


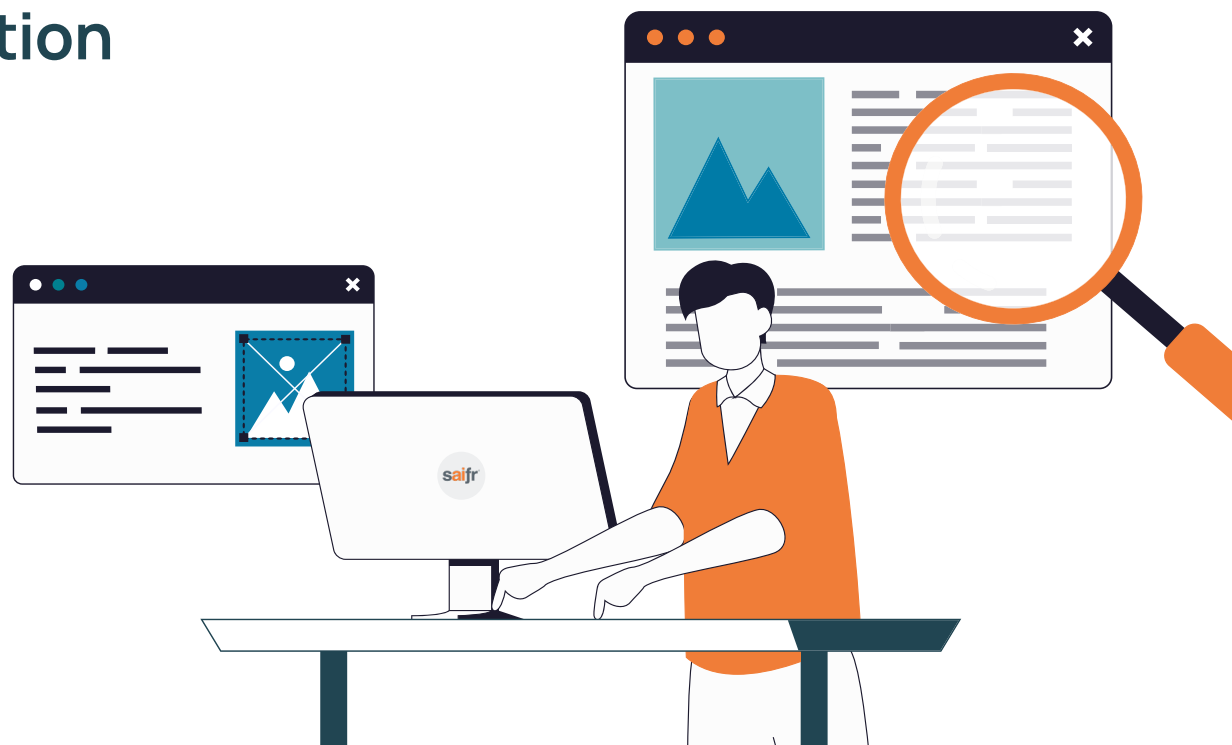
EBOOK

Insights survey

The struggle is real:
Overcoming hurdles in
content creation and review.

A large, stylized graphic of a human brain in the bottom right corner, composed of orange circuit-like lines and nodes, set against an orange background with a subtle circuit pattern.

Introduction



In today's fast-paced digital landscape, financial services organizations face an array of challenges when it comes to producing content. Marketing teams grapple with what types of content to create, which channels to prioritize, and endless tweaks to prepare content to go into the market. And that's before they reach the stage of internal review from the legal, risk, and compliance team. Content review can take as much time as creation, if not more, especially in the financial services sector.

The multiple back-and-forths between departments from initial idea to publication begs several questions: Are content creation and review processes truly optimized? Are marketing and compliance teams equipped to deal with the increasing variety of channels? And what is the impact on their workloads?

This online survey was conducted in September 2023 and included 48 marketing and 59 compliance executive, senior, and junior leaders from various financial institutions that are based in the U.S.

To investigate further, Saifr partnered with a research firm to survey 107 marketing and compliance leaders—from junior managers to top executives—in small, medium, and large departments at leading U.S. financial institutions.

