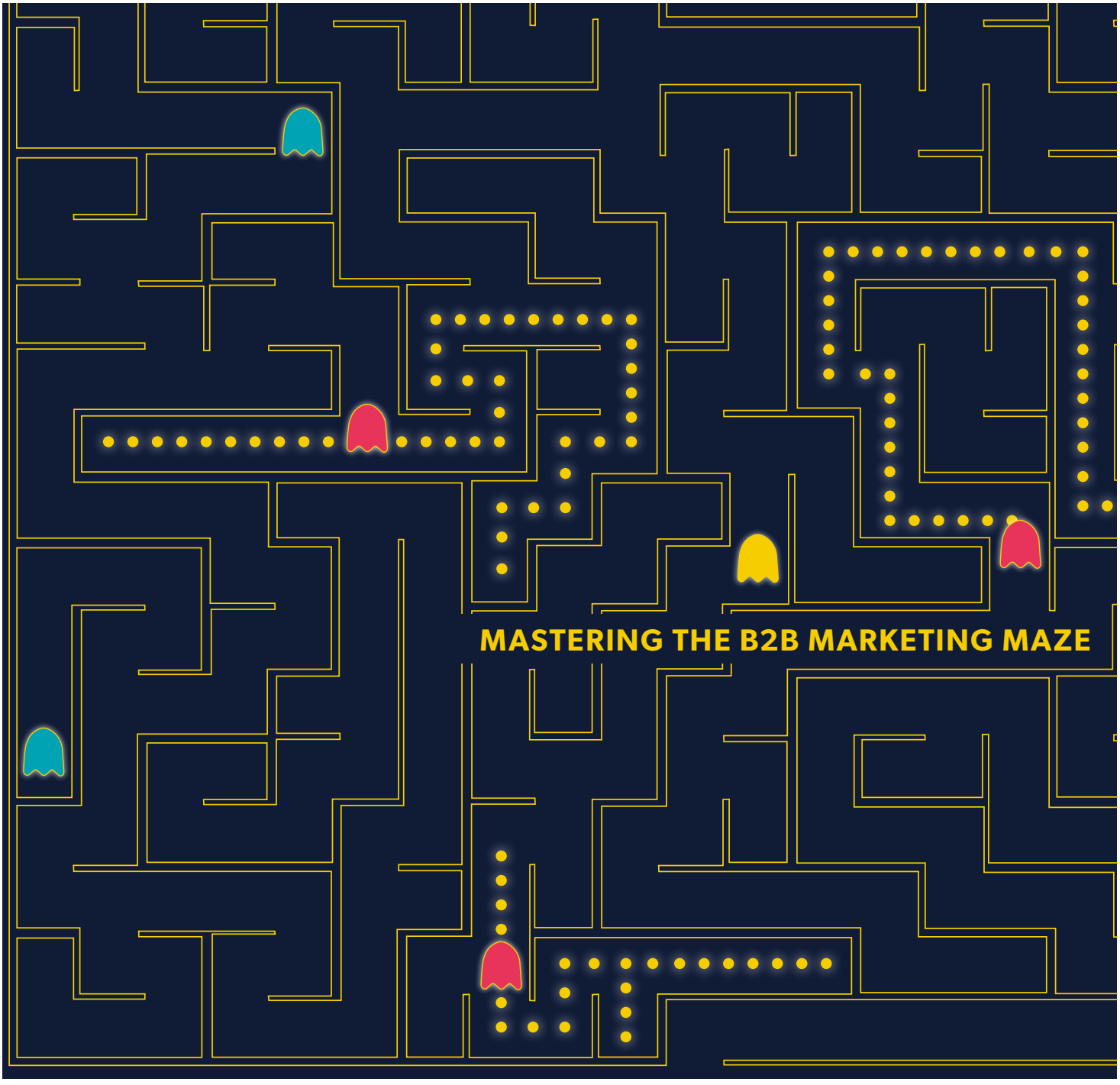
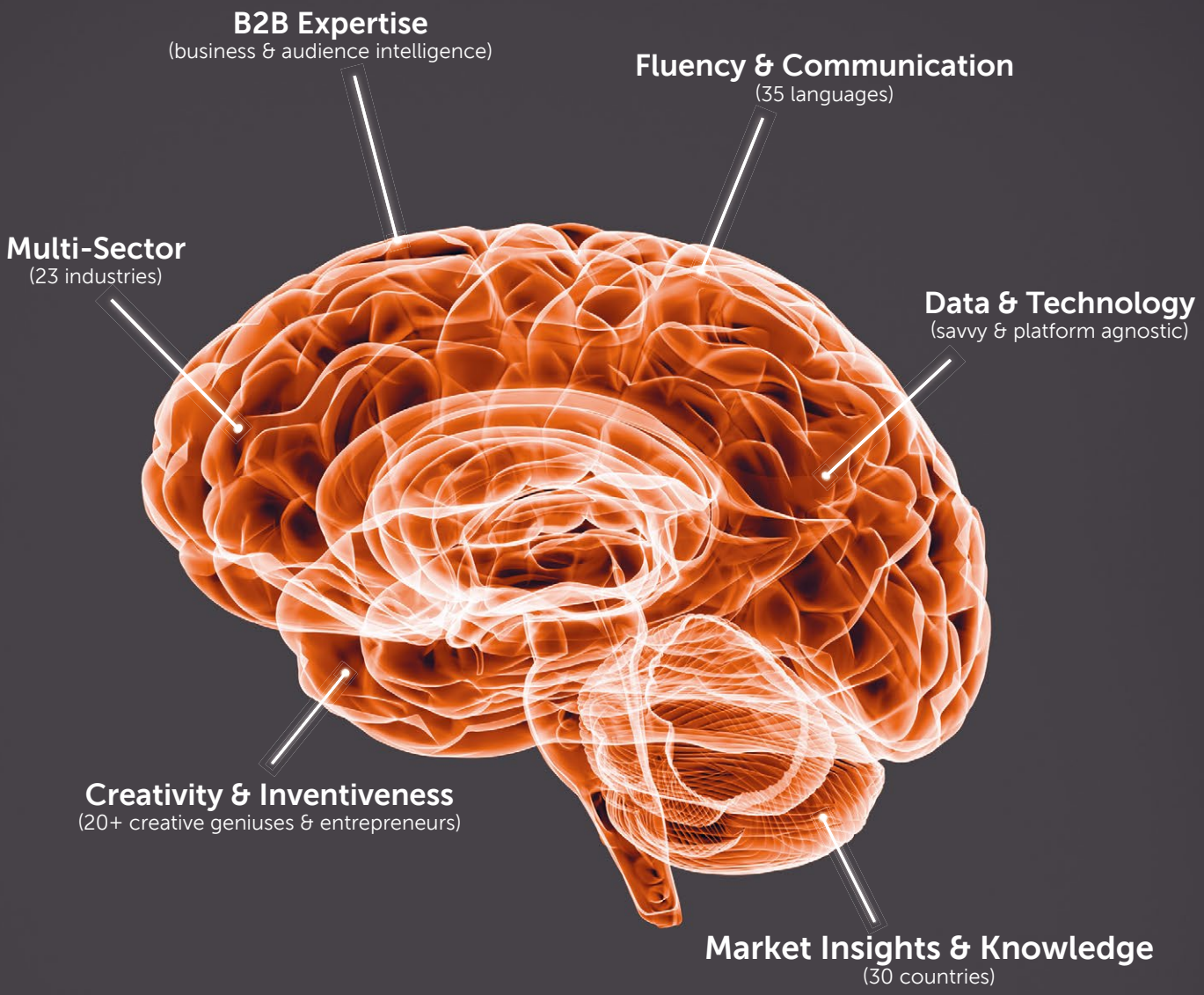
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Mary-Anne Baldwin
Head of content,
B2B Marketing

Those of you who know us well will no doubt have visited one of our annual Ignite conferences, where every summer more than 1300 marketing minds come together in London to learn, share and assess their own marketing strategies.

It's become an international phenomenon, which is why we're incredibly excited to bring the same bright and bold conference, plus our legendary awards, to the US.

To celebrate, we're dedicating this issue to the two day Ignite conference in Chicago, where 50 groundbreaking, fresh-thinking speakers will discuss topics including ABM, martech, leadership and strategy. It's why we're examining these same topics in this season's edition. We also catch up with some of our favourite Ignite USA speakers on their chosen topic on pages 8-9.

So if you're anywhere near the Renaissance Hotel in Downtown Chicago on May 27-28, come and join the party (though you might want to buy a ticket first) or drop your US colleagues and contacts a heads-up.

This issue also shares the results from two of our heavyweight annual industry surveys – the B2B Marketing Trend Tracker (pages 10-15) and the UK Agencies Benchmarking Survey (page 24-31).

The Trend Tracker reveals the hottest B2B marketing trends for 2020 and beyond – as determined by a global survey of marketing decision-makers. Meanwhile the Agencies Benchmarking Survey (part of our free 120-page report) reveals B2B agencies' appetite for global expansion, the growing trend for differentiation and the top services agencies are looking to introduce in the year ahead.

As you can tell, the following pages are packed full of insight from industry-wide analysis through to personal stories and opinions. I hope you enjoy it all.

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WE COMMUNICATE AND CAPTURE IMAGINATION.
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6–7



Bitesize B2B

We take you through the recent news headlines and industry updates

8–9



Opinion

Ahead of our Chicago-based conference, Ignite USA, on May 27-28 we caught up with three of its speakers to chat about their B2B marketing passions

10–15



The 2020 Trend Tracker

Want to know what your clients and agency rivals will be focusing on for the year ahead? Mary-Anne Baldwin looks at the hot marketing trends for 2020 and beyond

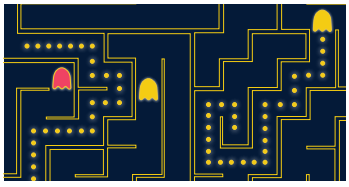
16–21



Are you ready for marketing operations?

With 93% of B2B marketers telling us that marketing operations is needed to drive digital transformation, Simon Daniels, marketing operations consultant at Percassity Associates tells us all about his role and why your business needs someone just like him

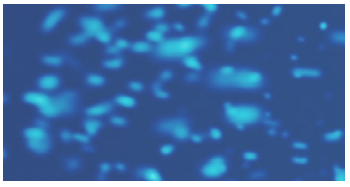
22–23



Forget one-to-one, few or many. Content consumption is the key to ABM

Conduent's David Cotterill explains why he kicked off ABM from a different starting point – and what you can learn from the success that's followed. Molly Raycraft reports

24–31



The state of the agency marketplace

Our annual benchmark survey reveals the UK agencies' assessment of the B2B marketplace, including their perceived challenges and opportunities, and how they're responding with new service offerings. Mary-Anne Baldwin reports

34–39



Making the switch from client to agency life

Philip Martin made the switch from a life-long client-side career to join the agency DMA Partners as managing partner. He tells us what it was like

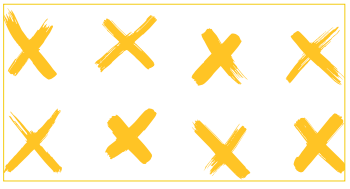
42–43



Why succession is crucial for success

We carried out a survey of senior marketing leaders to discover both the typical next career steps of a senior marketing leader, and their part in finding a successor. Joel Harrison reports

44–46



5 things sales hate about marketing (and how to put it right)

Have you ever wondered what irritates your sales team about marketing? What hinders your relationship, or how to fix it? Molly Raycraft asked the industry

STAR CAMPAIGN

Docusign launches historical agreements campaign





E-signature service provider Docusign has launched a book campaign discussing 50 pivotal agreements made through history. Kavita Singh spoke with COO Scott Olrich about the campaign's key message

An American company headquartered in San Francisco, DocuSign allows businesses to manage electronic agreements – making the 'signed' in 'signed, sealed and delivered' that much easier. Yet, its COO Scott Olrich describes Docusign's broader mission as "making the world more agreeable", which was the goal was for its latest campaign: *'The History of Innovation in 50 Agreements'*.

The idea first stemmed from the company repositioning itself around agreements and not the actual signature. It researched the world's most inspirational agreements in history publishing them as a book and e-Book. Scott explains: "You're happy that you've reached an agreement, but then it turns into despair because you have all this paperwork to fill out. We make that significantly easier to do, wherever you are in the world, and you can do that on your mobile device. We can dramatically accelerate that experience and do it in a way for consumers and businesses just expect today."

Scott recruited Leslie Hannah, historian professor at the London School of Economics and Greg Williams, editor-in-chief of Wired UK, to help narrow down 100 agreements to just 50. Some of those deals, although landmark agreements, never came to fruition.

"One of the deals that was not made was between Netflix and the video rental company, Blockbuster. The folks from Netflix had flown out and were working on a partnership agreement, and Blockbuster turned down that deal and weren't able to make that partnership agreement. Now you look at Blockbuster, which went bankrupt, versus Netflix, which is worth over $140 billion."

The Docusign communications and design team were tasked with creating an online website and the print book with eco-friendly materials. The team chose uncoated compostable paper for print and a simple, easily-to-navigate design for their official website. Visitors to the website could subscribe to 10 stories by email. Additionally, they offered the ability to purchase the full collection as a gated e-Book.

The official launch was held at the tech event Momentum London and Momentum Paris with an expert panel of Jamie Bothwell, Docusign head of EMEA marketing, and the two who had worked on the project, Leslie and Greg, discussing the agreements with live blogging uploaded to social media an hour after the session wrapped.
Blog content and social media marketing received 10,000 visits within its first month, which far exceeded its initial aim of 10,000 visits within six months. Native advertising proved a success for the company as well. Docusign selected *The Guardian* as an advertising partner and managed to exceed its targets with its native ad campaign.

While the campaign was devised in London, it was targeted at a global scale. Having gained traction in the UK and France, Germany will be next to go live with a digital programme focused on a localised version of the eBook.

News round-up

SALESFORCE LAUNCHES CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Cloud software provider Salesforce has announced its own content management system, Salesforce CMS. Salesforce CMS allows users to create and manage content while delivering it to any digital platform. According to its website, the CMS brings "drag and drop interfaces, headless APIs that can put content everywhere, and personalisation based on data".

DPL RAISES £1.3 MILLION FUNDING BY ANGEL COFUND

Behavioural science start-up DPL has secured £1.3 million in funding by UK-based venture capital fund, Angel Co-Fund. The investment is to accelerate and expand the development of DPL's personality-based marketing platform. DPL has also announced changes to its senior management team. Jean Pierre van Tiel was appointed as CEO, Robionson became CCO and Chris Ward was appointed as CTO.

EDELMAN SETS UP B2B MARKETING BUSINESS UNIT

PR and marketing firm Edelman announced the launch of Edelman Business Marketing, a unit focused on using integrated marketing to drive revenue growth for B2B clients. Edelman Business Marketing will bring marketing capabilities including audience development, enterprise branding, channel planning, creative, account-based marketing, marketing automation, sales enablement, experience design and CRM to help B2B companies grow.

The 5 most frequent ABM pilot errors



1 Not committing fully to the programme

You don't have to commit all your resources to an ABM pilot, but those you do must be fully invested in the project. It can't be a half-hearted approach, where you 'just give it a try'. Resources, commitment and alignment need to be in place to make it work from the get-go. All account-based marketing is a (calculated) risk. But by hedging your bets, you'll fail.



2 Failing to get commitment from sales

If you're trying to launch a pilot by marketing without the support of sales, it simply won't get off the ground. Their support in terms of enthusiasm and insight is crucial, as is collaboration between the two functions.



3 Trying to secure full alignment from the start

While you need internal buy-in to make your pilot fly, you don't need the whole organization to be in formation from the start. You can start your pilot with the support of a few key individuals, including senior stakeholders and advocates.



