

Research + Content = MadTech Sales

Leading brands and agencies weigh in on their preference for research-based content from potential AdTech and MarTech partners



A proprietary, research-based study



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research-based content trumps all other forms of marketing and can make other communication initiatives more effective.

Brand marketing and advertising technology decision makers are most likely to engage with vendors who provide research-based content.

Those are the sometimes surprising findings of a research study conducted by Industry Indexⁱ, based on surveys of technology purchase decision makers and influencers in brand marketing and advertising.

The survey debunks some common misconceptions and finds that only two forms of marketing—research-based content and email—work for a majority of senior marketers and advertisers. And emails get a response only when it is extremely personal or there is something original, such as research, promised.

The executives say they want research-based content that's useful, relevant, and tells them something new. Such content, they say, will get them to look for and do business with vendors who provide it.

This is true, they say, even when they know the research may have been packaged for the purpose of helping to generate leads.

Research-Based Content is the Most Effective but Least Utilized Marketing Method

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Most Effective

93%

say relevant research will positively impact perception of a company as a potential partner

Least Utilized

14%

regularly receive research or thought-leadership content that is relevant to their business

Research-Based Content: A Smart Allocation

Advertising, marketing, and media technology vendors are misallocating their marketing spend.

Pressed for resources, they believe that trade shows and press articles are the most effective ways they can use their limited marketing budgets to generate interest and capture leads.ⁱⁱ

Instead, brand marketers and agency executives

who determine or influence the purchase of technologies say they are most likely to engage with, consume, and think favorably of vendors who provide research-based content.ⁱⁱⁱ

And, they firmly place research-driven thought leadership atop all other forms of outreach.

Sales Or Marketing Tactics With Highest Response Rates From Brand and Agency Executives

	Not Likely to Respond	Likely to Respond
Research study, thought leadership	36%	64%
Emails	48%	52%
Tradeshow booth or conference sponsorship	56%	44%
Press in trade journal	62%	38%
Native advertising	74%	26%
Social media outreach	78%	22%
Voicemails	79%	21%
Display advertising campaign	82%	18%

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Purchasing Power But Overwhelmed

By next year, the average CMO (chief marketing officer) will spend more on IT than their CIO (chief information officer) counterpart.^{iv}

That budgetary sway makes marketing and advertising executives some of the most sought-after potential customers by “MadTech” vendors, our term for those who sell advertising, marketing, and media technologies.

But those executives can also be some of the hardest to people to reach, let alone impress. Amid more than 3,000 competitors, MadTech vendors struggle to stand out, vying to grab attention and generate a response.

Marketers and agencies are overwhelmed, inundated with emails and phone calls, often dozens per day. That means MadTech vendors are competing for mindshare across a broad range of rivals in multiple categories, who all promise to help achieve marketers’ objectives.

The way to break through and get marketing and agency executives to engage, our Industry Index survey finds, is to present them with information that’s original and useful.

37% of brand and agency execs receive

85+

unsolicited vendor calls or emails monthly

95% say cold calls create a negative impression

57% say emails create a negative impression

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“I actually don’t answer my phone.”

OMD executive

The Most Impactful Marketing

Brand and agency executives firmly place research-driven thought leadership first in influencing their consideration of vendors. ^v

Executives say that research-driven content has a wealth of positive attributes.

Most-preferred form of outreach over all other marketing. Email was the only other technique that scored positively with more than 50 percent of respondents.

Makes favorable impressions. Decision-making executives say they have an elevated opinion of vendors who regularly publish research.

Stands above other types of content. “Content marketing is usually way too basic and ‘empty,’” said one survey respondent. “95 percent of it is a poor attempt at a sales pitch.”

Generates leads. Research and thought leadership are the methods most likely to inspire a response—a return call, email address, or filled-out form to receive more information.

Improves “push” marketing. Decision makers say they are much more likely to open emails when proprietary, useful, research-driven information is inside.

Stimulates “pull” marketing. Decision makers often conduct research when looking for solutions.

“If I’m not interested in reading about mobile direct response today, because I don’t have any application for it, I might not be enthusiastic,” says one OMD executive who asked not to be named.

“But if I go out searching for it, and I see it, I might be like, ‘Oh, maybe I should contact these people.’”

Third-Party, Useful, Relevant Is Best

Advertising and marketing executives in our survey overwhelmingly say that “relevant, useful, proprietary research” both helped to educate them and most made them perceive a company as a “potential partner as opposed to just another vendor.”

Vendors who seize the opportunity to offer thought leadership based on original research—going beyond descriptions of their products and services—stand to put themselves ahead of the pack.

