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# Poor Content Execution Is Sinking Marketers' Grand CX And Brand Visions

Ad Hoc, One-Off, And Off-Brand Content  
Execution Typifies Low-Maturity Brands

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## Executive Summary

Companies today are failing to fully deliver on their digital brand experiences, resulting in subpar customer experience (CX). These CX shortcomings are getting visibility inside C-suites and board rooms. Based on Forrester research, each one-point improvement in a firm's CX score drives millions of dollars of incremental revenue.<sup>1</sup>

Sitecore commissioned Forrester Consulting in January 2021 to explore whether capabilities with content help or hinder enterprises from delivering on their CX and digital experience plans. To get to the bottom of this, Forrester surveyed 431 marketing leaders with responsibility for digital experiences at their organizations.

We found that weaknesses with content are sabotaging firms' otherwise solid digital strategies. Marketing and digital teams trying to deliver great CX are obstructed by poor content processes, routines, strategies, and capabilities. Rather than inventing new ways to deliver differentiated value for their customers, they're mired down by box ticking, redundant tagging, or replicating content across channels. And despite marketers' best efforts to drive quality in each phase of content development, gaps in processes and technologies introduce errors, delays, and other issues.

It's no surprise that two in three marketers said they believe their firm's content-technology decisions will make or break its CX efforts in the next five to 10 years. As a result, 85% of decision-makers reported that their organization plans to invest in a comprehensive solution for content planning, creation, management, and delivery by 2022.

**Key Findings** →



## Key Findings

**Disconnects between strategy and execution sink customer experience visions.** Most of the marketers said their firm's digital strategies are aligned with its CX vision. But fewer than one in three believe their firm's customers see content that is consistent with that vision. Absence of strategy leads to ad hoc content processes, which hurts CX.

**Content planning, creation, and execution workflows are disconnected at most firms.** Only 6% of decision-makers said their firm has a comprehensive and well-integrated digital-experience platform that enables it to manage content throughout the lifecycle — from planning to creation to delivery. Most creators are unable to quickly respond to customer expectations.

**Higher agility is associated with higher content proficiency.** Firms that can effectively seize new opportunities and deliver unique customer experiences are more likely to support mature content processes. In fact, highly agile organizations are eight times more likely to incorporate personalization in content development than less-agile organizations.

**Most respondents said their organization plans to invest in comprehensive content solutions to future-proof their business.** One-third of surveyed decision-makers said they agree or strongly agree that their company's proficiency with content will be vital to its success in the next five to 10 years, and 65% said they believe their firm's content-technology decisions will make or break its CX efforts during the same timeframe.

# Execution Failures Trip Up Marketers' Digital-Experience Strategies

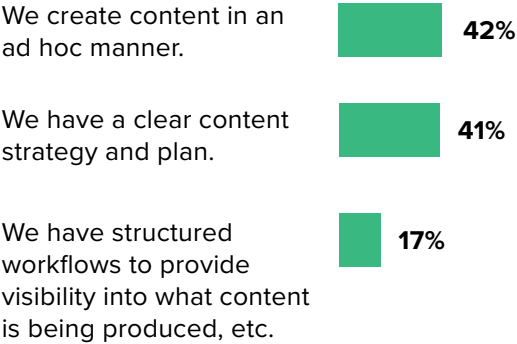
Nearly 70% of surveyed leaders responsible for their organization’s digital experience said they feel their firm’s strategies are aligned with its CX vision. Although the firms have great intentions, their ability to deliver is another matter. The content routines and capabilities that underpin digital strategies and CX are letting these leaders down.