This ebook details our findings on time spent on content creation and review, the unique challenges that different job levels and departments face, and the overall process from draft to review.

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Content workload has increased

If you ask a marketing professional about their workload, the response is likely to be a grumble about content volume and the variety of channels they must manage. So, we asked marketers which channels take up their time, both now and looking to the future.

Marketers use a diverse range of channels, and it looks to remain the case for the next five years

We found that marketers are spread thin across various marketing channels. There was no single one that stood out as taking up a significant chunk of marketers' time in the last six months. Website & social media ranked at the top with the highest current (17%) and future (18%) average time spent.

With no single marketing channel standing out—and marketers forecasting this to be the case for the next five years—the implication is that all channels are important and likely to remain relevant for the foreseeable future.

As marketers cannot focus their efforts on a single channel, they are forced to spread their finite time and resources across various channels. This, in turn, creates a strain on their workload.

The strain on marketers also impacts compliance

This increase in the variety of channels does not just affect marketers. It also has an impact on compliance. We followed up with compliance teams to ask if their workload has increased over the years. Unsurprisingly, it has.

In fact, three in five (61%) compliance officers say the overall volume of reviews has increased. We suspect this is due to the various channels, each requiring specific content. Three quarters (76%) of junior compliance officers agree that the volume of reviews has increased, and this is especially pronounced among those who work in large departments, where a staggering 83% recognize the growing volume of compliance reviews.



Takeaways:

- ✓ **Marketers spread their efforts** across a variety of channels and don't see that changing in the next five years.
- ✓ **The wide range of content channels** increases workloads for marketing and compliance teams, with three in five compliance officers experiencing an increase in workload.
- ✓ **Large departments** appear to be even more impacted by increased volumes of content.

Marketing time spend by delivery channel



Marketing and compliance devote most of their resources to content creation

In every organization, marketing strives to efficiently create high-quality content that gets delivered via the right channel, into the right hands, at the right time. Marketing departments must create content that not only engages their target audiences but is compliant with all applicable regulations.

We know that marketing creates content. Our survey results show that three in five marketers work on creating content, and this rises to an overwhelming 80% for junior marketing managers.

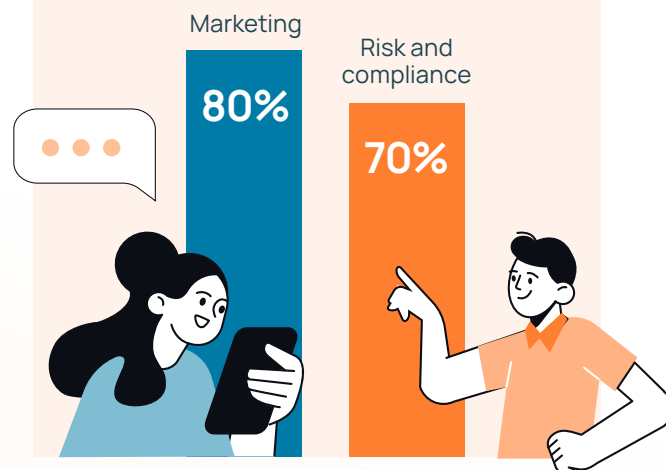
When it comes to compliance departments, two thirds spend their time approving marketing content. When we looked specifically at junior compliance officers, 70% spend their time on this content approval process.

Marketers understand and appreciate the need for compliance

To add color to the numbers, we asked marketers what they think about their compliance counterparts. It turns out that marketers understand and appreciate the importance of legal, risk, and compliance, perhaps more than their colleagues in compliance might expect.

Marketers recognize the pivotal role that compliance plays in safeguarding the firm and ensuring that products and messaging comply with regulations.

Percentage of junior managers that work on content



In my opinion it [compliance] is very important in any industry to ensure the quality, safety, legality and legitimacy of the product.

Senior marketing management

Many view compliance as essential for maintaining order, protecting public interests, and ensuring fair and ethical practices in various domains.

Top marketing executive

Take action now:

Streamline the process of generating content

Marketing and compliance teams focus significant efforts on content creation and development, especially at more junior levels. Organizations should ask themselves: "Does it need to be such a burden?"

