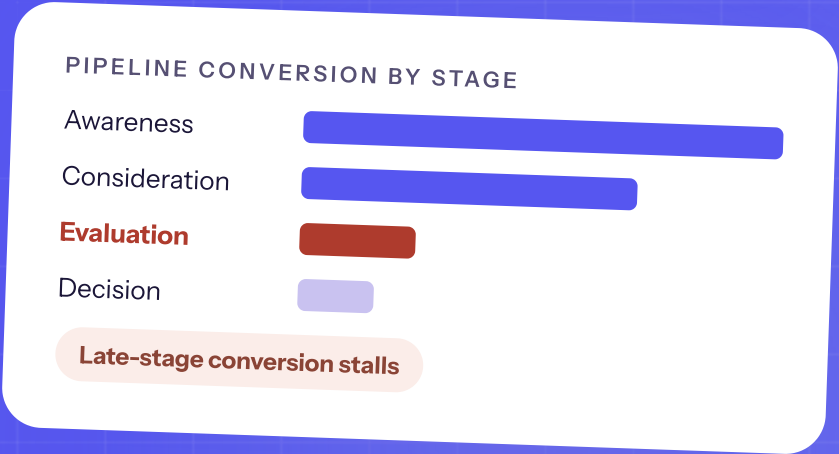
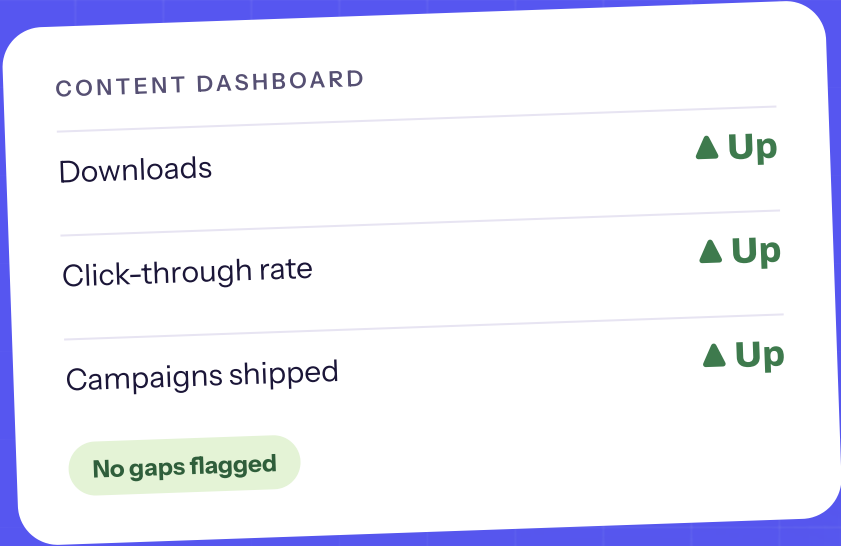


EBOOK

Find the content gaps your dashboards can't see

Learn why engagement metrics miss the buyers who find no answer, where those gaps form across the buying committee, and how to read pipeline conversion as a signal of missing content.

THE CAMPAIGN OPERATING SYSTEM FOR B2B MARKETING.



TL;DR

01	Engagement can't see absence	Engagement metrics record content interactions, such as clicks and downloads, but don't register when a buyer role at a specific pipeline stage finds no relevant asset and sources answers elsewhere.
02	Gaps sit at evaluation	Gaps exist at evaluation-critical stages where buying-committee members navigate decisions without relevant assets.
03	Competitors answer first	When these absences go unfilled, competitors fill them. The content that answers first sets the evaluation criteria every subsequent vendor interaction is measured against.
04	Conversion shows the outcome, not the cause	Stage conversion records the outcome of these absences. The metric does not identify which role lacked support or whether content existed to address that role's question at that stage.
05	The two dashboards never meet	Most CMO-led marketing organizations have separate dashboards for pipeline data and content coverage, which means the connection between the two goes unexamined.

What's inside

This eBook explains why standard content metrics miss critical pipeline gaps, how coverage shortfalls form at role-stage intersections, and how to align content planning with actual deal progression.

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Content reporting and deal progression don't connect

Most content teams report asset counts, campaign launches, and engagement numbers that look right. But demand generation leaders would struggle to answer a different question: where are there gaps in content coverage for specific questions buyers raise before they move along the buying journey? This question seems at first blush to be a gap in operational rigor. Instead, it marks a disconnect between content reporting and deal progression data, and most standard dashboards lack the structure to connect the two.

Senior marketing leaders describe a consistent source of frustration: deal-loss interviews surface buyer questions that the sales team answered verbally because they had no content available, the content library shows strong asset counts, and the engagement report registers no warning of the mismatch. B2B SaaS decision committees don't pause when a question goes unanswered; buyers source answers from anywhere that fills the absence. Pipeline conversion records the outcome, but it doesn't identify who encountered no content and looked elsewhere.

