



# 2023 Education Marketing Trends & Insights



# Table of Contents



|                                                             |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Executive Summary .....                                     | 3  |
| Key Findings .....                                          | 4  |
| ▶ B2E Marketers are Overwhelmingly Optimistic .....         | 5  |
| ▶ The 'Funnel' concept is Entrenched in B2E Marketing ..... | 7  |
| ▶ Multidimensional Communication is Critical .....          | 10 |
| ▶ Conferences Rebounded in 2022.....                        | 13 |
| ▶ COVID Reemphasized Common Sense Practices.....            | 15 |
| Main Takeaways .....                                        | 16 |
| About this Survey and CB&A .....                            | 17 |



# Executive Summary

## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME.

It has become a cliché, but there's a lot of truth in this aphorism.

In our fourth annual survey of business-to-education (B2E) marketers, we uncovered new insights that reveal how marketers are trying to reach schools and colleges in 2023. For instance, we found that discussion about potential economic uncertainty appearing on the horizon hasn't affected companies' outlook for the new year. We discovered a growing interest in producing multimedia marketing content such as videos, ebooks and podcasts to connect with customers and prospects. We learned that in-person conferences and events were well received in 2022, and they're poised to assume an even larger role in companies' 2023 plans.

We also saw results that echoed the findings from previous surveys and confirmed long-held beliefs. High-quality content is still pivotal to B2E marketing, and more than nine in 10 marketers plan to develop new content assets in 2023. Generating leads and increasing sales are the top two goals for marketers this year, as they were in 2022. Case studies continue to be highly valued content assets, because K-12 and higher-education leaders like to know how their peers are achieving success.

In asking respondents how their marketing has changed as a result of the pandemic, we found that companies innovated early on by pivoting to webinars and online "lunch and learns" as a replacement for in-person sales calls – and many of these practices will continue long after COVID is gone. We also found that marketers took a step back and recommitted to basic techniques that have been proven to work for decades, such as honing their messaging and being empathetic to their customers' needs.

## THE MORE THINGS CHANGE, THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME.



HELLO@CBLOHM.COM



C. BLOHM & ASSOCIATES, INC.



CBLOHMASSOC



# Key Findings

## 1 B2E MARKETERS REMAIN OVERWHELMINGLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE NEXT FEW YEARS, EVEN AS POSSIBLE ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY LOOMS.

Forty-three percent of respondents said their marketing budget for 2023 is higher than in 2022, while only 15% said it is lower. An overwhelming 86% expressed confidence in their company's revenue growth this year – and 42% said they were “very optimistic.”

## 2 THE “FUNNEL” CONCEPT IS FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN B2E MARKETING, WITH GENERATING AND NURTURING LEADS IDENTIFIED AS KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES.

Lead generation was cited as the most important marketing goal for the second year in a row. Nurturing leads was fourth, behind increasing sales and building brand awareness, but 47% of respondents said lead nurturing is a more important goal this year than in 2022.

## 3 BEING ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS AND PROSPECTS MULTIDimensionALLY IS CRITICAL.

The fact that B2E marketers are creating a wide range of content types and using many channels to promote this content confirms the importance and perceived impact of having a multidimensional communications strategy to reach their intended audiences.

## 4 CONFERENCES REBOUNDED IN A BIG WAY IN 2022, AND THERE'S STILL AN OPPORTUNITY TO BETTER DEFINE AND INCREASE ROI.

Eighty-three percent of respondents attended in-person conferences last year, and 92% plan to attend events in 2023. Fifty-three percent said the conferences they attended in 2022 met their expectations – and another 15% said the return of in-person conferences exceeded their expectations.

## 5 COVID FORCED BUSINESSES TO DOUBLE DOWN ON WHAT ARE COMMON-SENSE MARKETING PRACTICES FOR ANY ERA.

As travel was suspended and it became harder to reach customers and prospects, B2E marketers were forced to rethink their methods. A silver lining from this period is that it prompted a shift toward smarter business practices that will position companies for success moving forward.

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT EACH OF THESE FINDINGS, READ ON.



# B2E marketers are overwhelmingly optimistic about the next few years, even as possible economic uncertainty looms.

With interest rates climbing and many economists predicting economic uncertainty this year, it wouldn't be surprising if B2E marketers anticipated smaller budgets for 2023.

