PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

FUNNELFUEL



The Commercial Marketer Skills Series: How To Be More Analytical In Your Organization (And Win Business)

b2bmarketing.net/propolis

Contents

FOREWORD
Our take on analytical skills for marketeers

SECTION ONE
The Commercial Marketer Effect

SECTION TWO
Why is analytical thinking so important?

SECTION THREE
The solutions according to our experts

SECTION FOUR
The tech to enhance your analytical skills

SECTION FIVE
Conclusion: Challenge yourself to be data-driven













Our take on analytical skills for marketeers



Mike Harty,
Co-Founder and Chief Product Officer,
FunnelFuel

Today's modern marketing department has and continues to change constantly when you consider the same functions as reality of only a few years ago. Your department and individual team members' ability to identify, gather, interpret, and logically assess a myriad of, sometimes disparate, sources of information now forms the bedrock of how you can and should be aiming to define and demonstrate the value marketing delivers to a business.

As marketing practitioners and leaders, your ability to not only interpret the quantitative signals/data within your environment but also to overlay with qualitative inputs or observations to form a narrative, tell a story of your customer behavior, is propelling the function to the forefront of guiding a business, as your perspective is often far broader than your counterparts within the business.

The bedrock of the FunneFuel business is structuring (organizing) data within a rapidly changing technological landscape (and not always in a positive sense) and equally evolving tools, techniques, and partnerships to identify, target, and engage the B2B business in omnichannel digital advertising terms. We often use the phrase "pressure testing the industry" in terms of operating at the forefront of the rapidly evolving ecosystem on behalf of our clients in their quest to deliver greater, more tangible ROI on marketing spend. We're in the signals era, and accordingly, not everything is linear; you need to balance the direct cause-and-effect pattern with inputs and data that may require you and your peers around the leadership table to agree on hypotheses in the absence of explicit causality.

For that to be successful, you need to orchestrate and organize those inputs that you have at your disposal and represent them effectively in the business. Do that well, and a more opaque, sometimes inferred discussion is credible from a solid basis of data integrity and interpretation.

The marketing function has the potential to deliver huge value on its unique perspective in any business. Given the insights it should have from both inside and outside the business, customers and prospects, as well as the wider operating environment, it's the function's ability to gather, organize, and interpret those inputs into actionable insights aligned to the goals of the business that elevates the department to a position of strategic leadership.

The commercial marketeer movement is, in my mind, a clear signifier of the evolution of the B2B marketeer as an individual and their function as a whole, and one that every business will no doubt embrace for everyone's benefit.

FUNNELFUEL

The Commercial Marketer Effect

The time is now for B2B marketers…to step up as strategic leaders, reclaim their time, exert their influence, and irrefutably prove their impact!

We are committed to helping B2B marketers achieve this by helping them become commercial marketers – marketers who can build and execute commercially effective strategies through their mastery of six key skills:



Kavita Singh,
Head of Growth Solutions Content,
B2B Marketing

Insight skills

Analytical skills

Financial acumen

Strategic skills

Agile-decision making skills

Collaboration and communication

So what is a commercial marketer?

Let's get straight to the point.

A commercial marketer:

- Thinks strategically and has the marketing skills to drive measurable business growth.
- Thinks about the wider business objectives first and foremost, and marketing tactics and specialisms second.
- Is not primarily occupied by achieving tactical wins, or results in one isolated metric.

To many, this may be self-evident. Of course B2B marketers are there to drive measurable growth. If we're not, why are we here in the first place!?

Self-evident though this may be, the fact is that B2B marketers struggle to operate as commercial marketers. To prove the point, we analyzed the results of hundreds of hours of conversations with members of our B2B marketing community, Propolis, using AI.

The single biggest overarching challenge B2B marketing leaders are facing? According to Propolis AI:

"Proving and communicating the commercial impact of marketing to nonmarketing stakeholders – especially in large or complex organizations. Across the conversations, B2B marketing leaders all mentioned pressure to demonstrate marketing's value to the business, shift perceptions from a 'service function' to a 'business driver' and directly links marketing investments to outcomes like revenue, growth or pipeline.

