

Marketing agencies predict increasing complexity, the need to adapt in 2023



# How we got here

Marketing agencies recently shared their predictions and insights for 2023 with CallRail. As we look ahead, it's also helpful to see how we got here, particularly since the past few years were full of uncertainty and new challenges. Fortunately, many agencies overcame these challenges and came out better for it.

## Here's a recap:

94%

CallRail completed a [2020 report](#) based on our first agency growth survey. The results showed that 94% of small businesses said they were looking for help from a marketing agency after the year's shutdowns.

88%

In our [2021 report](#), agencies were optimistic about the future, with 88% of them saying they were "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied" with their agency's financial health.

95%

The [2022 report](#) revealed that agencies' optimism was warranted, as 2021 was a prosperous year. Of the 600 U.S. marketing professionals we surveyed, 95% said they met their annual revenue goals.

So what's in store for 2023? We asked agency professionals about the current state of their agencies and about their predictions for the upcoming year. Here's what they said.

# Automation is a must

The theme for the upcoming year seems to be change. Modern marketing is getting more complex and requires the right tools, skills, and knowledge. From cookies to search to analytics, small business marketing is quickly evolving, and it's likely that only the most prepared agencies will be able to keep up.



## What agencies are saying

*“Using call transcription, we’re able to listen to the calls, find the specific keywords that people are using and even the vocabulary that we might not have thought to build out – and then add them to our search programs.”*

- Andrew R. Mimault, Founder, [Mantic Media Group](#)

**mantic media** ©



## Why it matters

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a growing role in small business marketing, and that's not going to change. It's one of the top tools agencies are looking at embracing in the next year (if they haven't already). The technology is being used for automation, chatbots, call analysis, and much more. CallRail's **Conversation Intelligence** uses AI to automatically analyze calls and reveal insights.

Other key marketing tools for the future include more detailed data analytics and videos with interactive and virtual elements.



## How to take action

- Use a tool like [Conversation Intelligence](#) to analyze calls.
- Review the words and ideas your customers are using.
- Adjust your keyword and marketing strategies based on this information.

# SEO isn't dead – it's evolving and permeating other channels



## What agencies are saying

*“Optimizing for niche search engines will be a more successful strategy for small and mid-sized businesses. Creating the proper content for these media will be the key to success – engaging, thought-provoking posts on a LinkedIn forum, or a fun, informative short video on TikTok.”*

– Michael D’Elicio, Founder, [Dweeso Digital Marketing](#)

**dweeso**



## Why it matters

SEO is still relevant, but it's changing. It's no longer all about Google, as some users focus on Bing and other search engines. And some marketers don't typically think of social media platforms as needing SEO, but the tactic is becoming more important there as well.

Marketers should be taking advantage of these new opportunities in a variety of search engines. This should involve testing search terms, trying different search engines, and creating different kinds of posts and content to see what produces the best results.



## How to take action

- Create an [SEO strategy](#).
- Try search engines other than Google, including social platforms – and even Bing.
- Develop content geared toward those channels' audiences.

# Grow your agency with thought leadership



## What agencies are saying

*"Agencies tend to rely on relationships and referrals for growth... Having a brand and being a trusted authority can help. It can establish your reputation as a top service provider in a specific niche — even if people haven't heard of you."*

- Kristaps Brencans, CEO, [On the Map Marketing](#)



## Why it matters

When considering an agency, prospects often look for familiar names and brand authority. In B2B relationships, 88% of decision-makers say [thought leadership content helps improve their impression](#) of an organization.

[Conversation Intelligence](#) can help you discover what clients are saying and what they care about. That information will allow you to refine your approach to client needs and elevate your marketing to a thought leadership level.

Quality thought leadership content can help you stand out, especially when shared in relevant spaces like industry podcasts and publications, in addition to your website and social media. You can centralize and streamline your inbound customer communications through these channels in a tool like CallRail's [Lead Center](#) as part of an omnichannel marketing approach.



## How to take action

- Determine your area of expertise.
- Implement a [call analysis tool](#) to hear what prospects and customers need from your business.
- Establish your positioning and create thought leadership content to promote online.
- Use a centralized comms tool to understand how clients respond to your content along the customer journey.

# Adding value for clients isn't going anywhere (but track your efforts)



## What agencies are saying

*“Creating something unique and valuable that benefits your target audience isn't going out of style. This includes ensuring users know what they'll receive in exchange for their email, creating content that addresses prospects' pain points – and sharing it on the right channels, and a great, technically-optimized website. Finally, focus on data integrity. Tracking the right things will allow you to make marketing decisions backed by data.”*

- Eric Ritter, President & Founder, [Digital Neighbor](#)



## Why it matters

Marketing trends and technologies are constantly shifting and becoming more complex. For example, privacy rules, social media platforms, and automation tools are more pervasive than they were just a few years ago – and they will continue to change.

However, there are some constants in marketing, including the need for an optimized website, the role data integrity plays in decision-making, and the value of providing answers and solutions to your target audience. Customers can tell if you really understand their pain points, and they're willing to provide information about themselves if it's mutually beneficial.



## How to take action

- Answer customers' top questions on your website and social media.**
- Create an offer of value for your audience, like a promotion or an industry guide.**
- Ensure websites are technically optimized for SEO and ease of use.**

# Detailed data will be king for paid search performance



## What agencies are saying

*“As Google continues to push automation within the Google Ads platform, the companies that can properly identify conversion values will be the most successful. If you’re already using CallRail’s Automatic Conversion Import feature to report conversions on only those calls that are true opportunities, you’re already far ahead of most everyone else.”*

*The next level will be to make sure that you are creating multiple conversion types where companies have different products with different conversion rates and gross revenue amounts.”*

- Ron R. Browning, CEO, [Intellibright](#)



## Why it matters

It’s essential that today’s businesses are able to track traffic and engagement across platforms to better optimize their paid ad spend. Which is why 95% of agencies say [lead conversion tracking is important or very important](#). To gain more detailed data insights, agencies should be using features like [CallRail’s Automatic Conversion Import](#), which allows agencies to report uniquely on the calls that became an open opportunity for their clients — as opposed to bounces or poor-quality leads.

