B2BMX INSIGHTS
POWERED BY ADVERTISINGWEEK

2026 Benchmark Survey:

B2B Marketing Enters the AI Era

Executive Summary



The story of where B2B marketing is moving can be summed up in two letters: AI
Artificial intelligence tools and platforms in recent years has gone from background noise to the clear top budget priority in 2026. The year before, account-based marketing led the pack, and AI barely registered as a headline.

The 2026 B2BMX Insights Benchmark Survey maps how B2B marketers are rethinking budgets, priorities and channels against the prior year's results. Some things held steady. Others flipped. Knowing which is which is how you plan your next move.

Priorities tell a sharper story. Demand gen focus moved from lead quality over quantity to improving conversion rates and campaign results. The pivot is subtle but real— B2B marketers are less focused on filling the funnel and more focused on making it convert.

Measurement followed the same logic. Pipeline influenced climbed to the top metric, edging out the prior year's leaders of "opportunities generated" and MQLs/SALs. Revenue-based quotas rose sharply year over year, pointing to a tighter tie between marketing activity and business outcomes. Budgets stayed stable, with a modest upward push. Marketing operations investment cooled slightly, with fewer organizations reporting a significant increase compared with 2025. Read that as recalibration, not retreat. Spending is shifting, and AI is a big reason why.

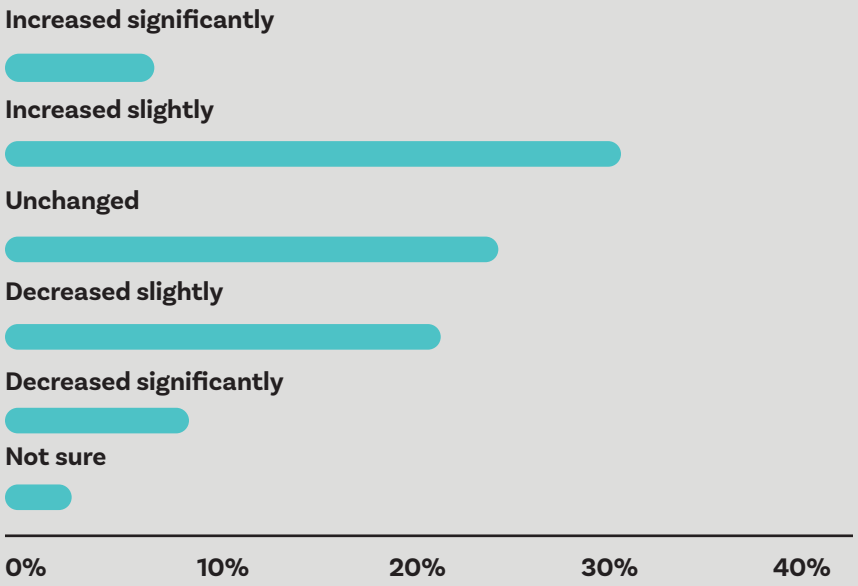
Channel strategy delivered one of the clearest reversals as in-person events and trade shows took the top spot. Face-to-face is back near the front of the plan as cross-team collaboration made real gains well. The share of organizations where brand and demand marketing work together on shared campaigns and goals rose meaningfully in 2026 compared with the year prior.

So what does all of this mean for B2B Marketers? The pages ahead break down each shift with the year-over-year data behind it, from budget allocation and revenue projections to AI adoption, channel mix and team alignment. You'll see where the market moved, where it held and where the biggest opportunities sit.

Read on. The details are where the strategy lives.

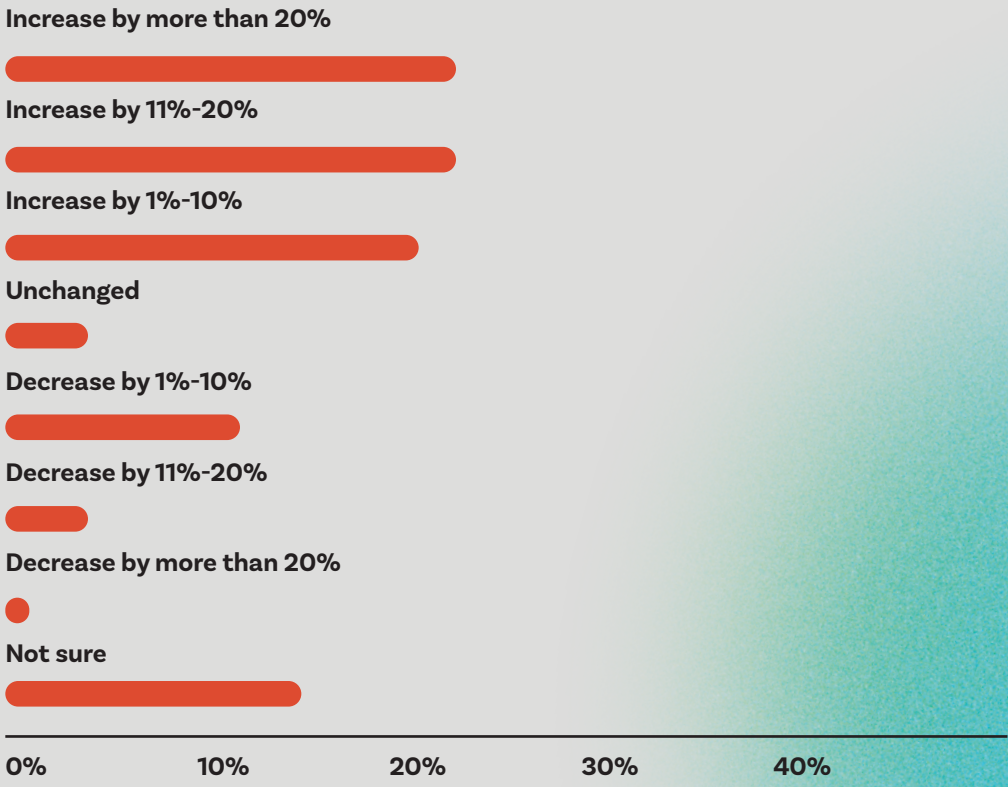
How has your overall marketing budget changed in 2026 versus 2025?