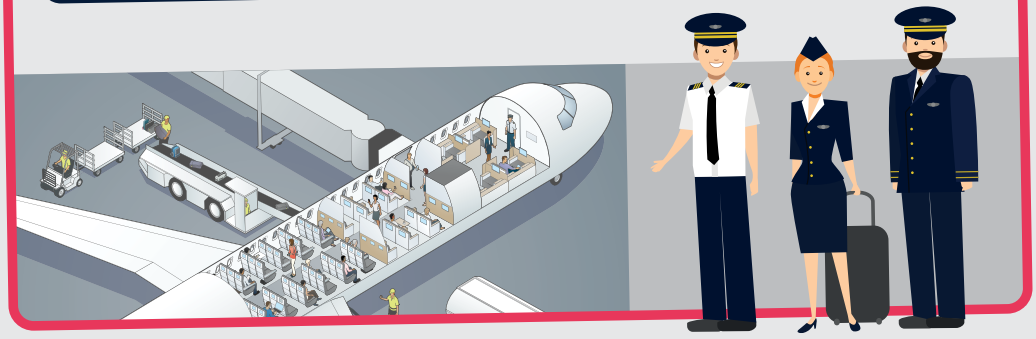
4 Trying to tackle too many accounts

Your pilot needs to be focused. Many marketers try to increase their chances of success by spreading themselves too thinly across too many accounts. Proper account selection is a crucial factor in ABM success, whether a pilot or full program.



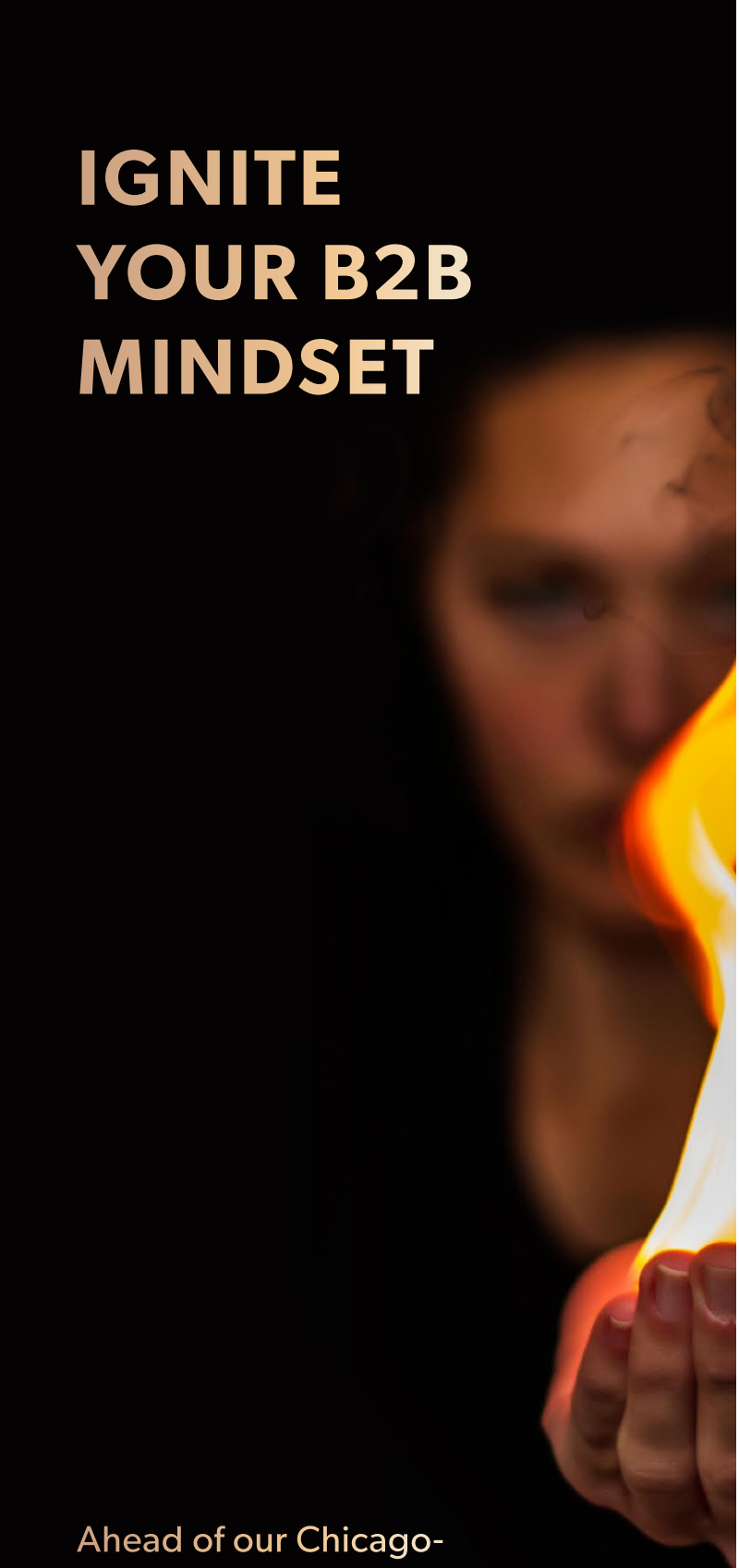
5 Making scale your objective, rather than the project goals

Your end-goal may be to use your pilot as a gateway to a full ABM programme, but don't let your focus on that allow you to lose sight of the task at hand.



Turn to page 22 for more great ABM advice

IGNITE YOUR B2B MINDSET



Ahead of our Chicago-based conference, Ignite USA, on May 27-28 we caught up with three of its speakers to chat about their B2B marketing passions



Identify your audience for killer content

Jennifer Farrington

Today there is a never-ending flow of content and thought leadership available for B2B companies. Jennifer Farrington, former CMO Mazars USA shares a few basic steps to cut through the noise and ensure you're reaching your audience at the right time

The first step in the content marketing process is to take a moment and ask yourself: "Who am I talking to?" The answer to that question can be more challenging than expected, especially if your company works with a variety of clients across multiple industries or provides numerous services in specialised fields.

Start by identifying your best clients. These clients are the ones you're most connected to, the most comfortable with, and the ones most likely to provide you with a referral. Picture a client that fits the criteria and write as if you are speaking directly to them. Discussions feel natural when you're talking to someone with whom you are at your most comfortable.

Next, consider how that topic will benefit your audience and how it will help their company in the long run. I picture sitting down and talking over dinner in a relaxed setting, where we discuss an interesting service and topic that is going to help their company save money or get to the next level. From there, expand the process to other companies similar to your ideal client.

Don't be afraid to use a ghostwriter to craft the initial draft. Writing isn't natural for everyone. For example, in the accounting industry and other service firms, writing isn't always an inherent talent. Using a professional writer who can sit with someone for an hour on the phone to create an initial draft and help get an article started, is money well-spent.

No matter what you use to get your content out, the first step is still identifying who you are writing for and understanding what information is useful to them. The rest will follow.



Driving a powerful brand strategy

Stefan Doering

Much research has been carried out on the power of brands and how the world's most successful organisations can harness this power to drive greater growth. Stefan Doering, brand strategy lead at PwC shares the three elements for success

Kantar Millward Brown's brand equity model asserts that brands need three key qualities; meaning, salience and difference.

Meaningful brands stand for something. They have a point of view and then deliver on it. In B2B, this is more important than ever, as services become more convergent. Meaningful brands deliver on both the functional and emotional needs of their customers, and the goal is to become an indispensable part of their lives. Brand purpose can play a significant part in this, but use purpose with caution – it has to be real and authentic, otherwise your customers will see right through it.

Salience is about being front of mind. In the B2B world, our clients are professionals but most importantly, they are people – with busy lives, multiple priorities and personal agendas. Just because they hold a senior job title, doesn't mean that they suddenly lose their human touch and become pure algorithmic processors of data and information. On the contrary, human relationships matter even more in B2B. You want to be the first organisation they pick up the phone to.

Difference is perhaps the trickiest of the three qualities. As services become increasingly globalised and commoditised, and as technology levels the playing field, genuine differentiation within sectors is quickly becoming the marketers holy grail. However, even in crowded, convergent markets a sense of difference is still possible: find your 'secret sauce' that makes your brand special - be it your people, values, methodologies or creativity - and then activate it to reinforce your meaning and salience.

As we begin the new year and the new decade, one of the most important things for any B2B organisation will be to double down on brand-building to drive long-term, sustainable growth.



How to deliver ABM on a global scale

Alisha Lyndon

As CEO of the world's first and only account-based marketing consultancy, Alisha Lyndon, founder & CEO at MomentumABM has seen firsthand the power of a well-executed ABM strategy. Here she gives her tips

It's hardly surprising that ABM marketers want to achieve results with more than a handful of key accounts. Yet the challenge for many fledgling ABM programmes comes in scaling a successful approach and replicating the returns across tens, hundreds, or thousands of accounts.

Here's how we tackled that problem with some of our biggest clients:

Step 1: Pick your targets. The best place to start is with prioritisation and clustering of accounts. How accounts are segmented will vary across businesses, but we clustered companies by geographic region, industries, business challenge, level of digital transformation, or a combination of these.

Step 2: Win hearts and minds. In order to scale ABM, buy-in of key stakeholders is a must. We always try to unite teams behind a customer-centric approach by including sales, marketing, engineering and many others. We ensure the assets speak to the highest level of thought leadership on the topics covered, while also making sure they resonate with each customer.

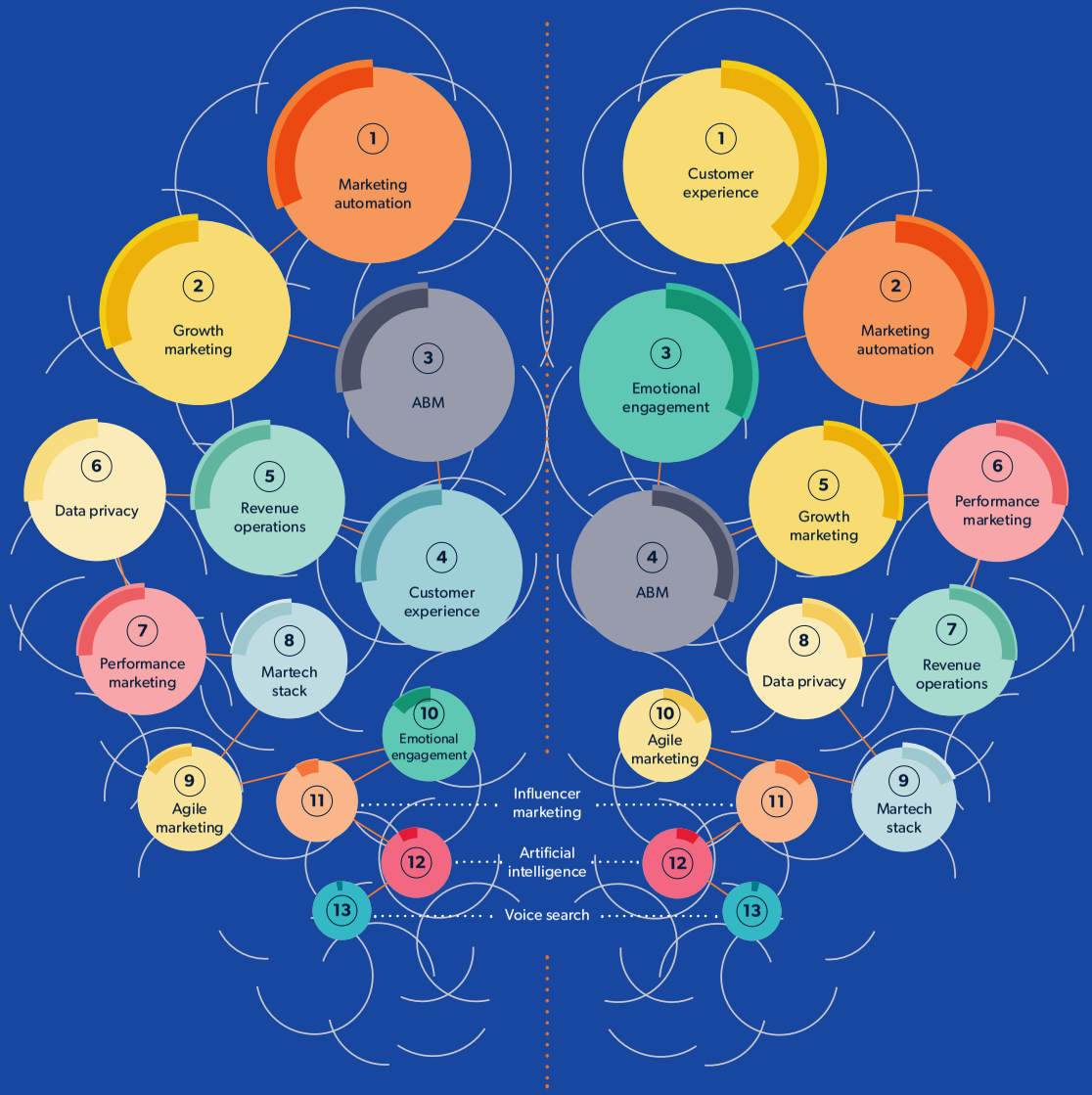
Step 3: Choose your weapons. Once we have an idea of the sectors we'll target and challenges faced by the companies within them, we can create content assets. In the past, we've created an interactive website that illustrates our client's innovative capabilities right across the breadth of an account's operations.

Step 4: All assets are stored on a central hub, providing a systemised approach to distributing customer-centric assets. This content hub allows ABM to be scaled globally and cost effectively. These steps allowed us to accelerate more than €500M in pipeline revenue with one of our biggest clients.

The 2020 B2B Marketing trend tracker:
The B2B mind

Client-side

1. Marketing automation 32%
2. Growth marketing 31%
3. ABM 28%
4. Customer experience 27%
5. Revenue operations 27%
6. Data privacy (including GDPR) 26%
7. Performance marketing 23%
8. Martech stack 15%
9. Agile marketing 14%
10. Emotional engagement 13%
11. Influencer marketing 9%
12. Artificial intelligence 9%
13. Voice search 3%



Agency-side

1. Customer experience (CX) 39%
2. Marketing automation 35%
3. Emotional engagement 33%
4. ABM 31%
5. Growth marketing 29%
6. Performance marketing 28%
7. Revenue operations 27%
8. Data privacy (including GDPR) 24%
9. Martech stack 19%
10. Agile marketing 19%
11. Influencer marketing 15%
12. Artificial intelligence 11%
13. Voice search 4%

Marketers were asked to rate the attributes shown above, based on how focused their team was on each – from 1 (0% focused) to 10 (100% focused). Figures shown are the average scores for each attribute for both agency and client-side marketers.

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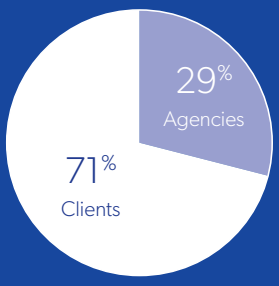
The 2020 Trend Tracker

Want to know what your clients and agency rivals will be focusing on for the year ahead? **Mary-Anne Baldwin** looks at the hot marketing trends for 2020 and beyond

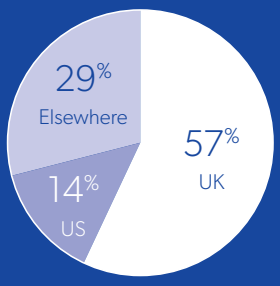
Our third annual Trend Tracker, conducted with Savanta, pools global feedback from over 250 B2B marketers at both agencies and clients. With this data we can reveal:

- The hottest marketing trends for 2020
- Which trends are rising or falling
- Our predictions for 2021's biggest areas of interest
- Whether agencies share the same priorities as clients.

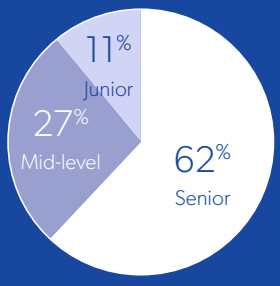
Number of agency versus client respondents



Geographical spread of respondents



Seniority of respondents



How have these trends changed from last year?

This year marketing automation has risen one place to sit at the top of the leader board – not customer experience, as was predicted by last year's survey participants.

It's no surprise that marketers are looking to deliver greater efficiencies and efficacy from marketing automation systems – either looking to hone and integrate what they've got, or upgrade to entirely new systems. We know this from the many conversations we have with marketers keen to optimise their tech stack and secure a greater understanding of their data as a result. Marketing automation is considered central to today's operations, yet many have work to do.

As mentioned, CX was expected to take the top spot once last year's number one, GDPR, had inevitably run its course. GDPR (now combined with data privacy at number 7) has fallen down the priority list as marketers have become familiar with data legislations and their implications.

It's our belief that CX's slippage from the second to third spot is not because it's deemed any less important – indeed anecdotal feedback shows us it's still very firmly on the agenda. Rather, this year's new entrant 'growth marketing' has jumped in to steal the limelight.

We'll explore growth marketing a little later in this article, but for now, it's worthwhile noting the interest shown for growth marketing and another new entrant for this year, revenue operations (which came in at number 5).

