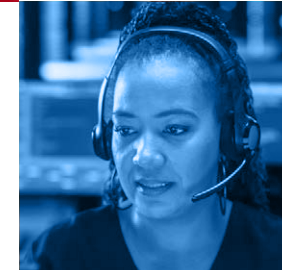
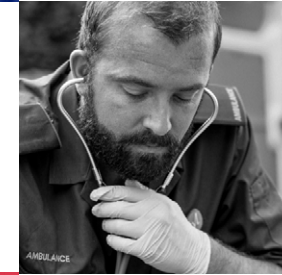


# TAPPING INTO THE MARKETING TRENDS OF ORGANIZATIONS SERVING PUBLIC SAFETY

An industry snapshot survey from RedFlash Group

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>OVERVIEW</b> .....	3
<b>PART 1: WHO WE HEARD FROM</b> .....	4
<b>PART 2: WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND</b> .....	8
Issues facing public safety.....	8-9
Marketing priorities & challenges.....	10-11
<b>PART 3: HOW YOU DO WHAT YOU DO</b> .....	12
Handling marketing & communications strategy .....	12
Staying current.....	13
Adopting trends.....	14
Nurturing & converting leads.....	15
Marketing efforts in need of support.....	16
<b>PART 4: MEASURING SUCCESS</b> .....	17
Metrics that matter .....	18
Effective marketing and sales tactics.....	19
Content that works .....	20
Assessing effectiveness.....	21-22
<b>LET'S TALK</b> .....	23
<b>APPENDIX</b> .....	24



# OVERVIEW

There are roughly 8,000 organizations serving public safety—which includes 911, law enforcement, fire, EMS and emergency management. These include commercial businesses, nonprofits and government entities. Of those, around half participate in public safety trade shows, advertise with industry media and support industry associations.

About 2,000 of those organizations follow **RedFlash Group**, reading our **blogs** and following our **social media**; some are current or past clients. It's safe to say these organizations are more engaged than most.

## SURVEY DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The “Tapping Into the Marketing Trends of Organizations Serving Public Safety” survey included 19 questions and took respondents about 6.5 minutes to complete.

Our sample includes 52 respondents who are representative of our client base and of organizations serving public safety more generally.

In a number of cases, the questions in the survey allowed for multiple answers, so totals may exceed 100%. For simplicity's sake, in showing the findings in charts we eliminated responses for “Other” and “Not Sure.”

# PART 1

## WHO WE HEARD FROM

Of the respondents who took the “Tapping Into the Marketing Trends of Organizations Serving Public Safety” survey, fully half hold a **C-suite** or **VP title** at a company or organization that creates products and/or services for at least one public safety discipline (fire-rescue, law enforcement, emergency medical services, emergency management and/or 911).

We also heard from **marketing directors and managers** (23% of respondents), **sales directors and managers** (13%) and **owners/founders** (nearly 6%).

## WHAT IS YOUR TITLE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Owner/Founder	6%
Executive (CEO, COO, CMO, Senior VP, VP, etc.)	50%
Marketing Director/Manager	23%
Sales Director/Manager	13%

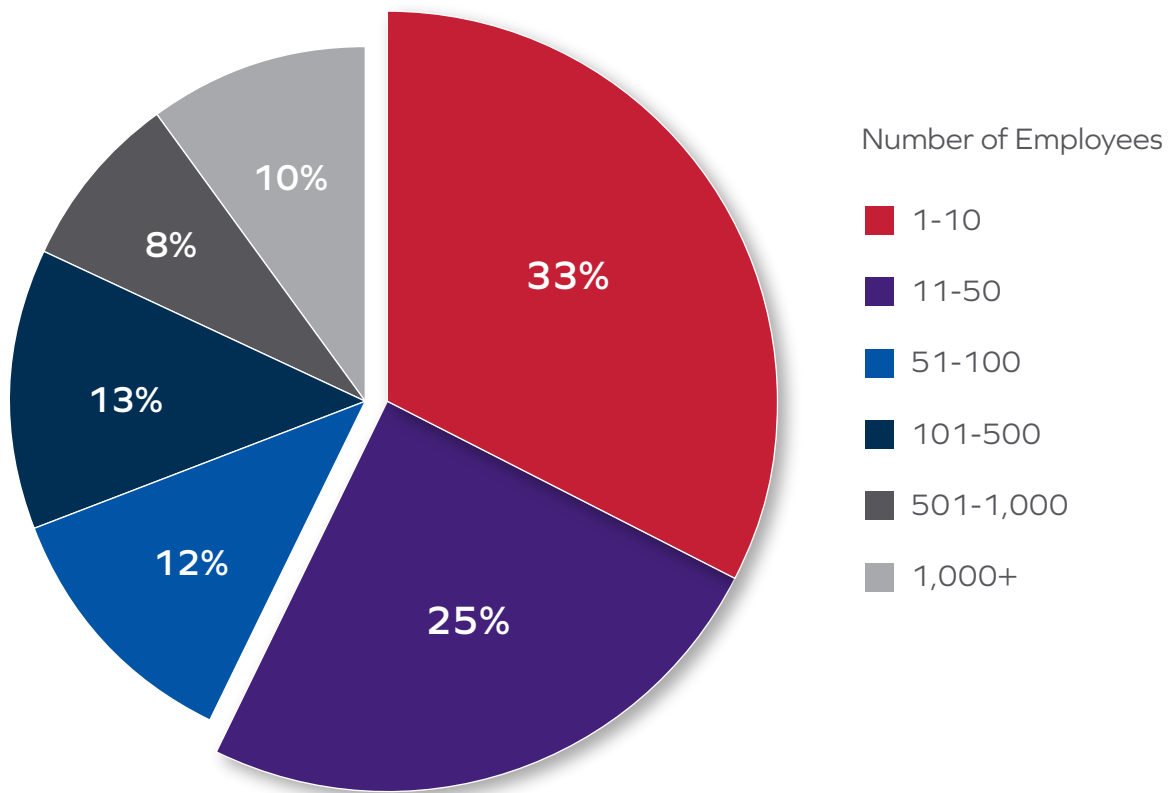
Fully half of respondents are in the C-suite or hold a VP title.



## PART 1

Many of the organizations who responded are smaller; **more than half have 50 or fewer employees**, and about **17% employ more than 500 people**. It isn't surprising to see such a wide chasm among organizations serving public safety, from small businesses to midsize companies to publicly-traded corporations.

