THE STATE OF LEAD NURTURING

A RESEARCH-BASED GUIDE FOR MARKETERS

Research Series Conducted in Partnership with Leading Providers of Marketing Technology and Digital Marketing Agency Services.

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METHODOLOGY

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing strategies, tactics and the technology that drives them with a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing professionals and marketing research subscribers.

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SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Primary Marketing Channel

B2B	31%
B2C	47%
B2B and B2C equally	22%

Number of Employees

More than 500	19%
50 to 500	23%
Fewer than 50	58%

Primary role in company

Owner / Partner / C-Level	46%
Vice President / Director / Manager	36%
Non-Management Professional	18%

THE STATE OF LEAD NURTURING

It is a marketer's job to provide prospective customers with targeted information in the form of engaging content to help make their purchase decision as smooth as possible. But this process, known as lead nurturing, is often underemphasized as a strategy of its own.

So we want to know, how are marketers approaching lead nurturing today?

To help answer this question, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded The State of Lead Nurturing Survey. We thank the 325 marketers who responded to this survey between April 19, 2021 and April 26, 2021.
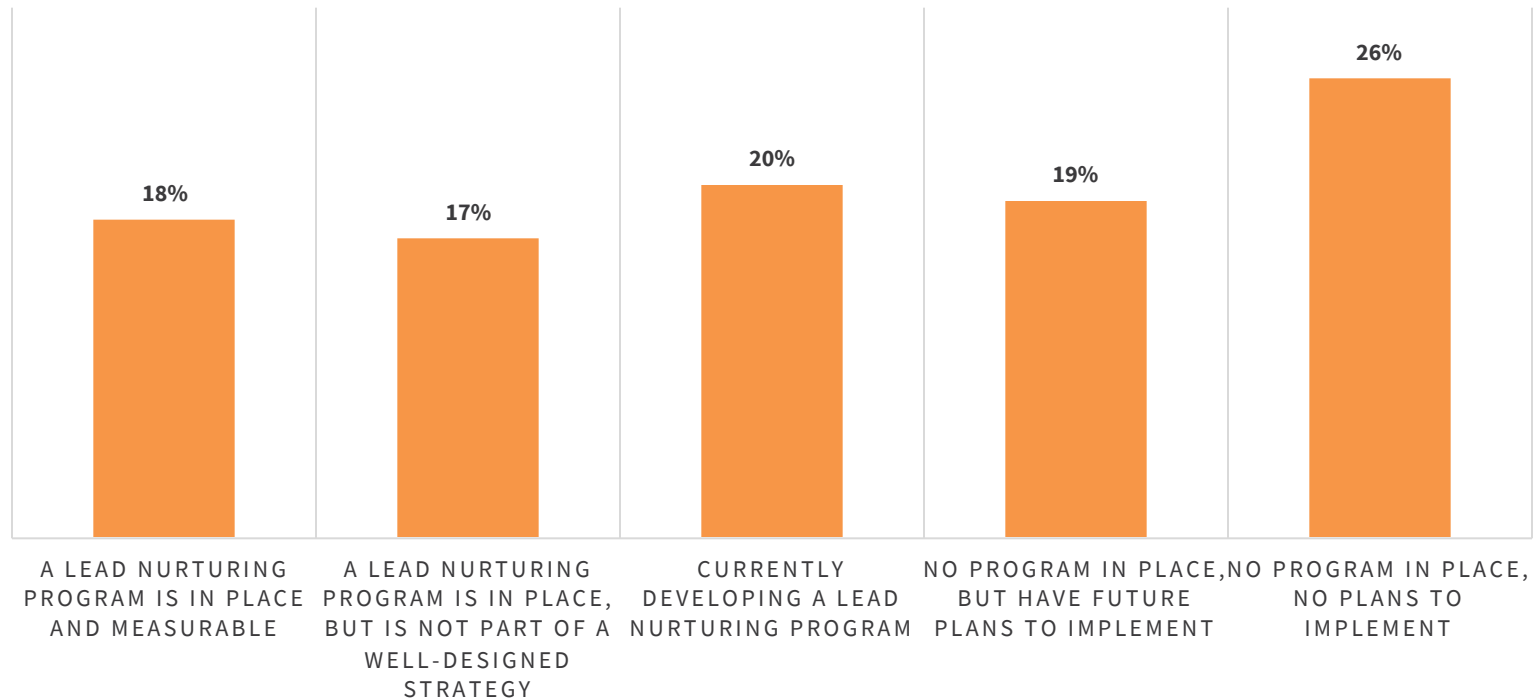
This Survey Summary Report, titled *The State of Lead Nurturing,* represents the opinions of all the market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments from the survey are reported on separately and exclusively by our participating Research Partners.

