

# CONTENT MARKETING TRENDS

FROM THE SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

ASCEND2 RESEARCH CONDUCTED  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALLEGRA



MARKETING

+



PRINT

+



MAIL

+



DESIGN

+



WEB

+



SIGNS

## **Content Marketing Trends from the Small and Medium-sized Business Perspective**

Ascend2 Research Conducted in Partnership with the Allegra.



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# Overcoming Content Marketing Challenges

Content marketing is a valuable tool for generating leads and growing small and medium-sized businesses, but the challenges to content marketing success are many.

*How will SMBs overcome the new challenges to content marketing success in the year ahead?*

To find out, Ascend2 and Allegra fielded the Content Marketing Trends Survey and completed interviews with marketing, sales and business professionals.

The data in this edition of the study titled *Content Marketing Trends from the Small and Medium-sized Business Perspective* represents the opinions of the 194 small and medium-sized businesses participating in the survey. We thank these busy professionals for sharing their insights with you.

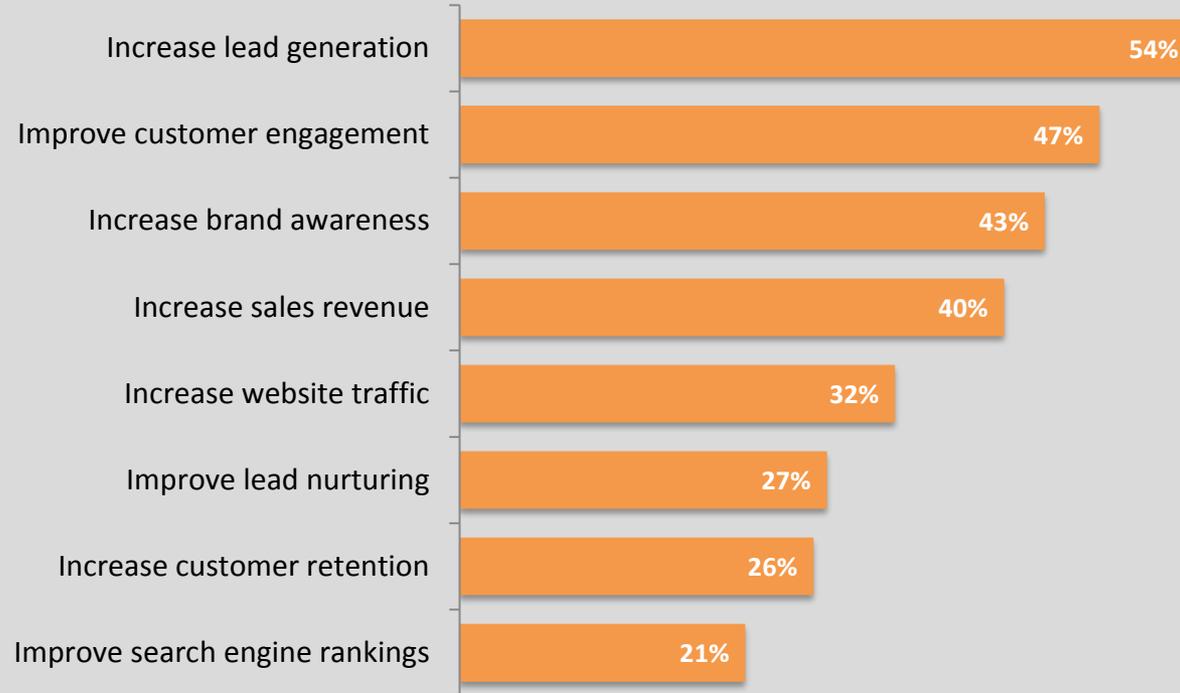
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# Most Important Objectives

The objectives of content marketing for SMBs are diverse. Lead generation is as dissimilar to customer engagement as brand awareness is to sales revenue. Yet these are the most important goals of a content marketing strategy for small and medium-sized businesses.

