

OUTCOMES RESEARCH REPORT

Podcasts as a Marketing Powerhouse: Strategies, Impact, and Future Outlook

A global survey of 861 marketing and communications professionals on how organizations use branded podcasts, what they measure, and where the channel is heading.

Published July 16, 2026

Fieldwork May 2026, via Prolific

Research partner Health Podcast Library

44.9%

already use podcasts in their marketing

45.8%

of non-hosts doubt podcasts work for their goals

16.8%

track formal ROI, cost versus return

56.9%

plan to increase podcast spend in 12 months

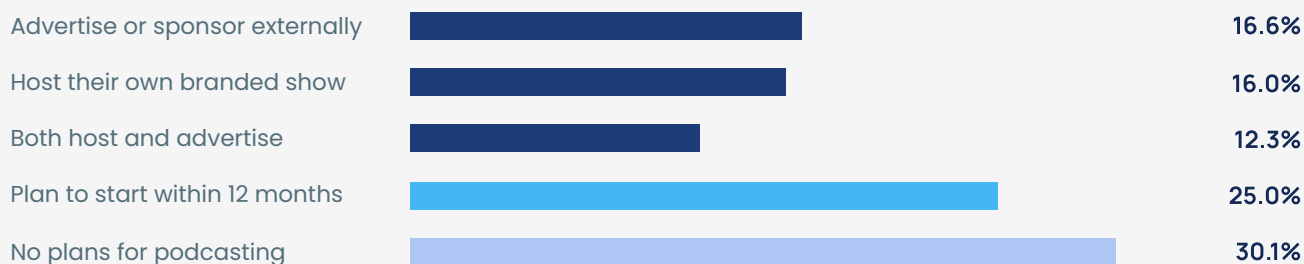
Branded podcasting has moved from novelty to a mainstream marketing channel, but the industry is still working out what success looks like. To better understand how marketers across B2B and B2C organizations use podcasts, measure their impact, and plan for the future, Outcomes Rocket partnered with [Health Podcast Library](#) to survey 861 marketing and public relations professionals worldwide. The results reveal a channel in growth mode, grappling with the tension between production investment and commercial accountability.

Nearly half of organizations surveyed are already active in podcasting, hosting their own shows, advertising on external podcasts, or both, and a further quarter plan to enter the space within 12 months. At the same time, the single biggest barrier to adoption is not budget or technical complexity: it is skepticism about the effectiveness of podcasting. That skepticism, the data suggests, is closely tied to how podcast success is being measured, and what is being left unmeasured.

Podcast adoption: strong growth, but skepticism holds many back

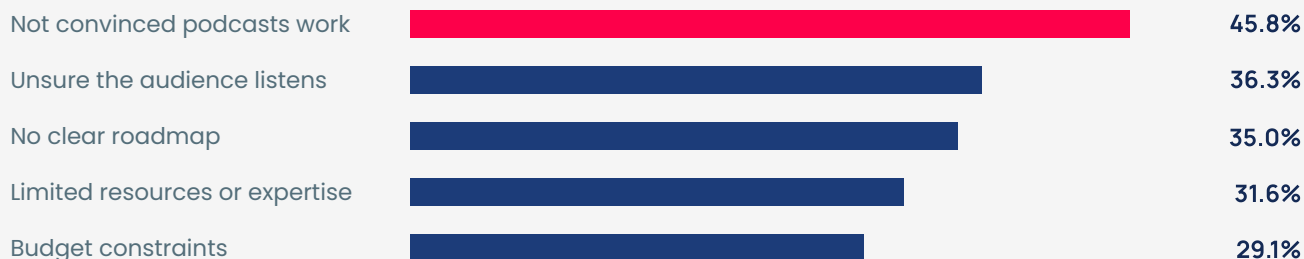
Podcast adoption among marketing organizations is considerable but far from universal. Nearly half of respondents (44.9%) say their organization currently incorporates podcasts into its marketing strategy in some form. Of these, 16% host their own branded podcast, 16.6% advertise or sponsor on external podcasts, and 12.3% do both. An additional 25% plan to begin using podcasts within the next 12 months, pointing to continued momentum in the channel. That still leaves 30.1% with no plans for podcasting.

FIG. 1 — CURRENT USE OF PODCASTS IN MARKETING



Among organizations not currently hosting a branded podcast, the most cited barrier is a lack of belief. 45.8% of respondents are not convinced that podcasts are effective for their marketing goals, making skepticism about effectiveness the top obstacle ahead of uncertainty about audience listenership, a lack of clear roadmap, limited internal resources, and budget constraints.