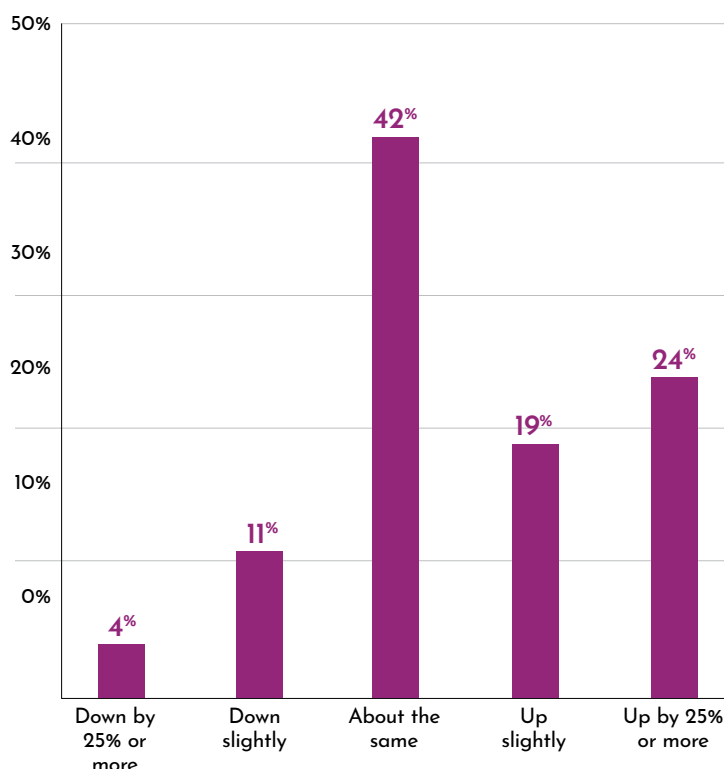
Instead, the opposite appears to be true: 43% of respondents with direct knowledge of their company's marketing budget said it was higher than in 2022 – and nearly a quarter (24%) said their budget was up by 25% or more.

Another 42% of respondents said their marketing budget for 2023 is about the same as last year's figures. Only 15% said their budget is lower.

## 86%

OF COMPANIES THAT  
SELL TO EDUCATION ARE  
FEELING **BULLISH** ABOUT  
THEIR PROSPECTS FOR  
GROWTH IN 2023.

## COMPARED TO LAST YEAR, OUR COMPANY'S MARKETING BUDGET FOR 2023 IS...



The optimism that B2E marketers are feeling about their company's sales prospects in 2023 could be a factor behind these budget increases.

When we asked, "How do you feel about your company's revenue growth in 2023," an overwhelming 86% of respondents expressed confidence – and 42% said they were "very optimistic." Eleven percent were neutral, and just 3% indicated concern.

A key reason for this optimism could be the billions of dollars in federal pandemic relief aid still available for education – and the need to spend this money soon.

Congress allocated nearly \$190 billion in aid for K-12 schools through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund. As of mid-January 2023, less than \$31 billion of this money had been spent, [according to a government website](#).



Schools have until Sept. 30, 2023, to spend the \$54 billion in aid from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act. They have until Sept. 30, 2024, to spend the \$122 billion from the American Rescue Plan Act.

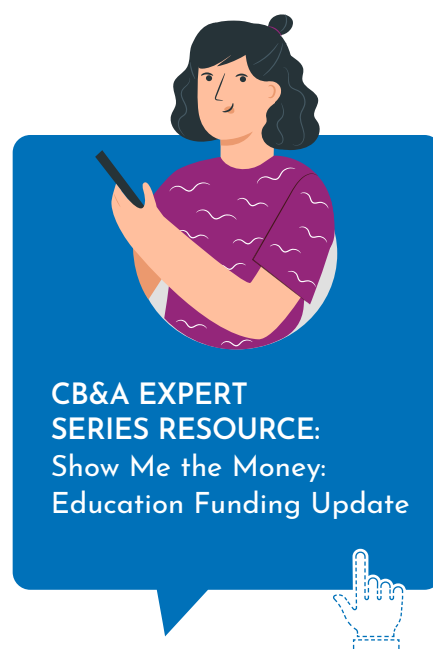
The fact that schools must spend so much COVID relief aid – or risk losing it – by fall 2024 puts B2E marketers in a good position for the next few years. However, a significant majority are concerned about what will happen when this money runs out or the deadline for spending it passes.

More than three in four respondents (77%) said they were at least “slightly worried” about an impending “fiscal cliff” in 2024, and 10% said they were “very worried.”

