ORACLE
Marketing

Marketing trends 2022

Marketers tell all about successes, struggles, and solutions

Oracle + Ascend2

Marketers are still adapting to pandemic-related disruptions, but there's more work to do.

In the last few years, marketers have learned they must be flexible and able to pivot when things change. But more than one-third of marketers surveyed say that adapting to circumstances as they arise is still one of their top marketing challenges. What's more, their buyers' baseline expectation is a personalized and enjoyable experience. It's now a balancing act. Marketers must balance their customers' desires against their need for agility and adaptability.

The good news? The data and technology needed for these exceptional experiences are becoming more accessible. Marketers' strategies must capitalize on these advances to ensure competitive advantage.

In partnership with the research firm Ascend2, Oracle sought to learn how marketers plan to face these challenges. We surveyed 853 marketers from various industries in the United States, Canada, India, and the UK.
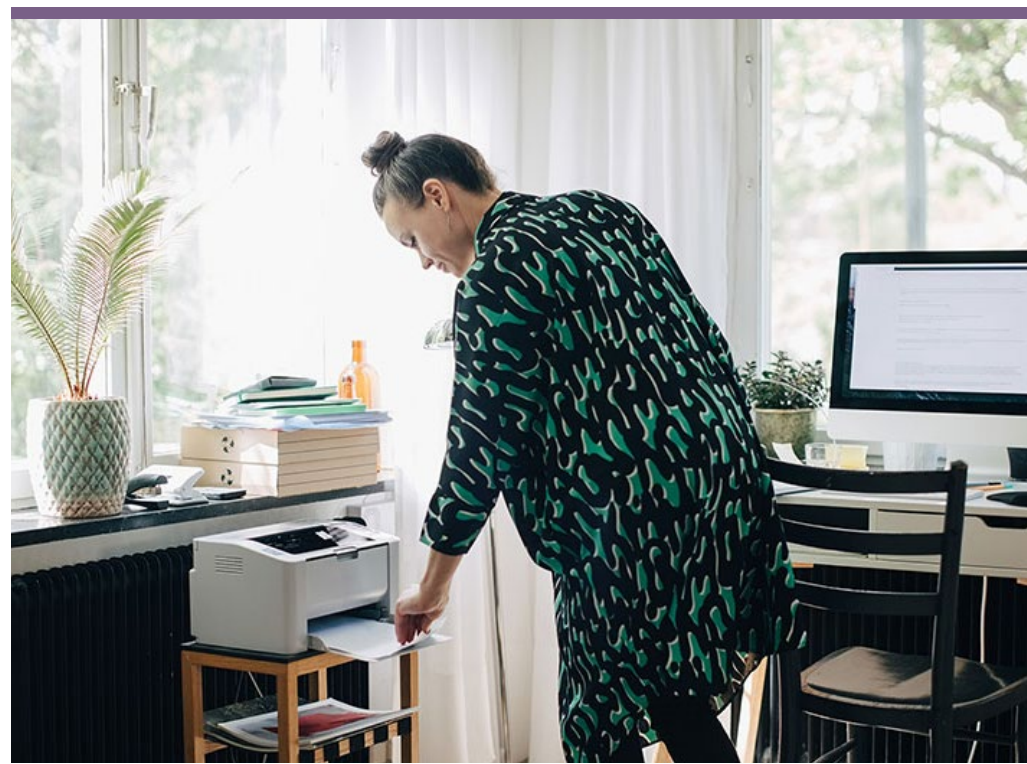
Key highlights

In with the new

A customer data platform (CDP), a relative newcomer to the martech scene, is one of the top three solutions marketers say they cannot live without. The other two, email marketing tools and content management systems (CMS), are the workhorses in most marketing organizations.

… and speaking of technology, marketers will be shopping for it in the year ahead. 82% of marketers surveyed say they will add, remove, or replace technology components to improve performance this year.

Marketers want to add customer service (40%) and customer loyalty (36%) insights to their marketing programs. They believe this would have the most impact on their 2022 success.

There are plenty of opportunities for AI to do some heavy lifting for marketers this year. You can take advantage of every customer interaction when you pair machine learning with unified, reliable data. 42% of marketers say they already trust AI to personalize content and offers in real time.

Even the most successful marketers say delivering an exceptional customer experience is a top challenge. That's second only to maximizing performance across channels. Siloed data and disconnected processes contribute to a negative customer experience. So, it is no surprise that many of those surveyed say their CDP is the top marketing solution they can't live without.

Things are looking up

Our research shows that a whopping 94% of marketers' 2021 marketing efforts were successful. And nearly half (48%) say their organizations were extremely successful.

With 2021 in the rearview mirror, marketers are ready to embrace the coming year's challenges. Our research found that marketers' outlook for 2022 is very positive: 37% are confident, another 31% are hopeful, and 24% feel excited.