- ✓ **Identify ways to improve efficiency.** Look across both departments to find solutions that might not be apparent when just evaluating one. It is important to find solutions that enable both departments to become more efficient in creating compliant content together.
- ✓ **Involve everyone.** There are many folks involved in the content creation process, with different roles and perspectives. Gathering suggestions from everyone can help to uncover creative solutions and build buy-in for change.

Challenges for marketing vary by seniority

The presence of multiple delivery channels has made it difficult for marketing departments to keep up with content demands. They must spin several plates at once, from determining topics, to targeting and sub-targeting, to gaining compliance approval.

Overall, 38% of the marketers identify budget limitations as their primary worry. Zooming in closer, our survey reveals that marketers at different levels of seniority face different challenges.

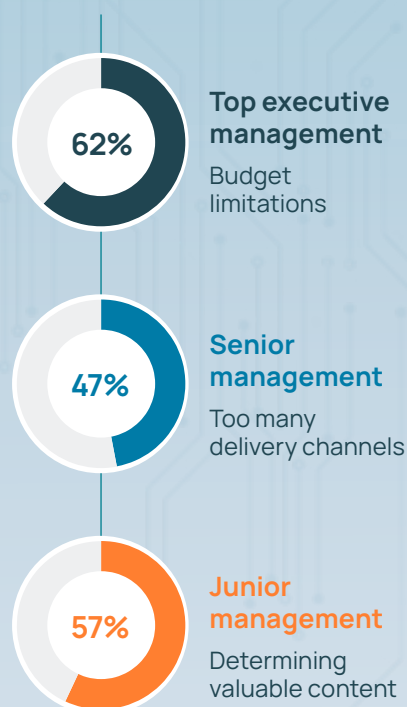
Breakdown of challenges by job level

About two thirds (62%) of **top executives** worry about budget limitations. And this makes sense—they take a strategic view and make the tough, budget-related calls. Yet these executives are also concerned about the time spent creating content (31%), and a quarter (27%) of top executives note that working with designers and copywriters presents a challenge.

When we move down a job level, half (47%) of **senior marketing managers** struggle with the number of delivery channels. Gone are the days of creating a single, standalone piece of marketing content. Now, content must be able to be repurposed across numerous channels in various mediums. To accommodate higher demand, almost three quarters (73%) of senior managers say between six and 10 tools are used to create content. In fact, 33% report that the number of platforms used to create content is a challenge itself. Another 33% highlight audience targeting and sub-targeting as a challenge.

Moving down yet another level, over half (57%) of **junior marketers** say they find it difficult to determine valuable topics and content. Another noteworthy challenge, raised by 43% of these junior managers, is the process of working with their compliance teams to get content reviewed and approved. And, 57% of junior marketers say they need to use 11–15 tools to create content.

The top challenge when creating content, based on level



Take action now: Focus on controllable factors

There are some factors that we cannot change, such as the number of delivery channels, in-demand topics, etc. But top executives can make changes to give their teams more breathing room:

- ✓ **Streamline internal content review.** Work with partners (copywriters, subject matter experts, compliance, etc.) to identify bottlenecks in the process and collaborate on workable solutions.
- ✓ **Look to technology.** Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can identify simple risks quickly and make suggestions, helping marketing to provide a cleaner first draft and compliance to concentrate on more subjective and complex tasks.
- ✓ **Reduce the number of tools** used for content creation to ease the burden on junior employees.

Compliance teams face a triple challenge

We asked compliance departments to rank the top three challenges they face. The results tell a related story to their counterparts in marketing.

As marketers use at least six channels to reach their client base, the sheer volume of content to review increases and can have a profound impact on the workload of compliance teams. Compliance officers report struggling to keep up with increasing demands and competing priorities.

Increased review volumes demand internal systems that work efficiently and have robust tracking and version control capabilities. Yet many in compliance report not having such tools.

Are additional resources sustainable?

On a more encouraging note, our survey reveals that 94% of compliance officers who reported an increase in their workload acknowledge that additional resources have been made available to them. This shows that, internally, there is an understanding that compliance departments require more support.