- Many organizations currently create content in an ad hoc manner.**

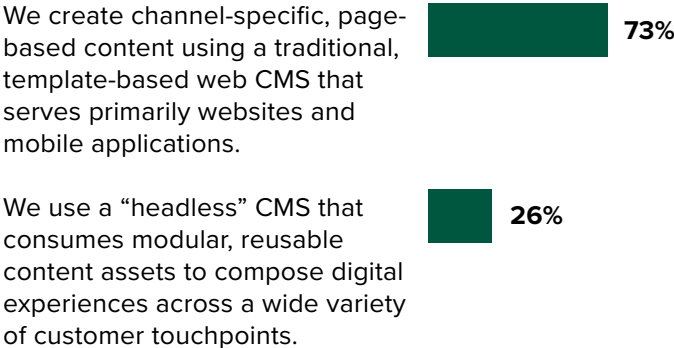
Nearly half of all surveyed decision-makers said their organization creates content as needed, rather than having a clear content strategy and plan. In fact, only 17% reported having a structured workflow to provide visibility into what content is being produced, which team is producing it, and why it is being produced (see Figure 1). This lack of cohesion leads to disparate and disconnected pieces of content that lead to a disjointed customer experience.

**Figure 1**

**“Which of the following best describes how you create your content?”**



**“Which of the following best describes how your team or organization distributes content across digital channels?”**



**43%** of all content is created for a specific channel.

Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations  
 Note: Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021

- Nearly three-quarters of organizations still use a traditional content management system (CMS).** Seventy-three percent of surveyed decision-makers said their organization creates channel-specific and page-based content using a template-based web CMS. Only 26% said their organization currently uses a “headless” CMS that consumes modular and reusable content assets to compose digital experiences across a wide variety of customer touchpoints. So, it’s no surprise that only one-third of surveyed decision-makers said they strongly agree that their organization’s content can be reassembled and repurposed for unlimited use cases that support personalization with no significant governance issues.
- Poor content hurts digital experiences across channels.** Less than one-third of decision-makers said they strongly agree that the content their customers encounter from their business — no matter the context or channel — is always true to and consistent with their organization’s brand and values (see Figure 2). Only 34% said they strongly agree that their organization is able to incorporate personalization as a fundamental part of how decision-makers think about content for their firm’s customers at each stage of the content lifecycle. And only 34% said they strongly agree that their decision-makers have a shared understanding of how their organization’s content should generate value for the business and its customers. This further underscores the fundamental disconnect between digital experience strategy and execution.

**Figure 2**

**“Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.”**

(Showing “Strongly agree”)



Our business has a **shared, common, and detailed understanding** of how our content should generate value for the business and our customers.



We incorporate **personalization as a fundamental** and consistent part of how we think about content for our customers at **each stage of a content lifecycle** — from planning to publishing to analysis.



The content that our customers encounter from our business — **no matter the context or channel** — is always true to and consistent with our brand and values.

Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations  
 Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021

# Challenges With Content Planning, Creation, And Execution Tools Lead To Poor CX

Surveyed decision-makers said their organizations are routinely held back from creating exceptional CX because of broken or inadequate content planning, creation, management, and delivery systems. Teams are often overwhelmed with mundane tasks, and they're unable to move quickly to adapt to changing customer demands. Critically, few content makers feel empowered to deliver unique customer content and to engage with their customers.

- **Content planning, creation, and delivery is critically disconnected for the vast majority of firms.** Only 6% of respondents said their organization has a comprehensive and well-integrated digital-experience platform that enables their firm to manage content throughout the lifecycle. Nearly one-third of respondents said their firm has completely disconnected content creation, management, or delivery. This leads to countless hours of lost productivity trying to bridge these gaps.
- **Team members aren't empowered to deliver good CX.** Only 28% of decision-makers said they strongly agree with the statement that their firm is empowered to deliver against the content needs of its customers without encountering hurdles or delays (see Figure 3). This point is further underscored by the fact that 43% reported that people with up-

**Figure 3**

**“Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.”**

(Showing “Strongly agree”)



**27%**

We as a team feel empowered and not obstructed by the technologies that support our customer content efforts.

**29%**

Our team always incorporates input and feedback from customers and their interactions with our content into how we plan future customer engagement.

Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021

to-date knowledge or expertise are not empowered to create or update content at their firm. This is the top people-centric challenge that decision-makers said their organization faces with its current approach to content production and management. On top of that, only 29% strongly agreed that their organization's teams are able to consistently incorporate input and feedback from customers into customer-engagement planning.

- **Content makers spend too much time on mundane tasks and improving content management instead of producing content.** Forty percent of digital-experience decision-makers said they spend too much time on mundane tasks, like moving content around, tagging content, and looking for content. Nearly 40% reported spending too much time trying to improve their firm's approach to content management and delivery instead of producing content (see Figure 4). They said they waste countless creator-hours each week looking for and managing content rather than delighting customers.

#### Figure 4

**“Which of the following people-centric challenges, if any, does your team or organization face in its current approach to content production and management?”**

We spend too much time on what feel like mundane tasks (e.g., moving content around, tagging content, looking for content, etc.).

**40%**

We spend too much time improving how we manage and deliver content compared to producing it.

**39%**

Teams spend too much time duplicating the work of other teams due to a lack of cross-team collaboration.

**37%**

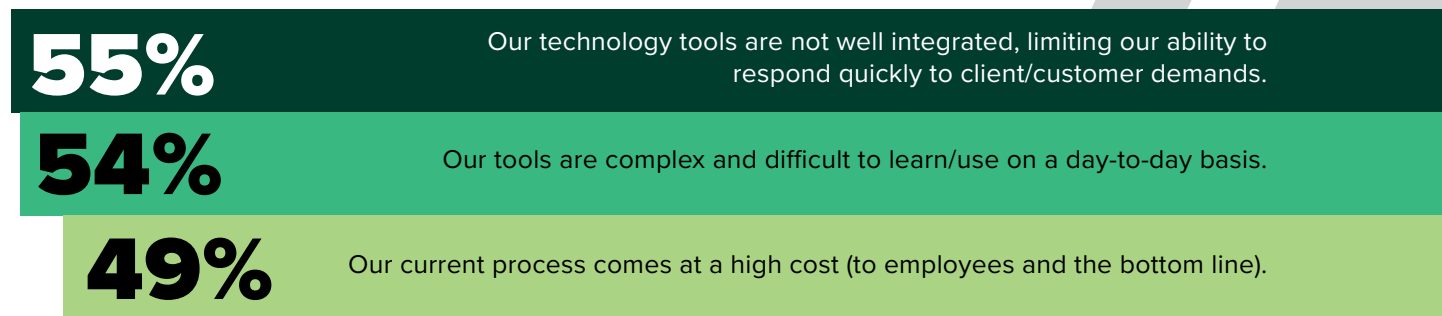
Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021



- **The majority of respondents said their organization struggles with poor tool integration and management of overly complex tools.** More than half of the surveyed decision-makers said their firm’s technology tools are not well-integrated and limit the organization’s ability to respond quickly to client or customer demands. And 54% said their firm’s tools are too complex and difficult to use on a day-to-day basis (see Figure 5). Nearly half said they recognize their organization’s current processes come at too high of a cost, both in terms of employee time demands and bottom-line expenses. So, it’s no surprise that only 27% said they strongly agree with the statement that they feel empowered by the technologies that support their firm’s customer-content efforts instead of being obstructed by them.

**Figure 5**

**“Which of the following process-centric challenges, if any, does your organization face in its current approach to content production and management?”**



Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021

## To Prepare For Future Success, Most Firms Plan To Invest In A Comprehensive Content Solution

Many marketing and digital leaders today have decades of experience with buying and using technologies to support content management, and decision-makers recognize that poor usability and architectural constraints hurt their business. Many respondents also said the solution space has changed, and they noted how cloud-based offerings introduce new opportunities to connect their firm's systems of engagement and insights.

