining conversational marketing with ABM has proven to increase growth.

Gifting/Mailers had easily the lowest adoption rate at 22%. This strategy gives a more traditional approach to ABM, and is very effective for those who have implemented it (we will discuss this later). As it stands, targeted mailers are mostly used by mid-sized companies, as seen below. High variable costs have kept smaller companies and startups from implementing mailers (10% adoption among these companies)



How are marketing teams leveraging customer success?



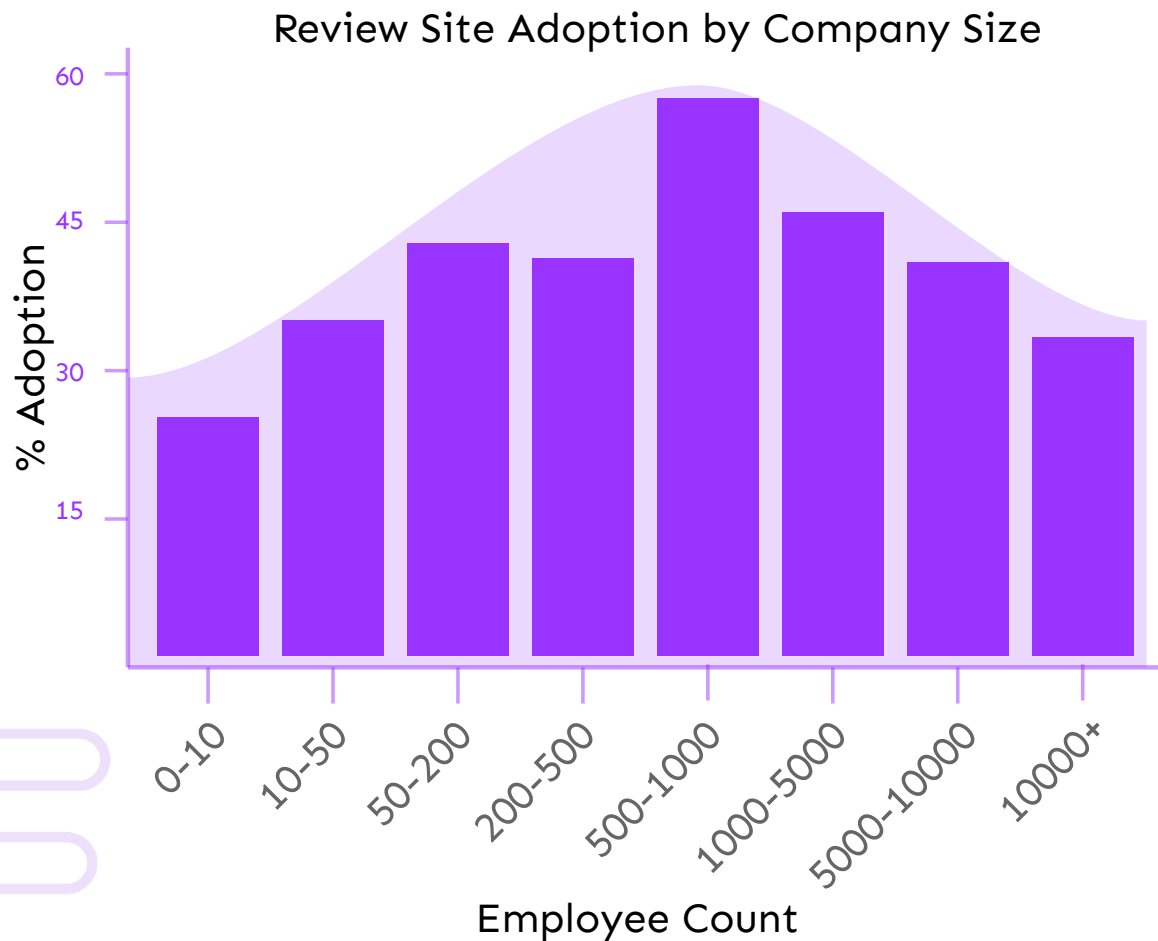
Case studies and testimonials are being by used by 70% and 67% of respondents respectively. These are the most digestable ways for prospects to get examples of how your product has objectively provided utility and/or ROI. The ability to utilize these strategies for SEO purposes is likely another reason for high adoption.

Case Studies & Testimonials

Leverage **SEO**

& provide **Utility**

Customer Marketing



REVIEW SITE MARKETING

Review sites have only 41% adoption among respondents. This may seem low, but small and very large companies are less incentivized to use review sites.

