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B2B Marketing
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It's time to start making it personal

The untapped power of personalisation in B2B marketing



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Introduction



David Rowlands
Editor
B2B Marketing

Dear 'name', thank you for downloading this report. That's all personalisation boils down to, right?

No, of course not, but you already knew that. Personalisation is a highly effective tool for marketers, and one that can ensure that you get the attention of both your existing and potential customers. After all, we're all different, have different tendencies and have different interests, and so it is obvious that marketing campaigns should be tailored to the individual. Ultimately, greater personalisation equals greater engagement, which equals greater ROI. it's not just about looking good.

Why then, do B2B marketers' efforts to personalise their campaigns continue to be patchy at best? Personalisation has certainly not been left in the dark, but neither has it received the full attention and focus it deserves.

With that in mind, this report aims to explore marketers' current attitudes to personalisation, their efforts to date to embrace or deploy it, and to benchmark the market's general level of sophistication. This report will also provide guidance for marketers seeking to enhance their personalisation efforts.

The foundation of this report was a 22-question survey, completed by 122 B2B marketers. Questions asked where participants are at in their personalisation efforts, how successful they think it is, what the biggest hurdles they face are, and more.

As we will see, the outlook for personalisation in B2B marketing is positive, with 75% of B2B marketers reporting that they use it in some way, shape or form. However, as with anything, there's always room for improvement.

This report will show you where you're ahead of the curve, where you should think about improving, and, ultimately, how to become a more well-rounded marketer.

Foreword



Chris Ashley-Manns
CMO
Webeo

Relevance is likely one of the most important elements of your marketing activity. But, how confident are you that your company's messaging is relevant to your audience?

You've lovingly crafted a single-minded proposition, created accurate audience personas, designed a killer creative campaign, and implemented segmented, automated or AI-based customer journeys — all designed to guide prospects or accounts further down the sales funnel.

The ultimate goal in B2B is to build one-to-one relationships with everyone that touches your brand. But, let's face it, our audiences rarely follow the 'ideal' journey we've created for them.

Your B2B website is one of your most powerful tools — in fact, 71% of buyers cite the website as being the most influential touchpoint when making a buying decision. So, why is it that websites don't allow for opportunities to personalise from the very first or subsequent visits that your audiences make?

As consumers, we're demanding. We expect personalisation when we're transacting digitally. Think Amazon, Netflix and Spotify. But our B2B websites don't always deliver.

Marketers are smart in attracting and driving visitors to their websites via impressive technology and tactics. However, we haven't evolved to help these visitors by providing the most relevant content and website experiences that match up to what we know about them.

As this report shows, business brands may be harnessing personalisation across their marketing campaigns. But in the place where it matters most — their website — they're still serving the same generic experience for every visitor, making them work hard to find what's important to them.

It happens every day — new potential buyers, your existing pipeline, and even current customers visit your website, and all get the same one-size-fits-all experience. What's worse is that B2B marketers have been happy to accept that this is the best they can do. Until now.

B2B website personalisation is one of the most powerful ways to create an instant connection with business buyers from the moment they land on your website. As B2B marketers, we have a unique advantage over our B2C counterparts, in that we can access powerful, business IP data that enables us to identify firmographic information about our website visitors. This data can tell

us their industry, business size and location, company name – and we can leverage this data to our advantage.

If your business serves multiple industries, and a visitor from a financial service firm lands on your website, you have the power to serve relevant messaging, imagery and specific content to that potential buyer from your homepage, in real-time, regardless of whether you know that organisation. It makes the visitor's life and customer experience 100x easier when they can find what they need. And, it gives you the opportunity to showcase your expertise in their sector and increase on-site conversion.

To take it a step further, with ABM campaigns, you have the opportunity to serve bespoke, company-specific experiences directly from your homepage — made even more powerful by addressing them individually. By talking to visitors in their language, leveraging insight you've gathered and demonstrating hyper-relevance, personalisation will set you way ahead of your competitors.

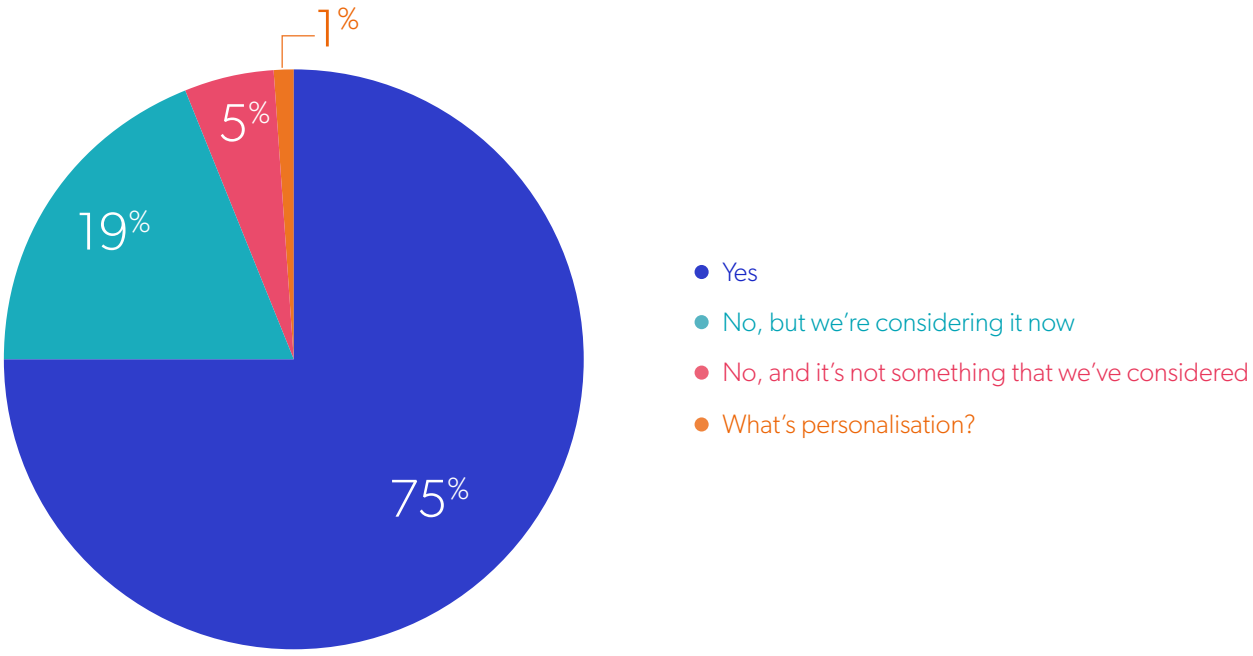
If the holy grail is relevance, then the website should be at the heart of an organisation's personalisation strategy, alongside everything else we are focusing on. By prioritising the website, not only do we have the ability to deliver exceptional CX for our audiences, but also significantly increase revenue.