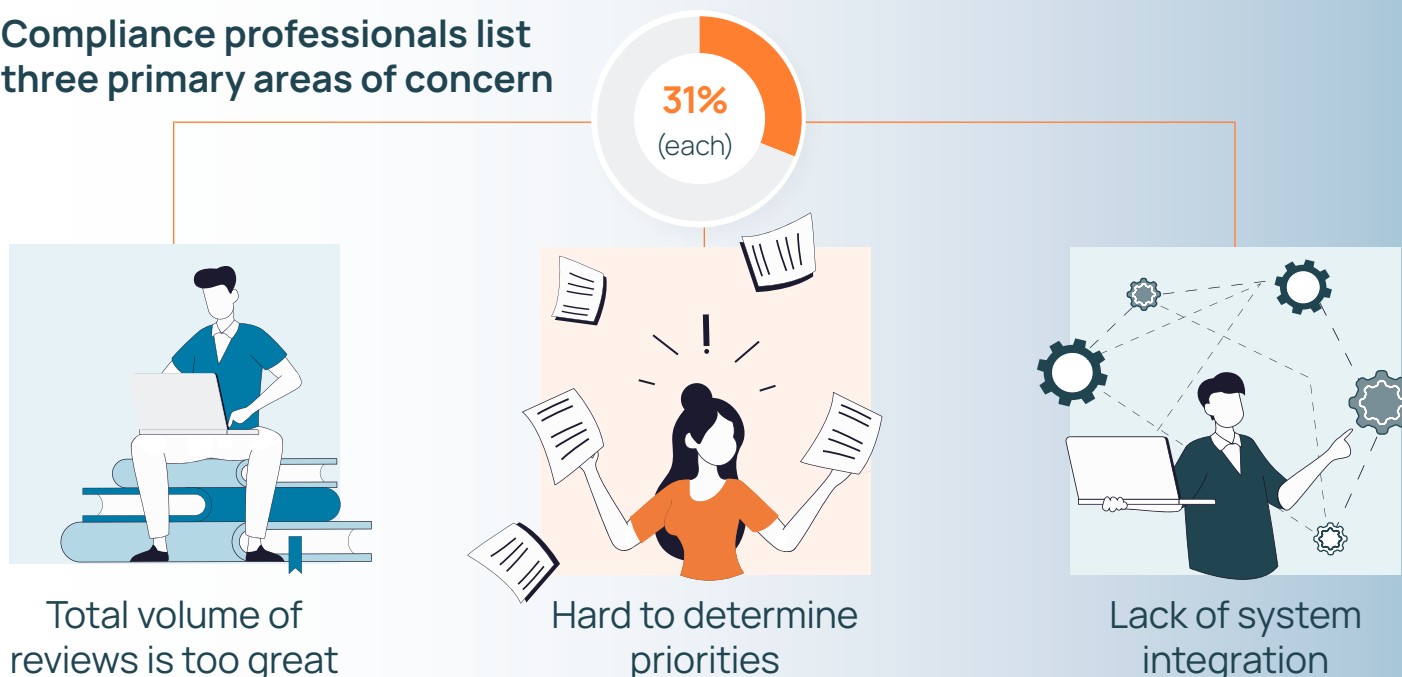
That said, bear in mind that these additional resources must be sustainable in the long term. If the past is any indicator, review volume will likely continue to increase; therefore, it is important for leadership to identify tools and systems that will enable compliance teams to optimize their content review processes and potentially do more with the same resources.

Take action now: Support strained compliance teams

Marketers use a wide range of delivery channels, and compliance needs to keep up with increasing amounts of varied content.

- ✓ **Help compliance teams prioritize tasks.** In a world where every project seems to be a priority, guidance on what is most important goes a long way.
- ✓ **Integrate efficient systems.** Workflow tools can help with clear tracking and version control to simplify the review process and provide clear measurement of workloads.




Compliance professionals list three primary areas of concern



Marketing and compliance are not always on the same page

We know that it takes a long time for organizations to create content that meets all regulatory requirements, but how long exactly? Digging deeper into the survey results, we found three striking disparities in the perceptions of marketing and compliance teams.

