

Business Technology Marketing

Benchmark Guide 2006

Data for B-to-B Software, Hardware
& Services Marketers

Note: This is an authorized excerpt from the full 233-page Business Technology Benchmark Guide. To download the entire Guide, go to: <http://www.SherpaStore.com> or call 877-895-1717

Letter from the President

Welcome to MarketingSherpa's third annual Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Guide (formerly known as the IT Marketing Metrics Report).

As with all our Benchmark Guides, the goal is to create a true *compendium* of all the useful data that's out there on a topic, not just results of one particular study. So, instead of being a 20-page white paper, this Guide is more than 200 pages long. It's packed with practical data from a multitude of new studies including:

*I. 1,900 real-life marketers reveal data —
MarketingSherpa Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Survey*

In June 2006, 1,900 marketers of business technology (software, hardware, and related products/services) shared their data in MarketingSherpa's third annual survey of the field, which included both online and telephone surveying. Questions ranged from percent of budget spent per tactic to what types of campaigns and offers currently worked best for lead generation.

You can review this data to see how your budget and results compare to the "norm." Plus, determine which tests and tactics you should consider investing more in for 2007.

*II. 633 business technology buyers reveal advertising preferences —
MarketingSherpa & CNET Partnered Technology Buyer Survey*

In May 2006, 633 business executives responsible for technology buying decisions within their organizations responded to a MarketingSherpa survey posted across CNET's network of business sites, including TechRepublic and ZDNet. We asked respondents to reveal what they like — and dislike — about marketing that's typically aimed at them, such as email newsletters.

Use these results to tweak your outbound marketing campaigns and email to be more compelling and engaging to your prospects.

*III. 161 Software Firms' Web Sites Studied —
MarketingSherpa Observational Study of Business Software Web Sites*

In June 2006, MarketingSherpa's research team visited 161 business software firm Web sites to observe how the sites were using (or not) best practices in online lead generation. Plus, we also visited search engines to see how well America's top 44 business software company sites were optimized. The results were ... less than cheering.

You'll probably want to view your own Web site with this Study in hand to see how you compare and where your site can be quickly improved to beat the competition. Also useful when convincing the management team to invest in Web revamp projects.

IV. Meet Your Prospects — 'In Person'

MarketingSherpa Persona & Profile Report for 13 Prospect Types

Your marketing campaign won't have great results unless you really understand what makes your prospects tick. Your copy, offer, media choices, and strategies must be incredibly compelling to the end prospect. But, no chart in the world can tell you how to do that.

So, we've created six prospect 'Personas' ranging from a CIO to a small business owner, plus seven industry vertical profiles, including IT decision committees at hospitals and banks, to help deepen your gut-level understanding of the prospect.

Examine these 13 Personas and Profiles as the first step in your next marketing campaign creative development process — whether you are deciding on your next webinar or white paper topic or making creative choices for advertising. Note: These are especially useful for copywriters and email newsletter writers.

V. Best-Of Data from 20+ Additional Research Sources

To supplement MarketingSherpa data and partnered research studies, our research team also surveyed the field of all B-to-B marketing research and studies conducted over the past 12 months (much of it never before available to the public.) We culled the most useful data for you — ranging from telemarketing call ratios to virtual trade show results metrics.

... all of this sounds (and is) marvelous. But let me also be very clear about what you will not find in this Guide:

You won't find sales statistics for specific technologies. That's best left to the tech study firms. You won't find sales compensation guidelines. That's best left to the sales research firms (we focus on marketing). You also won't find much specific technology niche marketing data charts.

Yes, we do break out software versus products and services in some charts. We also break out many more charts by the size of the organization you are targeting with your marketing (who your prospect is).

However, you won't find highly specific data about, say 'business intelligence solutions' marketing versus 'security solutions' marketing. That's because either we were unable to get numbers that were statistically viable from our pool of 1,900 respondents (we won't publish a number unless we feel it's "real," unlike some research organizations that will publish data based on a handful of respondents).

Also, often we found the data was roughly unchanged across many niches. For example, the percent of opt-in readers who open your regular newsletter is pretty much the same across various technology markets. The same is true for the percent of webinar sign-ups who actually remember to attend on the day of.

Why? Well, consider that in many organizations the same end prospect (or committee) is making a variety of technology choices. Their responses to specific marketing tactics don't tend to vary hugely depending on which particular technology you're marketing. (Things like their internal purchasing cycle and business readiness are far more important.)

All in all, you've got more than 150 charts and prospect profiles in your hands. And if, by chance, the marketing number you're looking for isn't in there, please let us know at feedback@marketingsherpa.com. (Yes, a real human being responds to email from that address every business day!) That way we're armed with your requests as we begin to research next year's edition. You, as always, are in the driver's seat for MarketingSherpa's research team.

My best wishes for your continued success,



Anne Holland, President
MarketingSherpa, Inc.

About MarketingSherpa

MarketingSherpa is a research firm publishing Case Studies and benchmark data for marketers in corporate America.

237,000 marketing professionals read MarketingSherpa each week. 60% of our readers are business-to-business specialists, making us the highest circulation B-to-B marketing information publisher in the world. The Economist, Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge Site, and Entrepreneur.com have all praised MarketingSherpa's content.

In addition to research publications and 25+ virtual events per year, the firm also organizes three annual in-person Summits:

- Business-to-Business Demand Generation Summits (East Coast & West Coast)
- Online Subscription Business Summit (NYC)
- Email Marketing Summit & Expo

MarketingSherpa Summits are almost invariably sell-outs, with ticket sales closing a week or more *prior* to the actual events. (Book early to avoid disappointment.)

Founded in 2000, MarketingSherpa is a woman-owned company and is a "preferred vendor" for several Fortune 500s. (Check with our service department for details.) The firm is headquartered in Warren, Rhode Island between Boston and New York."