### WHAT IS YOUR COMPANY'S STAFF SIZE?



*Most respondents come from smaller companies; 58% have 50 or fewer employees.*

## PART 1

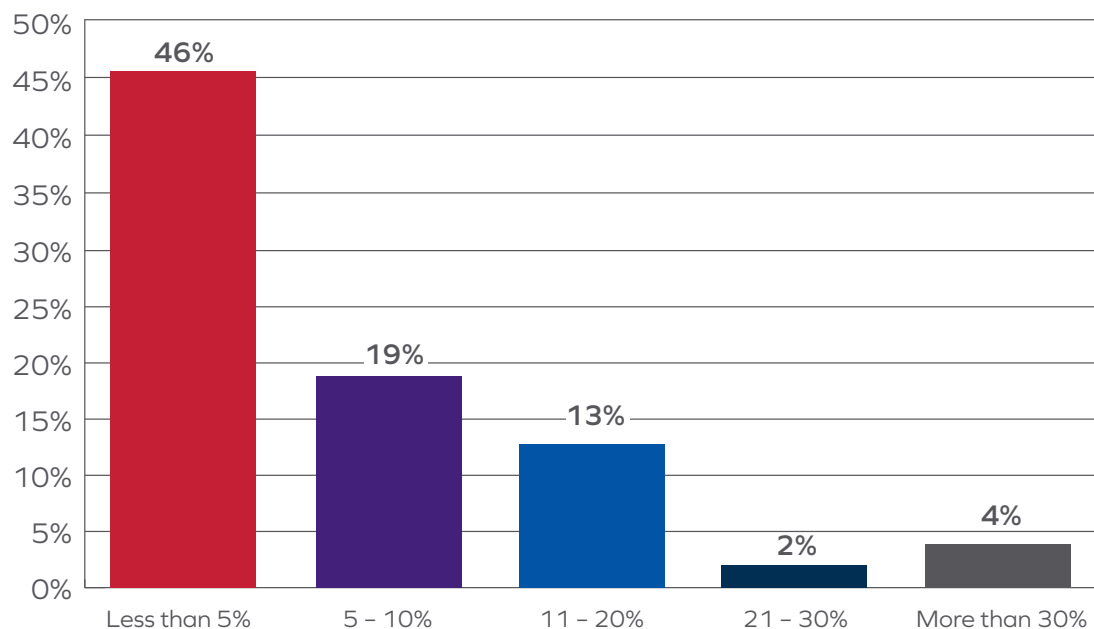
About **one-third of respondents allocate \$100,000 to \$500,000 to marketing every year**, while another **third say their annual budget is between \$20,000 and \$100,000**.

### WHAT'S YOUR ANNUAL MARKETING BUDGET?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under \$20,000	13%
\$20,000 - \$100,000	35%
\$100,000 - \$500,000	33%
Over \$500,000	10%

For **nearly half (46%) of those responding, marketing makes up less than 5% of their organization's annual revenue**. At the other end of the spectrum, a small percentage say their marketing budget is more than 30% of their annual revenue, with other organizations falling somewhere in between.

### HOW MUCH DO YOU ALLOCATE TO MARKETING?

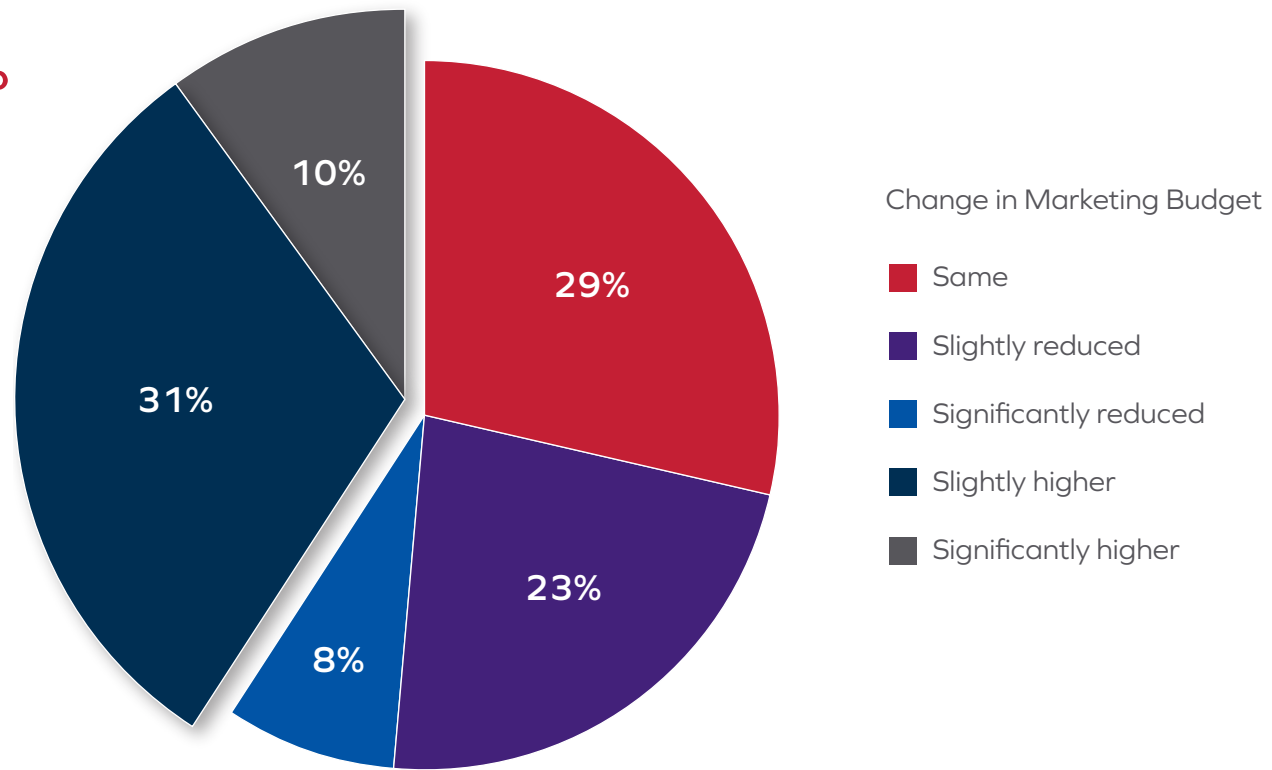


## PART 1

In the midst of what many describe as a soft economy, most organizations have stuck to their marketing guns year-on-year, with about **40% saying they have a slightly higher or much higher budget than the previous year**, and the next largest group (**29%**) **maintaining the same budget as the previous year**. But fewer than 10% saw their budget grow significantly this year, and almost 8% got a substantial cut.

