

REPORT & RESULTS

# Inside the Head of a Marketing Leader: The Buyer's Journey



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# Introduction

## “How do my peers make buying decisions?”

It's a question that's on the mind of many of today's B2B marketing leaders — and for good reason. The role of the marketing leader is evolving, expanding to focus on more strategic purchase decisions that span the entire customer lifecycle. And with this expansion comes the greater potential that your decisions more broadly impact the success of your company as well as the other functions across your organization.

Which brings us back to the question at hand, “How do my

peers make buying decisions?” Or more importantly, what's their involvement like throughout the purchasing process? What drives their ability to make better buying decisions? How do they play a more value-added role within their organization? And, of course, where do you stand compared to them?

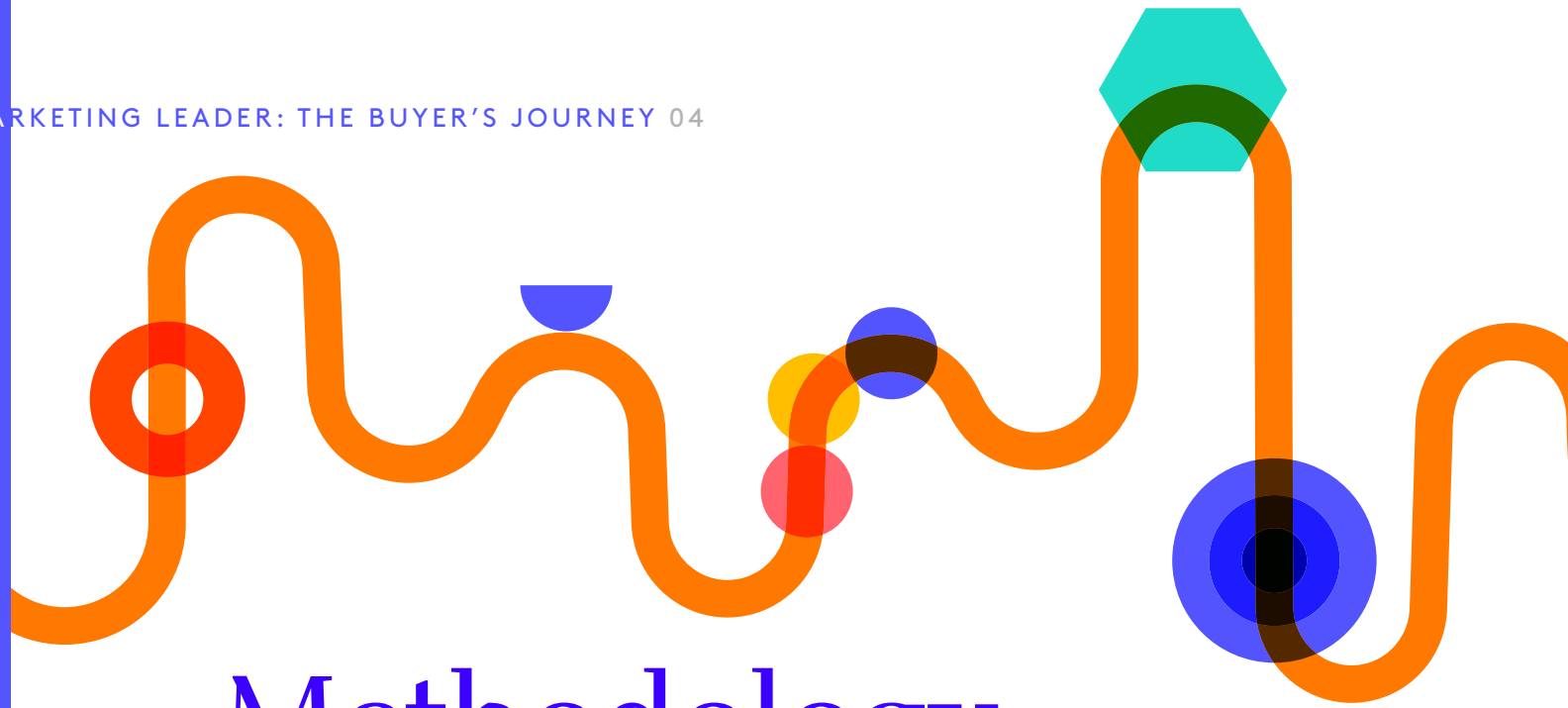
For B2B marketing leaders, knowledge is power. And understanding what your peers are doing gives you the ability to change, improve, and, ultimately, raise the bar not

only for your organization, but for the industry at-large.

**How do your peers make buying decisions? It's time to find out.**

Along the way, you might also discover areas for improvement in your own marketing and the way you enable your buyers with your company's content.

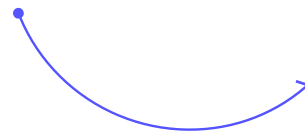




# Methodology

To understand how B2B marketing leaders engage the buyer's journey, interact with content, and make decisions, PathFactory and Heinz Marketing conducted a survey in December 2018.

The following responses came from 204 B2B marketing leaders across various organization sizes.



**Respondents were pre-qualified for this survey using the following criteria:**

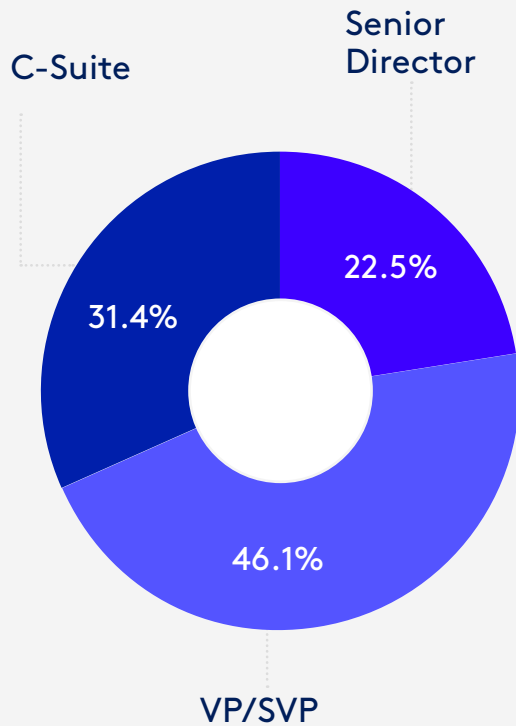
- A respondent's function must be associated with "Marketing."
- A respondent's title must be a "Senior Director," "VP/SVP," or "C-Suite"
- A respondent must have decision-making authority and/or influence in the buying decision process within their organization

Respondents who did not meet all of the above criteria were excluded from the survey.

# Respondent breakdown

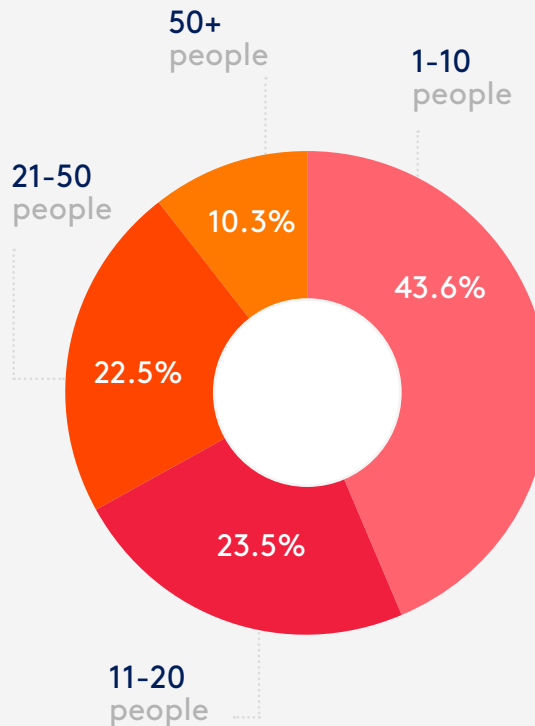
## Title/role

Which of the following titles best reflects the level of responsibility you have in your current role?



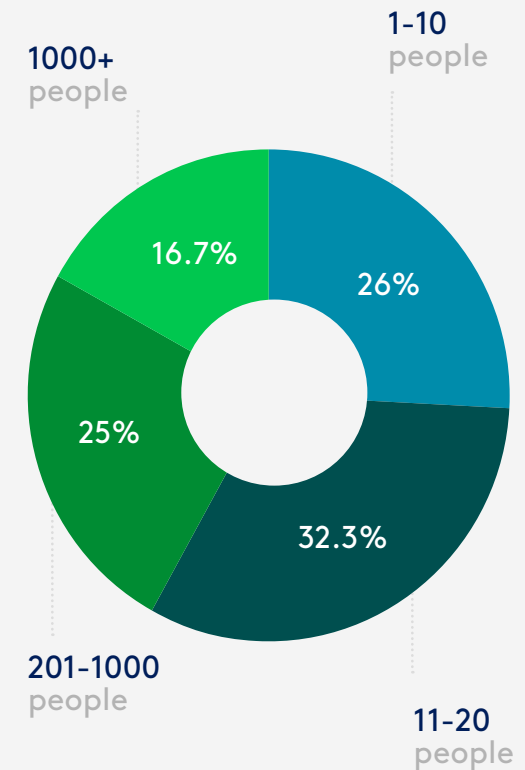
## Number of reports

Approximately, how many people report to you?



