



# THE CYBERSECURITY MEDIA TRENDS BAROMETER

## OUTLOOK & OPPORTUNITIES

### 2024

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# NAVIGATING CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

For cybersecurity marketing and PR professionals, 2023 has presented both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, a turbulent market has placed pressure on in-house budgets and the outlets themselves, resulting in redundancies and the closure of a host of key titles. As the media landscape shrinks and the volume of cybersecurity companies increases, competition for coverage becomes even more fierce.

However, the past year has also seen cybersecurity-related topics dominate business and trade media on both sides of the Atlantic, presenting a captive media audience that cybersecurity companies can capitalise on with the right story and messaging.

As a dedicated cybersecurity PR and marketing agency with a presence in both the UK and the US, we at Eskensi sought to examine this landscape and look at how media have covered cybersecurity-related topics over the past year.

In parallel, we also examined comms and marketing leaders' priorities and perceptions across core PR and marketing areas to understand how activities are changing in line with market forces. Our findings uncovered how budget constraints are prompting a shift in tactics, but underscored just how important thought leadership will continue to be.

## Methodology

We have undertaken in-depth research into cybersecurity's relationship to the media, examining mentions of "cybersecurity" in the media from January to June 2023.

Polling 30 of the world's most senior cybersecurity PR, Comms and Marketing professionals, we sought to understand their experiences of PR activities, priorities, budgets, and the activities they are looking to focus on in 2024.

# CYBERSECURITY & THE MEDIA

Media coverage of cybersecurity topics is increasing on a global scale

**In the UK and US, national newspapers were trending upwards in their coverage of cybersecurity**

## UK

A huge **122% increase** in readership for “cybersecurity” in H1 2023, when compared with the same period in 2022. This included **198% more** articles talking about cybersecurity, highlighting burgeoning appetite for the topic.

Online publications and blogs got more eyes on cybersecurity too, with a percentage **increase of 70%**.

## US

From January - June 2022, national newspapers covered cyber 2063 times, but in the same timeframe in 2023, the topic was covered **3,649 times**, representing an **increase of 76% year on year**.

The overwhelming majority of cyber mentions in the US, however, were from **online news sites, blogs, and magazines**.

From January - June 2022, through the same period in 2023, we tracked an **increase of 67%** in these mentions, rising from an already impressive **40,729 mentions to 68,140**.

## What does it mean?

**Cybersecurity is a booming part of the UK media conversation.** Across both national and trade media, mentions are up, trends indicate they will continue to grow.

**In the US, cybersecurity maintains a prominent media presence.** Unlike their counterparts in the UK, US newspapers, which span a broader and more diverse range of publications, consistently feature cybersecurity topics. The well-established trade press in the US remains the largest part of the security market, representing a huge collective readership of **nearly 598 billion**. This substantial readership underscores America's status as the leading technology superpower globally.

# ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES: THE PUBLICATION LANDSCAPE

The landscape in both of our major English-speaking geographies has shifted. **The Tier 1 trade magazine opportunities have declined**, meaning space in the remaining Tier 1 security and technology publications is more competitive than ever.

Over the past year, various publications have undergone a notable shift in their editorial focus. Some have opted to close their doors, while others have altered their editorial direction. As a result, obtaining comprehensive coverage has become more challenging.

- ▶ THREATPOST STOPPED PUBLISHING NEW CONTENT AS OF AUGUST 2022.
- ▶ THE DAILY SWIG CLOSED ITS DOORS IN MARCH 2023.
- ▶ PREVIOUSLY KNOWN FOR STRONG COMMITMENT TO COVERING CYBERSECURITY, ZDNET HAS SHIFTED ITS FOCUS TOWARDS TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE EXPANSIVE REALM OF 'DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION.'

On a national level, the issue is the same. Although there has been a rise in reporting on cybersecurity issues, the competition for airtime has escalated concurrently.

**With over 3,000 cybersecurity vendors vying for attention, standing out from the crowd demands a blend of creativity, compelling content, and distinctive messaging.**

## What does it mean?

By understanding and responding to these trends, you can equip yourself to deal with them more effectively, increasing your chances of inclusion in the ever-increasingly tough media landscape.