## What are the MOST IMPORTANT OBJECTIVES of a content marketing strategy?

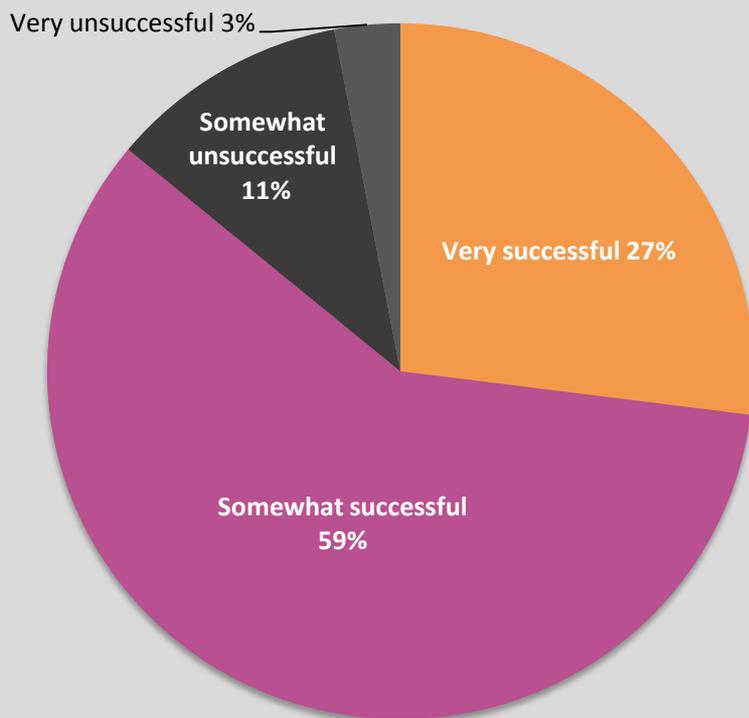


Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=194 SMBs Ascend2 and Allegra, Published Mar 2015

# Rating Content Marketing Success

Content marketing is very successful at achieving important objectives for 27% of SMBs and somewhat successful for another 59%. Only 14% of SMBs rate content marketing unsuccessful.

## How do you RATE THE SUCCESS of content marketing to achieve important objectives?



Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=194 SMBs Ascend2 and Allegra, Published Mar 2015

## A Mix is a Must

Nearly half (47%) of printed marketing materials are linked to online digital channels, says InfoTrends. And on average, three media types are used per campaign.



**TIP:** Launching a direct mail, paid ad or email campaign? Drive leads to a campaign-specific landing page. Keep it simple with one clear offer and call-to-action. Track conversion with a confirmation page or thank you email that includes a special offer or leads them to your social channels to continue the conversation.

# Most Important Challenges

Creating content is a time-intensive task that affects a broad set of marketing channels. Many small and medium-sized businesses are challenged by their lack of content creation resources, budget constraints and the lack of an effective strategy to follow.

## What are the MOST CHALLENGING OBSTACLES to content marketing success?



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## Repurpose . . . and Reuse

Three out of five marketers repurpose a content asset two to five times, says a recent report from Oracle Eloqua and LookBookHQ.

