



SEO Trends & Predictions for 2023

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Content

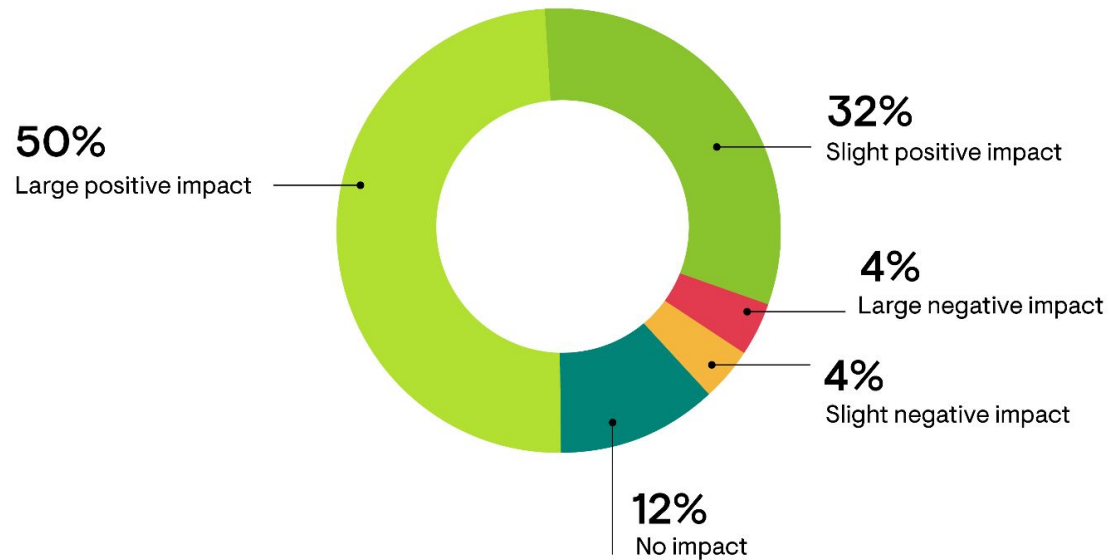
- [The Current State of Marketing](#)
- [The State of SEO in 2023](#)
- [The State of Content Marketing in 2023](#)
- [Methodology](#)

SEO Trends & Predictions

The Current State of Marketing

2022 Year in Review: The Impact of SEO on Marketing Performance and Goals

What impact did SEO have on your marketing performance and goals in 2022?



82%

reported **SEO had a positive impact** on marketing performance and goals in 2022.

Takeaway:

For 2023 and beyond, **SEO will continue to increase in importance** for all businesses, regardless of size, due to its cost-effectiveness, ability to increase visibility and reach, and long-term benefits.



"Despite the higher level of competition and quality needed to rank well in competitive markets, as well as shifts in Google search results' visibility that can end up harming CTR in certain scenarios, it's outstanding to see that **SEO efforts pay in such a high share of projects**. I expect that due to the current and expected economic scenario, this plays a key factor when deciding which channels to keep investing and double down on."

- **Aleyda Solis**,
International SEO Consultant & Founder at Orainti

Trends & Predictions

Expect Google's volatility to intensify moving forward.

- **Think:** Overlapping updates, faster rollouts, transitioning away from more traditional ranking factors, and AI experimentation in SERPs to answer more questions directly.



“**Visual search** to become **more prominent** as Google looks to compete with TikTok search disruption.”

- **Patrick Reinhart**,
VP of Services & Thought Leadership
at Conductor

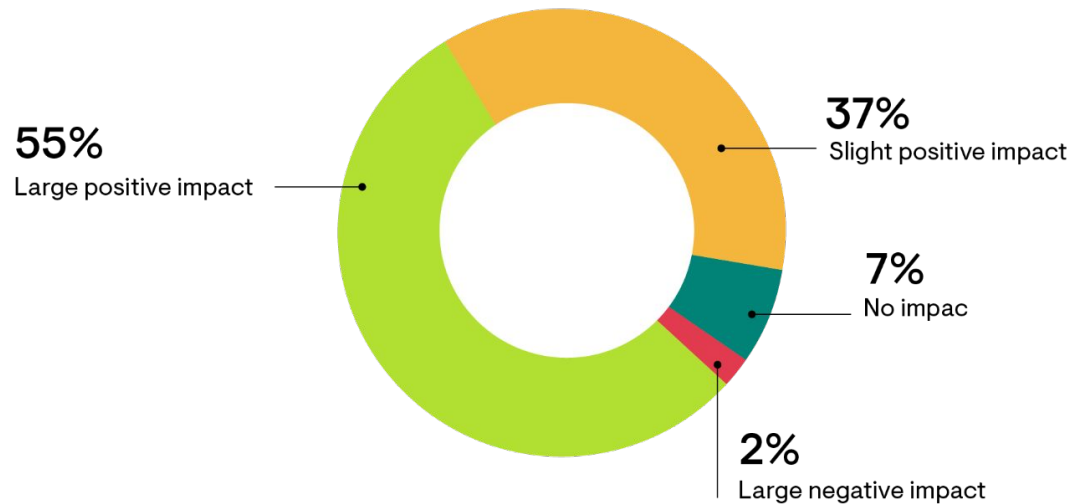
- Following SEO best practices for images (alt tags, load speeds, responsiveness, etc.) will become more critical as the popularity of visual search grows.
- But this isn't limited to images; now is the time to prioritize and invest in video marketing and video SEO.