Here's where their responses didn't align:

-  The percentage of content that compliance teams review
-  The average rounds of reviews required for content approval
-  Content turnaround time

There is a **13 percentage point gap** between senior and junior marketers



The regulatory burden might not be understood by all

The disparity between departments starts at a macro level. Overall, marketers report that compliance reviews 59% of the content they develop, while compliance teams say they review more—66% on average.

Breaking this down by job level, the discrepancy is similar among senior staff. Senior marketing managers think compliance teams review 58% of content, while senior compliance officers claim to review about two thirds (65%).

Junior members of both departments are on the same page—but differ from their senior colleagues—with marketing at 71% and compliance at 70%.

These differences highlight that senior managers might not fully understand the regulatory burden.

The review gap between the marketing and compliance teams



Marketing and compliance clash on rounds of review

Marketing and compliance disagree on how many rounds of review are needed for each piece of content, with further splits by department size.

Overall, marketing departments report that content goes through an average of six rounds of review. Alarming, large marketing departments say they endure 10 rounds of review on average to get content approved. Such a long process can introduce significant inefficiencies. Although small and medium-sized marketing teams have slightly fewer rounds of review (six rounds and five rounds, respectively), there is still ample room for a more efficient process.

The gap widens when we look at the data from compliance teams, who claim to go through an average of just four rounds of review to approve marketing content.

Content creation takes a long time, especially for smaller teams

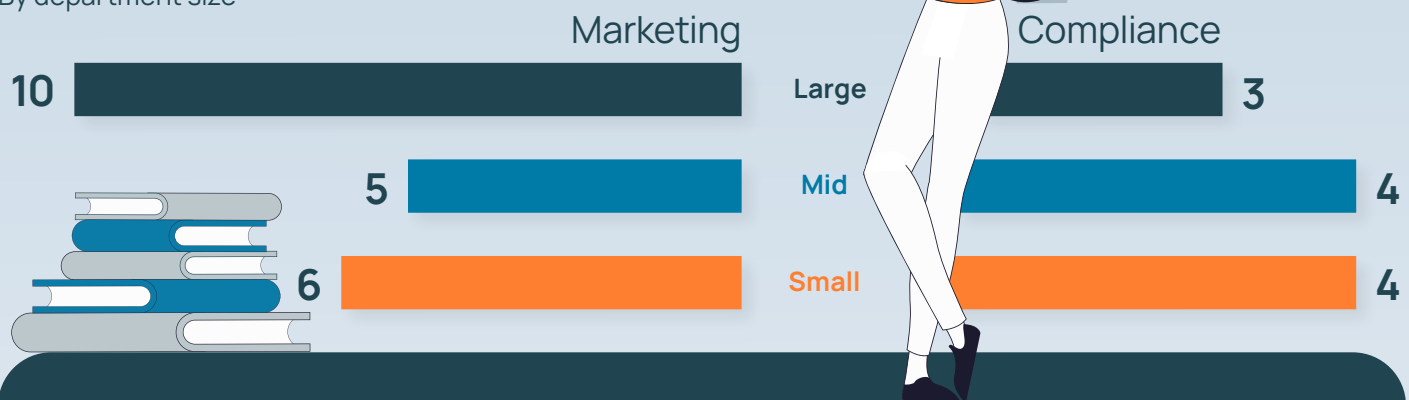
With a large percentage of content needing to be reviewed by compliance and those reviews requiring multiple rounds to gain approval, it can take a long time to develop content start to finish.

Overall, marketers say it takes them an average of 10 working days to create a piece of marketing content, with six of those days usually spent on the compliance process (a reminder that the bulk of their workload is heavily connected to their compliance counterparts). For small departments, content creation takes 12 days on average, start to finish.

There is a similar trend on the compliance side. They report an average of six days to review a piece of content, rising to seven days among smaller groups.

Perceived average rounds of review

By department size



Take action now:

Work toward a mutual understanding between departments

Evidently, departments are misaligned on the content review process. Organizations should work to understand the cause of these discrepancies between departments and job levels. To do so, they might consider the following steps:

- ✓ **Establish clear guidelines** on which communications need to be reviewed and which don't.
- ✓ **Implement tools** that can track, measure, and report on what is being reviewed, how many rounds are required, and how long the whole process takes.
- ✓ **Look for inefficiencies** using a combination of the previous two action points. Collaborate across departments to determine ways to work together to reduce the compliance burden.