## Which best describes how you feel about your chances of achieving marketing objectives in 2022?

1%
3%
4%
37%
24%
31%

- Confident
- Hopeful
- Excited
- Nervous
- Indifferent
- Panicked
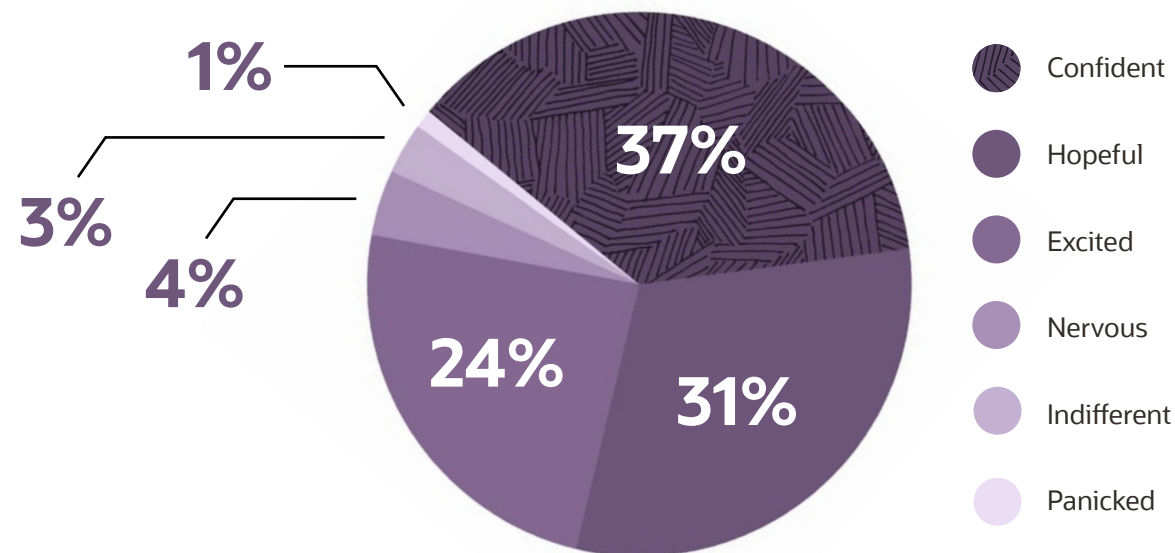
Number of marketers defines success

Marketers from larger marketing departments report more success than those from smaller departments. 58% of companies with more than 80 marketing employees say their efforts were "extremely successful" last year. Compare that to 33% at companies with marketing departments of 30 or fewer employees.

How are marketing budgets changing in 2022?

64%
Increasing from last year

25%
Decreasing from last year
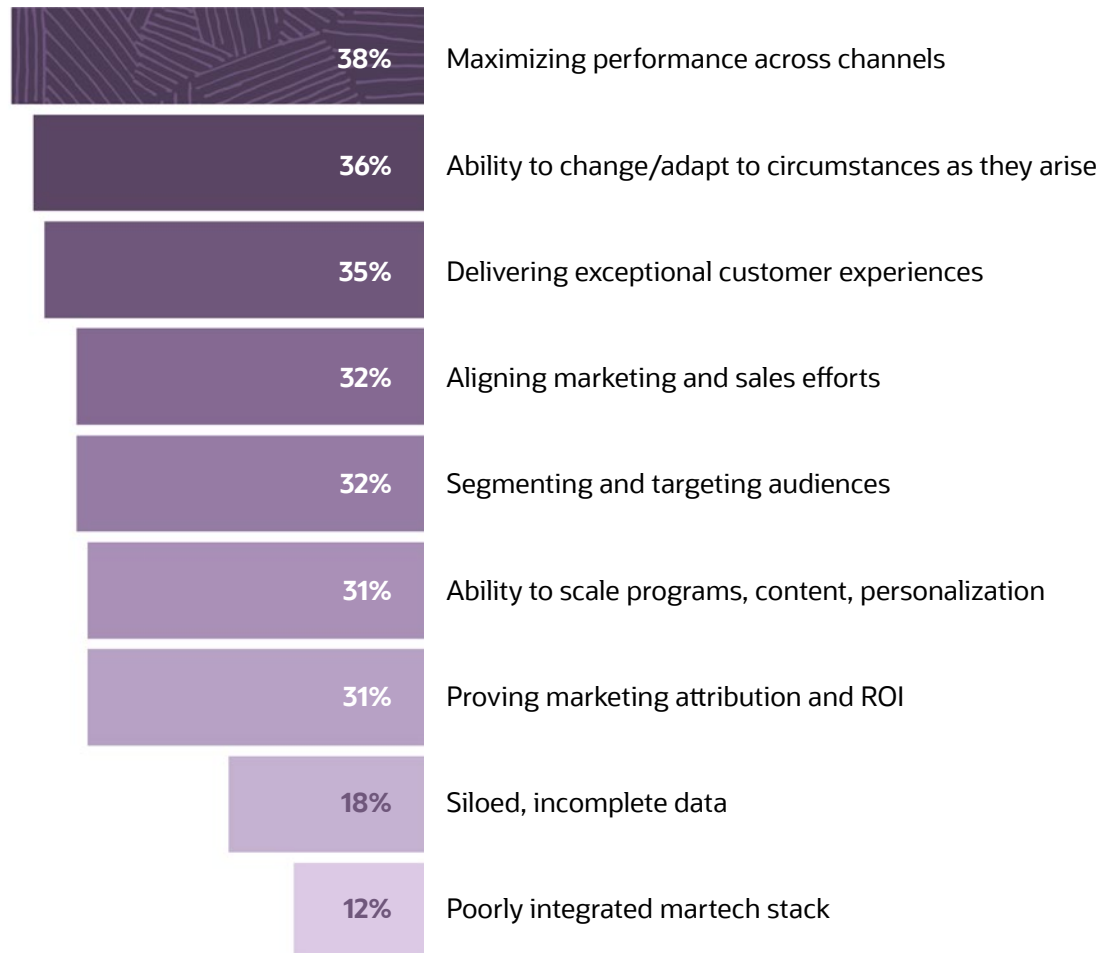
11%
No change—flat from last year
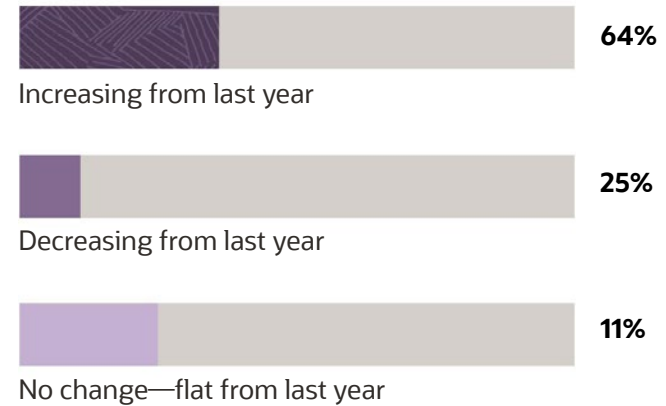
Marketing budgets are on the rise: Nearly two-thirds of those surveyed expect an increase in the coming year. That raises the stakes when it comes to how you spend the money.