Executive Outlook

2006-2007:

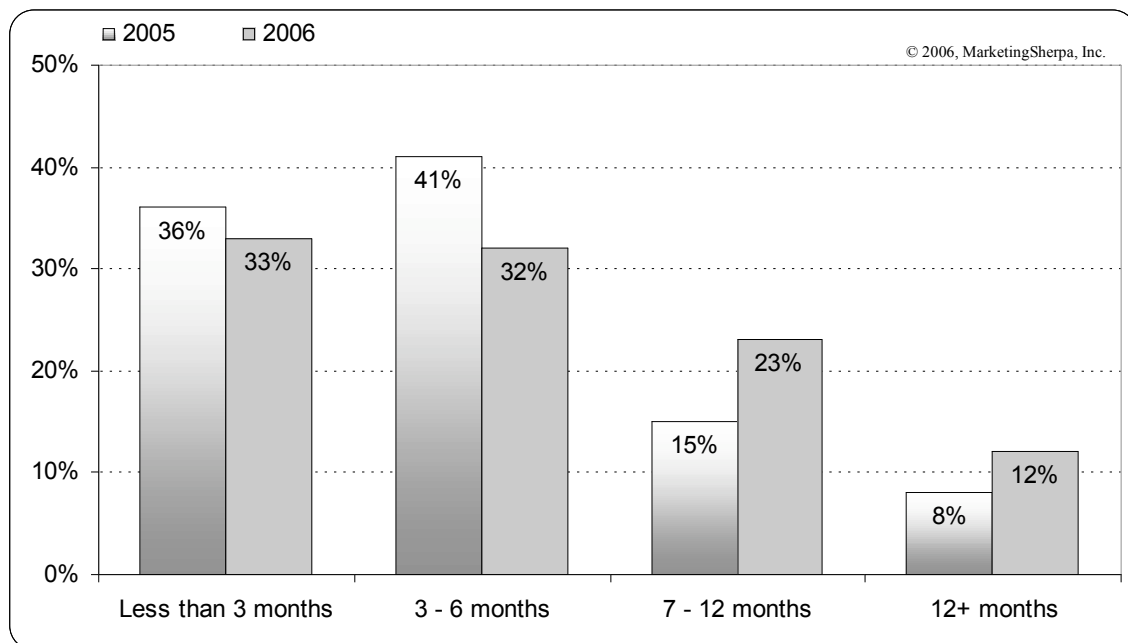
MarketingSherpa's 2006 Business Technology Benchmark Data: 5 Practical Insights:

US business technology spending is expected to reach almost \$1.2 trillion this year. It's the highest figure in history and larger than the GNP of many small countries. However, the picture is not quite as sunny as you might expect.

After faltering during the recession, business technology sales saw growth in the low double digits over 2004-2005. Sales since then have continued, but growth has slowed back down to the mid-single digits again. Most analysts expect this safer, steadier growth to continue for the foreseeable future.

In addition, according to MarketingSherpa's annual Business Technology Benchmark Survey conducted in June 2006, average sales cycles are continuing to lengthen, especially for high-priced hardware. So, even if you conduct a fantastic lead generation campaign this year, resulting sales may not come in until 2008.

Chart: Business Technology Sales Cycles as Reported by 1,900 Marketers:
2005 vs 2006



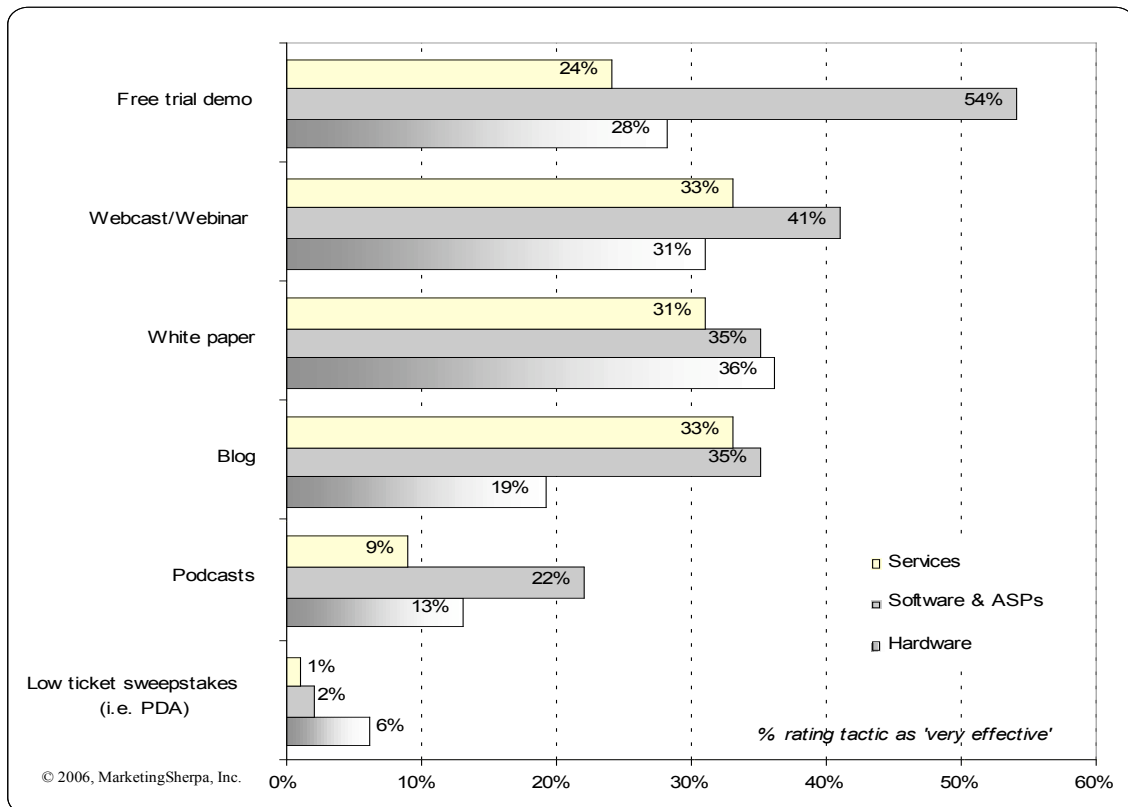
If your management team requires higher than average growth, your demand generation and lead nurturing efforts will have to be exceptional to buck the trend. In a world where B-to-B marketers are judged on this quarter's results, you need data to prove your efforts *are* working better than average even if sales haven't leapt as high as they should have quite yet.