Most respondents experienced either a slight increase or no change in their 2026 marketing budget compared to 2025. Significant increases or decreases were less common. This suggests overall budget stability with a modest upward trend, as 32.1% of respondents reported that their marketing budget increased slightly compared with the prior year. That's a modest dip from 2025, when 35.29% saw a slight increase.



What amount of total revenue growth is your organization projecting for the year ahead?

The majority of organizations are projecting revenue growth, with more than 65% expecting increases, including 22.6% projecting their organization's revenue to increase by more than 20% in 2026.



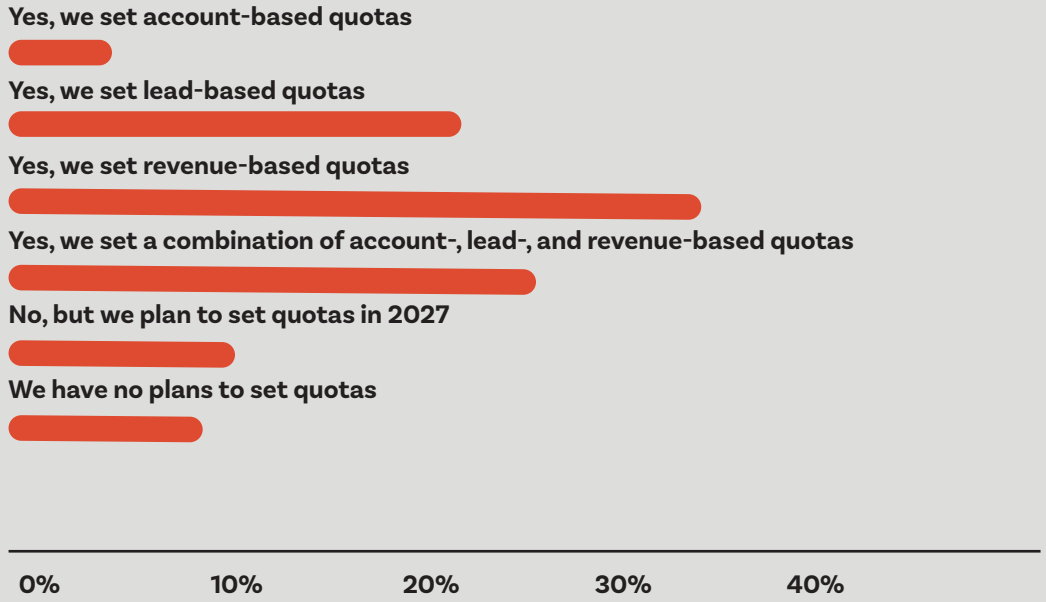
How will your investment in marketing operations change in 2026?

Most organizations are increasing their investment in marketing operations, either slightly or substantially. However, a notable portion do not have a marketing operations function or plan to invest in the future— while 28.3% saw a slight increase in marketing operations investment, that's a step down from 2025, when 37.7% planned a slight increase.



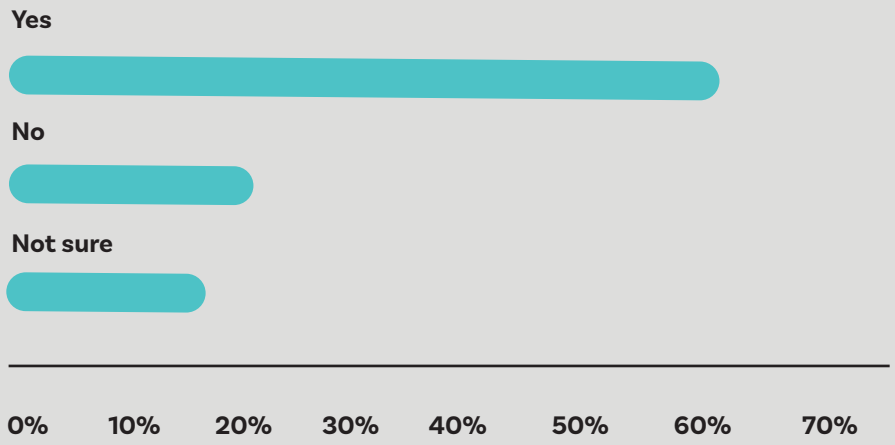
Does your marketing organization have performance quotas?

Performance quotas are common, especially revenue-based ones, with some organizations using a mix of account, lead, and revenue quotas. In 2026, 33.33% set revenue-based performance quotas for their marketing teams. This is a notable rise from 2025, when just 25.33% used revenue-based quotas, pointing to a sharper focus on measurable revenue outcomes.