This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

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CURRENT STATUS

Lead nurturing often takes a backseat to generating leads. 26% of marketing professionals do not have a formal strategy in place, nor do they plan on implementing one. Over two-thirds (35%) of marketers responding to the survey **have a working plan to nurture leads in place**. Another 39% say they are in the planning stages of implementation.
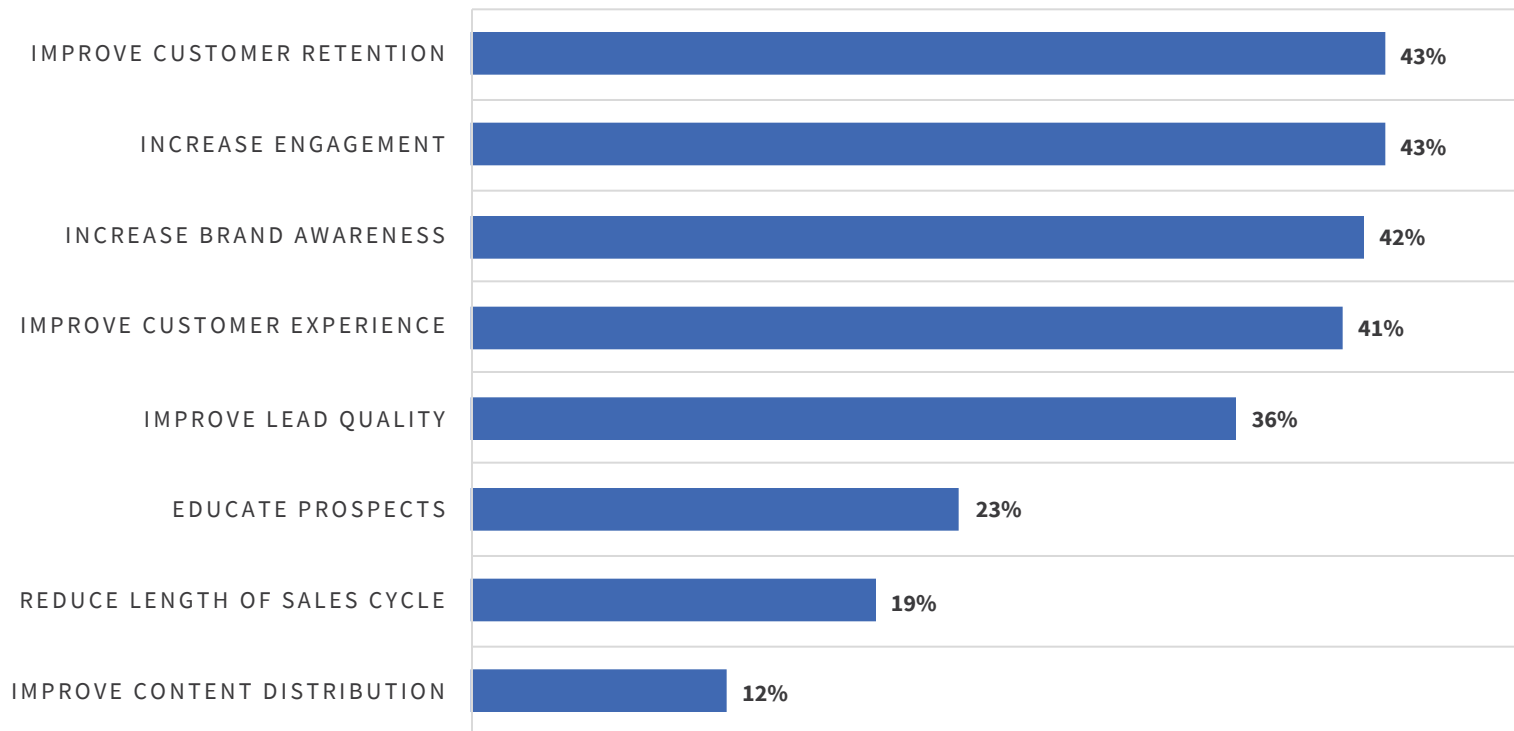
WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF YOUR (OR YOUR TYPICAL CLIENT'S) LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM?

A LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM IS IN PLACE AND MEASURABLE	A LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM IS IN PLACE, BUT IS NOT PART OF A WELL-DESIGNED STRATEGY	CURRENTLY DEVELOPING A LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM	NO PROGRAM IN PLACE, BUT HAVE FUTURE PLANS TO IMPLEMENT	NO PROGRAM IN PLACE, NO PLANS TO IMPLEMENT
18%	17%	20%	19%	26%

