The 3 Secrets to CMO Success

(in B2B SaaS)

Content

Revealed: The 3 Secrets to CMO Success

Content. Campaigns and Demand Gen. Performance marketing.

These are the three pillars that prop you up as CMO. So keeping them balanced is vital.

To do that, you need formidable plans. You need a laser-focus on metrics. And you need the flexibility to test and iterate.

In this eBook, I've outlined the secrets to my success in the role to date.

These helped Cognism go from $7M to $11M ARR, and grow by 57.41% over the last year.

Without further ado, let's get started.

Alice de Courcy

Content

Content is made up of all our organic activities.

This includes the demand we drive through SEO and our brand-building activity on social media.

Let's take a look at how we measure these tasks and tie them to revenue.

How to measure content

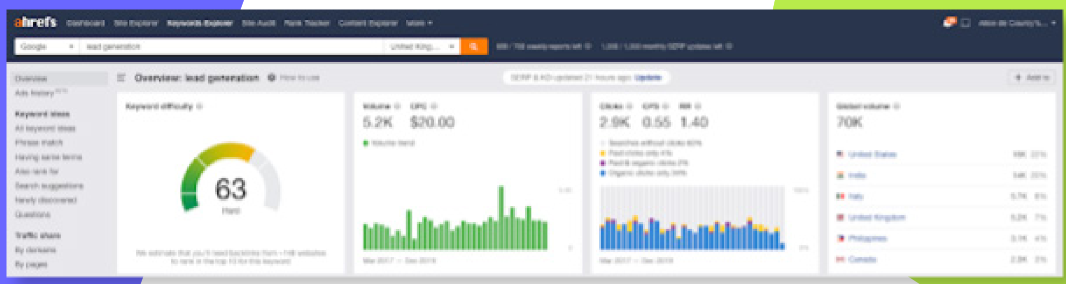
The content marketing team should be measured in the same way as you measure your 'demand gen', 'growth' or 'campaigns' team.

My content team owns the following targets:

- 50% of the sales-qualified opportunity target from Inbound and Content.
- A proportion of the marketing revenue target, generated via the content channel.

This is possible because their content does 2 important things:

1. It delivers on the SEO strategy to drive Google Page 1 rankings for key high intent search terms we want to own. This in turn drives the direct inbound sign-ups we have on our website.
2. It contributes to the content we use as lead magnets in our 'always on' advertising and in campaigns, driving the net new leads that are passed onto our MDR team.

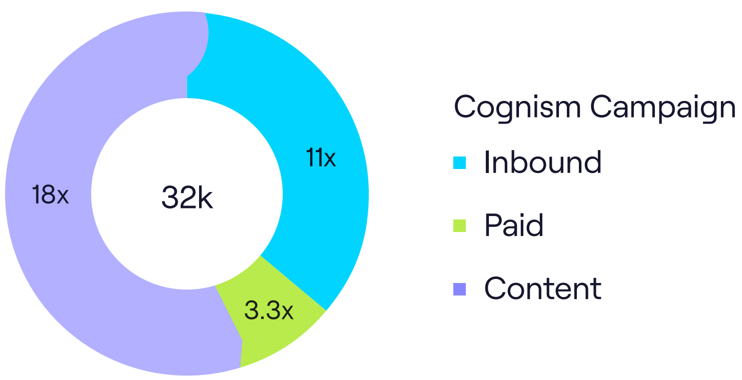


Using tools like **Ahrefs**, the content team can easily see the value of the search terms we claim.

In the above example, we can see competitors that aren't ranking for the 'lead generation' keyword are having to pay $20 for every click. It's clear what the revenue impact can be from owning this term organically.

On point 2, we've built dashboards to track the exact revenue derived from the content channel and the gated content pieces written by the content team. Here's a snapshot:

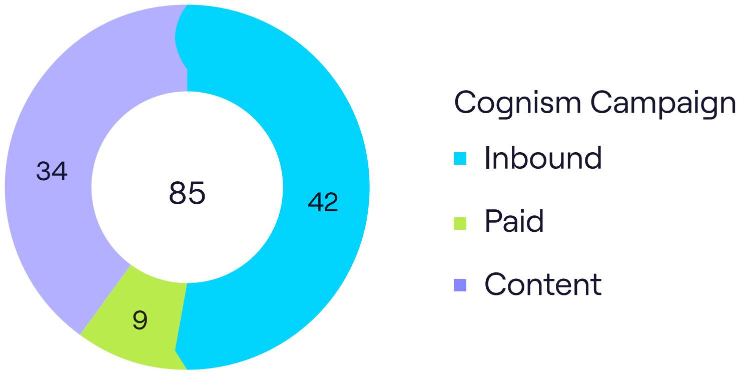
SUM OF INITIAL CONTRACT VALUE (USD)



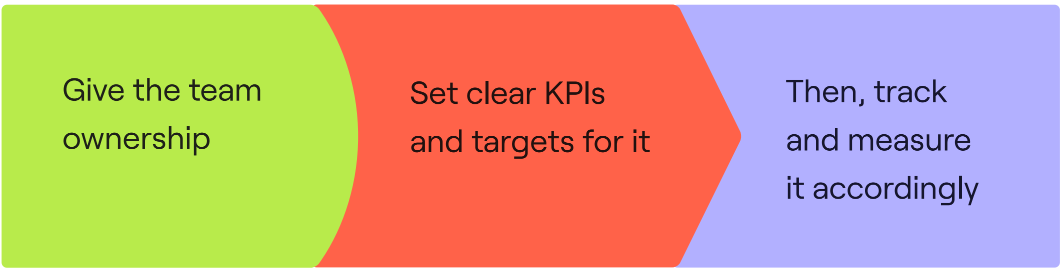
View Report (202005 Marketing_CW_Last month)

So for perspective, in the month of October they delivered $18,000.00 in MRR, along with 32 SQOs from this channel.

RECORD COUNT



My advice for managing this (and every other content project) is:



Messaging, tone of voice and social channels

This is an area of growing focus and ownership for the content team.

Like everything else, it needs breaking down and prioritizing. After all, we're a small team and need to stay lean and efficient.

So we decided to focus on two channels; the ones we feel could have the biggest impact right now. These are:

- LinkedIn
- Instagram

We know we need to take a different approach to each and we are in the trial, test, and learn phase on this right now. But here is how we're currently running the projects.

1. **Give ownership of each channel to 1 individual within the team.** We don't have a dedicated social media manager, so this is a side project for our content writers. But focus and specialization are still vital to success.
2. **Start testing different approaches.** But don't just hit post and round up the engagement stats into 1 monthly overview. If you want to own and scale these channels, you need to get forensic with your analysis.