Many marketers are likely to forget Universal Analytics is going dark on July 1, 2023.

- Recommendation: **Implement strategies** now to prepare for this or risk significant website performance analytics challenges mid-year.

2022 Year in Review: The Impact of Content on Marketing Performance and Goals

What impact did content marketing have on your marketing performance and goals in 2022?



92% reported **content marketing** had a **positive impact** on marketing performance and goals in 2022.

Takeaway:
Content marketing remains a highly effective marketing strategy that **produces a positive impact nearly 100% of the time**. This data reaffirms content marketing is a channel worth investing in for all companies, regardless of size.

Trends & Predictions

Organizations, especially enterprises, that have seen the impact of content marketing on business objectives will likely increase investments in content marketing across all channels in 2023 and beyond.

2023 will usher in a wave of companies experimenting with AI-generated content from emerging tools like ChatGPT in hopes that it can replace the investment in content writers or marketers.

- As [CNET learned](#), **AI-generated content will not replace content marketers**. This type of content needs fact-checking and often includes plagiarization. Additionally, Google has already begun flagging poor or spammy AI-generated content.
- Instead, ChatGPT and similar AI innovations will provide the most impact by automating time-consuming tasks like topic generation for content marketers.
 - **Remember:** These innovations will not replace content marketers. Content marketers remain a core business need; invest in them.

2022 Year in Review: Lead Generation Channels Ranked

In 2022, which channels generated the most conversions?

Leader	SEO	Content	Web
1 Paid Search	1 Organic Search	1 Social	1 Social
2 Social	2 Social	2 Direct	2 Direct
3 Email	3 Paid Search	3 Paid Search	3 Paid Search
4 Direct	4 Direct	4 Press	4 Organic Search
5 Press	5 Referral	5 Organic Search	5 Email
6 Referral	6 Email	6 Events	6 Events
7 Organic Search	7 Events	7 Emails	7 Press
8 Events	8 Press	8 Referral	8 Referral

Takeaway:

SEO experts ranked Organic Search as the #1 lead generation channel for 2022, while leaders ranked Paid Search as the #1 lead generation channel for 2022.

- Why the discrepancy?** Marketing leaders often identify Paid Search as a top lead driver because it is one of the easiest channels to measure ROI. These leaders often lack clear insight into SEO ROI as it's difficult to measure, while SEO experts likely ranked Organic Search higher as they have direct insight into its impact on lead generation.



"It's concerning to see such a big gap between how SEOs vs. Leaders see the impact of SEO efforts on conversions and shows the **fundamental need for better communication and reporting** towards non-technical decision makers."

