



# IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT AND RESULTS WITH **INTERACTIVE UTILITY**

The Case For Marketing Apps

More **content**.  
More **messages**.  
More **clutter**.

Content overload is everywhere.....  
and it's diluting content marketing to the point  
that many are questioning its value.

Marketing apps can transform your static content into a useful digital experience.  
Cut through the clutter—reduce bounce rates, improve engagement and increase  
conversion rates.

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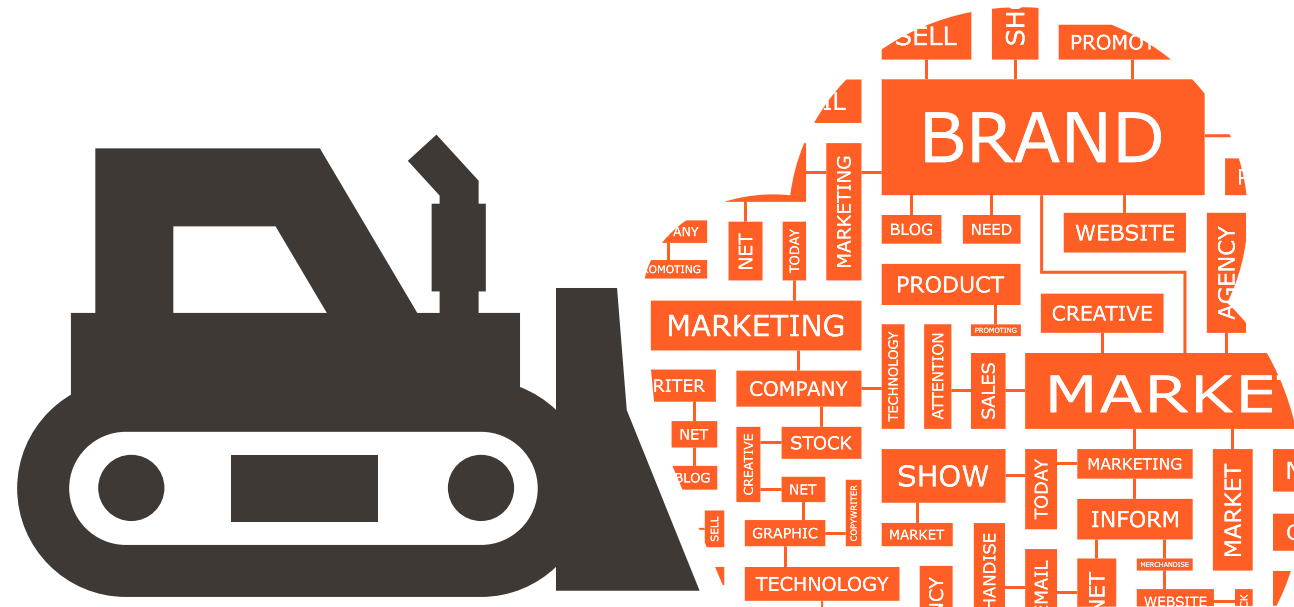
“There are only two ways for companies to break  
through in an environment that is unprecedented in  
its cacophony. They can be “amazing” or they can be  
useful. Instead of betting all your money on “amazing,”  
what if . . . you just focused on being useful?”

~ Jay Baer

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# Content



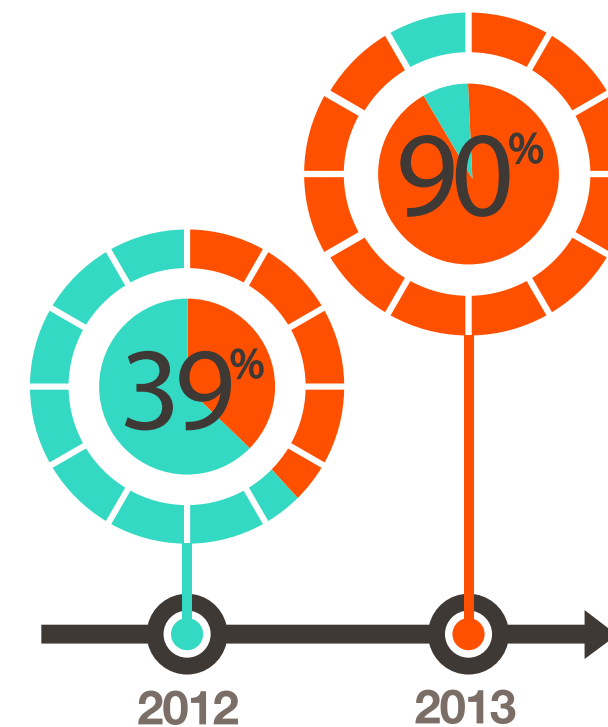


“...people can get content anywhere — and they’re sick of it. Content fatigue creates a new roadblock, as massive amounts of poorly developed, uninteresting content makes it more difficult to reach the good stuff.”

~ Gordon Locke, dcustom

While increasing our content marketing efforts is critical to distributing our message and engaging with our audience, we should also ask ourselves how useful and effective it is at driving business results for our brands.