- **Decision-makers are overwhelmingly looking to invest in more comprehensive content solutions.** Thirty percent of surveyed decision-makers said their organization will invest in a comprehensive solution for content planning, creation, management, and delivery in 2021. Eighty-five percent said their firm plans to invest by 2022.
- **Leaders expect new content solutions to drive improved employee experience (EX) and lead to better brand recognition.** Twenty-three percent of surveyed marketing leaders responsible for their firm's digital experiences cited better EX as the highest-priority benefit from a new content solution, and 60% rated it among their top three benefits. This shows that there's a sense of palpable frustration with existing tools. Twenty-two percent of respondents believe the highest-priority benefit of a new solution will be improved brand recognition because their business will be better able to serve customers across touchpoints.
- **Ease of implementation, ease of use for business users, and best-of-breed product functionality drive solution decisions.** In line with their expectations of improved EX, surveyed leaders stated that ease of use is among their top criteria when selecting a content solution, and 64% rated this among their top three considerations. The importance of easy implementation (the most commonly cited top selection criteria) reflects the increasing interest in cloud-based solutions.

# High Agility Correlates Directly With Digital Sales Performance And High CX

The survey generated a segmentation of marketing organizations based on agility, as reflected in three criteria: their ability to provide uniquely relevant CX to each customer, their technology to support customer engagement across all channels, and their ability to seize new opportunities on short notice. Agile businesses differ from less-agile firms in how they manage content and data and also in how they perform in digital sales.

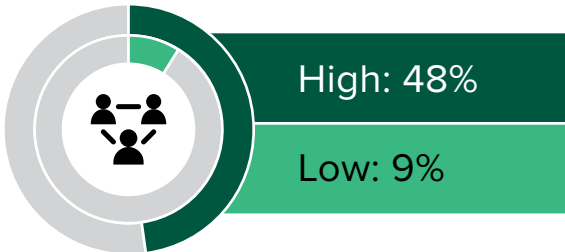
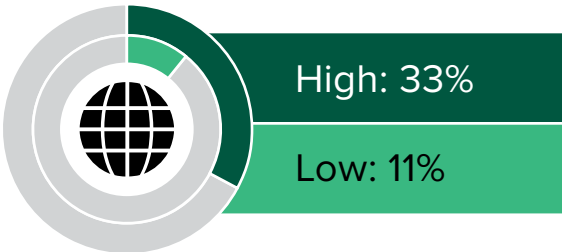
- **As marketing leaders invest in solutions, it’s critical that they also work to create agile organizations.** Highly agile firms are more successful than less agile firms. In fact, high-agility firms are three times more likely to outperform their key competitors in digital performance metrics (e.g., net sales, sales growth), and they are more than five times more likely to meet or exceed CX targets (see Figure 6). This indicates that it is critical for decision-makers to invest not only in the proper content solutions, but also in transforming their firm’s company culture to fundamentally adapt and respond to changing customer demands at every level.

**Figure 6**

**“Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.”**

We have outperformed our key competitors over the past 24 months in digital performance (e.g., net sales, sales growth, digital-influenced sales).

We meet or exceed our customer experience targets as measured by customer retention, acquisition, or similar metrics.



