

# The State of Gated vs. Ungated Content



# Introduction

I've been a B2B SaaS marketer my entire career. I'm fascinated by how quickly everything changes. The strategy, process, and tactics that work one quarter can be a waste of time the next. The most important quality that we possess as marketers is adaptability. I've learned that we can never get comfortable with our approach because the wants, needs, and desires of our future customers are constantly shifting. The moment that I stopped gating content is still the most significant shift that I've ever taken as a marketer. The process to drop gated content didn't happen overnight or in isolation. The choice to let my content fly free was a decision based on audience feedback and a few important stakeholders who helped change the way I think about content access forever.

It was 2014 and I was on the marketing team for a company that was on the brink of acquisition by one of the biggest software brands in the world. The company was going gangbusters. We went from hypergrowth to IPO to acquisition by Salesforce in my first 3 years of working there. The product was in the right place, right market, at the right time. I was working in a campaign marketing role and could do no wrong. It seemed like every campaign made the line on my dashboard point up and to the right. Marketing was a cash machine. The budgets were insane and the results were significant.

I was walking into work one morning and got a buzz from my iPhone 6. It was an email from my boss who wrote that I had an additional \$10,000 left to spend in my budget in the next 10 days before the quarter was over. I was unphased by his message because I knew exactly what I was going to do next. I took the elevator to the 4th floor, got to my desk, and immediately called up my content syndication dealer. In a matter of moments our new eBook was being promoted to some sort of audience that might or might not be a good fit for what we were selling...and of course, they had to fill out an absurdly long form to read it. I didn't think about the experience. I didn't even consider the real pipeline that came from this investment. My only concern was the vanity metrics that came from the CSV file that would be delivered from this campaign. I was a "me-centered" marketer who only cared about getting leads...regardless of the experience and the results on the other side.

My "me-centered" marketing wake-up call came after I received a call from our sales director. He said the leads

I was feeding his team were worthless and wasting their time. That was the moment that I realized that distributing gated content through transactional tactics did more harm than good. I started asking myself the question: Am I doing this for my audience or am I doing this for my metrics?

As you're reading this, stop everything and think about all of the content, campaigns, and sales collaboration that you are currently working on. Now ask yourself the question: Am I doing this for my audience or am I doing this for my metrics? Being a "me-centered" marketer means you're willing to sacrifice the experience of your audience for your metrics. It happens when we don't come from a place of abundance. It happens when our mindset is transactional and we aren't dedicated to the long game with our content.

Fast forward to nearly a decade later and there's more content, software choices, and competition than ever before. We're buying products in a world where we can use interactive demos to see features and functionality without even having to talk to a human. You'd think by now, gated content would be a thing of the past because of the value that is placed on experience by our future customers, but that couldn't be further from the truth. In the State of Gated vs. Ungated Content report we analyze nearly 300,000 pieces of content on The Juice to understand if the content that your gating is actually more engaging than the content that is being given away without barriers.

In this report you'll understand:

- The primary factors that make up the data set of gated vs. ungated content
- The impact on content consumers when all content is ungated
- The positive or negative impact on brands when all content is ungated

I want to thank everyone for reading the report and considering how you can better connect with your audience through your content.

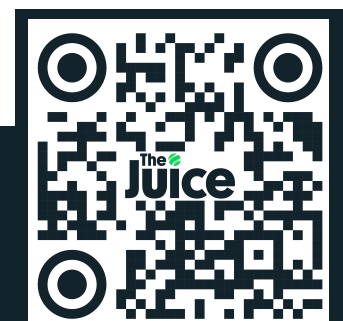
Take care,

**Brett McGrath**

VP of Marketing at The Juice 🍹

## Want to see the most popular content for your role in 2023? 🍹

Scan the QR code or click this link: [The Juice 2023 Wrapped!](#)

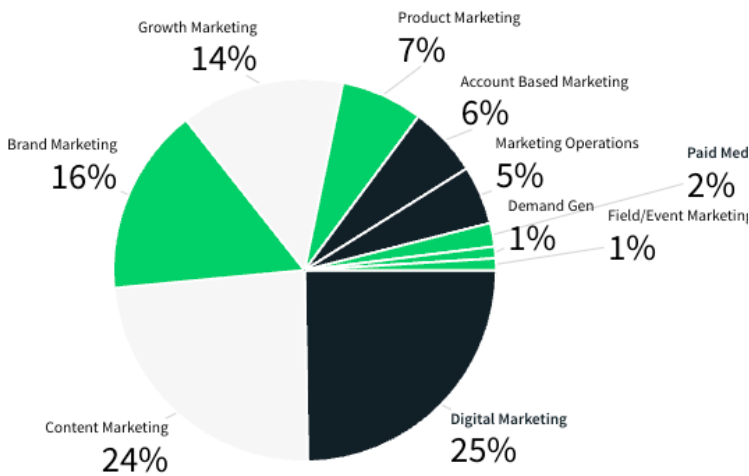


# Data Methodology

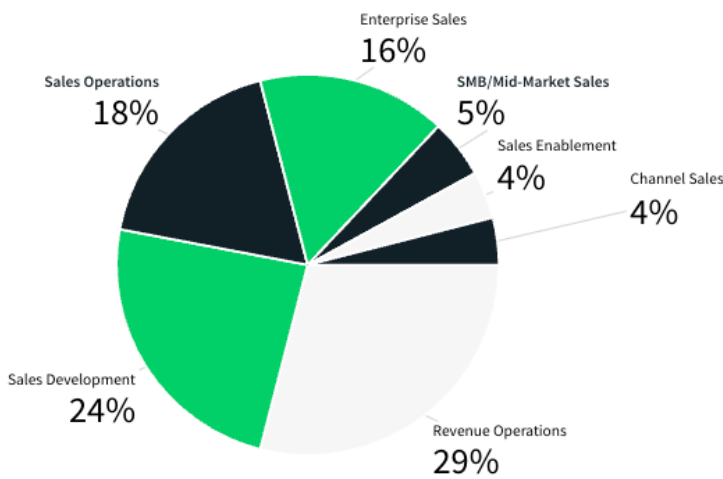
The Juice is the content curation platform for B2B marketing and sales professionals, and the distribution channel for brands who want to reach them. The Juice has the largest library of sales and marketing resources on the planet. We’ve analyzed the interactions of our 25,000+ members to better understand how they’re interacting with both gated and ungated resources.

