



CONTENT STRATEGY ALLIANCE



# 2014 Content Strategy Survey Report

*revised edition*



## Notice

Steven Grindlay and Noreen Compton assert their moral right to be identified as the authors of this document titled: 2014 Content Strategy Survey Report. March 6, 2104.

The contents of this document remain the property of Steven Grindlay and Noreen Compton and all rights are reserved.

You are free to read and share this document with whomever you like. You may quote from or refer to this document provided you identify and credit us as the authors (see above assertion of authorship) provided that said references do not breach our rights or integrity in any way.

You may not use this document for commercial purposes. You may not change, alter, add to or delete any portion of this document and its contents in part or in whole without the written consent of the authors.

Unauthorized use may result in prosecution.



## Thank You

No undertaking of this nature can be accomplished without the help of many people, who willingly volunteer their time and knowledge to see it through.

**A special "gracias" to:**

Lisa Moore, Noreen Compton, and Brody Dorland ("The Survey Team") for their hard work designing and crafting the survey.

**A tip of the hat to all the below who offered advice, guidance, editing, etc., to help make the survey a reality:**

Mark Baker, Youri Dominique, Shannon Doubleday, Emily Gray, Steven Grindlay, Nathalie Laroche, Hilary Marsh, Kristin Martin, Charlie Myerson, Gillian Rosheuvel, Bill Schankel

And to all of You, our fellow Content Strategists from around the world, who took the time to complete this survey. A HUGE thank you for your keen interest and revealing answers. We look forward to hearing more from you in the future about this Survey Report.

And thanks to Noreen Compton and Steven Grindlay for authoring this Survey Report. Extra thanks goes to Steven for his special efforts in stepping up and designing and laying out this document.

The Content Strategy Alliance



*“ What is content strategy?  
What does a content  
strategist do? Why do we  
need one? These are a few of  
the important and frequently  
asked questions for which  
there seems to be no simple  
answers.”*

## Introduction

In spite of the disruption caused by emerging technologies, new devices, new channels, new platforms and the Internet's widespread impact on communication as a whole, the relationship between those that create and publish the "stuff" of communication and those that consume it is more valuable and profitable now than ever.

Interest in content strategy has been gathering momentum for the last 5 or 6 years - and probably longer - but despite the term's growing popularity as a buzzword, the practice of content strategy and its functions continues to defy attempts to shed a clear and uncomplicated light on what it might actually be.

What is content strategy?

What does a content strategist do?

Why do we need one?

These are a few of the important and frequently asked questions for which there seems to be no simple answers.

The result is a great deal of confusion about CS practices among business leaders - as well as those whose job it is to deliver content - at a time when 'Content Strategy' can and should be making a measurable bottom line contribution to enterprise. Not to mention, helping meet the changing needs of consumers and audiences for relevant and useful information.

Content strategy has become a competitive imperative for business. It's an important and meaningful discipline, and when it's done well it can deliver considerable value to the publisher and audience alike.

Is there a need for a Content Strategy organizing body to bring clarity, credibility, and establish best practices and standards of performance for the consistent creation and publication of useful content?

We think so.

The following survey results suggest many of you think so too.

*-The Content Strategy Alliance*



# Table of Contents

Why The Content Strategy Survey?	1
Executive Summary	2-4
Conclusions	5
Key Findings—The Charts	6-11
Appendix	12



## Why the Content Strategy Survey?

In November of 2013, a group of content-minded people held a meeting to discuss how to advance the field of content strategy. Lisa Moore suggested we create and distribute a survey on content strategy to help us better understand:

- What is happening in the field of content strategy currently
- What the focus/goals of a content strategy group should be

### **Purpose and methodology**

The purpose of this survey is to ensure that we operate with as much knowledge about who the larger content strategy community is and involve them in determining the group's efforts and priorities.

To do that we thought we needed to gain insights about who was practicing content strategy at work, how they were doing it, what challenges they faced, and how they thought a content strategy organization could best serve them individually and the content strategy community as a whole.

To get the clearest picture possible, we directed the survey at those practicing content strategy today - or those who have in the past.