Below you can see how we're tracking our LinkedIn metrics:

Post type	No. of posts	Avg impressions	Avg engagement
January 2021			
Promotional - owned content	8	1335	62
Name drop	0	0	0
Text-only	4	1342	56
Video	1	2828	141
Company/employee milestone	1	1611	88
Webinar	7	1374	65
Campaign content	2	1309	57
Fun	3	1368	68

USER WARNING

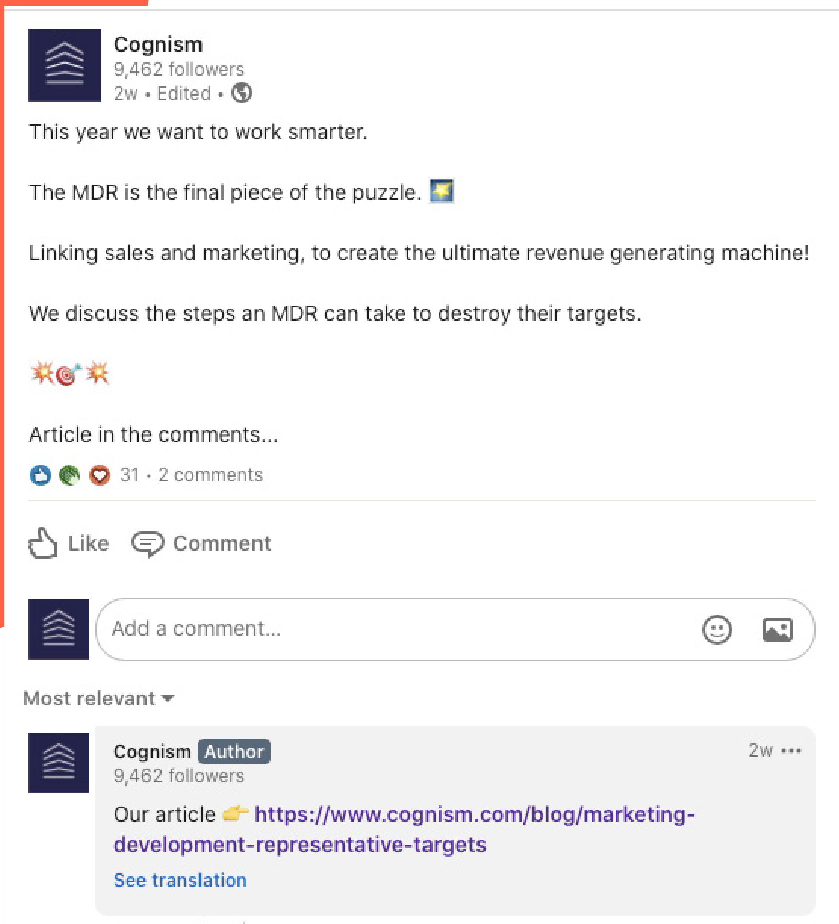
You can use these as frameworks for your company, but each audience is unique, so take the testing framework and forensic analysis approach and start trialling on your own social channels for your winning formula.

What we can see here is that video is our best format for LinkedIn by far.

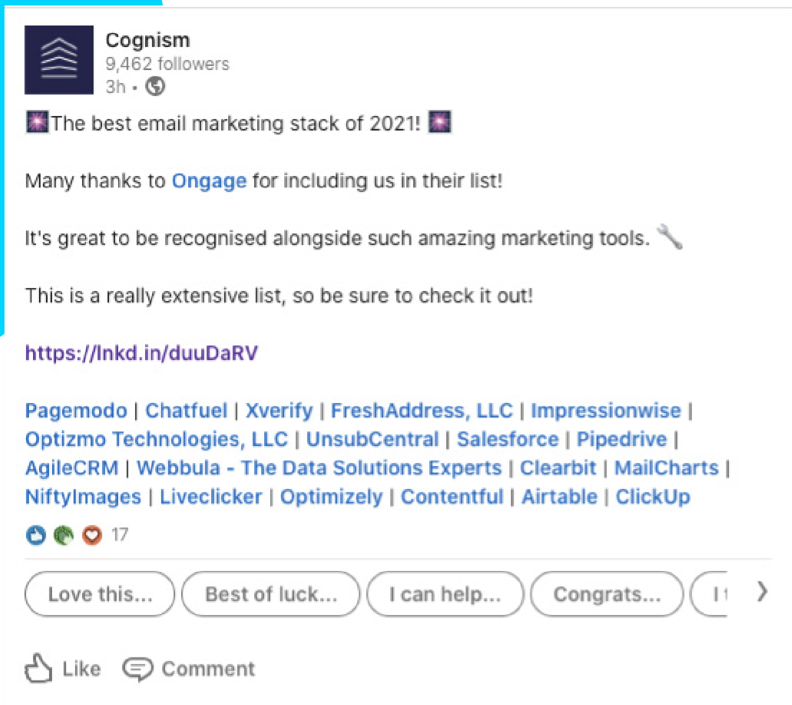
Clearly, it's something we need to double down on, because while it was comfortably our top performer, we only produced one post of this type.

So this is actionable for you, I've listed our most successful post for each category below.