## AUDIENCE MAKE UP BY ROLE

### Marketing



### Sales



We used platform engagement data to track interactions with gated and ungated content on The Juice.

This means:

- Tracking engagement and actions with all content on The Juice platform
- Calculated things like bookmarking, favoriting, and sharing
- Data is filtered by media type and data used here is specifically for any member on The Juice

# The gated and ungated data on The Juice is proprietary and impossible to replicate based on the member makeup and resources on the platform.

This presents the reader with a unique opportunity to get a bird's eye view of how sales and marketing professionals on The Juice are engaging with gated vs. ungated content.

We want to thank our friends at Tourial for their collaboration and sponsorship of The State of Gated vs. Ungated Content.

## Tourial

Tourial enables go-to-market teams to create interactive demos and Demo Centers — and distribute them anywhere.

Demo Centers empower you to educate your buyers faster and better than ever — from the very top of the funnel all the way down. It's a personalized content hub for your prospects to find the most important info they need, share with their team, and provide you with data on what they care about.

## Gated vs. Ungated is **Multidimensional**

“Throughout this report and throughout the history of this debate, we focus on the two dimensional—gated vs. ungated.


Truth be told, this report was inspired by neither of those things. In fact, it was inspired by a partner of The Juice's.

Tourial provides the ultimate ungated access in the form of interactive demos. In today's B2B tech world, there are more options than gated content and ungated content. There are solutions like Tourial, PLG motions, freemium offerings, trials, and communities providing access.

So while we focus on the ongoing (and never-ending) debate of gated vs. ungated, we encourage you to not limit yourself and your brand to only thinking about these options.

If the goal is engagement, there are more ways than ever to accomplish that. And we're big fans of Tourial.

If the goal is to understand gated vs. ungated, well...keep reading.

**Jonathan Gandolf**  
CEO of The Juice 

# Asking the AI Machines to Help Us Define Gated and Ungated Content

You can't create a report in 2023 without involving AI. We asked our good friends at copy.ai "What is gated content?" and "What is ungated content?" and here's what the machines shared:



## What is Gated Content?

Gated content refers to content that is accessible to users only after they provide some form of information or complete a specific action, typically by filling out a form or providing their contact details. The action required to access the gated content is often referred to as "filling out a gate."

The purpose of gating content is usually to generate leads or collect valuable user data. By requesting the user's information in exchange for access to the content, companies can build their email lists, gain insights into their target audience, and nurture potential prospects through email marketing campaigns.

Gated content is commonly used for resources like eBooks, whitepapers, case studies, reports, webinars, or exclusive access to certain materials. It allows businesses to capture and qualify leads, identify individuals interested in their products or services, and more effectively target their marketing and sales efforts.

However, it is important to strike a balance between providing valuable content and requiring too much information. If the content is not compelling enough or the form is too lengthy, users may be deterred from filling out the gate. Consider the value proposition of the content and weigh it against the information being requested to optimize the conversion rate.

Gating content can be an effective strategy to generate leads and collect user data, but it should be used judiciously and provide genuine value to the user in order to yield the desired results.



## What is Ungated Content?

Ungated content refers to online materials that are freely accessible to users without having to provide any personal information or complete specific actions. Unlike gated content, which requires users to fill out a form or provide their contact details, ungated content can be openly accessed and consumed by anyone[1].

Ungated content is often used to provide valuable information, resources, or entertainment to a wide audience without any barriers. It can include blog posts, articles, videos, podcasts, infographics, and other types of content that can be accessed freely on websites, social media platforms, or other online channels.

The main advantage of ungated content is that it removes any barriers to access and allows a larger audience to consume the content without any friction. It can be used to attract more website traffic, build brand awareness, establish thought leadership, and engage with a broader audience[1].

However, it's important to note that while ungated content may not require any user information upfront, businesses can still include calls-to-action (CTAs) within the content to encourage further engagement or conversion. For example, CTAs may prompt users to sign up for a newsletter, follow social media accounts, register for events, or explore other related content on the website[2].

Ultimately, the decision to create ungated content versus gated content depends on the marketing goals, target audience, and the specific content strategy of a business. Both approaches have their own advantages and can be used strategically to achieve different objectives.



### Sources:

1. TechTarget: Gated content / ungated content | Definition
2. HubSpot Blog: Gated Content: What Marketers Need to Know [+Examples]

# The intention of this report is not to shame anyone for gating content.

I spent the first half of my career in a demand generation function and gating content was how we measured results. I did it for years and didn't even consider the ramifications that forms had on the brand. I needed "leads." I needed to generate demand. I needed to hit my KPIs. From my seat, there wasn't any other way to measure my performance.

The catalyst for this report is to remind you about the power of access. The decision to prioritize access to your content without asking for contact information in return provides an opportunity to build trust with your audience. It's your opportunity to remove friction and allow for better engagement with your next customer. Content access gives your audience a better chance to learn from you. When someone enters our brand

halo to learn from our content, they likely have zero intent to buy from our brand in that moment. The decision to prioritize access is a decision to invest in the long game with your content.

