



Connecting Through Content Series

Researching how marketing practices align with technology buyers' expectations and preferences

Issue Two: Content Distribution — Where Information Intersects With Demand

May 2007

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Introduction

More Content Options For Technology Buyers Means More Opportunity For Content Distribution

Search Engines. Directories. Portals. Webcasts. Websites. Magazines. These are just a few of the many choices technology marketers have at their disposal when developing a content distribution strategy. The challenge is to get visibility for their content in the places where buyers are searching for information. Technology marketing is becoming more complex because buyers have more information consumption options than ever before. As noted in the first issue of KnowledgeStorm's *Connecting Through Content Series* published in March 2007, technology buyers want to find quality, educational information and marketers have plenty of information to offer. The trick is to find middle ground where marketers' information meets buyers' demand.

The objective of the research-based *Connecting Through Content Series*, jointly produced by KnowledgeStorm and MarketingSherpa, is to explore the impact of content development and distribution on audience engagement and message delivery. More specifically, this second study is designed to closely examine how technology buyers search for content and how marketers deliver content to them. Content distribution channels, user search techniques, content registration behavior and other aspects of content distribution and syndication are evaluated.

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Study Methodology

The study was conducted in April 2007 by KnowledgeStorm, the Internet's top-ranked search resource for technology solutions and information, and MarketingSherpa, a research firm publishing real-life Case Studies, practical know-how and benchmark data on what works — and doesn't work — in marketing today.

Nearly 3,000 technology buyers and marketers responded to online surveys used in this study.

Nearly 3,000 B2B marketers and technology and business professionals responded to two concurrently fielded surveys used in this study.

Of those marketers surveyed:

- 41% hold the title of CMO, VP or Director of Marketing
- 37% are Marketing or Product Managers

The technology buyers' demographic profile shows that the responsibilities and areas of influence of the respondents vary widely:

- 50% are business professionals
- 50% are IT professionals

- 45% are involved with their company's technology at a strategic level
- 31% authorize IT purchases or have a major influence on purchases

Opportunities for B2B Technology Marketers

Buyers Start With Search Engines; Syndication Maximizes Marketers' Visibility

Eighty-four percent of technology buyers begin their online search for information with one of the major search engines and ultimately use multiple channels during their search, including online publications, analyst sites, directories and IT vendor or community Websites. It is important for marketers to employ a diverse content strategy that includes search engine optimization (SEO), paid search/search engine marketing (SEM) and content syndication. By using all three of these approaches, marketers are able to effectively cover the Internet and reach buyers from a variety of touch points.

Two-thirds of marketers have a strategy to optimize their content's position organically in search engines, but 44% feel that their online content is not currently effectively search engine optimized. Of those 35% of marketers who are not employing a pay-per-click SEM strategy, more than a quarter say that they simply don't think it will work for them — though they have not tried it — and another 27% believed that the best search terms for their content are too expensive.

Eighty-four percent of technology buyers begin their research for information on one of the major search engines.

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Technology Buyers Are Digging Deeper Into Search Results

The survey found that technology buyers are using more complicated search terminology and are looking further into the results than expected. Fifty-six percent use three or more words in their search phrases and another 19% are using search operators like "AND" and "OR." Technology buyers are also willing to look deeper, scanning as many as five pages of search results to find an acceptable result before refining or abandoning their search. These search behaviors debunk the traditionally held belief that if you are not listed on the first page of results, you will not be seen.

Fifty-six percent of technology buyers search using phrases of three or more words.

Buyers Pay Attention to Pay-Per-Click Ads

If people are searching with more complex terms and looking beyond the first page, does this mean that the 59% of marketers who promote content through Google, Yahoo! or MSN paid search result are off the mark? Not necessarily. For those vendors either without the time or expertise to develop a comprehensive organic search optimization program (SEO), or who choose to augment their organic search positioning with

paid search, there is good news. Fourteen percent of technology buyers said they frequently read sponsored links and 6% frequently click on them. Thirty-nine percent claim to “sometimes” read the sponsored links and 28% “sometimes” click on them. Even these smaller percentages add up to significant results due to the millions of searches being performed daily.

Registration — Give a Little More to Get a Little More

There are a lot of questions around the validity of registration information in the B2B space. This study found that technology buyers are giving valid information more often than expected, especially when marketers offer the right kind of content with an adequate description. Seventy-two percent of technology buyers said they “always” give a valid name and 68% said they “always” give a valid email.

There has also been a level of debate around the quality of registration information when a personal email address is used. Marketers should not disregard registration information that includes a personal email. Forty-three percent of buyers use a valid personal email. This helps them organize and monitor vendor messages and does not necessarily indicate that they are not interested in receiving follow-up communication.

Marketers and technology buyers are aligned on the type of content they felt was most valuable to register for — white papers (81% and 79%, respectively). However, the two groups diverged from there. Technology buyers ranked the next two most popular content types worth registering for as case studies (63%) and analyst reports (57%). Marketers, on the other hand, ranked Webcasts (77%) and demos (64%) as their second and third content types. Interestingly, buyers ranked Webcasts and demos significantly lower, with only 31% and 38% claiming that they are typically willing to register for them.

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Seventy-four percent of technology buyers want to see at least a one-paragraph overview before deciding whether to download content.

Both marketers and technology buyers agree that the type of content is a “major factor”, either in requiring registration or deeming the content worthy of registration (90% and 82%, respectively). They differ greatly, however, in their views of the importance of the amount of detail in the overview. Seventy-two percent of buyers view detailed overviews as a “major factor,” but only 34% of marketers think so.

This is further reflected in how much of an overview a buyer wants to see versus how much is typically provided by the marketer. Nearly three-quarters of buyers want to read a one-paragraph overview before they decide to register for a download. Currently, 48% of marketers provide an abstract of a paragraph or more. (For more information on what content technology buyers most value, see the first report in the *Connecting Through Content, Issue One: How Marketers Are Meeting Technology Buyers' Appetite for Content*, published March 2007.)