In January of 2014, the survey was tweeted, posted on LinkedIn home pages as well as in forums, other applicable online groups, and emailed

All together their efforts succeeded in reaching over 1200 content strategy people worldwide.

Based on the results we hope to be better able to decide where to focus our attention moving forward, what the next steps might be and appoint committees to complete specific investigations or tasks.

This report reflects those results.

*“...we needed to gain insights about who was practicing content strategy at work, how they were doing it, what challenges they faced, and how they thought that the CSC could best serve them individually and the content strategy community as a whole.”*



*“90.5 percent of respondents reported that they are doing content strategy work but 61.7 percent said that their employer does not have a role titled “Content Strategist,” which tends to suggest that there is a lack of understanding about content strategy within organizations.”*

## Executive Summary

1255 people completed the survey: 63.3 percent were between the ages of 25- 44, with a clear gender bias in favor of women, who made up 61.9 percent of respondents. The majority of practitioners are well educated: 40.5 percent hold university degrees while a further 35.8 percent have earned post-graduate credentials.

### **Contractors versus employees**

64 percent report that they are currently working as employees while 35.4 percent are independent contractors or consultants.

### **How much experience do respondents have and how did they learn content strategy?**

The largest single group was 24.8 percent with 2-3 years of content strategy experience. With more than half of respondents reporting 6 or more years of experience, and 22.4 percent having 10 years or more, it is clear content strategy is not so “new.” Just ask the 8.9% who have been doing content strategy for more than 15 years.

*Regardless of experience, it's interesting to note that fully 80.8 percent are self-taught.*

### **Where do respondents reside?**

Respondents reside in many different countries, the three largest groups of which were 670 from the US (53.4%), 98 from the UK (7.8%) and 63 from Canada (5%). Many others hail from places as distant as Australia, Asia, the Middle East and Africa (for full list of nationalities, please see the map on page 7).

### **How widespread is the title of content strategist?**

90.5 percent of respondents reported that they are doing content strategy work but 61.7 percent said that their employer does not have a role titled “Content Strategist,” which tends to suggest that there is a lack of understanding about content strategy within organizations.



## Executive Summary — continued

### Where is content strategy work being done?

36.9% of respondents work for corporations, with 46.4% working at ad agencies, content strategy consultancies, and digital consultancies. Interestingly 12.6 percent of the 46.4% reported working more specifically for a Content Strategy consultancy, reflecting the increase in pure-play Content Strategy companies that are emerging as the field gains stature and industry recognition.

### What content strategy tasks were reported?

Of those who are doing content strategy work, the top tasks they perform in their current role are: Content Assessments/Audits 73 percent, Editing 71.4 percent, and Copywriting 62.9 percent. Analytics showed up prominently as well, being listed by more than half of respondents at 57.1 percent. Wireframes were listed by 36.1 percent.

### Is content strategy work multi-channel?

55.3 percent of respondents said they did digital-only work, with 44.7 percent covering multi-channels. While digital is still more than half the content strategy work, other channels are increasingly utilizing content strategy as well.

### What would they like to change about their current role?

If given the opportunity to change one aspect of their current roles, 20 percent would like to see more structure, 16 percent said they wanted to focus more on strategy than tactics, 10 percent wanted more understanding of content strategy as a discipline, and 9 percent wanted more & better resources (people).

### Challenges

With over 600 written-in answers to Question 13, compiling and condensing the results into some semblance of meaningful order was a herculean task. **Thanks Lisa for your hard work and sterling results.**

The biggest challenge— or opportunity depending on your point of view— was reported to be credibility issues. 39.3 percent reported that a lack of credibility inside

*“ 55.3 percent of respondents said they did digital-only work, with 44.7 percent covering multi-channels. While digital is still more than half the content strategy work, other channels are increasingly utilizing content strategy as well.”*





## Executive Summary – continued

organizations— senior management in particular— and within the general population at large presented the greatest stumbling block, followed closely by 16.8 percent who reported the lack of a clear and concise definition of content strategy was a major hindrance. Resource allocation and innovation as an issue scored 9.7 percent and unsurprisingly 8.1 percent of respondents felt that collaboration with other disciplines and departments was less than optimal.

