

2024 STATE OF B2B CONTENT CONSUMPTION & DEMAND REPORT

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

Welcome to our 8th annual State of B2B Content Consumption and Demand Report.

Before you read on, there is a key distinction to callout that sets this report apart from other industry studies: This report is not a summary of survey findings.

When we say we have insights into what B2B professionals actually want and need, we mean it.

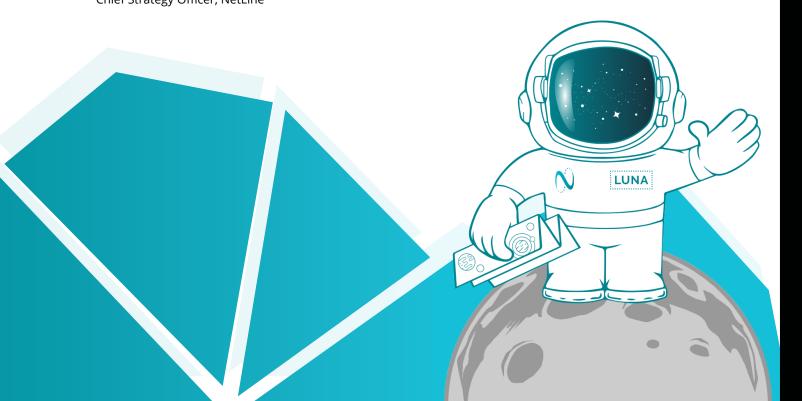
This year, we're sharing real user insights from 6.2 million first-party content registrations—revealing the true needs and intentions of B2B buyers everywhere.

We cannot wait to hear which stats and insights you find most impactful.

Share your breakthrough moments with #ImaDataMarketer.

Cheers,

# David Fortino Chief Strategy Officer, NetLine



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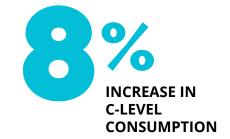
# INSIGHTS FROM 6.2 MILLION FULLY-PERMISSIONED, FIRST-PARTY LEADS.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Despite the growing push for ungated content from marketers, user demand for gated B2B content rose 14.3% YOY—up 77% since 2019.
- While professionals requested historic levels of content, time to consume slowed by 2.5 hours, widening The Consumption Gap by 8.8% YOY.
- In a year of economic distress and uncertainty, buyers stated they were 5.3% more likely to make investments within the next 12 months compared to 2022.
- 35.2% of professionals expected to make a purchase decision within the next 12 months.
- C-Level consumption represented 12.7% of audience demand, growing 7.9% YOY.
- eBooks remain the most popular content format for B2B professionals, representing 39.5% of all demand—with registrations increasing 34.5%.
- Compared to 2022, users requesting Case Studies were 78.5% more likely to make a purchase decision in the next 12 months.
- Webinars saw a 7.6% YOY increase in registrations; On-Demand Webinars were the eighth most popular format of 2023, growing 56.7%.
- Demand for Al-related content skyrocketed 5.5x YOY.









# APPLYING THE LEARNINGS FROM THIS REPORT

You're busy and we respect your time.

Assuming you're looking to build your pipeline and accelerate sales outcomes in 2024, here's what you need to know from this year's report.

#### **EMBRACE THE GATE.**

77% growth since 2019 proves users are not averse to sharing their information in exchange for high-quality content. Gated content = great first-party sourced intent signals.

#### **B2B PROFESSIONALS NEED TIME TO CONSUME.**

The Consumption Gap widened to 31.2 hours in 2023. If you're not giving people at least two days to consume the content they've requested before you follow up, you're not going to be successful.

#### IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO BUILD AWARENESS, CREATE EBOOKS.

There is nothing more appealing to professionals at the top of the funnel. Users are 3x more likely to request an eBook than the second most popular format (Guides).

#### THE IMPACT OF AI IS JUST BEGINNING.

Total demand for Al-related content jumped 5.5x in 2023 and seems to be following a similar trajectory for 2024.

#### THE C-SUITE LOVES SIMPLE CONTENT.

Executives consume a lot of content, but it needs to be easily digestible. 53.9% of their consumption came in the form of eBooks, Cheat Sheets, Book Summaries, and Tips and Tricks Guides.

#### CASE STUDIES ARE LINKED TO PURCHASE DECISIONS.

In 2023, compared to 2022, users requesting Case Studies were 78.5% more likely to make a purchase within the next 12 months.

#### **DON'T IGNORE INTENT.**

Third-party cookies are going away. Leveraging buyer-level intent data is your best bet to knowing precisely *who* your prospects are.