The challenge connects to several root causes:

- Attribution is difficult in complex, long-cycle sales environments.
- There's often a knowledge or skill gap between commercial expectations and actual marketing activity, especially after acquisitions or internal restructuring.
- Marketing leaders have to 'do more with less' and justify every spend amid economic uncertainty.
- Many marketers still face uneven capability with teams, uneven adoption of key frameworks like ABM, and pressure to modernize while maintaining proven results.

Essentially, the CMO and senior marketers are consistently fighting to make marketing's impact visible and respected at the top table, while managing rapid changes in technology, resourcing and skills. Everything else – alignment, tech, skills and tactics – feeds into or stems from that business value conversation."

So, how do I become a commercial marketer?

Let's be clear, every region, sector and organization is going to have its own specific issues, which may require more tailored support. However, we believe there are five key market and business areas that a commercial marketer should be close to, and six key skills that they should possess. If you're on top of both of these sets, you should be in good shape to be a commercial marketer.

Working with our Propolis Experts, we believe there are five key areas of your market and your business you must be close to, in order to have the requisite information to act effectively as a commercial marketer. Miss out on just one of these areas and your ability to make the most strategic decisions possible is going to be diluted.



Business and strategy
(why you're trading)



Product and portfolio
(what you're trading)



Customers, community and team
(who you're serving)



Market, industry and profession
(where you're trading)



Brand, campaigns and channels
(how you're trading)

If you'd like to see how you stack up against these five areas, we recommend checking out the full Commercial Marketing Guide, where you can assess for yourself. If you're in touch with those five areas, you should be in a great place to start thinking about what's going to serve the business first and foremost. However, in order to actually put a plan in place, you'll also need the ability to execute. With that in mind, these are the skills we believe commercial marketers need to act. That's where this report comes in.

In this series of our **The Commercial Marketer Skills Series**, we will be focusing on the six skills - essentially a practical guide that will help you become a commercial marketer by mastering each of the skills. For the purposes of this second edition, we will be honing in on **analytical thinking**. To be clear, this means the ability to understand and interpret data, in order to make commercially sensible decisions. And like most things in B2B marketing, it's something that is much easier said than done.

This report will dive into the critical nature of the skill, the challenges marketers are facing with mastering analytical thinking, as well as tangible expert-led advice and solutions.

Why is analytical thinking so important?

Before diving into analytical thinking's importance, we want to be clear on insights versus analytical thinking - after all, it can be easy to confuse the two skills but at the same time, they also go hand-in-hand. While insight skills are more about researching and understanding your market, analytical skills are more focused on collecting, analyzing and acting upon data.



Judit Szabo
B2B Expert
ex-TIBCO, ex-Endava

Judit Szabo, *B2B Expert*, **ex-TIBCO, ex-Endava** added:

" There's definitely a subtle, mostly semantic difference between the two, but both refer to a deep, meaningful interpretation of data and intelligence. Insight skills are about seeing beneath or beyond the data - understanding what it really means and what matters most. They involve the ability to recognize underlying patterns, make intuitive connections, or grasp the 'big picture' beyond the obvious or raw information. Analytical skills, on the other hand, are more about methodical reasoning - systematically breaking down information and applying structured thought to understand what's happening and why, often to uncover the root cause of an issue."

If you're more interested in learning about insight skills, you can check our first skills guide and webinar.