The pandemic relief aid might be ending soon, but there is no reason for marketers to panic. K-12 schools alone receive more than \$60 billion in funding each year from the federal government, and the U.S. education market is expected to keep growing at a compound annual growth rate of nearly five percent (4.82%) from 2022 through 2026, [according to one analysis](#).

During that time, the total value of the market likely will rise to \$2.02 trillion. Even without federal pandemic money, the demand for education products and services will continue to increase.

If schools and colleges do slow their spending when the stimulus money disappears, the companies that will continue to enjoy success are the ones that invested heavily in building strong relationships with customers and prospects during the pandemic. A proven marketing communications agency like CB&A can help you make wise investments now that will pay dividends down the road.



## KEY INSIGHTS

- ▶ 85% of B2E marketers say their 2023 budget is the same or higher than last year.
- ▶ Schools and colleges still have tens of billions of dollars in pandemic relief aid to spend before fall 2024.
- ▶ The investments that companies make in marketing programs now will pay dividends when the stimulus money runs out.



# The 'funnel' concept is firmly entrenched in B2E marketing, with generating and nurturing leads identified as key strategic priorities.

The sales funnel concept is a visual depiction of the buyer's journey from awareness to action. It represents the notion that the sales process begins with a large number of potential prospects and ends with a much smaller number of customers who actually make a purchase.

Lead generation and nurturing are fundamental activities in this process. Companies need to generate leads – that is, find new sales prospects – and then nurture these leads by developing relationships with them, gradually working them down the funnel from awareness to consideration and finally to action.

**47%**

OF B2E MARKETERS SAID **LEAD NURTURING** WAS A MORE IMPORTANT GOAL FOR THEM IN 2023.

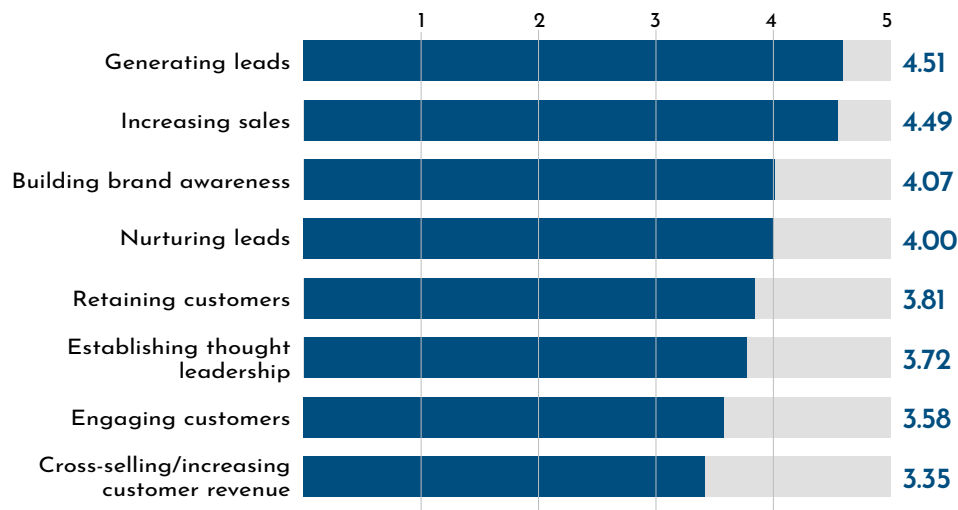


In a confirmation of the sales funnel's significance within B2E marketing, survey respondents named lead generation as their most important marketing goal for the second year in a row.

Nurturing leads was fourth, behind increasing sales and building brand awareness. However, 47% of respondents said lead nurturing was a more important goal than in 2022.