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TOP PRIORITIES

It is likely that a major goal of an organization's lead nurturing program is to generate more conversions from their leads. So what are other top priorities for implementing a nurturing program? **Customer retention, engagement, brand awareness and the customer experience** each ranked at the top of marketers' lists for what they aim to improve with their lead nurturing strategy.
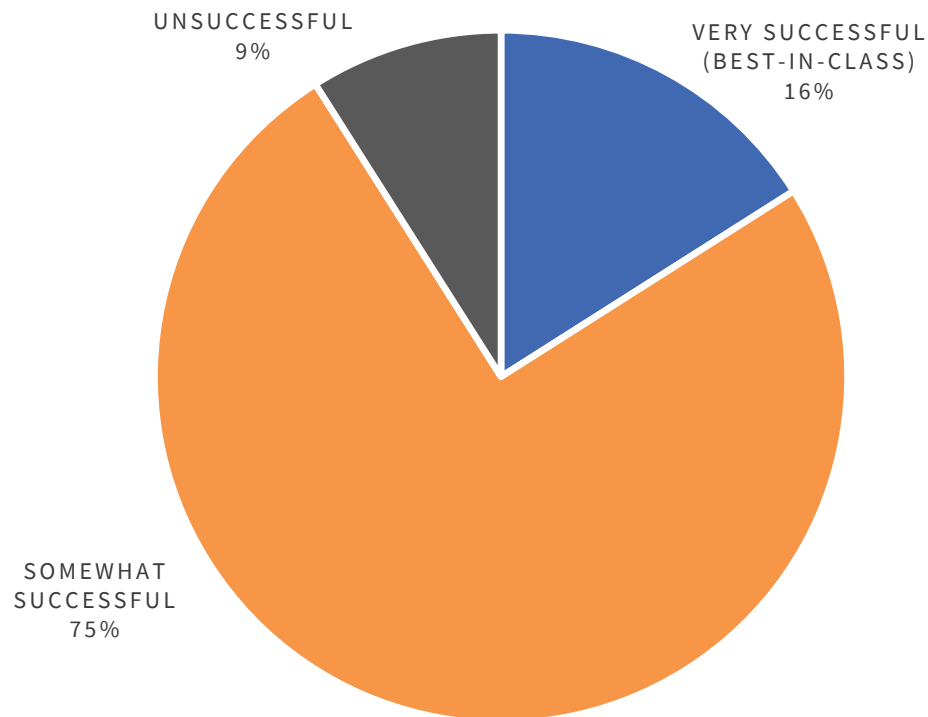
BEYOND IMPROVING CONVERSION RATES, WHAT ARE TOP PRIORITIES FOR A LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM TO ACHIEVE?

Priority	Percentage
IMPROVE CUSTOMER RETENTION	43%
INCREASE ENGAGEMENT	43%
INCREASE BRAND AWARENESS	42%
IMPROVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	41%
IMPROVE LEAD QUALITY	36%
EDUCATE PROSPECTS	23%
REDUCE LENGTH OF SALES CYCLE	19%
IMPROVE CONTENT DISTRIBUTION	12%

