B2B LEADERS REPORT 2015

B2B LEADERS

Defining leadership in the digital age

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Circleresearch
The B2B experts

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About this report

This report brings together insight from marketers operating at all levels within the B2B marketing department hierarchy, and aims to paint a picture of what it takes to be a great leader in the modern B2B environment.

Research surveys were completed by 139 B2B marketers, 68 of whom were drawn from the B2B Leaders membership pool.

The research took place in July 2015, and was carried out by Circle Research. Further analysis, writing, editing and design was carried out by B2B Marketing.

Introduction

Just as new parents may lament the lack of officially ratified documentation regarding exactly how they're supposed to look after the baby they've just created, so too can some B2B marketing leaders find themselves in charge of large teams without the necessary formalised training, guidance and insight to make the most of the opportunity.

In many ways this report is an attempt to address that industry shortcoming.

The focus very much stems from a position stating that the best leaders are the ones able to get the most out of their teams. And using the insight drawn from our research, we have managed to create the closest thing we've ever seen to a blueprint for B2B leadership success.

We're covering areas such as what motivates marketers, as well as the role leaders play in the process of delivering stimulating environments for their teams, and we're questioning exactly what successful leadership looks like.

There may be a few tricky home truths along the way. But by approaching the conclusions drawn in this research project with an open mind, all B2B leaders should find something that will allow them to become better leaders.

The B2B space is full of talented people leading innovative and successful teams. But the insight captured here will help you take your team's attainment to the next level.

Section 1

No leader is an island

No leader is an island

Career progression demands a shift in focus. Success becomes less about being skilled in particular tasks, and more about having an ability to see the big picture and plan well.

However, this is far from being the full story. Without deft execution even the most well-conceived strategy

The best leaders appreciate the importance of surrounding themselves with a strong team and know how to get the best out of them.

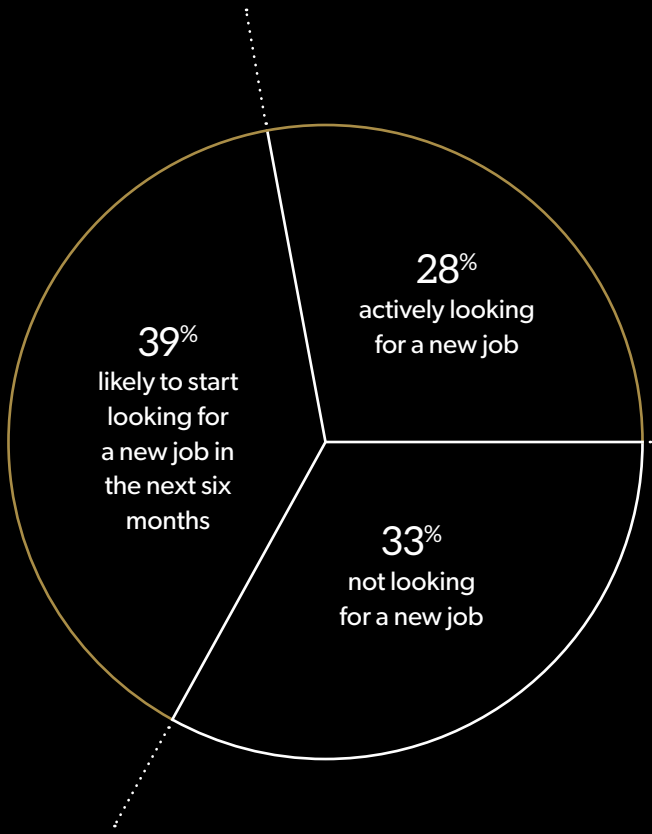
would fail. Therefore, the best leaders appreciate the importance of surrounding themselves with a strong team and know how to get the best out of them.

Success in the modern business environment demands a multi-disciplined collective working in harmony towards common goals. Marketing success on any kind of scale is impossible without a well-structured and dedicated team. You may well be presiding over such a scenario at present. But if your team is anything like the norm, then you may well have got a problem. Do you know how many of your department are currently thinking of jumping ship?

Section 2

Does your team want to leave?

Employee churn is common. It's not even necessarily something to fear. Indeed, it's quite often that changes in personnel actually allow for internal improvement and departmental up-skilling. Similarly, being aware of the other options out there is a completely normal thing for all employees to be interested in. But it may come as a surprise to some marketing leaders to hear just how many of your team are currently considering their options.



67%
of your team could be at risk

A relatively unprecedented outpouring of honesty among our marketing team respondents reveals that the number looking to move on in the near future is rather high.

