

# 2023 STATE OF MARKETING TO ENGINEERS

INFLUENCING THE TECHNICAL SALE

TREW MARKETING

GlobalSpec





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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2023 State of Marketing to Engineers Report. This marks the sixth consecutive year GlobalSpec and TREW Marketing have partnered to better understand how engineers and technical buyers find the information they need to make purchasing decisions.

Our survey contains a mix of popular topics we've asked about consistently to monitor trends, along with fresh questions that take a deeper dive into buying behaviors. This year's research touches on search, finding industry experts, podcasts, and in-person events.

## The State of Marketing to Engineers Report is designed to:

**Help you better understand** the information needs of technical buyers

**Provide critical insights** to guide your marketing plans

**Educate and forge alignment** with your leadership and sales organizations

# ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

## Participants by AGE

(n = 847)

35 and under	<b>13%</b>
36 – 45	<b>17%</b>
46 – 55	<b>18%</b>
56 – 65	<b>33%</b>
66+	<b>19%</b>

## Participants by JOB FUNCTION

(n = 851)

Engineering / R&D	<b>83%</b>
Manufacturing Staff	<b>10%</b>
Product Management	<b>6%</b>

## Participants by PRIMARY INDUSTRY

(n = 693)

Aerospace / Defense	<b>14%</b>
Automotive	<b>12%</b>
Process Technology	<b>11%</b>
Utilities / Utilities Infrastructure	<b>11%</b>
Energy and Natural Resources	<b>11%</b>
Electronics / Electronic Componentsx / Semiconductor	<b>10%</b>
Medical Devices / Equipment	<b>7%</b>
Chemicals / Materials	<b>6%</b>
Food and Beverage	<b>5%</b>
Communications and Networking	<b>5%</b>
Academic / University	<b>4%</b>
Life Sciences	<b>2%</b>



# ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS, CONTINUED

## Participants by GENDER IDENTITY

(n = 601)

Male	90%
Female	7%
Prefer not to answer	3%

## Participants by COMPANY SIZE (# of EMPLOYEES)

(n = 845)

1 – 250	48%
251 – 500	11%
501 – 750	5%
751 – 1,000	5%
over 1,000	31%

## Participants by BACKGROUND

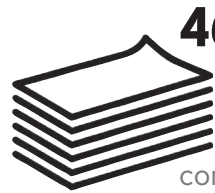
(n = 603)

White or Caucasian	56%
Asian or Asian American	19%
Hispanic or Latino	10%
Black or African American	3%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1%
Prefer to self-describe	6%
Prefer not to answer	9%

# KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR INDUSTRIAL MARKETERS



While **searching online**, **43%** of engineers filter through at least **5 pages** of search results to find the information they're looking for. In the process, about half of engineers actively avoid paid ads.



**46%** of engineers say they usually **review** at least **6 pieces of content** as part of their vendor consideration process.



**42%** of engineers **find industry experts** and pundits through technical publications. Some find them through social means by turning to LinkedIn, YouTube, and conferences.



**73%** of engineers listen to work-related **podcasts**, and over half prefer shorter episodes.



Engineers **look for assistance from sales** to validate their independent online research and better grasp concepts in the face of technical complexity. Only **5%** percent of respondents said they'd prefer not to interact with a salesperson at all.

In 2023, **55%** of engineers plan to **attend in-person events** at the same rate or more than they did in 2019 (pre-pandemic).



In line with 2022, engineers consider



the most valuable **social media platforms** for work. 29% of engineers use TikTok, and only 8% find it valuable for work.



# SURVEY FINDINGS

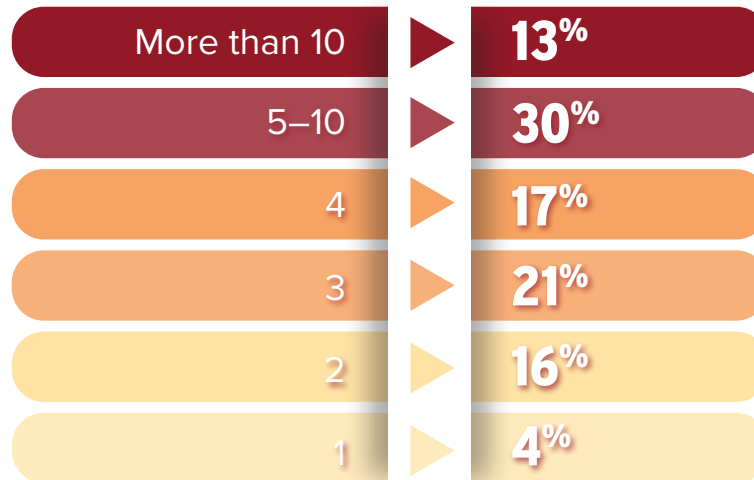
- ▶ **Seeking Answers**
- ▶ **Channels and Site Organization**
- ▶ **Content Preferences**
- ▶ **Newsletters**
- ▶ **Social Media and Sharing**
- ▶ **Industry Experts**
- ▶ **Podcasts**
- ▶ **In-Person Events**
- ▶ **Interaction with Sales**

# SEEKING ANSWERS

**Forty-three percent** of engineers will filter through at least five pages of search results to find what they're looking for. Similar to 2020, when we last inquired about this topic, only four percent stick to the first page of search results.

*When searching for work-related information using a search engine, how many pages of results are you willing to review before you select a page to visit or restart your search?*

(n = 697)



*“Even in the era of Google’s snippets featured prominently on page one, engineers keep the mouse moving, searching numerous pages deep to find ultra-specific information from trusted sources. Leverage this behavior by running content campaigns centered upon customer pain points and niche applications.”*

*-- Wendy Covey  
CEO and Co-Founder, TREW Marketing*

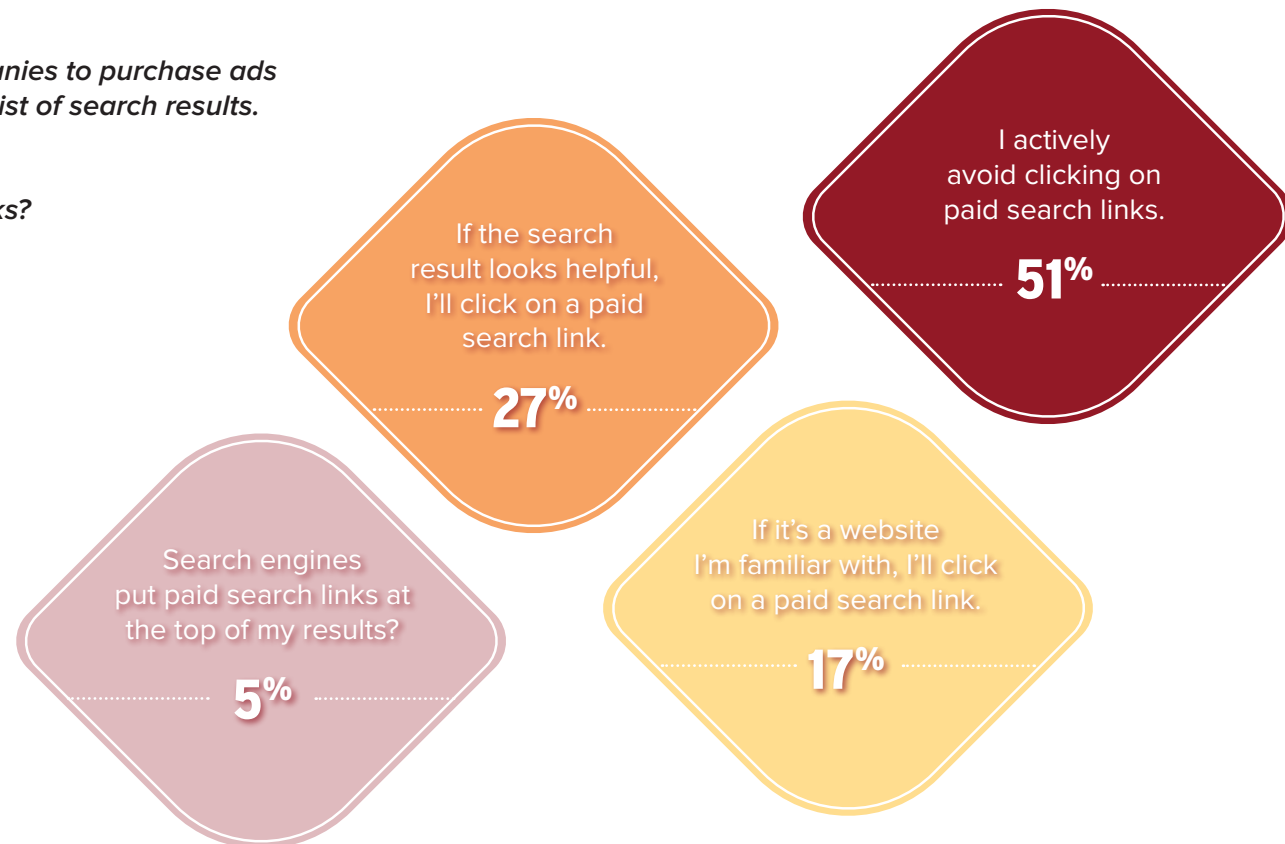


# SEEKING ANSWERS

When searching online, **51 percent** of engineers avoid paid search ads at all costs. However, if a paid link demonstrates a direct connection to search inquiry or clearly links to a familiar site, **44 percent** will click.

*Search engines allow companies to purchase ads that appear as links in your list of search results. This is called “paid search.” How, if at all, do you interact with paid search links?*

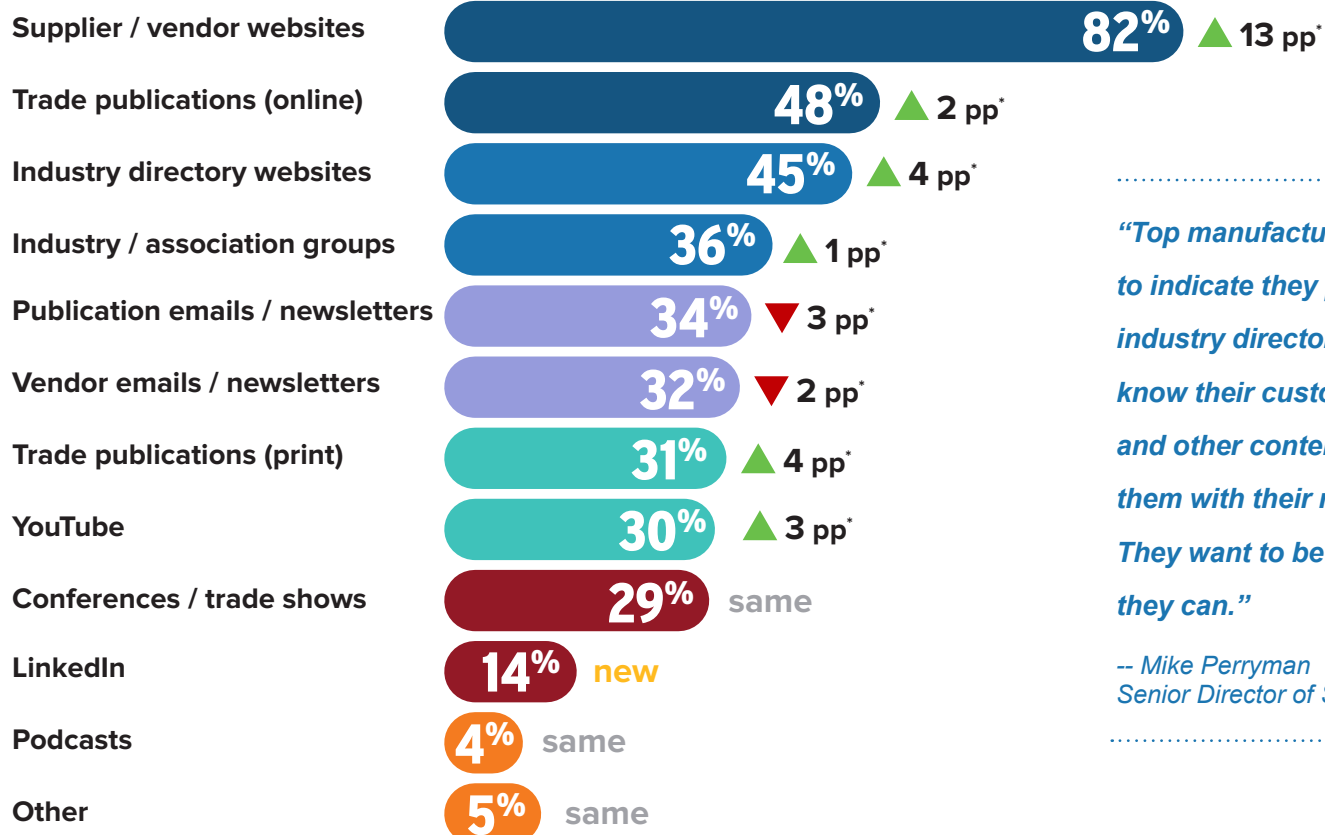
(n = 697)