STRATEGIC SUCCESS

Developing a relationship with leads as they move down the funnel closer to becoming a customer can be a process that includes many variables and requires ongoing refinement. Three-quarters (75%) of marketing professionals report that their lead nurturing strategy is just **somewhat successful** at achieving goals set for it while only 16% rate the success of their program as **best-in-class**.
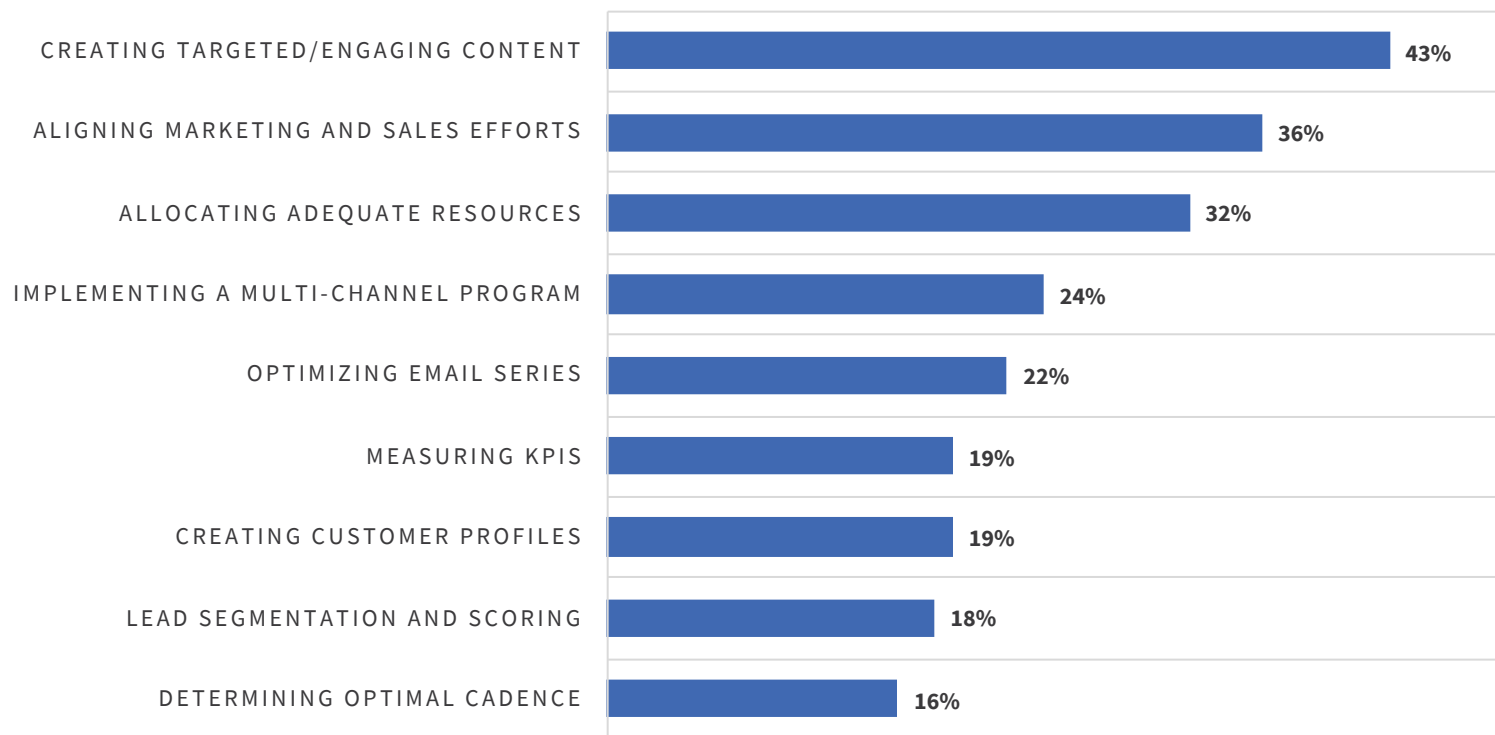
WHICH BEST DESCRIBES THE SUCCESS OF YOUR (OR YOUR TYPICAL CLIENT'S) LEAD NURTURING STRATEGY AT ACHIEVING TOP PRIORITIES?

UNSUCCESSFUL
9%

VERY SUCCESSFUL
(BEST-IN-CLASS)
16%

SOMEWHAT
SUCCESSFUL
75%

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CRITICAL CHALLENGES

Creating engaging content is often a grueling and time-consuming endeavor with 43% of marketers ranking this at the top of the list of challenges they face with a lead nurturing strategy. **Aligning marketing and sales efforts** to turn leads into conversions as well as **allocating enough resources** to get the job done also rank high according to 36% and 32% of marketers, respectively.
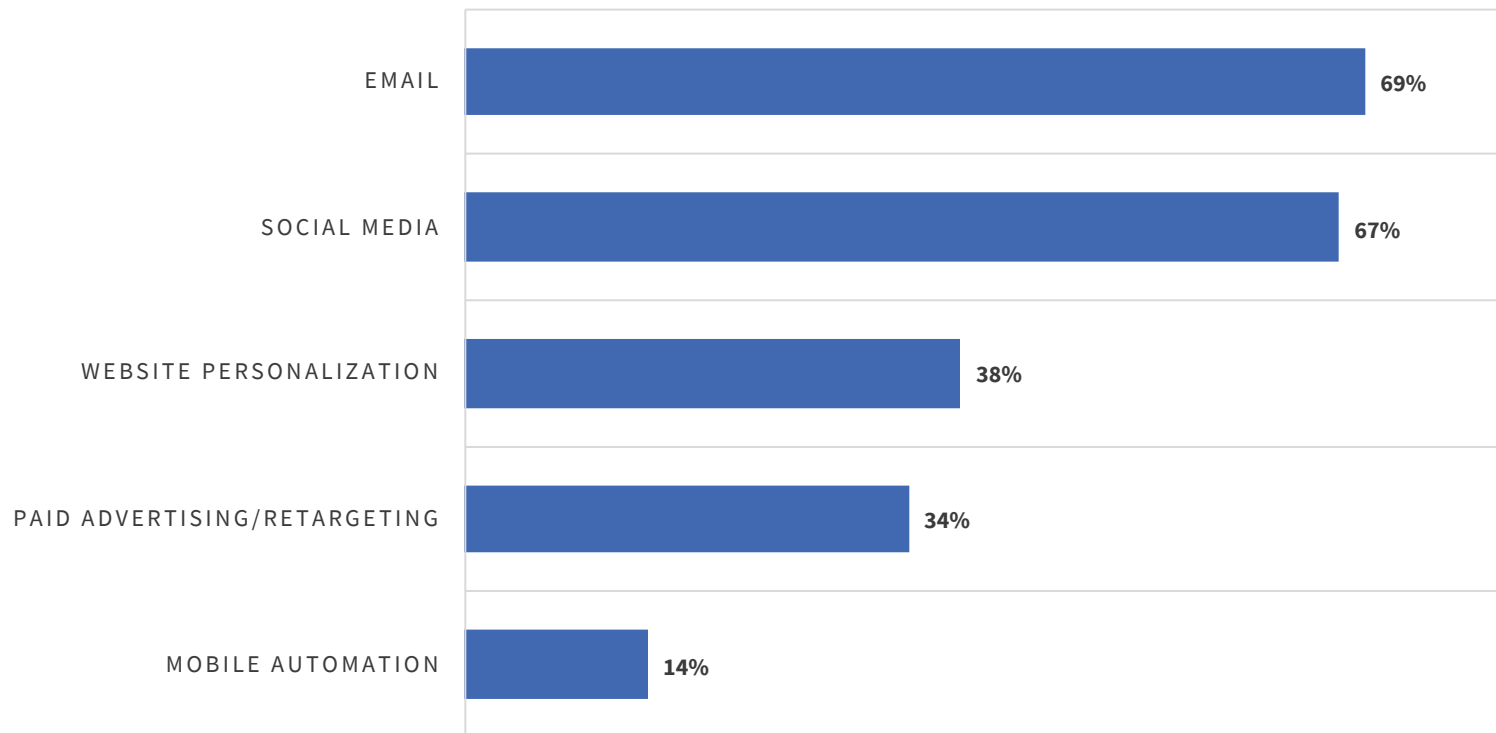
WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF A LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM?