## Company size

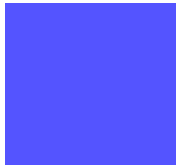
Which best reflects your company's size?



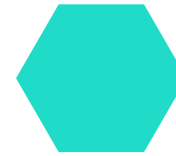
# Key findings

01

**Anyone can vocalize a challenge, but it's the marketing leader who initiates the buying process.**



2 in 5 marketing leaders report that anyone in any role can be the first to express challenges around a strategy, tactic, or tool. Rather, whoever vocalizes an issue is more dependent on the situation than it is on the actual role of that person. However, in most cases, it's the marketing leader who formally initiates the buying process.



02

**Marketing leaders are heavily involved at the beginning and end of the buyer's journey.**


Once the process is set in motion, over 9 in 10 marketing leaders are heavily involved at both the beginning and the end of the buyer's journey. And while 62% of marketing leaders work within a buying committee of 1-5 other people, 2 in 3 will *likely not* delegate purchase decisions to other members.

# Key findings



**03**  
**Marketing leaders are too regularly served lackluster content.**

92% of marketing leaders report that content plays an important part in their decision-making process, but 1 in 2 leaders feel that the content they receive is irrelevant to their pain points, challenges, and responsibilities. And this irrelevance makes leaders less responsive to content. As a result, marketing leaders turn to outside sources to find what they're looking for.



**04**  
**Marketing leaders take buyer enablement into their own hands.**

When companies aren't delivering what they need, a vast majority of marketing leaders bring it on themselves to find relevant information through other means. Asking peers or colleagues, browsing third-party review sites, and reading analyst reports are among the ways a marketing leader continues down the buyer's journey on their own terms.

# What do these key findings reveal?

That the way marketing leaders engage the buyer's journey is one built on self-reliance. Although they have other members on their team to assist them, these self-empowered leaders won't sit around waiting for a solution to fall into their lap. Instead, marketing leaders dedicate massive amounts of time and resources to find exactly what they're looking for since these resources are rarely

readily available to them when they need it.

The creation of the B2B buying committee was intended to lighten the load of the buying process for marketing leaders. However, our research has indicated otherwise. Though these committees of decision makers and influencers are present in a majority of organizations, the onus is

still on the marketing leader, themselves, to see a decision through from start to finish.

But before we dive into the weeds of how marketing leaders involve themselves in the decision-making process, first we must understand just how many other people are involved in either making or influencing a decision as members of the buying committee.



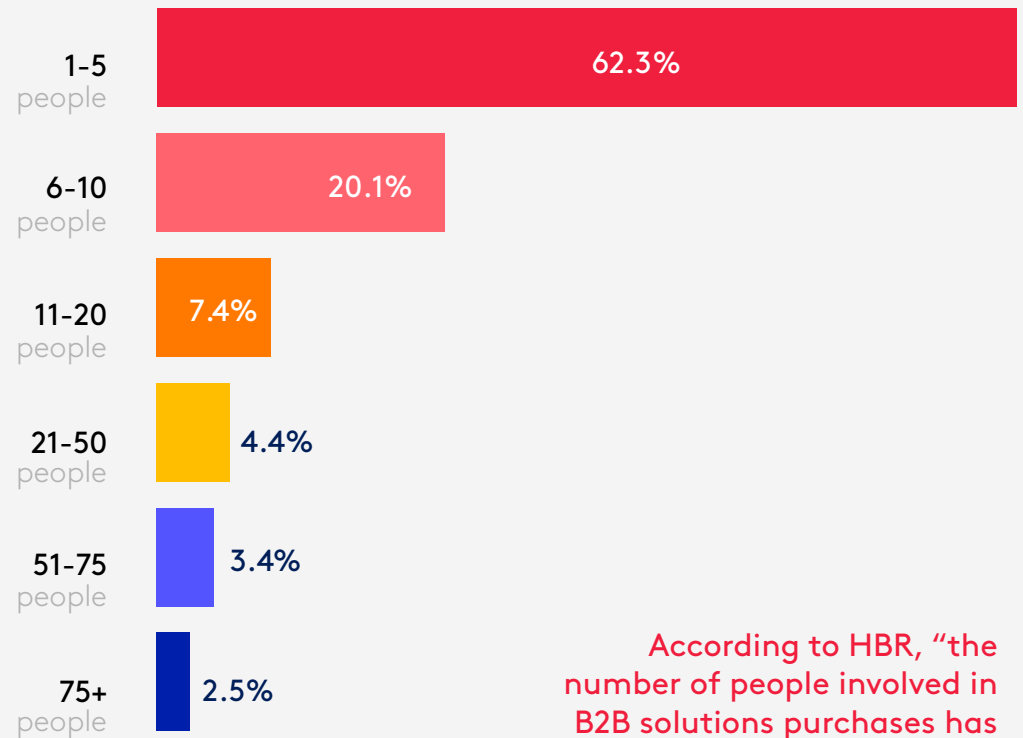


## The buying committee

62.3% of marketing leaders report working in a buying committee of 1-5 people and 20.1% report a group of 6-10 people.

In large organizations, the size of a marketing leader's buying committee tends to be even bigger. More than 20% of organizations with 201-1000 employees have buying committees of more than 50 people and 18% of organizations with 1000+ employees have buying committees made up of more than 50 people as well.

*How many other people are involved in either making or influencing that decision?*



According to HBR, "the number of people involved in B2B solutions purchases has climbed from an average of 5.4 (in 2015) to 6.8 (in 2017)."

The New Sales Imperative



# The beginning of the buyer's journey

At the beginning of every buying journey is a need, with a person or department recognizing a challenge and requesting a solution, or a situation driving the need to pursue an alternative. How marketing leaders go about initiating this journey varies, as well as the level of involvement they have throughout the process, including deciding whether or not to pursue a solution.

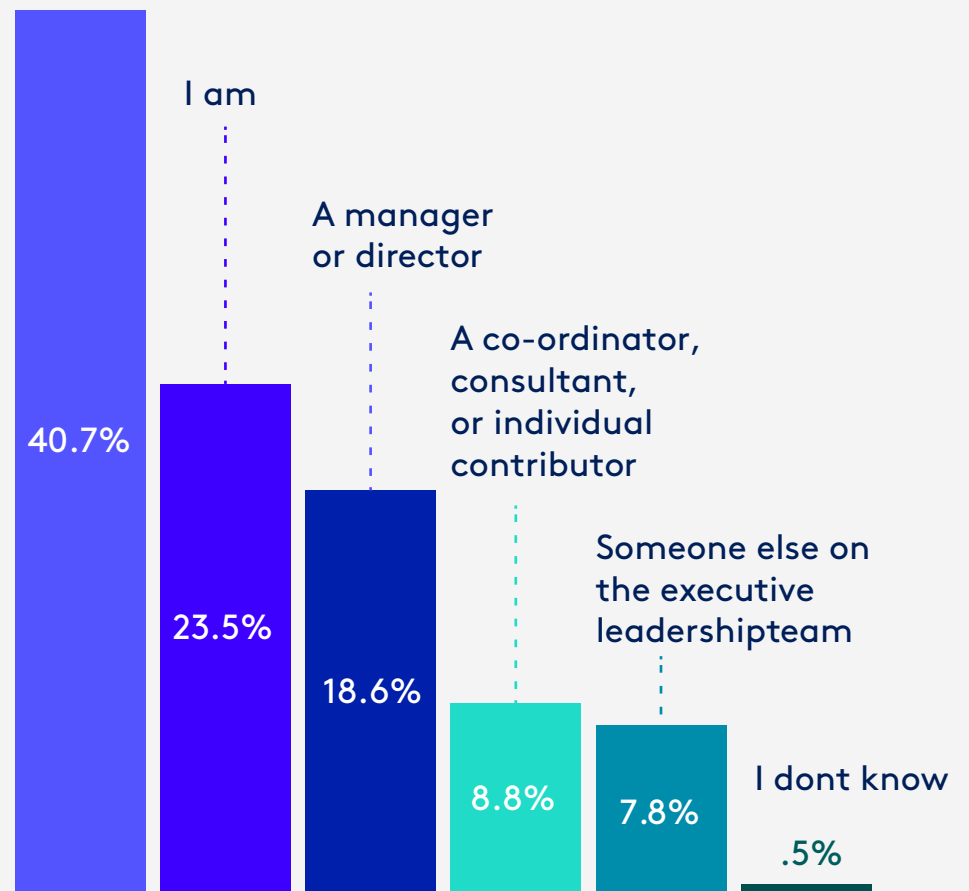
## Vocalizing challenges

When it comes to vocalizing strategic, tactical, or tool-based challenges, 40.7% of marketing leaders report that the initial concern can come from any number of roles, because it usually depends more on the situation than on the person's position in the organizational structure.