Finally, you may have noticed that the percentage figures for all of this year's trends are lower than last year, a change that reflects the decision for marketers to spread their efforts across numerous trends, rather than focusing on a few. But the lower numbers may also mark less urgency to pursue trends in general, in lieu of the business as usual. (In either case, the percentage difference between trends in the same year gives us a clear indication of rising or falling interest.)

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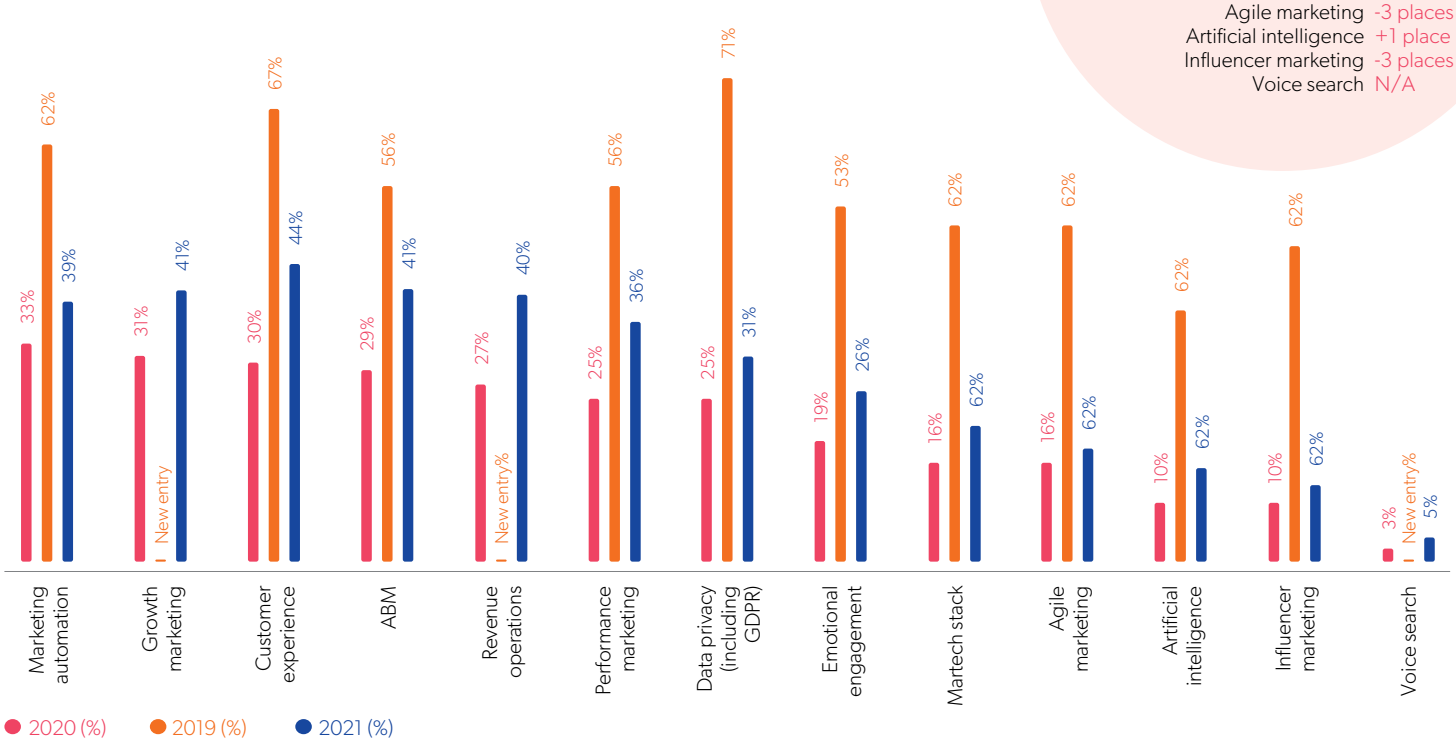
Networking sponsor: IRIS

Media partner: TopRank Marketing

The following data shows the combined appetite for each trend from both clients and agencies together, split across the last three years

In short: YoY results for 2020

Marketing automation	+1 place
Growth marketing	N/A
Customer experience	-2 places
ABM	Same
Revenue operations	N/A
Performance marketing	-1 place
Data privacy (including GDPR)	-4 places
Emotional engagement	-2 places
Martech stack	-1 place
Agile marketing	-3 places
Artificial intelligence	+1 place
Influencer marketing	-3 places
Voice search	N/A



What are set to be the big trends next year?

Trend	% of focus during 2020	% of focus during 2021
Customer experience	30	44
Growth marketing	31	41
Account-based marketing	29	41
Revenue operations	27	40

Do agencies share the same priorities as clients?

Are client and agencies aligned on their focus areas? Not always. The biggest variance we see is regarding emotional engagement, where agencies describe their teams as 33% focused on the area, versus clients, which put themselves at just 13%. This is likely due to the nature of agencies being hardwired to engage audiences at an emotional level – after all, it's what they do best. A variance here is to be accepted, just as long as agencies are aware of it.

The other area of significant variance is customer experience, which agencies place at 39% (number three in their chart) versus the 27% stated by clients (joint fourth place for them). It's important to consider here that agencies will be thinking about both their clients and the clients' end user, making it a double-whammy for them. Again, such is the nature of agency life that customer experience will be front and centre.

It's also worthy noting that influencer marketing saw a fair bit of variance with agencies placing 15% of their focus on it and clients just 9%.



RECORD-BREAKING RELATIONSHIPS

It's fantastic to have our work recognized with awards, it's even better when we break records. That's why we were so thrilled to get a record-breaking 14 nominations at this year's B2B Marketing Awards (breaking our own record of 13 in 2018) and be named The Drum's B2B Agency of the Year.

That's all great but the best rewards come from achieving the best for our clients. That's why we're on an ambitious growth path, with new agencies, skills and disciplines joining the Gravity family on a daily basis. Helping us to deliver even more for our clients and further our reputation as the world's most awarded dedicated B2B agency network.

To find out how we can create a record-breaking relationship together call Chris Omotosho on +44 (0)20 7330 8810 or visit gravityglobal.com

gravity GLOBAL

DRUM B2B AGENCY OF THE YEAR

1

1. Top trend:
Marketing Automation
(+2 places YoY)

Last year, marketing automation (MA) rose from the third to the second spot – now its steady climb puts it at the top of list.

Sure, marketing automation is about delivering the right message at the right time in the right way – but it's so much more. Great automation allows marketers to harness multiple channels, automate multiple tasks and deliver insight into the customer journey. Marketing automation is a business' central nervous system, so it's no wonder it's seen as a strategic priority.

Yet there's a lot to consider - costs, training requirements, whether it integrates well with your existing tech stack, whether it's scalable to your future requirements and whether the vendor's roadmap for the platform matches your own. Hence it requiring 33% of the average marketing team's focus for the year ahead.

Benefits of marketing automation:

- Saves time (and money)
- Allows you to scale your efforts
- Improves productivity
- Delivers more and better leads
- Improves experimentation (supporting A/B testing and iterative improvements)
- Delivers better data analytics
- Centralises data
- Allows you to improve your customer experience
- Improves segmentation
- Supports personalisation and better engagement
- Improves sales and marketing alignment

2

2. Second place:
Growth Marketing
(New entry)

Growth marketing is a new entry for 2020, added to the mix following growing interest from B2B marketers. It was right to make that addition, as it's shot straight in to take the second spot.

If you're unfamiliar with the term 'growth marketing' you may misinterpret it as non-descript. After all, we're all trying to grow our business through marketing, right? Actually, the term is more nuanced than that. Derived from lean start-up principles, it uses traditional marketing but with the application of A/B testing, data-driven thinking and speedy adaptation thrown in. It's about quick hacks for big growth.

Often closely linked with product development and looking at the entire customer journey, growth marketers improve anything from acquisition to retention, engagement or advocacy – so long as it's targeted, measurable and adds revenue to the bottom line.

> The most renowned example of growth marketing is from Dropbox. It delivered 3900% growth in 15 months with practically no marketing spend. Applying lean principles it analysed a regular flow of customer feedback, made continuous product improvements and introduced an incredibly easy but effective referral programme that had customers signing up in droves.

3

3. Top trend:
Customer experience
(-1 place YoY)

Customer experience (CX) was set to take the top spot according to last year's predictions, having come in a second place (after GDPR) in 2019. While it's not in this year's top place it's still a big issue for B2B marketers.

So what does CX comprise? It runs from customer journey mapping, to persona building and personalisation with a whole lot of other elements to boot. In short, it's knowing and pleasing your customer – increasingly through 'always-on' customer intelligence.

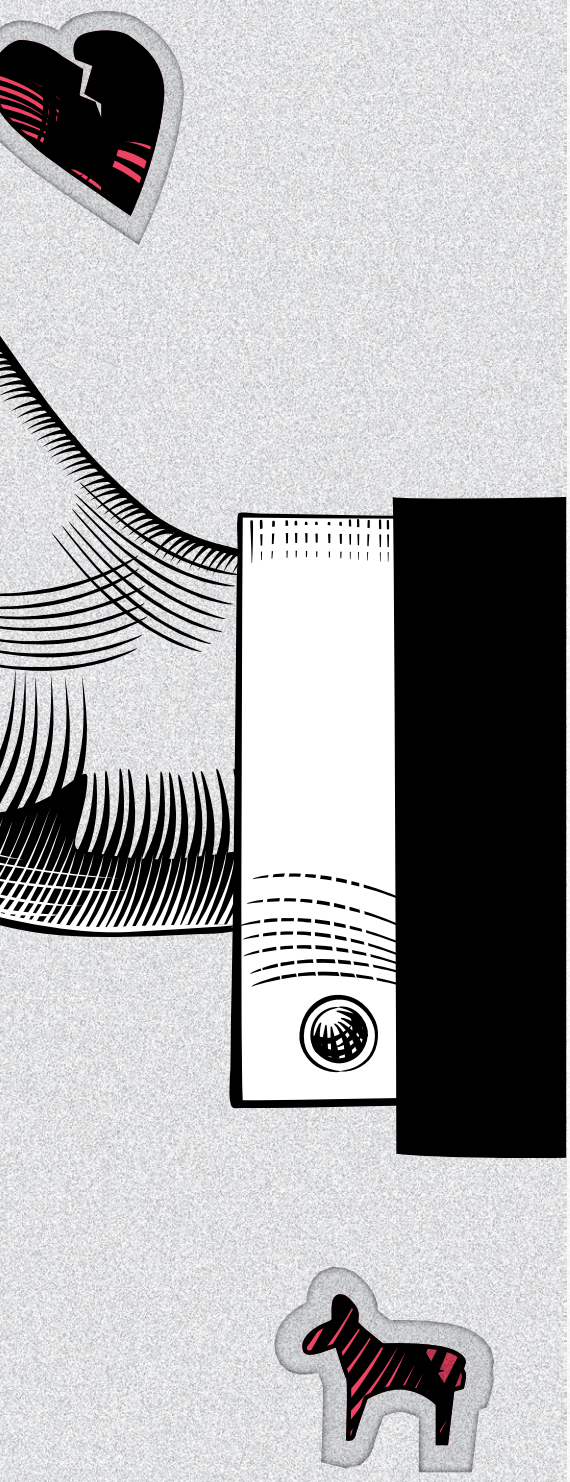
While everyone wants to improve their CX (in fact 79% of B2B marketers say it's a significant priority, our recent annual CX survey has shown) most are unsure who should do what, or how it all ties up. Actually many don't have a CX plan of any kind, and for most it's tackled in a piecemeal approach with each department doing what it can with the information and stretch it has. The impact that disjointed approach has on the customer means it's a big area of focus for marketers in 2020.

The biggest blocker to great CX in B2B is a lack of strategy (only 3% of marketers are aligned to a cohesive, operational plan) followed by a lack of clarity regarding who bears the responsibility. Yet, those who make improvements here are putting themselves ahead of the game in an area crucial to modern marketing.



ARE YOU READY FOR MARKETING OPERATIONS?

With 93% of B2B marketers telling us that marketing operations is needed to drive digital transformation, Simon Daniels, marketing operations consultant at Percassity Associates tells us all about his role and why your business needs someone just like him





Simon Daniels,
marketing operations consultant,
Percassity Associates

Marketing is digital. Digital requires martech. Martech needs to be operated. It was with this hypothesis in mind that we launched the second annual survey examining the B2B marketing operations landscape, soon to be published in full. As a heads up, you won't be surprised to hear that it unearthed a growing appetite for marketing operations. In fact, a near conclusive 93% of B2B marketers said the function is important or even critical in delivering digital transformation.

Marketing operations is a perfect example of a profession that didn't exist just a few years ago. Yet now, over two-thirds (67%) of B2B companies have in place either a whole team headed up by a lead, or an individual running marketing operations. A further 21% have the best intentions of launching one soon.

We sat down with Simon Daniels, marketing operations consultant at Percassity Associates to find out more about the role, its objectives, benefits and whether it might be right for your business.

How do you work with marketing operations practitioners in B2B organisations?

In my capacity as a marketing operations consultant, I work in a project and sometimes interim capacity, most often for marketing leadership or sometimes augmenting an existing marketing operations individual or team. Usually, I'm focused on a specific issue that is being experienced, such as lead process alignment, data governance or reporting and analytics. I'm also often involved in initiatives to select a particular marketing technology solution, such as a marketing automation tool or website CMS.

What does marketing operations look like as a function? How does it fit into the wider marketing department or team?

Marketing Operations is the infrastructure layer for marketing, leveraging data, technology and process to drive demand generation and revenue growth, partnering with stakeholders to proactively deliver both guidance and leadership.

How does a marketing team with a marketing operations function, leader or team differ from one without one? What are the relative advantages or disadvantages?

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Marketing operations brings focus to the crucial elements that ensure efficient, effective and measurable marketing activity

Marketing operations brings focus to the crucial elements that ensure efficient, effective and measurable marketing activity. In marketing teams that don't have a dedicated MOPS resource, there can be a reluctance to pay sufficient attention to data governance, process optimisation and technology deployment and so on, due to the pressures of delivering campaign results. This is ultimately self-defeating as problems can mount up that slowly degrade overall marketing performance.

Is there a tipping point when marketing operations expertise becomes essential? And when is that point/how do you spot it?

I always say that if you're doing marketing, you're doing marketing operations. Clearly, a lone marketer in a small business is going to have to span everything, but as soon as a team of 2-3 or more starts to develop, there's no reason why an individual couldn't be dedicated to marketing operations. Even a more junior role can provide great support to make sure everything is configured and working properly, and handle the date-to-day activities of data management, campaign set-up and execution and reporting, leaving others to handle more mainstream marcoms activities.

Where do great marketing operations people come from? What skills and attributes do they need? Can any marketer be a good ops practitioner, or does it take a certain type?

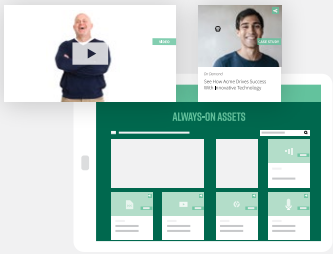
Historically, MOPS specialist might have originally been involved with database marketing, CRM or marketing analytics. More recently, marketers with experience in digital and web can take up a broader MOPS role. Today, it's perfectly possible to start a marketing career in MOPS, learning the technology, process design and analytics skills that form the role from scratch. MOPS requires a technical disposition, ability to embrace complexity at pace and to bring a methodical and considered approach. It's not always glamorous but the satisfaction is in knowing that you're key to ensuring a well-honed marketing machine. There's no reason anyone in marketing might not exhibit these capabilities, but you have to want to do it, rather than perhaps higher-profile campaign management etc.

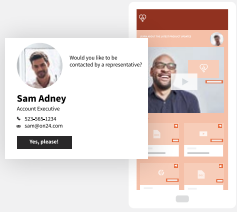
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What's the difference between a highly tech-savvy and enabled marketer, and a genuine marketing ops person? In other words, are marketing ops people just great digital marketers?

As discussed, a genuine marketing operations person is dedicated to supporting the wider marketing function and providing a vision for how it should work. Knowing programmes are running smoothly, maximising the available technology and being able to demonstrate their value are what motivates MOPS. This is different to pure digital marketing execution, which in turn encompass different skills and competencies.

Is having internal marketing operations people or resource the only option for B2B marketing teams? Is there another way that they can access the related skills and attributes?

