

# MARKETING TRENDS

*What Works During Uncertain Economic Times*

## WHERE B2B MARKETING STANDS

Since the beginning of 2024, SimplyDIRECT and Gatepoint Research have surveyed over 1000 sales and marketing executives. In this brief, we discuss both what we learned from our survey results and heard in hundreds of conversations about what is currently working and where teams are struggling. In today's unpredictable economic environment, B2B salespeople and marketers face unique challenges that require a shift in strategy to maintain engagement and drive results.

In 2024, budget cuts have significantly impacted B2B marketing, leading to extended sales cycles, underutilization of marketing technology, and increased pressure to achieve more with fewer resources. 45% of responders say they are only investing in proven, reliable programs with no room to try anything new. 17% of responders say that at some point in 2024, their budget was frozen or cut drastically, which resulted in the failure to achieve KPIs.

Only 8% of the marketers surveyed said *digital marketing efforts were not a successful part of their marketing strategy*. Digital marketing has proven to be one of the most effective approaches during uncertain economic times. With buyers increasingly researching online before engaging with sales teams, leveraging tools like SEO, targeted social media campaigns, and personalized **email marketing** has become essential. The ability to deliver dynamic, tailored content ensures that businesses stay relevant to their audience's specific needs and challenges, fostering trust and interest.



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## WHERE B2B MARKETING STANDS

43% of marketers surveyed indicated podcasts and webinars were essential parts of their strategy. B2B podcasts and webinars are powerful tools for building connections and demonstrating expertise (not to mention cutting through the clutter of over-saturated email). Podcasts offer an accessible, conversational format to share insights and foster brand affinity, while webinars provide an interactive platform for delivering in-depth knowledge, product demos, and live Q&A sessions. Both formats add value by educating audiences, addressing challenges, and nurturing trust, making them effective for lead generation and relationship building.

### Top strategies for B2B marketing



**Podcast**



**Webinars**



**In-person regional events**

Another successful strategy is the use of small, in-person regional events. These intimate gatherings allow businesses to connect with prospects and clients in a more personal and meaningful way. Unlike large conferences, which can feel impersonal or intimidating, regional events are cost-effective, foster deeper relationship-building, and often cater to localized concerns that resonate with attendees. During our conversations, one of the trends observed was that the perceived value from large tradeshows was very low. The majority of marketers felt badge scans do not convert, but felt it was necessary to continue to have a presence at larger events. They felt the perception of them not attending could damage their brand reputation.

### Top ABM Tools



73% of the marketers surveyed were actively using intent data platforms like 6Sense and Demandbase to help them with account identification and engagement for their [account-based marketing](#) (ABM) programs. Targeted ABM programs are also delivering strong results by focusing on high-value accounts with personalized and highly relevant outreach efforts. This precision allows marketing and sales teams to allocate their resources more effectively, creating deeper engagement with key stakeholders and fostering long-term relationships.

Alongside ABM, gifting has emerged as a powerful tool to break through the noise. Thoughtful and personalized gifts can leave a lasting impression with prospects and clients, enhancing brand recall and demonstrating a company's investment in the relationship.

## WHAT'S NOT WORKING: TACTICS NEEDING FINE- TUNING

On the other hand, some traditional strategies are becoming less effective. Cold calling, for instance, has significantly declined in utility as fewer professionals answer their phones, especially with many still working remotely. Prospects increasingly favor digital-first interactions that respect their time and offer value upfront, making cold calls feel intrusive and outdated in comparison. However, if someone does pick up the phone, cold calling can still be extremely valuable and make a huge impact on your outbound reps' ability to achieve their quota.



Despite subpar conversion numbers, 68% of the marketers surveyed indicated that content syndication programs will be funded moving into 2025. While effective for generating leads and expanding reach, content syndication often struggles to convert those leads into customers. The issue typically lies in the quality and intent of the leads generated. Syndicated content often attracts top-of-funnel prospects who may not be ready to engage with a sales team or make a purchase decision. Additionally, leads from syndication campaigns may lack the personalized touch and nurturing needed to move them through the sales funnel effectively.

## THE HOT B2B MARKETING TOPICS

In conversations with marketers offering **free trials and proof of concept** (POC) programs, we learned they perceive this tactic to be their highest performing from lead generation to closed/won business. Free trials and POCs are powerful B2B marketing tools that let prospects experience a product's value firsthand with minimal risk. Free trials offer independent exploration, while POCs tailor solutions to specific challenges, building trust and demonstrating measurable results. These strategies align with the trend of providing upfront value, accelerating decision-making, and positioning businesses as trusted partners in a competitive market.

Another hot topic for B2B marketers in 2024 was **Artificial intelligence** (AI). AI is increasingly integral to marketing strategies across various industries. Our survey revealed that 69% of marketers have incorporated AI into their operations, reflecting a growing reliance on AI technologies to enhance marketing efficiency and effectiveness as well as save time and budget.

