NetLine CORPORATION

2020 STATE OF

B2B CONTENT CONSUMPTION AND DEMAND

REPORT FOR MARKETERS

Research by Netline Corporation

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INTRODUCTION TO
THE RESEARCH

For B2B marketers looking to overcome noise and competition, understanding your audience is a top priority.

Welcome to another year of breaking down the largest repository of first party B2B content consumption data on the web. We're glad you've joined us for the 4th edition and 1st of a new decade.

As always, the 2020 Content Consumption and Demand Report continues the tradition of delivering as much of our data as possible in a way that helps marketers grow stronger content marketing programs. Each section is divided into actionable, strategic takeaways, all of which enable you to determine how to find and feed your demand generation machine.

Inside, you'll find that we've gathered and digested data from the real consumption behavior of professionals across our platform (we're talking millions of downloads, and the dozens of data points resulting from each of them). These aren't interviews; these aren't exhaust signals from search patterns—the data herein is gathered from real engagements with B2B content as professionals research their various business and technical challenges.

For B2B marketers, the results of this research and packaging of this data creates a unique opportunity to let data inform and direct a targeting and content marketing strategy. Rather than play very expensive guessing games with content and hope for ROI, our clients and partners have leveraged our technology and data to drive meaningful engagements with downstream impacts on developing their pipeline.

So, jump into a year's worth of downloads from the largest B2B lead gen platform and uncover the data that will help your content resonate better with your audience, and target the most engaged cross-section of professionals in your desired industry.

David Fortino

SVP Audience, Marketing and Product

THE
DATA SETS

04

Before we unveil all of the glorious data we've stuffed into this year's report, we need to establish something at the outset: the data you're about to review was sourced exclusively from first-party data sources.

If you're familiar with NetLine Corporation, you already know this. If this report is the first time you've interacted with us, however, let's quickly review what first-party buyer data is.

A first-party data buyer is someone who has agreed to share information about themselves and the organization they work with in exchange for professional content from our clients or partners.

To put it another way, these people were genuinely interested in the content that they downloaded. So much so that they proactively registered for the content and in the process provided their full professional profile.

This report covers all Active Audience data through millions of downloads globally. Our analysis aims to summarize the behaviors of first-party B2B buyers representing more than 300+ industries globally, with varying job levels, company sizes, and company revenue.

That raw data is broken out into two categories: Active Audience and In-Demand Audience.

- **Active Audience** is composed of all users who requested content and is measured by their self-identified first-party data. They may or may not have met the discerning needs of our clients.

- **In-Demand Audience** is composed of data from those users who fit the lead profile of our clients.

Between the two categories, we can see how marketers and buyers compare and contrast in their expectations around the supply and demand of the market.

Another term worth defining is what we call the Consumption Gap.

> The Consumption Gap is the time between the moment content is requested and the moment it's opened for consumption.

We track these metrics year-over-year to better understand how much change in intent occurs across each area of interest. This gives marketers and sales reps a tremendous leg up on the level of responsiveness they should expect from professionals in each industry.

At the end of each section, we've also provided Takeaways, where we offer content tips, best practices, and how your business can best take advantage of this data in 2020.

HOW TO READ
THIS GUIDE

1. As we've done in years past, we're sticking with the "no assembly required" approach. Read all of it in sequence or jump to your targeting sweet-spot for first-party data on what happened over the past 12 months in that cross-section of the total audience.

2. To get the most from this data, we suggest going into the content with a few questions in mind for yourself or your team:

   • What does your target audience look like? If you haven't defined personas yet, spend some time with this data to assemble audience profiles.

   • Is your target prospect limited to a single industry or does their job area span verticals?

   • What types of content formats perform best for you and for your prospects? Sometimes your best volume performing asset might very well be your worst late-stage converting asset.

   • How much do lifestyle preferences factor into your B2B strategy?

   Alright, Explorers — let's dig into the data!

CONTENT
INSIGHTS

At every stage of your Content Marketing strategy, you must keep in mind that the data you're analyzing represents real people. As you study the data at hand, it's crucial to understand their intent and what they're truly seeking. This intent influences the internal Buying Committee and, ultimately, the purchase decision.

In short: the best way to get to know your audience is by understanding what they're looking for.

Let's take Senior Directors, for example. In 2019, they were the fastest to consume content requested.

The content Senior Directors requested most often included themes like:

- Top Interview Questions
- Ways to Improve Productivity Skills
- Securing Company Infrastructure
- Leading with Empathy
- AI and Deep Learning

TAKEAWAY

Deliver Value Right Away.
The easiest thing to decipher here is how much value is expressed within the title itself. Whether we're evaluating Senior Directors or Supervisors, everyone wants to know what they're committing to. The better and more accurate the title, the happier you and your prospect will be.

Content Data Delivery Visualized

Wait, how much data?

The staggering amount of data the internet generates yearly increases annually. In 2019, our platform delivered

16 *petabytes of content*

If we were to try and visualize the sheer volume of this data, NetLine delivered the equivalent of:

size reference

1PB
(1015 bytes of data)

= **1,000**
terabytes (TB)

or

1,000,000
gigabytes (GB)

319 *million 4 drawer file cabinets loaded with text*

Laid out, end to end, the cabinets would stretch
9.74 **trips** *around the world*
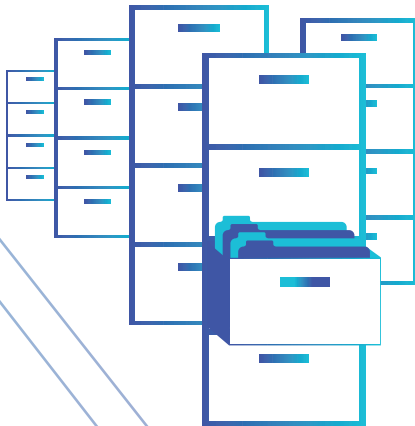
1.276
billion feet
of stacking file cabinets vertically
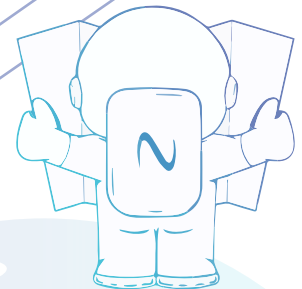
Stacked vertically, the cabinets would stretch to the
moon *with 15 million feet to spare*

08

In 2019, *Tuesdays and Wednesdays* were the **best times** to reach B2B audiences.

Answering the Question of Time

Is now still a good time?

Marketers are constantly on the hunt for the best time to reach their target buyer. In most cases, it's a total shot in the dark. With the first-party data that we've analyzed, we know when a Senior Manager in the Logistics or Transportation field, for example, is most likely to engage with content (which happens to be Wednesday, by the way).