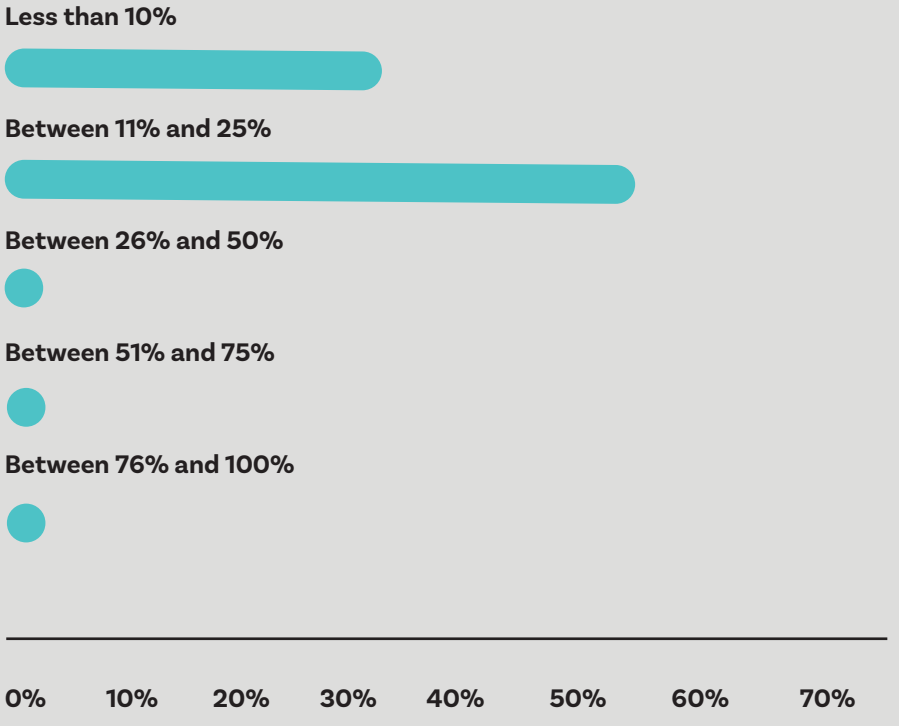


Has your company's annual revenue been attributable to marketing-sourced leads year over year?

In 2026, 60% of respondents attributed annual revenue to marketing-sourced leads year over year, edging slightly below 2025's 61.33. Among those tracking increases, most saw marketing-sourced revenue grow by 11–25% in the past year. Smaller groups reported increases of less than 10% or higher range

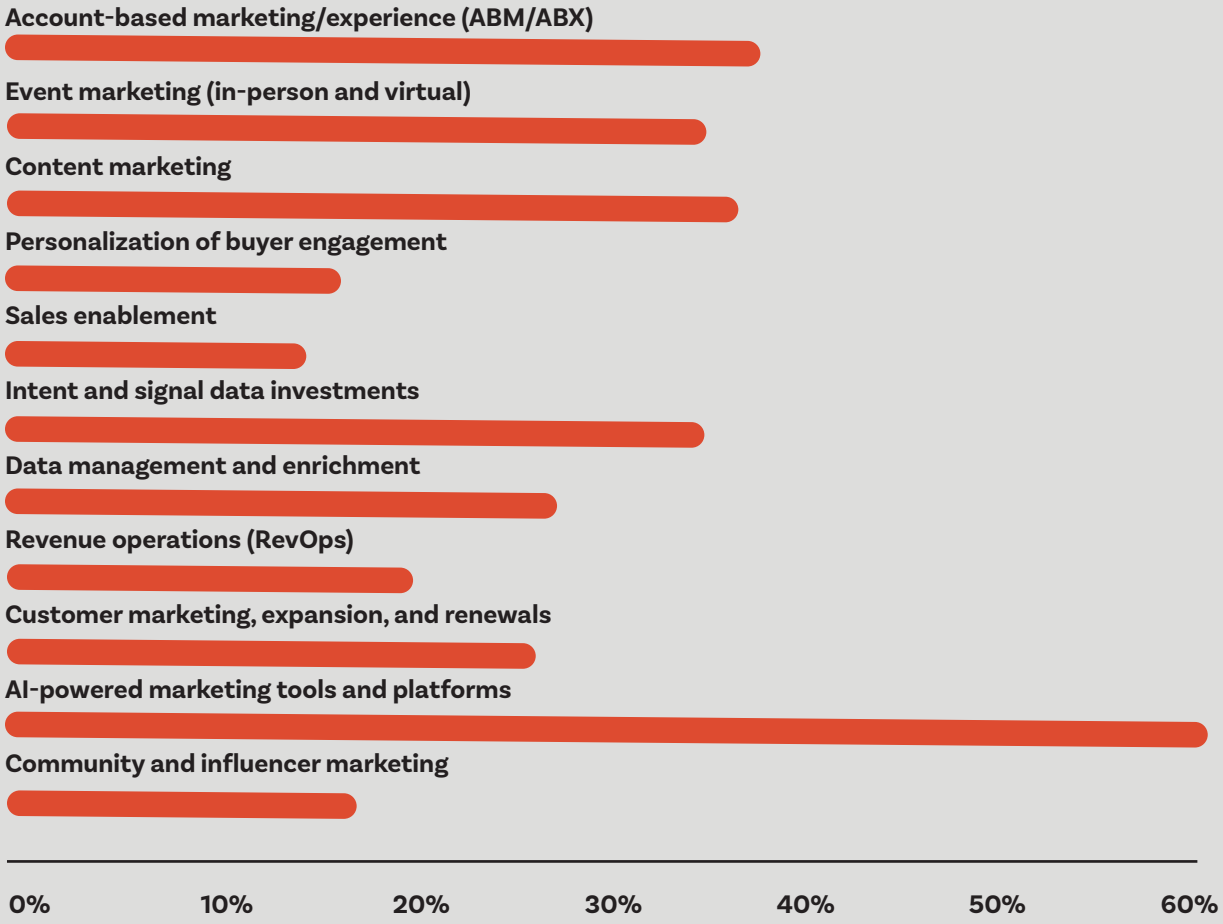


If yes, how much of an increase have you seen this past year?



Which of the following strategies are seeing increased budget prioritization? (Select all that apply)

AI-powered marketing tools are the top area for increased budget prioritization (60.4%), a major shift from 2025, when account-based marketing (ABM) led at 44.7%. Multiple strategies are being prioritized, reflecting a diverse and technology-driven approach as organizations are investing in both digital and traditional marketing strategies.