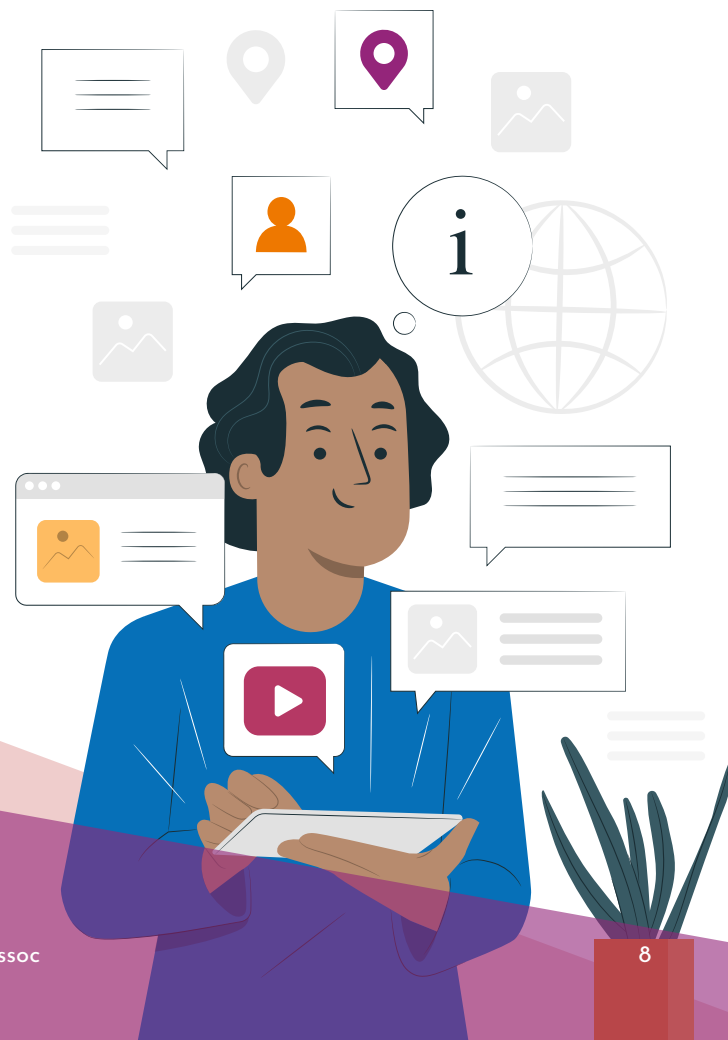


## HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING GOALS TO YOUR 2023 MARKETING PLANS? (SCALE OF 1-5)



Content plays a critical role in identifying sales prospects and moving them through the buyer's journey. By offering timely, high-quality content that helps educators and administrators solve key problems and do their jobs more effectively, marketers can collect prospects' email addresses as potential sales leads. Marketers can nurture relationships with these prospects by continuing to supply relevant content that establishes their company as a trusted source at key moments in the buying journey.

It's not surprising, then, that content marketing continues to top our survey as the most important tactic among B2E marketers.



In fact, 51% of respondents gave content marketing a “5” on a five-point scale of importance. Email marketing was second, reflecting the role that email plays in pushing out content and nurturing relationships with prospects.

Conferences were rated as the fourth-most important marketing tactic in our survey this year, with a weighted average of 3.59 on a scale of 1-5. That’s higher than the 3.36 score they received in last year’s survey, when conferences ranked fifth.

This rise in importance coincides with the return to in-person events that took place in 2022 – and we’ll discuss the role that conferences play in B2E marketing in more detail later in this report.

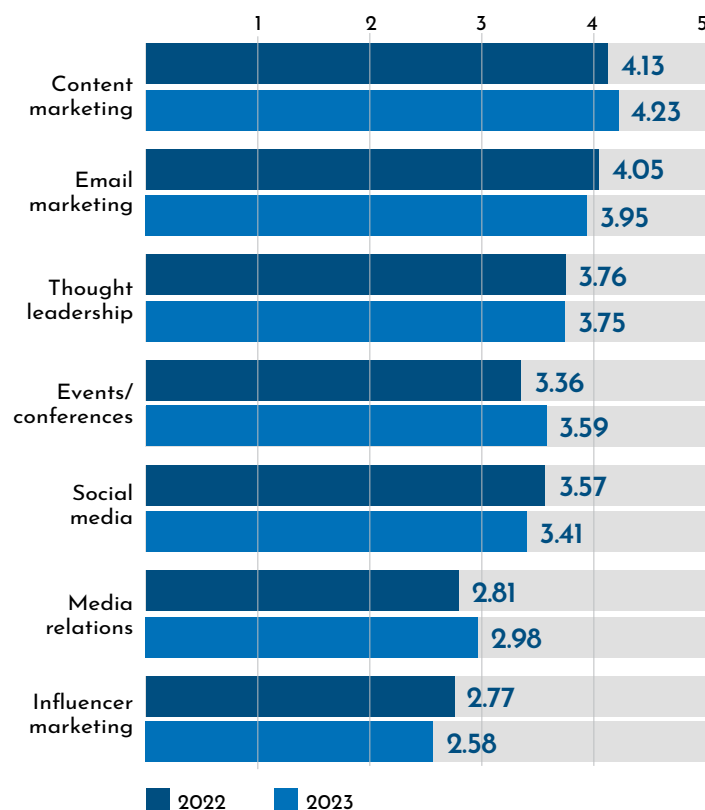
**51%**

OF RESPONDENTS GAVE  
**CONTENT MARKETING**  
A “5” ON A FIVE-POINT  
SCALE OF IMPORTANCE.