Section 1

Personalisation in B2B marketing – who's actually using it?

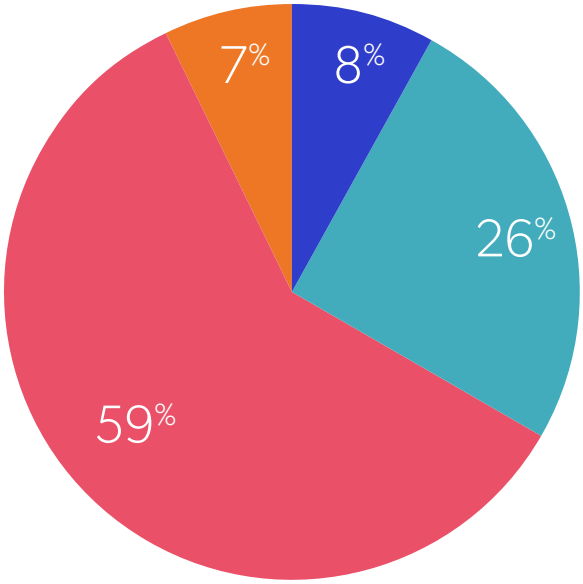
Is personalisation currently part of your marketing activity?



Encouragingly, personalisation is part and parcel of most B2B brands' marketing activity, with 75% of companies saying they use it in some shape or form. That still leaves almost a quarter (24%) of companies not employing personalisation in their arsenal, although 19% of those are considering it as a feasible option in the future. A stubborn 5% remain steadfast in their opposition – whether it's in their control or not – and have no plans for introducing personalisation to their marketing approach.

There's no doubting that the outlook here is generally positive. Out of all the brands surveyed, an overwhelming 95% of companies either already use personalisation, or are planning to in the near future. The strong evidence presented later in this report – that proves the benefits of a personalised approach to B2B marketing – will hopefully serve as a much-needed kick-start for some of the more reticent marketers out there.

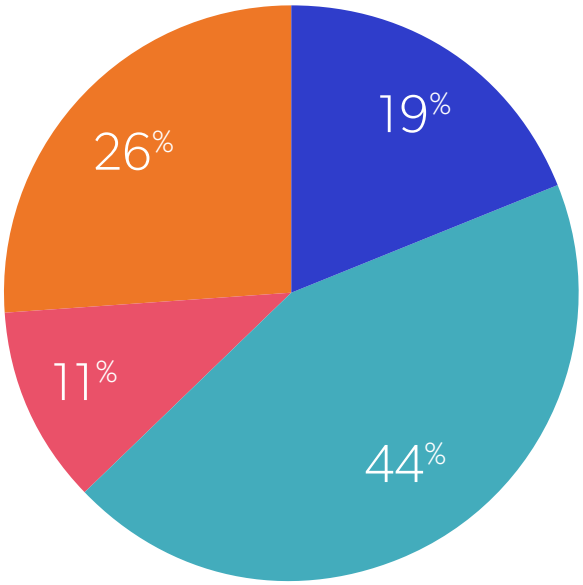
Which of the following best describes your adoption of personalisation?



- We personalise everything
- We personalise most of our marketing
- We personalise a little
- We currently don't practise personalisation

Despite the positives concerning general use of personalisation in B2B marketing, it remains a relative outsider in terms of the regularity of its use across the entire marketing function. A mere 8% of B2B brands personalise every aspect of their marketing, while only a quarter of brands use it across most of their marketing. This leaves almost 59% of B2B brands using just a sprinkling of personalisation – not nearly enough to truly experience the benefits.

How effective would you say your personalised marketing has been to date?



- Very effective
- Quite effective
- Not effective
- We don't know yet

Despite almost 60% of brands only dabbling in personalisation, the following should hopefully serve as a wake-up call. Its benefits are abundantly clear. Almost two-thirds (63%) of B2B marketers say personalised marketing is either 'very' or 'quite' effective, while only 11% say it's not effective at all. That leaves a quarter (26%) who are unsure of its benefits.

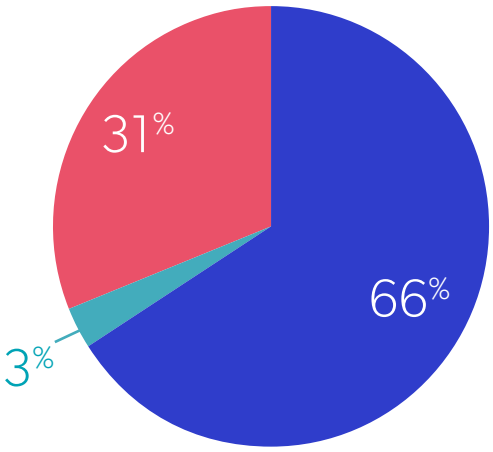
Why then, despite its tangible and acknowledged benefits, is personalisation yet to claim a more dominant and all-encompassing position at the marketing table? As with any marketing approach, there are roadblocks out there which could be serving to stunt more widespread application.