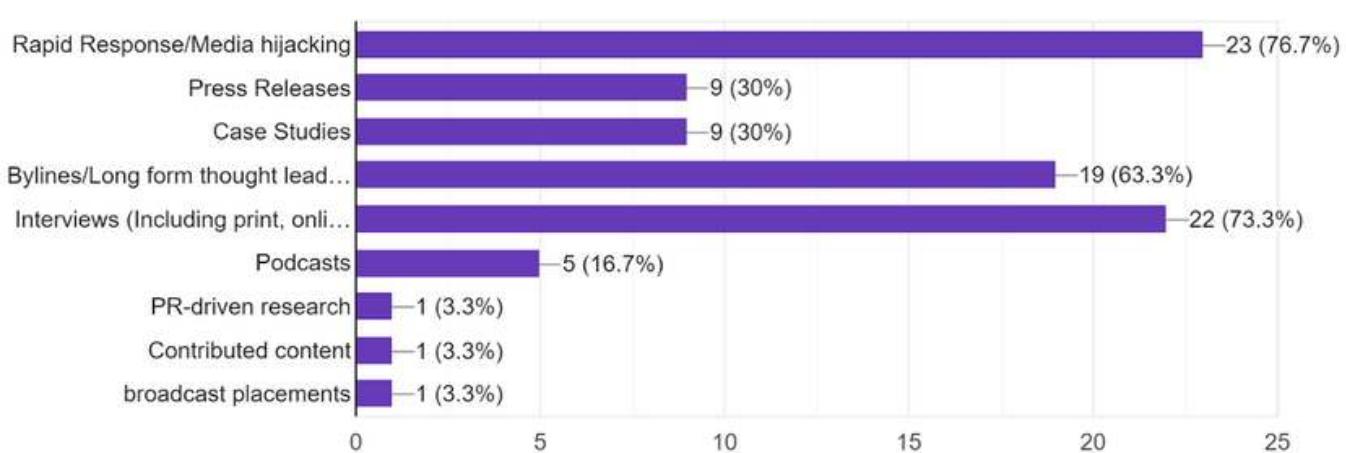
# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES

In Q4 2023, Eskensi surveyed 30 leaders in PR, communications, and marketing within the cybersecurity sector. The goal was to understand their current media and analyst engagement, effective strategies, and unveil 2024 budgets, plans, and priorities.

Here are key findings from this research.

## Thought Leadership Remains Key

Which of the following media activities would/do you find the most helpful for your brand? Please choose up to 3  
30 responses



In a poll about the most beneficial thought leadership activities for their brand, the top three responses suggested that establishing thought leadership remains crucial:

- 76.7% identified rapid response (media hijacking) activity as the most helpful.
- 73.3% identified interviews.
- 63.3% identified bylines or other forms of long-form thought leadership.

All of the above builds thought leadership platforms, with rapid response being the most popular creating almost instant brand awareness if done effectively.

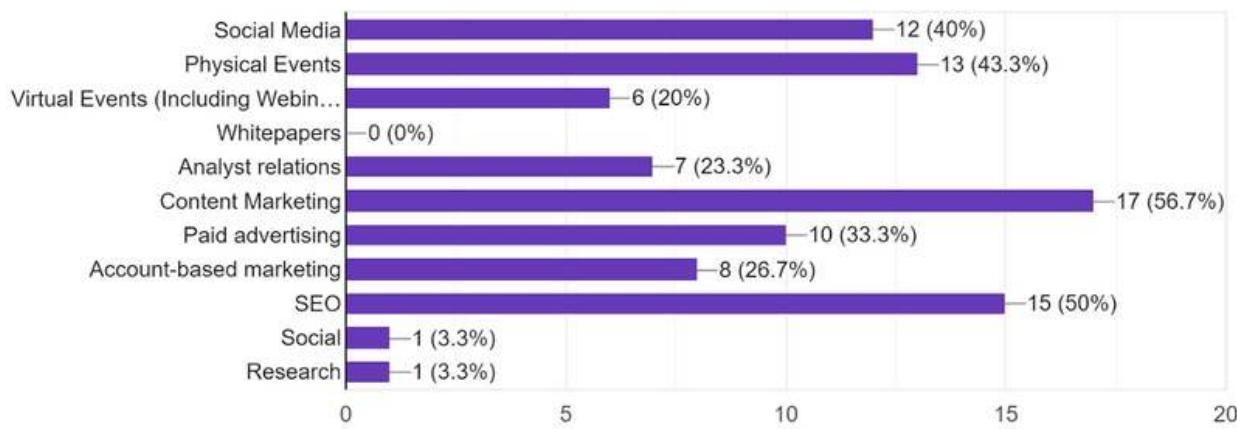
# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