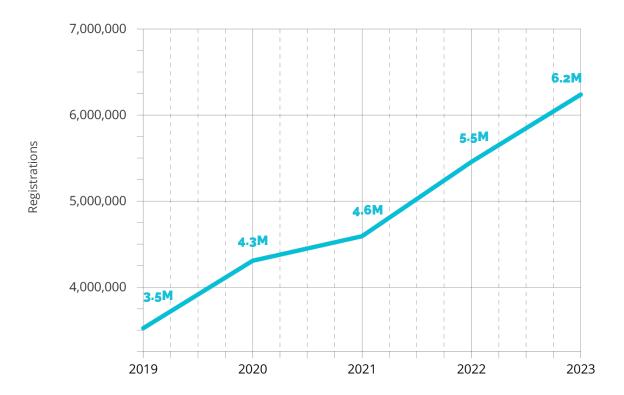
# CONTENT CONSUMPTION GREW 14.3% YOY

#### NetLine delivered 6.2 million fully-permissed, first-party leads in 2023.

That's a 14.3% YOY increase in total registrations.

Since 2019, NetLine has recorded a 77% increase in overall demand. Users have given no indication that their behaviors will change anytime soon.

#### THE PROGRESSION OF B2B CONTENT DEMAND

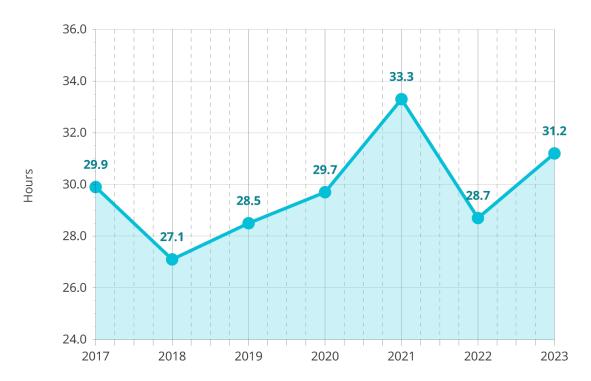


# THE CONSUMPTION GAP

The Consumption Gap is the time between when content is requested and the moment it's opened for consumption.

This past year, it widened, with the time to consume increasing from 28.7 hours to 31.2.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF THE CONSUMPTION GAP



ON AVERAGE, PROFESSIONALS TOOK

2.5 HOURS

LONGER TO CONSUME REQUESTED CONTENT

#### WHY DID THE CONSUMPTION GAP GROW?

As registrations increase, so does the time to consume.

Ultimately, the widening of the Consumption Gap for 2023 comes down to some very real issues:

#### CONTENT IS BEING REVIEWED BY MORE PEOPLE.

59% of B2B buyers have at least four people involved in their buying committee.

25% have at least seven people. While collaborative efforts signify a healthy organization, multiple rounds of vetting can delay work, underscoring the importance for marketers to tailor content strategies to the complex decision-making ecosystems of their audiences.

#### THE URGENCY TO PROVE ROI MORE SWIFTLY.

Present economic conditions necessitate a balance between immediate needs and future gains.

Ultimately, it requires a strategic shift in content creation and distribution to focus on clear, measurable outcomes that align with business goals that address both ROI concerns and timelines.

#### PROFESSIONALS ARE BEING ASKED TO DO MORE WITH LESS.

More work, less time/resources, same expectations.

Marketers and sellers must leverage tools and strategies that maximize impact without adding to the already high demands on their audience's time and attention.

Have patience with your prospects. Unless they've specifically requested to hear from you, give them time and space to consume your content.

**PRO TIP:** Close the Consumption Gap with content that your buyers are actively looking for. Discover your buyer's interests in our 2024 Content Trends & Planning Guide >>

### **CONSUMPTION CALLOUTS**



1 Hours

From registration to download was the fastest consumption rate. SVPs were the hungriest.



In consumption rate of professionals within organizations 50k+ employees. However, they still consumed content 6% faster than the average professional.

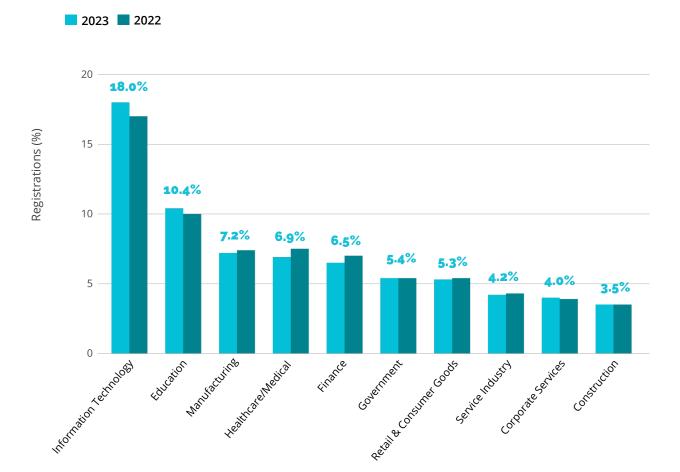


In consumption rate of professionals within the Automotive Industry, averaging at 21.5 hours.

