2015 B2B Web Usability Report

What B2B Buyers Want from Vendor Websites

APRIL 2015

by Huff Industrial Marketing, KoMarketing, & BuyerZone

INTRODUCTION

Google Analytics and other tools can tell you a great deal about what buyers **do** once they get to your website – which pages they click, the flow from one page to another, conversions, etc.

But we wanted to know what buyers actually *want* from a vendor website. Which content elements are most important to buyers? What causes them to leave a website and not return? How many times do typical buyers return to a website before taking the next step in the sales process?

We first set out to learn answers to these questions in October 2013, when we issued our first survey and then subsequently published our first report February 2014. Survey findings were published by MarketingLand, Content Marketing Institute, eMarketer, MarketingProfs and MediaPost, to name a few.

Based on the feedback we received on the 2014 report, we streamlined the survey and were more precise in our questions. In this year's report, you'll find some surprising data – along with our analysis.

We hope you find this report useful. If you do, please share it with your peers and social networks. They can download their own copy at:

www.komarketingassociates.com/b2b-web-usability-report-2015

It's completely free. No registration required.

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Executive Summary

In the *New York Times* article, "Quenching Consumers' Thirst for Authenticity," James H. Gilmore, marketing consultant and co-author of *Authenticity*, stated, "A sense of authenticity **reinforces trust** in what is real in an increasingly staged, contrived and mediated world."

Authenticity, and its **allied traits of trust and credibility**, is a tangible driver of revenues. In their 2014 global study, The *Age of Authenticity*, Cohn & Wolfe revealed that 63% of consumers would buy a brand they perceived as authentic, and thus trustworthy, over its competitors.

If we could sum up the **2015 B2B Website Usability Survey** in two words, they would be: Credibility and Trust. The importance buyers place on these important attributes was woven throughout the survey responses, as you'll see in the Research Findings.

Vendors must establish trust and credibility across all areas of the website

One content asset that plays a significant role in establishing trust and credibility is "thorough contact information." When asked **what causes them to leave a vendor website**, 44% of survey respondents indicated "No Contact Information / Phone Number." When asked to rate **website elements that annoy them**, more than half (54%) of respondents indicated that the **lack of thorough contact information** reduced a vendor's a credibility and thus would cause them to leave a website. When asked **what types of content assets were missing on most company websites**, 51% of respondents again indicated, "Thorough Contact Information (phone / email / address)."

A lack of contact information will also deter buyers from moving forward with a Request for Proposal (RFP) and with filling out a form to request a demo or RFP.

Social media's impact on the buyer's journey isn't as significant as assumed

In our 2014 survey, we learned that social media activity had minimal impact on the buying process. We discussed this finding for a long time. We believed that buyers do use social media and blogs in their discovery process but perhaps weren't aware they did so. Both Huff Industrial Marketing and KoMarketing know that prospects often find their respective companies due to blog posts in the search results or through recognition via social media channels.

For the 2015 survey, we asked questions specific to three phases of the buyer's journey: discovery, establishing credibility, and the impact on the buying process. While blogs and social media do have some impact across the various stages of the buying cycle, this impact is not as significant as marketers have assumed.

As a vendor, if you're relying on a blog or social media to drive traffic and inquiries / leads, you're missing a wider range of opportunity. Consider developing a strategy that integrates a full range of online marketing channels, such as webinars and YouTube, as well as offline channels, such as trade shows, conferences, and advertising and PR in print trade publications.

As a vendor, consider developing a website marketing strategy that addresses the following objectives:

* Keeps buyers on the website at the beginning of the discovery phase.
* Educates buyers as they leave a website and return to it multiple times through their research phase.
* Gives buyers the confidence to establish contact or begin a trial offer with a prospective vendor.

Buyers Need Contact Information

The first set of survey questions asked respondents about the actions they take once they arrive at a vendor website. We wanted to know how buyers orient themselves and which information they look for immediately.

The first question we asked was, "**When you get to a vendor website, which section of the site do you look at first?**" A little over 47% stated "Products and Services," with 33% choosing the Home page and 16% choosing "About / Company Information."

We then asked, "**Once you're on the Home page, what information do you want to see available?**" The answer, "Products and Services", was roughly the same as 2014, at 86%. Most surprising, however, 64% of respondents stated they wanted to see Contact Information, and 52% stated they wanted to see About / Company Information. Interestingly, fewer respondents indicated they wanted to see a Blog, Marketing Collateral, or Social Media Icons made available from the home page. (**Figure 1**)

The data shows that vendors need to establish trust and credibility with buyers as soon as they arrive at the website. Information needs to up-front, visible and easily accessed. It also needs to be current and explain what the vendor offers in jargon-free language.

We also asked, "**When you get to an internal page on a vendor website from a referral site or search engine, how do you orient yourself?**" Almost 50% of respondents indicated they use the navigation menu, with 36% stating they use the Company Logo to reach the home page.

📞 64%
WANT TO SEE CONTACT INFO
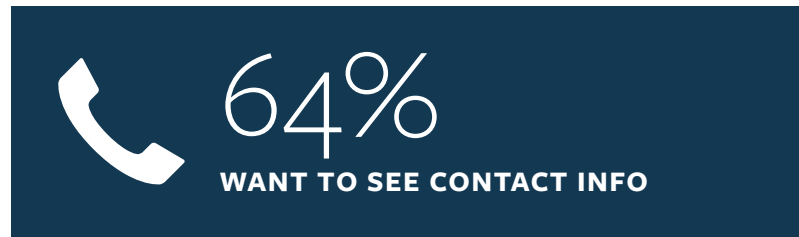
Information people want to see available on a vendor website home page

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	86%
CONTACT INFORMATION	64%
ABOUT / COMPANY INFORMATION	52%
TESTIMONIALS	27%
MARKETING COLLATERAL	23%
SOCIAL MEDIA ICONS	12%
BLOG	8%
PRICING	2%