In order to provide value, and rise above content clutter, we can leverage tactics to significantly increase the usefulness of our content. The opportunity for the modern marketer lies not in generating more and more and more content. The opportunity lies in putting that content to work—making it more engaging and useful for those who interact with it.



39% of overall marketing, advertising, and communications budgets were dedicated to content marketing in 2012. More than 90% of marketers have used content marketing in their plans in 2013.

~ Custom Content Council & ContentWise's 2013 Characteristics Study

# The problem with Content Marketing

## Too. Much. Content.

If you're a marketer, content is probably a big part of your plans for 2014. Blogs, webcasts, podcasts, webinars, social media, online events, newsletters, articles, in-person events, case studies, research reports, white papers and infographics are all content designed to attract, acquire and engage your prospects and customers.

Great content, combined with strategic distribution of that content, can be an incredible way to educate, influence and persuade your audience while building a strong affinity for your brand.

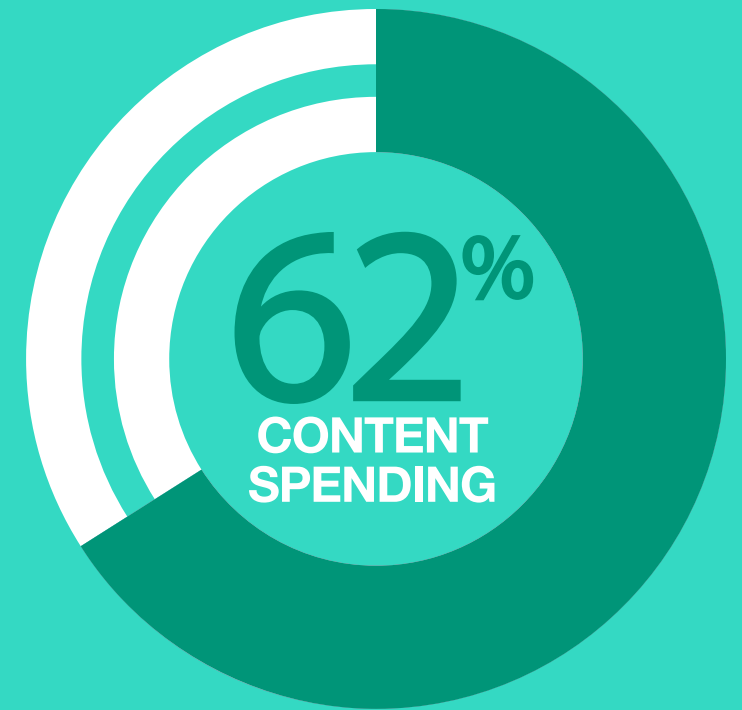
But along with the emphasis on content in most modern marketing programs, we're also faced with the reality that our prospects and customers are grappling with content overload.

Content marketing is “a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a target audience—with the objective of driving profitable customer action.”

~ Content Marketing Institute

62% of B2B marketers surveyed by the Content Marketing Institute plan to increase their spending on content over the next 12 months.

~ Content Marketing Institute



“ In a world where every prospective customer is facing an invitation avalanche, where every business is asking people to follow their tweets, read their blog, or watch their videos, you must resist the temptation to communicate solely and endlessly about your company, hoping for a quick sale. ”