Taken together at a combined 74.4 percent of responses, it's unclear whether poor credibility results from the lack of understanding about the nature and role of content strategy, under resourcing, or a failure on our part to work well with others; or whether these obstacles arise from the lack of credibility? Wherever the root cause might lie is debatable, but what is clear, is that there is a dynamic at play among these top 4 concerns.

It's hard to imagine that organizations would allocate resources to a cause it doesn't understand and consequently has little or no faith in. Similarly co-workers and teammates are unlikely to take seriously the recommendations or suggestions from a source that has not succeeded in winning management's confidence.

Clearly we have a responsibility here to elevate the stature of our profession by promoting a better and clearer understanding of what we do and the benefits we offer.

### **What would you like a content strategy group to focus on?**

Of the more than 10 key areas where respondents wanted to see a content strategy group focus its efforts, 82.8 percent of respondents listed that they would like us to work on creating a library of best practices/case studies. Defining content strategy is favored by 72.3 percent. Following in third place with 60.9 percent was raising awareness of the roles content strategy should play in agencies and business. Other important issues were promoting job openings and educational opportunities with scores of 52.6 percent and 51.4 percent respectively.

*“...it's unclear whether poor credibility results from the lack of understanding about the nature and role of content strategy, under resourcing, or a failure on our part to work well with others; or whether these obstacles arise from the lack of credibility?”*



## Executive Summary – continued

### Conclusion

The Survey was never intended to be an in-depth, cross-sectional analysis of the global content strategy ecosystem. Its intention was to gain a broader perspective about the industry and provide insights into how a content strategy organization might better serve its members.

We think it's done that rather well.

Of course you may not agree and may want to form your own conclusions.

The complete survey results (minus email addresses) are available at:

<http://www.contentstrategyalliance.com>

As much as we would like to immediately address every issue, overcome every challenge, and provide the many services and benefits that the survey has raised and suggested, right from the start, it's probably not realistic.

What we can do is identify the most pressing and important issues and begin to work on them first.

To do that, we will need your help.

If you have ideas or suggestions we'd love to hear them, or better yet, if you'd like to jump in and get involved, please get in touch with us at:

[info@contentstrategyalliance.com](mailto:info@contentstrategyalliance.com)

We appreciate your interest and hope you will continue to help us advance the practice of content strategy.

For the 788 of you who gave us your email address – thanks! – and we will be in touch.

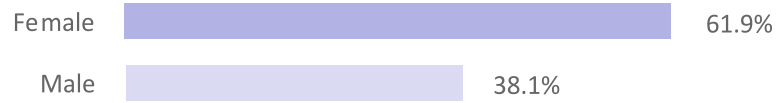
*“If you have ideas or suggestions we'd love to hear them, or better yet, if you'd like to jump in and get involved, please get in touch with us at the following address to find out how.”*



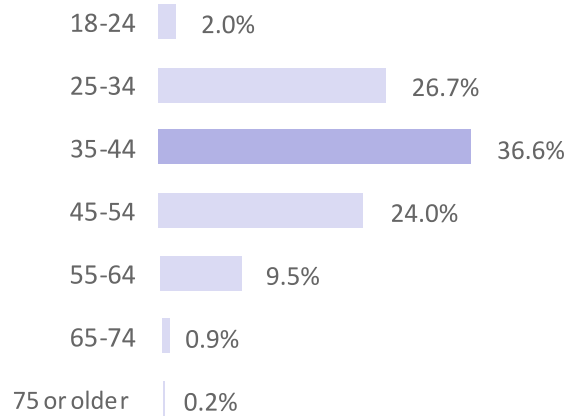
## Key Findings—The Charts

### Who Responded.

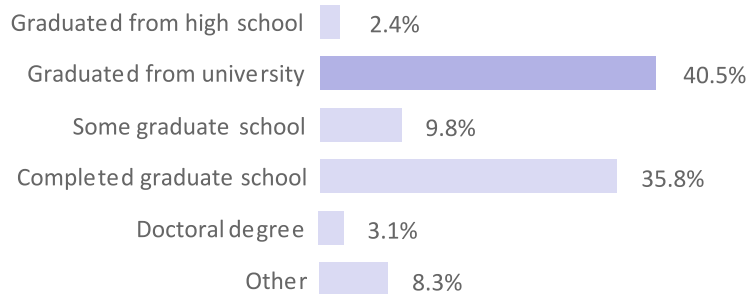
#### Q19. What is your gender?