Here is a snapshot view of some of the areas we researched to help you with this in this year's Benchmark Guide. Given that the Guide contains more than 200 charts, tables, and prospect profiles, this bare overview only scratches the surface. However, we hope you find it of some practical use:

Practical Insight #1. Four best (& two worst) lead generation offers

In order to generate sales leads and educate the marketplace, you need a group of offers at your disposal. Please note the term "group" is used quite purposefully. Different offers appeal to different prospects. If you rely on just one offer — such as the white paper you're so proud of just having published — you'll miss out on prospects who might have eagerly signed up for something else.

Chart: Highly Effective Lead Generation Offers — By Type of Technology Being Marketed



As you can see from the chart above, this year for the first time blogs have joined top-rated tactics to entice high-quality prospects to submit their contact information as leads. It must be emphasized that while free trials can work exceptionally well as lead generators, only prospects in the tail end of the sales cycle will generally respond to this offer. They are much closer to buying than other prospects, so your sales force will be very happy. However, if you focus on free trial accepters to the exclusion of other lead sources, you may slice the pipeline too thin and not generate sufficient volume. You'll also miss out on prospects that were scooped up earlier in the cycle by your competitors who've been nurturing the relationship ever since.

Why are sweepstakes rated so low on this scale? After all, sweeps and freebie offers such as T-shirts and iPods tend to get very high response rates.

Remember, we asked respondents to rate the value of the effort — meaning the quality of the leads — rather than merely the quantity of leads. Dumping a mountain of extremely low-quality leads into your sales team's inboxes will only earn you their wrath and distrust. And, adding \$5 to \$20 or more per lead for initial telephone qualification and scoring can bust your marketing budget.

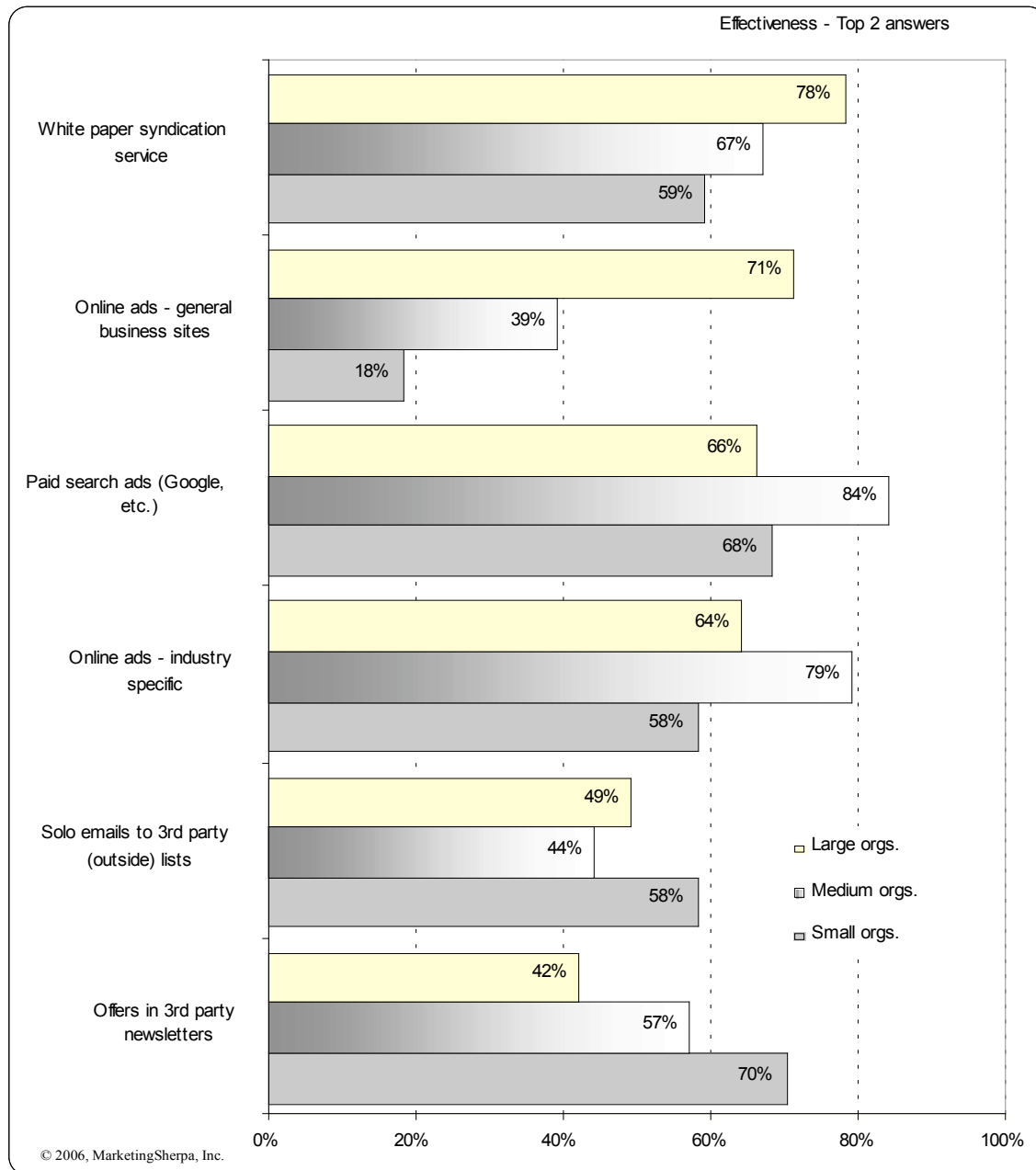
This is also why we typically distrust initial happy-sounding viral marketing stories that some marketers try to pitch our editorial team. Very few viral campaigns that generate high attention wind up panning out in the long run as quality demand generation vehicles. (Yes, there are some exceptions — mainly those for viral campaigns targeted within large enterprises where you have to influence dozens or even hundreds of executives at the same company to land the deal.)

Practical Insight #2. Determine your online advertising strategy based on your prospects' organization size

Key — please don't be confused by the chart. It is **not** based on the size of the organization that you the marketer work for, but rather on the size of the organization that your prospect works for. After all, great marketing is prospect-centric.