FIG. 2 — BARRIERS AMONG ORGANIZATIONS NOT HOSTING A PODCAST



Despite this skepticism, 28.5% of non-hosting organizations say they are interested in launching a branded podcast within the next 12 to 18 months, signaling an openness to the channel even when confidence is not yet established.

Getting started: most organizations move quickly, then slow down

For organizations that commit to launching a branded podcast, getting to air is not a prolonged process. 65.3% publish their first episode within six months of the initial idea, with 32.0% going live within one to three months. Only 10.3% take longer than a year from concept to first episode.

The challenge is maintaining publishing consistency after launch. Monthly episodes and inconsistent or unscheduled releases together account for over half of all branded podcast operations. For a channel that builds audience trust and algorithmic visibility through consistent output, irregular publishing is a compounding disadvantage.

FIG. 3 — PUBLISHING CADENCE OF BRANDED PODCASTS



Format and audience: conversation-first, mostly top-of-funnel

On format, the market has consolidated around conversation-driven content. Interview or guest-led podcasts are the most common approach, used by 32.8% of organizations, followed closely by co-hosted formats at 28.9%. Panel or roundtable discussions account for 15.9%, while solo monologues represent just 9.4% of productions.

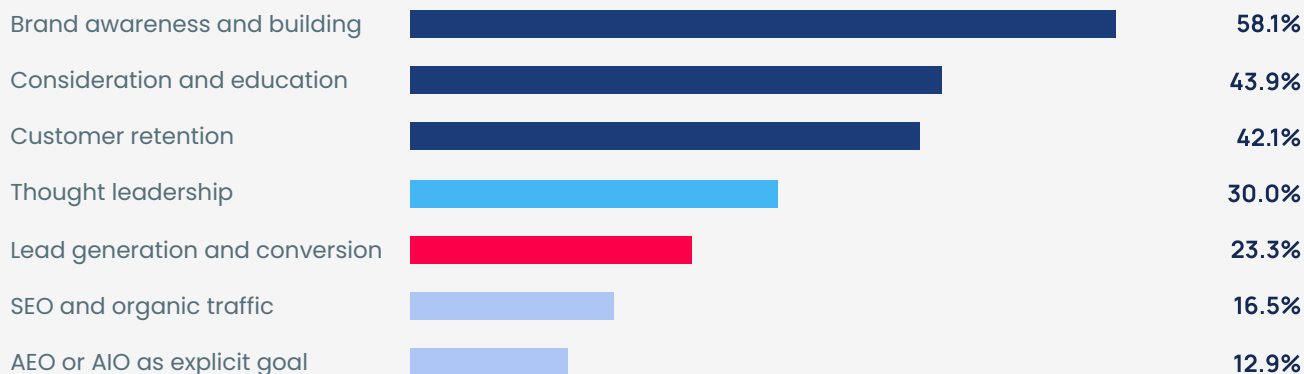
Conversational formats offer practical advantages: guests bring their own audiences, shared networks expand distribution organically, and dialogue rarely exhausts itself for content. It is also a format well-suited to building the guest relationships that can translate into commercial value beyond the episode itself.

In terms of intended audience, 33.3% of podcast hosts target the general public or a broad consumer audience, while 24.0% focus on prospective customers and 22.0% on industry peers and professional communities. Existing customers are the primary target for only 15.5% of organizations, a relatively small proportion, given that loyal customers are often among the most receptive and commercially valuable podcast audiences for B2B brands.

FIG. 4 — PRIMARY INTENDED AUDIENCE

Strategic goals: a brand channel with growing commercial ambition

When it comes to strategic intent, podcasts are firmly positioned as a top-of-funnel tool. 58.1% of podcast marketers say their primary goal is brand awareness and brand building, with mid-funnel consideration and education at 43.9% and customer retention at 42.1% also featuring prominently. Bottom-funnel goals, lead generation and conversion, are cited by 23.3%. Notably, 12.9% of podcast-running organizations already list AEO (Answer Engine Optimization) or AIO (AI Optimization) as explicit goals, a share that is likely to grow as AI-mediated discovery becomes a more significant part of how audiences find content.

FIG. 5 — PRIMARY STRATEGIC GOALS FOR PODCASTING

7.3%

Estimated average share of total marketing budget directed to podcast activities. 39.3% spend under 5%; 35.4% spend 5–10%.