~ Jay Baer

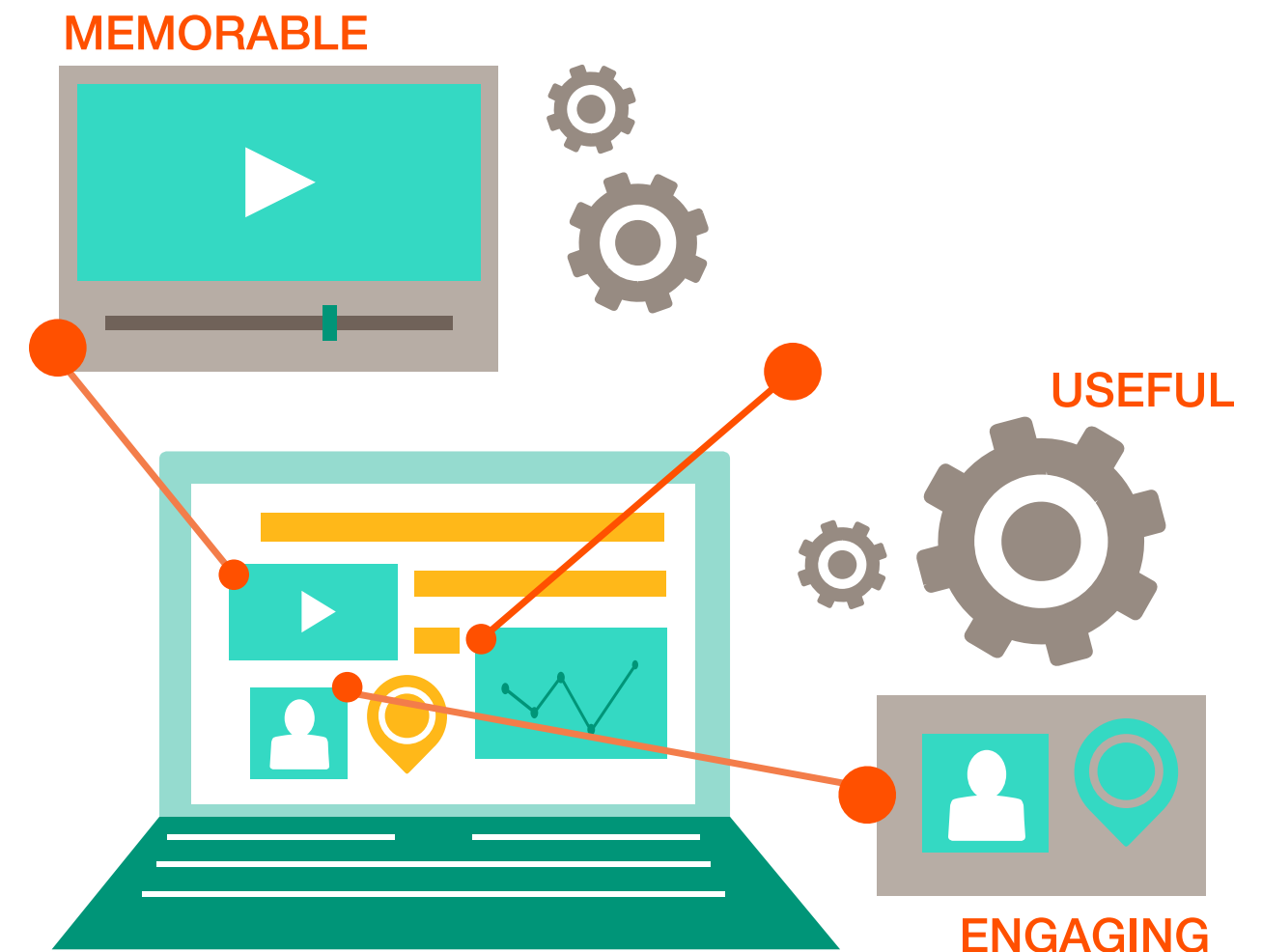
# The content marketing opportunity

Be engaging. Be memorable.  
Be useful.

According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI), content marketing is “a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action.”

The heart of content marketing is engagement. But marketers surveyed by the CMI reported that creating engaging content is their biggest challenge.

It's no wonder. How engaging is a white paper? A blog post? An article? A microsite? About the most engaging we tend to get with content is live Q&A at the end of a webinar, responding to a blog comment or having a fleeting social conversation with a consumer you happen to capture in the right moment. At some point our content becomes an endless stream of words, pictures and video on a web page. To become memorable, to be the brand that creates a meaningful impression, and to make our content more effective, we can't simply release more newsletters and spin up another infographic. Engaging, useful content requires more than words, images and video. It requires utility.



In a recent study by the Content Marketing Institute, marketers rated their biggest challenge as “producing the kind of content that engages.”

~ Content Marketing Institute

Enter the marketing app. Marketing apps leverage usefulness to turn static content into applications that engage and convert your audience into leads and sales. It's a form of youtility that transforms your content into something customers actually want to interact with because it's useful, memorable and valuable.

With marketing apps, visitors aren't reading five paragraphs of content to attempt to assimilate or discern what's relevant to them. They aren't downloading a white paper with an interesting title only to have it sit unread on their desktop for months.

Marketing apps make your content more useful. By providing a feedback loop (or a result) for your audience, content is transformed from something you read or watch to something you interact with.

“Content Marketing”...requires businesses to create content that their customers actually want. Content that helps them...That is why more than 90% of marketers are using content marketing, but only 42% rate their content marketing efforts as effective, according to a recent study. If everyone is creating content, how does a business break through the noise? How do we reach our customers in a way that engages them?

~ Michael Brenner



“Youtility is the marketing strategy for the age of information overload.”

~ Jay Baer

# Content marketing goes to the apps

## People like useful things.

A marketing app is a browser-based digital experience designed for user interaction. It's not a mobile app that runs on a mobile operating system as an installed application. Rather, it's an interactive, engaging experience that's happening within the browser, regardless of device. It's desktop, mobile, tablet—it's any device, any time. If you are an online marketer, you may already have marketing apps and not even realize it. Marketing apps can take the form of:

- Quizzes
- Calculators
- Surveys
- Assessments
- Wizards
- Configurators
- Contests
- Conversion paths
- ebooks
- ecatalogs

A marketing app often includes some sort of feedback loop where the outcome is directly impacted by the interaction of the participant. For example:

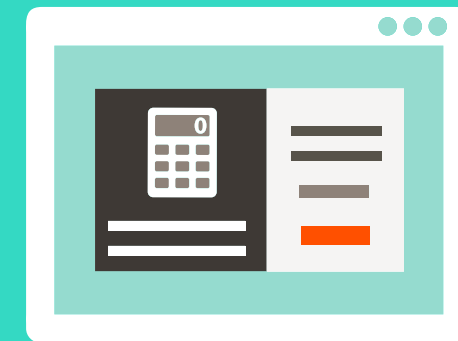
- A self-assessment tool that allows visitors to test their knowledge to get a score, or personalized recommendations based on their answers.
- A configurator that enables users to experiment with options and permutations of a particular product or solution based on their personalized information.