Section 2

Barriers to success – what's stopping personalisation from progressing?

- Available technology is unable to facilitate a quality level of personalisation.
- Lack of understanding of how to use the tools that are available (59% of marketers cite deploying martech effectively as the biggest barrier to personalisation).
- Difficulty bringing together all personalised options to form one cohesive personalisation approach.
- Inability to effectively measure success of personalised marketing on ROI (only 16% of marketers can measurably prove the value of personalisation).

Which aspects of your marketing do you currently personalise?



- Outbound only (e.g. email marketing or marketing automation, messaging on social platforms)
- Inbound only (e.g. website visitors)
- Both inbound and outbound

When it comes to which areas of B2B marketing enjoy personalisation the most, outbound immediately presents itself as the most accessible candidate. Tailored email copy, geo-targeted paid social, or personalised programmatic – it's fair to assume that most B2B brands have experimented with some form of outbound personalisation.

In fact, an imposing two-thirds of B2B brands are exclusively applying personalisation to outbound marketing, but are they missing a trick? Only three in ten (31%) marketers are using personalisation across a mix of inbound and outbound marketing.

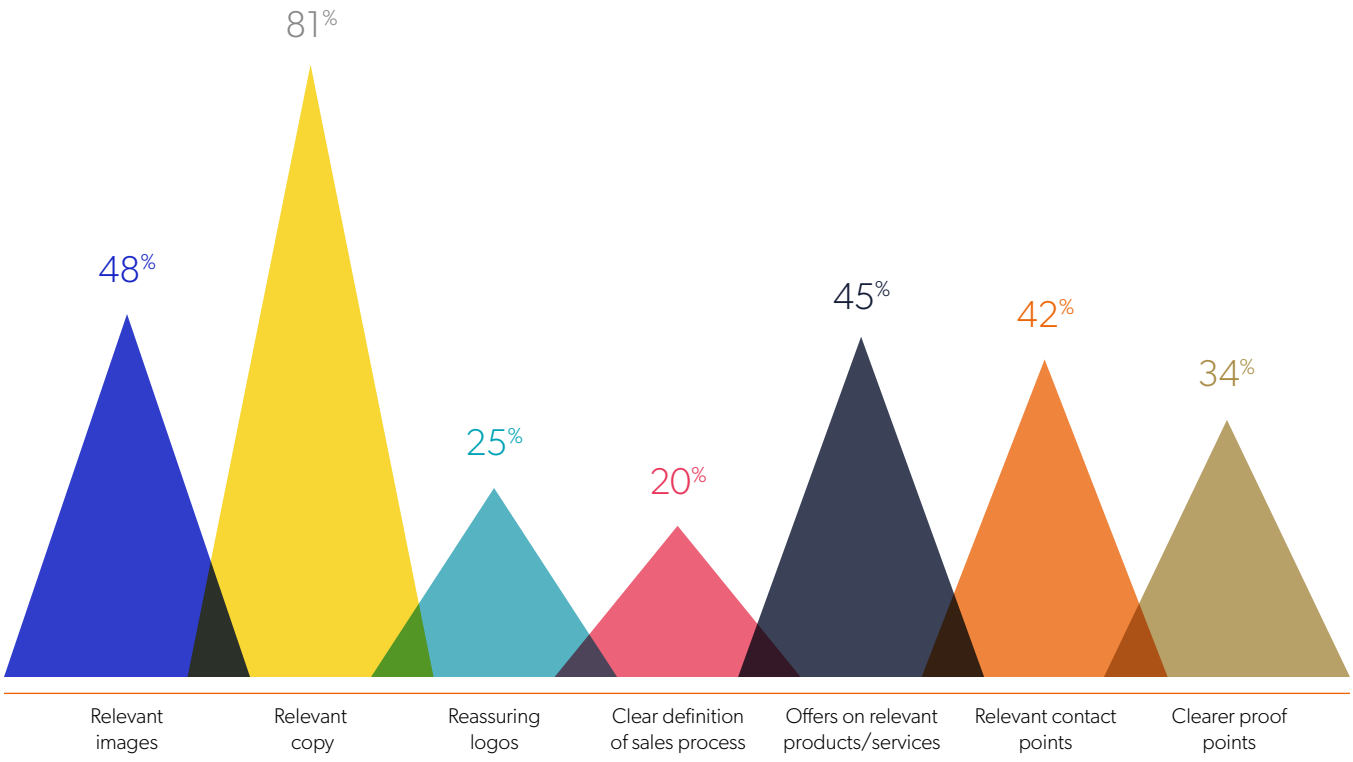
Personalised inbound is certainly a more sophisticated and subtle variant of marketing, but if done right, can result in more effective lead generation and a more intimate and personal experience for prospects and existing customers alike. For many B2B brands, one of its website's major purposes is to collect first-party data to inform outbound marketing. For example, tracking which web pages a user has been browsing or their stage on the customer journey – and using that data to tailor email copy or serve personalised display, search, or social ads – has become a tried and tested tactic for many B2B brands, and a relatively successful one at that.

However, with the emergence of marketing technologies specifically designed to personalise a user's website experience, good personalised inbound marketing has evolved into an integral part of the marketing mix in its own right. Armed with a more sophisticated understanding of prospects, website content can be adjusted, imagery can be tweaked, and calls to action altered to reflect and meet the needs and expectations of individual visitors, often in real time.