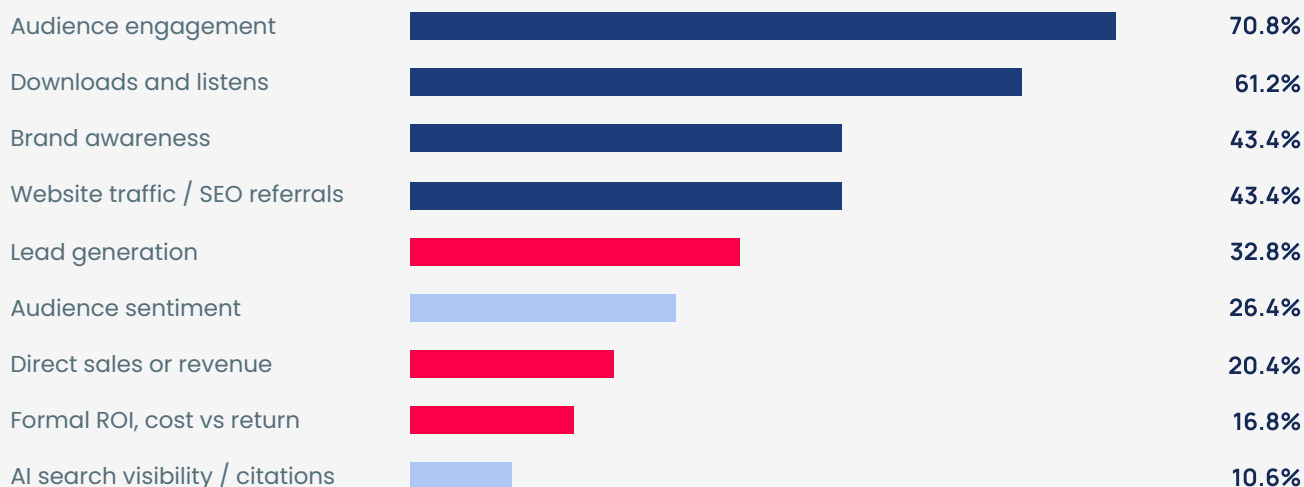
56.9%

of organizations engaged in podcasting say they are likely or very likely to increase podcast spend over the next 12 months.

Measurement: engagement leads, business outcomes lag

How podcast success is measured reveals the clearest tension in the data. Audience engagement, meaning completion rates and shares, is the dominant metric, tracked by 70.8% of podcast marketers. Downloads and listens follow at 61.2%. Further down the value chain, measurement drops off sharply. Lead generation metrics are tracked by only 32.8% of organizations. Direct sales or revenue attribution is measured by 20.4%, and formal ROI is tracked by just 16.8%.

FIG. 6 — METRICS USED TO MEASURE PODCAST SUCCESS



The gap between what gets measured and what drives commercial decisions is significant. 47.3% of podcast marketers rate their overall ROI as strong. But without systematic tracking of business outcomes, that positive assessment often rests on engagement signals rather than pipeline or revenue data.

A related structural challenge is where podcast budgets are spent. 41.8% of organizations allocate more budget to production, meaning recording, editing, hosting, and equipment, than to marketing and promotion, while only 26.1% invest more in distribution and promotion than production. Nearly one in five (17.8%) directs more than 80% of their podcast budget toward production alone.

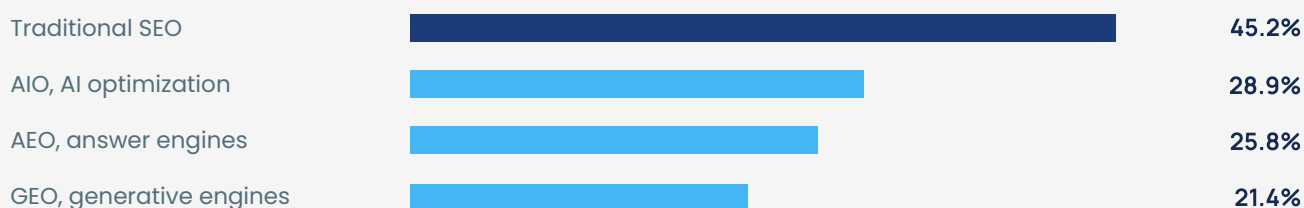
“Downloads are vanity. Contacts and contracts are sanity. Most people are measuring the wrong things, and that is exactly why so many organizations remain skeptical about the channel.”

Saul Marquez, CEO and Founder, Outcomes Rocket

AI and search: early movers gaining ground

One of the more forward-looking signals in the data is the growing use of podcast content to support AI-driven search and discovery. 45.2% of podcast marketers already use podcast content to support traditional SEO. A growing cohort is going further: 28.9% are applying podcasts to AIO, 25.8% to AEO, and 21.4% to GEO (Generative Engine Optimization).