#### Q20. What is your Age?



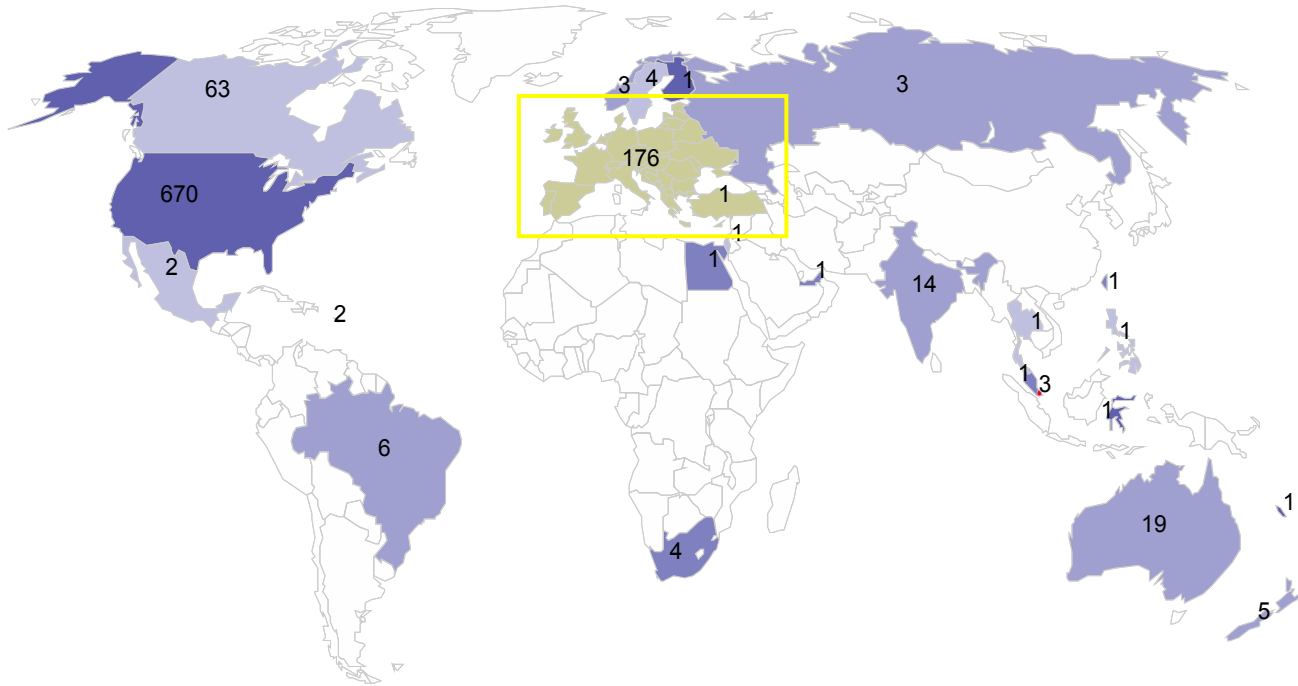
#### Q.21 What is the highest level of education you have completed?



