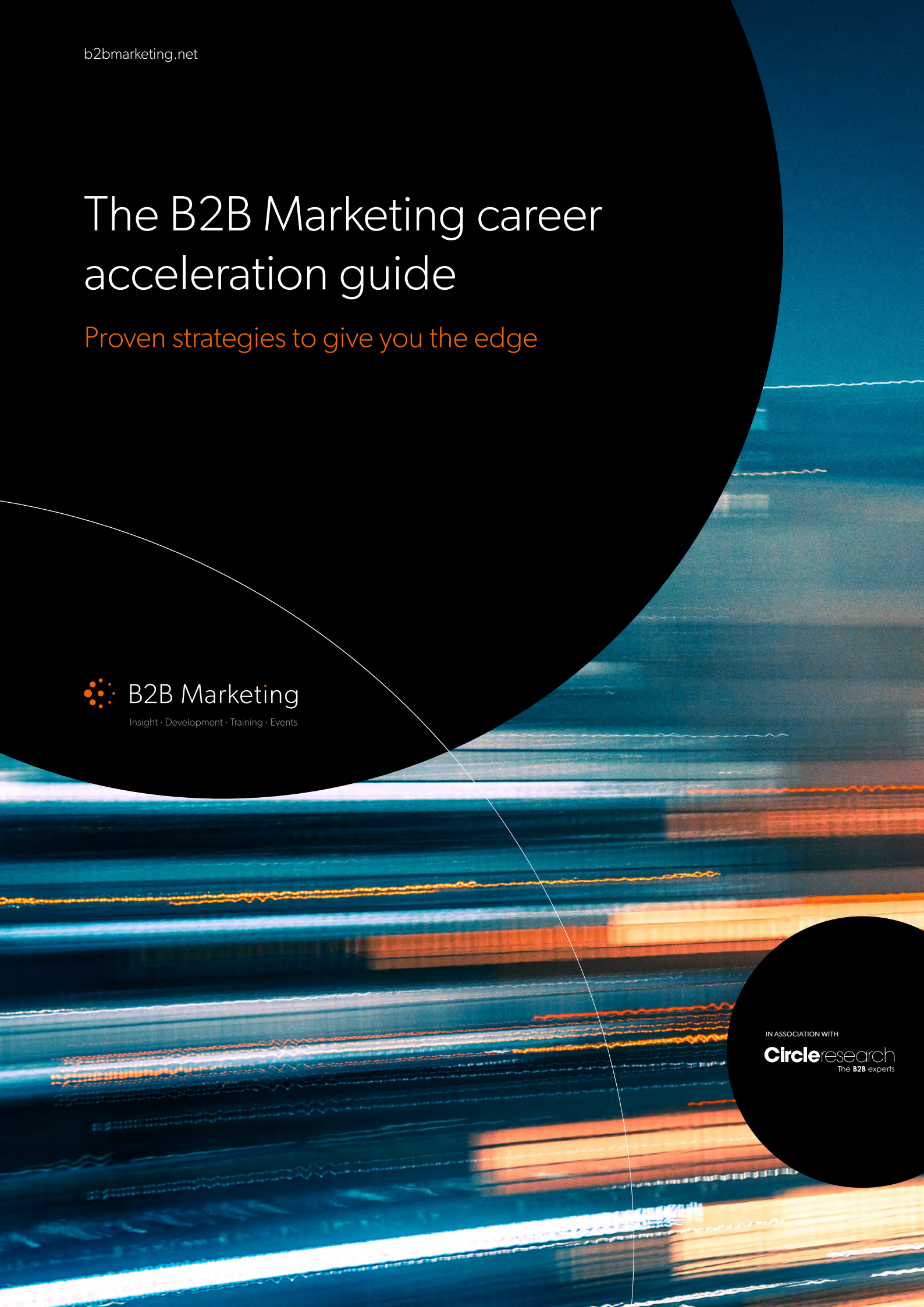
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The B2B Marketing career acceleration guide

Proven strategies to give you the edge

B2B Marketing

Insight · Development · Training · Events



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Circleresearch

The B2B experts



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Introduction
The story behind your CV



Danielle Howe
Reports editor
B2B Marketing

On paper, the career trajectory of the B2B marketer looks relatively simple. Put in enough hard work and after a few years you can expect to move from marketing executive to marketing manager and beyond. But behind every CV, there's a different story. Some B2B marketers have joined the fold as a result of a career change, while others have grafted at university before working their way up the ranks.

So, what does success actually look like in B2B marketing? Which skills and qualities do you need to reach the top? This is what we've set out to explore in this brand new piece of research. We've surveyed more than 200 B2B marketers from a range of backgrounds in order to find out. We've uncovered what factors B2B marketers feel are important to career progression, what differentiates the fastest-progressing marketers from everyone else, and where junior marketers tend to have a (surprising) edge.

Methodology

Via an online questionnaire, we surveyed 203 B2B marketers spread across different levels of seniority, business size and sector, and on both sides of the client/agency fence.

They included:

- 165 client-side marketers and 38 agency marketers.
- 34 CMOs/VPs/marketing directors, 38 heads, 86 managers, 34 executives and 11 assistants.
- 133 female marketers, 69 male (one preferred not to say).

Throughout the report we've looked at two different measures of success in marketing:

- Level of seniority – what differences can we see between senior levels (CMO/VP/marketing director) and lower levels of seniority?
- Rate of progression – we asked marketers to rate their speed of career progression against other marketers. What differences can we see between those who say their progression has been faster than average compared to those who say their progression has been the same or slower than average?

The project was carried out in association with Circle Research.

Research and analysis: *Sally Watts and Agnes Losonczi, Circle Research*
Report authored by: *Danielle Howe and Jess Pike, B2B Marketing*

Section 1
Key stats

82%

of marketers believe communicaton skills are 'very important' to success in marketing.

1/4

of marketers have taken a career break.

4.5

is the average number of channels CMOs use to promote themselves.

43

years-old is the age of the average head of marketing.

9

hours is how long high-flying marketers work each week, on top of their contracted hours.

94%

of marketers believe working in a company with a good culture is key to career success.



