

INK & IMPACT

*The resilience and results of print
and mail in modern marketing*

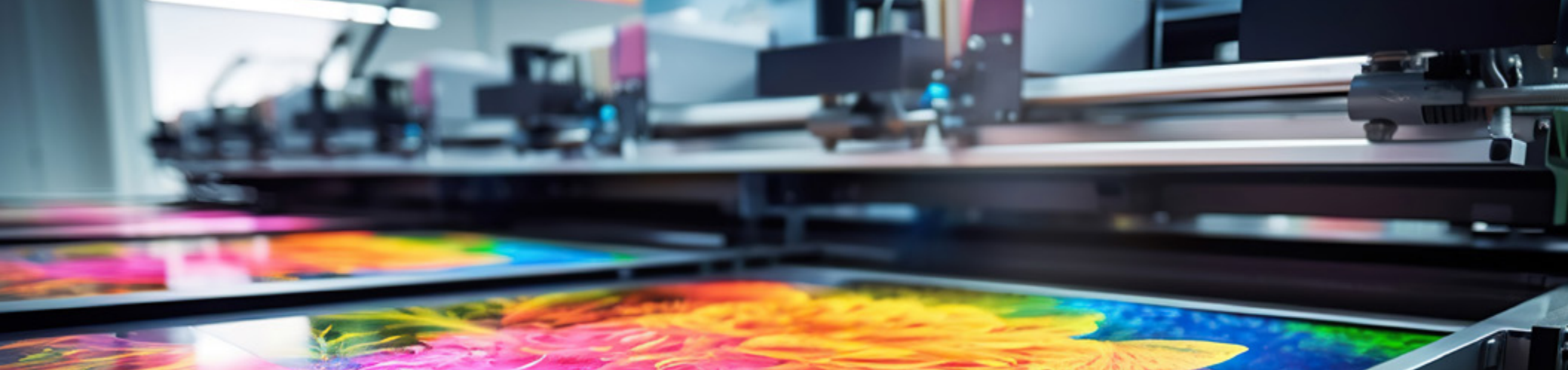
Research created in partnership with Ascend2



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INTRODUCTION

Print isn't going anywhere, in fact, the use of printed marketing materials is increasing.

In today's digitally driven world, businesses are tasked with creating an impactful and consistent presence across an ever-growing number of channels. Marketing with direct mail and printed marketing materials is a tried-and-true form of creating a brand image that resonates to drive leads and improve performance. With the right data and technology, companies can now seamlessly integrate their printed marketing campaigns with their digital efforts to drive success like never before.

That is why print isn't going anywhere. According to our research, 58 percent of marketers expect to increase their use of printed marketing materials in the coming year, and those who expect to meet or exceed revenue goals in the coming year are significantly more likely than others to be increasing the use of print (74 percent vs 53 percent). Further, marketers who are certain about meeting or exceeding revenue goals in the coming year are also more likely to be increasing their print budgets (90 percent vs 71 percent).

In the report that follows, we dive into the state of print and direct marketing to discover the benefits of print, the challenges marketers face when executing their print strategy, and what the best-in-class are doing differently to improve performance.

We hope you enjoy this research!

Experienced marketers trust print. Those with more marketing experience are significantly more likely to be using printed marketing materials in their strategy. Nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of those with more than five years of marketing experience have used printed materials in the last year, compared to just over half (52 percent) of those with less than five years of marketing experience.

1.0 THE STATE OF PRINT

What are the most popular printed marketing materials?

Brochures and flyers are common among marketing and lead generation strategies today with seven out of every 10 marketers reporting use of them in the last year. Direct mail (other than postcards) and promotional signage are also commonly used by marketers with nearly half of those surveyed (45 percent and 44 percent, respectively).

VARIATIONS IN PRINTED MARKETING MATERIALS USED ACROSS INDUSTRIES

Of course, the use of printed materials can look quite different when considering the industry. Here are some highlights of major disparities:

Those in **professional services** are more likely to be using trade show displays than others.

Manufacturing respondents also use trade show displays more than others.

Retailers are using significantly fewer brochures and flyers than all others.

