

September 2020

# Content in the crisis

How consulting firms are faring  
compared to other content providers  
and what they need to do next





---

## Introduction

The months since the onset of the COVID crisis have seen a surge in demand among senior executives for content that helps them stay up to date with developments, find practical ways to respond, and prepare for a future that seems less certain than it has done at any point in their lives.

Consulting firms have had an important role to play as content providers throughout this time, and in many ways have done so very well. However, against the backdrop of a rapidly-evolving situation, they're in danger of being outgunned in the battle for the eyes and ears of their clients by business and economic publications, like HBR and The Economist, and even by mainstream media.

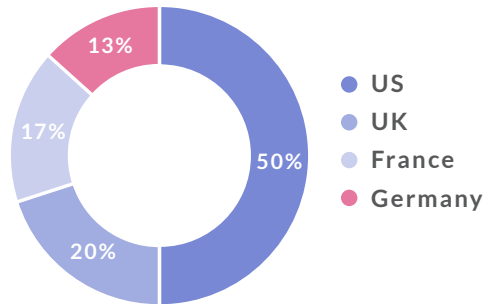
Editor's note: In this report we refer to "content" because our research includes information about the output from a number of different sources. To refer to thought leadership throughout the report would be to overlook the fact that a lot of content, particularly from mainstream media or business and economic publications, for example, is never described in this way. Similarly, we refer to content being "consumed" because while in most cases it's being read, some content is listened to or watched.



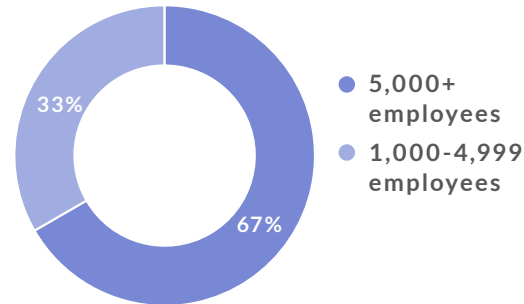
## Methodology

In August 2020 we surveyed 150 senior executives in four countries—the US, the UK, France, and Germany—about their use of content. All had extensive experience of working with consultants and the vast majority (81%) said they had personally taken decisions about bringing consultants, or other advisers, into their organisation.

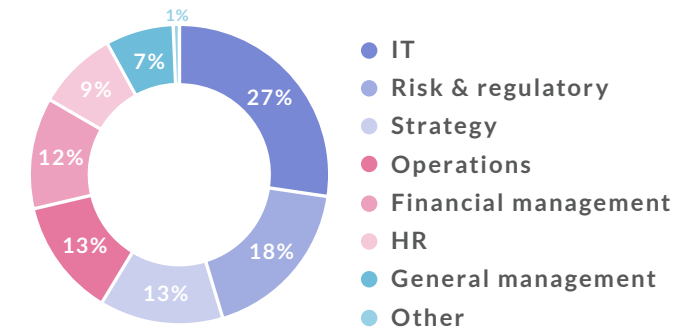
*Where are you based?*



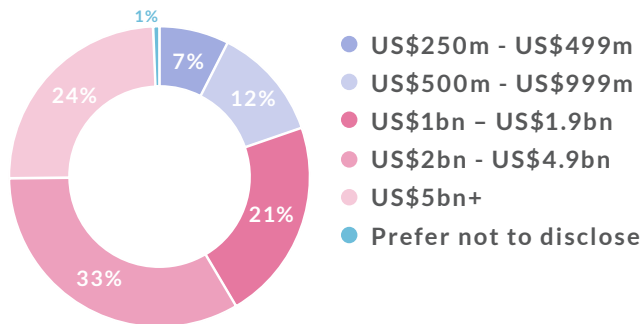
*What is the approximate size of your total organisation?*



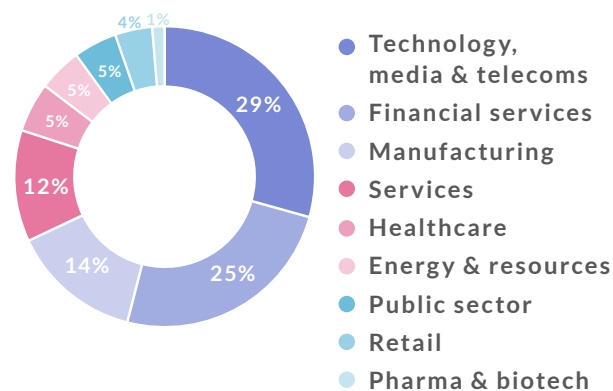
*How would you best describe your functional role within your organisation?*



