

A look at ROI:



What is the place of curation in SMBs' content marketing mix?



A report by **Scoop.it!**

A Look at ROI: What Is The Place of Curation in SMBs' Content Marketing Mix?

INTRODUCTION

As the beginning of the end of 2014 approaches, marketers are likely reflecting upon the last year, the trends that have caught on, and the trends that haven't. At this time in 2013, the digital marketing world was abuzz about content marketing and content curation. Over the last year or so, marketing experts have been debating how much importance content curation should have within a content marketing strategy.

There are numerous amounts of tools, tips, and best practices for using content curation and there are many SMBs and even larger enterprises who have adopted the practice and found success in the past year, but there are also still some who seem to doubt the true value of curation for business.

With over 1.5 million freemium users on the Scoop.it platform, we decided to add data to the discussion and ask our SMB clients how curation has impacted their content marketing strategies and goals. A lot of our customers have used curation for quite some time now, and many have told us they've measured significant impacts on content marketing objectives including lead generation, brand awareness, audience engagement, thought leadership, and website traffic. With this in mind, we surveyed SMBs using Scoop.it and/or other content marketing tools. (Larger company? Don't worry, [we've got answers for you too.](#)) Our methodology was to ask respondents (i) how they allocated their investments between creating and curating content (in terms of hours and also in terms of dollars), (ii) how they measured quantifiable results of curated vs created content (in terms of volume produced, traffic and leads generated) and (iii) how they perceived non-quantifiable results such as contribution to thought leadership, brand awareness or audience engagement of curated vs. created content. We then established ratios to see, for each one of these objectives, how curated content performed relatively to created content and to the investment made.

In this report, you'll see first what current views content marketing experts have on content curation, followed by key findings from our survey on how content curation impacts content strategies: from a volume and budget standpoint as well as from a return on investment perspective.

1. 7 EXPERTS' TAKE ON CONTENT CURATION ROI FOR MARKETERS

Although content curation is more mainstream at this point than it was last year, it's still in its early stages as a content marketing strategy staple. There is still plenty of debate around the subject, but one thing's for sure: experts' perceptions of the need for curation in a content marketing strategy are evolving positively: while last year, some experts still [questioned the need for content curation](#), this year, we're seeing consensus that curation plays an important role - just *which* role is the open question as you can see from the quotes below:

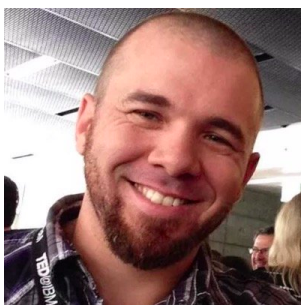


“Well, I think you definitely need both! At the beginning of the year I would have said definitely focus more on the creation aspect, but now that tools like Scoop.it allow you to add a CTA to your curated content and therefore **there is more measurable ROI from content curation**, it is more important than what others think!”

Neal Schaffer, Author, “[Maximize Your Social](#),” Strategy & Social Business Coach

“A well-integrated content curation strategy is a critical component of your organization’s overarching content marketing strategy. **Content curation supports your content plans by making you a tastemaker in your niche**, highlighting the gems in your existing content, and tapping into other peoples’ audiences.”

Heidi Cohen, [Actionable Marketing Guide](#)



“Too often we forget about the reason for creating content, which is to provide value or solve a problem for our customers or our community. **If in the same amount of time you could have written a blog with your insights, you’re able to take three great pieces of content that you found and read during your day and share them with your insights on top of them, you’re providing value across three different views.** Not only does it show that you’re connected and understand that people are reading that same article, but you’re not providing your

thought leadership because people are following your page ... because of the value you can provide.”

Brian Fanzo, Chief Digital Strategist & Partner, [Broadsuite](#)

“The type of curation varies and the reason why you might use it can vary also. I just think that you [need to] have that firm idea in your mind of what you’re using curation for and what you hope it can do for you.”

Nicole Smith, managing editor of TechPageOne.com, Dell’s tech news site



“Original content creation drives organic search and social for your brand and is essential for lead generation. **Curation is for building relationships and showing you’re paying attention to the broader conversation taking place in your industry.** Together, they can work like a team, but curation cannot stand on its own.”