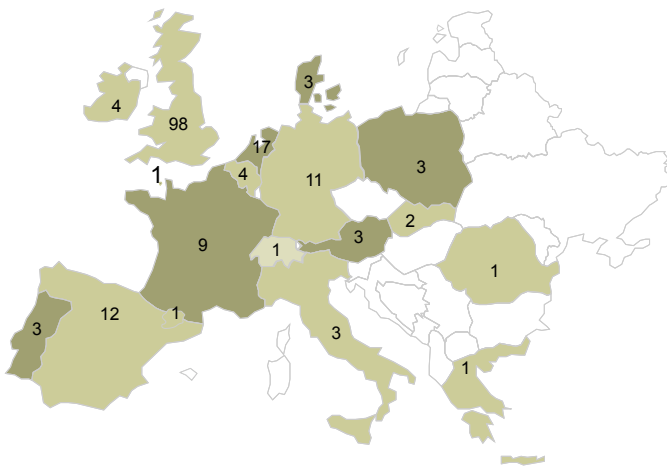


Content Strategists responded from around the world

United States	670
Canada	63
Australia	19
India	14
Brazil	6
New Zealand	5
South Africa	4
Sweden	4
Norway	3
Russia	3
Singapore	3
Anguilla	2
Mexico	2
Egypt	1
Finland	1
Israel	1
Malaysia	1
Philippines	1
Taiwan	1
Thailand	1
Tuvalu	1
UAE	1



Central, Eastern & Northern Europe



United Kingdom	98
Netherlands	17
Spain	12
Germany	11
France	9
Belgium	4
Ireland	4
Austria	4
Denmark	4
Italy	4
Poland	3
Portugal	3
Slovakia	2
Romania	1
Switzerland	1
Turkey	1
Greece	1
Jersey	1
Andorra	1



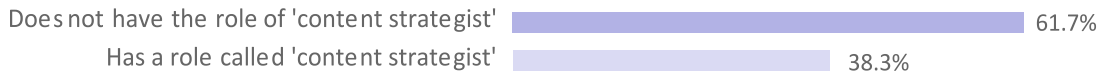
# Key Findings—The Charts

## How is content strategy being practiced.

### Q1. Are you currently doing Content Strategy Work?



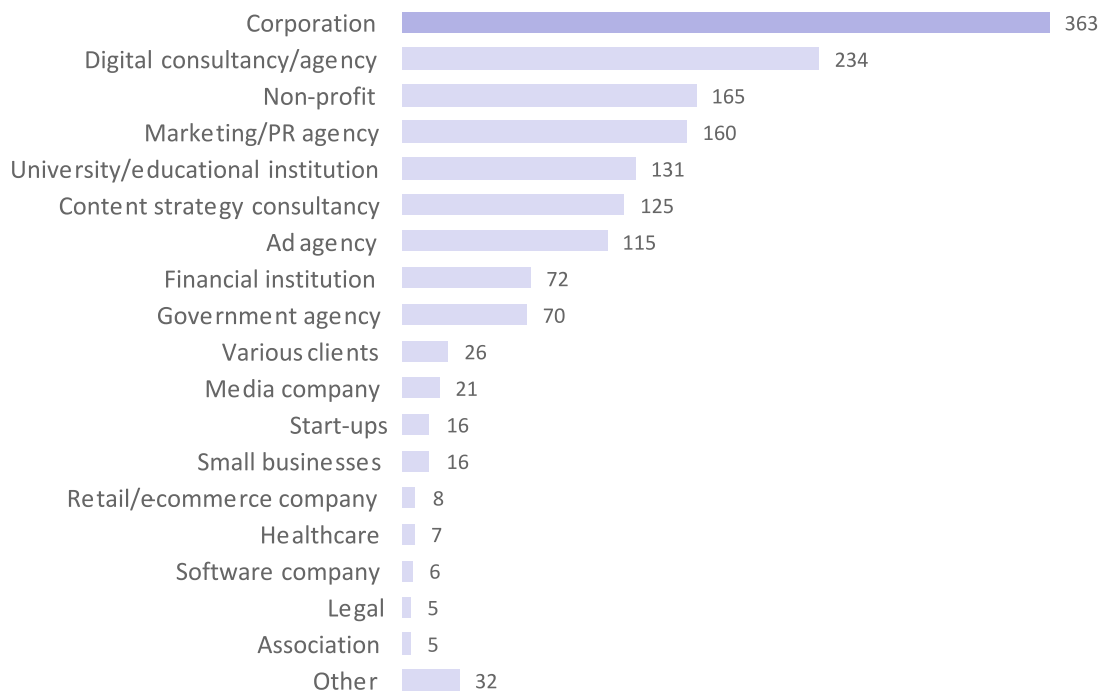
### Q5. My current employer...



