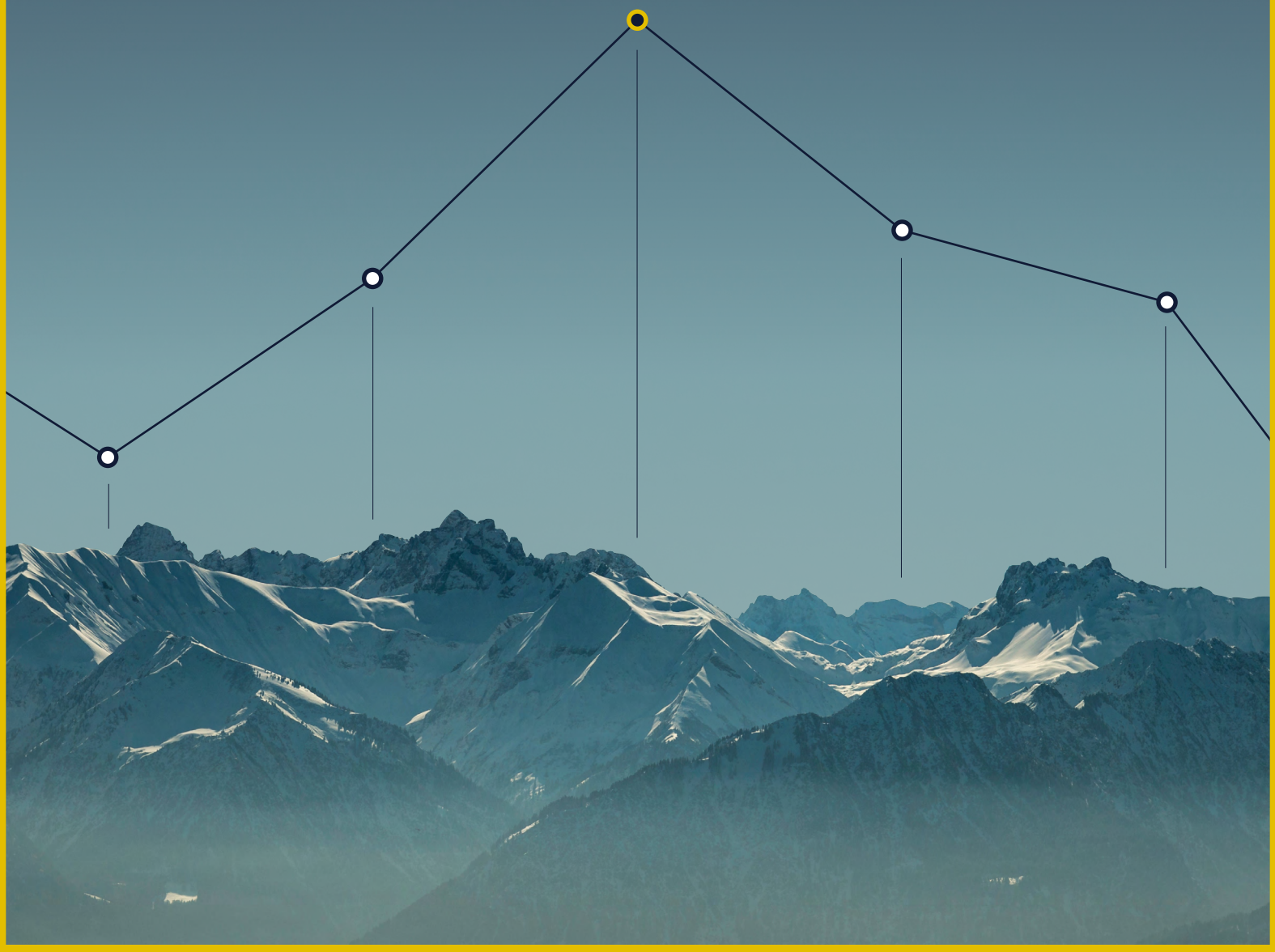
High Performance B2B Marketing

2016–17

BENCHMARKING REPORT
DIRECTORS' CUT June 2016



B2B Marketing

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Circleresearch
The B2B experts

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Introduction

The expanding remit of marketing has created a situation where marketers can feel overstretched and confused as to where they should be focusing their efforts.

Our attempt to solve this challenge saw us going back to basics and, following considerable research and consultation, we identified four key things that should be at the heart of everything marketers do. The argument runs that these areas – 'customer', 'strategy', 'brand' and 'measurement' – underpin successful marketing in the B2B space (and beyond).

When we presented them to the market they were extremely well received. But, more importantly, we found the marketing departments most aligned with these four factors were also the ones more frequently celebrating success. This report quantifies the traits of these high performing B2B marketing departments and helps those aspiring to such a status to start thinking differently.

This 'directors' cut' is designed for you as a marketing leader, in the knowledge that you may not have time to read through a whole 30-page report. In the following pages you'll find the highlights of the research, tailored just for you, however, if you would like to read the full report and the detailed findings, you can download it here.

The research phase for this report was carried out in April 2016, with 146 B2B marketers completing our online survey.

Writing and concept: B2B Marketing Research: Circle Research

1. What is high performance B2B marketing?

Marketing – at its best – has the power to significantly bolster the performance of any business.

As a marketing leader, you're responsible for ensuring marketing fulfils its potential in this respect. By taking a close look at the marketing departments who are driving business growth and leading business conversations, this report should provide you with the inspiration to drive meaningful change, not just within marketing, but across the business.

We have isolated the behaviours and priorities of the marketing departments making the most significant contributions to their organisations, highlighting the areas where they are most markedly different from the average. From here, we're able to recommend what marketing leaders need to be focusing on to ensure they're making more meaningful contributions to their organisation's future success.