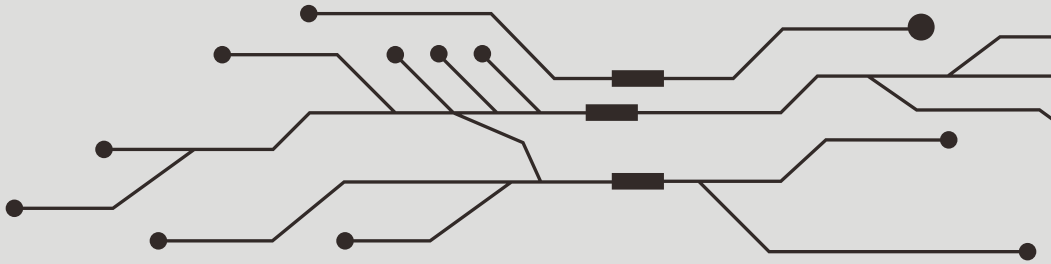


How would you describe the current state of AI adoption across your marketing workflows?

AI adoption is progressing, with many using AI in specific workflows and some embedding it across most workflows. A smaller group is still evaluating or piloting AI tools. Full-scale AI integration remains a work in progress for many– 35.9% use AI in several specific marketing workflows.

Where is AI having the biggest impact on your content creation and personalization efforts? (Select all that apply)

AI has the biggest impact on content production and repurposing. Drafting, scaling, and generating creative content are key areas of AI influence. Personalization and optimization are also significant but less widespread. – 70% use AI for drafting and scaling content production.

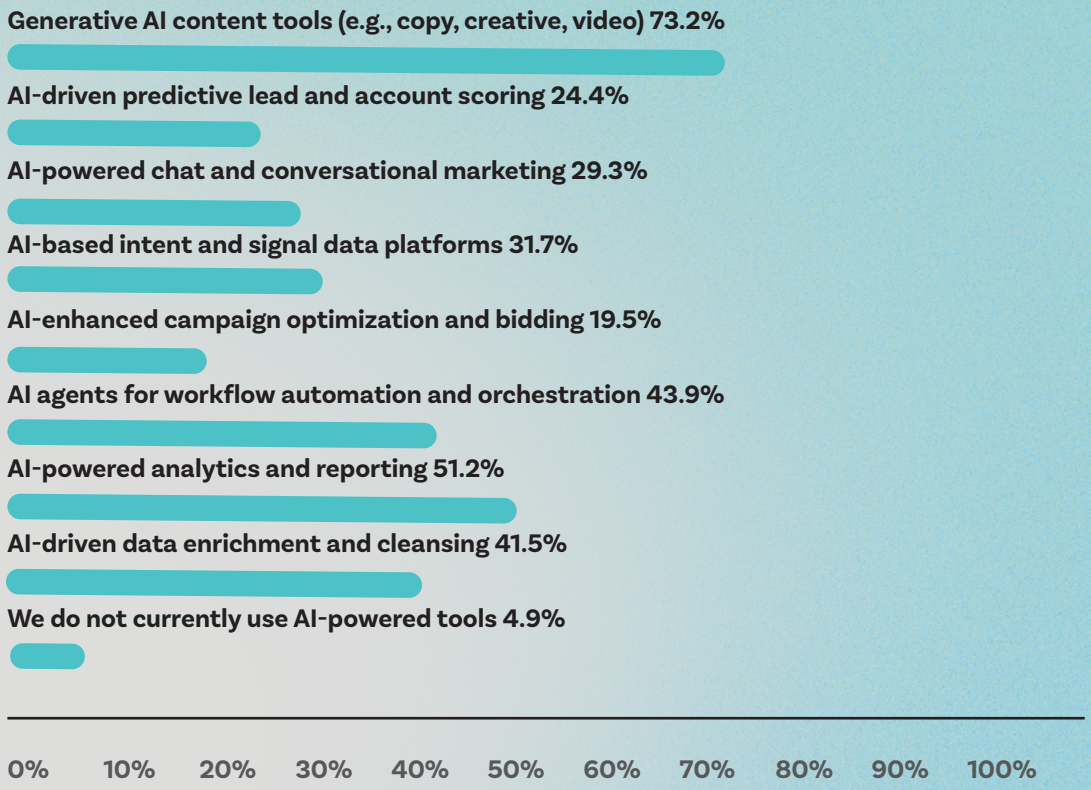


Which tools and/or tactics are you planning to test and/or deploy? (Select all that apply)

Generative AI tools and marketing automation are the most planned for testing or deployment– 51.4% of respondents currently are testing or deploying Gen AI tools. Multichannel lead nurturing and competitive intelligence are priorities as well, as organizations are exploring a range of tools to enhance marketing effectiveness.

Generative AI content tools (75%) are the most widely adopted tools in MarTech stacks. Analytics, workflow automation, and data enrichment were other uses cited. For 2026, 54.1% plan to invest more in lead nurturing campaigns, the leading content format. This tops 2025, when case studies led at 56.9% and lead nurturing followed at 46.6%, showing lead nurturing's rise to the front.