## Direct Revenue Generation is Driving Marketing Activity

In the face of a challenging economic climate, respondents revealed that they are doubling down on activities such as SEO, content marketing, and account-based marketing, most likely because of the perceived impact on bottom lines. However, given the lengthy sales cycles and multiple touchpoints required for B2B sales, it will be critical that this activity isn't done at the expense of brand awareness campaigns.

Which other communications activities have the greatest impact for your business (Please select up to three)

30 responses



- Content marketing was the most useful to 56.7% of respondents.
- SEO was the most useful to half (50%).
- Physical events remained in a strong post-pandemic position, with 43% suggesting they were still useful.

**This implies the activities that are perceived as directly generating leads are high on the list of marketeers' priorities.**

# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

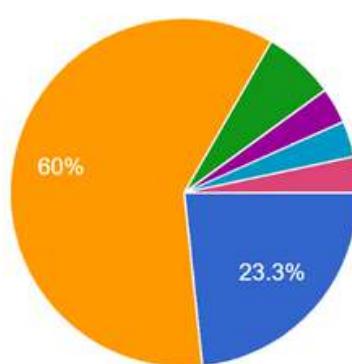
## Analysts, Awards & Speaking Opportunities

We asked our contacts about some of the most hotly debated activities within marketing departments. Some organisations view these areas of marketing activity - particularly analyst relations - as a key and defining part of a strategy.

### Analyst Relations

Where do analyst relations sit within your organisation?

30 responses



- We have a dedicated AR department
- We have a dedicated AR agency
- Our internal PR/marketing team deals with AR
- Our PR agency deals with AR
- our product marketing team leads AR
- we have an AR lead on the comms team
- limited AR currently but something we need to build in the future

Most of the respondents surveyed (60%) handled analyst relations in-house in their marketing teams, with a further 23% boasting a dedicated analyst relations department.

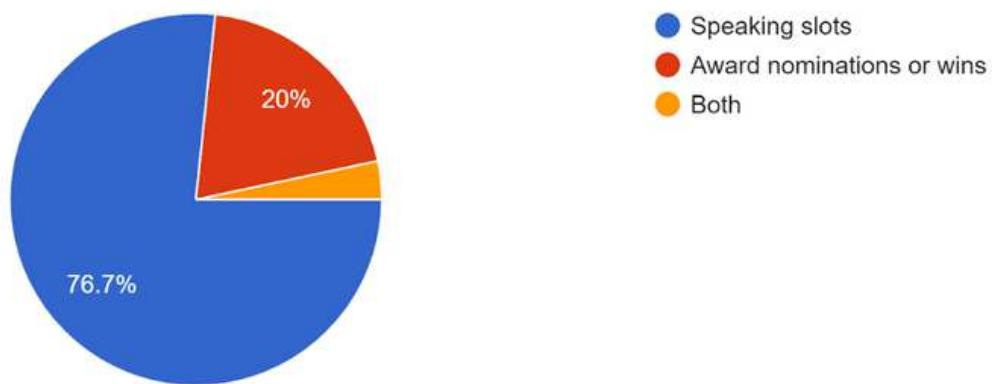
Only 6% currently outsourced analyst relations to their PR firm, potentially presenting a missed opportunity to more closely integrate AR and PR and underpin media activities with analyst insight..

# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

## Analyst Relations

Which do you consider to be more valuable?

30 responses



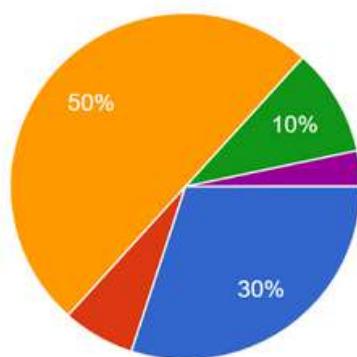
Our survey participants strongly favoured speaking slots over award nominations or wins. This underscores the significance of thought leadership platforms compared to accolades, especially those that often involve a pay-to-play component.

# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

## The Untapped Potential of Influencers

Which of the following best describes your organisation's approach to engaging with influencers (individuals outside of your organisation who can w...h as CISOs with a large following, or podcasters)?

30 responses



- We hope to build an external influencer programme
- We hope to develop internal staff members as influencers
- We do not currently have an influencer programme, but would be interested i...
- We do not see the value in an influencer programme
- We have an active external influencer program

The vast majority of those surveyed (80%) do not currently have an active influencer programme in place. This would imply that our industry is behind the curve when compared to others, where influencer relations have become integral to marketing strategy.

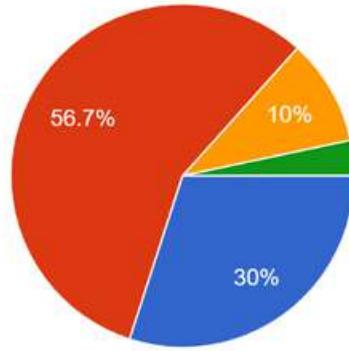
# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

## Developing Spokespeople

As a PR agency, we understand that organisations live and die by the strength of their spokespeople. The best and most successful clients we work with are the ones who have several spokespeople in place, across multiple subjects. This understanding is shared by the comms community, where the vast majority of respondents (56.7%) understood that different spokespeople for different subjects remains crucial, with a further 30% identifying the importance of regional spokespeople.

What best describes your company approach to spokespeople (people within the organisation who have public or media facing engagements as part of their job brief)?

30 responses



- We find it valuable to have spokespeople in every region in which we operate
- We have multiple spokespeople for different subjects
- We think that the spokesperson should only be a figurehead, such as the CEO or another member of the c-suite
- We have a few spokespeople but need more

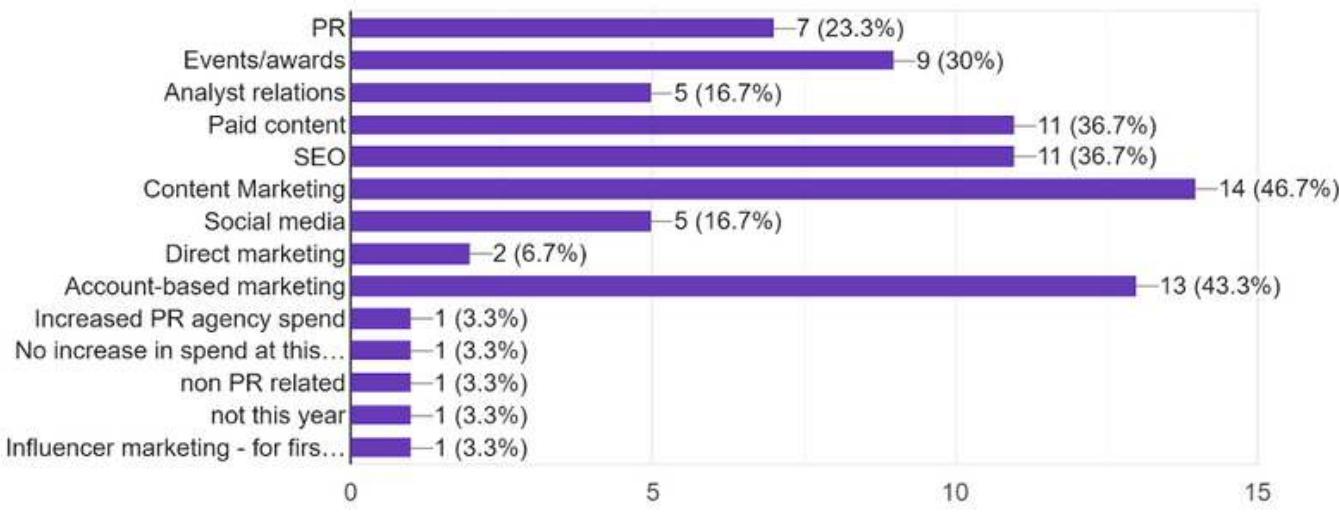
# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

## Budgets in 2024

In the face of economic turbulence, business departments - including marketing - need to cut costs. As such, we've asked where our marketing and comms contacts were intending to spend and cut their budgets in 2024.