## THE TITANS OF TECH

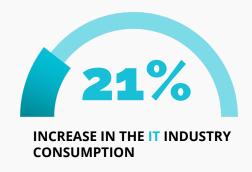
As usual, all things technology-related accounted for the largest share of audience registration across each Job and Industry category.

#### THE TOP 10 ACTIVE INDUSTRIES

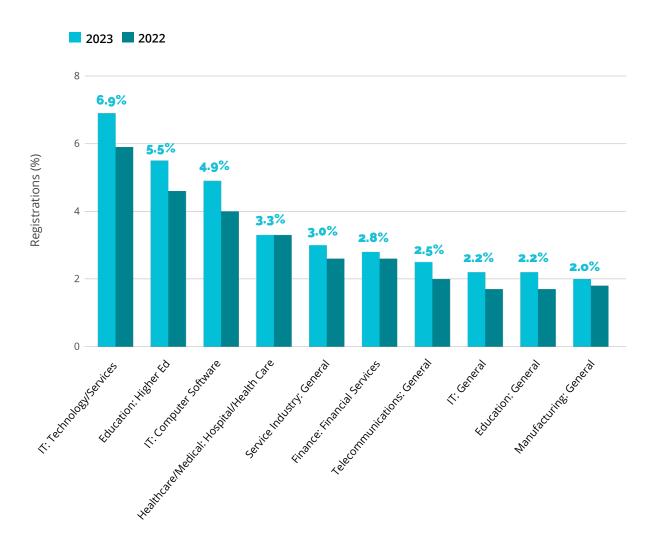


The IT Industry was the most active, representing 18% of total audience.

Total registrations grew 20.8% YOY.



#### THE TOP 10 ACTIVE SUB-INDUSTRIES



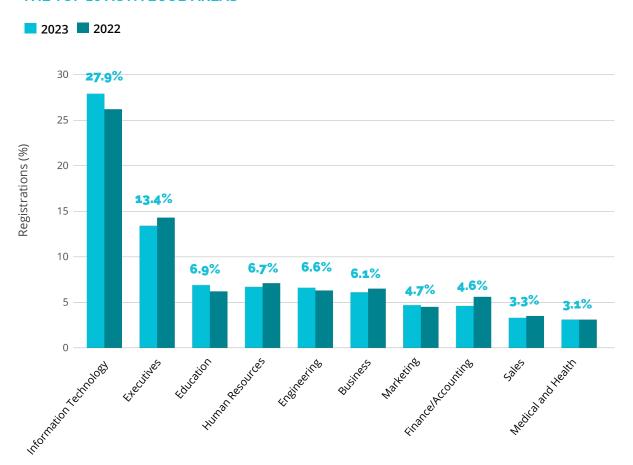


OF ALL REG FROM IT SERVICES, COMPUTER SOFTWARE, GENERAL COMPUTER & TECHNOLOGY SERVICES INCREASE IN TOTAL REGISTRATIONS FOR THE TOP 10 SUB INDUSTRIES

#### **Job Area vs. Job Functions**

Job Areas define a discipline within an organization. Job Functions define specific tasks and roles an individual has within a given discipline.

#### THE TOP 10 ACTIVE JOB AREAS



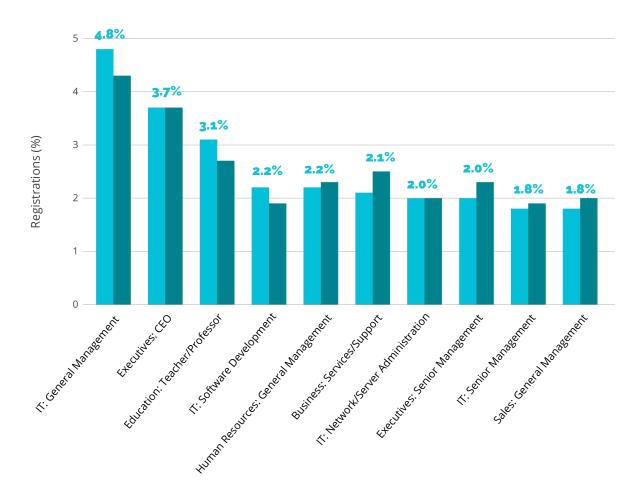
The IT/Computers/Electronics Job Area was the most active, representing 27.9% of total audience.

Registrations for this group grew 21.5%.



#### THE TOP 10 ACTIVE JOB FUNCTIONS

#### 2023 2022

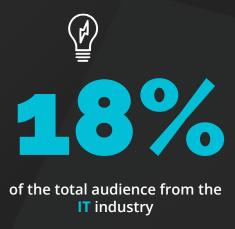


IT/Computer/Electronics: General Management was the most active Job Function, representing 4.8% of total audience.