For technology spending, the number one solution marketers are planning to invest in is a customer data platform. That's followed by segmentation and targeting solutions (32%). This is a sign that data-driven marketing continues to grow in importance. Marketers' focus will be on tech investments that capture, organize, and use data to improve the customer experience, automate processes, and prove ROI.

… but the struggle is real

What are your top marketing challenges right now?

- **38%** Maximizing performance across channels
- **36%** Ability to change/adapt to circumstances as they arise
- **35%** Delivering exceptional customer experiences
- **32%** Aligning marketing and sales efforts
- **32%** Segmenting and targeting audiences
- **31%** Ability to scale programs, content, personalization
- **31%** Proving marketing attribution and ROI
- **18%** Siloed, incomplete data
- **12%** Poorly integrated martech stack

Let's face it, organizations need to be using many channels to deliver an impressionable experience today. Your audience is everywhere (and we mean everywhere). They consume and engage with content across a variety of channels and devices. Being everywhere at once and showing up in a consistent and relevant way can be as difficult as it sounds. **38% of marketers surveyed said that maximizing channel performance is one of their top marketing challenges.**

Adaptability is a concept that has become problematic for marketers to execute. More than one-third of marketers report that adapting to circumstances as they come up is a major barrier to success. Taking an agile approach to content delivery allows customers to interact with your brand on their terms. But, to do this, marketers must be adept at making decisions based on their customers' needs. That means choosing technologies that incorporate data from various departments, channels, and sources. This will give marketers a more complete picture of their customers and better control of their narrative.
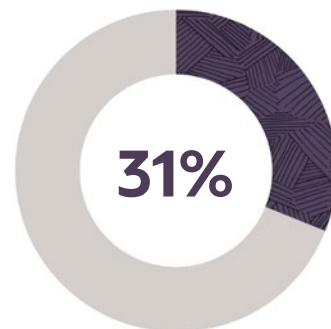
Measuring up

The most difficult performance metrics to measure vary, based on level of marketing organization success.
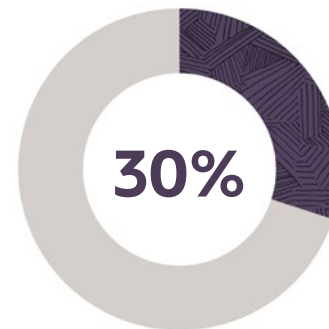
Extremely successful marketing organizations:
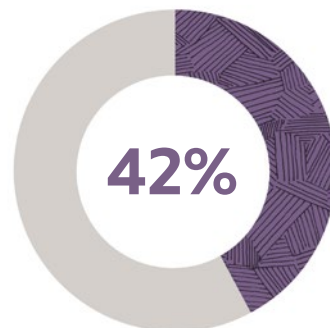
35%

Sales and revenue attributed to marketing

31%

Customer lifetime value

30%

Cost per lead/cost per acquisition

All other marketing organizations:

42%

Marketing ROI

37%

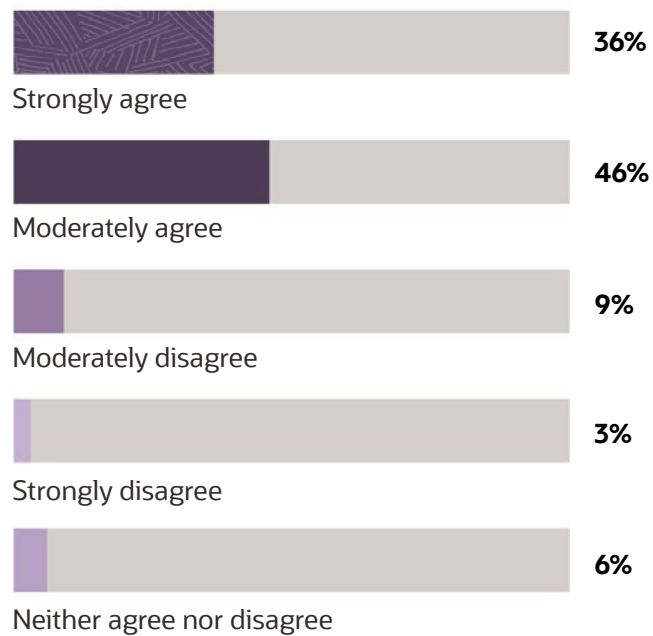Sales and revenue attributed to marketing

31%
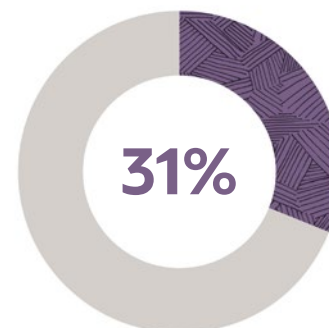
Customer acquisition and retention

Measuring performance across channels can be cumbersome. Marketers' two most hated tasks are creating reports and dashboards and calculating ROI. The tasks are time-consuming and difficult, and the outcome can be disappointing. About **one-third of marketers say that proving marketing attribution and ROI is one of their top challenges.**

Marketers who self-reported as "extremely successful" have less difficulty determining marketing ROI than all other marketers (26% vs. 42%) Regardless of reported success, though, **all marketers surveyed identified sales and revenue attribution as the most difficult KPI to measure.** The costs involved in acquiring and retaining customers are also a top challenge to measure for all marketers.

