

2022

State of Marketing to Engineers

Reaching Technical Buyers in an Ever-Changing Environment

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2022 State of Marketing to Engineers Report. This marks the fifth consecutive year GlobalSpec and TREW Marketing have partnered to better understand how engineers and technical buyers find the information they need to make critical work-related decisions.

Each year, we've empathized with the industrial marketer's need to justify their marketing spend. They've long needed to make informed decisions on resources – including people, time, and budget – to deliver maximum ROI.

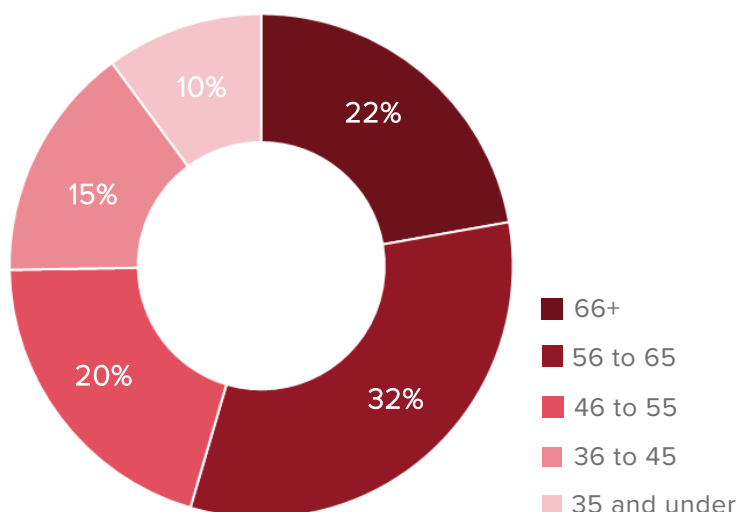
This year, our survey contains a mix of popular topics asked consistently to monitor trends, along with fresh questions that take a deeper dive into particular channels and buying behaviors. This year's research examines valued sales behavior, LinkedIn interaction, and a few new webinar and podcast questions.

The State of Marketing to Engineers Report is designed to help you better understand the information needs of your target audience, giving you critical insights to guide your marketing plans in 2022 and beyond.

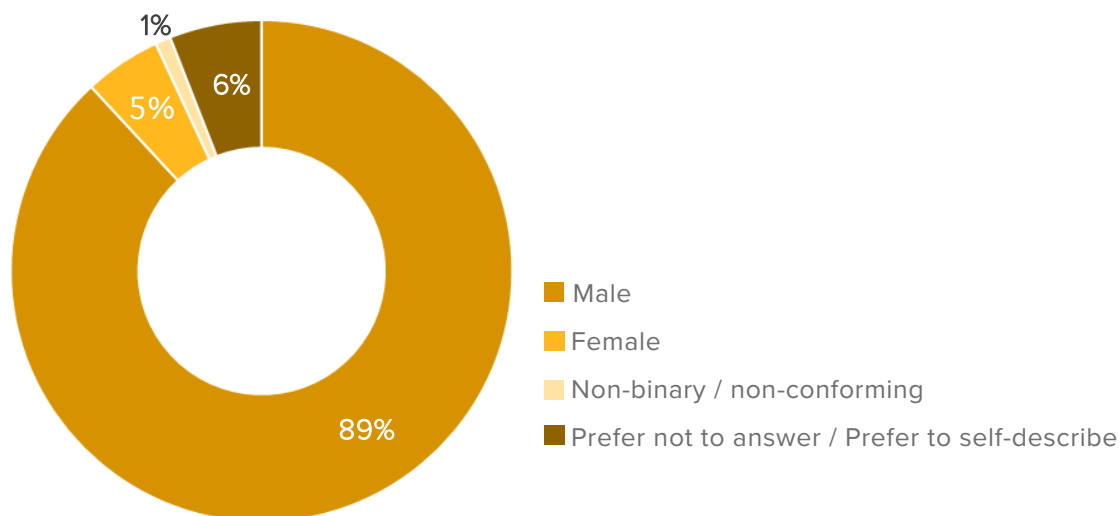
About the Survey Respondents

Over 800 engineers and technical professionals across the globe responded to our most recent survey. Participants were not required to answer each and every question, so sample sizes vary slightly question-to-question. Sample sizes are noted throughout for clarity.

Participants by Age (n = 875)



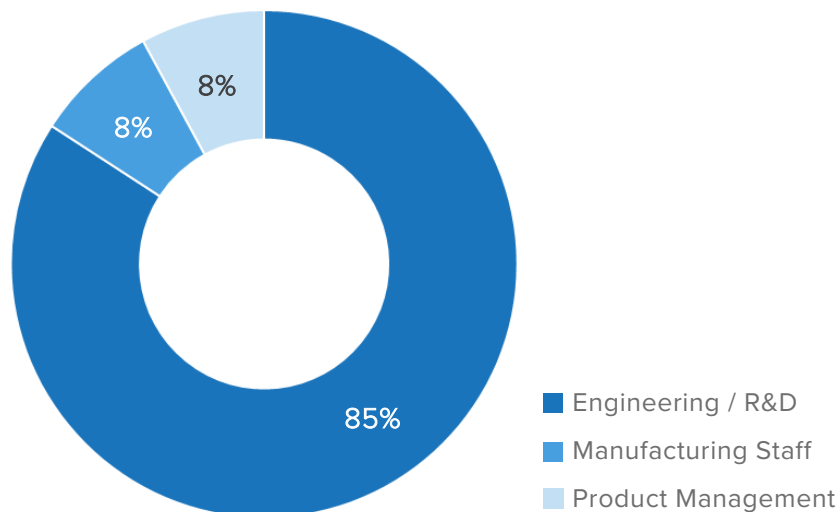
Participants by Gender Identity (n = 748)



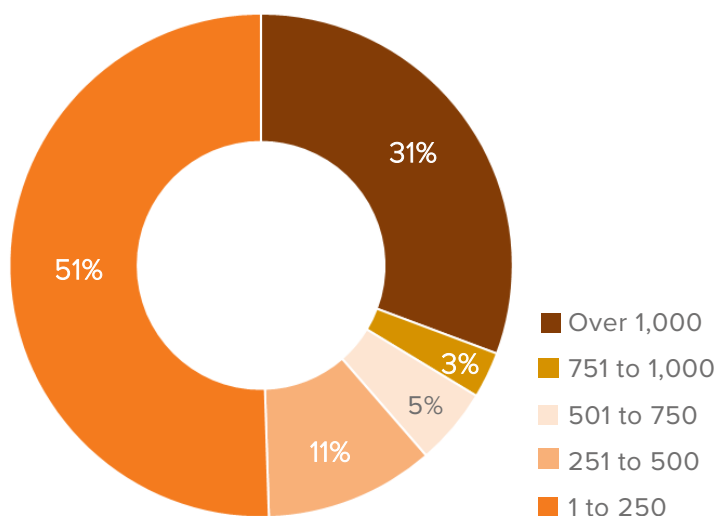
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About the Survey Respondents