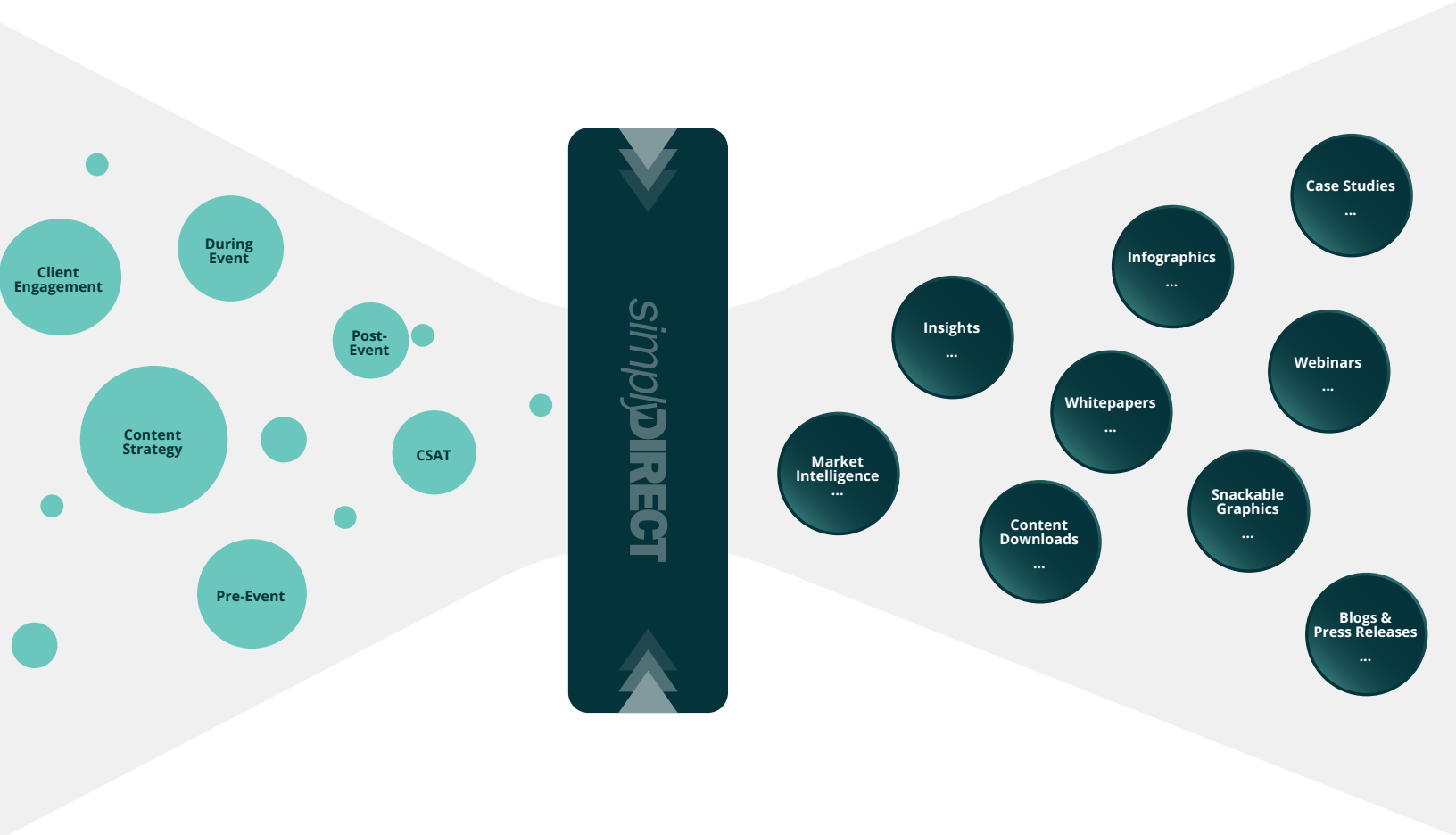
### Latest Topics

-  **Free trials and proof of concept**  
Highest performing lead generation tactic
-  **Artificial Intelligence**  
69% of marketers have incorporated AI into their operations

# SHARPER MARKETING & SALES STRATEGY

SimplyDIRECT and its subsidiary Gatepoint Research pioneered **account-based surveying** over 25 years ago. Since then, SimplyDIRECT has mastered the art of using survey intelligence to engage and convert target accounts into meetings and opportunities.

Research based content can influence every step of the buyer’s journey from initial engagement to closed won. The survey intel is used to create top funnel content to attract, mid funnel content to educate, and conversion content to help close.



With SimplyDIRECT you’re getting the best of both worlds – hyper targeted executives who opt-in to being contacted and have given your sales team the information needed to create thoughtful, solution focused outreach. You’re also getting the insights your marketing team needs to create value added content from awareness to acquisition.

## CONCLUSION

# B2B MARKETING'S NEXT DIRECTION

To thrive in uncertain economic times, B2B marketing teams must embrace a [multichannel approach](#), combining the scalability of digital marketing and ABM with the relationship-building potential of in-person events, ABM surveying and gifting. By focusing on warm leads generated through digital engagement and using personalization tools to refine targeting, businesses can foster authenticity and trust—qualities that resonate strongly during periods of economic instability. This adaptive strategy ensures that sales and marketing efforts remain both relevant and impactful.



## INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

Scan the QR or [click here](#) to participate in SimplyDIRECT's 2025 Trends in Marketing Survey!

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