



# **Survey Says! Building a Better Higher Ed Marketing Team**

# SURVEY METHODOLOGY



# Methodology

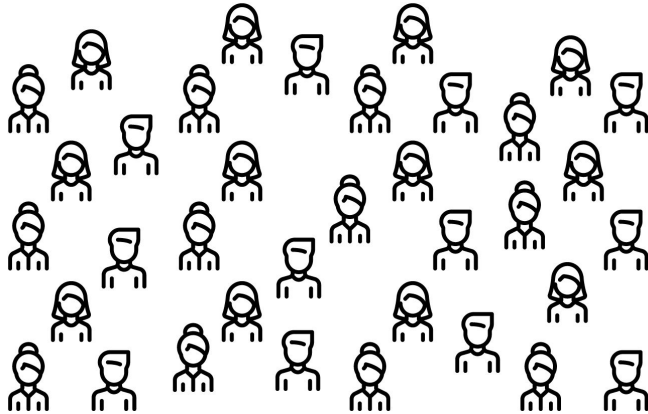
- Confidential, online survey fielded April 22 – May 12, 2021
- Sample included contacts from OHO's proprietary database of U.S. and international higher ed institutions
  - Additional respondents sourced via social media promotion

# Survey focus areas:

- Higher education marketing teams':
  - Size and composition
  - Areas of responsibility
  - Metrics shared with leadership
  - Success factors
  - Covid-19 pandemic impacts

# Respondent characteristics

163 Survey Participants



Where they work at the institution:

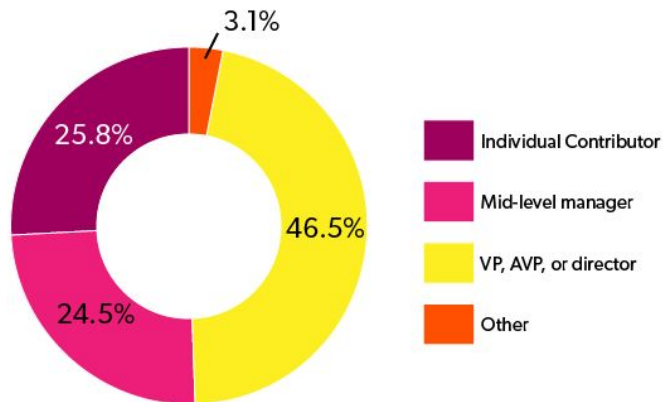


**32.5%** work in marketing communications, but not a part of the centralized team

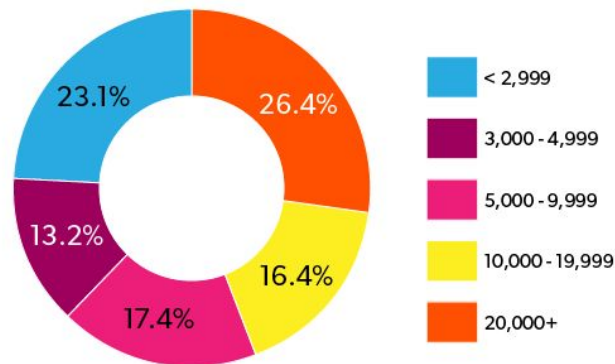
**61.3%** are part of a centralized marketing team