# CHANNELS AND SITE ORGANIZATION

Most engineers **go directly to supplier / vendor websites** when researching a specific product or service. Nearly half say they consult trusted industry resources like online trade publications and/or directory websites. New this year, respondents were given the option to select “LinkedIn” (rather than “Social media” more generally). **Fourteen percent selected LinkedIn as a place to find product or service information.**

*Where do you routinely seek information when researching a product or service for a work-related purchase?  
Select all that apply.* (n = 700)



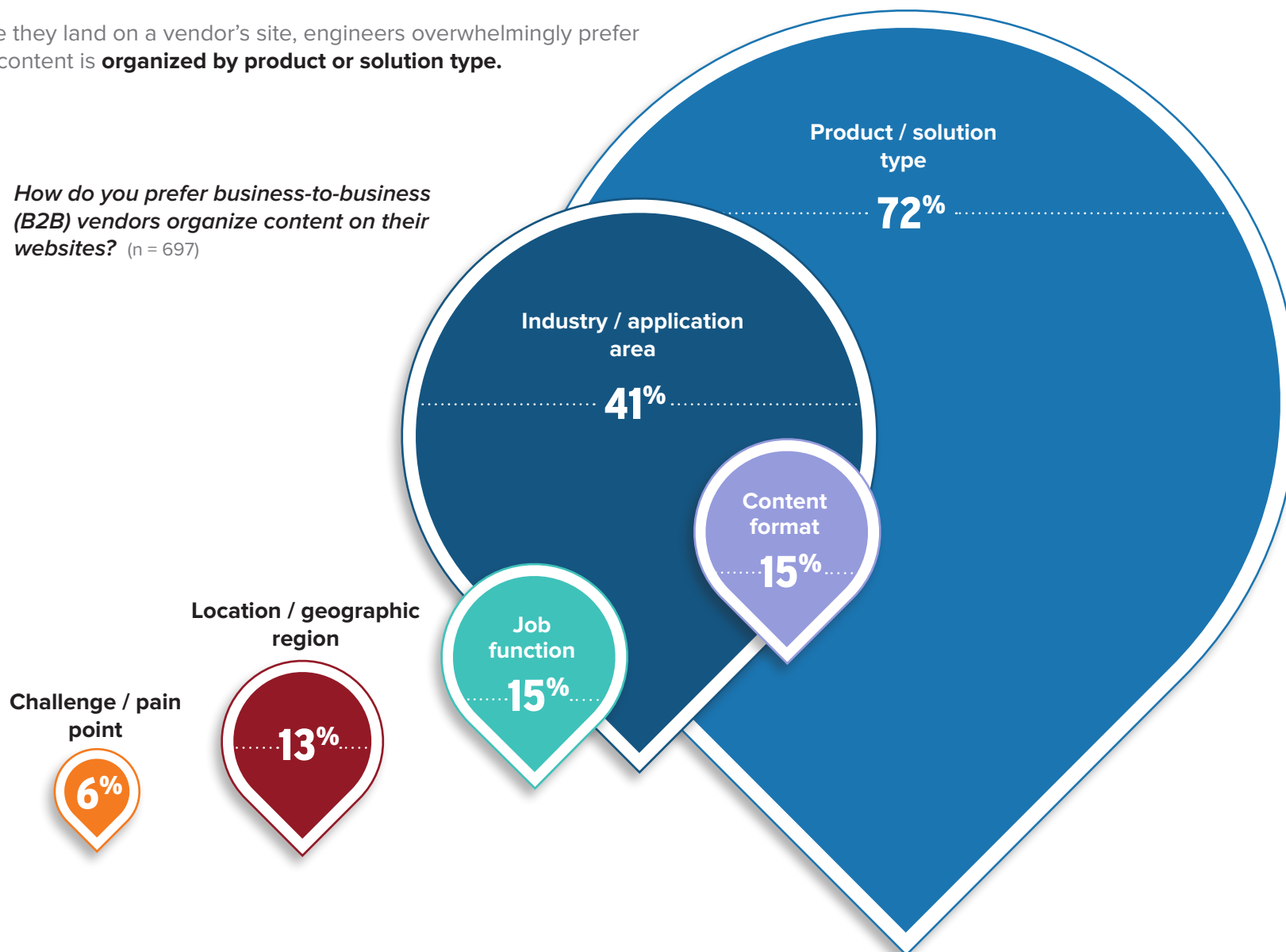
*“Top manufacturers and distributors continue to indicate they promote their products in key industry directories, like GlobalSpec, as they know their customers value the search tools and other content we provide in order to help them with their research and sourcing needs. They want to be in every possible search path they can.”*

*-- Mike Perryman  
Senior Director of Sales, GlobalSpec*

# CHANNELS AND SITE ORGANIZATION

Once they land on a vendor's site, engineers overwhelmingly prefer that content is **organized by product or solution type**.

*How do you prefer business-to-business (B2B) vendors organize content on their websites?* (n = 697)

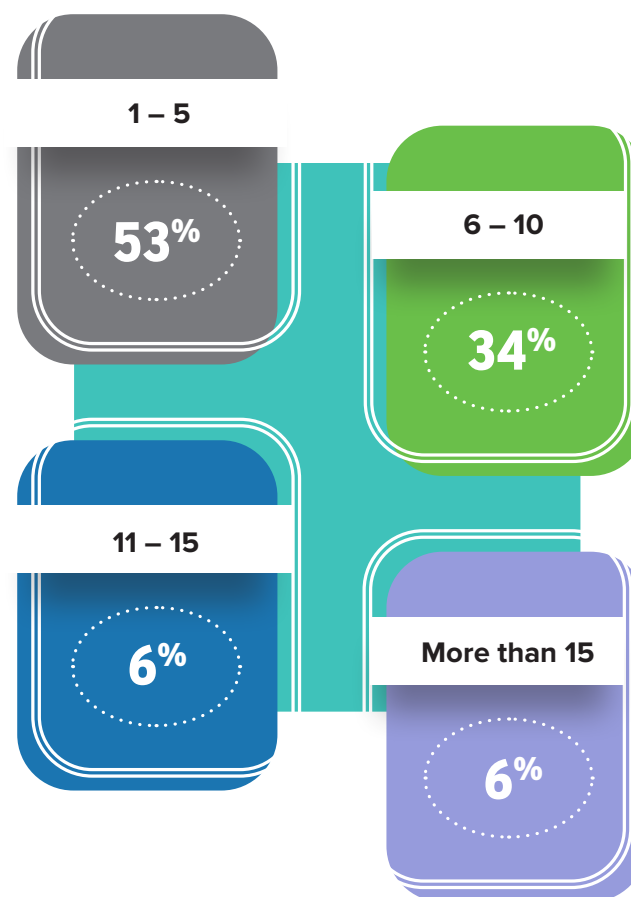


# CONTENT PREFERENCES

About half of engineers say they review one to five pieces of content, on average, as part of their vendor consideration process. Thirty-four percent will review six to ten, and 12 percent—mostly in Engineering / R&D roles—are looking for more.

*Thinking back, on average, how many pieces of content do you typically review from technical vendors under heavy consideration in the purchasing process?*

(n = 697)



# CONTENT PREFERENCES

Consistent with years past, engineers find content with specific technical detail (e.g., datasheets and CAD drawings) to be the most valuable in their decision-making processes. Secondary to technical documentation, engineers find value in content that provides information on use and implementation (e.g., product demos, reviews, and case studies).

*“Engineers want content with substance. They need hard product data to specify products for their designs, which is why deliverables like CAD models, PDF datasheets, and demo videos are critical for industrial manufacturers.”*