There are certainly plenty of consultancies and agencies that can provide marketing operations guidance, services and support. A growing team without dedicated resource may find it easiest to work with an external partner to fill this gap. However, it's important not to become dependent on outside resources to the exclusion of building in-house capability. The best mix is internal expertise supported by an agency or consultancy for specific advice or a particular project, together perhaps with day-to-day "production" support – campaign building and so on that can be labour intensive and effectively managed with good processes.

Is a great marketing operations person likely to be a great candidate for the organisation's next CMO or marketing director? If not, why not?

There's no reason why an experienced MOPS practitioner could not move up to a leadership role, in the same way as any other marketing discipline. Like a CMO stepping up to CEO though, it would be important to ensure a good range of experience outside their immediate specialism. In particular, experience planning and executing demand generation programmes, including outbound, digital and social activity would be crucial. Look for a role that combines MOPS and demand gen as a stepping stone.



How is marketing operations as a function likely to evolve? There's a lot of hype around it at the moment – is momentum going to build, or is it a fashionable thing that'll disappear in a couple of years' time?

It's difficult to see the core function of marketing operations disappearing, even if the name or specific responsibilities evolve. Modern marketing inextricably involves data, technology and process and this has to be managed properly, especially at scale. MOPS leaders may start to adopt a more strategic remit within marketing or even take on a 'chief of staff' role supporting the CMO.

What does the rise of revenue operations mean to marketing ops people? Is it a threat or an opportunity?

This is certainly a direction in which the function could evolve as the operational aspects across sales, marketing and customer experience become ever more critical. In considering adopting such a structure, businesses and MOPS leaders approached for such roles, should be clear what the actual remit is. I've seen many sales and marketing operations roles for instance that are actually sales ops with a bit of marketing automation thrown in. True revenue operations will be a properly balanced blend of all these functions and recognised for the contribution it makes.

What would you say to someone who thinks marketing ops could be an ideal next step in their career?

Go for it! As discussed, if the machinery of marketing and ensuring world class execution and accountability are what motivates you, then marketing operations is the place to be. MOPS are the drummers and bass players of the band, not necessarily up front doing showy guitar solos but without whom the whole thing would fall to pieces. Grab some sticks and start keeping time!

FORGET ABOUT ONE-TO-ONE, FEW OR MANY. CONTENT CONSUMPTION IS THE KEY TO ABM

Conduent's David Cotterill explains why he kicked off ABM from a different starting point – and what you can learn from the success that's followed. **Molly Raycraft** reports



David Cotteroill, marketing director, Conduent

It's been a year since ABM veteren David Cotterill, marketing director at Conduent last took to B2B Marketing's stage to discuss the advent of his ABM programme. At our last conference, he returned to outline his success using methods that are somewhat against the grain.

Conduent is a business processing firm, which formed just over two years ago from an arm of Xerox. It was fairly quick to take up account-based marketing but not so in answering the first question most ABMers come to. "Do you start with one-to-one, one-to-few, or one-to-many?", David wondered. "The answer is: it doesn't matter."

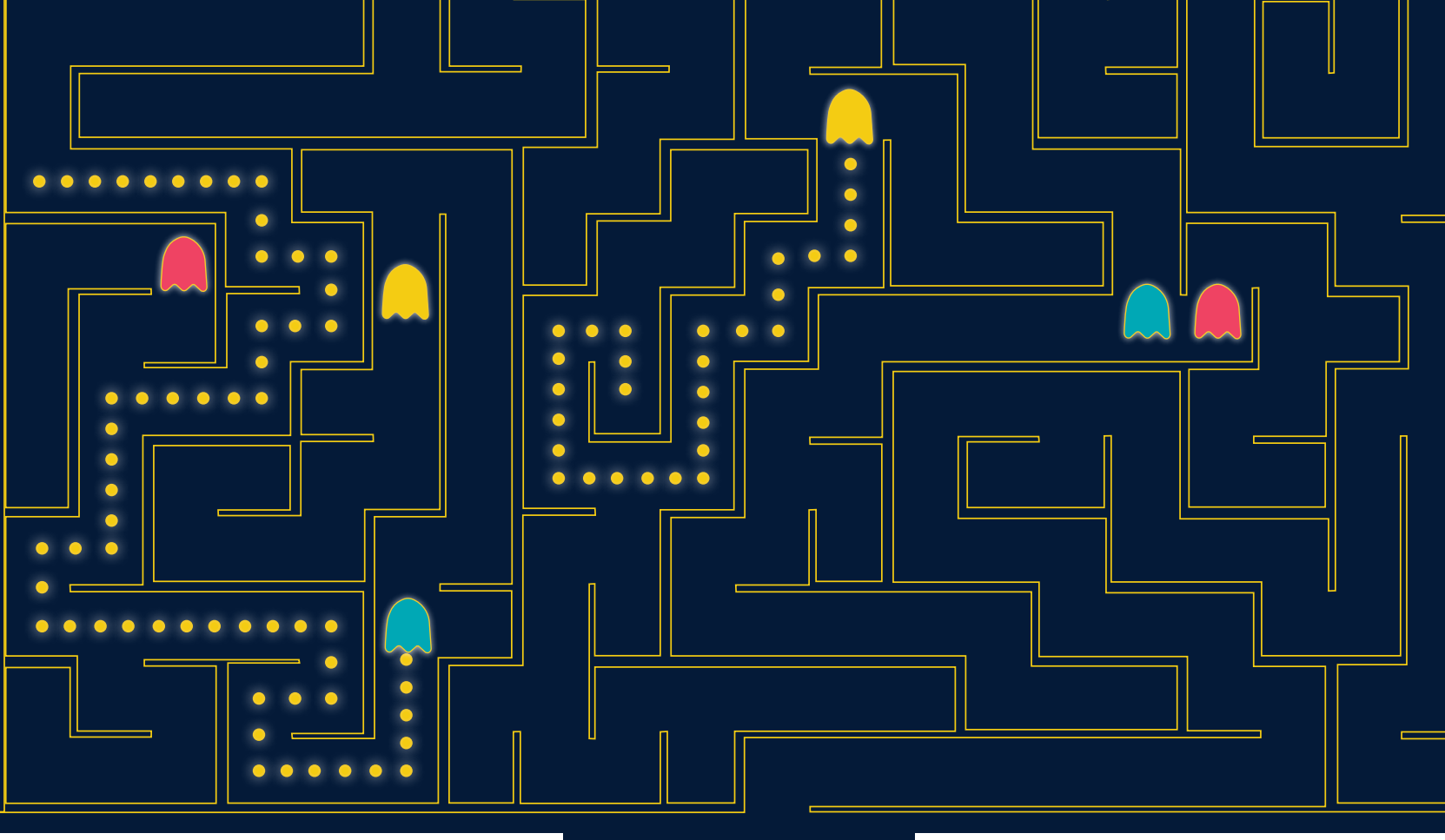
Instead, Conduent focused on content consumption and how this could indicate client pain points that ABM could resolve.

Choosing accounts through content consumption

This unique approach first meant deciphering target accounts, which David asked the sales team to provide. Once sales had sent a list of 50-60 accounts, the marketing team identified the account's content consumption (using Demandbase) as an indicator of their propensity to buy. "If they've been consuming content, we can see. I can tell you that at one of our tech target accounts, there are 171 people researching key terms across online publications and research sites, which are relevant to Conduent solutions," David explains.

Although the ABM team couldn't see who the individuals were, they could see the companies. Once this information was obtained Conduent invested £10,000-£20,000 in retargeting the prospects each time they returned to the page. "This takes us away from spraying and praying towards a more targeted, focused advertising approach," says David.

This process identified which of the sales accounts were actually in market and willing to engage with Conduent, and which ones needed to be dropped. David mentions one particular account which demonstrated the importance of this kind of vetting. "The sales guy was really driving the relationship," he says. "But it became clear the account wasn't in market because they weren't consuming any content around our topics. They were playing lots of golf together but not making sales."



Of course, David instructed the salesperson to stop activity with the account. But rather than pull the plug entirely, he used the account as a template to find look-a-likes, such as Swiss Re, which was similar and ready to purchase. The sales team followed up with the insurance company and sold a $3 million deal within three months. "This is why you don't need to worry about one-to-one, one-to-few or one-to-many, because the most important thing is working out which accounts are consuming content."

His success led David to replicate the process, finding more look-a-like accounts. This now means the marketing team can take 10-30 accounts from the sales team and multiply it by 10. "I can go back to sales in 2020, and say you gave me these accounts in 2019, these are the accounts you should be looking at for 2020," explains David.

Choosing an approach

A prospect's content consumption habits have proven invaluable to Conduent. It's allowed the company to decipher levels of engagement and propensity to buy, but also outlined the approach they should be taking with ABM.



At a glance: Conduent's ABM programme

Marketing team in Europe:
3 people

Marketing team worldwide:
60 people

ABM agency:
Transmission

Tech agency:
Demandbase

Business intelligence platform:
Domo

Number of accounts:
300

For heavily engaged accounts, Conduent know to take a one-to-one strategic approach. "We'll really drive down into them. We'll understand their personas and buying characteristics. And at the same time, we'll slowly be bringing through the accounts that were originally not engaged."

The ABM programme will take a lighter form when applied to accounts that have been viewing relevant content but aren't engaged with Conduent – at least until they've started engaging and can be moved to the heavier approach.

So far, the metrics indicate strong success with this not-so-conventional approach. Page views, cost-per-click, and the revenue from look-a-like accounts have all improved significantly.

"A year ago, we didn't have a tech platform. A year on and we really understand ABM. We're doing ABM in a targeted and segmented fashion, driving real outcome and results," says David.

So what can other ABM teams learn from David success? "The most important thing to take away is that this approach is providing MQLs that are driving SQLs, that are driving leads and opportunities. Everytime you think about ABM, this is what you should be focused on," David answers.

The state of the agency marketplace

Despite concerns over Brexit and changeable client relationships, 2019 was another solid year for agencies. As we'll explore, headcount was on par with the year before and like-for-like gross income increased. That cautious optimism is moving with us into 2020. While a conservative 78% of the agencies we surveyed in this year's report describe the current industry as 'strong' or 'good', 91% expect growth from their own company in the year ahead.

91%
of agencies expect growth in 2020

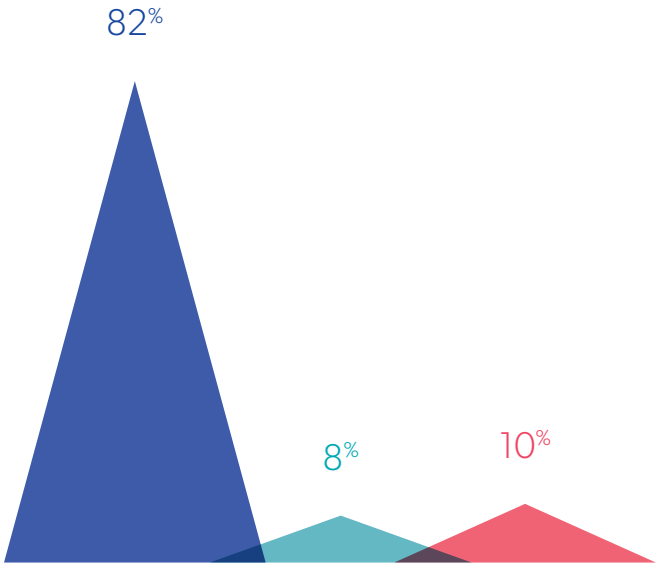
78%
describe the current industry as 'strong' or 'good'

12%
view the market as 'challenging'

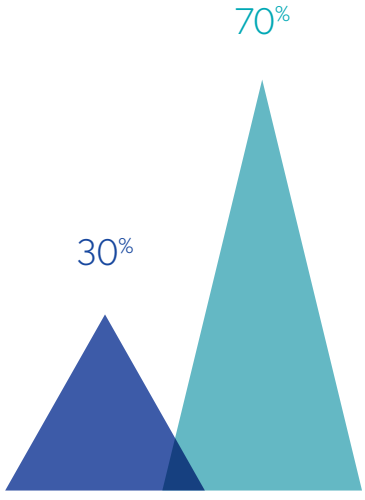
Overview of 2020's survey respondents

93
Number of entrants

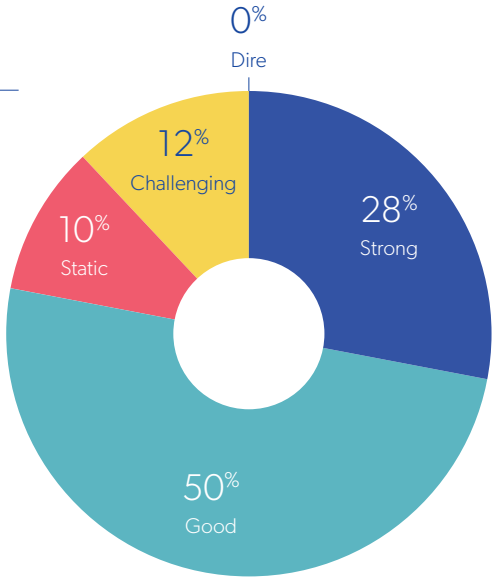
Structure



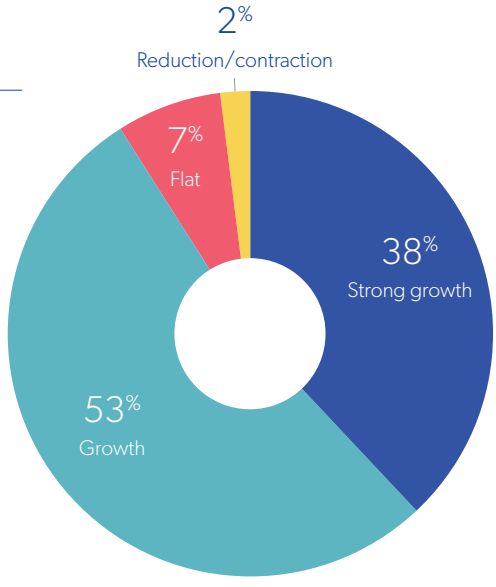
Location



How would you describe the current state of the market for B2B marketing services?



What are the expectations for your agency in the next 12 months?



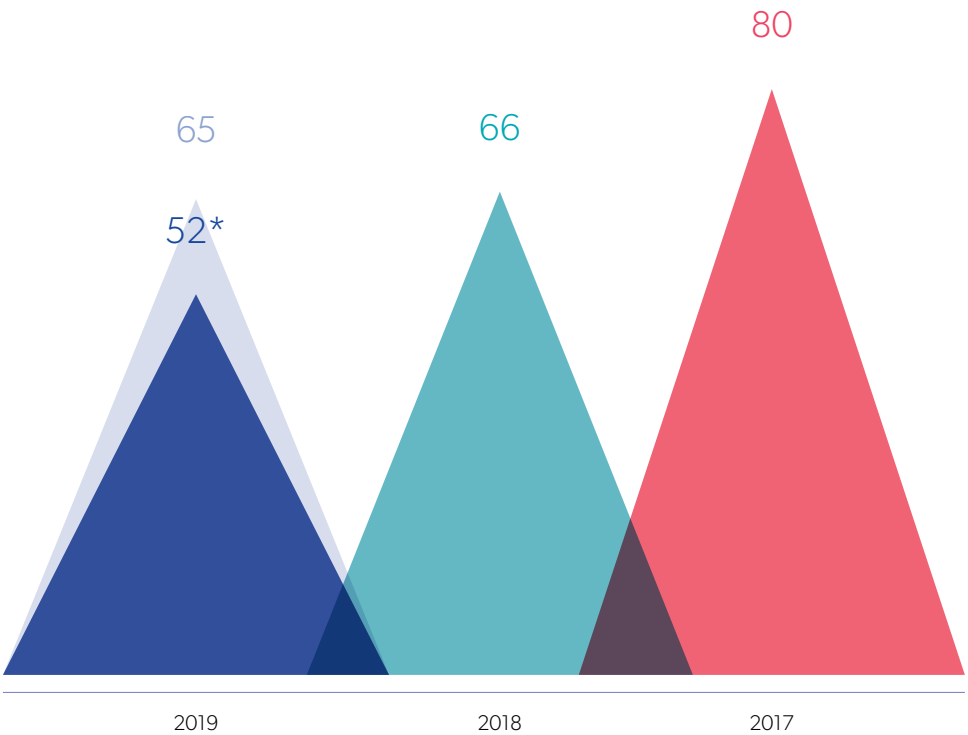
Our annual benchmark survey reveals the UK agencies' assessment of the B2B marketplace, including their perceived challenges and opportunities, and how they're responding with new service offerings. **Mary-Anne Baldwin** reports

UK agency headcount

While on the surface, this year's figures show a decline in the average agency headcount (falling from 66 in 2018 to 52 in 2019), it's important to note that one significant inclusion has skewed that data in previous years – that being the figures from agency goliath, Oliver. With a 2019 headcount of 1153, it eclipses the size of all other entrants. This year, Oliver has been excluded from the Agency Benchmarking Report, not just for its size but its business model, which is profoundly different to other agencies we list.