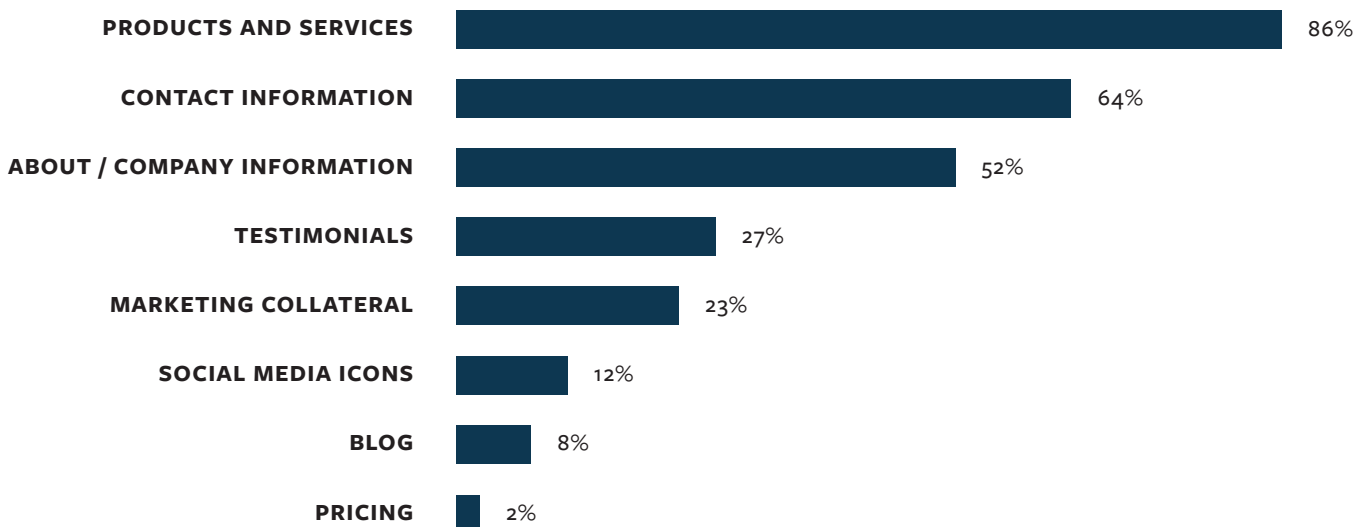**Figure 1**   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Adopt clear and concise navigation. Provide an easy path to Products / Services and About / Company Information.

If appropriate for your company, add complete contact information (address / phone / email) to the footer of all pages. Or, add a visible link to the Contact page to help establish credibility and trust.
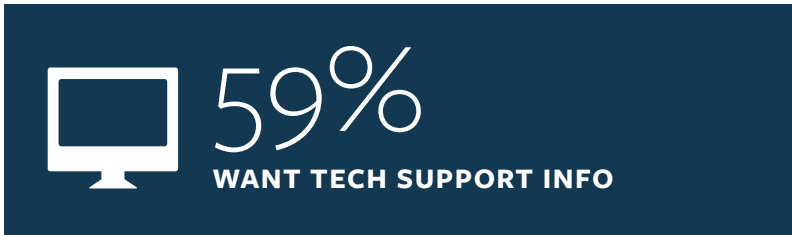

Incorporate standard navigational elements, such as linking the logo to the home page, in order to reduce clicks.

A Disconnect Still Exists Between the Content Assets Buyers Want and What Vendors Provide

Website content does more than help move prospects along the buyer journey. It also helps with establishing a vendor's credibility. As we've already shown, Thorough Contact Information in the form of phone, address, and email is a **must have** for all vendors.

Survey respondents also indicated that About Info and traditional marketing collateral, in the form of Research Reports, Case Studies, and White Papers, also helps establish credibility, as seen in **Figure 2**. Client Lists and Testimonials also go far in helping buyers determine if they should proceed with a vendor.

59%
WANT TECH SUPPORT INFO

Content Assets that Establish Credibility

VIDEO CONTENT
SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY
BLOG POSTS
MEDIA MENTIONS
NEWS RELEASES
RESEARCH REPORT
CLIENT LIST/TESTIMONIALS
CASE STUDIES/WHITE PAPERS/ARTICLES
ABOUT INFO/TEAM BIOS
THOROUGH CONTACT INFO

MUST HAVE   VERY IMPORTANT   SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT   NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT
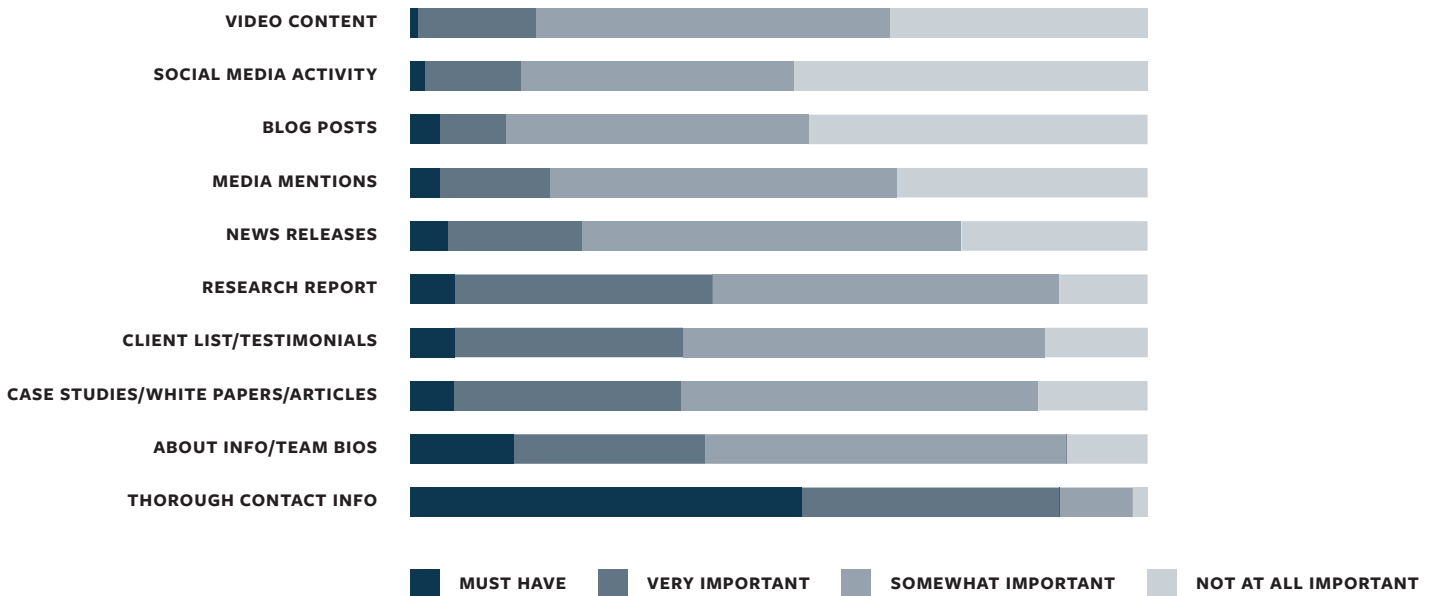
Figure 2