Aspect	Percentage
CREATING TARGETED/ENGAGING CONTENT	43%
ALIGNING MARKETING AND SALES EFFORTS	36%
ALLOCATING ADEQUATE RESOURCES	32%
IMPLEMENTING A MULTI-CHANNEL PROGRAM	24%
OPTIMIZING EMAIL SERIES	22%
MEASURING KPIS	19%
CREATING CUSTOMER PROFILES	19%
LEAD SEGMENTATION AND SCORING	18%
DETERMINING OPTIMAL CADENCE	16%

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DIGITAL CHANNEL USAGE

During the lead nurturing process, marketers have a choice from a wide range of tactics and channels to connect with potential customers. Finding the right mix of these channels is essential. Over two-thirds of marketers report that **email** (69%) and **social media** (67%) are the most frequently used digital channels in their lead nurturing programs.
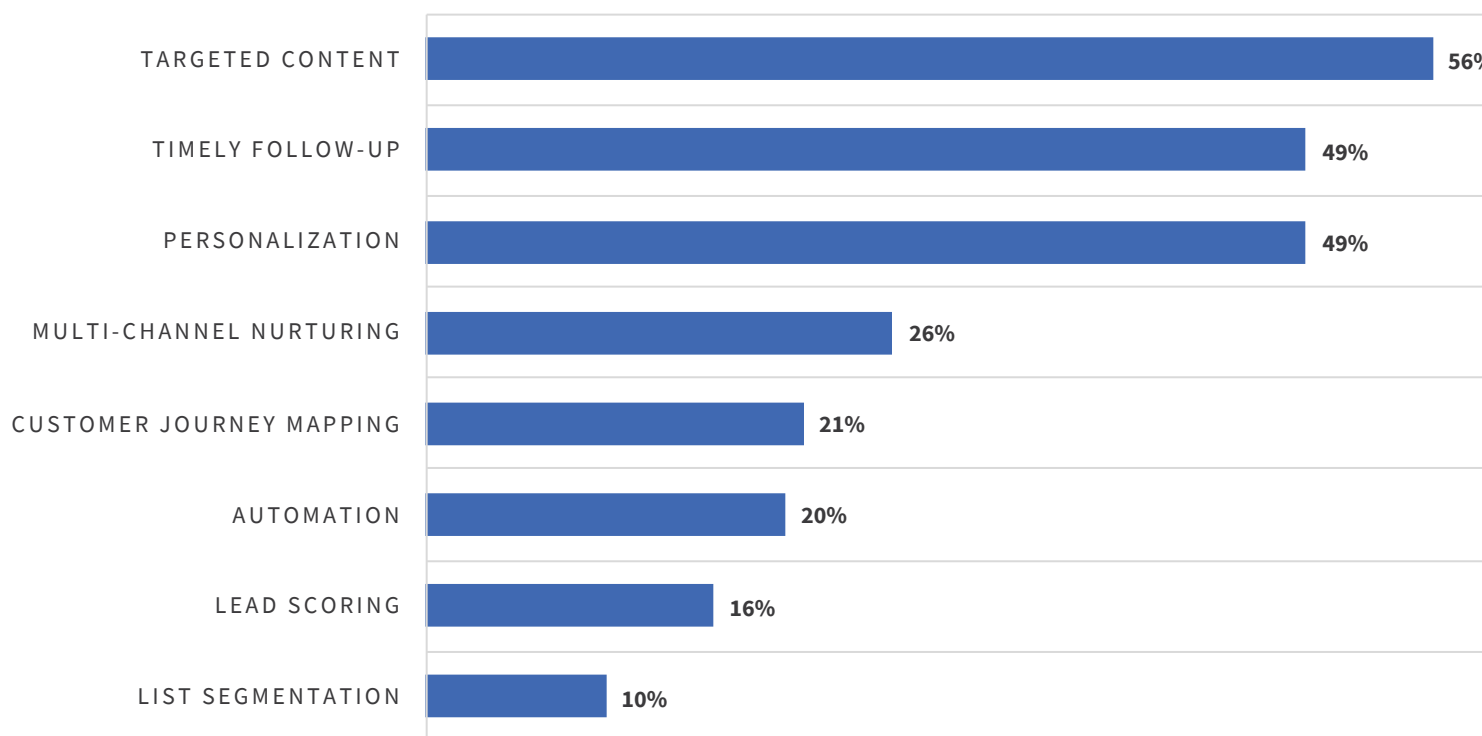
WHICH DIGITAL CHANNELS ARE MOST FREQUENTLY USED DURING THE LEAD NURTURING PROCESS?