Ted Karczewski, Marketing Content Specialist, Skyword



“In truth, I don’t know if there will ever be an industry standard metric. “Content” differs widely across different organizations. Sure categories might be similar (blog post, eBook, whitepaper, etc) but there are so many idiosyncrasies with different products, services, messages and audiences. Success for one company might not be completely replicable for others. I do find the “original vs curated” content discussion interesting. I tend to believe the ratio should always be “more” when it comes to original content, though the ratio [is debatable](#). Curation probably boosts interaction, but original boosts conversions. **Deciding what’s most important for certain initiatives will determine what’s more valid.**”

Andrew J. Coate, Senior Community & Content Manager, Kapost



“Curation is really the business of trust brokerage. **Brands can earn trust by helping their audiences make sense of complicated industries and complex issues.** Identifying what matters is important, but adding context is what will allow a brand to provide unique value that leads to trust. And trust is essential for long-term success.

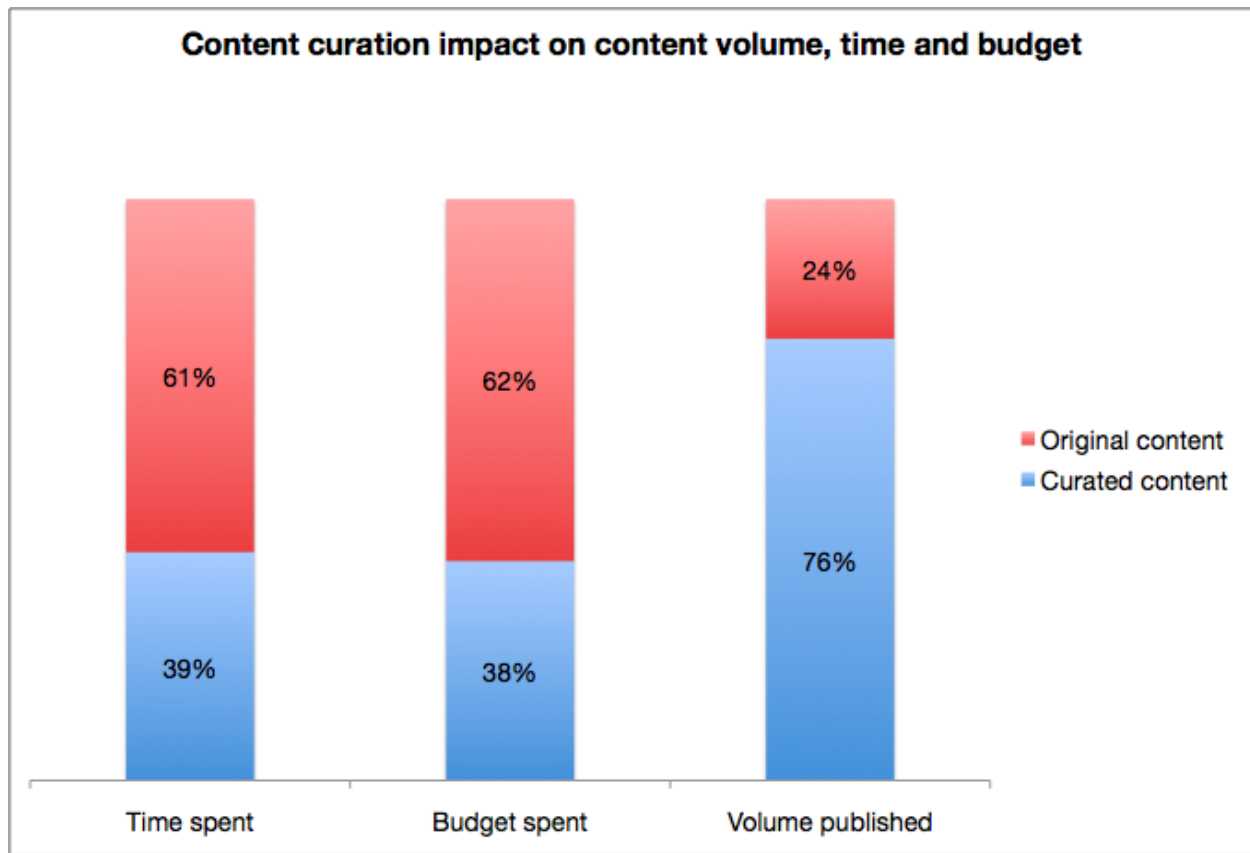
There’s a lot of confusion about what curation actually is, and how it’s different from aggregation, which is why we break it down like this:

aggregation is the collection of everything that happened, curation filters through everything that happened to focus on what is actually important, but contextualization is what happened that matters and why it matters. Providing context to the reader is the difference between curation and aggregation. Aggregation feels a lot like regurgitation and believe me, nobody wins in that scenario.”