Registrations for this group grew 27.1%.

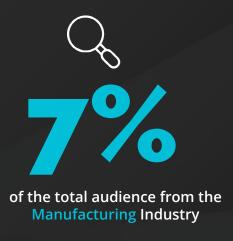


## **INDUSTRY CALLOUTS**





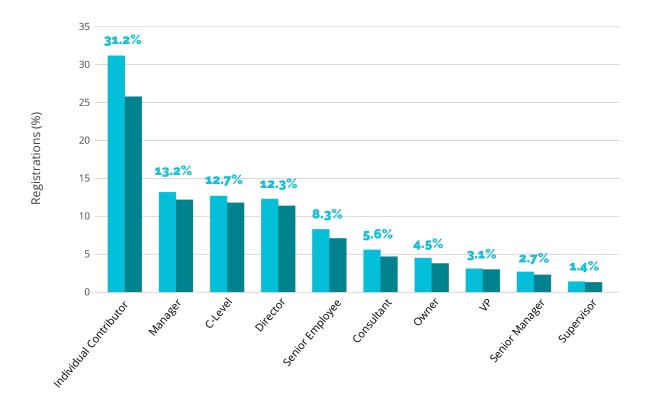
of the total audience from the Education industry



# BY THE **JOB LEVEL**

#### THE TOP 10 JOB LEVELS

2023 2022



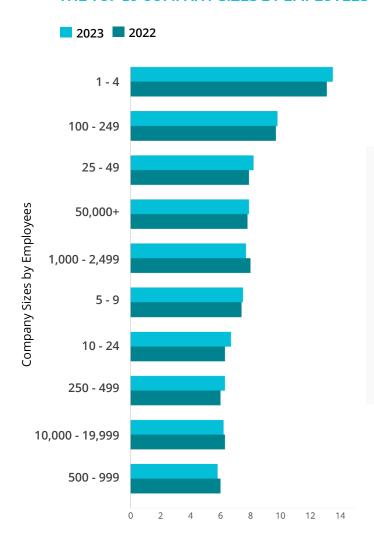
Individual Contributors were the most active Job Level, representing 31.2% of total audience, with this group's registrations growing 20.7%. Manager, Director, and C-Level Job Levels saw their total registrations grow by an average of 7.9%. However, their total audience share dropped by an average of 6%.

Historically, these three Job Levels have been the drivers of consumption. To see all three "dip" YOY is quite interesting. It's possible that this drop could be due to mass layoffs, specifically within the tech industry.



# BY THE COMPANY SIZE

#### THE TOP 10 COMPANY SIZES BY EMPLOYEES



In 2023, registrations from the largest enterprises (10,000-19,999 employees) grew by 1.4%.

However, demand from companies with 1,000 to 49,999 employees dipped by an average of 5.6%.

Organizations employing 10 to 24 requested 5.7% more content in 2023.

Demand from organizations employing 20,000 to 49,999 employees dropped by 10.2%.

**10%**DECREASE IN 20,000 TO 49,999 COMPANY SIZE

INCREASE IN 10 TO 24 COMPANY SIZE

# CHECKING IN ON THE C-SUITE

Everyone wants to reach the C-Suite.

The good news is they're listening quite attentively.



INCREASE IN TOTAL REGISTRATIONS









## **AUDIENCE ATTRIBUTES**





in Managers, Directors, and C-Level consumption



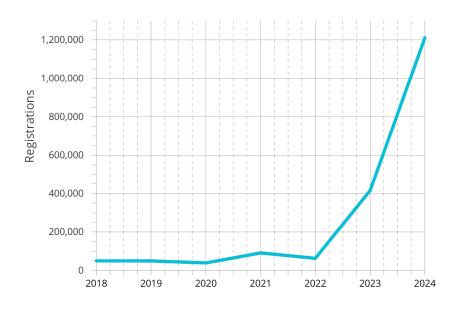
## **AI: ABSOLUTELY INTERESTED**

2023 was the year AI went mainstream, thanks in large part to OpenAI's ChatGPT.

During this period of exponential growth, our assumption was that B2B consumption behaviors would change alongside it, thus validating that this is a point of no-return.

That is indeed the case.

#### THE TOTAL AI CONTENT DEMAND





After years of see-sawing, demand for AI content exploded in 2023, increasing 5.5x YOY.

- Marketers, Journalists and HR professionals were more likely to consume ChatGPT-related content.
- Healthcare professionals, collectively, had the highest percentage of users consuming
   Natural Language Processing (NLP) related content.

Al topic registrations for 2024 have already eclipsed the totals for 2018-2020, and are currently pacing to finish the year up 1.9x from 2023.

The world will not be changing. The world has changed.

Our 2023 Report did not feature any Al insights. At time of publication, we were just beginning to track the explosion of demand within this new market opportunity.

This will continue to be an area of strategic focus for NetLine in 2024.