### HOW DOES YOUR CURRENT MARKETING BUDGET COMPARE TO LAST YEAR'S?

*More than 40% saw a bump in their year-on-year marketing budget.*



# PART 2

## WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND

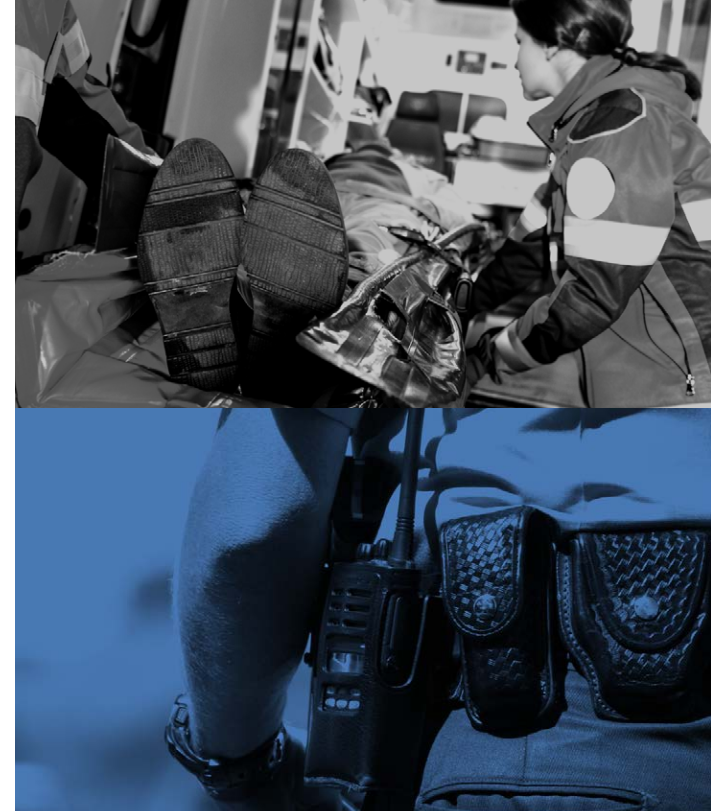
### ISSUES FACING PUBLIC SAFETY

We weren't surprised to see that **agency funding and budgets**, along with **staffing, recruitment and retention**, are the issues that most concern these organizations. This mirrors numerous other sources surveying public safety professionals about the biggest challenges they're currently facing.

**Changing technology** is significant to our respondents, too: More than 84% called it important or very important, and it's not hard to see why. New technologies, such as AI-driven handling of non-urgent 911 calls and cloud-based software that's easy and fast to integrate and update, are allowing resource-strapped agencies to stretch those shrinking budgets.

**Cybersecurity** is also on the minds of those who responded. It's wise to keep an eye on this topic. According to **Motorola Solutions' Public Safety Threat Alliance**, from January to September 2023, there were more cyber attacks against public-safety organizations than in all of 2022.

Where COVID-19 once put **supply-chain issues** front and center among public safety's concerns, they now rank last on our list.





## PART 2



"It's no surprise that agency funding is the #1 concern. After all, those budgets are the lifeblood of the ecosystem that supports public safety. *Public safety budgets—typically drawn from the local government's budget—are traditionally slower to see the impact of changes in the economy.* We'll be interested to see if these concerns increase or decrease as we move into the next round of budget planning."

### WHAT ISSUES FACING PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERN YOU THE MOST?

ANSWER CHOICES	NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
<i>Agency funding/budgets</i>	0%	8%	41%	51%
Staffing/recruitment/retention	6%	13%	31%	50%
Supply-chain issues	24%	40%	32%	4%
Health and wellness	6%	16%	39%	39%
Changing technology	0%	16%	39%	45%
Cybersecurity	4%	14%	37%	45%

## PART 2

### MARKETING PRIORITIES & CHALLENGES

Our respondents clearly see growing **brand awareness** as their top marketing priority, followed closely by **educating the market**, **reputation-building** and **lead generation**. They rank **thought leadership** as somewhat less important compared to these priorities.

### WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PRIORITIES?

These are the percentages of companies who said each marketing priority was either very important or important to them:



### REDFLASH INSIGHT

"It's actually refreshing to see nearly all organizations recognize brand awareness as important. Too often, we run across organizations with an inflated sense of their brand awareness and recognition.

We often write about the importance of building trust and credibility as part of your brand, so it's good that organizations are not taking this for granted when it comes to reputation-building. There are many cases of brands that hold the #1 place in market share in their category becoming complacent and cutting back on marketing, sponsorships and advertising. We hate to see them in such a perilous situation.

*So keep branding, good people!*

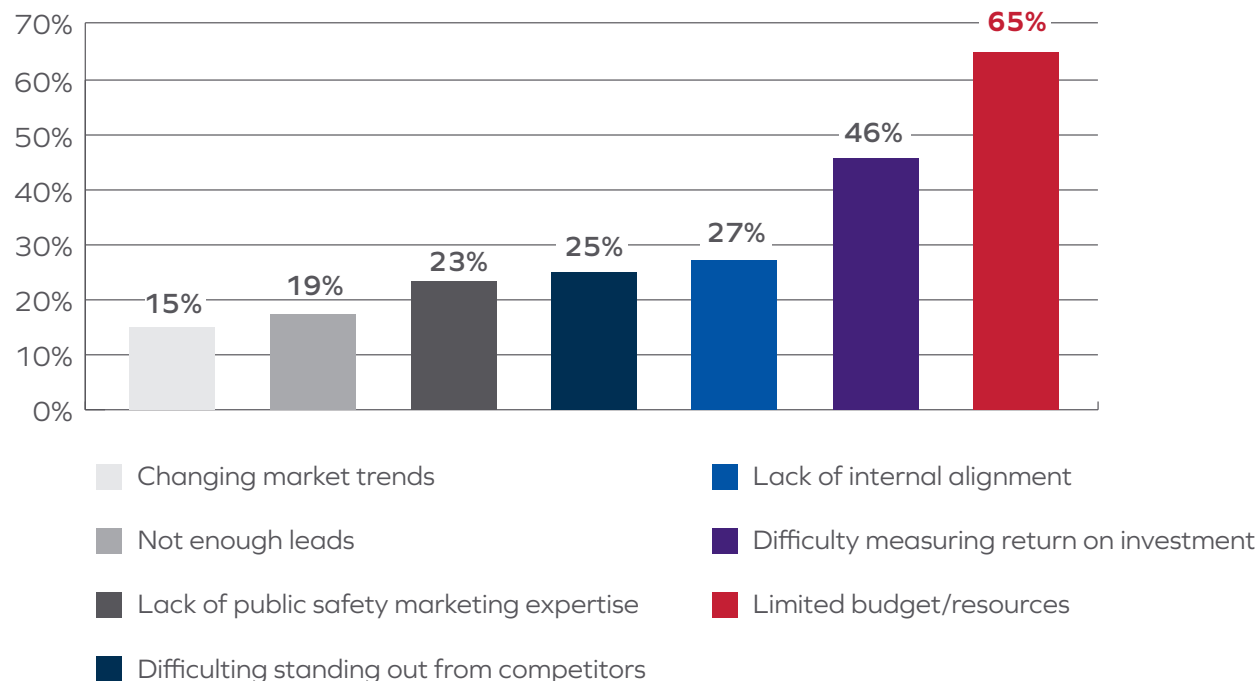
Lead generation is the area we hear most about in our work, so it makes sense that 85% prioritize this. Interestingly, thought leadership is an integral part of reputation-building and educating the market, so we're not sure why some organizations give it a lower priority."