Andrew Hanelly, SVP Strategy, McMURRY/TMG



2. KEY SURVEY FINDINGS: CONTENT CURATION IMPACT ON CONTENT VOLUME, TIME & BUDGET



Our first finding is that content curation helps SMBs scale the volume of content they publish. 76% of the content SMBs publish on average is curated vs 24% original. With such a ratio, it's safe to say that content curation is becoming more of a staple in content strategies across small businesses. Just a year and a half ago, some marketing professionals were [bashing content curation](#), saying that it has no place in a content strategy beyond social media. Only a few months after that post went viral in the content marketing world, there were plenty of responses demonstrating the [returns of content curation](#) for business-minded strategists. Today, more than 2/3 of small businesses curate over 5 pieces of content per month.

These SMBs are now starting to dedicate some of their content marketing budgets to content curation tools, resources, and practices. And it works: For small businesses looking to increase the amount of content they host on their website and share on their social media accounts, the fact that 40% of their budget is able to produce 76% of their content is pretty convincing. On average, they end up with about 109 pieces of content per month, 83 of which are curated. With each additional piece of content produced, small businesses have one more landing page, one more chance to engage their audiences, and one more chance to capture a lead that could end up being a sale.

"If in the same amount of time you could have written a blog with your insights, you're able to take three great pieces of content that you found and read during your day and share them with your insights on top of them, you're providing value across three different views."

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Brian Fanzo, Chief Digital Strategist & Partner,
Broadsuite

And this increased volume yields results: as we'll see in the next section, over half of the website traffic of small businesses surveyed appears to be coming from content curation. This is implemented using curated content hubs that include a CTA leading to their websites, hosting their curated content as a page of their corporate website or using content curation tools that lets them integrate with

their websites through an API or some form of integration.

Content Marketing Volume & Budget: 7 Key Statistics

-The average small business who uses curation in their marketing mix manages to publish 109 pieces of content per month.

- Even though surveyed SMBs spend on average about six hours less (11h) per month curating content than creating original content (17h), they end up publishing 3 times as many pieces of curated content than original content.

- On average, surveyed small businesses are currently looking at a ratio of 76% curated content to 24% original content per month.

- On average, content marketing monetary budget is split as follows: 60% on creation, 40% on curation.

- On average, 43% of SMBs' website traffic comes from original content while 57% comes from curated content.

- 69% of SMBs curate 5 or more pieces of content per month.