See chart next page >>

Chart: Online Media Buy Effectiveness by Prospect's Company Size



At first, the differences in online media buy effectiveness may seem startling above, however upon thought, they make a great deal of practical sense. Technology purchase decision makers often have a formal process by which they buy products and services. This formal process usually includes a research phase, most often assigned to a manager-level executive who combs the Web (and often trade shows) for appropriate vendor white papers as a starting point. This is why white paper syndication — the act of placing your white papers into the online library of third-party technology news and information sites (think CNET's ZDNet, TechTarget, CMP TechWeb, and others) — works exceptionally well when targeting the Fortune 1000.

Top executives at the Fortune 1000 are also more likely than their peers at smaller organizations to have the time and inclination to review the general business press. This may be because their company is diversified into several product lines or because they are public.

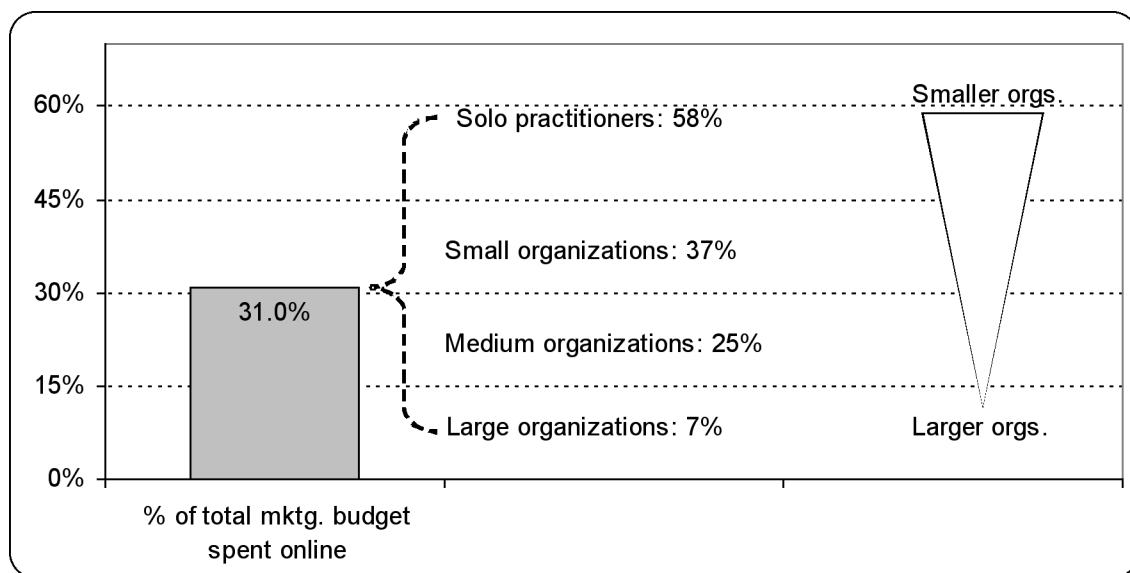
On the other hand, executives at very small organizations, where they may be wearing multiple job function hats, are more likely to respond to ads in email newsletters they've actively signed up for and respect. They have no time to go trolling for information, but may pay attention to media that's pushed out to them — especially if it's a quick, targeted read.

Practical Insight #3. Larger organizations can (vastly) improve search marketing

The following chart makes one wonder how on earth small, entrepreneurial technology firms marketed effectively before the Internet! No doubt, more personal networking and a higher dependence on postal direct mail, trade shows, and telemarketing.

The barrier to entry for new firms in the technology space in terms of initial marketing cost certainly has never been lower. However, that also means a huge increase in message clutter — dozens or even hundreds of technology firms now compete frantically for the same prospects. And, prospects are more inclined to look beyond the initial contacts they've met perhaps haphazardly via the mail or local connections. Prospects now have a Net-wide world of competitors to pick and choose between.

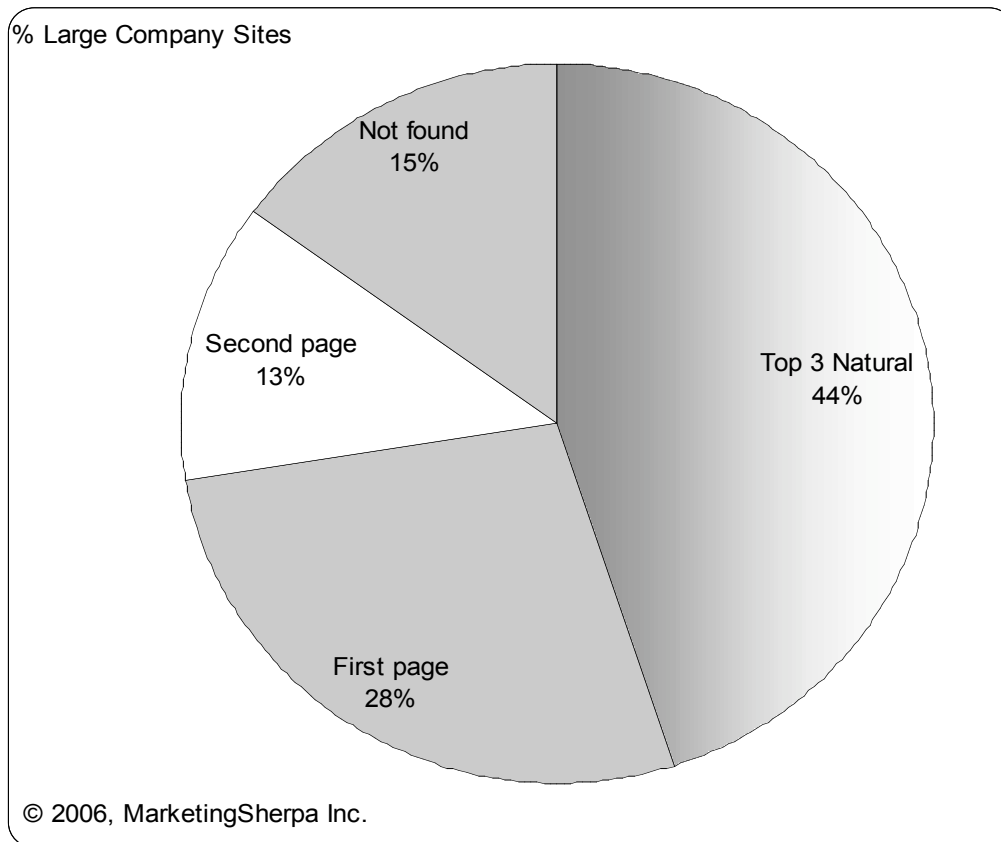
Chart: Percent of Marketing Budget Spent Online: By Size of Marketer's Organization



Naturally, we expected very large organizations to spend less of their budget online, if only because they have such a vast budget to deploy against multiple media. The Microsofts of the world can invest in traveling road shows, broadcast TV and radio advertising, glossy printed marketing materials, inside telesales, dimensional direct mail, etc. Small organizations can't effectively get their feet in some of those doors, or afford enough test campaigns to be truly effective, so they don't even bother.