It will never just be about providing access to your content. It's about pairing that access up with great distribution. Take a moment to consider the last album you listened to, book you read, or movie that you saw. It's likely that access and distribution played a critical role in your content consumption. Marketers should always reflect on the ways that we engage with content in our personal lives and measure that experience with how we deliver content to our audience in our professional lives.



THE JUICE INSIGHT

**We analyzed customer data and found that  
162 days is the average length between a  
content touchpoint and an opportunity  
going closed won on The Juice.**

The Juice launched nearly 3 years ago and we've prioritized access for our members from the beginning. We want to deliver access to the best content, organized by each member's role without having to fill out a form every time that they want to read, listen, or watch something.

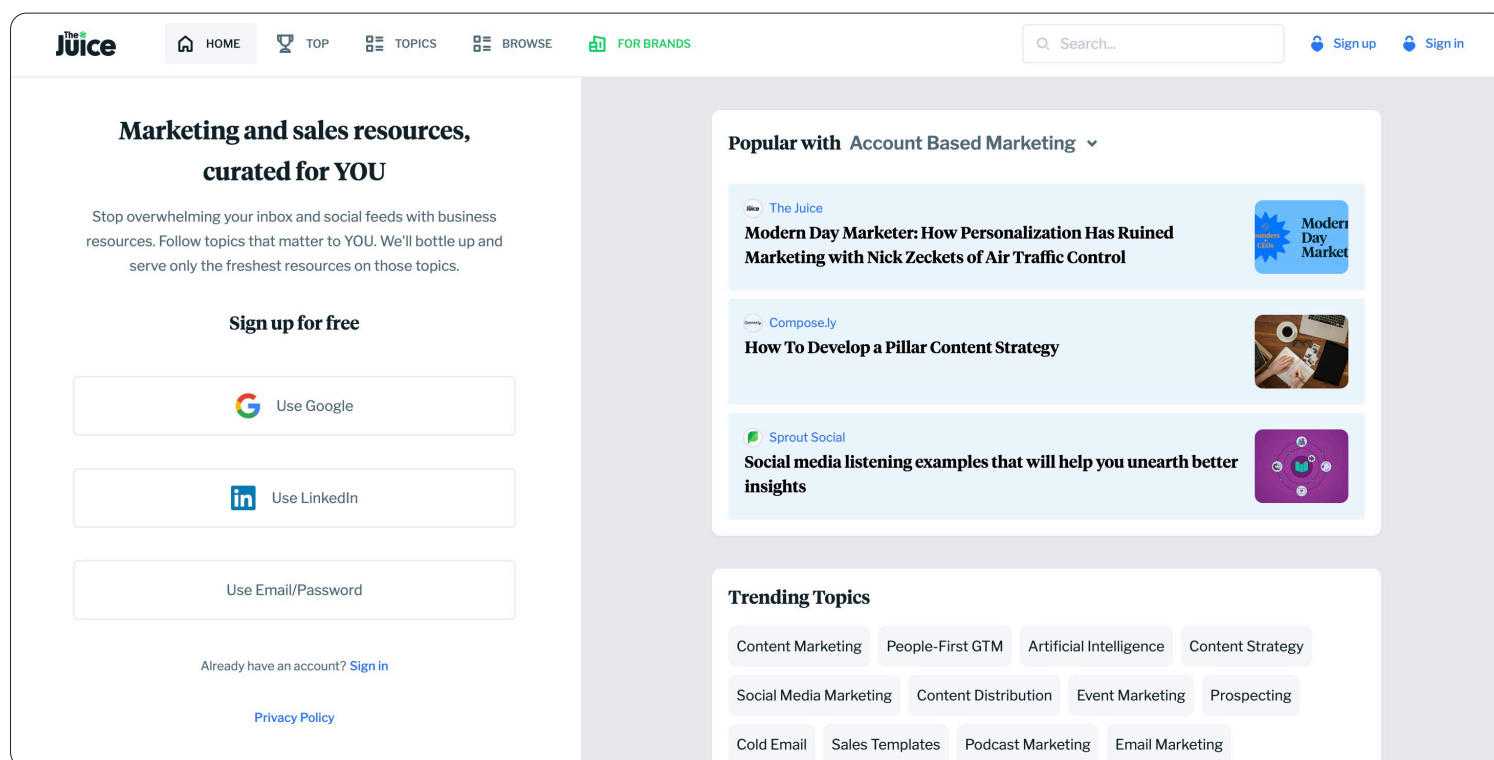
The old B2B marketing playbook is to overpromise and underdeliver with content. Brands' goals are not aligned with the goals of their audience. Brands use

content to "get leads" when their audience just wants to be educated, entertained, and inspired. Brands place barriers in front of their content to optimize for conversion but neglect the experience it creates with their audience. B2B marketing and sales professionals want easy access to great content on their own terms. They want to grow professionally with easy access to great content but are frustrated by the process.



# A Single Point of Entry. Only on The Juice.

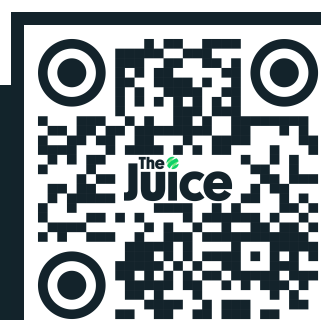
We make a commitment with each new member who signs up for The Juice. When you create a profile, you only fill out one form. This profile is used to better curate topics, resources, and brands who are creating content specifically for your role.



When you become a member of The Juice you have access to 300,000+ resources for go-to-market professionals in an ungated format. This report highlights data from both previously gated resources and ungated resources.