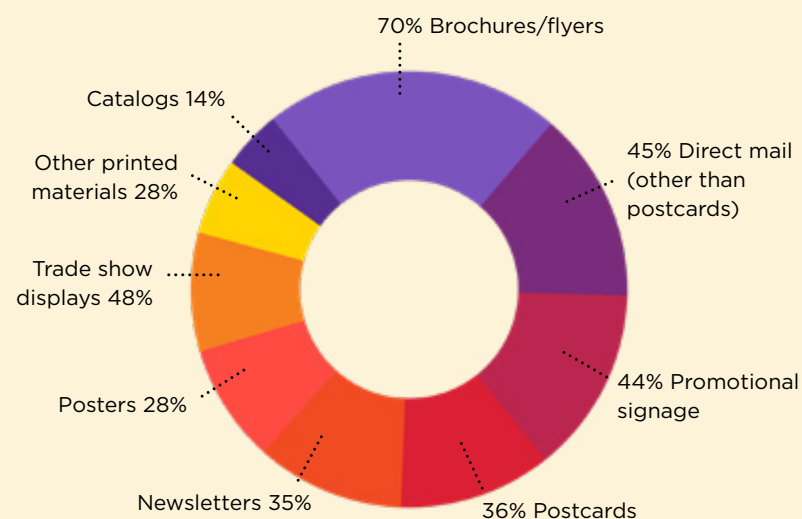
Nonprofits use significantly more printed newsletters, postcards and posters than all others.

The **healthcare** industry relies heavily on posters and direct mail.

Those in **real estate** also use more direct mail than all others.

Nine out of 10 marketers say that the use of printed marketing materials is effective at generating brand awareness for their business (89 percent).

What printed materials have you used in the past 12 months as part of your marketing/lead generation programs?



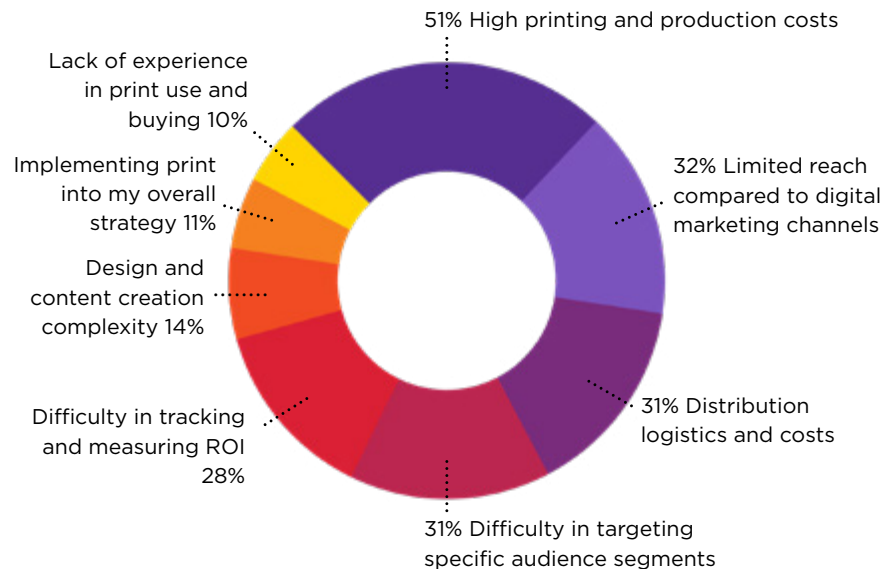
Trade show and event marketing is on the rise. Those who expect to meet or exceed revenue goals in the coming year are significantly more likely than others to be increasing the use of trade show/event marketing in the coming year (53 percent vs 29 percent).

1.1 THE STATE OF PRINT

Top challenges when using printed marketing materials

Half of marketers surveyed (51 percent) point to printing and production costs as a top challenge. Another 31 percent of those surveyed report distribution logistics and costs are a barrier to success. Less than one-third of those surveyed report that printed marketing materials have limited reach compared to digital channels.

What are the main challenges you face when using printed marketing materials as part of your marketing strategy?



68%

of marketers report that lower printing and production costs would encourage more use of printed marketing materials in their strategy.



ROI OUTWEIGHS COST

Throughout this report, you will find that the ROI of print materials is high, indicating that printed materials work. Minimizing the costs of printed material will further increase your ROI. Here are four tips to help you achieve this:

1. OPTIMIZE DESIGN FOR EFFICIENCY

- + Simplify your design to reduce the need for multiple colors and complex graphics.
- + Carefully proofread your content before it goes to the printer to avoid the cost of new proofs.

2. BE FLEXIBLE

- + Take advantage of bulk printing discounts by ordering larger quantities of materials that have infrequent updates to the content.
- + Consider a company online storefront for frequently ordered materials that need customization. You'll centralize buying and manage proper branding.

