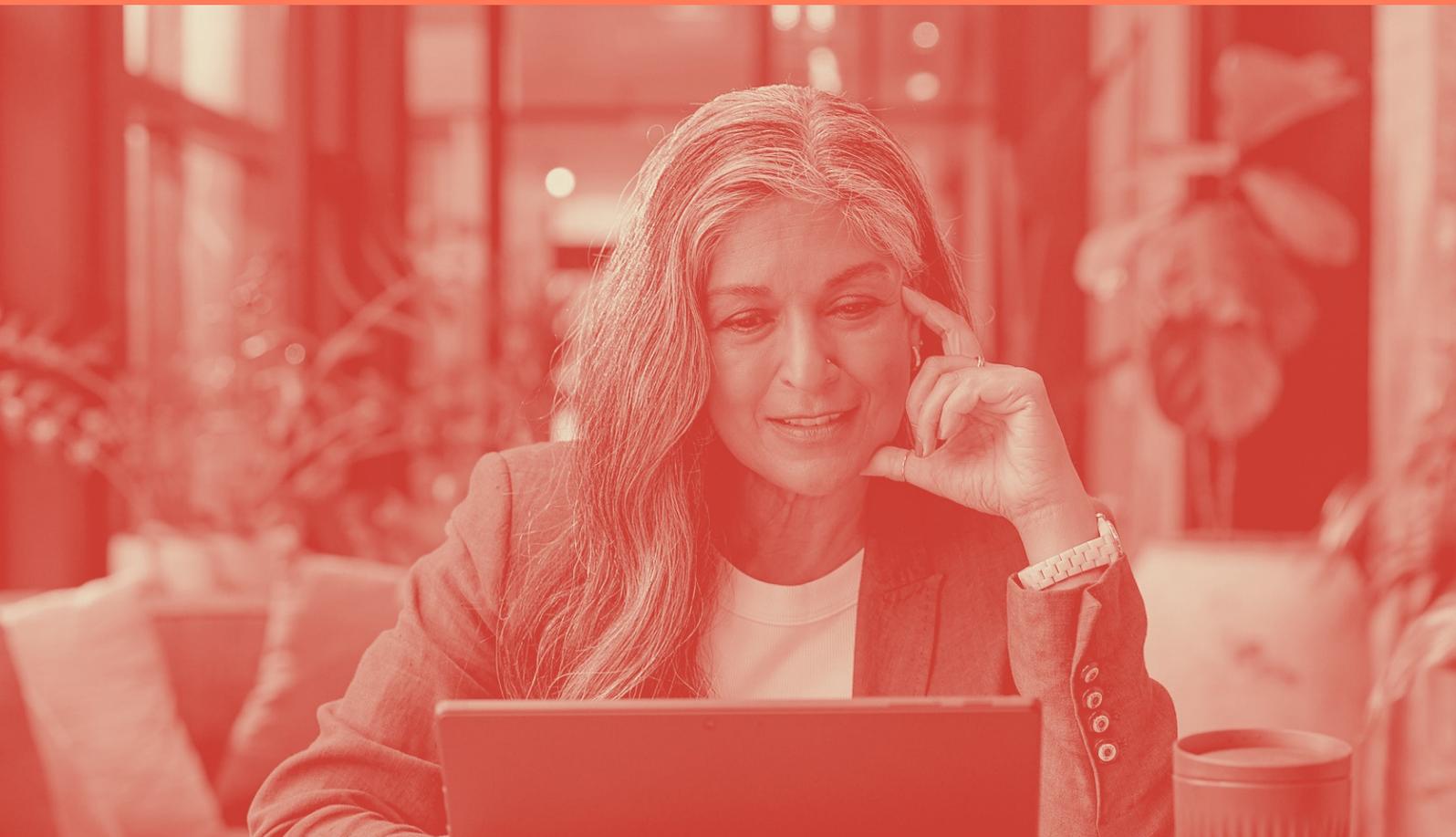




x HubSpot

DECEMBER 2020

The Executive Marketing Leadership Survey: How Top Marketing Leaders Are Adapting In 2021



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HOW MARKETING LEADERS ADJUSTED THEIR INVESTMENTS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND HOW THEY ARE PLANNING TO SUCCEED IN THE NEW YEAR

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken up businesses everywhere. We've had to adapt, understand a new environment, and create new ways of collaborating, communicating, and strategizing across our organizations.