Participants by Job Function (n = 878)



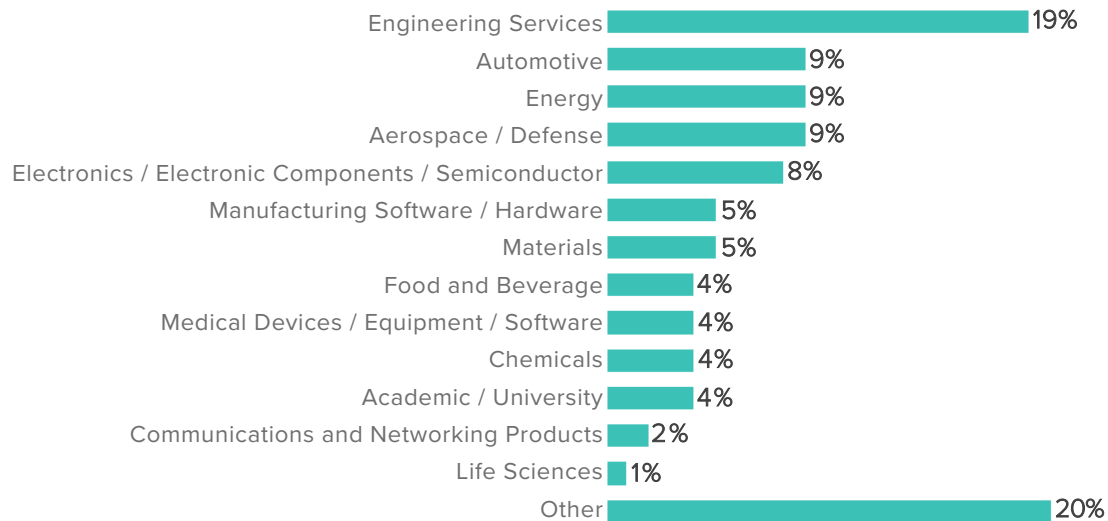
Participants by Company Size (Number of Employees) (n = 876)



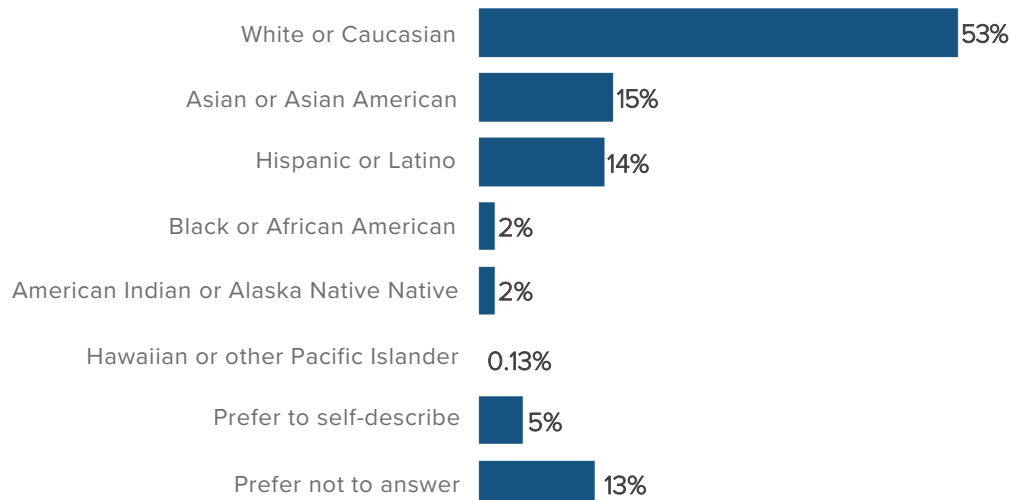
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

About the Survey Respondents

Participants by Primary Industry (n = 880)



Participants by Background (n = 749)



Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or ability to multiselect

Key Takeaways for Industrial Marketers

- Online information sources are the dominant "go-to" for engineers researching a product or service for a business purchase. Engineers still turn to supplier / vendor and trade publication websites, but industry directory websites grew in popularity, jumping to the third most preferred source this year. Industry association groups were also ranked highly.
- 83 percent of engineers are willing to fill out a form in exchange for technical content. The most useful types of content cited by engineers included a long list! Datasheets was the clear winner, however CAD drawings, product demo videos, white papers, and how-to videos were all cited as highly useful.
- YouTube and LinkedIn dominate social media use, with GitHub cited as a distant third. 81 percent of engineers spend some amount of time reading and/or sharing information with their LinkedIn networks. The most unpopular channels include: Twitter again this year, along with Reddit, Instagram, and Clubhouse.
- Podcast listenership is on the rise, with 73 percent of engineers listening to work-related podcasts throughout their week, growing by 33 percent over the previous year. When asked to recommend a podcast, our survey respondents most commonly listed industry-oriented and technology- / innovation-oriented content.
- Time spent watching video is increasing. 96 percent of engineers consume videos for work-related purposes, with 53 percent watching one hour or more weekly.
- Enewsletters remain popular, but subscriptions have dipped. While 89 percent of engineers subscribe to at least one newsletter, there has been a two-year downward trend in total subscriptions.
- The most annoying sales behaviors are lack of technical expertise and poor responsiveness. The majority of engineers prefer to research online knowing there is a vendor sales representative available to assist as needed.