CallRail reports on the value of your conversions, assigning different values for different conversion types. This allows Google Analytics to use these values in its bidding strategy to obtain higher-quality clicks that are more likely to convert.



## How to take action

- Choose a tool that reports call conversions back to Google Ads.**
- Create conversion reports that include specific conversion values.**
- Set up programmatic Ads bidding to generate more high-value conversions.**



# Get ready for the shift to Google Analytics 4



## What experts are saying

*"On July 1, 2023, Universal Analytics is sunseting and marketers will be fully reliant on GA4. There are some big improvements — and big differences — and I think it will be towards the end of the year before everyone is fully used to how the data is processed and presented before marketers can start taking full advantage."*

- Laura Lawrie, Principal Product Manager, CallRail

CallRail



## Why it matters

It seems like Google is introducing a new way of looking at data with Google Analytics 4 (GA4). Google first introduced source/medium/campaign/gclid and it's a major change that it won't be built in as standard anymore. Agency marketers will want to start using GA4 as soon as possible to get plenty of practice by the time Universal Analytics (UA) is deprecated.

Some advice? Run both UA and GA4 at the same time so data can flow into both systems. Use UA up until its sunset date while simultaneously looking at corresponding data in GA4, and build reports that satisfy the same requirements as your old reports. The good news is both platforms are running at the same time so take advantage of the fact that you won't get kicked out of UA without learning your way around in GA4 first.



## How to take action

- Run UA and GA4 at the same time.**
- Establish parity between both tools.**
- Set up the tracking pixel for GA4 immediately so that by the time UA sunsets, you'll have several months of historical data.**



# Stop mourning the death of the cookie



## What agencies are saying

*“Digital teams must start thinking now about collecting first-party data (or more of it) because data extrapolated from ad performance and market research will become even more valuable. Teams also will be looking at how to partner with large publishers who carry a treasure trove of data based on content consumption. Contextual ad targeting also will become more relevant.”*

- Care Gerland, [Savage Brands](#)



## Why it matters

Though the timeline for phasing out third-party tracking was pushed back to [late 2024](#), it's never too soon to figure out [how to advertise without cookies](#). Start by finding tools that don't rely on third-party cookies and that support your efforts to collect your own first-party data. CallRail, for example, only uses first-party data, so our customers [won't be affected by third-party restrictions](#) in the future.



## How to take action

- Start collecting first-party data with opt-in.**
- Partner with large publishers where customers can submit forms.**
- Try contextual advertising where you target behavior — not individuals.**

# Retain clients long term with data



## What agencies are saying

*"Clients want to scale their business. You want to hold them accountable and you have to hold yourselves accountable. That's what CallRail does for us: it provides the right data. The business owner always has a feeling about their business, but we want to prove all those feelings right or wrong — the data will tell us."*

- Erin Wilder, Director of Strategy, [EightyOne & Sunny](#)



## Why it matters

It's essential you use data to prove ROI and justify your working partnership to clients. You can also use it to hold your agency accountable and see what's working and what's not and where you can perform better for your clients.

Lowering the cost of customer acquisition not only helps your clients but helps you demonstrate your value.



## How to take action

- Invest in [marketing analytics tools](#).
- Establish which KPIs are important for each client.
- Set client goals and agency goals.
- Continue to iterate strategies and campaigns based on data.

# Generate loyalty among seasonal, one-time customers



## What agencies are saying

“Increasing customer lifetime value from the usual surge of Q4 revenue will depend on providing a great user experience to foster loyalty. Consider implementing freebies, loyalty discounts, referral discounts, and over-communication of fulfillment expectations if those aren't already in place. Any loyalty you can foster now will pay off big-time with potential upsells, referral customers, and higher-ticket purchases when the economy turns around.”

- Bryan Karas, CEO and co-founder, [Playbook Media](#)



## Why it matters

It's easy to focus solely on ROI and ad spend, but consider KPIs like customer lifetime value too — and how they impact your clients' businesses. During periods of economic uncertainty, customers will appreciate promotions — and are likely to return and even spend more generously when finances bounce back. Of course, more loyal customers to your clients means more loyal clients for your agency.



## How to take action

- Decide which KPIs are important to your business.**
- Make sure your tracking tools can identify repeat customers, including those who call or text.**
- Set goals to raise the number or frequency of return customers.**

# Use CallRail with your clients



## What agencies are saying

“CallRail changes us from a website developer or a PPC shop or any other marketing agency to business consultants sitting down with a client and talking about the business metrics that matter to them.”

- Conrad Saam, Owner, [Mockingbird Marketing](#)



## Why it matters

Provide an invaluable tool to your clients by partnering with CallRail. Your clients' success is your success, and you'll be helping your clients track their calls, campaigns, keywords, and more to help increase sales.



## How to take action

- Take advantage of the [CallRail free trial](#).
- Expand your offerings by providing enhanced call analytics to your clients.
- Enjoy better client relationships.

# Looking to the future of small business marketing

Change remains the only constant in the agency world. As one agency professional said, “One tried and tested tactic that’s not going anywhere in the new year: creating something unique and of value that your audience can benefit from.” Creating something new and useful for your clients will help you embrace the changing nature of marketing while allowing your agency to stand out.



2023 is coming, and it's a good time to take action and see how CallRail can improve results for your agency and your clients.

[Try Call Tracking for free today](#)