3. MAKE USE OF THE SPACE

- + Print on two sides of each sheet to cut your paper quantity in half.
- + Use standard paper sizes and formats to minimize waste and cut costs.

4. OPT FOR TARGETED DISTRIBUTION

- + Use mailing lists that align with your target audiences to improve response rates and avoid printing and postage costs to others who aren't.
- + Implement tracking mechanisms, like unique QR codes or custom URLs, to measure the effectiveness of your distribution and refine your strategy over time.

By implementing these cost-saving strategies, you can reduce your expenses while still effectively using printed marketing materials to reach your audience. To get expert guidance and pricing, **request a meeting** with an Allegra expert.

1.2 THE STATE OF PRINT

Budgets for print and production.

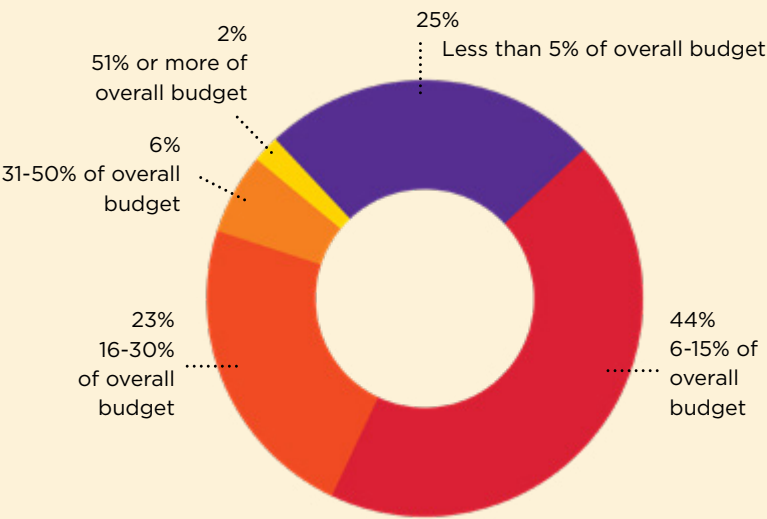
Printed marketing materials account for 15 percent or less of the overall marketing budget for 69 percent of those surveyed. Nearly one-quarter (23 percent) of those surveyed allocate 15-30 percent of their marketing budget to print.

**Personal services, non profits,
and real estate industries
dedicate more budget to print
than others.**



Those who feel that they will definitely meet or exceed revenue goals in the coming year are significantly more likely than all others to be increasing their budget for print in the year ahead (90 percent vs 71 percent). They are about four times more likely to be increasing their budget for print significantly (19 percent vs 4 percent).

What is the approximate amount of your overall marketing budget dedicated to printed marketing materials?



How do you expect the overall marketing budget dedicated to printed marketing materials to change in the coming year?

(Segmented by the percent of overall budget dedicated to print)

PERCENT OF OVERALL BUDGET	PERCENT OF THOSE WHO WILL INCREASE BUDGET
Less than 5%	67%
6-15%	77%
16-30%	81%
31% +	83%

Over three-quarters (76 percent) of marketers say their budget for printed marketing materials will increase in the next year. Interestingly, the more companies spend on printed marketing materials, the more likely they are to report increases in print-dedicated budgets in the coming year, indicating that print is making a positive impact on overall marketing efforts.

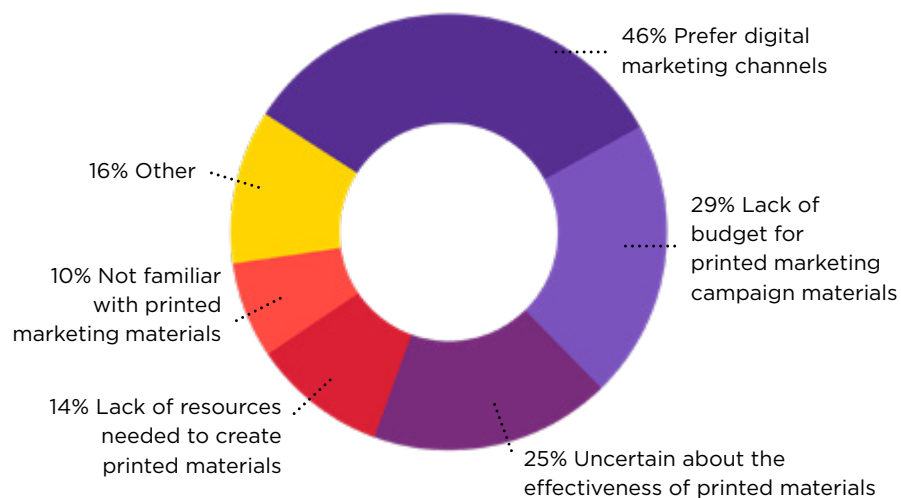
1.3 THE STATE OF PRINT

Why some marketers hesitate to use print

Two-thirds (65 percent) of marketers surveyed report having used printed marketing materials as a part of their marketing efforts in the last 12 months. So what reportedly held the rest back last year?