Distinguishing between a content program that generates attention and one that advances buying-committee decisions requires more than a better dashboard. Demand generation functions must recognize that the two operate on independent axes. The reporting surfaces most marketing organizations rely on to measure the first were built without any structural connection to the second. This disconnect concentrates at predictable role-stage intersections and compounds across the pipeline before deal-loss data surfaces the issue.

The argument starts with what engagement metrics actually measure, and what they structurally ignore.

01

Seeing what engagement metrics obscure

[Gartner's 2025 data shows 59% of CMOs report insufficient budget¹](#). For board directors evaluating efficiency, this constraint sharpens the focus on a specific visibility gap: marketing organizations produce content that registers in dashboards but fails to support deals.

59% of CMOs report insufficient budget in 2025, according to Gartner

Engagement metrics record interaction, not absence. A dashboard registers when a buyer touches an asset, but remains static when a buyer asks a question no asset answers. These represent two separate dynamics, and standard reporting fails to connect them.

This matters because the two surfaces diverge sharply while every visible indicator reads healthy.

¹ Gartner, 2025 CMO Spend Survey, May 12, 2025. [businesswire.com/news/home/20250512782208](https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20250512782208)

Marketing and revenue operations review different numbers

MARKETING · QUARTERLY REVIEW

Click-through rates

▲ Increase

Downloads

▲ Rise

Campaigns shipped

▲ More than last quarter

≠

REVENUE OPERATIONS · PIPELINE REVIEW

Late-stage conversion

▼ Stalls

Reviewed separately, in a different meeting.

Imagine that a growth-stage B2B SaaS marketing team closes their quarterly review. Click-through rates increase, downloads rise, and the team ships more campaigns than the prior quarter. Meanwhile, revenue operations reviews the pipeline separately and notes that late-stage conversion stalls. **No standard report joins these two data sets.**

When a product marketing leader pulls deal-loss interview notes, a consistent pattern emerges: buyers at the evaluation stage asked security and integration questions. Sales answered verbally. **No asset exists for that buying-committee role at that stage.** The engagement metric never registered the absence because the buyer had nothing to engage with.

Engagement metrics can't show a missing asset

Execution remained strong, but coverage failed, and the dashboard lacked the mechanism to detect this. Engagement metrics aggregate attention signals across all content interactions without recording which buyer role consumed the asset, at which pipeline stage, or whether the interaction addressed an open question influencing the deal. A security lead doing a deep-dive at the evaluation stage and a champion downloading a top-of-funnel overview generate identical signals in most content reporting systems.

Demand generation leaders may assume a strong engagement trend confirms the content program works. Whether the right person sees the content, at the right stage, in response to the right question remains a separate measurement question, and one engagement data can't answer.

The reporting tension persists. Engagement metrics provide a defensible, consistently available performance narrative, and finance stakeholders recognize the signals. Shifting to a coverage lens requires marketing teams to map assets against deal progression data and buying-committee structures. This mapping surfaces an absence, which doesn't fit neatly into the standard marketing reporting narrative.

TWO INTERACTIONS, ONE SIGNAL

Security lead

Deep-dive · evaluation stage

Champion

Overview download · top of funnel

↓ Both reported as

Content engagement

+1 each

Deal reviews show the gap before dashboards do

Marketing operations leaders notice this dynamic first in deal reviews, not dashboards. A sales team member describes a buyer request at a specific pipeline stage. Sales delivered the answer verbally because there was no asset which answered the question.

The pattern repeats across stages:

Late-stage evaluation

Sales teams answer security and integration questions.

Mid-stage consideration

Sales calls cover ROI and competitive differentiation.

Committee expansion

Sales reps encounter new buying-committee members who lack tailored assets for their specific roles or concerns.

Sales covers these absences, leaving them invisible in reporting.

02

Mapping how coverage gaps form across the buying committee

Each movement associated with a coverage gap registers as a normal sales motion, with variations in pipeline movement explained through traditional mechanisms. But collectively, these instances describe a content program that attracts attention but fails to cover the decisions determining deal closure.

The pattern isn't a content volume problem; it's a planning structure problem.

The content production report shows consistent output. Campaigns shipped on schedule. Asset counts are up. But the pattern isn't a content volume problem; it's a planning structure problem. Marketing organizations build content plans from campaign themes and asset types. The brief starts with a narrative, a product angle, or a seasonal moment. Roles and stages often come later or not at all. When planning begins upstream of the actual buyer question, the resulting assets address what the marketing team prioritized, not what the buying committee navigates at that specific stage.

Content production reports hide this absence. A marketing team may ship consistently and still leave entire role-stage intersections empty. This isn't a knock on the team: they're crafting content based on perfectly reasonable signals they've been using for years. The reporting signal measures asset count.

