

B2B Content Marketing 2010:

# Professional Services Industry Report

# FOREWORD

In September 2010, **Junta42** and **MarketingProfs** in conjunction with the Business Marketing Association (BMA) and American Business Media (ABM) released the largest study to date, 2010 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends, showing how B2B marketers are using content within their marketing mix. The Professional Services Industry Report takes a more granular look at how marketers at B2B service firms are using content marketing--and how they differ from their peers in other industries.

## **Compared to companies of other sizes, PSF marketers:**

### **Are adopting content marketing at slightly lower rates than the average across industries.**

Professional services firms (PSFs) are big adopters of content marketing. Eight out of 10 PSF marketers are using content to engage their prospects and customers, which is slightly lower than the overall average of nine out of 10 marketers across all verticals.

### **Struggle with effectiveness – but less so than their peers.**

One of the key findings from the overall survey is that content marketers use a number of tactics, but they aren't certain whether these tactics are effective. The same is true for the professional services industry: PSF marketers report misgivings about content marketing effectiveness, though not to the same extent as marketers as a whole.

### **Are typically not varying their content by different categories.**

PSF marketers are not often customizing content by categories such as “stage of the buying cycle,” “company characteristics,” or “profile of decision maker.” Twenty-six percent of PSF marketers admit no customization in any of these areas, compared to 18% for the larger sample. Why does customization matter? Because content written without considering the particular needs/wants of the reader too often leads to poor engagement scores.

### **Have a much harder time outsourcing content development.**

Professional services firms are less likely to outsource content marketing development than firms in other industries, perhaps because the intellectual rigor of their content must at all times be of the highest caliber. After all, their content libraries reflect the very service they offer their clients in a way that is not true of many other industries, and so the potential for missteps is significantly higher.

Professional services firms are an especially interesting cohort of marketers to study because their business model is about packaging and selling intelligence, whether as management consulting, logistics support, sales training or any other of a wide range of B2B services. A strong content marketing program—particularly in niche areas where subject matter expertise is of utmost importance—can position and differentiate these firms as experienced players with depth of knowledge to share with their customers.

My hope is that the survey results will generate conversation about content marketing for PSF firms. Why are PSF firms not showing greater sophistication? What are the specific challenges/obstacles? What's needed to push PSF marketers to become more competent publishers?

One important caveat: the professional service firm marketers who responded to this survey are slightly more heavily weighted to small- and mid-size businesses than their peer respondents. This SME weighting likely skews some of the findings for professional services firms. For more details about survey sample composition and survey methodology, see “Survey Details” at the end of this report.