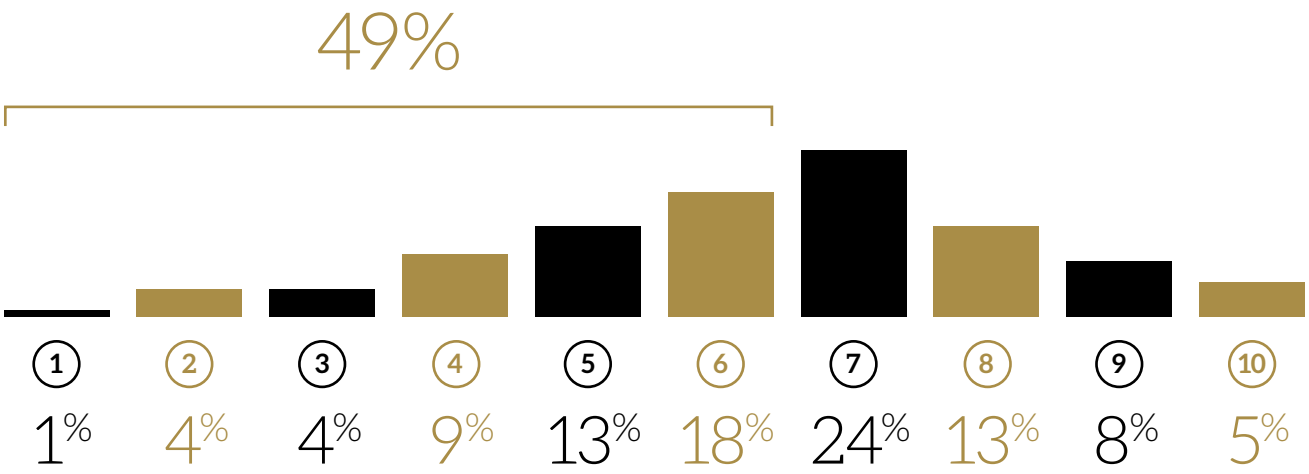
In fact 28 per cent of marketers are actively looking for a new job at the moment. A further 39 per cent also admitted they are likely to start looking for a new job in the next six months.

This means that around two thirds of your team could be at risk.

Ensuring your top talent stays within the business is clearly an important element of effective leadership, but it's not just about encouraging people to stay. As a leader you also have an obligation to nurture talent and effectively leverage it for the benefit of the organisation.

Here, too, there seems to be a challenge. Almost one half (49 per cent) of marketing team members say that they don't feel valued by their employer, and if they feel under-valued it's odds-on that they're not giving their all, and they've got one eye on the door.

The evidence we've uncovered so far suggests it may be worth B2B marketing leaders putting a little effort into understanding exactly what it is their teams are looking for.



How valued do you feel by your employer? [Rated 1 to 10, percentages rounded down]

Section 3

What your employees want

What your employees want

To get the most out of your team, it's critical to understand what motivates them. Of course, it goes without saying that the precise motivators will be unique to every individual within it. We won't be going into micro detail to examine hyper-personal scenarios.

But it is very possible to glean valuable direction on what's likely to matter most to your team by examining the results of the questions we set looking at what respondents equated with happiness in their jobs. Strong averages emerged and provide pretty solid points for discussion. The focus here was on the elements of work that employees felt contributed most to overall job satisfaction. Note: at this point we were not asking whether these factors were present in their current roles. Rather, the focus was theoretical.

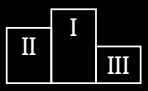
We presented 14 different options and asked respondents to rank these in terms of the impact they felt they had on job satisfaction.

By far the most frequently quoted option was 'having a stimulating job'. Fifty-two per cent placed it in their top three, while 22 per cent selected it as the top factor determining job satisfaction.

'Feeling valued by your employer' was the second most-selected element, with 37 per cent placing it in their top three and 17 per cent putting it right up at the top. Meanwhile, a healthy work/life balance was regarded as a top-three factor by a third (33 per cent) and as the most influential element by 12 per cent.

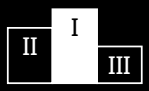
Which factors have the greatest impact on job satisfaction?

1st Having a stimulating job



52%

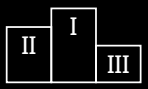
in the top three factors



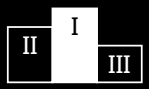
22%

the top factor for job satisfaction

2nd Feeling valued by your employer

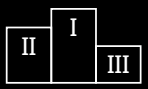


37%

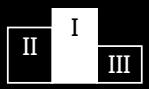


17%

3rd Having a healthy work/life balance



33%



12%

Plenty of food for thought there. But before you go rushing out and examining how stimulating your team's roles are, praising them for every little action, and figuring out how many hours above and beyond contract they've worked this month, be warned that things may not actually be quite this simple. What people think they want, and what they actually want aren't always the same thing.

As referenced previously, there's often some disparity between what people say and what they mean. Sometimes people lack a true insight into their own motivations, which means that what they believe to matter may not always be what truly matters. With this in mind we wanted to dig a little deeper into the factors that really make a difference when it comes to job satisfaction.

In order to locate any differences in this instance we asked respondents to report how satisfied they were with their current jobs, and plotted this against the responses provided to the questions examining the 14 areas of potential sources of job satisfaction. In doing so, we were able to chart whether those most satisfied in their roles also tended to be the ones focusing on any specific areas of satisfaction. Similarly, we're able to note whether those least satisfied with their lots were similarly grouped.

This exercise reveals that having a stimulating role is indeed a powerful driver of job satisfaction. Not only is this the most commonly stated reason for job satisfaction, it also shows a high correlation with actual job satisfaction. In other words, it matters an awful lot.

But more revelatory findings were highlighted when we placed work/life balance and 'feeling valued' under the microscope.

Both of these factors recorded relatively low levels of correlation between the percentage placing them in their top three and the volume actually flagging it as a significant contributing factor to their current job satisfaction.

This suggests, and it stands to reason, that people are happy to sacrifice their personal time, provided it's in a job they enjoy. Similarly, it seems the task in hand plays a more important role than being regularly recognised for your contribution.

Section 4

What really makes them happy

What really makes them happy

To extend this narrative to a useful conclusion, it's vital that we flag the areas those currently enjoying their roles suggested were the factors contributing most to their happiness. This insight is much more likely to help you create happy, dedicated teams than addressing some of the issues raised in the previous section.