2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing

A disconnect exists, however, between what buyers need and the information vendors give them. In **Figure 3**, you can see the content assets most lacking on vendor websites – with 51% of respondents indicating Thorough Contact Information, followed by Client List, Research Reports, and Case Studies.

This disconnect is also apparent with regard to the sales and product-related information buyers want to see on vendor websites and what they find to be lacking. As you can see in **Figure 4**, "must have" sales and product information includes Pricing (78%), Shipping (62%), Product Reviews (52%) and Details about Technical Support (47%).
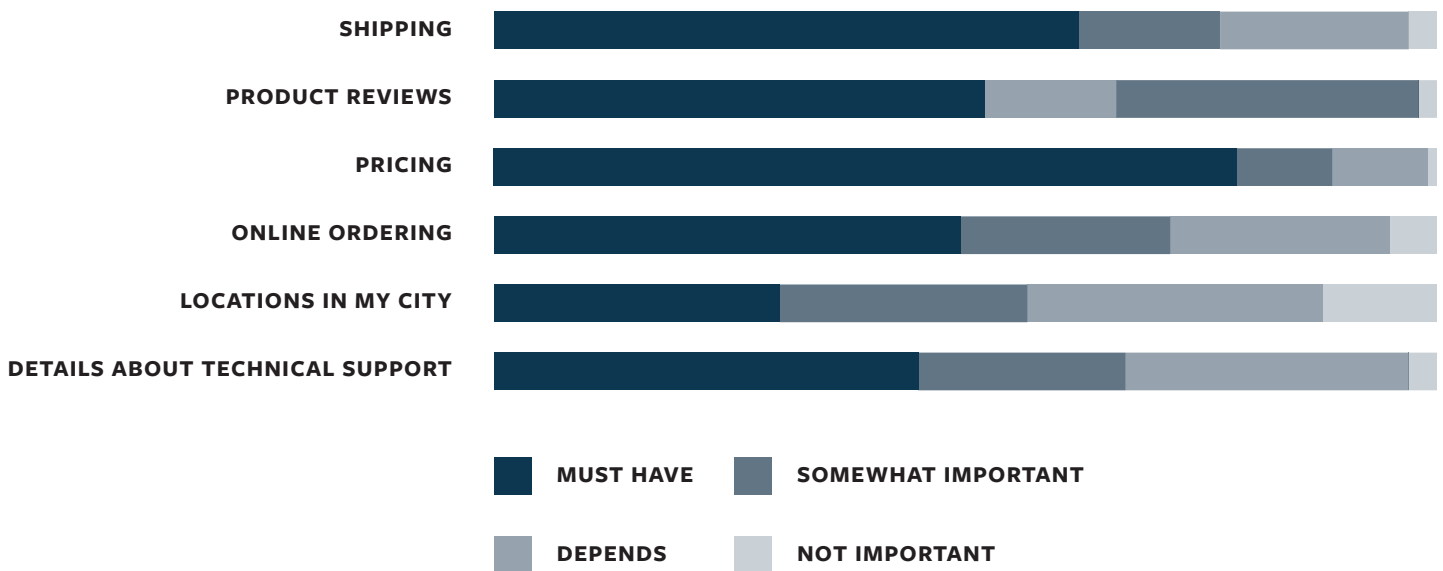
Content Assets Most Lacking on Vendor Websites

THOROUGH CONTACT INFORMATION	51%
CLIENT LIST	37%
RESEARCH REPORTS	35%
CASE STUDIES	34%
TESTIMONIALS	31%
WHITE PAPERS	30%
ABOUT INFO/TEAM BIOS	29%