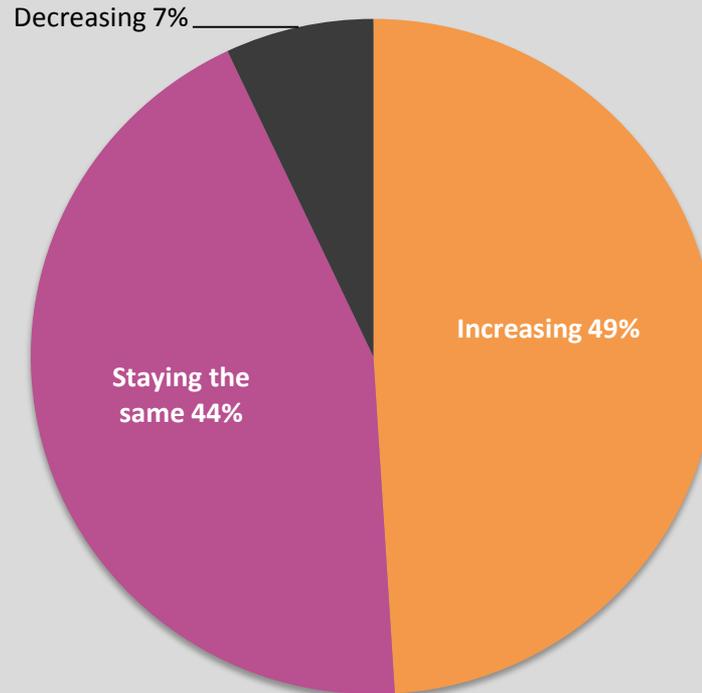


**TIP:** "Nugget-ize" the long-form content from your white papers or informational guides into blogs, tip sheets, Facebook posts, tweets and website content.

# Content Marketing Budget Trends

Overcoming obstacles to achieve important content marketing objectives requires a financial commitment from SMBs. About half of companies surveyed are increasing content marketing budgets. Only 7% are decreasing budgets.

## How is your content marketing BUDGET CHANGING?

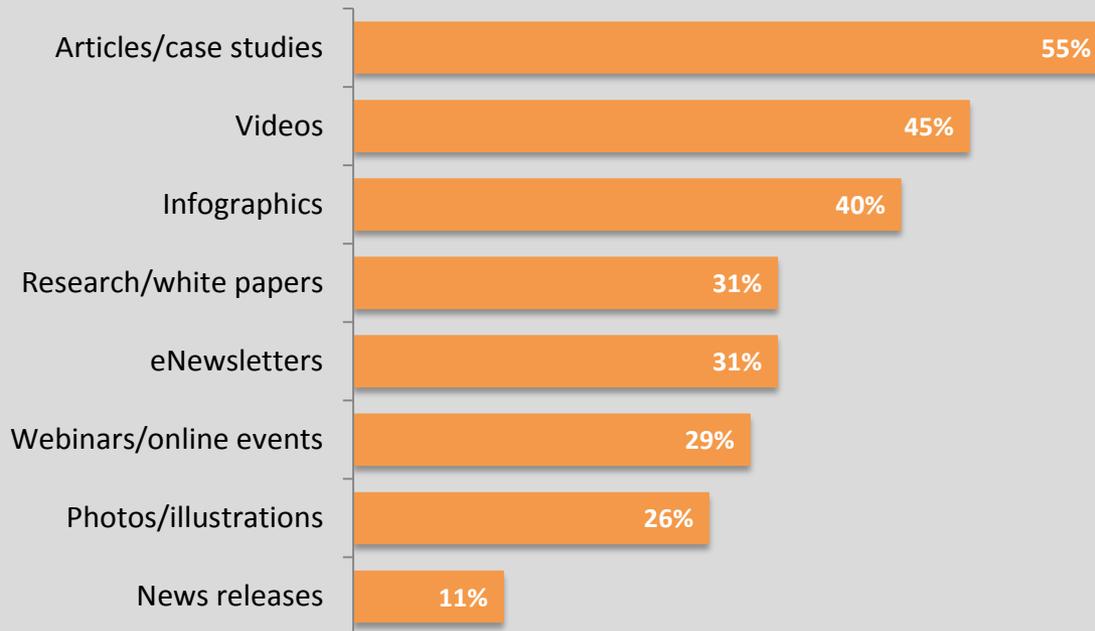


Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=194 SMBs Ascend2 and Allegra, Published Mar 2015

# Most Effective Types of Content

Content that provides instant gratification, such as videos and infographics, are effective. But word-intensive content that requires more time and effort to consume, such as articles and case studies, rank as the most effective types of content used for SMB marketing purposes.

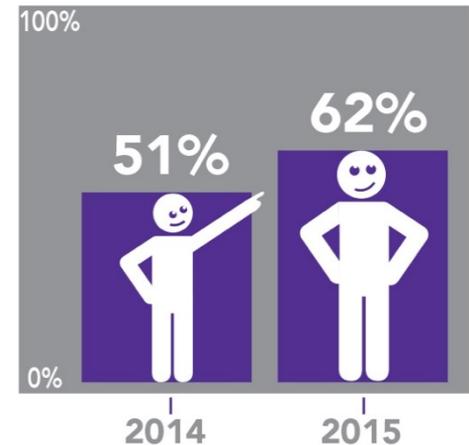
## What are the MOST EFFECTIVE types of content used?