For the sake of a like-for-like comparison, had they been included, that average would have increased to 65, which is on par with last year. However, that is still a considerable decline from 2017's average headcount of 80, showing not only a lack of growth in size from last year, but an inability to recover from the heights of 2017.

Average headcount



**This figure excludes our usual contributor Oliver, which has a headcount this year of 1153. This would have resulted in an average headcount of 65, on par with last year.*

Recent agency acquisitions

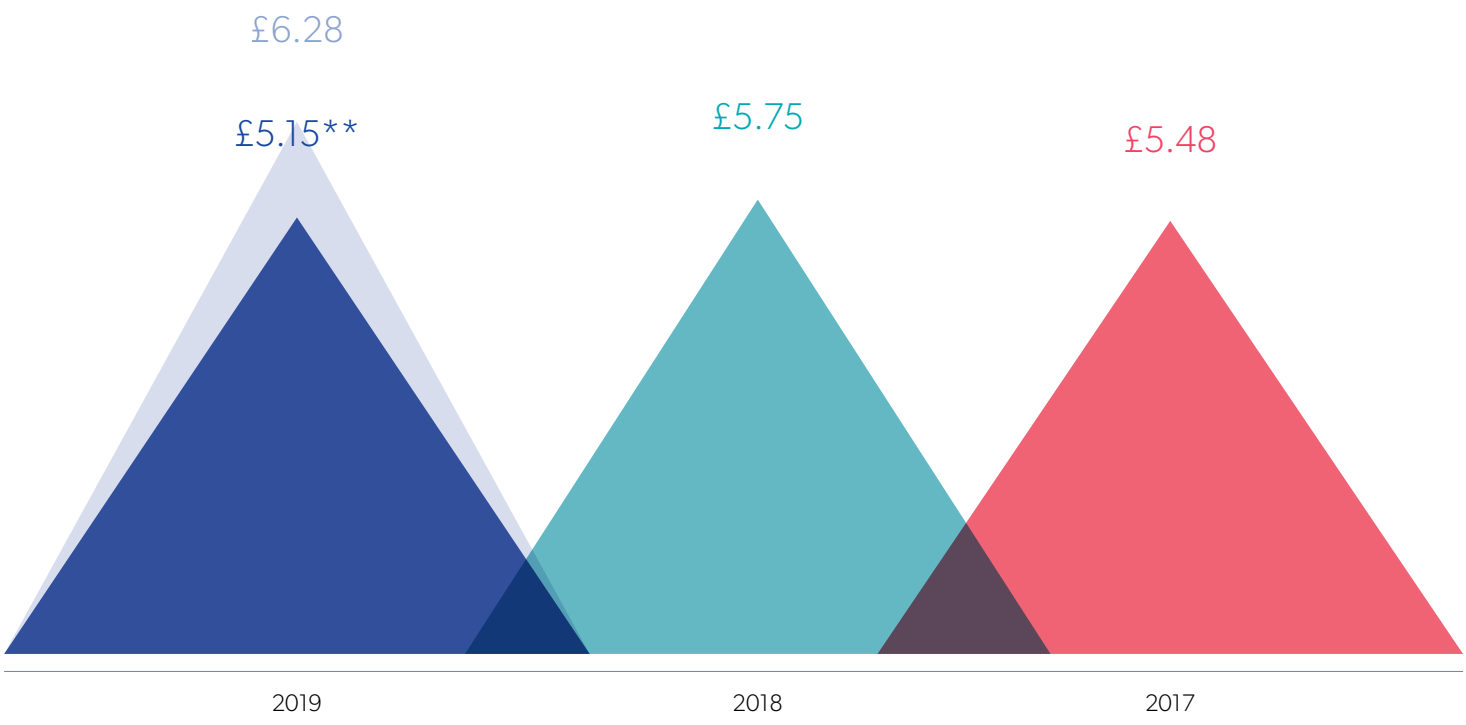
The following list shows the agency acquisitions made by this year's survey participants:

- **Gyro** acquired B2B International Group, October 2018
- **Gravity Global** acquired JJ Marketing and Further in 2019
- **Napier** acquired Armitage Communications Limited, January 2019
- **Unlimited Group** acquired Direction Group, March 2019
- **Foco Global** sold 50% of the business to MRM Communications (which is now its parent communications group), February 2019
- **Fat Media** acquired Reading Room, November 2018
- **BBN International** acquired The Marketing Hub, Celeritas Solutions and Hexa Group in 2019.

UK agency gross income

As with the average headcount, the average gross income for 2019 must be considered through the lens of this year's contributors. The recorded figure for 2019 is £5.15m, down from the previous year's £5.75m. However, this data is also skewed by this year's exclusion of Oliver, which with a 2019 gross income of £99.1m, would have brought the average up to £6.28m – considerably more than both of the two years prior.

Average gross income (m)



***This figure excludes our usual contributor Oliver, which had a gross income of £99.1m for 2019. This would have resulted in an average gross income of £6.28m, which is up on last year.*

Last year's top bugbears

Each year, we ask agencies about the recent challenges they've been facing. During the last 12 months, two particular problems have grown in intensity, both climbing three places from their spot last year. The first is Brexit, which is now in third place, falling behind the habitual frontrunners of staff retention and client budgets. With the UK really no closer to a resolution of this matter, unfortunately Brexit – and its effect on spending – will continue to dampen matters for the year ahead.

The other challenge to have piqued agencies during 2019 was the move by clients to bring more of their agency activity in-house. While only four percent of our survey participants ranked client in-sourcing as a 'very significant' challenge, a further 28% see it as a 'significant' challenge, putting it at number seven in the list, up from 10th place last year. It's a trend that gained real traction with the likes of Deloitte setting up its own internal agency, 368, and Atos celebrated gains with its move to bring Oliver's agency staff in-house to work alongside its own. However, even those who aren't making these sweeping changes have been opting to do more with their in-house team, saving agencies for the very essentials, no doubt buffering the costly tides of Brexit.

How significant are the following challenges to your agency currently?

YoY trend		Challenges	% ranking as 'very significant'
—	Same	Ability to attract/retain quality staff	24%
—	Same	Pressure on clients' budgets	18%
↑	Up 3 places	Brexit-related concerns	12%
↓	Down 1 place	Ability to measure campaign effectiveness	11%
↑	Up 2 places	Clients' appreciation of creativity	6%
*	New entry	Business model transformation	4%
↑	Up 3 places	Clients moving agency activity in-house/insourcing	4%
↓	Down 4 places	Embracing and managing internal digital capability	3%
*	New entry	New product/service developments	3%
↓	Down 4 places	Role of procurement and purchasing departments	2%
*	New entry	Data privacy/GDPR	0%

What can you do to counter the challenge?

Meeting the challenge of in-sourcing requires an understanding of the client's perspective. Certainly, clients still celebrate the value of agencies – particularly the innovation and creativity they deliver. But, they also want to cultivate that for themselves. Many clients aren't just satisfied introducing an agency-like culture, they're looking to hire agency staff. While this interest in agency life puts pressure on recruitment (which, unfortunately, is consistently the top challenge for agencies year on year), there are ways you can meet the issue head on – chiefly by getting your team more involved with the daily running of your client's organisation.

Another primary draw of the in-house model, cited by Cat Dutton, VP marketing at Atos, is speed-to-market. Cat says: "When working on new business with external agencies, it was taking a few weeks to go from briefing to outcome. Having these guys on site as part of the team, we can talk in the morning, involve them in workshops throughout the day, and have creative back within 24 hours – that's been incredible for us."

Thankfully, while many client companies we talked with told us they're using fewer agencies, they are keen to stick with those that really get to know their business and its operations. If you can bag a long-term relationship by proving you understand the client and can work quickly, closely and collaboratively with them, you still stand to carve a bigger piece of the pie.

Certainly, clients still celebrate the value of agencies – particularly the innovation and creativity they deliver. But, they also want to cultivate that for themselves

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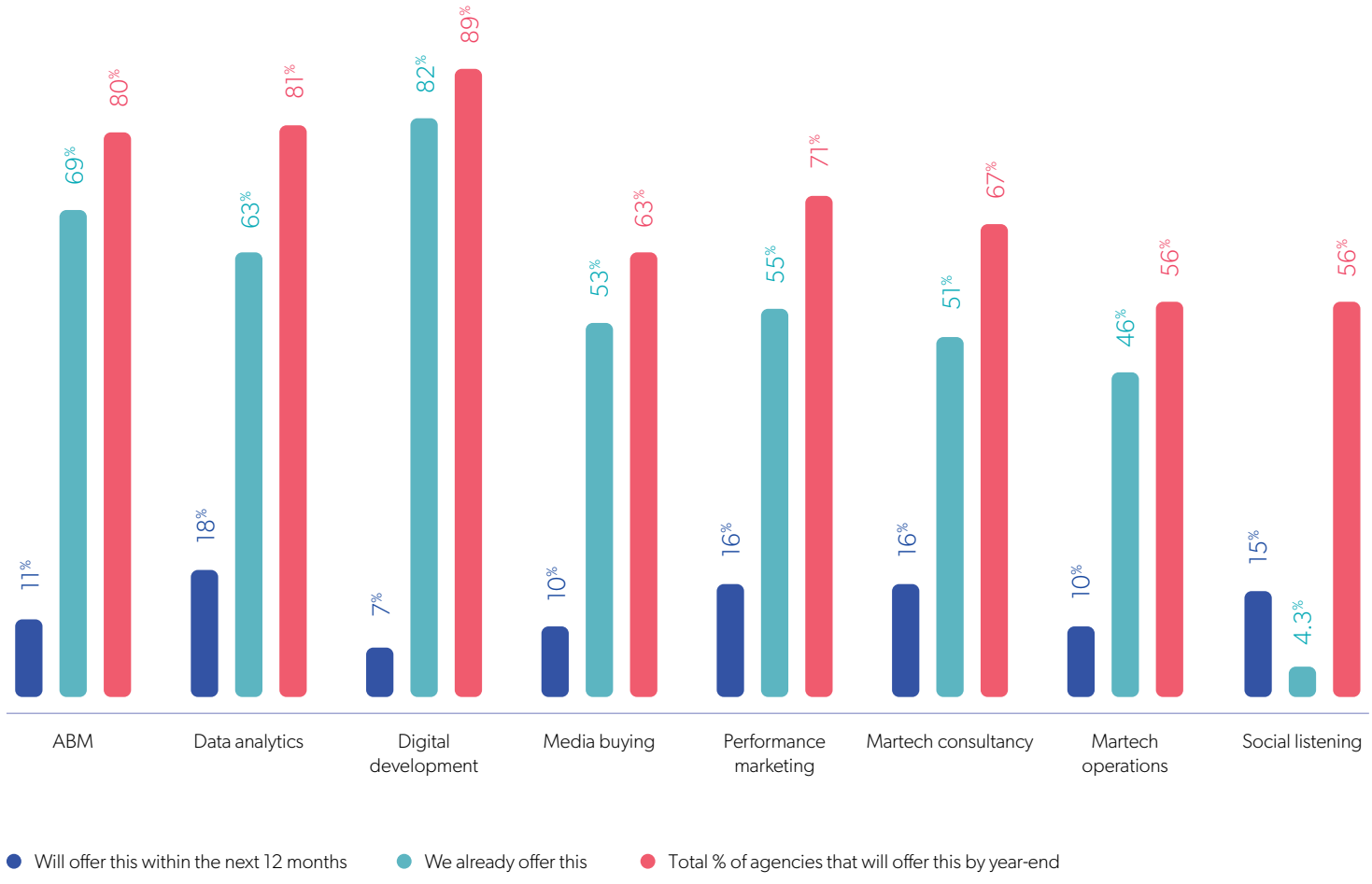


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Which agency services are you considering offering?



Services and skills

As with last year, the three most common core services offered by agencies are: campaign and creative (49%), digital (43%), and marketing planning (42%). But this year, we dug deeper to ask which services agencies plan to introduce in the year ahead.

It revealed some interesting results. With 82% of agencies having already invested in digital developments, many have turned – or are turning – their attention to data. Data analytics will see significant investment from agencies in 2020 with 18% adding it as an offering by year-end. Teamed with those already doing it, a collective 81% of agencies will offer this service by the close of 2020.

Following this, the most significant investment will be put into performance marketing and martech consultancy (16% each) and social listening (15%). However, marry those numbers with those who've already invested in these areas and they surface somewhere in the middle of the pack.

So let's fast forward to the end of the year and see which three new or non-core services will be the most popular offerings. At the top spot is digital development with 89% of agencies offering this. Next is data analytics at 81%, quickly followed by account-based marketing, which at 80% has seen a huge increase in recent years.

Winning new business

Want to know where your rivals are finding work? Most new business comes through direct client referral (73% say this is very common) or a referral from another individual (38% say it's very common). Beyond that, 33% win new business through the pitching process and 22% through an RFP.

Agencies are pretty confident about their ability to win pitches with the largest percentage group (29%) saying they win between 70-80% of the pitches they deliver. The next largest group (19%) claim they win pitches between 50-60% of the time.

To get to great work, you need to look for what's missing – from your brief, your concept or your presentation. Frequently it's an idea.