Figure 3   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

Sales and Product-Related Information Buyers Need

- SHIPPING
- PRODUCT REVIEWS
- PRICING
- ONLINE ORDERING
- LOCATIONS IN MY CITY
- DETAILS ABOUT TECHNICAL SUPPORT

■ MUST HAVE   ■ SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT

■ DEPENDS   ■ NOT IMPORTANT

Figure 4   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*
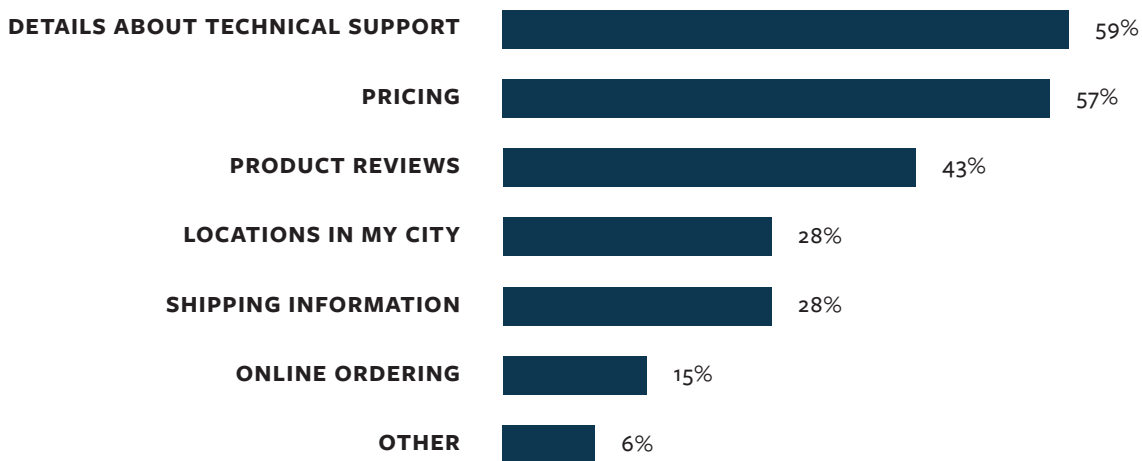
What sales and product information is most lacking on vendor websites? Details about Technical Support (59%), Pricing (56%), and Product Reviews (43%) (**Figure 5**). In fact, respondents indicated that in order to move forward with a vendor by asking for an RFQ, a vendor must have the following information on its website:

Company Address / Contact Information (47%)
Product Pricing (43%)
Product Name (30%)
Lead/Ship Times (21%)

One note about Technical Support: With almost everything we do now tied to some sort of technology, be it software or hardware, it's important for prospects and customers to have direct access to technical support, whether online chat, email, a knowledge center or a call-in number. While your application may seem easy to use, not everyone is technically fluent. As the data shows, including technical support information on your website will help your company build credibility and trust as well as increase conversions over time.

Sales and Product-Related Information Lacking on Vendor Websites

Category	Percentage
DETAILS ABOUT TECHNICAL SUPPORT	59%
PRICING	57%
PRODUCT REVIEWS	43%
LOCATIONS IN MY CITY	28%
SHIPPING INFORMATION	28%
ONLINE ORDERING	15%
OTHER	6%

Figure 5   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Know which content assets buyers need to move forward with you. Consider putting your marketing dollars into assets such as white papers and case studies before trying newer assets such as video, infographics, or podcasts.

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Vendors often balk at adding pricing to websites. Bite the bullet and test adding prices. You can always remove pricing if you determine that listing them deters sales.

———

Include Product- and Sales-related information buyers need most: Technical Support, Product Reviews, and Contact Information.

———

Create a robust "About" section that lists team bios, company history, and any other information that helps establish credibility and trust in the minds of buyers. For example, post photos of team members rather than a picture of your building.

Blog and Social Media Impact on the Buyer Journey Not as Significant a Factor

In the 2014 survey, we learned that a vendor's lack of social media activity impacted the buying process much less than we believed. We found this data perplexing because we see the value of social media, and in particular blogging, in our respective businesses with regard to increasing traffic and inquiries.

This year, we developed questions to help us understand what role blogs and social media play throughout the entire buyer journey: discovery, establishing credibility, and decision making and purchasing itself.

Discovery Phase

We were concerned, based on the results from last year's report, that we were ignoring how buyers found vendor websites that they were interested in purchasing from.

Surely, blogs and social media had something to do with it?

Figures 6 and 7 show how survey respondents answered when asked whether these type of content marketing assets aided in the vendor discovery process.

In both cases, less than 20% of respondents indicated that either channel definitively played a part in the discovery process. More importantly, over one-third of respondents explicitly indicated blogs did not play a part, and 38% for an organization's social media efforts.

Establishing Credibility

Our next task was to understand whether these assets helped establish credibility and trust for the vendor organization. (Figures 8 and 9)

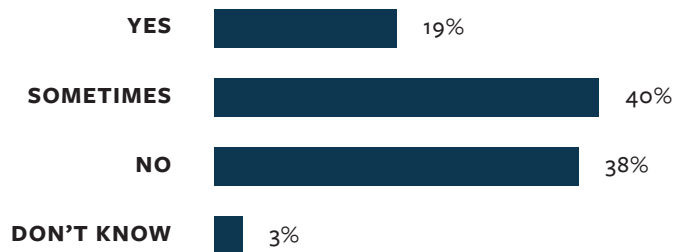## Do B2B company blogs aid you in your vendor discovery process?

YES	12%
SOMETIMES	40%
NO	34%
DON'T KNOW	13%
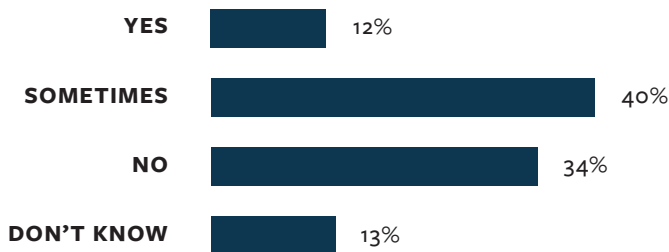
Figure 6 *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

Does social media aid you in your vendor discovery process?

YES	19%
SOMETIMES	40%
NO	38%
DON'T KNOW	3%

Figure 7 *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

Does a blog help establish a company's credibility?

YES	20%
SOMETIMES	35%
NO	36%
DON'T KNOW	10%
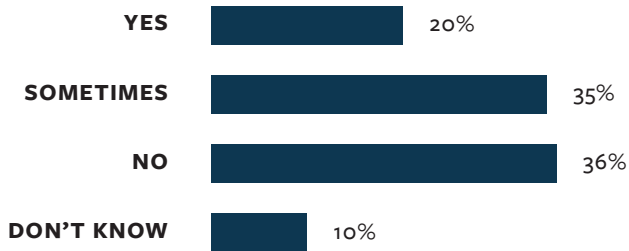
Figure 8 *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

Does social media activity help establish a company's credibility?

