

International ICMF Survey 2016 on Content Marketing

In demand: more budget, more promotion, more quality

The findings of the largest international decision-maker study on content marketing are now available. This year the responses of roughly 600 businesses and organizations from nine countries were assessed. The 2016 study was carried out by the Swiss market research institute zehnvier research & strategy on behalf of the International Content Marketing Forum (ICMF). It confirms the results of last year's ICMF study and points to new trends – some international and some regional.

This year's international study on content marketing, which is the second of its kind, was commissioned by the International Content Marketing Forum (ICMF) – the international network of national content marketing associations. As in 2015, it was carried out by the Swiss market research institute zehnvier research & strategy under the leadership of Professor Clemens Koob. The concept of the study is based on the annual studies carried out by the Content Marketing Forum (CMF), member of ICMF and transnational association for Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

The nine countries included in this year's ICMF study are: Austria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland and the USA.

The following main results and trends can be derived from the ICMF's international survey 2016 on content marketing:

A budget increase for the rising star in the communications mix

Content marketing is the new normal in communications activities: On an international level, already 20+% of the communications budgets are allocated to content-driven communications. At 28%, the frontrunner here is the USA. At the same time, a trend can be seen: Content marketing is still on the rise, even though the pace at which this is happening varies. A budget increase of 14 to 69% is expected by 2020 (depending on country), and growth expectations are particularly high in the eastern European markets of Croatia and Poland. Moreover, there is a broad international consensus that content marketing will carry even more weight in the communications mix of the future than it does today.

Content promotion: undisputed success factor

With regard to the importance of content promotion – i.e. the targeted promotion of content via paid media and earned media with the objective of creating higher awareness for own content – there is a general consensus among respondents on an international level. In all of the countries that participated in the study, the marketing for one's own content is viewed as a success factor. The people responsible for decision making in businesses hold the view that even more investment in content promotion will bolster the success of content marketing additionally. From this finding in the study it can be assumed that in future, companies will invest even more in promotion.

An unbeatable team: content marketing and advertising

Advertising and content marketing are often played off against one another, but the study reveals a different picture: The future does not lie in a conflict between content marketing and advertising, but rather in achieving an optimum in the integration and interplay of these forms of communication. On this issue the responses demonstrate a broad international consensus. When cleverly planned and implemented, content marketing and advertising are seen as the unbeatable team of communications.

Crystal clear: quality before quantity

A result that was to be expected is the internationally uniform assertion that the quality of content is of increasing importance, and mere quantity of increasingly lower interest.

The big challenge: organization

One aspect that is addressed only rarely but is regarded by many businesses in the study as a problem area and challenge is content marketing organization. The participating executives see a clear need for optimization in this domain. They advocate for stronger centralization of content marketing responsibilities within the company. This is particularly manifest in Austria, Croatia and the USA.

The problem child: strategy

Responses in the study were quite uniform across all countries: Many businesses still don't have a clear content strategy. A more flourishing situation in this regard can only be found in the USA (59%). This deficit must and will be addressed.

The international network of national associations for content marketing – the ICMF – has been active since 2007.

<http://www.icmforum.net>

For any further information, please contact [Viviane Egli](#), who represents Switzerland at the ICMF.

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