Unlock 20,000+ curated resources with your unique profile. 🍷

Scan the QR code or click this link: [One form to end all forms!](#)



# Gated Resource Engagement Rates

The Juice has unlocked 20,137 previously gated resources which makes up 8.3% of the total content population on the platform. Members of The Juice have access to previously gated resources at the time of signing up for the platform.

Previously gated resources fall into the following 10 categories that are segmented by content types: eBooks, Event Sessions,

Webinars, Toolkits, Reports (like this one), Infographics, Videos, Podcast Episodes, Articles, Case Study.

Gated content is measured on The Juice by their engagement rate or how many clicks are generated per piece of content. Here's that group of resources stack ranked by most engaged:

**1 Toolkits (1.94 Engagement Rate)**

**2 Event Sessions (0.6)**

**3 Infographic (0.5)**

**4 eBooks (0.35)**

**5 Reports (0.3)**

**6 Articles (0.19)**

**7 Podcast Episodes (0.11)**

**8 Webinars (0.08)**

**9 Video (0.03)**

**10 Case Study (0.02)**

Typically, gated content resources are viewed by marketers as their most premium content. The decision to gate content isn't the issue. The problem that most marketers who gate their content face is

that their opinion on what they consider to be premium content (or what's valuable enough to ask for your audience's data) is different from the individual who they're trying to reach with that content.

“

I spent a majority of my marketing career gating content. Despite my own instincts, our teams felt the pressure to *generate* leads. With this pressure, we lost sight of the experience we wanted our audience to go through.

No content consumer has ever come across a gate in the wild and thought, “oh joy, I love filling these things out.” Not one. Ever.


However, I know the pressure is still being felt by marketing teams. In every board

meeting, there's a marketing slide with MQLs being presented.

It's going to take a team effort to educate non-marketing executives, and stakeholders across the entire business.

At the end of the day, we hope this report can be a resource for that education. And if your business decides that gating content is right for you, let these data points provide the right path forward.

**Jonathan Gandolf**

CEO of The Juice 



# Top 10 Gated Resources on The Juice

Gated content is not the enemy. In fact, if you have high-quality content, gating it may still be appropriate.

You see in the data from The Juice, a trend in the successful gated content. These resources are either heavily rooted in proprietary data and/or provide an actionable template for the reader.



## [State of Content Report '23](#)

Bynder



## [Ideal Customer Profile and Buyer Personas Workbook \(+ Templates\)](#)

Reply



## [Templates by Guru](#)

Guru



## [The Ultimate E-Commerce Guide to Marketing Psychology](#)

Exponea



## [Sales Guides and Templates Kit for Startups and Entrepreneurs](#)

HubSpot



## [The Social Media Campaign Brief Template](#)

Sculpt



## [Free Customer Journey Map Template](#)

HubSpot



## [How to Build the Case for Social Media Investment in a Tight Economy](#)

Sprout Social



## [Paid Advertising Strategies in a World of Rising Cost](#)

Clearbit



## [Social Media, AI, and the Future of Omni-Channel Care](#)

Sprout Social

# Ungated Resource Engagement Rates

The Juice hosts 222,625 ungated resources for go-to-market professionals from industry leading brands. Members of The Juice have access to ungated resources at the time of signing up for the platform.

Ungated resources fall into the following 10 categories that are segmented by content types: eBooks, Event Sessions, Webinars, Toolkits, Reports, Infographics, Videos, Podcast Episodes, Articles, Case Study. Ungated content is measured on The Juice by their engagement rate or how many clicks are generated per piece of content. Here's that group of resources stack ranked by most engaged:

<b>1</b> <b>Toolkits (3.02 Engagement Rate)</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Webinar (0.26)</b>
<b>2</b> <b>Event Sessions (0.93)</b>	<b>7</b> <b>Video (0.26)</b>
<b>3</b> <b>eBooks (0.7)</b>	<b>8</b> <b>Podcast Episode (0.24)</b>
<b>4</b> <b>Reports (0.48)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>Article (0.22)</b>
<b>5</b> <b>Infographic (0.39)</b>	<b>10</b> <b>Case Study (0.09)</b>


## The Power of Access.

Ungated content is shared by marketers to offer their point of view, build brand, and drive SEO. When I was in the process of organizing this report I dropped this post on LinkedIn to share my thoughts on the power of access.

My post received a ton of thoughtful comments on why content access is important, but the following comment from Brendan Hufford, Founder at Growth Sprints is what still stands out in my mind.

The decision to provide better access for your content shouldn't be a difficult decision, but still presents a challenge. Decision makers outside of marketing stifle our ability to let our content fly free because of archaic opinions on content, transactional thinking, and a general lack of understanding for how marketing actually works in 2023 and beyond.

We hope this report can be used as a secret weapon to better educate your boss, boss' boss, investor, or board members who need better data on content access to modernize their opinion on effective content marketing.


**Brett McGrath** • 1st  
 VP of Marketing: The Juice | Host of Modern Day Marketer | H...  
 2w •

The justifications for gating content by marketers are self-serving.

I'm not pointing fingers. I've been there.

Changing the system is hard. Reporting back on vanity metrics that don't impact future pipeline is the easy part.

Investigating the reasons why a piece of content is gated typically results in a heavy dose of "me-centered" marketing excuses that lacks consideration for the people we're trying to serve with our content.

It's things like:

- "Well, we invested \$\$\$ in the creation of our new e-book and need to justify the spend for future campaigns"
- "Leads are how I'm measured and gated content help me hit my number"
- "The content is premium and prospects shouldn't have to think twice about giving us some information for it"

I'm not sure who needs to hear this, but our future customers could care less about our reasons to gate content. They just care about access.

Can you imagine a restaurant requiring name, phone number, and email to step inside and eat their food? It's the quality of their food and word of mouth that drives repeat business...not some stupid marketing gimmick.


Accessible, excellent content brings your premium audience back to your brand. It's like a freakin' magnet.

