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b2b content marketing 2018 benchmarks budgets and

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Introduction

When marketers in the B2B arena look toward the future, they often ask: **“How much should we invest in content marketing, and what results can we realistically expect?”**The answer lies in understanding industry benchmarks—data points that reveal typical performance and budget allocations across the sector. In 2018, a wave of research surfaced that mapped out these benchmarks, giving firms a concrete baseline for planning and evaluation. This article dives into the 2018 B2B content marketing benchmarks, explores budget trends, and shows how you can leverage that knowledge to shape a winning strategy today.

We’ll cover the most relevant metrics, break down the average spend by channel, and illustrate how to translate numbers into action. Whether you’re a seasoned content strategist or a new manager stepping into the world of B2B marketing, the insights below will help you set realistic expectations, justify budget requests, and ultimately drive better business outcomes.

What Are B2B Content Marketing Benchmarks?

Benchmarks are essentially reference points—industry averages that help organizations gauge their performance. In the context of B2B content marketing, benchmarks encompass:

- Content production frequency (posts per week, articles per month)
- Engagement rates (click through, time on page, social shares)
- Lead generation metrics (cost per lead, conversion rates)
- Budget allocation across content types and channels

By comparing your own figures against these averages, you can identify gaps, spot opportunities, and set realistic, data driven goals.

Why Benchmarks Matter

Without a yardstick, it’s easy to misinterpret success. A 2% click through rate might be stellar for one company but below average for another. Benchmarks level the playing field, allowing you to:

1. Measure progress objectively
2. Prioritize high impact tactics
3. Justify spend to stakeholders
4. Benchmark against competitors, even without direct data

Key Metrics in 2018

The 2018 studies highlighted several core metrics that defined B2B content performance:

- Average blog post length: 1,200–1,500 words
- Optimal posting frequency: 3–4 posts per week
- Lead conversion rate from content: 1.5–2.5%
- Cost per lead: $50–$150, depending on industry
- Social engagement rate: 0.5–1.2%

2018 Budget Allocation for B2B Content Marketing

In 2018, the average B2B marketing budget allocation for content was roughly 20–25% of the overall marketing spend. Within that slice, firms distributed funds across several key areas:

- Content Creation (35–45%): Copywriting, design, video production.
- Distribution & Promotion (30–40%): Paid social, native advertising, email marketing.
- Technology & Tools (10–15%): CMS, analytics, marketing automation.
- People & Training (10–15%): In house staff, external agencies, skill development.

Typical Budget Distribution Across Channels

Below is a snapshot of how companies typically spread their content budget by channel in 2018:

Channel	Percentage of Budget
Owned Media (Blog, Website)	25%
Social Media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook)	20%
Email Marketing	15%
Paid Search & Display	10%
Events & Webinars	10%
Other (Video, Podcast, Infographics)	20%

ROI and Cost Per Lead

ROI in B2B content marketing is often measured by the cost per lead (CPL) and the value of those leads in the sales pipeline. In 2018, the average CPL for content driven leads was $70, with variations across industries:

- Technology: $60–$80
- Manufacturing: $90–$120
- Professional Services: $50–$70

Companies that invested in high quality, long form content (whitepapers, eBooks) typically saw CPLs in the $120–$200 range but enjoyed higher conversion rates, justifying the higher spend.

Top Benchmarks for 2018: What the Data Shows

Let's dive deeper into the specific performance metrics that defined 2018. These figures serve as a benchmark for any B2B organization aiming to evaluate its content strategy.

Content Production Frequency

The data indicated that successful firms published between 3 and 4 blog posts per week. This frequency balanced consistency with quality, ensuring fresh content without sacrificing depth. Moreover, firms that maintained a steady publishing cadence saw a 30% increase in organic traffic over 12 months.

Engagement Rates

Engagement was measured through:

- Click through rate (CTR): 2–3%
- Average time on page: 3–5 minutes
- Social shares: 0.5–1.2% of total views

These numbers underscore the importance of compelling headlines, concise summaries, and engaging visuals.

Conversion Rates

Conversion rates varied by content type:

- Whitepapers and eBooks: 4–6%
- Case studies: 3–5%
- Blog posts: 1–2%

- Videos: 1.5–3%

Conversion rates above the industry average typically correlated with targeted calls to action (CTAs) and well structured lead capture forms.

Comparing 2018 Benchmarks to Current Trends

While the 2018 benchmarks provide a solid foundation, the B2B landscape has evolved. Let's examine how the numbers have shifted and what that means for today's marketers.

Evolution Over Time

Key changes include:

- Shift from blog centric to multi format content (video, podcasts, interactive tools).
- Increased emphasis on account based marketing (ABM) and personalized content.
- Higher use of marketing automation and AI driven analytics.

What 2024 Looks Like

Current data suggests:

- Average blog post length has risen to 1,800–2,200 words.
- Video content now accounts for 25% of total content output.
- Cost per lead for high value content has increased to $150–$250, reflecting higher production costs.
- Social engagement rates have plateaued, with LinkedIn still leading in B2B engagement.

These shifts mean that while the fundamentals of content marketing remain, the tactics and tools you deploy must adapt to meet new audience expectations.

How to Use Benchmarks to Optimize Your B2B Content Strategy

Benchmarks are only useful if you translate them into action. Below are practical steps to align your strategy with industry standards.

Set Realistic Goals

Start by establishing baseline metrics for your organization. Then, compare them to the 2018 benchmarks:

1. Identify gaps (e.g., if your CTR is 1.5% versus the 2–3% benchmark).
2. Set incremental targets (e.g., raise CTR by 0.5% over the next quarter).
3. Track progress using dashboards and regular reporting.

Allocate Budget Effectively

Use the 2018 budget distribution as a guide but adjust for your specific needs:

- Invest more in high ROI channels like LinkedIn if your audience is there.
- Allocate a larger share to content creation if you're lacking in quality assets.
- Reserve funds for experimentation (e.g., new formats, ABM initiatives).

Track and Measure Success

Adopt a robust analytics framework that captures:

- Content performance (views, time on page, CTR).
- Lead generation (CPL, conversion rates).
- Revenue attribution (MQL to SQL pipeline progression).

Leverage tools such as HubSpot, Marketo, or custom dashboards to correlate content spend with business outcomes.

Case Study: A Mid Size SaaS Company

Let’s examine how a mid size SaaS firm used 2018 benchmarks to revamp its content marketing.

Initial Challenges

Before the overhaul, the company faced:

- Low organic traffic (3,000 monthly visitors).
- High CPL ($200) and low conversion rates (1%).
- Limited content output—only one blog post per month.

Benchmark Driven Adjustments

Using the 2018 data, the team made the following changes:

1. Increased blog frequency to 3 posts per week.
2. Added long form whitepapers targeting key buyer personas.
3. Reallocated budget: 45% to content creation, 30% to paid social.
4. Implemented marketing automation to nurture leads.

Results and Takeaways

Within six months, the company achieved:

- Organic traffic grew to 15,000 visitors per month (500% increase).
- CPL dropped to $80.
- Conversion rates climbed to 3.5%.
- Revenue attributed to content marketing rose by 25%.

Key takeaways:

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