# Respondent characteristics

Role

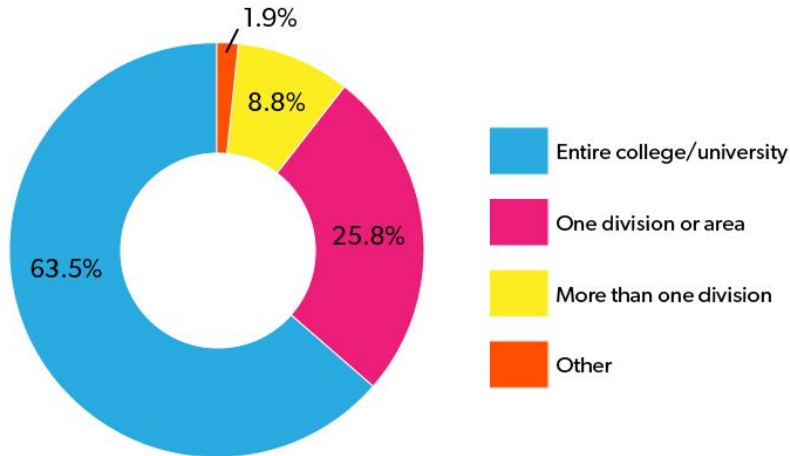


Total Enrollment of College/University

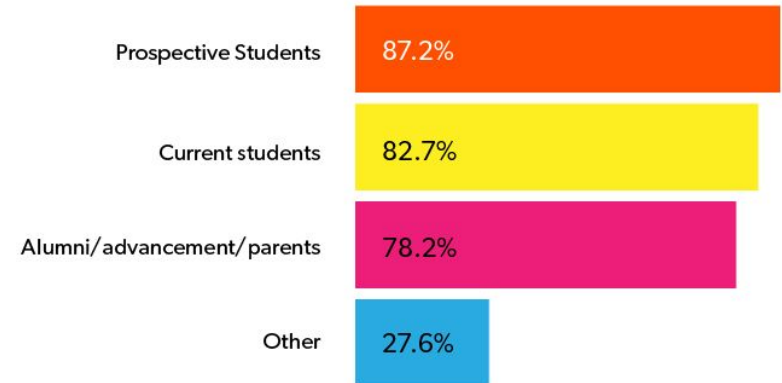


# Respondent characteristics

## Areas Served By Respondents



## Respondent's Team's Work Supports



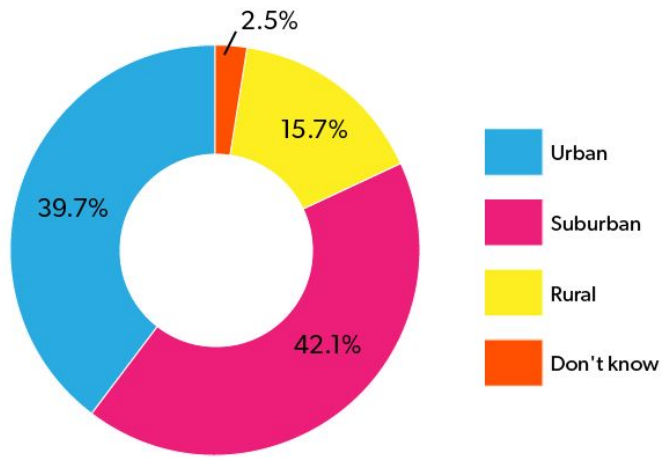
# Geography



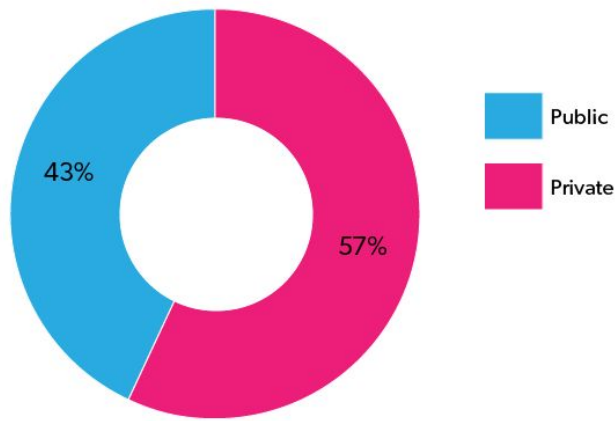
**35** states

**5.0%** international respondents

### Setting of Institution's Main Campus



### Type of Institution





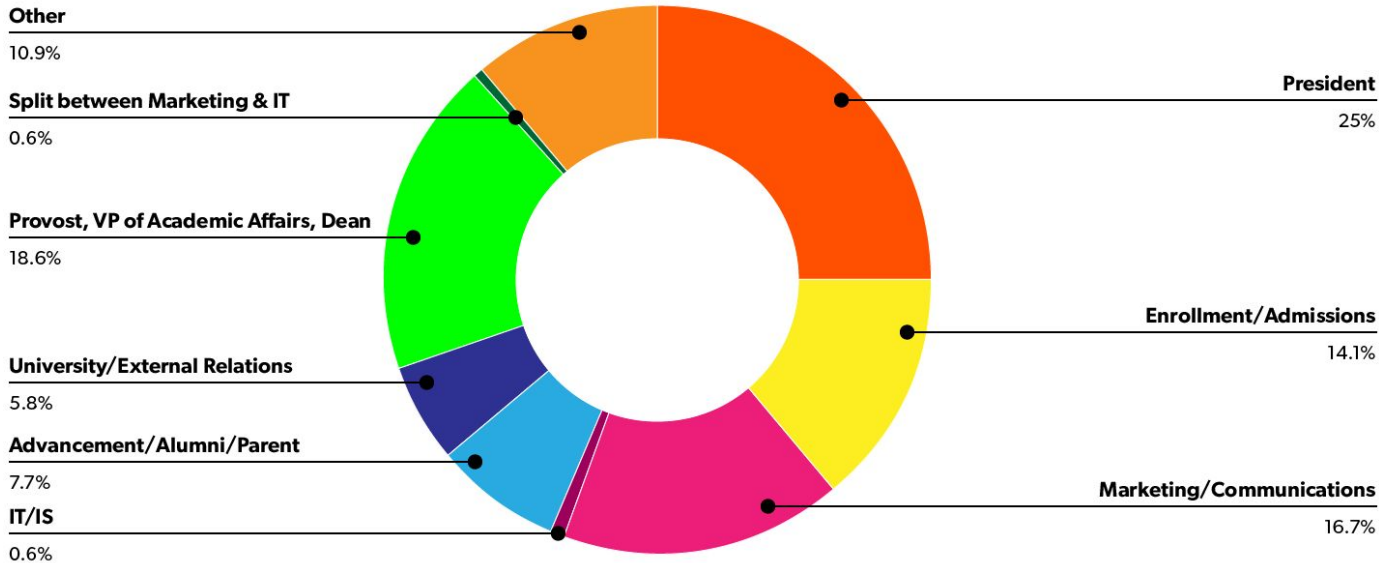
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# REPORTING & COMPOSITION