Section 2
The B2B marketing career path

2.1 How long does it take to get to the top?

Unsurprisingly, it turns out there isn't a typical marketing career path. While some might expect it to be well-trodden, the reality is that B2B marketing careers come in all shapes and sizes – and the speed of career progression varies hugely from individual to individual. Some of the marketers we surveyed have moved into B2B marketing from a completely different career, while others have been steadfast B2B-ers for more than 20 years.

Having said this, it is possible to draw out the average number of years that marketers tend to spend in each position as they move up the career ladder, as well as the age at which they reach this position (see chart opposite).

But while these figures highlight the relatively short length of time in which some marketers reach senior positions, it's important to emphasise that individual stories vary considerably – for instance, it would take longer to reach CMO level within a large corporation than it might do within a smaller business.

"Organisations change constantly, which means structures, roles and responsibilities do so too, so it's important to recognise when it's time to move on in order to progress."

CMO



2.2 A picture of the average B2B marketer

Looking to the top of the marketing tree, it's perhaps edifying to see that the majority of the big-hitting CMOs spent at least 90% of their careers in marketing. Plus, it's interesting to note that CMOs tend to whizz up the career ladder more quickly than other marketers, with 65% saying they felt they'd progressed faster than the average marketer. This is, we suspect, in part down to the fact that all-star CMOs are more likely to possess the skills needed to gain rapid promotion as they move through their careers.

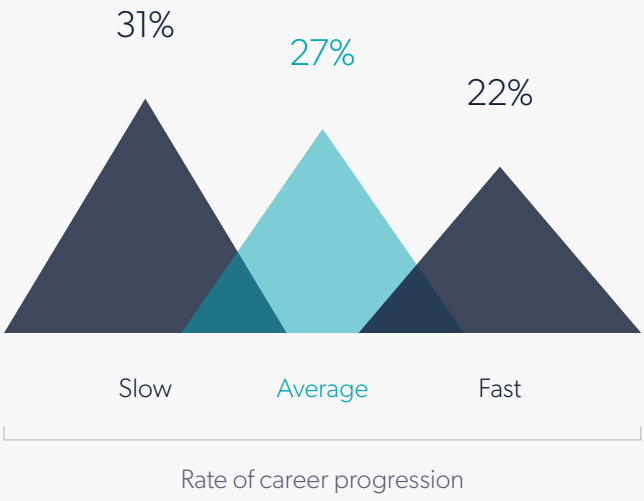
Here's a picture of the average marketer at different levels of their career:

Job title	Marketing executive	Marketing manager	Head of marketing	CMO/VP/ Marketing director
Average age	31-years-old	36-years-old	43-years-old	44-years-old
Skills	More likely to possess specialist skills such as video, with weaker strategy/planning abilities	Stronger in areas including content marketing, communications and event marketing	More advanced skills than CMOs in communications, account management and brand	Expert in strategy/ planning and general marketing
Gender	Female (64%)	Female (69%)	Female (74%)	Male (59%)
Hours worked per week	40 hours	43 hours	45 hours	49 hours
Channels used to promote professional profile	› LinkedIn (95%) › Twitter (34%) › Blog posts (35%)	› LinkedIn (95%) › Twitter (34%)	› LinkedIn (100%) › Twitter (39%)	› LinkedIn (97%) › Twitter (62%) › Speaking at events (56%) › Blog posts (50%)



The question of career breaks also revealed some interesting stories: more than a quarter of all marketers (26%) have taken a career break at some point in their lives, the average lasting 1.1 years. You'd assume this was down to women choosing to take a break to raise children, but 22% of male respondents report they'd had a career break too. The impact on career progression is marked: on the one hand, taking some time out won't necessarily prevent you from reaching the top (38% of CMOs have taken a break) but it might slow you down.

Marketers who've taken career breaks



"More than a quarter of all marketers have taken a career break at some point in their lives"

Section 3
Eight steps you can take to get ahead

As with any profession, age and tenure won't automatically guarantee promotion, and B2B marketers – no matter where they sit on the career ladder – can't afford to be complacent. But what should they be doing more of in order to rise through the ranks?

3.1 Develop the skills that count at the right time

Our skills map, on the following page, shows that certain skills become more necessary to master as you climb your career – and that specialisms aren't always the way forward. You can see that our most senior respondents (CMOs, VPs and marketing directors) share similar skillsets: all are adept in strategy/planning and general marketing, showing that being able to take an overarching, outcomes-driven, strategic approach is crucial. The fact their general marketing skills are top notch shows that any strategy is informed by what can feasibly be achieved 'on the ground'.

Heads of marketing are marked out by their experience with communications, content, account management and brand. The fact that heads of marketing are honing a broader range of skills than their CMO seniors reveals they're – unsurprisingly – more involved in the day-to-day, on-the-ground delivery of campaigns and projects than those sitting above them.

What the research also reveals is that there are a number of other skills that are useful for mid-level marketers – such as digital marketing, lead generation, event marketing, copywriting, email marketing, demand generation and PR.

Skills that are less necessary – but where some marketers will choose to specialise – include CRM, product development, data collection/analysis, design, social media, video marketing, marketing automation and SEO. It's also the case that some of these are areas where many B2B brands call on the expertise of agencies – or employ an inhouse specialist.

> *"In order to succeed you have to quickly develop a comprehensive marketing skillset based on real hands-on experience"*
>
> **Marketing manager**