Content Marketing Trends Survey, N=194 SMBs Ascend2 and Allegra, Published Mar 2015

## Infographics are "In"

Of all content marketing tactics, infographics showed the biggest jump in usage among B2B companies, from 51% last year to 62% this year, according to the Content Marketing Institute.

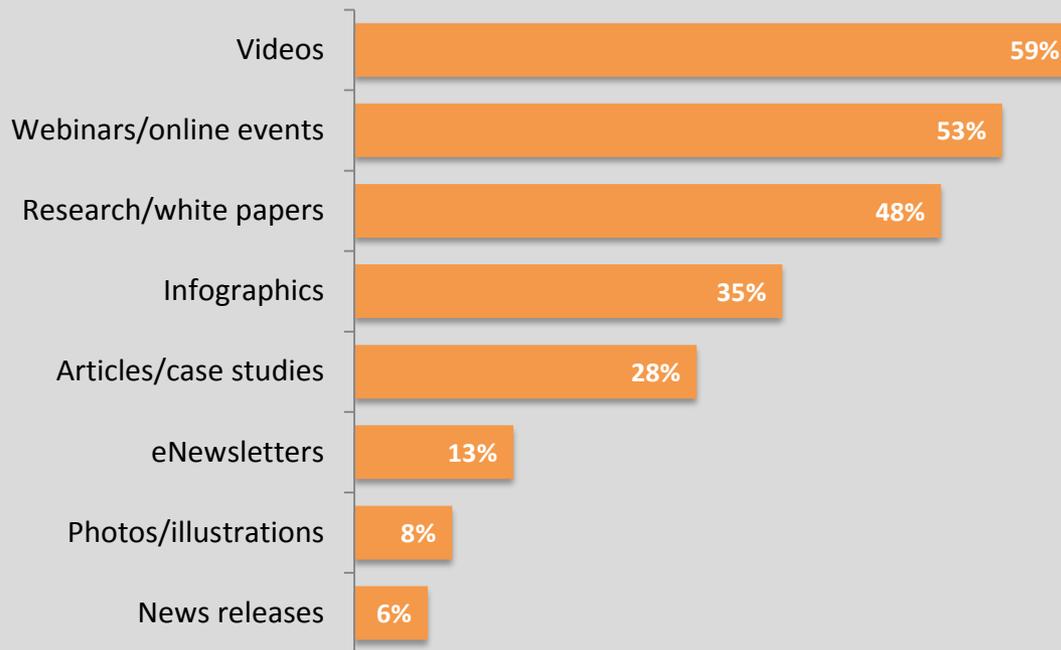


**TIP:** Think integration. Share your infographic via your blog, direct mail or email. Pull out specific statistics as Facebook posts, and link back to the full infographic on your website.

# Most Difficult Types to Create

The most difficult types of content for small and medium-sized businesses to create, such as videos, webinars and research-based papers, often require resources and capabilities not available in-house.

## What are the MOST DIFFICULT types of content to create?



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## Top 4 Video Styles

According to Cisco, video will account for 69% of all consumer Internet traffic by 2017.