## **Clare McDermott**

Principal  
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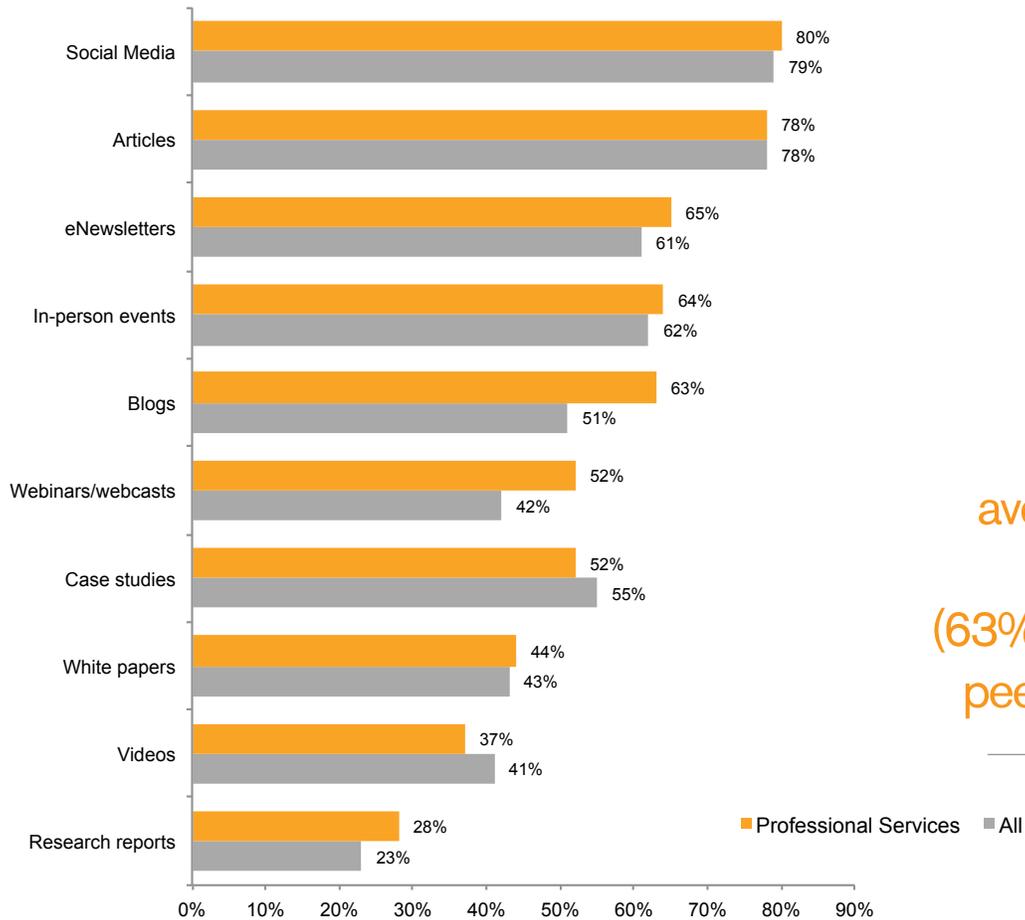
# DETAILED FINDINGS

## ► USAGE AND EFFECTIVENESS

### Content Marketing Tactics Used

Similar to other B2B marketers, PSF marketers use a wide variety of content tactics to build a solid portfolio of activities. The top ten content marketing tactics used by professional services firms include:

**Top 10 Content Marketing Tactics Used**



PSF marketers were much more likely than average to use blogging as a content strategy (63%) than their marketing peers (51% on average).

Source: B2B Content Marketing 2010: Professional Services Industry Report

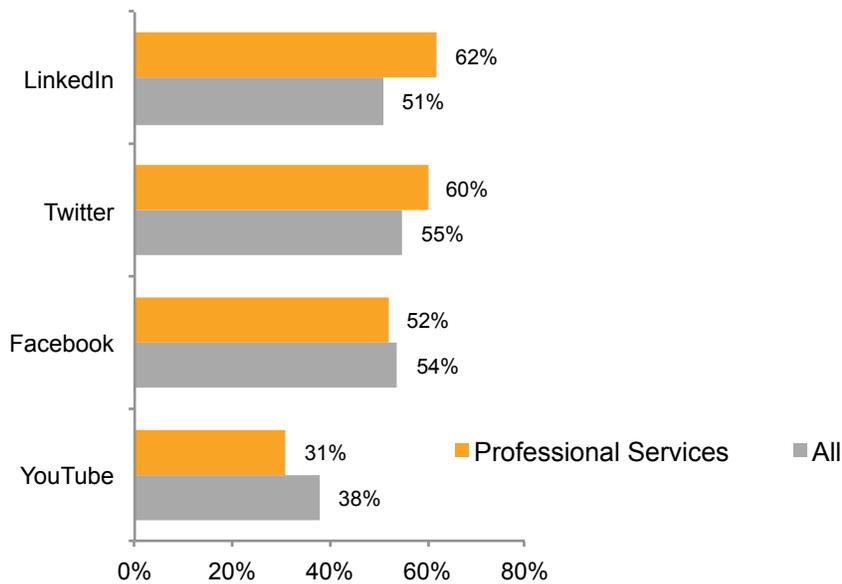
This top five round-up mirrors closely the top five strategies used by most B2B marketers with one single exception. **PSF marketers were much more likely than average to use blogging as a content strategy (63%) than their marketing peers (51% on average).** Their adoption of blogging as a marketing tool aligned with marketers within the computing/software industry (68% adoption of blogging) and advertising/marketing industry (66% adoption of blogging).

Another tactic that PSF marketers use more than their peers--though one that does not make the top ten--is webcasts. Fifty-two percent of PSF marketers use webcasts compared to 42% of marketers overall.