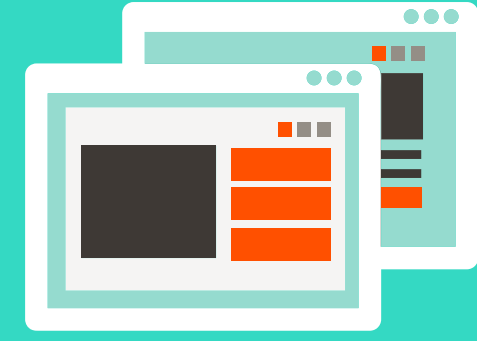
Quizzes & Assessments



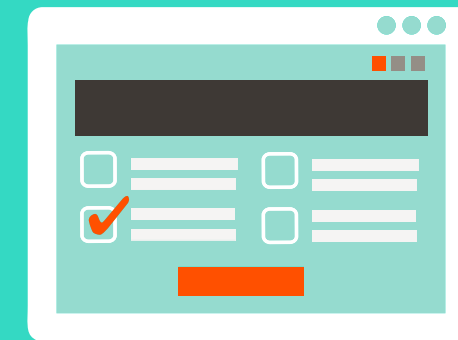
Contests



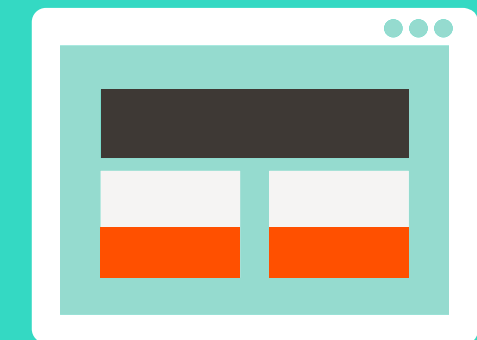
Calculators



Wizards & Configurators



Surveys



Conversion Paths



ebooks



ecatalogs





- A conversion path based on a series of simple choices by the visitor, allows them to drill down quickly to specific and relevant information that feels more customized because their self-directed journey.
- A calculator that provides pricing or ROI estimates based on inputs from the user.

User expectations are quickly evolving with regards to how they want to interact with brands, and with the content they are consuming. An app-like experience is increasingly what your online audience is now conditioned to expect.

Because of the explosion of mobile apps, and mobility in general, we're used to interacting with our devices, inputting information on the screen and having it do something. We don't read our bank balance in our banking app, we move money and pay bills. We're interacting, and impacting outcomes based on that interaction.

Additionally, we're consuming content snacks rather than dinner—on the go or while multitasking. We're bouncing around reading headlines and summaries, assimilating it all very quickly, rather than sitting down to chew on a meaty 20-paragraph article. Our consumption of content is often now based on sound bites and snippets, because it's all we have time and attention for.

Online, people need utility, are increasingly consuming shorter and smaller bits of information, and are fighting a deluge of available content. It's time for serious consideration of marketing apps and how they can transform your content into better branding, better engagement, better relationships—and ultimately more leads & sales.



# 9 killer ideas to get you started with marketing apps

## Idea 1: Content Wizard

Content wizards let participants drill down to their favorite content while they enable marketers to learn who's on their site and what interests those visitors have. Rather than showing long list pages of white papers and webinars to wade through, content wizards provide a more enjoyable and personal user experience.

And, as you associate the data collected to the lead record, you can also tie that data back to the referrers that drive the traffic. Then, it's a much shorter distance to optimize for the most qualified traffic.



## Idea 2: Conversion Path

Conversion paths enable participants to take control of their conversion experience by making one or more personal choices that affect the pages and content they visit. At its most basic, a conversion path lets a visitor self-segment into one of two buckets. This choice is communicated via a click — not a form. The post-choice page is then more specific to the visitor's interest and more likely to convert their initial engagement into conversion. And, conversion paths are mutually beneficial — giving marketers valuable segmentation data tied to the resulting lead record and tied back to the referring source of traffic.



**Testing ideas:** Try varying the number of steps to see how increasing or reducing the pre-conversion steps impacts conversion rate.