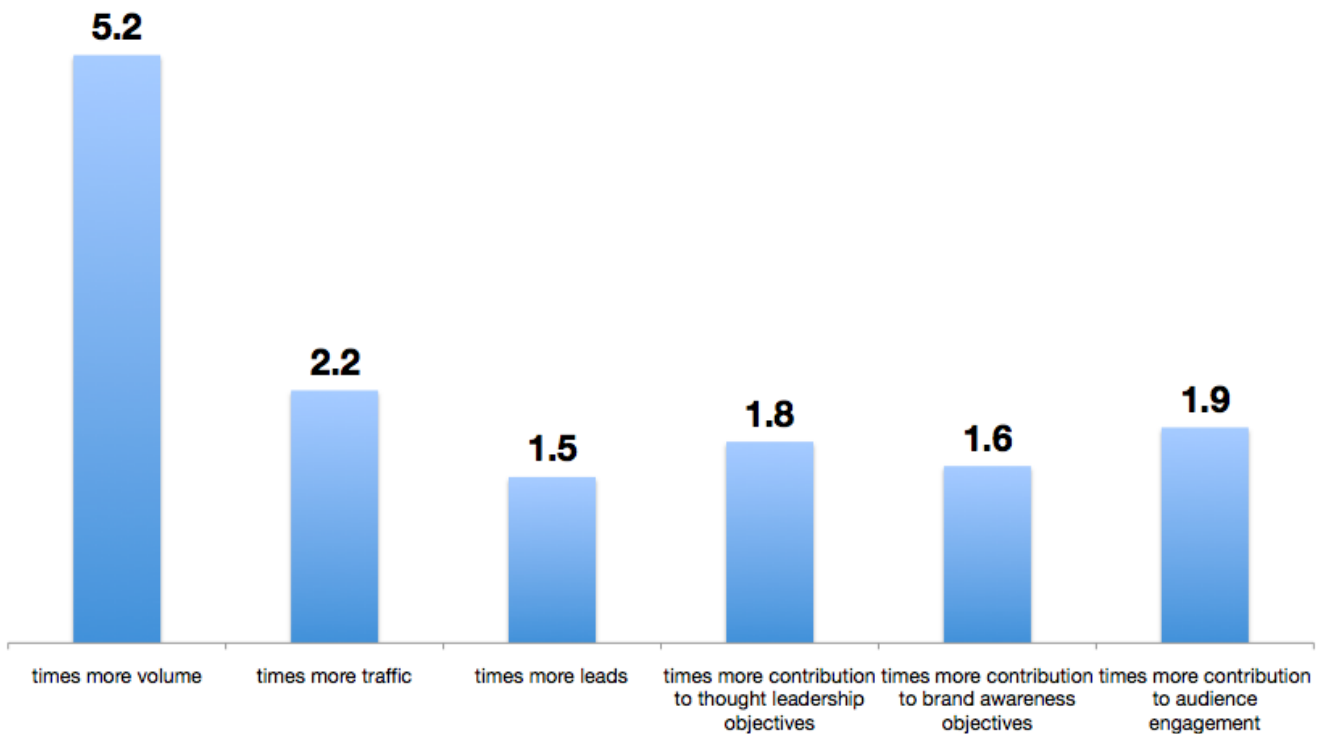
3. KEY SURVEY FINDINGS: CONTENT MARKETING AND CONTENT CURATION ROI

Considering SMBs invest time and/or money in creating and curating content, we've compared the amount they respectively invest in creation vs. curation with the results they told us they obtained in terms of:

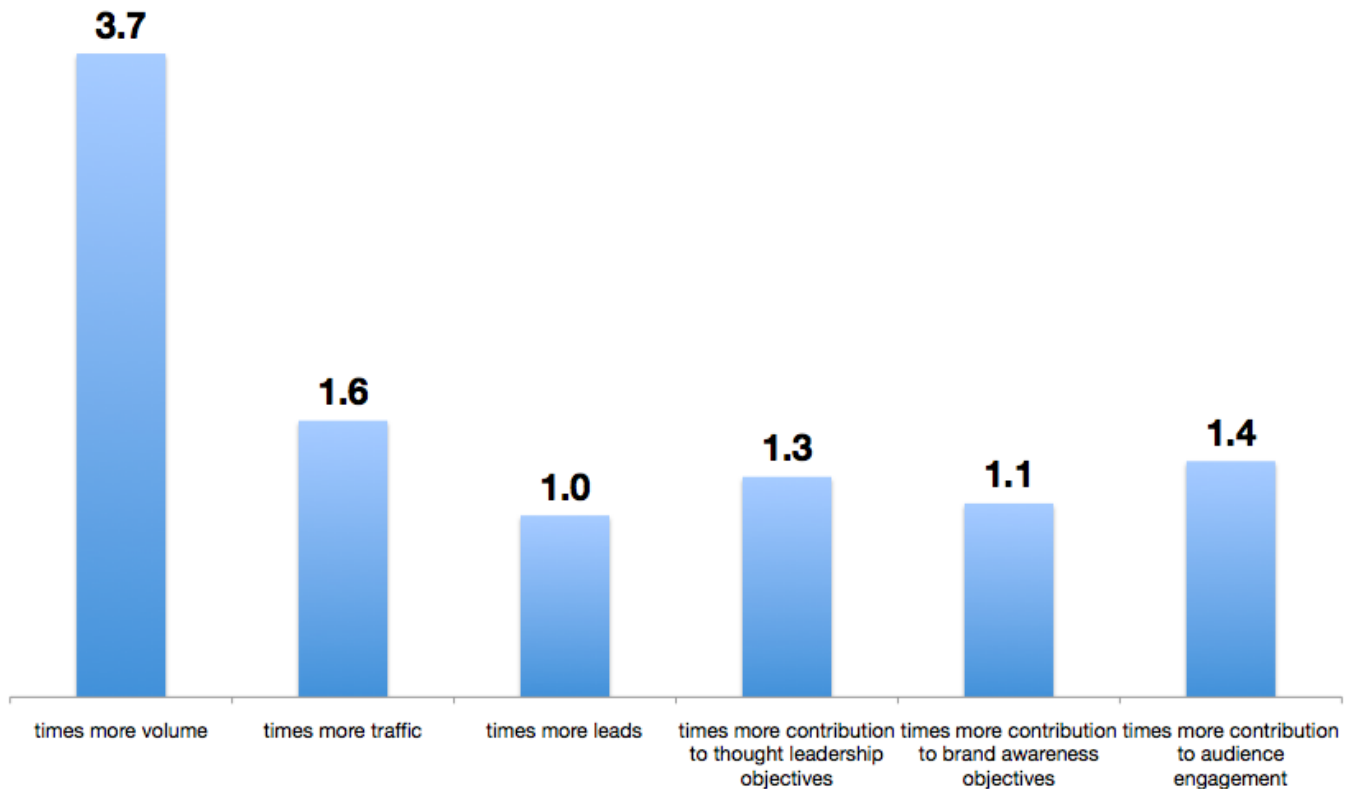
- quantifiable results (volume of content, traffic, leads),
- contributing to their business objectives (thought leadership, brand awareness, audience engagement).