Skills map based on how marketers rate their own skills



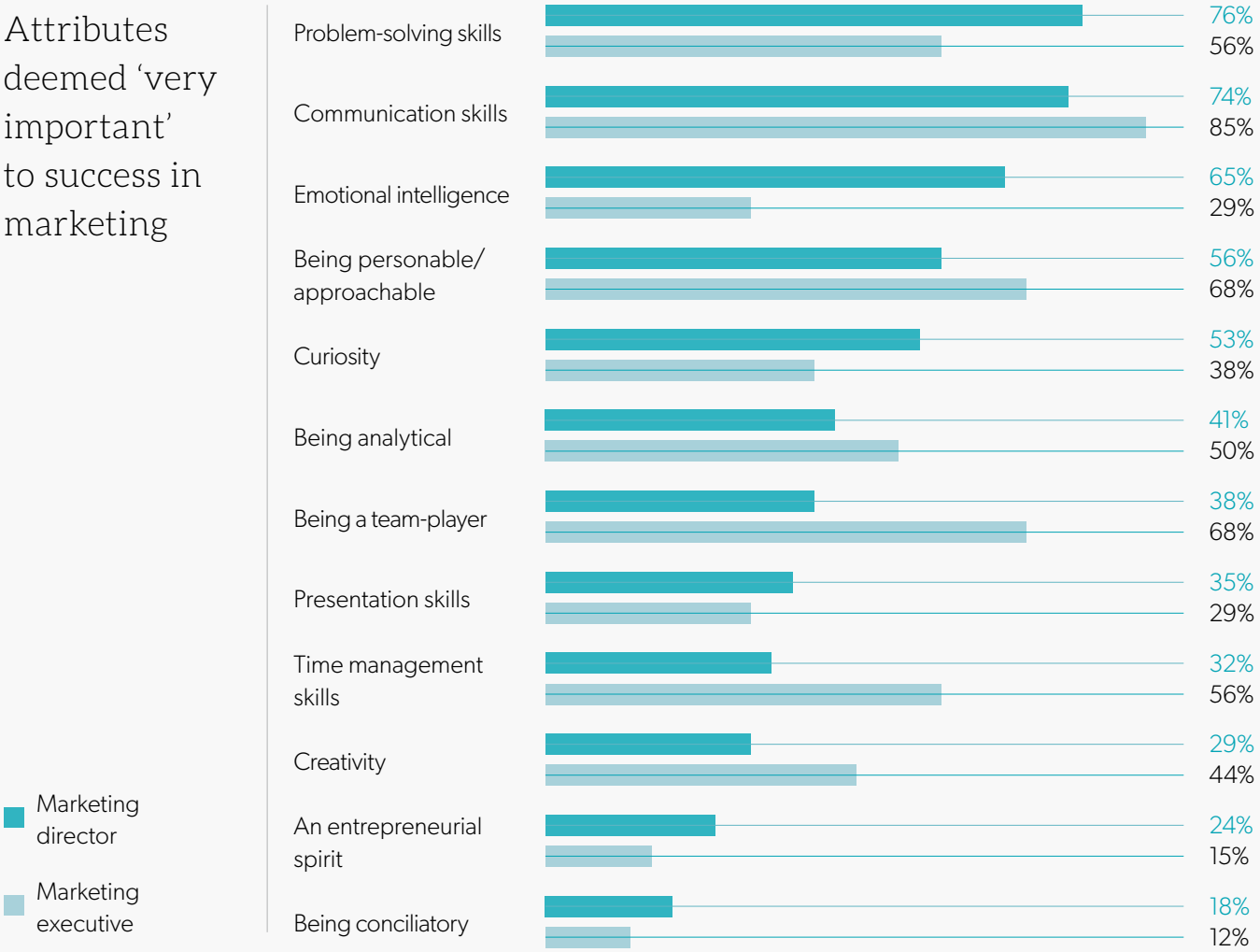
"Communication skills are non-negotiable for B2B marketers"

3.2 Work on your communication and problem-solving skills

It's a truth widely acknowledged that communication skills are non-negotiable for B2B marketers: 82% of all respondents say these are 'very important', with problem-solving skills also being universally acknowledged as key to success in marketing.

There are, however, some differences between what marketing executives and marketing directors perceive as important. Emotional intelligence is rated as 'very important' by 65% of marketing directors, but just 29% of executives, while being a good team player is deemed as 'very important' by 68% of execs and just 38% of directors.

Attributes deemed 'very important' to success in marketing



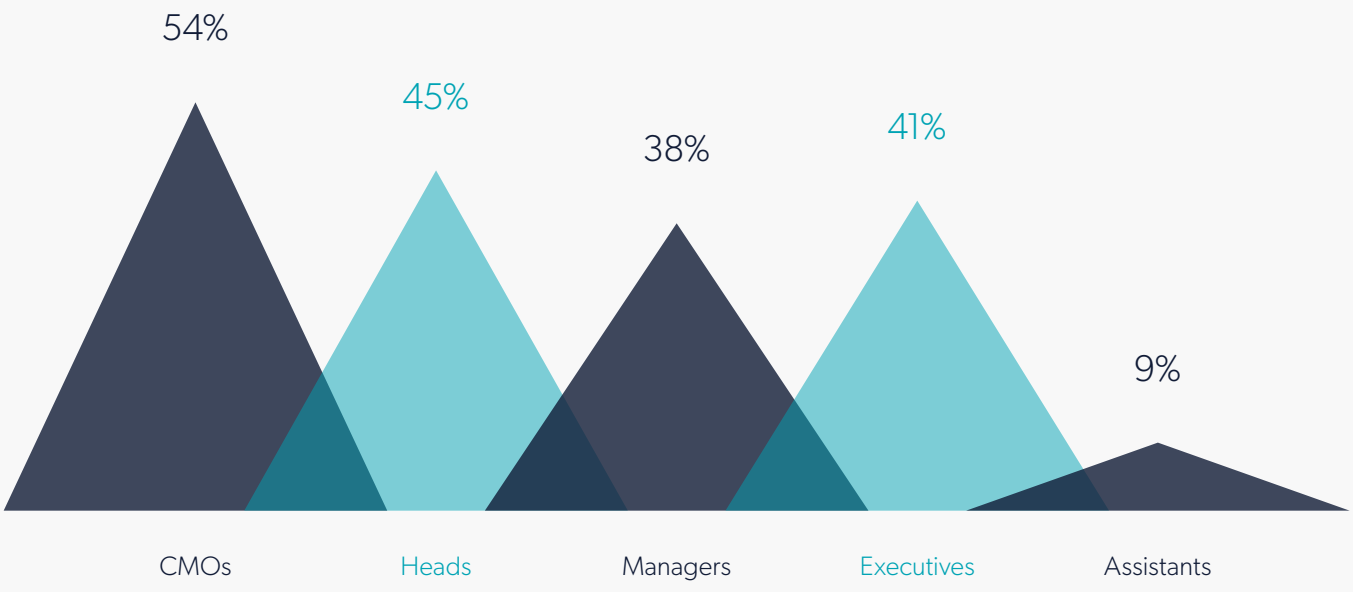
3.3 Consider professional qualifications

Our *B2B Marketing Salary Survey 2017-18* points to the fact that qualifications can boost remuneration, but what about career progression? Professional marketing qualifications, such as certificates or diplomas, are seen by 75% of those who hold them as being 'very' or 'quite important' to their career progression. This is pretty illuminating: of all executives surveyed, 41% hold a professional marketing qualification, and this increases to 54% of CMOs.

