

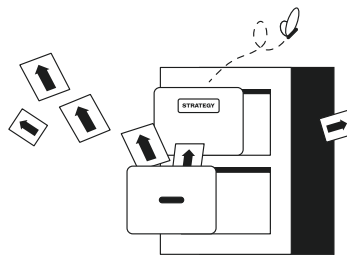
The Content Execution Gap

Why automation alone isn't delivering ROI



Executive Summary

Most organizations have invested in automation and still can't execute content reliably at scale. This report surveyed 400 professionals across marketing and engineering to understand why the gap between automation investment and execution outcomes persists.



The findings point to the same root cause from both sides of the business: **automation without orchestration**.

Tools are connected and steps are automated, but workflows aren't coordinated. Content moves through approvals, localization, publishing, and downstream systems (AI, eCommerce, CRM) without sequencing logic, governance, or centralized visibility. The result is wasted engineering time, unreliable launches, and AI systems fed with content no one fully trusts.

74.5% of content operators lose 6+ hours per week to coordination, not creation.

90% of marketing teams lack end-to-end workflow coordination.

88% of engineering organizations take more than a week to implement new automation.

Only 8% have centralized, observable workflow logic.

The data shows two teams experiencing the same problem from opposite ends. Marketers are blocked by coordination overhead and launch inconsistency. Engineers are consumed by maintenance, fragile scripts, and automation debt. The orchestration layer that would connect their work into reliable, repeatable execution is absent in most organizations.

This paper defines that gap, shows where it surfaces, and describes what fixing it looks like in practice.

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The operational gap in content execution



For enterprise organizations, content feeds product launches, powers AI systems, drives ecommerce, and enables global expansion. The teams responsible for it are under pressure to move faster, cover more channels, and maintain quality across regions.

The investment has followed: marketing technology budgets have grown, automation tools are widely deployed, and teams are larger and more specialized than five years ago.

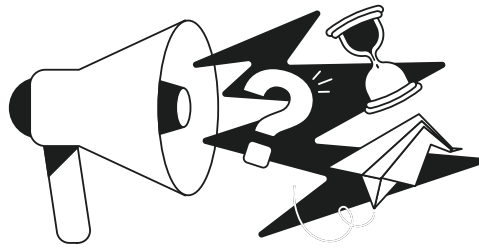
Yet 50% of marketing teams still report content going live late, incomplete, or inconsistently across channels. Nearly three out of four content operators lose at least a full workday each week to coordination, not content work. The investment, the effort, and the tooling are all present, but the problem is structural.

Publishing a content update is one step in a chain that spans legal review, localization, downstream storefronts, AI systems, and stakeholder notifications. Each step depends on the previous one. Most organizations coordinate that chain manually.

50% of marketing teams report content going live late, incomplete, or inconsistently.

Nearly 3 in 4 content operators lose at least one full workday per week to coordination.

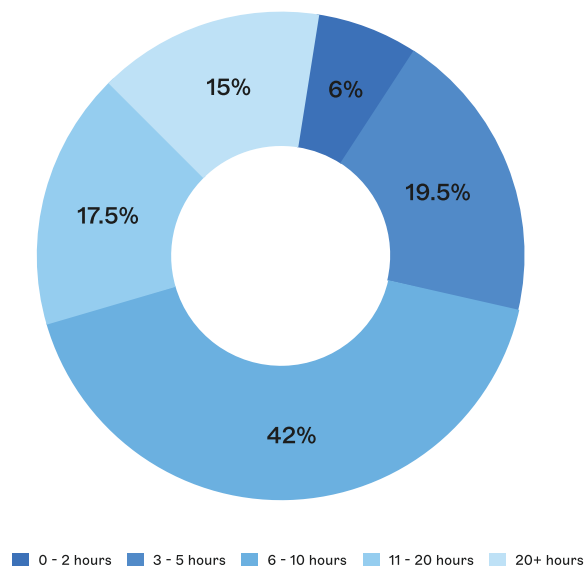
The marketer's reality



The marketers surveyed span across content operations, campaign management, marketing operations, and digital marketing. Their answers describe a function that has the tools to execute but not the infrastructure to coordinate.

TIME LOST TO COORDINATION

74.5% of respondents spend 6 or more hours per week on coordination tasks: approvals, hand-offs, routing content between systems, and chasing updates. 32.5% spend 11 or more hours. For context, a standard 40-hour work week leaves most content operators with fewer than four uninterrupted days of actual content work.



Weekly Time Spent on Content Coordination

74.5% spend 6+ hours per week on coordination tasks.

32.5% spend 11+ hours — more than a quarter of their working week.