- **Aleyda Solis**,
International SEO Consultant & Founder at Orainti

Trends & Predictions

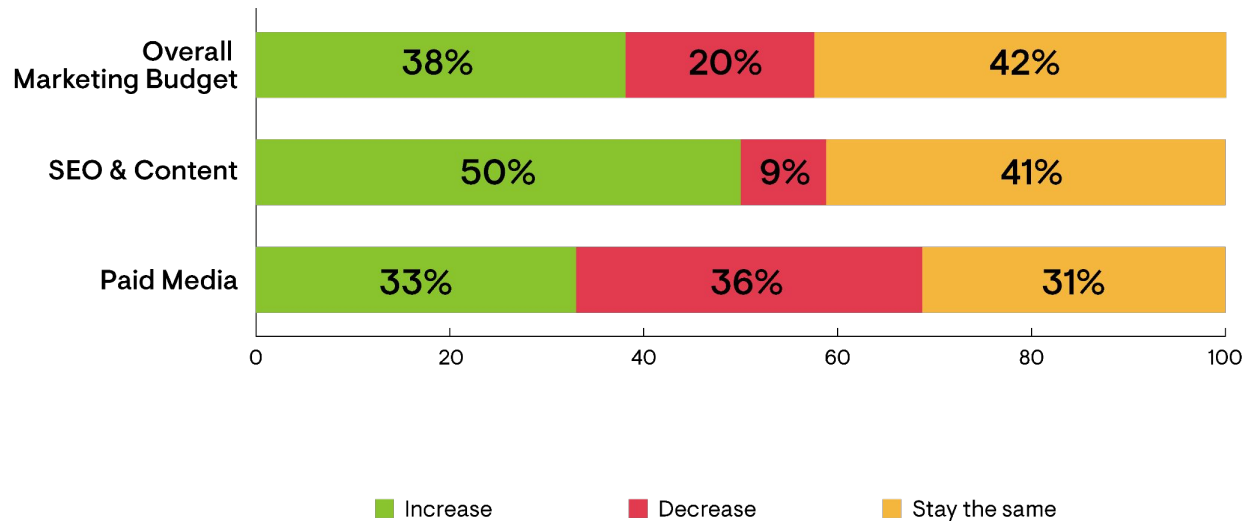
Expect increased investments in, and prioritization of, enterprise SEO software that enables proper SEO ROI attribution in 2023. Leaders want to better understand the value of SEO and these investments will help executives start viewing SEO as more than just a top-of-funnel traffic driver.

Unable to tie SEO efforts to impact? [Schedule a demo of Conductor](#), the leading enterprise SEO platform, and see how it can transform your SEO reporting.



SEO & Content Marketing Budget

In 2023, how do you expect your SEO and content marketing budget will change?



Takeaways:
Expect a majority of marketing budgets to **remain flat** as we enter 2023.

- **SEO & content marketing** budget allocation is expected to **increase**, while **paid media** budget allocation is expected to **decrease**.

Trends & Predictions

With [significant layoffs from major tech organizations](#), including Microsoft, Google, Meta, and Amazon, during 2022 and the start of 2023, business leaders will remain focused on cutting costs and maximizing marketing budget allocations as economic uncertainty continues.

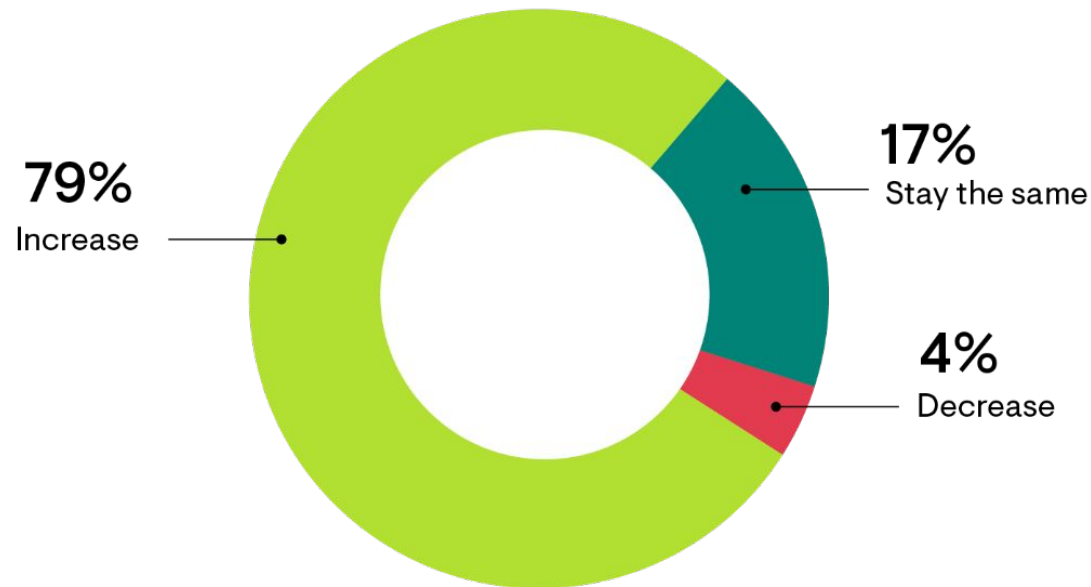
Paid media budget allocation could continue to decrease, a trend we've seen since the height of the pandemic when companies significantly reduced paid budgets to conserve spend as much as possible. As a result of this shift, more companies began to understand the power and value of organic as it emerged as the primary lead generation channel with paid media powered down.

Another factor driving paid media investments down is the surging CPC rates for highly competitive keywords. The money you spent on paid last year will not have the same impact this year as campaigns become more and more expensive for the same number of clicks and conversions. Additionally, paid campaigns are becoming less targeted due to evolving third-party cookie regulations.