YES	18%
SOMETIMES	39%
NO	35%
DON'T KNOW	8%
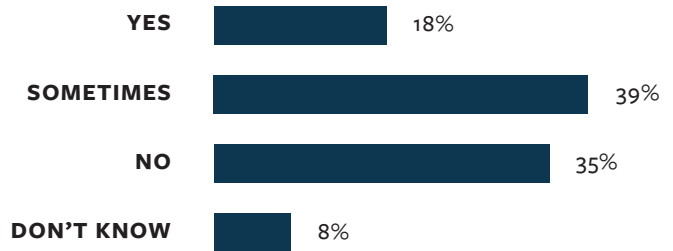
Figure 9 *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

Decision Making Process

Finally, we asked a series of questions about what impacts a buyer's vendor selection process. These questions were similar to the ones we asked last year, when we uncovered the lack of impact blogs and social media had in the buying process.

As you can see across all data, while blogs and social media have some impact in each phase of the buyer's journey, **the impact isn't as significant as marketers may assume**.

In fact, as we continue looking at other types of content marketing assets buyers demand from vendor sites, and that directly impact the sales and RFP process, we can see the comparative impact as well.

In short, an effective B2B content marketing strategy has to encompass much more than social media or a company blog.

## How much does a company's blog impact your vendor decision making process?

A LOT	3%
IT'S IMPORTANT BUT NOT A DEAL BREAKER	20%
NEUTRAL	30%
NOT A FACTOR	46%
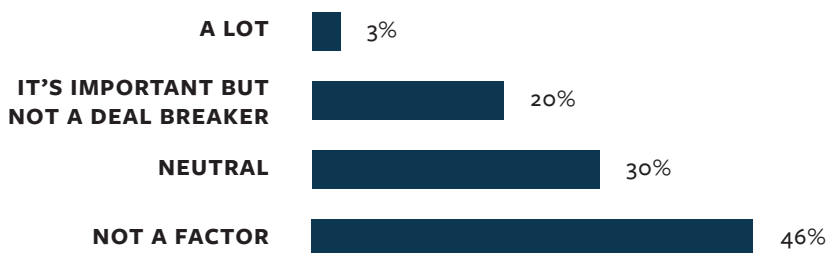
Figure 10 *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

How much does a company's social media activity impact your vendor decision making process?

A LOT — 3%
IT'S IMPORTANT BUT NOT A DEAL BREAKER — 20%
NEUTRAL — 30%
NOT A FACTOR — 46%
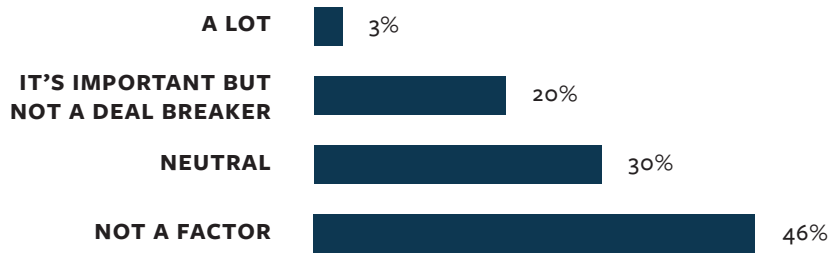
Figure 11 *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

If you're only relying on a blog or social media to drive traffic and inquiries / leads, you're missing a wider range of opportunity. Buyers look for vendors that incorporate a strategy that integrates a full range of content assets as well as offline channels, such as trade shows and print trade publications.

———

Ask your customers what they want or need. Find out how important your blogging and social media efforts are or have been in their buying process and customer relationship and adjust your strategy accordingly.

———

Let reporting information guide your decision making. Even though this set of survey respondents indicated their preferences, compare visitor performance across content marketing assets to find out what truly matters for visitors on your website.

Buyers Don't Like Distractions

B2B buyers are busy, and when they're researching potential vendors, they have little patience for annoyances that waste their time or slow them down. When we asked, "**Which website elements annoy you or cause you to leave a website?**" we were surprised to learn that almost half, or 46% stated, "Lack of Message (can't tell what a company does)" – which again ties back to establishing that credibility and trust.

Other top website elements that annoy buyers or cause them to leave a website include: No Contact Information / Phone number (44%), Animated Ads (that crawl across the page) / Popups (42%), Poor Design or Navigation (37%), and Video or Audio that Plays Automatically (33%) (**Figure 12**).

We then asked respondents to indicate why a particular website element annoyed them or caused them to leave a website in terms of "Waste of My Time," and "Reduces Credibility."

In the "**Waste of My Time**" column, Animated Ads/ Popups (63%), Intrusive Live Chat (53%), and Video or Audio that Plays Automatically (50%) were the top three annoyances. Animated Ads were also the top annoyance for 2014. Similarly to 2014, respondents indicated No Contact Information (54%) as the top reason for reducing a vendor's credibility, with Poor Design or Navigation (50%) and Lack of Message (48%) also being potential causes for a buyer to leave a vendor website.