1. Promotional, owned content:



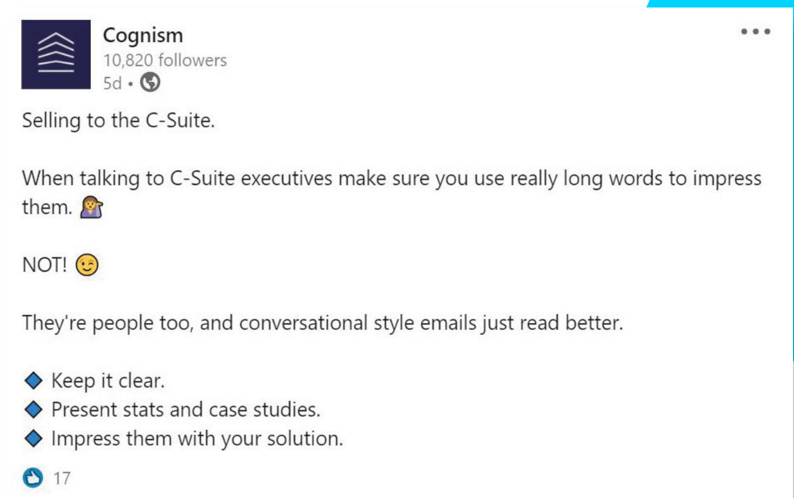
2. Name drop



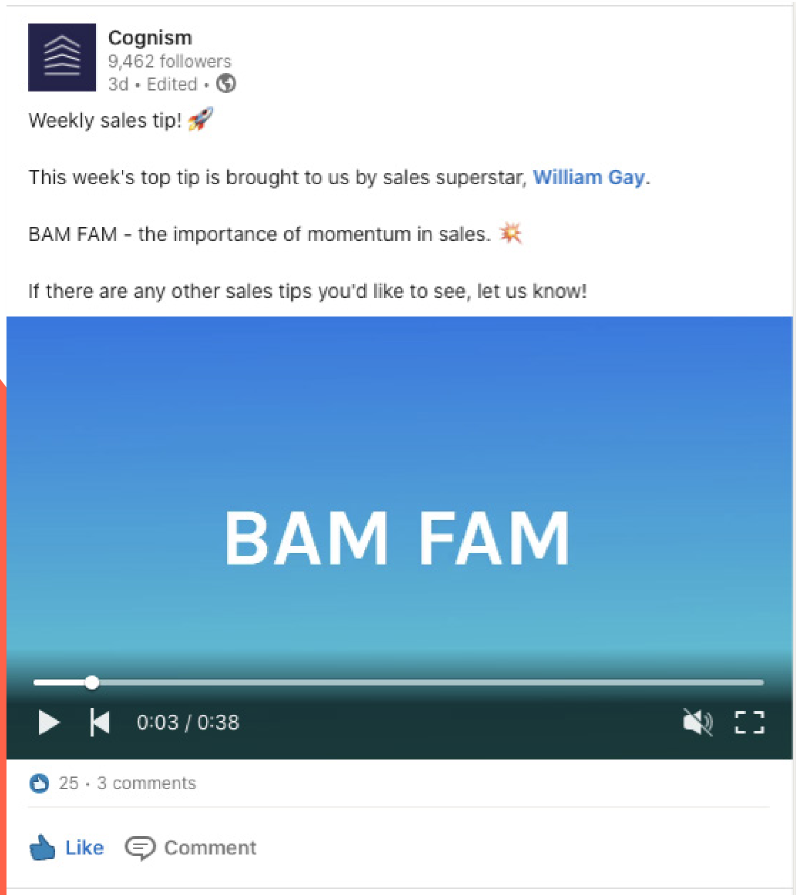
TOP TIP

LinkedIn doesn't want its users to leave its platform, so it often penalizes posts that link external sites. This is an issue when promoting owned content. To get around it, use text-only posts like the one above and include a comment CTA, linking your blog.

3. Text-only:



4. Video:



5. Company/employee milestone:


Cognism
9,462 followers
1w • Edited •

💥INNOVATIVE UK START-UPS 💥

StartupsTips.com - Startup Magazine have placed us on their list:

24+ Innovative Startups UK To Follow in 2021

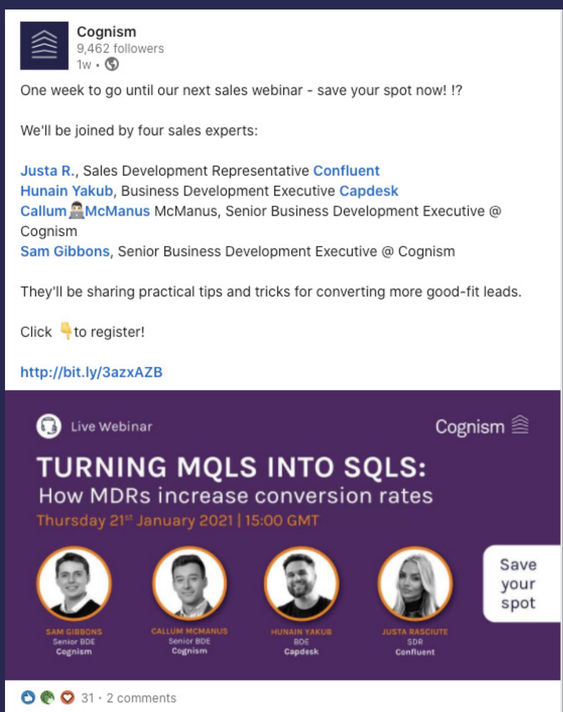
We want to thank Startups Tips and all of our followers, for being with us on our journey. 🚀

Cognism

24+ Innovative Startups UK To Follow in 2021 - STARTUPS TIPS
startupstips.com • 11 min read

41

6. Webinar:


Cognism
9,462 followers
1w •

One week to go until our next sales webinar - save your spot now! !?

We'll be joined by four sales experts:

Justa R., Sales Development Representative Confluent
Hunain Yakub, Business Development Executive Capdesk
Callum 👨‍💻McManus McManus, Senior Business Development Executive @ Cognism
Sam Gibbons, Senior Business Development Executive @ Cognism

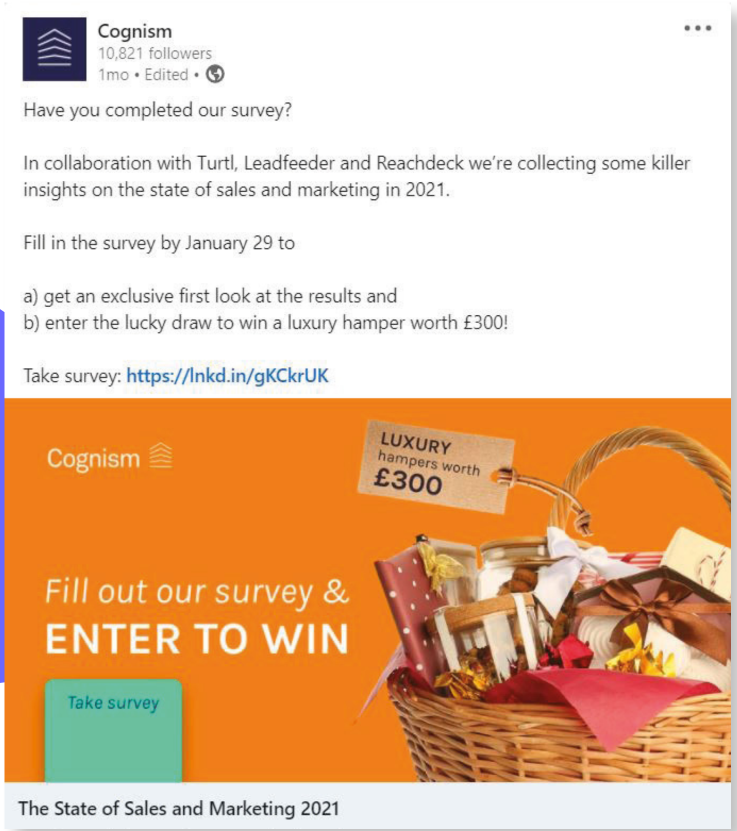
They'll be sharing practical tips and tricks for converting more good-fit leads.

Click 👇to register!