Martech stacks up

We will have to add, remove, or replace components of our current martech stack to improve performance in 2022.

Strongly agree	36%
Moderately agree	46%
Moderately disagree	9%
Strongly disagree	3%
Neither agree nor disagree	6%

82% of organizations plan to add, remove, or replace components of their marketing tech stack to improve performance this year.

The last two years were perilous: quick decisions, uncertainty, uncharted territory. Some organizations even faced a complete overhaul of channels, data sources, or revenue streams. Now, marketers must update the technology and processes they use to execute.

To understand this reformation, we need to learn the tactics and strategies they are planning for the year ahead. Where are they planning to invest most of their resources and budget? From there, we can paint a clear picture of 2022 marketing priorities and the technology choices marketers will make to meet their goals.
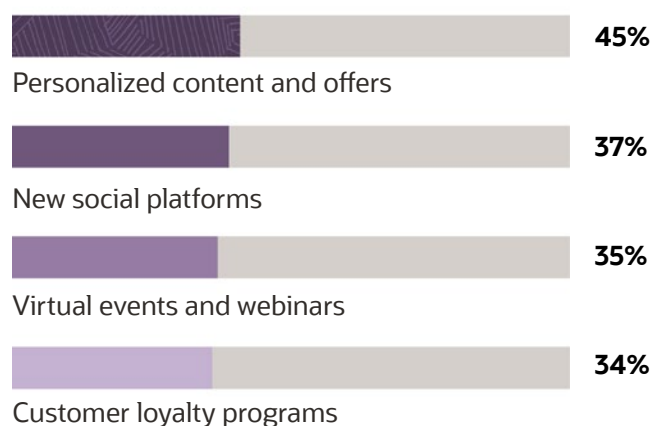
Which of the following marketing tactics will you add in 2022?

B2B marketers

Personalized content and offers — 41%

Customer loyalty programs — 39%

Virtual events and webinars — 37%

Video marketing — 36%

B2C marketers

Personalized content and offers — 45%

New social platforms — 37%

Virtual events and webinars — 35%

Customer loyalty programs — 34%

So which tactics are being added in 2022, and how will this affect tech stacks? Personalized content and offers, virtual events, and customer loyalty programs will be important to B2B and B2C marketing strategies. All three tactics focus on finding ways to engage with your customers more effectively. It is not surprising that virtual events lead the pack. And personalized content has been growing in importance. But **customer loyalty programs are quickly moving from "nice-to-have" to "have-to-have"** programs.
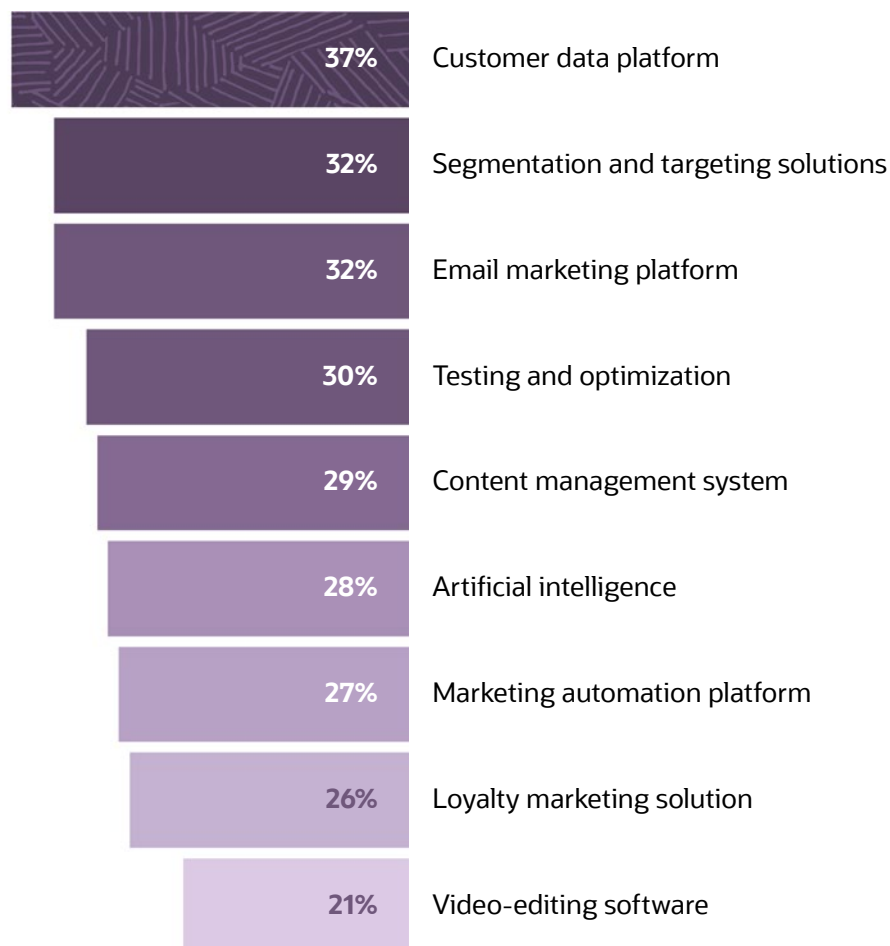
For B2B marketers, creating and delivering video content will take a leading role for 36% of those surveyed. To do this at scale, B2B marketers should look to content management systems that provide video support, editing, and delivery capabilities. More than one-quarter (26%) of B2B marketers say a top investment for the coming year will be video-editing software. Only 14% of B2C marketers plan to make video-editing software a priority investment.