## PART 2

But achieving marketing goals is often easier said than done, of course.

**Limited budget and resources** overwhelmingly top the list of challenges faced by organizations. That was followed by **difficulty measuring ROI** (aka “is what we’re doing actually *working*?”).

### WHAT TOP MARKETING CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE NOW?



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

*“Two-thirds rank budget and resources as their top challenge*

but 40% say their budget has gone up. So it’s safe to say they feel they still need more gas on the marketing fire. This makes us wonder how teams are prioritizing what they do have and how they’re measuring the effectiveness of their efforts.

To do this, organizations need to start with a sound strategy; become ruthless in what they say ‘no’ to; double down on efforts that provide measurable return; and continue investing for the long-term in areas that are less measurable, like branding, reputation and thought leadership.”

## PART 3

### HOW YOU DO WHAT YOU DO

#### HANDLING MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

About three-quarters of those who responded to the survey say they **handle their marketing and comms strategy in-house** rather than enlist outside help. One-third say they tend to **repeat what they did the previous year** rather than develop a new strategy annually (just 18% do this, and about 22% told us they develop or refresh their marketing strategy every few years). More than one-quarter said they tend to **focus on tactics** rather than strategy.

#### HOW DO YOU HANDLE MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
We handle in-house.	73%
We tend to repeat what we did last year.	31%
We focus on tactics rather than strategy.	25%
We enlist outside support.	25%
We develop/refresh our strategy every few years.	22%
We build a new strategy annually.	18%



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

"Maybe we shouldn't have been surprised. But the fact that almost

*one-third of organizations repeat what they did last year*

is so, well, disappointing! It stands to reason that these are likely the same folks who struggle to measure ROI. Here's some advice if you're in this boat, too:

- Don't simply repeat what you did last year (just don't).
- Assess the performance of all your activities.
- Stop doing things that aren't a good use of time and money.
- Put more effort into areas that produce solid returns.
- Test some new ideas; start small but keep testing to see what works.
- Be different from your contemporaries and competition."

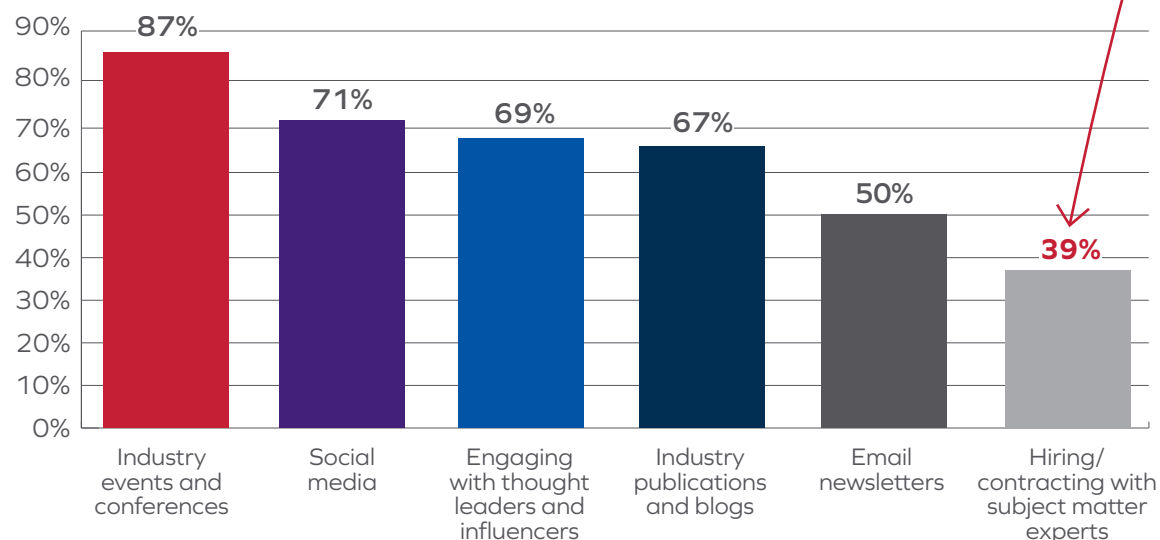
## PART 3

### STAYING CURRENT

Like any industry, public safety is changing all the time. The COVID-19 pandemic brought seismic shifts that are still being felt across disciplines. So how do you stay up-to-date? More than 86% of respondents **attend industry events and conferences**; that's money and time well-spent, given that doing business in public safety is and as always has been centered on personal relationships.

Many respondents say they look to **social media** and nearly as many **engage with thought leaders and influencers** and **follow industry publications and blogs** to keep current. Half read **email newsletters** and more than one-third **hire subject matter experts** to provide information and insight into what's happening in public safety.

### HOW DO YOU STAY CURRENT ON INDUSTRY NEWS & TRENDS?



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

"It's interesting that relatively

*few organizations hire or contract with subject matter experts.*

This could be because they already have enough expertise on staff. In our experience, that's typically not the case. You may think you're close to your customers and don't need an outside expert voice weighing in on your strategies, but the best-in-class organizations we know aren't afraid to bring in outside experts. They want to hear from experienced voices outside their organization, especially those who aren't afraid to question assumptions. Wouldn't you rather have a public safety expert weigh in on your new product launch early, before having to walk back objections from prospects?"