## KEY INSIGHTS:

- ▶ Lead generation is the top priority for B2E marketers in 2023.
- ▶ Nurturing leads is fourth, behind increasing sales and building brand awareness. However, 47% of marketers say lead nurturing is more important for them this year.
- ▶ High-quality content plays a critical role in lead generation and nurturing – and 51% of marketers give content marketing a “5” on a 5-point scale of importance.

## HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TACTICS TO YOUR MARKETING PLANS? (SCALE OF 1-5)



# 3 Being able to communicate with customers and prospects multidimensionally is critical.

As we mentioned in the previous section, content continues to play a vital role in B2E marketing – which is why 91% of respondents said they plan to develop new content assets in 2023.

Once again, case studies topped the list of content assets that B2E marketers plan to create this year. Case studies were also the most popular content type in 2022. Education buyers are highly influenced by the experiences of their peers at other schools and colleges when making decisions, and a well-written case study can help increase prospects' confidence in a product's ability to drive results.

## 55%

OF RESPONDENTS SAID **VIDEO** WILL PLAY A MORE IMPORTANT ROLE IN THEIR MARKETING THIS YEAR.



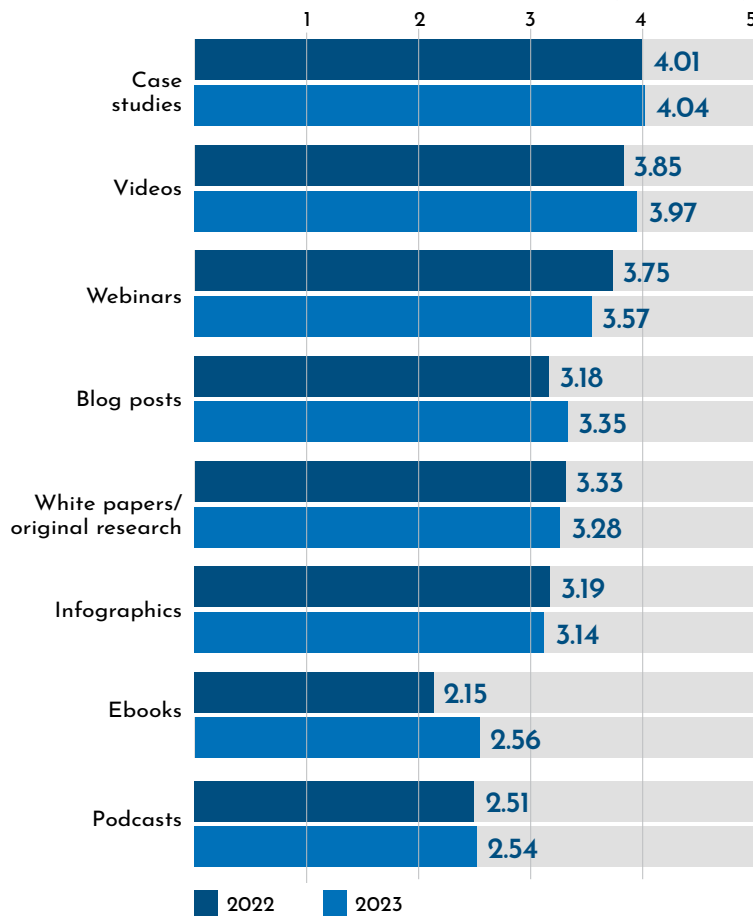
However, there was a surge in interest for multimedia content in this year's survey. Although videos placed second on the list in both years, 55% of respondents said video will be more important to their marketing plans in 2023 than in 2022. This development may reflect the growing influence of online video on sites such as TikTok and YouTube as a key marketing and communications tool, especially among a younger generation of buyers.

According to [one market report](#), 94% of consumers watch explainer videos to understand a product or brand better and 84% have decided to make a purchase after watching a video.

Ebooks and podcasts also garnered more interest. Thirty percent of respondents rated ebooks as at least a "4" on a five-point scale of importance, and ebooks received a weighted average score of 2.56 – up from 2.15 last year. Meanwhile, 27% of respondents said podcasts were more important to their plans in 2023 than in 2022.



## HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING CONTENT ASSETS TO YOUR MARKETING PLANS? (SCALE OF 1-5)



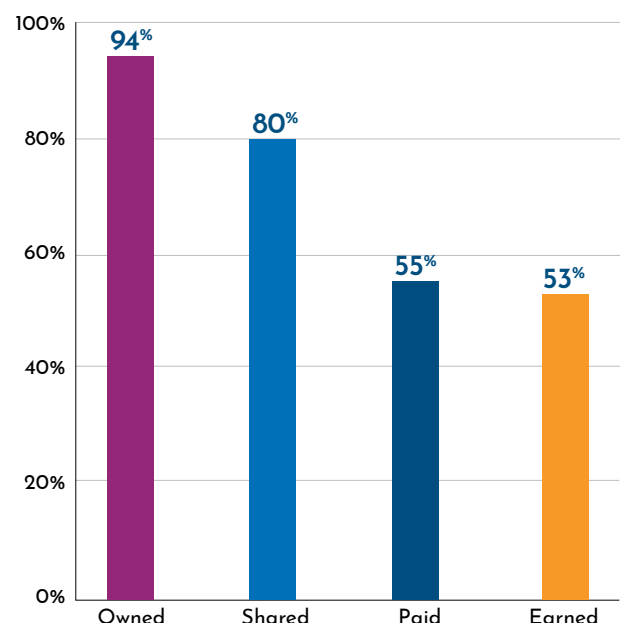
Although more respondents said they would use paid media channels (55%) than earned media channels (53%) this year, earned media (3.29) rated higher than paid media (2.98) in terms of importance on a five-point scale. This could indicate that while content appearing in industry publications as a result of media relations is more highly valued than sponsored content, it's also harder to attain.

The fact that B2E marketers are creating a wide range of content types, including multimedia, and are using many different channels to disseminate this content confirms the importance of having a comprehensive, multidimensional communications strategy.

When it comes to distributing content, all four media channels in the PESO model (paid, earned, shared, owned) factored into a majority of respondents' plans for 2023. This suggests that B2E marketers wisely use a broad range of media channels to extend the reach of the high-quality content they have invested in.

Not surprisingly, owned media channels – which include distribution through a company's blog, website and other properties – ranked first when we asked marketers how they would promote their content in 2023, followed by shared, paid and earned.

## WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MEDIA CHANNELS DO YOU PLAN TO USE IN 2023 TO PROMOTE YOUR CONTENT?





#### CB&A EXPERT SERIES RESOURCE:

How to Be Highly Strategic  
in Your Content Marketing.

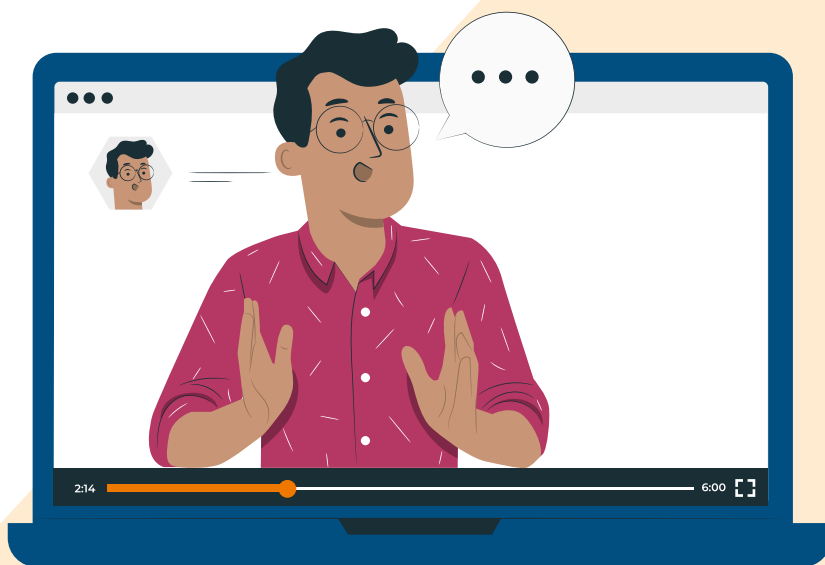


Marketers need to use a variety of content modes and platforms to reach the full range of their intended audiences. Some people respond more effectively to video, while others prefer to get their information through podcasts or print media. Having a multidimensional strategy helps you reach more prospects in more places.

This point was underscored in the open-response section of the survey. “We’re focusing ... less on static content presented one dimensionally,” one respondent said – and they’re seeing better outcomes as a result.