Summary of Key Findings

Complex Searches Dominate

When technology buyers start their search using one of the major search engines, 56% use phrases of three or more words. An additional 19% use search operators. Only 6% use one word or an acronym.

Technology Buyers Go Beyond the First Page of Search Results

Fifty-three percent of technology buyers scan, on average, three to five pages of search results.

Technology Buyers Read, and Click On Paid Ads

Sponsored links, or paid ads that appear in search results, are read by 53% of technology buyers “frequently” or “sometimes.” Thirty-four percent click on the link or ad “sometimes” or “frequently.” Sixty-five percent of marketers use a paid ad strategy to place their content on search results.

Marketers Believe They Have an Effective Strategy for Search Engine Optimization

Sixty-six percent of marketers say they have a strategy for achieving a high organic or natural placement for their content on major search engines. Fifty-six percent thought that their content was consistently indexed and usually accessible within the major search engines.

Offline Marketing Drives Technology Buyers Online

Eighty percent of technology buyers say that offline marketing materials such as magazine advertisements or direct mail create sufficient interest for them to seek more information online “sometimes” or “frequently.”

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Technology Buyers Typically Provide Valid Information When Registering for Downloads

More than 50% of technology buyers say they give a valid name, email address, industry, job title and company name when they register for technology content online. Less than 40% provide accurate phone numbers, indicating that they are more receptive to follow up emails than to follow up phone calls.

Technology Buyers Often Use Personal Email Addresses When They Register

Forty-three percent of technology buyers provide valid personal email addresses when asked to register for content. Marketers may discount personal emails, but buyers say they use a non-business address to better manage their email and segment information requests and follow-ups into more manageable queues.

Technology Buyers and Marketers Differ When It Comes to What is Deemed Worthy of Registration

Nearly 80% of technology buyers will register for a white paper, which is also the top content type marketers deem as worth requiring registration. By contrast, only 38% of buyers will register for a demo and 31% for a

Webcast — two content types ranked highly by marketers (77% and 64%, respectively) as content for which they typically require registration.

Technology Buyers Value the Type of Content and Amount of Overview Information When It Comes to Registration Worthiness

More than 80% of technology buyers consider the type of content important in deciding whether to register for it. Other key factors include the amount of overview information available (72%), and the source of content (69%).

Overviews Encourage Technology Buyers to Register

When technology buyers are asked to register for content, 72% weigh the amount of detail provided in the overview in their decision and 74% want to see at least a one-paragraph overview. However, only 48% of marketers provide this desired level of detail.

Conclusion

The typical place for a search to start is on one of the major search engines, most often Google. From there, buyers willingly scan dozens of results and go to multiple sources for information in the course of their searches. They read sponsored links and paid ads when they come up in their searches, and more than a third will click on them at least sometimes. Eighty percent indicate that offline marketing materials will “frequently” or “often” drive them to specific sites. Once they reach their “content destination,” technology buyers place greater value on certain types of marketing material and want to have a good idea what they’re getting before they commit to registering for downloaded content.

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The number of sources of information buyers consult during searches provides a boon for marketers by expanding their opportunities to get their content in front of buyers through a variety of online touchpoints. In addition to traditional means of content distribution, marketers can go beyond the corporate Websites to expand the visibility they can obtain for their content, either by posting it on online publications and/or by engaging a syndication service to distribute it on their behalf. These actions increase the probability the content will be seen and will improve SEO.

The Game is Changing When it Comes to Search

Conventional search engine wisdom says that you need to be on the first page of results to be seen or that you should show up in the most common search terms or acronyms. Not anymore. The game is changing and marketers should adjust their SEM and SEO strategies accordingly. Search is becoming more sophisticated, with buyers using more complex terms of three or more words and often looking as deep as five pages.

Many marketers are also incorporating paid search into their content positioning strategies, with good reason. The majority of technology buyers have read paid ads that appear in their search results at least

sometimes, and just over one-third have clicked on the links. Of those marketers who do not use a paid advertising SEM approach today, the majority have never tried it because they do not expect it would work for them or because they think the best search terms for their products or services would be too expensive. Because of the buyers' tendency to use more complex search terms, the best terms for many marketers may be quite specific, and less expensive and more effective than they anticipate.

Fifty-three percent of technology buyers read paid ads or sponsored links that appear in their search results.

Marketers Can Use Offline Channels to Draw Online Interest

Eighty percent of technology buyers indicate that offline marketing materials will drive them online to find additional information. For marketers, then, an offline marketing program of magazine advertisements, direct mail, seminars or tradeshow has the advantage of increasing online activity. Once prospects are online they can be tracked and measured, so effective marketers can work both elements of their plans to increase their number of qualified leads.

Eighty percent of technology buyers say that offline marketing materials will “frequently” or “often” drive them to specific sites.

Marketers and Technology Buyers Are Not in Complete Alignment on Registration

When it comes to registration, buyer behavior and marketer practices are sometimes in step, but not always. When it comes to content types deemed worthy of registration, technology buyers and marketers are aligned on the more traditional types, such as white papers, but less so on newer media. This does not necessarily mean that buyers are not responding to new media, such as Webcasts and podcasts, but it does reflect the ideas presented in KnowledgeStorm's *Emerging Media Series* that marketers are anticipating demand for these content types and buyers, while lagging currently in areas such as podcasts, are expected to continue to adopt these content types and consume them at a growing rate. Regardless of the channel, marketers can engage prospects by ensuring that they provide enough detailed information to engage a prospect and assure them of the compelling nature of the content. This is a great opportunity for marketers to attract more attention to their valuable content and could improve response to content already made available online.