In 2019, Tuesdays and Wednesdays were the best times to reach B2B audiences. While Mondays and Thursdays still made up for 40% of the Most Active Cons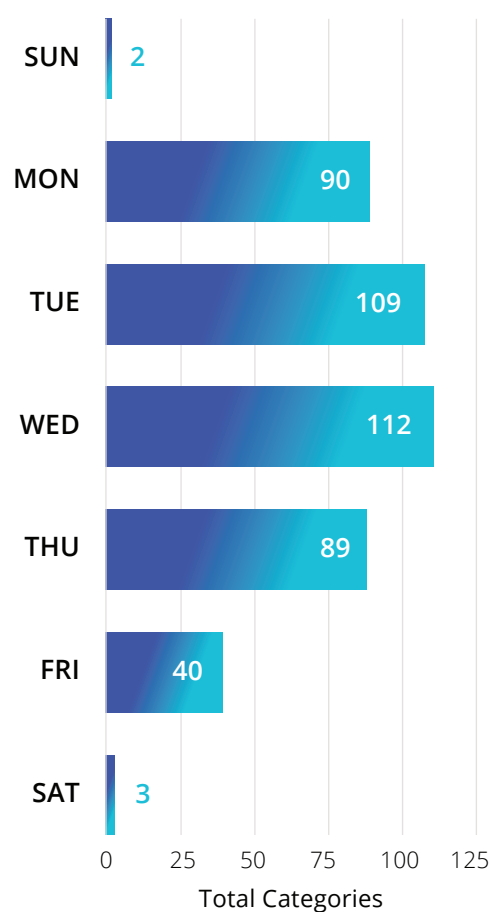umption Days, Wednesdays and Tuesdays made up for just over half of the days where users requested information, especially for users in the Financial, IT, & Human Resources — not to mention 7 of the Top 10 Job Functions by Pageviews.

MOST ACTIVE CONSUMPTION DAYS

Day	Total Categories
SUN	2
MON	90
TUE	109
WED	112
THU	89
FRI	40
SAT	3

Total Categories

Turkey Time is Content Consumption Time

Of the 50 most active days for Content Consumption in 2019 — all of which occurred in the 2nd half of the year — 12 took place in November, including the top three. Within the Top 100, 92 days came in Q3 and Q4.

By Format

eBook Registrations Triple White Papers

eBooks are once again the top dog in the content download fight in a big way. Behind eBooks were White Papers and Guides, with the three of these Content Types combined representing roughly 56% of the inventory in the market.

Each of these terms are often used interchangeably in Content Marketing, but each medium has its own unique set of differentiators and use cases.
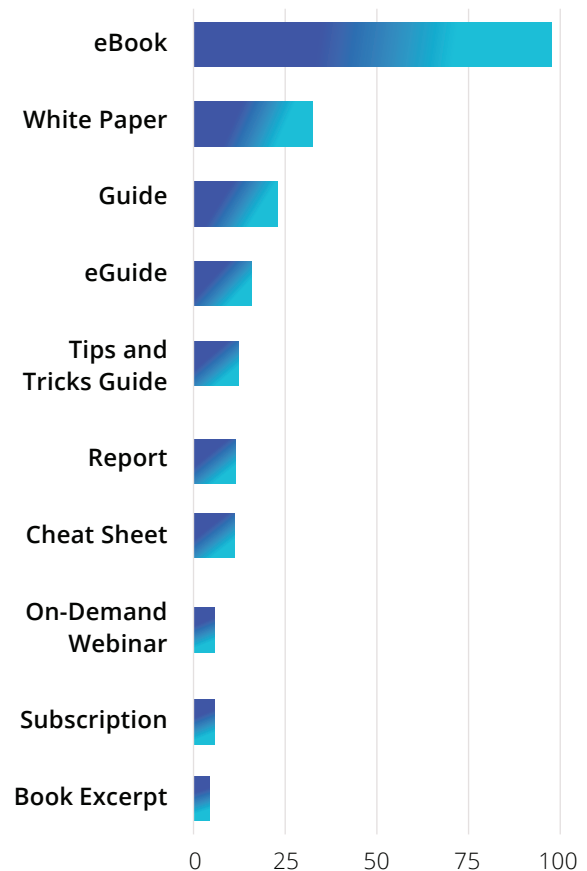
- **eBooks –** The ultimate utility in content marketing and feature a wide range of uses. From case studies to thought leadership, they can be used to present anything a business wants to feature.

- **White Papers –** The closest things content marketers have to scientific studies. Where eBooks have room to be casual, White Papers are designed to present data and other vital information as directly as possible.

- **Guides –** While the term is used loosely, are primarily positioned, to imply or even establish authority. This format is designed to walk a reader through a topic or procedure step by step from start to finish.

Webinars Will Rule

While webinars were requested less than ebooks and other text materials in 2019, this doesn't lessen their importance. Webinars tend to be associated more with prospects further down the funnel, equating to less total volume. However, smaller often means more invested, and webinar attendees are exponentially more engaged.

According to research from our partner ON24, 76% of marketers say webinars allow them to drive more leads while 80% report that webinars help lower their cost-per-lead. Consider, too, how much time consumers actively engage with this medium: a whopping 58 minutes. Add to this the elephant in the room that is COVID-19, and webinars will indeed rule in 2020 and beyond. As of April 2020, ON24 is already reporting a 333% increase in webinar attendance.

TOP 10 CONTENT TYPES BY REQUESTS

Content Type	
eBook	~98
White Paper	~32
Guide	~23
eGuide	~15
Tips and Tricks Guide	~12
Report	~11
Cheat Sheet	~11
On-Demand Webinar	~5
Subscription	~5
Book Excerpt	~4

(0   25   50   75   100)

76%
*of marketers say webinars allow them to drive **more leads***

BY THE
PEOPLE

2019 was a year of change for B2B marketers. Coming off the heels of GDPR and the announcement of CCPA, a great deal of time was spent trying to better understand the ramifications these laws may have on our industry, at large. Announcements without as much fanfare, like Google's revelation that they'd be dramatically altering third-party cookie tracking in 2020, have great consequences for marketers, as well (though Google tried to quietly brush it off as if it were nothing but crumbs).

What didn't change, however, is the marketer's desire to find the most effective ways to acquire quality leads and efficiently develop pipeline from those leads. By adding tools like Audience Explorer (which we'll further examine later in this report) B2B marketers found ways to stop guessing and start understanding the true buying behaviors of their target audience(s). It is this access to first-party data that became, perhaps, the real star of 2019.

First-party data allows marketers to dive into what is actually being consumed, directly connecting marketers to the interests and concerns of their audience without having to make the most informed educated guess. By removing the need to take as many guesses, marketers had the benefit of focusing on quality over quantity. While the idea of quality over quantity is a mantra often discussed by marketers, it's something that still causes apprehension.

This jump in quality leads should be a story every B2B marketer finds confidence in.

Did time between content requests change YOY?