"Gaining the right marketing qualifications (CIM) and a related degree suggests commitment to a career in marketing"

Head of marketing

Breakdown of marketers with professional qualifications





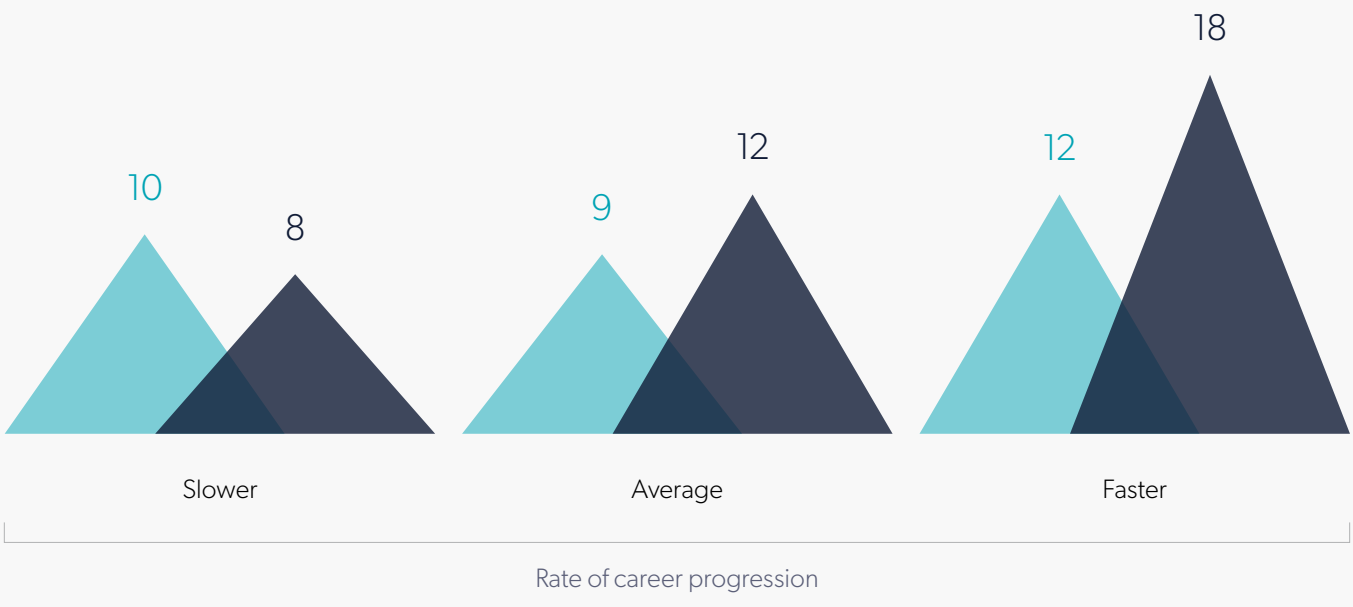
Additionally, marketers who say their progression has been slower than the average are much less likely to have a professional marketing qualification. Some 45% of marketers whose careers are progressing swiftly have professional qualifications versus 27% of those who say their careers are moving at a slower pace.

Alongside qualifications, consider whether you've been enhancing your skillset through training – faster marketers attend more training on average than other marketers – 12 hours of internal training and 18 hours of external training in the last 12 months, compared to nine and 12 for average marketers and 10 and eight for slower marketers.

"Some marketers fall behind because there's no time for training or lessons learnt in their business"

Marketing executive

Level of progression/hours of internal and external training in the last 12 months



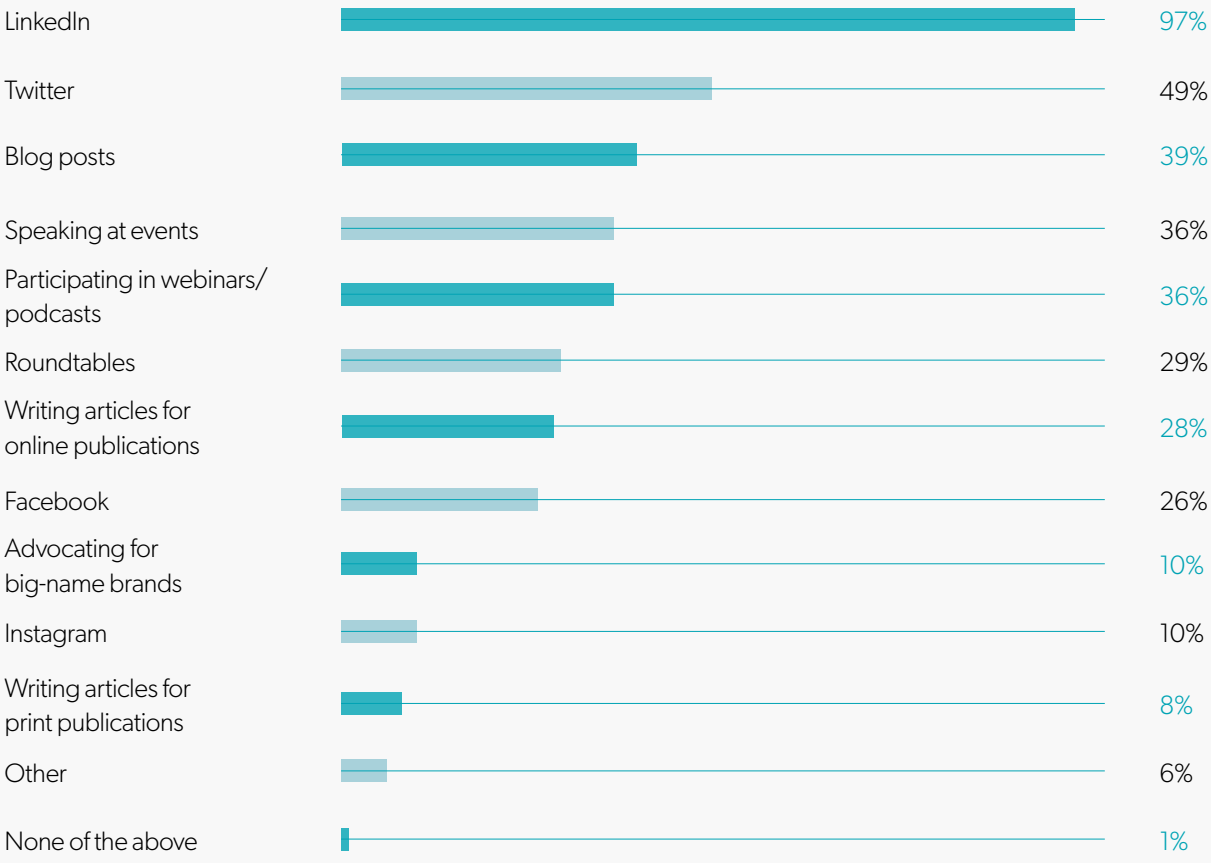
"If you don't raise your own profile no-one will realise what contribution you can make"