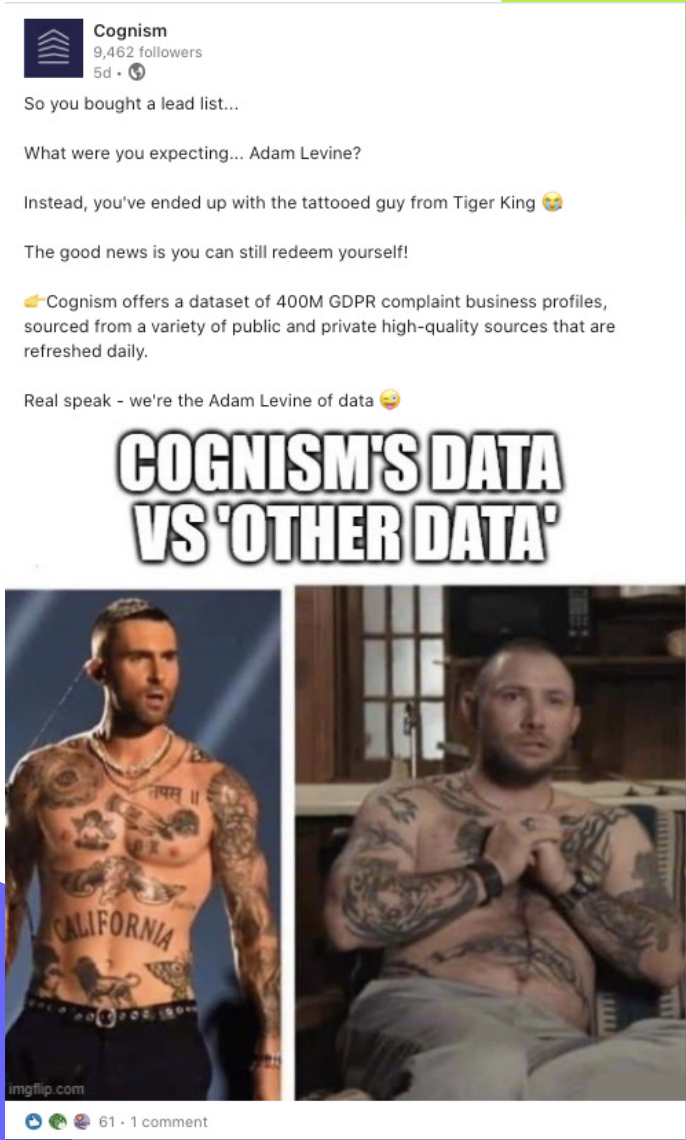
http://bit.ly/3azxAZB

31 · 2 comments

7. Campaign content:



8. Fun:


Cognism
9,462 followers
5d •
So you bought a lead list...
What were you expecting... Adam Levine?
Instead, you've ended up with the tattooed guy from Tiger King 😭
The good news is you can still redeem yourself!
👉Cognism offers a dataset of 400M GDPR complaint business profiles, sourced from a variety of public and private high-quality sources that are refreshed daily.
Real speak - we're the Adam Levine of data 😜
COGNISM'S DATA VS 'OTHER DATA'
CALIFORNIA
imgflip.com
61 · 1 comment

For instagram, we are tracking in a similar way, but the content is different:

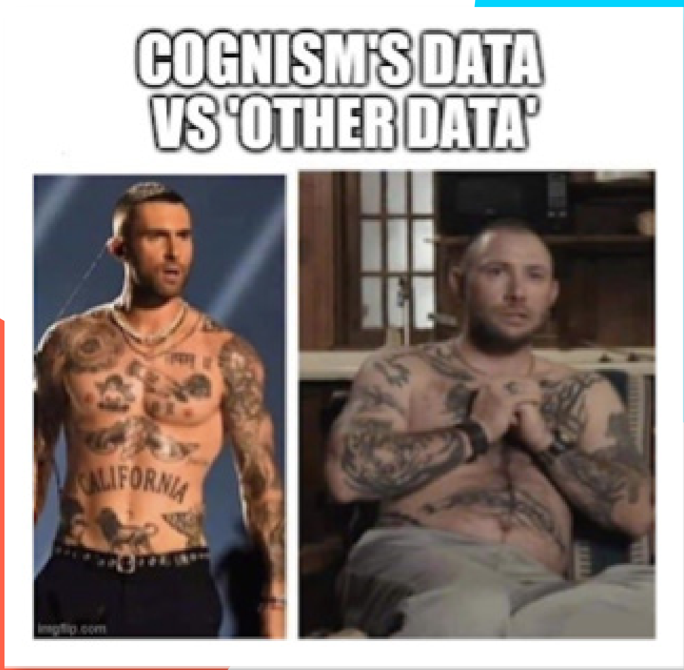
Post type	Engagement
January 2021	
Adam Levine Meme	51 likes, 1 comment
GF Meme	31 likes, 1 story share
Awards/company milestone	28 likes, 2 comments
Video	94 views, 19 likes
Webinar	18 likes
Product	17 likes, 1 comment
Newsletters	14 likes
Templates	12 likes

Memes are the clear winner on Instagram right now, whereas educational content doesn't perform as well.

As a result, we'll create more memes until the data shows otherwise.

But when we're getting DMs like this, it's tough to see anything kicking them off top spot.

The top performing Instagram post to date:



Newsletters

The final key area of focus for the content team is newsletters.

If you can build a successful newsletter channel, this can give you a whole new channel to engage with your prospects and customers.

We want to focus on owning these channels and building them ourselves, rather than syndicating on other people's channels. This is often expensive and, from our experience, unproductive.

We've split out our newsletters so that we have specialized newsletters for each of our key personas:

Sales leaders

Marketing/ Demand Gen Leaders

Content Professionals

The reason for this is so we can better tailor the newsletters to our personas, building up a more loyal, relevant readership. Plus it also allows us to get tactical with the resources we share.

The format

What we have found to work best so far for these is:

- Text only
- Conversational
- Educational*

*Don't take an educational approach with your brand content. You need to earn the right to talk about yourself."

Here's a snippet of our latest content newsletter to show you what I mean:

Cognism Content Digest #7: What a sad little life
Use
..The List and Twist. At least that's what top copywriter, Dan Nelken, calls it. This technique **lists three things**, but the last item is something unexpected enough to prick your ears. It can be funny. But most of all, it's memorable. That makes it ideal to use for product descriptions and CTAs. ... (P.S. if you're worried about content duplication, check out **the debate** in the comments)
Like
...Your own posts and comments on LinkedIn. This is a tactic I spotted from a popular B2B marketing influencer and started reading more about. And according to SocialMedia Examiner, it's a totally legit way to drive more engagement and trap yourself in the algorithm.

Final thoughts on content:

One word: planning.

If you want to build a content strategy that'll continuously deliver for you in terms of SEO and lead gen, it needs to be underpinned by **data-driven marketing** decisions.

At Cognism, our content is planned half yearly, leaving some room for crea

- In-depth keyword analysis focusing on: keywords we rank for and want to maintain in core territories; high intent keywords we don't yet rank for but want to rank for in core territories; keywords aligned to customer pain points we want to own in core territories.
- Content our campaigns/demand gen team require that can ensure we cover: TOFU, MOFU, and BOFU
- Industry-specific content
- Regional-specific content

We've produced a content calendar template that helps us track and manage all this work. **It's yours** if you want it!