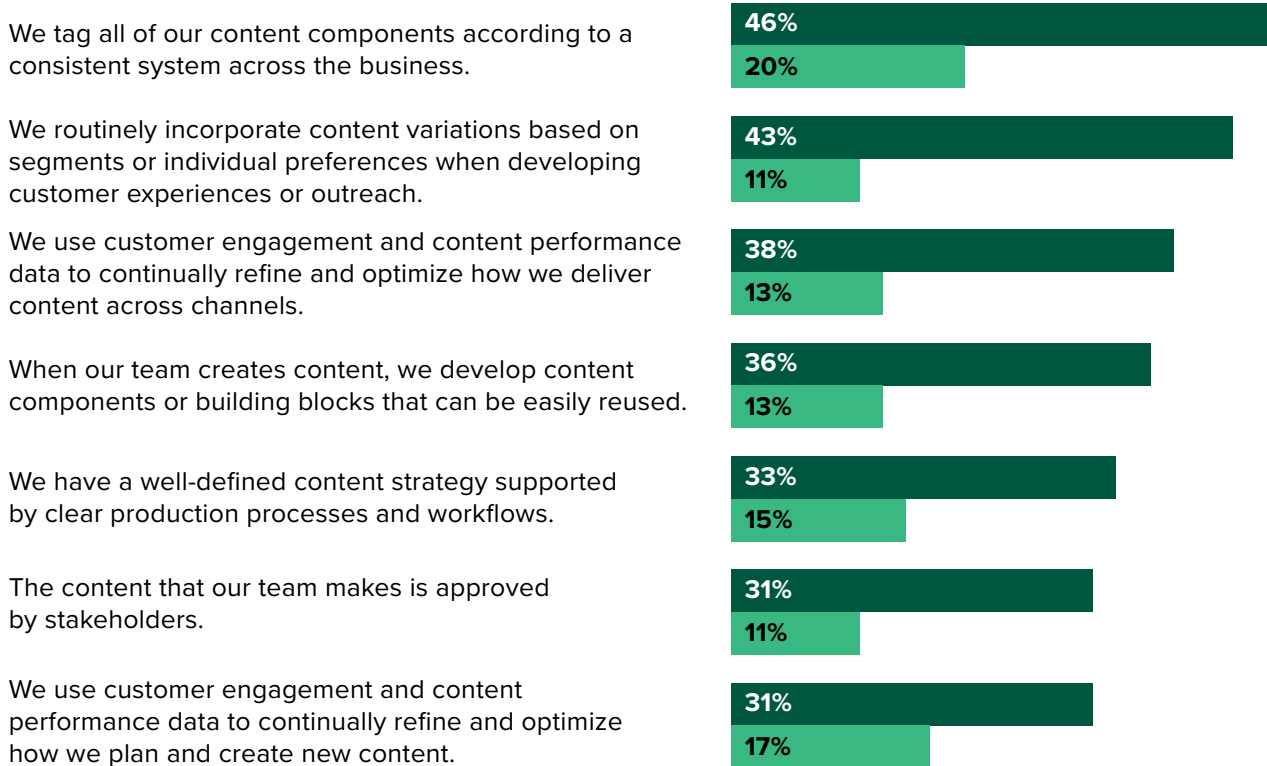
Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations  
Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021

- High business agility correlates to strong feedback loops and data governance, which is where low- and medium-maturity organizations should begin.** Highly agile firms are nearly three times more likely to use customer data and content performance data to continually refine and optimize how they deliver content across channels than low-maturity firms are. And they are also twice as likely to have a well-defined content strategy supported by clear production processes and workflows (see Figure 8). To optimize their content solution investments, decision-makers with low- and medium-maturity businesses must develop feedback loops for their firm’s content and establish clear content strategies.

**Figure 7**

**“Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.”**

● High ● Low



Base: 431 decision-makers at the director-level or above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organizations

Note: Showing percent “Strongly agree”

Source: A commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Sitecore, February 2021

## Marketers See Content Capabilities As Crucial To Future Success

Marketing leaders understand that content plays a crucial role as customers relate to their brands and make purchasing decisions and that it underpins CX. This close relationship between content and CX means these organizations recognize that many of their future initiatives and much of their success depend on the firm's proficiency with content.

- **Decision-makers see content as an engine of future growth for all businesses.** Two-thirds of surveyed decision-makers said their company's proficiency with content will be vital to its success in the next five to 10 years, and 65% believe their organization's content-technology decisions will make or break its CX efforts during the same timeframe. Delivering exceptional CX is the foundation for strong business performance, and organizations will falter at creating unique CX unless they have a solution for content planning, creation, management, and delivery.
- **Decision-makers from agile organizations see content capabilities as the key to the success of their firm's future personalization initiatives.** Seventy-one percent of respondents from highly agile organizations said they believe that their firm's proficiency with content will make or break its personalization efforts in the next five to 10 years. Seventy-three percent of the same respondents believe this proficiency will also be crucial to their organization's success during the same timeframe.