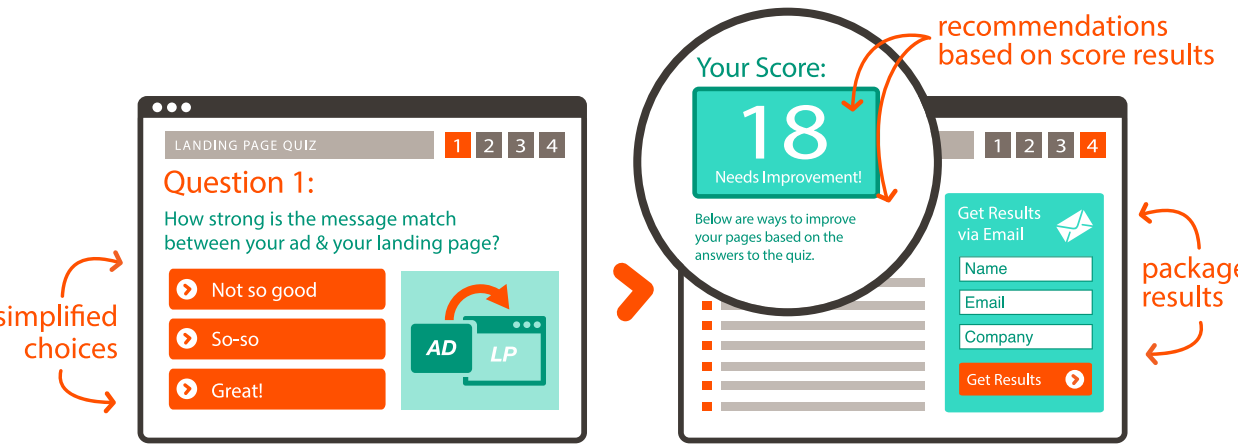


**Testing ideas:** Try testing different segment labels and calls-to-action to minimize bounce rate. Track those tests to see how the various segment labels affect conversion.

## Idea 3: Quiz

Quizzes are a great way to engage and educate participants — giving them valuable insights and advice, while marketers get high-value visitor profiling and segmentation data. You can then use that data to drive targeted marketing automation programs and to surface warmer leads to sales with pre-fab insight into pains. For quizzes to work well, they must offer valuable information.

For example, asking visitors multiple-choice questions in an assessment and subsequently giving participants written recommendations based upon their answers.

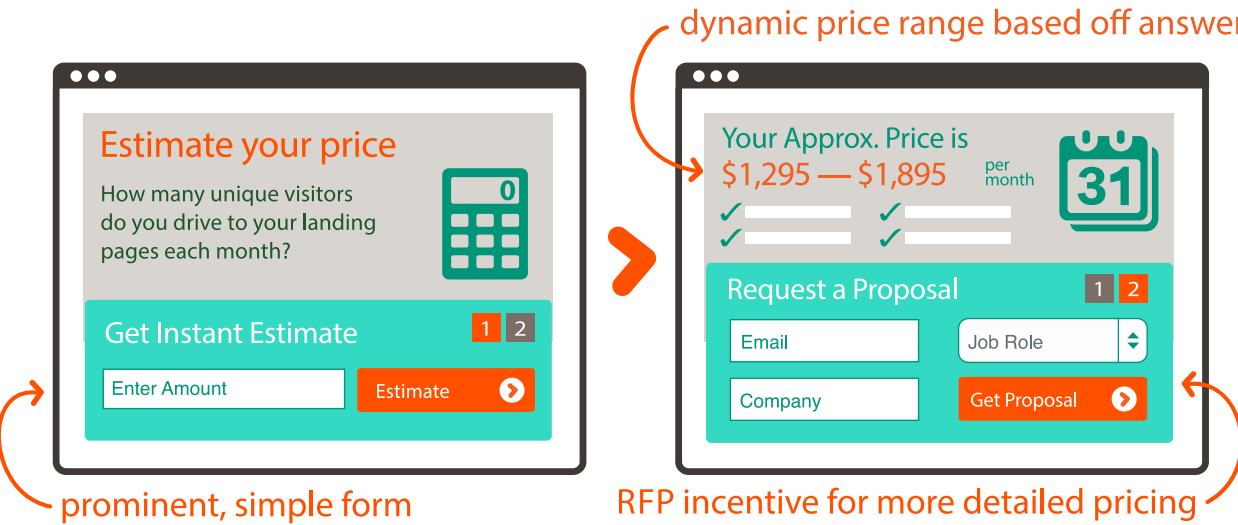


**Testing ideas:** Try requiring sign-up before taking the quiz, versus before getting the recommendations, versus only if you want to receive the recommendations via email. Another idea is to experiment with the number of questions and/or answers to optimize for completion and conversion.

**See it in action:**  
**Quiz:** <http://ioninteractive.com/score>

## Idea 4: Calculator

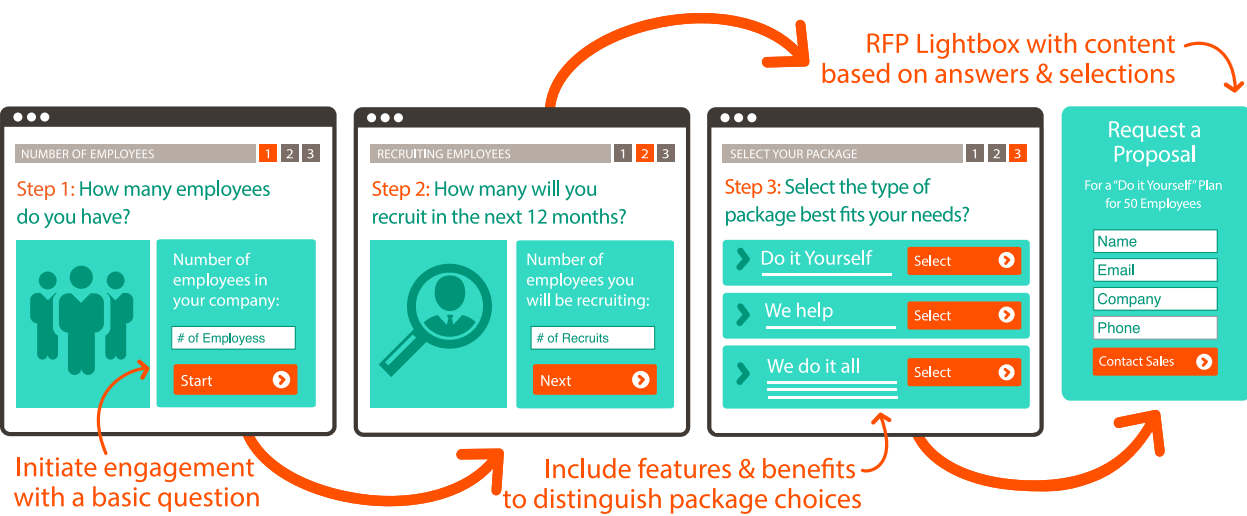
Most organizations have something that can be calculated using an engaging app-like experience. The most obvious example is pricing. Price ‘ball parking’ lets you price-qualify leads without giving them personal pricing. It uses some basic axes upon which to assess and offer a price range or ball park. This provides the immediate gratification that B2B buyers crave while allowing sales to continue to build value prior to delivering a specific price quote.