Section 3

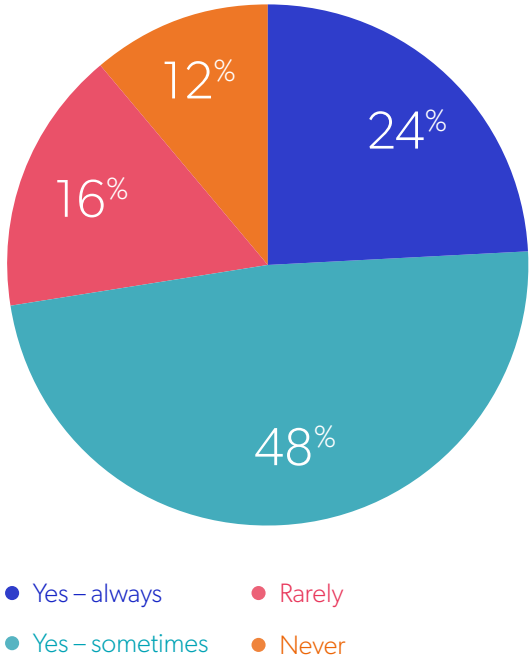
The power of personas – segmentation is key to proper personalisation

Which of the following do you use to customise messages? Please select any that apply.



The most popular form of customised messaging is through relevant copy (81%), followed by relevant images (48%), and relevant product/service offers (45%).

Do you use personas? As part of your personalisation efforts or otherwise?

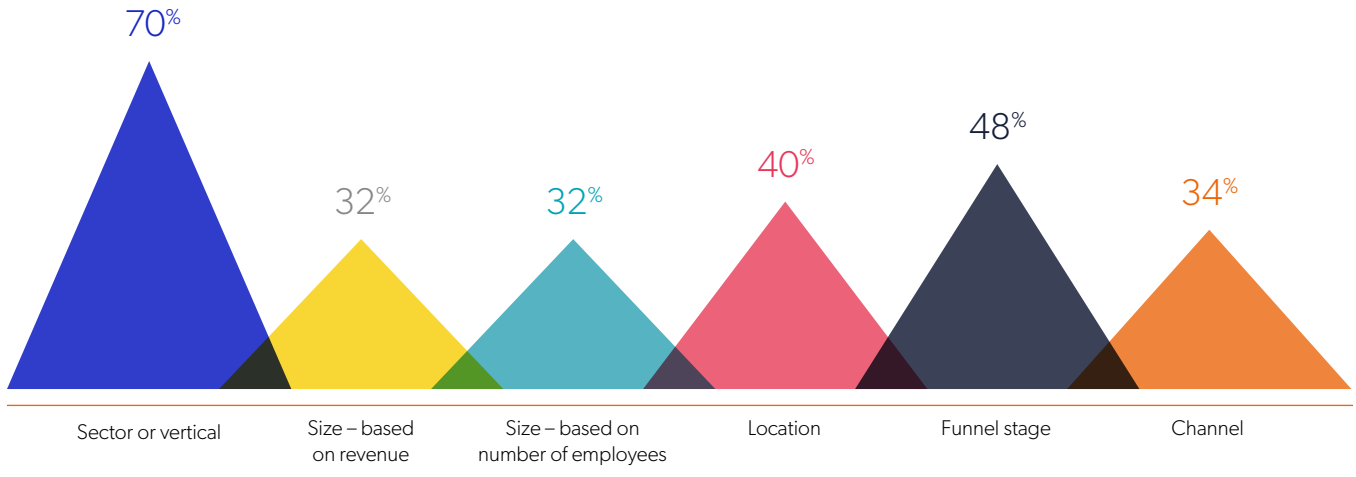


Much of this inbound activity relies on possessing strong audience personas and, encouragingly, this is an area B2B marketers have actively embraced: a quarter (24%) use them consistently, while almost half (48%) use them intermittently. Still though, a combined 28% either use personas rarely, or not at all.

A potential barrier for these reticent brands is their inability to decide which personas to target, with 30% of marketers citing struggling to agree how to segment their audience.

Whether through organisation, location, size, industry, interests or behaviour, audience segmentation and personas ensure a more relevant and personalised experience to marketing, especially when applied to a brand's website, which has long been touted as B2B's most powerful lead generation tool.

How, or on what basis, do you personalise?