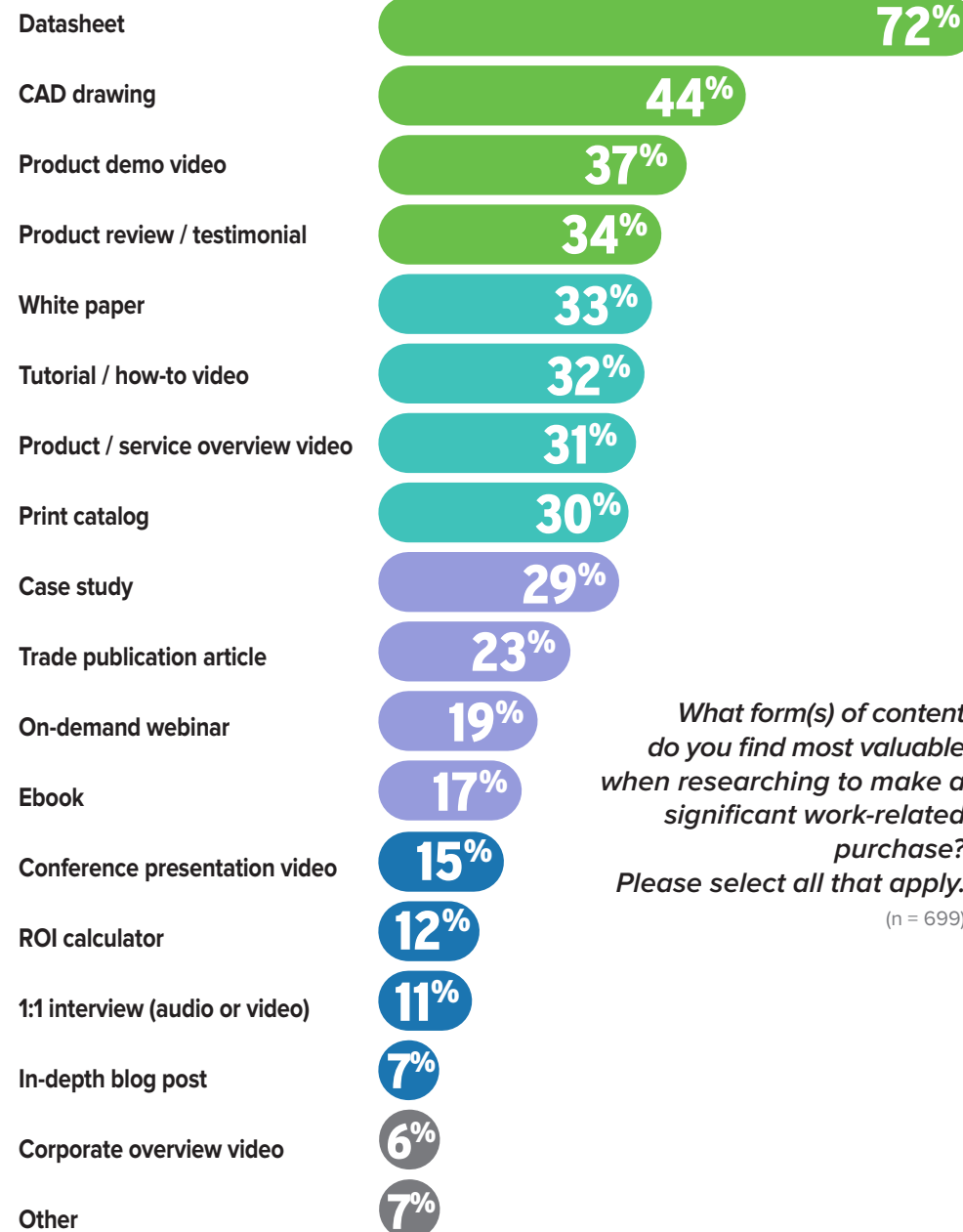
-- Adam Beck

Marketing Director, CADENAS PARTSolutions

*“We’re not surprised to see videos high on the list of valued content types for engineering decision-makers. Content Marketing Institute’s (CMI’s) latest annual survey found that manufacturing content marketers are getting good results with video and that 80% plan to continue investing in video in 2023.”*

-- Lisa Murton Beets

Research Director, CMI



*What form(s) of content do you find most valuable when researching to make a significant work-related purchase?  
Please select all that apply.*

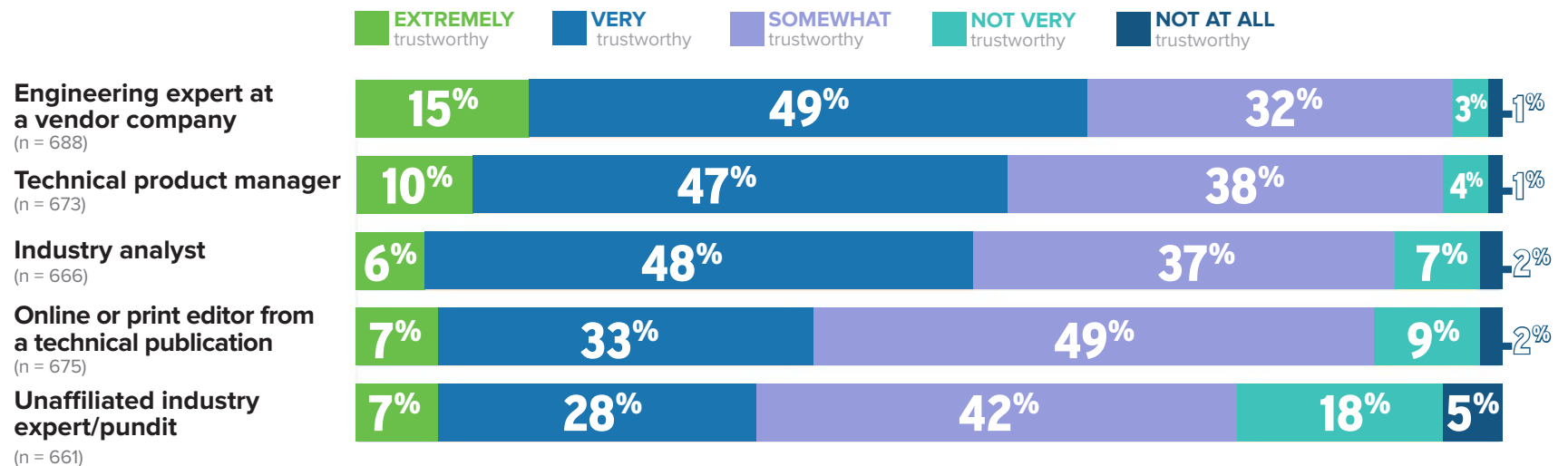
(n = 699)



# CONTENT PREFERENCES

Content attributed to engineering experts, technical product managers, and industry analysts are considered the most trustworthy from an engineer's perspective. Still, technical authors aren't trusted sources by default.

*Technical content can be written and published by a variety of professionals. To what extent do you trust the following authors?*



*"It is encouraging to see our investment in providing compelling content from our engineering experts validated as the most trusted source of information for engineers."*

*-- Rich Goldman, Director of Product Marketing, Ansys*

*"It makes sense that engineers trust content written by other engineers. In my experience, talking about the actual work the engineer is doing develops a level of trust that is necessary if you are to have a meaningful conversation around what can be very complex topics."*

*-- Peter Matthews, Senior Technical Marketing Manager, Knowles*

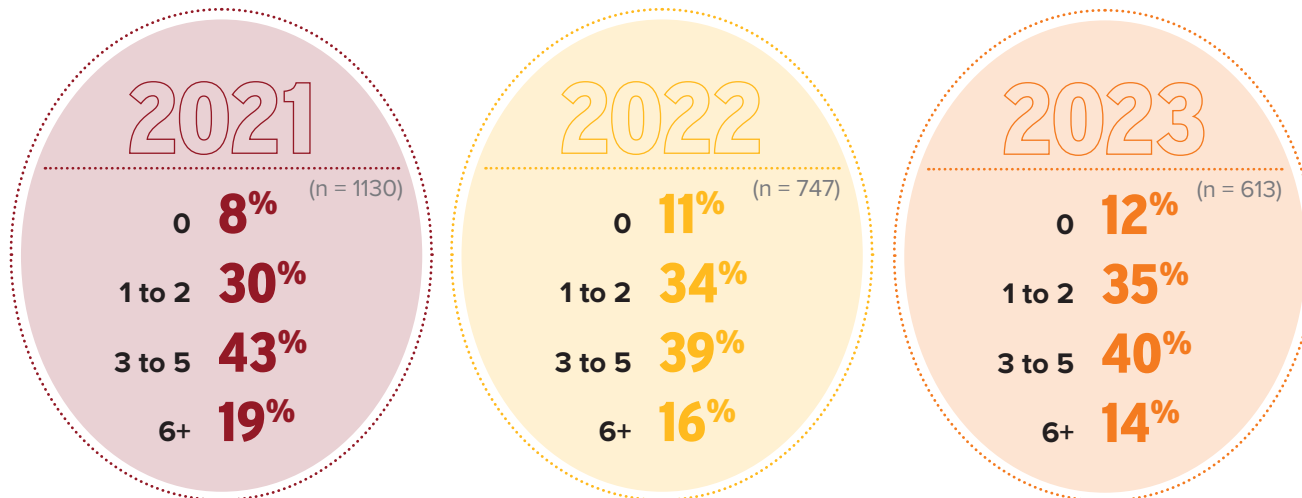
# NEWSLETTERS

After a two-year slide, newsletter subscriptions may be starting to level off. **Eighty-nine percent** of engineers subscribe to at least **one newsletter**, while **54 percent** subscribe to at least **three newsletters**. Of the non-subscribers, 79 percent are over the age of 45.

*Approximately how many work-related newsletters do you subscribe to?* (n = 613)



## Newsletter Subscriptions Over Time

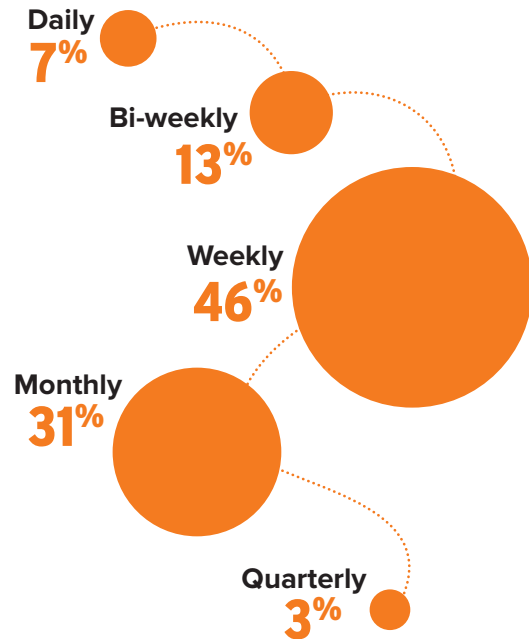


# NEWSLETTERS

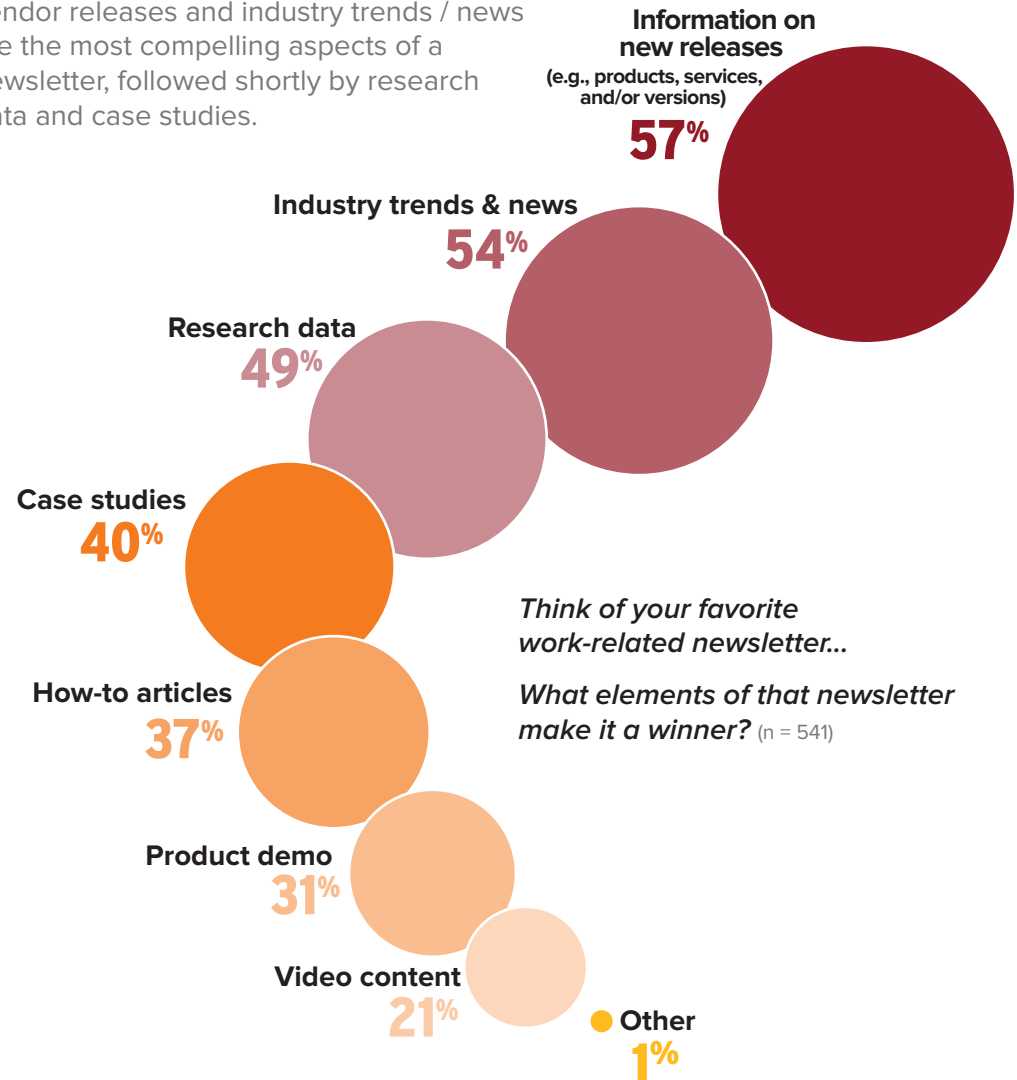
Weekly and monthly delivery cadences are most preferred—not too many, not too few.