## PART 3

### ADOPTING TRENDS

Staying up-to-date also means exploring and applying new tools and solutions in marketing. Nearly two-thirds of respondents say they plan to **emphasize social media more** in the coming year, and 59% say **video content will play a bigger role**. We also heard that nearly half want to do more with **personalized marketing**, probably with the help of marketing automation tools. Fewer than one-third will use **AI** more, and only seven respondents plan to focus more on **mobile marketing**.

### WHAT TRENDS WILL YOU APPLY TO YOUR MARKETING IN THE NEXT YEAR?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Increased importance of social media	63%
Greater use of video content	59%
Greater emphasis on personalized marketing	45%
Greater use of artificial intelligence (eg, ChatGPT)	29%
Increased focus on mobile marketing	14%



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

"If you're among those planning to focus more on social media,

**consider both organic and paid social.**

Together, they are more powerful than either alone. LinkedIn continues to be the powerhouse for reaching public safety decision-makers. At the same time, Facebook is a strong vehicle for driving brand awareness and reaching public safety agency influencers (those below command-staff level).

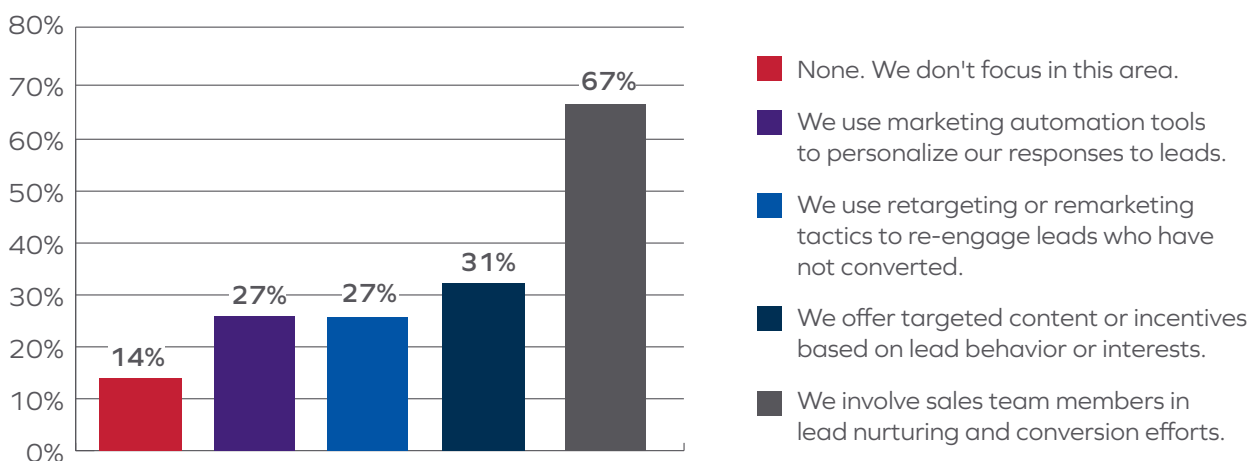
Respondents also say they want to use video more, which dovetails well with social. Youtube.com is the #2 website in the world (following google.com), with an average visit duration of nearly 24 minutes. With quality video and editing now within most people's abilities, it's never been more viable and cost-effective to embrace video. Lastly, it's unwise not to use mobile marketing — it's critical to reaching public safety."

## NURTURING & CONVERTING LEADS

Lead nurturing and conversion is super-important to marketing leaders, so we wanted to know how they typically approach it. Two-thirds **involve their colleagues in the sales department** in the process of cultivating prospects, and one-third say they **create targeted content or incentives** that align with their leads' behavior or interests.

More than one-quarter of respondents **use marketing automation tools** such as HubSpot, Salesforce Pardot and Adobe Marketo Engage to personalize responses to leads, and the same number also **use retargeting/remarketing tactics** to re-engage leads who haven't yet converted. About 14% say they don't focus on nurturing or converting prospects.

### HOW DO YOU APPROACH LEAD NURTURING & CONVERSION?

**REDFLASH  
INSIGHT**

"In the old days, sales reps would make cold calls and send emails to lists from conferences. They'd hope to move the prospect along the sales pipeline without scaring them off.

*We're in a new age now:  
Prospects want to take themselves  
along on the sales journey*

by spending time on your website, reviewing your content and social presence and maybe signing up for your emails. Sales shouldn't be doing a thing...yet.

But when that prospect reaches out, has a high enough lead score, or (gasp!) calls the salesperson—that's when you know your marketing is working the way it should. Your salespeople should be building trust and relationships and closing deals. Any lead nurturing they do should be after your marketing efforts and automation have allowed the prospect to learn at their own pace."

PART 3

MARKETING EFFORTS  
IN NEED OF SUPPORT

We already heard that about one-quarter of respondents enlist external help for at least some of their marketing and communications efforts.

In answering this question, they told us that **content — case studies, Ebooks, blog posts** and more — lead the list of efforts for which they need the most support.



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

*"Content is king.* Content is also a subtly difficult strategy and tactic to execute for most. How do you tell the story in a way that's both educational *and* compelling? How do you *show* your audience rather than *telling* them (which can feel like being browbeaten)? While content strategy and development are difficult to master, they also resonate strongest with public safety audiences. Best of all, the quality content you produce can be reused across your channels, platforms and tactics. Content is the fuel that will drive so much else—especially brand awareness, messaging, lead generation, digital efforts, and conferences."

WHICH MARKETING EFFORTS ARE MOST IN NEED OF SUPPORT?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Content creation (case studies, Ebooks, blog posts, etc.)	59%
Brand awareness	47%
Lead generation	47%
Overall public safety marketing strategy	37%
Messaging	29%

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Digital campaigns	29%
Conference strategy	22%
Website and SEO	22%
Sponsorships/advertising	14%
Reporting and analysis	12%

## PART 4

### MEASURING SUCCESS

Now we get to the heart of the matter: determining whether your strategy and tactics are actually having the impact you want.

Success is (no surprise) synonymous with **sales**; 83% rank it as most important, followed by **lead generation**. **Social media metrics** such as likes, shares and comments come in next, and **website traffic and engagement** and **brand sentiment and reputation** each get 50% as important ways to track success.