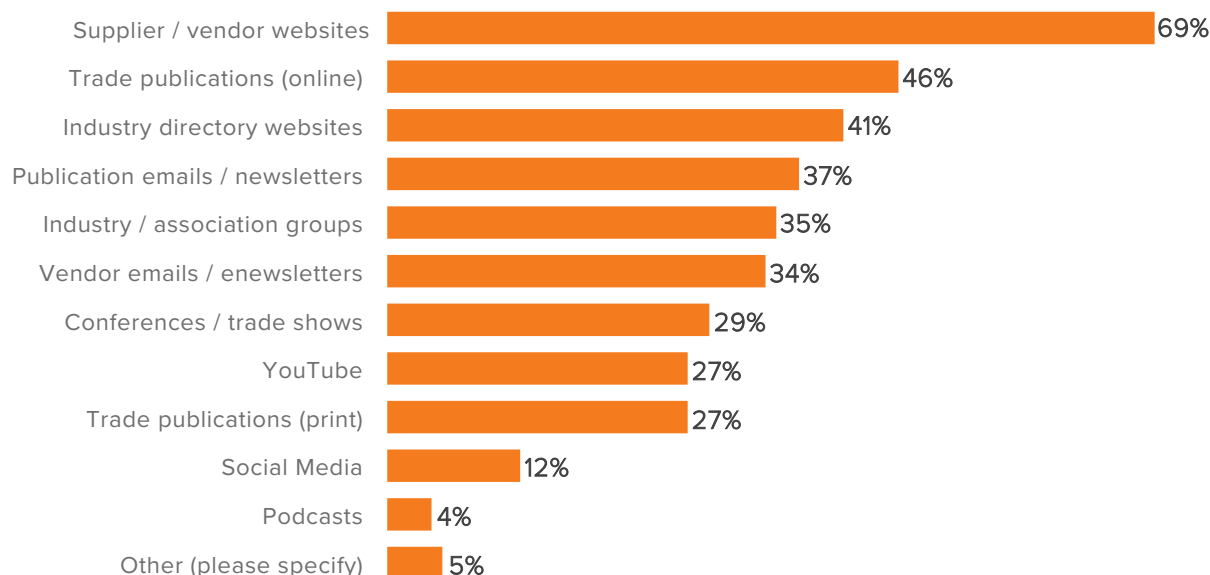
Survey Findings

Where Engineers Find Information

When researching a product or service for a business purchase, 69 percent of engineers go right to the source: supplier / vendor websites. They'll also check online trade publications, industry directory websites, and publication emails / newsletters. Industry / association groups were also popular information sources.

Engineers are least likely to seek information for business-related purchases on social media and podcasts. That said, you'll see on the next page that these sources still have a place in the technical content ecosystem.

Where do you routinely seek information when researching a product or service for a business purchase? (n = 883)



Thought Starter:

Given the importance of websites as an information source for technical buyers, site usability is more important than ever. How does your website fare?

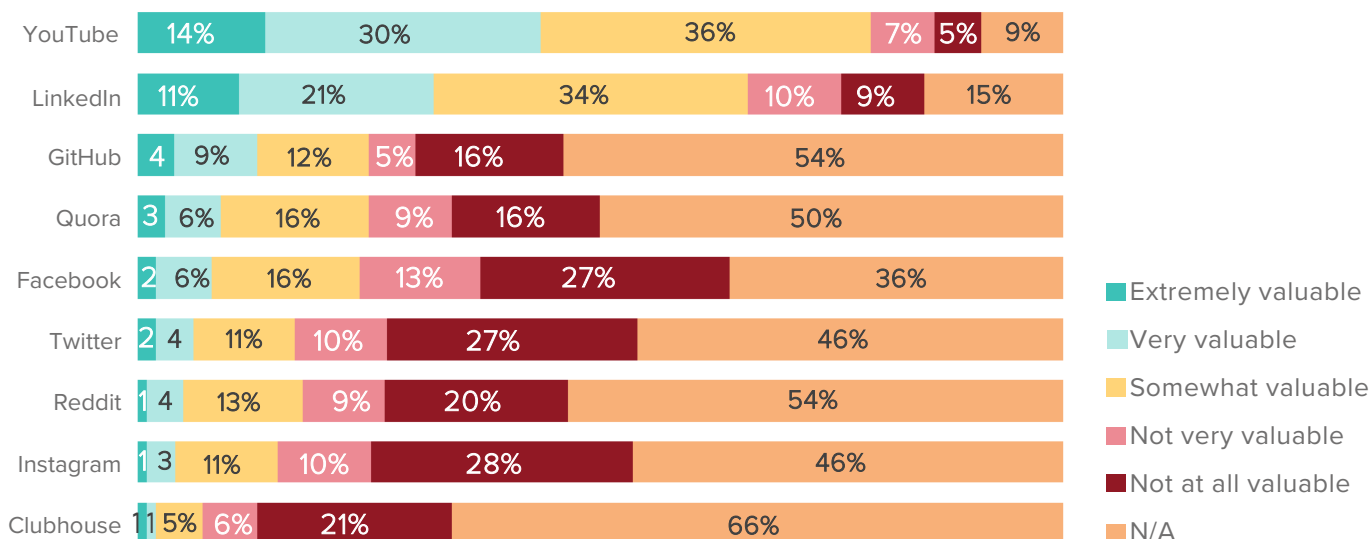
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Survey Findings

Where Engineers Find Information

As shown on the previous page, engineers do not place much value in social media as a whole when it comes to work. This is consistent with years past. However, YouTube, LinkedIn, and GitHub stand out as valued sources for helping engineers stay up to date on the latest trends and technology. Clubhouse, GitHub, and Quora were new additions in 2022.

How valuable are each of the following social media platforms when seeking information on the latest engineering technologies, industry trends, and products? (n = 746)



Thought Starter:

As you consider your 2022 social strategy, audit the engagement patterns of your followers. Do they gravitate towards individual company spokespeople or your branded company account? [LinkedIn's data](#) shows that 30 percent of a company's engagement comes from employees.

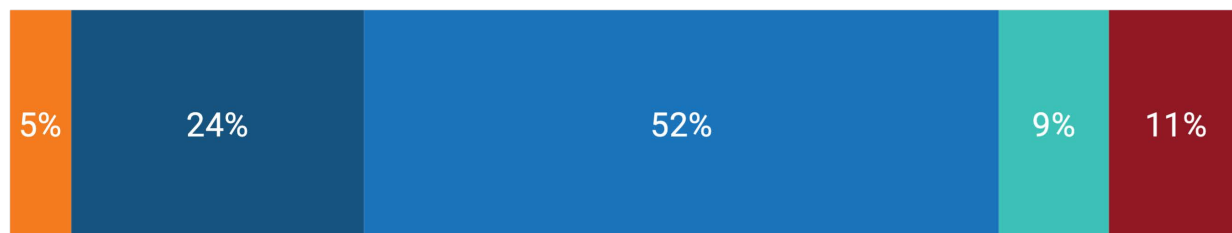
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Where Engineers Find Information

New this year, we wanted to better understand how engineers interact with LinkedIn. 81 percent of engineers spend some amount of time reading and/or sharing information with their LinkedIn networks. 52 percent spend less than one hour and another 29 percent stay online longer. 9 percent reported having a LinkedIn account that they never use, while 11 percent don't have a LinkedIn account at all.

Approximately how much time do you spend per week on LinkedIn reading and/or sharing information with your network? (n = 748)



- More than 5 hours
- Between 1 and 5 hours
- Less than 1 hour
- I have a LinkedIn account, but I never use it.
- I don't have a LinkedIn account.



Thought Starter:

Engineers are on LinkedIn, but you don't have their attention for long, and it pays to have a thoughtful approach to crafting your posts. LinkedIn posts with images have [2X higher](#) engagement than text, and LinkedIn users are [20X more likely](#) to reshare a video.