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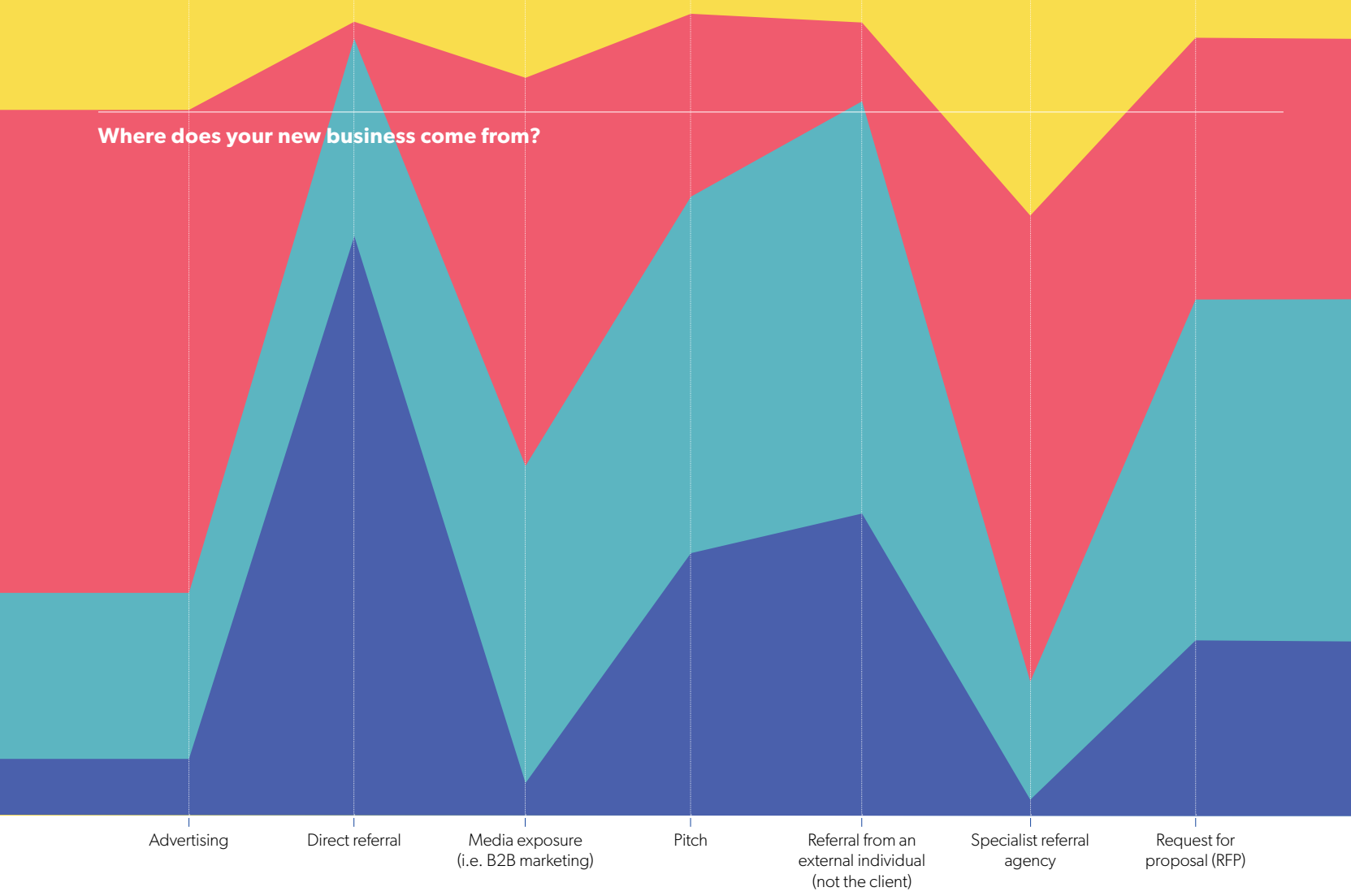
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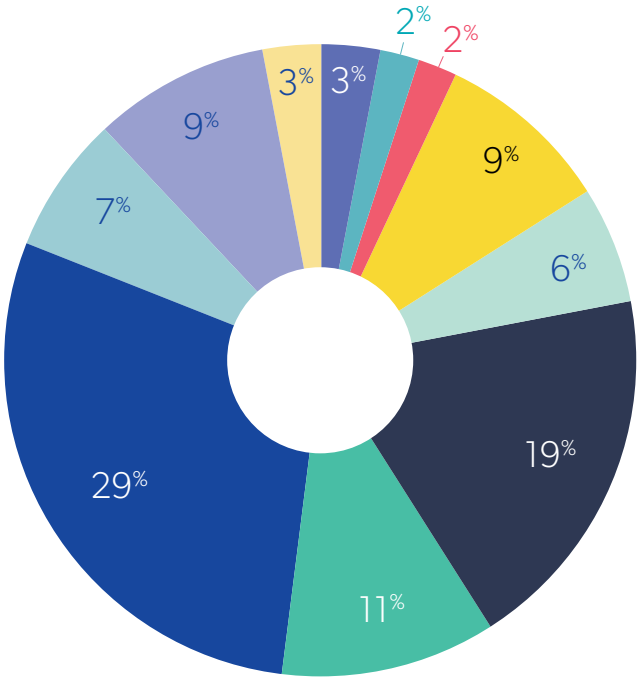


Omobono
The Business Agency

Where does your new business come from?



Approximately what percentage of pitches entered has your agency won over the past 12 months?



- 0-10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- 51-60%
- 61-70%
- 71-80%
- 81-90%
- More than 90%
- I don't know

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MAKING THE SWITCH FROM CLIENT TO AGENCY LIFE

Philip Martin made the switch from a life-long client-side career to join the agency DMA Partners as managing partner. He tells us what it was like

Why did you decide to move into your current role at DMA Partners?

I was at a stage in my life when I was at the top of marketing in my company and was spending increasingly more time mentoring and helping others, particularly in campaign delivery and social media.

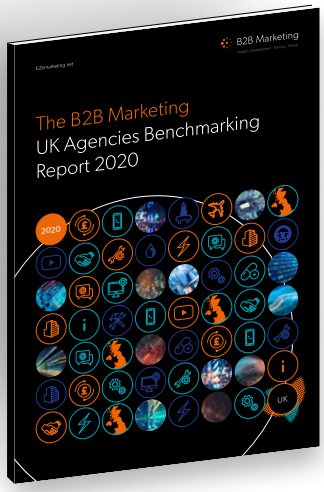
Because the company I worked at didn't hire outside – they moved people around – I started mentoring younger people through their marketing career. There wasn't a strong marketing culture, it was very much pushed by product so I would even mentor project managers who didn't have a marketing background.

After a while people started saying 'go and see Philip Martin, he'll be able to help you.' I found that aspect of my role was really interesting and rewarding. Having the opportunity to give something back was a great pull. I found myself consulting more and more, so I thought, why not do it with different companies?

When I started to look elsewhere for a bigger marketing role, I thought that my perfect job would be a move to the agency side, but I just didn't think I had the experience for it. I was discussing this with the owner of the agency DMA Partners who said: 'Why don't you come and work with me?' He knew I understood how clients thought and could impart my knowledge easily, which they saw as extra value.



Philip Martin,
managing partner,
DMA Partners



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It felt like a nice seamless move because we'd already worked on numerous campaigns together, and I knew we complemented each other. DMA is a small company, which was another pull for me. It meant I could be much closer to the rest of the group and work with designers, copywriters and ideas people – they've got such a different perspective.

How do the skill requirements differ from client-side to agency?

I think there is a difference. You will have a learning curve, don't expect to just jump in. What I've learned and been learning for the past four years is that a key skill at an agency is having a consultative approach. So it's not telling people what to do, it's asking them what they need, and what they want. This is where the mentoring skills come through.

You start to build empathy, which as a corporation you're pretty poor at. You start to put yourself into the client's shoes because at the end of the day, you're working with an individual and as an extension of their team. You're trying to understand their pains and how you can help them reduce their stress levels. It's a lot more than delivering creative work. It's about helping someone get through their career because they've got other problems and that's why they're outsourcing to an agency.

Have you planned your career?

I can't say I've planned it at all but it seems to have worked itself out. At the beginning, I was at uni doing environmental science and wasn't marketing at all. When I was younger computers and technology were just starting to develop. My idea was to get a skill I could use, so I learned how to programme and then worked as a developer. It really wasn't for me but it was a way of gaining a skill that I could later reuse. For me, marketing as a profession was based on skill, and I had that skill. I understood tech, and I stuck with tech.

Who do you talk to about your career?

I can't think of anybody who I've spoken to about my career. I've always quietly made a decision myself. I've spoken to my family but by then I'm halfway down the line and my wife says 'What? We're moving to where?"

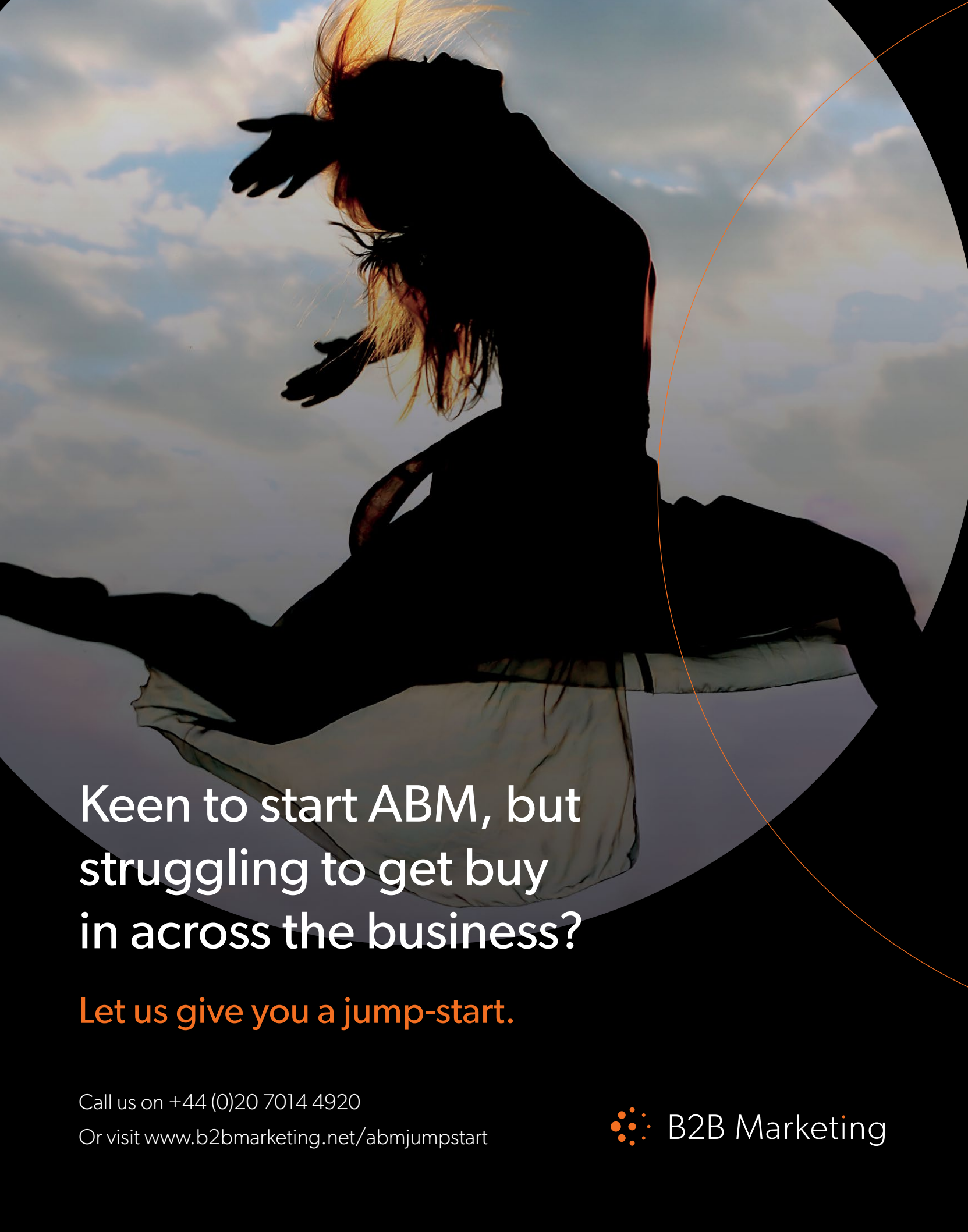
For example, when I left British Airways, I really wanted to try something different. This big start-up called Amadeus turned up and they didn't have a system in place at that time. It was in the South of France and they were going to pay me double my salary. My wife was doing French at university, so that was great for her. Within three months, we'd moved. We were expecting our first child at the time. I remember my dad rang me and asked what the hell was I doing.

When something seemed to fit, I just went after it. It gave me the opportunity to find out what I could do and to push myself.

I've done lots of different jobs within Amadeus. It was almost like I wasn't in one company. I kept moving to learn different skill sets. I always sought something new. You have to be fully committed to roles like these. You've got to come out of your comfort zone.

What gives you job satisfaction?

Having the ability to keep motivating the rest of the team is important. If they're not happy, I'm not, because it means we're not doing the right thing or finding the right roles for people.



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B2B Marketing

"Moving to an independent agency gives you a lot more freedom but also more responsibility. You have to make quicker decisions. You've got to work different hours, you've got to fit in with the client"

At a personal level, I'm looking for something that's a bit stretching. Moving to agency-side at my time in life could have failed. Then, I would have been looking for a job in my fifties. But I've always applied for jobs that I had 50% of the skillset for. The other 50% I would learn and expand my CV and myself.

It's frustrating when you move into a role where you're doing the exact same thing as you were last time. For example, at a big corporation when you have a reorganisation, you're reporting into a different person and that person is then re-evaluating you again for the same job. That is not job satisfaction.

Were you worried about starting the new agency role?

I was definitely worried. It was the biggest move for me, because I'd been at Amadeus for such a long time. When you work in a corporation, you can get stuck in the corner a bit and think you're never going to move, but you do have safety.

When you leave a company like that, you feel like you're out on your own, you feel a bit naked. You have to pull in everything that you know and more.

What were the biggest differences?

The biggest difference for me is speed and time of delivery. At agencies, it's very rapid. This means the thought-process is different and we have tighter processes. There's no hierarchy or politics as such. We encourage everyone to come forward and make decisions.

Moving to an independent agency gives you a lot more freedom but also more responsibility. You can't just sit back and say you'll have a meeting in two weeks because you've got a client that you're trying to quickly turn things around for. You have to make quicker decisions. You've got to work different hours, you've got to fit in with the client.

Client-side it takes a long time to make decisions. Previously, we've had up to 20 sign-offs for a campaign. It goes around the houses, so by the end of it, the campaign idea has been watered down to a much lesser effect. There's hierarchy, politics and quite a few big egos.

When I was working in a corporation, it would be very rare that I was with senior people in the company. However in an agency, we are working with those people all the time because they value what we're doing. The position I was in has been

Career history:

- DMA Partners
  Managing partner
  4yrs – present

- Amadeus IT Group:

  Head of global marketing, Amadeus rail and ground travel
  1 year, 6 months

  Head of global marketing
  Amadeus rail
  8 years, 8 months

  Head of product management
  2 years, 4 months

  Business unit director,
  4 years

  Unit manager, product management
  1 year, 4 months

  Senior functional analysts
  3 years

  Application development
  6 years

- British Airways
  Systems engineer
  2 years

- American Express
  Systems engineer
  4 years

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Ash Hamidi,
marketing manager, Sky

elevated because I'm in an agency. They take my advice much more seriously.

How did you adjust yourself to your agency role?

I was slow to react. It's difficult to get out of that corporate mindset sometimes. I wasn't thinking like a consultant, and I wasn't asking enough questions.

My business partner threw me in at the deep end. I tried out different aspects of the role, a bit of copywriting, a bit of creative. Eventually, we figured out where the best fit was but it was a trial and error. What's nice in an agency is that if you try something and fail, it doesn't matter, because you can always pick it back up.

Eventually I focused on the business development plus sales and marketing. I can explain what the agency does better than someone from an agency background.

What would you say to someone considering moving client-side to agency?

It's a great experience. You get a huge amount of fulfilment because you're helping someone do their job better and succeed. Knowing what the person you're helping is going through can be very rewarding because you're reducing their stress. They're getting compliments from their bosses, and the marketing arm is getting more business value.

If I could start all over again, I would definitely be a bit stronger. Don't be afraid to speak up about what you see. Just make sure you get your point and opinion across at an early stage.

What client-side skills were transferable to your agency-side role?

Definitely expertise and knowledge about the job as a client-side marketer. Understanding how the head of marketing is thinking and their challenges are is paramount. That gives the agency great value straight away.

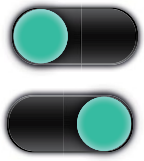
What are the benefits and challenges of being client-side?

If you like meeting people, it's an opportunity to meet different cultures and learn so much about different people. I enjoy sharing that – you find lots of people who are similar to you and work out problems together.

You have the backing of a large machine. You know you'll be able to do things if you've got a large marketing budget. There's also travelling and meeting different companies plus opportunities to live abroad.

What is sometimes taken for granted is the HR department. They will help you with your career as well. They're there to listen and help you. They're neutral within a company, which is quite useful.

You've still got to deal with politics all the time. You've got to deal with competition internally, and sometimes with re-organisations. If there's a re-organisation, don't be afraid of it. Take it as an opportunity. Understand why it's happening and where you can fit in.



"I was slow to react. It's difficult to get out of that corporate mindset sometimes. I wasn't thinking like a consultant, and I wasn't asking enough questions"

What would you say to those in agencies who are considering moving to client-side?

It's a bit like taking a brief really. Find out what value you could bring to the job and focus on that from the beginning. People from agencies can offer experience of different companies. They know what briefs are coming in and what companies are asking for in terms of campaigns. That is gold dust when you're moving into client-side, because sometimes, you don't get a budget for agencies, so you have to come up with ideas internally. There's a lot an agency person can bring into a marketing department. It would be a nice asset to have.

Did you prepare your successors for when you left Amadeus?

We'd earmarked some people for succession but unfortunately, one of them left before, and another one left at the same time as me.

What happens nowadays is that they transfer the marketing job to sales, and that's what they did. A salesperson took over as head of sales and marketing. It's an opportunity to synergise the sales and marketing relationship but it's the worst case scenario for marketing.