On the other hand, we did wonder if the largest organizations were perhaps a bit too dependent on offline campaigns to be as effective as they need to be online.

Chart: Top 44 US Business Software Firms' Search Engine Optimization Effectiveness



Where did our research team get this — frankly pitiful-looking — data? We visited the home pages of the top 44 software firms in the US (based on annual revenues). We determined the terms, such as “CRM” they’d probably most like to be found under in the search engines from their headlines and offers on their home page. Then we searched under those terms on major search engines and noted who made the grade.

Our search marketing data shows that for business technology purchasers and researchers, it’s pretty darn critical to be in the first three organic or natural listings in an important key term. In a highly competitive niche, being on the first page of results can be enough to establish your place in offerings leadership.

That said, being listed on the second page is close to worthless. Most busy business executives will retype their search request to get “better” answers, rather than clicking to page two of results, if they don’t find what they were looking for.

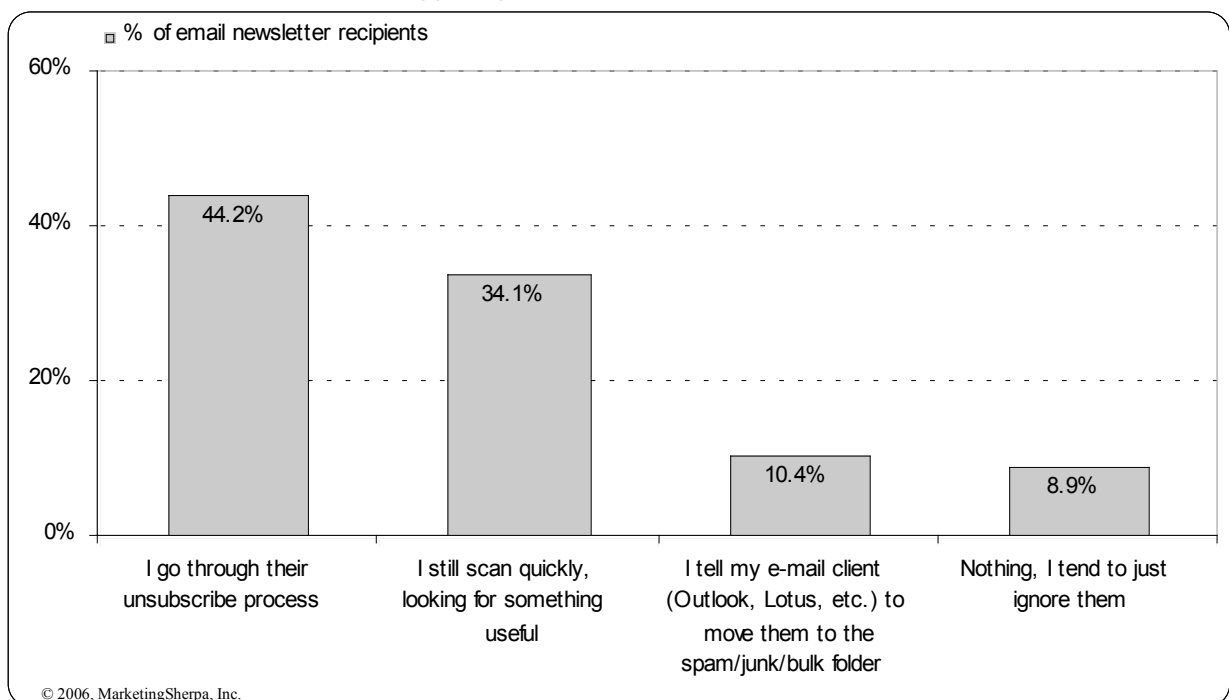
So, more than a quarter of the top software firms in the US, firms with gargantuan glittering trade show booths, webinars boasting celebrity guests, and lush PR budgets can’t be bothered to invest enough in search marketing 101 to be found under the very terms they boast industry leadership in.

Did we already use the word “pitiful”?

Practical Insight #4. Prospects’ interest in your emails can be revived (but be careful)

Despite the growing length of the technology purchase sales cycle, MarketingSherpa research shows that when prospects sign up for a vendor’s email newsletter, their interest in that email lags fairly quickly. You’ve got a romance period of about 60 days before many of your newest opt-ins cease regularly opening and clicking on your newsletter.

Chart: What Business Technology Buyers Do With Unwanted Email Newsletters



We wondered what happened after that? What do business technology prospects do with vendors’ email newsletters that they no longer find so compelling. So, as part of a partnered study with CNET, we asked 633 of them in May 2006 about their habits when it came to unwanted email newsletters.

The chart has good news and bad news. The bad news is 10% of respondents said they'd report your newsletter as a spammer using whatever system they were on. This is regardless of whether they had originally opted in to your newsletter list and/or they were a customer and/or whether you're legally CAN-SPAM compliant. This data proves that spam is in the eye of the beholder, not the sender. Sender beware!

We have several years of evidence from other sources that B-to-B email (email sent to at-work addresses) is filtered at a much higher rate than typical consumer email is. Many of these spam filters are triggered at the personal in-box or corporate spam-filter level by this 10% of now-unwilling recipients. So, if you are concerned about being filtered, it's best to make opting out as easy and visible as possible at the TOP of your email (not in fine print at the very bottom). The key is to get people to unsubscribe rather than damage your overall email deliverability by blocking you altogether.