# ANALYZE YOUR TARGET BUYERS

As much as we would love to cover each and every audience, we simply can't do it.

Fortunately, you can uncover exactly what your prospects are consuming right now with our free, interactive tool, Audience Explorer.

Audience Explorer allows you to break down audience content consumption by Job Area and Industry—as well filtering options by Region, Company Size, and Job Level—with real-time data from the past 180 days.

#### **Start Exploring your ICP Today.**



## **INTENT FINDINGS**

#### Knowing what could happen next is a superpower.

It's like having the answers to a test or knowing precisely how an opponent plans to move.

While it may not be a cure-all, intent data—specifically buyer-level intent data—is the closest thing we have to tangibly understanding WHO our prospects and future buyers are.

It also helps us identify what they want and when they want it.

With the introduction of INTENTIVE—the only buyer-level intent platform delivering real-time insights into "who" is actively expressing intent in an account (as well as "what", "when", and "where")—NetLine now has access to billions of intent-rich data points that provide insight into the future behaviors of B2B buyers.

Let's review what INTENTIVE has discovered.

#### **PURCHASE READINESS INCREASED**

Despite economic turmoil, B2B organizations continue to spend in areas in which they deem valuable.

A mid-year report from The Winterberry Group projected that B2B advertising and marketing spend was forecasted to be \$53.7B in 2023—an increase from \$49.9B in 2022.

This might explain why 35% of B2B buyers showed a greater likelihood of purchase intent over the next 12 months, up from 33% in 2022.

	Under 3 Months	3-6 Months	6-12 Months	Over 1 Year
2022	8.8%	10.0%	14.5%	66.7%
2023	9.4%	8.8%	17.0%	64.8%
Delta	6.8%	-12.0%	17.2%	-2.8%

**RESPONDENTS WERE** 

5%

MORE LIKELY TO INVEST
2 MONTHS, YOY

**RESPONDENTS WERE** 

7%

MORE LIKELY TO INVEST IN 3 MONTHS, YOY

**RESPONDENTS WERE** 

12%

LESS LIKELY TO INVEST IN 3-6 MONTHS, YOY

#### WHO IS READY TO BUY?

#### Percentages are nice but they don't tell us the story about the people.

Who across the B2B landscape is most likely to make an immediate buying decision?

#### **JOB LEVELS**

<i>More</i> Likely Associated with Immediate Buying Decision	Less Likely Associated with Immediate Buying Decision
C-Level	Supervisor
Executive VP	Senior Employee
Owner	Senior Manager
Individual Contributor	Director
Senior VP	Manager

The C-Suite and Senior leadership were the most likely to be aggressive. Middle management and senior employees were more reserved.

#### **JOB AREAS**

<i>More</i> Likely Associated with Immediate Buying Decision	Less Likely Associated with Immediate Buying Decision
Quality Assurance/Safety	Banking/Mortgage
Logistics/Transportation	Customer Support/Client Services
Manufacturing/Production/Operations	Engineering
Human Resources	Education
Sales	Medical and Health

The nature of these roles speak to the needs for each:

- Sales and Manufacturing/Production/Operations, for example, want and need solutions immediately.
- Professionals in the Education and Engineering space, for example, are associated with planning ahead, allowing more time for consideration.

#### **INDUSTRIES**

<i>More</i> Likely Associated with Immediate Buying Decision	Less Likely Associated with Immediate Buying Decision
Biotech and Pharmaceuticals	Education
Retail and Consumer Goods	Non-Profit/Organizations
Utility/Energy	Insurance
Advertising/Marketing	Transportation and Logistics
Real Estate	Government

Real Estate and CPG professionals live in a, "what have you done for me lately?" world where inflation and interest rates are also a major factor.

NPOs and Government professionals ponder every decision and often take considerable time before arriving at any result.



#### The Relationship Between the Buyer's Journey and Content Format

There is a clear connection between a user's choice in format and their readiness to buy.

Based on our first-party buyer-level intent data, we categorized 12 unique content formats with two Immediate Buying Decision Association distinctions: More Likely and Less Likely.

#### **CONTENT FORMATS**

More Likely Associated with a Buying Decision	Less Likely Associated with a Buying Decision
Playbook	Tips & Tricks Guide
Case Study	Course
Trend Report	eKit
Analyst Report	Report
White Paper	Article
Live Webinar	Cheat Sheets

# PLAYBOOKS, CASE STUDIES, AND TREND REPORTS

were the three formats **most** likely to be associated with a buying decision over the course of the next year.



Users requesting these formats are seeking tangible ways to action a product or service in an optimal fashion and to study how their peers have had success.

# TIPS AND TRICKS GUIDES, COURSES, AND EKITS

were the three formats **least** likely to be associated with a buying decision over the course of the next year.