92.5% believe significant time could be saved with end-to-end workflow automation.

FRAGMENTED TOOLS, FRAGMENTED EXECUTION

70.5% of respondents agree their content workflows rely on multiple tools that don't communicate well with each other. 23% strongly agree. Only 10% describe their workflows as coordinated end-to-end across systems. In other words, the remaining 90% operate somewhere between fully manual and partially automated, with people filling the gaps between tools.

70.5% say their tools don't communicate well with each other.

Only 10% have workflows coordinated end-to-end across systems.

WHAT THAT FRAGMENTATION COSTS AT LAUNCH

When tools don't communicate, launches absorb the consequences. 50% of respondents report that content updates go live late, incomplete, or inconsistently across channels or regions. That figure holds across company sizes and team structures.

50% report content going live late, incomplete, or inconsistently.

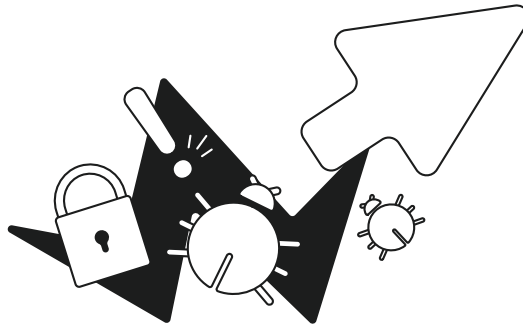
ENGINEERING BECOMES A BOTTLENECK

When content automation workflows need to change, most marketing teams can't change them independently. Engineering involvement is frequently or almost always required to implement updates that marketers should be able to handle themselves. This creates a structural bottleneck: marketing agility is capped by engineering availability, and engineering teams pay the cost in interrupted roadmap work.

The developer survey data reinforces this from the other side. 78% of engineering teams spend more than 10% of their time maintaining integrations, scripts, and workflows. A significant share of that maintenance is content-related — work that originated as a “small content change” and became an engineering task.

78% of engineering teams spend 10%+ of their time on integration and workflow maintenance.

The developer's reality



The engineering and platform leaders' data tells a story that marketing leaders rarely see directly: the automation infrastructure supporting content operations is fragile, expensive to maintain, and getting harder to scale.

AUTOMATION IS SLOW TO BUILD AND SLOWER TO CHANGE

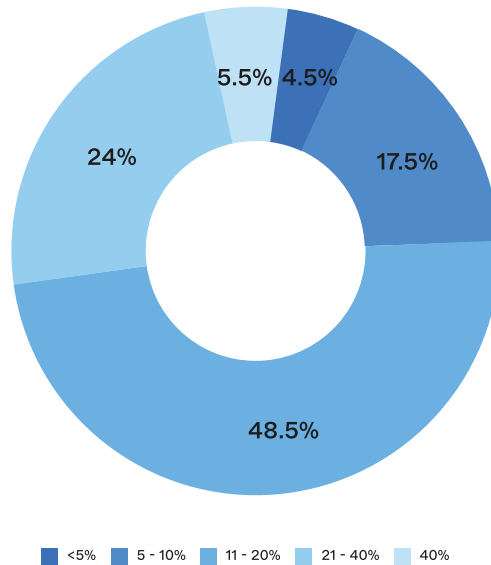
88% of organizations take more than a week to implement a new automation workflow. 37% take more than a month. For marketing teams that depend on those workflows to execute campaigns, localize content, and manage launches, that timeline is the bottleneck.

88% of organizations take more than a week to implement new automation workflows.

37% take more than a month.

MAINTENANCE IS CONSUMING ENGINEERING CAPACITY

78% of engineering teams spend more than 10% of their time maintaining existing integrations, scripts, and workflows. 29% spend more than 20%. That proportion of time is not going toward product development, infrastructure improvements, or strategic technical work. It is going toward keeping existing automation functional, often automation that was built quickly, without long-term maintainability in mind.



Team Time Spent on Maintaining or Adjusting Workflows

78% of engineering teams spend 10%+ of their time on integration and workflow maintenance.

29% spend more than 20% — roughly one full day per week, every week.

WORKFLOW LOGIC IS SCATTERED AND INVISIBLE

Only 8% of organizations have centralized, observable workflow logic. The majority run on a combination of custom scripts, tool-native automations, and ad-hoc webhooks distributed across systems, owned by different people, and documented inconsistently, if at all. When something breaks, finding it takes time that most teams don't have.

14% report that workflow failure detection is painful and manual. Some teams only discover failures after downstream systems have already been affected — after AI has indexed outdated content, after a storefront has published an unapproved update, after a regional launch has gone out without legal clearance.