37% of B2C marketers will focus on testing and implementing tactics in new social platforms (e.g., TikTok, Discord, Twitch, etc.). For their consumer-oriented activities, this opens doors to engage with new potential customers and deliver relevant messaging and offers.

A CDP would make their social media efforts more effective and targeted. A CMS would also be beneficial. For the best results, your CDP and CMS should support your digital asset management (to store, manage, and find images and videos for social media) and omnichannel content delivery to the web and apps.

Which marketing solutions do you plan to invest in the most in 2022?

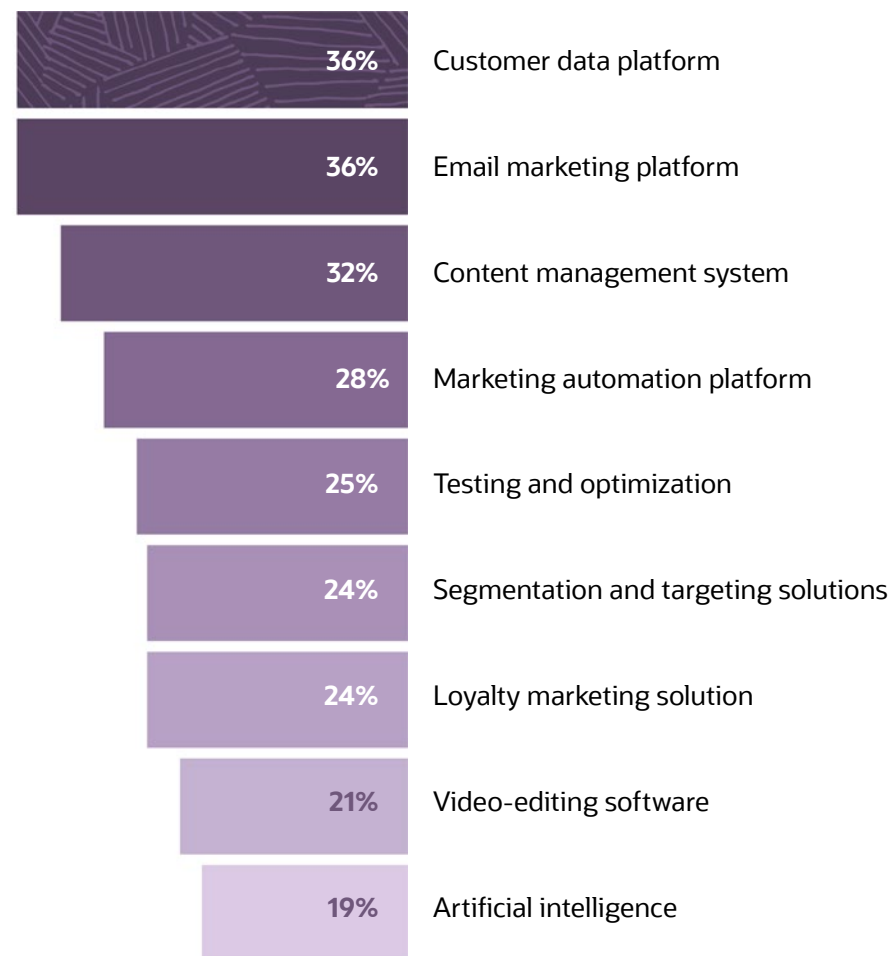| Percentage	Solution
37%	Customer data platform
32%	Segmentation and targeting solutions
32%	Email marketing platform
30%	Testing and optimization
29%	Content management system
28%	Artificial intelligence
27%	Marketing automation platform
26%	Loyalty marketing solution
21%	Video-editing software

Budgets are rising, so many marketers will be hunting for solutions to optimize their tech stacks in the year ahead. Where do marketers plan to invest most of their 2022 technology budgets? CDPs (37%), segmentation and targeting solutions (32%), and email marketing platforms (32%) top their lists.

I'm not doing ABM … or am I? Marketers were least likely to fear missing out on account-based marketing (ABM). In fact, the fewest respondents identified it as a marketing tactic they would add in 2022. Could this be because many companies have already implemented ABM? Or are some executing ABM-like strategies without calling them ABM? Possibly. CDPs and segmentation and targeting solutions top the list of solutions marketers plan to invest in next year. Both are cornerstones to an account-based approach.

"Extremely successful" marketers say their biggest tech investment in the coming year will be in testing and optimization solutions. This signals their ongoing need to improve efforts and maximize outcomes.

Which marketing solution can you absolutely not live without?

36%	Customer data platform
36%	Email marketing platform
32%	Content management system
28%	Marketing automation platform
25%	Testing and optimization
24%	Segmentation and targeting solutions
24%	Loyalty marketing solution
21%	Video-editing software
19%	Artificial intelligence

As the marketing technology landscape continues to expand, some relative newcomers now stand alongside time-tested heavyweights as necessities. A CDP is a good example.

Email marketing platforms and content management systems are essential to modern martech and among the top three most heavily relied on solutions for 36% and 32% of marketers, respectively. These content creation, publishing, and distribution giants are mainstays for marketers.