Marketing manager

3.4 Promote yourself

Speaking at events and taking part in podcasts are great ways of getting yourself noticed, and the canny faster-progressing marketers are well aware of this. Just 6% of slower marketers promote themselves through speaking at events, and only 18% take part in webinars or podcasts, compared to more than a third of faster marketers (36%).

Channels used by faster-progressing marketers to promote professional profile



3.5 Grow your network

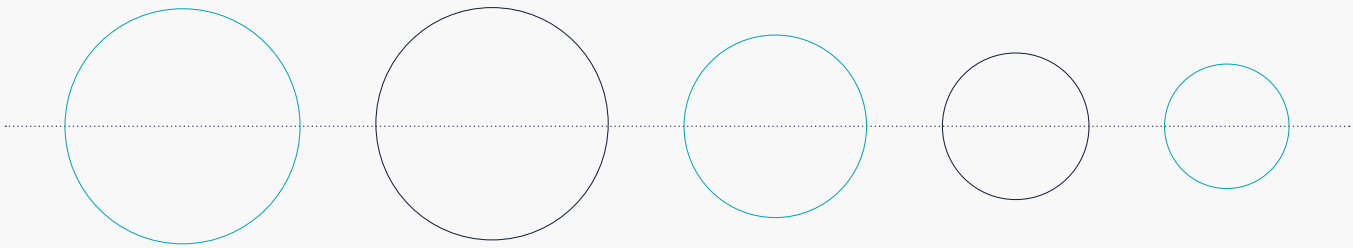
This one's intrinsically linked to point four: if you're getting your name out there you're de facto growing your network and expanding your reach. But getting out and about and meeting people is crucial: having a strong professional network of contacts will help you in two ways. Firstly, it's a sure-fire way of gaining new insight, ideas and knowledge, and secondly, it's about keeping your options open. Who knows whether that impressive marketing director you met at a recent roundtable might remember you when she comes round to hiring a new marketing manager?

Senior marketers don't need convincing of the power of networking: heads and CMOs/marketing directors rate their networks as much stronger than those at lower levels of seniority – 85% of CMOs and 84% of heads rate their network as 'quite' or 'very' strong, compared to 66% for managers, 53% for executives and 45% for assistants.

"You need to network. Doing a good job is all well and good, but if it's not packaged and presented well to colleagues and industry peers, you will stay invisible"

Marketing manager

Marketers who rate their professional networks as 'quite' or 'very' strong



85% CMOs

84% Heads

66% Managers

53% Executives

45% Assistants



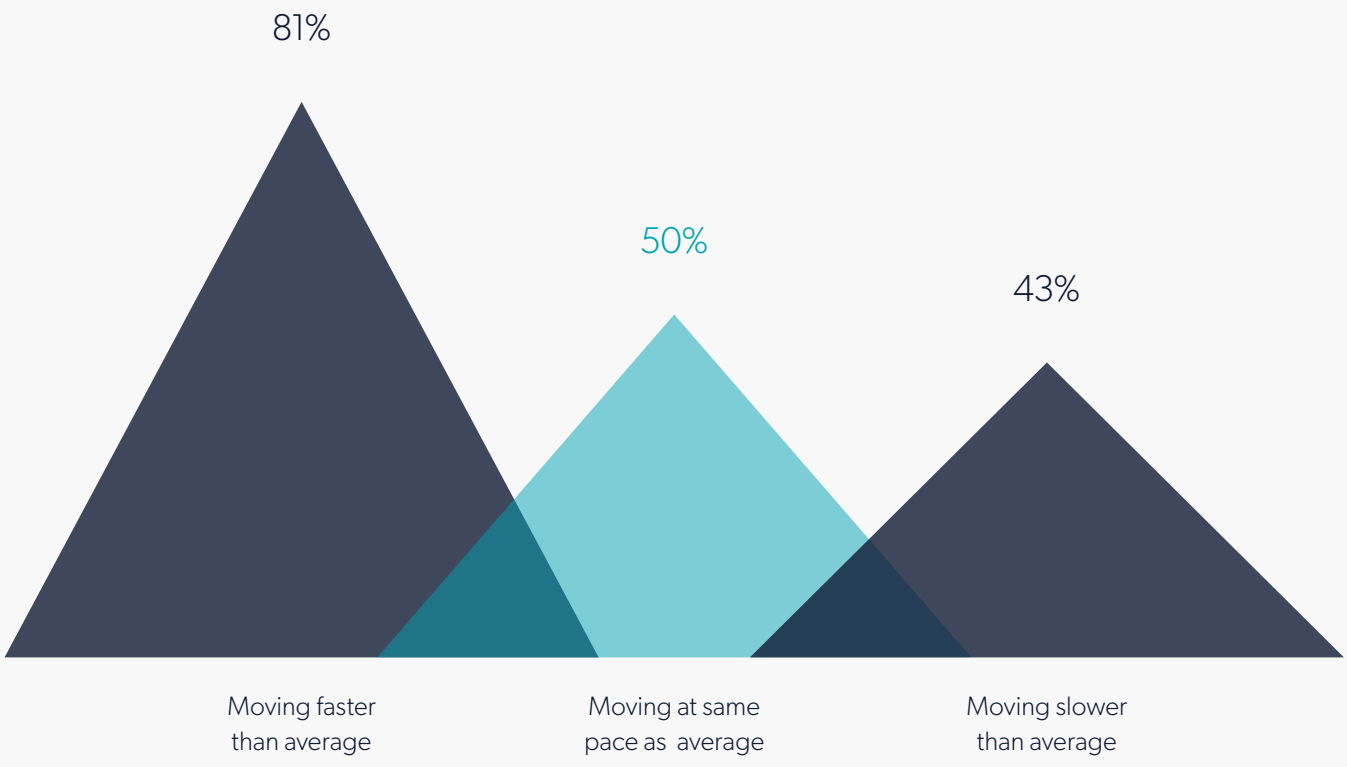
"The most successful marketers treat themselves as a brand and their career as a campaign"