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

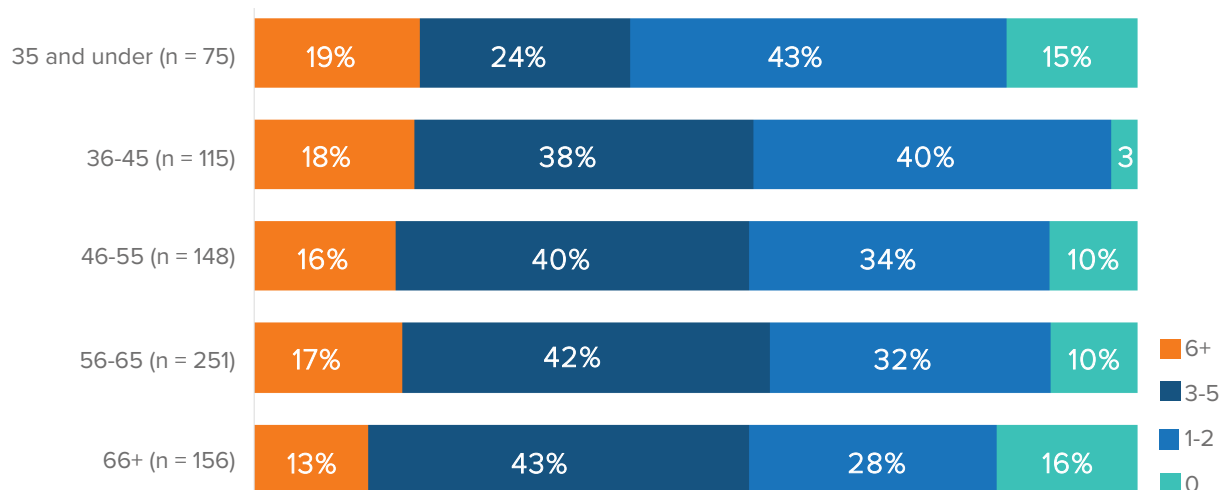
Where Engineers Find Information

89 percent of engineers subscribe to at least one newsletter. 55 percent subscribe to receive at least three newsletters in their inbox, down by 7 percentage points since last year. 11 percent say they don't subscribe to any newsletters, up slightly from the previous year. This may point towards COVID-19-induced email fatigue.

Approximately how many work-related newsletters do you subscribe to? (n = 747)



Approximately how many work-related newsletters do you subscribe to?



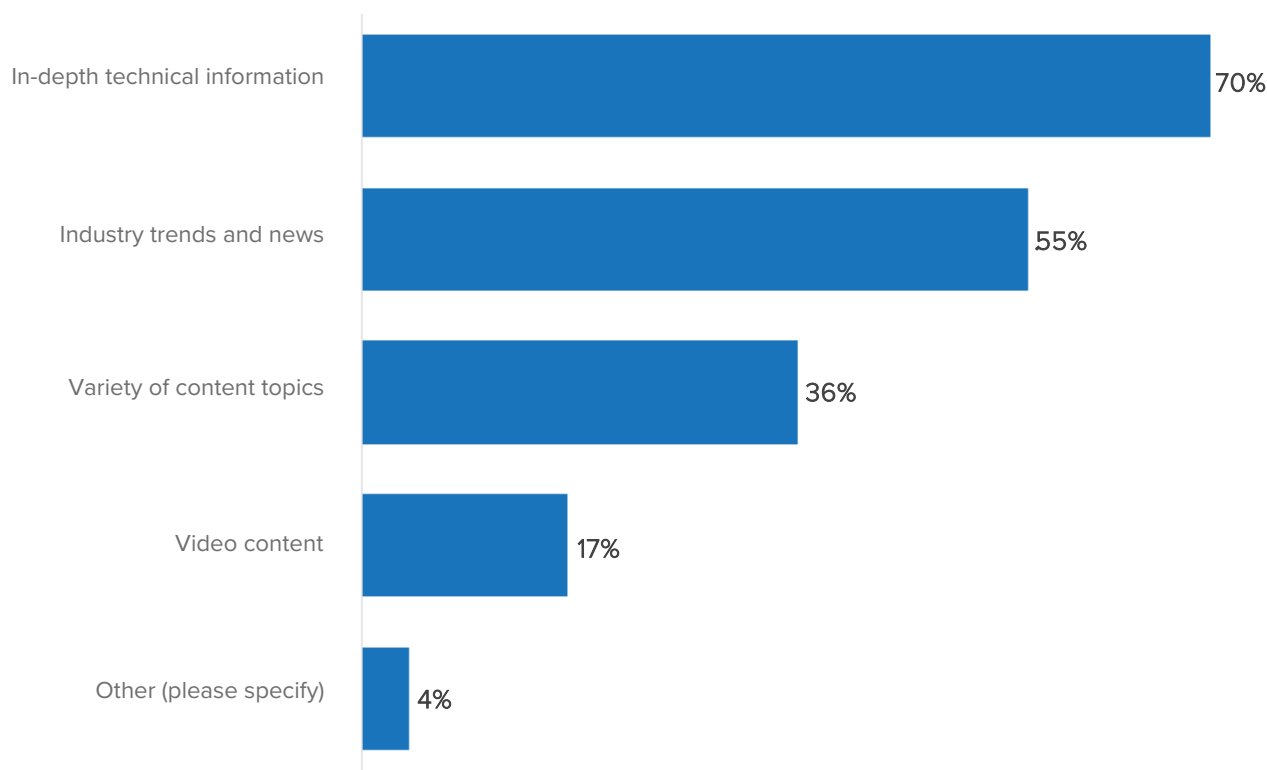
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Where Engineers Find Information

Engineers gravitate towards the technical. It's no surprise that 70 percent are interested in newsletters that feature in-depth technical information, and 55 percent are looking for the latest industry trends and news. Lowest on the list, 17 percent look forward to video content offerings sent directly to their inboxes.

Think of your favorite work-related newsletter. What elements of that newsletter make it a winner? (n = 745)



Thought Starter:

When competing for newsletter subscriptions, how can yours make the cut? Examine your past high-performing content and the elements cited here to inform your editorial strategy.

Percentages may not add to 100% due to ability to multiselect

Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

Consistent with last year, 96 percent of engineers consume videos for work-related purposes throughout the week. 53 percent watch one hour of more, up slightly compared to last year, while another 43 percent consume less than one hour of video content per week.