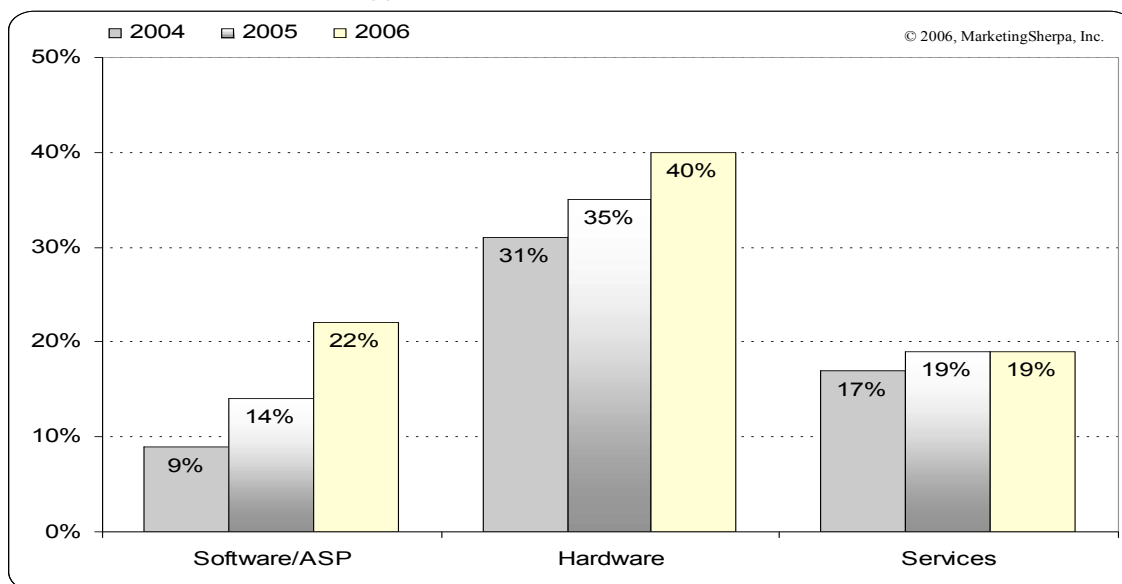
The good news from this chart is the very high number of respondents who said they still reviewed email newsletters even after they'd lost interest in them.

This means you can re-engage these prospects if you have the right content, and if you design your newsletter in such a way that the right content will catch their quickly skimming eye (probably in the preview pane.) Our first recommendation is that you test an eyetracking study for your email newsletter to see what's seen by the human eye and what's ignored, and then redesign accordingly.

Our second recommendation is immediately below.

Practical Insight #5. Base your copywriting and offers on persona-research

Chart: Business Technology Marketers' Use of Personas: 2004-2006



Personas are a method of intimately profiling your typical prospect so well that you feel you've met that prospect individually. Most marketers using personas tend to create five to seven personas per product or service being offered. That way you can deeply investigate the motivations and pain points of a range of key individuals rather than relying on one single "average" that represents no one in particular.

These persona profiles often include a photograph (taken from stock footage, but used by the creative team to pin an entire faux-individual's story around.) They also include demographic and psychographic notes on that individual. After reading a 1-2 page persona profile, you should feel that you've met the person, understand what makes them tick, and what they'd care about when it comes to your product and your marketing.

Personas can be used by everyone on the marketing team, especially copywriters and graphic designers. When a new Web page or white paper title (for example) is created, you can look at it through the lens of each persona to say, "Would Bob want to read this?" "Would Helen click?"

In a world where all too often marketing creative is dictated by product features or buzzwords, we're utterly delighted to see that persona-based marketing has begun to make very real headway. This can only bode well for response rates in the future.

Inspired by these results, we've created six new personas and seven vertical industry profiles for this year's edition of the Business Technology Benchmark Guide. We hope you find them a useful starting point in the creation of your own!

Sincerely,

The Editors

MarketingSherpa's *Business Technology Marketing Benchmark Guide 2006*

Table of Contents

Letter from the President.....	1
Executive Outlook 2006-2007:.....	4
Glossary of Terms.....	13
Chapter 1: Business Technology Buyers	17
Meet Your Prospects: Technology Buyers & Vertical Markets Profiled.....	17
Essay: Marketing to the CIO, Technical Decision-Makers and Technical Influencers.....	17
Sample Personas of Technology Buyers.....	23
Persona #1: Enterprise CIO	24
Persona #2: CIO, Medium-Sized Organization.....	26
Persona #3: CTO, Small Business.....	28
Persona #4: Systems Architect, Medium-Sized Organization	30
Persona #5: On-call Programmer/Consultant.....	32
Persona #6: Small-Business Owner.....	34
Vertical Markets	36
Vertical #1: Banks & Credit Unions	36
Vertical #2: Electronics Engineers.....	37
Vertical #3: Government	38
Vertical #4: Hospitals	38
Vertical #5: Law Firms.....	38
Vertical #6: Marketing to Marketers.....	40
Vertical #7: Marketing to Small- and Medium-Sized Businesses	40
Technology Industry Metrics.....	43
1.01 Chart: U.S. Technology Spending 1999 – 2008	43
1.02 Chart: Growth in Technology Spending 1999-2008.....	44
1.03 Table: Universe of Technical Purchase Decision-Makers by Job Title	45
1.04 Table: Universe of Technical Purchase Decision Makers by Category.....	46
1.05 Chart: Projected Growth in Information Technology Budgets.....	47
1.06 Chart: CIO Concerns = Marketing Campaign Themes	48
Notes from the field: Qualifying hot leads versus tire-kickers	49
1.07 Chart: Impact of Media on Purchase Decisions	50
1.08 Chart: Influences on Technology Buyers.....	51
1.09 Chart: Timing the Buying Cycle Step 1 — Identifying the Technology Need.....	53
1.10 Chart: Timing the Buying Cycle Step 2 — Searches & Gathering Technology Data .	54
1.11 Chart: Timing the Buying Cycle Step 3 — Evaluating Technologies of Interest.....	54
1.12 Chart: Timing the Buying Cycle Step 4 — Making a Technology Decision	55
1.13 Chart: How are Technology Buyers Getting Their Information?.....	56
1.14 Chart: The Attitudes of Innovation of Technology Buyers.....	57
1.15 Chart: Tech Marketers Rate Their Organizations' Attitudes Toward Innovation.....	58
1.16 Chart: Marketers Rate Their Orgs. Attitude Toward Innovation — ASP Marketers ..	60
1.17 Chart: Marketers Rate Their Orgs. Attitude Toward Innovation — Enterprise Orgs.	60
1.18 Chart: Technology Sales Cycles Continue to Increase	61
Chapter 2: Technology Marketing Budgets & Lead Generation Metrics	62
2.01 Chart: Technology Marketing Budgets as Percentage of Gross Revenues.....	62
2.02 Chart: Share of Technology Marketing Budget Spent on People vs. Programs.....	63
2.03 Chart: Share of Technology Marketing Budget Spent Online by Organization Size..	64

