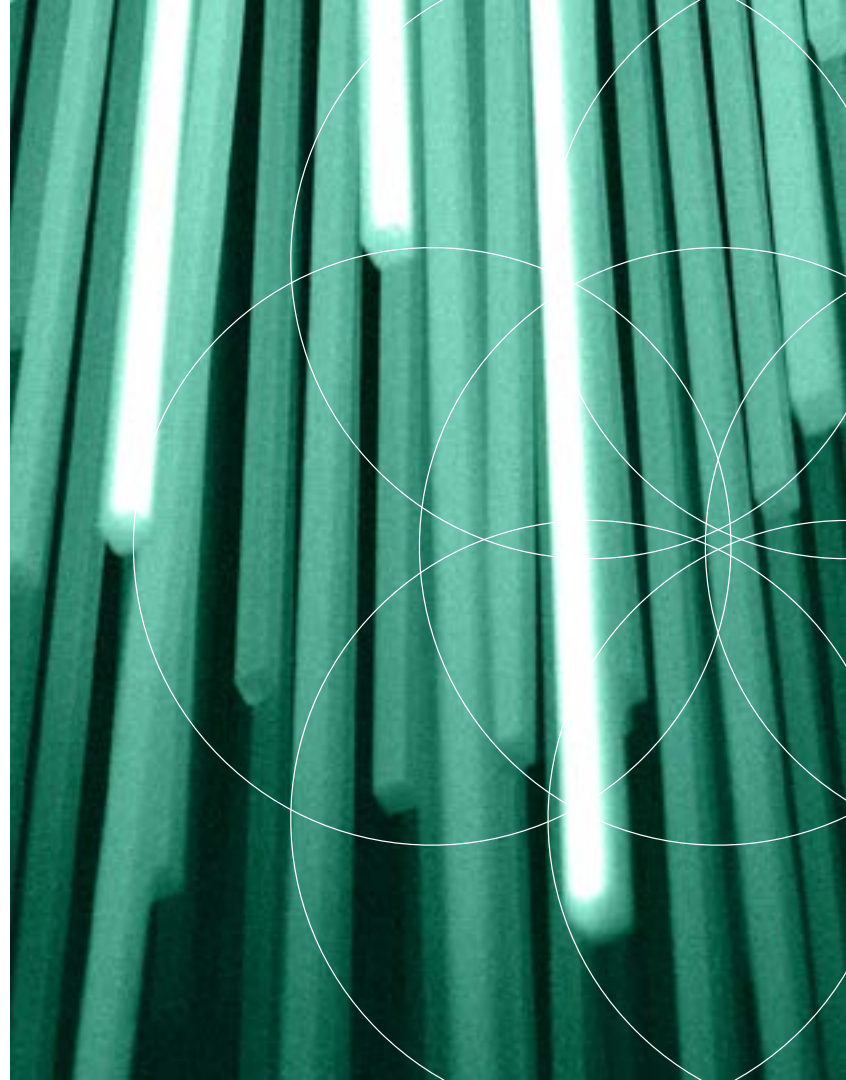# FORRESTER

Operational Alignment Fuels Content Marketing

To Optimize The Planning And Execution Of Content, Organizations Require More Collaboration And Better Technology

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Content Success Relies On Connected Operations

Marketing content delivers a brand message, and marketing leaders base the success of their content on how efficiently it is produced and the impact of that message on customers. These key elements of content marketing are challenged by a lack of organizational alignment caused by disparate technology solutions, siloed operations, and lack of consensus on brand strategy. To break these barriers, leaders need to spark collaboration across their organizations and connect planning and operations. If successful, they can optimize content planning and execution with shared technology, cohesive omnichannel marketing, and more efficient content production.

> "Alignment between leadership and operational teams promotes a culture of continuous improvement."
>
> **CMO, RETAIL, US**

Key Findings

Operational alignment is critical: Eighty-nine percent of marketing/advertising leaders agree that connecting planning, creation, and calendaring is necessary for content to succeed.

Silos and technology hinder collaboration: Leaders are being held back by a lack of streamlined technology and communication across various departments and marketing subgroups.