Approximately how much time per week do you spend watching videos for work-related purposes? (n = 884)



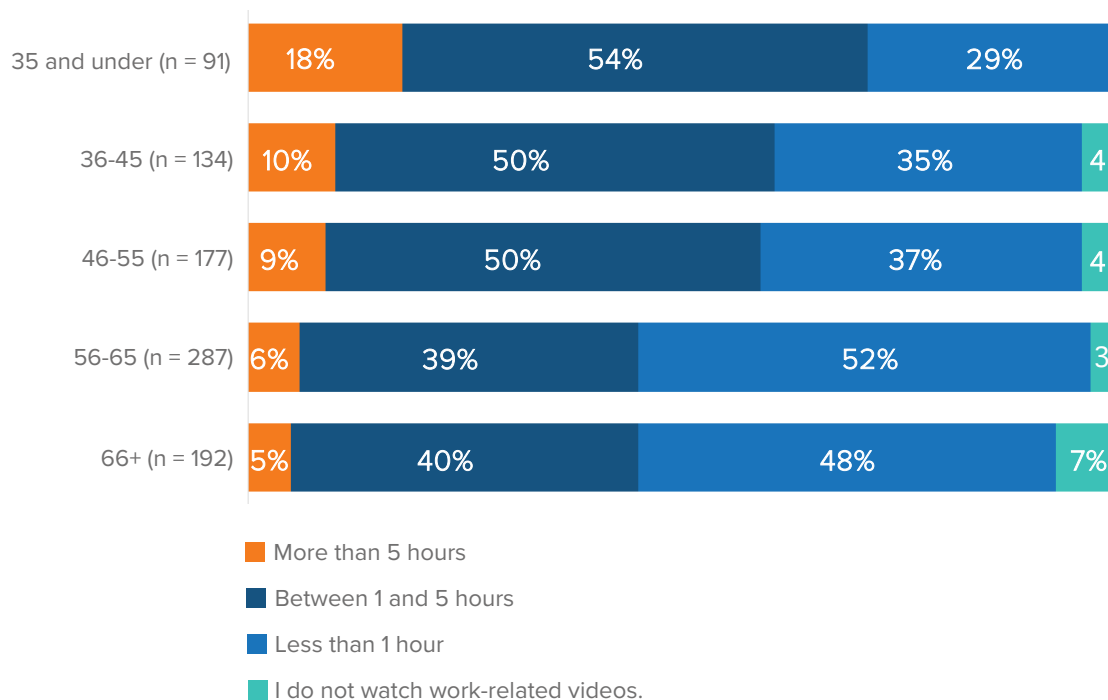
- More than 5 hours
- Between 1 and 5 hours
- Less than 1 hour
- I do not watch work-related videos.

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

Approximately how much time per week do you spend watching videos for work-related purposes?



Thought Starter:

The Content Marketing Institute's report, [Manufacturing Content Marketing Benchmarks, Budgets, and Trends With Insights from 2022](#), showed that 64 percent of manufacturing marketers expect their content marketing budget to increase in 2022, and 85 percent expect continued investment in video in 2022. How does your content marketing investment stack up against the competition?

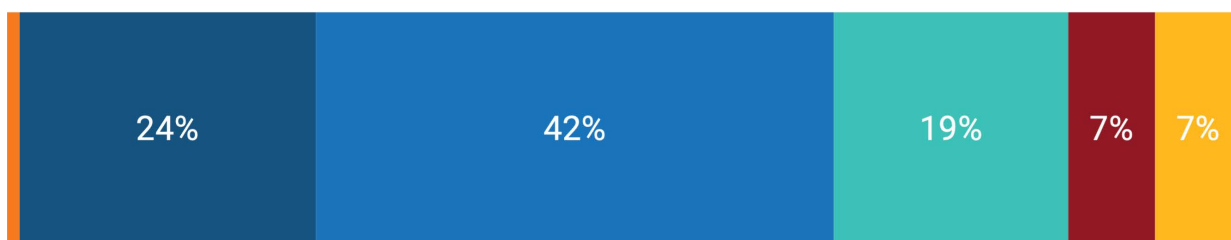
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Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

New this year, we dug deeper on webinars. 42 percent of engineers say the ideal length for webinar content is 30 minutes. 24 percent are looking for a more substantive presentation of 60 minutes, and 19 percent say 15 minutes is enough.

What is the ideal length of a webinar? (n = 742)



1%

Over 60 minutes

60 Minutes

30 Minutes

15 minutes or shorter

No preference

Not applicable; I have never attended a webinar.



Thought Starter:

According to the [ON24 Webinar Benchmarks Report](#), in 2020, the average viewing time for a webinar was about 57 minutes. However, when looking at on-demand webinar content, the viewing time averaged around 29 minutes. When given more time to fill, are companies more tempted to fill it with self-promotional material versus education? How do your webinars compare?

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

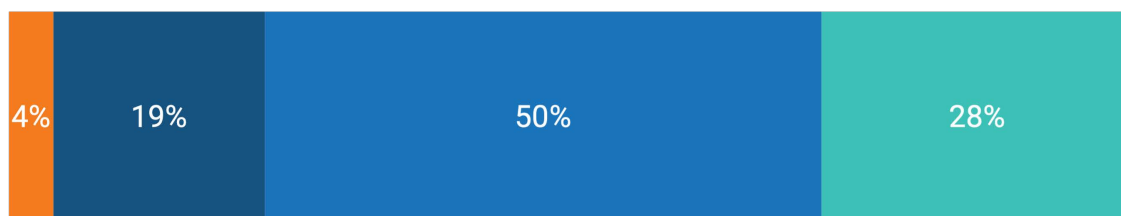
Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

This year we wanted to hear more about podcast preferences too. 73 percent of engineers listen to work-related podcasts throughout their week, up from the previous year. 50 percent spend less than an hour listening to podcasts, while another 23 percent listen for an hour or more.

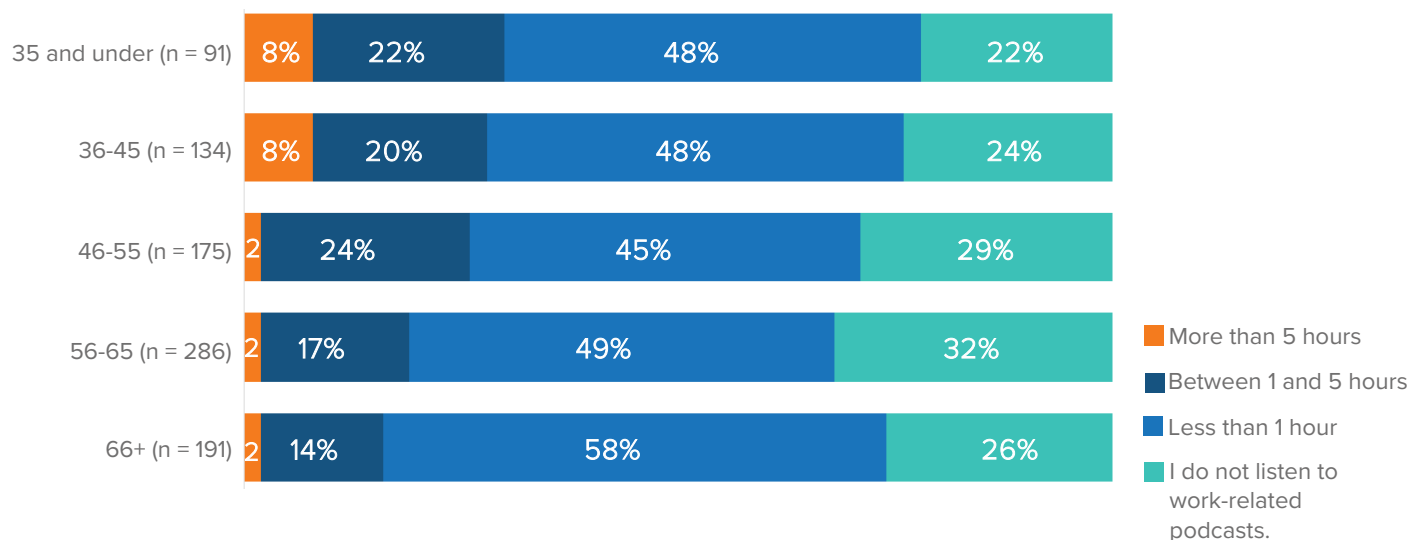
When we break this data down by age, younger engineers tend to listen to more podcasting content on a weekly basis than their older counterparts. 30 percent of engineers 35 and under listen to work-related podcasts one hour or more in the average week.