We've heard our customers talk through their specific issues and ask about ways they can pivot strategies to support this new working world. They've shared their struggles and asked for recommendations on how to successfully adapt their teams. We got to work finding data that would give us a better understanding of where marketers are struggling, and how marketing leaders have made a successful transition.

47% have seen website traffic increase since COVID

44% have seen an increased need for design assets

67% of marketing team's productivity has been impacted by COVID - driven by resources; team workload and burnout



HubSpot and Canva have teamed up to survey over 500 marketing leaders, asking them where they're investing in 2021 to achieve their goals. We learned about their investments in programs, team operations, and technology, as well as their struggles with changing over to distributed teams, slowing productivity, insufficient resources, and more. We also found some interesting metrics around website traffic and investments.

In this report, we'll outline our findings and provide recommendations and best practices to help your marketing teams overcome challenges, increase productivity and team collaboration, as well as find growth opportunities that move the needle in 2021. We'll also provide supplemental data from our recent [COVID-19 Benchmark Data Report](#) that will help put all of these numbers in valuable context as you build your 2021 strategy to move your business forward.



Investments in Growth Marketing, Content, and Design Are a Future Focus

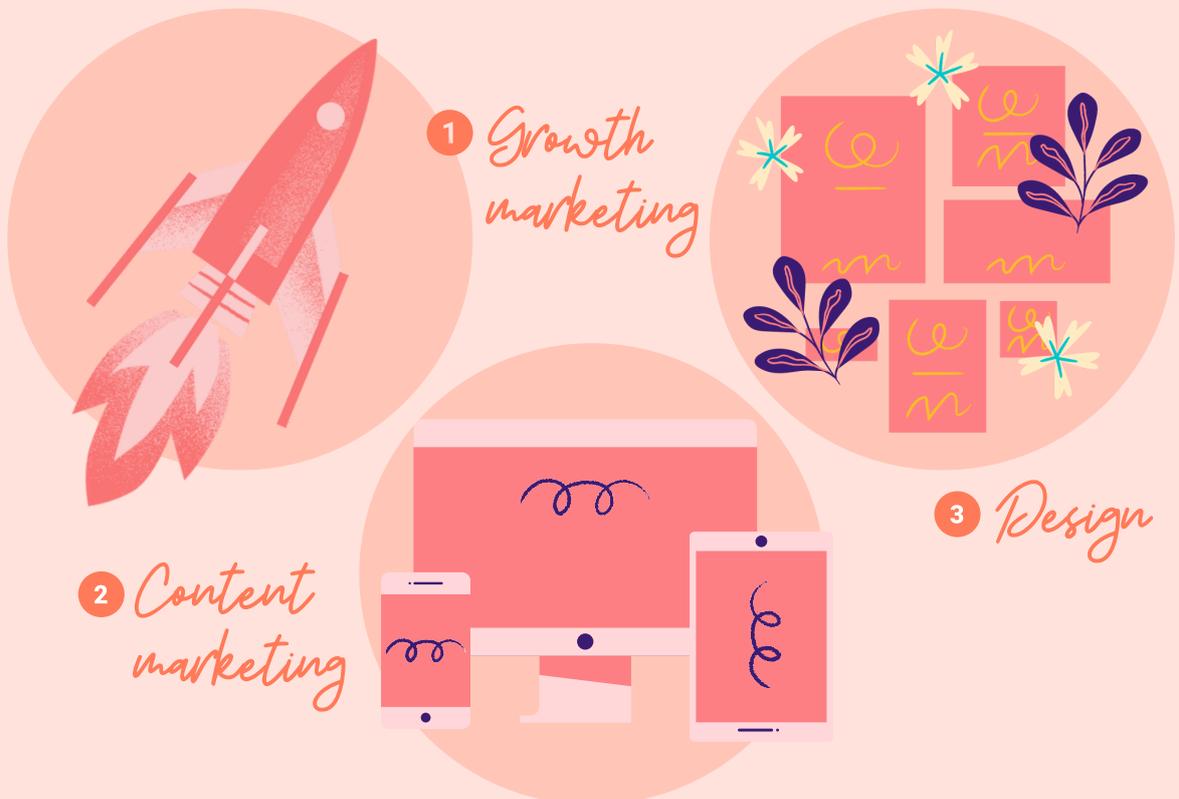
When it comes to planning your marketing investments, it helps to have consistency. COVID-19 and the 2020 USA election threw all consistency out the window, and marketers have had to adjust and plan for the future through a constantly changing landscape. We asked marketing leaders where they were focusing their time and money for 2021, and whether they had made any major changes to their strategies.