Date	Content Title	Theme	Funnel Position	Objective	Type	Channel	Keywords	Comments	Date Completed	URL
Friday, 1 January 2021										
Monday, 4 January 2021										
Tuesday, 5 January 2021										
Wednesday, 6 January 2021										
Thursday, 7 January 2021										
Friday, 8 January 2021										
Monday, 11 January 2021										
Tuesday, 12 January 2021										
Wednesday, 13 January 2021										
Thursday, 14 January 2021										
Friday, 15 January 2021										
Monday, 18 January 2021										
Tuesday, 19 January 2021										
Wednesday, 20 January 2021										
Thursday, 21 January 2021										
Friday, 22 January 2021										
Monday, 25 January 2021										
Tuesday, 26 January 2021										
Wednesday, 27 January 2021										
Thursday, 28 January 2021										

Category 2: Campaigns/ Demand Gen.

Campaigns and demand gen is a combination of our always-on gated content activity, such as:

- Reports
- White papers
- Templates

AND our spotlight initiatives, including:

- Free tools
- Thematic campaigns

Choosing exactly who you want to own these projects and how you'll empower them to meet their targets will decide whether you succeed or fail.

Here's what I've learned about structuring the Cognism team:

Hiring growth-focused marketers

We know how important growth-focused marketers are.

So how do you go about hiring them?

Well, by asking yourself the following questions, you'll be able to decide whether they're up to the job:

- Have they demonstrated the willingness to own a number?
- Have they proven an ability to move the needle on key metrics?
- Do they understand which metrics matter?
- Are they comfortable pivoting quickly?
- Have they learned by failing?
- Do they get a lot done?

Of course, finding candidates with all the right characteristics is easier said than done.

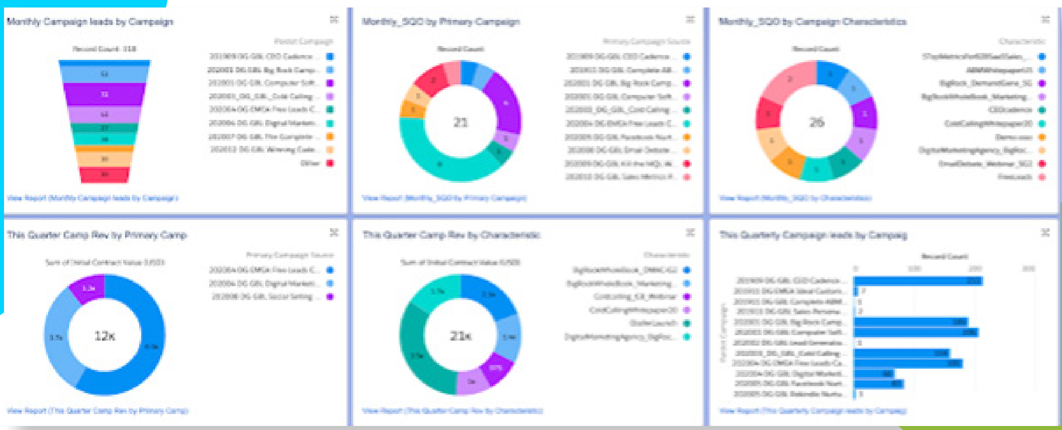
So you need to develop an interview process that tests for them.
This is so important and it's a topic I'll be returning to in the future!

Once you have your **demand generation** team in place, give them a number they can own and understand.

The campaigns team owns an SQO target.

It's 50% of the sales-qualified opportunity target from inbound and content.

Importantly they have dashboards where they can track their campaign performance against this target:



But that on its own isn’t enough.

In the early days, the campaigns team spent too much time planning and building.

The results were all too familiar:

They’d set something live after weeks of planning, see it didn’t work, and become demoralized. They’d spend even more time trying to get it to work, for fear of wasting the time already spent on it.

The opportunity cost here was far too high and the mentality was all wrong.

So I changed our MO.

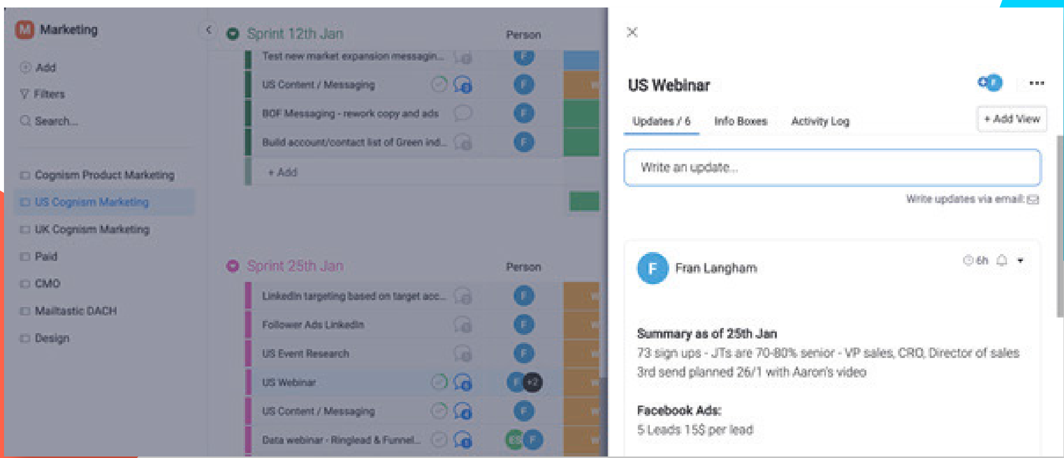
Instead of endless planning and works-in-progress, the team switched to a cycle of bi-weekly sprints.

In these sprints, we review the key numbers, our status to target, and our priority metrics. Then we decide on a collective action plan.

The focus is to improve our numbers with the least possible effort.

The sprint ends with us setting out clear next steps, accountability, and the expected outcome, which we follow up on during the next sprint review.

So how does this look in practice?



Because Cognism's team is remote and of a certain size, it needs tools to run effective sprints.

We use Monday.com for this.
And we love it.

It's trackable, which creates visibility and it integrates nicely into your everyday tools and workflows.

TOP TIP:
Set up Slack alerts for extra motivation and transparency.

And the results speak for themselves...

Now, we're moving much faster, getting campaigns live in double-quick time. We're also super-concentrated on our key lead generation objectives.

Some other ways you can drive efficiency include:

- Be fearless in killing things! Not everything will work. You need to balance the opportunity cost of time spent vs the potential rewards.
- Drill this motto into your team: 'work in progress' = no value added. A good campaign today is better than a great campaign next week.
- Set SLAs on key repeatable activities. For example, setting up a webinar should be possible in 1 week, while getting a gated piece of content ready to launch should be done in 2 days or less.
- Measure everything in numbers!

Offer, buyer stage, and channels

So now we've covered who and how this team works, it's time to take you under the hood of what they work on.

Put simply, all activities boil down to:

- Offer
- Buyer stage
- Channels

Our core focus is about reducing the time it takes to convert strangers who fit our ICP into prospects. And then converting those prospects into loyal, happy customers.