For newsletters you've subscribed to, what delivery cadence do you prefer? (n = 542)

## DELIVERY CADENCE



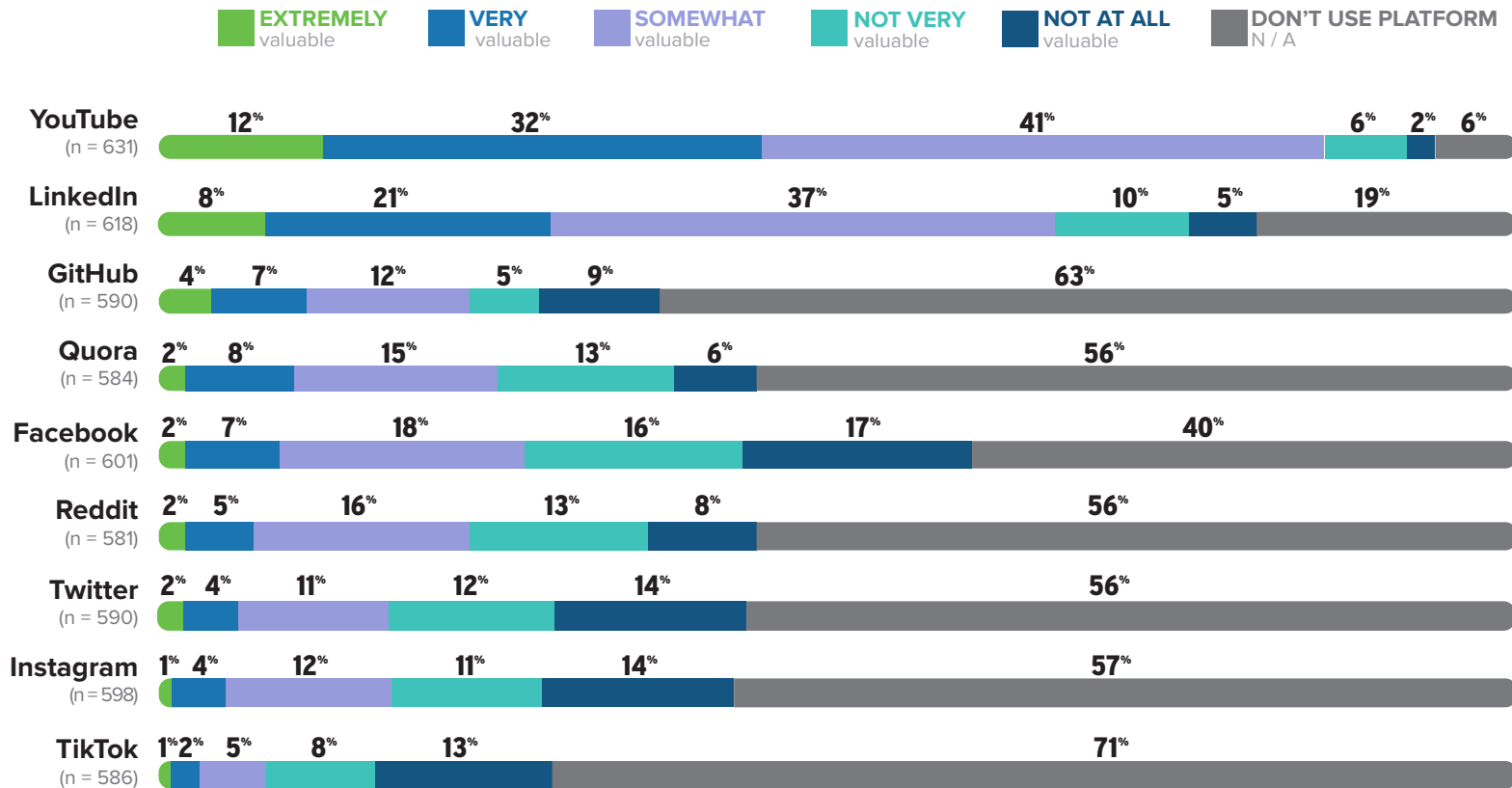
To engineers, information on upcoming vendor releases and industry trends / news are the most compelling aspects of a newsletter, followed shortly by research data and case studies.



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND SHARING

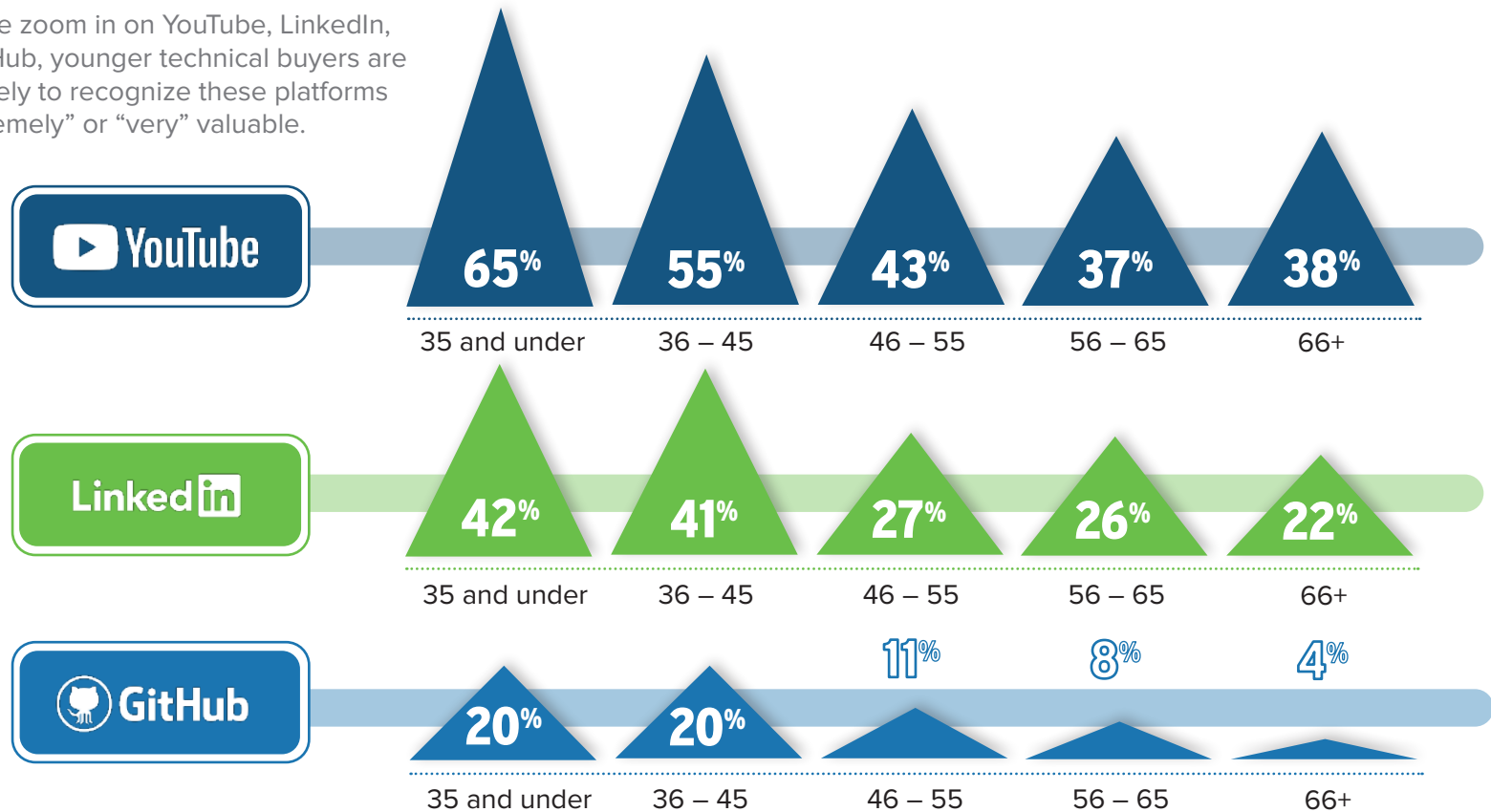
YouTube, LinkedIn, and GitHub help engineers stay up to date on the latest trends and technology. TikTok was a new addition to our research in 2023; 29 percent of engineers use the platform, but only eight percent consider it a valuable resource for keeping up with the industry.

*How valuable are each of the following social media platforms when seeking information on the latest engineering technologies, industry trends, and products?*



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND SHARING

When we zoom in on YouTube, LinkedIn, and GitHub, younger technical buyers are more likely to recognize these platforms as “extremely” or “very” valuable.



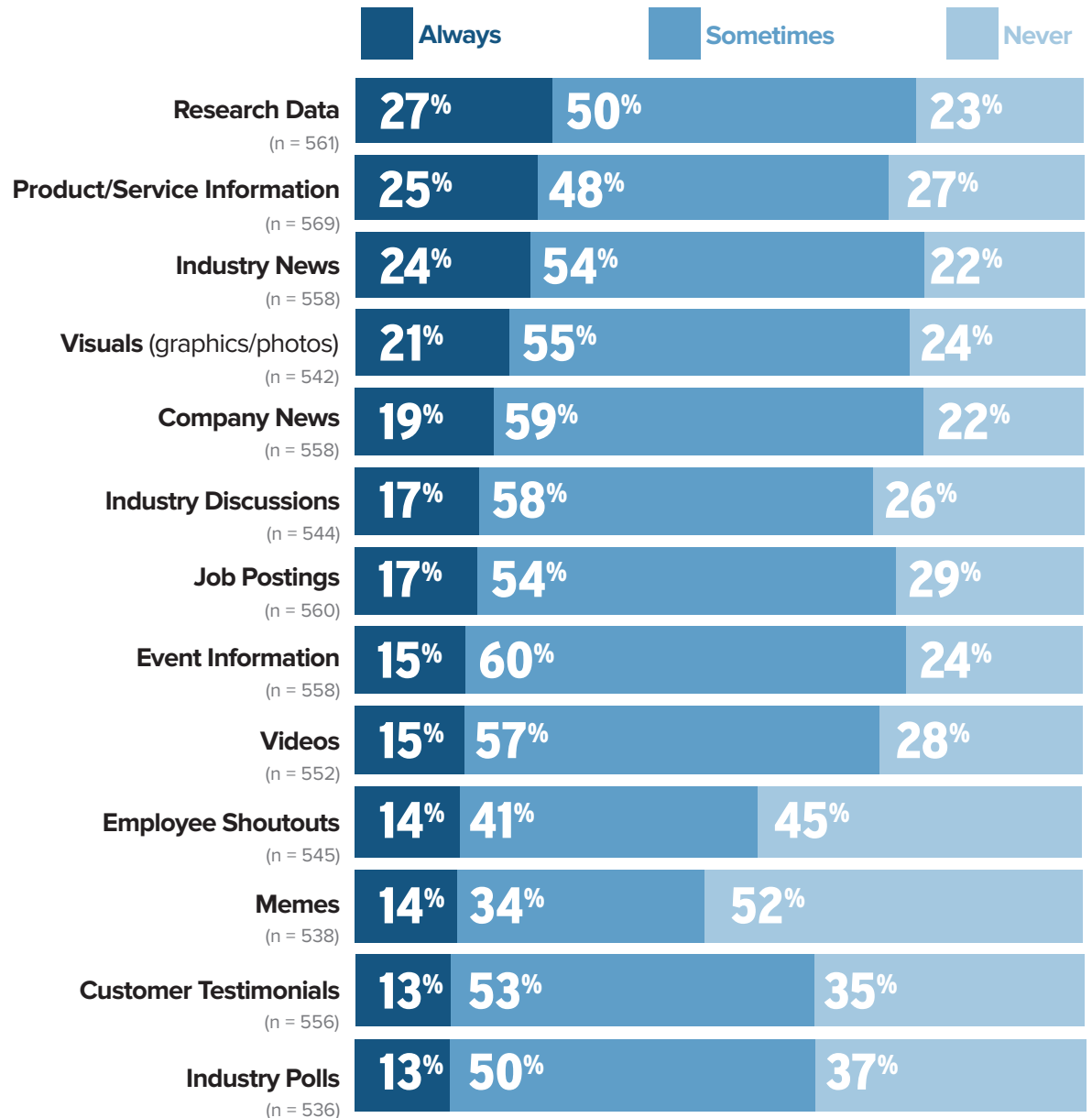
***“Engineers love learning and researching on YouTube. It’s a great platform for vendor-created and community-sourced product demos, deep-dive topical learning, and the occasional wacky project build. Hot take: keep an eye on TikTok, I have a feeling it’s poised for major growth in the science & technology space.”*** -- Daniel Bogdenoff, Resident Geek, Keysight



