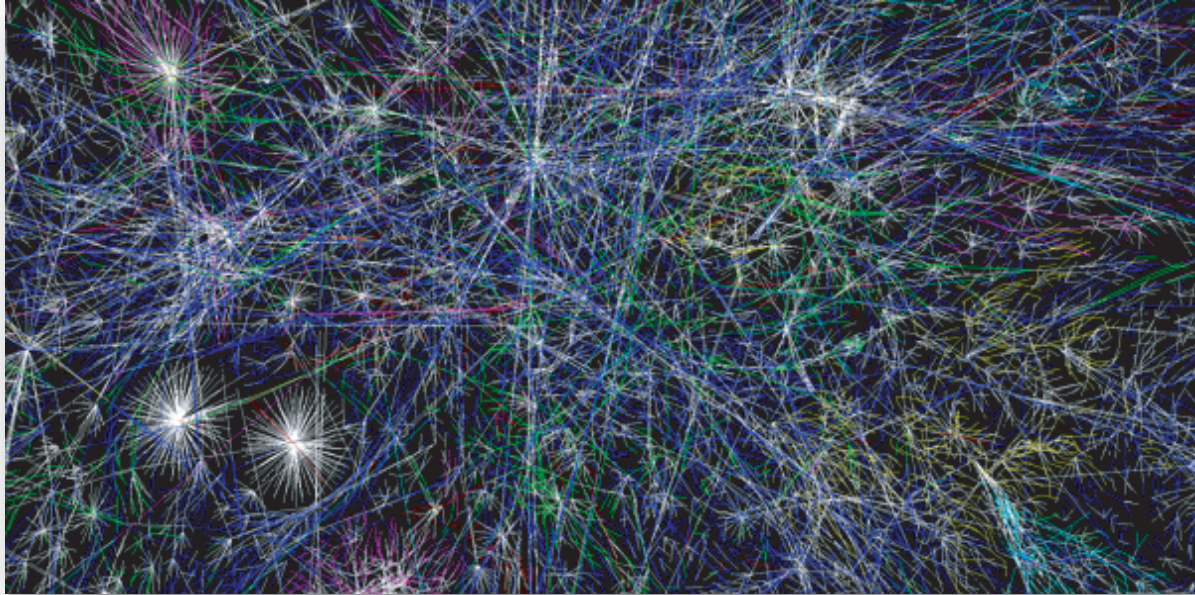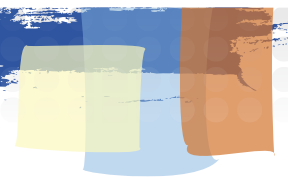www.ckwrites.com
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COMPLIMENTARY REPORT
Creating Online Marketing Tactics

http://bit.ly/5tHH2x

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

"These tactics really generate strong awareness at a low cost.

But they also demand a lot of time to maintain."

The survey was conducted in December, 2009.

163 people . Of them, 150 worked for companies that are currently Implementing one or more online marketing tactics. Most of the respondents work for small companies (<100) in the B2B service space.

Key Findings

The quote sums up our findings. *It works, but it takes a great deal of work.*

- The primary reason that companies are implementing online media is to create awareness to help fill the top of the sales funnel.

- The second reason is to deepen relationships with existing clients and accounts.

- Budget is <u>not</u> the principal barrier to adoptions. Internal resources and an appropriate ROI model were both cited as more significant issues.

- Twitter, Blogging and Direct email are three most often used tactics. Case Studies are also frequently used to support the latter part of the sales cycle.

- Production is largely being done inhouse,. 75% of all of the content is specifically created for this use. Agencies and independents are primarily engaged for specialized services.

15% of the respondents work for companies that do not use online media. The three reasons cited are:

- A lack of internal resources to implement and manage the process.

- A lack of budget.

- The perception that online tactics are inappropriate to their business model.

Two literal questions provide a wealth of insight into the common issues that these companies are facing as they learn to create and manage online marketing tactics.

The Study

With the explosion of companies developing **online marketing initiatives**, I wanted to provide the reader with some insight into the experience of people who are responsible for creating these new tools.

While the press focuses on home runs and big wins, the less glamorous story about making it happen is being ignored.

As a professional content creator, I know that turning out this much "stuff" on a consistent basis is an enormous challenge. Doing it as part of your "day job", with no training or resources, is not easy.

The burden of having to meet if not exceed theoretical ROI assumptions further complicates the task.

As a result of the 'focus on the fabulous', businesses are making decisions based on best case scenarios instead of practical insight into what is involved in implementing these tactics.

With the help of my long time associate, Kevin O'Neill of Audience Insights, I designed a survey which provides the reader with a window on the nitty gritty choices that have to be made to use online marketing tactics to move the needle.

The survey asks and answers questions about:

- The business objectives behind the tactics.

- The relative adoption of a variety online marketing tactics.

- Who had the responsibility for the execution of each tactic.

- Which tactics were paired with each step of the sales funnel

- What the barriers to adoption are among companies who are <u>currently using</u> online marketing tactics.

- What the barriers to adoption are among companies who are <u>not currently using</u> online marketing tactics.

- What the emerging best practices are telling us.

What's the bottom line? Let a respondent tell you:

> "If you are consistent it works well. The implementation of our online e-marketing has been very successful in helping get new clients."

Methodology

For a 360 perspective, I wanted to use social media to invite people to participate.

The survey was conducted during December, 2009. 163 people completed at least part of the survey.

Three different invitation techniques were used:

- I promoted the survey via Twitter to my followers (200+). One person told me that they retweeted the invitation to his followers.

- I promoted the survey on nine LinkedIn marketing, sales and social media forums.

- I promoted the survey through my personal Linked In list (about 125 letters).

The invitations to participate offered a copy of the finished report as an incentive.

Directly contacting my personal Linked In list turned out to be the most effective approach and accounted for half of the responses. This is consistent with social media theory.

The survey consisted of 13 multiple choice and matrix questions, and two literal (write-in) questions.

The respondents whose companies did not use online media were dynamically branched to a three question set focused on the barriers to adoption, which is reported separately at the end of the report.

This survey provides a sense of common themes among the participants and reflects the challenges they are facing. The methodology is sound, but in Kevin and my opinion, the *results are not statistically suitable for projections or forecasts*.

Respondent Profile

- 80% of all respondents were from companies smaller then 100 people.

- 54% indicated that they worked for B2B businesses,

- 40% indicated that their employer was engaged in both B2B & B2C businesses.