Users requesting these formats are looking to begin with the basics or refresh their knowledge.

#### **CONTENT FORMATS**

<i>More</i> Likely Associated with a Buying Decision in Under 3 Months	<i>More</i> Likely Associated with a Buying Decision in 3 - 6 Months
Guide	Playbook
Live Webinar	Trend Report
Best Practices	Case Study
White Paper	Special Report
Live Virtual Event	White Paper
Checklist	Live Webinar

#### From these findings, four insights stood out from the rest:

#### GUIDES

47%

*More* likely to Purchase in 0-3 Months compared to other formats

#### WHITE PAPERS

13%

**More** likely to purchase in 0-3 Months compared to eBooks

#### **PLAYBOOKS**

62%

Less likely to purchase in 0-3 months, despite being the top format

#### **HOWEVER, PLAYBOOKS**

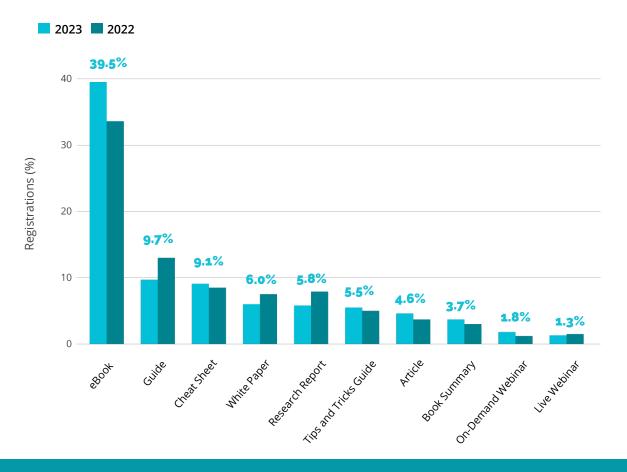
**6**x

*More* likely to purchase in the next 3-6 months.

## **FORMAT FINDINGS**

We've learned how content formats can signal different levels of purchase intent. But what else can format trends teach us about B2B buyers?

#### THE TOP 10 CONTENT FORMATS



EBOOKS WERE KING ONCE AGAIN, WITH GUIDES AND WHITE PAPERS DECLINING IN TOTAL DEMAND. eBooks were 3x and 5.8x more likely to be requested compared to Guides and White Papers, respectively.

Guides, after increasing in demand by 75% in 2022, fell 14.9% YOY.

In the Top 10, only Research Reports saw a greater dropoff.

Cheat Sheets (21.5%), Tips and Tricks Guides (26.0%) and Book Summaries (43.1%) all saw increases.

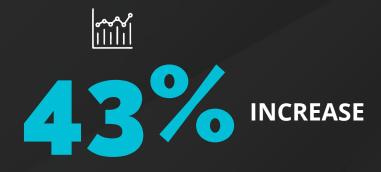
This highlights the clear need for the majority of content (read: Top-of-Funnel content) to focus on delivering value as directly and efficiently as possible.

## **FORMAT FEATURES**



220 INCREASE

in Demand for Cheat Sheets

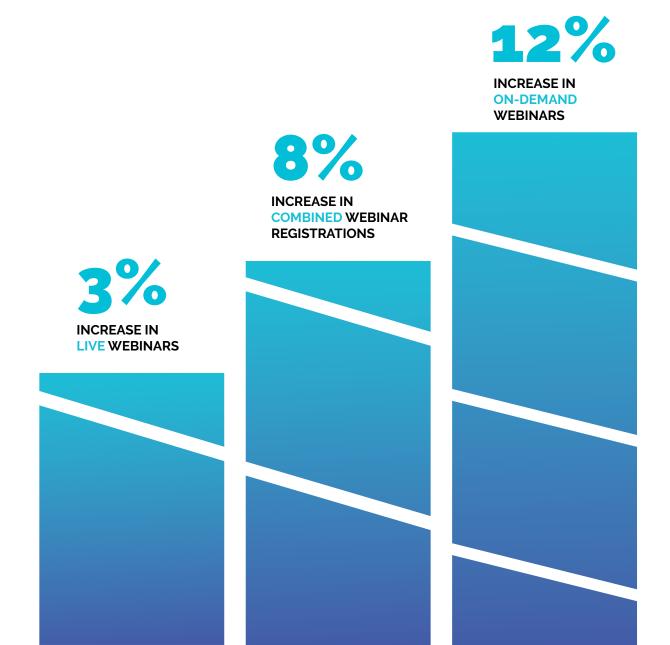


in Demand for Book Summaries

#### **WEBINAR WATCHING**

Combined as a format, including Live and On-Demand, Webinars saw a 7.6% YOY increase in demand.

On-Demand Webinar demand grew 12.1% YOY, finishing as the tenth most popular format of 2023.



#### CONSUMPTION PROBABILITY

## AND PURCHASE INTENT

NetLine has studied format consumption trends for the past eight years.