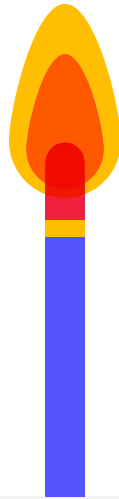
Outside of that, 23.5% of marketing leaders themselves are among the first to vocalize challenges, followed by managers and directors at 18.6%.

*Typically, who in your company is the first to vocalize a strategic, tactical, or tool-based challenge when it arises?*

A mix of all roles depending on the situation



## Initiating the process



How exactly is the buying process initiated among marketing leaders? How involved are they, and who takes the lead? In general, marketing leaders are very involved across the board, and they are usually the ones who lead the discovery and decision-making processes.

## Personal involvement

Although the issue can be raised by any number of people within an organization, **marketing leaders are heavily involved at the beginning of the decision-making process**: 93.6% report being involved or very involved in the process. This is true for marketing leaders in organizations of all sizes.

Even when a marketing leader works within a buying committee of 5, 10, 50, or more people, heavy involvement remains a constant. In fact, for marketing leaders in buying committees with 51 or more people, the personal involvement of marketing leaders increases at the beginning of the journey:

**80%** of marketing leaders in buying committees of **75 or more** people are heavily involved in the decision-making process

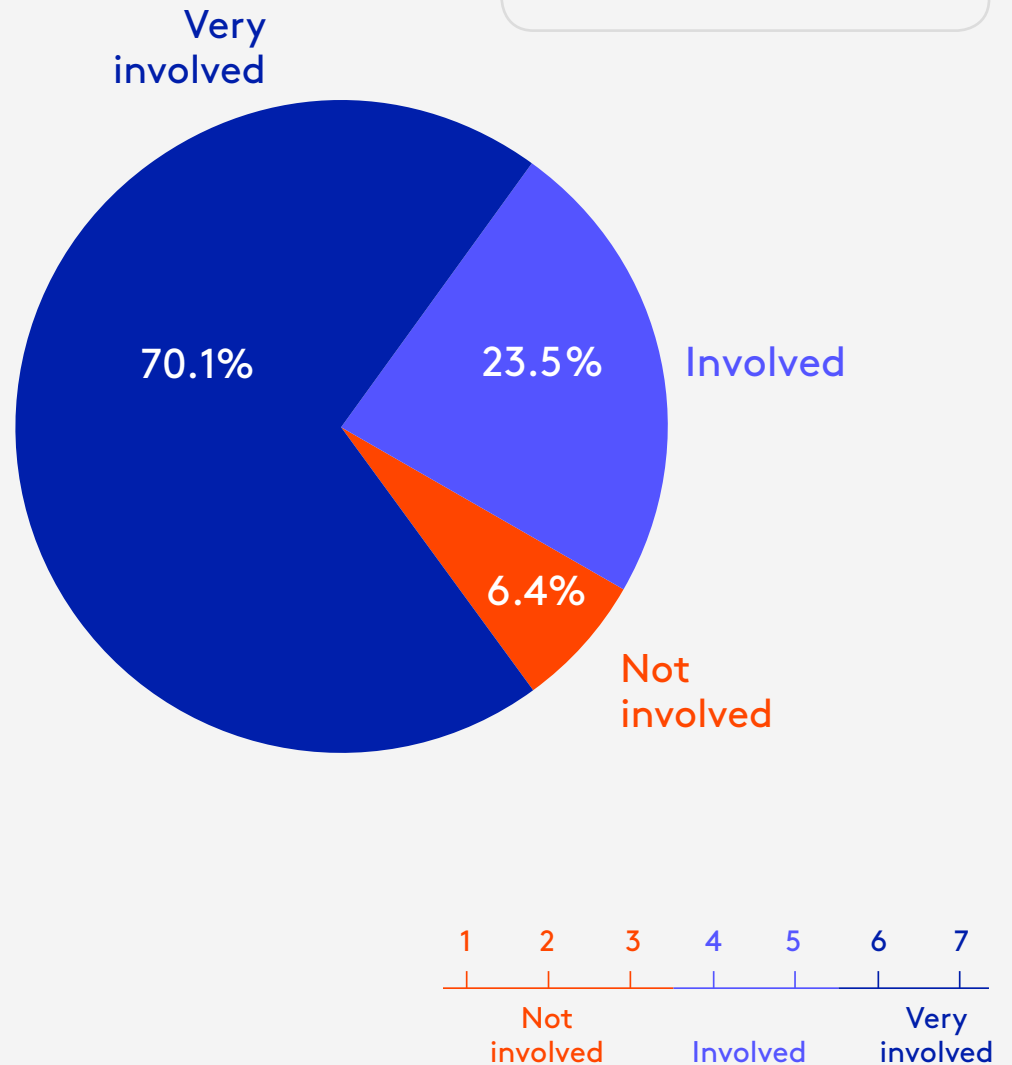
**85.7%** of those in committees of between **51-75** people are heavily involved

## Personal involvement

While one would think that the bigger the committee, the less involvement would be required of a marketing leader, it's actually the opposite. As buying committees grow larger, the level of personal involvement at the beginning of the process also increases.

Why could this be? As the dynamics of a committee become more complex, the responsibility to find a decision falls more on the individual who is leading the effort. Or perhaps it's that larger buying committees deal with purchase decisions that have greater costs and broad-scale impact across the organization, putting the onus on the individual leader to see that the decision they're about to pursue can actually address their needs.

*How involved are you, personally, towards the beginning of the decision-making process?*



## Leading the charge

With their heavy involvement at the beginning of the decision-making process, it's not surprising that nearly half of all marketing leaders lead the charge when it comes to formally initiating the buying process.

But marketing leaders are not present solely to give the green light in the decision-making process. So just how involved are they at the beginning of the journey?

*Who usually initiates the buying process within your organization?*



*How is your company's buying process initiated?  
(Select all that apply.)*

## Other means of initiating the buyer's journey

As we saw earlier, 61.8% of marketing leaders confirm that a buying process begins when a challenge or pain point has been vocalized. While that is the most common way, there are other ways the buyer's journey begins as well:

While a majority of buying processes begin with the vocalization of a challenge or pain point, marketing leaders can initiate their buyer's journey from a number of other instances, including the end of a contract, coming across compelling content, or a vendor's marketing in the form of email marketing or an event presence.

Yet once the journey begins, what prompts these leaders to pursue a solution?



## Determining to pursue

Marketing leaders report that there are a number of ways to determine whether or not to pursue a prospective solution, regardless of their company size and size of the buying committee. **The top 3 ways marketing leaders decide which solutions to pursue are:**

- Have others on their team conduct research (57.8%)
- Read analyst reports about prospective solutions (52%)
- Have others on their team go on discovery calls (48%)

Marketing leaders are heavily involved at the beginning of the buyer's journey, but as they venture further down the buyer's journey, what kinds of resources, materials, and assets are waiting for them? And more importantly, how do marketing leaders respond?

*At the start of the buying process, how do you and the other members of your company's buying committee determine which prospective solutions to pursue?  
(Select all that apply.)*



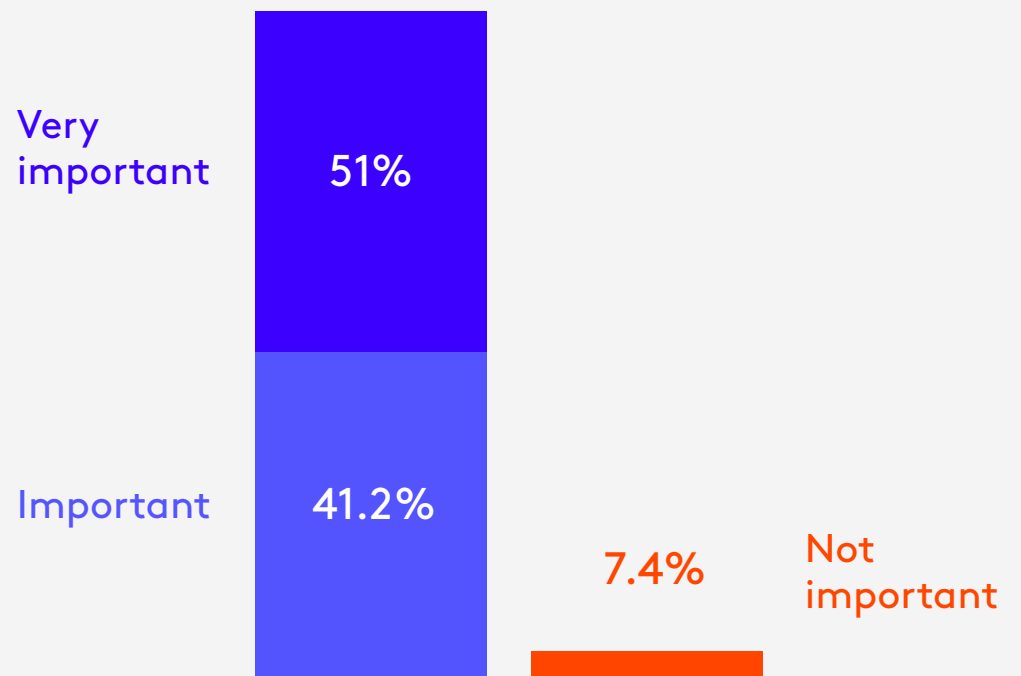
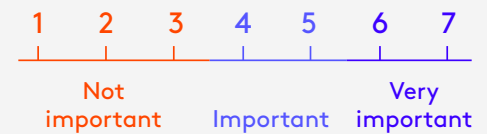