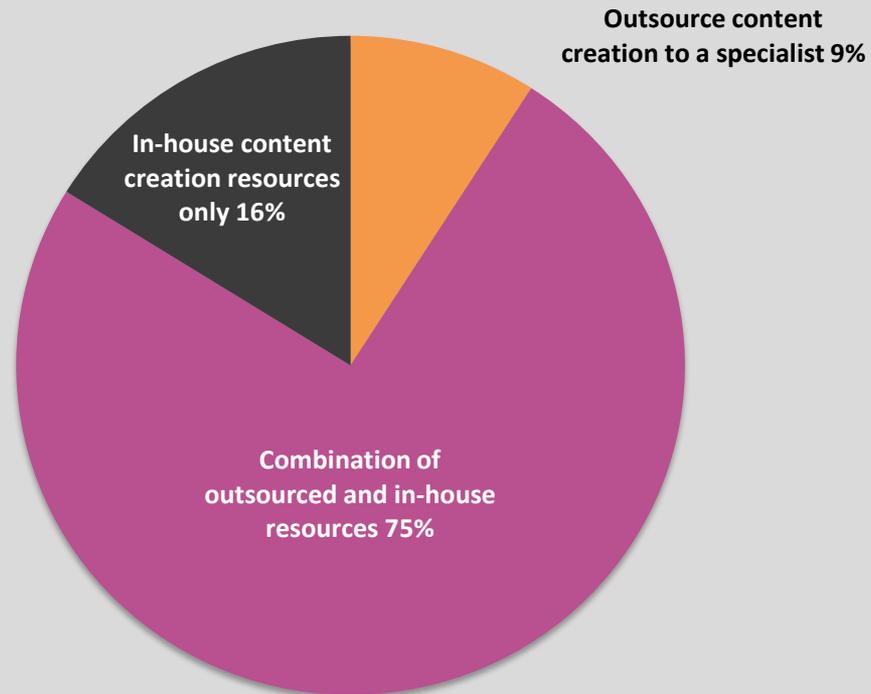
- Web Video Marketing Council

**TIP:** Include a call to action. What should the viewer do now? Download an educational guide, visit a website or contact you?

# Content Creation Resources

Creating content is difficult; and the degree of difficulty is driving the need to outsource the task. 84% of SMBs surveyed say they outsource all or part of their content creation, allowing them to access specialized skills and capabilities not available in-house.