**Testing ideas:** Try varying price ranges as well as varied propositions on the conversion form — for example: contact sales; versus request for proposal; versus get your price, etc.

# Idea 5: Configurator

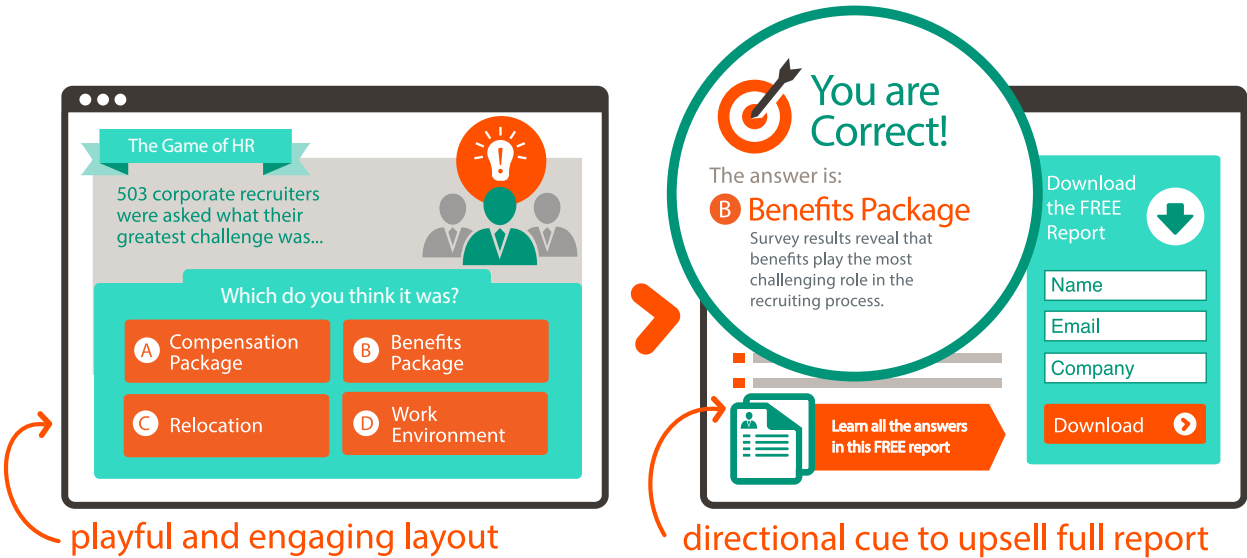
Configurators are specific types of wizards that allow participants to assemble or package products and/or services. By answering a series of self-evaluation questions, they can be presented with a more targeted and specific offering. This provides a valuable service to the visitor while providing marketing with even more valuable packaging data on what visitors need and want. This insight can be used in marketing automation programs as well as in personal selling to cater messages and offers. This makes sales and marketing smarter, more likely to satisfy visitor expectations and more likely to convert traffic into business.



**Testing ideas:** Experiment with the number of steps and the specificity of framing questions. There is often reluctance to divulge information deemed too personal or specific, so experimenting with varying degrees of specificity can reveal the sweet spots at which information gathering and conversion optimization are in alignment.