Companies that recognize the opportunities organic search provides to drive reliable, qualified leads, analyze and understand audience behavior via first-party data, and overcome rising challenges associated with paid media (inflated CPC costs, impending third-party cookie elimination, etc.) will increase budget allocation for SEO and content initiatives.

2023 Marketing Goals

In 2023, do you expect your marketing goals will decrease, remain the same, or increase?

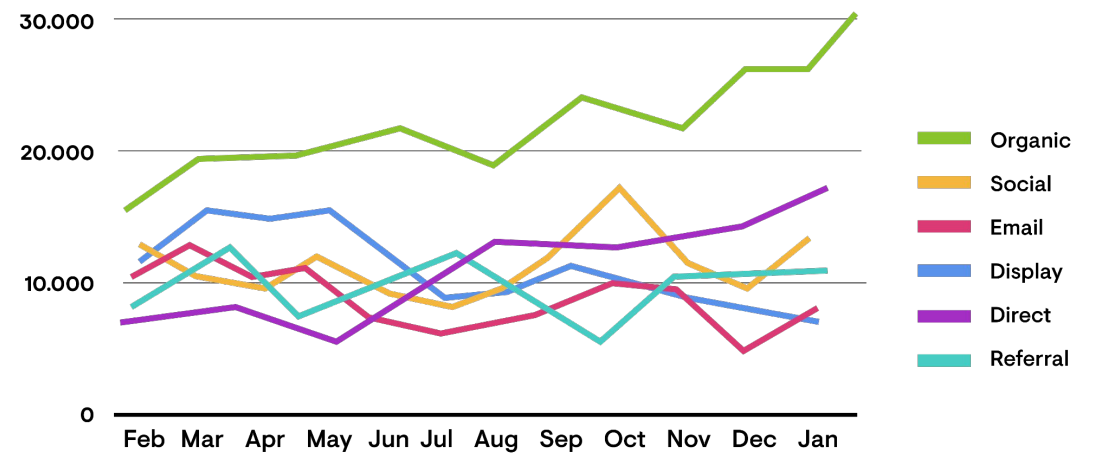


Takeaway:

79% of marketers reported goals would increase for 2023, despite overall marketing budgets remaining flat.

Trends & Predictions

The 'do more with less' mentality is evident as we head into another year of economic uncertainty where business leaders are looking for improved marketing results despite no change in total spend. **Leaders need their marketing experts to identify and maximize efforts in channels that produce the highest ROI, like organic search.** Iterative and agile content marketing and SEO initiatives are going to be the keys to achieving these goals.



SEO Trends & Predictions

The State of SEO in 2023

Top SEO Technology Pain Points for 2023

What is your primary pain point with SEO technology?

Marketing Leaders

The majority (43%) **identified siloed data and the manual work** associated with tracking and measuring performance.

SEOs

The majority (47%) cited a **lack of accessibility and ease of use** for new users.

Trends & Predictions

To overcome ROI tracking and performance measurement challenges, marketing leaders will play a more active role in evaluating current SEO tools they have in place and potential SEO software alternatives that better meet their reporting needs.

SEOs will be hit hard as the 'do more with less' mentality ramps up. They will need help prioritizing impactful strategies to drive traffic and automating time-consuming, manual workflows to maximize limited resources. Identifying and implementing an enterprise SEO platform that best supports these needs is key to SEO success in 2023.



2023 SEO Technology Requirements

Thinking about SEO technology, which of the feature capabilities below do you find most valuable to your current goals?

1	Technical SEO
2	Product usability
3	Keyword capabilities
4	Dashboarding & data presentation
5	Automation

Takeaways:

Technical SEO was the clear winner when respondents were asked to rank a list of 14 SEO technology capabilities based on which they value most.

This comes as no surprise given the increasing competition within search. Forward-thinking organizations recognize that a **strong technical SEO foundation will become a key differentiator** to increase overall organic visibility and set planned content up for the highest likelihood of ranking in the top 10.

Trends & Predictions

Technical SEO is one of the capabilities most often found lacking in modern SEO technologies, and it's also increasingly difficult to find SEOs with comprehensive technical SEO expertise. Leaders are catching on and looking to overcome these challenges by investing in SEO technology capable of **analyzing, monitoring, and implementing technical SEO improvements**.

Enterprise organizations relying on SEO technologies that **don't** provide comprehensive functionality across these five top-valued categories risk wasting limited spend on solutions unable to help marketers achieve core business objectives.

- **Translation:** SEOs must become advocates for the SEO technologies that best meet business needs and educate leaders on the potential impact of sacrificing core functionality requirements to save on costs.



