

2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey



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This abbreviated summary highlights some of the most significant findings of ITSMA's *2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey*. A more in-depth analysis can be found in the full report: <https://www.itsma.com/research/itsma-2021-b2b-marketing-trends-survey/>

Introduction

To drive strategic growth in 2021, marketers have four levers:

- **Brand**
- **Sales/revenue**
- **Customer experience**
- **Market/customer insight**



B2B marketers stepped up in 2020 and played a critical leadership role in the pandemic response; the perceived value of marketing is at an all-time high

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Since 1994, ITSMA has been helping B2B marketers stay on the cutting edge of marketing practice. We have lived through a number of memorable market ups and downs. Most notable downs include the dot-com bubble burst, the financial crisis of 2009, and now, the COVID-19 pandemic. But this most recent crisis was different. B2B marketers not only survived the crisis, but they also thrived!

B2B marketers stepped up in 2020 and played a critical leadership role in the pandemic response. Today, the perceived value of marketing is at an all-time high. To maintain the momentum, marketers must recommit to driving growth, strategically.

ITSMA's *2021 Marketing Trends Survey* highlights the critical contributions that marketers can make to growth and

profitability. The report reviews current projections for marketing budget and staff growth, and outlines the priorities of marketing executives from top technology and professional services companies.

The report also highlights where B2B marketers need to focus to drive growth in 2021:

- Elevating the firm's brand, positioning, and messaging
- Collaborating with sales to grow revenue
- Orchestrating the customer experience
- Providing insight for senior leadership and sales

In addition, it showcases what a segment of marketing organizations that are successfully driving strategic growth are doing differently, including case study examples from ITSMA's Marketing Excellence Award winners.

B2B marketers stepped up in 2020 and played a critical leadership role in the pandemic response

The perceived value of marketing is at an all-time high

How has the pandemic changed your company's senior leadership team's perception of the value of marketing to the business?

77%
the perception of marketing's value improved

% of respondents (N=61)

Note: Mean rating based on a 5-point scale where 1=Significantly diminished the perception of marketing's value and 5=Significantly improved the perception of marketing's value.

Source: ITSMA, 2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey

Despite monumental challenges, marketers successfully achieved their revised 2020 marketing goals

87%

Effective in achieving their revised 2020 marketing goals

% of respondents (N=61)

Source: ITSMA, 2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey

To maintain momentum, marketing must recommit to driving growth, strategically

Marketing has four paths to drive strategic growth

Brand



Sales/
revenue



Customer
experience



Market/
customer
insight



What the strategic growth drivers do differently

Brand

Use their brand and communications expertise to become change agents for business strategy execution

The extent to which the pandemic has accelerated **building a purpose-driven brand**

Strategic Growth Drivers (N=15)

4.3

Aspirational (N=35)

3.8

1 A major decelerator Mean rating 5 A major accelerant

Sales/Revenue

Do more than generate and nurture leads; they collaborate with sales to impact business outcomes

Increasing spend on sales and field enablement

Strategic Growth Drivers (N=15)

69%

Aspirational (N=35)

17%

Note: Differences are statistically significant.
Source: ITSMA, 2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey

What the strategic growth drivers do differently

Customer experience

Collaborate across the organization to enhance client-centric engagement and value delivery

Collaborating cross-functionally to deliver a superior customer experience

% of respondents that are effective



Market/customer insight

Bring an outside-in orientation to guide sales and inform senior leadership as they chart strategy

Marketing brings insight and innovation to the business

% of respondents that strongly agree



Note: Differences are statistically significant.
Source: ITSMA, 2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey

Additionally, we believe all marketers (including the strategic growth drivers) need to improve in three key areas:



Relevant, personalized
thought leadership

70% Have *not* yet
implemented content
personalization
tools/technology
% of respondents
(N=57)



Orchestrated
executive engagement

54% Do *not* have a
dedicated person or
team to oversee
executive engagement
% of respondents
(N=59)



Sales and marketing
collaboration

15% Sales and
marketing share
the same goals
and metrics
% of respondents
(N=55)

Tweetable takeaways

1. B2B marketers stepped up in 2020 and played a critical leadership role in the pandemic response; the perceived value of marketing is at an all-time high **#ITSMA21**
2. Despite monumental challenges, 87% of marketers successfully achieved their revised 2020 marketing goals **#ITSMA21**
3. B2B marketing budgets will grow 6.1% and staffs at 5.0% in 2021 per **#ITSMA21** research
4. Pandemic-adjusted event budgets remain down due to ongoing uncertainty; half of marketers do not yet know if they will hold in-person events in 2021 **#ITSMA21**
5. 2021 top B2B marketing priorities include ABM, lead generation, busting internal silos, and strengthening the brand **#ITSMA21**
6. To drive strategic growth in 2021, marketers have four levers: brand, sales/revenue, customer experience, and market/customer insight **#ITSMA21**
7. To ensure desired impact, marketers need to improve in three key areas: personalized thought leadership, orchestrated executive engagement, and sales & marketing collaboration **#ITSMA21**



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Methodology and demographics