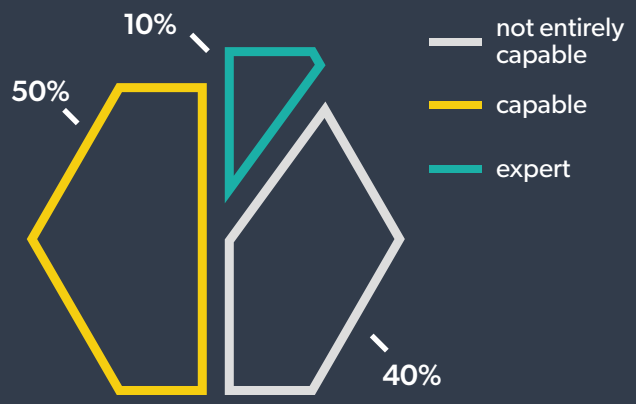
Now onto its place in the market. Ultimately, being analytical has become non-negotiable because of the current market. Having the ability to understand data and make it relevant to your business decisions is imperative.

Michael Barber, *CMO*, **StarTech** explained:

"Everything we do eventually lands in front of a CFO or a CRO. If you can't explain how our work moves revenue, pipeline, or customers, you're guessing. And guessing is expensive. Analytical skills keep you honest. They cut through opinion. They turn 'I think' into 'I know'. In a world where budgets get reviewed every quarter, that's survival."

However, with new tech and digitization, marketing now has access to an overwhelming amount of data. And this could be why our community agrees with this sense of overwhelm. According to a recent Propolis poll, only 10% of marketers feel they're experts in this area. Half describe themselves as "capable," while 40% admit they're not fully confident. That's nearly half of B2B marketers who are potentially struggling. Interestingly enough, when we surveyed marketers about each skill, it turns out that this was one of the most challenging areas (right behind financial acumen). And in an industry that stresses how essential it is to be data-driven, that is quite concerning. So why are marketing leaders struggling with this specific skill?

How good are you at collecting, analyzing and acting upon data in a way that has a clear impact on revenue?





Michael Barber
CMO
StarTech



Hannah Stringer
Marketing Director
Moneypenny

Judit said: *"I think it takes a unique blend of skills to bridge the gap between simply looking at data and being able to analyze it in a way that turns it into actionable insights. You need to know what you're looking for, recognize what stands out from the ordinary, and stay inquisitive enough to keep digging deeper - uncovering layers of intelligence until you can connect distant ideas or synthesize seemingly unrelated data points into a cohesive, strategic output."*

Hannah Stringer, *Marketing Director*, **Moneypenny** added:

"Marketing has become more data-driven, and many people didn't enter the industry expecting that shift. Add in complex tech stacks and it can be easy to feel unsure. There's also a fear of 'getting the numbers wrong' which can be a barrier to stop capable marketers from trusting their judgement."

The solutions according to our experts

And a good example of analytical thinking in action? Well, if you've planned or built any type of ABM campaign, then you've hopefully based it off of deep account intelligence. That is analytical thinking. However, if you've targeted accounts because sales tells you to, then it becomes a missed opportunity.

Judit added: *"Even if we keep those wish-list accounts, understanding the value our solution can bring to them requires analyzing all available first-, second-, and third-party data. That analysis helps us shape our messaging to align with each account's context and needs instead of leading with our preferred narrative. When analytical thinking is coupled with insight skills, it flips the coin for strategic campaign planning, driving more relevant engagement and ultimately better sales outcomes."*

Another instance? Hannah mentioned that at Moneypenny, they discovered that rising cost-per-lead wasn't a budget issue for them; instead, it was a poorly performing keyword that was driving low-quality enquiries.

She said: *"By shifting spend to higher-intent keywords and tightening the landing page message, we reduced CPL and improved lead quality. A small piece of analysis made a big commercial difference."*

Now that we've established what analytical skills look like in practice, we can share a few tips to accomplishing this. We used some of the tips our Propolis Expert, Georgie Gilmore gave in our **Community Sprint Report**, as well as Michael and Judit's advice to expand further on the tangible solutions.



Georgie Gilmore,
Propolis Expert,
B2B Marketing

> ***Build your data literacy step-by-step. You don't need to be a data scientist to make smart decisions."***

Hannah Stringer,
Marketing Director,
Moneypenny

Develop a clear dashboard aligned to business goals.