Depending on which job levels you're trying to reach, they either took more or less time to make a second request for content. C-Suite, Director, and Executive VP levels all followed the trend we saw in 2018, where professionals are taking longer to come back for more content across the board. Conversely, Senior VPs, Individual Contributors, and Senior Employees all took less time between their second request in 2019, while Managers remained flat year over year. All in all, the average time between the first and second request was 19.4 days.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS BETWEEN CONTENT REQUESTS BY JOB LEVEL
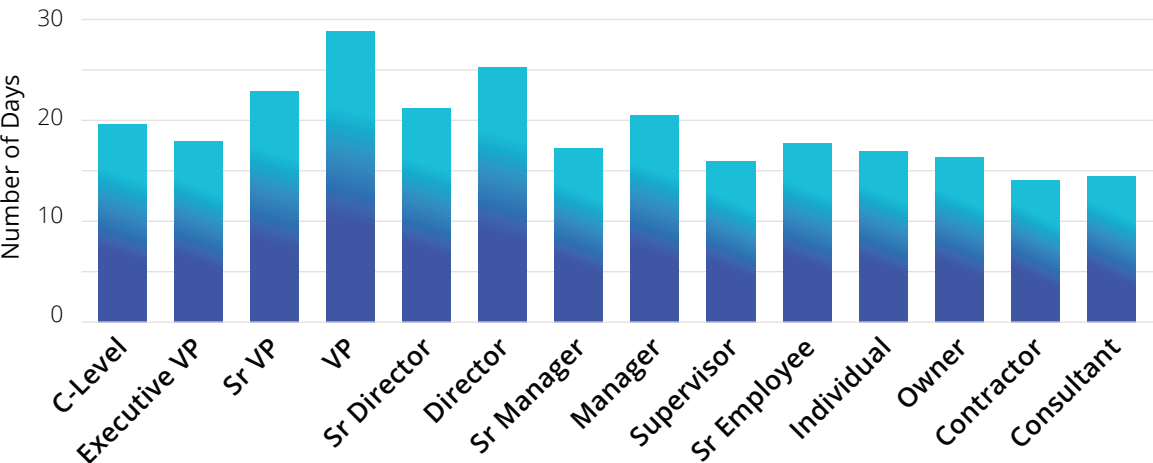
Follow-up Requests

When we think of successful Content Marketing, we often talk about demand, frequency, and nurturing. Each of these components drive interest in your business and your offerings. The relationship between these three elements, however, isn't explored quite enough.

The primary driver is demand; without it, nothing else matters. The frequency of that demand, individually and collectively, dictates the appetite for the next piece of content in the buyer journey. How we nurture this interest in consumption and exploration causes the process to return to the beginning, triggering additional demand.

Despite the fact that total demand following the initial request was flat for the second year in a row, it's important to take this with a grain of salt. Given the sheer volume of content being produced and consumed in the B2B space, it's easy for consumers to become distracted by the shiny new thing. Even though demand remained level, marketers should be encouraged that targeted and intended prospects are still engaging as expected.

TAKEAWAY

Quality Beats Quantity.
B2B marketers know the best way to serve your audience is with informative, quality content. While the needs and appetites of your audience will evolve over time, one constant remains — quality is always in vogue.

Engaged Executives

Even though total demand following the initial request was flat, Executives increased their secondary requests by nearly 2% in 2019. While that may not seem like much, that 2% equates to tens of thousands of additional downloads for marketers and publishers, further indicating the seriousness of a prospect's intentions.

Consumption Gap Profiles

How do we know when prospects are ready?
By evaluating user signals like content resonance and user bandwidth from our own data, we can provide perspective on the sales-readiness of different prospects. We call this the Consumption Gap.

> The Consumption Gap is the time between the moment content is requested and the moment it's opened for consumption.
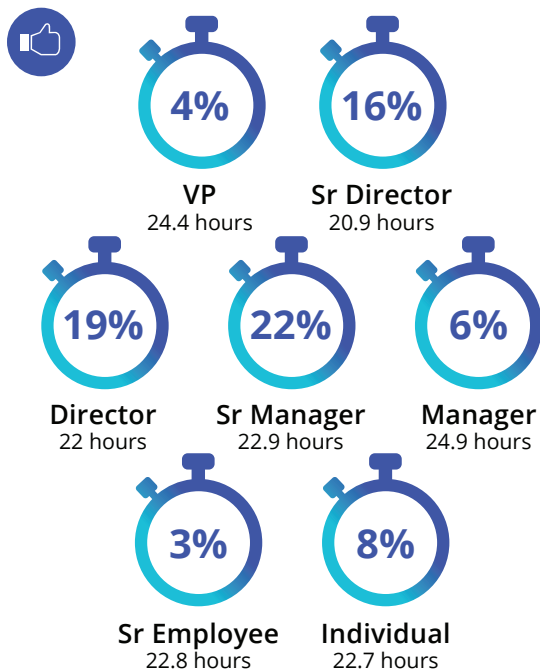
The data below reflects the change in time to consume compared to last year's data.

TAKEAWAY

Mid-Level Leaders are Eager.
Senior Managers and Directors were the most eager consumers in 2019, suggesting you're better off targeting folks with more hands on influence than simply going straight to the top. Conversely, professionals above the VP level are taking longer to engage with the content they requested across the board. Marketers need to be cognizant of that when responding, nurturing, and/or when reps reach out to these prospects.

WHERE TIME TO CONSUME DECREASED

4%
VP
24.4 hours

16%
Sr Director
20.9 hours

19%
Director
22 hours

22%
Sr Manager
22.9 hours

6%
Manager
24.9 hours

3%
Sr Employee
22.8 hours

8%
Individual
22.7 hours

WHERE TIME TO CONSUME INCREASED

16%
C-Level
34.7 hours

16%
Executive VP
26.3 hours

3%
Sr VP
27.6 hours

1%
Supervisor
26.2 hours

6%
Owner
40.3 hours

57%
Contractor
44.2 hours

46%
Consultant
39.2 hours
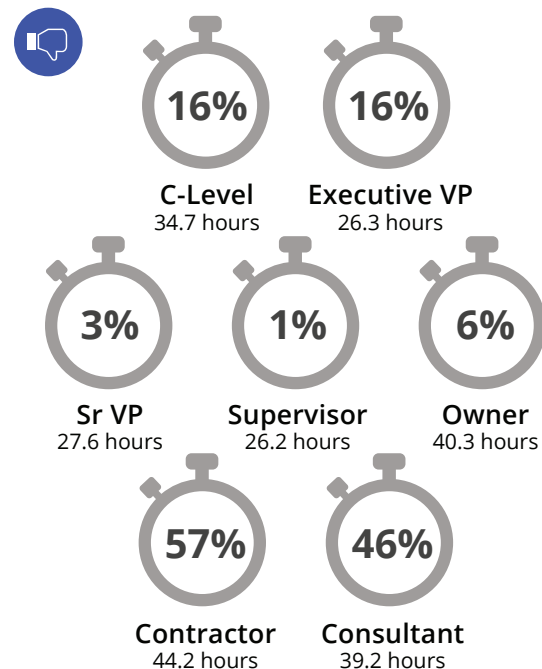
Don't Focus Solely on the C-Suite

Aside from Contractors and Consultants, nearly every Job Level in an Executive or leadership role took **8% longer** (that's 5.7 hours), on average, to open the content they'd requested.

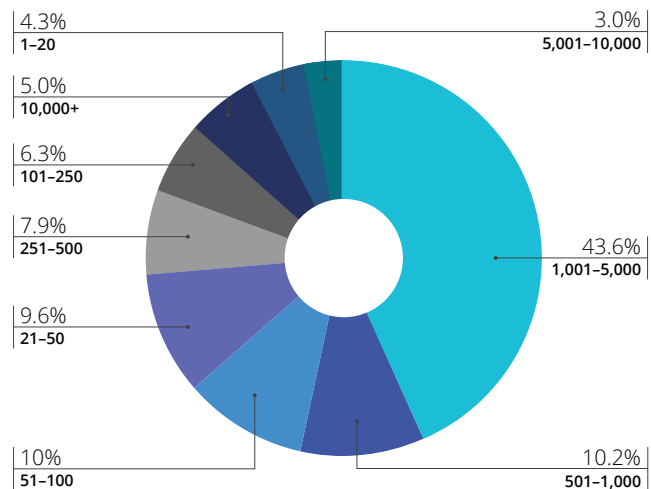# C-Level: The Enterprise Strikes Back

In 2019, the C-Level represented 16% of NetLine's total audience. Of that 16%, the overwhelming majority came from organizations between the 1,001-5,000, a big shift from 2018 when we found that the majority of C-Level executives were from companies between 1-20 employees.