At [The Juice](#) we're diving into data to bring light to the gated vs. ungated content debate. Ungated content that's created with access in mind is outperforming traditionally gated content on The Juice by 26%.

If you're gating content because you think it's more engaging you're probably not thinking it from your future customer's perspective.

There's tons of myths to bust about gated content

Excited to bring more data to life in the coming weeks. 📊


 26 comments • 2 reposts


**Brendan Hufford** (He/Him) • 1st  
 Exploring how SaaS companies \*actually\* get customers  
 2w •

You and I both know who needs to hear this and it AIN'T the marketers. It's boards. It's investors. It's CEOs who don't get marketing.

It's not the marketers.

Like • 📈 24 • Reply • 1 Reply

# Top 10 Ungated Resources on The Juice

B2B content consumers appreciate actionable content, examples, and content that helps them perform better in their role. We analyzed the top ungated resources on The Juice to uncover key insights. We're highlighting the top 10 ungated resources that are leading the way when it comes to engagement on The Juice.



## [15 AI Prompts to Supercharge Sales & Marketing Teams](#)

copy.ai

Write better AI prompts for your sales and marketing teams. Unblock your execution barriers and get better content from generative AI.

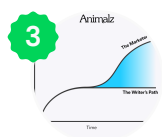


## [The Ultimate Guide to Buying Triggers: How Marketers Can Use Trigger Events to Reduce Costs and Drive Sales](#)

Katelyn Bourgoin

Let's explore buying triggers: the most critical (and often ignored) stage of the buying journey.

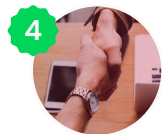
Marketers who understand the specific events that trigger buyers to enter the buying journey spend 80% less on direct marketing costs.



## [You're a Content Marketer, Not a Writer](#)

Animalz

The "writer brain" helps content marketers in the early part of their career, but, left unchecked, it hinders them in the latter stages.



## [24\(!\) Sales Email Templates for Before, During & After the Sale](#)

Copper

A whopping 24 sales email templates for every stage of the sale. From reaching out to following up, here's how to write to prospects and customers.



### [How To Use AI To Repurpose Content Across Social Media](#)

copy.ai

Learn how to use AI to re-purpose content across social media platforms for increased reach, engagement, and efficiency.



### [ChatGPT Social Media Marketing Life Hacks](#)

Meltwater

These ChatGPT for Social Media Marketing life hacks will help you work faster and smarter, without compromising quality.



### [The Ultimate Guide to Content Strategy](#)

MarketMuse

There's so much information out there about how to build a content strategy. Here's everything you need to know from how to build it, content types, terminology breakdowns and more.



### [Top 7 Tools for Digital Marketers](#)

Crimson Park Digital

In this guide, we've rounded up some of our tools for digital marketers, that provide high value and benefits for our agency and our clients.



### [Audience Persona Template](#)

Kalyna Marketing

Design better marketing personas with audience research data, based on Amanda Natividad's blog post from SparkToro. This template walks you through recording key info and crafting a more actionable summary of people who you're trying to reach with your content marketing campaigns.



### [Unleash the Power of LinkedIn: Our Strategy and Why It Works](#)

Kalyna Marketing

Engagement on LinkedIn means people feel like your posts are speaking to them. It means the conversation has started. And when LinkedIn's algorithm takes notice of that engagement, it amplifies your message.

# Top 50 Highest Performing Brands on The Juice


We used engagement rate to analyze the top 50 highest performing brands on The Juice. Next, we analyze the totality of their content on The Juice and separate it into a gated or ungated category. Finally, we gave each a gated content rate.

“There are nearly 1,000 brands on The Juice. We wanted to evaluate which brands are most engaging to see if there’s a trend with how much content they are producing.

The next couple of pages share the brands and what we learned from this data.

There are great brands in this list and as you can see, one size does not fit all. The majority of brands are not gating the majority of their content.

Check out the full list (and our platform!) to learn more.

**Jonathan Gandolf**  
CEO of The Juice 

BRAND		% OF CONTENT THAT IS GATED
1	MarketMuse	4.2%
2	copy.ai	0%
3	HubSpot	3.2%
4	Sprout Social	0.5%
5	PEAK Community	0.3%
6	Crimson Park Digital	0%
7	Goldcast	3.2%
8	Guru	3.6%
9	Animalz	0%
10	HubSpot Hacks	0.6%
11	Simple Strat	2.4%
12	Kalya Marketing	0%
13	Sculpt	1.5%
14	Jebbit	1.9%
15	Copper	0.5%
16	Metadata	0.3%
17	Bynder	10.1%
18	Demandwell	0%
19	Cognizant (fka Lev Digital)	4.1%
20	Spiff	0.3%
21	Dooly	1.3%
22	Customer Camp	0%
23	Motion	0%
24	Meltwater	32%
25	CaliberMind	5.1%
26	Hotjar	0.2%
27	heycollab	0%
28	Compose.ly	2.3%
29	Keap	6.5%
30	Buffer	.01%
31	Chili Piper	0.23%
32	Narrato	0%
33	Exponea	26%
34	G2	1.7%
35	Siteimprove	33%
36	Responsive	2.5%
37	LeadIQ	1.8%
38	Influitive	15%
39	Wistia	2.3%
40	RevGenius	23%
41	Aprimo	12.4%
42	SEMrush	54%
43	The Quota	0%
44	Reply	14%
45	GoLinks	0%
46	agorapulse	5.2%
47	CommentSold	5.1%
48	Hypercontext	2.2%
49	Unthinkable Media	0%
50	Drift	6.9%



# Key Insights



**12 of the top 50 (24%) most engaged brands gate none of their content**



**21 of the top 50 (42%) most engaged brands gate less than 1% of their content**



**26 of the top 50 (52%) most engaged brands gate less than 2% of their content**



**31 of the top 50 (62%) most engaged brands gate less than 3% of their content**



**14 of the top 50 (28%) most engaged brands gate more than 5% of their content**

## What happens when everything is ungated?

It's challenging to break preexisting thoughts on gated content without data. Marketers use gated content for market research, to gather leads, and to measure content performance. It's undeniable that every marketer understands the importance of the experience and access of their content heading into 2024. The problem is that marketers are still unwilling to budge on letting their content fly free without evidence that their content might perform stronger without barriers.