- 5-6% of the respondents worked for exclusively B2C businesses.

- 47% sold services,

- 40% sold a combination of products and services. 13% sold products.

- 54% said that their job description included the development of online tactics,

- 22% identified themselves as a content or strategy advisor

- 10% indicated that they had some input into the process.

Because of the small sample, there was not enough data to compare B2B and B2C initiatives.

All Objectives For The Online Marketing Program

⌘ Chart 1 shows the responses to the question:

Which of the following are objectives for your online marketing program?

People see online marketing as a very flexible tool. Perhaps even as a silver bullet that can be used throughout the sales cycle.
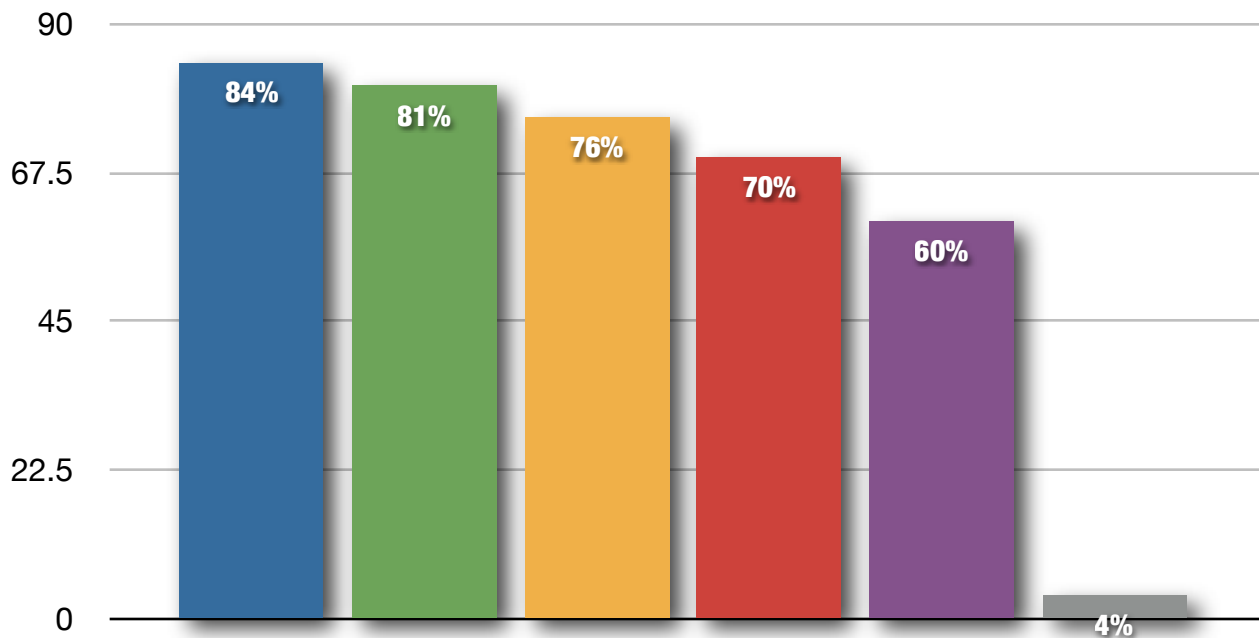
Legend:
- Build awareness (fill the top of the funnel)
- Influence brand image and perception (e.g. forums on your site or sponsored forums)
- Position products and services (e.g. provide papers and other materials)
- Deepen relationships with existing clients or accounts (e.g. training special offers)
- Support campaigns in other media (e.g. print broadcast direct mail)
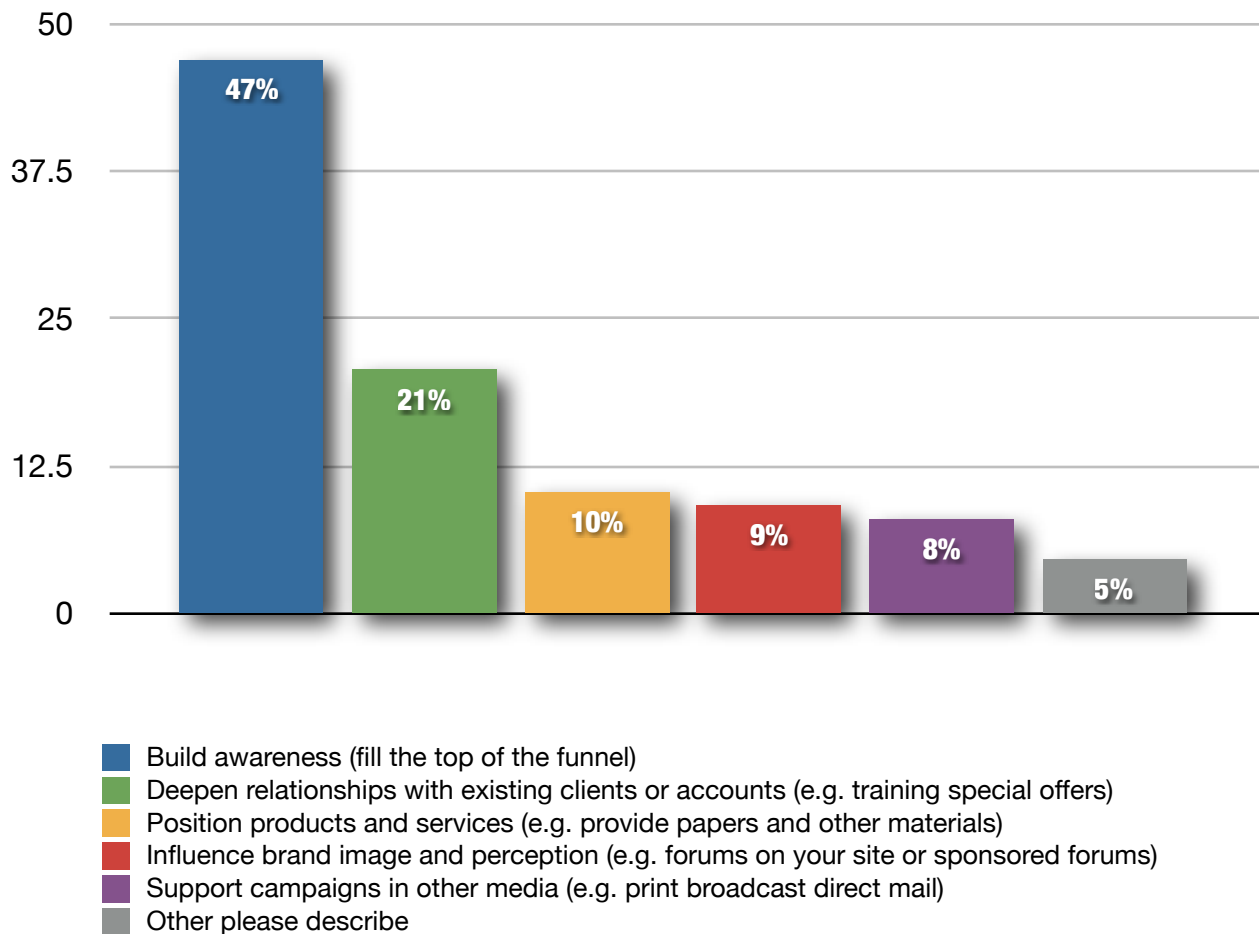- Other please describe