Whatever this may look like to you, create a clear and concise framework that adheres to the overarching business goals. That means with every set of figures you put together, it should be able to speak to metrics that matter to the C-suite. If you can put an estimated ROI based on a dataset, that will speak volumes to the board.

Michael furthered this suggesting leaders spend 20 minutes a day in their dashboards - not scrolling mindlessly but simply understanding. When you look at the data long enough, you'll start to see patterns. He said: *"Start small. Pick one metric you genuinely want to understand and go deep. Then add another. And another. Don't chase complexity. It always starts with curiosity."*

Another key tip? Judit recommends using conversational AI tools if you're lacking confidence in this area. LLMs can help digest large amounts of data into more manageable "chunkable" insights. She said: *"They don't replace the strategic or creative thinking required in the final stages of analysis - drawing conclusions and making decisions - but they can remove much of the intimidation that comes with working with data, especially for those unsure where to begin."*

Don't be scared to ask for help.

If you're still struggling with your analysis?

Seeing the way other people tick can really help you shape your own analytical thinking. You'll see what questions they ask, what pops up when first looking at data and how they are able to pinpoint trends. More importantly though, when you sit down with other departments, you'll see how they apply their own analysis to your organization's business goals. Being able to see how they make data relevant to your company is unmatched in comparison to outside tools.

Michael said: *"Go sit with your data team. Go ask dumb questions. Bring your data team into more conversations with your marketing team, more often. Dumb questions and the relationships you have with the data team usually uncover the good stuff. And remember, no one is born analytical. It's learned. If you can tell a clear story and are willing to dig, the skills emerge faster than you think."*

> ***Sit with your data or RevOps team and ask them to show you how they think. Most marketers don't do that. It's a cheat code."***
>
> Michael Barber, *CMO*
> **StarTech**

Communicate results as a narrative that is easy to understand and link to commercial outcomes.

Whatever data you are interpreting, understanding it yourself is half the battle. In addition, you need to be able to communicate this to your C-Suite while identifying its link to commercial impact.

If you're having a hard time communicating this, then it might be worth reevaluating the data to ensure you 100% understand the implications.

Michael said executives often look for three criteria:

- What changed
- Why it changed
- What decision do you want them to make

"If you can't retell the data in simple, direct language, it doesn't matter how good your analysis is," Michael said. *"If you can get that into a few clear sentences, doors open. If you drop a 30-slide chart dump on the table, you're done."*