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14% say workflow failure detection is painful and manual.

THE GOVERNANCE GAP IS A SHARED RISK

Only 15% of engineering teams report governed workflows with built-in approval logic. The rest rely on tool-level automations or ad-hoc integrations that execute without checkpoints. For content operations specifically, that means automated actions touching storefronts, AI systems, and regulated regional content run without enforced review. And it's not because teams don't want governance, but because the infrastructure to build it into workflows doesn't exist in most stacks.

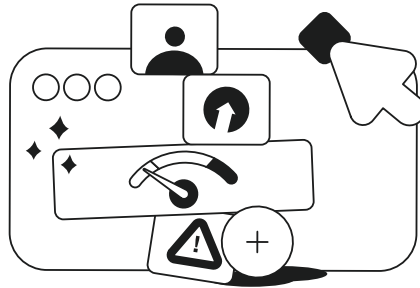
This matters more as AI takes a larger role. An ungoverned automation that publishes a product page late is a minor operational failure. An ungoverned AI workflow that indexes, summarizes, and serves content across customer touchpoints before that content has been approved is a different category of risk.

Only 15% report governed workflows with approval logic built in.
85% run on tool-level automation or ad-hoc integrations without enforced checkpoints.

WHERE THE TWO REALITIES CONNECT

The marketer survey shows a function losing 6+ hours per week to coordination. The developer survey shows an engineering function losing significant capacity to maintain the automation that was supposed to eliminate that coordination. Both outcomes trace back to the same architecture: automation built step by step, tool by tool, without a coordination layer managing the sequence.

The AI readiness problem



Both surveys confirm that AI adoption in content operations is accelerating: teams are adding AI steps to their workflows, experimenting with content enrichment, and under pressure from leadership to demonstrate AI ROI. The infrastructure those AI systems run on is not keeping pace with that adoption.

AI systems consume content, not generate it. What they index, summarize, serve, and personalize is sourced directly from wherever an organization's content lives, and the quality, governance, and structure of that content determines the quality of everything AI does with it. **The survey data suggests most organizations are treating AI readiness as a model selection problem when the actual constraint is content infrastructure.**

Only 15% of engineering teams report governed AI workflows with built-in approval logic. The remaining 85% are running AI on the same fragile, ungoverned infrastructure already struggling to coordinate standard content operations. AI steps sit outside any structured execution sequence, triggered ad-hoc, without checkpoints or visibility into what they consumed or produced.

Only 15% have governed AI workflows with approval logic built in.

85% run AI on tool-level or ad-hoc integrations without enforced checkpoints.

83.5% of marketing respondents say governance and control over AI workflows would significantly increase their trust in using AI for everyday content operations. When marketers don't know which content version an AI system has indexed, whether it cleared legal review, or whether an AI-generated summary reflects a published or draft story, the output becomes unreliable regardless of how good the model is. Governance addresses the infrastructure AI runs on, and that infrastructure is where the trust gap actually sits.

83.5% say governance over AI workflows would significantly increase their trust.

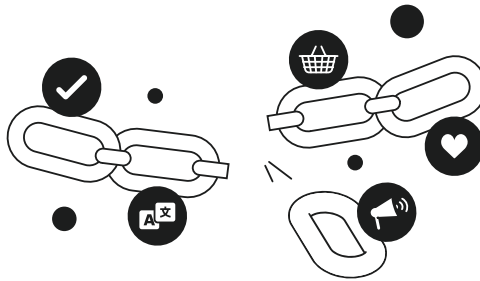
The compounding risk is that AI operates at a speed and volume that amplifies whatever it is given. A governance failure that previously affected one channel now affects every surface the AI touches: customer-facing chatbots, personalization engines, search summaries, internal knowledge bases. 92.5% of marketers believe end-to-end workflow automation would improve their confidence in the content they publish. AI output confidence is directly downstream of that.

92.5% believe end-to-end automation would improve their content confidence.

Content often lives in silos: CMS here, DAM there, analytics somewhere else entirely. AI struggles when those systems don't coordinate, and so do the teams responsible for governing what AI consumes. The CMS is where content originates — where it is created, structured, reviewed, approved, and versioned. Whether it functions as a governed source of truth for AI systems depends entirely on the coordination infrastructure built around it.

Organizations that haven't solved content coordination inside their CMS are not AI-ready, regardless of which models they deploy.

The missing layer



Automation handles discrete steps: a webhook fires when a story is published, a script resizes an image, a tool-native integration sends a Slack notification. Each action works in isolation and none of them knows what the others are doing.