While it's a near 180°, it might explain the rise in quality leads delivered in 2019. Still, it's not as if SMBs fell off the face of the earth. In total, companies of 1,000 employees or less still represent 38.3% of all C-Level activity.
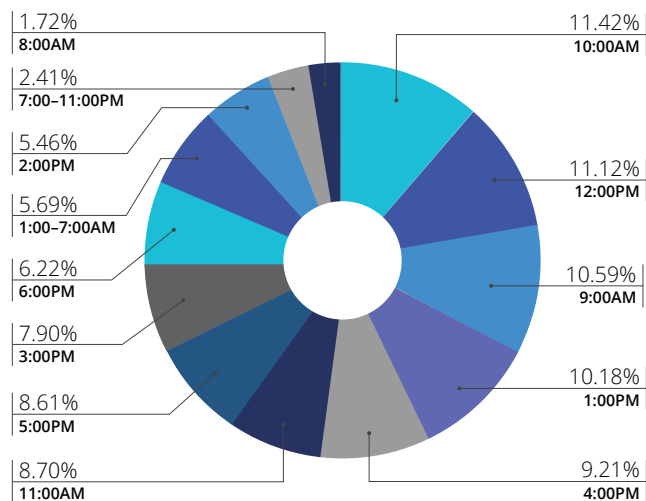
C-LEVEL BY ORG SIZE

- 4.3% — 1–20
- 5.0% — 10,000+
- 6.3% — 101–250
- 7.9% — 251–500
- 9.6% — 21–50
- 10% — 51–100
- 3.0% — 5,001–10,000
- 43.6% — 1,001–5,000
- 10.2% — 501–1,000

How's Tuesday at 10?

No, seriously: Tuesday at 10 [local time] is the best chance you'll have to reach the C-Suite. C-Level professionals in the US, for example, were most active at 10:00 AM EST, followed closely by 12:00 PM EST, and 9:00 AM EST, with 4:00 PM EST being the best afternoon time slot.

C-LEVEL CONSUMPTION BY HOUR

- 1.72% — 8:00AM
- 2.41% — 7:00–11:00PM
- 5.46% — 2:00PM
- 5.69% — 1:00–7:00AM
- 6.22% — 6:00PM
- 7.90% — 3:00PM
- 8.61% — 5:00PM
- 8.70% — 11:00AM
- 11.42% — 10:00AM
- 11.12% — 12:00PM
- 10.59% — 9:00AM
- 10.18% — 1:00PM
- 9.21% — 4:00PM

Regardless of company size, C-level engagement rose by nearly 2% year over year as well, outpacing total campaign demand by 5%. The engagement of C-Level Executives highlights the importance of targeting the entire Buying Committee. If the C-Suite is interacting with content in a larger capacity, marketers must be able to identify and target key influencers so that they can be properly educated.

This trend may also point to a lack of confidence that executives have in their teams — a concerning issue for those reporting to the C-Suite. If this is indeed the case, we expect a sharp increase in requests from Directors and Managers across the board in the 2021 Report. Of course, this could simply be Executives taking a greater interest in the topics impacting their business. It's a fascinating development, regardless.

TOP EXECUTIVE ATTRIBUTES

Industry & Sub-Industry
High-Tech

Job Area
Executives

Job Function
CEO

TAP INTO THE BUYING COMMITTEE

According to [analysis from Gartner](#), the buying process in B2B organizations now includes upwards of 10 people. What this means is that whether you're targeting Senior Managers or CFOs, the likelihood that your content needs to be seen, consumed, discussed and shared by multiple employees increases annually.

Larger organizations face this obstacle much more frequently. Considering that organizations of 50,000+ are the 2nd largest active audience on the platform, it's essential to remember the overall Buyer Committee in your content-centric lead gen efforts.

USE WORDS THAT STICK

When choosing the words we use in our headlines, successful marketers focus on addressing the most pressing needs of their prospects and customers. These needs often revolve around the 7 Key Questions: Who, What, Why, When, Where, How and How Much? Content marketing has taken these 7 Key Questions and provided an avenue for businesses to point prospects in the right direction and bring customers additional value.

In addition to these 7 Key Questions, other words are needed to round out quality headlines that get their ideas across. Words like Guide, Report, and Compare rank similarly for Executives as they do across the rest of 2019's most popular titles, the subject matter certainly differs between the groups.

Organizational size aside, Executives are very aware of the need to protect their assets. This motivation fits in naturally with the words that appear in a good portion of the Top 100 titles.

The Words That Matter to Executives
- Enterprise Security
- Talent Management
- CFO
- Financial Risk
- Leadership Advice

In 2019, Executives were looking for solid advice on how to secure their data (customer and company), improve their HR and recruitment practices, become more in-sync with their financial departments, and, as always, become more familiar with the pricing requests of potential vendor partners.

Leadership

Time Management
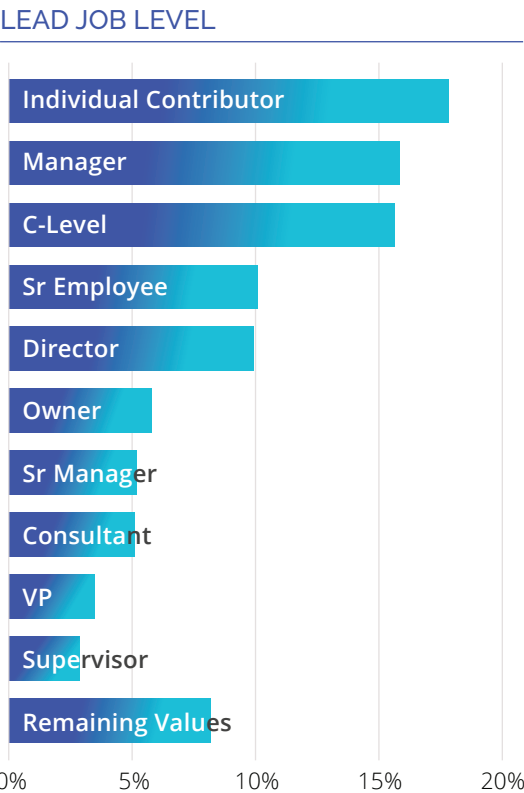
Communication

Motivation
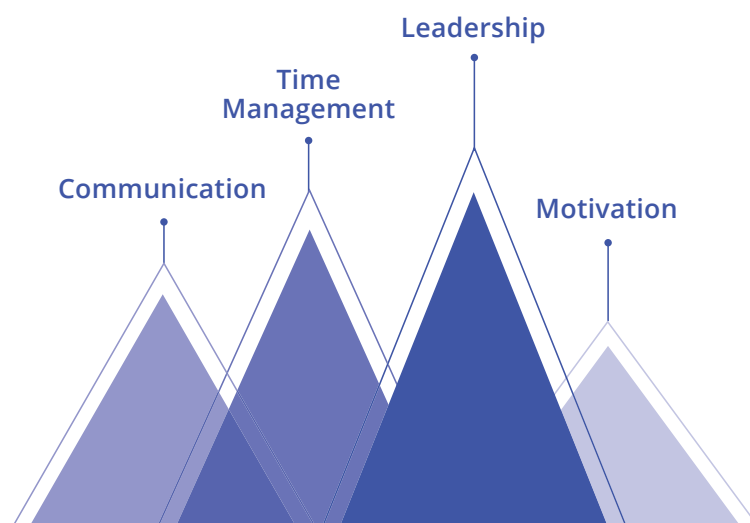
Total Audience Job Level Breakdown

Improving your marketing performance starts with better understanding your target audience. Having the facts makes this much easier to navigate. By reviewing the most active groups within every audience section you'll begin to gain a clearer picture of just who you should be engaging.