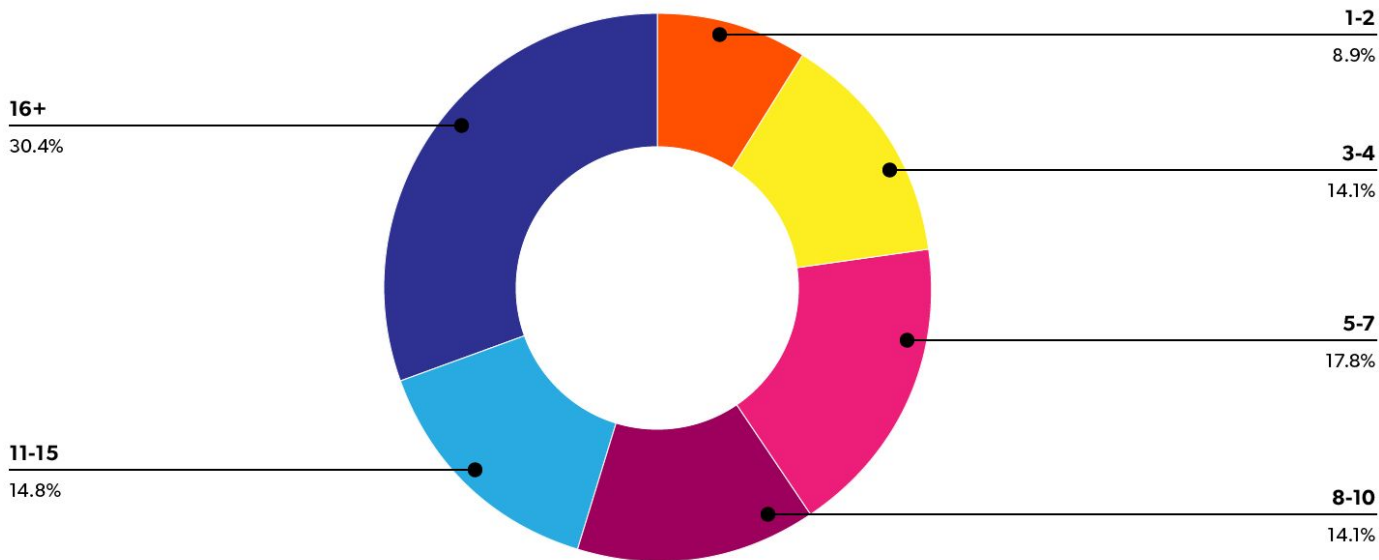
# Team Reporting

What primary leadership group does your team report to?



# Team Size

How many full-time employees are in your department?



# FTE by Size of Institution



**5-10 FTE**

> 5,000  
Enrollments



**5-10 FTE**

5,000 - 9,999  
Enrollments



**16+ FTE**

10,000+  
Enrollments

# Roles in the Department

## 5 MOST COMMON ROLES (BY %)

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- Manager/Director (88.2)
- Social media coordinator/Mgr (88.2)
- Graphic designer (81.6)
- Writer/storyteller (80.9)
- Digital marketer (74.3)

## 5 LEAST COMMON ROLES (BY %)

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- System administrator (12.5)
- Community and government relations (21.3)
- UX designer (22.8)
- SEO specialist (22.8)
- Back-end/CMS developer (23.5)

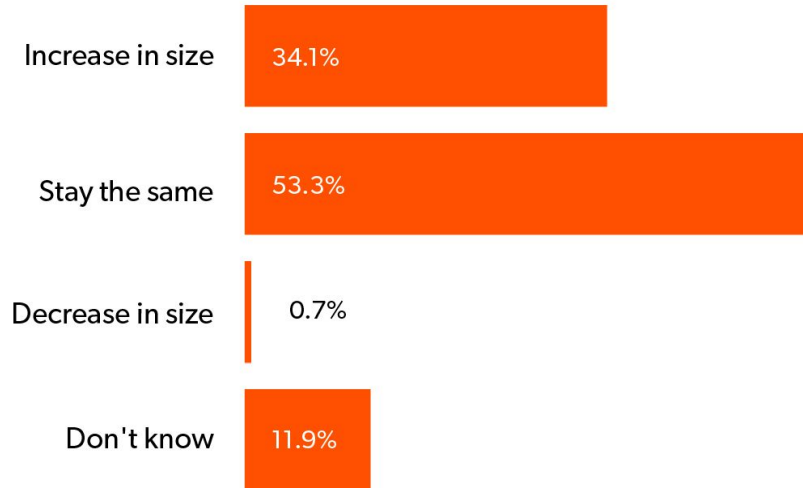
88.2%

of departments reported having these two roles:

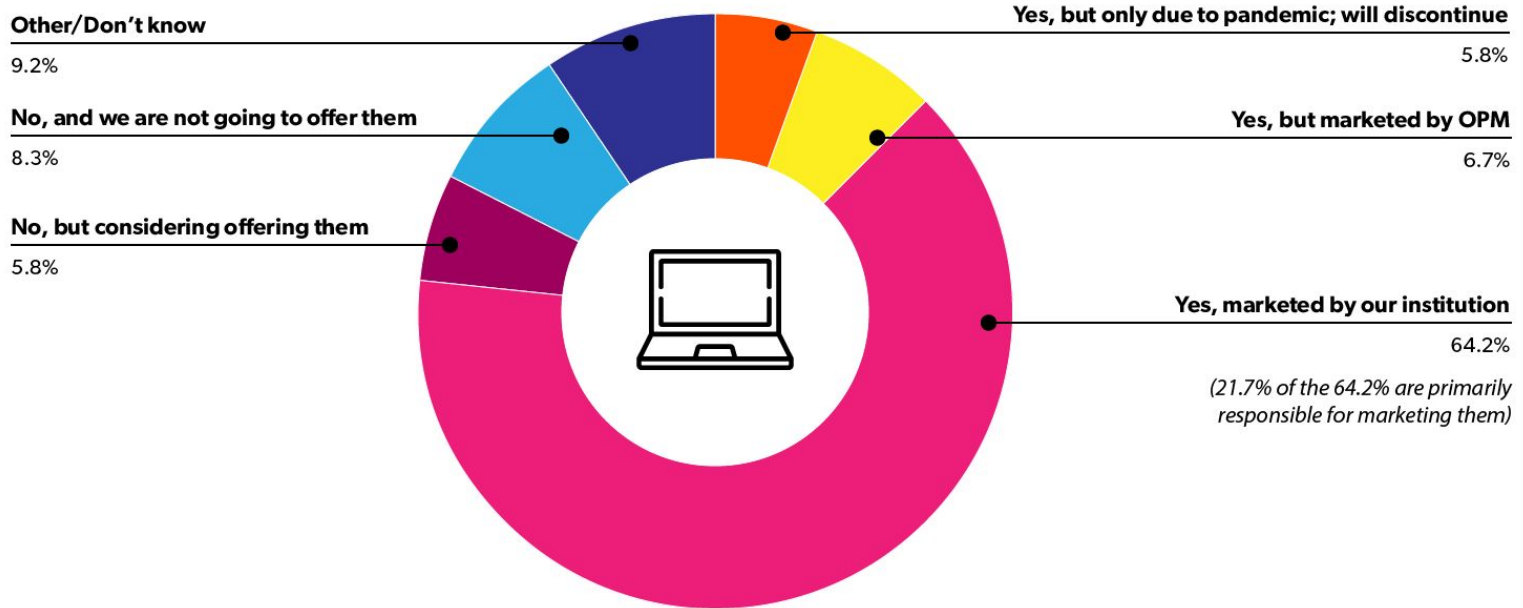
**manager/director &  
social media coordinator/manager**

# Anticipated Changes in FTE

In the next year or so, do you expect your department will...



# Offer Fully Online Programs





# RESPONSIBILITIES & SKILLS



# Most Common System Responsibilities

**84.7%**

## Website

While always a critically important tool for prospects, during the pandemic it also served as vital communication tool for the broader community.

**57.7%**

## Marketing/email automation

Whether it's Marketo, Pardot, Hubspot, or some other tool, marketing departments are increasingly responsible for email communications.

**52.6%**

## Event calendar

With in-person events quickly shifting to a virtual format or being postponed, event calendar management was more dynamic than ever.

**43.8%**

## Digital signage on campus

Promotions, wayfinding, and campus messages are often the role of digital signage. During the pandemic, they also helped to keep campuses safe.

3.8

Avg. number of systems respondents' departments  
oversee

*“We provide admission application, CRM, marketing/email automation, website, website chatbot, and event calendar for our continuing education division only – not the entire university.”*

Survey Respondent

*“To be clear, we partner with admissions on the application and CRM and partner with IT for web but not specifically on our team.”*

Survey Respondent

# Team Top 10 Skills

## HAVE ON THE TEAM CURRENTLY (BY %)

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- Content writing (93.3)
- Social media (92.5)
- Graphic design (88.9)
- Marketing strategy (88.1)
- Web strategy (83.5)
- Web analytics (82.8)
- Public/media relations (81.1)
- Content strategy (80.5)
- Project management (75.9)
- Digital strategy (72.6)

## PLAN TO ADD TO THE TEAM (BY %)

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- CRM/marketing automation admin (12.1)
- Content strategy (9.8)
- Email marketing drip campaigns (9.7)
- Digital marketing campaign measurement (8.8)
- Marketing analytics (8.8)
- Project management (7.5)
- UX design (6.2)
- SEO (6.0)
- Digital strategy (5.9)
- Web strategy (4.5)

# Top 10 Partnership Areas

## HAVE THROUGH PARTNER CURRENTLY (BY %)

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- Digital marketing campaign measurement (40.4)
- CMS development (39.5)
- SEO (38.3)
- Digital strategy (32.6)
- Web design (32.1)
- Web applications/integrations (31.8)
- UX design (30.0)
- HTML/CSS (26.9)
- Web strategy (25.6)
- CRM/marketing automation admin (23.5)

## PLAN TO ADD TO THROUGH PARTNER (BY %)

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- Marketing analytics (6.6)
- SEO (5.3)
- Digital marketing campaign measurement (5.1)
- CRM/marketing automation admin (4.5)
- UX design (3.8)
- CMS development (3.1)
- Email marketing drip campaigns (3.0)
- Web strategy (2.3)
- HTML/CSS (2.3)
- Web analytics & Marketing Strategy (Tied) (2.2)



**SERVICE-ORIENTED VS.  
STRATEGICALLY FOCUSED  
TEAMS**





# Service-oriented vs. Strategic

Would you define your department as a **service-oriented** or a **strategically focused** group?

## Service-oriented

We “take orders” from other groups

## Strategically focused

We have a seat at the table and drive strategy



Average Response (61)

# Service-oriented vs. Strategic

## SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

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- Title: more likely to describe work as strategic if VP, AVP, or director.
- More likely to describe work as service-oriented if reporting up to marketing communications or external relations.
- Service-oriented less likely to have content or marketing strategists on their team.
- Strategic more likely to expect their institution to be open to remote employees.

## NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES

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- If they are a part of a centralized marketing team or not.
- By # of FTEs in their group/size of team.
- Size of institution.
- If they serve the entire institution or just a part of it.
- By audience (e.g, prospects, current students, faculty) they support.
- If they have or support fully online programs at their institution.