Nearly half of the 35 percent of this group say it is because they prefer digital channels and 29 percent report a lack of budget, while one-quarter report being uncertain about the effectiveness of printed materials.

What are the main reasons you do **not use printed marketing materials in your marketing programs?**



PRINT USERS REPORT MORE REVENUE GROWTH

Those who have used printed marketing materials as a part of their marketing efforts in the past year are more likely to have seen an increase in revenue (55 percent vs 40 percent).



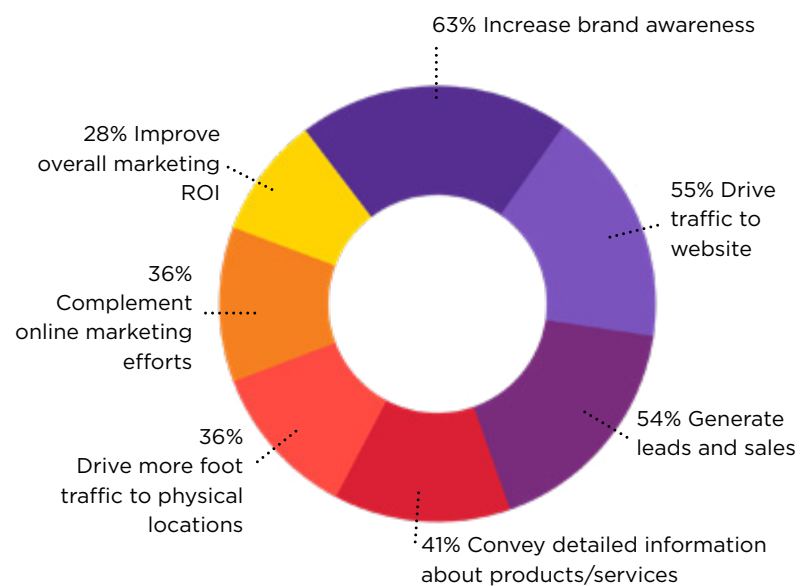
2.0 HOW PRINT IS MAKING AN IMPACT

Print continues to help marketers improve overall performance

According to our research, the use of printed marketing materials and direct mail positively impacts revenue growth and a whopping **93 percent of those who use printed marketing materials say that it is important to their marketing strategy.**

How is print helping marketers? Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of those surveyed report an increase in brand awareness can be a result of using printed marketing materials. Over half of marketers believe that printed marketing materials can drive traffic to their website (55 percent), and generate sales leads (54 percent) as well.

What specific marketing goals do you believe printed marketing materials can help you achieve?



89% of marketers say that the use of printed marketing materials is effective at improving their company's brand/image.

2.1 HOW PRINT IS MAKING AN IMPACT

6 Ways to Use Print to Impact Your Brand

Using printed materials effectively can enhance your company's brand image and reinforce its messaging. Here are five ways to do that:



1. CONSISTENT BRANDING ELEMENTS

- Ensure that all printed materials, from business cards to brochures, follow a consistent design that reflects your brand's visual identity. This includes using the same colors, fonts, logos and imagery.
- Consistency in branding helps create a strong and memorable brand image in the minds of your audience.

2. HIGH-QUALITY MATERIALS AND FINISHES

- Invest in high-quality paper, printing and finishing options. Premium materials can convey a sense of professionalism and luxury associated with your brand.
- Consider special finishes like embossing, foil stamping or spot UV coating to make printed materials stand out and leave a lasting impression.

3. TELL YOUR BRAND STORY

- Use printed materials to tell your brand's story, values and mission. Include a compelling brand narrative in brochures, catalogs and promotional materials.
- Showcase your company's history, milestones and achievements to build trust and credibility.