In this section, we'll explore the most active audiences by job level, job area and function as an individual.

Total Audience Job Level Breakdown Follow the Buyers
For the 4th consecutive year, Individual Contributors were the most active Job Level category. The C-Level nearly tied the Manager level for 2nd place with Senior Employees and Directors in a close battle for 4th. This data again highlights the importance of being able to address and appeal to multiple levels of the organization. It also reinforces the notion that marketers need to consider content creation efforts specifically speaking to different audiences within their target organization and appeal to their unique pain points. The financial stakeholder obviously has a very different need analysis than the daily end-user.

LEAD JOB LEVEL

Job Level	
Individual Contributor	
Manager	
C-Level	
Sr Employee	
Director	
Owner	
Sr Manager	
Consultant	
VP	
Supervisor	
Remaining Values	

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%

TOP 5 JOB AREAS

Information Technology
Executives
Human Resources
Marketing
Education

Information Technology audiences continue to reign supreme, with more than 30% of all audience demand originating from this sector, a 3% increase from 2018. Education made it into the Top 5 Job Areas overtaking Sales, with Finance/Accounting gaining more than half of an audience percentage point to land in the 6th spot, the largest increase from any job area.

TOP 5 JOB AREAS BY LEVEL

Executives: C-Level
HR: Individual Contributor
HR: Manager
HR: Sr Employee
IT: Manager

While C-Level Execs kept the #1 spot, 2019 saw a much greater distribution of audience demand. For the first time, Human Resources stole the show, becoming the most active audience by far. While IT is usually the most dominant industry, it's encouraging to see that the audience evolves and grows over time. This re-emphasizes that behavior and content preferences do fluctuate. Keep this in mind before launching a campaign and target "by the people", using the individual behavior profile as a starting point.

Active Audience Data in Real-Time
While this report is chock full of the latest data, you can't review the trends specific to your industry. Not at a super granular level, at least. With Audience Explorer, you can.

Launched in Summer 2019, Audience Explorer is the only real-time, interactive buyer engagement tool that helps B2B content marketers outsmart the competition. As a completely free tool, Audience Explorer uses the power of NetLine's 16 petabytes worth of first-party data to monitor buyer behavior and discover the types of content that your in-market buyers are actively consuming.

Using a rolling 180-day collection of data, Audience Explorer shows marketers how unique audience sets are engaging with content in real-time. The tool enables marketers to investigate the tangible, real world habits of professionals so they can better plan, create, and target to reach their ideal customer. Explore everything from Trending Topics, the Most Consumed Content Formats, and the Most Active Companies within each niche to get a complete picture of who your prospect is.

TAKEAWAY

Embrace Your Niche.
Year after year, marketers want to go bigger than before. They want to accelerate buying decisions and head straight to the top of the food chain. But many marketers' objectives tend to favor larger enterprise organizations for two reasons: budget and influence. While these are sound strategies in theory, there is more influence within smaller companies thanks to their ability to be nimble and act quickly. Remember that not all industries, job levels, and sub-industries function equally. Follow the data and make the best decisions for your brand and your budget long-term. With larger organizations, you'll not only need more content diversity, but you'll also need to expand your footprint within the organization to educate both horizontally and vertically across the org chart.

Words Matter

While more people are downloading eBooks than guides, users are still drawn to the word "guide". This supports the idea that professionals seek straightforward, "how to" content.

Words at Work

The Top Words in the 100 Titles Downloaded by the entire in-demand audience.

WORD CLOUD

BY THE
COMPANY

***SET THE SCALE BY EVALUATING
COMPANY SIZE AGAINST OBJECTIVES***

Marketers are attracted to scale. It's important to remember, however, that scale doesn't exclusively mean enterprise. As we continue to stress, it's possible to reach ideal buyers who are highly engaged with your content who can help you scale.

Reaching hyper-targeted buyers within targeted company sizes can be achieved in two ways: company employee size or company revenue. Discerning the value from each filter depends on which camp you're in.

Targeting by Employee Size & Revenue

27% of the active audience came from organizations of 1-24 employees, remaining flat year-over-year. Organizations of 1-4 employees were actually the largest individual group making up 13.62% of that 27%. While we saw a resurgence from the C-Suite and enterprise level businesses in 2019, companies with 1,000 employees or less made up 62% of the active audience pie.
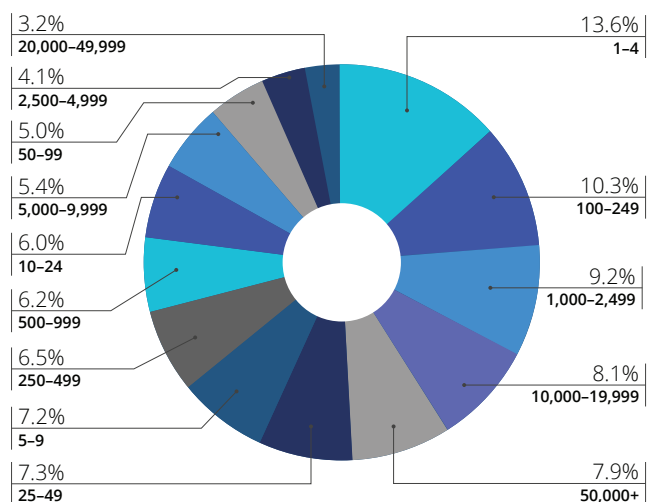
Throughout this report, we've discussed the role of the Buying Committee. In reviewing the active audience data, it's not too much of a stretch to see some of the cons of having to educate and sell up and across a larger business. In smaller organizations, there are few people to convince, less red tape to navigate, and faster avenues for decisions. Larger organizations may have the same zeal for content as companies with 1,000 employees or less, they simply have more obstacles in their path. Keep this in mind in your 2020 marketing efforts.