Connected functionality unlocks a cohesive strategy: Connecting content planning and execution brings together customer experience (CX), marketing channels, and touchpoints into a cohesive strategy.

Improving Internal Alignment Is Critical

Nearly all of the 151 surveyed marketing/advertising leaders (89%) agree that aligning content planning, creation, and calendaring is important to their organization's success, yet only 1% say their content planning and execution strategies are seamless. Despite broad investment in a range of technologies like customer analytics tools (72%) and unified marketing measurement solutions (69%), they still struggle to align on content strategy. There is a high degree of tech investment, yet there is still a gap in alignment.

Marketing leaders recognize the need to improve the alignment and collaboration of their own function with other departments above all else (38%). This is the most common goal on their roadmaps, followed by improving brand perception (37%), ROI (31%), and their focus on customer experience (29%).

> "When marketing leadership and operational teams work together, they … develop more … relevant marketing content."
>
> **CMO, TECH, US**

"Which of the following priorities will be most important to your organization's marketing strategy over the next 12 months?"

38%
Improving marketing alignment and collaboration with other departments (e.g., customer experience [CX], customer service, e-commerce)

37%
Improving how my organization's brand is perceived by customers and prospects

31%
Improving the ROI/effectiveness of marketing

29%
Increasing focus on customer experience

Base: 151 marketing/advertising leaders with decision-making responsibility for marketing operations and technology at their organization
Note: Showing top four responses.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Opal, June 2023

Success Is Measured By Customer Growth And Fueled By Scalable, Efficient Content

For marketing leaders, the success of content is measured in a bifurcated way: through the production of the content itself and the impact of that content on their organization's business outcomes.

To measure the performance of content production, marketing leaders look to scale/scalability (58%) and efficiency (56%) as the most common determinants of success. Once content is released, there is also a need to measure the impact that marketing content has on business outcomes, and leaders most frequently turn to customer growth (42%), customer retention (42%), ROI (41%), and brand reputation (39%) as barometers of that success. When compared to more traditional and generalized success metrics like CSAT and Net Promoter Score^{SM} (NPS), leaders prioritize tangible measures of business growth rather than customer satisfaction.

How Leaders Measure Success Of Marketing Content Production*

58%
Scale/scalability

56%
Efficiency

How Leaders Measure Success Of Marketing's Impact On Business Outcomes

New customer growth
42%

Customer retention
42%

Return on investment (ROI)
41%

Brand reputation
39%

Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT)
38%

Net Promoter Score (NPS)
30%

Functional Misalignment And Risk To Brand Reputation Are Top Threats

Marketing leaders struggle to align their firms' internal organizations and brand strategies. While they plan to improve collaboration with other areas of the organization, nearly half (45%) say cross-functional misalignment on business objectives (e.g., teams with disparate goals or key performance indicators) is still top a challenge.

Threats to brand reputation dilute the holistic image and messaging organizations want to convey to their audiences, and a lack of internal alignment creates disunification between strategy and content. Eighty-five percent of leaders say unexpected brand/reputation scenarios have been a recent challenge. In addition, misaligned brand perception (43%) and lack of compelling messaging (43%) are current challenges. Brand perception can trickle down and create internal issues as well, with 79% of leaders admitting these external issues make it more difficult to achieve internal alignment.

"Which of the following are the biggest challenges preventing your organization from achieving its marketing goals?"

Lack of cross-functional alignment on business objectives	**45%**
Brand perception does not reflect my organization's desired brand identity	**43%**
Inability to compel action with my organization's messaging	**43%**
Lack of actionability from customer data	**42%**
Inaccessibility of customer data	**42%**
Lack of desired skills within the company	**40%**
Lack of clarity on brand governance/guidelines	**39%**
Lack of alignment between strategy and operations	**39%**

Base: 151 marketing/advertising leaders with decision-making responsibility for marketing operations and technology at their organization
Note: Showing top eight responses.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Opal, June 2023

Point Solutions, Silos, And Outdated Technology Are Top Barriers Of Alignment

Eighty-nine percent of marketing leaders agree that for their organizations to sync up content planning and execution operations, they need to reduce the number of tools/applications that drive them. Too many point solutions inhibit teams from connecting on shared content marketing platforms (e.g., software connecting content strategy, ideation, planning, calendaring, etc.). Technology should be a bridge to alignment, rather than a barrier. And for this to happen, leaders say their organizations need better hardware/software (87%).