## What are the MOST EFFECTIVE RESOURCES for creating content?

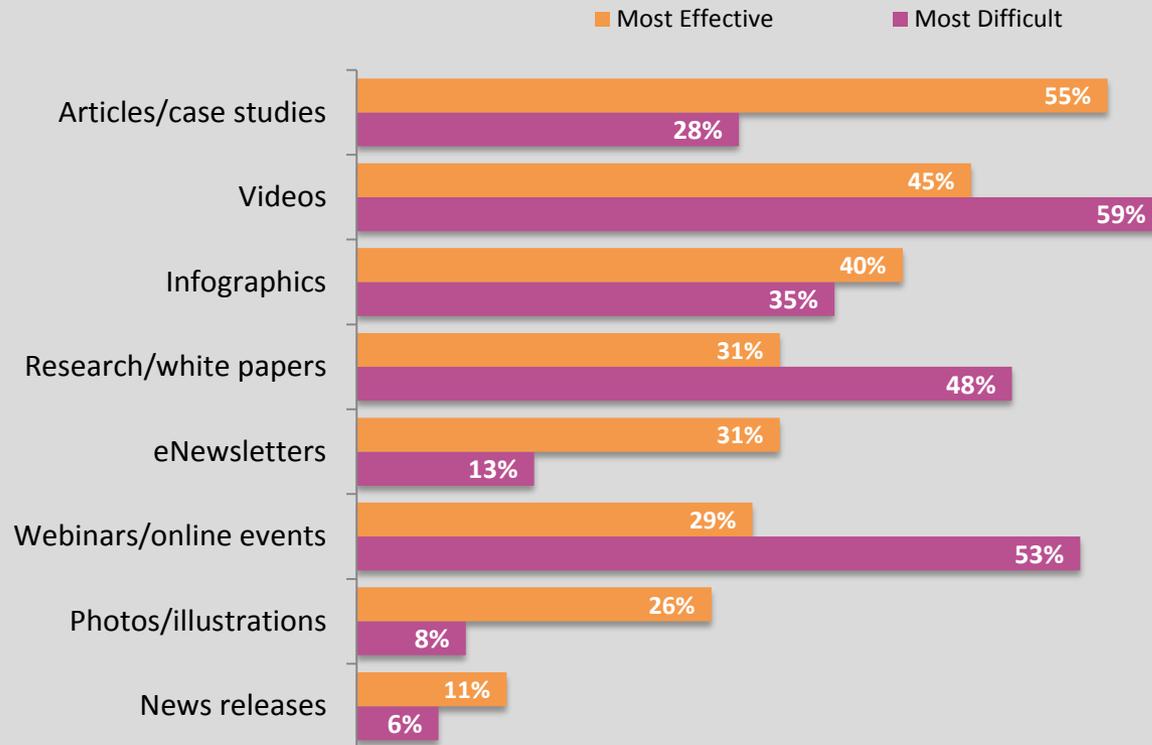


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# Content Effectiveness Versus Difficulty

Comparing content effectiveness with the degree of difficulty required to create it is often a key factor in determining the types to use. For example, articles/case studies are far more effective than difficult. Conversely, webinars/online events are far more difficult than effective.

## Most effective types of content versus most difficult to create

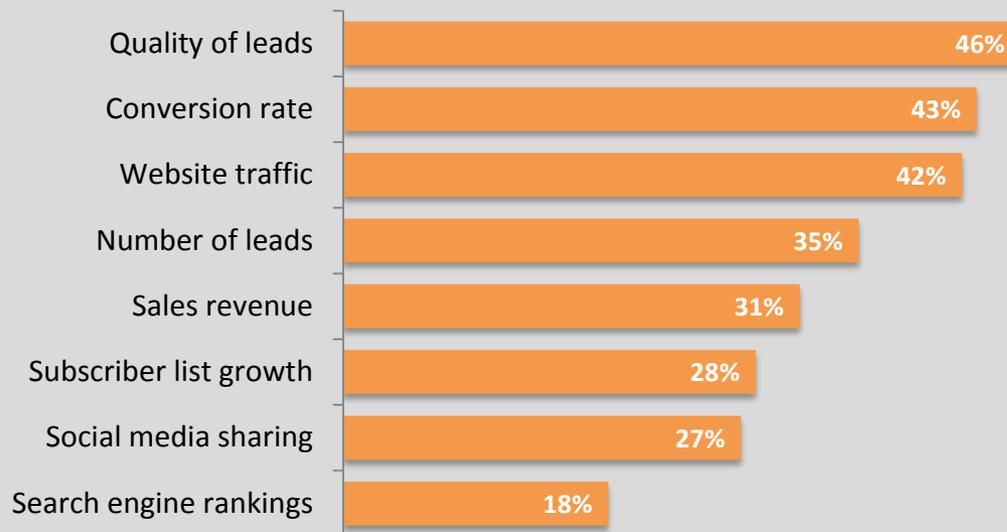


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# Most Useful Content Marketing Metrics

Increasing leads and engaging prospects are the top objectives of a content marketing strategy for SMBs. Subsequently, the quality of leads generated and measuring the conversion of prospects to leads are the most useful metrics for measuring content marketing performance.

## What are the MOST USEFUL METRICS for measuring content marketing performance?



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## Moving the Bar on ROI

If your campaigns are falling short, consider the following to help you refine your program:

- ✓ Is my list accurate and targeted to the right people?
- ✓ Is my offer valuable, relevant and appealing to my prospects?
- ✓ Is the creative piece attention-grabbing? Does it include a strong call-to-action?
- ✓ Is my value proposition evident in all of my marketing materials?
- ✓ Would I buy from me?

# Survey Methodology and Demographics

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of popular digital marketing strategies and practices using a standardized questionnaire, research methodology and proprietary 3-Minute Survey format. Findings are examined in a quantitative context by experienced analysts and reported objectively.