What we found was clear—moving forward, marketing leaders want to invest more in [growth marketing](#), [content marketing](#), and [design](#).

This indicates the importance of creating quality marketing assets and well-designed, branded materials that can help companies get their message across online.

[Content marketing](#) is a critical aspect of any marketing strategy, and is only becoming more and more important now that field marketing has declined due to COVID-19. Billboards, outdoor ads, and in-person events have taken a major hit, and companies are investing heavily in content (visual and long form) and thought leadership to drive traffic to their website.

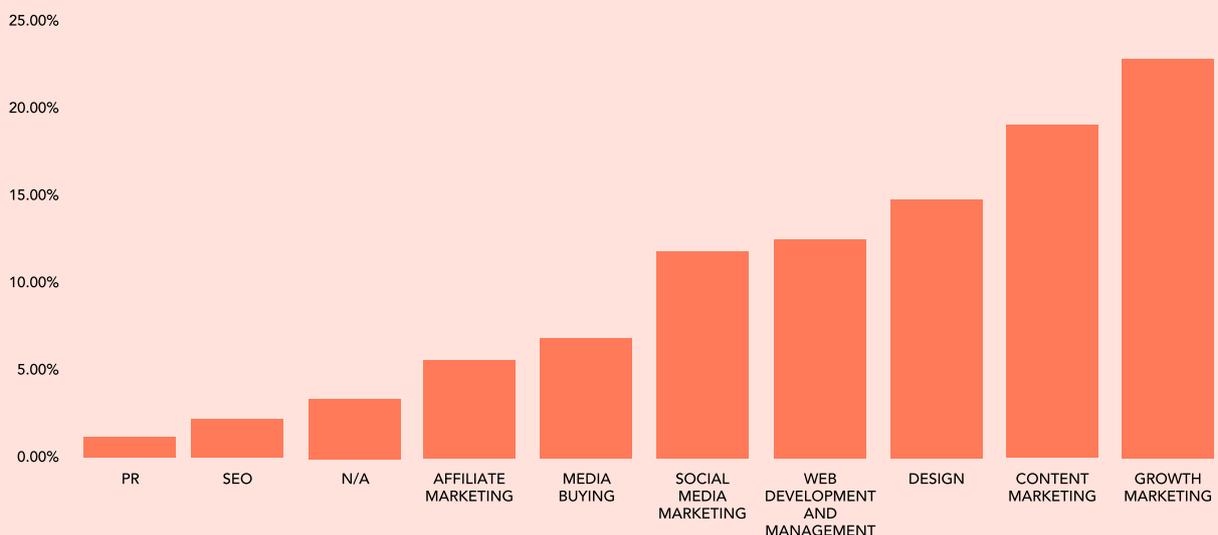
TOP 3 MARKETING INVESTMENTS FOR 2021



Growth marketing has been a hot topic for several years now, but with online traffic growing during COVID-19, marketing leaders are focusing their efforts on converting traffic into leads, while maintaining traffic levels over time. Growth marketing is no longer a niche subject—it's a pillar of successful companies. Establishing a culture of testing and experimentation should be at the center of your marketing organization.

Finally, we also learned that email, Facebook, Instagram, and the Company Blog are the most important channels used by marketing leaders to hit their goals. This fits into both content marketing and design investments—using design and content to connect your brand to your audience, with email, Facebook, and Instagram as the main channels for distribution of that content. Design plays a huge role in all of these channels, allowing your brand to stay adaptive, consistent, and recognizable for your audience.

WHAT AREAS OF MARKETING DO YOU WISH YOUR TEAM INVESTED MORE IN?



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Content marketing has been around for a number of years, but as consumer buying behaviour changes, the marketplace in all industries becomes more crowded. Companies need to embrace the creation of rich content to stand them apart from their competitors. Setting up and scaling a consistent content marketing program should be a critical piece of your 2021 strategy.

The good news is that it's easier than ever to start. Building a blog presence is key, and allows you to create a consistent method of communication between you and your audience. Your blog should provide value for your audience while positioning yourself as a thought leader and authority in your industry.