*“We have a huge information gap regarding conversions and can’t sync the website data with the enrollment data (people problems).*

*The institution still seems to think the viewbook is the primary touchpoint for prospective students, so metrics tend to be extremely siloed.”*

Survey Respondent

# Service-oriented vs. Strategic

## STRATEGIC TEAMS MORE LIKELY TO AGREE\*

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- They have strategic direction from leadership.
- They have the ability to measure results and tie back to big picture.
- There is internal agreement about what is needed to move the marketing needle.
- Internal politics are minimal; No sacred cows, and can shift course.
- They have skills/training needed to be successful.
- They're empowered to make decisions needed to be successful.

## NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN AGREEMENT

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- Size of team needed to do the work.
- Budget needed to deliver results expected.
- Leadership commitment to digital-first approach.
- Communication is timely and clear.

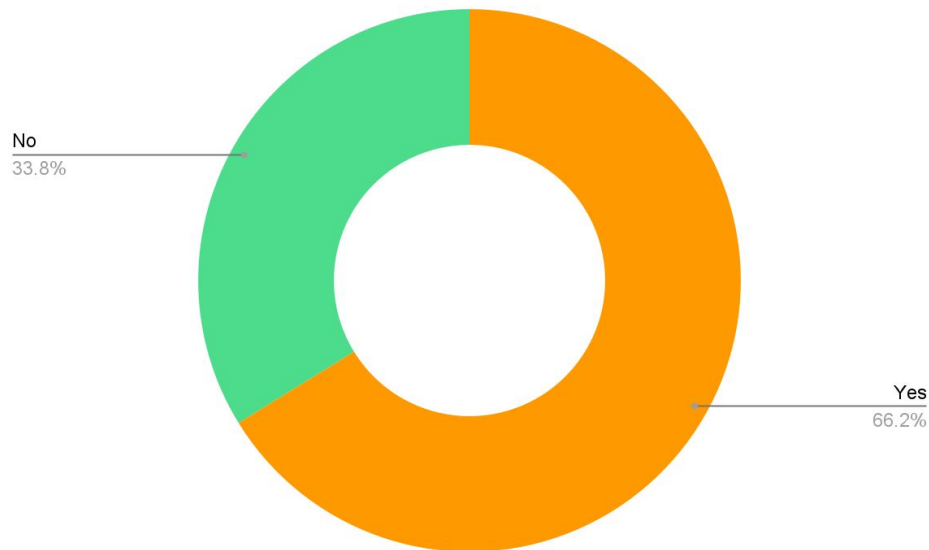
\*Differences are statistically significant.



# **METRICS SHARED WITH LEADERSHIP**



# Responsibility for reporting metrics to leadership



# 31.8%

provide website and digital marketing data  
quarterly to leadership.

# Metrics as Activities/Output vs. Outcomes

16. How would you characterize the information you provide in reports you provide about the website and digital efforts?

## Activities/Output

(e.g., number of pages published, views, social media posts)

Equal parts  
Output/Outcomes

## Outcomes

(e.g., number of conversions, leads, form completes)



Average Response (51)



## Open-ended metrics question

What **metrics** do you believe are most **important** to leadership **and why?**

# Most Important Metrics to Leadership

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**Number of page views/web visitors/sessions  
(29 mentions)**

“Because they lack depth of understanding about what data is truly meaningful, they typically are interested in visits/clicks (because that's a data point they've been seeing in reports for years).”

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**Conversions/requests for information (RFI)  
(26 mentions)**

“Conversions because they equal revenue.”

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**Admission funnel/application data  
(18 mentions)**

“Number of applications, quality of applicants, and number of enrollments are ultimately how exec leadership is evaluating return on marketing spend.”

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# Most Important Metrics to Leadership

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**Other website user behavior/data mentions)**

**(15**

“Pageviews; length of time on page; % of videos watched. They are mostly concerned with number of people who are engaging with our content, especially video content at this point in time.”

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**Deposits/enrollment (15 mentions)**

“The one thing that counts is the number of students who enroll. Yield, from apply to enroll, is another important metric.”

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**Costs/ROI (15 mentions)**

“ROI. Leadership doesn't typically understand the strategy or nuance to marketing, but is always concerned with our team.”


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*“[We report on] most viewed content (themes, stories, what is important to our audience) and KPI for strategic goals/plans (e.g., increase conversion of X audience through A, B, and C areas).”*