We're also focused on increasing the conversion rates at each stage of this journey.

Offer

This is where you can really look to experiment as a performance-driven demand gen team. I'm always pushing the team to think outside the box when it comes to offers.

I do this by setting a key challenge:

That is to create so much demand for one of our offers that we have to automate or scale it. One campaign that smashed it out of the park for us in exactly this way is 'Free Leads'.

This offers 25 free leads to cold audience prospects within our ICP.

Buyer stage

We're a B2B data provider, but we don't run free trials of our product as standard.

As many of our competitors do run trials, this created friction in our lead gen processes. And we wanted to show, not tell to provide value before we asked our prospects for their time.

We use our software ourselves in marketing, so we had the idea to run the samples ourselves when requested, and provide 25 leads to prove the quality of our offering.

We had no plans for how this could scale, and no idea if it'd even be an offer our ICP would engage with.

So we started by building a landing page and messaging for our offer, and defining the channels and audience we would test this on.

For our MVP and testing purposes, we decided to run the offer only to retargeting audiences that hadn't yet converted. This allowed us to narrow down the targeting and concentrate on people who knew us or showed intent.

This also ensured we didn't suddenly have an overwhelming influx of demand we couldn't service.

Channels

The channels we used were:

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Google Display

We quickly saw conversions on this campaign way above our usual offer for a 'free demo' to the same audience.

So we gradually started to expand the campaign audience, the channels, and the stage in the funnel we used the offer in. To date, the campaign has generated **$185,000.00 in revenue and 179 opportunities**.

While this is just one example of a successful Cognism campaign, others are underpinned by the same three pillars and philosophy (offer, buyer stage, channel).

Anything that works is uncomplicated. It builds for demand before looking for scale. And it creates nice problems you need to solve by then finding a way to scale for this demand.

If you need a template for mapping out your campaigns, we've got one of those:

Get your campaign planning template now

‘Always on’ optimisation

Another key focus for the campaigns team is turning the always on content downloads (from gated LinkedIn content campaigns) into opportunities.

Now this is a controversial area in marketing, as the ‘to gate, or not to gate’ debate rolls on. At Cognism we gate our high-value content resources because:

1. We believe in the value of the content we are delivering
2. We match the content to the buyer stage
3. It works
4. It scales

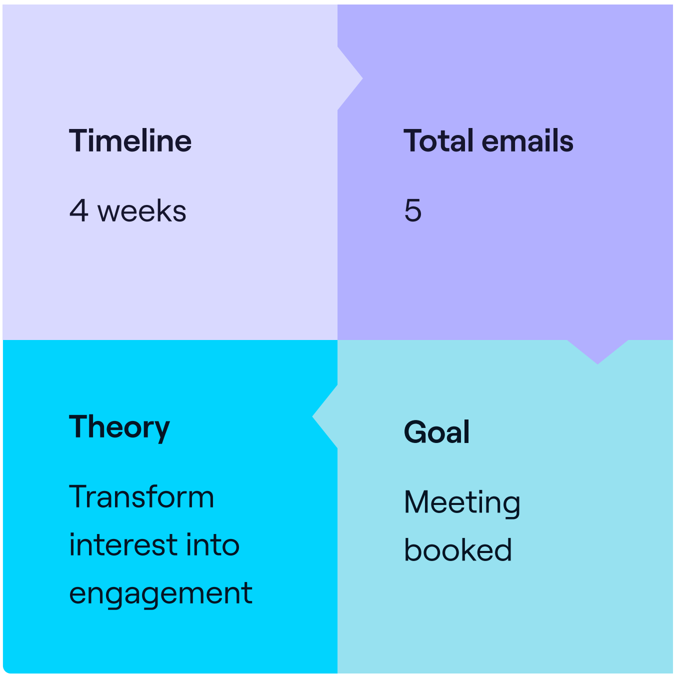
Importantly, you won’t get 3 and 4 if you don’t do 1 and 2 well, and that all comes back to your content planning which we covered earlier.

Optimising this part of our strategy has a number of components:

I’d love to cover all of these topics in detail, but we’ll have to save that for another time!

Instead, I'll focus on the final point here:

How to set-up and structure a high-performing email nurture program to engage your content downloads with.



Timeline

Day 1
Content download

Day 2
Email 1: Thank you

Day 6
Email 2: Expand interest

Day 11
Email 3: Problem-solver template/resource

Day 16
Email 4: MOFU content

Day 19
Email 5: Scale with offers

Emails

The "thank you"

- Polite reminder and access to the content download
- Consider sharing similar TOFU resources and value-centric blogs!

The "expand interest"

- You liked [x], so we thought you might find [y] useful?
- Re-introduce who you are, but continue to offer value.

The "problem solver":

- Isn't it annoying when [x] happens?
- You showed an interest in [x] topic – here's our template to solve that problem.

The "MOFU":

- It's time for later-stage resources.
- Reports, case studies – content that can be presented in a value-forward light (but that also references your offering!)

The "offer":

- Once they're engaged, it's time to convert.
- Showcase an exclusive offer that will get them to book a meeting – a free trial or something that entices them.

Nurture campaigns

The campaigns team works on building out full lifecycle nurture programs. This ensures we engage with strangers, prospects and, customers at every stage of their buyer journey.

TOP TIP:

This shouldn't stop when they've rejected you or become a lost opportunity.

There are so many opportunties sitting in your CRM in 'nurture', 'rejected', 'closed lost;' stages.
It's your low-hanging fruit and much easier than generating new demand.

So let's take your close lost opps as an example and see what you could be doing to re-engage and remain top of mind.

Timeline

Dependent on closed-lost reason (see below)

Theory

Reconvert closed-lost opportunities into new ones

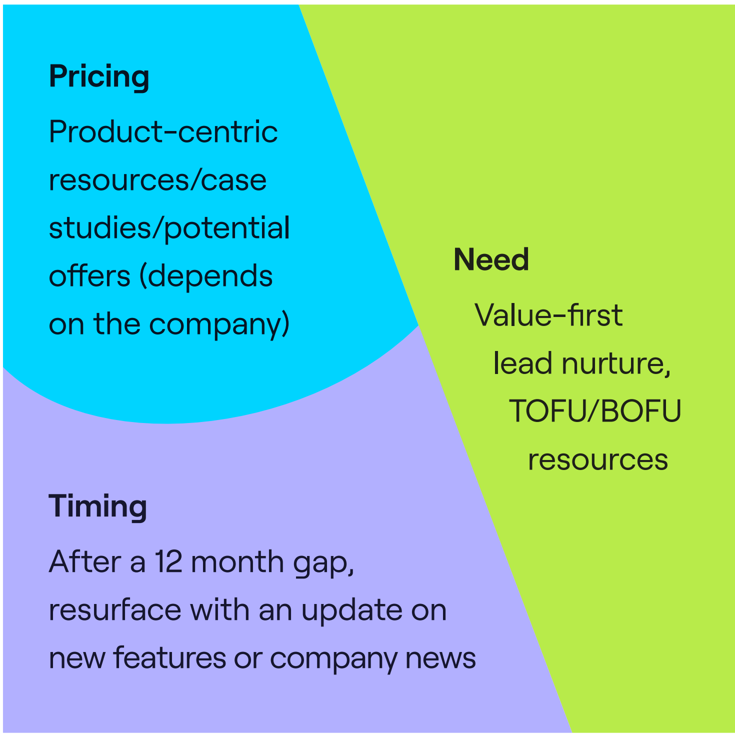
Goal

Meeting booked

Segments

Your emails can be tailored to meet and resolve the original reason for the opportunity failing. Whether it's an issue of pricing, timing or need, try to adapt your approach to that issue – including how long after the opportunity fails, before you get back in touch.