46%
LEAVE DUE TO LACK OF MESSAGE

Website Elements that Annoy Buyers and Cause Them to Leave

Element	Percentage
LACK OF MESSAGE	46%
NO CONTACT INFO	44%
ANIMATED ADS	42%
POOR DESIGN/NAVIGATION	37%
AUTOMATIC AUDIO/VIDEO	33%
INTRUSIVE LIVE CHAT	30%
SLIDERS	17%
TINY TEXT	15%
STOCK PHOTOS	3%

Figure 12   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*
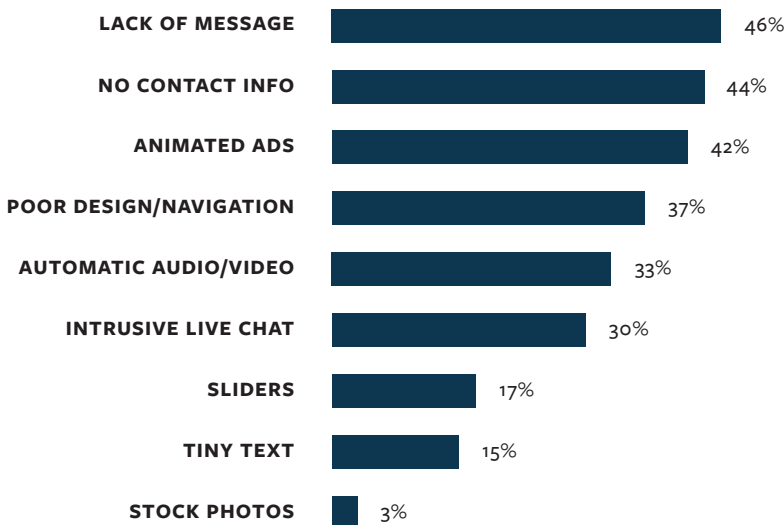
We wanted to know if a slow loading website deterred buyers or caused them to leave a website, especially with mobile device usage soaring and with it the expectation for content to be available instantly. Surprisingly, while 75% of survey respondents indicated they will use the "Back" button before a page fully loads, their definition of "slow loading" was much more lenient than what many believe constitutes a slow loading page as seen in **Figure 13**.

Buyers' Definition of Slow Loading

15 SECONDS	34%
10 SECONDS	42%
5 SECONDS	20%
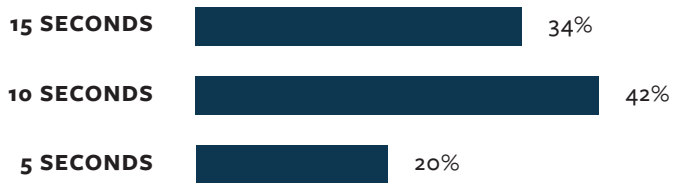
Figure 13   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

KEY TAKEAWAYS

State what your company offers – and the challenges you solve – in jargon-free language.

———

Remove anything on your website that gets in the way of a smooth and efficient experience for prospects.

———

Consider upgrading your website if it's more than five years old in order to improve the navigation and usability experience for buyers.

———

Use tools, such as Pingdom.com or GTMetrix, to determine if your website is fast or slow loading and how to improve its performance.

Buyers Will Fill Out Forms for Specific Items

In our 2014 report, survey data showed that 82% of respondents were deterred by "excessive form requirements." Over half, or 52%, however, stated they would fill out a form in order to receive trial offers, research, white papers, and webinars.

For 2015, we changed the questions a little bit. We asked, "**What deters you from filling out a Contact form if you have a general inquiry?**" Over two-thirds of respondents, or 69%, indicated that "excessive form field requirements" would deter them from completing a general inquiry form, with 65% stating they wouldn't submit a form if "too much personal information" was required. If the form included an automatic email subscription, 55% said that would deter them as well.

Survey respondents pointed out in the comments that they don't want to fill out a form because they've experienced either not receiving a response or too slow of a response time in the past.

These deterrents are also in play when buyers have to fill out a form for something of high-value, **such as a demo or an RFQ**, as seen in **Figure 14**. We asked, "For forms where you expect to be contacted, such as when you request a demo or RFQ, what deters you from filling out the form?" What we found most notable about this piece of data is the indirect link to building credibility and trust. If something about the form raises a "flag" or concern, 66% of respondents said they wouldn't complete it.

69%
DETERRED BY LONG FORMS

Form Deterrents When Requesting a Demo or RFP

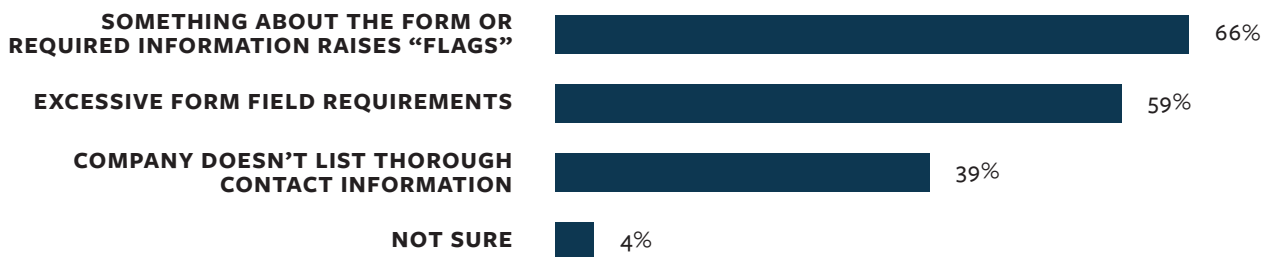|	
SOMETHING ABOUT THE FORM OR REQUIRED INFORMATION RAISES "FLAGS"	66%
EXCESSIVE FORM FIELD REQUIREMENTS	59%
COMPANY DOESN'T LIST THOROUGH CONTACT INFORMATION	39%
NOT SURE	4%

Figure 14

2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing

As with 2014, respondents indicated they would fill out a form (form requirements aside), for the following: Trial Offers (62%), Product Demos (48%), Product Evaluations (44%), Research (41%), and Brochures & Datasheets (40%) (**Figure 15**).

Survey respondents indicated that they prefer not to release their phone numbers (58%) or their address information (53%) in a form submission (**Figure 16**).