Our 2022 and 2023 reports highlighted the probability of purchase intent and how it relates to content format and other parameters.

#### THE PROGRESSION OF EBOOK CONSUMPTION

eBooks are the most popular format for B2B professionals. While there are many who will debate the semantics of eBooks, Guides, Reports, and White Papers, NetLine's data is clear: eBooks rule.

#### **EBOOKS REPRESENTED**

40%

OF ALL DEMAND, WITH A YOY INCREASE OF 34.5%



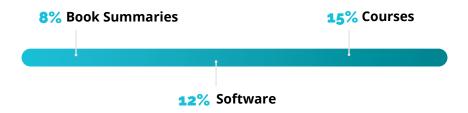
eBooks are also linked to a greater likelihood of purchase within the next six months. For this format, getting a first date is quite easy. A second? Not so much.

Users who requested an eBook and go on to consume additional content consume a different format 96.4% of the time.

This is where things get fun.

This could mean that eBook consumption is more tightly aligned with purchase intent than previously believed. The truth is more complicated.

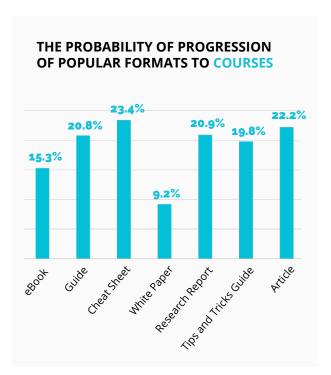
Users registering for eBooks were most likely to progress to:

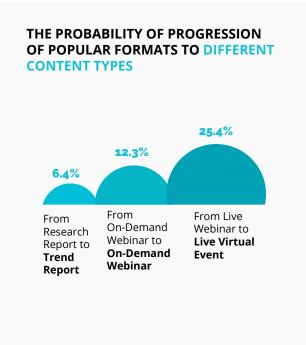


Each of these formats were less likely to be associated with a buying decision in the next 12 months.

While users registering for eBooks were most likely to progress to Courses, this progression is not unique to this content format.

In fact, users registering for one of the seven most requested formats are most likely to progress to Courses following their initial registration.





What's evident immediately is the popularity of Courses as a secondary format following initial consumption.

A remarkable feat for the 26th most requested content format overall.

#### TYING IT BACK TO PURCHASE INTENT

Even as we expanded our analysis to the top 25 content formats of 2023, we found that, on average, there was an 18.8% chance that a user would next register for a Course, making it the most likely next step.

While Course registrations reside on the Content Formats Less Likely Associated with a Buying Decision, not all outcomes are made equal.

However, just because Courses are the most likely outcome, doesn't mean it's a dead-end in terms of intent.

On the previous chart, six of the 10 formats are associated with greater purchase intent. Four of those formats (White Papers, eBooks, Articles, and Guides) each feature sequences with Courses as the next most likely format request.

#### **CONTENT FORMAT CONSUMPTION SEQUENCE**

From	То	Probability of Progression
White Paper	Course	9.2%
eBook	Course	15.3%
Article	Course	19.8%
Guide	Course	20.8%

What you should take note of is the Probability Progression to this Format percentages. White Papers being at only 9.2% is indicative of users choosing other formats.

Of the users requesting White Papers, the most likely content formats they request next include Trend Reports, Live Virtual Events, Playbooks, and Webinars, all of which are associated with greater purchase intent.

# VOLUME VS. HIGH VALUE CONTENT

Courses were popular as a second registration.

While the format isn't immediately associated with purchase intent, the format residing at the opposite end of the spectrum is.

On average, the probability of users requesting Case Studies as their second piece of content is only 0.1%.

Despite users choosing Case Studies last out of a group of 25 choices, it represents one of the richest intent signals possible.

Users requesting Case Studies were 78.5% more likely to make a purchase decision in the next 12 months, second only to users requesting Playbooks (115.3% more likely).

While volume may not be there, interested prospects certainly are.







115%

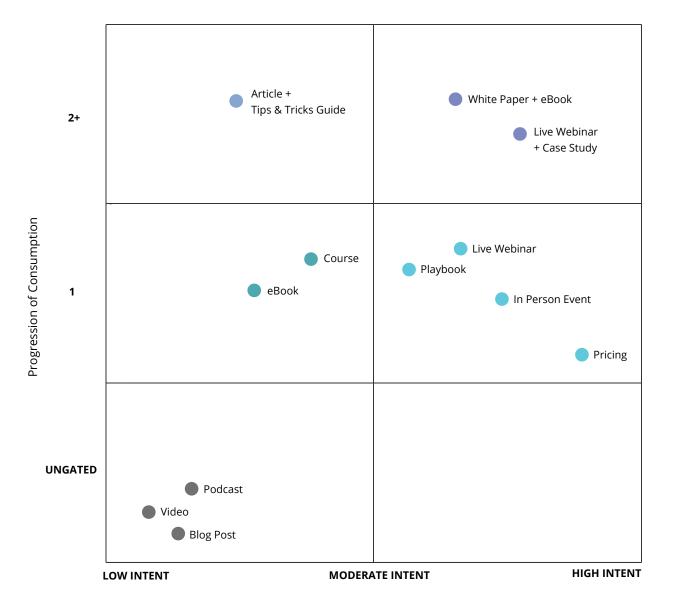
MORE LIKELY TO PURCHASE WITHIN 12 MONTHS