#### KEY INSIGHTS:

- ▶ 91% of B2E marketers plan to create new content marketing assets in 2023.
- ▶ All four media channels in the PESO model for distributing content (paid, earned, shared, owned) factor into a majority of marketers’ plans.
- ▶ Marketers are using a variety of content modes and platforms to reach their intended audiences.



# 4 Conferences rebounded in a big way in 2022, and there's still an opportunity to better define and increase ROI.

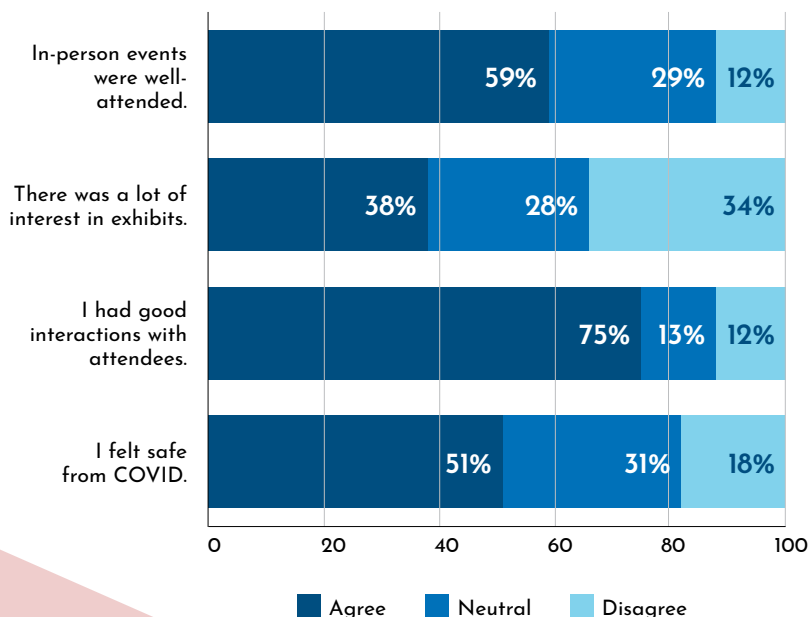
Last year's survey, which we administered in December 2021, revealed some ambivalence about the return of in-person conferences. Whether it was because B2E marketers were unsure how well-attended conferences would be, or they were worried about their own safety, about a quarter of respondents told us that in-person events weren't important to their 2022 marketing plans.

This year's survey told a very different story. As it turns out, fully 83% of respondents physically attended at least one education conference in 2022. A solid 53% majority said these events met their expectations – and another 15% said the conferences they went to exceeded their expectations.

## 92%

OF B2E MARKETERS  
PLAN TO ATTEND  
CONFERENCES AND  
EVENTS THIS YEAR.

## IF YOU ATTENDED IN-PERSON EVENTS IN 2022, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT EACH OF THESE STATEMENTS?



Nearly three out of five respondents (59%) agreed that in-person conferences were well-attended in 2022. Seventy-five percent said they had good interactions with attendees, and 51% said they felt safe from COVID. (Thirty-one percent of respondents were neutral on this question, and 18% disagreed.)

Perhaps buoyed by their own or their colleagues' experiences in 2022, an overwhelming 92% of respondents said they plan on attending education conferences and events in 2023.



Collecting sales leads is the top goal of B2E marketers in attending events this year, followed closely by networking and building brand awareness. Eighty percent of survey respondents say they'll use conferences to build relationships with customers, 69% plan to gather market information, 63% hope to find new business partners and 61% plan to exhibit.

While conferences appear to have rebounded significantly in the wake of the pandemic, B2E marketers who attended in-person events in 2022 were divided over how well attended the exhibit halls were. Although 38% said there was a lot of interest in exhibits, 34% disagreed and 28% were neutral.

This finding, and the comments we received in the open responses, suggest that conference ROI is still a concern for some marketers. "There is not enough bang for our buck" to justify traveling to conferences, one respondent wrote; another said: "ROI is not definitive." To help define and increase ROI, marketers can also consider ancillary opportunities, like meeting with press attendees at the events, which a communications partner like CB&A can help facilitate.

The pandemic has prompted businesses in all sectors to rethink how they operate, and that's certainly true for B2E marketers. Given the sizable costs involved in purchasing exhibit hall space, shipping booth equipment and transporting staff, it makes sense for marketers to reevaluate the role that conferences play in their marketing going forward – such as by being more strategic about which events they choose to attend in person.

As one respondent told us: "We are relying more on online and high-ROI events, rather than [attending] every event."