"I would agree that technical SEO is becoming increasingly important to organizations. Technical SEO has become more complex over time, with the advent of new challenges with JavaScript rendering, crawl budget limitations, increasingly large and complex websites, mobile-first indexing, the Page Experience signal, and more.

Not only do these concepts require significant technical chops to analyze and address, but keeping up with the latest trends and developments in technical SEO is also a full-time job. Beyond that, when it comes to analyzing, measuring, and reporting on data from large websites, skills like big data visualization, Python, SQL, and other programming languages become invaluable. **The types of SEOs that can handle these challenges effectively are harder to come by** than SEOs who know how to do keyword research and optimize content."

- Lily Ray,
Sr. Director of SEO & Head of Organic Research at Amsive Digital

Top SEO Priorities for 2023

What are the top priorities related to SEO your organization should be focused on in 2023?

1	Improving the customer and user experience
2	Optimizing your website's technical SEO
3	Increasing brand awareness
4	Implementing new SEO automation techniques (AI, ML, etc.)
5	Increasing SEO collaboration across teams and departments

Takeaway:

2023 is the year when organizations will be investing heavily in CX + UX improvements and optimizing website technical SEO—both ranked as the top two SEO priorities by marketing leaders and SEOs.



"It's not surprising to see 'improving the customer & user experience' as the top SEO priority following Google's updates last year and EEAT-related best practices and communication, which can become more challenging when automating certain activities, especially those related to content development."

- Aleyda Solis,
International SEO Consultant & Founder at Orai

Trends & Predictions

Customer-centric will transition beyond a buzzword and become a guiding principle across all enterprise digital marketing strategies in 2023 for two reasons:

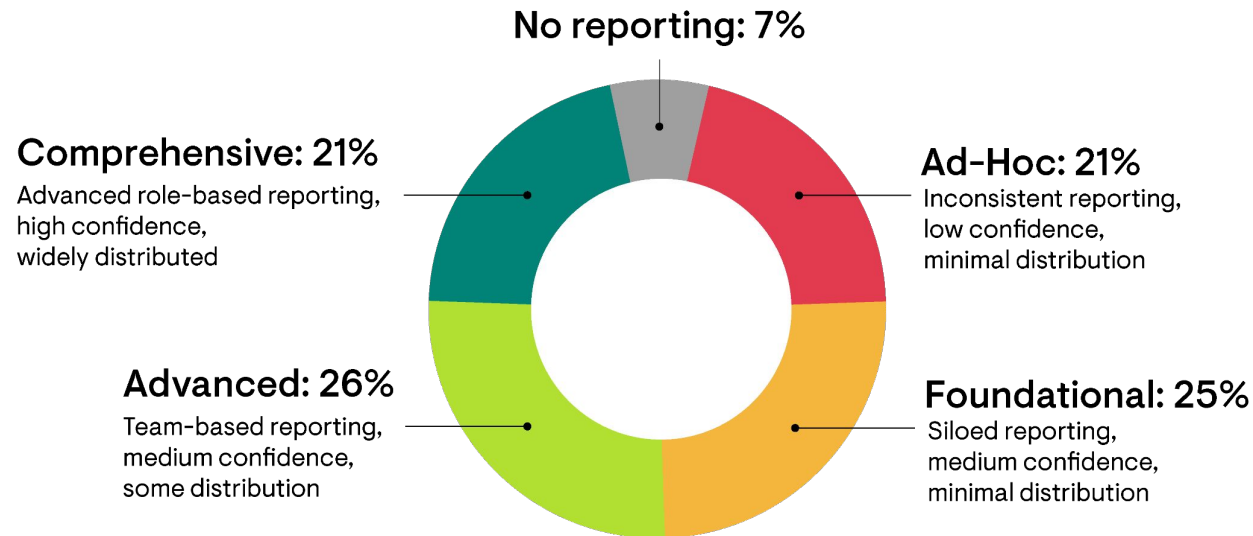
1. As economic uncertainty continues, brands are more apt to invest in improving digital experiences—especially in eCommerce—rather than in-person services due to lessons learned during the pandemic. While consumer behaviors may adapt and evolve, as we saw throughout 2020 and 2021, the one constant is their preference to interact with brands, find answers to their problems, and make purchases **online**.
2. Page experience factors will continue to become a more significant ranking factor as Google prioritizes pages that provide the best UX. Companies with a pulse on the latest search industry trends are prioritizing UX and CX improvements now to protect and improve rankings moving forward.

Improving technical SEO and increasing brand awareness will be the two key strategies brands are implementing in 2023 to improve organic visibility of content and organic traffic.