The biggest misconception that we've found through our research is that gated content means more valuable content for the end user. Gating content creates a perception of value by making those resources available to only those individuals willing to share information.

Unfortunately, for marketers who gate content we're able

to bust the myth of gated content value by analyzing the engagement rate metrics of our members on The Juice.

When looking at engagement as the key metric, we found that ungated content beats gated content by 26% (0.53 clicks/piece ungated vs. 0.42 clicks/piece gated). Through our research we can begin to validate the idea that many marketers think they're gating more engaging content, but they're really not. Marketers are gating content arbitrarily without guidance or because gating content is what they've always done.

Ungated content types like articles, podcast episodes, and videos might have been traditionally viewed as brand pieces, but is the content that is being shared within teams on Slack, LinkedIn, and through platforms like The Juice.



THE JUICE INSIGHT

**When all other factors are equal, **ungated content outperforms gated content by 26%.** Many marketers think they're gating more engaging content, but they're really not.**

# From the Community

It wouldn't be a report from The Juice without asking the community for feedback in the gated vs. ungated content conversation. I reached out to some of my favorite marketers to gather their perspective on the decision to gate or ungate their content.



## **Lindsay McGuire, Associate Director of Content and Campaigns at Goldcast**

The tale as old as time. We usually want to gate content because it gives us the perception that we can measure everything, get immediate ROI, and identify a base metric to easily track and report on.

**But we generally don't ask the question of is this the best experience for our audience?** Most of us know if we hand over our email address, it's likely that you're getting some type of unwanted interactions following the handover: phone calls, emails, ads... you name it. So audiences now weigh the value of handing over their email upon landing on a form, and oftentimes the dread of those follow ups far outweighs their want for your content.

Yet, it is hard to let go of wanting to gather emails and build your database. **The key is to not only understand what your audience finds valuable enough to provide an email for, but position your brand as trustworthy enough to not abuse that email once it is handed over.**

Your leadership also plays a role in the gate versus ungate philosophy. If email addresses coming in equates success to your leaders, then you'll never win the gate vs ungate battle. Yet the brands who do lean into the ungate side will see that they quickly and easily build a fan base of repeat visitors who trust their brand and content. And in the long run, those audience members are more likely to trust those brands when it's time to buy.

## **Zac Harris, Head of Demand Generation at Copy.ai**

I'm 100% team ungated, and here's why: You're providing value and building trust from the first interaction and your content has a greater reach (potential to reach more prospects).

It minimizes friction and lets buyers consume content at their own pace. **Gated content worked well in the traditional playbook, but let's be real; the playbooks have changed, and buyers have access to an abundance of information these days.** They are also very reluctant to share their information with a company they're seeing for the first time and don't engage with the "traditional offers" like gated ebooks, etc.

We should be focused on providing as much value as possible with minimal friction, and ungated content does exactly that. I know there's an argument for gated content = MQLs, but in reality, very few people are raising their hands when they do download gated assets, and most of your submissions are low-quality.

**By ungating our content, we invite trust, encourage self-paced exploration, and gear towards a more buyer-centric approach. Less friction, more value!**

# From the Community

Continued

## Andrew Barlos, Sr. Director of Marketing at Loomly

When in doubt: don't gate it. Weave your brand value and a CTA into every piece instead. Make sure your attribution tool or GA is measuring which content is most impactful to your buyer journey.

**If your content resonates with your audience and your brand value is highlighted, you should want as many visitors to read it as possible.** If you do gate content like free templates, I guarantee someone who downloads it doesn't want sales to immediately email and call them 3x a week. If they did, they'd request a demo. Create a great, automated "thank you" email, and spread your drip campaigns out to focus on the long game.

## Nick Zeckets, CEO and Co-founder at Air Traffic Control

The decision to gate content has absolutely nothing to do with the prospect. We've always known that friction in a product is bad. And that removing friction is something we should obsess over. What I cannot grok is why we'd introduce friction in our content marketing.

If we ever see that our content isn't generating hand-raisers, our response isn't to put that content behind a gate. **Rather, the mandate is to write better content and make it obvious to a reader that we have a durable stream of useful things to share with them so that subscribing feels like they're winning.**

## John Miller, Founder at Scribewise

For 15 years, gated content has been the bedrock of inbound marketing, but those days are rapidly dying. A couple reasons:

1. Gated content as a mechanism generally provides low intent leads, people who want the content but don't have any interest in buying. These people didn't ask to speak to sales or even to be put into your drip campaign.
2. **Today, the customer is hip to the game.** They guard their inbox obsessively, and don't want to give up their email address so easily. Of course we want the rules to stay the same, but we cannot ignore customer attitudes.

**It's time for a new, more customer-focused approach, which raises the bar in 3 critical areas for B2B marketers**

1. The content has to be higher quality than ever before
2. We need to create more of this superlative content
3. We need to have faith that following 1 and 2 will create a trust-based relationship with customers.

## Theresa Anderson, Marketing Strategy Advisor

UNGATE. I'll die on that hill, strongly. Most content is too top-of-funnel to justify adding the friction. **We need less barriers to building that relationship through content, not more.**

## Jared Robin, Co-Founder at RevGenius

I think everything should be ungated. I get the need to understand who's viewing your content and target them to buy your product or nurture them in a funnel, but you can do that without gating.