Survey Respondent

# TEAM SUCCESS FACTORS

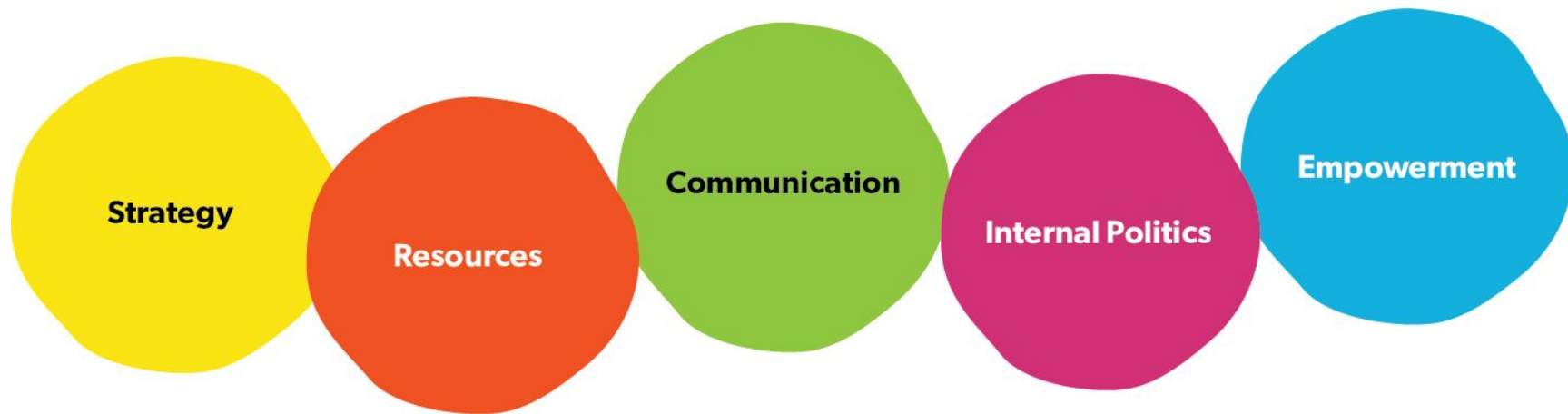




**It takes more than  
talent and drive to  
build a better  
marketing team.**

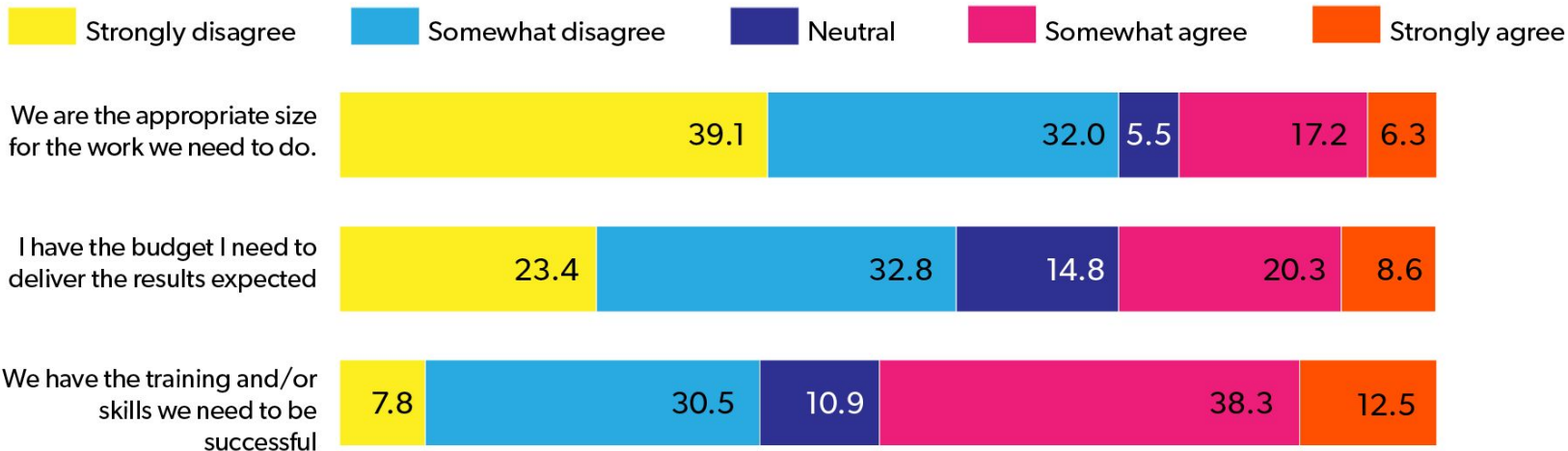


# Team Success Factors



# Success Factor: Resources

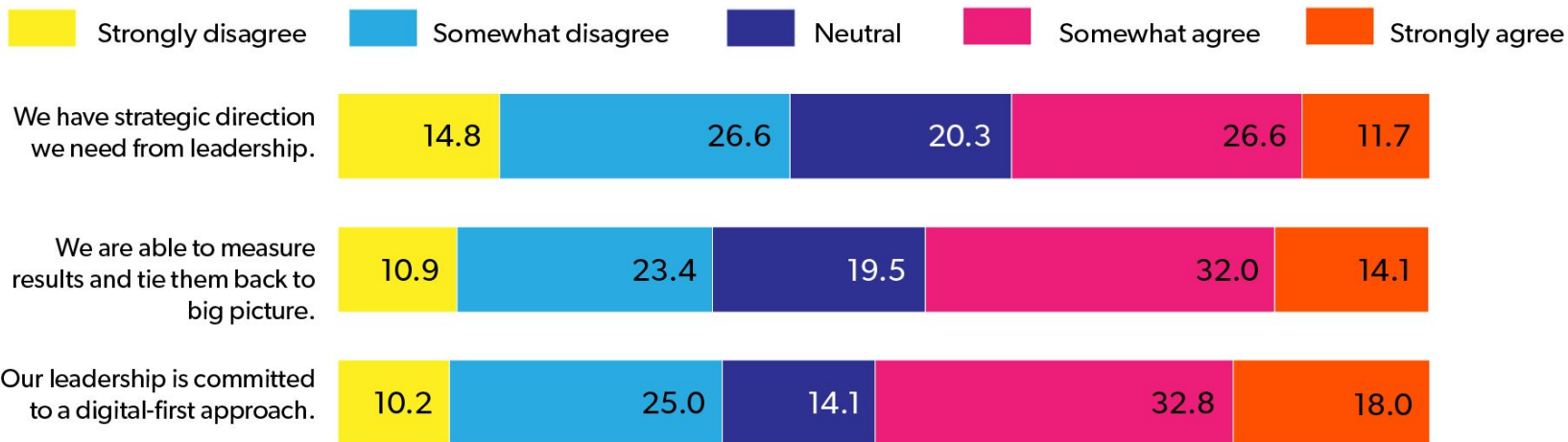
We're interested in understanding factors that may be impacting your department's success. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.