## ► SOCIAL MEDIA DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

While PSF marketers are big users of content marketing strategies, their adoption rates of social media distribution strategies are relatively low (as they are for all B2B marketers). Among the four distribution vehicles that the survey inquired about, adoption was only slightly above 60% for most. Compared to the overall sample, PSF marketers use LinkedIn and Twitter more than their peers.

### Percentage of Marketers Who Use Various Social Media Sites to Distribute Content



Source: B2B Content Marketing 2010: Professional Services Industry Report

While PSF marketers are big users of content marketing strategies, their adoption rates of social media distribution strategies are relatively low.

## ► CONTENT MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to asking survey respondents to tell us which content marketing products they currently employ in their companies, we also asked them to rate the effectiveness of each of these products in their marketing efforts on a scale of one (low effectiveness) to five (high effectiveness).

When we consider the adoption rates of each content vehicle measured against the perceived effectiveness of that particular vehicle among those who use that tactic, we find a “confidence gap.” That is, while companies invested in a number of content marketing products, they may not have confidence in how they are using each of those products.

While it is unclear if this lack of confidence is due to true ineffectiveness of any given strategy or simply the inability to measure effectiveness, this gap exists across all industries and company sizes.

Let’s consider the top five tactics used by PSF marketers. The table below presents the usage rate for each tactic as well as the percentage of marketers who found the tactic effective.

Type of Content Marketing Tactic	Usage Rate	Effectiveness Rating*
Social media, excluding blogs .....	80%.....	35%
Articles .....	78%.....	48%
eNewsletters .....	65%.....	60%
In-person events .....	64%.....	85%
Blogs .....	63%.....	52%

\*Corresponds to the percent of respondents who believe that tactic is effective, defined as a “4” or “5” on a 5-point scale.

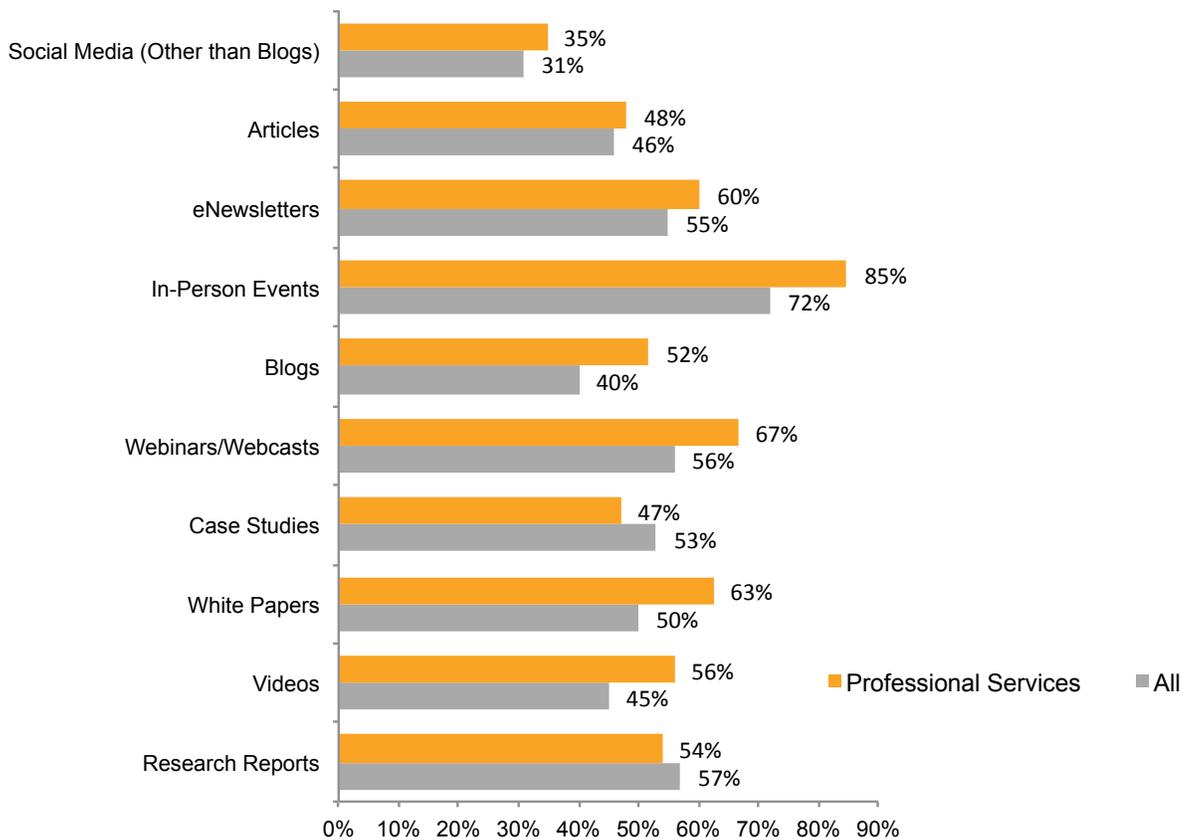
Even though social media is only deemed effective by 35% of PSF marketers, that particular rating for social media is highest compared to other industries we evaluated, and of course higher than the 31% average effectiveness rating across industries:

- Agriculture: 26% effectiveness
- Manufacturing: 21% effectiveness
- Computing/software: 20% effectiveness

Here are some noteworthy differences when looking at the tactics PSF marketers use most often:

Tactic	Percentage of PSF Marketers Who Use	Percentage of PSF Marketers Who Think it is Effective	Overall Sample Who Think it is Effective
In-person events.....	64%.....	85%.....	72%
White papers.....	44%.....	63%.....	50%
Blogs.....	63%.....	52%.....	40%
Videos.....	37%.....	56%.....	45%
Webinars/webcasts.....	52%.....	67%.....	56%

## Effectiveness Ratings: Top 10 Content Marketing Tactics Used in Professional Services Organizations



Source: B2B Content Marketing 2010: Professional Services Industry Report

Case studies are one of the only tactics that PSF marketers are more likely to rate as “less effective” compared to the larger sample. Of the 52% who use them, 47% think they are effective compared to 53% of user across all segments.

Even though social media is only deemed effective by 35% of users, this is the highest effectiveness rating compared to the other industries we evaluated.

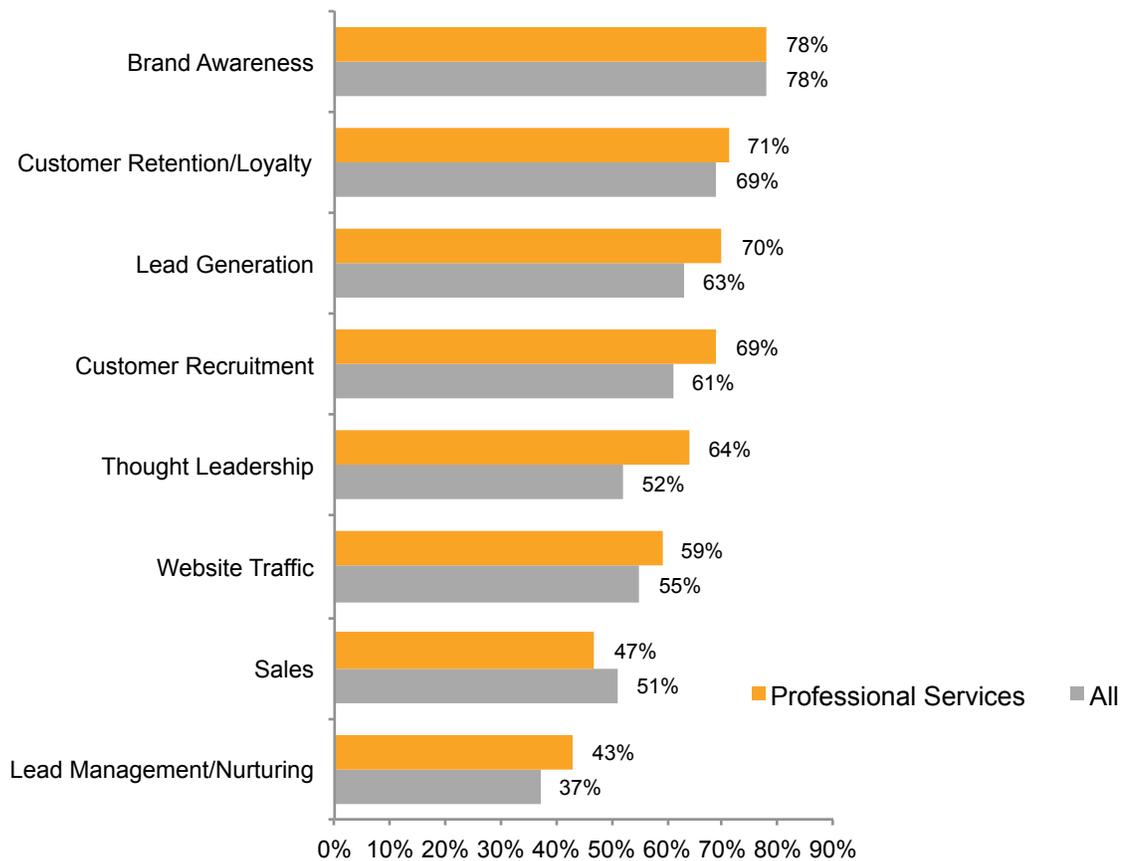
# GOALS AND MEASUREMENT

## ► ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Nearly across the board, professional services firms are much more likely than the average to use content marketing to nurture stages of the sales process.

- 70% define “lead generation” as a goal versus 63% of all respondents
- 69% define “customer recruitment” as a goal versus 61% of all respondents
- 43% define “lead management/nurturing” as a goal versus 37% on average

### Organizational Goals for Content Marketing



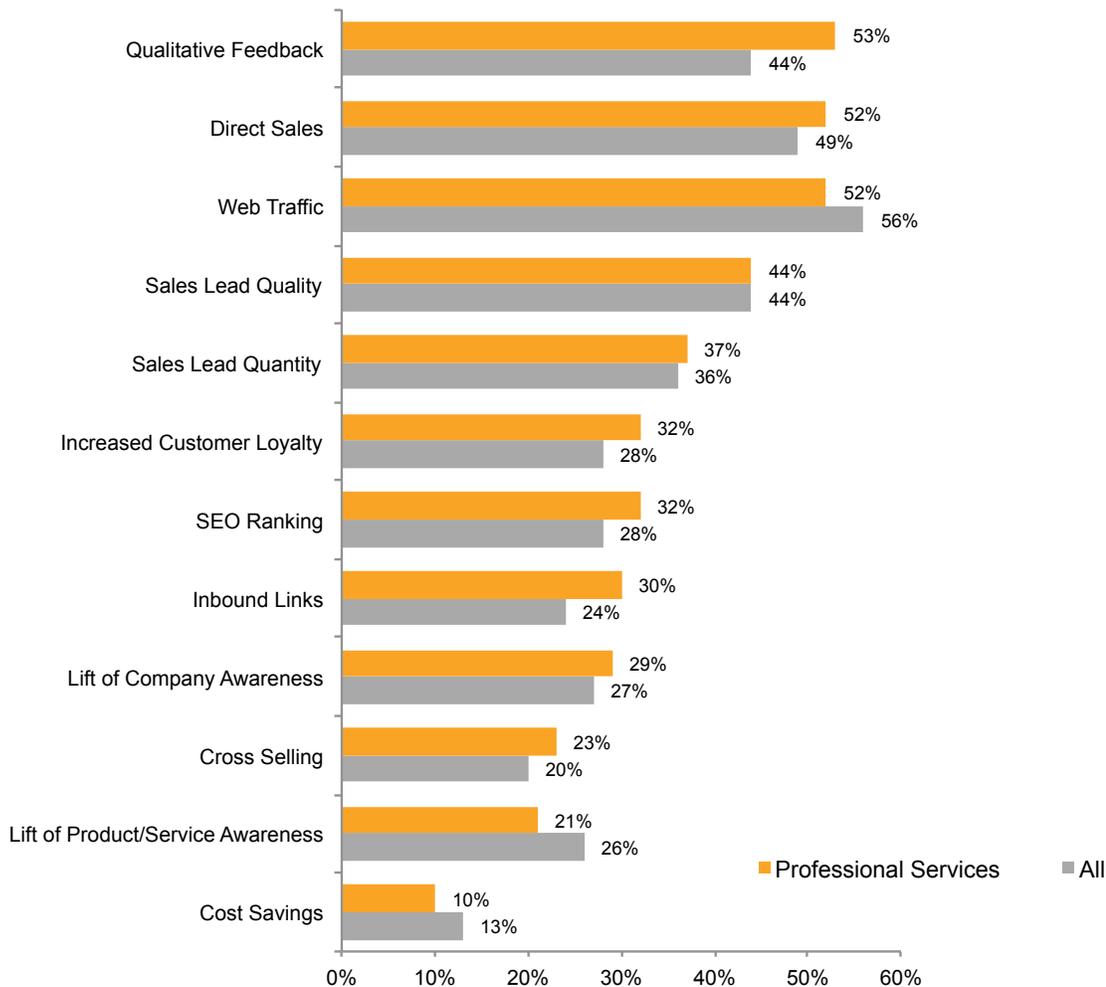
Source: B2B Content Marketing 2010: Professional Services Industry Report