Approximately how much time per week do you spend listening to work-related podcasts? (n = 880)



More than 5 hours Between 1 and 5 hours Less than 1 hour I do not listen to work-related podcasts.

Approximately how much time per week do you spend listening to work-related podcasts?



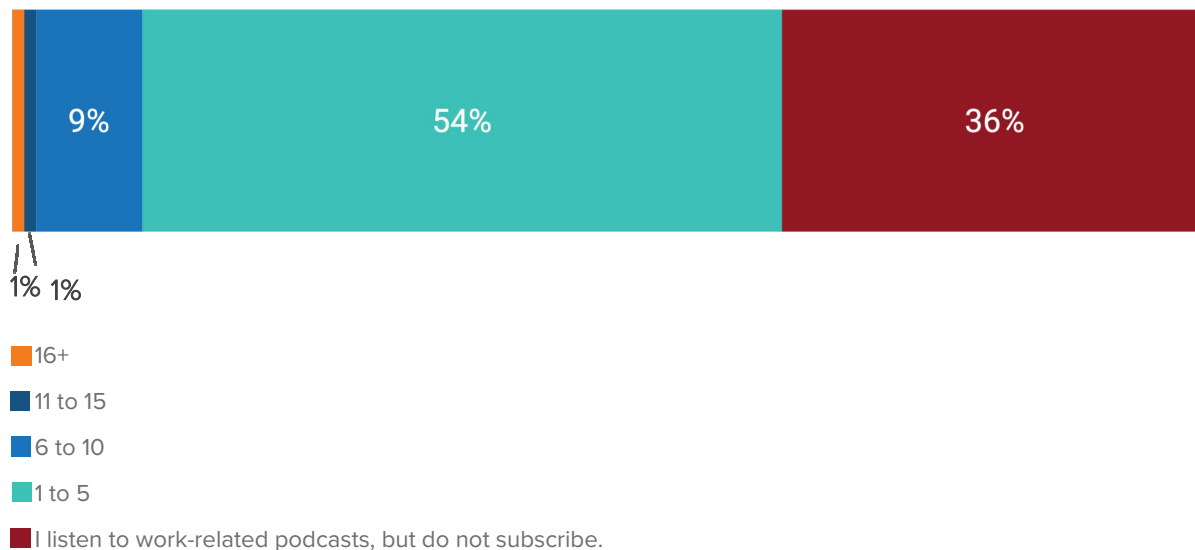
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Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

Of those who listen to work-related podcasts, 54 percent subscribe to between one and five, while 11 percent subscribe to more. 36 percent are tuning in without subscribing at all. When asked to recommend a podcast, our survey respondents most commonly listed industry-oriented and technology- / innovation-oriented podcasts. A few recommended content focused on inspiration, leadership, or news.

How many work-related podcasts do you subscribe to? (n = 360)



Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

A few podcast recommendations directly from participants...

"*Engineering360* [because it] appears to be the most current and addresses current issues of interest."

"*Operation Automation* [because it] targets the equipment we use."

"*HVAC School* [because it gives good information and insight into field work and how things work."

"*Engineering Matters* [because it's] easy listening and constructive."

"*The Amp Hour* [because it's] based on real-world, hands-on experience."

"*Stacey on IoT* [because it provides] nice coverage on the topic."

"*Level-up Engineering* [because of its] tech level and variety."

"*HBR Ideacast* [because] it has great content and ideas about work practices."



Thought Starter:

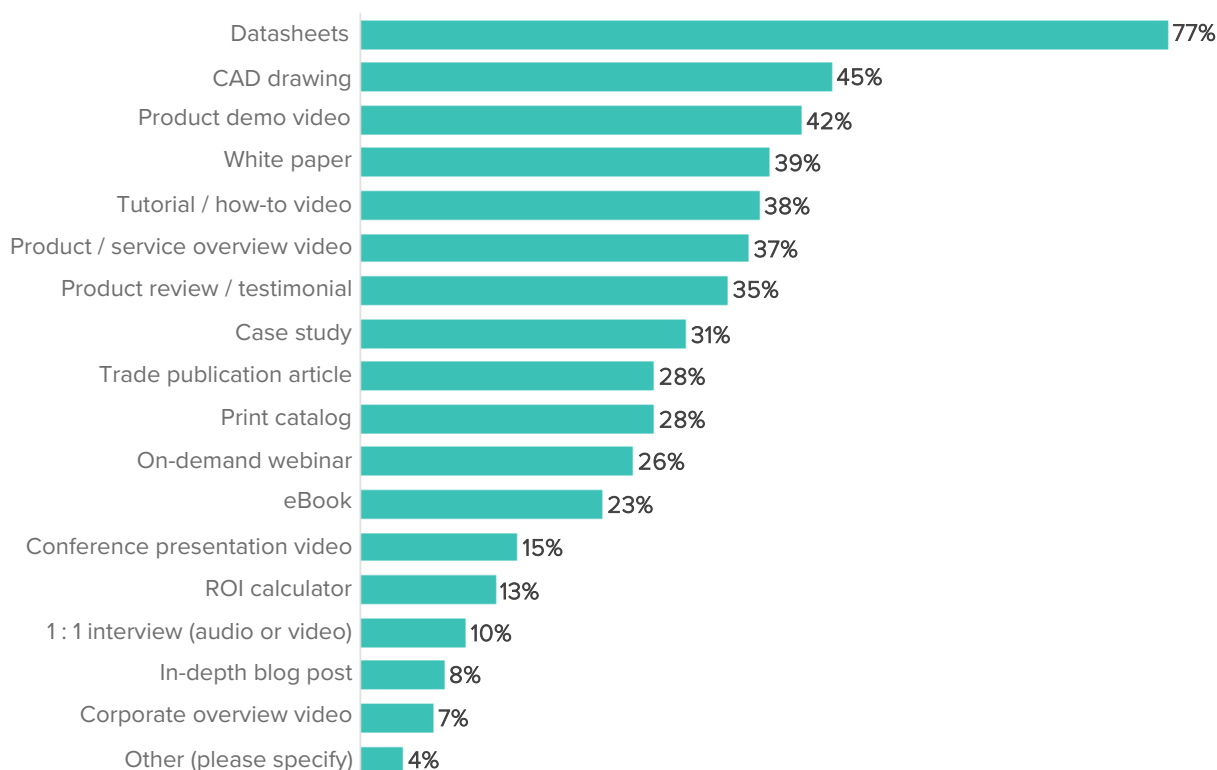
Hosting a podcast requires a major time commitment, one that many companies don't have the luxury for if they're still establishing the fundamental elements of content marketing strategy. That said, hosting a podcast isn't the only way to get involved. What kinds of podcasts does your audience listen to? Where could your brand have a strong guest presence?

Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

In their search for information, engineers consume a variety of different types of content. Similar to previous years, they find datasheets, CAD drawings, and product demo videos most useful when researching to make a significant work purchase. They're least likely to consult content that's perceived to be surface level, like corporate overview videos.

What form(s) of content do you find useful when researching to make a significant purchase for work? (n = 884)



Thought Starter:

Often we focus on ROI of marketing investment, but we should also consider the risks and potentially negative business impact of not providing enough content (or enough variety) to technical buyers. For example, according to the research cited in the [2021 Industrial Sales and Marketing Report](#) by CADENAS PARTsolutions, if component suppliers do not offer CAD/BIM models online, 36 percent of buyers will turn to a competitor who does.

Percentages may not add to 100% due to ability to multiselect

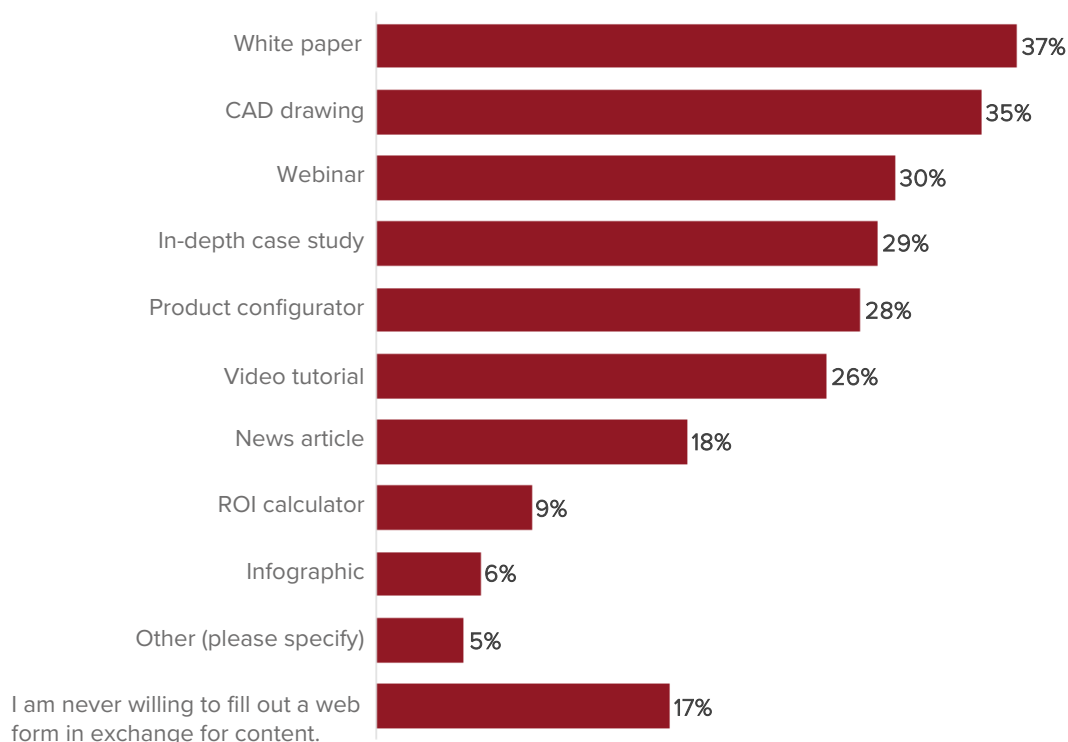
Survey Findings

Videos, Podcasts, and Content Preferences of Engineers

Gated content (content that requires the completion of a form) is a popular and effective way to generate leads on your website. Consistent with the previous year, 83 percent of engineers responded that they are willing to fill out a web form in exchange for some type of technical content.

The two most valued gated content pieces remain the same from last year's findings—white papers and CAD drawings. These offer engineers the most value in return for sharing their information. In 2022, webinars inched ahead of in-depth case studies to take the third position. ROI calculators and infographics rank lowest on the list.

When offered technical content, but asked first to complete a short form to download the material, which types of content are most likely to entice you to provide your information? (n = 881)



Thought Starter:

As the perceived value of a piece of content rises, so does the amount of engineers willing to share information to access it. When weighing which content should be gated, consider the level of technical effort the content took to create. Does it offer information your audience can't easily find elsewhere?

Percentages may not add to 100% due to ability to multiselect

Survey Findings

Engineers Engagement with Vendors

New this year, we dug deeper into sales engagement preferences. 51 percent of engineers prefer to research online knowing there is a vendor sales representative available to assist as needed. 26 percent say they typically meet with a salesperson once they've narrowed down their product selections. Engineers gravitate away from the absolutes. Only 8 percent want a fully digital experience with no salesperson interaction, and only 16 percent would prefer to partner with a technical salesperson early in the process.

Which best described how you typically interact with salespeople at a vendor company? (n = 744)



- I do most of my research online but appreciate having a salesperson available to answer questions.
- I meet with a salesperson once I have narrowed my selection to a few products/vendors.
- I partner with a technical salesperson early in the decision process.
- I never want to interact with a salesperson. I want all my questions answered online.

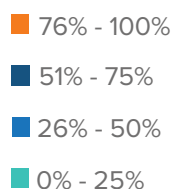
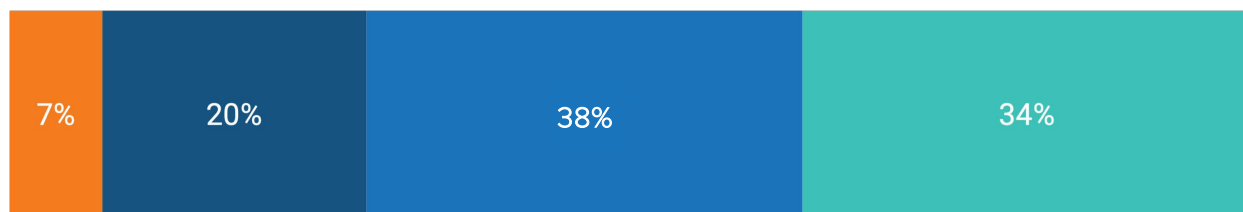
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Engineers Engagement with Vendors

Engineers are still online for much of the buying process. 38 percent spend between a quarter and half of the buying process online and 27 percent spend over half of the buying process online.