Primary Objective For The Online Marketing Program

⌘ Chart 2 shows the responses to the question:

What is the single most important objective for your online marketing program?

Creating awareness to fill the funnel is the dominant response. This is reflected in the expressed preference for Twitter and direct email.

The use of online tactics to deepen relationships is more surprising.

Legend:
- Build awareness (fill the top of the funnel)
- Deepen relationships with existing clients or accounts (e.g. training special offers)
- Position products and services (e.g. provide papers and other materials)
- Influence brand image and perception (e.g. forums on your site or sponsored forums)
- Support campaigns in other media (e.g. print broadcast direct mail)
- Other please describe

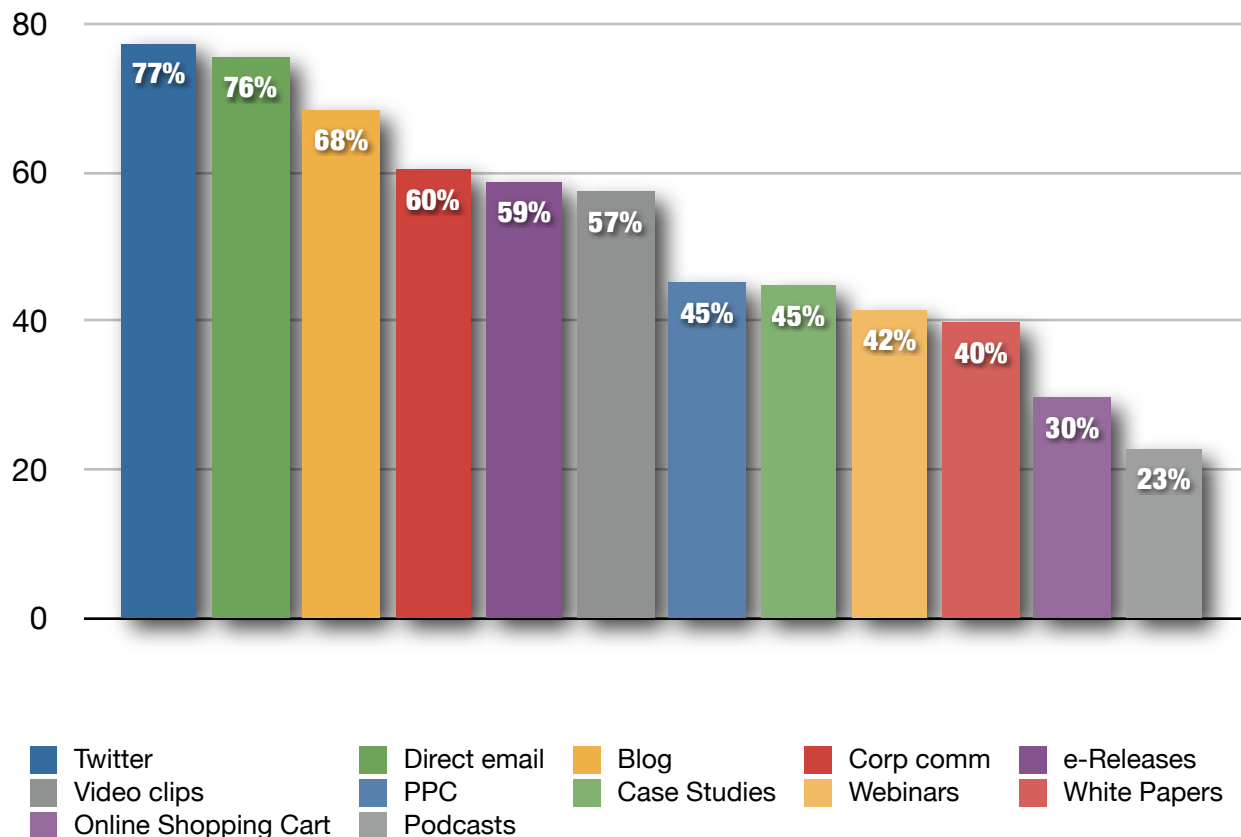# Implementation Of Specific Online Marketing Tactics

⌘ Chart 3 shows the responses to the question:

Which of the following online tactics has your company implemented?

Twitter, direct email and blogging dominate the responses.

Tweeting and Blogging are both low cost tactics that are primarily done in-house (Chart 7). In many cases I suspect that direct email is an extension of pre-existing direct marketing programs.

For the record, I was the one who neglected to include facebook on this list - a good sized oops. Thanks to so many of you for bringing this to my attention =)

Chart shows bars with values: 77%, 76%, 68%, 60%, 59%, 57%, 45%, 45%, 42%, 40%, 30%, 23%

Legend:
- Twitter
- Direct email
- Blog
- Corp comm
- e-Releases
- Video clips
- PPC
- Case Studies
- Webinars
- White Papers
- Online Shopping Cart
- Podcasts

Literal Responses: Tactics

⌘ The first literal (write-in) question was:

Which online marketing tactic (whether or not you have implemented it) do you believe will have the greatest impact on your business? Why?

The dominant tactic was Blogs, used to support a thought leadership position in the market.

- Blog - The ability to provide thought leadership and the "human" side of the organization.

- Blog - Helps us provide a solution versus just a product.

- Blog and Podcast, because we can become thought-leaders through the ideas that we write about, and present ourselves as educators in our field.

- Blog and podcasts. Because the "buzz" increases with quality content.

- Blog and Twitter - to be active in the conversation is very important.

- Blogging because it's so versatile.

- Blogs - content repository.