Web-based survey

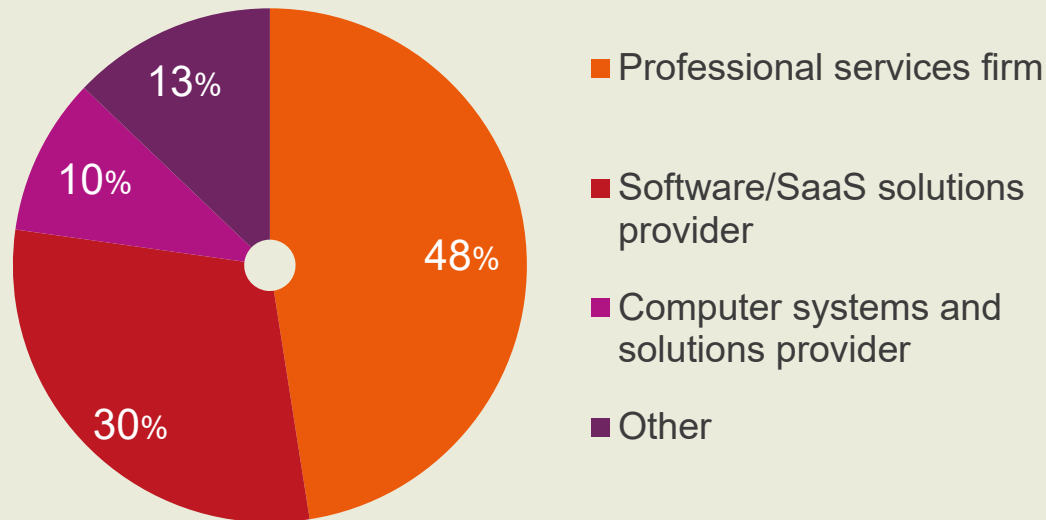


Survey invitations were emailed December 2020 through January 2021 to ITSMA member and select non-member companies



61 participants from 56 companies

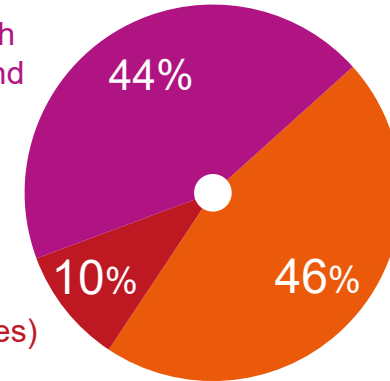
Which of these categories best describes your industry subsector?



Source: ITSMA, 2021 B2B Marketing Trends Survey | % of respondents (N=61)

Type of company

We sell both products and services

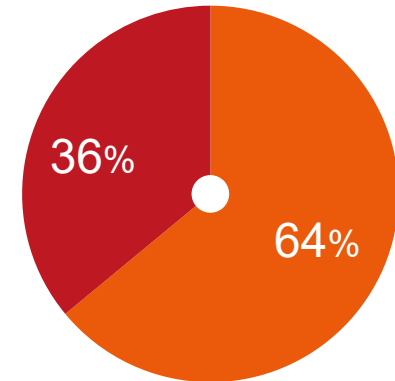


We primarily sell products (<10% revenue from services)

We primarily sell services (<10% revenue from products)

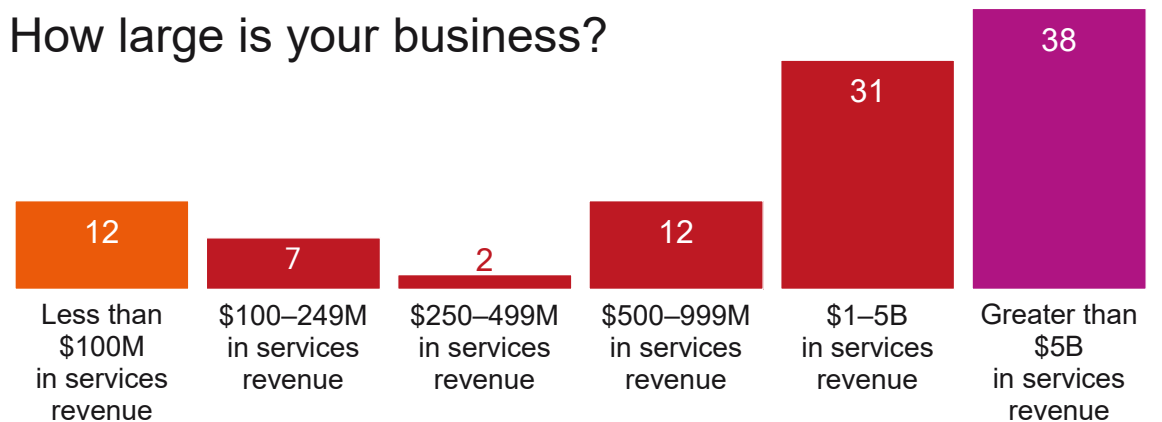
Respondents' perspective

A specific business unit or division



Entire company

How large is your business?



Want to learn more?

Here's what is included in the full study:

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The full report is available at no additional fee to ITSMA member companies that participated in the study. Non-member companies that participated in the study are eligible to receive an Executive Summary. For non-participating companies, this report is available for sale at member and non-member prices. <https://www.itsma.com/research/itsma-2021-b2b-marketing-trends-survey/>



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