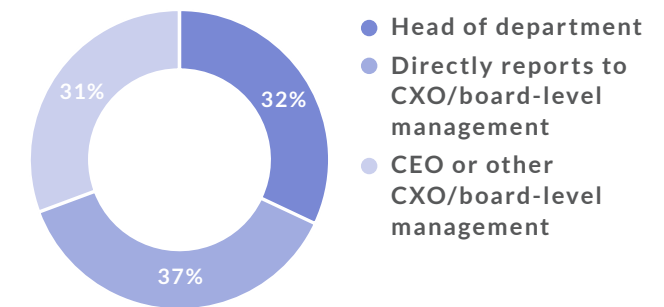
*What is the annual revenue of your organisation?*



*In which of the following industrial sectors does your organisation primarily operate?*



*What is your level of responsibility within your organisation?*





---

## Contents

- 1 What do clients want?
- 2 Is consulting firms' content giving clients what they want?
- 3 What should consulting firms do?





# What do clients want?





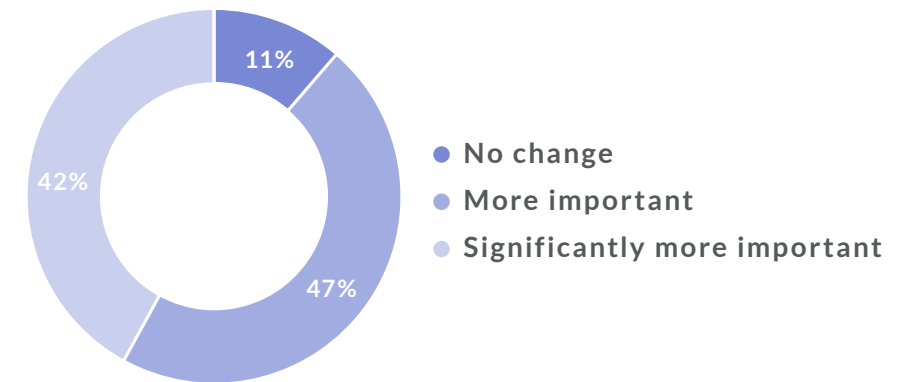


## Content is more important to clients as a result of the crisis...

This moment could represent the high water mark for the importance of content. In our survey of senior executives we found 89% saying that the COVID crisis had made content more important, and nearly half of them said it had done so significantly.

And there is little difference by size of organisation. Eighty-seven percent of people in large organisations are likely to place a high value on content versus 92% in smaller organisations (those with fewer than 5,000 employees).

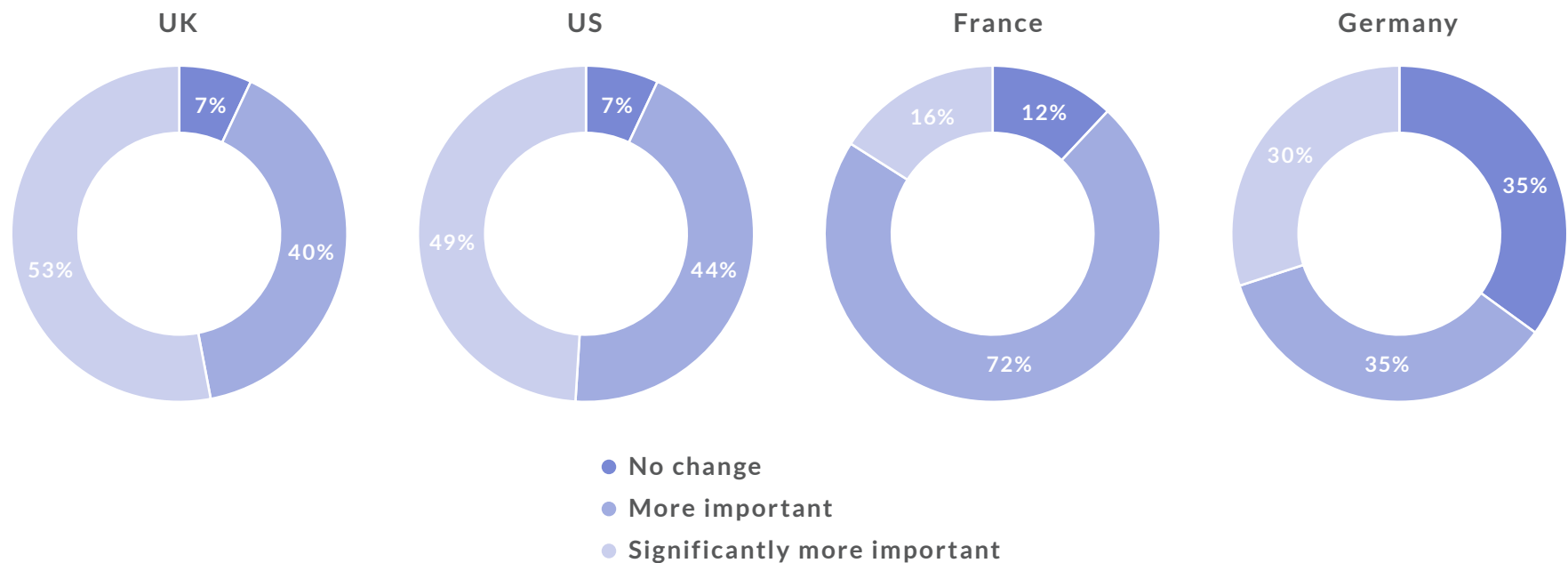
*To what extent has the COVID crisis changed the importance of content to you in helping you to deal with the challenges you face at work?*