As previously stated, it's incredibly important that a job is stimulating. Such is the level of correlation in responses on this point that we can label it as a 'critical motivator'. Indeed, without wishing to overstate the case, it might be possible to argue that true job satisfaction is impossible without its presence.

Examining additional factors linked to those currently experiencing job satisfaction, we see having an 'enjoyable job' and the quality of leadership present in the organisation as being very important. We could dub these elements 'understated motivators'. These factors are more important than our respondents realised. And when we isolated those looking for new jobs, we found additional evidence to support the case.

When set an open-ended question asking what was behind their decision to look elsewhere, familiar themes were noticeable.

What is behind your decision to look for a new job?

14%

'Poor leadership' was quoted as a factor by 14 per cent.

16%

'Boredom' was quoted by around 16 per cent.

28%

Almost a third (28 per cent) felt that in order to progress their career they had to move elsewhere.

This provides a clear challenge to those in managerial and leadership positions. We'll examine exactly what goes in to 'good leadership' in section six.



Our research also unveiled that the extent to which an employee 'understands and supports company vision' plays a greater role in job satisfaction than many would assume. It was seen to have low stated importance but high correlation with actual job satisfaction. For this reason we have labelled it as a an 'unconscious motivator'.

We should probably make it clear that no advocacy is being made for ignoring the elements cited as 'theoretical motivators'. The fact that respondents have flagged issues such as work/life balance and recognition for a job well done means they – clearly – are important. But it seems it would also pay dividends if marketing leaders also seek to deliver on the 'understated' and 'unconscious' motivators flagged by those currently most enjoying their working life.

Perhaps we may even go as far as to claim that the recipe for job satisfaction looks something like: working for a strong leader in a stimulating role at a company with a believable and clear vision. This seems so obvious written down. But ensuring your team's experiences match this nirvana is the tricky bit.

Section 5

What your team doesn't like

What your team doesn't like

Because the world of work isn't always one continuous smooth cruise, it was also important we asked respondents to reflect on what they disliked most about their jobs. It can be cathartic to get such irritations off your chest. But in doing so our respondents have provided us with yet more invaluable information on how B2B marketing leaders should be attempting to manage their departments.

When asked what they dislike most about their job, the marketing teams we surveyed consistently named three things:

It's interesting that the first two could be true of people working in any number of professional disciplines. They are not marketing-specific. They are, however, entirely legitimate frustrations; possibly even shared by the people running their departments. And, perhaps more interestingly, there are causal links running between them all.

The most obvious link is between budgetary and resource constraints and the lack of respect marketing receives internally. Were marketing to secure a better internal reputation, it would probably be easier to negotiate increased budget. Of course, sitting around complaining is not going to change this, though. The challenge is for marketers, and the people managing them, to find creative ways of making the most of what they have, earning greater respect, and securing the rewards that accompany it.

It's possible to draw a positive conclusion from these most-flagged frustrations, however. And that is that marketers are committed to their craft. Each of the frustrations we've flagged here are directly related to issues blocking marketing success. Marketers like what they do, and they want to succeed. Your challenge is to create an environment in which they can do so.

1

Budgetary and resource constraints

2

Internal politics and bureaucracy

3

Lack of respect for marketing

To lead their team effectively, a marketing leader should be looking to head up a campaign of organisational change; a crusade to break down bureaucratic boundaries, gain respect for marketing and capture the resources it deserves.