Marketing manager

3.6 Plan your route to the top

Now we're not expecting you to be plotting your ascent to the top like a James Bond villain, but it definitely pays to be aware of where you'd like to be in the future. Do you think you actively manage your career? Do you take a keen interest in where you're moving? Some 81% of faster-progressing marketers say they're 'very' or 'quite' actively managing their careers. As ever, CMOs come up trumps here: nearly a quarter (21%) say they have a structured career plan in place.

Marketers who are actively managing their careers



"To succeed you need the passion to spend extra hours reading up on the latest trends and technology"

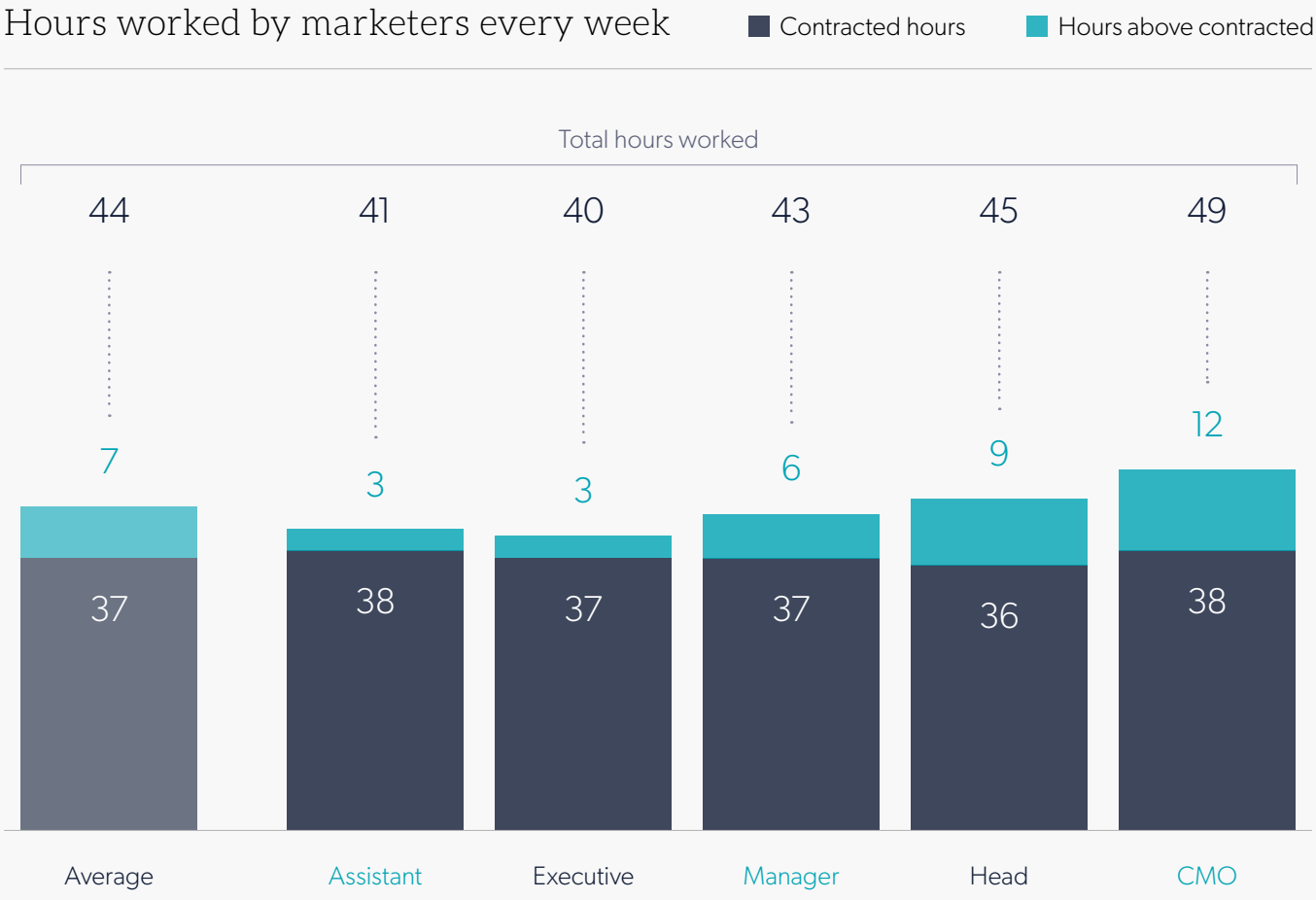
Head of marketing

3.7 Put the hours in

This may not be what you want to hear, but the marketers rising rapidly to the top are more than willing to put in the overtime – a mammoth 42% say that it's important to work longer than contracted hours, compared to 27% for average and 20% for slower. High-flyers work, on average, nine hours per week more than they're contracted.

Worth the eventual (both literal and metaphorical) pay-off or promotion? That's for you to decide.

Unsurprisingly, the closer you reach to the top the less likely it is that extra hours worked will be something within your control. CMOs work an average of 12 extra hours above contracted hours per week compared to just four hours for assistants.





3.8 Pick the right company

The age-old question of nature versus nurture is appropriate here, and it seems that much of an individual's success can be attributed to their working environment. An overwhelming 94% of B2B marketers say that working in a company with a good culture is important for success, 93% say it's important to have a supportive line manager and 90% believe it's all about having an inspirational boss.

The message, then, is to carefully consider the brand you work for: there may not be immediate opportunities for progression within the team, but if they have a positive approach to progression and training, you could be gearing up for serious career acceleration later on.

It also pays to consider your company's approach to training: 80% of marketers say that having a structured professional development plan in place is critical to career progression.