4. EDUCATIONAL AND VALUE-ADDED CONTENT

- Create printed materials that provide valuable information, tips or resources related to your industry or products.
- Position your company as an expert by offering educational content in the form of printed guides, whitepapers or booklets.

5. PERSONALIZED COMMUNICATION

- Personalize printed materials when possible, such as direct mail campaigns or thank-you notes. Use recipients' names and tailor content to their interests or purchase history.
- Personalization creates a sense of connection and makes customers feel valued, strengthening brand loyalty.

6. EVENT BRANDING AND PROMOTION

- When hosting or participating in events, use printed materials like banners, posters and flyers to prominently display your brand.
- Offer branded promotional items (e.g., pens, notepads or T-shirts) as giveaways to reinforce brand visibility.

By strategically incorporating these printed materials into your branding efforts, you can create a cohesive and memorable brand image that resonates with your target audience and sets your company apart from the competition.

2.2 HOW PRINT IS MAKING AN IMPACT

Confidence in using print drives the benefits

As confidence in using printed marketing materials increases, so do the benefits. About one-third (34 percent) of those surveyed say they are very confident in using printed marketing materials in their marketing strategy. Not only is this group with the most confidence significantly more likely to have seen increases in revenue last year, they also have a more positive outlook on meeting or exceeding revenue goals in the coming year.

Confidence in use of printed marketing materials and direct mail breeds success.

VERY CONFIDENT IN THEIR USE OF PRINT	VERY CONFIDENT IN THEIR USE OF PRINT	ALL OTHERS
Saw an increase in revenue last year	63%	49%
Will definitely meet/exceed revenue goals next year	36% +	18%

79% of marketers agree that specialty finishes and printing techniques (e.g., foils, specialty coatings, finishes or die cuts) improve the overall perception of a brand.

88% of marketers say that the use of printed marketing materials is effective at driving leads for their business.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN USING PRINTED MATERIAL FOR MARKETING.

Confidence in using printed materials for marketing can be built through a combination of strategy, research and testing. Here are four ways to build that confidence:

- Understand your audience and how to reach them with your printed material.
- Set clear objectives and metrics for your print campaigns.
- Use A/B testing to help you learn what works, so you can optimize your print campaigns.
- Invest in experienced graphic designers and professional printers to ensure that your materials are visually appealing, high-quality and align with your brand standards.

Allegra’s team will work with you to find unique and creative solutions to the biggest business and communication challenges you are facing to help you build confidence in the print and production process. Get started.

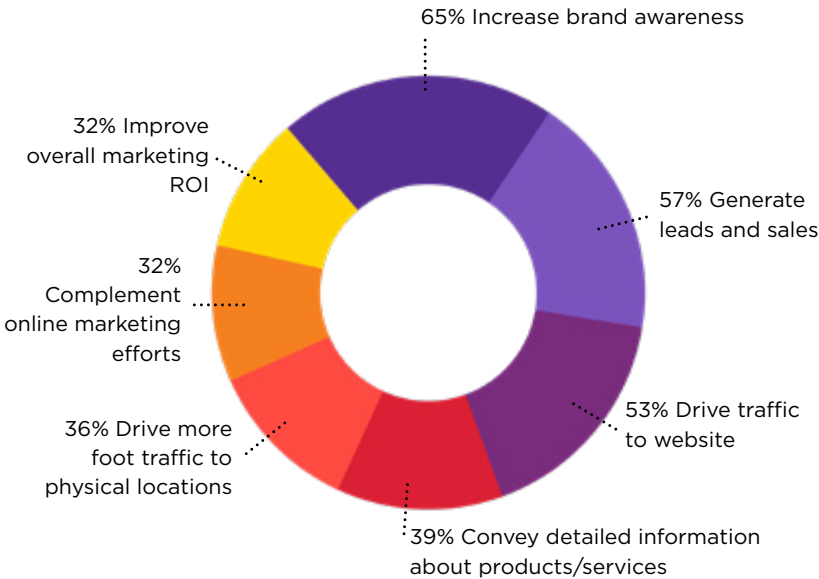
3.0 USING DIRECT MAIL TO DIFFERENTIATE

Direct mail can help generate leads and sales

Overall, 43 percent of those surveyed plan to increase their use of direct mail in the coming year. The most successful marketing strategies incorporate direct mail, even as the digital marketing landscape evolves. In fact, those who expect to meet or exceed revenue goals in the coming year are significantly more likely than others to increase the use of direct mail in the coming year (50 percent vs 41 percent).