When sequence matters (when legal review must complete before translation begins, when translation must complete before a storefront updates, when a storefront update must trigger a social post that requires human approval) automation alone has no mechanism to enforce that order. People fill that gap, which is why 74.5% of content operators spend 6+ hours a week on coordination that no human should need to manage.

Automation handles steps. Orchestration handles the sequence, the dependencies, and the exceptions.

Most content operations stacks sit across two tiers, neither of which solves this:

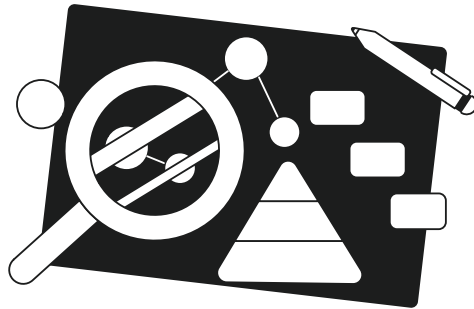
Automation alone optimizes individual steps but leaves every handoff between them to people.

Integrated connectivity moves data between tools but has no logic for what to do when an approval is rejected, a dependency hasn't been met, or a step fails.

Orchestration coordinates entire workflows end to end: it enforces sequencing, manages dependencies, handles exceptions, embeds human approval where governance requires it, and gives marketing and engineering teams shared visibility into what is running and what has failed. For marketing teams that means launches that execute without manual coordination; for engineering teams, workflow logic that is centralized and maintainable rather than distributed across scripts no one fully owns; for AI systems, content that is approved and correctly structured before it reaches them.

Only 8% of organizations operate at the orchestration tier; the other 92% are absorbing the coordination costs that a structured orchestration layer would eliminate.

What leaders should do next



The survey data gives both marketing and engineering leaders a clear picture of where execution is breaking down. The question is where to start fixing it. Three priorities emerge consistently from the findings.

START WITH AN HONEST AUDIT

Before adding new tooling or rebuilding workflows, organizations need to know what they're currently running. That means mapping where automation logic lives (which scripts, which tool-native integrations, which webhooks) and who owns each one. Only 8% of organizations have centralized, observable workflow logic — which means, for most, that mapping exercise will find automation distributed across systems, inconsistently owned, and largely invisible to anyone outside the team that built it.



COMPLETE A QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT TO LEARN YOUR CURRENT CONTENT OPERATIONS READINESS.

Objectively assess your content ops maturity and quantify orchestration gaps blocking scale, governance, and AI readiness.

Check the boxes that are true today, and then score yourself:

Incorporate this one-pager in the white paper [HERE](#).

DIAGNOSE BEFORE YOU BUILD

Most organizations facing coordination problems respond by adding more automation. The survey data suggests that it rarely fixes the underlying issue. 88% of engineering teams already take more than a week to implement new automation. Adding more automation to an uncoordinated stack adds more maintenance surface, not more execution reliability.

The more useful diagnostic question is not “what should we automate next” but “what is coordinating the automation we already have.” If the answer is people, spreadsheets, or Slack messages, the gap is structural, and new tools won’t close it.

Don’t ask yourself what to automate next. Ask what coordination the existing automation requires.

PRIORITIZE BY DOWNSTREAM RISK

Start with the workflows where a failed handoff, a missed approval, or an out-of-sequence update creates legal exposure, brand risk, or direct revenue impact: regulated content, AI systems, global storefronts, customer-facing launches. Sequence the orchestration investment by downstream risk. A broken localization workflow that delays a regional product launch by two weeks costs more than a broken internal content monitoring workflow. Fix the highest-risk chains first, establish the orchestration pattern, then extend it.

RETHINK THE ENGINEERING-MARKETING BOUNDARY

Both surveys describe consequences of the same structural problem, and the problem sits at the boundary between the two teams. Marketing needs to adapt workflows quickly; engineering needs those workflows to be stable and maintainable. Under the current architecture those needs conflict: every marketing workflow change requires engineering involvement, and every engineering involvement interrupts roadmap work.

When workflow logic is centralized and the tooling supports non-technical workflow building, that conflict resolves. Marketing adapts coordination logic without opening a ticket. Engineering owns the infrastructure layer, marketing owns the execution layer, and both have visibility into what’s running.