# The role of content

Once a buying journey begins, marketing leaders and buying committee members require information to make informed purchasing decisions. This information is usually in the form of content supplied by a vendor. However, many marketing leaders look beyond vendor-supplied content for more objective, useful, and relevant information.

Most vendors use content in some form in their marketing, and 92.2% of marketing leaders report that a vendor's content plays an important role in their decision-making process, even when the marketing leader is a senior director, VP or SVP, or part of the C-Suite.

*On a scale of 1-7, how big of a role does a prospective vendor's content play in your decision-making process, where 7 is very important and 1 is not important at all?*



## Issues with content

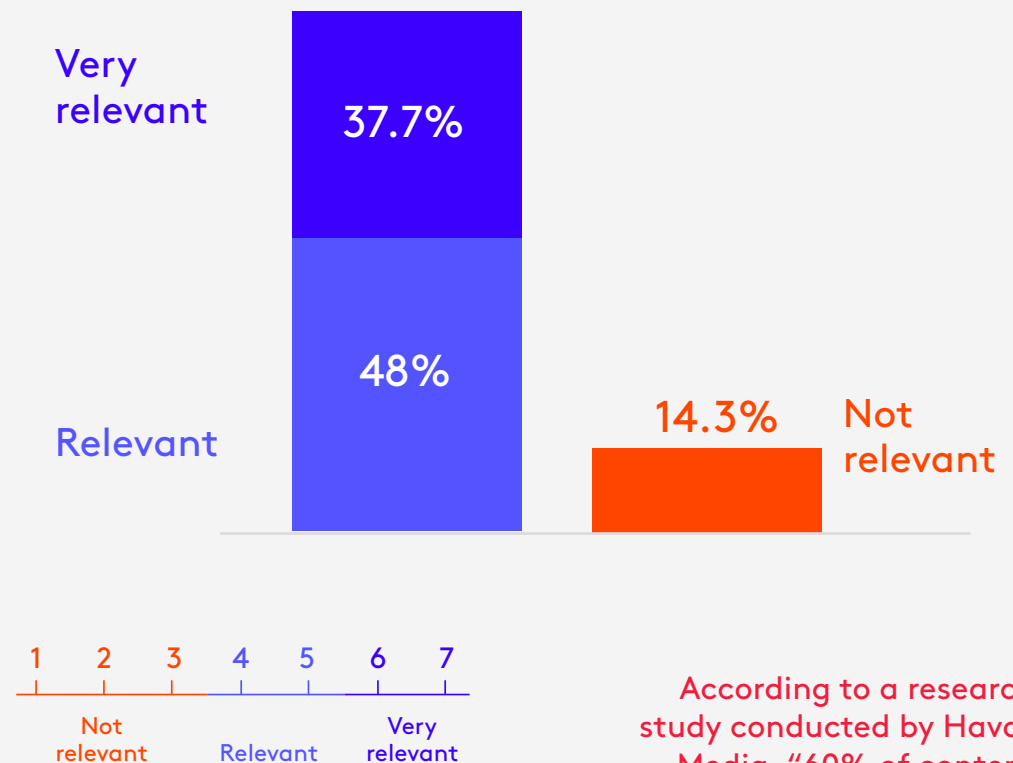
However, while the vast majority of marketing leaders place a high value on content, much of that content lacks relevance or the ability to help marketing leaders advance their decision-making process.

## Relevance is lacking

Irrelevant content is a huge issue, with 48% of marketing leaders reporting that the content they receive is only somewhat relevant to them. This is true for marketing leaders of all titles and roles. Surprisingly, 14.2% of marketing leaders report that the content sent to them is not relevant at all.

When more than 9 in 10 marketing leaders report that a vendor's content plays an important role in their decision-making process, but only 37.7% of that content is actually relevant, there is a serious disconnect.

*Typically, how relevant are the types of marketing materials/content you currently receive to you?*



According to a research study conducted by Havas Media, "60% of content produced by brands is declared as poor, irrelevant, or failing to deliver."

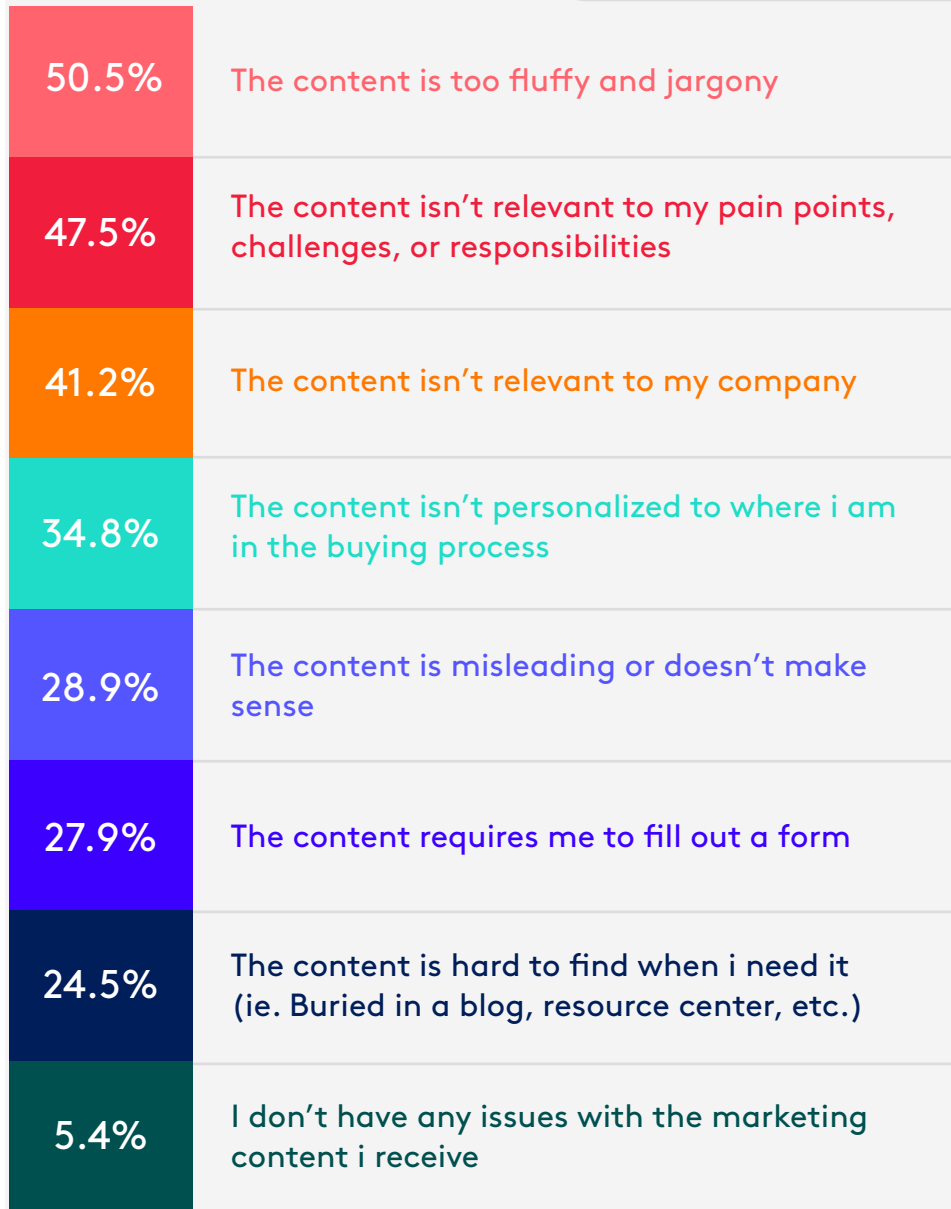
Havas Media

*What are the biggest issues you have with the marketing content you currently receive?*

## Other challenges

Irrelevant content is an issue for marketing leaders, but a general lack of relevance isn't the only issue they face. Specifically, content is irrelevant to marketing leaders because it's poorly done or not targeted to a marketing leader's needs:

Despite these failings on the part of the content, a majority of marketing leaders still say that content has value in their decision-making process. So what kind of content *do* marketing leaders prefer?