The first report in the *Connecting Through Content Series: Content Development* provides one explanation for these differences. Technology buyers place the highest value on high-quality educational materials, particularly white papers and case studies, and are consequently most willing to register for them. In addition, technology buyers want to read an abstract of at least a paragraph to determine whether they will register for specific content. Less than half of the marketers surveyed provide that level of detail.

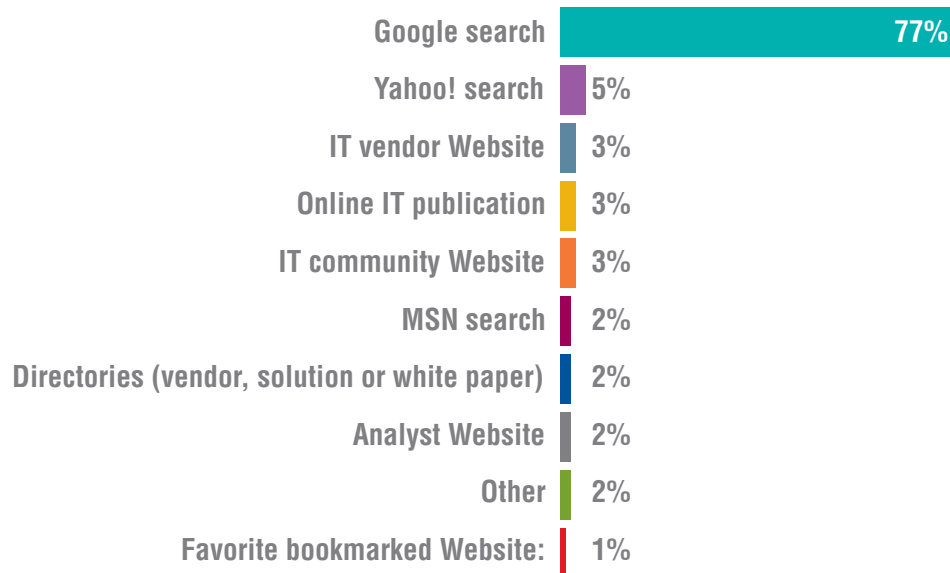
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Detailed Findings

Technology Buyers Begin Their Searches With The Major Search Engines

Seventy-seven percent of technology buyers typically start their online search for information with a search on Google. The next most common starting point was Yahoo! search, which was the first choice of only 5% of respondents. No other Website, directory or online publication was used by more than 3% of respondents as their starting point.

► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** *Where do you typically BEGIN your online search for technology information?*



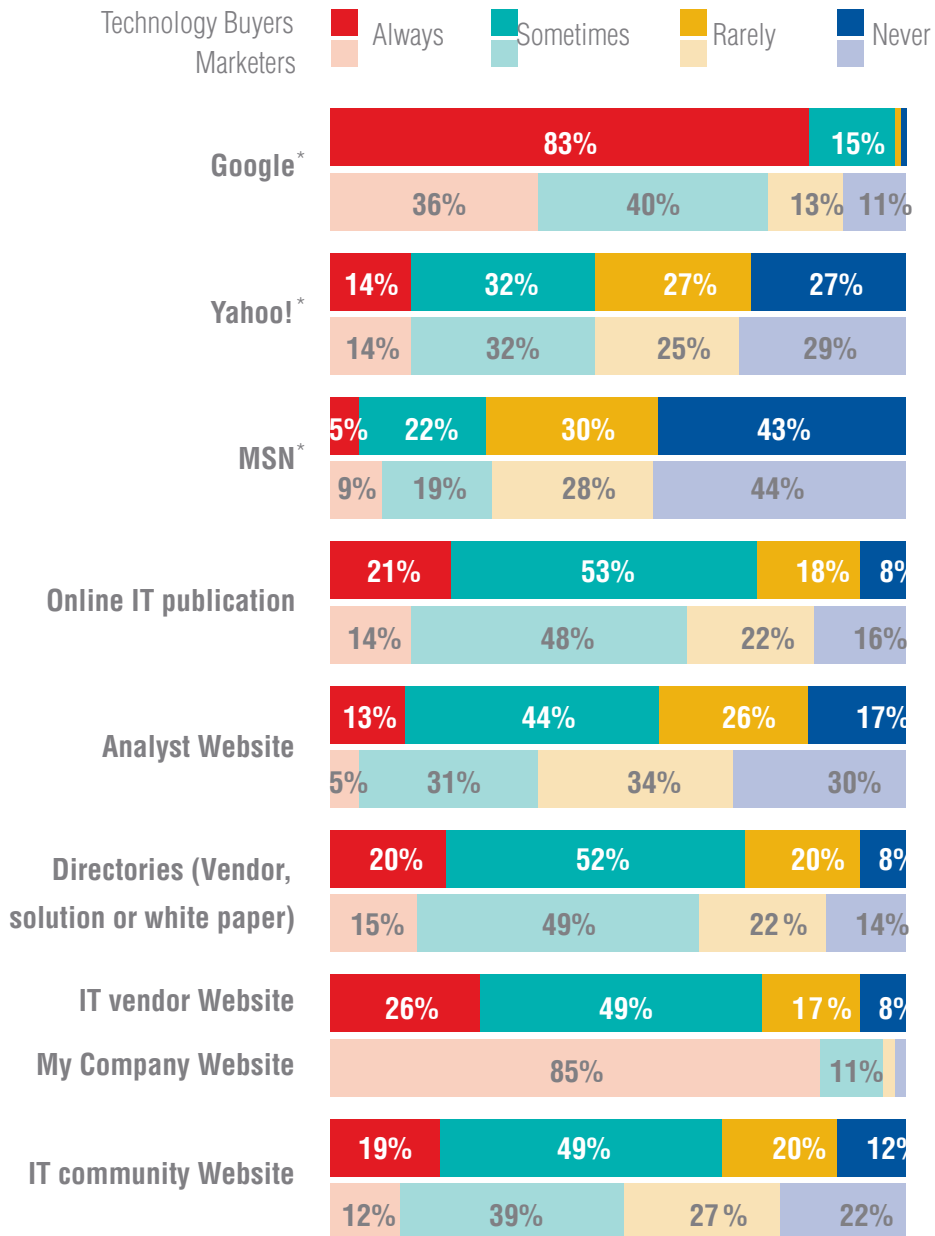
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Technology Buyers Use Multiple Websites When Searching for Information

While 83% of technology buyers go to Google at some point in their search for technology information, they also use other Websites with some frequency. More than 20% go to directories, online IT publications or IT vendor Websites. Eighty-five percent of marketers promote their materials primarily on their company Websites, missing the opportunity to connect with technology buyers in the many other places that buyers seek content.

► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** : Please check all of the types of Websites that you typically use when searching for technology information.

► **MARKETERS:** When conducting online content marketing programs, where do you typically promote content?



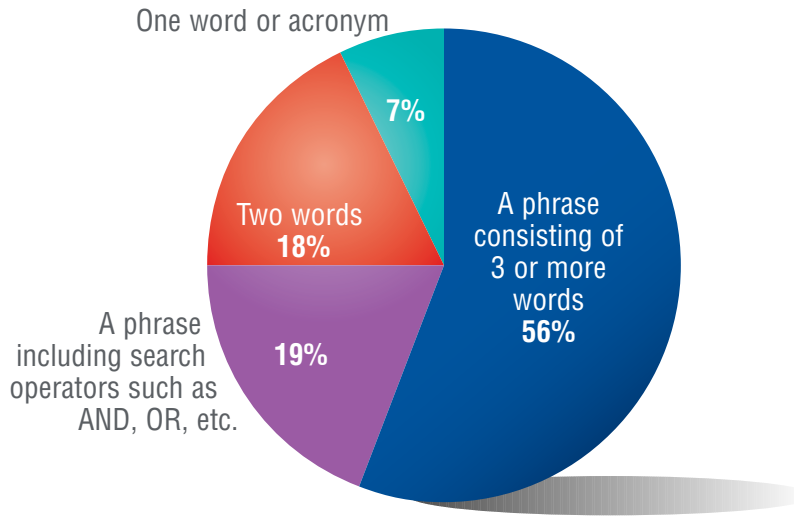
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*Answers from Marketers for Google, Yahoo! and MSN represent participation in paid search programs from those brands.

Technology Buyers Conduct Sophisticated, Patient Searches

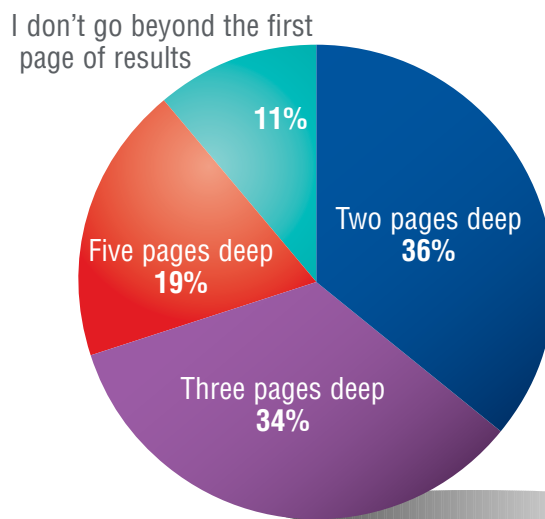
Fifty-six percent of technology buyers using a major search engine typically use complex phrases of three or more words when they look for technology information. More than 53% will scan three to five pages (30-50 results) before finding a result that interests them or redefining or abandoning the search. Marketers can take comfort in knowing that their product or service does not need to appear on the first page of the search results to capture the attention of most technology buyers. Marketers can reflect the more complex search terms used by technology buyers when they search engine optimize their content to direct more qualified prospects to their site or materials.

► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** When using one of the major search engines to find technology information, how complex are your typical keyword searches?



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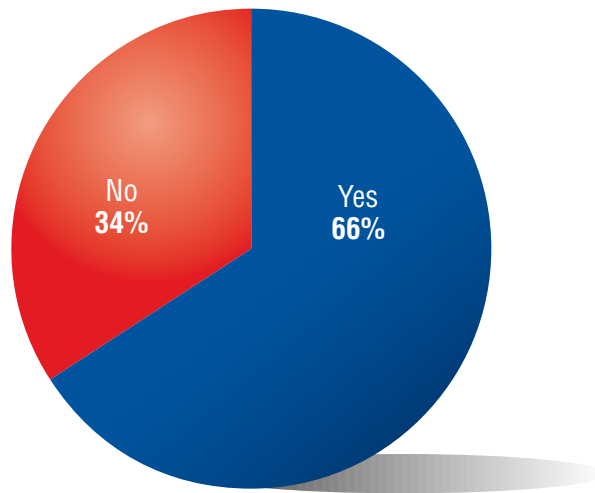
► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** How many pages of search results do you normally scan before finding an acceptable result, refining your search or abandoning your search? (Note: this question assumes your search engine is displaying 10 results per page)



Marketers Have a Strategy for Optimizing Content Positioning on Major Search Engines

Sixty-six percent of marketers say they have a strategy for positioning their content well within the major search engines' natural (non-paid) results and 56% believe that their content is indexed and usually accessible within the major search engines. The other 44% feel that their content is not consistently found on the major search engines. Given the numbers of buyers going to the search engines, developing an effective SEO strategy would likely be a worthwhile investment for those who are unhappy with their current search rankings.