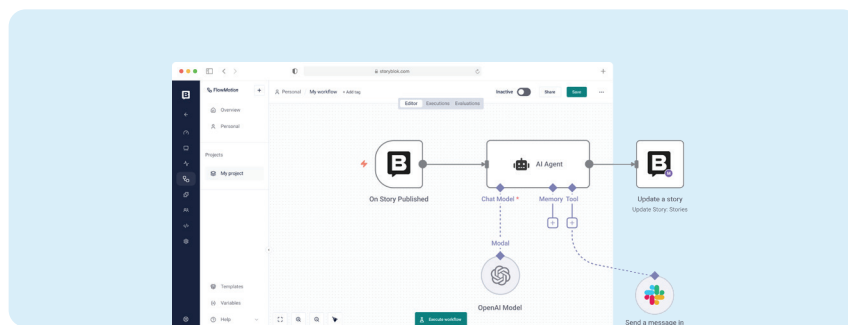
Only 10% of marketing teams currently have workflows coordinated end-to-end.

78% of engineering teams are spending 10%+ of their time maintaining the integrations that support the other 90%.

Orchestration in practice: How FlowMotion makes it work

The coordination problems the survey surfaces show up in specific workflows most content organizations run every week: localization, product launches, and AI enrichment. The following scenarios show what those workflows look like when orchestration is in place.

FlowMotion is Storyblok's automation and orchestration layer for modern content operations. Built on n8n's enterprise-proven engine, it connects teams, tools, and AI systems through event-driven workflows that live inside the CMS, where content originates.



LOCALIZATION AND REGIONAL PUBLISHING

Today: localization requires manually sending content to translation tools, tracking progress across teams, and updating Storyblok once translations return. Each handoff depends on someone remembering to do it. 50% of marketing teams report regional content going live inconsistently as a direct result.

With FlowMotion: a story is created in Storyblok, FlowMotion sends it to Lokalise automatically, translation returns and Storyblok status updates, the localization manager reviews in Slack, and approval releases the content to the regional storefront. Rejection routes it back with context. No step executes before the previous one is complete.

- ✓ **One trigger.**
- ✓ **One governed sequence.**
- ✓ **Zero manual follow-up between steps.**

PRODUCT LAUNCH COORDINATION

Today: nearly 3 in 4 content operators lose a full workday per week coordinating launches. 50% experience late, incomplete, or inconsistent results. A standard product update touches

Jira, Shopify, HubSpot, Slack, and social channels, each managed separately, each dependent on someone noticing the previous step is done.

With FlowMotion: a product page published in Storyblok triggers a single flow: Jira tickets close, Shopify pages update, a HubSpot campaign activates, release notes post to Slack, and social content moves to an approval queue. One content action coordinates the entire downstream chain.

“ For a company of our size, with thousands of employees and varying levels of marketing resources across markets, this kind of automation makes a real difference. Flowmotion allows us to centralize key processes while still supporting local needs. It's exciting to see how quickly we can bring these ideas to life and we're just getting started with what's possible.

Christoph Bergdahl, Product Owner Web at Systemair

AI CONTENT ENRICHMENT

Today: enriching content with tags, summaries, and metadata takes several minutes per entry. Across hundreds of assets that becomes days of inconsistent manual work, and AI systems inherit that inconsistency directly.

With FlowMotion: new content created in Storyblok triggers an AI enrichment step automatically. Tags, summaries, and metadata write back directly to Storyblok. Every asset leaves the workflow enriched, structured, and ready for semantic use without manual input.

SOCIAL MEDIA AUTOMATION

Today: a social media specialist receives a request, writes the copy, sends it for approval in Slack, waits for design to resize images for different networks, and schedules the post. A single update can take multiple people, tools, and hours of coordination.

With FlowMotion: publishing a story with a specific status automatically triggers social media preparation. Images are resized for each network, AI generates post copy, and an approval request goes to Slack or Telegram before anything is published. The workflow runs without manual handoffs, design chasing, or missed approvals.

- ✓ Social posts live in minutes, not hours.
- ✓ AI-assisted copy generation.
- ✓ Automatic image preparation across networks.
- ✓ Built-in approval workflows before publishing.
- ✓ Consistent posting across channels.

Conclusion

The survey data across 400 respondents points to the same gap from every angle: automation is present, connectivity is present, but execution still depends on people filling the space between systems. That space is where coordination failures happen: missed approvals, delayed launches, ungoverned AI, fragile scripts no one fully owns.

Automation handles steps. What makes those steps reliable, repeatable, and governable is orchestration. That is the layer most organizations are currently missing, and the one that determines whether content operations functions as infrastructure or overhead.

FlowMotion solves this problem by providing an orchestration layer directly within a CMS. For teams already on Storyblok, it is the fastest path from fragmented automation to governed, end-to-end execution. For teams evaluating their content infrastructure, it is worth understanding what orchestration looks like when it lives where content does.



LEARN MORE

[Watch an interactive FlowMotion demo](#)

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