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

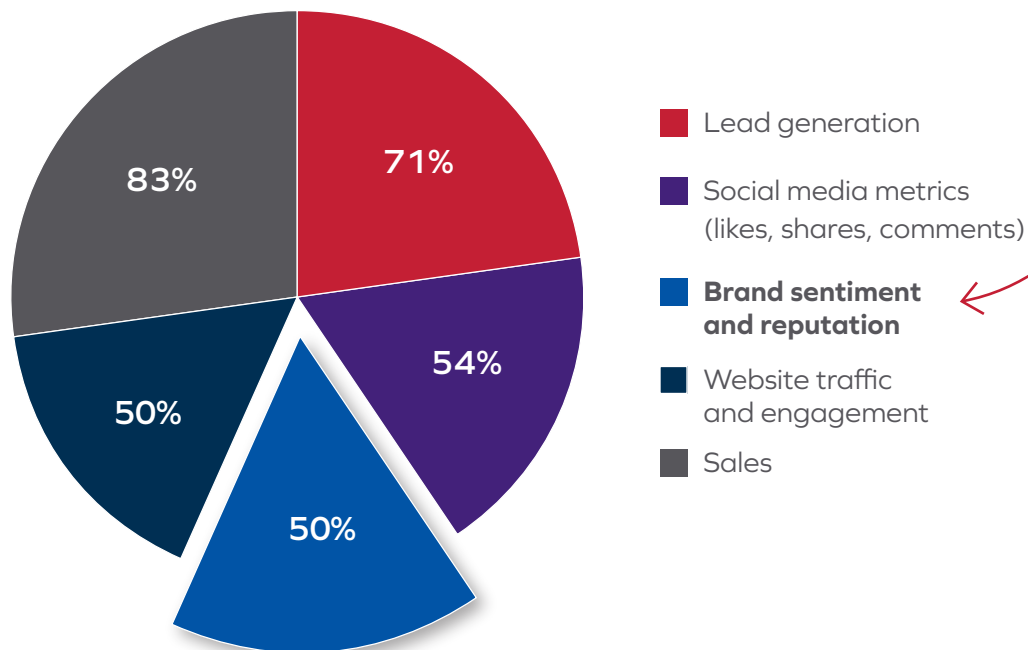
“Hmmm, there seems to be a disconnect here. Earlier, we shared that respondents rate brand awareness as the top priority for their organization. Yet measuring brand sentiment and reputation ranks here near the bottom of the areas they measure.

*Why not measure the area that's most important to you?*

It may be that they think it's too hard to measure brand awareness, but we've done this successfully.

Sales may be the leading metric used for measuring success, but the problem is that many factors—from awareness to qualifying the incoming lead to closing the sale—contribute to success or failure. Bottom line: You can't rely on sales alone to measure marketing success, whether positively or negatively.”

#### HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

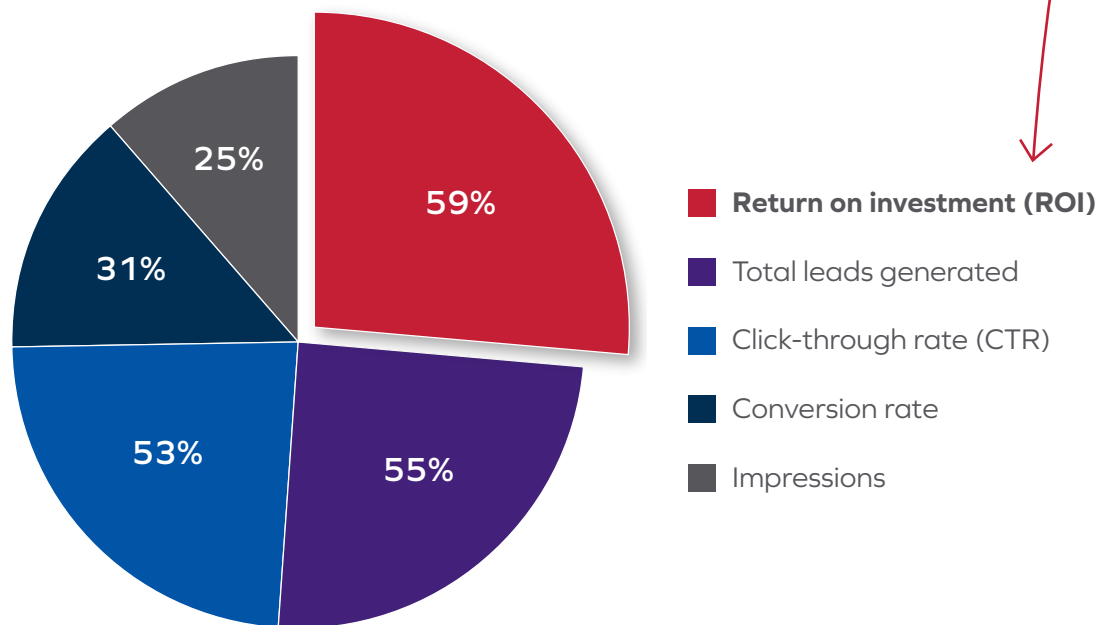


## PART 4

### METRICS THAT MATTER

**Measuring ROI** takes top honors, with nearly 60% of respondents saying this metric matters most to them. That's followed by the **total number of leads generated** and **conversion rate**. **Cost-per-lead** is important to about one-third, and **click-through rate** and **impressions** were somewhat less meaningful to our survey-takers.

### WHICH METRICS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?



REDFLASH  
INSIGHT

"Again, it's not a big surprise that

**ROI is seen as the most important marketing metric.**

Really, all these methods are viable measures of performance. Building brand awareness is a key area our respondents need more support on, but how are you measuring it? Leads won't tell the whole story, nor will website traffic, email opens, search clicks, or other common metrics, by themselves.

We recommend two ways; the first is a brand survey. This allows you to measure your brand awareness at a starting point and then measure how it changes based on your marketing efforts. We help clients with this all the time.

The second way is what we call 'metric soup.' For this, you'll take a number of reference points, capture how you're doing on each at a given point in time, and then measure those same points later. No single metric will tell you how your brand awareness is doing, but a combo can provide good insight. Metrics can include overall website traffic, direct site traffic, site conversions, referral traffic, social growth and engagement, branded search, and earned media."



## PART 4

### EFFECTIVE MARKETING AND SALES TACTICS

When it comes to their most impactful tactics, respondents say building and nurturing relationships and doing business in person continue to be critically important: Nearly 79% **call conferences and trade shows** their most effective tactic, followed by customer referrals.

But other approaches have their place, too: **organic social**, **organic search/SEO**, **virtual events/webinars**, **industry media/association advertising**, and **email blasts** each garnered at least 25%, according to survey-takers.