### Q6: what are your primary areas of expertise/Interest/focus?



### Q7. Who do you do content strategy for currently? (You can choose more than one)

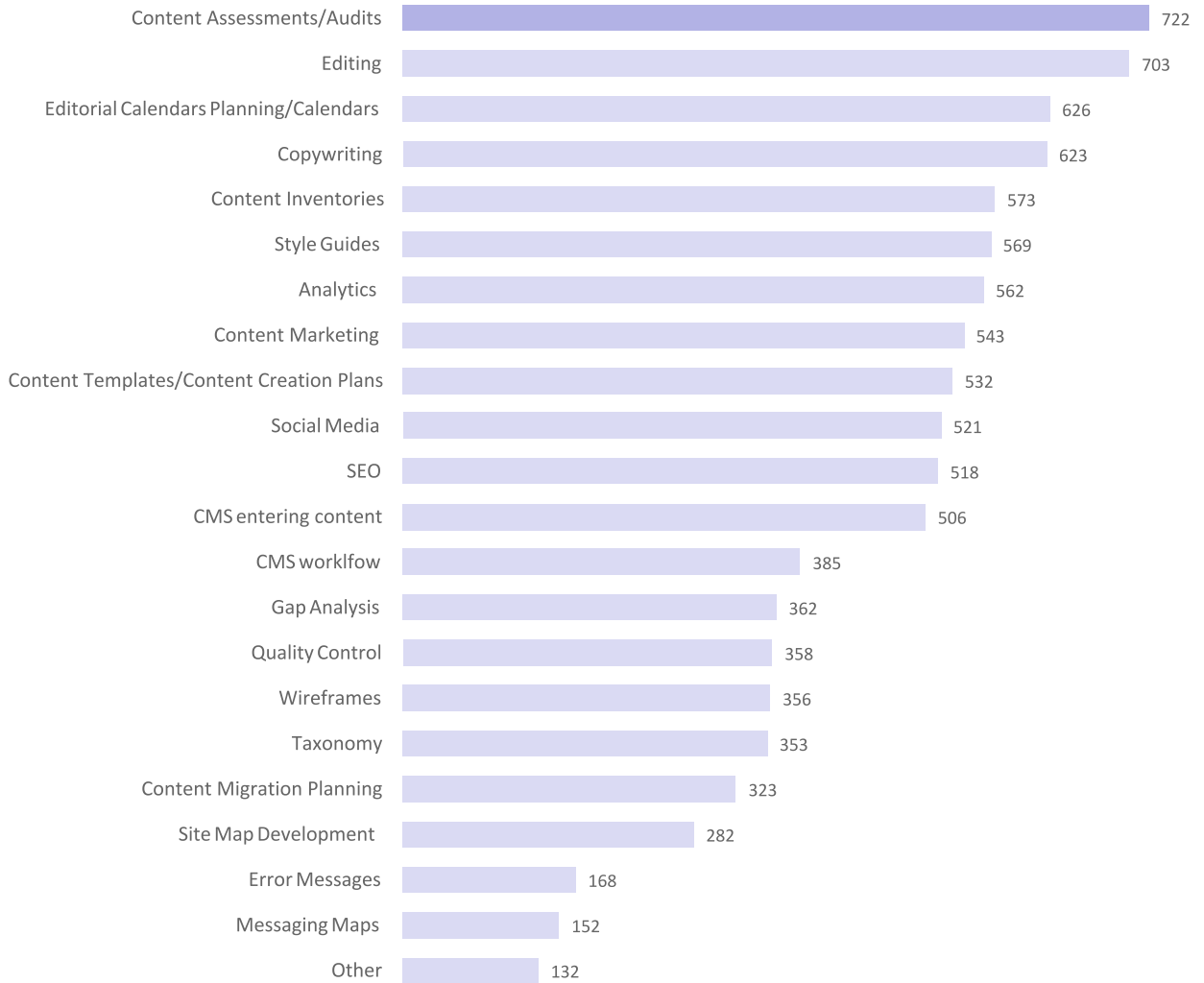




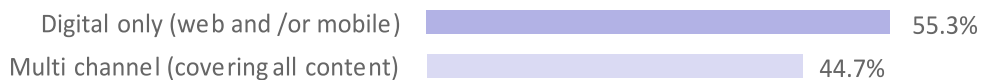
# Key Findings—The Charts

## How is content strategy being practiced — continued

### Q9. Which tasks do you perform in your current role as a content strategist?



### Q12. In your current role, is your strategic influence...

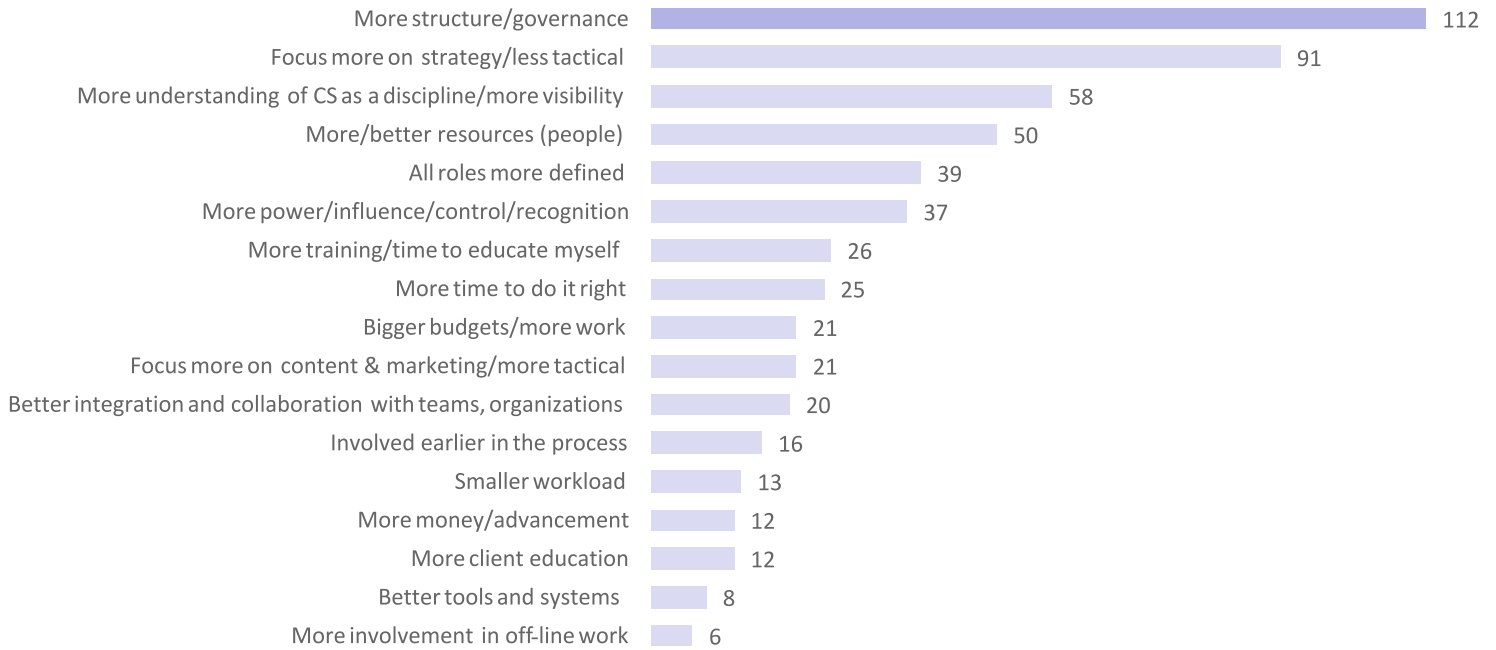




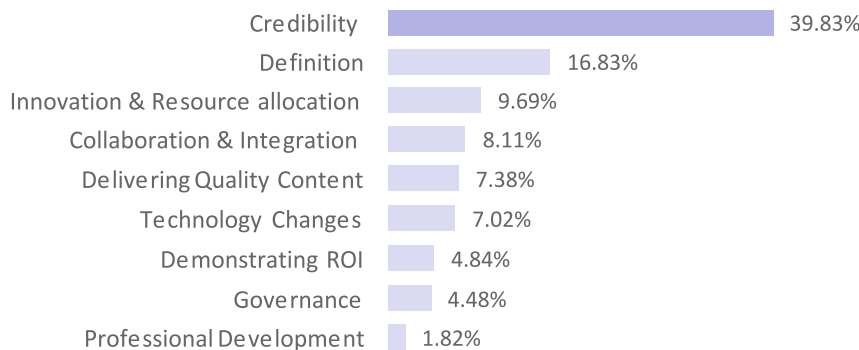
# Key Findings—The Charts

## Opportunities & Challenges

### Q11. If you could change one aspect of your current role, what would it be?



### Q13. In your opinion, what is the greatest opportunity (or challenge) facing the content strategy discipline today?

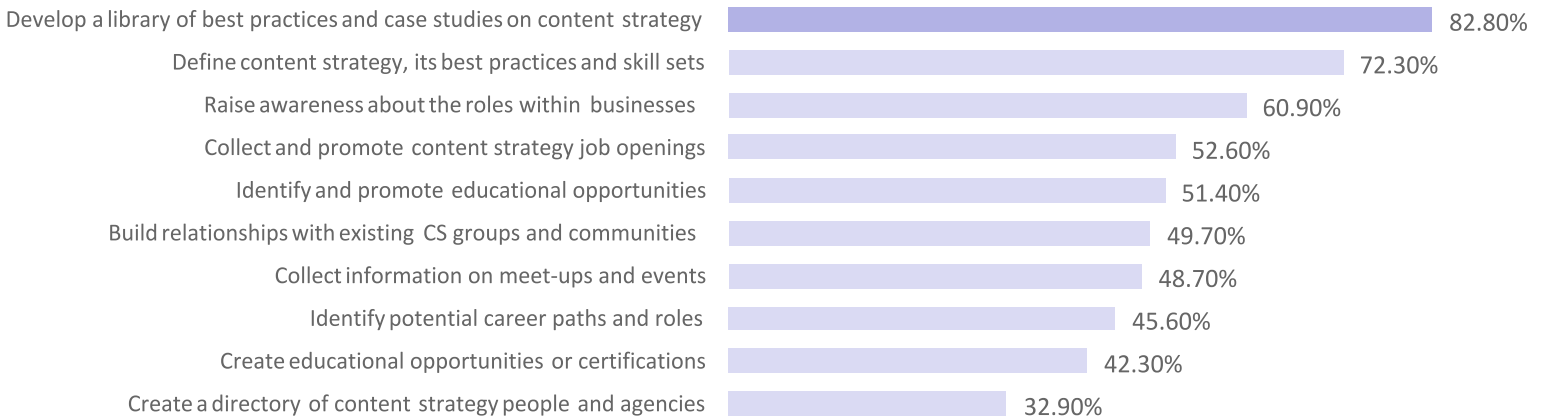