All eyes will be on the emerging use cases of AI in SEO to boost efficiency due to recent innovations like ChatGPT. While the long-running (but less shiny) priority of increasing SEO collaboration across teams will remain of equal importance for brands that understand the critical role cross-departmental collaboration—AKA humans—play in effective enterprise SEO and content marketing.

The State of SEO Reporting in 2023

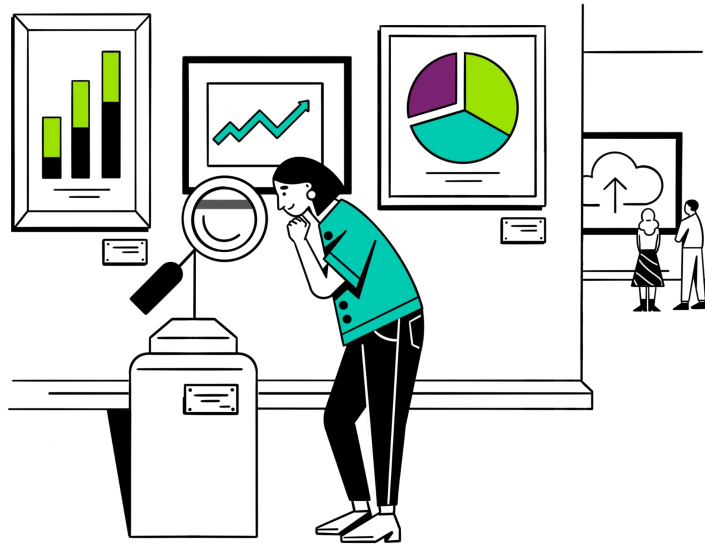
Which of the following best describes your organization's current approach to SEO reporting:



Takeaway:
Only **1 in 5 brands** categorize their SEO reporting as comprehensive.

Trends & Predictions

As SEO investments are expected to increase in 2023, organizations will also need to increase investments in SEO software to ensure proper SEO ROI tracking and attribution to prove the overall value to the business.

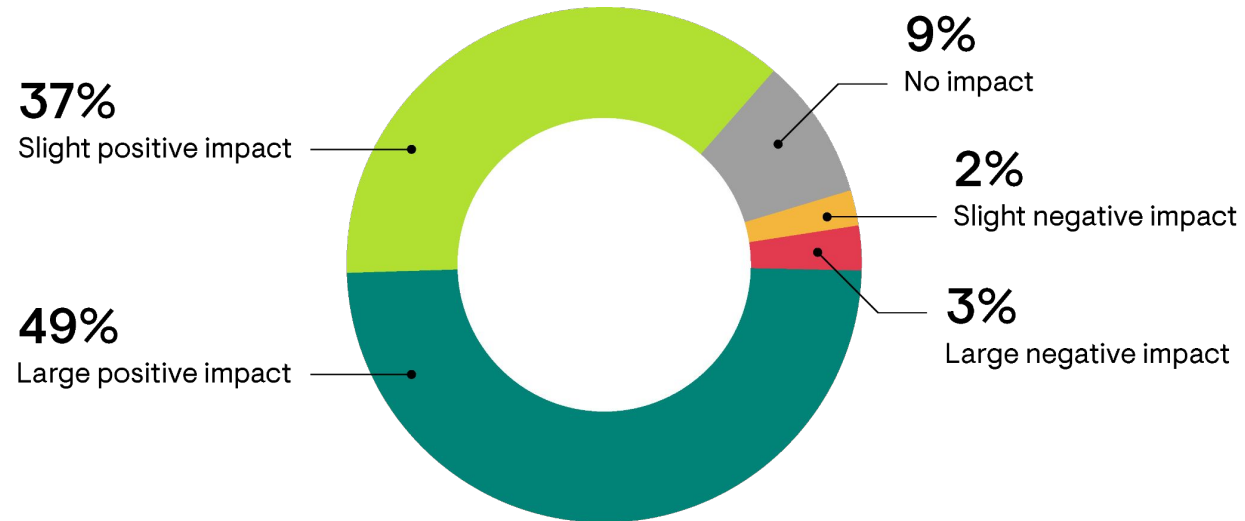


“For enterprise brands, **achieving a comprehensive level of SEO reporting will be vital to elevate SEO strategies from a reactive to a proactive approach** by enabling marketers to test, iterate, and pivot, as needed, based on data-driven insights.”

- **Patrick Reinhart,**
VP of Services & Thought Leadership at Conductor

The Role of SEO in Content Marketing

What role has SEO played in content marketing in 2022?



Takeaway:
86% of marketers reported **SEO had a positive impact on content marketing efforts** over the last 12 months.

Trends & Predictions

SEO and content marketing collaboration and alignment are the driving factors behind maximizing content marketing impact. Skills for SEO and content marketing roles will continue to overlap as these teams and skill sets become more blended from an organizational and content creation perspective.