Asset counts hide missing roles at evaluation

The revenue signal, on the other hand, measures whether a security reviewer or a procurement lead at evaluation finds relevant material, or whether the sales rep answers questions manually, deal by deal.

Imagine that a product marketing team at a B2B SaaS company evaluates pipeline assets. Awareness-stage content exists for every ICP persona. At the evaluation stage, content supports the economic buyer and the technical evaluator. Content for the security reviewer and the procurement lead at the same stage remains absent. The sales team fields those questions verbally, assembling custom one-pagers per deal. The content production report failed to show this absence because the system counted total assets, not specific buyer coverage.

The team had been shipping campaigns consistently. The stage conversion drop reflected what those campaigns failed to address. Theme-led planning processes fail to surface this question.

COVERAGE BY ROLE AND STAGE		
	AWARENESS	EVALUATION
Economic buyer	Covered	Covered
Technical evaluator	Covered	Covered
Security reviewer	Covered	Absent
Procurement lead	Covered	Absent

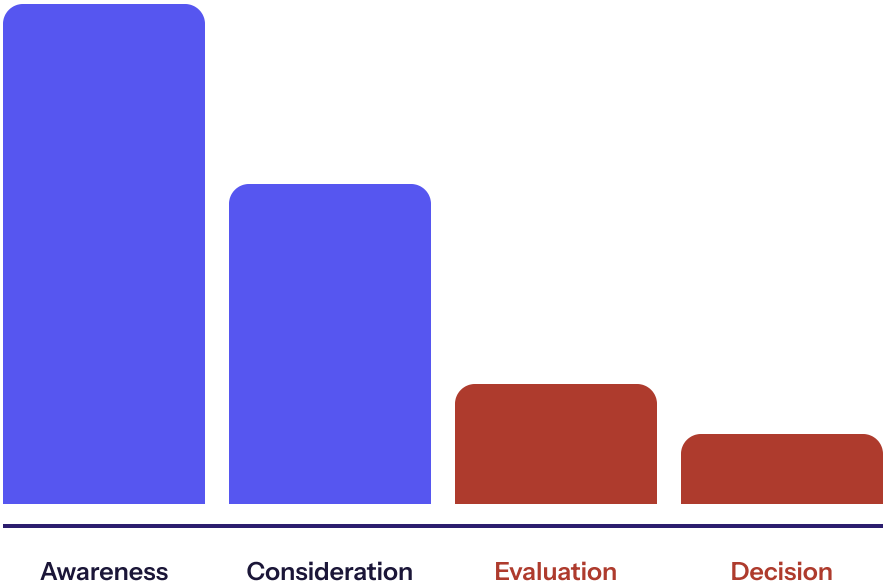
Absent cells are where sales assembles custom one-pagers, deal by deal.

Gaps cluster where buyer questions get specific

Marketing organizations notice a pattern before any specific metric flags a problem. The content library frequently holds high asset volumes at the top of the funnel and drops off at evaluation and decision stages, particularly for technical, security, and financial buyer roles. Entire role-stage intersections remain empty. The sales team’s deal activity and prospect interactions reveal what the content plan missed.

The production report omits this reality; it wasn’t designed to monitor the question in the first place. These absences represent a planning artifact, not an execution failure. Missing content concentrates at predictable intersections, in the roles and stages where buyer questions remain highly specific, and where the cost of an absent asset translates to **a stalled deal rather than a missed click.**

A TYPICAL LIBRARY, COUNTED BY STAGE



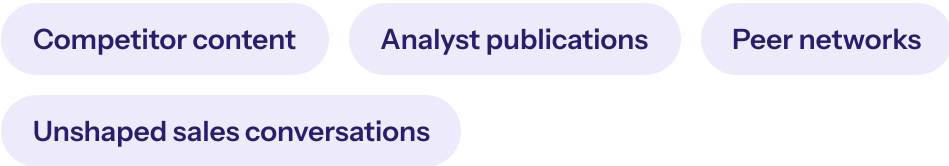
Illustrative. The library thins out just as technical, security, and financial roles join the deal.

03

Recognizing where competitive pressure enters the gap

Buying-committee members don't wait for vendors to fill content absences. Buyers accept answers from whoever responds first.

The absence of an answer is not neutral. Buyers source answers from whatever is available, including competitor content, analyst publications, peer networks, or a sales conversation the marketing organization did not initiate or shape.



This buyer behavior carries weight. Competitor content that answers an evaluation-stage question establishes the evaluation criteria the buyer applies to every subsequent vendor interaction. The absence becomes a competitive positioning event, and the marketing organization ends up playing catchup.