"Some marketers have been institutionalised in the same company for too long, which can have an impact on career progression and self-improvement"

Marketing manager

The importance of the right working environment

94%

of marketers value working in a company with a good culture.

93%

of marketers believe having a supportive line manager is important to success.

90%

of marketers say an inspiring boss makes all the difference.

Section 4
Your career acceleration plan

4.1 If you're a less experienced marketer looking to progress:

- **Never stop honing your general marketing skills** – possessing rock-solid marketing fundamentals will stand you in good stead in the long run.
- If you have a particular strength, such as video, you should of course capitalise on it. But **never lose sight of strategic marketing objectives** – a tactic-first approach will not yield long-term results, and a broader view of marketing will make you a more versatile marketer in the future.
- Always **approach problems with solutions,** and consider the viewpoints of others until it becomes second nature.
- Some marketers argue that marketers who can write well are few and far between. Seek out ways to **develop your writing skills** (consider starting your own blog on something you're passionate about); this will help you communicate better both as a colleague and as a marketer.
- Remember that your professional (and personal) profile is reflected across many different channels – **consider your persona on social channels** and how it reflects on your professional profile. Also review your privacy settings; if your Instagram profile is public, remember that it's visible to everyone, including future employers and colleagues.
- **Build your social following.** Easy ways to do this could include taking part in groups and discussions on LinkedIn and engaging with influencers on Twitter.
- **Join professional networks** like the BMC (Business Marketing Club) to extend your network. You can also find marketing events on websites like meetup.com where you can meet like-minded marketing folk.
- **Seek out mentoring programmes,** either within your business or externally; there's nothing quite like first-hand advice from someone who's been through it all before. A mentor can help you navigate challenging times, or simply provide practical marketing tips and advice.
- If you're looking for a new role, **don't hesitate to apply speculatively to companies you'd like to work for;** even if they're not advertising for a specific vacancy, they might have something ideal coming up. You're also much more likely to catch their attention if you contact them explaining how keen you'd be to work for them.
- Before you put pen to paper and sign a new contract, take a look to see if the company you're considering has been reviewed on websites like Glassdoor, or if it features in 'Best companies to work for' lists. Also make sure you ask relevant questions during interviews – try and **get a good sense of the company culture.**

The B2B Marketing career acceleration guide © **B2B Marketing 2017**



4.2 If you're a more experienced marketer looking for your next step up:

- Gaining a wider view of the business and a **strategic understanding of marketing's role** will be crucial if you want to get ahead. To do this, make sure you build relationships with other departments and understand the challenges they're facing.
- **Continue to think about the language you use** with different members of the wider organisation; are you communicating in a way that means something to them?
- **Consider taking an Agile marketing approach** within your team; this will boost your adaptability as well as that of the wider department.
- Reach out to media agencies with offers of columns or blogs. This can help **build your profile as a marketing thought leader.**
- Look into whether there are **networks you can join** within your organisation, such as a women's network.
- Now's the time to **start seeking out speaking opportunities,** if you haven't already. Submit an idea the next time you see a call-for-papers, or look out for opportunities to sit on panels.
- **Consider small networking commitments** like sticking around for an extra half an hour after a conference (you never know who you might meet).
- **Don't get complacent** – if you're too comfortable within your role (or even your company), maybe it's time for a change? If you're not being challenged then it may well be time to seek out new opportunities.
- **Consider becoming a mentor** for more junior marketers, either within your business or externally. Not only can this be rewarding in its own right, it's also a good way of demonstrating your level of experience and leadership to your peers.

"Gaining a wider view of the business and a strategic understanding of marketing's role will be crucial if you want to get ahead"



4.3 Actionable ways to plan your career success today

'Where do you see yourself in five years?' is a question dreaded by many, and not just marketers. But our research clearly shows that **marketers who have a career plan in place are often more successful**. Here's how to create one:

- Map the path you've already taken, and think about why you've ended up where you are now. Are you satisfied with the jobs you've done in the past, and what would you have done differently? Reflecting on this can help you make a more effective plan in future.

- Identify your options – do you aspire to become a CMO of a big-name brand, or perhaps start your own agency one day? Spend some time thinking about what you really want from your career – also make sure you take into account personal priorities, such as a good work/life balance or having children.

- Set SMART goals (specific, measureable, attainable, relevant and time-bound). If you set short-term goals (within a year) and long-term goals (within five years) you'll be able to take concrete steps to further your dream career.

- Re-examine your career on a regular basis. Think about dedicating time to career planning, perhaps once a year. This could be an opportunity to think carefully about the direction your career is heading, and help you anticipate any challenging times you face in future.

- Identify a couple of marketers whose careers you admire – see how they made their way to the top. Is there anything you could try to emulate? How quickly do they change roles? How active are they on social media?

- Think about how much you want to earn. Having an idea of your salary ambitions will help you figure out which career path may be best suited to you. Use our *Salary Survey* to determine the average salary for different B2B marketing roles.

- Make your employer clear about your ambitions – if they don't have a strong understanding of what you want to achieve, they won't be able to support your progression. The best employers will encourage you to pursue your dreams, even if it means letting you go.

- Make sure you're noting down your achievements – it's easy to forget successes when it comes round to updating your CV.

Conclusion

The findings of this research illustrate just how many different elements are required for success in B2B marketing. Those at the top will tell you that working longer hours will only get you so far – among other things, you also need to work on your personal brand and ensure you develop a business brain, as well as a marketing one, in order to succeed.

On the skills front, it's pretty clear that specialising too specifically, too soon, may actually be a set back – CMOs aren't *just* generalists, but their skills are actually weaker than one might have expected when it comes to more specialist areas such as data analysis and social media. The number one skill required for the role of CMO is strategy/planning – so if you're an aspiring marketing leader, don't let this one fall by the wayside.

Another overriding lesson from our respondents is the importance of being passionate about what you do (we say, without wanting to sound like a self-help manual). The message is pretty clear – building a professional network and your personal brand takes time and effort outside of traditional working hours, but these factors are more important than ever when careers are no longer just about finding the right company and staying there for life.