# Idea 6: Game

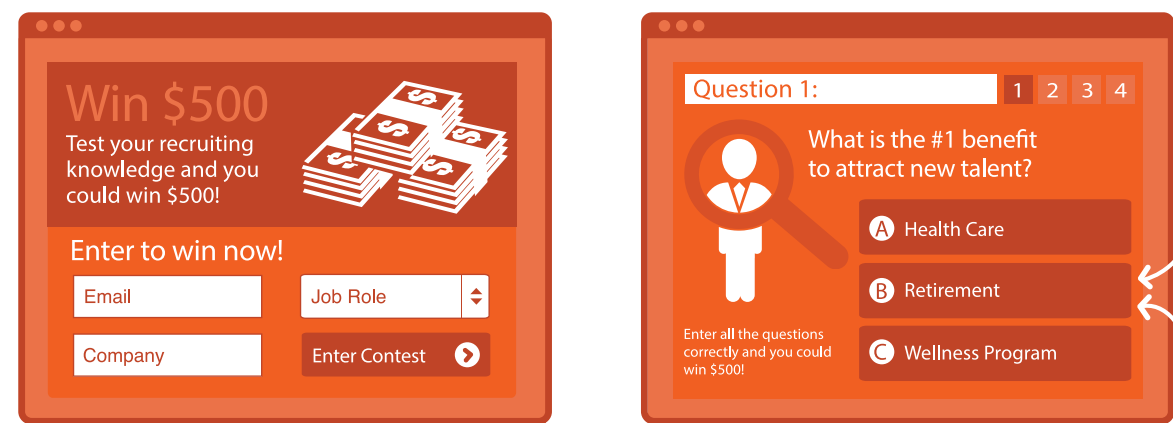
Games are entertaining ways to engage, educate and convert prospects. For example, ‘Guess which’ games are great follow-on uses of survey data. Rather than answering survey questions for themselves, participants guess which answer was most popular amongst their peers (think Family Feud “survey said...”). In answering, they are exposed to shared pains, problems and solutions that drive demand. Simple guessing games provide another way to communicate strategically compelling information — for example, guessing how much time is saved on average by users of a solution — and tying that back to real research.



**Testing ideas:** Game incentives are great to experiment with. Try monetary incentives, versus social recognition, versus an asset offer to stimulate engagement and conversion. Also, test different conversion points — pre-game versus post-game — to see which delivers the most conversions.

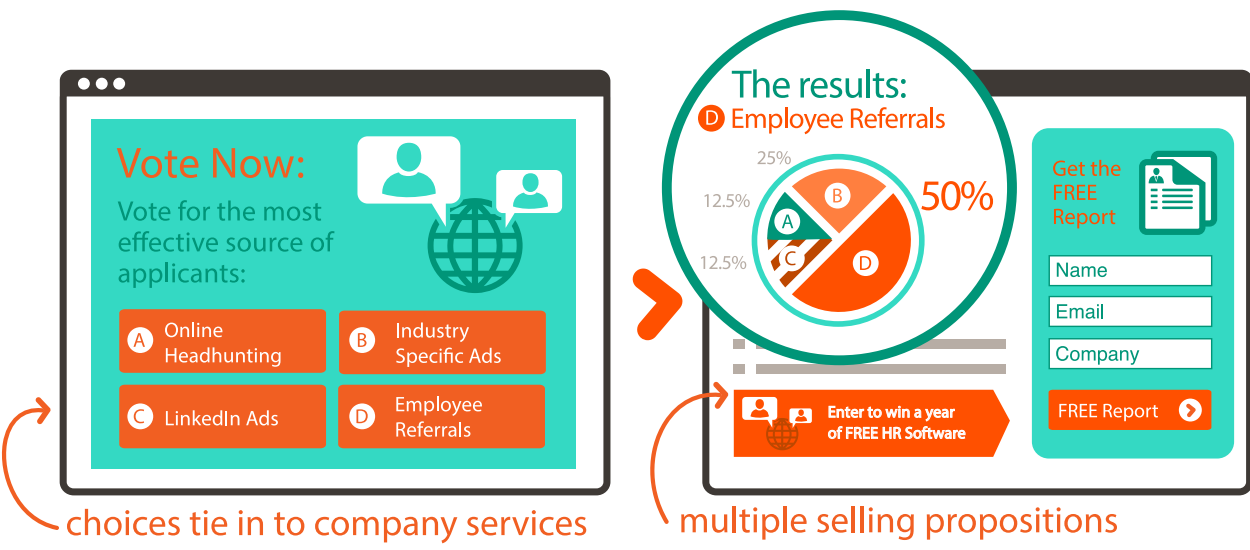
# Idea 7: Contest

Knowledge-driven contests engage participants by incentivizing them to compete. Aligning the contest with marketing propositions — either by exposing pains or solutions within the content of the contest — involves and educates participants. The flow of competitive answers from participants can be associated with their profiles and then used for sales messaging and marketing segmentation. Contests can be valuable sources of engagement and data from highly qualified prospects.



# Idea 8: Voting

Voting for preferences can be an easy-to-tap motive for visitors. Extending the experience to show how the visitor’s vote compared to the votes of others can further deepen interest and desire. When marketers design the alternatives between which visitors are being asked to vote so they have meaningful tie-ins to marketing strategy and selling propositions, the engagement in voting becomes engagement in the brand. And when the reveal of all votes shows shared pain that can be solved by the brand, engagement can turn into persuasion. While it can be difficult to use a voting app for lead-gen, they are often used to collect data that can be used in sales enablement or as fodder for other apps.



**Testing ideas:** Try testing various incentives — cash, gift cards, promotional offers, bragging rights, social prominence — to determine which incentives attract the most qualified participants. Also, try varying the level of difficulty to see if ‘easier’ or ‘harder’ attracts and converts more of the right participants.



**Testing ideas:** It’s unlikely that experimentation with gating the actual voting with a form will have a successful outcome. What may have a more successful conversion outcome could be gating the reveal of the population’s vote or combining your poll with a monetary or other type of incentive.