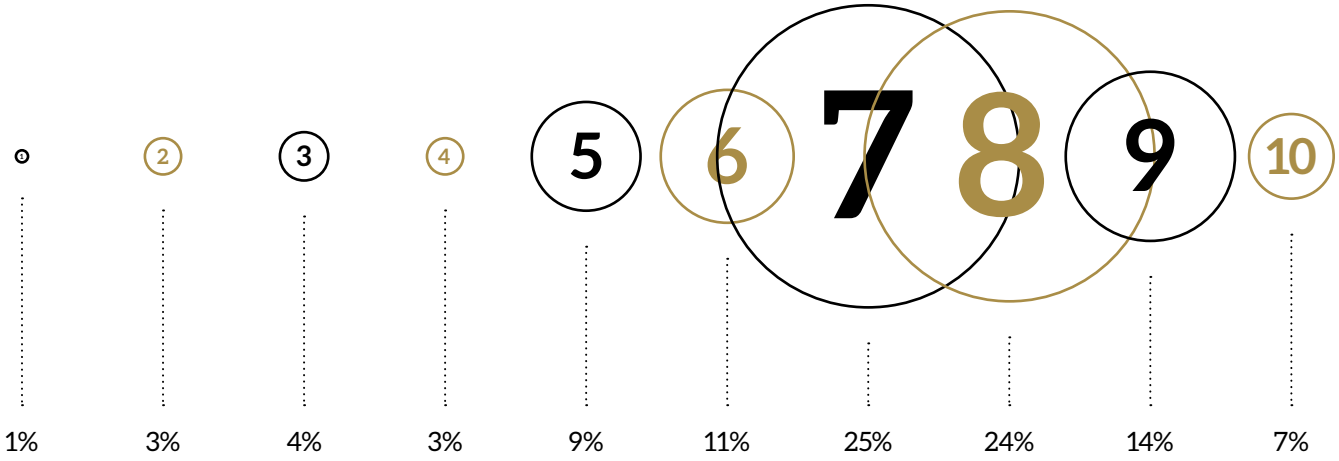
Section 6

The need for effective leadership

The need for effective leadership

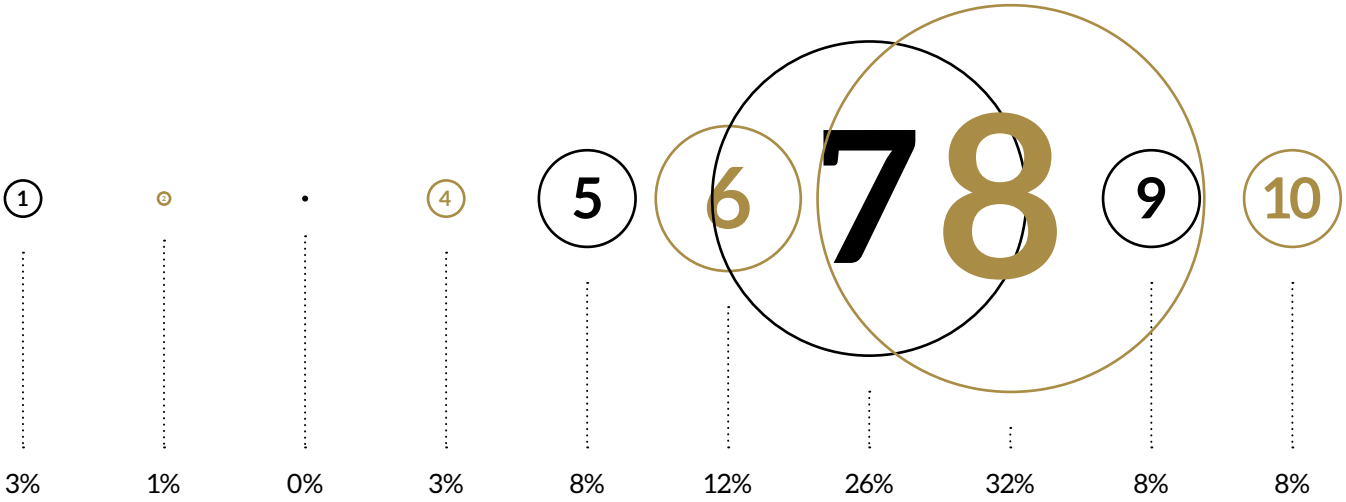
It's worth noting that the majority of marketing team members are actually rather content with their jobs in general. The average employee rates their job at seven out of 10 for both 'stimulation' and 'enjoyment'. That's one big and very important box ticked already.

But when we explore how employees feel about their employer's performance in areas critical to job satisfaction, it becomes apparent that high levels of staff turnover can often be linked to clear root causes. There are the perennial issues: many feel financial rewards could be better, as could benefits, training and the tools they're given to do their job. However, although these areas should ideally be addressed, as flagged previously, they don't actually have much of an impact on satisfaction or loyalty.



How satisfied are you with the extent to which your job is stimulating?

[Rated 1 to 10, numbers rounded up]



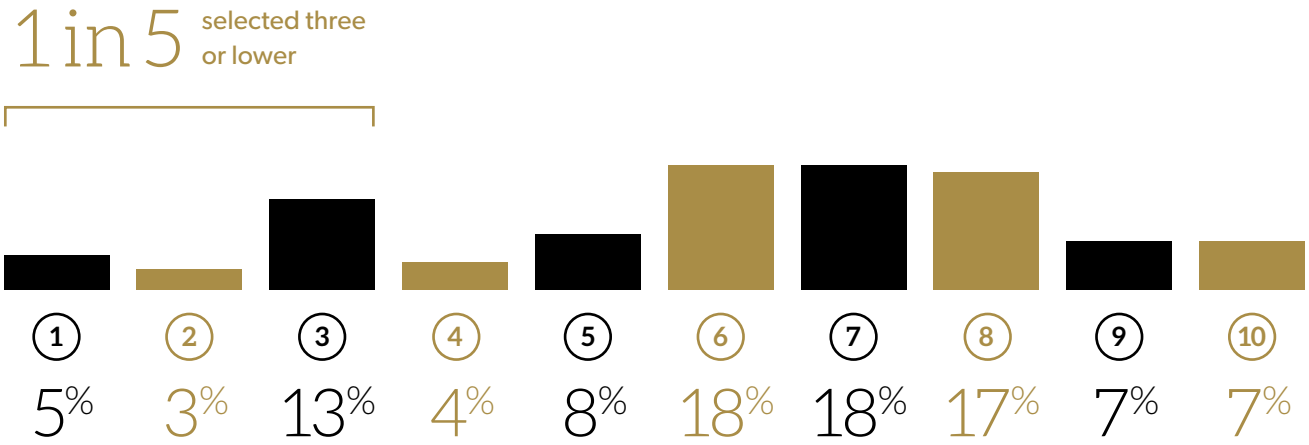
How satisfied are you with the extent to which your job is enjoyable?

[Rated 1 to 10, numbers rounded up]

The focus needs to be on the one area highlighted as a source of discontent and also a critical driver of employee satisfaction: leadership. The average marketing team member rates the quality of leadership provided by senior management in their organisation at just six out of 10. Even more alarmingly, one in five selected three or lower.

Leadership has been flagged throughout this report as a major driver of successful, loyal and contented marketing departments. Unfortunately, the B2B leaders surveyed in the parallel research project didn't recognise this fact. Less than half recognised that good leadership was an important driver of employee satisfaction.