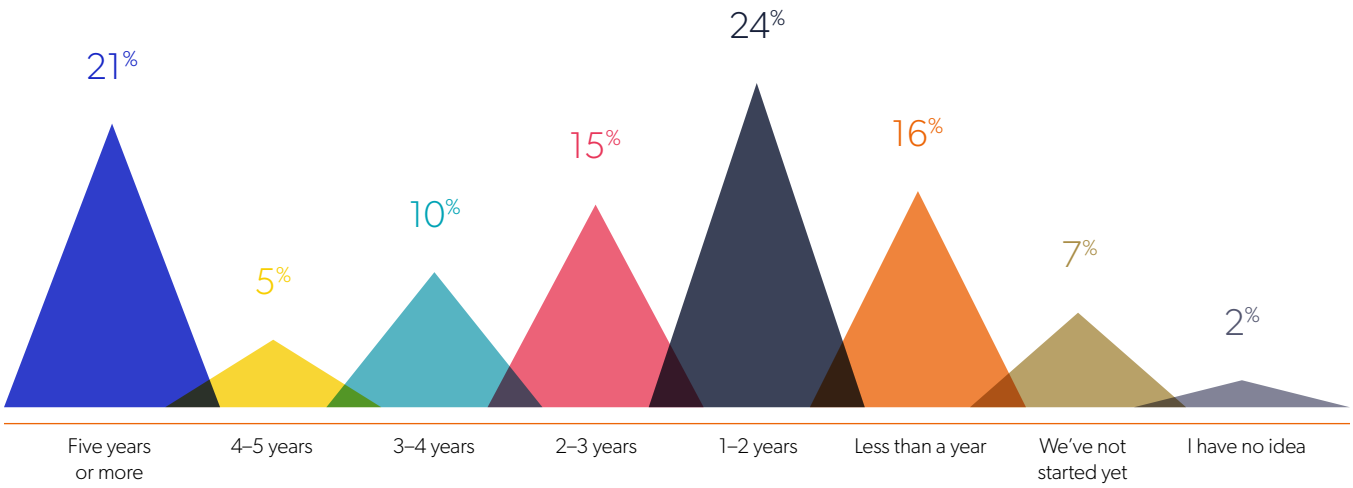


The most popular form of segmentation is by sector or vertical (70%). And there's a significant gap between the next most common approaches: funnel stage (48%) and location (40%).

If seven in 10 marketers are personalising by sector or vertical, why then, are they not also personalising by other means?

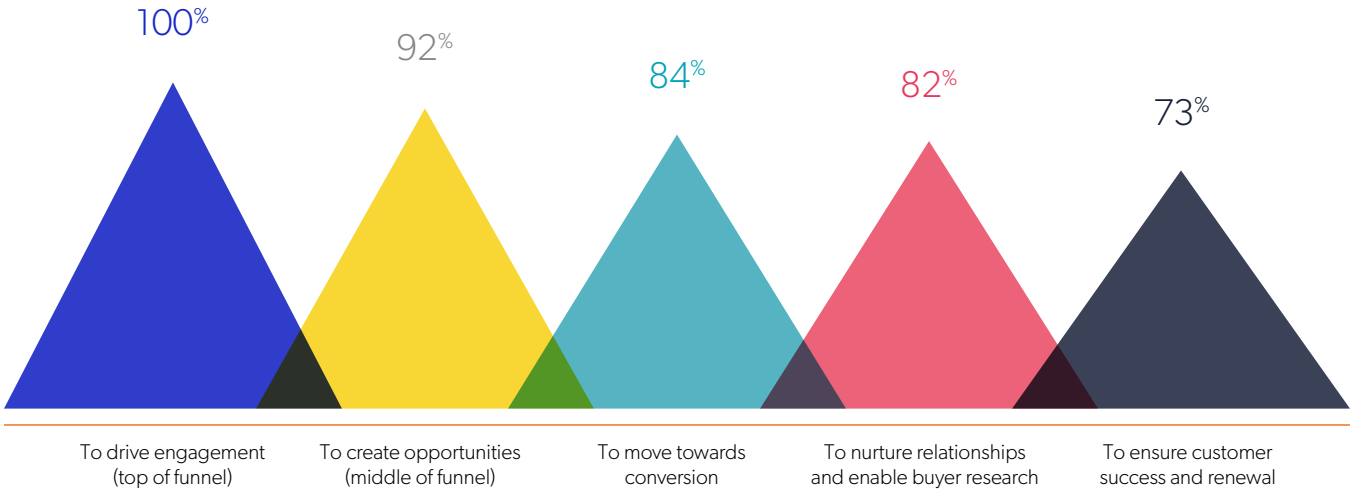
After all, the needs and requirements of a senior marketer at a hedge fund company are going to wildly differ to that of a retail bank. The more detail a brand possesses on their customers or prospects, the greater the opportunity for more sophisticated levels of personalisation, yet many are still only focusing on a broad brushstroke approach.

How long have you actively been personalising some or all of your marketing?



For almost a quarter (24%) of marketers, their use of personalisation is still in its early stages at between one and two years, closely followed by a more experienced subgroup of brands that has used personalised marketing for five years or more (21%). This fairly even representation indicates that, despite its fairly widespread and sustained use, there are still new B2B brands picking up personalisation on a regular basis.

What do you use personalised messages for? Please rank the following in terms of importance (1 being the most important).