Additionally, 65 percent of marketers surveyed say that direct mail can help them increase brand awareness. Another 57 percent of those surveyed say that direct mail can generate sales and 53 percent say it can drive traffic to their website.

What specific marketing goals do you believe direct mail can help you achieve?



MARKETERS SAY
THAT DIRECT MAIL IS
EFFECTIVE TO:

84%
Improve their
company's brand
and image

85%
Drive leads
for their business

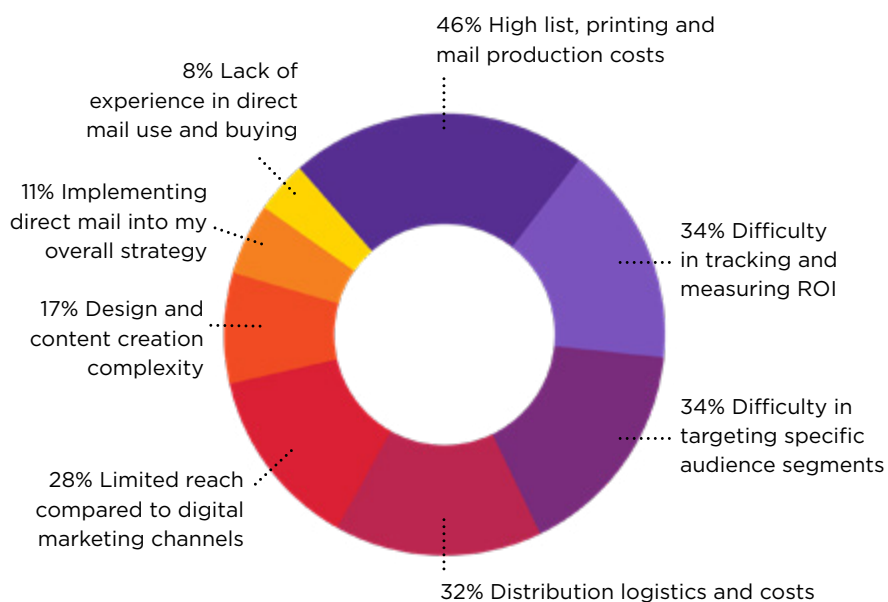
87%
Generate brand
awareness
for their business

3.1 USING DIRECT MAIL TO DIFFERENTIATE

Challenges with direct mail

Lists, printing and mail production costs top the list of main challenges marketers face as they execute direct mail campaigns (46 percent). Difficulty in tracking and measuring ROI as well as difficulty in targeting specific audience segments are also top challenges for about one-third (34 percent) of those surveyed.

What are the main challenges you face when using direct mail as part of your marketing strategy?



30% of marketers would be more inclined to use direct mail in their marketing strategy if they were able to more seamlessly integrate with digital marketing efforts.

45% of marketers say they would incorporate more direct mail into their strategy if they could improve strategic targeting options to reach specific demographics.

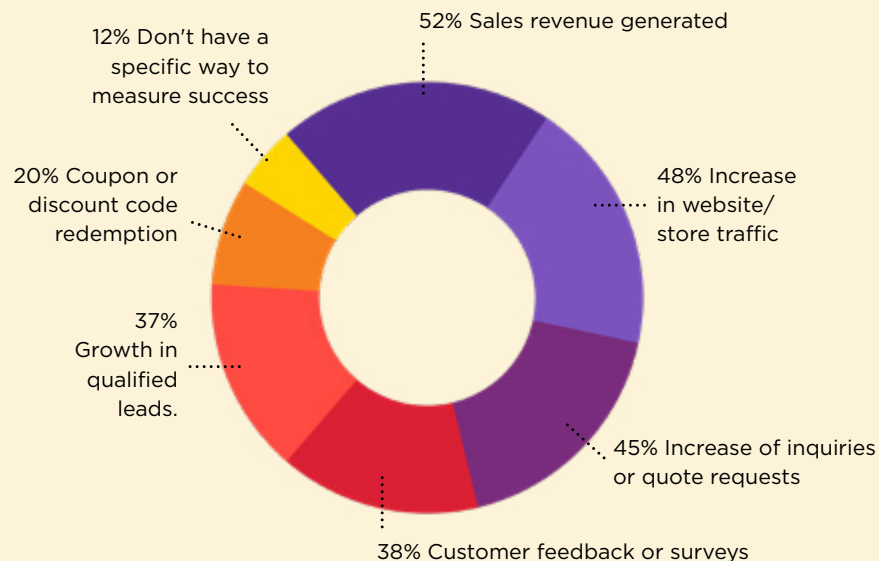
4.0 MEASURING PRINT MARKETING PERFORMANCE.