Working your way to the top: **Developing your succession strategy**



Nick Eades,
former CMO, Wincanton
now chief commercial officer, HTEC



Jackie Bibby,
CMO,
Wincanton

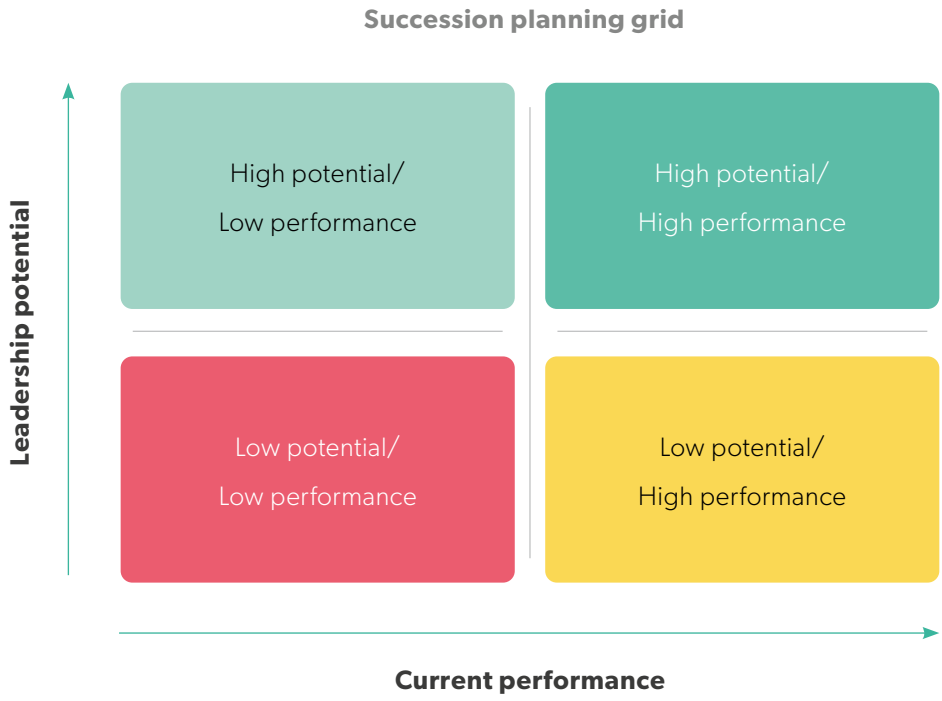
When Nick Eades, the former CMO of Wincanton announced he was leaving the logistics company to become chief commercial officer at HTEC, it naturally triggered a conversation about succession. Thankfully, he had a clear plan.

Nick appointed his colleague Jackie Bibby as his replacement, following a strategic succession plan. **Kavita Singh** spoke with both about the process

What's your succession planning process at Wincanton?

Nick: We have a qualitative process around succession planning, and I believe all good companies do. We have measurement tools showing what's needed to be considered for future roles within the company. It all comes down to performance and potential. Performance is evidence-based, and potential is about future success. What Jackie has done in the business, as well as her reputation, placed her firmly in the right spot.

Jackie: Working with Nick for the past three years really set me up for the role. Nick and I were having regular personal development discussions, working on my progression towards the CMO job. When the position arose, I went for it. It's what I've been working towards.



Can you tell me the benefit of having an internal successor?

Nick: We looked internally and externally. I was extremely comfortable taking an internal path. What we've done in the last three years is different and we've gained traction in Wincanton. We've focused on taking logistics, an inherently old business stuck in its views, and making it fresh. The last thing I want to do is bring in someone from a competitor or adjacent market who would take us backwards. There was a real risk of losing that momentum.

What was your timescale?

Nick: In September, I was doing my job 90% of the time. Jackie was tying up loose ends for me. By October, it was 50/50. And then by November, I was doing 10% and Jackie was doing 90%. In November, it was about wrapping everything up and also familiarising the idea that Jackie was now in charge. These shifts were created so that it was a natural progression.

Jackie: Having this set-up was absolutely great. It was ideal to have his help. That's what I'm going to miss; having a senior leader to bounce a few ideas off. I know it's going to be a steep learning curve, but you need to be pushed outside your comfort zone. That's how you learn.

"I know it's going to be a steep learning curve, but you need to be pushed outside your comfort zone. That's how you learn"

Jackie, are there any skills that you felt you needed to develop for this role?

Jackie: I focused more on the aspect of leadership, because moving from head manager to a leading director role has been a challenge. I asked myself how I can continue leading with the confidence to both manage and deliver. I'm really fortunate that I've had a lot of investment and training in readiness for this position.

What quality do you think you and Jackie share?

Nick: A key word that comes to mind is 'energy'. If you love what you do and do what you love, you'll want to be the best you can possibly be. And when someone with energy gets behind others, there can be an incredible acceleration. That's when you're in a good place. This company needs an injection of energy.

WHY SUCCESSION IS CRUCIAL FOR SUCCESS

We carried out a survey of senior marketing leaders to discover both the typical next career steps of a senior marketing leader, and their part in finding a successor. **Joel Harrison** reports

The average tenture of today's B2B marketing leader is 3.5 years

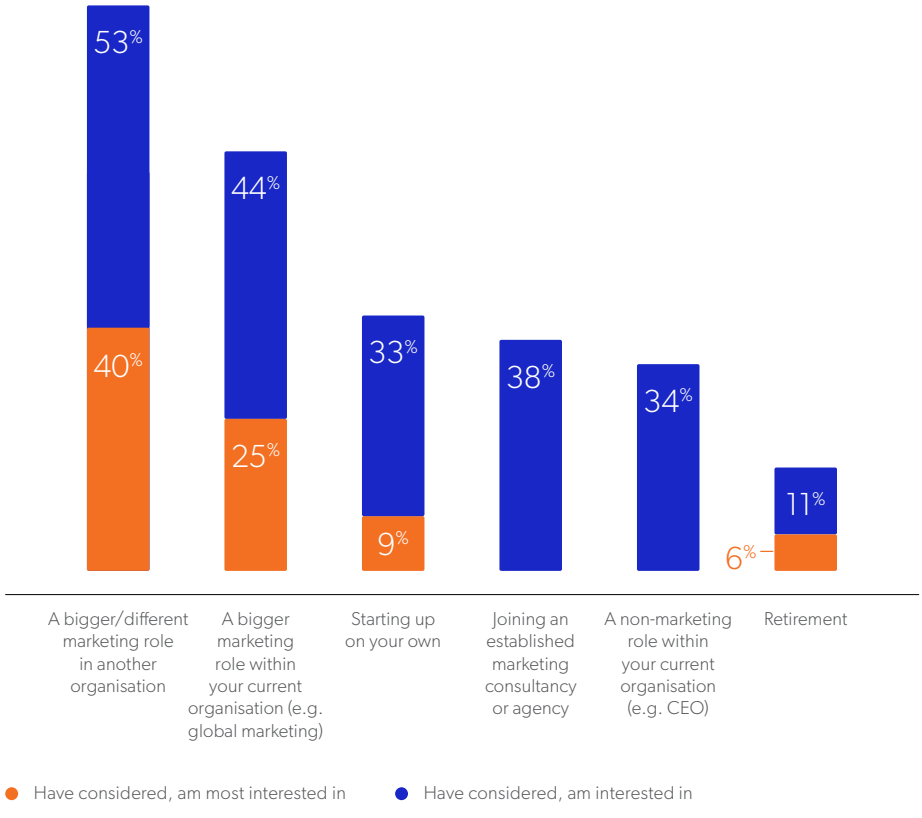
The tenure of marketers in B2B organisations has been widely discussed and speculated, for senior leaders it's typically thought to be a dizzyingly short 18 months or less. Unless the operations were very basic prior to their arrival – conforming to the age-old stereotype of promotional pen purchasing, or golf days - it's hard to believe they would have achieved anything significant during that time.

So it was a relief that our research data, published in the report *From Career Success to Succession*, thoroughly confounded this rumour. In reality, tenure for B2B marketing leaders was shown to be about three and a half years, which seems a much more realistic timeframe for marketers to make a demonstrable impact. Around two thirds expected to hold down their existing marketing leadership role for at least three years and 40% expect to do so for more than four years.

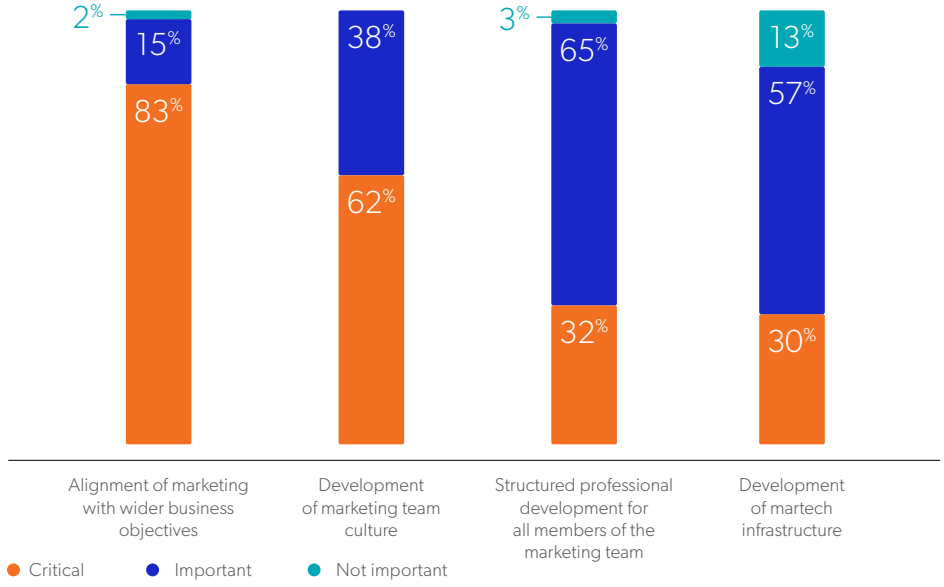
A legacy of success

The goal of a marketing leader in their typical three and a half year tenure is to leave a legacy of success – one that is elevated above the company they

Q. Which of the following would you consider as the next step in your career?



Q. How would you rate the following as a means of ensuring an ongoing legacy from your tenure as a marketing leader



"A three year tenure seems about right to me. In the past 10 years I've done two CMO roles – both three years"

Nick Eades, CMO, Wincanton

originally joined and primed for even greater future success.

The majority of leaders believe this comes in the form of greater alignment of marketing to the wider business and its objectives. While the value of this cannot be in doubt, many are overlooking the importance of handing the baton over to a primed and capable successor.

From success to succession

Our data shows that recruitment of senior marketers isn't simple. Most positions are filled by internal promotions or sideways moves. By contrast, roles that were filled via a head-hunter accounted for just under 30% of the total and by responding to advertisements just 17%.

While there are a variety of ways to recruit senior marketers, internal promotion remains the most effective and less costly route in many situations. So it should follow that incumbent marketing leaders are cultivating the next generation of leaders.

The good news is that the majority of respondents in our industry survey recognise the need to support the next generation of leaders and either see it as a top priority (29%), or something that's generally important (52%) – although clearly it would be preferable if these figures were reversed.

What's worrying, however, is that almost one in five are currently making no real attempt to feed the leadership pipeline. It's likely there are many reasons for this, among them are a lack of relevant internal candidates (particularly an issue in smaller marketing teams), and the means to provide structured development for younger talent.

One thing's for sure, companies not addressing the issue of succession are most commonly kicking the can down the road. When the problem does arise, as it inevitably will, it will present more of a challenge than for those who had shown more foresight.

Career progression for senior marketing leaders

We've looked at the rationale behind finding your internal successor, but what about current senior leaders looking for the next step?

We asked what marketing leaders want from their next role. In short, they desire a bigger marketing role at a different company. Despite findings that internal promotions or sideways moves account for almost half the marketing leadership appointments, the desire for external promotion outweighs that of internal progression.

When in search of a bigger role, marketers believe their two most sellable attributes are visibility within the business (great for those wanting internal progression) and market insight (vital when stepping up in an external or internal capacity).

The focus on 'visibility' reflects a growing recognition that marketers need to be prominent within their organisation, garnering respect from colleagues at all levels, and in all other departments. This hasn't always been the case, and historically at least, respect for marketing has been limited. The current generation of leaders, thankfully, are very focused on changing that.

> *"The classic thing businesses are looking for are people skilled in relationship building. They want to know whether the hire can make an impact culturally and change the dynamics of the organisation. They want someone who can take a £17 million company to £21 million over a set period of time, and know the steps to get them there."* Tom Howe, managing partner, The Jefferson Group

Taking to top job

Other options for next steps were noticeably less popular. Interestingly, 'starting up on your own' was more popular and actively sought than working for an agency, or taking a non-marketing role, such as the CEO position. Conversely more marketers are actively considering retirement versus becoming a CEO.

We wanted to understand the reticence behind taking up a CEO role and found that in most cases marketing leaders felt they lacked the financial literacy and fluency for the top job. Financial literacy has always been perceived as a weakness in the B2B marketing industry. Although recognition may be the first sign of resolution, it also seems not enough has been done to address this. One wonders whether marketers simply lack the confidence to pursue the task at hand.

5 THINGS SALES HATE ABOUT MARKETING

(AND HOW TO PUT IT RIGHT)

At B2B Marketing we hear time and time again about the frustrations that sales teams cause marketers; whether it be the expectations of a high workload with a short turnaround, or the belief that marketing's sole purpose is to create branded merchandise. But what about the other side of the coin? What do sales find annoying about marketing? We asked the industry. Brace yourself for some honest feedback.

1. Marketing take forever to complete things

Some sales teams get frustrated when collateral needed for crucial touch points in the buyer journey aren't completed on time – or at all. This delays the sales process and affects the amount of revenue sales bring in. Ultimately it's the sales person's neck that's on the line - not marketing's.

"It's annoying when you ask marketing for something crucial for your pitch, and months later you're still waiting for it. If this directly impacts getting revenue through the door, it begs the question of what marketing spends their time on," says one sales professional.

"I've resorted to creating my own marketing to get things done in time, but this obviously encourages the marketing team to become even more remote from what the business is actually focusing on," they explain.

The predominant cause of this kind of delay is that the marketing team is usually smaller than the sales team. This makes servicing individual needs difficult. But there are measures that can be put in place to elevate this.

- Explain your priorities. This gives more understanding as to why you're unable to deliver something, rather than creating animosity by just saying no.
- Create customisable templates. This means sales will be able to access marketing assets quickly and tailor them to their needs.
- Be honest. If you really can't deliver something in time, be truthful and make this known as soon as possible. This means that if a sales person is truly relying on the asset they still have time to create it without impacting their timeline.

2. Marketing are arrogant and don't respect sales

You may feel sales don't appreciate marketing, but guess what - some sales teams feel marketing doesn't respect them. This leads to a volatile relationship and evokes one-upmanship that just isn't conducive to business success.

Tim Gibbons, director at Elemental says he's heard sales professionals complain that marketing are arrogant, particularly when they claim to know more about the customer and product than the other party.

"I get the impression many sales professionals think marketers are slick young things who sit around all day and try to think of 'cool' ideas," says Tim. "There needs to be a greater appreciation of skillsets and value on both sides."

These feelings usually stem from a lack of communication and a lack of understanding as to what each other are contributing. Once these negative feelings are within a culture they can be difficult to eradicate and can be debilitating on both sides. "It creates an 'us and them' culture," explains Tim. "This is obviously a drain on resources and will be destructive both in the short and long-term."

Have you ever wondered what irritates your sales team about marketing? What hinders your relationship, or how to fix it? **Molly Raycraft** asked the industry

How to resolve this:

- Meet face-to-face as much as possible. This limits mistranslation. What's said in person could be interpreted in a completely different tone to what's said over email.
- Attend sales pitches and training. This will show sales that you appreciate their role in the customer journey and improves your understanding.
- Meet in a neutral environment. If things are volatile, meet sales outside the office, where people feel more relaxed and no one feels territorial.
- Encourage a clear and open dialogue. Break down siloes by encouraging things to be shared - whether that be successes or challenges. After all, two heads are better than one.

3. Marketing don't add value to the sales process

Some sales teams don't see marketing as providing any strategic value to the sales process. It's this view that has created the label of marketing being the 'colouring-in department'.

Russ Powell, head of marketing at Inervate says he's heard the phrase "sprinkle some marketing magic on this" far too many times during his career. "That is largely the fault of marketers who haven't effectively demonstrated what real value marketing can have on a business and its sales function," he says. "Many sales people think marketing doesn't operate in the real world. That at best, it's just a support function for them, and at worst something that can be ignored in full."

The sales team's primary focus is on hitting revenue numbers, so you need to demonstrate what marketing is doing to contribute to the bottom-line, whether that be for the short or long-term.

"If you can't do that, you're setting yourself up to be seen as merely a cost-centre for the business, rather than a shrewd investment," he says.