... speaking of data

Collecting data is one thing. But harnessing the power of that data to turn insights into action requires a holistic view. CDPs allow marketers to deliver experiences based on real-time data and a single source of truth. Unified data allows marketers to enhance decision-making with data-backed insights about the needs and behaviors of their audiences.
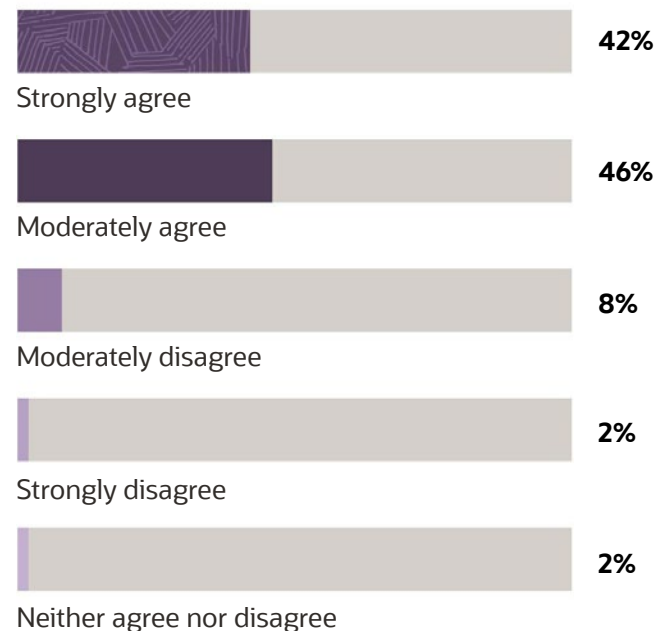
88% of marketers say they'll have access to the right data for effective decision-making this year. But using customer data to its fullest is the aspect of digital marketing that marketers most fear they are missing out on. The ability to turn data into action will be the marketer's differentiator. It will spell the difference between mediocre customer experiences and exceptional ones.

Opportunity for AI to do some heavy lifting

When unified and reliable data is backed with machine learning, you can capitalize on every customer interaction. 42% of marketers say they trust AI to personalize content and offers in real time.

Even the most successful marketers say that delivering exceptional customer experiences is a top challenge. It's second only to maximizing performance across channels. Siloed data and disconnected processes negatively affect the customer experience. Yet another reason why CDPs are the top marketing solution this group can't live without.

I will have access to the appropriate data to make critical marketing decisions in 2022.

42%
Strongly agree

46%
Moderately agree

8%
Moderately disagree

2%
Strongly disagree

2%
Neither agree nor disagree

Marketers feel they could improve their performance with customer service (40%) and customer loyalty (36%) data. They believe that integrating this data into their existing martech stack would have the biggest impact on their success.

B2C companies were the early adopters of loyalty programs, but B2B companies are taking notice. B2B (33%) and B2C (43%) marketers are very bullish on the impact of customer loyalty programs. Loyal customers are more likely to repurchase, refer more, and try a new offering. These are all goals and measurements that marketers are trying to achieve. There are even more opportunities to impact growth with the integration of loyalty program data to the martech stack.

If you could integrate data from another business application to your martech stack, which one would have the most impact on your success?

	B2B	B2C
Customer service	39%	42%
Customer loyalty	33%	43%
Order management	29%	15%
Supply chain management	28%	24%
Subscription management	27%	19%
Financial and accounting	26%	21%
Commerce platform	26%	20%
Shipping and logistics	21%	19%
Configure, price, quote (CPQ)	20%	15%

Which first-party data sources will be most valuable to you in 2022 to address the loss of third-party cookies?

36%	Customer purchase history
32%	Social media profiles
31%	Website registrations
26%	Survey respondents
26%	Mobile app usage
26%	CRM/call center interactions
26%	Loyalty programs
20%	User community members
17%	Newsletter subscribers
14%	SMS

Third-party cookies are going away, but data-driven marketing isn't. While marketers look for new ways to acquire data, they will continue to rely on customer purchase history, social media profile data, and website registrations.

First-party data gives companies unique and reliable customer insight. The more sources you can tap into for that data collection, the better. Every customer engagement (i.e., surveys, call center engagements, loyalty program activities, etc.) is a chance to collect more first-party data to ensure top-notch user experiences and stellar marketing performance.

Going all in on AI

As AI's use in marketing increases, even the smallest marketing teams have begun to test its effect on their performance. AI can optimize, automate, predict, and measure a variety of marketing tasks and tactics. And our research shows that marketers are embracing AI in more and more places.
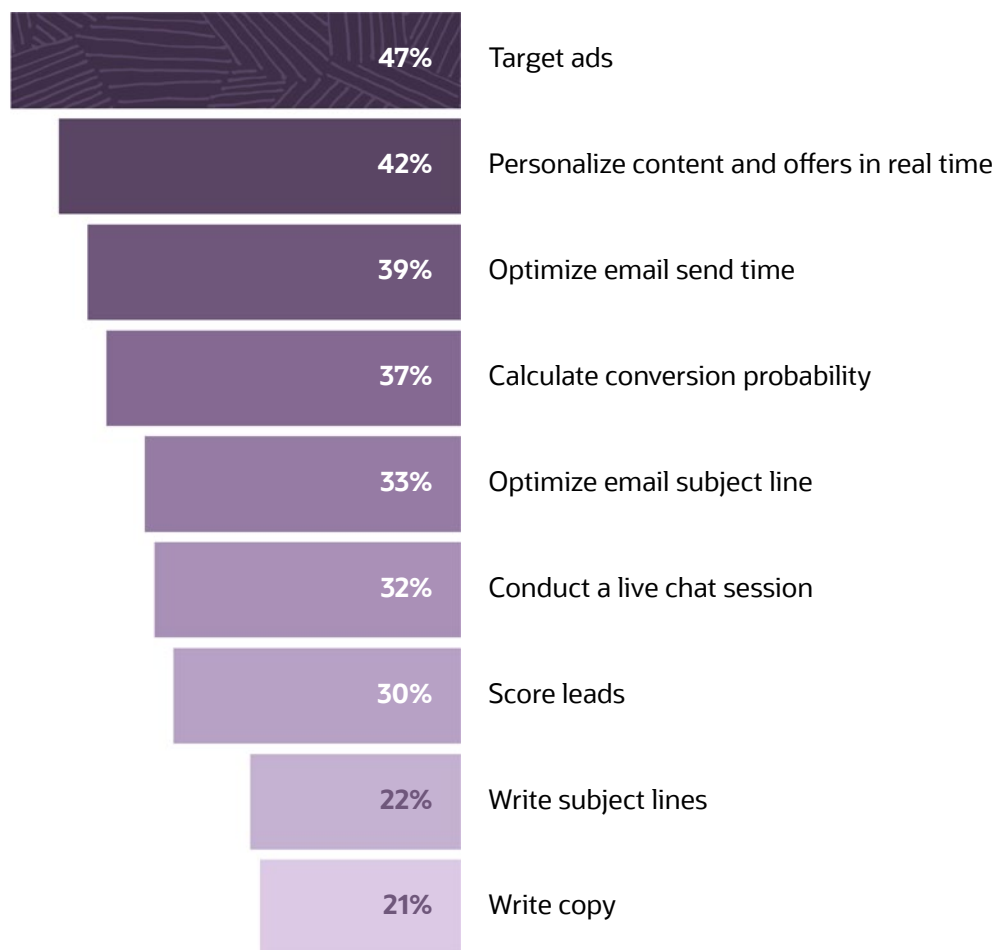
Just 19% of marketers in our survey listed AI as a solution they absolutely cannot live without. These AI power users might be onto something. Interestingly, this group is significantly more likely to report the highest levels of marketing success: 59% of marketers who absolutely can't live without AI say their marketing strategies are extremely successful.