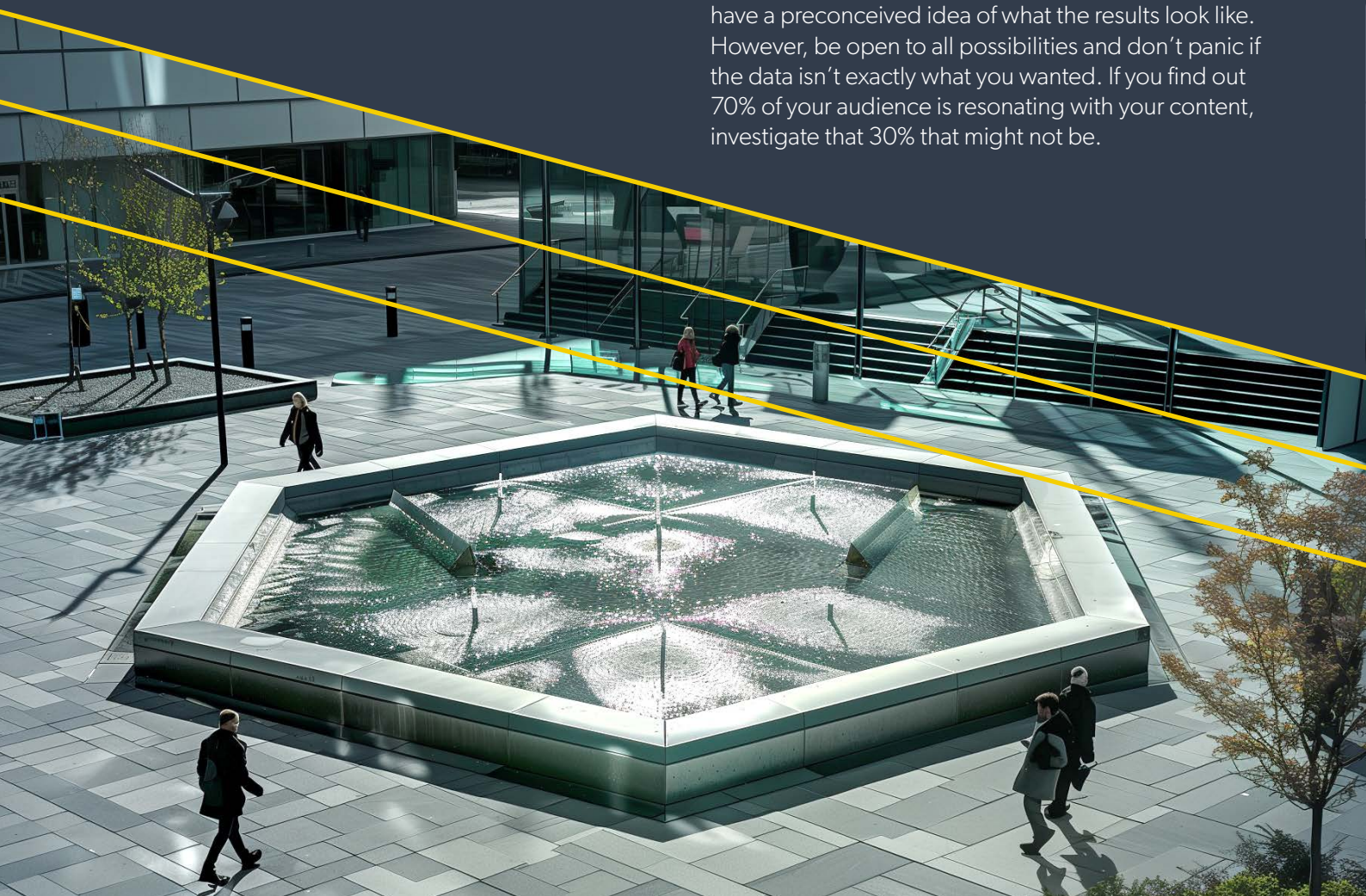
Include your qualitative (customer insights, etc) with your quantitative data to create your narrative.

In our last edition of our report, we focused on customer insights. Our experts recommended asking extra questions at the end of their calls, using PESTEL and strategically cherry picking what content to consume. And on the qualitative side, that might be easier because the insights come directly from leaders. As long as you're asking clear questions, the answers will follow.

However with quantitative data, you can interpret it in several ways depending on the data. The sweet spot is collating both sets of data and coming to conclusions. All good research is backed by both so be sure to have a balance between the two.

Another one of Georgie's recommendations? Be honest about what you find.

Too often, before the data is even collected, marketers have a preconceived idea of what the results look like. However, be open to all possibilities and don't panic if the data isn't exactly what you wanted. If you find out 70% of your audience is resonating with your content, investigate that 30% that might not be.



The tech to enhance your analytical skills

If you're looking to upskill your analytical thinking, the below tools can be used to not only enact your business strategy but help you become more analytical. These can be found in our Martech Vendor Spotlight Report.

Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytic tools can help with statistical thinking, modeling and decision-making. These types of tools use past and present data, alongside machine learning and models to predict future outcomes. Ideal for forecasting future trends such as customer churn or demand changes, using predictive analytics can help build business cases by estimating revenue growth.

Tools to use:

LeanData Act-On 6sense

Data Enrichment

Data enrichment tools can be extremely beneficial (as long as your data is accurate) as they don't just provide more data but they also provide better data. It can also add context to a plethora of essential information from demographics to firmographics and geospatial data. From an upskilling point-of-view, using these types of platforms can help you connect clean data and build stronger hypotheses in a structured way.