Original content based on research from an authoritative third party helps put vendors who provide it top of mind when technology needs arise.

Yet, despite the clarion call for research-driven original content, marketing and advertising executives say it is the least-often received type of vendor communication among the five categories we listed.^{vi}

“When evaluating potential partners,” one respondent said, “I am primarily influenced by how well-respected they are in their industry [as demonstrated with] unique thought leadership, valuable new information they can provide.”

“If there’s someone that’s actually trying to help me do my job better in some way, then that goes a really long way,” says David Berkowitz, founding principal of Serial Marketer^{viii}, and former CMO of digital advertising agency MRY.

The information is valued even more when built on research from an authoritative third party, which when presented carefully to show the underlying data, reduces perceptions of possible bias.

“It’s always better to work with an objective third party,” Sean Finnegan, Managing Partner, co/Star, told Industry Index. “It comes across better. They need the intelligence behind them to make their point.”

A significant majority of respondents, meanwhile, say they do not find dinners or cocktails persuasive, and are emphatically not interested in voicemail that details a vendor’s capabilities and services.

Most Highly-Prized Content for Brand and Agency Executives^{vii}

93% Relevant, useful **proprietary research** that educates me.

84% **Thought leadership content** that provides education and a unique perspective.

71% A well-worded **email** that educates me on something I didn’t know about my business. These emails are especially powerful if **supported by original research**, many said.

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Conclusion: The Multiple Benefits

The benefits of research-based original content also include enhancement of other efforts and retention of existing customers. For a MadTech vendor, the benefits of research-based original content go beyond the initial efforts to use it as a tool for proactive outreach.

It becomes a lasting asset that not only enhances favorable perceptions and generates leads but also builds relationships, adds to discoverability, and further spreads the messenger's influence.

It extends reach more than a trade show booth, and can generate press coverage.

It helps technology decision makers find the research on their own time, using it in ways that encourage sharing. That inspires good will while further extending the vendor's brand and messages.

Handled strategically, **original research can form the linchpin of a virtuous cycle of content discovery**, thought leadership, influence, customer retention and lead generation.

It provides material to germinate, enhance, and reinforce other content creation and distribution efforts.

Email newsletters are made stronger

when offering proprietary original research-based content.

Social media become more enticing when they can use original aspects of the research and promise more upon click-through.

Videos and podcasts get new source material.

Trade conferences will be stronger for vendors who can hand out original research.

Panel discussions and presentations are enhanced.

Research-based content establishes the vendor as an intelligent and useful potential partner who knows the spheres in which it operates, who understands how to help customers achieve their objectives.

"Many brands and agencies enjoy research, even if it's biased and self-serving," Finnegan says. "Many times, they use it for the stats and data in their own business plans to justify and provide rationale around the budgets against a tech solution and to sell in that strategy."

"They reward the people who gave them that intelligence," he adds.

For MadTech vendors, that is the ultimate reward. ■

This paper was authored by Dorian Benkoil with Jessica Joines for Industry Index.

For the full data from this report, register at IndustryIndex.com/ContentMarketingSurveyResults.pdf.

END NOTES

- i Methodology: Industry Index surveyed marketers and conducted separate interviews in the latter half of 2016 to better understand the value and perceptions of various marketing tactics leveraged by AdTech and MarTech providers. One hundred agencies and 64 brands who evaluate, purchase, employ or influence the purchase of advertising and marketing technology solutions responded to the survey. Respondents spanned job levels at the supervisor level and above with the mean distribution at the director level. All major industry verticals were represented.
- ii Based upon interviews conducted with more than eight vendors in confidence by Industry Index.
- iii For example, brand executives are slightly more likely to respond to research and thought leadership than are agency executives.
- iv <http://www.gartner.com/webinar/1871515/player?commlid=39625&channelId=5500&srcId=1-4730952011>
- v Brand executives are slightly more likely to respond to research and thought-leadership than agency executives.
- vi Another type of original material—case studies that demonstrate the real effectiveness of a business service or technology—is also highly desired but seldom received.
- vii Top three responses and related percentages.
- viii Berkowitz is also an adviser to Industry Index.



Industry Index has been conducting research in the MadTech (AdTech + MarTech) ecosystem for the last five years for customers including PubMatic, Rocket Fuel, Tapad, MarketShare, BrightRoll and many others. We conduct benchmark studies, brand reviews, and create thought-leadership/data-driven marketing content. Our research and exceptional industry-focused surveys emerge from the Industry Index which tracks the entire MadTech landscape and includes:

35,000+ brands and agencies

4,000+ vendors

4,000+ publishers

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