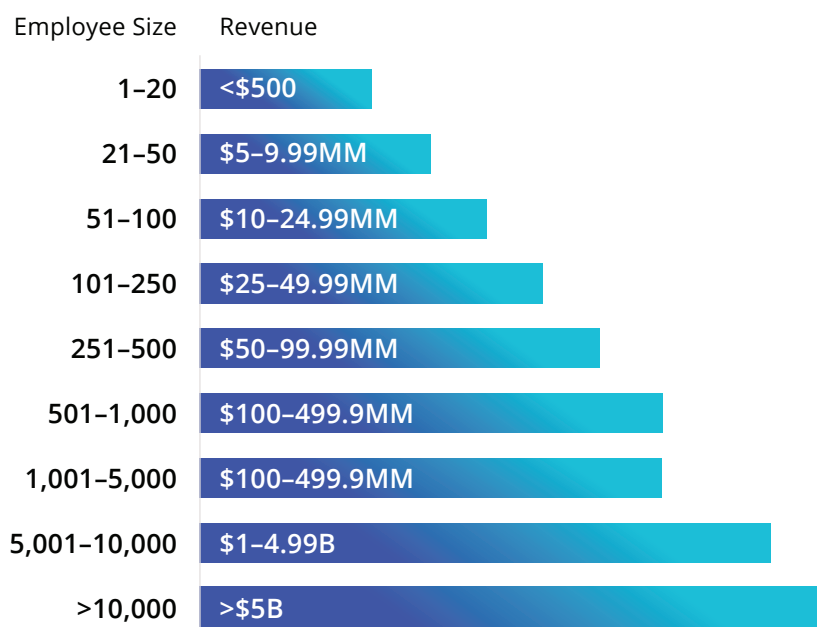## TAKEAWAY

Growing with SMBs.
While they may not have the same household names that make your website look "good", small and medium-sized businesses represent a massive opportunity for everyone. Don't overlook them now, because they might just be the next big thing tomorrow.

COMPANY EMPLOYEE SIZE

3.2% **20,000–49,999**
4.1% **2,500–4,999**
5.0% **50–99**
5.4% **5,000–9,999**
6.0% **10–24**
6.2% **500–999**
6.5% **250–499**
7.2% **5–9**
7.3% **25–49**

13.6% **1–4**
10.3% **100–249**
9.2% **1,000–2,499**
8.1% **10,000–19,999**
7.9% **50,000+**

As can be expected, across the 4 million downloads in 2019, there's a positive correlation between company size and revenue. There is also some overlap in mid-market company size and revenue targeting with both the 501-1,000 and 1,001-5,000 company size sharing the same revenue targeting of $100-499.9 million. Marketers can put this information to practical use by aligning with expectations for better, more realistic filtering.

AUDIENCE BY EMPLOYEE SIZE

Employee Size	Revenue
1–20	<$500
21–50	$5–9.99MM
51–100	$10–24.99MM
101–250	$25–49.99MM
251–500	$50–99.99MM
501–1,000	$100–499.9MM
1,001–5,000	$100–499.9MM
5,001–10,000	$1–4.99B
>10,000	>$5B

*Across the **4 million downloads** in 2019, there's a **positive correlation** between company size and revenue.*

BY THE
INDUSTRY

CONSUMPTION DATA FROM OVER 300 INDUSTRIES

Before researching industry-based consumption trends, we suggest that you ask three specific questions:

- Which industries or niche audiences does your B2B product or solution target?
- How active are the industry professionals you're targeting in conducting research related to their profession?
- Do some professionals require routine certifications or education on products/software?

Each of these questions set reasonable expectations around the audience where you have the most interest.

Exploration Doesn't Stop Here

Beyond the research you'll find below, Audience Explorer is an excellent resource for studying niche audience sets. While it's great to have yearly data that covers the entire B2B landscape, Audience Explorer gives you custom, real-time data specific to your vertical.

Getting Engaged

Each month, millions of professionals engage with nearly 10k pieces of content across our industry-agnostic platform. By categorizing and analyzing over 300 industries, we've captured insights on which industries are most active.
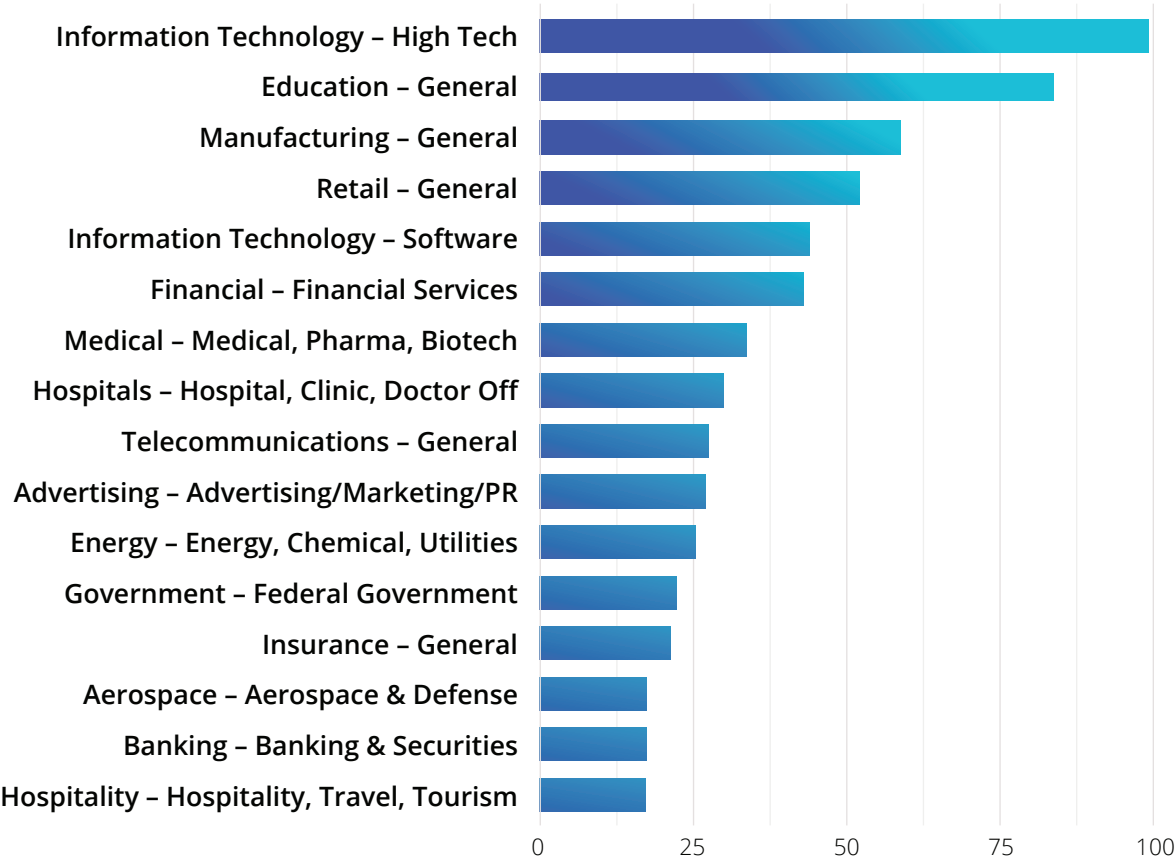
After reviewing the data from our audience and publisher partners, these are the trending industries, as reported by users who are actively consuming content.