- Blogs...but would like to do Podcasting and Webinars.

Webinars and Case Studies are popular because they often stimulate interaction.

- Webinars and a blog. I feel we need to create more opportunities to dialogue with prospects and share points-of-view.

- Webinars and online demos. I do workshops, so seeing, hearing, and participating is believing.

- Webinars. When running a series of them, you can focus on specific subjects that will attract a targeted audience. They can also reach a great number of people across a vast distance, with relatively low costs.

- Case studies. Readers are interested in the complete short story...

- Case studies, customers ask for examples.

Direct email marketing is the preferred way to stay in contact with customers and prospects.

Users cite the ability to target and the ease of maintaining relationships over time as primary reasons they use the email tactic.

Lest the reader think our coverage is disproportionate, it is worth noting that no other single topic generated so many responses.

- No doubt it is also familiar and readily measured and quantified - a good balance to the uncertainty of less well developed tactics.

- Email blasts to our web users. This is our front line to engage digital users in an industry that is behind normal trends in technology.

- It takes between 12-24 months from the time we meet a person until they use our products & services. This is why e-mail marketing is so important. The newsletter is like a wave, "we're over here" kind of thing.

- On-line e-marketing. Direct line to past, present and potential customers. Sending monthly newsletter keeps our branding out there. Our clients forward our newsletter to people they feel can use our products and services. It's a great way to announce what our company is doing and to announce specials every month.

- ...direct email because it gives the best chance to begin a dialogue.

- We have seen the most response and conversion from direct email. We've gathered leads from other tools such as Twitter but direct email has shown the most results with sales.

- Direct email--we only send to folks we have a relationship with and who know us--therefore, they are more likely to do business with us.

- ...allows for a much more targeted approach which enables us to provide the customers a more appropriate set of information.

In the interests of providing a balanced picture, users did cite a number of concerns.

- A concern that the communications will be lost in the fray. Needing a better way to get smart and strategic particularly to key decision makers.

- ...over-saturation of on-line marketing:-emails, search, etc. they all say the same thing. What differentiates vendors? All websites, emails etc about a particular industry say the same thing.

- The biggest hurdle is a good distribution list.

Preferred Tactics For Each Step Of The Sales Cycle

⌘ Chart 4 shows the responses to the question:

Which online tactics will you use for each step of the sales cycle in 2010?

To present a more representative picture, I am reporting the top two responses for each stage.

The primary investment is focused on bringing leads through to purchase. It would be interesting to know if most companies are using the same Twitter and Blog content for Loyalty.

Twitter   Blog   Direct email   Case Studies   Shopping Cart
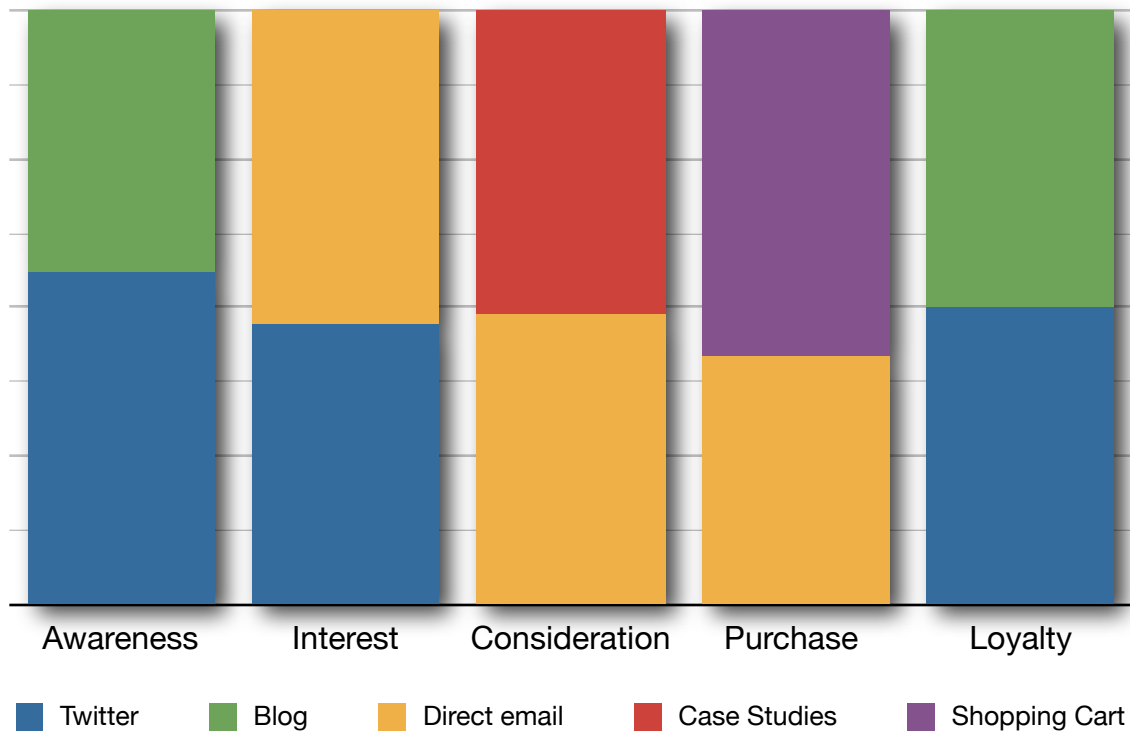
Best Practices

⌘ I did not set out to study best practices. However in reviewing the literal questions, some very good advice was shared which I wanted to pass on.

The comments confirm my belief that a lot of smart people are working very hard to integrate online marketing tactics, especially social media, into their overall go-to-market strategy.

The central theme that emerges is the sense that it is better to do and learn, then to over think the problem and fall behind the competition.

Impact

- ...inbound marketing tactics work better than outbound tactics.

- If you are consistent it works well. The implementation of our online e-marketing has been very successful in helping get new clients.

- It's a difficult space to make a big impact.

- It provides the opportunity to address many audiences at once.

Integration

- Must be integrated with all operations and all other marketing tools.

- The message has to be focused, and the look and feel has to be professional.

- Centralizing reporting, standardizing branding across platforms/sites

- Consistency of message and timely turnaround.

- Optimize, categorize, organize, and strategize

- It needs to be on brand on budget and on time.

- ...being very careful about social media and that one size does not fit all...

Challenges

- How difficult it is to find the right person and then get the information to them in the right format so they will actually click or read it.