Fewer respondents say **paid social** and **paid search** work well for them, and very few find **cold-calling** or **direct mail** effective ways to reach potential customers.



### REDFLASH INSIGHT

"We're very glad to see

**customer referrals rate so highly**

and that many organizations prioritize them. Peer-to-peer testimonials and referrals are critical in public safety and should rank far ahead of many other tactics. Asking for referrals is a start, but there's so much more that can be done to maximize this area, such as gathering testimonials, case studies and use cases, pairing prospects with willing current customers at in-person events and virtually, and, of course, keeping your customers happy to ensure more positive referrals."

### WHAT MARKETING AND SALES TACTICS DO YOU FIND MOST EFFECTIVE?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Conferences/trade shows	79%
Customer referrals	67% ↙
Organic social	38%
Organic search/SEO	27%
Virtual events/webinars	27%
Email blasts	25%

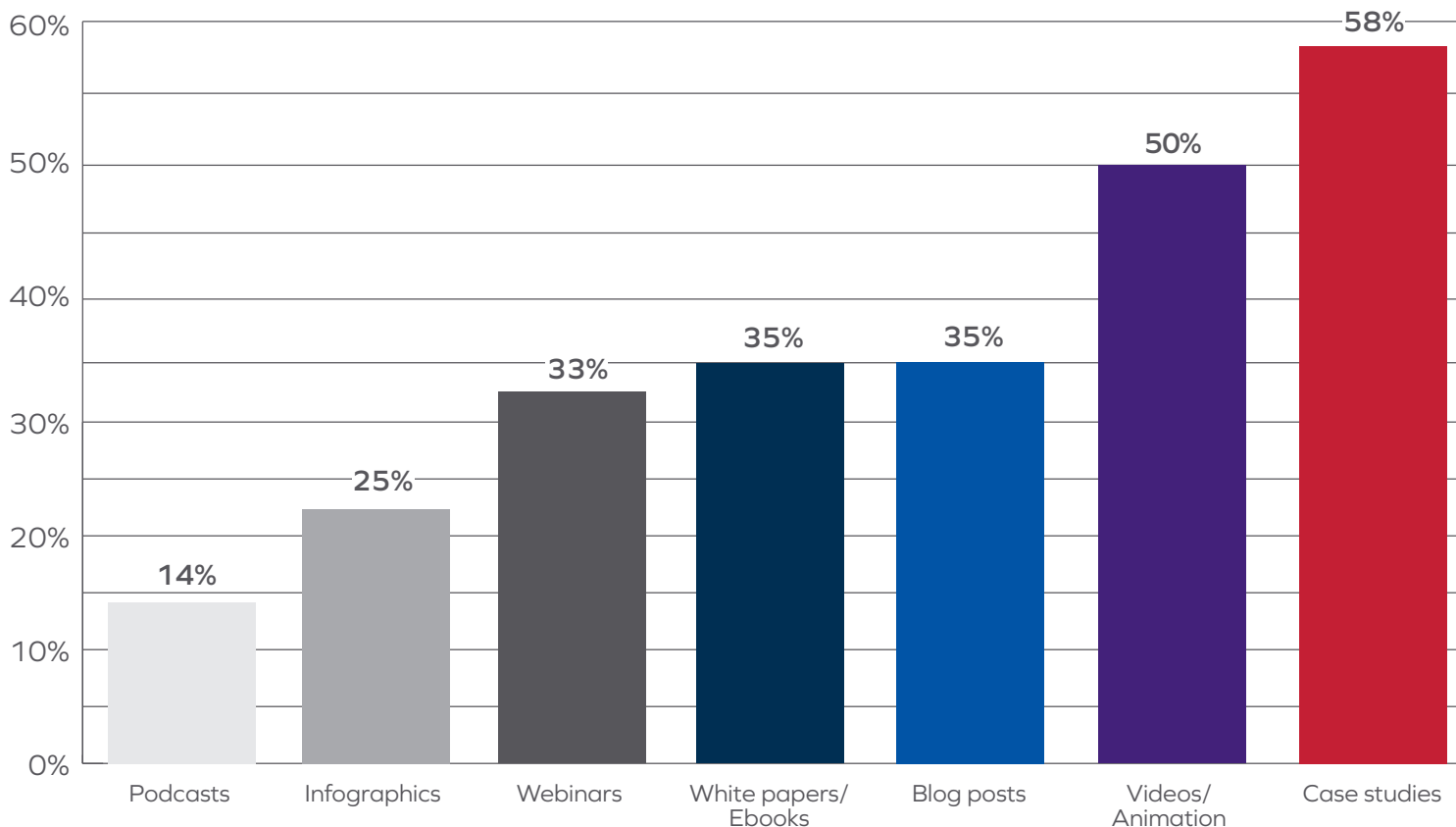
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Advertising with industry media/associations	25%
Paid search	19%
Paid social	15%
Cold-calling	10%
Direct mail	8%

## PART 4

### CONTENT THAT WORKS

As noted above, it's not uncommon for marketing leaders to seek outside help to create impactful content. Whether developed in- or out-of-house, they tell us that **case studies** are most effective, followed by **videos/animation, white papers and Ebooks**, and **blog posts**. **Infographics** and **podcasts** ranked as somewhat less impactful.

### WHICH CONTENT TYPES DO YOU FIND MOST EFFECTIVE?



## PART 4

### ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS

There was a lot of variation in how often marketing leaders stop to check how they're doing. About one-third do so **monthly**, and another quarter of respondents review their performance **quarterly**. But 12% only do so **annually** or less, and about the same number **don't review performance** at all.