- ▶ **MARKETERS:** *Do you have a strategy for getting your content well positioned within the major search engines' natural or organic results?*



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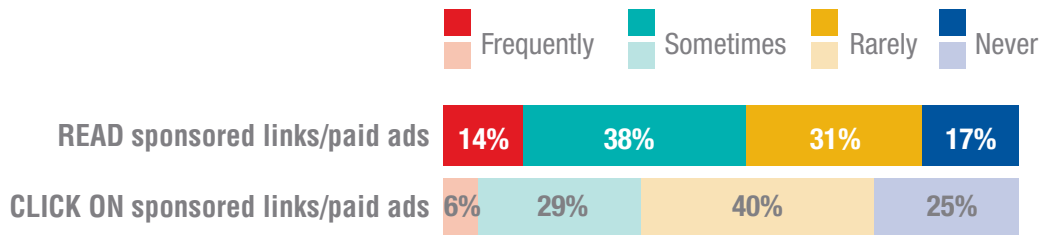
- ▶ **MARKETERS:** *Please rate how well you feel your online content is search engine optimized:*

Good - Our content gets indexed and is usually accessible within the major search engines	40%
Fair - Our content is not consistently found within the major search engines	31%
Excellent - We create content with SEO in mind and get great placement within the major search engines	16%
Poor - Our content does not get indexed or found within the major search engines	7%
Not sure - We don't do anything specifically for the purposes of search engine optimization and/or we are not sure how to approach it	6%

Technology Buyers Often Read and Click on Paid Ads in Search Results

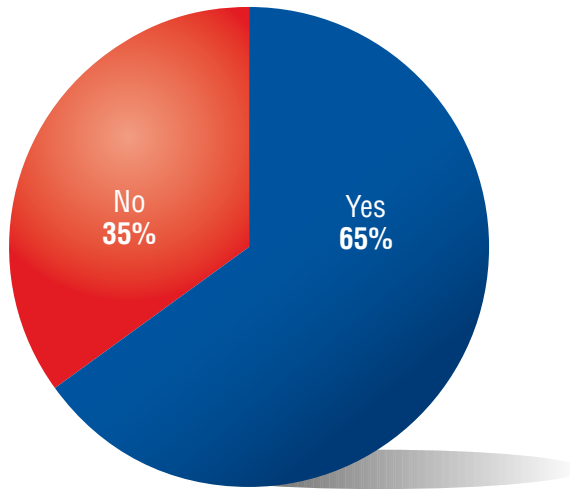
Fifty-three percent of technology buyers “sometimes” or “frequently” read paid ads that appear in their search results, and 34% “frequently” or “sometimes” click on them. Sixty-five percent of marketers use a pay-per-click advertising strategy to promote their content.

- ▶ **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** *When searching for technology information, do you read and click on the paid ads that appear in the search results? (Note: paid ads are the search results labeled as “Sponsored” links generally appearing at the top of the search results or to the right of the main results)*



- ▶ **MARKETERS:** *Do you currently conduct search engine marketing programs to drive demand or lead generation?*

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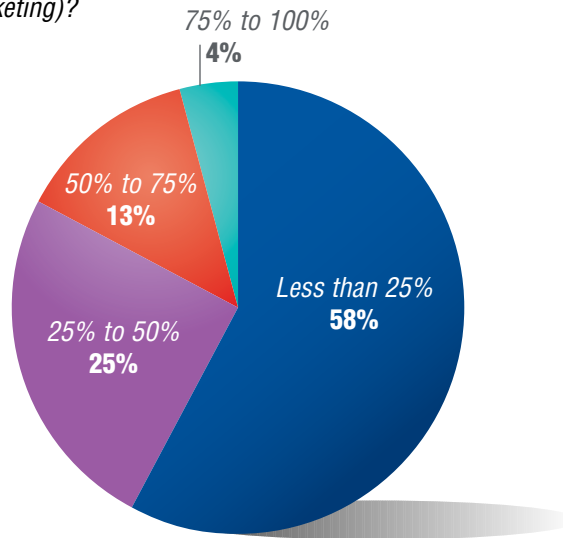


SEM Marketing Budgets are Still Low

Only 17% of marketers currently devote more than 50% of their online marketing budgets to search engine marketing (SEM). Fifty-eight percent allot less than 25% of their online dollars to paid ad placement on search engine results. Of those marketers who do not currently use SEM, only 20% have tried it. Seventeen percent of non-users say they do not know how to track the results of their efforts, while 27% have never tried it because they do not think it would work for them. Another 27% think that the best search terms for their products and services are too expensive.

With the majority of technology buyers responding that they do read paid ads, marketers may be missing an opportunity to position their products and services with qualified prospects. In addition, technology buyers report using fairly complex multiple word search terms, which may make finding affordable, specific search terms easier than marketers may expect.

► **MARKETERS:** How much of your online marketing budget is spent on SEM (Search Engine Marketing)?



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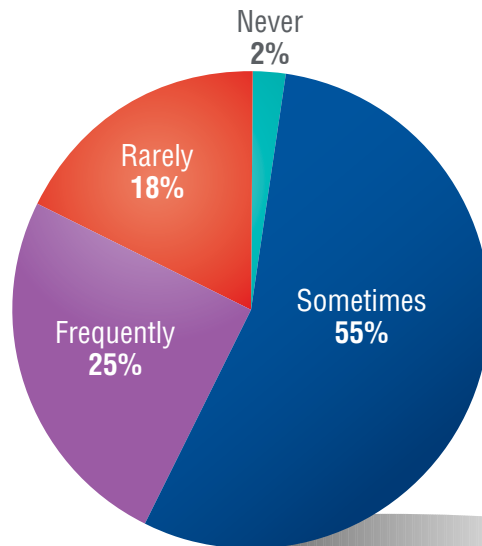
► **MARKETERS:** What is the main reason why you are not doing SEM at this time?