- That it is very difficult to get agreement between different corporate divisions - this has resulted in a number of wasteful projects due to a failure to get a satisfactory result in a timely fashion.

- Difficulty narrowing down our prospects to justify the time needed to execute a successful online marketing campaign.

- Patience

Execution

- Execution eats strategy for breakfast.

- Someone has to take direct control of the project for it to succeed.

- Though it may only take one person to initiate and implement it, you need the force of the organization at large to make it work and sustain the tactics' ROI.

- Reasonably plan and then execute. You can never know everything you need to know to launch before launching. Put your best thinking cap on, develop the best plan you can and then go. Watch what happens carefully and tweak as you go.

- ... It is better to get it published than perfect. Waiting for getting things perfect can waste opportunity. Get published, then round up and tweak.

- Don't chase your tail. Focus on the tactics that work and don't work so hard to be cutting edge.

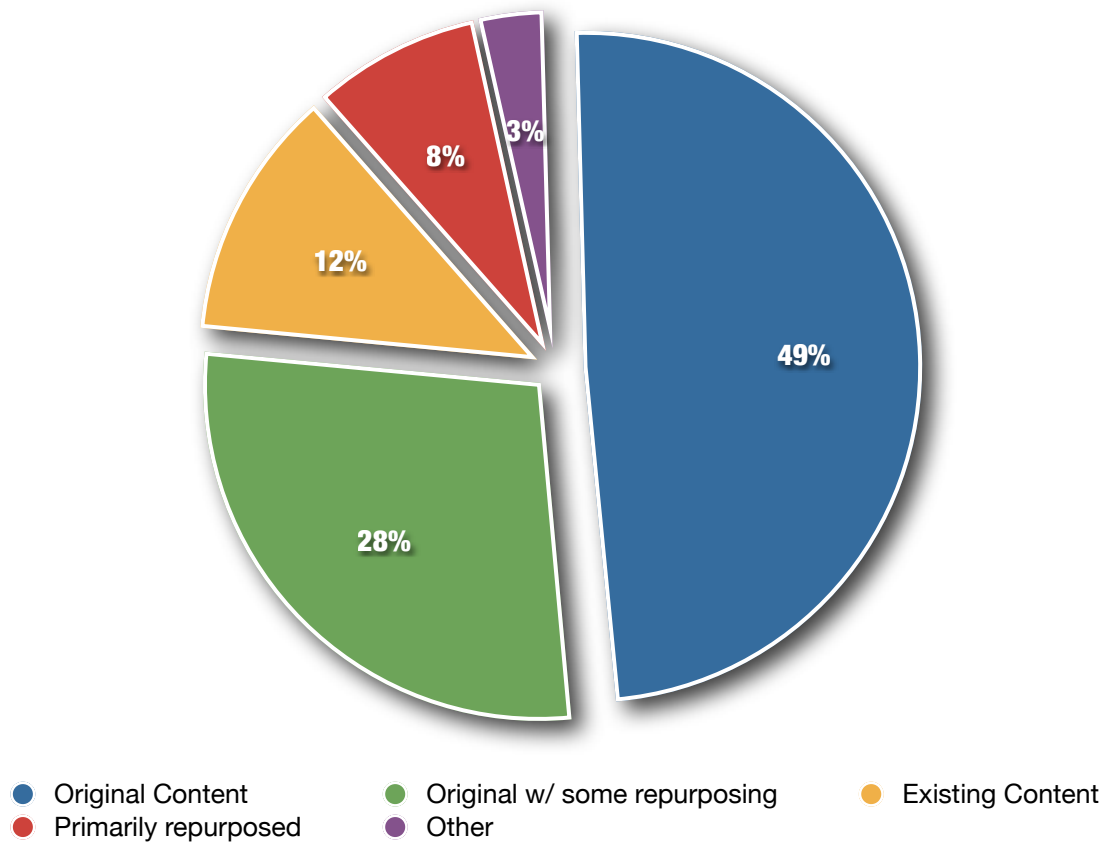- SEO is important.

Content
- You must have something MEANINGFUL and RELEVANT to say to the market.

- We have to reach buyers with great content in which we solve buyer's problems. In their words we let them understand that we have the solution they need...

- Smoke and mirrors all around. To stand out from the junk requires a new mindset. Nothing is automatic. Everything is temporary.

Content Sources

⌘ Chart 5 shows the responses to the question:

Where does the content used in your online marketing initiatives come from?

Some 75% of the content is produced specifically for use in online marketing tactics.

- 🔵 Original Content
- 🔴 Primarily repurposed
- 🟢 Original w/ some repurposing
- 🟣 Other
- 🟡 Existing Content

Production Responsibilities

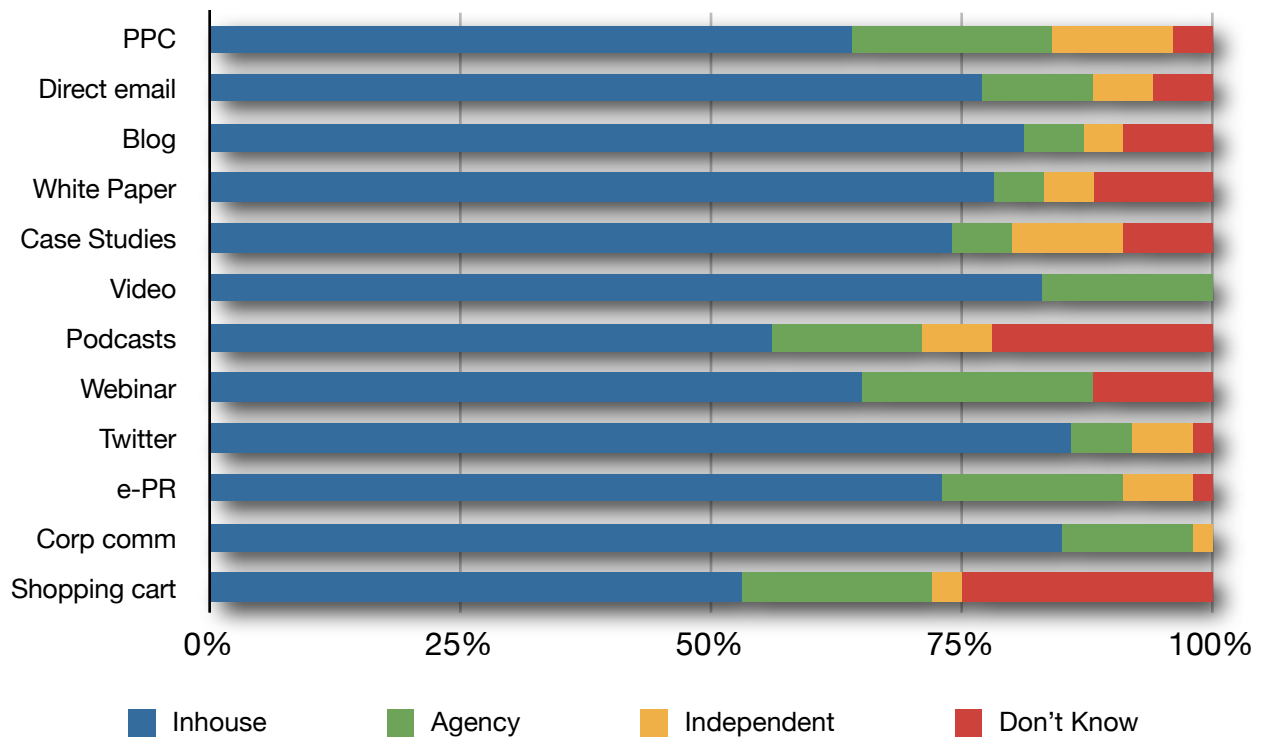⌘ Chart 6 shows the responses to the question:

Who has the primary responsibility for producing the content used for each tactic?

The majority of the work to support all of the tactics is being done inhouse. This no doubt reflects the small business bias of this sample.

Twitter and the blog are time sensitive, while video and corporate communications are both well established functions.

A percentage of the technical and production services are contracted to agencies and independents.

For the most part these are more mature tactics for which there is an established infrastructure.
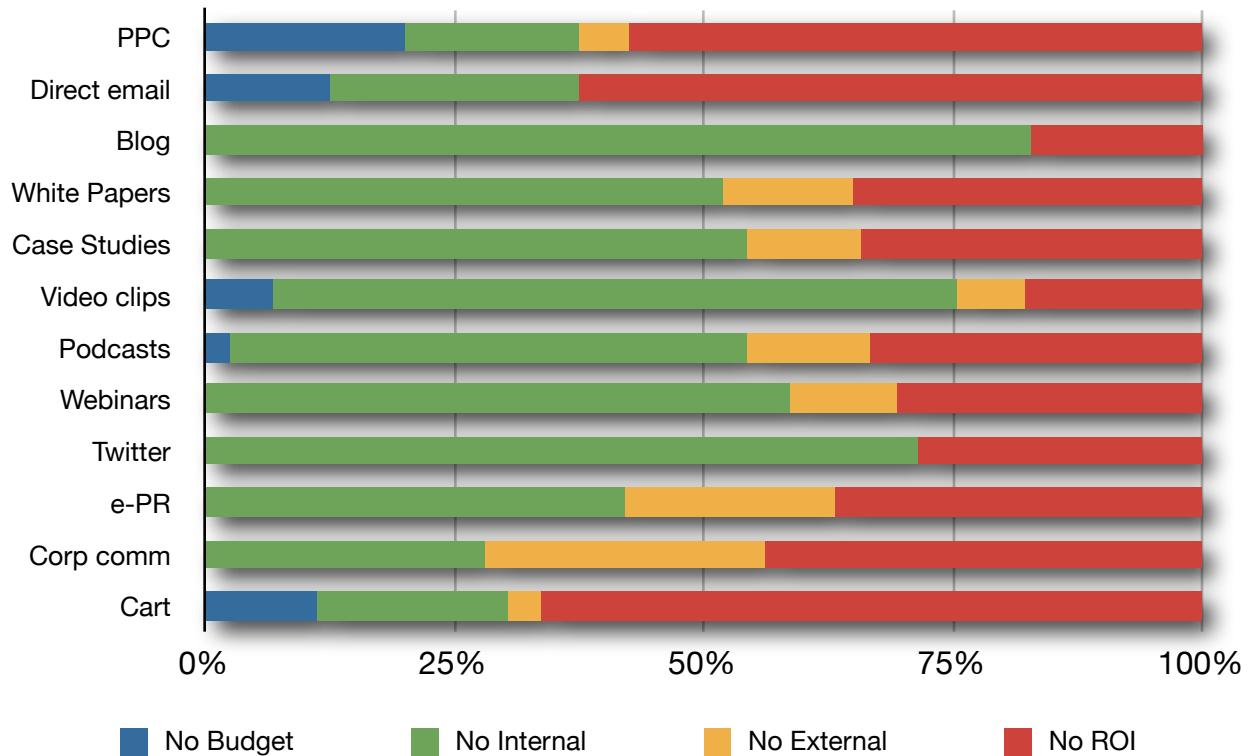
Hurdles To Implementation

⌘ Chart 7 shows the responses to the question:

What is the primary reason that your company is not currently using the following online tactics?

Clearly budget is not a barrier to adoption.

Rather it is a lack of internal resources and insufficient ROI metrics to justify the investment.

The complete questions read:

- Insufficient budget

- Insufficient Internal Resources

- No Agency Or Independent Resource

- Insufficient ROI Metrics To Justify

Literal Responses: Hurdles

⌘ The second literal (write-in) question was:

What is the biggest hurdle in your company to the implementation of online marketing tactics?

The responses here fall into categories which closely mirror the survey findings.

Management

- Management's refusal to believe that anything changes. Ever.

- Educating senior level marketing people with experience with traditional media who think by virtue of tenure and osmosis they understand online media, and social media in particular.

Budget

- If adding online marketing into the mix, want to make sure that its smart and targeted and not another shotgun blast. Company is devoting resources elsewhere at the moment as do not anticipate significant return from online to justify expense to "do it right."

- Dollars...being a smaller company ($25 million) we have a small IT staff and find it hard to outsource many of our needs. With a larger budget we could do more.

- Convincing the board to invest and finding qualified people to set up and run the marketing campaigns.

Learning Curve

- Getting started.

- Time and expertise required to implement.

- Technological learning curve, e.g., creating podcasts, implementing webinars, setting up a store.

- Knowing which strategy will reap the best results.

Time

- These tactics really generate strong awareness at a low cost. But they also demand a lot of time to maintain.

- Takes more time and money than thought

- Time and energy to create content

- Time management - as a startup, we find it extremely difficult to juggle client acquisition with PR and being on top of the social media tools.