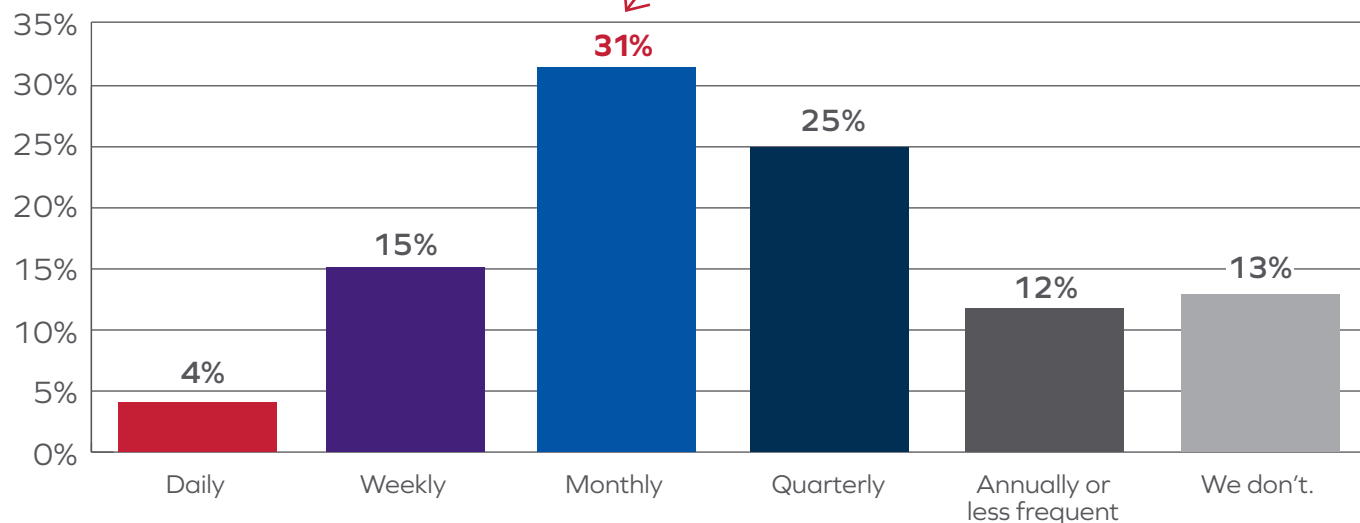


### REDFLASH INSIGHT

"Doing reviews monthly is a manageable frequency. But there are other metrics, such as email performance, social stats and your website's SEO, that should be assessed in near-real time. At the same time, if you're spending too much time every day looking in the rearview mirror, well, you know what happens.

*Do regularly assess performance, but not so much that you never get anything done."*

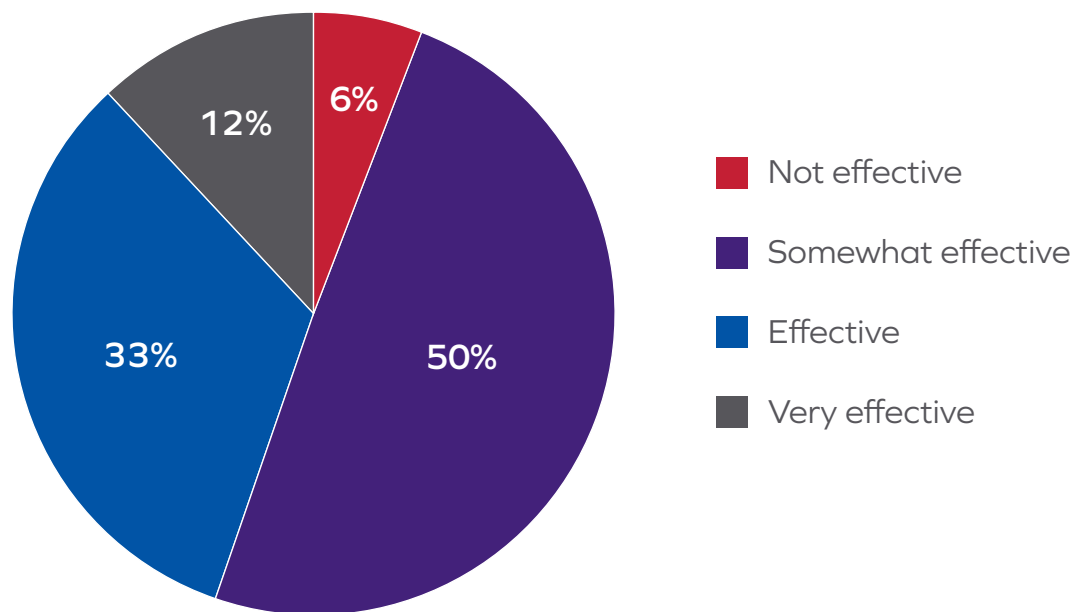
### HOW OFTEN DO YOU ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR EFFORTS?



## PART 4

Overall, our respondents are pretty *meh* about how impactful their marketing methods are. Just 12% call them very effective and *no one* rates them extremely effective. The vast majority—83%—say their approach is either effective or somewhat effective. And a small percentage say what they're doing simply isn't working.

### HOW EFFECTIVE ARE YOUR CURRENT MARKETING METHODS?



#### REDFLASH INSIGHT

"We appreciate the honesty here! Self-awareness is the first step to improvement. This may connect back to the fact that quite a few marketers approach their 'strategy' as essentially doing the same thing year in and year out.

*It's going to be difficult to improve effectiveness in the absence of real strategic planning and clear measurement.*

Now is the time! Start by taking even a couple of the steps mentioned in this Ebook (or any of our previous Ebooks) to make your marketing better and more effective."

## AT REDFLASH GROUP, WE BELIEVE IN DOING WORK THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.

For more than 20 years we've teamed with small startups, large companies, government agencies and nonprofits to help them make an impact on the public safety field.

**WE PARTNER WITH GREAT ORGANIZATIONS TO MAKE COMMUNITIES SAFER AND HEALTHIER. LET'S START A CONVERSATION.**

**WHO WE ARE >**

**HOW WE HELP >**

**WHAT WE DO >**



**Jeff Berend, Partner**

[JBerend@RedFlashGroup.com](mailto:JBerend@RedFlashGroup.com)

(619) 841-1903



**Jake Knight, Partner**

[JKnight@RedFlashGroup.com](mailto:JKnight@RedFlashGroup.com)



**Kris Kaull, Partner**

[KKaull@RedFlashGroup.com](mailto:KKaull@RedFlashGroup.com)

**Reach out for a free  
30-minute consultation >**



# APPENDIX

## REFERENCES

[“One Year In, Public Safety Threat Alliance Plans for Growth,”](#) by Jule Pattison-Gordon, Government Technology, October 13, 2023

[“Recruiting in Today’s Fire Services: Facing Challenges Head-On,”](#) by Lynn Morgan, firefighternation.com, November 3, 2023

[“Asking the big questions,”](#) emsweek.org

[“From integrating new technologies to staffing shortages, report highlights challenges faced by 911 answering centers,”](#) by Andy Castillo, American City & County, August 24, 2022

[“Digital Edition: What cops want in 2023,”](#) police1.com, June 12, 2023

Statistics on most-visited websites; accessed, August 26, 2024

<https://www.semrush.com/website/youtube.com/overview/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1201880/most-visited-websites-worldwide/>

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

<https://www.hostinger.com/tutorials/most-visited-websites-in-the-world>