A competitor's content sets the evaluation criteria

1

A technical evaluator needs a security deep-dive at evaluation

2

Our security content is written for awareness-stage readers

3

They find a competitor's security and compliance overview

4

That overview defines the criteria sales is measured against

Deal-loss interviews reveal this pattern imperfectly and only in retrospect. Imagine this scenario: during competitive losses at the evaluation stage, buyers reference a competitor's security and compliance overview as the document that defines their evaluation criteria. The marketing organization possesses security content, written for awareness-stage readers and positioned at the top of the funnel, but no security-specific asset exists for the technical evaluator at the evaluation stage.

The competitor's asset provides the answer and sets the criteria. By the time the sales team engages the security reviewer, a competitor's content already defines the evaluation framework. Buyers arrive at late-stage conversations already using language that originated in a competitor's security overview or evaluation guide. The sales team engages a technical evaluator and discovers a competitor's content already defined the evaluation framework.

The detail that matters is the stage mismatch. Content existed at the top of the funnel, but this evaluator was looking for a deep-dive that the content team hadn't produced. They found an equivalent with a competitor, and suddenly the sales team is answering questions based on a framing designed to preference a competitor.

04

Reading the pipeline as a content coverage signal

When marketing teams misalign coverage by role and stage, the pipeline metric that records the outcome shows a drop, but not the cause of that drop. Revenue operations track stage conversion as an aggregate signal that reflects the stage-level drop profile, but typically the metric does not identify which buying-committee role drove the drop, and it provides no visibility into whether content existed to support that role's decision at that stage.

Missing content and poor sales execution look identical in conversion rate analyses.

Demand generation functions assume this represents a sales problem, but missing content and poor sales execution look identical in conversion rate analyses. This assumption persists because the data lives in two separate places. Pipeline conversion belongs to the revenue operations dashboard, while content performance belongs to the marketing analytics view. Marketing organizations rarely connect those two data sources. Without that coordination, the diagnostic signal connecting the two stays invisible.

In practice, a sales team reports competitive pressure and pricing objections at the evaluation stage. Those observations remain incomplete. If no current content addresses those questions, the buyer finds answers elsewhere, turning to a competitor's analyst brief, a community forum, or an informal reference call. The sales team experiences the consequence of that search, but misses the coverage absence that caused it.

Five signs the gap is already in the pipeline

The pattern marking a structural problem remains consistent: the same pipeline stage shows lower conversion for the same buyer role across multiple deals, independent of deal size, industry, or sales rep. When the pattern holds across that variance, the failure traces back to content structure rather than a rep, a quarter, or a competitor's pricing move.

1**The same stage stalls no matter who's selling.**

If conversion at one stage lags across reps, segments and deal sizes, the cause is unlikely to be any one of them.

2**Sales keeps rebuilding the same answer.**

Custom one-pagers, repeated explanations over email, and "let me get back to you" on security, integration or pricing questions all point to a question the content library doesn't answer.

3**Buyers arrive with criteria the team didn't set.**

When a buyer's evaluation language, checklists or comparison frameworks trace back to a competitor's or analyst's material, someone else answered the question first.

4**The library thins out where the committee widens.**

Counted by stage and role instead of in total, most libraries are dense at awareness and sparse at evaluation. That is exactly where technical, security and financial roles join the deal.

5**Engagement and conversion never share a slide.**

If different teams review content performance and stage conversion in different meetings, nothing in the process can connect the two.

05

Every report asks whether content got attention

Nothing in this picture is a failure of effort. The campaigns shipped, the assets exist, and the engagement numbers are real. The problem is that every report in the stack answers the same question, “did content get attention?”, and none of them asks whether it answered the buyer.

That second question has no natural owner. Content performance lives in marketing analytics. Stage conversion lives in revenue operations. Buyer questions live in call notes and deal-loss interviews. Each view is accurate on its own terms, and none of them is built to show where they overlap. So the gap never appears as a red number. It appears as a stage that keeps underperforming, a sales team that keeps improvising, and buyers who reach evaluation already holding someone else’s criteria.

That last sign is the costly one. An unanswered question at evaluation doesn’t stay open. A competitor, an analyst or a peer answers it, and that answer becomes the yardstick for every vendor conversation that follows. By the time it shows up in a loss review, it reads as one lost deal with one explanation, not as a pattern.

The implication for marketing leaders is narrow but uncomfortable: a healthy content dashboard is not evidence of healthy coverage. It is evidence of activity.

Whether that activity reaches the security reviewer at evaluation or the procurement lead at decision is a separate question, and at most organizations no current report is designed to answer it.

BEFORE THE NEXT QUARTERLY
REVIEW

It's worth asking directly: at the stage where conversion stalls most consistently, which buying-committee roles have content written for their questions, and which ones are getting their answers from someone else?



The Campaign Operating System for B2B marketing.

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