Finally, nobody can underestimate the importance of being an inquisitive marketer; most will agree that this is fundamental to success in such a fast-changing sector. It's the curious marketers of today who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

And remember, if you're keen to know what you can expect to earn for your role, refer to our *B2B Marketing Salary Survey 2017-18*, which is available to download for free.

"Nobody can underestimate the importance of being an inquisitive marketer"

The secrets of professional success



Andrew Dalglish
Director
Circle Research

The survey that underpins this report captured the experiences of over 70 B2B marketers who've made it to the heady heights of head of marketing, VP marketing or CMO. What's the secret of their success?

Well, it wasn't an accident, with 71% actively planning their career. And this plan seems to revolve around four pillars.

Firstly, they invest in **knowledge**. Most of those at senior levels possess a university degree and the majority feel this has been an important contributor to their success. The subject of this degree doesn't seem to matter though, with the majority studying a topic other than marketing, whether that's fine art, philosophy, engineering or law. However, vocational qualifications do play an important role, with 53% obtaining a professional marketing qualification once in the workplace.

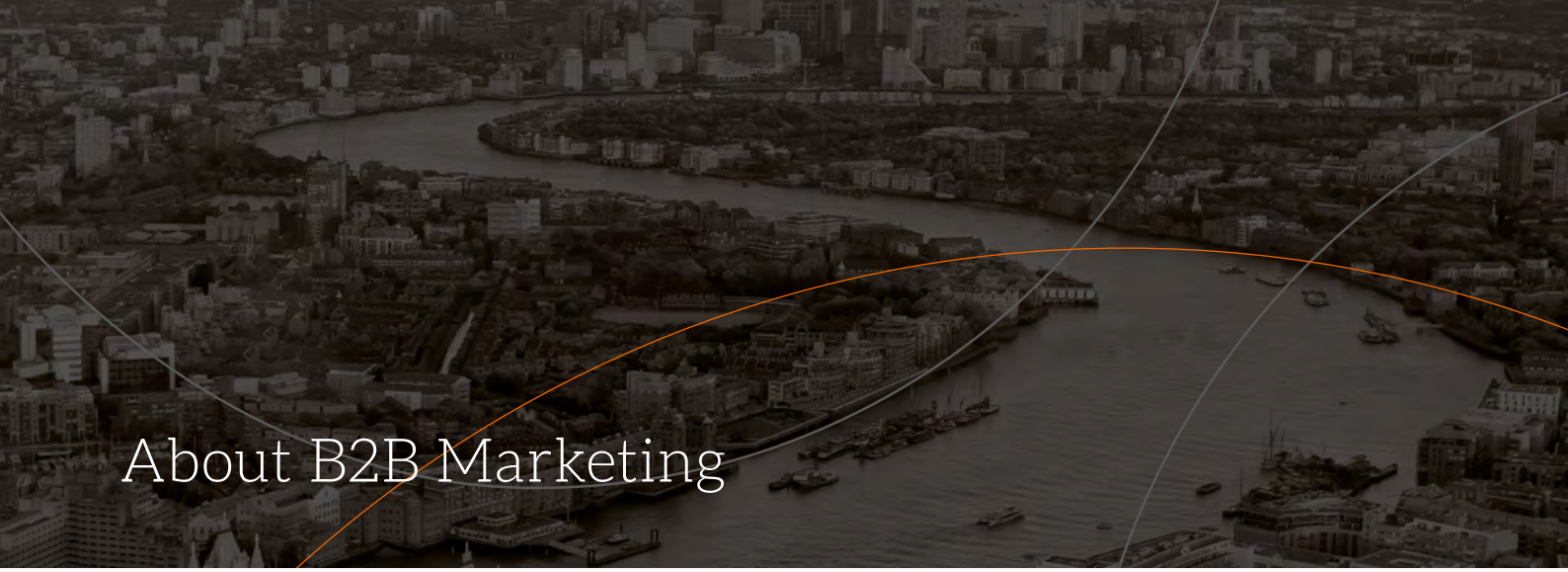
Secondly, they seek out **diverse experiences**. Most senior marketers (68%) have been in the profession for more than 15 years, and during that time have typically worked in five companies. Furthermore, they seem to carefully pick their workplace, looking for a positive culture, supportive line manager and inspiring boss. This provides numerous learning experiences and an environment where their skills are nurtured.

"Most of those at senior levels possess a university degree and the majority feel this has been an important contributor to their success"

Thirdly, they **develop some core skills** which are essential to success. They seek to become expert communicators (81% say this has been very important to their success) with strong emotional intelligence (70%), an adaptable mindset (76%) and outstanding problem-solving skills (73%).

And finally, they develop **a personal brand** and actively promote this so new opportunities open up. Almost all senior marketers (99%) use LinkedIn to promote their professional profile and half (49%) also use Twitter to the same end.

Good luck on your journey!



About B2B Marketing

With hundreds of thousands of users across the globe, we are the leading trusted voice at the centre of the B2B marketing community.

B2B Marketing members are kept up to date with the latest strategies, insight and inspiration from the B2B marketing space, through our dedicated:

- Research and analysis
- News
- Information portal
- Events
- Training
- Networking.

Why become a B2B Marketing Premium member?

Our Premium membership package delivers outstanding value, and is the go-to choice for thousands of senior-level B2B marketers, decision-makers and leaders.

Here's just some of the value Premium membership provides:

- Access to five on-demand DMA- and CPD-accredited training courses worth £875.
- B2B marketing-specific Best Practice Guides worth over £3000.
- B2B industry benchmarking reports worth over £3300.
- Business cases priced at £150 each for non-members.
- Premium research, analysis, benchmarking reports and guides published every month.
- An annual subscription to the quarterly *B2B Marketing* magazine.

Our promise to you

Things change fast in B2B. Just staying on top of the changes can be a full-time job. So we do that job for you.

With our membership, training and events we guarantee you'll:

- Put your best ever strategies in place.
- Lock down the multiple skills, tools and insights you need.
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- Go to b2bmarketing.net/join to set up your Premium membership.
- Check out Events, Training and Enterprise Solutions on our website.
- Call us on +44 (0)207 014 4920 if you'd like to discuss your specific business needs.

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About Circle Research

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

Here's why:

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

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

Call Andrew Dalglish, director at Circle on +44 (0)20 7960 3802 or email him at andrew.dalglish@circle-research.com

Circleresearch
The B2B experts

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