## Ali Schwanke, Founder at Simple Strat

When it comes to the decision to gate or not gate our content, we ask a couple of key questions:

1. How unique and/or valuable is this content? In other words, can they easily get something similar from the competition? If so, the answer needs to be ungate it. **We don't want to give up the opportunity to build brand awareness and credibility with our audience by almost forcibly sending them elsewhere to search for the things we're sharing.**
2. What is the intended purpose of this content and how close are they to a sale when the content is downloaded? If the content is very bottom of funnel, it makes sense to gate as someone who converts on that content would likely be ready to talk about an opportunity. We find this to be true with a few resources we have such as a buying guide for HubSpot and what you need to know about HubSpot to get it set up right.
3. Is the goal to drive value with the content or time savings? Years ago in the content marketing game, the gate was used to keep people from getting your most valuable assets, or things that you created that you really wanted to drive leads on. But now, there is SO much content available, that you can successfully gate something if the reason you're gating it is actually a gain in time or efficiency for the end user.

Lastly, the gate vs ungate question comes down to a matter of what you're doing vs the competition, and how exclusive the content is. We're still gating webinars and virtual events, as are most companies, and we're not seeing that as a detriment to engagement whatsoever.

## Tristan Pelligrino, Co-founder at Motion

When it comes to gating or ungating content, I believe there's a case for both situations. In many ways, **I don't believe this is even the right question to ask. Instead, ask yourself if the customer's experience would be better if you knew more about them (and would require their email, company information, etc.).**

For example, a newsletter experience is "gated" because it must be delivered through email. Do you have a community? That is "gated" content because it requires special access. Do you have a special course to help your customers? You would want to gate the content and deliver it with a heightened experience (in a portal or online course). Do you have research available where you could tailor the results to your customer? This would be a case where you'd also want additional information from the user.

# From the Community

Continued (the community *really* loves this debate!)

## Molly Clarke, VP of Digital Marketing at Spiff

I don't believe there's a single right or wrong answer to the gated vs. ungated question. It's more about the when, the what, and the why behind your decision to gate something.

To me, it's only appropriate to gate a resource if there is some benefit to the customer or prospect that requires follow-up. Here are a few questions I ask myself before deciding to gate something:

- Is this a highly technical or advanced piece of content that is likely to leave the reader with questions that only a member of my team can answer?
- Is there a risk of the wrong audience happening upon this content if I leave it ungated and is it likely to cause confusion or muddy the water?
- Do we have a strategic follow up plan or a secondary piece of content that compliments the original piece well?
- Do we have operational support to execute on our follow up plan?
- If we gate this piece, what's the worst that could happen?
- If we ungated this piece, what's the worst that could happen?

**If you're only gating your content to collect contact information and not to add value, that's when it becomes annoying and gimmicky.** If your content genuinely adds value and you require a reader's contact information to further that value, your audience won't mind sharing it.

## Tommy Walker, Founder at The Content Studio

I have a complicated relationship with this question right now. I think there's a lot of gated stuff that should be ungated, and not enough thought put into why something should be gated in the first place.

Technically, all of my written work is gated right now because the only place I am publishing my deep thoughts is in my newsletter. Could this stuff be blog posts? Maybe, but the newsletter is called "The Studio Insider " because I want it to be an "if you know you know" scenario, and you can't get it anywhere else.

The thing about gated content is that it should be it's own channel with it's stream of content, not just a place to rehash LinkedIn posts or redeliver blog posts. In my content ecosystem, the gated stuff is my behind the scenes thinking about how good content is made, whereas the more public facing stuff is the demonstration I know what I'm talking about.

**All that said, the whole "gimme your email so I can send you the ebook then spam you until you buy" needs to be rethought. That's tired.**

## Mark Huber, VP of Marketing at UserEvidence

For me – gating vs. ungating content comes down to this: how good is the content? **If it's so good you'd actually pay for it, then gate away.** Especially if whatever you're downloading or getting access to requires some interpretation. People get frustrated, myself included, when you fill out a form only to read average content and get bombarded by an SDR afterwards.

## Brendan Hufford, Founder at Growth Sprints

The truth is that almost all "gated" content ends up in somebody's downloads folder, or goes right to their Dropbox or Google Drive to die. They never look at it ever again because it's just honestly not that good.

I think that it depends what kind of company you are. If you've historically gated everything, then ungating it all is a big marketing moment! Do the marketing and then do marketing for the marketing! I'd gladly opt in for good things and I believe in paying for information I need. Email scripts that help me follow up? Gate that. If you ungated it and everybody uses it, they don't work as well. Sales deck templates? If they're good, gate 'em!

I think we've all just been burned by opting into so much garbage over the years. Then you get 25 emails in the next 30 days and it's pretty rough. **The gating thing is a symptom of the MQL issue. Sales want more leads, so we gate more stuff. Then they hire more salespeople then we have to gate even more stuff for more leads. But then we look around 12 months later and we're in a really bad spot because none of those leads worked and we have bloated sales and marketing programs.**

My ideal scenario: plant a flag for quality. Only gate stuff if you have a reason for their email address that isn't them becoming a lead. Like, most gated content is really just a form that says "HEY! WANNA BECOME A LEAD?" and that's just not very compelling.

## Adam McQueen, Content Marketing Manager, Klue

The real question is: why are you gating?

If you're gating to hit an arbitrary MQL number for SDRs to spam outreach...then don't gate.

Gating is OK if you have two things in place:

1. The gated content is valuable enough that your audience would pay for it.
2. You have a plan for folks who share their email with you to bring them into your ecosystem.