TAKEAWAY

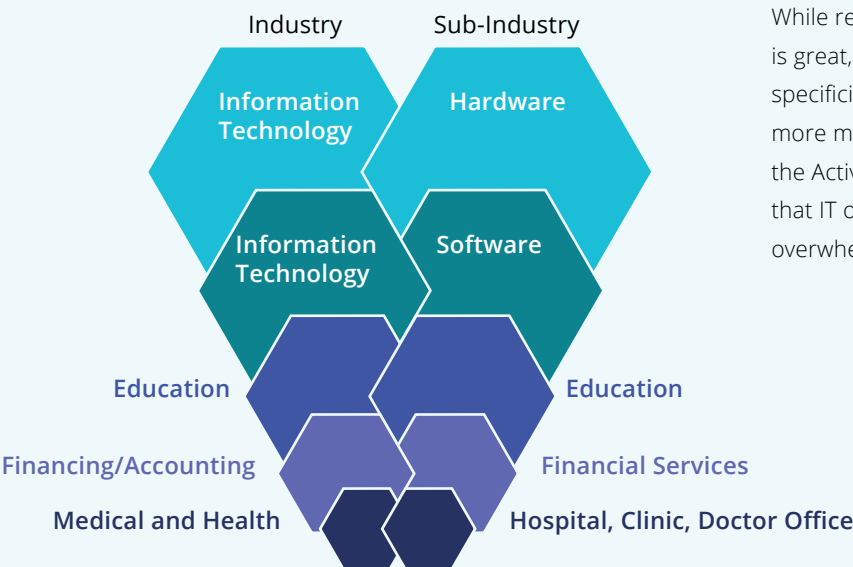**Big Categories Reign.**
Since tech is always evolving and upgrading, results will often show them at or around the top of many consumption categories. Professionals in these fields must continuously educate themselves. 2019 also saw increases in some traditional industries within Education, Financial/Accounting, and Hospitals — industries which also require constant retraining and skill development.

MOST ACTIVE AUDIENCE INDUSTRIES

TOP 5 JOB AREA + SUB-INDUSTRY COMBOS

Industry   Sub-Industry

Information Technology   Hardware

Information Technology   Software

Education   Education

Financing/Accounting   Financial Services

Medical and Health   Hospital, Clinic, Doctor Office

While reviewing industry data on its own is great, adding an additional layer of specificity can make the results that much more meaningful for B2B marketers. In the Active Audiences chart above, we see that IT oriented industries represent the overwhelming majority of active industries.

HUMANIZE
WITH DATA

ENHANCE CONTENT RESONANCE

How do we better connect with our audiences?

That is a question every marketer is faced with each and every day. In a world awash in information, buyers are searching for authenticity and knowledge. As you've learned from the insights found in this report, the most successful content breaks down useful knowledge and sets clear expectations. The businesses who best combine these elements often find themselves breaking through the noise and reaching the buyers they can best serve.

Yet as we've seen engagement numbers slip in aggregate in nearly every channel (aside from email), another truth begins to reveal itself: buyers don't want *brands* to be human. What they want is to engage with the humans *behind* the brands. This is crucial in B2B. While B2C companies often have much larger buyer pools with shorter sales cycles, B2B sales cycles tend to be longer, requiring relationships to play a major role in the buying behavior of the client.

So how do we build relationships that positively affect the bottom line? By going beyond the first-party data we've already analyzed and learned about *who* our buyers are. In matrixing alongside our website analytics software, we're able to discern other qualitative characteristics in aggregate of the busy professionals consuming content across our platform.

Check out the profile and affinity groups of the many users who engaged with content over the past 12 months and use this information to develop content that is engaging, educational, and (hopefully) entertaining.

TAKEAWAY

Be *of* your audience — not *in* it.
First-party data is the best data you can have. But even that isn't enough sometimes to fully understand your user's personalities and values. Aside from directly asking them what matters most (which is a great thing to do, by the way), reviewing Affinity and In-Market Analytics segments gives you a clue as to where you need to be to become an involved member of the communities you're selling to.

Affinity Categories

Get to Know Users Outside of B2B

In-Market Segments provide a valuable overview for marketers developing personas. This data is a holistic understanding of research tendencies, categorically, providing more granular perspectives on the content preferences and individuals across our network.

At first blush you might be asking, "How can I as a B2B marketer leverage consumer-oriented buyer affinities and propensity to optimize by demand gen efforts?" The goal of every marketer is to understand the needs of their prospects and clients at the core. Understanding that your targets are real people, with real interests besides buying your solution is vital. Arming yourself with those types of perspectives are invaluable as you begin to ideate content creation for new initiatives and/or the optimization of existing campaigns.

For example, we were able to identify that Network Security professionals are 87% more likely to be a 'Do-It-Yourselfer' outside of the office versus all other professional audiences.

Use those insights to understand the psychology of the prospect beyond the immediate need to get them to engage with your brand. Content informed with this level of nuance, even if executed in a subtle fashion, will be transparent to your audience and provide the sense that you "get them" without ever even speaking to them.
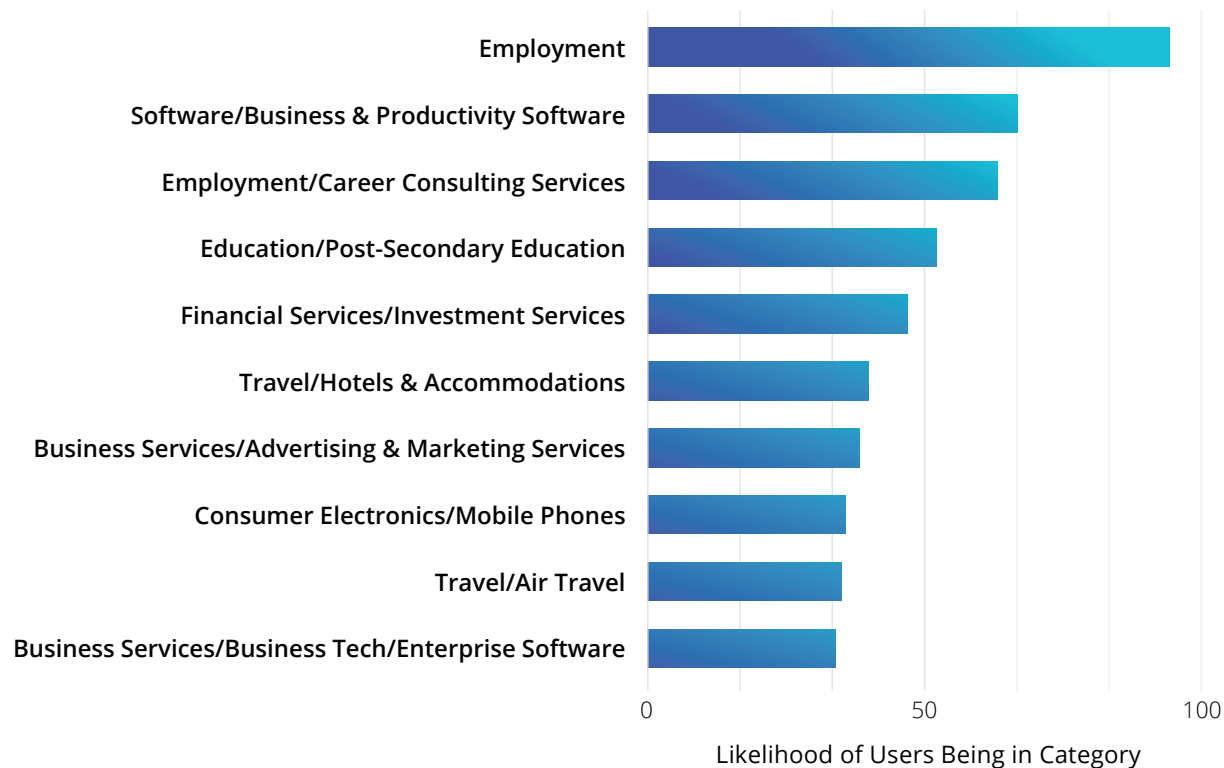
B2B BUYER AFFINITIES