This is an alarming statistic to be associated with those running our marketing departments, and one that must change.



How satisfied are you with the quality of leadership provided by senior management? [Rated 1 to 10]

Section 7

Are you a good leader?

Are you a good leader?

If we accept that good leadership matters (and we should), it becomes necessary to define exactly what 'good leadership' means. And who better to ask than those being led?

In our survey of marketing teams we asked respondents to define a good leader in their own words. An analysis of these comments reveals that, from an employee's point of view, a good leader displays two critical traits:

- A clear, well-articulated, vision
- An ability to inspire those around them.

So, how do you stack up? Leaders must be brave enough to put the quality of their own leadership skills under the microscope. In our research, most leaders (79%) gave their leadership skills either seven or eight out of 10. Pretty solid figures.

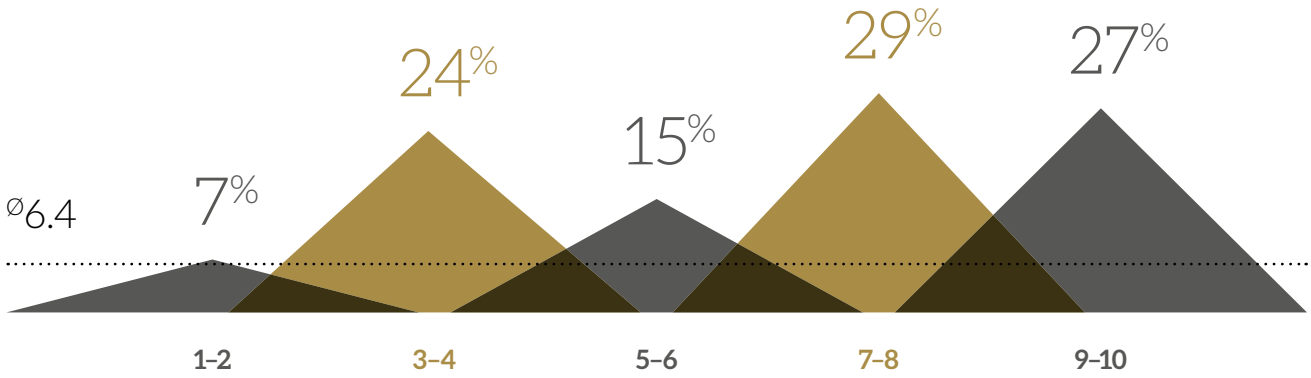
But we also asked our team member respondents to evaluate their leader's performance, across a series of 15 distinct leadership traits. And the results may not make for the prettiest of reading.

Particularly unfavourable feedback was given against our all-important traits pertaining to workplace satisfaction: an average of 6.4 out of 10 was recorded against how inspirational respondents' leaders were, while the figure was 6.3 when asked to reflect on how well their leaders could provide a clear vision to work towards.

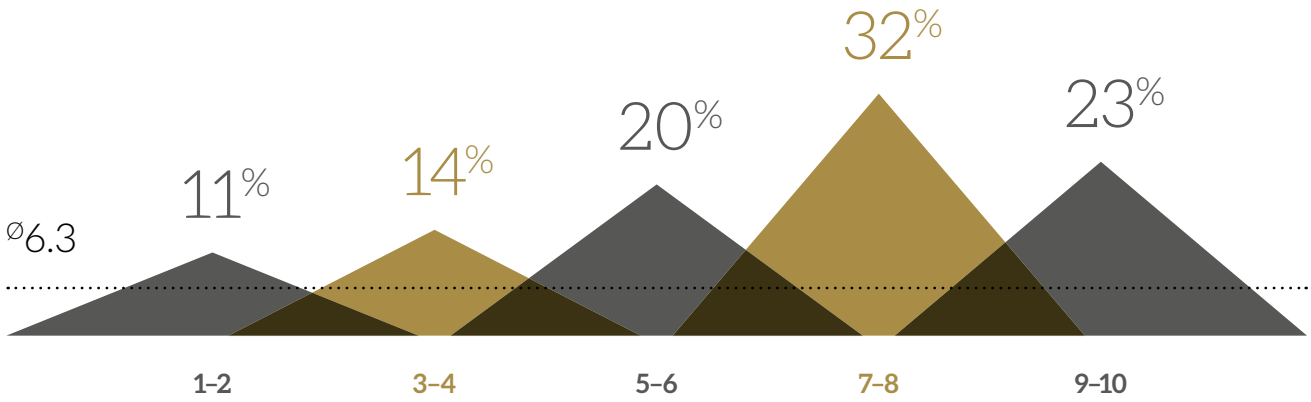
More impressive scores were awarded to traits such as leaders' commitment to success, having a passion for what they do, and in terms of their 'drive to reach their goals,' where 8.2, 7.9 and 7.7 were the averages recorded. It is, however, hard not to conclude that these are all much more focused on personal attainment than on the success and contentment of the teams being led.

And while it would be naive to deny that personal success plays a huge role in the world of work, few would argue that selfishness trumps altruism when it comes to leading a successful team.