This survey was conducted online from a panel of more than 50,000 US and international marketing, sales and business professionals representing a range of demographic roles, channels and company sizes. The segment of survey responses used for this report is as follows:

## Number of Employees

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| More than 500 (Large) | 0%  |
| 50 to 500 (Medium)    | 27% |
| Fewer than 50 (Small) | 73% |

## Role in the Company

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| CEO / COO / CMO / CSO             | 45% |
| Marketing VP / Director / Manager | 30% |
| Sales VP / Director / Manager     | 7%  |
| Marketing or Sales Staff          | 11% |
| Other                             | 8%  |

## Primary Marketing/Sales Channel

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| B2B (Business-to-Business) | 75% |
| B2C (Business-to-Consumer) | 25% |

# About the Research Partners



When today's equation for powerful marketing communications involves print + digital + mobile, count on our experienced team to put YOU first. We'll find solutions to help grow your company or organization by reaching your most important audiences through the right mix of channels. Whatever strategies you need – whether it's print + mail, writing + design, Web + signs or an equation all your own – you have a local resource that can do it all with just one call.

**Allegra:** Your single source for strategic communications with measurable results.

## Ascend2™

### Research-Based Demand Generation for Marketing Solution Providers

Marketing software, data companies and agencies partner with Ascend2 to reliably generate demand and supplement marketing content. Our Research Partner Programs are transparent –spotlighting your brand and the interests of your market.

Learn more at [www.Ascend2.com](http://www.Ascend2.com).

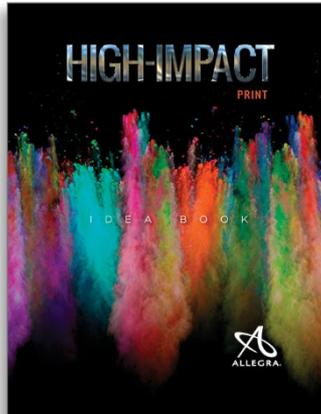
# Looking for More Marketing Insights?

For best practices and new ideas to help your business grow, talk to an Allegra professional about these other valuable resources. Just ask for a printed or digital copy; we'll be happy to deliver it to you.



## **Your Brand: Unraveled?** *A Business Self-assessment Guide*

Do a quick self-appraisal of your current activities, and see where they could be performing better.



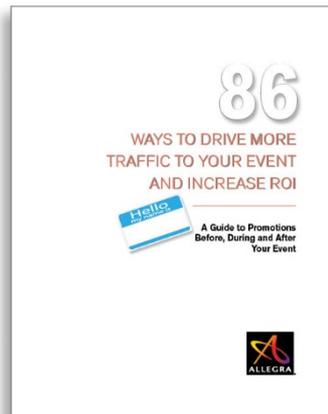
## **HIGH-IMPACT Print Idea Book**

New technology, materials and printing techniques have made it easier to make an impact like never before.



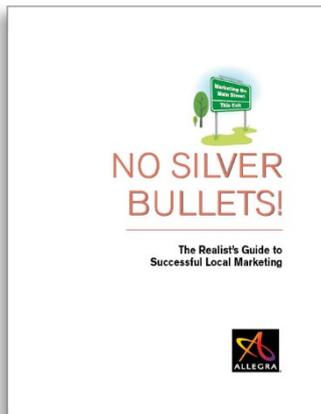
## **The Ultimate Direct Mail Marketing Guide** *Proven Tips and Techniques You Can Use Today*

Learn how to break through the clutter and create powerful direct mail campaigns that reach the right people with the right message.



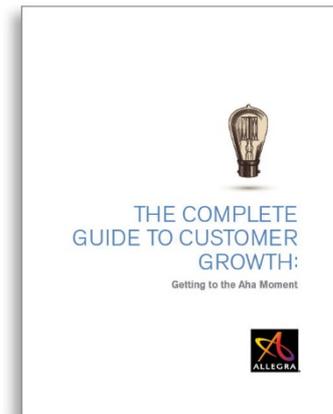
## **86 Ways to Drive More Traffic to Your Event** *A Guide to Promotion Before, During and After Your Event*

These sure-fire techniques from event industry insiders will boost your next event or trade show.



## **No Silver Bullets!** *The Realist's Guide to Successful Local Marketing*

Use these six cross-channel strategies to find more local customers and drive new sales.



## **The Complete Guide to Customer Growth** *Getting to the Aha Moment*

Gain a better understanding of your customers and use that information to strengthen your relationships and grow new sales.