… and now v is creeping in. 30% of marketers fear they are missing out on AI's capability to predict behavior and adjust campaigns. Couple this with the fact that about one-quarter of marketers say their team's most complained about tasks are setting up campaign workflows, testing creative (offers, subject lines, copy), and customizing content. These manual, repetitive tasks are great candidates for an AI solution. Think of what that would do to improve efficiency and make better use of resources.
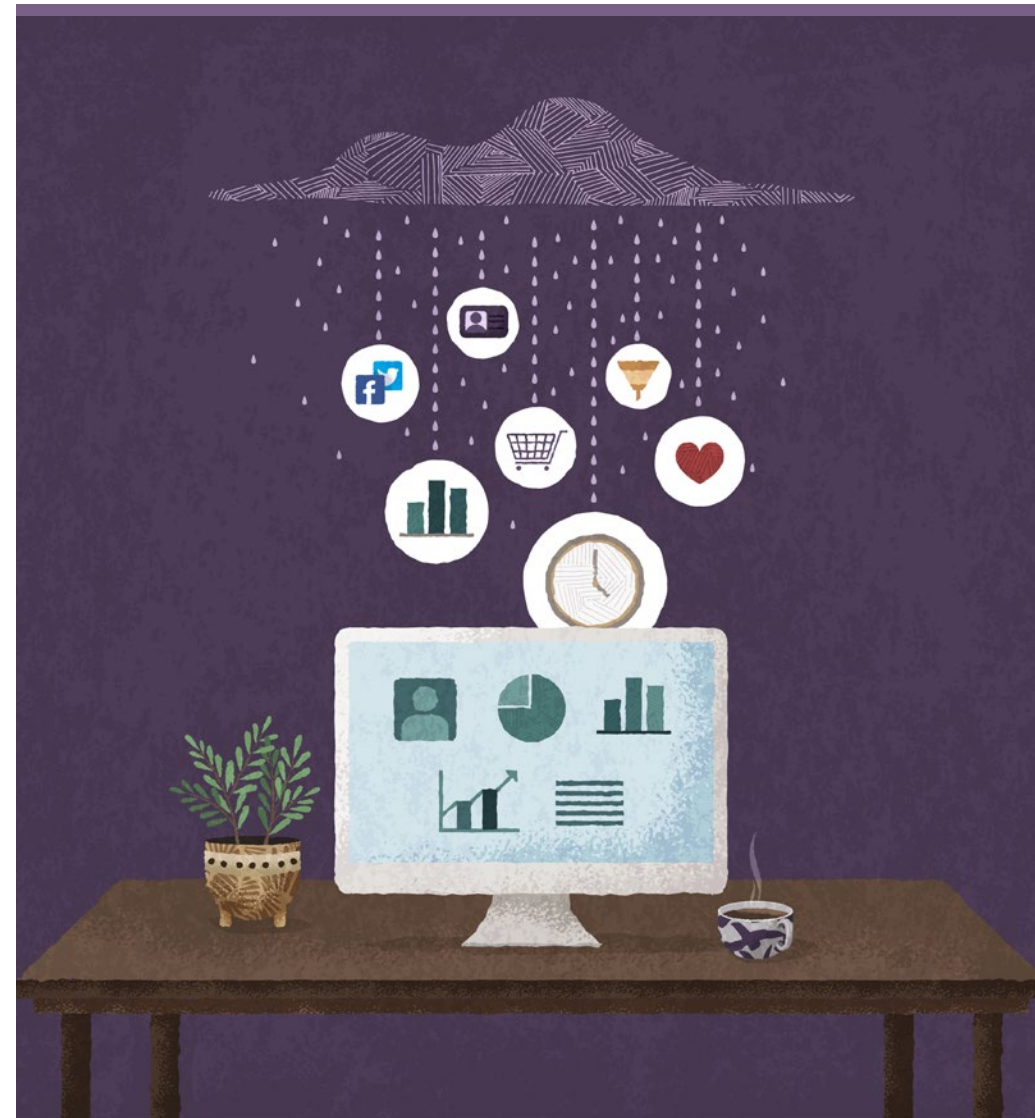
Which of the following activities would you trust (or already use) artificial intelligence to do for you?