Do you plan to increase spend in each of the following areas? Tick all that apply

30 responses

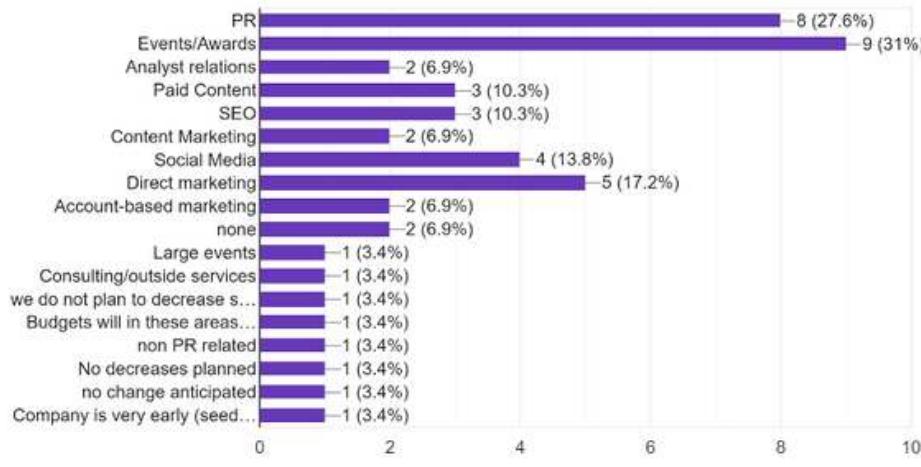


Once again we can see that direct lead-generating activity is where our respondents are looking to spend their budgets. Content and account-based marketing were the most popular areas for increase, with 46% and 43.3% respectively. Following this, 36.7% of respondents highlighted both paid content and SEO as key areas of spend. This indicates that guaranteed results are being demanded by organisations more than ever.

# THE VENDOR VIEW: SENIOR PR PEOPLE ON PR, MARKETING & 2024 PRIORITIES cont.

A tough year ahead for PR? But in the challenge lies opportunity

Do you plan to decrease spend in each of the following areas? Tick all that apply  
29 responses



Our findings also indicate that just over a quarter (27%) of cybersecurity companies are facing cuts to their PR budget. While this could be interpreted as a damper outlook for communications, it is offset by 23% increasing budgets and budgets for the remaining half staying flat. Given this disparity, those companies cutting PR spend risk losing ground to those increasing investment. For organisations finding themselves having to do more with less, creativity and prioritisation will be paramount. Activity such as newsjacking and differentiated data - which have the potential to yield significant amounts of coverage - will become an even more integral part of companies' arsenals.

From Eskenzi's experience from almost 30 years in business and surviving through two major recessions, it was the businesses which continued to promote their brands and spend money during the downturns that ended up stronger and more successful in the long term than those who slashed budgets.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Five things you need to know



The landscape described in the preceding sections is challenging: The issues stemming from a growing and competitive media environment are further complicated by an economic climate that demands meticulous scrutiny and justification for every expenditure.

Consequently, we've summarised our top five recommendations for generating leads, shaping a media strategy, and optimising your PR approach.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## Know Your Audience



As we've seen from the data outlined in section two, cybersecurity is a topic that is covered with enthusiasm by the media. All major geopolitical events - the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine, elections in the UK and US - will all, in the modern world, have some kind of cybersecurity ramifications. Additionally, the minutiae of cybercrime activity carries on daily. New data breaches, new vulnerability disclosures, and malware variants are reported weekly, as well as a constant drip of industry reports.

What's crucial for your organisation is understanding who your audience is - and where this audience is in the media. If, for example, you have a very specific technical play or product, then you may want to focus attention on the tech media, with specific pushes into relevant vertical publications. This can be done broadly speaking by developing more technical thought leadership positions, and by developing technical research in your specific field which can help to build a position as a leading voice in your specific segment of the market.