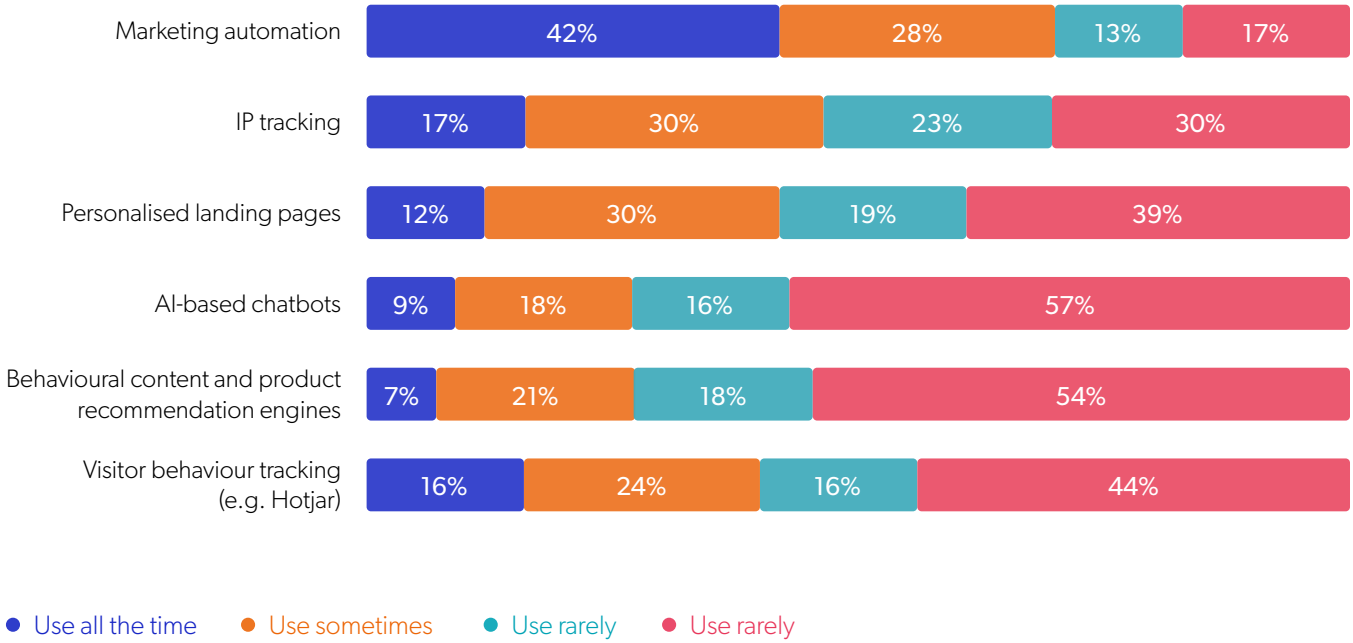


Personalisation has many applications, and can benefit almost every stage of the customer journey. Indeed, 100% of B2B brands currently applying personalised marketing use it to drive top-of-funnel engagement, closely followed by mid-funnel opportunities (92%). Personalisation's consistent high use across the customer journey highlights its potential to improve and enhance each individual stage, from customer success and renewal (73%) to nurturing relationships and enabling buyer research (82%).

Section 4

Realising the true potential of your martech

To what extent do you use martech to enable personalisation?

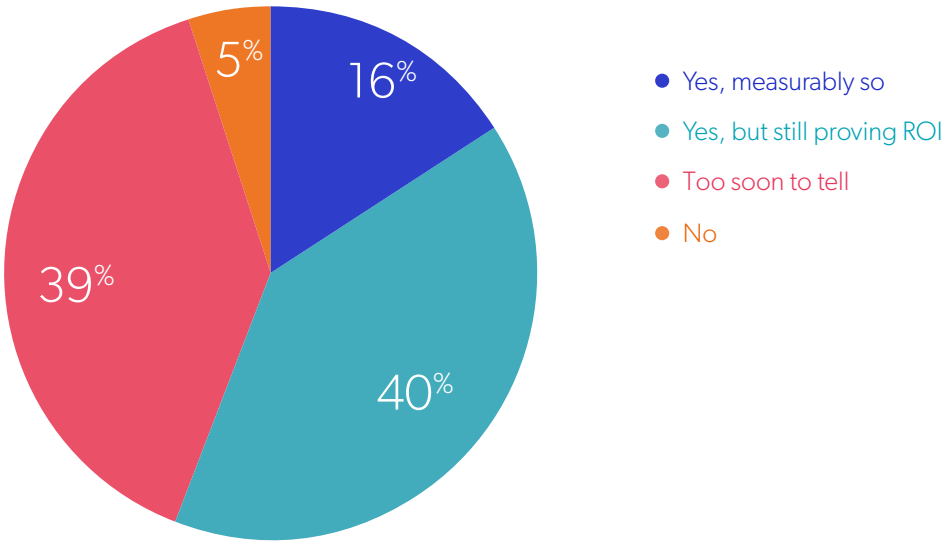


With the relentless march of technology showing no sign of slowing, there exist many opportunities for personalisation to enhance technology's ability to engage and convert. Marketing automation seems to be the most popular piece of martech for enabling personalisation, with 70% of marketers using it either 'all the time' or 'sometimes'. This is closely followed by IP tracking (47%) and personalised landing pages (42%), while at the other end of the scale, AI-based chatbots and behavioural content and product recommendation engines (27% and 28%, respectively) are relatively underused.

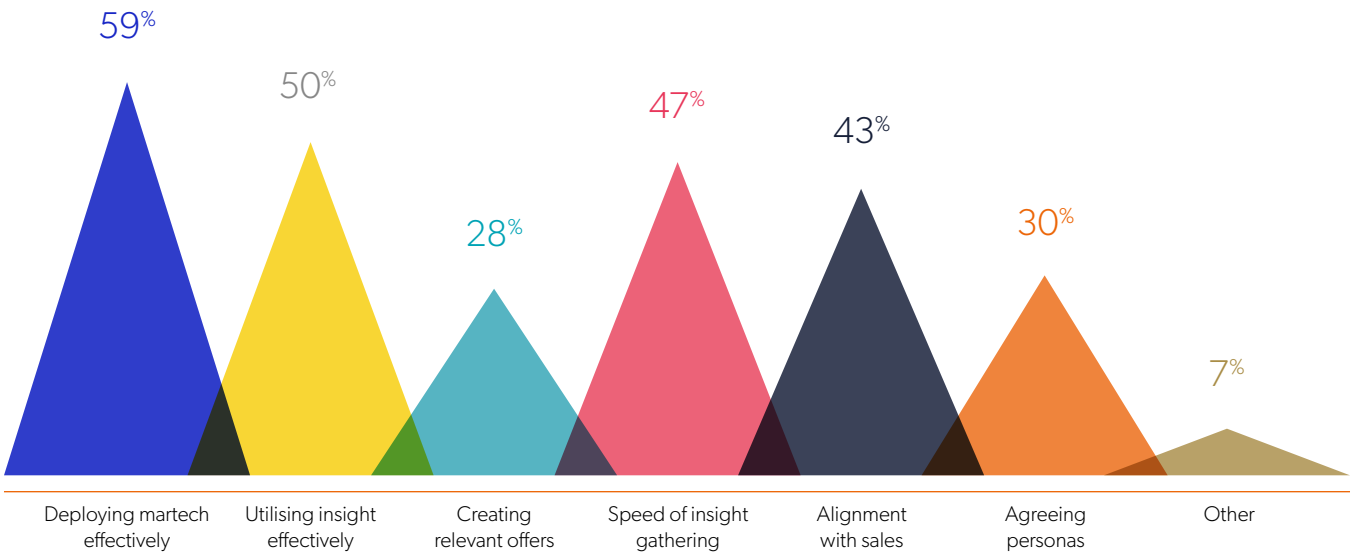
An ideal scenario would be to possess a piece of martech that features most, if not all, of these capabilities. With the above in mind, B2B marketers should possess a holistic piece of technology that can enable multiple personalisation features for their website.