# Success Factor: Strategy

We're interested in understanding factors that may be impacting your department's success. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.



# 41.4%

of respondents disagree that they have the strategic direction they need from leadership.

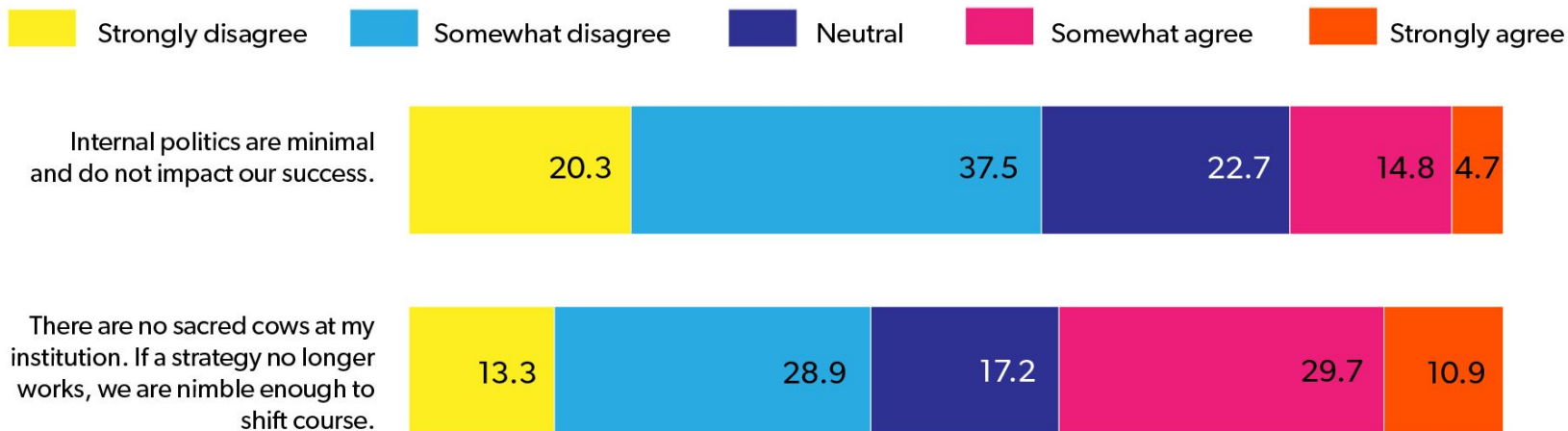
# Success Factor: Communication

We're interested in understanding factors that may be impacting your department's success. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.



# Success Factor: Internal Politics

We're interested in understanding factors that may be impacting your department's success. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.



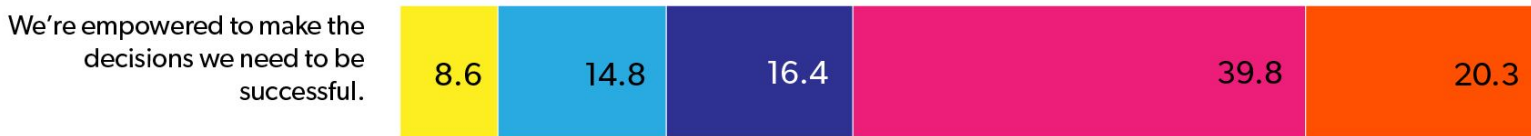
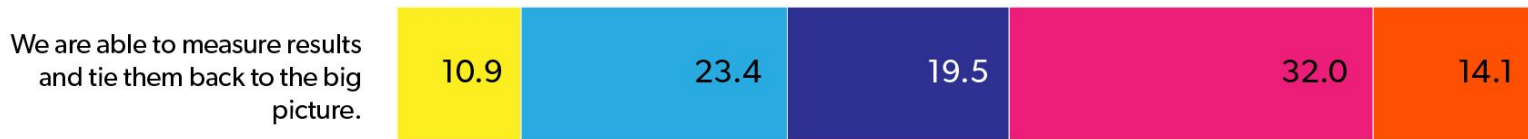
# 57.8%

of respondents “disagree” that internal politics are minimal and don’t impact their success. (In other words, internal politics still greatly impact success.)

# Success Factor: Empowerment

We're interested in understanding factors that may be impacting your department's success. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Strongly disagree    Somewhat disagree    Neutral    Somewhat agree    Strongly agree



# PANDEMIC IMPACT



# COVID-19: Thriving vs. Reacting

At many institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the work of higher education staff. Which of the following best describes how your department is doing, overall? On most days, are you...?