# Engaging with content

Marketing leaders have many options for tracking down and consuming the content they seek, with a strong preference for third-party content that will give them objective information about a vendor's solution. How they consume that content varies, but for the most part, digital channels prevail.

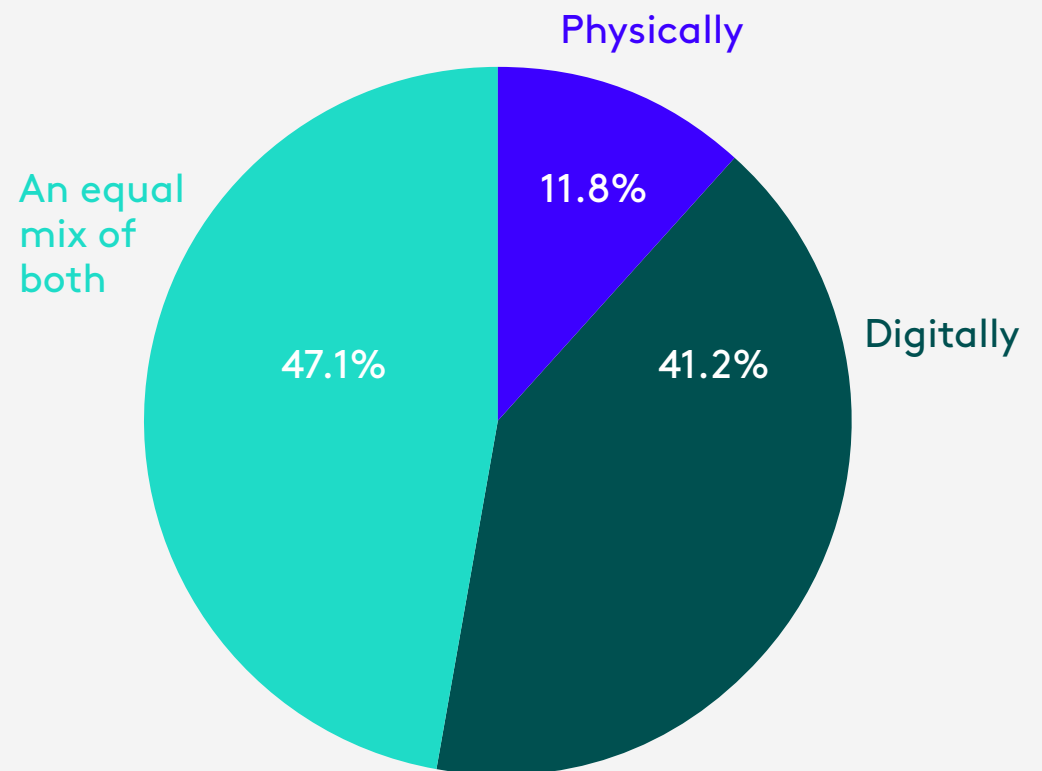
*What is your preferred way to engage with a prospective company's marketing/sales content?*

## Content delivery

While 47.1% of marketing leaders report preferring an equal mix of physical and digital content, digital far outweighs physical content for those marketers who prefer one or the other: 41.2% of marketing leaders prefer to engage with content digitally.

Marketing leaders are always on the move, so it makes sense that they'd prefer content that they can take wherever they go. Plus, digital content is easy to share with their buying committees.

Knowing they prefer digital content, what kinds of content are they most likely to engage with?



*What content formats do you find most valuable or interesting?*

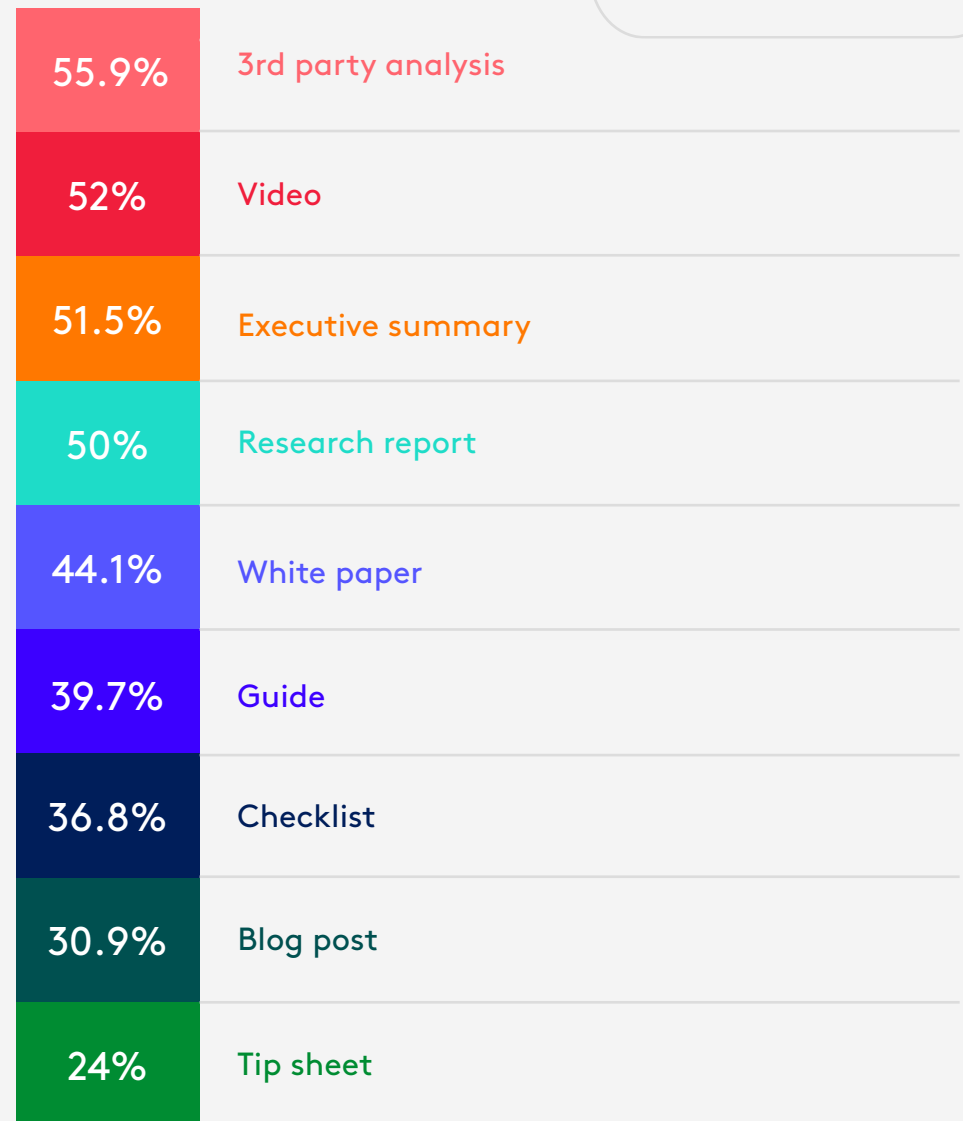
## Content formats

When asked about content formats, 55.9% of marketing leaders report that third-party analyses are most valuable to them in their decision-making processes. This is followed by:

- 52% valuing video
- 51.5% valuing executive summaries
- And 50% valuing research reports

The high value of third-party analysis speaks to a marketing leader's need for added validation from an outside source. While a vendor can say whatever they want about their own value, learning about a vendor from a third-party source can speak volumes more, especially when we consider that over half of marketing leaders consider vendor content to be fluffy and full of jargon.

But this is far from an exhaustive list of content types. What other sources do marketing leaders turn to in order to find what they're looking for?