Channel	Percentage
EMAIL	69%
SOCIAL MEDIA	67%
WEBSITE PERSONALIZATION	38%
PAID ADVERTISING/RETARGETING	34%
MOBILE AUTOMATION	14%

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ESSENTIAL STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

Which strategic elements make up a successful lead nurturing strategy? 56% of marketing professionals say **targeted content**. About one-half (49%) of those responding to the survey place a great amount of importance on **timely follow-up** and **personalization**. Only one in ten (10%) marketers say that **list segmentation** is important during this process.
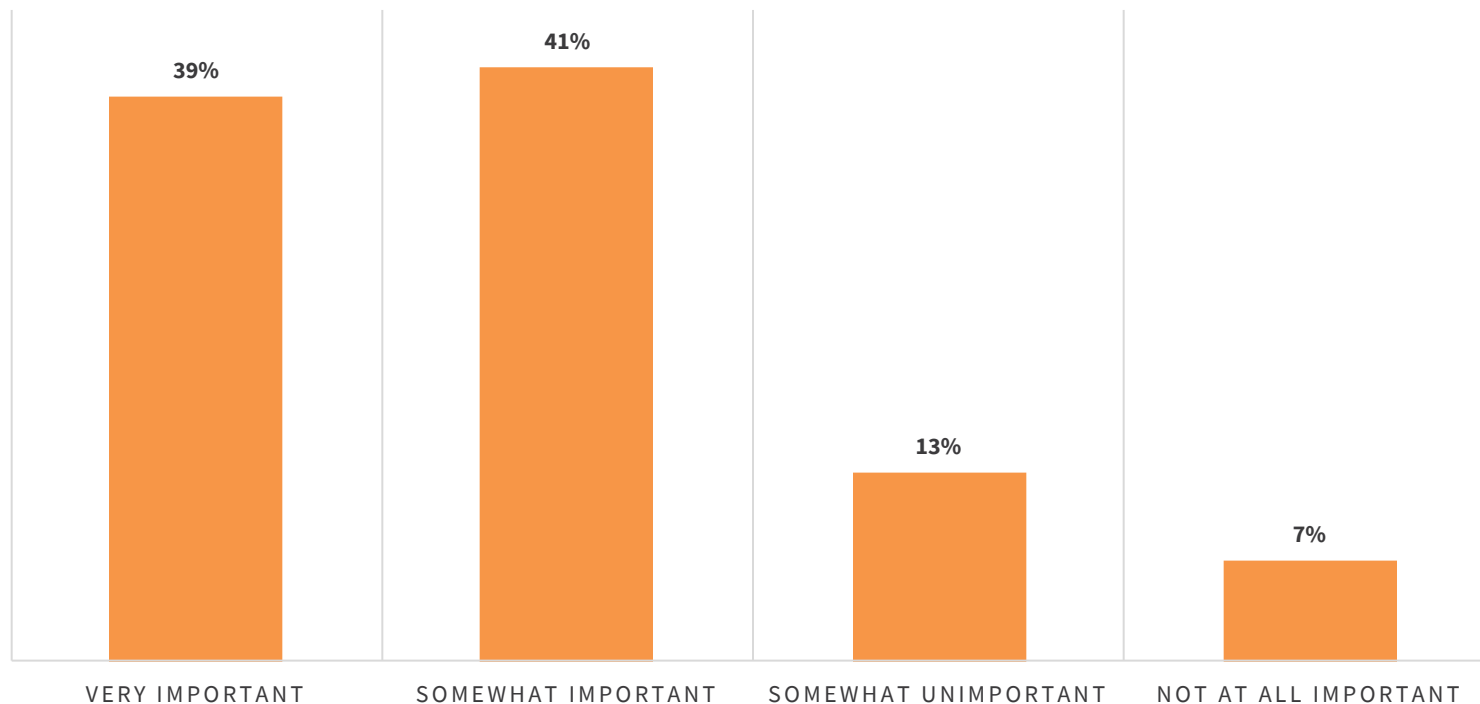
WHAT ARE THE MOST ESSENTIAL STRATEGIC ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL LEAD NURTURING PROGRAM?