- Time - to blog, upload pictures, and update information; also keeping a professional image while using everyday online sites like facebook, twitter, etc.
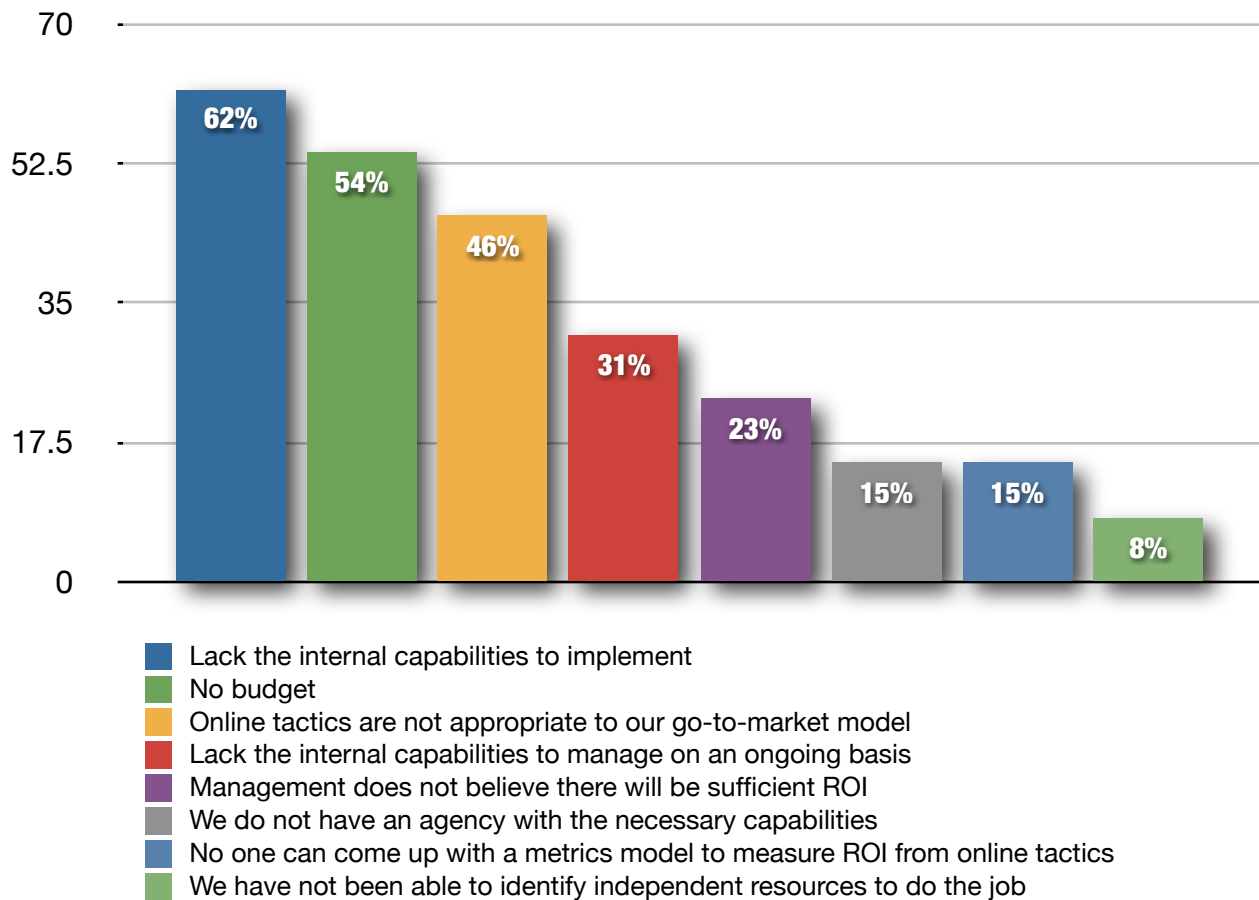
Companies Not Using Online Marketing Tactics

⌘ Chart 8 shows the responses to the question:

What are all of the reasons that your company does not currently do online marketing?

14% of our respondents indicated that their company does not currently use online marketing tactics.

Budget is clearly an important factor. But the answers also suggest that these companies do not have the internal resources to support these kinds of initiatives; and have not yet figured out how to adapt them to their business model.

Legend:
- ■ Lack the internal capabilities to implement
- ■ No budget
- ■ Online tactics are not appropriate to our go-to-market model
- ■ Lack the internal capabilities to manage on an ongoing basis
- ■ Management does not believe there will be sufficient ROI
- ■ We do not have an agency with the necessary capabilities
- ■ No one can come up with a metrics model to measure ROI from online tactics
- ■ We have not been able to identify independent resources to do the job
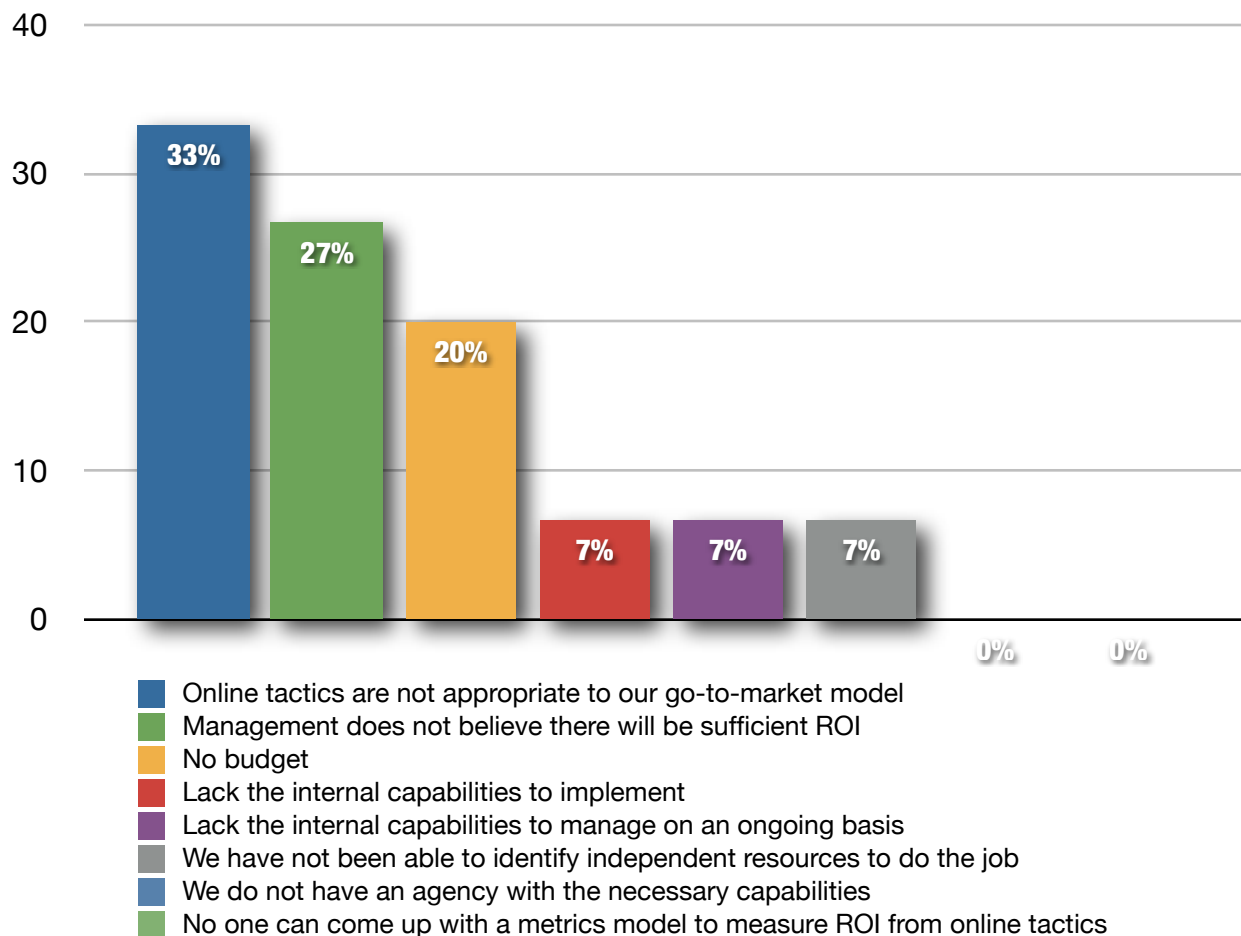
Barriers To Adoption