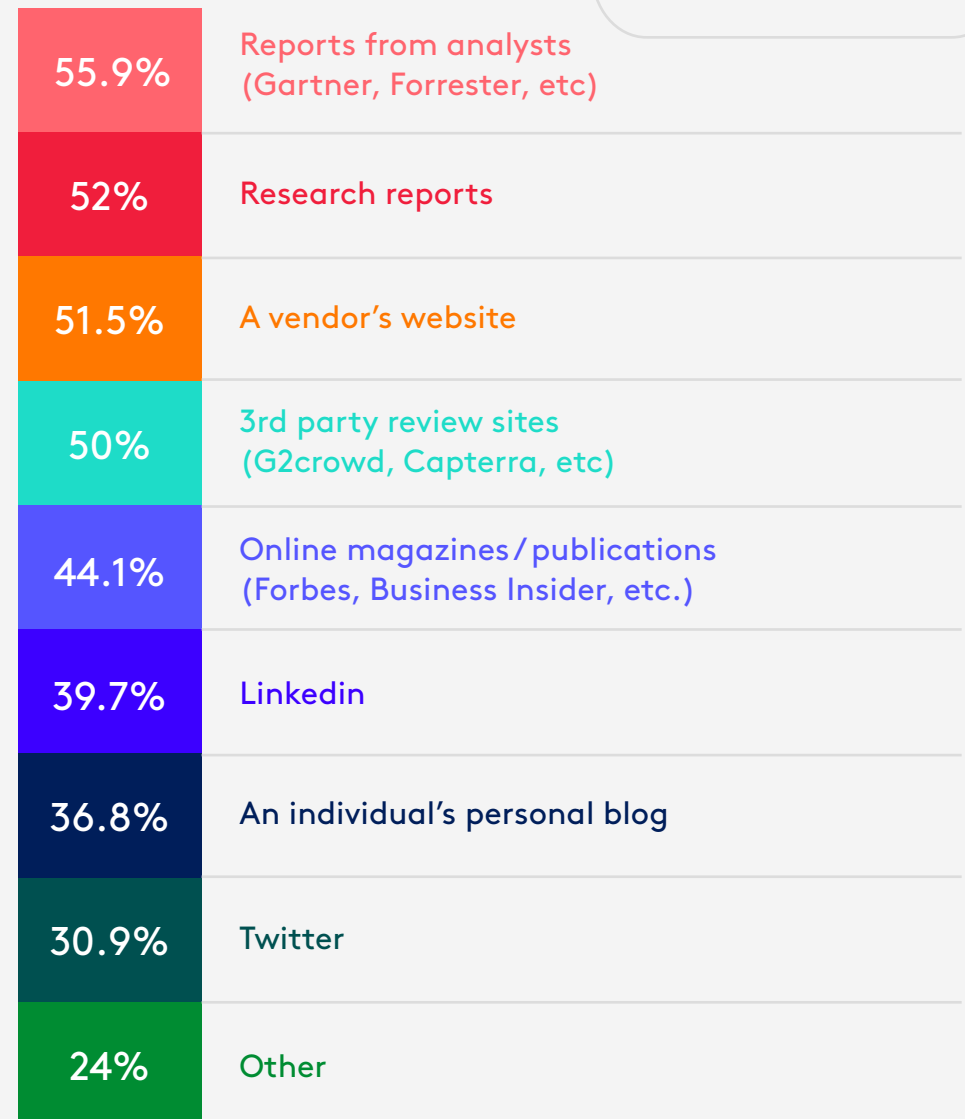
*What sources do you find most reliable in finding business information you need?*

## Content sources

Given the importance of third-party content, it's not surprising that 63.2% of marketing leaders turn to analyst reports to find the information they need on a prospective solution. In addition, 50.5% of marketing leaders refer to third-party review sites as well. Other popular content sources include:

- Research reports (55.4%)
- Vendor websites (52%)

Marketing leaders have many sources of content formats and sources to choose from, but which channels do they turn to most often to consume information?



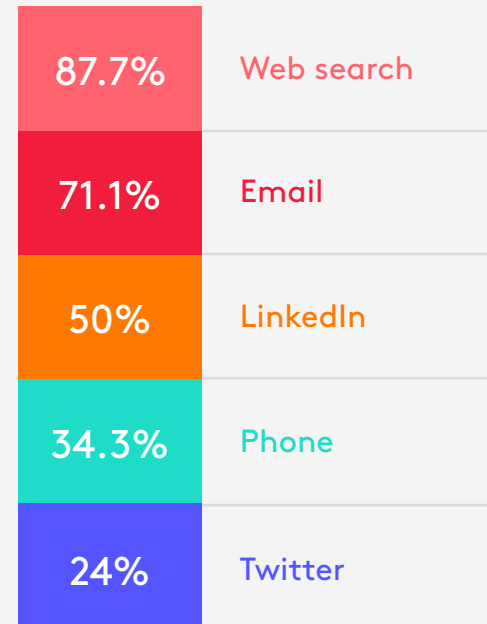
*What channels do you most commonly use to consume information?*

## Content channels

Marketing leaders turn to many common channels to consume information and research vendor solutions:

- 87.7% use web search
- 71.1% use email
- 50% use LinkedIn

Not surprisingly in this digital age, only 34.3% of marketing leaders use phone calls as a preferred method to consume information, and C-Suite members are least likely to use phone, at only 26.6%. What is surprising, given its popularity, is Twitter's position at the bottom of the list with only 24% of all marketing leaders using Twitter.

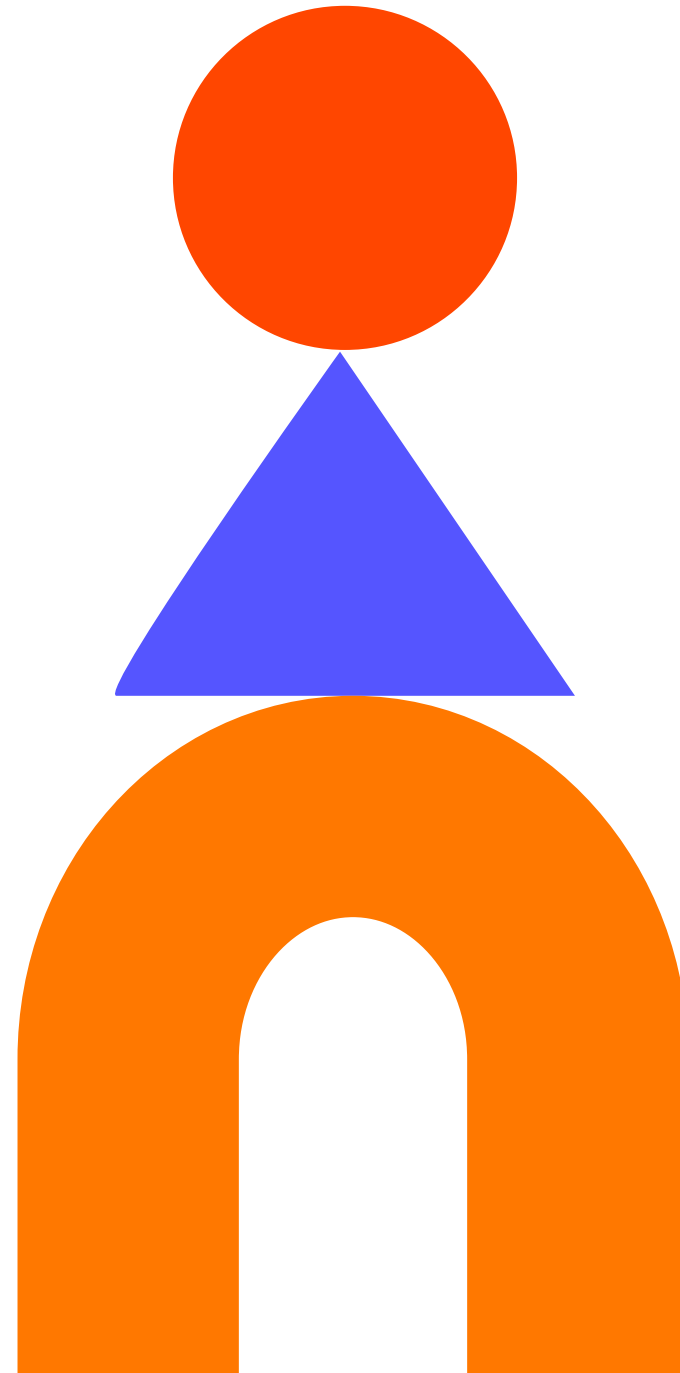




## The content challenge

While content plays a key role in a decision, the majority of content that's sent to marketing leaders is irrelevant, fluffy, or not targeted. However, marketing leaders need content to inform their buying-decisions and they actively use a wide range of channels and sources to find the information they're looking for.

And after the content has been discovered, consumed, and considered, and the decision-making process reaches the end, what role do marketing leaders play? Are they just as involved as they were at the start? Or do they offload responsibilities to their buying committee peers?