For example, if you downloaded this research report and liked it... wouldn't you want to know if the Juice and industry experts were hosting a live session breaking down the biggest takeaways and what that means for marketers in 2023? The most direct way to do so is via email. It converts.

**Contrary to what every LinkedIn 'thought leader' says, gating isn't the worst marketing habit. It's the quality of the content itself.**



# From the Community

Continued (like, *really really* loves this debate!)

## Katarina Andrejević, Customer Advocate at Userlist

This was always a doozy to me. As a marketer, I understand the relevance of signed-up leads, and the value they bring. But as a human on the internet, I'm a big proponent of free information. And the combination of the two doesn't really put me in a great situation, right?

But both as a creator and a consumer, I tend to lean toward free information. And I believe if you offer enough value in your ungated content, and tend to be strategic about your newsletter sign-up forms, the right leads will respect that enough and find their way back to you.

In at least three companies I've worked in so far, I have served as the filter for content overload in one capacity or the other. That territory comes with dozens, if not hundreds, of subscriptions. Still, the brands I feel the most loyal to are the ones who keep the majority of their content ungated.

**So I'll always advise to go with free, accessible value first. And when you happen to have gems that are exceptionally more valuable, dare to gate them, but don't betray the trust the leads have given you with their information.**

## Gwen Lafage, VP Marketing, Brand, Content at Sinch

To gate or ungate content is not a one-size-fits-all decision. It should be approached on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature and goals of the content.

Generally, I lean towards the idea of not gating content to maximize its reach and impact. The main focus should be on putting the buyer or reader first, ensuring easy access to educational content without unnecessary barriers. By adopting this mindset, the aim is to provide value upfront. That said, marketing still needs to deliver pipeline and qualified leads. So there are scenarios where gating content is essential.

**The challenge is to ensure that the content being gated is of high value and unique—something not readily available elsewhere: proprietary research, exclusive data, interactive tools, templates, or ROI calculators.**

There are also cultural nuances and audience preferences. Tailoring content formats to suit different generations, industries, and geographical locations is essential. Believe it or not, but some audiences among certain demographics or countries still like traditional PDFs while other more tech-savvy, fully embrace online, multimedia-rich formats.

You also don't have to gate everything – you can combine formats, offer both a long form online page and a PDF version, you can gate some chapters or deep dives and ungated other sections.

## Justin Simon, Founder Justin Simon Consulting

To me, **you need to treat gated content a bit like salt in baking.** A little bit can enhance the entire program, but if *\*everything\** is gated it leaves a bad taste in your mouth. And eventually it becomes a massive barrier between you and your audience.

In a perfect world, teams probably wouldn't gate content at all, but so much of it dependent on the larger business strategy.

## Kyle Lacy, Chief Marketing Officer at Jellyfish

The decision to gate or ungated content depends on the perceived value of the content being produced. **If you gate uninteresting or low-value content, you are setting up your outreach strategy for failure.** Only gate the content that is so good that people would pay for it.

## Amanda Oles, Sr. Manager, Demand Generation at Stensul

I'm team ungated for sure. If you're confident in your ICP and have taken time to build a database with folks that fit your profile, then why make them fill out information we already know? Taking the consultative ungated approach also builds brand credibility and website traffic.

**This is longtail, but those motions will lead to demo requests and other high-intent actions if you're communicating your value prop effectively in that content.**

## Josh Carter, Director of Demand Generation at Pavilion

I default to not gating content.

**However, gating can be acceptable if:**

- 1. the content contains high-value research, and**
- 2. you have a defined nurturing strategy for downloads.** We get a 75% conversion rate on gated high-value research content, like our monthly Pulse Reports.

## Nicole MacLean, Head of Growth Marketing at Compose.ly

In my experience, this isn't an either/or question — it's yes, and.

Put yourself in the shoes of your buyer. Would you want the added friction to access this piece of content? Some of my most successful content has been ungated and the value readily available. But then we created a supplemental piece with an actionable, printable template that made our visitor want to provide information for access to a download. This approach consistently yielded more "downloads."

**At the end of the day, create helpful content and remove the friction to access the value. That way when someone actually converts, you know it's higher quality.**

## Conclusion

We hope that The State of Gated vs. Ungated Content helps you think differently about how access can positively impact the relationship that you start with your next customer.

It's common to feel trepidation when thinking about removing barriers to your content. We understand that removing gated content from your mix might present even more questions like, "How are we going to track our content's performance?" or "Where are we going to get leads from now?"

The Juice believes that sharing real data about how content is performing on our platform can help more marketers understand the long term impact that providing access to your content can have on your brand.

Here are the primary takeaways after digging through the data and writing this report:



### Ungated content outperforms gated content

Marketers get stuck thinking that their most engaging content pieces are the resources that they decide to put behind a gated form. **We found that ungated content gets more engagement by 26% in comparison to gated content.** We should never lose sight of the importance of access for our content.



### If you're going to gate your content make sure you know which types perform well

**Toolkits (Templates) and Event Sessions are the only two gated content types that performed above a 1% engagement rate.** These are the formats that your audience expects to give up their information for.



### Always play the long game with your content

Content should never be viewed from a transactional perspective. When we analyzed our customers' content performance on The Juice, **we found that it takes 162 days from first content touch point to closed opportunity.** If you're investing in content, make sure you're investing in the time it takes for your content to perform.



### Brands who get the most engagement on their content hardly gate their content

When analyzing the **Top 50 most engaged brands on The Juice we found that 31 of those brands gate less than 3% of their content.** The more brands allow for content access the stronger their engagement gets.





### It's not a one-size fits all decision

The decision to gate or ungate your content should be made based on your content strategy and not someone else's. It's important to make sure that before you make your decision you understand your key metrics and have the infrastructure to support your decision.



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