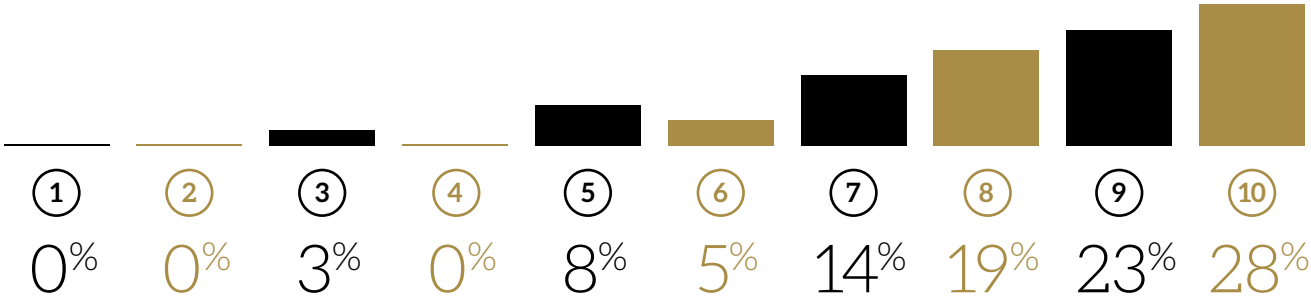
To what extent would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the person who leads your organisation's marketing?



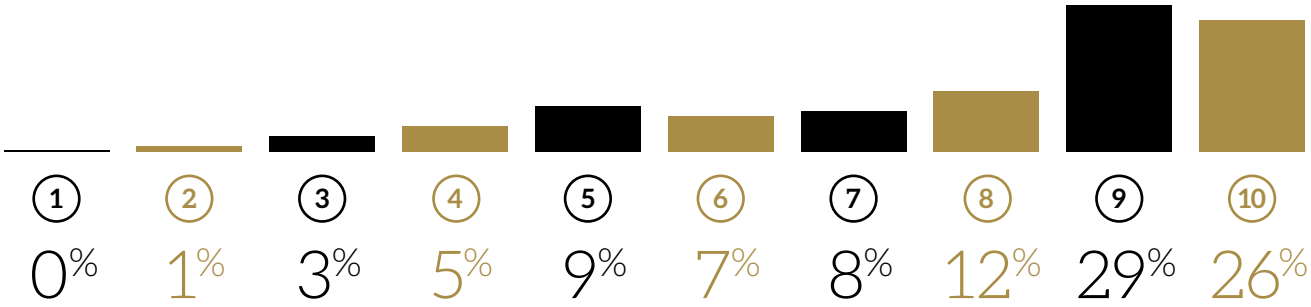
They inspire our team. [Rated 1 to 10]



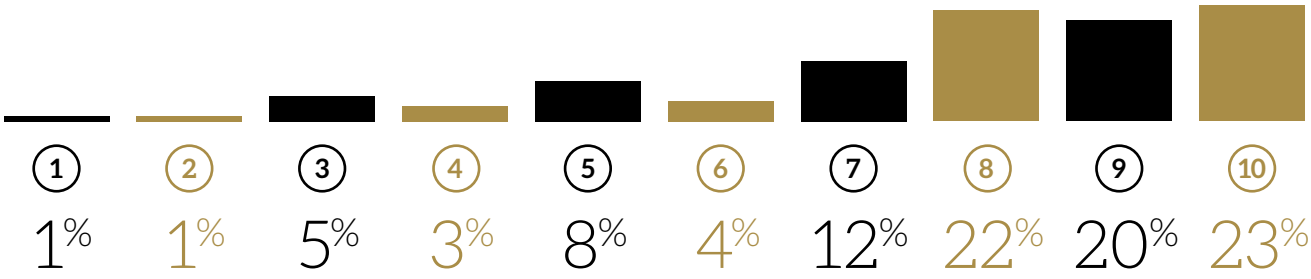
They provide a clear vision for our team. [Rated 1 to 10]



They are highly committed to the success of the organisation. [Rated 1 to 10]



They are passionate about what they do. [Rated 1 to 10]



They are persistent and driven to reach their goals. [Rated 1 to 10, numbers rounded down]

Section 8

Key takeaways

Key takeaways

Good leadership involves the creation and nurturing of effective and dedicated teams.

The 'quality of leadership' on offer at a company also plays a hugely significant role in the creation of dedicated teams.

Over a quarter of your team are currently looking for new jobs. And up to a further 39 per cent might start doing so in the next six months.

Fifty-three per cent of marketers regard 'a stimulating job' as being one of the most important factors in creating job satisfaction.

While a healthy work/life balance is regarded as being important, there are also certain 'subconscious motivators' at play too.

Many leaders tend to overestimate the quality of their leadership skills.

Forty-seven per cent of marketers don't feel valued by their employer.

Marketing leaders should be seen to be leading a campaign to gain respect for marketing and capture the resources it deserves.

The recipe for job satisfaction looks something like: working for a strong leader in a stimulating role at a company with a believable and clear vision.

Leadership is seen as being weak in many B2B organisations. Our respondents gave their managers an average of just six out of 10 for their leadership skills.

Good leadership involves clear, well-articulated vision sharing, and the ability to inspire.

Leaders must concentrate on the impact they are having on their teams, just as much as their own career development. Indeed, one will more than likely lead to the other.