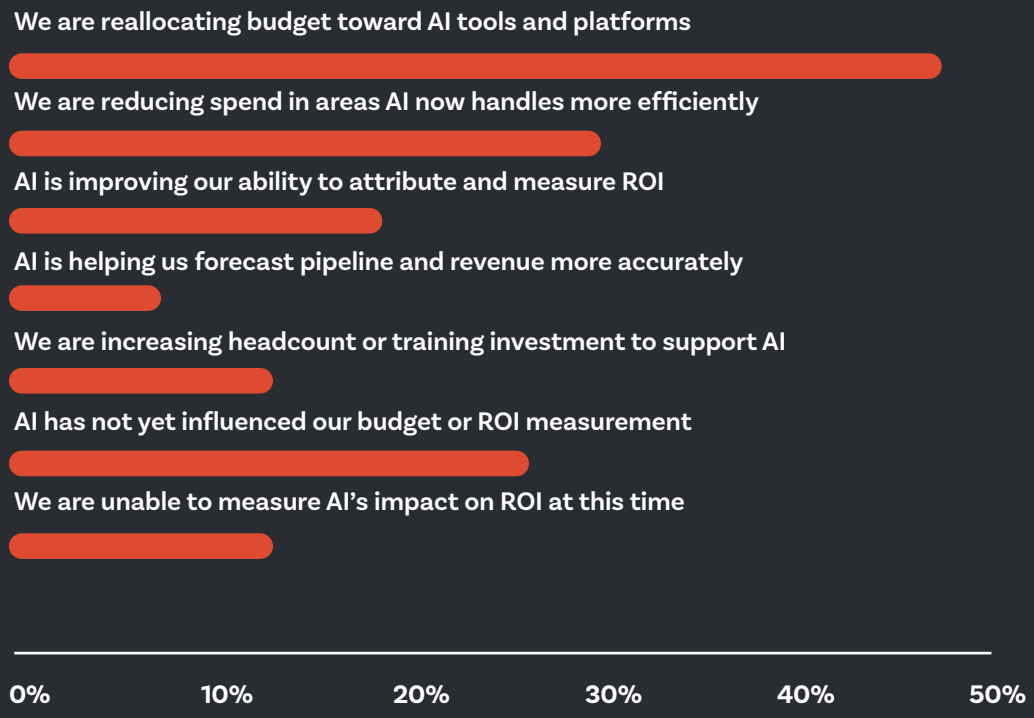




How is AI influencing your budget decisions and ROI measurement?

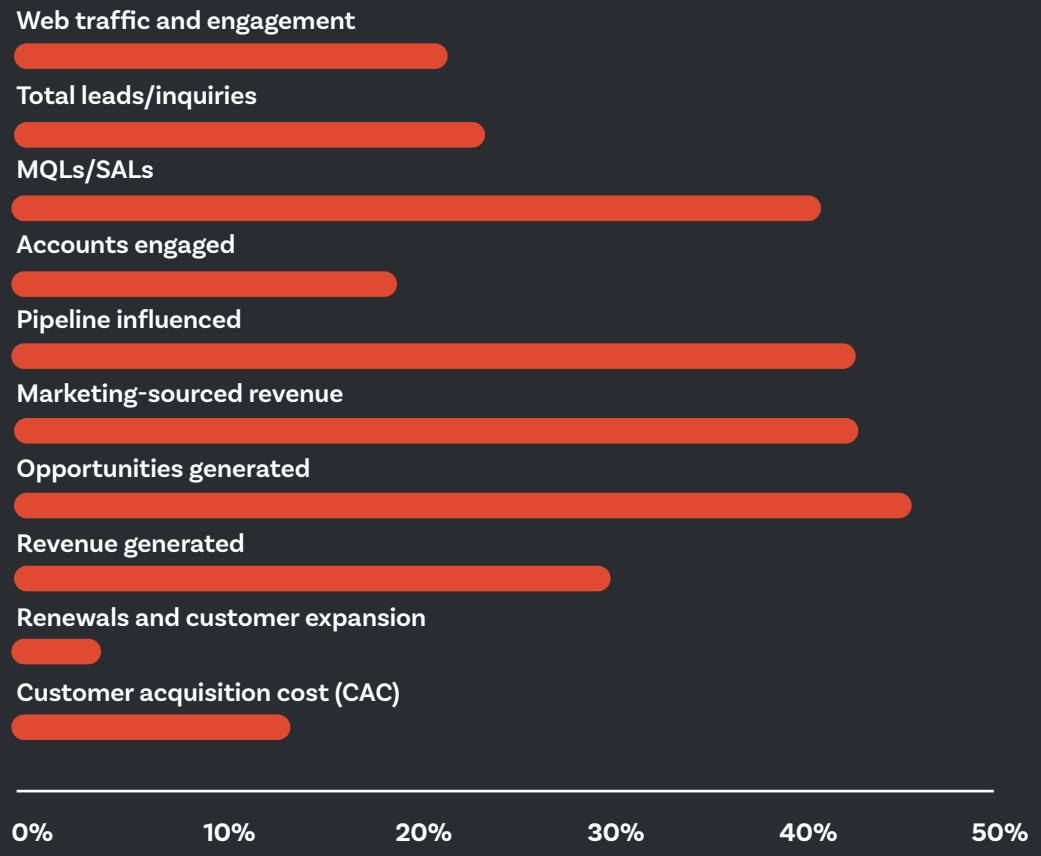
(Select all that apply)

Half of respondents are reallocating budget toward AI tools and platforms, reducing spend in areas where AI improves efficiency. AI is helping with ROI measurement and forecasting for a subset of organizations – 50% are reallocating budget toward AI tools and platforms. In 2026, 51.35% plan to test or deploy generative AI tools, the most popular tactic. This contrasts with 2025, when multichannel lead nurturing led at 58.62%, underscoring the fast climb of generative AI on the roadmap.



What are the top three metrics your team is measured on? (Select Top 3)

Pipeline influenced, marketing-sourced revenue, and opportunities generated are the top metrics measured. These are closely followed by MQLs/SALs and revenue generated. The focus is on metrics that directly tie marketing efforts to business outcomes. For 2026, pipeline influenced topped the list at 44.% as a key metric tied to business outcomes. In 2025, opportunities generated led at 52%, with MQLs/SALs close behind, showing a pivot toward pipeline-focused measurement.



Rank your organization's demand generation priorities for 2026, with 1 being the most important.