## ... although there are clear differences by country

*To what extent has the COVID crisis changed the importance of content to you in helping you to deal with the challenges you face at work?*





## About the authors

### *Edward Haigh*

Ed is a Managing Director of Source, and he is particularly focused on HR, strategic marketing, and new product development. He is a key member of the Source research team and spends much of his time interviewing consultants and their clients around the world in order to identify and explore major market trends.

Ed regularly speaks about the consulting market to leadership teams around the world, has lectured at Columbia University (New York), Imperial College (London), and Vrije Universiteit (Amsterdam), and he is regularly quoted by media including the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, the Financial Times, Bloomberg, and the trade press. Prior to joining Source in 2008, Ed spent seven years in various marketing roles for Sony Europe.

Edward Haigh

✉ [edward.haigh@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:edward.haigh@sourceglobalresearch.com)

Zoë Stumpf

✉ [zoe.stumpf@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:zoe.stumpf@sourceglobalresearch.com)

### *Zoë Stumpf*

Zoë is Head of Thought Leadership at Source. She is responsible for the development and use of our thought leadership methodology, our rankings of the thought leadership produced by consulting firms, and our White Space platform, which provides a database of consulting thought leadership and guidance in its production to subscribing firms. As well consuming a huge amount of consulting firm content, Zoë spends much of her time analysing the views of senior executives about what they want from thought leadership via both interviews and surveys. Before joining Source, Zoë spent more than 12 years working as a management consultant in a variety of roles with KPMG and Atos Consulting. She has also worked as an independent marketing consultant.







## Programme schedule for 2020

Reports 2020	Market Data & Analysis	Client & Brand Insights	Emerging Trends	White Space
January				A powerful research tool that allows subscribers to keep up to date with the latest content being produced and maximise their return on investment. A series of reports that analyse the quality and effectiveness of thought leadership are published throughout the year.
February	Forecasts for 2020 UK	UK		
March	GCC Benelux	GCC Nordics	The Future of Account Management	
April	Nordics	Germany		
May	DACH France Southern Europe US	US France		
June	Eastern Europe & Russia Canada Australia India South America Japan South East Asia China	Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms	Sustainable Futures: Building Resilient Businesses	
July	Mexico Africa	Energy & Resources Healthcare		Please note that with the purchase of all country Market Data & Analysis reports in 2020, you will also gain access to monthly updates regarding the impact COVID-19 is having on the consulting industry more widely.
August	Global Risk & Cybersecurity Services	Perceptions of Risk Firms Perceptions of Tax Firms		
September	Energy & Resources	Perceptions of Audit Firms	Sustainable Futures: A Climate Transformed	
October	Global Tax Advisory Financial Services			
November	Healthcare Technology, Media & Telecoms Planning for Growth in 2021		The Consultant of Tomorrow	
December				

## Our custom work

---

We provide advice and custom research services to the world's most successful professional services firms, helping them to identify, and develop strategic responses to, their most pressing opportunities and challenges.

Among other things, our work includes:

- Deep market and competitor analysis
- Acquisition strategy
- Proposition strategy and development
- Brand and client sentiment analysis
- Thought leadership and content strategy, development, and review

For more information about any of these, please visit our website or get in touch.

## Source Global Research is a leading provider of information about the market for professional services.

Set up in 2007, Source serves the professional services industry with expert analysis, research, and reporting. We draw not only on our extensive in-house experience but also on the breadth of our relationships with both suppliers and buyers. All of our work is underpinned by our core values of intelligence, integrity, efficiency, and transparency.

Source Information Services Ltd  
20 Little Britain | London | EC1A 7DH  
UK +44 (0)20 3478 1207

US +1 800 767 8058  
[info@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:info@sourceglobalresearch.com)  
[www.sourceglobalresearch.com](http://www.sourceglobalresearch.com)

© Source Information Services Ltd 2020

Source Information Services Ltd and its agents have used their best efforts in collecting the information published in this report. Source Information Services Ltd does not assume, and hereby disclaims, any liability for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in this report, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, accident, or other causes.