Measuring performance is a key to success

Successfully measuring performance and ROI is critical to strategic optimization. However, difficulty in tracking and measuring ROI is listed as a top challenge that marketers face when executing printed marketing and direct mail programs, and just over one-third (36 percent) of those surveyed find measuring the performance of these campaigns to be difficult to some extent.

So how are marketers currently tracking success? Overall, sales revenue generated and website or store traffic are the most reported metrics that marketers are using to measure the success of their campaigns using printed marketing materials.

How do you measure the success of your printed marketing materials campaigns?



MEASURING PERFORMANCE IMPROVES CONFIDENCE IN PRINT AND CONFIDENCE BREEDS SUCCESS.

We know through our research that confidence in executing print initiatives improves success. Our research also shows that the easier it is to measure performance, the more confident marketers are in their print campaigns. Those who find it easy to measure the performance of their printed marketing campaigns are overwhelmingly more confident in their print initiatives (nearly three times). Three-quarters (75 percent) of marketers who find it easy to measure their performance are very confident in their use of print, compared to just 28 percent of those who find measuring performance moderately easy or difficult.

4.1 MEASURING PRINT MARKETING PERFORMANCE.

What are the most confident marketers doing differently?

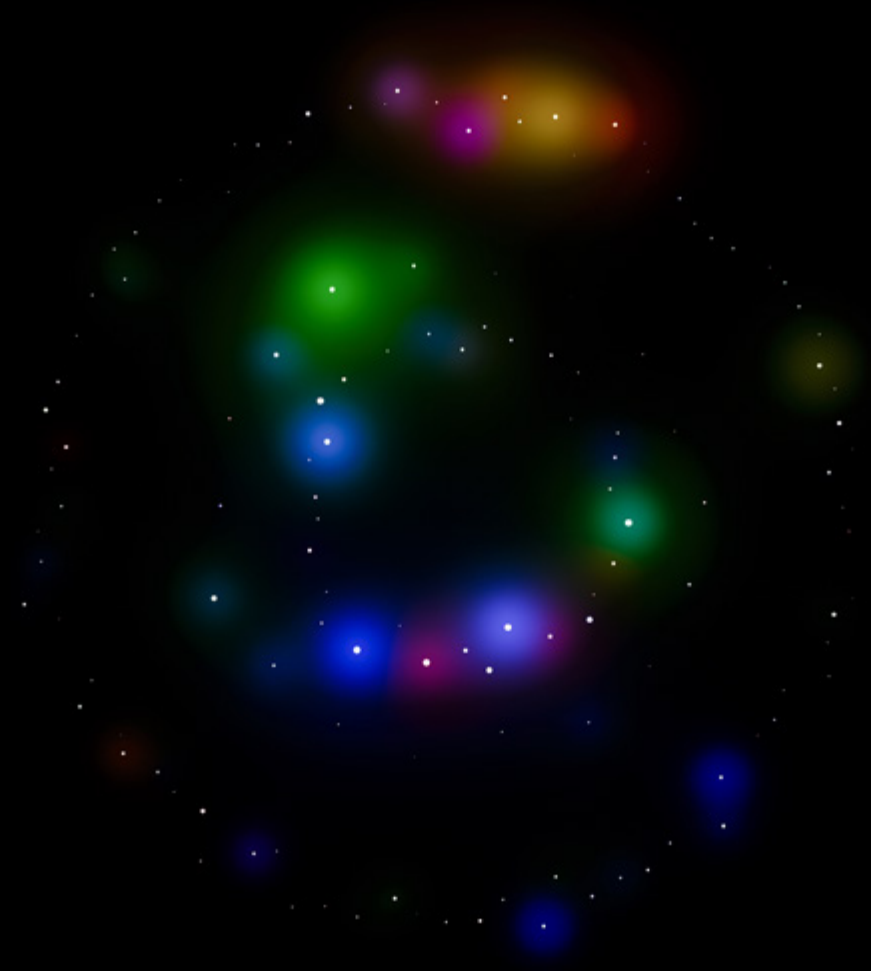
Those with the most confidence in using print are also measuring differently than all others. Very confident print users are more likely to be measuring metrics across the board and significantly more likely to be measuring sales revenue generated (63 percent vs 47 percent), an increase of inquiries or quote requests (53 percent vs 41 percent) and growth in qualified leads (45 percent vs 33 percent).