Closed-lost reasons



Timeline
Day 1 Email 1: Light reintroduction
Day 4 Email 2: Re-engaging
Day 7 Email 3: TOFU warmer
Day 10 Email 4: Tailoring
Day 12 Email 5: Scale with offers
Day 26 Email 6: The MOFU microwave
Day 28

Emails

The "reintroduction":
- Remember us? It's been a while, but we've got [x] new resource that you'd love.
- A podcast works great here.

The "re-engaging":
- Share some of the content you've made recently, but also push your socials.
- They don't want to miss out on the latest tips, right?

The "TOFU warmer":
- Time to shine – push your best blogs to get them involved.
- Ideally this stage is personalised as much as possible!

The "tailoring":
- Give them some options between resources
- Let them show you their pain points, deliver value, and maybe even book a meeting through your site.

The "offer":
- Once they're engaged, it's time to convert.
- Showcase an exclusive offer that will get them to book a meeting – a free trial or something that entices them.

The "MOFU microwave":
- They didn't take up the offer? Time to reheat that lead.
- They've had some space, now give them a report or case study to mull over.

The "second swing":
- Reframe your initial offer in email 5. What could they gain from it? is it a timed exclusive?
- This is the last chance to convert – make it count!

Performance marketing

Cognism's performance marketing department generates demand through paid activities. These include:

- PPC
- LinkedIn Ads
- Facebook Ads
- Programmatic Ads

Here, I'm going to look at how outsourcing could kill this crucial role while exploring some key metrics.

Let's dive in.

Why in-house wins

The most important thing any CMO can have in their locker is an in-house, performance-driven marketer.

And I say in-house because I've seen the damage a 'set and forget' mentality can have on paid channels.

Understanding all the intricacies and levers of each paid channel is vital if you're going to find repeatable and sustainable success in paid.

Say a competitor starts to aggressively bid on your brand name by impression share. Without an adept performance marketer, you risk losing paid traction for however long it takes you to realize. Plus your inbound performance will fall off a cliff.

Can you afford for this to go undetected for a day?

Never mind a week or longer.

That's why if you have to outsource the role, you should be prepared to pay good money for it.

Still, I'd recommend against it. But either way, you'll need daily updates on your paid channels.

Key metrics

While it's easy to get caught up on specific platform metrics with a performance role, the targets should remain the same:

SQOs and revenue, with some key efficiency metrics thrown in, such as cost-per-SQO and CPA.

Tracking all of these together will ensure you're always optimizing the channels and spend for the right things.

If you want to take your paid marketing to the next level, it's important to dive deeper into the detail, and provide more regular, granular views.

This is what our performance marketer does. They break down performance by channel and look at the metrics below, with a laser focus for optimization:

Google Ads

	EMEA B2B Data Campaign	notes:	Another week of consistent performance, lead quality looks good too.
Leads	5		
Spent	678.02		
CTR	4.08%		
Conv. rate	11.90%		
CPL	135.60		

LinkedIn Ads

notes:

A stable and consistent week on leads. Major changes are a good reduction in CPL for the digital marketing campaign. And also a rise in cost on the BOF campaign. We may be tiring the audience here. We've just added new content and creatives, so hopefully, we see a bounce back. There has been an increase in the CompSoft Sales/Marketing 51+ but that would be expected as last week it included some 11-50 time period. One thing to note, Marketing content does great on the 11-50s but not on the 51+. We're missing the mark on larger company marketing messaging.

	ComSoft Sales 51+	ComSoft Marketing 51+	BOF Content	ComSoft Sales 11-50	ComSoft Marketing 11-50
Spend	427.26	427.55	175.96	25.32	25.93
Leads	14.00	16.00	18.00	2.00	4.00
CPL	**30.52**	**26.72**	**9.78**	**12.66**	**6.48**
CTR	0.84%	0.65%	1.02%	0.83%	1.64%
	DigiMark Sales	**DigiMark Marketing**	**DigiMark AccServ**		
Spend	350.86	352.60	350.81		
Leads	17.00	16.00	14.00		
CPL	**20.64**	**22.04**	**25.06**	**Content Leads:**	**183**
CTR	0.77%	0.94%	0.66%		

And that brings me onto reporting, KPIs, and key metrics more broadly.

As a CMO, having control over your key metrics is vital. This means when things start to change you can react quickly and make adjustments.

So what metrics do I keep under my hood?

Then I look at the efficiency of the funnel by tracking these core items:

- Cost per MQL – we aim for under $25
- Cost per MB – we aim for under $250
- Cost per SQO – we aim for under $450
- Cost per acquisition – we aim for under $1200 *

*A business’s benchmarks for these will directly depend on deal size and average deal length.

If you bring in larger deals that stay longer, you can afford to spend more on bringing them in. It’ll also vary from region to region.

For example, we see most of our metrics increase in the US as we're operating in a more competitive environment.

It's also important to be tracking the conversion rates achieved across this funnel for forecasting:

- MQL:MB
- MB:MA
- MA:SQO
- SQO:CW
- MA:CW

Reporting to the board

As CMO, you're likely to be reporting performance to the board as well. For this, you need to understand other key metrics such as CAC.

We break down our CAC across our 3 main 'tactics': Inbound, Paid, and Content. This enables us to see which channel is more efficient and scaling fastest.

Some other things that keep me up at night as CMO are:

- Average response time to an inbound request. We target under 3 minutes, track it daily, and compensate our MDRs on it.
- % of inbound requests that have an outcome. We target 70%. It's one thing to action an inbound straight away, but you want to motivate your MDRs to be persistent and track down an outcome consistently.