Marketing leaders also agree that organizational siloes in the form of too many marketing subgroups (e.g., marketing ops, brand governance, etc.) make it difficult to holistically align on content strategy (77%). It becomes impossible to collaborate when there are too many subgroups with their own goals using unique systems to accomplish them.

Abundant And Inferior Tools Challenge Marketing Visibility And Alignment

● Agree   ○ Strongly agree

My organization needs to reduce the number of tools/applications it uses in order to streamline and improve its content planning and execution.

| 48% | 41% | **89%** |

My organization requires better technology to align its content planning strategy with execution.

| 44% | 43% | **87%** |

The misalignment of my organization's brand message dilutes its ability to collaborate internally and with other teams.

| 40% | 39% | **79%** |

Too many subgroups within marketing (e.g., marketing ops, brand governance, etc.) makes it difficult for my organization to align on a holistic content strategy.

| 41% | 36% | **77%** |

Disconnect Between Content Planning And Execution Harms Marketing Strategy

Point solutions and silos contribute to poor visibility throughout the marketing function, but the connection between content planning and execution is a critical line of sight for leaders. Fifty percent of leaders say a lack of visibility between these operations drives a wedge between CX, marketing channels, and customer touchpoints, and that this fragments key aspects of their strategies. This can create the appearance of divergent content and can impact the goals of each function.

Poor visibility between planning and execution also complicates an organization's ability to leverage technology as a shared platform for content strategies (47%), disconnects planned strategy with actual strategy (43%), and decreases the ability of leaders and managers to collaborate and gather feedback throughout the organization (42%).

Only 1%

of respondents say their organization's content planning and execution strategies are seamless.

"What are the biggest challenges your organization faces from a lack of visibility between its content planning strategy and content execution operations?"

Customer experience, marketing channels, and touchpoints cannot be aligned into a cohesive strategy.

50%

My organization has lost its ability to effectively use its marketing technology as a singular platform for content strategies.

47%

My organization has lost the ability to reconcile its planned strategy with its actual strategy.

43%

My organization has lost the ability to effectively collaborate and gather feedback.

42%

Content asset development has slowed down.

41%

My organization has lost the ability to scale the creation of its content assets.

39%

Content asset development has become more expensive.

33%

Base: 151 marketing/advertising leaders with decision-making responsibility for marketing operations and technology at their organization.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Opal, June 2023
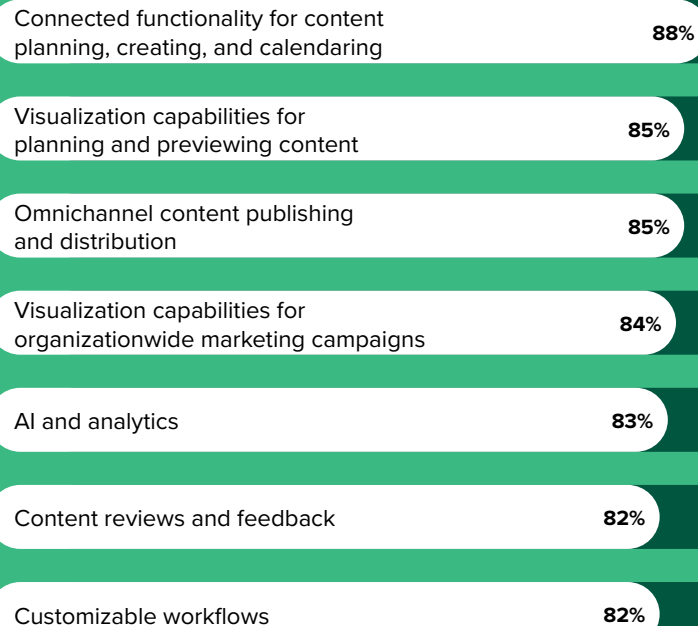
Leaders Need Technology That Sparks Functional, Omnichannel Connectivity

Marketing leaders look for many things in their ideal content platform, but connected functionality is paramount. Roughly nine out of 10 say it's important/very important to have connected functionality for content planning, creating, and calendaring. Enabling the improvement of relationships between business and operations (e.g., the leaders and managers who plan and execute) is critical. Leaders from both small companies with 4,999 employees or fewer and from medium-large sized companies with 5,000 employees or more agree this is the most important capability.