Likelihood of Users Being in Category

In-Market Segments

Build Personas That Speak to People

B2B BUYER IN-MARKET SEGMENT

Likelihood of Users Being in Category

- Employment
- Software/Business & Productivity Software
- Employment/Career Consulting Services
- Education/Post-Secondary Education
- Financial Services/Investment Services
- Travel/Hotels & Accommodations
- Business Services/Advertising & Marketing Services
- Consumer Electronics/Mobile Phones
- Travel/Air Travel
- Business Services/Business Tech/Enterprise Software

Mobile Sessions Increase

If it's not in their pocket, everyone you know has their mobile phone within a few feet of them. Whether they're scrolling through Instagram or waiting on an important email, our phones are nearly always on our person. Compared to the general population, B2B professionals may even be more likely to always be engaging with a device, especially when they're on the go.

Between 2018 and 2019, mobile traffic increased by a full 10%; desktop consumption is still the overall king, but mobile (mobile + tablet) now represents nearly 1/3 of all B2B content being consumed. B2B content is being consumed on the go and on smaller screens, meaning marketers and designers need to be cognizant of the unique needs this presents for everyone involved. Mobile traffic will only increase as Gen Z joins the workforce and devices become faster and expand their already impressive capabilities.

VISITS BY DEVICE

- 3.2% Tablet
- 68.1% Desktop
- 28.7% Mobile
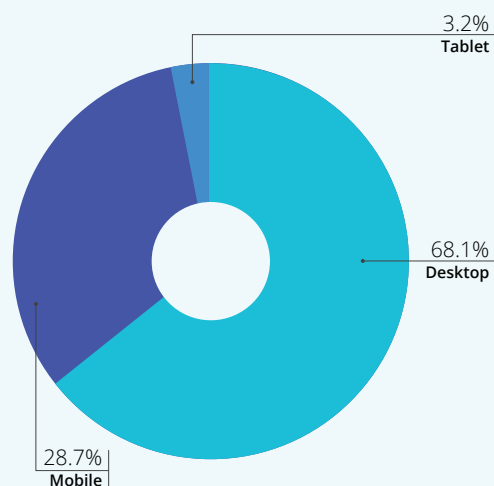
MAKING SENSE
OF THE REPORT

SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

Now that it's more apparent than ever that quality and targeting mattered most in 2019, what can you do to make sure content is relevant and has impact in 2020?

Nurturing is Necessity

For the second year in a row, the time between content requests averaged 19 days, with the shortest window being a full two weeks. Considering the general impatience of marketers and sales reps, now would be the best time to review your nurture path. Why? Because of one basic truth: Content Consumption Gap times will only continue to rise.

Professionals have a lot on their plate with a great deal of information to parse through and a lot of people to please. Having a nurture path that appropriately paces prospects within this 2-3 week window is essential for generating the type of responses we want. Add in the fact that nurtured leads make 47% larger purchases compared to non-nurtured leads and your nurture path just became that much more important in 2020.

The Oversaturated and the Underserved

Much like getting a "yes" from a Shark on Shark Tank, everyone wants to connect with the C-Level and Senior Employees within large organizations. However, there is a big disconnect between who marketers want to engage with and who's proactively engaging and interacting with them.

As usual, Individual Contributors were the most Active Audience in 2019, representing nearly 18% of all content requests. However, Individual Contributors were only included in 3% of all Demand Targets. On the other side, VPs were targeted 10.43% of the time but only represented 3% of the Total Active Audience. Marketers must be more aware of who their most engaged buyers are — whether they're Mark Cuban or just trying to become one of his Angel Investments.

First Party is the Best Party in Town

Let's come full circle and talk about the difference between first-party and third-party data. When you're dealing directly with a consumer, you're getting first-party data; the good stuff. It's fully permissioned and 100% intentional. Third-party data, on the other hand, comes from tracking anonymous cookies associated with an IP address, scraped from a set of keywords found on a page as a user engages with content.

As a consumer, with which method of data collection do you feel most comfortable? As a marketer? To us, the answer is very simple, regardless of our bias: and that's first-party data. No one likes being watched.

For marketers, content-first initiatives give them confidence that a user sincerely had interest in what the brand was sharing and wanted to attach their name to that interest. Anonymity certainly has its place on the web, but marketers cannot waste time, effort, and budget on it in 2020. A prospect deciding to proceed to register for your content is the very definition of high-intent — and that is the goal for any lead gen team.

#ImADataMarketer

ARE YOU?

The B2B space is full of opportunity just waiting to be explored. There are so many stars in each and every industry hoping to have their light shine through the void they see in their given industry. So how do these stars shine through?

While this entire report has been about data, there is something deeper to the human condition that content marketing must appeal to for stars to shine through: and those are stories.

Stories are the best way to cut through the darkness of the web. Stories don't mean you need to spin fairytales or epic quests; rather they need to be a complete record of how your business understands, addresses, and guides businesses through the obstacles and opportunities set before them.

But stories only matter if someone's there to read, hear, or watch them. Data gives us the blueprint we need to find the perfect audience just for us.

For 25 years, NetLine's mission has been to make it easy for marketers to get measurable results through content-centric lead generation. We've led the charge to democratize lead gen and made it simple for SMBs and enterprise businesses to have access to the same resources, all of which is powered by first-party, permission-based, intent-driven marketing. With powerful tools like **Audience Explorer**, marketers have the opportunity to see how their stories align with different audiences in the area where they're trying to reach, thanks to real-time B2B buyer engagement data sets.

And now it's time for you to tell the world that **#ImADataMarketer**. Share on LinkedIn or Twitter what being a Data Marketer means to you using #ImADataMarketer and we'll add you to our exclusive (but inclusive) Explorers Crew for the chance to grab some extra galactic swag. We'll be on the lookout for you!

ABOUT
NETLINE CORPORATION

NetLine Corporation empowers B2B Marketers with the reach, technology, and expertise required to drive scalable lead generation results and accelerate the sales funnel. Operating the #1 B2B buyer engagement platform, NetLine provides content-centric lead generation and buyer engagement insights through the largest B2B network on the web. Via its exclusive AudienceTarget™ content recommendation logic, NetLine amasses 1st party content consumption activities of 125 million professionals downloading more than 700 thousand

buyer-specific pieces of content each month. Superior quality, on-demand access, and interactive campaign reports deliver measurable ROI, enabling marketers to achieve lead generation success. Founded in 1994, NetLine is privately held and headquartered in Los Gatos, California.

OUR COMMITMENT
TO YOU

As the#1 B2B Buyer Engagement Platform, we feel that it is important to share with you how we do business. NetLine operates according to five core values: innovation, teamwork, integrity, customer satisfaction and accountability. Our advanced technology and massive scale are uniquely positioned to achieve the results marketers are looking for. NetLine's performance-based Portal and our dedicated team of experienced lead generation experts ensure that you will only pay for leads that meet your assigned campaign criteria — nothing less. Expand your footprint and competitive market share. Read more about our commitment to you.

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