At the very least though, B2B marketers must ensure that their martech stack is integrated in such a manner that all their various moving parts (CRM data, omnichannel, inbound and outbound strategies, etc) come together to form one cohesive personalisation approach.

Would you say your personalisation efforts are having an impact on your revenue goals?



What are the biggest challenges you're facing to improve the effectiveness of your personalisation strategies?

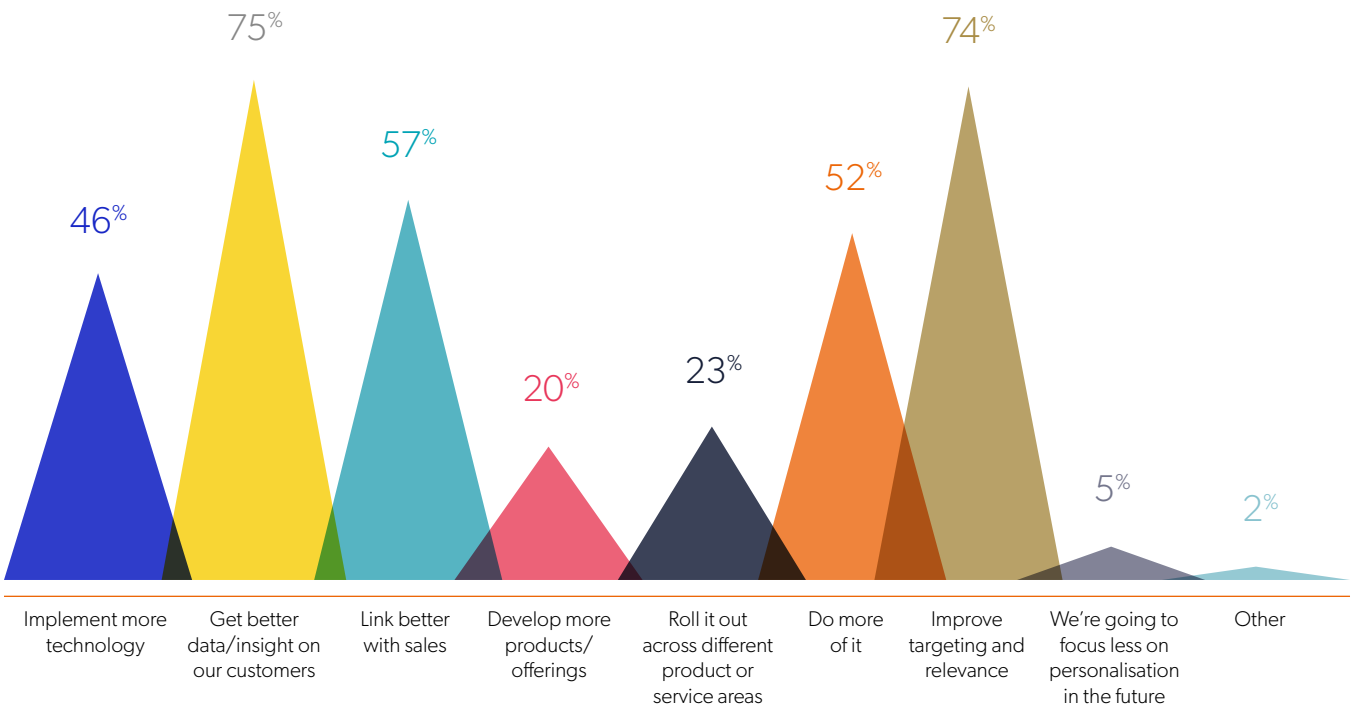


Proving ROI is a perennial issue for B2B marketers, and it seems that personalisation is no different. A lucky few have cracked it (16%), but the remainder either can't measure it effectiveness at all (39%), or are measuring it against other metrics but still can't prove ROI (40%).

With only a small percentage of B2B marketers able to prove success, it's clear there's a significant gap between application of personalised marketing and measuring effectiveness. This is where technology plays a critical role – for those who can use it to its full potential.

Indeed, the top three most common barriers to effective personalisation strategies are deploying martech effectively (59%), followed by utilising insight effectively (50%), and speed of gathering insight (47%) – all of which expose either a shortcoming in the technology itself, or a lack of understanding on how to actually use it properly.

What are you planning to do more of in the future?



Encouragingly, marketers are making significant strides to address these shortfalls. Many have realised that higher quality personas and segmentation is the key to better personalisation, with three-quarters of marketers planning to gather better data and insight on their customers, and around the same amount (74%) looking to improve targeting and relevance.