## Key Findings—The Charts

What would you like a content strategy organization to focus on?

### Q14. Which initiatives would you most like to see a Content Strategy Organization focus on? (Please select as many as you like.)



Thanks again to all those that participated in producing this report and the survey.  
 Thanks to you, for reading it. If you feel inclined, please share it with anyone who might be interested.  
 We look forward to hearing any thoughts or ideas you may have, once again, please feel free to drop us a line.

Noreen Compton: [noreen@contentstrategyalliance.com](mailto:noreen@contentstrategyalliance.com)  
 Steven Grindlay : [steven@contentstrategyalliance.com](mailto:steven@contentstrategyalliance.com)

*The Authors:  
 Steven Grindlay & Noreen Compton  
 February, 2014.*





## Appendix

### **About the original report generated by SurveyMonkey**

We realize this report is far from exhaustive, so if you have more thoughts or insights on the report you'd like to share, please contact us at: [info@contentstrategyalliance.com](mailto:info@contentstrategyalliance.com)

For a complete copy of the survey results, a PDF copy is available at:  
[www.contentstrategyalliance.com](http://www.contentstrategyalliance.com)

### **Contacts:**

For more information about the survey or how to get involved in the Content Strategy Alliance, feel free to contact us at: [info@contentstrategyalliance.com](mailto:info@contentstrategyalliance.com)

Check out our website at: [www.contentstrategyalliance.com](http://www.contentstrategyalliance.com).