Is the process truly automated?

It is abundantly clear that marketing and compliance departments could benefit greatly from streamlining the content approval process. But, as always, the million-dollar question is “how?” The key is automation.

We asked marketing and compliance professionals about the tools they use and how much of the content approval process is automated. Just about everyone (99%) says they use in-house tools to review content, while 63% say their approval process is automated.

But what is meant by “automated?” Unfortunately, we didn’t ask the follow-up question, but it is obvious that different departments can have varying interpretations of what the term means. Some might define automation as a master spreadsheet that provides tracking. Others might define it as a streamlined process involving drag-and-drop functionality within a portal, where software simply helps with approval flow and approval tracking.

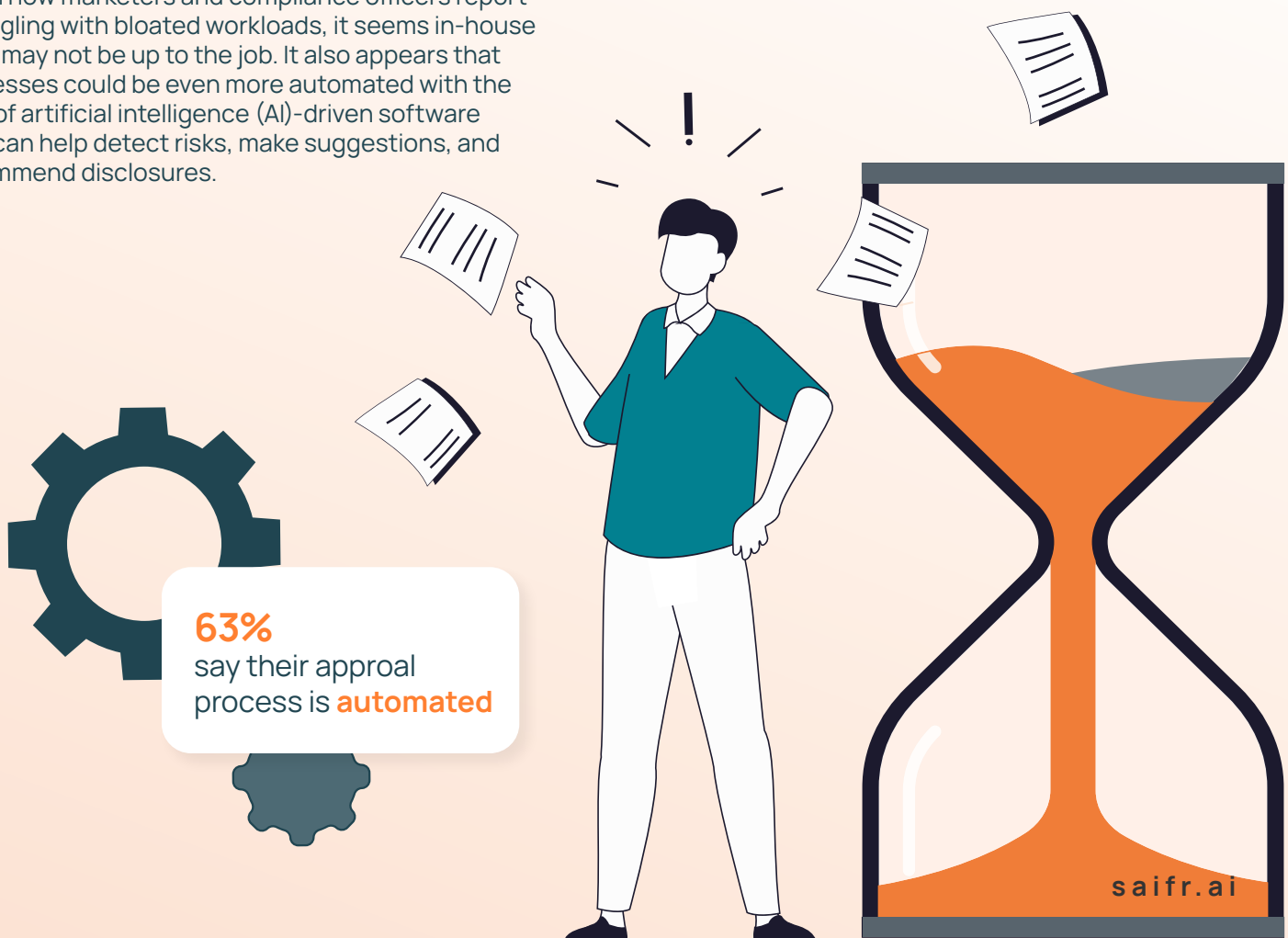
Consider additional tools to streamline the process