Section 9

Leaders: Profiling

Leaders: Profiling

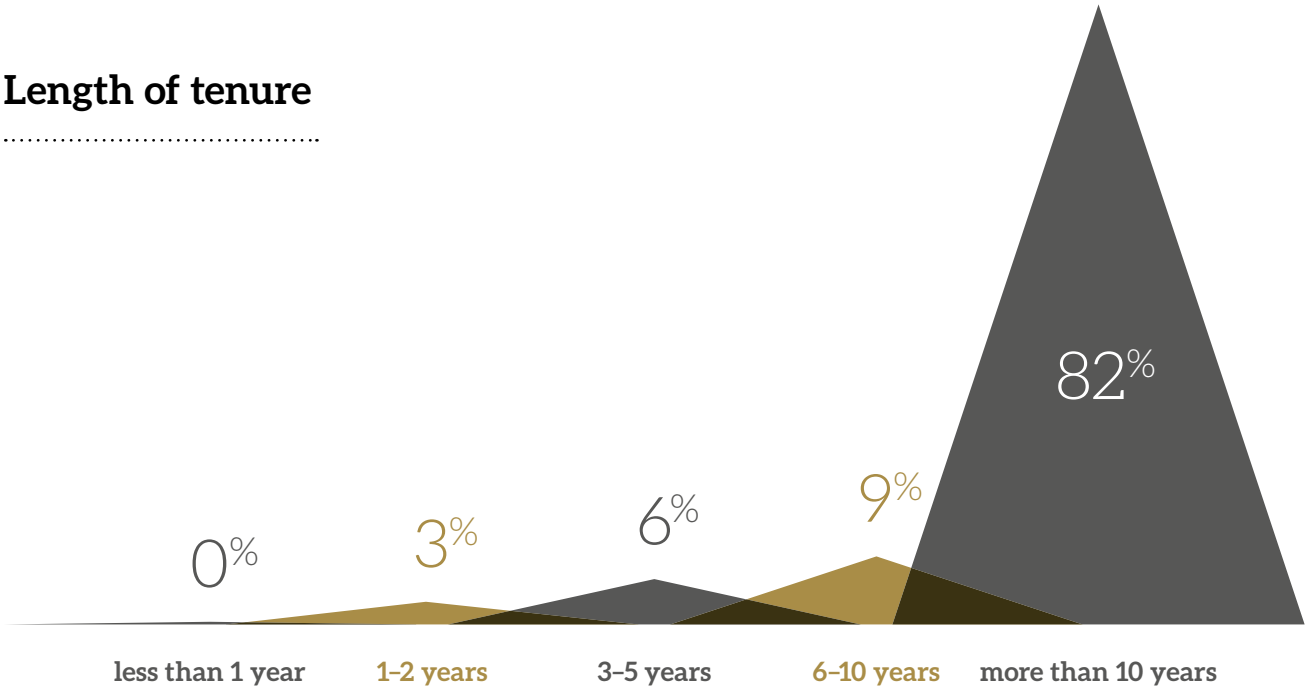
There's no doubt about it: leading a department is not an easy task. The challenges are wide-ranging and complicated, and it can often feel like there's relatively little support. Where do you go for help when you don't know the answer?

Much like the other content pieces, events and networking opportunities forming the core of the B2B Leaders programme, this report is designed to address this isolation issue. There is, after all, safety to be found in numbers.

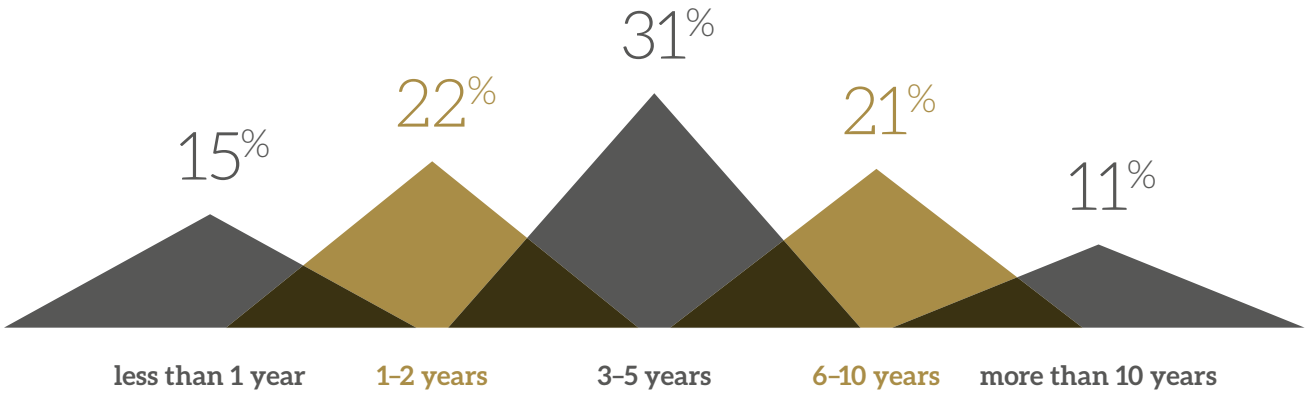
This final section of the *B2B Leaders Report 2015* aims to share a few of the 'behind the scenes' attributes that make up the characteristics of the 'average' B2B leader. Consider these insights as a glimpse under the masks of your peers.

While they aren't necessarily sharing an office with you right now, these are your colleagues. Hopefully you will find comfort in the fact that that many of the challenges you face are not quite as unique as they may sometimes appear.