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND SHARING

When reflecting on their time on LinkedIn, **research data is the most eye-catching**, with 77 percent of engineers saying they'll always or sometimes stop scrolling to check it out.

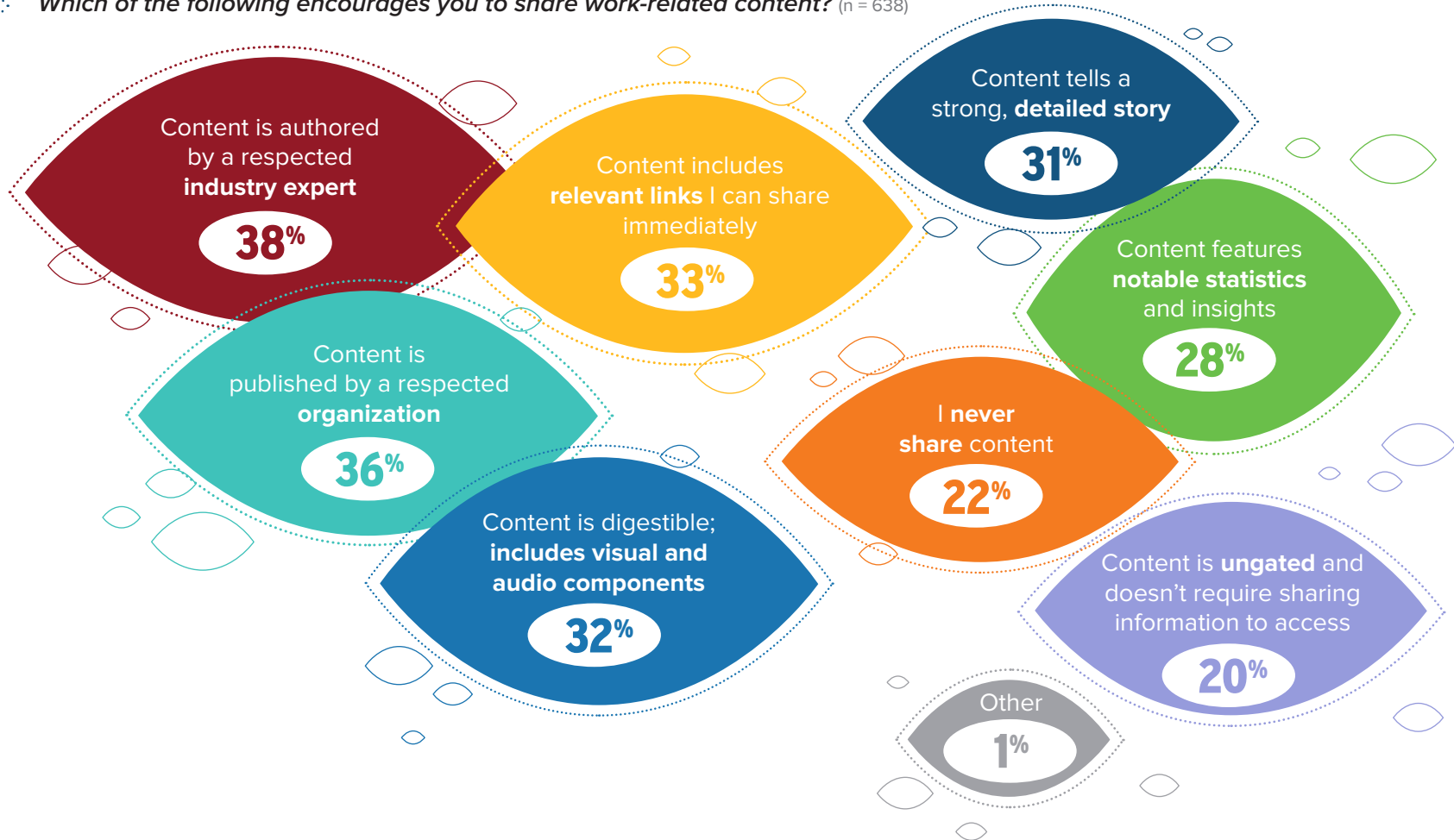
*When visiting LinkedIn, what makes you stop scrolling?*



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND SHARING

When considering sharing work-related content, engineers are encouraged when they **find information that's authored and/or published by respected experts and organizations within the industry**. They're also motivated by relevance, audio/visual components, and strong storytelling. Most engineers are not deterred from sharing information that requires filling out a form to access.

Which of the following encourages you to share work-related content? (n = 638)

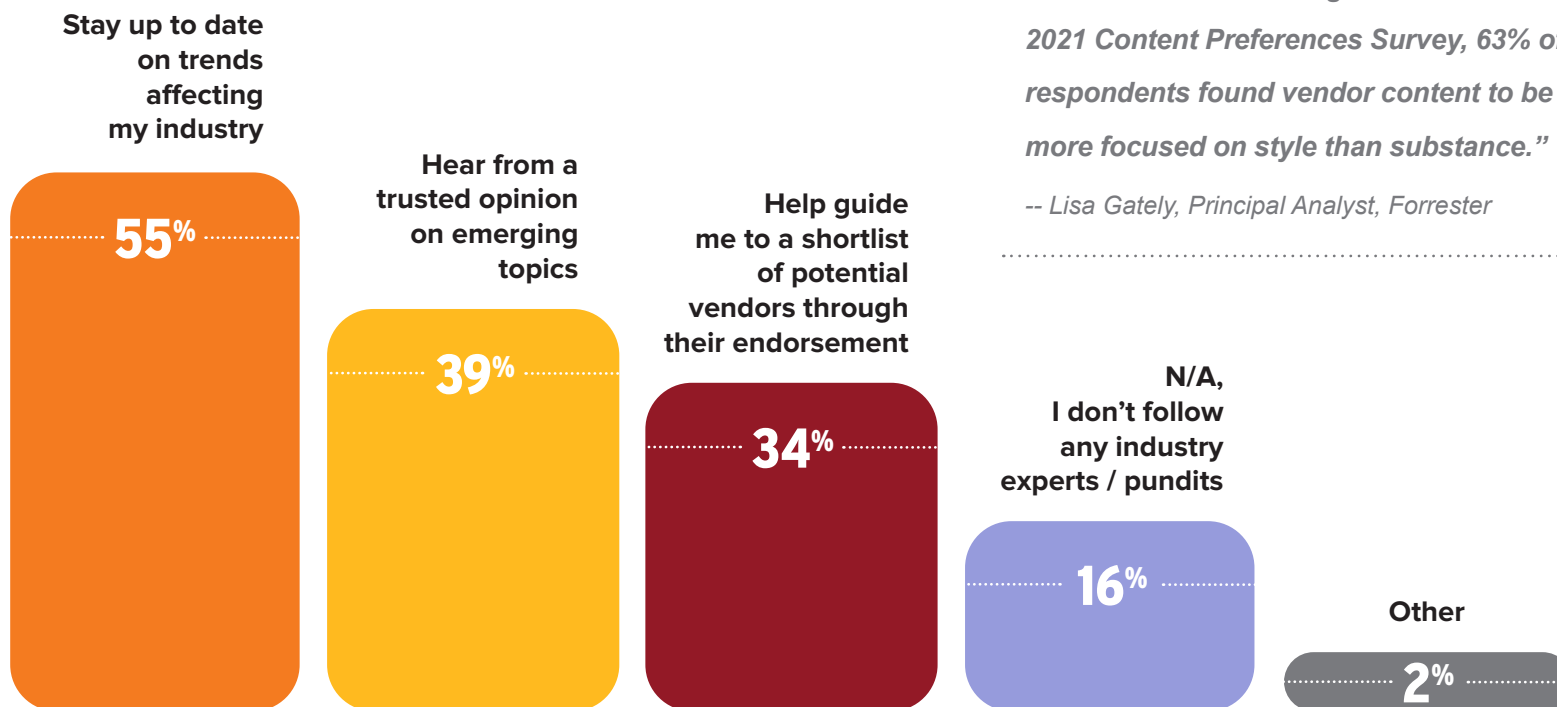


# INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Eighty-four percent of engineers turn to some sort of expert(s) or pundit(s) in the industry. Fifty-five percent look for information on industry trends, 39 percent seek trusted opinions, and 34 percent are looking for vendor endorsements. Of those who say they don't follow industry experts, 79 percent are over the age of 45.