The highest weighted average score for demand generation priorities was 5.08 for improving conversion rates and campaign results. In 2025, lead quality over quantity led with a higher score of 5.56, reflecting a shift in top demand gen focus. Other top priorities include reaching the right contacts and focusing on lead quality as B2B marketers are balancing volume, quality, and targeting in their strategies.

Generating increased lead volume

Focusing on lead quality over quantity

Improving the depth and accuracy of our database

Improving conversion rates and campaign results

Strengthening our ability to measure and analyze marketing impact

Improving sales and marketing alignment

Reaching the right contacts and stakeholders within target accounts

Using intent and signal data to identify new opportunities

> "In 2025, lead quality over quantity led with a higher score of 5.56, reflecting a shift in top demand gen focus."

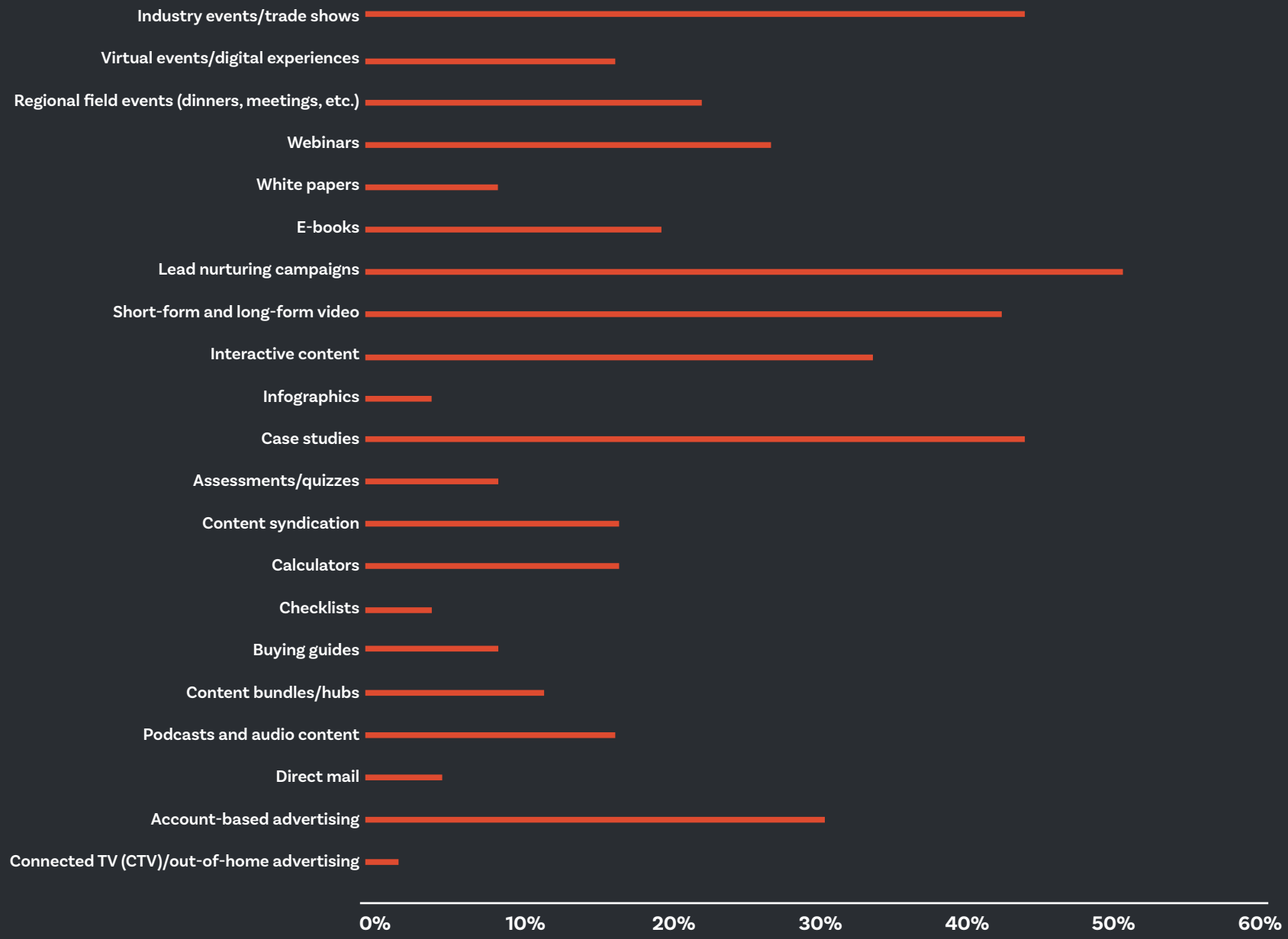


Which content formats do you plan to invest more in through 2027?

(Select top five)

Lead nurturing campaigns, industry events, and case studies are the top content formats for increased investment. Video and interactive content are also popular choices. This reflects a mix of traditional and digital content strategies – 54.05% plan to invest more in lead nurturing campaigns.