## KEY INSIGHTS:

- ▶ 83% of B2E marketers attended in-person conferences in 2022.
- ▶ 68% said these events met or exceeded their expectations.
- ▶ 59% said conferences were well attended.
- ▶ 92% said they plan on attending education conferences and events in 2023.



# COVID forced businesses to double down on what are common-sense marketing practices for any era.

If there's one lesson from the pandemic that stands above the others, it's that highly-effective practices work regardless of the medium or circumstances.

As travel was suspended and it became harder to reach customers and prospects, B2E marketers were forced to think carefully about their methods.

Marketers had to hone their skills to find proven ways to connect with people online and through email. They had to clarify their mission and their message. They had to communicate empathy and be laser-focused on their customers' needs. They had to adapt and innovate.

When we asked B2E marketers how their practices have changed since COVID emerged and what practices are now the new normal, "we are far more focused," was a common refrain.

"Our content has become more consumer-oriented and less about us," one person wrote. Another said: "We have simplified our message via email."

These are smart marketing strategies for any era. A silver lining from the pandemic is that it prompted a shift toward more common-sense practices that will position companies for greater success moving forward.

"OUR CONTENT HAS BECOME MORE CONSUMER-ORIENTED AND LESS ABOUT US."

—SURVEY RESPONDENT

## KEY INSIGHT:

- Highly effective marketing practices work in any circumstance. These include being clear with your message, being empathetic to customers' challenges, being quick to adapt, and being laser-focused on customers' needs.



# Main Takeaways

- ▶ 86% of B2E marketers are optimistic about their sales prospects in 2023. Nearly the same percentage say their 2023 marketing budgets are the same or higher than last year.
- ▶ Lead generation and nurturing continue to be top marketing goals. Content marketing is the No. 1 strategy for meeting these goals, and 91% of marketers plan to develop new content assets in 2023.
- ▶ Case studies are the most popular content assets, but multimedia assets such as videos, ebooks and podcasts are growing in importance. Marketers must use a variety of content modes and platforms to reach sales prospects.
- ▶ After dipping in importance during COVID, conferences are making a comeback. 92% of marketers plan to attend education conferences this year. 83% attended at least one show last year, and of these, 68% said conferences met or exceeded their expectations.
- ▶ The main takeaway from the pandemic is that it prompted a shift toward smarter marketing strategies that will position companies for greater success heading into the future.

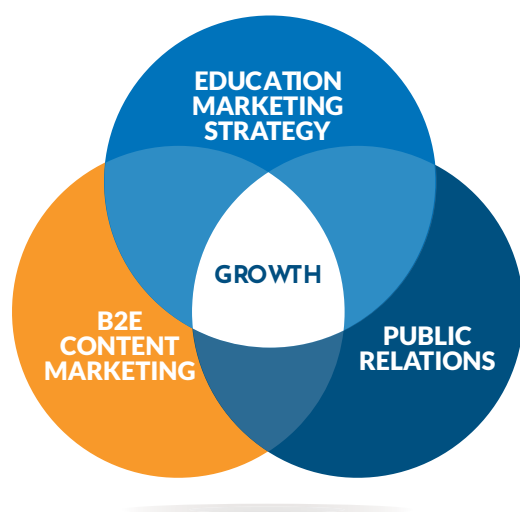


# About This Survey

This report is based on a survey of more than 100 marketing professionals and business owners who sell to the education market, conducted in December 2022.

Respondents were asked to identify the sector(s) they serve within education and their job level or title. With this information, we can provide additional insight from specific groups in future materials. The overwhelming majority of respondents (84%) serve the preK-12 market. Ten percent sell primarily to colleges and universities.

Our survey reached a wide range of job titles. Twenty-five percent of respondents are business owners or CEOs. We also heard from marketing directors (16%), vice presidents of marketing (12%) and others.



## OUR BUSINESS

CB&A is the most experienced marketing communications agency specializing in the U.S. education market.

## OUR PURPOSE

CB&A accelerates the growth of companies that provide products and services to K-12 school systems and higher education institutions.

## OUR CAUSE

We believe that by accelerating our clients' growth, we are contributing to positive outcomes for students and educators.



CALL US IF YOU WANT  
TO TEAM UP FOR BIG  
MARKETING WINS IN 2023:  
608-216-7300

✉ [HELLO@CBLOHM.COM](mailto:HELLO@CBLOHM.COM)

in [C. BLOHM & ASSOCIATES, INC.](#)

📷 [CBLOHMASSOC](#)