How do you measure the success of your printed marketing materials campaigns?

	VERY CONFIDENT	ALL OTHERS
Sales revenue generated	63%	47%
Increase in website/store traffic	54%	44%
Increase of inquiries or quote requests	53%	41%
Growth in qualified leads	45%	33%
Customer feedback or surveys	40%	36%
Coupon or discount code redemption	24%	18%
Don't have a specific way to measure success	8%	14%

PERSONALIZED LANDING PAGES TO TRACK RESULTS.

Forty three percent (43) of marketers would increase their use of direct mail if tools to measure and track the performance of campaigns were available or improved. With personalized landing pages (PURLs), marketers can personalize the customer experience with an auto-generated landing page specific to each direct marketing recipient. This allows for an easy way for your audience to engage and enables real-time tracking.



METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANTS

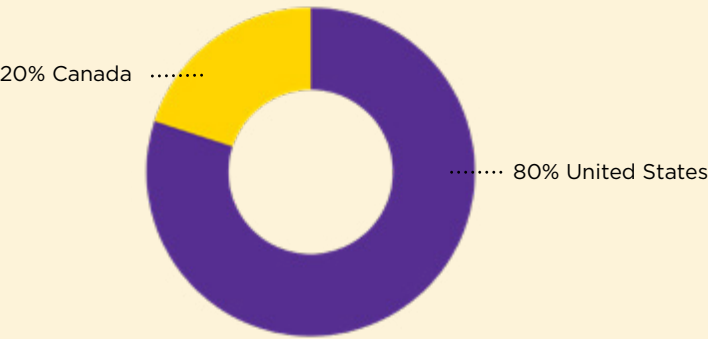
Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of business strategies and the tactics and technology that drive them. To collect the data in this report, Ascend2 used a custom online questionnaire to survey 441 marketing and sales decision-makers in positions of management and above during the month of August 2023. All survey participants represented small and mid-sized businesses (5-200 employees) operating in the United States and Canada across various industries.

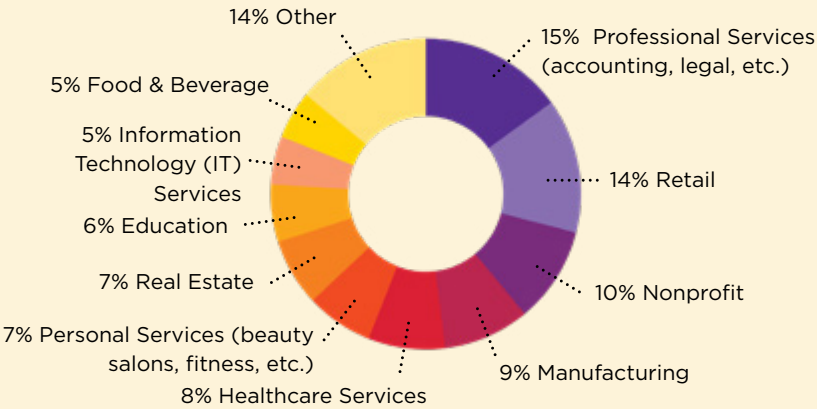


PARTICIPANTS

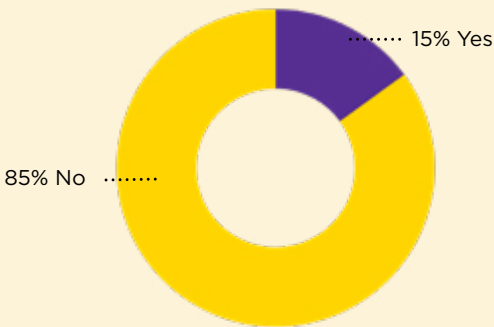
Region



Industry



Nonprofit



ABOUT THE RESEARCH PARTNERS



Allegra Marketing Print Mail is a full-service marketing and print communications provider with in-house capabilities including marketing consultation and graphic design services, advanced printing technologies including wide-format printed graphics, complete finishing services, mailing services, variable data capabilities, promotional products and print management solutions. For more about Allegra, visit allegramarketingprint.com.



Companies partner with Ascend2 to create original research from survey conceptualization through report and content creation to media outreach. Ascend2 helps companies fuel marketing content, generate leads and engage prospects to drive demand through the middle of the funnel. For more about Ascend, visit ascend2.com.