# The end of the buyers journey

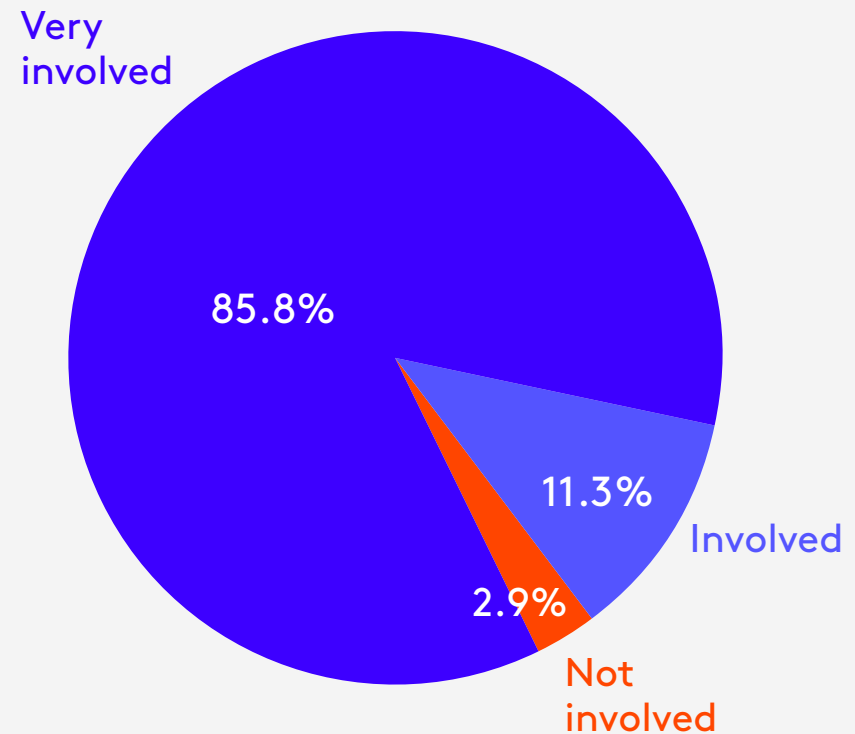
As marketing leaders transition through the buyer's journey, from initiation through discovery of content and to the final decision, most remain personally involved. And this involvement not just continues, but increases, even as they work with the other members of their buying committee.

## Personal involvement

While 93.6% of marketing leaders report being involved or very involved at the beginning of the buying process, even more are involved or very involved at the end as well: 97.1%. This is regardless of role, company size, or buying committee size.

What does this look like? How do marketing leaders involve themselves towards the end of the journey?

*How involved are you, personally, towards the end of the decision-making process?*



# Validation

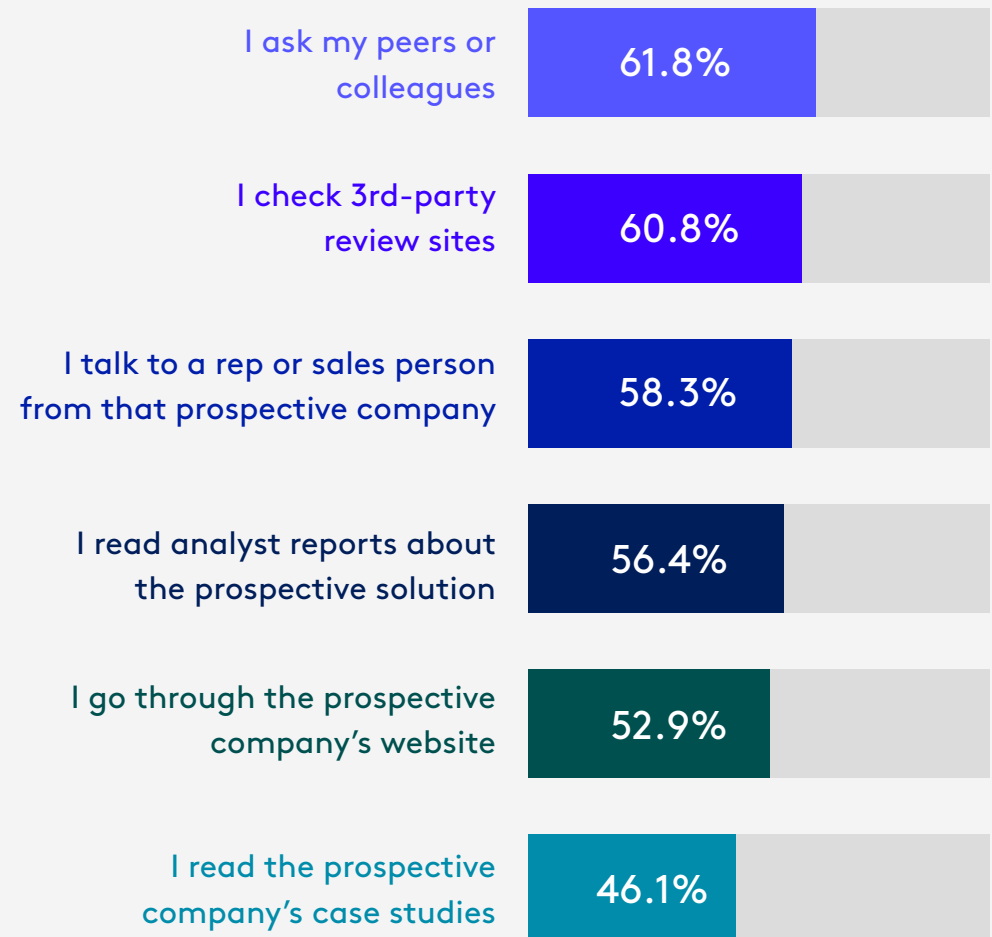
Marketing leaders are often involved in validating a prospective purchase, in a variety of ways:

- 61.8% will confer with their peers and colleagues about the decision
- 60.8% will check third-party review sites
- Another 58.3% will talk to a sales representative to get questions answered and concerns addressed
- And 56.4% will read additional analyst reports about the prospective solution

Just as a marketing leader uses a variety of channels and sources to learn more about a vendor, they use a varied approach to validate a prospective purchase.

And what about the rest of the buying committee? What roles do those individuals play?

*What is the most reliable/trustworthy way that you, personally, validate a prospective purchase? (Check all that apply.)*



## The buying committee

Toward the end of the buyer's journey, how marketing leaders confer with their buying committees and the level of trust they have in the members of those committees varies by the size of their committee.



## Meeting frequency

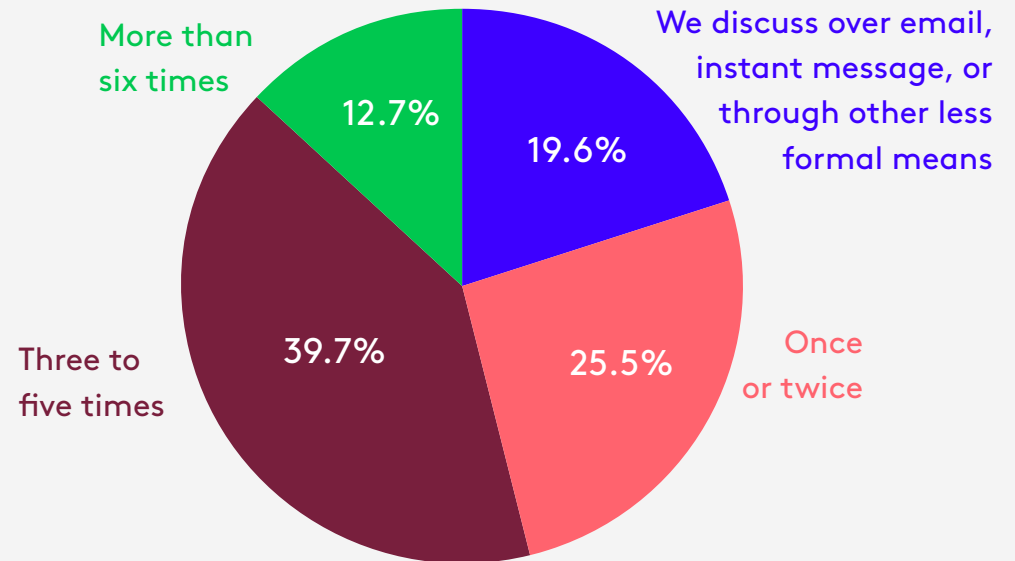
39.7% of all marketing leaders meet with their buying committee 3 to 5 times before making high-dollar purchase decisions.

Larger buying committees commonly use email, instant messages, or other informal means of communication. This is true of 42.9% of marketing leaders in committees of 51-75 people, and could be because of the challenges of scheduling meeting times for larger numbers of people.

However, for marketing leaders in committees with over 75 people, meeting more than 6 times to discuss a potential decision is the most common (60%), followed only by meeting through less formal means (40%).

Despite meeting and communicating with other members of the buying committee, which would seemingly give marketing leaders the ability to offload some of the weight of making a final decision, marketing leaders report that they rarely delegate this to the other members of the buying committee.

*When it comes to making a high-dollar purchase decision, on average, how frequently do you and the other members of your company's buying committee meet before a decision is made?*



	Size of buying committee					
	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-50	50-75	75+
Email, instant message, or through other less formal means	18.9%	19.5%	13.3%	11.1%	42.9%	40%
Once or twice	31.5%	12.2%	26.7%	22.2%	14.3%	
Three to five times	41.7%	41.5%	40%	33.3%	28.6%	
More than six times	6.3%	19.5%	20%	33.3%	14.3%	60%

# Delegation

Just 27.9% of all marketing leaders report often delegating the final purchase decision to other members of their team or buying committee, while 37.7% will only sometimes delegate, and 33.8% won't delegate at all.