Element	Percentage
TARGETED CONTENT	56%
TIMELY FOLLOW-UP	49%
PERSONALIZATION	49%
MULTI-CHANNEL NURTURING	26%
CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAPPING	21%
AUTOMATION	20%
LEAD SCORING	16%
LIST SEGMENTATION	10%

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IMPORTANCE OF AUTOMATION

When used correctly, automation software can help marketers build strategic customer experiences that drive leads down the funnel more efficiently. An 80% majority of marketing professionals surveyed say that having automation software is **an important part of improving lead nurturing performance**. About half of this group go so far as to say it is very important to improving success.
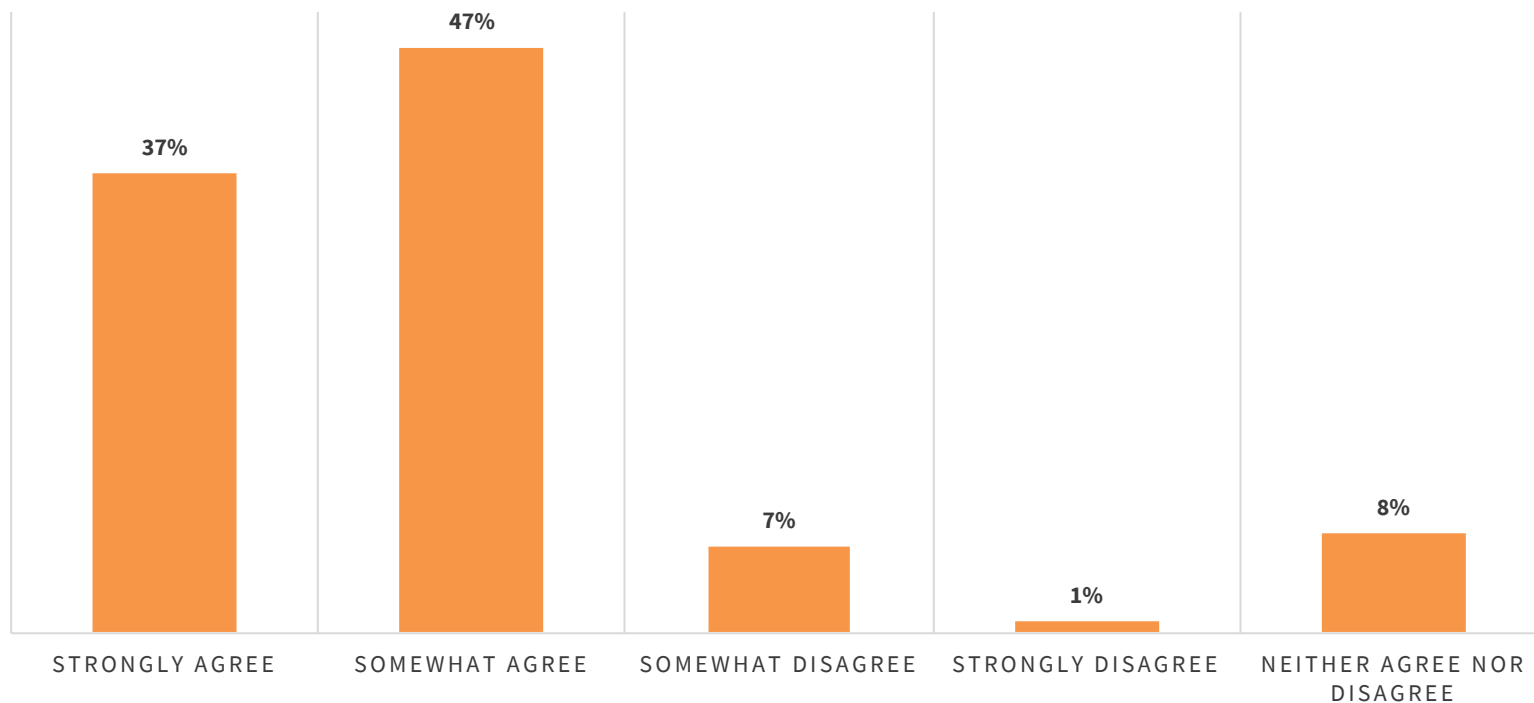
HOW IMPORTANT IS AUTOMATION SOFTWARE TO IMPROVING LEAD NURTURING PERFORMANCE?

VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
39%	41%	13%	7%

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DEDICATED RESOURCES

From this research, we discovered that lead nurturing is typically not as much of a priority as lead generation in the minds of marketers. But would **allocating more time and resources to lead nurturing efforts improve conversion rates**? 84% of marketers say yes. In fact, 37% of those surveyed strongly agree that more resources dedicated to lead nurturing would lead to more conversions.

ALLOCATING MORE TIME/RESOURCES TO LEAD NURTURING EFFORTS WOULD IMPROVE MY CONVERSION RATES.

37%	47%	7%	1%	8%
STRONGLY AGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

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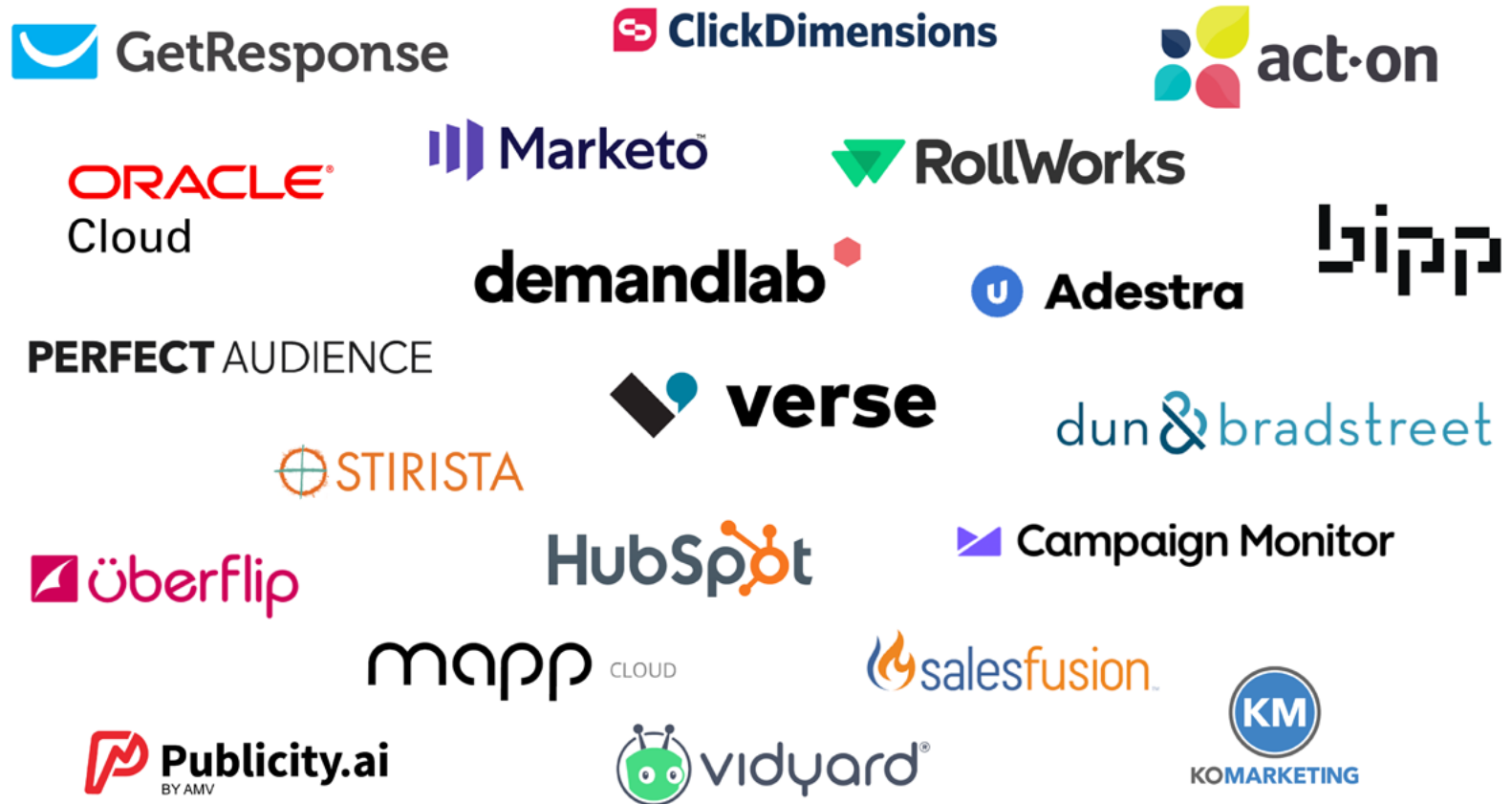# PERSONALIZED B2B RESEARCH TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS

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Research studies by BuzzSumo, MarketingProfs, and eMarketer finds that original research is the #1 type of content to engage prospects and convert leads to sales. Find out how you can add research to your marketing mix.

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