The best search terms for our products and services are too expensive	27%
We haven't tried it because we don't think it will work for us	27%
We've tried it and it doesn't work for us	19%
We are unable to track the results	17%
Other	10%

Offline Marketing Programs Boost Online Traffic

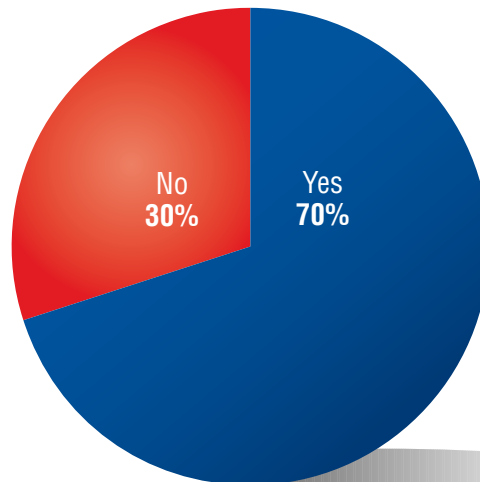
Offline marketing resources such as magazine advertisements, direct mail pieces, tradeshows and seminars cause 80% of technology buyers to “sometimes” or “frequently” seek additional information about products or services online. Marketers understand the importance of integrating online and offline programs, with 70% using offline components to drive online registrations.

- ▶ **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** How often do offline resources (e.g. magazine advertisements, direct mail pieces, tradeshows, etc.) create enough interest to drive you online for more information?



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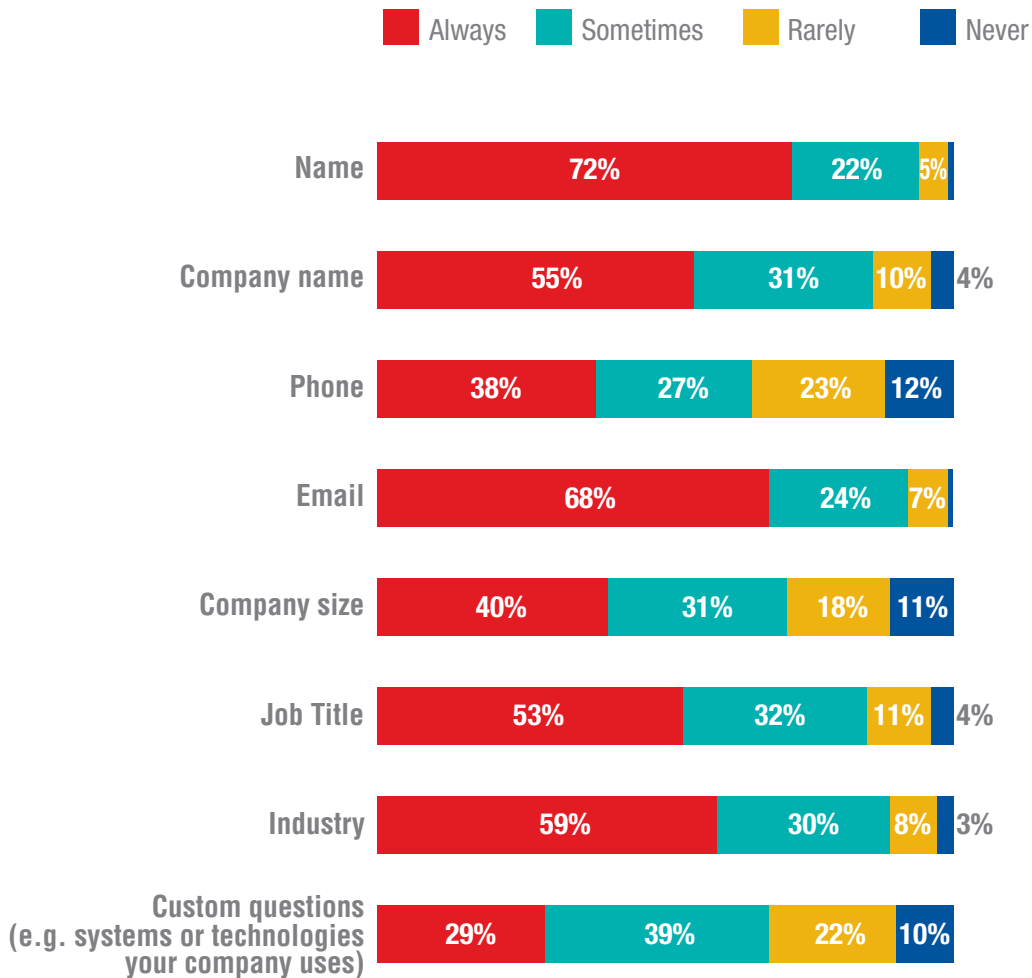
- ▶ **MARKETERS:** Do you conduct integrated programs that involve offline components driving to online registrations?



Technology Buyers Provide Mostly Valid Information When They Register to Download Content

The majority of technology buyers report that they provide accurate responses to registration questions regarding their names (72%), email (68%), industry (59%), company name (55%) and job title (53%). They are less likely to provide valid phone numbers (38%) or respond accurately to custom questions.

► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** When asked to register to download technology content online how often do you give valid registration information?

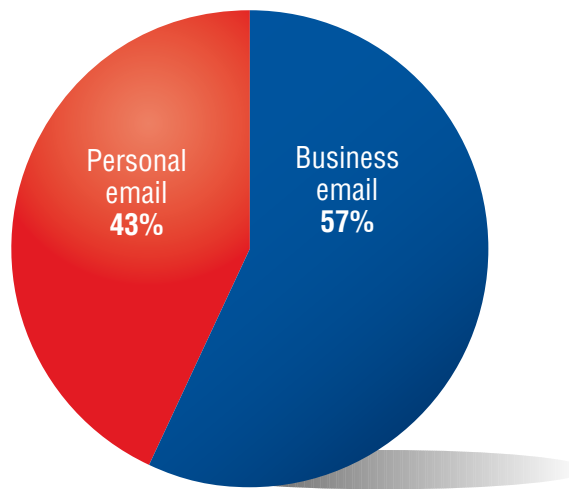


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Technology Buyers Often Provide Personal Email Addresses When They Register

While 57% of respondents say they use their business email when they register for content, 43% of technology buyers use a personal email address. Almost half of those who provide personal email addresses say they do so to keep their business email clear of solicitations from third parties or vendors and an additional 37% use a specific personal email address to segregate all their business and technology research. Twelve percent say that their business spam filters keep out information from vendors.

► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** *When asked to provide an email address, do you typically use your business email address or a personal email address such as a Gmail, Yahoo!, Hotmail, etc.?*



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► **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** *Please choose the main reason why you use a personal email account:*

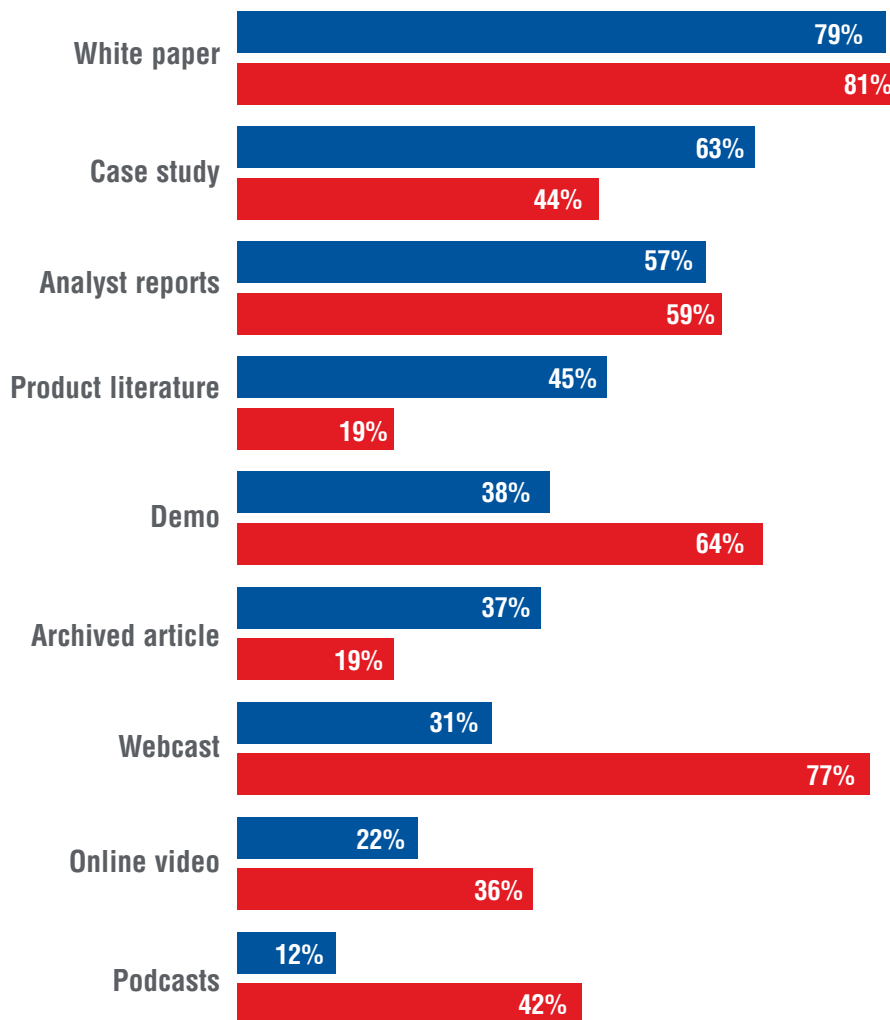
I do not want to clutter up my business account with offers from third parties or vendors	49%
I have a specific personal email account that I use for organizing all of my business and technology research	37%
My business account has a tight spam filter that does not usually allow communications to reach me	12%
Other	2%

Marketers and Technology Buyers Differ in Their Assessment of What Content Warrants Registration

The majority of technology buyers are willing to register to download white papers (79%) and analyst reports (57%), which aligns well with marketer expectations for those types of content. Technology buyers are much more willing to register for case studies (63%) than marketers anticipate (44%) and almost twice as willing to register for archived articles (37%) and product literature (45%) than marketers expect.

More than twice as many marketers consider Webcasts worthy of registration (77%) as technology buyers (31%), a difference nearly repeated with demos, where 64% of marketers think registration is reasonable, but only 31% of technology buyers would be willing to do so. The discrepancy in expectations continues with some of the new media content types.

- ▶ **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** From the following list, please check which content types you are typically willing to register for: (Check all that apply.)
- ▶ **MARKETERS:** From the following list, please check which content types you would deem worthy of requiring registration to gain access: (Check all that apply.)