When we asked our respondents to reflect on the extent to which their marketing department contributes to the overall success of their business, an encouraging two-thirds (65 per cent) rated their performance as being at least seven out of 10. Not bad. However, the percentage of marketers rating their performance as at least eight out of 10 drops to 37 per cent. This group forms our high performance benchmark. We are looking at what this best-performing third of the market is doing differently from the rest. Further analysis reveals these high performers are more likely to:

- Make a greater contribution to business growth
- Out-perform competitors
- Work in higher growth businesses.

So what are the high performers doing to achieve these impressive results?

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2. The four pillars of marketing

Customer

Without customers, businesses are nothing. Marketers must loudly and repeatedly make this point in their organisations, driving coherent customer experiences, using customer data to guide strategy and leading the charge in making their organisations truly customer-centric.

Strategy

The starting point of a marketing strategy has to be business strategy. Marketers must align all their objectives with the goals of the wider organisation and demonstrate at every point how their work will help achieve these outcomes.

Measurement

The metrics that matter to marketers don't necessarily help make marketing's case at board level. Marketers must be able to produce data tying their activity to strategic business metrics such as pipeline, revenue and growth.

Brand

In the digital age, having a coherent brand which differentiates your business from competitors is more vital than ever before. Marketers must own the company brand and ensure its values permeate every level of the business.



94%

believe these four areas are 'quite' or 'very important'

Respondents across the board delivered unequivocal support for the pillars.

For each area, at least 94 per cent agreed they were either 'quite' or 'very important' to success. Strategic alignment was regarded as the most important pillar, with 97 per cent of high performers regarding it as very important, while 95 per cent regarded being customer-focused as very important.

Such support for the model is encouraging, but – as is often the case – there is a difference between theory and practice. It's important to understand what these high performers are doing in a real sense so that you can lead your department to similar levels of success.

3. The best versus the rest

To really quantify the difference in priorities between those earmarked as high performers and those making up the rest, we sought to question respondents on how they felt their departments performed in specific relation to these four key areas. And it's here that we're able to begin quantifying how proper focus on core objectives reaps rewards. →

High performers	Percentage of respondents claiming to be 'very successful' with regard to each pillar	Average performers
67%	**Strategic alignment**	34%
	Difference: 33%	
63%	**Being customer driven**	34%
	Difference: 29%	
73%	**Managing the brand**	51%
	Difference: 22%	
27%	**Measurement and reporting**	20%
	Difference: 7%	

If you'd like to find out in detail what high performers are specifically doing differently in each area, you can download the full report here.

→ The most significant gap between our high performance group and the average performers comes in the shape of strategic alignment. Sixty-seven per cent of high performers felt their departmental objectives were closely aligned with corporate objectives, while only 34 per cent of average performers felt similarly. A disparity of 33 per cent cannot be ignored here. And the conclusion is clear: marketing leaders who can ensure the department delivers against wider business objectives are more likely to make more meaningful and quantifiable contributions to business success.

A similarly stark difference was recorded between high performers and the rest when it came to their customer-centricity performance. Again, almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of high performers rated their customer centricity efforts as very successful, while only 34 per cent of the average group felt they were doing similarly well.

The difference between the two groups narrows to 22 per cent when we look at brand management, with marketers across the board speaking more favourably of their performances. That said, the contrast is still telling.

The gap narrows to only seven per cent with regard to measurement. The lazy conclusion here is that 'measurement doesn't matter'. But in reality, the results demonstrate B2B marketing is clearly still suffering from an inability to measure and report on its performance. Even among the high performers, little more than a quarter (27 per cent) felt they were 'very successful'.

This is clearly a matter of concern; effective measurement and reporting – translated into a language the rest of the c-suite will understand – is paramount as you make marketing's case in the boardroom and aim to ensure its long-term success.

Marketing departments closely aligned to, and focused on delivering against, wider business objectives are more likely to make more meaningful and quantifiable contributions to business success.

4. Your action plan

1

The four pillars of marketing are:
Customer
Strategy
Brand
Measurement

2

High performance marketing departments are more aligned with the four pillars of marketing than their less remarkable peers.

3

The most successful marketing leaders have an in-depth understanding of the business's aspirations and objectives. Leaders need to be able to articulate, in straightforward terms, what the business is aiming for and what marketing is doing to help it meet these objectives. The whole marketing function has to understand the reasons behind every marketing choice.

4

High performance marketing teams have a much stronger understanding of their customers' needs than average performers. Marketing leaders need to constantly put themselves in their customers' shoes and ensure they're always aware of their changing needs and desires. They need to be the voice of the customer at every level of the business.

5

High performance marketing teams create brands that offer clear differentiation from competitors. Brands aren't static; customers' perceptions of the business will change if they're let down. Marketing leaders have to retain a holistic view of the brand and ensure customers' experiences of the business are consistent at every level.

6

Effective measurement is vital for marketing leaders who need to demonstrate to the rest of the c-suite the difference they're making to business growth. Leaders need to understand how to translate marketing metrics into business results in order to demonstrate evidence of success, and show the powerful difference that marketing can make to business growth.

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



B2B Marketing

Circle Research

Circle Research uses market research to help clients solve business issues, grasp opportunities and develop competitive advantage. The average client engages Circle Research on more than four projects, and counting.

Here's why:

- The B2B market research experts – understanding your sector and seeing things others miss.
- Multi-award winning – benefit from extensive experience and best-in-class approach.
- Commercial acumen – receive commercially sound, engagingly presented recommendations that drive action.
- International – seamlessly covering your entire footprint.
- Delighted clients – you'll love the Circle experience.

Get in touch and let's talk about uncovering those Eureka! moments – insights that transform your view of the situation.

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