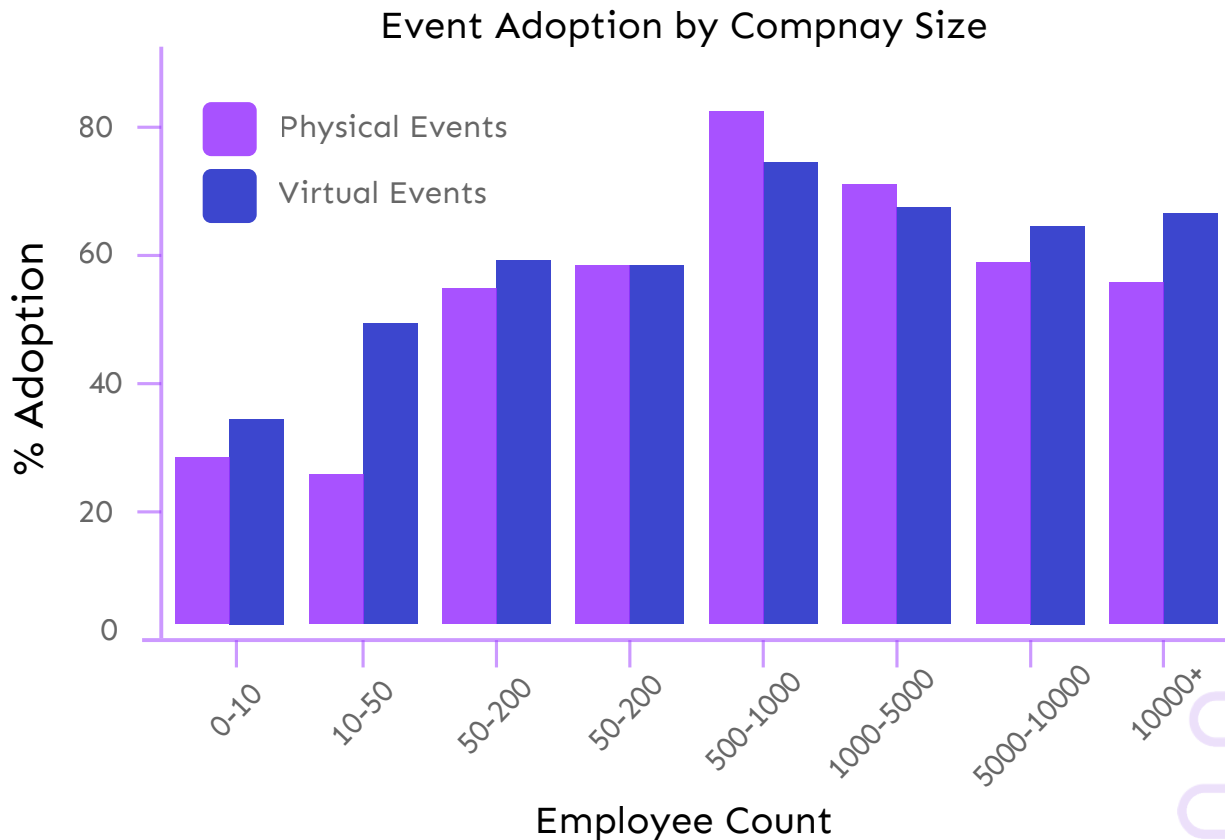
The chart above shows a bell-curve type distribution exists for review site usage. Smaller companies face some significant hurdles when trying to compete with the volume of reviews received by established competitors. Larger companies, on the other hand, rely less on customer marketing, and more on brand recognition and retention.

Marketing Events

While smaller companies see as low as 34% adoption, companies over 500 employees see northward of 60% adoption.

Smaller companies are going to be more sensitive to upfront costs that are inherent to events. Hosting a virtual event is generally much cheaper than hosting/participating in a physical event, but small companies aren't using physical events either.

Companies with 50 or less employees use physical events less than 30% of the time.



The variance in adoption is even more exaggerated for physical events than for virtual ones. Usage peaks for companies with 500 - 1000 employees; more than 80% of these companies participate in physical events. Companies any larger than this are less likely to adopt this strategy, as the "brand awareness" incentive of physical events is probably less effective.

Why do large companies prefer physical events, even after the pandemic?

Physical events often serve different purposes, including recruiting, and pure brand awareness. Smaller firms don't need to conduct recruiting at a larger scale, and are likely more tactical about their branding through product and customer marketing.

Performance

Section Introduction

Now that we know who is using which strategies, which ones are actually the most effective? We asked survey participants to report the annual growth rate of their company's revenue. We used this as our success metric, and used regression analysis to determine which strategies were being used by the fastest growing companies in the industry.