The assumption we're trying to verify and measure is whether or not content curation is efficient to reach these results and if so, how much more efficient it is.

What does 1 dollar of content curation bring SMBs vs 1 dollar of content creation?



What does 1 hour of content curation bring SMBs vs 1 hour of content creation?



A consistent theme here is that small businesses are able to get more out of content curation than they put into it. Although the typical small business doesn't dedicate yet more than 40% of its budget to content curation, the returns is actually much higher than those from content creation when compared to the time and money spent.

As previously mentioned, we thought the best way to investigate the ROI of including content curation in a content marketing strategy for small businesses was to compare the yield of one dollar spent on content curation vs. one dollar spent on content creation and then perform the same analysis for time. The above charts demonstrate the clear impact of content curation on business objectives. For example, for each dollar spent on content curation yields over 5 times the volume of content, 2.2 times the amount of traffic, and 1.5 times the amount of leads than a dollar spent on creating original content.

Dollars aren't the only part of a content marketing budget that's well-spent on curation, though as a lot of small businesses are relying on their own efforts rather than outsourcing. According to

our study, spending one hour curating content produces almost 4 times the volume, 1.6 times the traffic, and 1.4 times the audience engagement than one hour of creating original content.

Smart SMBs have caught onto this high return and are more than doubling their output and successfully reaching their business objectives by adding curation to the mix.

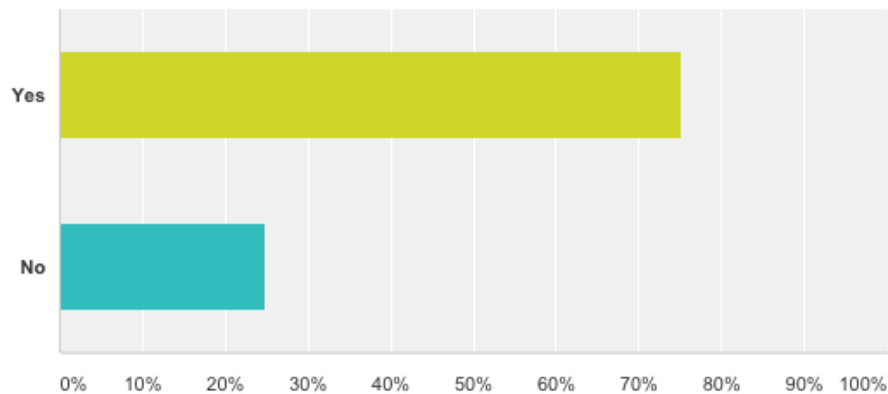
Another interesting tidbit from the ROI section of the report is the rankings of content marketing goals: audience engagement is the most commonly measured, followed by brand awareness, then thought leadership and lead generation. So while SMBs are not yet at the point where they all demand direct and measurable returns in increased sales from their content, it's interesting to note that close to a third of them (30%) already generate leads with content curation. Should content marketing follow the trend of social media which is now more and more used for selling and lead generation, content curation could play an interesting role here as a strategy already proven to generate leads for SMBs.

"At the beginning of the year I would have said definitely focus more on the creation aspect, but now that tools like Scoop.it allow you to add a CTA to your curated content and therefore there is more measurable ROI from content curation, it is more important than what others think!"