*Fill in the blank. Select all that apply.*

*I look to specific industry experts / pundits to \_\_\_\_\_.* (n = 640)



*“Content developed under a thought leadership label gets sidetracked into promoting products instead of valuable insights. In Forrester’s 2021 Content Preferences Survey, 63% of respondents found vendor content to be more focused on style than substance.”*

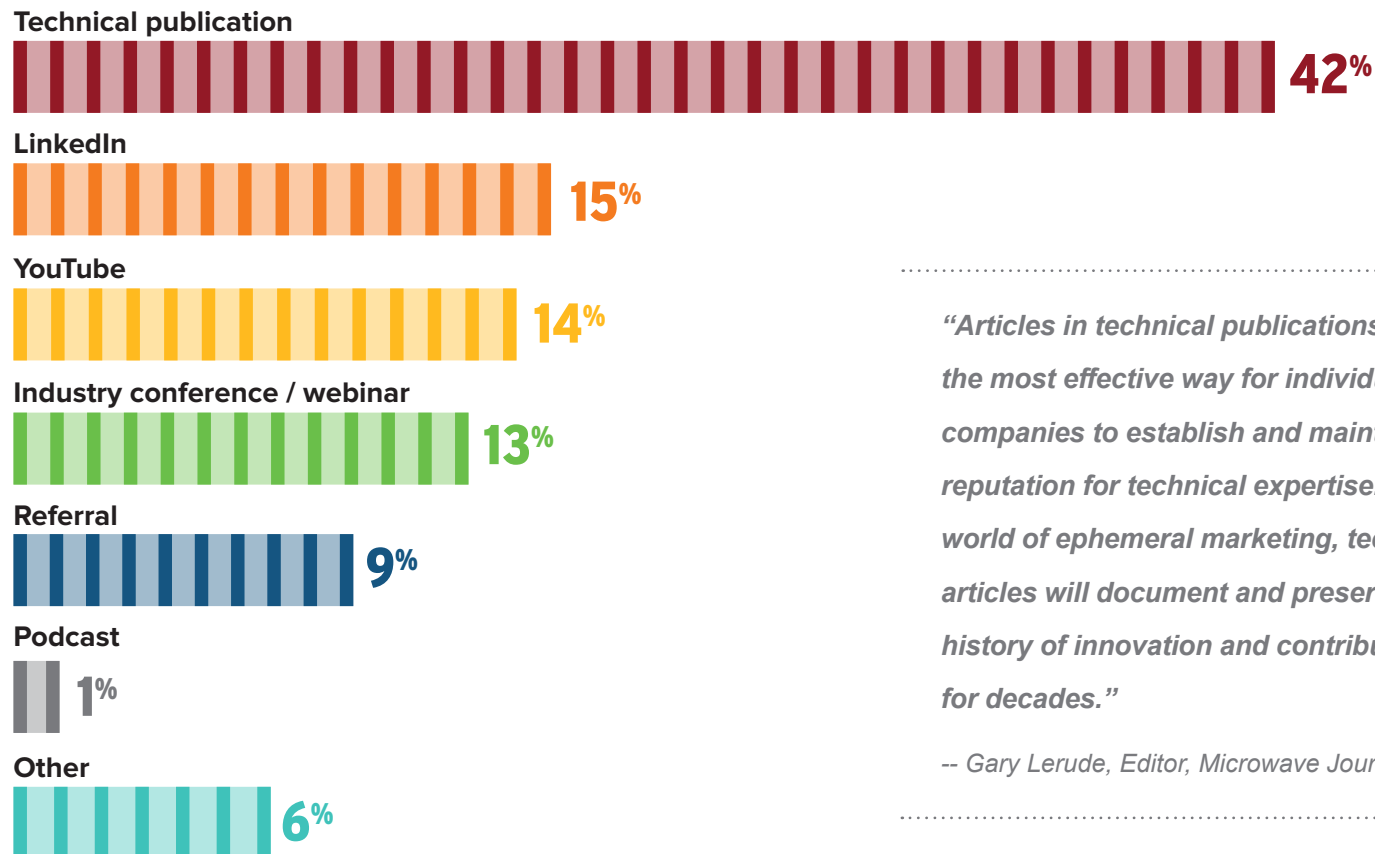
*-- Lisa Gately, Principal Analyst, Forrester*

# INDUSTRY EXPERTS

**Forty-two percent of engineers find industry experts and pundits through technical publications.**

Some find influencers through social means by turning to LinkedIn, YouTube, and conferences.

Think of your go-to industry expert / pundit. How did you discover them? (n = 528)



*“Articles in technical publications remain the most effective way for individuals and companies to establish and maintain a reputation for technical expertise. In this world of ephemeral marketing, technical articles will document and preserve the history of innovation and contribution for decades.”*

*-- Gary Lerude, Editor, Microwave Journal*

# INDUSTRY EXPERTS

A few expert sources and perspectives named by respondents...



- ★ **Amit Pandey**, Lockheed Martin
- ★ **Ben Eater**, YouTube Creator
- ★ **Eric Bogatin**, Teledyne Lecroy and Signal Integrity Journal
- ★ **Mark Terryberry**, YouTube Creator
- ★ **Jennifer Doudna**, UC Berkeley and Howard Hughes Medical Institute
- ★ **Linus Sebastian**, Linus Tech Tips
- ★ **Neal Sullivan**, Colorado School of Mines
- ★ **Robin Renzetti**, YouTube Creator
- ★ **Michael King**, Vanderbilt University
- ★ **Theo Swart**, University of Johannesburg
- ★ **Taylor Sparks**, University of Utah



# INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Think of your go-to industry expert / pundit. How did you discover them?

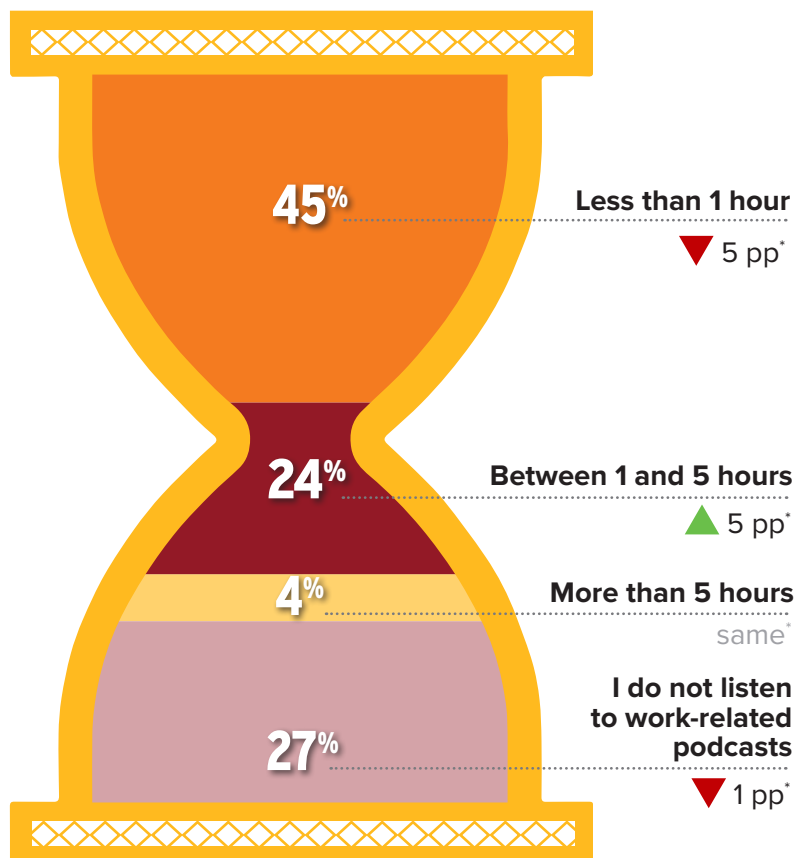
INDUSTRIES	Technical publication	LinkedIn	YouTube	Industry conference/webinar	Referral	Podcast
	(n = 221)	(n = 80)	(n = 73)	(n = 66)	(n = 49)	(n = 4)
Academic / University	4%	5%	1%	9%	N/A	N/A
Aerospace / Defense	18%	8%	11%	9%	10%	25%
Automotive	7%	18%	11%	21%	12%	25%
Chemicals / Materials	7%	10%	4%	5%	2%	25%
Communications and Networking	7%	3%	5%	3%	8%	N/A
Electronics / Electronic Components / Semiconductor	7%	9%	14%	11%	12%	N/A
Energy and Natural Resources	10%	13%	14%	11%	18%	N/A
Food and Beverage	5%	4%	4%	8%	6%	25%
Life Sciences	2%	3%	3%	N/A	4%	N/A
Medical Devices / Equipment	10%	10%	5%	8%	2%	N/A
Process Technology	12%	6%	18%	3%	12%	N/A
Utilities / Utilities Infrastructure	13%	14%	10%	14%	12%	N/A

# PODCASTS

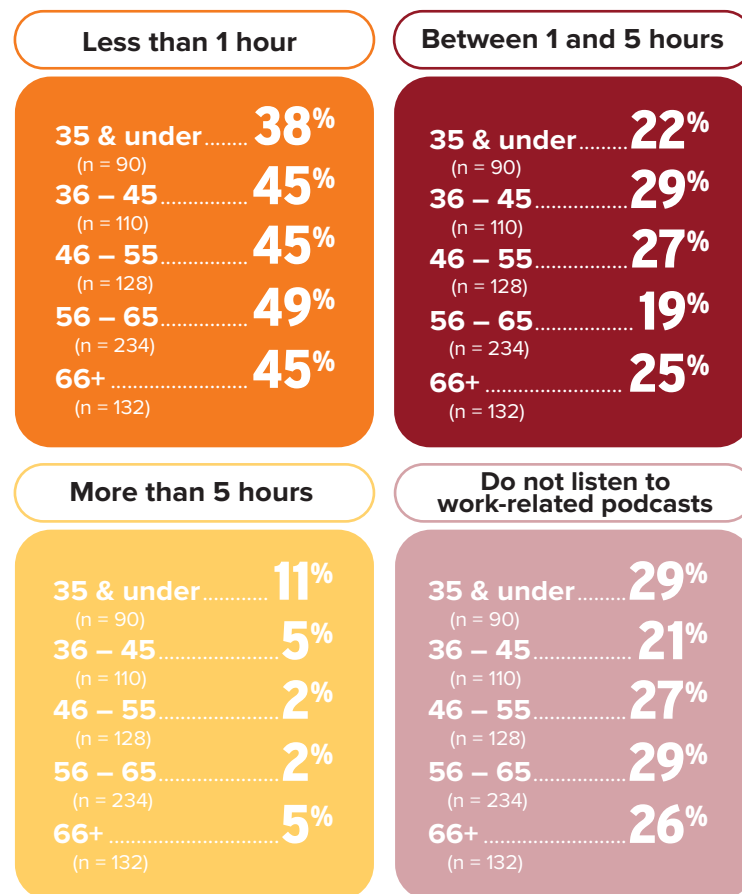
In line with 2022, **73 percent of engineers listen to work-related podcasts.** Forty-five percent spend less than an hour listening to podcasts, while another 28 percent listen for an hour or more—up slightly from last year. Of those who don't listen to work-related podcasts, 74 percent are over the age of 45.

*Approximately how much time per week do you spend listening to work-related podcasts?* (n = 696)

*\*percentage point (pp) change from '22*



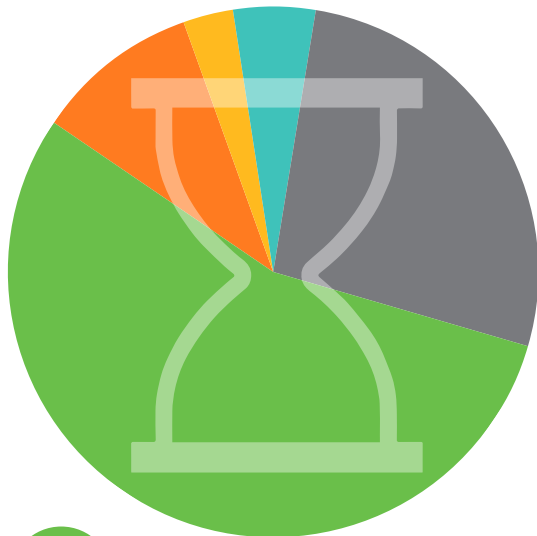
*Approximately how much time per week do you spend listening to work-related podcasts?*



# PODCASTS

Of those who listen to work-related podcasts, 82 percent would **prefer a duration of 30 minutes or less**. Fifty-five percent say 15 minutes tops.