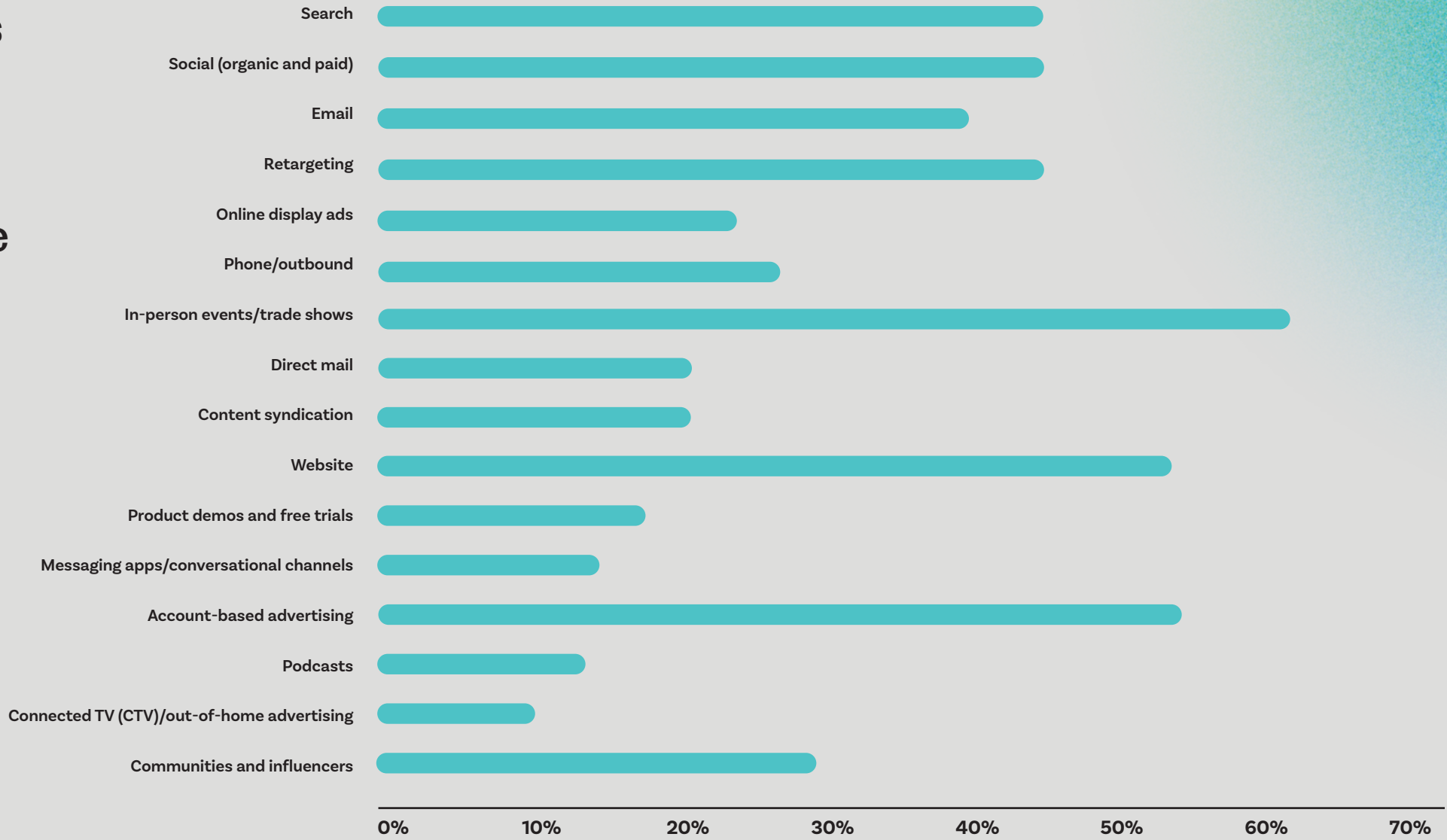




Which channels do you plan to increase investment in to drive pipeline through 2026?

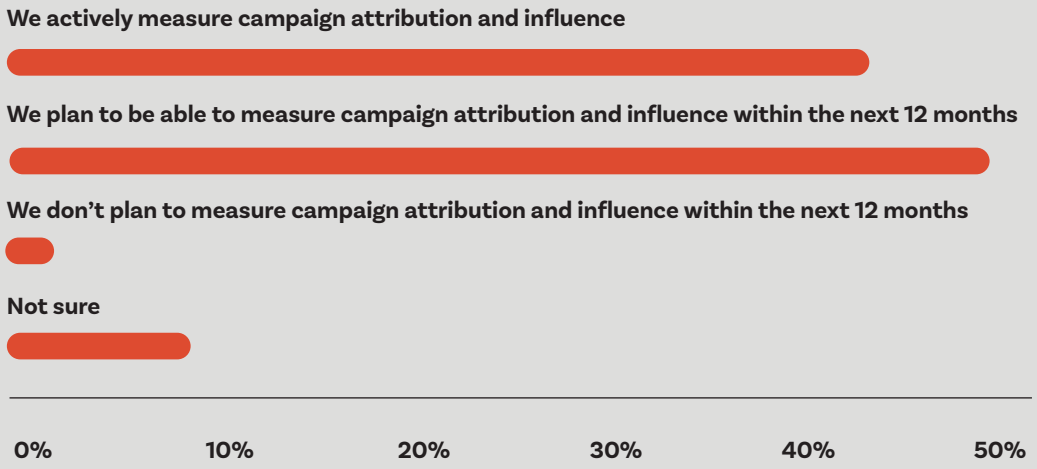
(Select all that apply)

In-person events, websites, and account-based advertising are the top channels for increased investment. For 2026, 62.2% plan to increase investment in in-person events and trade shows, the top channel. In 2025, the website led at 63.8%, with email at 58.6%, marking a move toward offline, face-to-face channels. Search, social, and retargeting are also important. This shows a balanced approach across digital and offline channels.



How would you describe your current ability to measure campaign attribution and influence?

Nearly half plan to measure campaign attribution and influence within the next year. A significant portion are already “actively” measuring these metrics. Only a small minority are not planning to measure attribution



Which of the following are priorities in terms of your demand generation goals?