How to resolve this:

- Talk the language of the sales teams. Sales care about the numbers that relate to pipeline value and revenue. Explain how your marketing metrics directly impact these areas of focus.
- Say "no". Push back if you're being asked to do things that don't add value to the business. If you don't, you're at risk of de-valuing marketing and becoming the permanent go-to for those branded golf balls.
- Start saying "Yes AND…". If sales ask you to do something that does add value say yes, but add to that. Perhaps suggest the most suitable approach for the task, or propose an addition that would make the idea even better. This vocalises marketing's value.

4. Marketing don't seek sales' input

Collaborating with sales might not be something you enjoy, but it's necessary. Sales teams find it frustrating when marketing work in siloes and don't consult them. Lauren Bigland, VP brand strategy and communications at S4M says involving sales in marketing projects is crucial. "They're the ones speaking to clients every single day, so incorporating their feedback into your work will improve the quality of your marketing."

She says it's important to see sales and marketing as one team, and don't take sales' criticism to heart. However, Lauren

acknowledges this can be difficult. "The most challenging sales relationship I've had was when everything was critiqued, sent back, and amended over and over," she says. "At the time, it felt incredibly frustrating but ultimately it meant the work we sweated over was effective and actually used effectively by the sales team."

How to resolve this:

- Don't take criticism personally. Use feedback and data to improve.
- Have regular meetings. This should be an opportunity for sales and marketing to ensure approaches are aligned and relevant.
- Sit near the sales team. Aside from meetings, being in the same vicinity as sales enables team members to bond and promote the idea of being 'one team'.

5. Marketing don't show they understand the customer

Sales are on the frontline with customers and some don't feel their marketing counterparts know as much about them as they do. This causes a disconnect between what marketing delivers and what sales feel they need.

"How many marketers actually talk to customers to understand their world, their wants, needs and desires?" asks Paul Mackender, chief revenue officer at Agent 3. He says marketers need to get under the skin of customer and prospect needs. "Be customer-centric," he summarised.

"I knew a marketing director who was so fed up with his team sitting at the back of the room taking notes that he set them the objective of bringing one piece of key customer insight the sales team didn't already know to each sales meeting," says Paul.

How to resolve this:

- Accompany sales on client meetings. Marketers can put this insight at the heart of their campaigns to ensure ultimate alignment and relevance.
- Do your research. Build a strong foundation of knowledge around customers, personas, sales strategies and the market. This will give you a stronger leg to stand on during sales meetings.



What our resident expert says...

Andy Bacon, consultant at B2B Marketing has worked with multiple brands to align sales and marketing teams in preparation for account-based marketing. He says:

"Like many marriages, a happy and rewarding relationship between sales and marketing relies on good communication, empathy and trust. Where the relationship has broken down it will largely be due to misunderstandings, which could have very easily been avoided.

Fundamentally, marketing will state that sales do not understand or recognise the value they deliver, while sales believe marketing do not understand customers' or their own challenges. Most behaviour is a product of this 'void of understanding'.

Given that sales don't believe they really need marketing, yet marketing can be so much more effective with a collaborative relationship with sales, marketing needs to break the deadlock and build trust.

Marketing are usually on the back foot because they're frequently too far from the sales process and have no direct contact with customers. This is where to start.

Marketing execs should shadow the sales team as a part of their induction, and ideally attend customer visits/ and join teleconference calls (initially as an observer) so they can witness the sales process firsthand. If they contribute to the meeting it should only be to ask questions. In a short time sales will warm and the relationship will build, based on mutual respect. Marketing should seek to extract maximum value by discussing the experience after the meeting(s) and validating their impressions. Sales will be confident that marketing really do understand the customer and this will bring long term value as marketing will be directly influenced by first-hand experience 'in the trenches'.

Having a number of allies in sales also makes a huge difference. By having a trusted sounding board, marketing can validate their thinking for future activity and gain buy-in. Sales feel they have influence and will feel part of the programme."

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Radix Communications
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ON24
Services: Content marketing, demand generation, digital marketing, lead generation, marcomms, technology
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Information technology

Dun & Bradstreet
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Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
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LinkedIn
Services: Advertising, branding, content marketing, demand generation, lead generation, marketing services and technology
Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
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Integrated marketing

Napier
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Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, automotive, business services, engineering, industrial, manufacturing, IT, telecomms
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Stein IAS
Services: Branding, content marketing, customer insight, design, digital marketing, marketing automation
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, professional, business, financial services
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Lead generation

Lead Forensics
Services: Customer insight, lead generation
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Really B2B
Services: Appointment setting, demand generation solutions, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, marcomms, social media services
Industry expertise: Business services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/really-b2b

Marketing automation

Force24
Services: Email marketing, lead generation, marketing automation
Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
b2bmarketing.net/force24

Marketo
Services: Marketing automation, social media
Industry expertise: Marketing, media, pharmaceuticals, publishing, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/marketo

Oracle Marketing Cloud
Services: Marketing automation
Industry expertise: Financial services, leisure and entertainment, media, publishing, marketing
b2bmarketing.net/oracle-marketing-cloud

Marcomms

BBN International
Services: ABM, advertising, branding, content marketing, data analytics, demand generation, design, digital and inbound marketing, MA, marketing communications, PR, social media
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, pharmaceuticals, professional services, property and construction
b2bmarketing.net/bbn

Bray Leino
Services: Branding, events and exhibition services, marcomms, media buying, mobile, web design
Industry expertise: Automotive, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, professional services, public sector, retail and wholesale
b2bmarketing.net/bray-leino

Cyber-Duck
Services: Content marketing, data analytics, design, digital marketing, lead generation, SEO/SEM, web design, website development
Industry expertise: Financial services, pharmaceuticals, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/cyber-duck

Digital Radish
Services: Content marketing, design, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, marcomms
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, leisure and entertainment, media, publishing, marketing, retail and wholesale
b2bmarketing.net/digital-radish

Direction Group Unlimited
Services: ABM, branding, content marketing, demand generation solutions, design digital marketing, lead generation, marketing communications
Industry expertise: Business services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/directiongroup

Gyro
Services: Advertising, branding, content marketing, copywriting, CRM, data analytics, demand generation, design, digital and direct marketing, lead generation, marcomms, PR, SEO/SEM, social media, web and development
Industry expertise: Industrial, manufacturing and engineering, IT, telecomms, pharmaceuticals, professional services, property and construction, telecomms, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/gyro

Miramar
Services: Branding, demand generation solutions, design, digital marketing, events and exhibition services, marketing communications, web design, web development
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/miramar

Point to Point
Services: ABM, advertising, customer insight, demand generation, digital marketing, inbound marketing, media buying, SEO/SEM
Industry expertise: Media, publishing and marketing
b2bmarketing.net/pointtopoint

Earnest
Services: Branding, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, marcomms
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/earnest

Gravity
Services: Branding, digital marketing, marcomms, PR
Industry expertise: Automotive, business services, financial services, industrial, engineering, IT, telecomms, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/gravity

MOI Global
Services: Digital marketing, direct marketing, event and exhibition services, marcomms
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/moi

Purple Agency
Services: ABM, branding, content marketing, demand generation solutions, digital marketing, events and exhibition services, lead generation, marketing communications
Industry expertise: Industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/purple-agency

Expandi Group
Services: Data analytics, demand generation solutions, email marketing, marketing automation platforms, marketing communications, web analytics
Industry expertise: IT, Telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/expandi-group

Iris Business
Services: Advertising, branding, content marketing, customer insight, digital marketing, ecommerce, events and exhibitions, marcomms
Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, IT, telecoms, property and construction
b2bmarketing.net/irisbusiness

Nelson Bostock Unlimited
Services: Branding, content marketing, copywriting
Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
b2bmarketing.net/nelson-bostock-unlimited

Quantum Marketing
Services: Campaign and creative execution, demand generation, telemarketing, marketing planning and strategy
Industry expertise: Information services, professional services, technology and telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/quantum-marketing

Godfrey
Services: Advertising, branding, content marketing, customer insight, demand generation, marcomms, PR, web development
Industry expertise: Industrial, manufacturing and engineering, property and construction
b2bmarketing.net/godfrey

JFT Marketing
Services: Data management, digital marketing, email marketing, lead generation, marcomms, marketing automation platforms, marketing services andcommunications, technology
Industry expertise: Automotive, financial services, IT, telecomms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/jft-marketing

Octopus Group
Services: Content marketing, marcomms, PR, social media
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, media, publishing, marketing
b2bmarketing.net/octopus-group

Quarry
Services: ABM, demand generation, telemarketing, marketing planning and strategy
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial manufacturing and engineering, professional services, technology and telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/quarry

Harvard
Services: Financial services, media and marketing, technology and telecomms
Industry expertise: Campaign and creative execution, content marketing, PR
b2bmarketing.net/harvard

Kingpin
Services: Advertising, digital marketing, lead generation, marcomms, media buying, telemarketing
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/kingpin-communications

Ogilvy
Services: Advertising, branding, digital marketing, email marketing, marcomms, social media
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/ogilvyone-business

Red House B2B Marketing
Services: ABM, content marketing, data analytics, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, social media, web development
Industry expertise: Industrial, manufacturing and engineering, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/redhouseb2bmarketing

Really B2B
Services: ABM, demand generation solutions, digital marketing, direct marketing, inbound marketing, lead generation, marketing communications, marketing services and technology
Industry expertise: Automotive business services, financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecoms, professional services, property and construction
b2bmarketing.net/really-b2b

Retina
Services: Branding, content marketing, demand generation, digital marketing, martech, media buying, web analytics, web development
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecoms, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/retina

The Crocodile
Services: Demand generation, digital marketing, direct marketing, marcomms, marketing automation, PR, web design
Industry expertise: Automotive, financial services, industrial, IT, telecoms, pharmaceuticals
b2bmarketing.net/the-crocodile

The Marketing Pod
Services: Branding, content marketing, copywriting, customer insight, design, email marketing, events and exhibition, inbound marketing, marcomms, PR
Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, automotive, business services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecoms, media, publishing, marketing, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/marketing-pod

The Mx Group
Services: Branding, content marketing, demand generation, digital marketing, telemarketing, web development
Industry expertise: Automotive, business and financial services, engineering, IT, telecoms, media, publishing, marketing, pharmaceuticals, professional services, property, public sector, retail, wholesale
b2bmarketing.net/mxgroup

Tomorrow People
Services: Content marketing, data analytics, digital marketing, inbound marketing, lead generation, marketing services and technology, PR, social media services, web design and development
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecoms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/tomorrow-people

Torpedo
Services: Branding, digital marketing, design, lead generation, marcomms, video, apps, websites, content
Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, business services, industrial, IT, manufacturing, engineering, telecoms
b2bmarketing.net/torpedo

TricomB2B
Services: Advertising, branding, content marketing, digital marketing, events and exhibitions, marcomms, PR, web development
Industry expertise: Industrial, manufacturing and engineering
b2bmarketing.net/ tricomb2b

twogether
Services: Branding, content marketing, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, website development, media, telemarketing, web design
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecoms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/twogether

Wavemaker
Services: ABM, digital marketing, lead generation, media buying agencies, mobile, online video, SEO/SEM, social media services
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, IT, telecoms
b2bmarketing.net/wavemaker

Weber Shandwick
Services: ABM, content marketing, data analytics, lead generation, marcomms, PR, social media
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial, manufacturing and engineering, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/ webershandwick

93x
Services: Content marketing, design, digital marketing, marcomms, marketing automation platforms, SEO/SEM
Industry expertise: IT, telecoms
b2bmarketing.net/93x

Market research

B2B International
Services: Branding, customer insight, market research
Industry expertise: Business and financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecoms, professional services, property and construction
b2bmarketing.net/ b2b-international

Savanta
Services: Customer insight, market research
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, IT, telecoms, media, manufacturing, professional services, property, retail
b2bmarketing.net/savanta

Public relations

Speed Communications
Services: PR, content marketing, marcomms, social media
Industry expertise: Automotive, business services, financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, professional services, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/ speed-communications

Telemarketing

The Telemarketing Company
Services: Appointment setting, business development, data cleansing, demand generation solutions, lead generation, telemarketing
Industry expertise: Business and financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecoms, pharmaceuticals, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/ telemarketing-company

UK distribution and digital printing

Washington Direct Mail
Services: Direct mail, post fulfilment, design, digital and lithographic presses, print finishing, campaign management
Industry expertise: Marketing, business services, software, health and beauty, financial services, publishing, pharmaceuticals, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/wdm

Web analytics

Google
Services: Marketing services, technology, online video, web analytics
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, marketing, media, professional services, publishing
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What I learned about the UK's fastest growing B2B agencies



There's a distinct and unprecedented swagger about the fastest growing agencies in the year's B2B Marketing UK Agencies Benchmarking Report, writes **Joel Harrison**

Joel Harrison is editor-in-chief and co-founder of B2B Marketing, and is an evangelist, advocate and all-round enthusiast for all things B2B. As well as speaking around the world on business marketing issues, Joel is responsible for the development of B2B Marketing's training and events activities.

I've been working with and writing about B2B marketing agencies for approaching two decades now, and in that time, the sector has transformed beyond recognition. This change only seems to be accelerating – at least if the experiences of the fastest growing agencies in the B2B Marketing Agencies Benchmarking Report 2020 are anything to go by.

I interviewed the principles of the five fastest growing agencies for an article that appears in this report, and I was struck by their confidence, pragmatism and optimism - not to mention their appetite for further change. They have a can-do stance on facing the undoubted challenges to come. You might even call it swagger.

Here are the five key things I learned from these interviews:

1. Consultancy services are no longer aspirational – they're increasingly the reality

B2B agencies have long claimed to be providers of consultancy services, but in reality those who were truly credible in this as a discipline were few and far between. Typically the consultancy piece was effectively 'given away' in order to win campaign work. In 2020, some of these fastest growing B2B agencies have the confidence to offer this as a standalone service, and/or incorporate it meaningfully into account teams. They're no longer playing lip service, or communicating an aspiration. This new reality demands a new level of maturity and a different set of skills and practices.

2. International is no longer optional – it's essential

The UK is a finite market, with limited budgets – but that's not a restriction for the most ambitious B2B agencies. In the past, to get international reach, B2B agencies might join a network, providing access to potential partners around the world. Today, they are actively opening offices – in the US, Europe and increasingly beyond. Given the costs and logistics involved, this is a huge statement of confidence. Even those agencies without people on-the-ground around-the-world are becoming increasingly successful internationally – today's technology and working patterns means there are no barriers to virtual and integrated client/agency teams.

3. From customer-first to people-first

In a people business, it's always hard to attract and retain quality staff, but today's trail-blazing B2B agencies have raised their game to a whole new level. Employees expectations have changed – it's no longer enough to provide fresh fruit once a week and free drinks once a month – agencies need a comprehensive programme of employee development and actualisation to motivate and retain individuals of all demographics, and help them work together successfully.

4. The right customer, not just any-old customer

The fastest growing B2B agencies generally have a really clear idea about what kind of customer they are looking for – or perhaps more particularly, what kind of customer they are not looking for! Whether their focus is on current size of marketing budget, type service, board-level aspiration and attitude, account potential, or something else entirely, the success of these agencies has been based on being just as choosy about their clients as they are about them. That's easy to say, but in reality requires agencies to make some difficult decisions.

5. The future is bright… but not necessarily any easier

All the agencies I spoke to were confident about the future, but equally were far from complacent. Most expect significant headwinds, given the geo-political context, and particularly given their ambitious plans. Most expect future consolidation in the industry – both voluntary, as agencies merge or are acquired, or enforced as they go bust. These agencies know that they will have to continue to adapt, but at the same time, understand (and reinforce) their points of difference.

You can read my full article, and see the comprehensive league tables plus much more in the free 120-page UK Agencies Benchmarking Report 2020: bitly/ukabmr2020


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WE DON'T DO WALLPAPER

Repetitive, predictable, monotone B2B work is everywhere you look – although we wouldn't blame you if you hadn't noticed. We often wonder if the old saying that you can 'piss money up the wall' was coined as a direct result of the millions wasted on B2B ads that people stroll (or scroll) past every day, without so much as a glance of the eye.

True was founded to be a different type of B2B agency. To break free from the world of short-term 'performance' marketing that swamps the industry with no lasting business effects. We are in the business of making a difference. And we do that by harnessing data-driven and cultural insights to unearth powerful human truths that are creatively transformed into memorable brand communications – and delivered with pin-point media accuracy.

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