Tools to use:

Cognism Datanyze ZoomInfo

Business Intelligence Tools

Beyond enriching your data, business intelligence tools can help you explore, visualize, and interpret data to make decisions. If you get quite overwhelmed by numbers, these types of tools can help shape a narrative or story through data models (created by you). In addition, when you get a clearer picture of what your data tells you, you'll be able to instinctively start thinking more about the 'why' questions - Why did sales drop here? When did they drop exactly? Plus, a lot of business intelligence tools measure the metrics that matter such as customer retention and revenue.

Tools to use:

DOMO Pipedrive Tableau

CRM

Bringing it back to the basics, a CRM centralizes customer interactions, sales activities, and engagement history. By tracking behaviors, preferences and trends over a period of time, marketers can pinpoint when customers are more likely to convert. As with all the tech we've mentioned, CRMs connect customer data with business outcomes by turning data into insights that can guide your decision-making.

Tools to use:

Marketo Salesforce Zoho CRM

Conclusion: Challenge yourself to be data-driven

While analytical skills remain imperative in today's competitive climate where proving ROI means everything, marketing leaders are still struggling. And we understand why - coming up with conclusions can be difficult if you're met with a vast amount of data at once. However, with technological advancements and AI constantly evolving, we now have tools that can help assist with data interpretation.

And on top of the array of marketing tools to enhance your analytical thinking, we also recommend using Georgie, Judit and Michael's advice as well, from using dashboards through to communicating data to your C-suite. These tactics will actually challenge you to become more data-driven and strategic.

Can't get enough commercial marketing content? Our next edition will focus on financial acumen. In the meantime, check out our Propolis Commercial Marketing Strategy Pack **here** for more information.

In addition, this report used valuable insights and information using data and insights from Propolis. Propolis is where B2B marketers find the right strategies, frameworks, and skills to confidently drive growth, build teams, and prove a clear business impact. And if you enjoyed the advice from experts like Georgie Gilmore, we highly recommend checking out **Propolis** to find out more about its membership.

This is the second edition of The Commercial Marketer Skills Series.

We will be running both a bi-monthly report and webinar series on each of the **six essential skills** to help you become the commercial marketer.

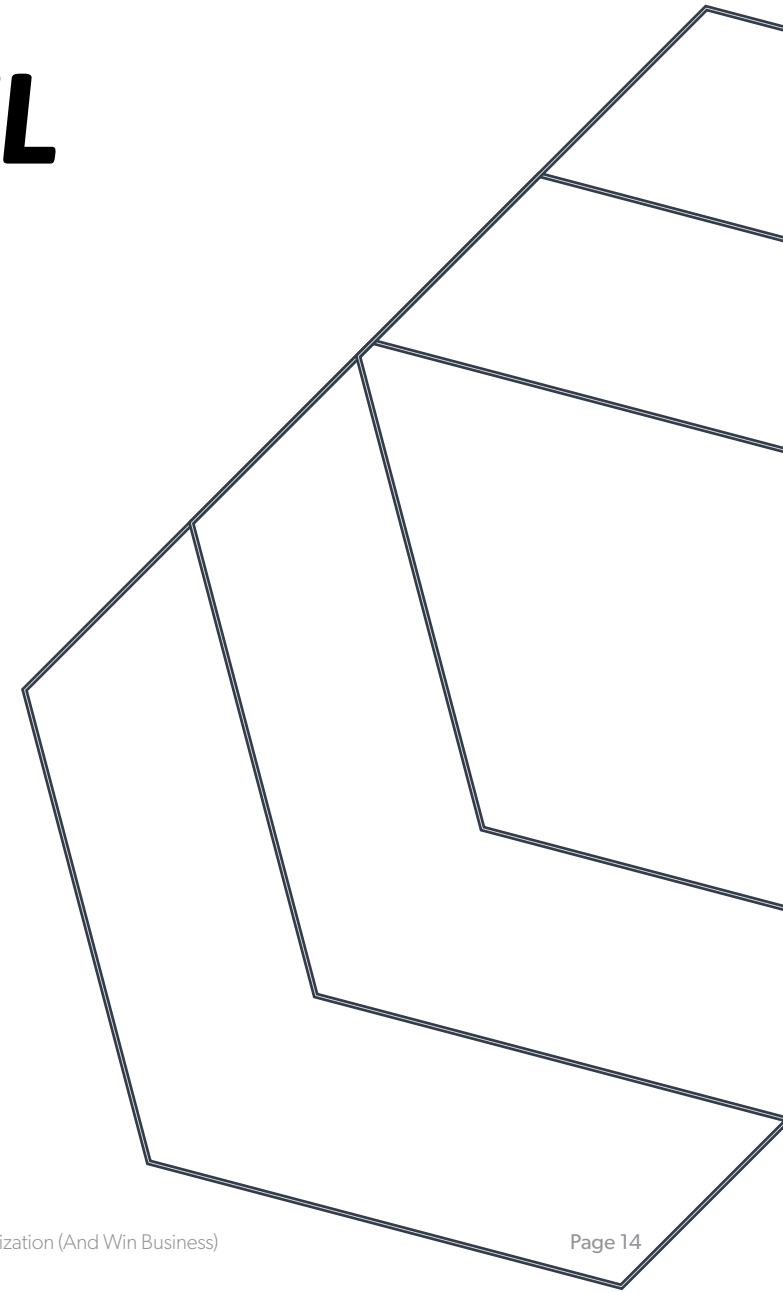
Our next edition will be focusing on financial acumen - the skill marketers felt the least confident in. The report and webinar will be launching in late February.