**Thriving and  
adapting**

**Reacting and  
overwhelmed**

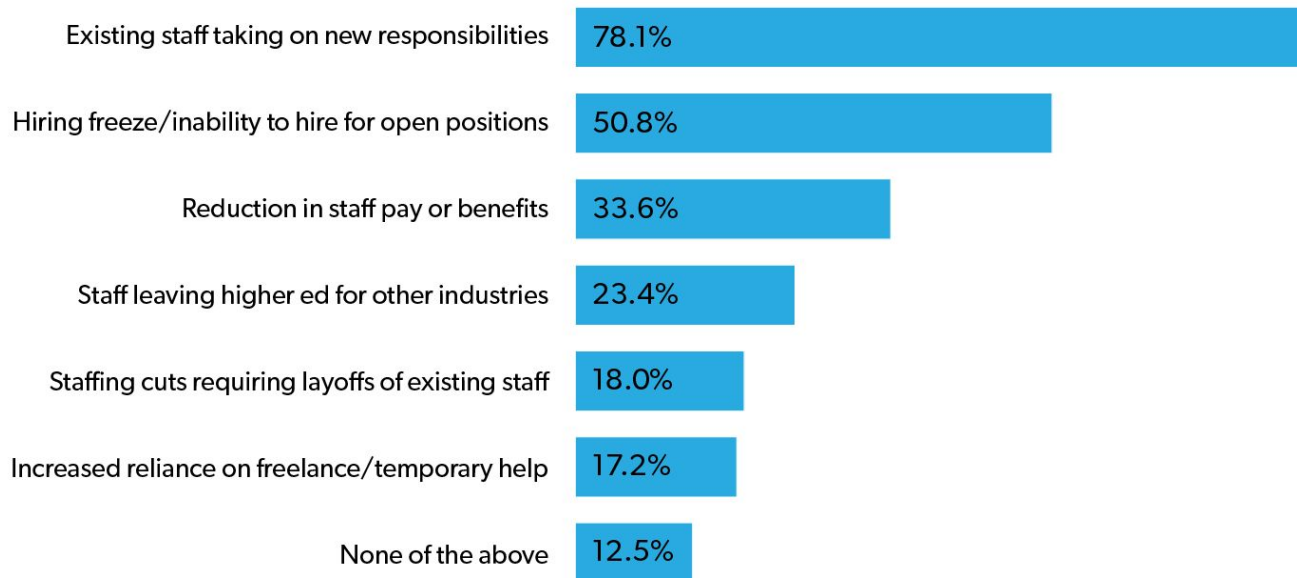


Average Response (51)



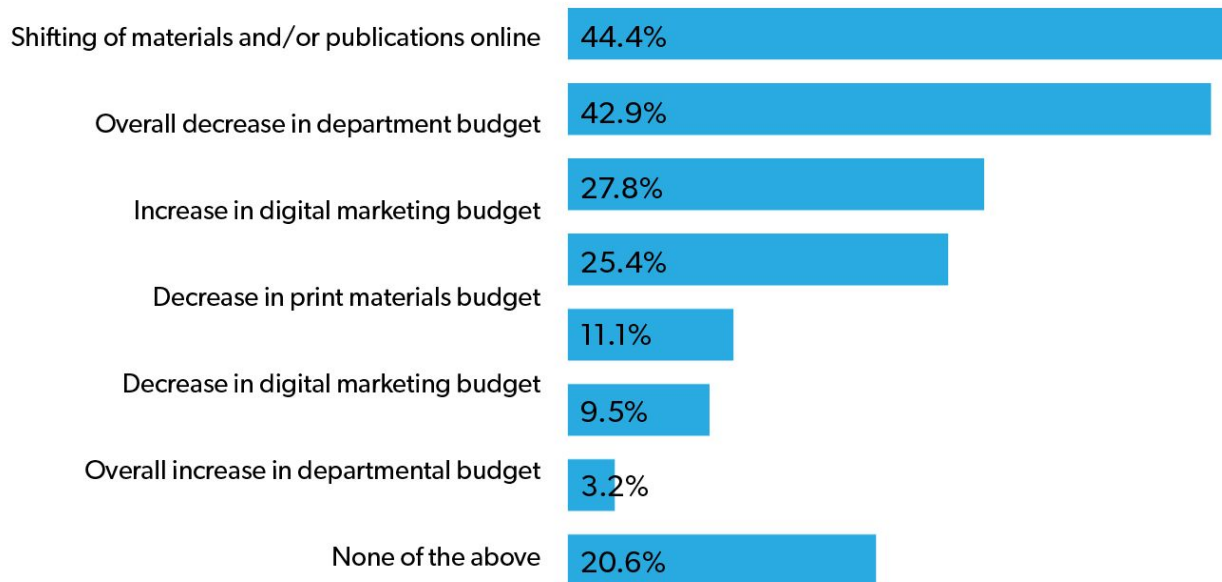
# Metrics: Staffing & Pay

In the 2020-2021 academic year, which of the following staffing impacts has the COVID-19 pandemic had on your department?



# Metrics: Budget

In the 2020-2021 academic year, which of the following budgetary impacts has the COVID-19 pandemic had on your department? Check all that apply.



# Remote work?

44.5% said “yes,” their institutions are now more open to hiring remote employees.


# My takeaways

# 2017 State of Higher Ed Web Team Survey


- Roles on team
  - 47% Social media manager vs 88.2% now
- Skills on team
  - 65% Content writing vs. 93.3% now
  - 66% Social media vs 92.5% now

# POV

- Many Marketing/Communications office are still largely PR/Comms/Media focused and not strong enough on the marketing strategy side
- Major progress in reporting structure, elevating strategic importance and value
- There's no right or wrong, or one best practice – no one size fits all

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**Thank you to all  
who participated  
in this survey!**

Decorative graphic in the bottom-right corner consisting of overlapping orange and yellow circular shapes.

# Align Your Marketing Team to Your Strategy

An **organizational assessment** can help you build the case you need to fight for the resources and tools your team needs to be effective.

## The Right Time

- New Leadership
- New Strategic Plan
- Build a case for additional budget

## The Right Results

- Fill Skill Gaps
- Redefine Roles
- Implement New Process
- Build Board Alignment





**Thank you!**