2.04 Chart: Breakdown of Technology Marketing Budgets	65
2.05 Chart: Tactical Distribution Within Online Budgets — Technology Marketers	66
2.06 Chart: Online Budget Distribution Normal Ranges — Technology Marketers	67
2.07 Chart: Technology Marketers' Offline Budget Distributions	68
2.08 Chart: Technology Marketers Offline Budgets — Normal Ranges by Tactic	69
2.09 Chart: Offline Budget Distribution for Orgs. Emphasizing Telemarketing	70
2.10 Chart: Offline Budget Distribution for Orgs. Emphasizing Print Advertising	71
2.11 Chart: Technology Marketer's Wish List: How Would You Spend \$50,000?	72
2.12 Chart: Marketers vs. Consultants: How Would They Spend \$50,000 Differently?	74
2.13 Chart: How Are Technology Marketing Tactics Best Handled?	76
2.14 Chart: Profit Margins of Business Technology Marketing Companies.....	77
2.15 Chart: Technology Company Profit Margins by Outlook on Innovation.....	78
2.16 Chart: Technology Company Customer Metrics Tracked by Organization Size	79
2.17 Chart: Technology Marketing Lead Sources Averaged	80
2.18 Chart: Technology Company Lead Closure Rates Compared	81
2.19 Chart: What Works for Tech Marketing — Online Tactics for Lead Generation.....	82
2.20 Chart: Usage of Online Marketing Tactics for Tech Marketing.....	83
2.21 Chart: What Works for Tech Marketing — Offline Tactics for Lead Generation	84
2.22 Chart: Lead Generation Offers Used — Tech SMBs	85
2.23 Chart: How Would Lead-Generation-Focused Marketers Spend \$50,000?.....	86
2.24 Chart: Lead Sources for Tech Marketing — Email Focused Budgets	87
2.25 Chart: Lead Sources for Tech Marketing — Search Focused Budgets	88
2.26 Chart: Lead Sources for Tech Marketing — Brand Focused Budgets	89
2.27 Table: Tech Marketing Lead Conversion Comparison — Good vs. Poor	90
2.28 Chart: Information Collected in Lead-Generation Process	91
2.29 Chart: Lead Management Practices for Tech Marketing	93
2.30 Chart: Lead Management Practices of Highly Selective Tech Marketers.....	95
2.31 Chart: Tech Lead Generation Chain — From Prospect to Sale 2005 – 2006	97
2.32 Chart: Tech Lead Generation Chain — Strong Lead Management Organizations	98
Channel Marketing	99
2.33 Chart: Closure Rate — Tech Company Channel Partners vs. Internal Sales Force... 99	
2.34 Chart: Tech Company Channel Management Tactical Usage & Effectiveness	100
2.35 Chart: Tech Company Channel Management Tactics — Usage by Response Rates	102
2.36 Chart: Channel Closure Rates for High-Touch Tech Organizations	103
2.37 Chart: Focus on High-Response Tech Channel Marketers — Lead Pass-Through Times	104
Customer Retention	105
2.38 Chart: Tech Company Customer Retention Averages	105
2.39 Chart: Why They Left — Customers and Vendors Disagree	106
Marketing to Target Company Size.....	109
2.40 Chart: Tech Company Attitudes Toward Innovation by Target Customer Size	109
2.41 Chart: Tech Company Sales Cycle Comparison — Targeting Small Businesses.....	110
2.42 Chart: Tech Company Sales Cycle Comparison — Targeting the Enterprise	111
2.43 Chart: Tech Company Usage of Online Marketing Tactics by Target Size	112
2.44 Chart: Effectiveness of Online Tactics by Target Company Size	113
 Chapter 3: Brand Marketing, Online Advertising & Public Relations	114
3.01 Chart: What Works in Tech Marketing — Online Tactics for Brand Marketers	114
3.02 Chart: Technology Brand Marketer's Wish List: How Would You Spend \$50,000?..	115
3.03 Chart: How Important Is Technology Brand Awareness?	116
3.04 Chart: Rising CPM Tide Lifts Technology Marketing Costs.....	117