Design plays a major role in your content strategy, allowing you to educate your target consumers through visual communications such as charts, graphs, frameworks, infographics, and more. It's also a major investment for marketing leaders in 2021, and for good reason—49% of businesses Venngage interviewed in their Visual Marketing Content Survey said visual content was “very important” to their strategy in 2020, and that number is growing.

Resources



Learn how to get started with growth marketing from the HubSpot and GrowthHackers guide to a data-driven approach to growth marketing.

Learn more about how design plays into a successful content marketing strategy with Canva's Visual Marketing Guide.

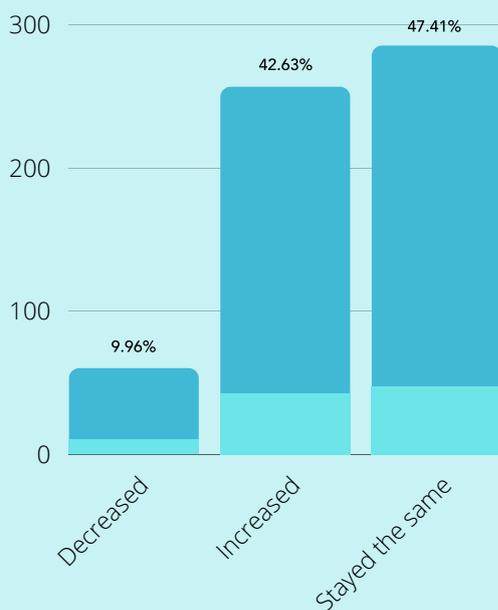
Email marketing isn't going away—get familiar with email design in Canva's guide to email marketing, and learn from some great examples of Really Good Emails.

Marketing Leaders are Struggling with Remote Team Operations

When COVID-19 hit the world, we all had to adapt to closed offices, unfamiliar work schedules, and a completely different working environment. For many companies, this transition wasn't easy—and it still comes with challenges as offices continue to close or begin a staggered opening approach. Remote work, however, isn't new—it's seen explosive growth over the last ten years, and will only go up from here. It's time for us to adapt to it.

The amount of people who work remotely at least once per week has grown by 400% since 2010, while 99% of people said they'd choose to work remotely, at least part-time, for the rest of their careers.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOUR TEAM'S WORKLOAD HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?



HOW HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOUR COMPANY IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS. SINCE THE BEGINNING OF COVID-19, TRAFFIC TO OUR COMPANY'S WEBSITE HAS



REMOTE WORK STRUGGLE OR TRANSITION TO REMOTE WORK

Our survey results were clear—marketing leaders are struggling with the transition to remote work. 43% of respondents stated that their team workload has increased since COVID-19 hit, and 80% of leaders agree that it's been difficult to motivate their teams and improve productivity. There's clearly more opportunity for growth, with 46% of marketing leaders responding that they have seen an increase in web traffic since COVID-19 broke out. Although that may be a positive element, this data shows a major predicament—there's more work to be done, but employees are having a hard time getting motivated to put it together.

We found that:

72% of marketing leaders agree that their planning process has been more difficult

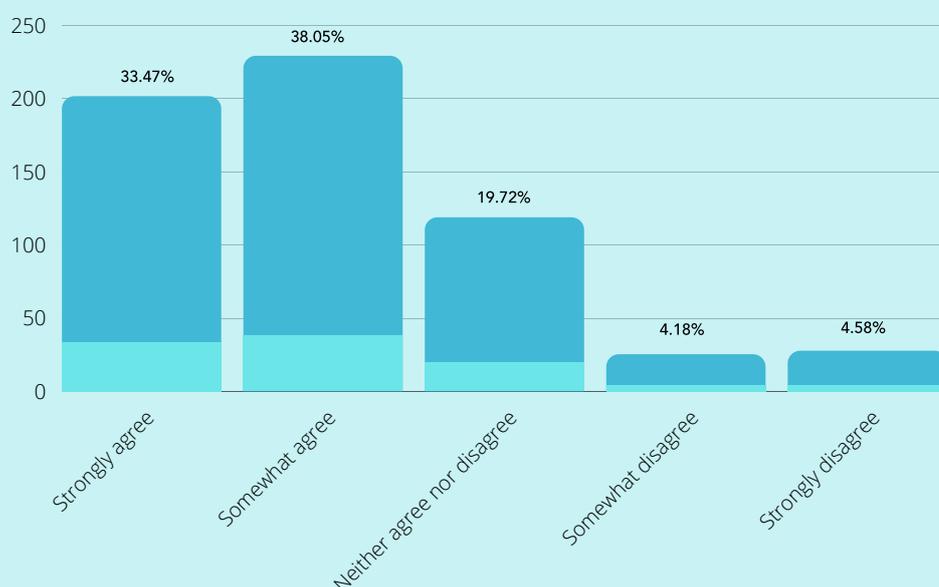
31% of leaders strongly agreeing that planning is more difficult