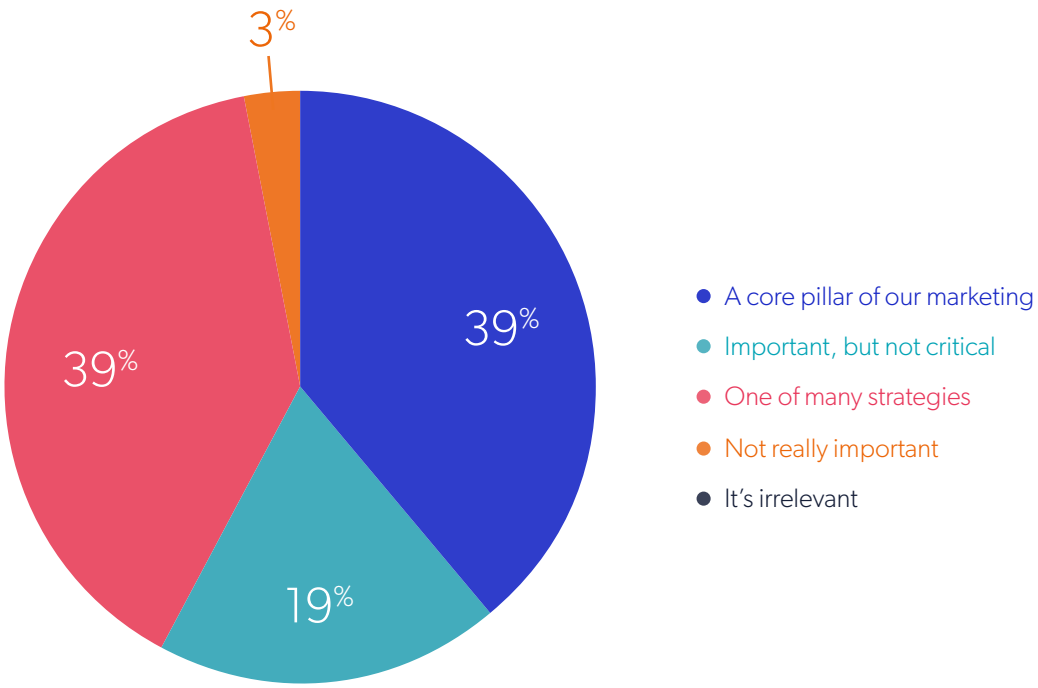
And almost half of marketers (46%) recognise they need to invest in more technology, which will hopefully be able to facilitate better segmentation and personas.

Interestingly, for over half (52%) of marketers, they just want to do more personalisation. Testing and learning is one of the most undervalued attitudes in B2B marketing, so although it may seem base, simply doing more personalisation should be top of every marketer's list.

Section 5

How can personalisation progress? Four key learnings for better personalised marketing

How significant is personalisation likely to be for your marketing going forward?



Personalisation is seemingly on the right track. The benefits are clear, and an overwhelming majority (78%) have either made it a core pillar of their marketing, or treat it as one of many marketing strategies. While 19% of marketers see personalisation as a non-critical strategy, they at least see it as a relatively important aspect of their marketing mix.

Where then, can B2B marketers improve, and what should they consider to ensure personalisation becomes a core component of their marketing activity?

1. Blend inbound and outbound personalisation

While personalised outbound has been a staple fixture of B2B marketing for decades – think of all those 'Hi [insert first name]' emails you've received over the years – the increasing sophistication of first-party data gathering and its respective technology should hopefully thrust personalised inbound into the limelight.

We're not saying that outbound doesn't have its place (it really, really does), but being able to personalise an experience that a prospect has personally chosen to undertake (i.e. visiting your website) is infinitely more engaging than an unsolicited email or barely visible display ad.

2. Better personas = better personalisation

And how do you better personalise those inbound experiences? With better personas, of course. This process starts with re-evaluating the current state of your martech stack, chiefly your analytics capabilities and how well this integrates with your ability to personalise.

Many marketers are stopping short of detailed personas, either because they can't agree on what they should look like, or their technology just doesn't have the capabilities to segment audiences with that much sophistication (i.e. diving beyond just sectors and verticals).

3. Get to know your technology (and it will help you get to know your ROI)

As alluded to above, one of the biggest barriers to personalisation success is often not the technology itself, but a marketing team's ability to use it to its full potential or integrate it effectively within the rest of their stack.

This is arguably the biggest block to measuring the effectiveness of personalisation. Once understood, and properly integrated across the board, technology is the key to proving the ROI of personalisation. Hopefully, with many brands still in their infancy when it comes to personalised marketing, as time goes on, the value realisation will only increase.

4. Put personalisation at the heart of everything you do

Of course, it's not just about the technology. The pursuit for personalisation should sit at the centre of your marketing activity. B2B marketers pride themselves on building long-lasting relationships with clients, built on mutual trust and understanding, and that passion should bleed across every aspect of your organisation, not just marketing, but sales and operations too.

About

B2B Marketing

B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as *B2B Marketing* magazine, it has since evolved into a multi-faceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are:

- Online community
- Magazine
- Awards
- Research and reports
- Training
- Events
- Membership.

For more information on any of these products or services go to **b2bmarketing.net** or call **+44 (0)20 7014 4920.**

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Webeo

Webeo is a multi award-winning B2B website personalisation software tool enabling users to deliver personalised and relevant experiences to their website visitors from the moment they land on their site. This leads to intensified conversions, instantly richer connections with prospects and customers, and the ability to serve every visitor the most relevant content to supercharge their buyer journey and drive revenue.

Webeo provides the ability for marketers to create segmented experiences based on industry, size, location, funnel stage and behaviour, and enables bespoke company-based personalisations to accelerate ABM efforts.

Based in the UK but serving clients across the globe, Webeo is obsessed with maximising clients' conversions and helping B2B organisations recognise every website visitor and realise serious revenue. On average, Webeo clients achieve an average of a 31% decrease in bounce rate, a 67% increase in dwell time, and a 275% increase in onsite conversion.

To discover the power of personalisation for your website, find out more or book a demonstration at **webeo.com**

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