# Idea 9: Survey

Surveys in a marketing context can be more persuasive than ordinary research surveys. When a survey is strategically designed to focus on pains that can be relieved by the brand behind it, the survey can become an engaging and educational marketing vehicle. Surveys that subsequently compare the participant’s responses to those of their peer group provide valuable benchmarks that establish the participant’s pain relative to others. The data gathered from an app-like marketing survey can provide rich sales enablement and marketing automation insight into pains and segmentation.



**Testing ideas:** If the goal is lead-gen, try gating the survey at various points: pre-survey and pre-benchmark are two good places to start. If the survey is for sales enablement, try testing a guided (by a sales rep) version against an unguided version — and experiment with delivery of the benchmarking — email versus in-browser.

# From static content to visitor interaction

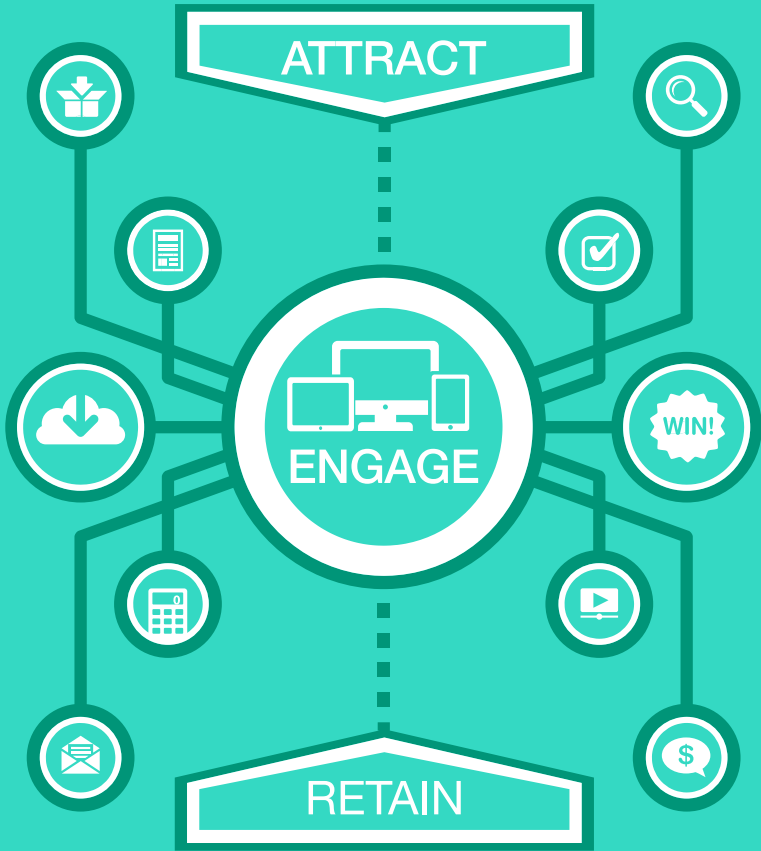
## Attract.Engage. Retain.

Content marketing isn’t going anywhere. In fact, it’s likely to continue growing in importance. We still need newsletters, white papers, blogs, articles, webinars, slideshares and all the other content marketing tools we know and love.

Simply put—content marketing works! It attracts visitors to your site, builds your owned media, educates your audience and creates brand affinity for your prospects and buyers.

There is tremendous value in generating authentic, original content and spreading it to your target audience. The opportunity to amplify your efforts by launching engaging, useful marketing apps that turn your static content into visitor interaction only increases that content value.

A piece of content can only speak at the reader. An interactive marketing app, based on that same content, starts a personalized dialog. It’s memorable. Helpful. And engages them in a way that static content just can’t.



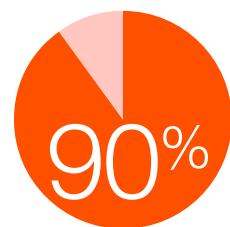
# More leads. More engagement. More revenue.

## Marketing Apps from ion interactive

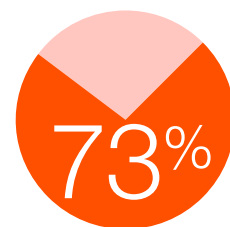
ion interactive is a marketing apps platform that generates leads and revenue with engaging, highly interactive, digital marketing experiences that can be created and tested without developers. ion interactive is used to differentiate brands, increase engagement and improve conversions in content marketing, social marketing, email marketing and advertising campaigns.

- Create engaging app-like experiences in minutes
- Pass segmentation and sales enablement data in and out
- Test and auto-optimize alternatives
- Save time, money and resources

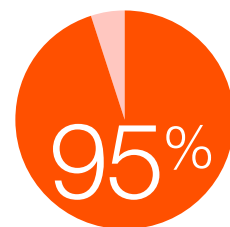
According to third-party research 73% of our customers double their conversions. 90% get positive ROI. And 95% would recommend us. Join them.



Positive ROI



Double  
Results



Would  
Recommend

**Get Started:** [meet.ioninteractive.com/getstarted](https://meet.ioninteractive.com/getstarted) or Call 1.888.ion.idea (466.4332) or +1.561.235.7474 outside the US





[www.ioninteractive.com](http://www.ioninteractive.com)