Now that our teams are distributed, we've been forced to move our business communications online, and asynchronous planning is a muscle that many companies haven't yet had to flex. In such a difficult time, it's important to make sure that you're able to prioritize your work and create organizational changes that will increase productivity without increasing stress. Good prioritization isn't only useful for goal-setting—team members that are able to effectively prioritize their work reported being 48% more engaged and 89% more likely to stay with their organization.

FEEDBACK IS A GIFT

Feedback management is a critical component of planning and productivity during a time that's rife with change, but it can be difficult to make sure we're giving and receiving helpful feedback at the right time. In fact, our survey found that 71% of marketing leaders feel that providing feedback to their teams has been harder post COVID-19 onset. Employees who receive little or no feedback from their managers tend to disengage from their work more readily, making a clear connection between feedback and productivity, especially during a tumultuous time. It's important that managers take the time to gather feedback, both on a project basis and on a quarterly basis.

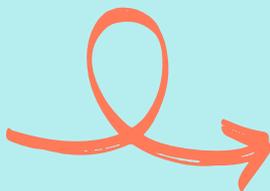
MY TEAM FINDS IT HARDER TO GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK WHEN WORKING REMOTELY.



REMOTE PRODUCTIVITY BEST PRACTICES:

- ✓ Be clear about your goals: Make sure your goals are aligned across the organization, including omissions from your quarterly work. What's important for your business in this quarter? Be clear around expectations and set SMART goals so everyone can be on the same page.
- ✓ Do a tool audit—make sure everyone in your organization is using the same tools to do their best work. 46% of users in a Nextplane survey said they or their team have introduced new technologies, leaving many companies with a set of tools that are misaligned. Be clear on where communication happens, and what types of communication go in which area—tools like Slack, Skype, Zoom, Canva, JIRA, Trello, and others can be incredibly helpful for getting on the same page.
- ✓ Set up a CRM: Using a CRM will get your sales team on the same page, and will allow them to easily make notes about every prospect and customer interaction that is easy to see across the company. You won't have to rely on spreadsheets or staggered email conversations—your team can easily keep track of what's happening no matter where they are in the world.
- ✓ Feedback is critical: With Canva for Enterprise, you can streamline team communication and design approval workflows all within the platform so your teams can produce their best work. You can also make sure each project comes with a retrospective on the calendar, so you can learn from any issues and optimize processes on a project-based timeline.

Resources



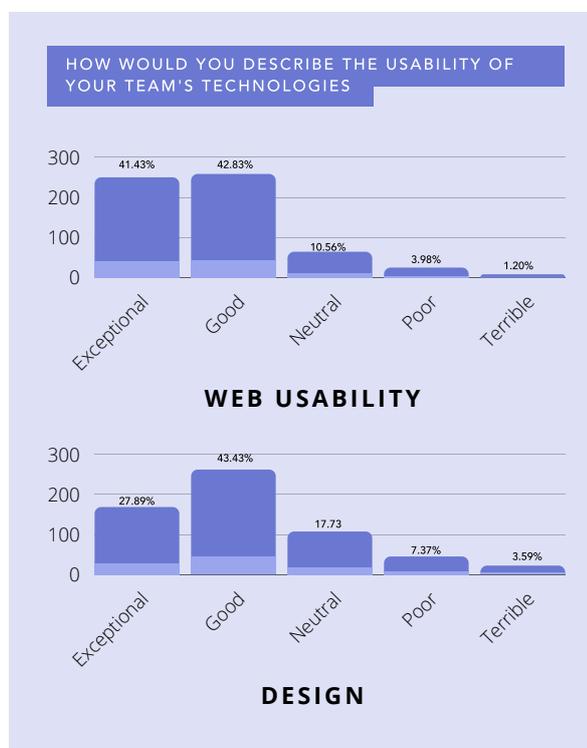
[Why Your Company Needs A CRM To Grow Better](#)