Types of Content Buyers Will Complete a Form to Obtain

TRIAL OFFERS	62%
PRODUCT DEMOS	48%
PRODUCT EVALUATIONS	44%
RESEARCH	41%
BROCHURES, DATASHEETS	40%
WEBINARS	34%
WHITE PAPERS	28%
CASE STUDIES	24%
NEWSLETTERS	23%
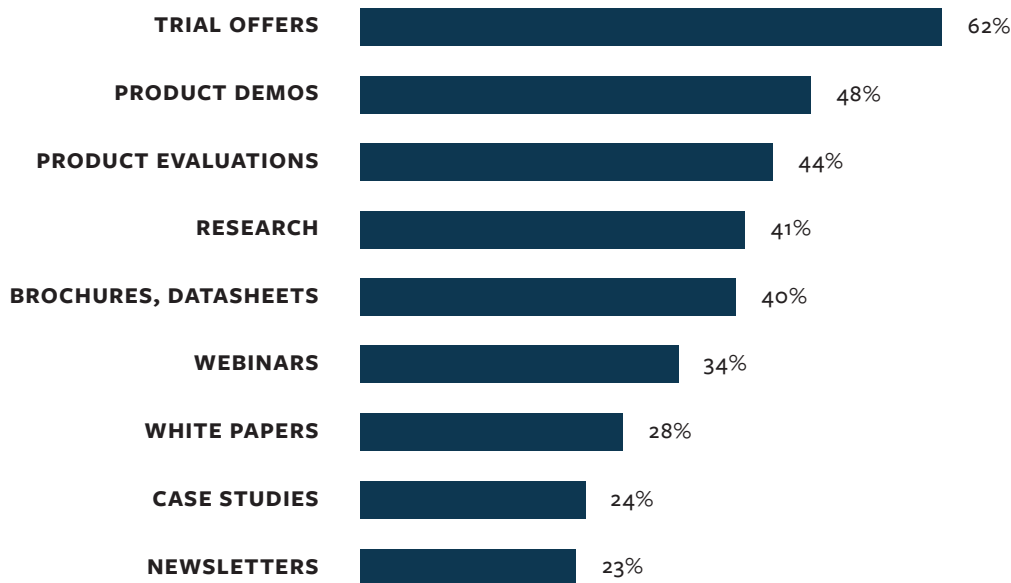
Figure 15

2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing

Personal Information Buyers Prefer Not to Release in a Form

PHONE NUMBER	58%
ADDRESS INFORMATION	53%
ROLE/TITLE	21%
LAST NAME	20%
COMPANY	18%
EMAIL	16%
FIRST NAME	11%
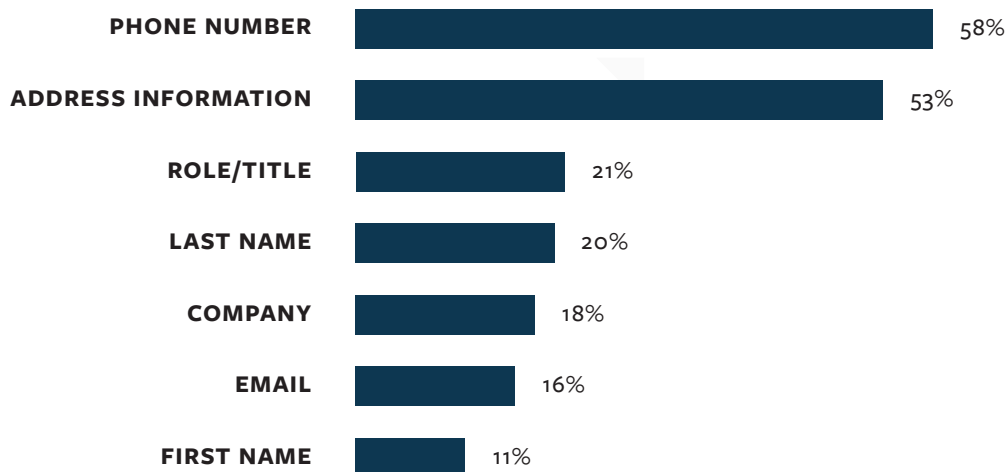
Figure 16

2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Use brief forms to capture prospects' information for demos and trial offers, certainly, but also for content assets such as Brochures, Datasheets, Case Studies, and Newsletters.

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Gather important information, such as a phone number, when you've built trust and your prospect is ready to take the next step with you.

———

Test conversion actions. A/B testing tools, such as Optimizely, CrazyEgg, and Unbounce, offer affordable subscriptions for testing form elements and landing experiences. Google Analytics offers Content Experiments as a free resource as well.

Buyers Will Visit a Vendor Website Multiple Times

We already knew from the 2014 survey that buyers will visit a vendor website up to five times before contacting a vendor. The data remained unchanged for 2015, with 37% of survey respondents indicating they'll visit a vendor website 3 – 5 times. We also knew that vendors will sometimes leave a vendor website to research third-party references and information; for the 2015 survey, 33% indicated they do so.

What we wanted to know, however, is which factors cause a buyer to leave a vendor website to perform this research. As you can see in **Figure 17**, the number one reason vendors will leave a website is to evaluate competitive products / solutions (87%) or to research ratings / feedback from past clients (57%).

33%
LEAVE TO RESEARCH OTHER VENDORS

Factors that Cause Buyers to Leave a Website to Perform Research

WANT TO SEE OR EVALUATE COMPETITIVE PRODUCTS / SOLUTIONS — 87%

WANT TO RESEARCH RATINGS / FEEDBACK FROM PAST CLIENTS — 57%

WANT TO OBTAIN REFERENCES VIA PERSONAL / PROFESSIONAL NETWORK OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION — 32%

WANT TO SEE WHAT THEY'RE SAYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA — 25%

Figure 17

2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Help vendors "comparison shop" by providing clear, easy-to-read charts and checklists that illustrate what they get with your product or service.

———

Ask existing customers to provide objective feedback about your product or service on product review sites.

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Provide multiple content assets or offers that help build buyers' trust as they visit your website multiple times. Consider case studies, non-gated webinars, videos and other information.

———

Research and identify third-party publications in your industry to gain additional visibility for your products or brand.