Online Ads	118
3.05 Chart: Technology Company Online Ad Clickthrough Rates 2004 – 2006	118
3.06 Chart: Technology Company Online Ad Conversion Rates 2004 – 2006	119
3.07 Table: Conversion Ranges — Online Tech Advertising.....	120
Themes & Success in Online Technology Advertising	121
3.08 Chart: How Do Tech Professionals Perceive Online Ads	122
3.09 Chart: How Do Technology Ad Themes Play with the Pros?	123
Print Advertising	124
3.10 Chart: Tech Magazine Readership by Section.....	124
3.11 Chart: Business Reader Recall of Advertisers by Number of Exposures	125
3.12 Table: Print Ad Costs across General and Tech Specific Publications	126
Notes from the Field: Catalogs in the Computer Age.....	127
Public Relations	129
3.13 Chart: Journalists' Changing Use of the Internet	129
3.14 Chart: Practices Used for Press Releases.....	130
3.15 Chart: Technology Press-Release Volumes and Growth	132
3.16 Table: Web Traffic to Search-Engine News Sites.....	133
Emerging Marketing Channels	134
3.17 Chart: Effectiveness of Emerging Marketing Channels for Tech Companies	134
3.18 Chart: Usage of Emerging Marketing Channels by Tech Companies	136
3.19 Chart: Types of Blogs Read Regularly by Technology Buyers	137
3.20 Chart: Tech Buyers' Reasons for Reading Blogs.....	137
3.21 Chart: Share of Technology Vendors Offering Podcasts by Size of Org.	138
 Chapter 4: Direct Marketing Tactics.....	 139
Technology Marketer's Web Sites.....	139
4.01 Chart: Technology Web Site Metrics Tracked	139
4.02 Chart: Web Site Metrics Tracked by Tech Marketers w/High Conversion Rates	140
4.03 Chart: Technology Web Site Management Practices 2005 & 2006.....	141
4.04 Chart: Tech Marketers Rate Web Site-Offer Effectiveness 2005 vs. 2006	142
4.05 Chart: Technology Web Site Offers Compared — High Response-Rate Orgs.....	143
4.06 Chart: Effectiveness of Tech. Web Site Offers by Target Company Size.....	144
4.07 Chart: Technology Web Site Free-Trial Offerings.....	145
4.08 Chart: Web Site Merchandising Methods Used — Tech SMBs	146
4.09 Chart: Web Site Merchandising Methods Used — Large Tech Orgs.	146
Direct Postal Mail.....	147
4.10 Chart: Direct Postal Mail to Tech House Lists — Response Rates 2004 – 2006	147
4.11 Chart: Direct Postal Mail to Outside Tech Lists — Response Rates 2004 – 2006.....	148
Email	149
4.12 Chart: Technology Company Email Open Rates 2004 – 2006	149
4.13 Chart: Technology Company Email Clickthrough Rates 2004 – 2006	150
4.14 Chart: Technology Company Email Conversion Rates 2004 – 2006	151
4.15 Chart: Technology Marketers' Email Marketing Practices	152
4.16 Chart: Technology Marketers' Email Content Tests	153
4.17 Chart: Technology Marketers' Email Marketing Tests	154
4.18 Chart: Technology Buyers' Email Newsletter Subscription Practices	155
4.19 Chart: Technology Buyers' Attitudes Toward Email Newsletters.....	156
4.20 Chart: Technology Buyers' Expanding Definitions of 'Spam'.....	157
4.21 Chart: Technology Buyers' Preference for Control over Email.....	159
4.22 Chart: Email Programs Offered by Tech Orgs.....	160
4.23 Chart: Email Call to Register on Tech Web Sites' Home Page.....	161
4.24 Chart: Email Frequency — Tech SMBs.....	162

4.25 Chart: Email Frequency — Large Tech Orgs.....	163
4.26 Chart: Actions Taken by Technology Buyers to End the Email Relationship.....	164
4.27 Chart: Technology Buyers' Frequency of Forwarding Emails.....	165
4.28 Image: Award-Winning Technology Email Welcome Message.....	166
4.29 Chart: How Aging of List Members Affects Performance for Email Trade Journals	167
4.30 Chart: Business Technology Marketers and Email Segmentation.....	168
4.31 Chart: How Do B-to-B Marketers Deal with Inactive List Members?	169
4.32 Table: Technology-Focused Newsletters — CPM Sampling	170
Search Engine Marketing	173
4.33 Chart: Natural Search Placement (SEO) — Tech SMBs.....	173
4.34 Chart: Natural Search Placement (SEO) — Large Tech Orgs.....	174
4.35 Chart: Paid Search Placement — Tech SMBs.....	175
4.36 Chart: Technology Companies' Paid Search Clickthrough Rates 2004 – 2006.....	176
4.37 Chart: Technology Companies' Paid Search Conversion Rates 2004 – 2006	177
4.38 Chart: Technology Companies' Search Marketing Management Tactics	178
4.39 Chart: Search Boxes on Tech Site Home Pages	179
4.40 Chart: Impact of Search in the Tech-Buying Process — Research Phase.....	180
4.41 Chart: Impact of Search in the Tech-Buying Process — Consideration Phase	181
4.42 Chart: Impact of Search in the Tech-Buying Process — Purchase Phase.....	182
4.43 Table: Impact of Search-Listing Rank on Clickthrough.....	183
4.44 Chart: ROI of Keyword Research Methods — B-to-B Marketers.....	184
4.45 Table: Technology Search Terms 2005 and 2006 — KnowledgeStorm	185
4.46 Chart: Top Technology Search Terms 2005 & 2006 — CNET	186
Telemarketing	187
4.47 Chart: Tech Marketing Ranges for Lead Qualification Telemarketing.....	187
4.48 Chart: Tech Company Lead Qualification Ranges — Budgets Emphasizing Telemarketing	188
4.49 Chart: Technology Companies' Budgeted Dollars per Telephone Contact.....	189
4.50 Chart: Effect of the Time Delay on Follow-up Call in Technology Marketing.....	190
Trade Shows & In-Person Events.....	191
4.51 Chart: Lead Generation Results — Broad vs. Vertical Technology Shows 2006.....	191
4.52 Table: Cost of Exhibiting at Technology Trade Shows	192
4.53 Chart: Impact of Trade Show/Event Interactions on Technology Buyers	193
4.54 Chart: Role of Trade Shows in Manufacturers' Marketing Plans	194
4.55 Table: Domestic Technology Trade Shows — Sampling of Exhibiting Costs.....	195
4.56 Table: International Technology Events — Sampling of Exhibiting Costs	196
4.57 Table: Virtual Trade Show — Interaction with Attendees	197
4.58 Table: Virtual Trade Show Deal-Value Breakdown	198
Notes from the field: Exploring Online Events.....	200
Webinars.....	201
4.59 Chart: Technology Webinar Invitation Acceptance Rates	201
4.60 Chart: Technology Webinar Attendance Rates.....	202
4.61 Chart: Reasons for Missing Technology Webinars	203
4.62 Chart: Types of Webinars Attended by Technology Buyers.....	204
4.63 Chart: What Makes a Great Technology Webinar?	205
Notes from the field: Exploring new ways to webcast	207
Notes from the field: Testing B-to-B creative	209
White Papers	211
4.64 Chart: What Makes a Great White Paper?	211
Special Report: White Paper Titles	212
Referenced Resources	216
About MarketingSherpa, Inc.	226

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