In thinking about the entire buying process for significant work-related purchases, from early research to the final purchase decision, how much of the process happens online before you choose to speak to someone at the company? (n = 749)



Thought Starter:

Engineers like people! Just not too much—how do technical salespeople and marketers strike the right balance of online education, tailored nurturing, and making themselves available without overwhelming their prospects?

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Engineers Engagement with Vendors

Consistent with the previous year, 53 percent of engineers prefer their initial salesperson interaction to happen via email. 25 percent would prefer a phone call. In-person meetings are still less desirable with only 8 percent selecting this as their preference. In response to changes brought about by COVID, participants were offered the option to select “virtual meeting / video call.” Only 7 percent preferred this option. Chat adoption is still quite low, dropping one percentage point since last year.

When you are ready to speak with a salesperson at a vendor company for the first time, which of the following is your preferred method of communication? (n=746)



- Email
- Phone
- In-person meeting
- Virtual meeting / video call
- Online text chat
- No preference

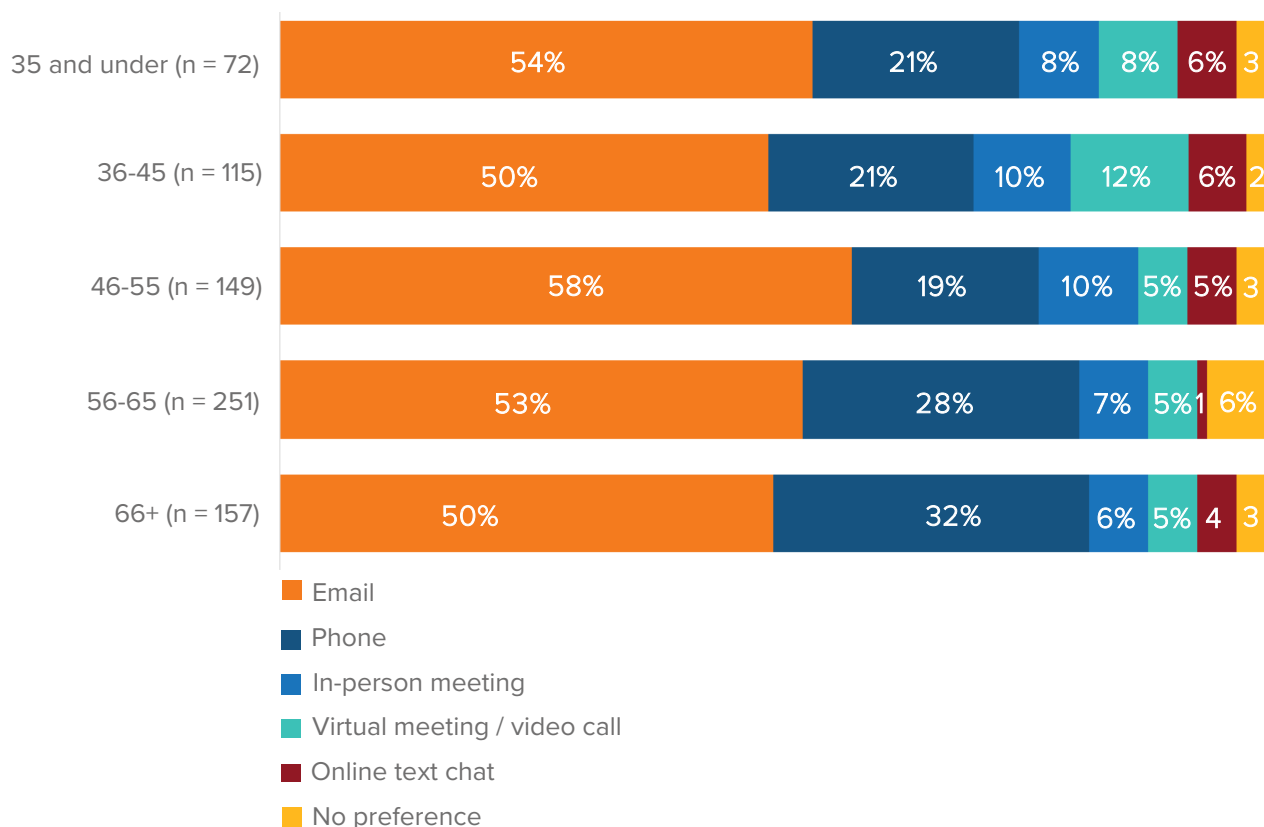
Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Engineers Engagement with Vendors

When examining the data by age, you'll see that phone preferences are higher among the 56+ group as opposed to their younger counterparts.

When you are ready to speak with a salesperson at a vendor company for the first time, which of the following is your preferred method of communication?



Thought Starter:

Given the clear preference for email interactions with sales, mixed with overstuffed inboxes, how can you make your messages stand out and have enough impact to inspire a response?

Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding

Survey Findings

Engineers Engagement with Vendors

Consistent with content preferences, engineers are most annoyed with sales teams and resources that lack technical expertise. The three most irksome behaviors are lack of technical expertise, poor responsiveness, and high-frequency contact. Influential factors below are organized according to the number of participants who selected the factor as “most annoying” (n = 742).

Most Annoying

(Order of Annoyance)

Influential Factors

- 1 Lack of technical expertise
- 2 Poor responsiveness
- 3 Contacting me too often
- 4 Reaching out to me without permission (unsolicited)
- 5 Emails with grammar/misspelling issues
- 6 Lack of presence at industry functions, online, etc.

A company’s ability to demonstrate technical expertise early on plays an important role in the overall decision-making process too. Influential factors below are organized according to the number of participants who selected the factor as “most important” (n = 737).

Most Important

(Order of Importance)

Influential Factors

- 1 Technical expertise
- 2 Responsiveness and customer service
- 3 Innovative technology
- 4 Price
- 5 Referrals
- 6 Company values / social responsibility
- 7 Financial stability
- 8 Awards



Thought Starter:

How can marketing help the sales team establish technical credibility as early in the process as possible?

About GlobalSpec

GlobalSpec is a provider of data-driven industrial marketing solutions designed to help companies promote their products and grow their businesses.

Our audience of engineers and technical professionals relies on the GlobalSpec family of brands as a trusted resource for content, community, and engagement at all stages of the research, design, and purchasing process. Our clients count on us to deliver deep industry intelligence, customized marketing programs, and measurable campaign performance.

For more information about GlobalSpec, visit www.globalspec.com/advertising.

About TREW Marketing

TREW Marketing, headquartered in Austin, Texas, is a full-service content marketing firm serving B2B companies that target highly technical buyers. With deep experience in the design, embedded, measurement and automation, and software industries, TREW Marketing provides branding, marketing strategy, content development, and digital marketing services to help customers efficiently and effectively achieve business goals.

For more information, please visit www.trewmarketing.com.

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