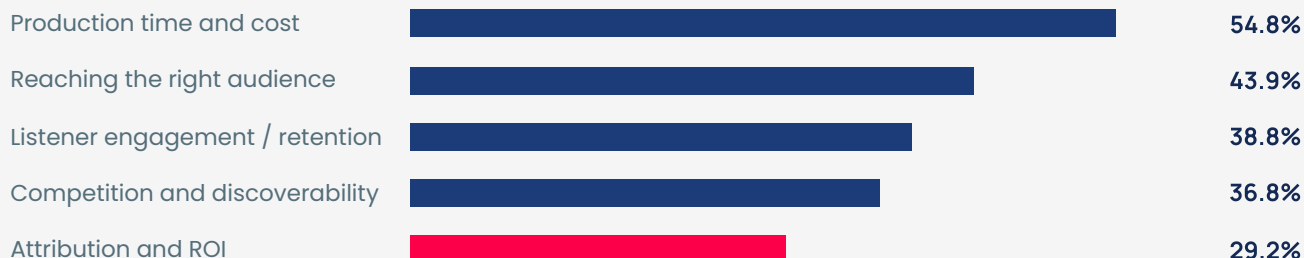
FIG. 7 — USE OF PODCAST CONTENT FOR SEARCH OPTIMIZATION



The most widely adopted tactic is content repurposing: 37.0% adapt podcast clips and transcripts for AI search engines, and 33.6% are producing transcript-rich, question-based episodes specifically designed to be cited in AI responses. Sponsoring podcasts that rank well in AI answers is a strategy used by 21.4%. More than four in ten respondents (41.6%) rate their effectiveness at generating AI-driven visibility as high, even as 28.9% say they are not yet using podcasts for search optimization at all, suggesting a clear divide between early movers and the broader market.

Challenges and future outlook

When asked about the biggest challenges in using podcasts for marketing, 54.8% of respondents name production time and cost as the dominant concern. Discovering and reaching the right audience is a close second at 43.9%, followed by low listener engagement or retention (38.8%), competition and discoverability (36.8%), and measuring attribution and ROI (29.2%).

FIG. 8 — BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN PODCAST MARKETING


Looking toward 2027 and beyond, respondents hold a nuanced view of where the channel is heading. 43.1% predict that podcasting will evolve toward greater specialization: smaller, more targeted audiences and deeper trust-based relationships. 35.0% expect stronger integration with AI and emerging content formats. At the same time, 32.3% anticipate growing saturation and competition, and 29.6% see increasing importance and broader adoption as the defining trend.

FIG. 9 — PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS


Conclusion

The data from this survey points to a podcast marketing landscape that is growing in reach and ambition but is still maturing in its approach to accountability. Adoption is increasing, investment intent is positive, and a meaningful cohort of marketers are already thinking beyond traditional SEO toward AI-era search strategies. Yet the measurement gap, between commonly tracked engagement metrics and demonstrable business outcomes, remains the central challenge the industry has yet to fully close.

“Think about who you invite into your kitchen or your car. It’s probably only people you know and trust. And that is exactly what listeners do with podcasts. Across many industries, trusted relationships are the key to being effective, and podcasting earns the kind of trust that gets you invited back.”

Dan Kendall, CEO, [Health Podcast Library](#)

The organizations best placed to benefit from podcasting’s continued growth will be those that move beyond listenership as the primary signal of success, building the measurement infrastructure to connect their podcast activity to the awareness, pipeline, and revenue outcomes that justify the investment.

Respondent profile

The survey captures a broad cross-section of marketing and communications professionals, spanning seniority levels, company sizes, and geographies.

DIMENSION	BREAKDOWN
Seniority	Managers 33.9% · Individual contributors 33.2% · Senior or lead 20.2% · Directors 7% · C-suite 5.2% · VPs 0.5%
Orientation	B2C 43.1% · B2B 29.3% · Both equally 26.1%
Company size	1–50 employees 35% · 51–200 21.3% · 201–500 13% · 5,000+ 11.7%
Headquarters	Europe excluding UK 31% · United Kingdom 30.8% · United States 18.8% · Middle East and Africa 8.8%

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a global survey of 861 marketing and public relations or communications professionals, representing a diverse mix of industries, company sizes, and seniority levels. Data was collected in May 2026 via Prolific, a research platform for pre-screened professional respondents. Participants were selected based on their involvement in marketing, PR, or communications functions within their organizations.

Percentages reflect multiple-response questions where noted and may total more than 100%. Source: [Outcomes Rocket, Podcasts as a Marketing Powerhouse \(July 16, 2026\)](#), in partnership with Health Podcast Library.