47%	Target ads
42%	Personalize content and offers in real time
39%	Optimize email send time
37%	Calculate conversion probability
33%	Optimize email subject line
32%	Conduct a live chat session
30%	Score leads
22%	Write subject lines
21%	Write copy

Marketers across all segments are adopting AI to carry out marketing tasks. Nearly half (47%) of those surveyed report that they trust AI to target ads. And other top activities they would hand over include real-time personalization of content and offers, email send-time optimization, and conversion probability calculations. When AI completes these tasks without human intervention, AI can provide added marketing agility. (Marketers reported that adapting to circumstances as they arise is a top challenge.)

Smaller marketing departments are less likely to trust AI for marketing tasks. Those from marketing teams of 30 or fewer employees say they only trust AI to tackle two items on the list: scoring leads and writing subject lines.

Having sufficient data should correlate with trust in AI. After all, if the underlying data is incomplete or lacking in quality, AI will fail. However, the numbers don't tell that story. The marketers have a good feeling about their data: 44% of midsize organizations, 45% of larger organizations, and 36% of smaller marketing teams strongly believe they have sufficient data to make decisions. But smaller marketing teams still lack trust in AI.

Dynamic duo: content and personalization

Quality content and the ability to personalize it for your clients is a powerful combination. When marketers develop their strategy and set priorities, they should consider the availability of data, technology, and people (constraints often include inefficient manual processes).

This is the number one tactic both B2B and B2C marketers will implement in the coming year. But scaling content and maximizing its performance across channels are still major challenges.

Our research shows that marketers will meet this challenge by investing in their content management systems. One-third (32%) of marketers absolutely can't live without their CMS, and for almost as many (29%), it will be one of their most invested-in solutions in the year ahead.

On the people side, nearly one-quarter (24%) of marketers complain about customizing content (it's hard, slow work). So, it's no wonder that 31% say they face a major barrier to their success in scaling programs, content, and personalization. Data insights, such as those delivered by a CDP, can reduce manual, repetitive content customization tasks.

43%

of marketing organizations will be adding personalized content and offers to their marketing strategy in the year ahead.

Marketers show love to loyalty programs

Rewarding your customers for their loyalty and frequent brand engagement is good for them and you. Loyalty programs offer great opportunities for building a complete profile of each customer. And that profile data can help personalize your interactions and offerings.

How much do marketers love their loyalty programs?

24% of marketers say they absolutely could not live without their loyalty marketing solution. More may be joining this group, as 42% of marketers plan to add a loyalty program in 2022. Midsize marketing departments are especially eager to jump on the bandwagon: 50% plan to add a loyalty program in 2022.

Data is a critical part of loyalty programs. 36% of all marketers would like to integrate data from their customer loyalty program to their martech stack. Adding data from loyalty programs provides marketers with cross-channel insight into members interacting in-store, in-app, or with online touchpoints. Marketers also recognize the value of loyalty programs—26% said they provide an opportunity to collect unique first-party data in the absence of third-party cookies.

As loyalty programs grow in popularity, marketers must leverage technology and data to deliver consistent cross-channel loyalty experiences.

Takeaways

- Good news! The outlook for 2022 is largely positive: Nearly two-thirds expect budgets to rise, and when asked about their chances for marketing success in 2022, 37% are confident, another 31% are hopeful, and 24% feel excited.

- Marketers plan to spend that budget on technology that captures, organizes, and uses data to improve the customer experience, automate processes, and prove ROI.

- The one constant during the last few years has been change. As we go into 2022, more than one-third of marketers say that adapting to circumstances as they arise is still one of their top marketing challenges.

- 82% of marketers plan to add, remove, or replace technology components in 2022. The top three marketing solutions they plan to invest in are CDP, a segmentation and targeting solution, and email marketing.

- Marketers' plans for technology investment are probably driven by their top challenges: maximizing performance across channels, adapting to circumstances as they arise, and delivering a personalized customer experience.

- Data integration across front- and back-office solutions will be even more critical in the year ahead. The two data sources most marketers covet as an addition to their marketing insights are customer service (40%) and customer loyalty (36%) data.

- AI adoption is on the rise, but not for smaller marketing organizations. We wondered if insufficient data was standing in the way. It's not. Most organizations report that they have sufficient data, but smaller marketing organizations still don't trust AI for most marketing tasks.

Methodology and participants

Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of business strategies and the tactics and technology that drives them. With a custom online questionnaire, this survey was fielded to a panel of 853 marketing professionals in management and leadership positions throughout the US, UK, Canada, and India. Respondents represented organizations with annual revenue equivalent to $250 million or more. The responses were collected from January 10 to 22, 2022.

Participants *N = 853 marketing professionals*

Country

US	40%
India	27%
UK	24%
Canada	9%

Buyer segment

B2B	41%
B2C	24%
Both B2B and B2C	35%

Marketing organization size

10 or less	7%
11-30	20%
31-80	27%
80 or more	46%

Industry

Retail/Consumer Packaged Goods	29%
Services (Personal, Professional, Technology/IT)	15%
Manufacturing	14%
Banking/Financial Services	12%
Technology/Software	8%
Healthcare	6%
Government/Public Sector/Education	5%
Entertainment	4%
Transportation	3%
Hospitality	2%
Agriculture	1%
Telecommunications	1%

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RESEARCH-BASED MARKETING

About Oracle and Advertising and CX

Make every customer interaction matter by connecting all your business data across advertising, marketing, sales, commerce, and service. Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience (CX) is a connected suite of applications that goes beyond traditional CRM to help you create and nurture lasting customer relationships. Build a complete view of every interaction and every customer, no matter how and when they engage. Empower your entire business to deliver exceptional customer experiences—from acquisition to retention—and everything in between.

About Ascend2

Marketing technology companies and digital marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to supplement their marketing content, generate leads, and engage prospects to drive demand through the middle of the funnel.

Learn more about Ascend2.