**68% agree** that their company's proficiency with content will be vital to its success in the next five to 10 years.

## Key Recommendations

The more than 400 marketing leaders surveyed for this report provided one clear takeaway: Enabling their organizations' teams to deliver great CX through effective content processes will be key to their firms' growth. Marketers can use this finding to reassess how they support content processes in their own businesses and begin to make progress toward improving and optimizing them to fuel new growth. Forrester recommends that organizations:

### **Establish a strategic role for content.**

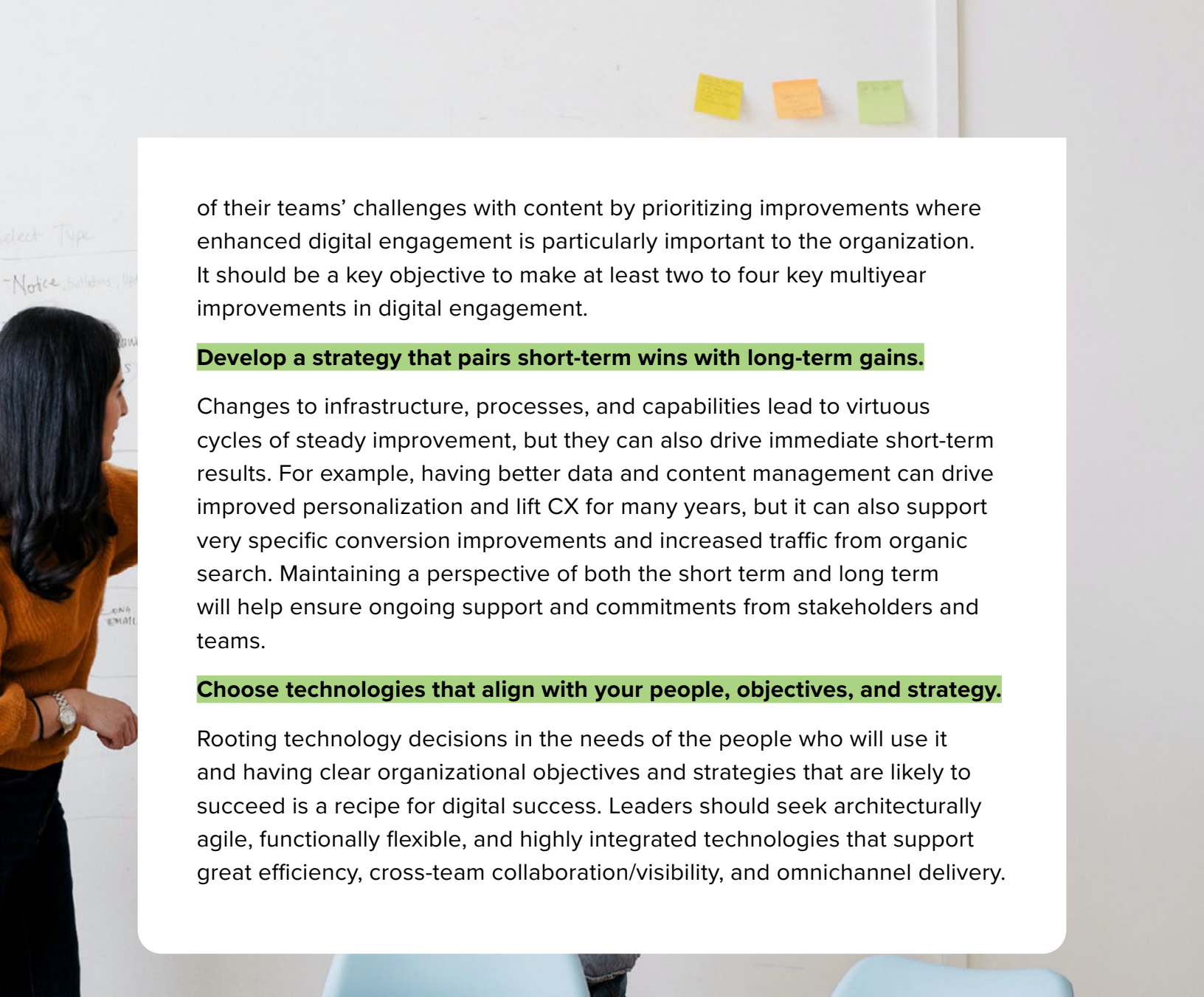
Organizations today face many challenges and opportunities in how they address content, so they need leaders with mandates to drive change to take a hands-on approach. Many firms that excel at content have established a leadership position for it. Such a role often intersects with technology, marketing, and business or e-commerce leaders, and it provides focus on content capabilities across different teams and groups responsible for supporting great CX.