In the analysis, we included company size, industry, location, etc. as control variables. We also included other metrics summarized earlier such as conversion rate, sales medium, etc. Any strategies that did not significantly affect growth were omitted.

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Effective Strategies

DRIP MARKETING

Those with

DRIP
MARKETING
Experienced

30%
*Higher
Growth*

According to our analysis the most effective strategy is drip marketing. Companies incorporating this strategy saw 30% higher growth. While "drip marketing" is a broad term, it generally encompasses the nurturing of a individual at any stage of the process. While traditionally these sequences were used for new prospects, growth leaders now incorporate them into their reselling and retention strategies. The effectiveness of this strategy is likely a combination of its low cost and necessity.

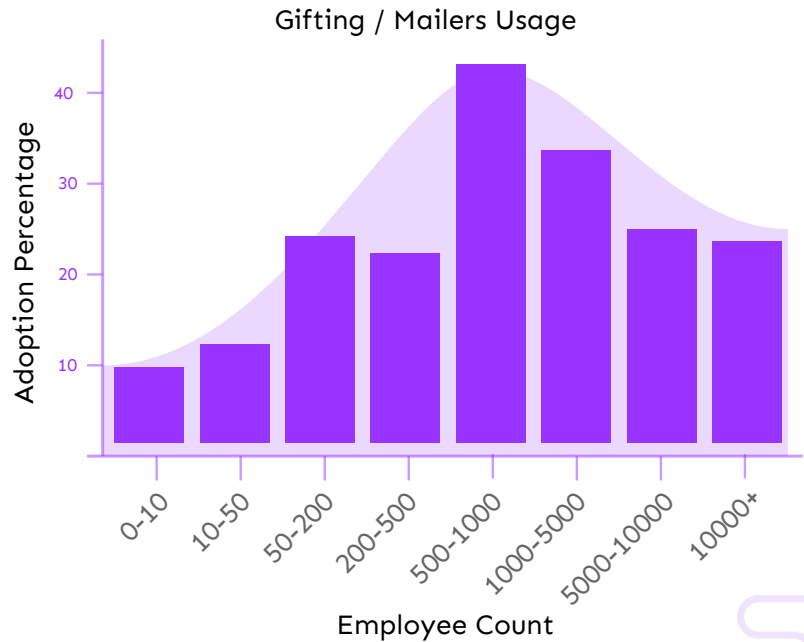
Once the drip marketing flows is set up, there is little cost involved, aside from maintenance and strategy tweaks. Almost every marketing automation and ABM tool has drip functionality built in, so the software itself is also pretty low cost.

Some tactics and strategies should be put into place by every business, ad one could argue drip marketing is included in that list. In order to build relationships with propsects and clients, communication must remain steady. While verbal communications are best, codified dialogue helps to nurture the relationship in a productive manner.

GIFTING MAILERS

Targeted gifting/mailers are another strategy that is underutilized by growth teams in 2022. All else equal, companies that adopt a mailer strategy see 13% higher growth. Despite it being one of the least used strategies to engage with prospects, it has one of the largest positive effects among all variables evaluated.