Given how marketers and compliance officers report struggling with bloated workloads, it seems in-house tools may not be up to the job. It also appears that processes could be even more automated with the help of artificial intelligence (AI)-driven software that can help detect risks, make suggestions, and recommend disclosures.

Take action now: Go beyond just automation

When it comes to compliance-related procedures, organizations and top executives should consider solutions that help reduce the burden of manual work without compromising the thoroughness of compliance checks.

- ✓ **Explore workflow tools** that integrate seamlessly across departments and simplify tracking, reporting, filing, and storing.
- ✓ **Consider implementing robust AI solutions** to help reduce the rounds of compliance review and overall time spent on the content approval process.



Key takeaways

The number of delivery channels, customized targeting strategies, and trending topics will change—often rapidly. The only constant is that all content must comply with regulations.

So, rather than wasting energy on factors that are beyond your control, focus on how you can make a tangible impact on efficiency for both marketing and compliance departments while creating engaging, compliant content.



Understand your current situation

It's clear that marketing and compliance teams don't always see eye to eye when it comes to the content approval process. Even senior executives and junior officers within the same departments seem to have different perceptions.

It's crucial to understand why teams—and job levels—report different numbers. A good starting point is to establish a system to measure what content is being reviewed, which parties are involved, how many rounds of review are required, and how long the process takes from draft to publication.



Establish and monitor guidelines

Set clear guidelines to establish which pieces of content require compliance review. This alignment will clarify the compliance burden, allowing both marketing and compliance teams to staff, prioritize, and use their limited time efficiently.

Continue to educate team members, monitor the process, and periodically review the guidelines to help ensure all content is meeting regulatory guidelines.



Explore ways to become more efficient

Marketing and compliance both need the content approval process to become more efficient. Closely monitor the process to identify ways to reduce the rounds of review and the overall burden of compliance.

It may be that the best way to increase efficiency is to embrace new tools and technology...



Embrace AI tools

Automation alone is not sufficient. An efficient content approval process should embrace the potential of AI to help catch and address issues early. AI can help reduce the rounds of compliance review and lessen onerous, manual intervention, freeing up professionals to focus on new, important challenges.

Consider exploring robust workflow tools that operate across departments to track and report on key performance indicators such as the number of reviews required, how long they take, and where there might be bottlenecks.

Saifr for marketing and compliance

Create more compliant marketing content faster with Saifr.

Saifr's solutions are designed to help you work more efficiently by using AI to identify potential compliance risks and discrepancies in brand guidelines across text, images, audio, and videos.

AI for marketing

Develop more compliant materials from the start for faster review:

- ✓ Reduces rounds of compliance review by using AI to automatically flag potentially non-compliant content
- ✓ Gets you to a cleaner draft sooner by suggesting alternative phrasing and disclosures
- ✓ Educates your team by explaining why content may be non-compliant
- ✓ Helps optimize content for your target audience by scoring content based on sentiment, readability level, and inclusive language

AI for compliance

Manage routine, repetitive compliance tasks more efficiently:

- ✓ Helps mitigate compliance risks by using AI to review text, images, audio, and video
- ✓ Minimizes rounds of review by suggesting more compliant language for risky content
- ✓ Streamlines compliance by recommending appropriate disclosures from your company's repository
- ✓ Simplifies auditing with thorough tracking, reporting, and direct filing with regulators

Find out how you can simplify compliance with Saifr

[Check out our website and request a demo.](#)

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