### **Start with what's keeping your employees from delivering great CX.**

In this survey, leaders reported that their teams are burdened by inefficient processes, redundant actions, and disconnected systems. To prioritize the right changes in your organization's content operations, you should start by conducting a widespread assessment of teams working with content and providing consultations. What are the common and edge challenges? Where are the capability gaps? How are they prevented from supporting the organization's CX vision? Answering these questions provides a foundation for changes to come.

### **Identify key objectives associated with digital engagement.**

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations have radically accelerated their initiatives to support customer engagement through digital channels. Marketing leaders should build on the assessment



of their teams' challenges with content by prioritizing improvements where enhanced digital engagement is particularly important to the organization. It should be a key objective to make at least two to four key multiyear improvements in digital engagement.

**Develop a strategy that pairs short-term wins with long-term gains.**

Changes to infrastructure, processes, and capabilities lead to virtuous cycles of steady improvement, but they can also drive immediate short-term results. For example, having better data and content management can drive improved personalization and lift CX for many years, but it can also support very specific conversion improvements and increased traffic from organic search. Maintaining a perspective of both the short term and long term will help ensure ongoing support and commitments from stakeholders and teams.

**Choose technologies that align with your people, objectives, and strategy.**

Rooting technology decisions in the needs of the people who will use it and having clear organizational objectives and strategies that are likely to succeed is a recipe for digital success. Leaders should seek architecturally agile, functionally flexible, and highly integrated technologies that support great efficiency, cross-team collaboration/visibility, and omnichannel delivery.

## Appendix A: Methodology

In this study, Forrester conducted an online survey of directors and above who are in charge of or influence the digital experience at their organization. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate the digital-content-experience maturity of their organizations. Survey participants included decision-makers in marketing and CX/support departments with organizations based in the US, the UK, Germany, France, Australia, Singapore, the Netherlands, and Canada. Respondents were offered a small incentive as a thank you for time spent on the survey. The study began in January 2021 and was completed in February 2021.

## Appendix B: Demographics

COUNTRY	
The United States	21%
The United Kingdom	13%
Germany	13%
France	13%
Australia	13%
Singapore	12%
The Netherlands	12%
Canada	4%

COMPANY SIZE	
20,000 employees or more	14%
5,000 to 19,999 employees	35%
1,000 to 4,999 employees	51%

BUSINESS MODEL	
B2B	73%
B2C	45%
B2B2C	32%

POSITION	
Director	45%
Vice president	36%
C-level executive	19%

RESPONSIBILITY OVER CUSTOMER-FACING DIGITAL CONTENT	
Final decision-maker	54%
Key influencer	34%
Involved	12%

DEPARTMENT	
Marketing	39%
Customer experience/support	61%

## Appendix C: Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Source: “How Customer Experience Drives Business Growth, 2020,” Forrester Research, Inc., December 3, 2020.





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