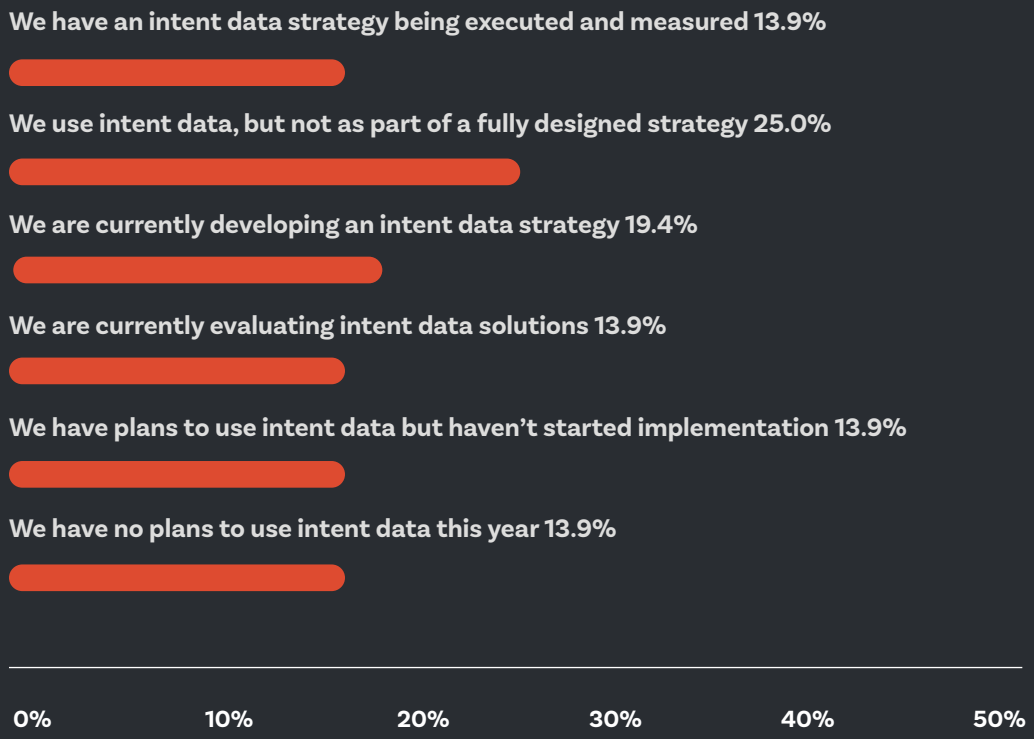
(Select top three)

Nurturing leads and shifting to higher-quality leads are the top demand generation priorities. Increasing conversion rates and aligning marketing and sales are also important. For 2026, 47.22% prioritize nurturing leads to avoid missed opportunities as a top demand gen goal. In 2025, increasing conversion rates from MQLs to opportunities led at 55.2%, showing a tilt toward nurturing and lead quality. Organizations are focused on both pipeline quality and collaboration.



What is the current state of intent data usage at your organization?

Intent data usage is still developing, with only a minority executing a measured strategy. Many are in the process of developing or considering intent data solutions. Adoption is not yet widespread. Twenty-five percent are using intent data but not as part of a fully designed strategy. In 2026, 25% use intent data but not as part of a fully designed strategy.



What best describes your current approach to brand building and demand generation?

Most organizations have brand and demand teams working together on shared campaigns and goals. Some have a fully integrated approach, while others operate independently. Collaboration between brand and demand is common but not universal – 41.7% say brand and demand marketing work together on shared campaigns and goals. This is a clear jump from 2025, when 29.3% reported a fully integrated approach, reflecting stronger cross-team collaboration.



Conclusion

The through-line across the 2026 B2BMX Insights Benchmark Survey is disciplined optimism. The rapid integration of AI is the story. Adoption is no longer theoretical; it's operational. A growing share use AI across specific marketing workflows, and the vast majority now use it for drafting and scaling content production.

Even more telling, three in four organizations have generative AI content tools in their MarTech stack. Content is where AI earns its keep first: drafting, repurposing and scaling the work that used to eat your team's hours. If you're still piloting, the benchmark is clear on where your peers already put AI to work.

The budget and strategy signals point in the same direction, as half of respondents are reallocating budget toward AI tools and platforms, and a majority plan to test or deploy generative AI in the year ahead, making it the most popular tactic on the roadmap. Compare that to 2025, when multichannel lead nurturing led the priority list and AI wasn't the headline. That's the shift in one line. AI moved from experiment to line item, and the dollars are following the intent.

This is all happening where budgets are more scrutinized then ever before. A strong majority project revenue growth as B2B marketers work to there budget more tightly then ever. Pipeline influenced now leads the metrics, revenue-based quotas rose sharply from the prior year, and the connection between marketing and business outcomes has never been clearer. Marketing-sourced revenue grew for most organizations at a stronger rate than in 2025, when modest and strong gains were split nearly evenly. The rest of the findings round out the picture. Lead nurturing campaigns rose to the top content investment, and nurturing leads to avoid missed opportunities became a leading demand gen goal. In-person events and trade shows claimed the top channel spot, a clear move toward face-to-face after websites led in 2025. Attribution remains a work in progress, with fewer organizations actively measuring campaign attribution and influence compared with last year, that more of you are still catching up. Brand and demand alignment strengthened meaningfully.

Put it together and 2026 reads as a year of sharpening. Sharper metrics. Sharper spend. Sharper focus on conversion, nurturing and revenue. The tools changed fast, but the goal didn't: turn marketing into measurable business impact.

Use these benchmarks to pressure-test your own plan. Where do you lead the market? Where are you behind? Answer those two questions, then move.



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Respondents to the DGR Benchmark survey came mostly from smaller companies, with a sizable group of large enterprises. More than half (52.8%) reported annual revenue under $50 million, including 27.8% under $10 million and 25% between $10 million and $50 million. Another 13.9% reported $50 million to $100 million, and just 2.8% fell between $100 million and $500 million. At the top end, 11.1% reported $500 million to $1 billion, and 19.4% exceeded $1 billion. By industry, software and technology companies made up the largest share at 44.4%, followed by business services and consulting at 22.2%. Together, those two groups accounted for two-thirds of respondents. Manufacturing represented 13.9%, financial services 5.6%, and retail and health care 2.8% each.