What is the ideal length for a podcast? (n = 470)



**55%** 15 minutes or shorter

**27%** 30 minutes

**3%** Over 60 minutes

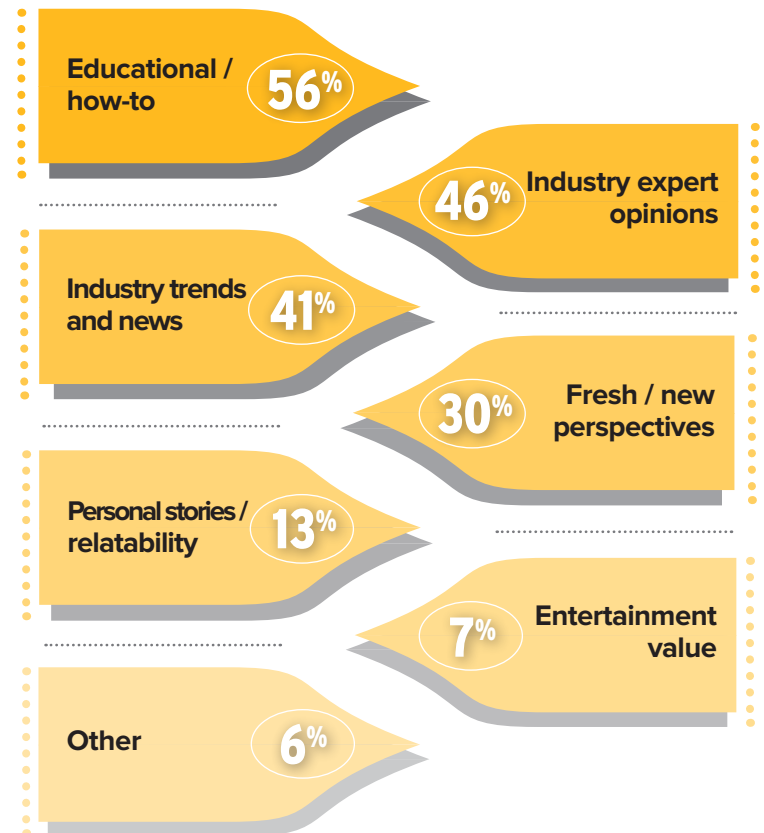
**5%** 60 minutes

**10%** No preference

Most engineers who turn to podcasts are seeking educational “how-to” information, industry expert opinions, or details on trends and news.

Think about your favorite work-related podcast.

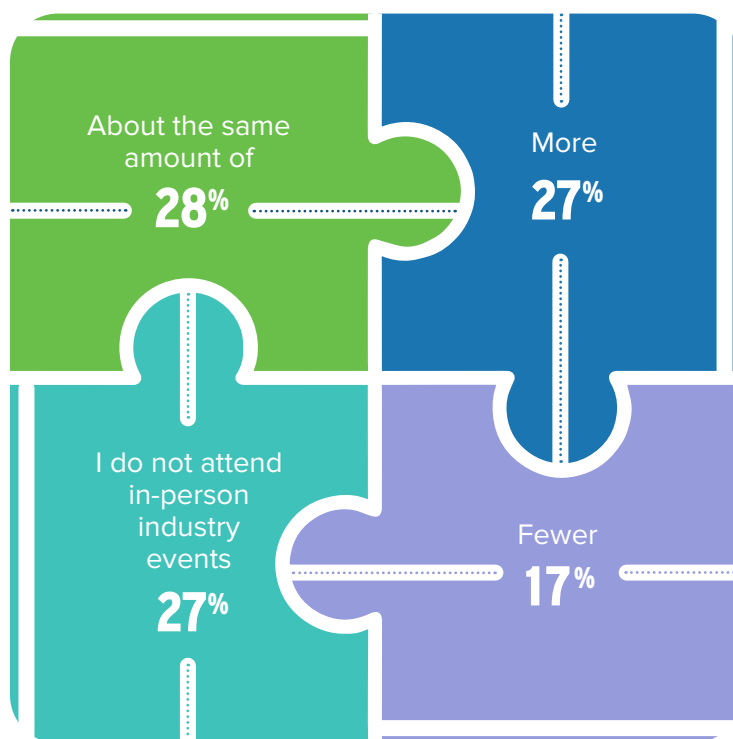
What makes it so compelling for you to listen to? (n = 468)



# IN-PERSON EVENTS

When thinking about the year ahead, 28 percent of engineers **plan to attend** about the same amount of in-person industry events as they did in 2019 (pre-pandemic). Twenty-seven percent say they'll be attending more.

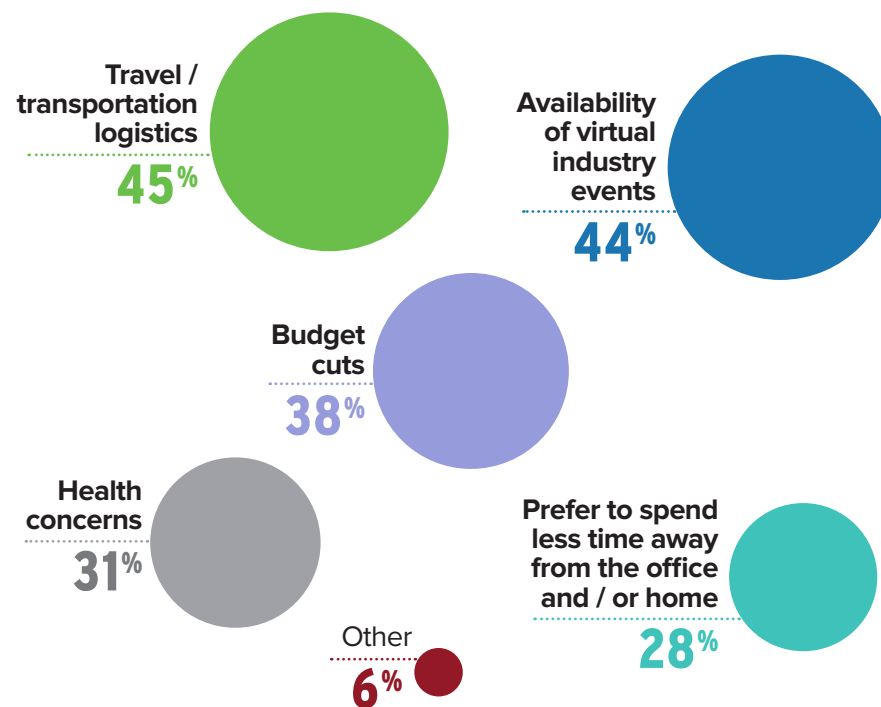
*Fill in the blank. I plan to attend \_\_\_\_\_ in-person industry events (i.e., trade shows, conferences) in 2023 than I did in 2019 (pre-pandemic).* (n = 612)



Seventeen percent say they're planning to attend fewer in-person industry events than they did pre-pandemic. Most engineers cite travel/transportation logistics, the availability of virtual industry events, and budget cuts as the main cause for this change. Budget cuts are not confined to any particular industry.

*You mentioned you plan to attend fewer in-person industry events in 2023 than you did in 2019.*

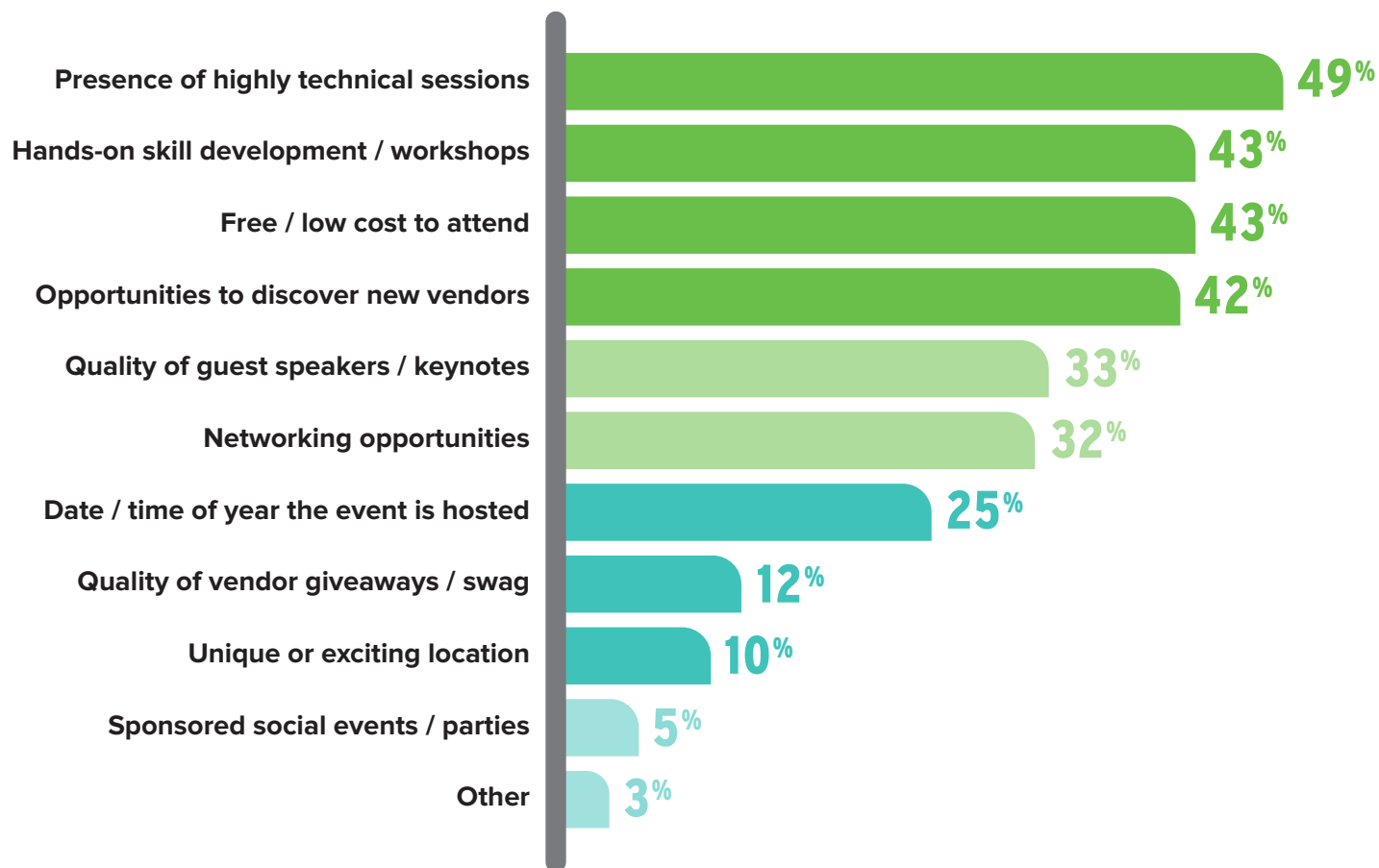
*What factor (or factors) are influencing that change?* (n = 104)



# IN-PERSON EVENTS

We asked engineers to think about what elements most influence their experience at in-person industry events. If given the option to attend a single in-person event in 2023, engineers still take a pragmatic stance. **They're looking for highly technical sessions, hands-on skill development, and vendor exposure—all at a low cost.**