[14% of enterprise organizations reported SEO sits with the content team](#), according to data sourced from our 2023 Digital Marketing Salary Guide. This speaks to the efforts from leadership to break down barriers between these groups to improve collaboration and alignment throughout all stages of the content planning and creation processes.

Additionally, expect more enterprise brands to transition SEO expertise from an agency to an in-house team to enable SEO agility. [59% of enterprise businesses reported having an entirely in-house SEO team in 2022](#), according to data sourced from our 2023 Digital Marketing Salary Guide. Anticipate this number to increase throughout 2023, making it that much harder to attract and retain qualified SEO experts.

SEO Trends & Predictions

The State of Content Marketing in 2023

Content Topics of Interest for 2023: Title-Specific

Which content topics do you find the most interesting to read?

Marketing Leaders	SEOs	Content Marketers
1 Benefits and tips to improve UX	1 Driving digital transformation in your organization	1 Benefits and tips to improve UX
2 Increasing collaboration across departments	2 Optimizing marketing channel mix and improving ROI with organic	2 Increasing collaboration across departments
3 Optimizing marketing channel mix and improving ROI with organic	3 Exploring MarTech strides in automation, AI, and cloud computing	3 Optimizing marketing channel mix and improving ROI with organic

Takeaway:

Driving digital transformation within the larger organization is an important topic of interest for SEOs but it didn't make the cut for the top 3 topics marketing leaders are most interested in.

Trends & Predictions

SEOs view digital transformation as a significant hurdle to overcome to increase collaboration across departments, but marketing leaders seem to overlook this connection.

- **SEOs are onto something here.** Prioritizing digital transformation by investing in scalable enterprise SEO technologies and solutions helps resolve a wide range of critical business challenges, including SEO measurement and reporting gaps, data silos between departments and teams, inability to collaborate, and more.

Expect to see an increase in published content around these top-ranked topics throughout 2023. (**Tip:** Make room in your content marketing strategy to prioritize these topics if aligned with your target audience.)

In-Demand Content Marketing Formats for 2023

Which content formats are you most interested in seeing more of in the future?

Most interested in	
1	Research reports
2	Social media
3	News articles

Least interested in	
1	eBooks
2	Blog posts
3	Press releases

Leaders Most Interested In: Social and News

SEOs Most Interested In: Research reports and Videos

Content Marketers Most Interested In: Research reports and Social

Takeaways:

- **Leaders** engage with content where they spend the most time: on LinkedIn and popular, high-quality news sites.
- **SEOs** prioritize content formats that verify claims, recommendations, or benchmarks with data and want to be able to digest this information quickly via short-form videos.
- **Content marketers** prefer best practices and tips in the form of data-based research and look for inspiration on how to translate long-form content into digestible, engaging social posts.

Trends & Predictions

Press releases serve a specific purpose to educate the larger community about a significant business update, but is anyone reading these? Press releases are important to invest in for PR features and commentary opportunities, but they are decreasing in overall value. Brands with limited budgets in 2023 should prioritize investments in more engaging content formats.

eBooks and blog posts are now viewed as fluffier and less reliable content formats as they often lack updated data-driven research and instead tend to focus on surface-level insights.

For 2023, forward-thinking marketers will increase investments in research report creation and resources to translate these data-driven insights into digestible, engaging social media posts. The content marketing focus of the enterprise will be on providing verifiable value through long-form content and conveying that value visually on social.

- **Translation:** Abstract or unverified information is out. Readers want to see the proof behind best practice recommendations, benchmarking, and customer behavior insights. Show them the data! (Increase reach by showing it to them in a visually engaging way on social.)

Top 3 Content Marketing Challenges for 2023

What are the top challenges you face with content marketing?

Top challenges	
1	Generating leads
2	Measuring content ROI
3	Driving traffic to your website

Takeaways:

Generating leads remains the top challenge of content marketing.

Where and how to prove the ROI of content efforts in attribution models remains a challenge for most organizations. No platform or company has been able to identify a simple, scalable methodology to measure the effort, investment, and ROI of content marketing because content supports various functions within marketing and is involved in numerous touch points throughout the funnel.