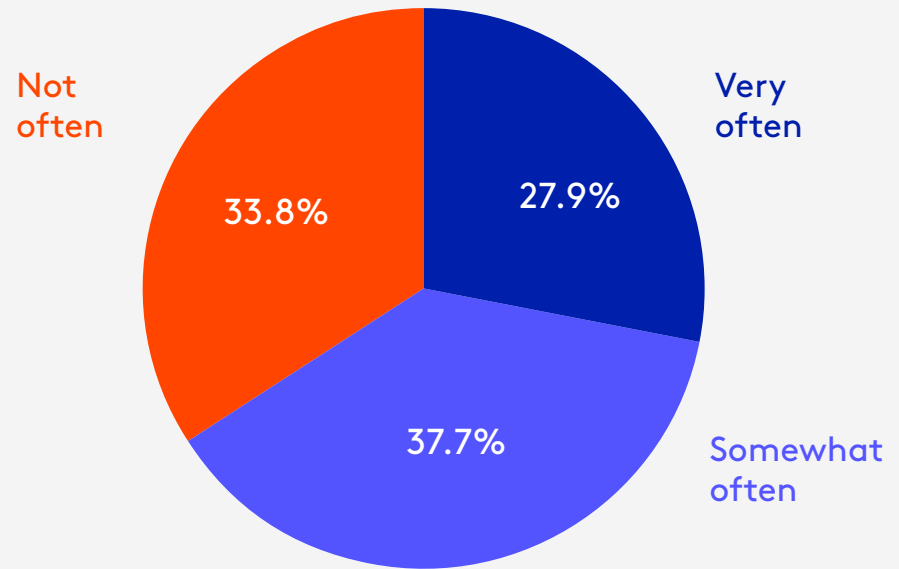
**37.5%** of C-Suite marketing leaders will often not delegate a decision

However, while marketing leaders seem reluctant to delegate their purchase decisions, the situation changes when buying committee sizes increase. The larger the committee, the more likely it is that delegation of a purchase decision occurs:

- 60% of marketing leaders in buying committees of over 75 people will often delegate to other members
- 71.4% of marketing leaders in buying committees of 51-75 people will do the same

While it's typical for a marketing leader to not delegate a purchase decision, the instances where they become more likely to do so are driven when the size of their committee increases. As more people are involved in the decision, it's more likely that a marketing leader finds someone they trust to make decisions on their behalf.

*On a scale of 1-7, how often do you delegate purchase decisions to other members of your team or your company's buying committee, where 7 is very often and 1 is not often at all?*



	Size of buying committee					
	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-50	50-75	75+
Very often	21.3%	26.8%	46.7%	44.4%	71.4%	60%
Somewhat often	34.6%	51.2%	26.7%	44.4%	28.6%	40%
Not often	43.3%	22%	26.7%	11.1%	14.3%	60%

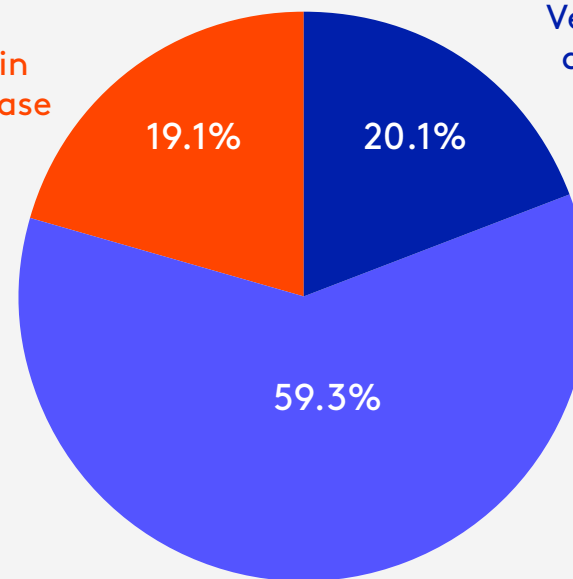
*How confident are you in your other executive peers in your company's buying committee to make decisions on your behalf?*

# Confidence in their peers

This reliability is echoed when looking at marketing leaders' confidence in their peers to make decisions on their behalf. Because while, in general, just 19% of marketing leaders are very confident in their executive peers, as the committee grows, so does their confidence. 60% of marketing leaders in buying committees of over 75 people are very confident in their peers. And 57% of those in committees between 51 and 75 people feel the same.

Marketing leaders may be more involved at the end of the decision-making process than at the beginning, but with larger buying committees comes a greater willingness to delegate to their executive peers within those committees. While, in general, there's a reluctance to delegation, as new situations arise and buying committees grow, that reluctance starts to wane.

I need to be involved in every purchase decision



Very confident - I don't need to be heavily involved

Somewhat confident - It depends on the type of purchase being made

	Size of buying committee					
	1-5	6-10	11-20	21-50	50-75	75+
Very often	11%	22%	33%	44%	57.1%	60%
Somewhat often	63%	63.4%	53.3%	44.4%	28.6%	20%
Not often	25.2%	9.8%	13.3%	11.1%	14.3%	20%



# Conclusion

**How do your peers make buying decisions? With thoughtfulness, personal involvement, and a whole lot of time and effort.**

As we've just seen, marketing leaders of all organizations and buying committee sizes place the onus on themselves to not only initiate a decision, but also to personally see it through to the end. Marketing leaders help to uncover the gaps in their teams and search for solutions that address them. And in the process, these individuals see

for themselves the extent of what options are out there while sifting through irrelevant content to find something that's of value.

The role of the marketing leader is one filled with challenges, but it's also not without its wins. The ability to problem solve, to lead the charge in finding a solution, to play both a strategic and an operational role in the buyer's journey — those are the traits of a successful marketing leader.

**Where do you stand amongst your peers? More importantly, what lessons can you apply to your own marketing strategy to ensure that your buyers get the most relevant information at the right time? Your buyers may also face similar challenges as they move through their buying journey and navigate the complexities of increasingly large buying committees.**



OVERVIEW

# Getting into the mind of a marketing leader

Typical buying committee size:  
**1-10 people**

## The beginning of the buyer's journey

**93%** are involved

**45%** personally initiate the process

### HOW THEY CHOOSE TO BEGIN THE JOURNEY

**46.6%** report hearing about a prospective solution from a third-party source

**61%** begins when a challenge or pain point has been vocalized

**45.1%** indicate that they're nearing the end of a contract and are actively looking for alternatives

**48%** of marketing leaders report that they or someone on their team found a prospective vendor's content interesting or relevant

### HOW THEY DETERMINE WHEN TO PURSUE

**52%** Read analyst reports about prospective solutions

**48%** Have others on their team go on discovery calls

**57.8%** Have others on their team conduct research

## The role of content

**92%** say content is important or very important to their decision-making process

### ISSUES WITH CONTENT RELEVANCE

**48%** of marketing leaders reporting that the content they receive is only somewhat relevant

**14%** say that content sent to them isn't relevant at all

**50.5%** of marketing leaders report that content is fluffy and full of jargon

**47.5%** believe that the content they receive isn't relevant to their actual pain points

**41.2%** report that the content isn't relevant to their company

**34.8%** report that the content they're sent isn't personalized to where they are in the decision-making process

## Content preferences

### DELIVERY

**41%** prefer digital

### FORMATS

**52%** value video

**51.5%** value executive summaries

**50%** value research reports

### SOURCES

**63.2%** of marketing leaders turn to analyst reports

**50.5%** refer to third-party review sites

**55.4%** turn to research reports

**52%** look at vendor websites

### CHANNELS

**87.7%** use web search

**71.1%** use email

**50%** use LinkedIn

## The end of the buyer's journey

**97.1%** of marketing leaders are involved

### HOW THEY VALIDATE

**61.8%** will confer with their peers and colleagues about the decision

**60.8%** will check third-party review sites

**58.3%** will talk to a sales representative to get questions answered and concerns addressed

**56.4%** will read additional analyst reports about the prospective solution

### MEETING FREQUENCY

**40%** meet with buying committee 3 to 5 times

### DELEGATION

**28%** of all marketing leaders report often delegating purchase decisions to other members of their team or buying committee

**34%** won't delegate at all

### CONFIDENCE IN THEIR PEERS

**19%** of marketing leaders are very confident in their executive peers making decisions on their behalf

RESEARCH REPORT BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Heinz Marketing is a B2B marketing and sales acceleration firm that delivers measurable revenue results. Every strategy, tactic, and action has a specific, measured purpose. Instead of focusing on the outcomes, we focus on the outcomes. What really matters is sales pipeline, closing business, and accelerating revenue.



PathFactory's Content Insight and Activation Platform helps B2B marketers understand the role of content in the buyer's journey and discover a new class of data to optimize the path to purchase. PathFactory uses this data and insight to optimize content delivery across every channel, connecting buyers with the most relevant information whenever and wherever they click.