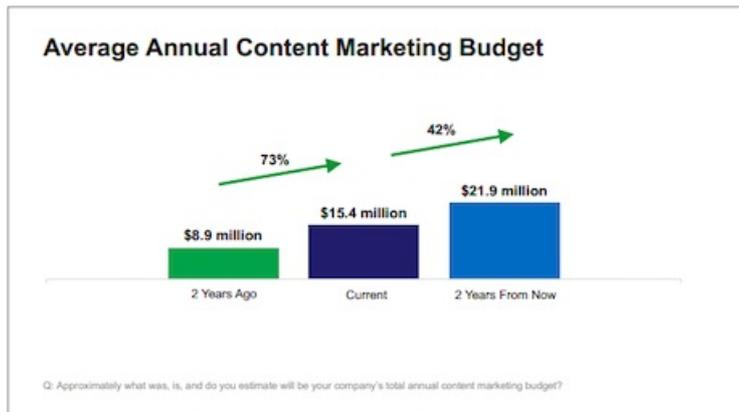


MARKETING

Marketers take to content marketing despite reservations over ROI, measurement

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Average annual content marketing budget is set for a 42 percent increase two years from now. Source: Association of National Advertisers, The Content Council

By MICKEY ALAM KHAN

Advertisers are increasingly embracing content marketing despite misgivings over the lack of accurate and insightful measurement of its effectiveness.

The "Growth and Opportunities in Content Marketing" study from the Association of National Advertisers in partnership with The Content Council found that spending on content marketing showed a 73 percent average budget upswing over a two-year period. Conducted in 2019 pre-COVID-19, the study also forecast a 42 percent jump in spending on content marketing in the next two years.

"It's clear from this important study that content marketing has become, in a very short time, a major tool for marketers seeking to engage consumers in new and different ways," said ANA CEO Bob Liodice in a statement.

"It's proof that a majority of advertisers are willing to experiment with and embrace longer forms of messaging to connect with their constituents," he said.

New York-based ANA is the United States' largest trade association for advertisers.

The survey included 126 responses, of which 90 percent were client-side marketers, and the remaining coming from academia, nonprofits and associations.

Nearly three-quarters reported being at the director level or higher, and more than half said they were the primary decision-makers for their company when it came to strategy, distribution or development and production of content.

Word's worth

Respondents to the study showed their commitment to content marketing has grown substantially over the past two years, with 52 percent indicating a "strong commitment," doubling from 26 percent two years ago.

ANA found that content marketing also commands a substantial portion (18 percent) of overall marketing budgets, according to respondents' current estimates of total spending.

The study defined content marketing as "the discipline of creating content, on behalf of a brand, designed with the specific strategy of influencing the intended target audience to drive quantifiable profitable results."

Despite their increased reliance on content marketing, 59 percent of respondents had misgivings about a lack of actionable insights derived from current tracking methods in determining the effectiveness of content marketing activity.

"Since content marketing's inception, it has been difficult to track, and often prove, its ROI," the ANA study said. "Effective measurement continues to be a pain point for marketers who must justify larger content investments."

For example, when asked which aspects of content marketing were the most frustrating for respondents, the top three responses touched on proving ROI, improving attribution and overall measurement, the report said.

Another disconnect disclosed in the report showed that only 35 percent of respondents said they have a clearly documented content strategy, 52 percent said they do not, while 13 percent said they were unsure.

Not surprisingly, respondents with a clearly documented content strategy were twice as likely to report a positive outlook on the future of content marketing as opposed to those operating without a strategy, the report found.

Agency help

Per the ANA and the Content Council, the report also showed:

- Almost two-thirds (63 percent) of content marketing services are handled internally. The amount of work outsourced 37 percent is relatively stable but growing.
- Marketers are driving the process in most areas of content marketing and are primarily responsible for strategy, technology, measurement and analytics.
- Agencies have significant responsibility for development and production and distribution. However, collaborative efforts between marketers and agencies are still key in all areas of content marketing.
- All respondents reported relying on at least one agency partner to assist with content marketing initiatives. Advertising agencies were most consistently used across tasks, with other agency types being used depending on specific areas of expertise.

"Get ready for Content Marketing 2.0," said Jacqueline Loch, chair of the Content Council, in a statement.

"With 42 percent growth in content spending predicted over the next two years and the acceleration of consumer digital transformation, there is an exceptional opportunity for agency and publisher partners to help brands to deliver on content needs and to set the path for data interpretation," she said.

[Please click here to download a PDF of the ANA report with The Content Council titled, "Growth and Opportunities in Content Marketing"](#)

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