Trends & Predictions

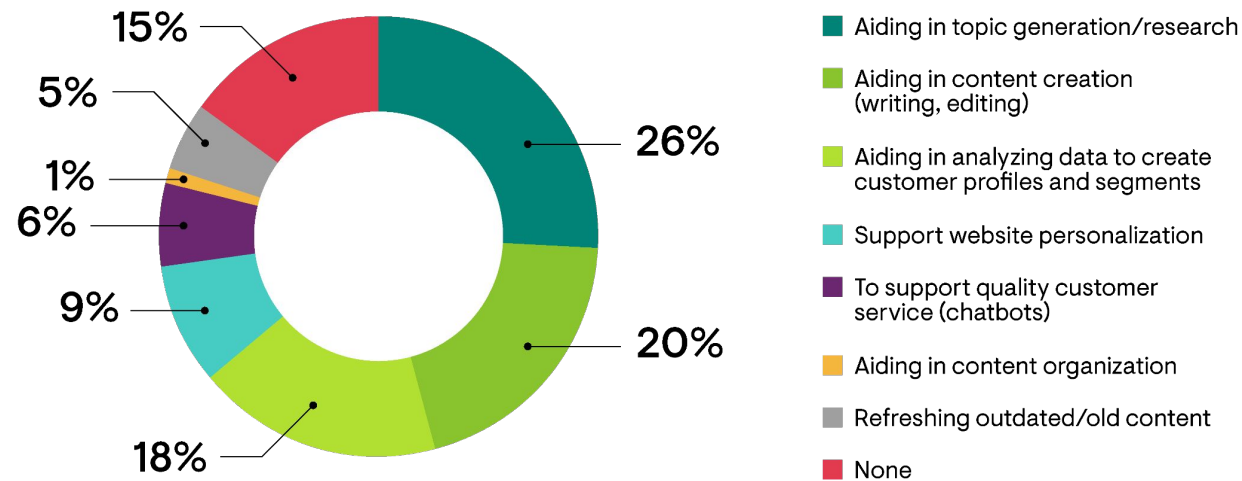
Brands with lower SEO maturity will experiment with different gated content formats to generate more leads in 2023.

Brands with higher SEO maturity will adopt a more strategic approach by targeting intent-driven lead generation through value-driven content—gate or no gate.



The Role of AI in Content Marketing in 2023

What role do you see AI and/or ML playing in content marketing in 2023?



Takeaways:

1 in 4 marketers believes topic generation and research support will be the most significant role AI/ML play in content marketing in 2023.

1 in 5 marketers believes AI/ML will play a role in the writing and editing stages of content creation.

***Note:** A majority of responses were submitted before the launch of ChatGPT.

Trends & Predictions

Disruptive AI/ML-powered innovations (think: ChatGPT) will become valuable tools for SEOs and content marketers to offset tedious tasks like data analysis, keyword research, and topic generation. But AI is not the new Google; keep this in mind.

The Good:

- From a search engine and user perspective, more emphasis and value will be put on unique and original content written by humans for humans vs. AI-generated content.
- Regardless, expect to see a wealth of experimentation from search leaders like Google implementing AI innovations to answer questions and provide more value directly on SERPs.

The Bad:

- OpenAI Co-Founder Sam Altman [tweeted](#), “ChatGPT is incredibly limited, but good enough at some things to create a misleading impression of greatness.”
- Many brands will make the mistake of thinking AI-powered tech can take over content creation in 2023 and invest in these options over human writers and editors (See [CNET's AI-generated content fumble](#)).
 - It's good, but it is not equivalent to the capabilities of a human. At least, not yet.

Methodology

To learn more about the current state of digital marketing, emerging SEO trends, and content marketing predictions for 2023, we ran two independent surveys of a wide range of marketers at organizations of all sizes, from SMBs to enterprises. Data is sourced from the **2023 Impact of SEO & Content Marketing Survey**, run by ClickZ in collaboration with Conductor, of 117 global marketing leaders and digital marketers. Additional data is sourced from the **Conductor SEO & Brand Research Survey** of 341 marketing leaders, SEOs, and content marketers.

In total, nearly 500 marketing and SEO professionals responded to our surveys and shared their insights on the future of SEO to inform the following trends and predictions. We hope you find them as valuable as we have.



The Future of SEO & Content Marketing in 2023

The future of SEO and content marketing in 2023 and beyond looks bright (and busy). Expect more frequent algorithm updates, experimentation with AI content generators, and an increased focus on the user experience in 2023. The tried-and-true marketing strategies outlined in this report will help brands weather whatever economic or industry-specific storms lay ahead. With ongoing economic uncertainty, marketing leaders remain hyperfocused on maximizing efforts in organic search because it produces a high ROI and simultaneously fuels reliable short-term and long-term growth.

Take these trends and predictions into consideration when adapting your current (and future) SEO and content marketing strategies to stay one step ahead of the competition.

[Schedule a free Conductor demo](#) to learn how our enterprise SEO platform and dedicated partnership can help you achieve your 2023 digital marketing goals.