You can keep up to date with our series and find out more by following **Propolis on LinkedIn.**

PROPOLIS
FROM B2B MARKETING

About FunnelFuel

Founded in 2022, FunnelFuel is a B2B demand gen platform that specializes in data-driven advertising, audience analytics, and lead gen solutions. In an industry striving for personalization and actionable insights, traditional tools often fall short—especially with the decline of cookies and the limitations of Google Analytics. FunnelFuel empowers modern marketers by providing a set of capabilities to identify, target, deliver and report on B2B digital advertising



About B2B MARKETING

B2B Marketing is the world-renowned provider of insight, professional development, events and training for marketers and leaders in B2B.

Since our launch in 2004, we've amassed the largest global network of B2B marketers, giving us the unique ability to place your brand in the centre of the B2B buzz.

At the core of our business are the 85,000+ members of our website worldwide and five of the biggest and most influential annual events in the B2B calendar, alongside a host of webinars, podcasts, roundtables and training.

What can we do for you?

Our dedicated marketing and media solutions team can help you:

Build powerful brand recognition at the heart of the B2B industry.

Deliver your marketing content and proposition to the right audience at the right time through our weekly content emails.

Create compelling stories around your brand with headline-grabbing research and analysis through our reports.

Get face to face and engage with some of the industry's most influential decision-makers and buyers at our events.

Share your brand stories and content with our 160k+ subscribers, 80k+ monthly website users and 260k+ social media following.

Our products

PROPOLIS FROM B2B MARKETING

PROPOLIS INDEX FROM B2B MARKETING

PROPOLIS TRAINING FROM B2B MARKETING

B2B IGNITE FROM B2B MARKETING

THE GLOBAL ABM CONFERENCE FROM B2B MARKETING

THE EUROPEAN ABM FORUM FROM B2B MARKETING | SPOTONVISION

B2B MARKETING AWARDS FROM B2B MARKETING

ELEVATION AWARDS FROM B2B MARKETING

B2B GROWTH SOLUTIONS FROM B2B MARKETING

THE B2B MARKETING PODCAST FROM B2B MARKETING

B2B Marketing
Westgate House
9 Holborn
London
EC1N 2LL

info@b2bmarketing.net
b2bmarketing.net



B2B MARKETING