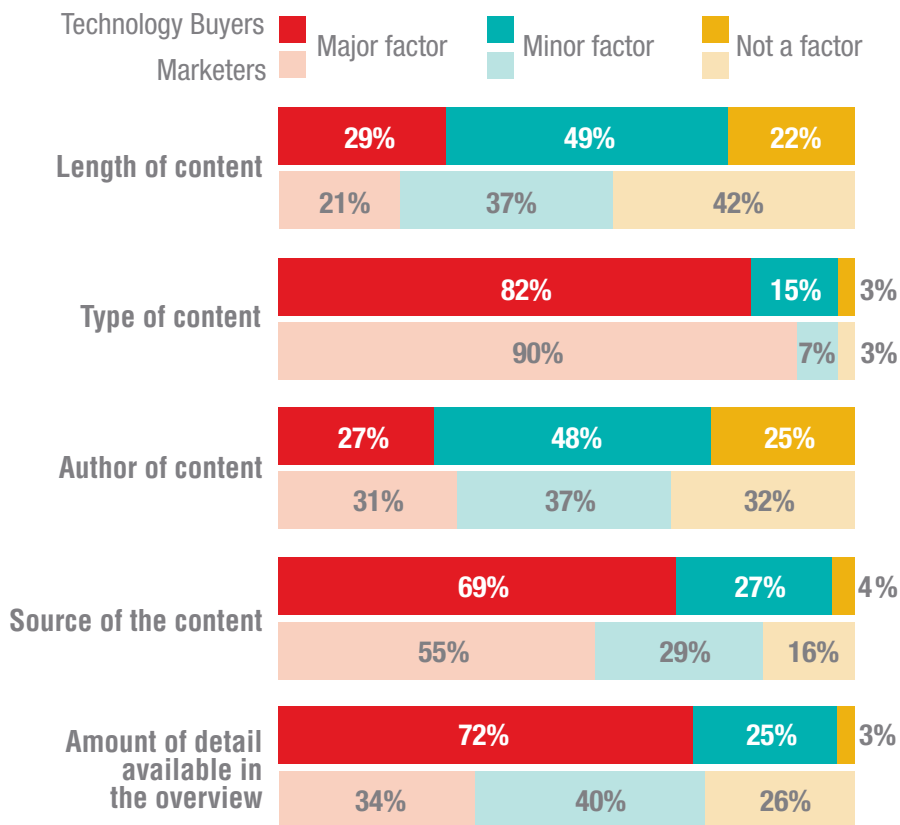


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Marketers and Technology Buyers Are Not Always Aligned on Key Factors in Registration

Eighty-two percent of technology buyers say that the type of content is the most important factor in their willingness to register to download marketing material. The next most important factors for technology buyers are the amount of detail provided in the overview (72%) and the source of the content (69%). Marketers align well with buyers here, with fully 90% considering the type of content the key determinant in asking for registration, followed by the source of the content (55%). Marketers underestimate the value of a detailed overview, though, with only 34% considering that a factor in asking for registration.

- ▶ **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** When considering whether to register for a particular piece of content, how much do you factor in the following:
- ▶ **MARKETERS:** Which of the following are factors when determining whether to require registration for a particular piece of content?

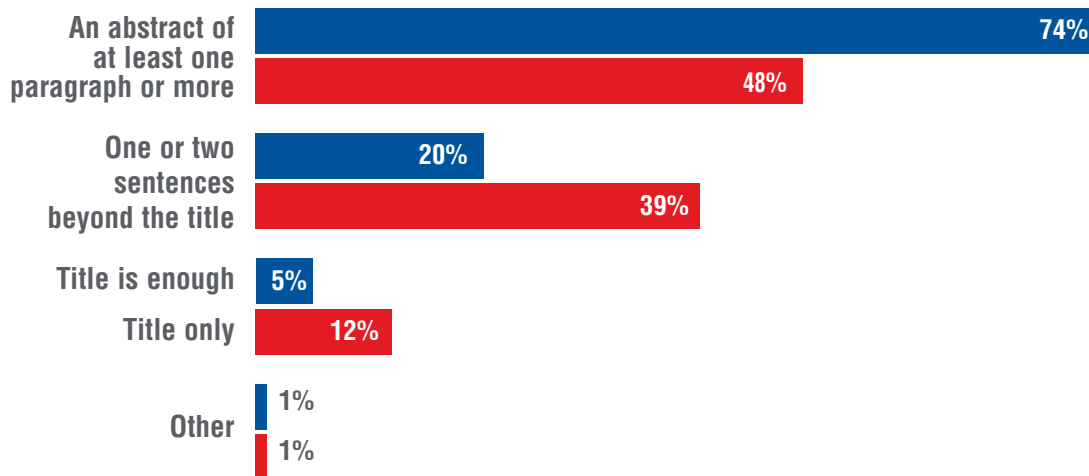


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A Detailed Overview Encourages Technology Buyers to Register for Downloads

Nearly three-quarters of technology buyers report that they prefer to see an abstract of at least one paragraph before they decide whether to register for a particular download. Yet, less than half of marketers provide a full paragraph abstract prior to requesting registration information for their content, though an additional 39% provide a short overview of a sentence or two. For those, time spent adding a few additional sentences could make a significant difference in the perceived value of their materials and the number of registrations their content delivers.

- ▶ **TECHNOLOGY BUYERS:** *How much of an overview do you like to see in order to determine whether or not to register for a particular offer?*
- ▶ **MARKETERS:** *How much of a content overview do you typically provide prior to asking for registration information?*



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About Us

About KnowledgeStorm

KnowledgeStorm is the Internet's top-ranked search resource for technology solutions and information. Through the KnowledgeStorm Network of premier partners and its extensive search expertise, KnowledgeStorm is able to reach technology buyers and deliver the information they need no matter where their search begins. KnowledgeStorm, with its network, search expertise and performance tools and services, is a powerful resource for technology vendors, providing them the most opportunities to reach buyers on the Internet and convert them into Web leads. For more information, call (877) 340-9274 or visit www.knowledgestorm.com.

About MarketingSherpa

MarketingSherpa is a research firm publishing real-life Case Studies, practical know-how and benchmark data on what works in marketing today. More than 237,000 marketing professionals read MarketingSherpa each week to discover how to improve their results. *The Economist*, *Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site* and *Entrepreneur.com* have all praised MarketingSherpa's content. In addition to eight, free, weekly newsletters, MarketingSherpa publishes Benchmark Guides, Buyer's Guides and How-to Handbooks. Readers can meet MarketingSherpa's researchers at MarketingSherpa's annual Case Study-based Summits: Selling Subscriptions Online Summit (every May in NYC), Email Marketing Summit (every February in Florida) and the B-to-B Demand Generation Summit (every fall in Boston and San Francisco.)

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About the Connecting Through Content Series

The *Connecting through Content Series* is a succession of thought-leadership studies conducted by KnowledgeStorm and MarketingSherpa that examines the role online content plays in generating quality leads and the most effective ways to develop and distribute content that technology buyers want to see and use.

The series includes:

Issue One: Content Development, March 2007

Issue Two: Content Distribution, May 2007

Issue Three: Performance Measurement and Lead Nurturing, Summer 2007