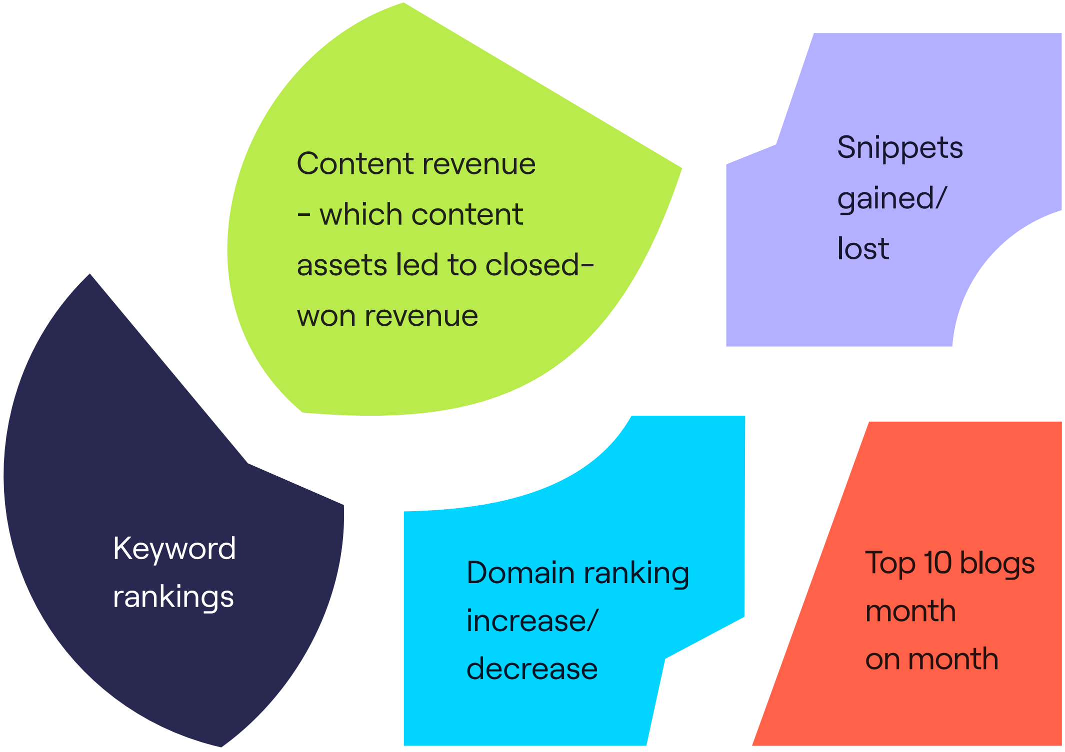
- Stalled MQLs: by region, by rep, by campaign
- MQLs with no activity: by region, by rep, and by campaign

We track all of this on what we call our 'Inbound Dashboard'.

As you can tell from the length of the 'Content' section of this piece, my locker is full of content.

Reporting to the board

- Blog views % change/ increase month on month
- Page 1 rankings gained/lost
- Backlinks gained/lost
- Content opportunities – which content assets led to opps being created
- Target keyword improvements/declines: split out into primary keywords, secondary, and retained

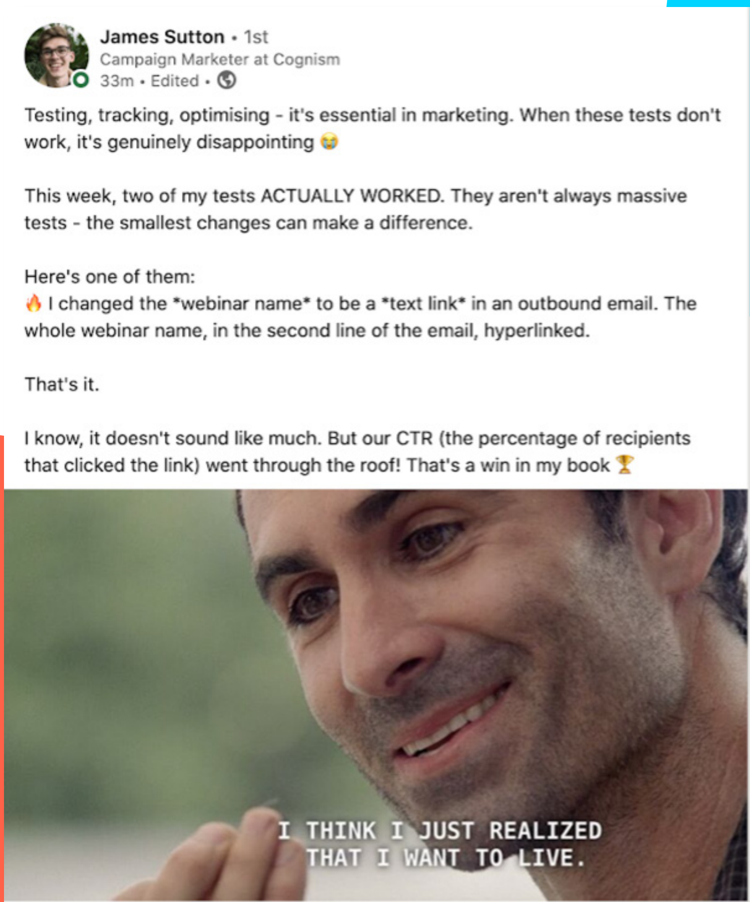


That's because I run a content-first strategy. That means I care about these important content metrics or 'leading indicators':

My key focuses for 2021

I'm a relatively new CMO, but I've scaled from scattergun to predictable in under six months. I hope that by looking in my locker, you'll be able to build and scale a predictable marketing engine, as well as a performance-minded marketing team.

If your team starts posting like this on LinkedIn, it's a good indication you're on the right track:


James Sutton • 1st
Campaign Marketer at Cognism
33m • Edited •

Testing, tracking, optimising - it's essential in marketing. When these tests don't work, it's genuinely disappointing 😭

This week, two of my tests ACTUALLY WORKED. They aren't always massive tests - the smallest changes can make a difference.

Here's one of them:
🔥 I changed the *webinar name* to be a *text link* in an outbound email. The whole webinar name, in the second line of the email, hyperlinked.

That's it.

I know, it doesn't sound like much. But our CTR (the percentage of recipients that clicked the link) went through the roof! That's a win in my book 🏆

Last of all, I'm going to leave you with the key focuses for me and my team this year:

1 Efficiency – waving goodbye to lengthy campaign plans that take months to execute only to flop. Instead, we've embraced a campaign sprint methodology.

2 Transparency – we're still working from home and visibility is an issue, even if everyone is getting lots done. So in 2021, we're going to share everything, which will inevitably lead to better idea flow.

3 Innovation + ownership + execution: queue mantra – 'a good idea is only as good as its execution'.

4 Revenue marketing: own, know, love the numbers. We are building a team of revenue-focused marketers, 'scientists'.

5 Purpose – 'MAKE SALES EASIER'

Send us your feedback

Do you have any comments/feedback about our guide? Connect with us on our social media - we'd love to hear from you!

Contact Cognism today

Cognism is the world's best all-in-one prospecting solution. Our accurate, compliant and intelligent B2B data can help you to:

- Identify more of your ideal customers.
- Engage with them when they're most likely to buy.
- Build a pipeline at lightning speed.
- Improve your outreach and drive better results.

Request your demo today