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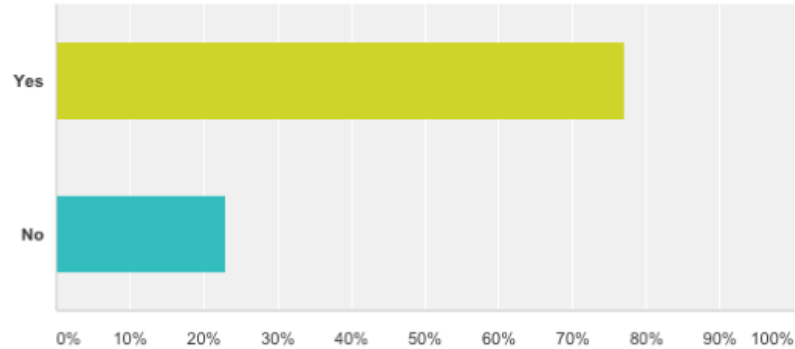
Content Marketing Objectives & ROI: 13 Key Statistics

Do you consider thought leadership an objective of your content marketing efforts?



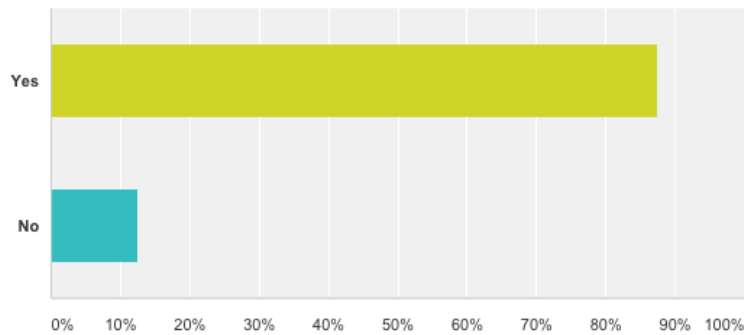
Thought leadership was reported as a measurable objective for content marketing for about 75% of respondents.

Do you consider brand awareness an objective of your content marketing strategy?



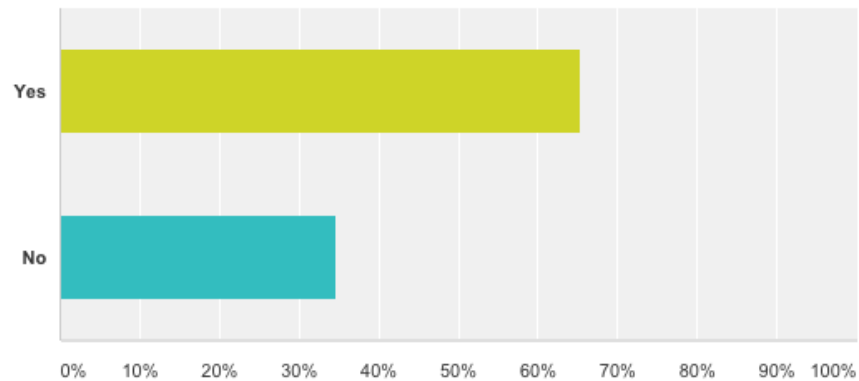
Brand awareness was reported as a measurable objective for content marketing for about 77% of respondents.

Do you consider audience engagement an objective of your content marketing strategy?



Audience engagement was reported as a measurable objective for content marketing for about 87% of respondents (most commonly measured objective).

Do you consider lead generation an objective of your content marketing strategy?



Lead generation was reported as a measurable objective for content marketing for about 65% of respondents.

- 20% of respondents reported over 1,000 monthly pageviews generated from curated content; a close 18% reach that traffic through original content.

- 53% of respondents who reported thought leadership as a measurable content marketing goal see more than half of this objective being met through curation.

- 41% of SMB's who reported brand awareness as a content marketing goal meet more than half of this objective through content curation.

- Content curation has a 50% or above contribution to thought leadership and brand awareness business objectives for 40% of respondents.

- 30% of SMB's already generate leads with content curation.

CONCLUSION

There are a few bottom lines here:

1. One is that **small businesses are in need of more content, and adding curation to the marketing mix solves this problem**; businesses who added curation to their content strategies produced over 100 pieces of content per month.
2. Further, scaling content marketing by adding content curation to the mix provides value to small businesses in that **curation yields more results when it comes to meeting objectives like thought leadership, brand awareness, audience engagement, and lead generation**.
3. While SMBs are still primarily focused on deriving thought leadership, audience engagement and brand awareness benefits from of their content strategy, it's interesting to note that **close to a third of SMBs are already generating leads through content curation**.

While experts still debate which particular role content curation could play in the content marketing mix, there is now growing consensus that content curation is an essential piece of it. The data from our survey suggests indeed that even though there isn't necessarily a one-size-fits all answer to the role of curation, there is one sure answer here: the addition of curation produces significant results for small businesses.