[Remote Sales and Marketing: A guide to moving your business online](#)

[Moving Your Company Into The Future: How you can upgrade your process to be more productive](#)

Investments in Marketing Technology are Fostering Collaboration

When implemented and maintained properly, marketing technology can improve team efficiencies and foster collaboration. Make sure that your tools are adding value to your business, are easy to use, and give the ability to collaborate across your organization. Misaligned tool usage could mean that your team has trouble working together, finding different assets, and feels like information is slipping through the cracks.



Our survey found that 84% of marketing leaders believe that their web content management system (CMS) fosters good or excellent collaboration, and 71.32% of marketers surveyed find the usability of their graphic design software to be good or excellent. Your web content management system is what allows you to create your website—it's the foundation for starting your blog, adding your product/service pages, and bringing your company to life for your audience.

According to Chapter One, content marketing is where marketing leaders are investing in 2021. Your web content management system is the building block of that content marketing strategy—this is a tool that has to work for you, offer flexibility, collaboration opportunities and easy asset management, and be easy to use across the organization.

Not only does your web content management system have to be streamlined—your CMS must work in conjunction with your entire growth machine. This includes all the tools your marketing team uses to create an amazing customer experience -- your CRM, marketing automation platform, and your design tools. Creating content with design in mind will make sure that your brand represents your company well and brings your content together into a cohesive package. Creating content without design in mind will create missed opportunities for your brand and leave your content with something to be desired.

Whether your content includes images that illustrate text or simply accompany an article, readers want to see visuals. Articles and blog posts that contain images get over 90% more total views than those without. Press releases also see a 45% increase in views when a photo or video are included. The same goes for social media—tweets with images receive 150% more retweets than without, and Facebook posts with images see over 2x more engagement than those without. BuzzSumo also found that articles featuring an image every 75 to 100 words were shared twice as much as articles with fewer images.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Making sure that your software is integrated will have an impact on your team's productivity, your ability to collaborate, and will bring your company closer to hitting your marketing goals. A tool audit will help you understand whether or not your software is hitting all the marks. Consider these questions when auditing your web content management system and your design software:

Do they play well together? Does my CMS integrate with my graphic design software?

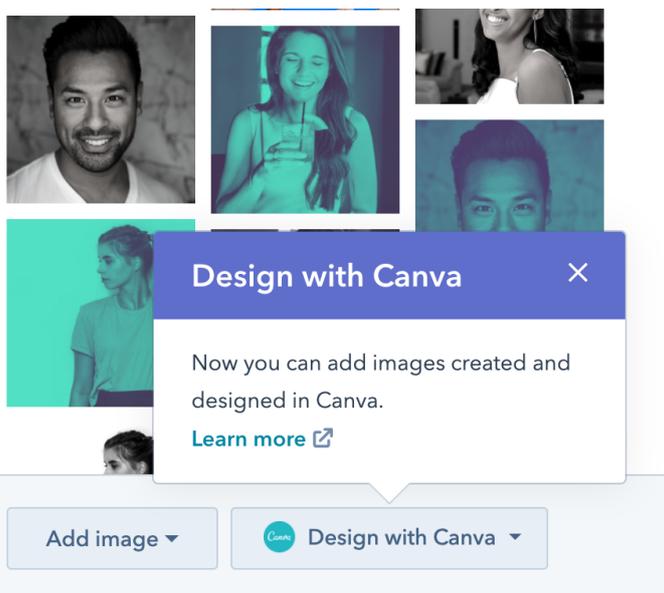
Are these tools easy for my team to use, or are they reliant on developers or designers to get their work done

Are we able to report on our success across all our systems, and easily leverage data to improve upon our website or design assets?

It doesn't matter how powerful your tools are if no one on your team can use them. HubSpot and Canva both provide easy to use tools that provide enterprise-grade power for growing businesses. Powerful on their own, when combined they provide your marketing team with all the tools they need to execute beautifully designed and highly personalized digital marketing materials. And unlike traditional tools, which are difficult to manage and often require technical ability, these tools remove gatekeepers and empower your marketing team to do their best work.