## **INTENT SEQUENCES**

NetLine's INTENTIVE has demonstrated that B2B marketers cannot rely on a single datapoint to determine a user's intention.

The more high-intent registrations your team sees across your marketing the better.

#### **CONTENT FORMAT INTENT MATRIX**



## A user requesting and consuming high-intent content formats and taking additional actions is a tremendous sign of a buyer's true intentions.

To further demonstrate this, we visit our exploration of eBook registrations. These requests were associated with late stage purchase behavior in the next 3-6 months.

For this reason, we reviewed the probability of users progressing to one of these formats.

#### **USER PROGRESSION FROM EBOOKS**

More Likely to Be Associated with a Buying Decision in 3-6 Months	Probability of Users Progressing to this format from eBooks
eBook	3.6%
Trend Report	1.7%
Live Virtual Event	1.3%
Live Webinar	0.8%
Playbook	0.6%
Guide	0.6%
Special Report	0.5%
Research Report	0.3%
Case Study	0.1%
White Paper	0.1%

Sans eBook to eBook progression, users who requested an eBook and go on to consume additional content are more likely to register for Trend Reports, Live Virtual Events, and Live Webinars.

Therefore, it can be assumed that users progressing from eBooks to Trend Reports, Live Webinars, or Live Virtual Events demonstrate significantly stronger purchase intent signals than users registering for one of these formats alone.

#### WRAPPING UP A YEAR

## **OF CONSUMPTION**

#### **GATED CONTENT ISN'T DEAD.**

NetLine has seen a 77% increase in demand for gated content since 2019. Any report telling you users shy away from gates is unsubstantiated.

#### **PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE.**

Your prospects need time: Time to consume, time to digest, and time to discuss with their colleagues. Unless they have requested a meeting, assume they are not ready to buy quite yet.

#### **INCREASED BUYER READINESS.**

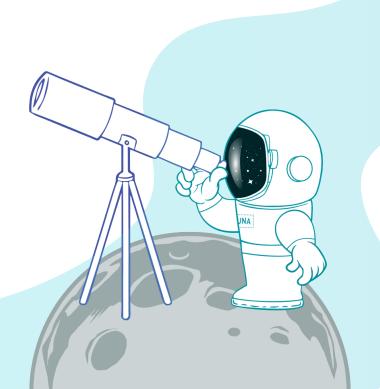
Buyers are more likely to invest within the next year. To keep buyers progressing, be sure your content library includes formats that span across the Buying Decision Spectrum.

#### **KEY DECISION MAKERS IDENTIFIED.**

C-Level and Sales job roles are crucial in immediate buying decisions. Consider the types of detail and information these professionals want and need to make a purchase.

#### AI WILL LIKELY INCREASE CONTENT CONSUMPTION.

Based on current demand for Al-focused and overall content, 2024 is pacing to be a historic year of registrations. Expect this to hold true for the foreseeable future, as Al accelerates everything across the content marketing universe.



# ABOUT **NETLINE**

NetLine empowers B2B marketers to scale revenue via an all-in-one buyer engagement platform that delivers unparalleled buyer-level intent data and lead generation capabilities.

Operating the only buyer-level intent platform, INTENTIVE, delivering real-time insights into "who" is actively expressing intent in an account, "what" actions that person is taking, "when" those actions took place, and uniquely "where" those actions occurred, including offline Event Intent data, NetLine fast tracks buyer transparency.

In addition, NetLine also operates the largest B2B content-centric lead generation platform offering content syndication, lead generation, account-based marketing, lead management, and more. Founded in 1994, NetLine is a part of Informa Tech, a leading provider of market insight and market access to the global technology industry.

Successful B2B Marketers Start with NetLine. Visit www.netline.com.

# OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

As the#1 B2B Buyer Engagement Platform, we feel that it is important to share with you how we do business. NetLine operates according to five core values: innovation, teamwork, integrity, customer satisfaction and accountability. Our advanced technology and massive scale are uniquely positioned to achieve the results Marketers are looking for. NetLine's performance-based Portal and our dedicated team of experienced lead generation experts ensure that you will only pay for leads that meet your assigned campaign criteria—nothing less. Expand your footprint and competitive market share.