Omnichannel content publishing (85%) and visualization features (85%) are also critical components of the ideal technology platform, along with AI/analytics (83%), content reviews and feedback (82%), and customizable workflows (82%).

"How important is it to have each of the following capabilities as a part of your organization's ideal content marketing platform?"

(Showing "Important" and "Very important")

Capability	
Connected functionality for content planning, creating, and calendaring	88%
Visualization capabilities for planning and previewing content	85%
Omnichannel content publishing and distribution	85%
Visualization capabilities for organizationwide marketing campaigns	84%
AI and analytics	83%
Content reviews and feedback	82%
Customizable workflows	82%

Base: 151 marketing/advertising leaders with decision-making responsibility for marketing operations and technology at their organization
Note: Showing top seven responses.
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Opal, June 2023

Collaboration Builds Cohesion Between Technology, CX, And Content Production

If organizational leaders and operational managers can collaborate and align the strategic planning and execution of content, it can open the door to a range of benefits that support both content production success and marketing business outcomes.

Marketing leaders view the alignment of planning and execution as a gateway to optimizing the use of technology as a singular platform (56%) within their organizations. Customer experience is also a key benefit, specifically the alignment of CX with customer channels and touchpoints (49%). Improving omnichannel CX can spark new customer growth, which is the most popular success metric among surveyed leaders.

Key drivers of content production success like scalability (45%) and efficiency (41%) are also areas in which leaders expect to improve as a result of using a more aligned planning and execution process.

"What are the biggest benefits you would expect your organization to gain from aligning its content planning strategies and content execution operations?"

56%
Optimized marketing technology as a singular platform for content planning and execution

49%
Alignment of customer experience, marketing channels, and touchpoints into a cohesive strategy

45%
Increased scalability of content creation

41%
Faster development of content assets

Base: 151 marketing/advertising leaders with decision-making responsibility for marketing operations and technology at their organization
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Opal, June 2023

Conclusion

After hearing the perspectives of 151 marketing/advertising leaders, here are key takeaways to keep in mind for your business:

- **Align on a brand strategy.** The perception of your brand should match how it's identified internally. Ensure that different teams and subgroups within your organization are aligned on brand strategy and messaging.

- **Link strategic planning with execution.** Content success is measured by operational efficiency and business outcomes. Connect these processes so that downstream performance informs planning and, in turn, execution of content.

- **Use a shared solution for content operations.** Connecting planning and execution with a shared content solution can improve transparency by distributing access to calendars and processes. It can also provide an opportunity for increased governance and automation.

"Strategic alignment ensures that marketing efforts are in sync with the ever-changing market dynamics. This adaptability helps in staying ahead of the curve, seizing opportunities, and mitigating risks in a fast-paced business environment."

CMO, RETAIL, US

Resources

Related Forrester Research:

"Stop Overlooking Process And People in Your Martech Strategies,"
Forrester Research, Inc., April 27, 2023

Project Team:

John Lloyd,
Market Impact Consultant

Steven Mullahoo,
Associate Market Impact Consultant

Contributing Research:

Forrester's Consumer and Digital Market
Insights Research Group

Methodology

This Opportunity Snapshot was commissioned by Opal. To create this profile, Forrester Consulting supplemented this research with custom survey questions asked of 151 B2C marketing leaders from retail and technology organizations. The custom survey began and was completed in June 2023.

Demographics

RESPONDENT ROLES	
Director	**52%**
Vice president	**25%**
C-level executive	**23%**

COUNTRY	
United States	**81%**
Canada	**19%**

INDUSTRY	
Technology and/or technology services	**51%**
Retail	**49%**

COMPANY SIZE	
1,000 to 4,999 employees	**67%**
5,000 to 19,999 employees	**27%**
20,000 employees or more	**6%**

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