HubSpot & Canva have native integrations within them, making it easy to send already created designs into HubSpot, or quickly create a beautiful graphic for your next web page or social media post directly within HubSpot. With HubSpot & Canva, your marketing team is in complete control over your brand's digital presence.

Resources: www.canva.com/button/hubspot/



Power your Platform with the Canva Button

Like HubSpot, adding the Canva Button to your platform will enable your customers to create amazing designs without leaving your site. They'll instantly access Canva's easy-to-use design editor, with thousands of customizable templates for headers, emails, ads, or social posts. The Button is fast and easy to integrate with just 10 lines of code.

[Learn about the Canva button here.](#)

Reacting At Speed

COVID-19 PRODUCTIVITY IMPACT

The early months of COVID-19 saw some major slowing down in companies' responsiveness. We were hit with a global pandemic and had to take some time to understand our new environment, where our audience was having issues, and how we might be suited to help. Businesses are being pressured to change and react. The survey answers highlighted this experience—63% of marketing leaders said COVID-19 has negatively impacted their teams' productivity and responsiveness.

This number is not unexpected—teams had to take stock of their content, interview their audience about their newfound struggles, restructure their teams, and investigate their solutions for this new world.

In the last eight months, businesses have been doing some soul searching, and we've found that today, 70% of marketing leaders agree that their marketing team can respond quickly to external pressures. Pair this with the findings in Chapter Two, though, and we're seeing that even though we're starting to bounce back, productivity is still an issue.

The survey found that the biggest barriers to marketing team productivity include insufficient team resources (19%), team workload and burnout (17%), and constantly changing business strategies (11%) to respond to the global environment.



That's not all, though—with the constantly shifting environment come constant updates to our content and website strategies. 47% of survey respondents said they have needed to update their website more regularly since the start of COVID-19. With website traffic on the rise since March, more businesses have been doubling down on their website content. Whether that's updating their website product or service pages, moving to e-commerce, or adding to their content marketing strategy, rising website traffic means a constant process of refreshing your website.

50% of respondents find the creative process more difficult.

With updating your website, you'll need more design content. Half of marketing leaders surveyed said that it has been more difficult for them to come up with creative ideas, and 44% said the rate at which they have needed to create visual graphic design assets has increased. We're seeing a conflict here—marketers need to create more and more visual assets, but coming up with creative ideas for those assets is more difficult than ever. With Canva, marketers can rely upon a massive library of 75 million premium stock photos, videos, soundtracks, and graphics as well over 420,000 ready-made templates which takes the guesswork out of design. These assets can be used across your website and represent your brand in a cohesive way, helping create the tie in between your website, your content marketing, and your brand style.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES TO YOUR TEAM'S PRODUCTIVITY SINCE THE PANDEMIC TOOK HOLD?



UPDATING WEBSITE

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

The survey is consistent—updating website content will be very important in 2021. We're experiencing constant changes on a global scale, and your business has to be able to respond quickly. It's critical that your content management system, or CMS, allows for easy updating with simple permissions and asset management for the organization. Marketers can't wait on developers to edit pages for them—make sure that your software allows

for easy editing across the organization, with permissions that make it simple.

You don't have to have a huge design team in order to create assets that work well for your brand and can easily be swapped into your CMS for use across your website. Using tools like Canva can make it simple to have everything you need in one place, and to create an organized templated environment where your team can create assets without having to start from scratch.

Resources

Learn how to create [a visual style guide](#) to help your team stay within your brand guidelines and make it easy to create new assets that feel cohesive.

Take a [branding your business course](#) from the Canva design school.

Learn the [fundamentals of graphic design](#) with HubSpot Academy.



LOOKING FORWARD INTO 2021 MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

2020 was rocked by political, environmental, and health challenges globally. Businesses had to adapt to survive, with many organizations going remote, moving their business online, setting up e-commerce sites, and facing productivity and financial challenges. Learning from our survey respondents, we found that website traffic was increasing, businesses needed ways to encourage their teams and come together organizationally, and find ways to synchronize their content and design strategies. In 2021, we're predicting more online growth and team alignment as a core metric of success. Take the first step in setting up your team for success by connecting Canva and HubSpot, helping your marketing team work together quickly, and respond to the changing environment of today's business landscape.



[SEE HOW CANVA AND HUBSPOT WORK TOGETHER](#)