If you have a more generalist cybersecurity offering (such as a security awareness training platform, or a cyber certification platform) then a focus on the mainstream business and national media would be the best way to get your name out there.

This is not as easy as simply establishing this, however. Despite a **readership increase of 122% for cybersecurity**, you are also going to be fighting for space with 3,000 other security companies, as well as more general technology news stories. If you're going to succeed in the mainstream press, then you need to make sure your media strategy is airtight.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

# 2

## Build a strategy around your spokespeople

As the senior marketing, communications, and PR contacts surveyed have indicated, the vast majority of organisations are seeking a diversified approach to spokespeople; One which ensures that every topic and geography in which they have an interest is serviced by a corresponding spokesperson.

This strategy should be standard practice for the industry. The 10% of respondents who suggested that a spokesperson should be a figurehead such as a CEO will find their ability to build a platform around this figurehead severely limited, due to their inability to respond to requests or to edit and approve drafted content.

As such, before a media strategy is put into place, your spokespeople should come first. While it is smart to include a CEO or leadership figure among your roster of spokespeople, for high-level commentary, the smartest companies will identify their key verticals, topics, and geographies, and will then identify spokespeople to media train, brief, and then champion them.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## 3



### Get Ahead with an Influencer Programme

Our senior marketing, PR and communications professionals made it very clear that influencer programmes are not yet widespread in the cybersecurity industry, with 80% suggesting there was not currently an active one at their organisation.

As a result, smart cybersecurity companies will get ahead, and work with trusted partners to develop a strategy for influencer relations before the rest of the industry catches up. Third-party validation can be an incredibly powerful tool for your business: This can come via 'soft' methods such as having CISOs or well-known industry voices on webinars and roundtable panels, extolling the virtues of tools such as yours, or via more paid-for 'hard' methods, such as sponsoring podcasts with relevant influencers. This kind of activity lends seriousness to your business, without looking (to the untrained eye of course) too advertorial.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

## 4

### Choose Your Paid Opportunities Carefully

Budgets are getting tighter. While any smart marketing budget will account for some spending on paid media and events, this should be considered more carefully than ever. For example, we have heard from our survey that physical events are still valuable, but 31% said this is an area for budget cuts. Therefore, if this is a spend you want to make, work to ensure that you choose the right events for your company.

Additionally, reassess the value of activities such as awards - generally paid-for opportunities, but ones which our survey respondents did not find as valuable as speaking slots. In short, make sure that you are laser-focused on understanding where every penny of your marketing spend goes, and the direct ROI you will receive for this spend.

We would also recommend that where possible, organisations assess any paid content opportunities stringently. With nearly 37% of organisations surveyed looking to increase budgets for paid content, understanding that this is often seen as more advertising than thought leadership - and is clearly labelled as paid - is key to assessing the context around any spend.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS

# 5



## Continue Focusing on Thought Leadership

The understandable need for marketing activity to drive sales is reflected in the results displayed above. Content and account-based marketing were the most popular choices for increasing budget, with 46% and 43.3% respectively. You can see why in our hostile business environment these decisions have been made. However, marketeers need to be aware this is only one part of the puzzle - and one which is likely to provide short-term, as opposed to long-term relief.

In addition, multiple studies have shown only 5-10% of B2B buyers are in the market to buy at any given time, meaning a huge 90-95% aren't actively looking to purchase new solutions. Furthermore, when companies are looking to put out an RFP, the vast majority will already know who they want on their shortlist.

For B2B cybersecurity companies, this makes brand awareness critical. While it can be tempting when budgets are constrained to channel all your money into lead gen, this can ultimately harm your sales goals as it reduces your market visibility and new business opportunities in the long term. harm your sales goals as it reduces your market visibility and new business opportunities in the long term.

Essentially, our surveyed marketers acknowledged that core thought leadership activities, such as rapid response commentary, long-form bylines, and key publication interviews, remain pivotal differentiators for effective brand storytelling. While lead generation is crucial, maintaining your brand's perception as a thought leader beyond direct marketing activities is vital for long-term marketing goals. The most astute organisations prioritise creative, dynamic PR campaigns that lead to earned media coverage, making them central to their overall marketing strategy.

# THANK YOU!



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