## ► MEASUREMENT CRITERIA

Similar to their peers in other industries, PSF marketers struggle to identify measurement criteria and execute measurement programs. The top five primary measurement criteria for PSF marketers who use content marketing as a strategy are:

- Qualitative feedback (53%)
- Web traffic (52%)
- Direct sales (52%)
- Sales lead quality (44%)
- Sales lead quantity (37%)

### Measurement Criteria for Content Marketing Success



Source: B2B Content Marketing 2010: Professional Services Industry Report

Why are these results so low? Why are so few PSF marketers bolstering their content strategies with measurement criteria? Perhaps many marketers simply do not yet understand how best to do so. Also, because respondents were more heavily weighted to the small and medium enterprise (SME) market, this too would lower the level of measurement, possibly as a result of SMEs' more limited resources.

## BUDGETS AND PRODUCTION

### ► CONTENT MARKETING SPENDING

Fifty-one percent of professional service firm marketers expected to increase their budgets for content marketing in the coming 12 months, while 46% claimed their investment in content marketing will remain the same. Almost no marketers (2%) reported their content marketing budgets would decrease in the coming year.

### ► CONTENT MARKETING OUTSOURCING

Professional services firms are much more likely than average to produce content in-house. Fifty-three percent of PSF marketers report relying on in-house resources only, compared to 45% on average among B2B marketers. This is not surprising as professional service firm content must be tightly tethered to subject matter experts within the organization.

## CHALLENGES IN CONTENT MARKETING

PSF marketers were asked to cite their biggest content marketing challenge, and ranked them as follows:

- Producing the kind of content that engages prospects/customers (36%)
- Producing enough content (30%)
- Budget to produce enough content (18%)
- Lack of buy-in from higher-ups (6%)
- Producing a variety of content (6%)

Like all marketers, PSF marketers cite producing engaging content as the biggest challenge. However, PSF marketers cite producing enough content as a bigger challenge than the average marketer (30% versus 21%) – more than any of their peers in other industries. However, they are less likely to have issues with producing a variety of content (6% versus 9%) and getting executive buy-in (6% versus 11%).

## RESEARCH DETAIL

Of the 1,124 respondents to the **2010 B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends** survey, 112 respondents are from professional services firms. Professional service firm respondents were more heavily weighted than the average survey respondent to small- and mid-size businesses, as indicated in the table below.

### Number of Employees

Fewer than 10 .....	41%
50 – 249.....	39%
250 – 4,999.....	9%
More than 5,000.....	8%

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### About Clare McDermott

Clare McDermott is Principal of SoloPortfolio, a marketing strategy and editorial branding firm for professional services. Clare is also Editor of Chief Content Officer magazine. She holds an MBA in Marketing and Finance from the F.W. Olin Graduate School of Business at Babson College, as well as an MA in American Literature from Washington University. You can find her blogging about content marketing for professional service firms at [soloportfolio.com](http://soloportfolio.com) or follow her on Twitter @soloportfolio.

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