Buyers Use Mobile But Desktops Still Rule

Unchanged from 2014 is buyers use of desktops when searching for B2B vendors, products and services. However, when analyzing this year's data, we came away thinking that buyers have a love-hate relationship with mobile, and this could be simply because buyers and their behaviors are changing even as devices, websites and other technologies rapidly change.

When asked, "**Are you looking for B2B products using your smartphone?**" 41% of respondents who were smartphone owners stated "Yes" while 59% said "No" they were not. The split was the same regarding tablets, with 41% of respondents who were tablet owners indicating they do search for B2B products using a tablet and 59% saying they didn't.

In addition, 65% of respondents who were smartphone owners indicated that a website designed for a smartphone wasn't important to them, while 33% indicated that the lack of a mobile-friendly website wasn't a deal breaker (**Figure 18**).

Buyer behaviors appear to be in transition, however. When asked if they would contact a vendor by filling out a form using a smartphone, 43% of respondents who were smartphone owners said "No," but 57% either said "Yes," or "It Depends."

And, when asked, "**When using a smartphone to research a vendor, is the ability to touch a phone number and have it automatically dial important?**" over two thirds of smartphone owners, or 69% stated it was.

How Lack of a Mobile-Friendly Website Impacts the Buying Process

A LOT	6%
IT'S IMPORTANT BUT NOT A DEAL BREAKER	33%
NEUTRAL	31%
NOT A FACTOR	30%
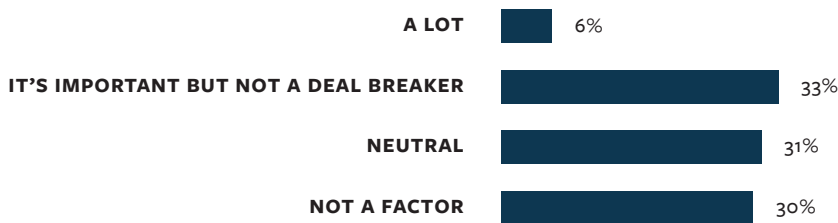
Figure 18   *2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing*

Mobile is still a developing medium for B2B buyers.

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Although buyers still use their desktops to research vendors, this practice is changing. While a non-mobile friendly website isn't a deal-breaker (yet), it will become more important in the near future, especially as more companies redesign their websites for mobile.

———

As smartphones become bigger and tablets become smaller, more business people will rely on these devices to do more of their work on the fly – making a mobile-friendly website a key asset.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS AND PROCESS

Conducted in October and November 2014, the survey was taken by 262 people. Survey respondents include Presidents and CEOs, COO/CFO/CTO/CMOs, Managers / Executives, Directors and VPs, Analysts and Specialists, and Consultants (**Figure 19**). The majority of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 64, with 67% between the ages of 36 and 64 (**Figure 19**). More than half, or 63% were male, and 37% female. Approximately 94% of respondents were from the United States.

How the Information was Gathered

We used a combination of email and social media to invite people to take the survey. We emailed our respective in-house lists as well as posted updates to our social media followers on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, and G+. Our Partner, BuyerZone, also emailed its in-house B2B list, as did our Sponsor, Ten24 Digital Solutions.

Respondents' Roles

Role	Percentage
MANAGER/EXECUTIVE	29%
CEO/PRESIDENT	24%
DIRECTOR/VP	10%
ANALYST/SPECIALIST	7%
CONSULTANT/ADVISOR	6%
COO/CFO/CTO/CMO	2%

Respondents' Ages

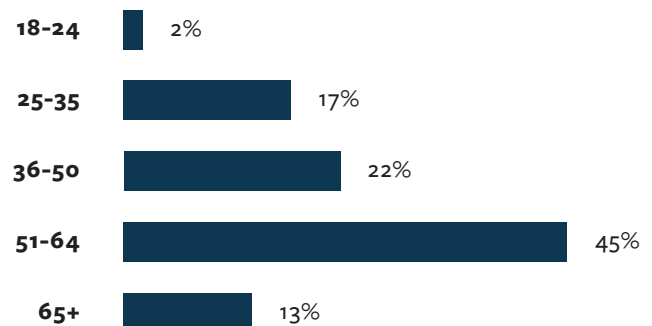| Age	Percentage
18-24	2%
25-35	17%
36-50	22%
51-64	45%
65+	13%
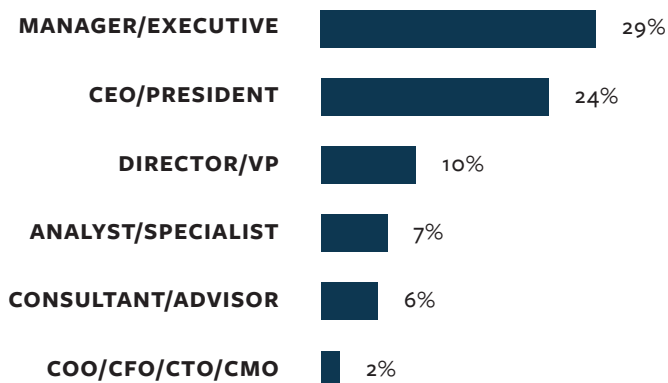
Figure 19

2015 B2B Web Usability Report, Huff/KoMarketing

Derek Edmond and Casie Gillette of KoMarketing, and Dianna Huff, of Huff Industrial Marketing, Inc., developed the survey and wrote the report with input and feedback from Liza Semenova, who also analyzed and charted the data.

Partners and Sponsors

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KoMarketing is a B2B online marketing agency specializing in search engine, social media, and content marketing. Celebrating over ten years of client success stories, KoMarketing helps build the connections that drive B2B business results through highly customized marketing programs. Casie Gillette, Director of Online Marketing, can be reached via email at **casieg@komarketingassociates. com** or Twitter **@CasieG**. Derek Edmond, Managing Partner, can be reached via email at **derek@ komarketingassociates.com** or via Twitter **@DerekEdmond**.