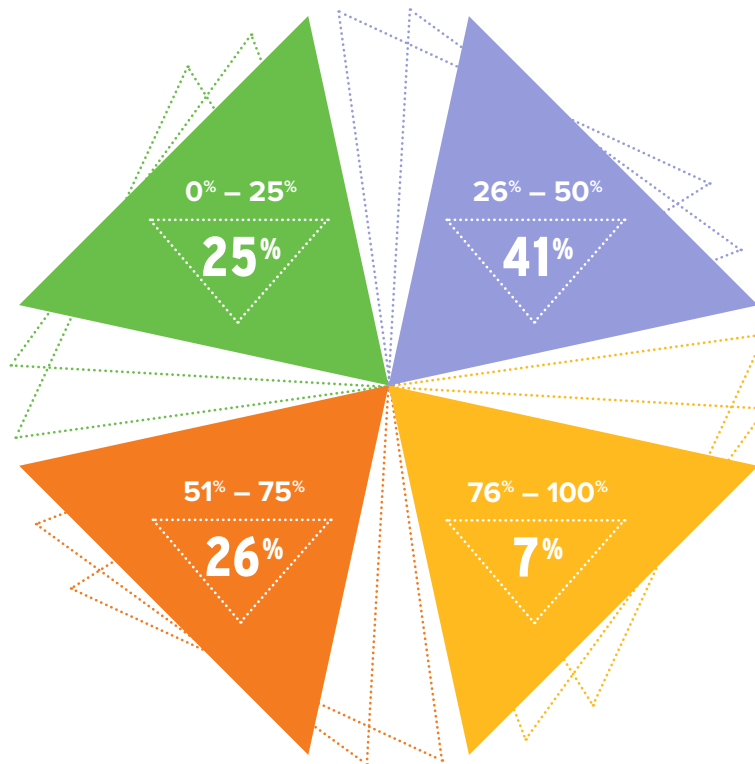
*Imagine for a moment: You can choose one in-person industry event to attend in 2023. Which element (or elements) most heavily impacts your final selection? (n = 600)*



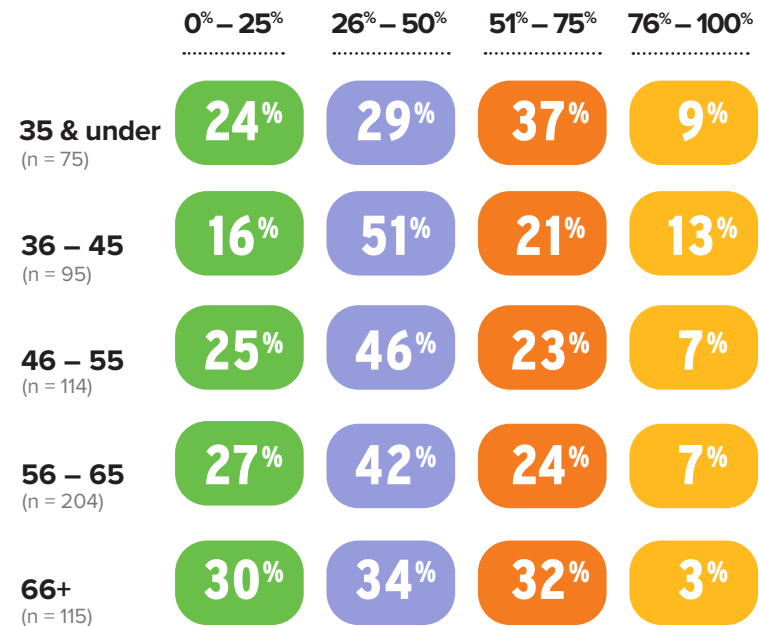
# INTERACTION WITH SALES

**Engineers still spend much of the buying process online.** Forty-one percent spend between a quarter and half of the buying process online, and 33 percent spend over half of the buying process online.

*In thinking about the entire buying process for significant work-related purchases, from early research to the final purchase decision, how much of the process happens online before you choose to speak to someone at the company?* (n = 604)

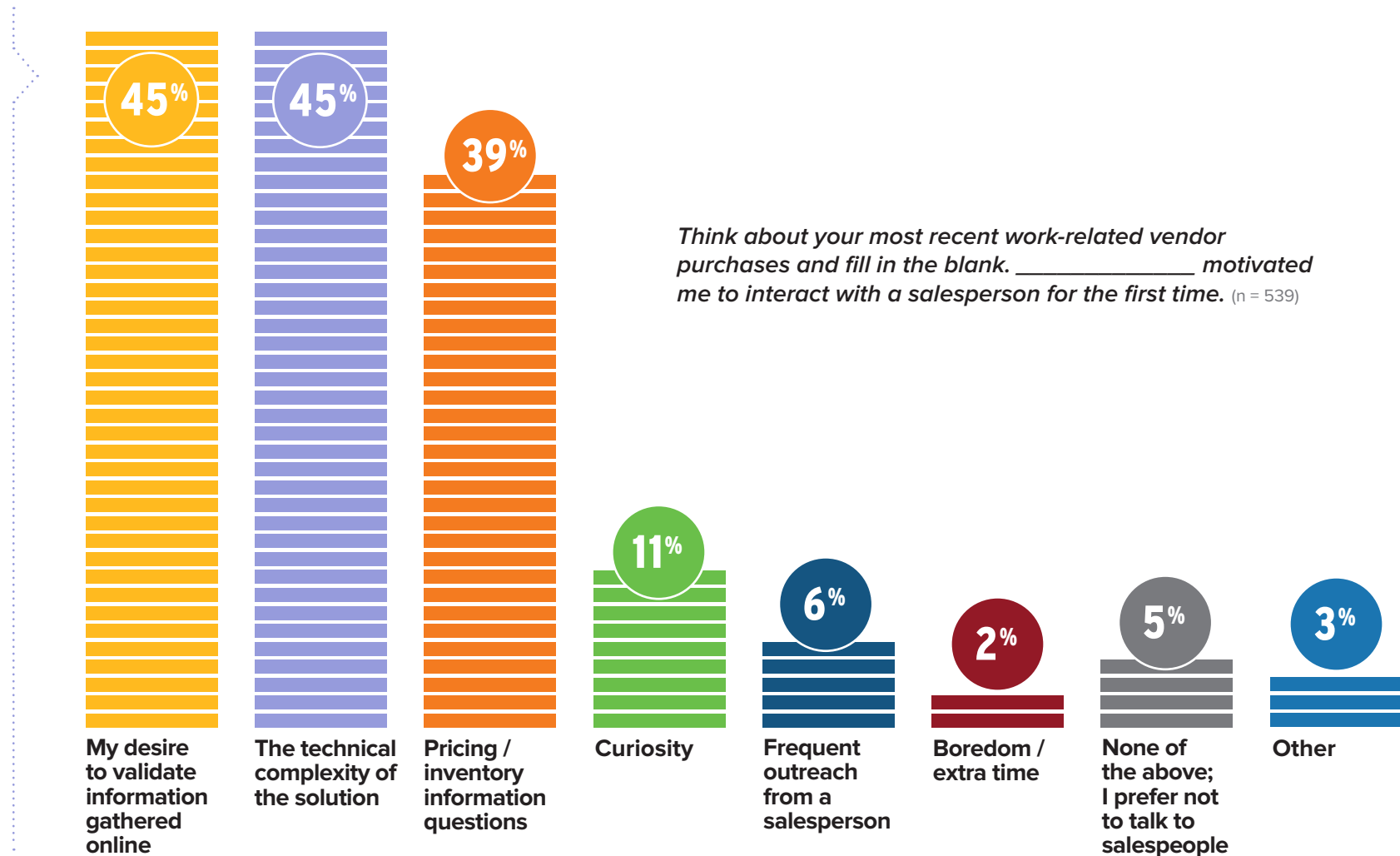


*In thinking about the entire buying process for significant work-related purchases, from early research to the final purchase decision, how much of the process happens online before you choose to speak to someone at the company?*



# INTERACTION WITH SALES

Thinking back to their most recent work-related vendor purchases, engineers say they were **motivated to interact with sales to validate the research they'd done online independently**. Technical complexity was also a major factor. Only 5 percent of respondents said they'd prefer not to interact with a salesperson at all.



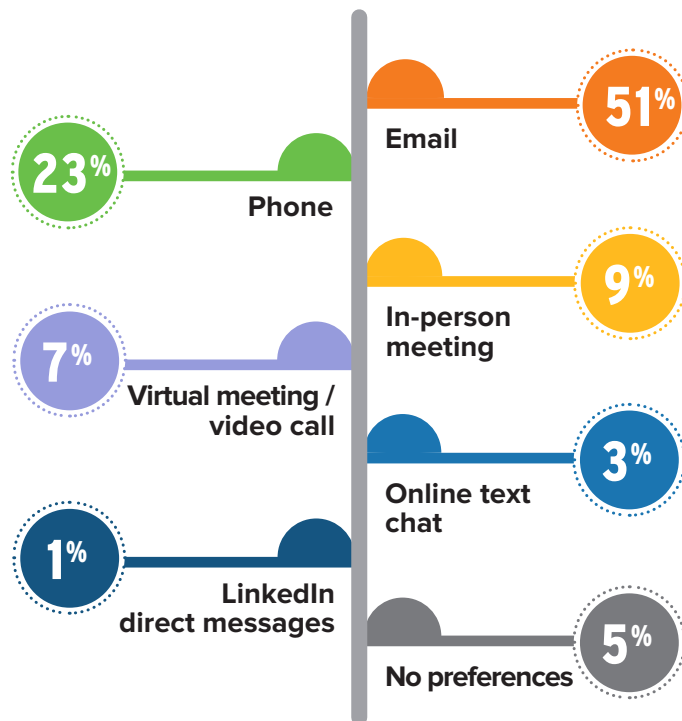


# INTERACTION WITH SALES

Consistent with 2022, **51 percent of engineers prefer their initial salesperson interaction to happen via email.**

23 percent would prefer a phone call. In-person meetings are still less desirable with only 9 percent selecting this as their preference. Chat adoption remains low, dropping one percentage point since last year. New this year, participants were offered the option to select “LinkedIn direct messages;” only one percent preferred this option.

*When you are ready to speak with a salesperson at a vendor company for the first time, which of the following is your preferred method of communication?* (n = 602)



*When you are ready to speak with a salesperson at a vendor company for the first time, which of the following is your preferred method of communication?*

	Email	Phone	In-person meeting	Virtual meeting / video call	Online text chat	LinkedIn direct messages	No preference
<b>35 and under</b> (n = 75)	51%	19%	8%	13%	7%	0%	3%
<b>36 – 45</b> (n = 94)	63%	11%	9%	9%	3%	1%	5%
<b>46 – 55</b> (n = 114)	59%	17%	7%	8%	4%	2%	4%
<b>56 – 65</b> (n = 204)	49%	27%	11%	4%	3%	1%	6%
<b>66+</b> (n = 114)	39%	37%	11%	7%	2%	1%	4%



## ABOUT GlobalSpec

GlobalSpec is a provider of data-driven industrial marketing solutions designed to help companies promote their products and grow their businesses.

Our audience of engineers and technical professionals relies on the GlobalSpec family of brands as a trusted resource for content, community, and engagement at all stages of the research, design, and purchasing process. Our clients count on us to deliver deep industry intelligence, customized marketing programs, and measurable campaign performance.

For more information, visit [globalspec.com/advertising](https://globalspec.com/advertising).

## ABOUT TREW MARKETING

TREW Marketing, headquartered in Austin, Texas, is a strategy-first content marketing agency serving B2B companies that target highly technical buyers. With deep experience in the design, embedded, measurement and automation, and software industries, TREW Marketing provides branding, marketing strategy, content development, and digital marketing services to help customers efficiently and effectively achieve business goals.

For more information, visit [trewmarketing.com](https://trewmarketing.com).