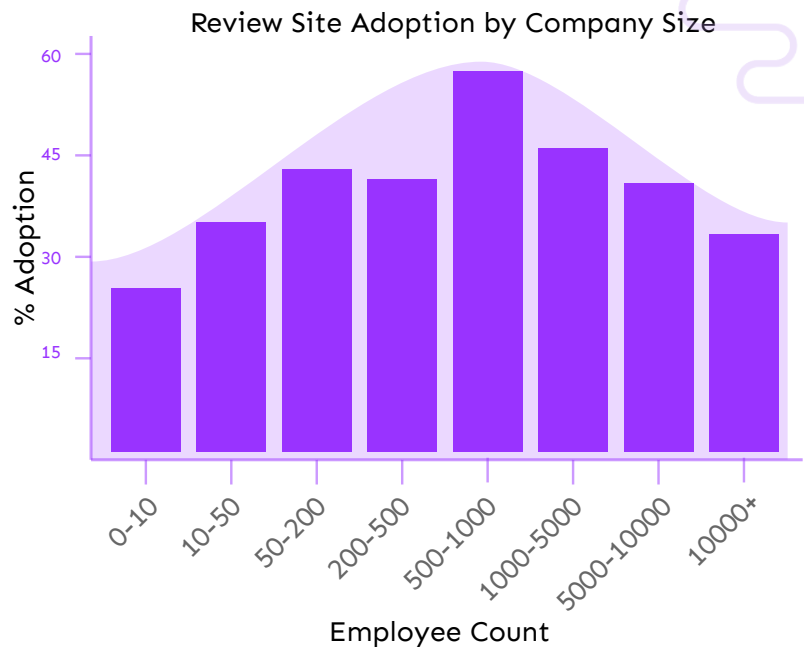
13%
Higher Growth



REVIEW SITES

Those who use review sites to showcase their product (such as G2) see 12% higher growth than those who don't. As seen previously, mid-size to larger-sized companies most often leverage these sites to gain market reputation and attract prospects looking for new options. While smaller companies and startups use these sites at a lower rate, it is still advantageous for them, and is probably underutilized.

12%
Higher Growth



BLOGGING

Blogs likely have the best combination of usage and effectiveness. It is the most used strategy among marketers, and also accounts for 11% higher growth for adopters. Blogs are typically very low cost, and provide lots of value outside of the content itself; particularly SEO value.

11%
Higher Growth

ABM + CONVERSATIONAL MARKETING

While neither conversational marketing nor ABM saw a significant effect on growth, the combination of the two did. Firms that use conversational marketing and ABM saw 7% more growth than those who didn't combine these strategies. This synergy is becoming more common, as companies use their conversational marketing strategy to engage with prospects live on their site, and then use ABM to guide them through the buyer journey. This gives a full-funnel approach to account-based strategies, and is also commonly referred to as "Account-Based Engagement". Companies like ChatFunnels have ushered in all-encompassing Account-Based Engagement Platforms that helps guide prospects from their very first website visit to becoming a customer.

SELLING ONLINE

Those who sell their product online are more likely to have high growth. For every percent of a company's sales that is completed entirely online, growth increases by 0.3%. **That means that on average, a company that completes 50% of their sales online will have 15% higher growth than a company that completes all of their sales with a salesperson involved.** While it may not be feasible or effective to do all sales online (i.e. enterprise accounts will require extra attention), it provides a more streamlined experience for buyers, and brings down variable costs.

Those who complete
50% of Sales
ONLINE
Experienced

15%
*Higher
Growth*

REFERRALS AND PARTNERSHIPS

Those who have no referral or partnership programs have 6% lower growth. Outside of sourcing their own deals, these opportunities often have the highest close rates, and shortest sales cycles.

6%
**Higher
Growth**

What strategies/behaviors led to the lowest growth?

PAID SOCIAL

The lowest performing marketing strategy that we evaluated was paid social (24% lower growth). Despite high usage, it appears as though this market is more than saturated, and marketers are not getting a return on their investment compared to other strategies. Paid social is often a natural progression of a team's organic social strategy. But unlike the fixed cost nature of an organic strategy, paid social brings high costs, especially for smaller firms who have smaller budgets and who are still experimenting with their brand and product identities.

EMAIL MARKETING

Those who use email marketing have 18% lower growth than those who don't. This is likely an oversaturated market. Cheap costs of entry, low variable costs, and scalability are all characteristics that led to high adoption. But spam is more prevalent than ever, making recipients frustrated and email hosting services on high alert. This market is completely dependent as the tolerance of email users to receive marketing material, which has been diluted by spam and overly automated templates.

INFLATED CONVERSION RATES

Conversion rates actually have a negative correlation with growth; the higher the reported website conversion rate, the lower the company's annual growth is. This is likely due to high growth companies taking a "quality over quantity" approach. While their website is converting at a lower rate, these companies are stricter and more targeted about who is considered a lead. Their sales teams spend less time sifting through low intent prospects, and productivity increases.

Common Strategy Combinations

Section Introduction

What strategies did companies most often use together? We looked at strategies across different groups to get a better idea of common combinations, and only reported on those that are statistically significant.

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PAID SEARCH — PAID SOCIAL

PAID SEARCH — ORGANIC SEARCH

E-BOOKS — BLOGS

VIRTUAL EVENTS — PHYSICAL EVENTS

While many companies have replaced physical events with virtual events in the aftermath of the pandemic, some are choosing to use them in tandem.

TESTIMONIALS — CASE STUDIES

These strategies are often very synergized; case studies are usually more data-driven, while testimonials tend to be the more anecdotal, qualitative pieces of product marketing.

TRADITIONAL — VIRTUAL EVENTS

The only significant negative correlation that existed was between traditional marketing and virtual events. These strategies lie on opposite ends of the “digital” spectrum, and it’s unsurprising that hosting virtual events makes it less likely that you also implement traditional marketing