⌘ Chart 9 shows the responses to the question:

What is the primary reason that your company does not currently do online marketing?

There are two major issues that these companies are facing.

First is the surprising comment that online marketing tactics are inappropriate to their go-to-market model. This may reflect the fact that these companies are just now beginning to explore how to adapt these tactics to their specific situation. (Late adopters)

The lack of suitable metrics is the second reason. This is consistent with what one expects to find in a company that has not yet made the commitment to use online tactics.


- Online tactics are not appropriate to our go-to-market model
- Management does not believe there will be sufficient ROI
- No budget
- Lack the internal capabilities to implement
- Lack the internal capabilities to manage on an ongoing basis
- We have not been able to identify independent resources to do the job
- We do not have an agency with the necessary capabilities
- No one can come up with a metrics model to measure ROI from online tactics

Future Plans To Implement Online Marketing Tactics

⌘ Chart 10 shows the responses to the question:

Does your company currently have plans to implement online marketing other than a web site?

The answer here begs the question, does the emperor have no shoes... Given the very small number of responses to this question, I am inclined to discard or at least heavily discount the "no plans to implement" response.

NOTE That this is the last of the questions for respondents whose companies do not currently employ online marketing tactics.

Legend: ■ Yes in 2010   ■ Yes but beyond 2010   ■ No plans to implement
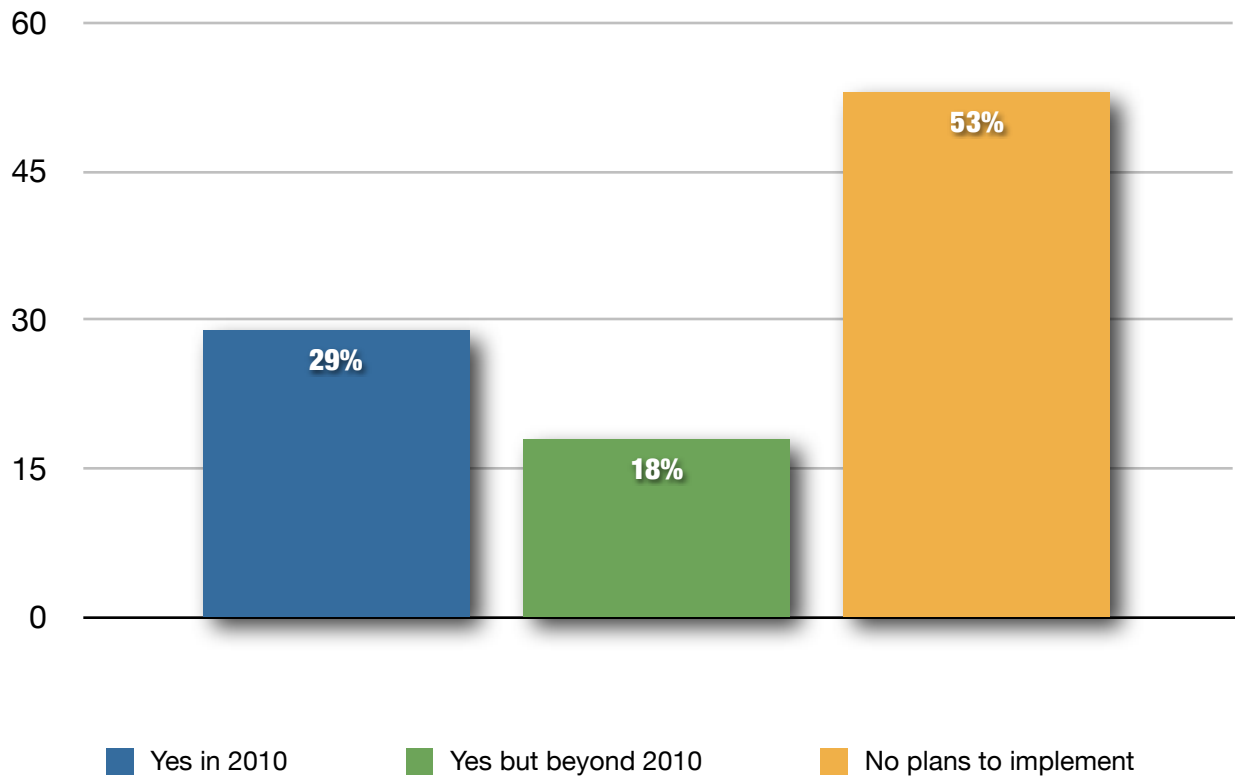
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