Length of tenure

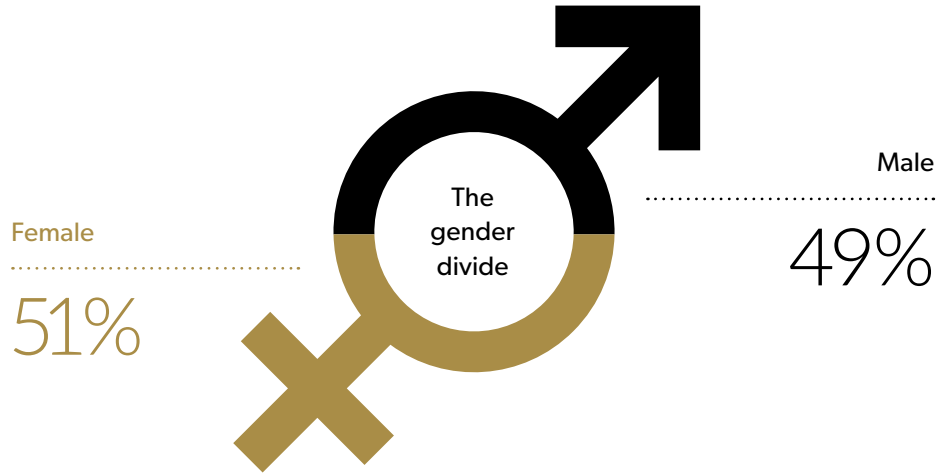


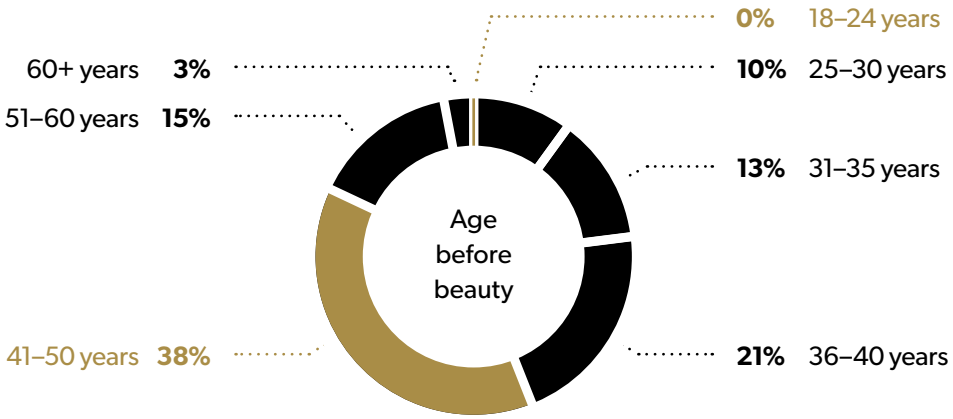
How long have you been working in marketing?



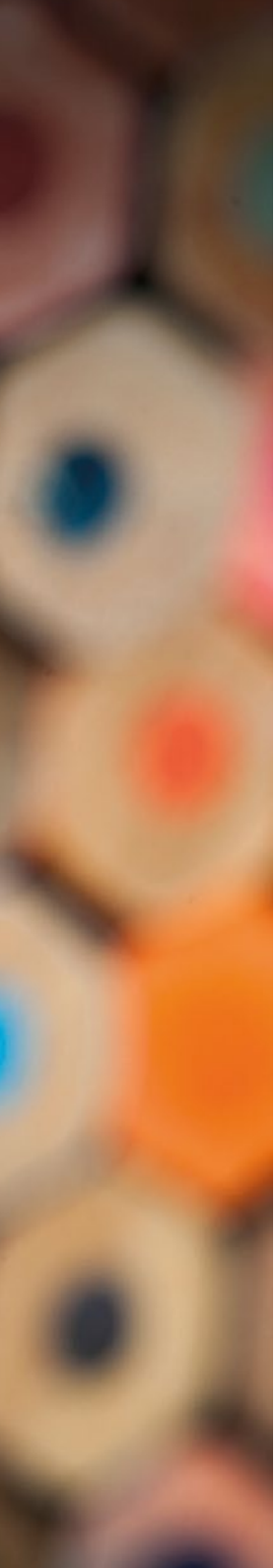
How long have you worked for your current employer?

Who are you?


The gender divide
Female
51%
Male
49%


Age before beauty
60+ years 3%
51–60 years 15%
41–50 years 38%
0% 18–24 years
10% 25–30 years
13% 31–35 years
21% 36–40 years


B2B Marketing™ Training



Why successful businesses choose B2B Marketing Training

Why is it such a problem finding expert B2B-focused training for you and your marketing team?

And why is training that inspires – with real-world examples and success stories – the reserve of the B2C world?

How do you ensure you have the right blend of specialist B2B skills and expertise to succeed?

For businesses that choose B2B Marketing for their training, these problems are easily dealt with.

" This was one of the best training sessions I've ever been on – and I've been on a lot! "

Marina Maciver
Marketing manager, Scottish Enterprise

For more information:
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Call us on +44 (0)207 014 4920
Or email us at training@b2bmarketing.net

About

B2B Leaders

The B2B Leaders programme is a network of the most senior figures in the B2B marketing space, from heads of marketing to global CMOs of leading brands.

Members benefit from a unique and invaluable opportunity to regularly network and collaborate with senior-level peers, share insights and discuss strategic challenges.

Membership is by invitation only, and includes:

- Annual Leaders Forum ticket, the only B2B marketing leader's event of its kind
- Monthly roundtables, focused on key marketing leadership topics
- Monthly roundtable findings reports
- Annual *B2B Leaders Report,* with key research data and insights

The B2B Leaders programme counts senior marketing names in Deloitte, Oracle, Atos, Dell, HSBC, KPMG and Adobe among its members, all sharing ideas on topics ranging from team development to board interaction.

To register for the programme call +44 (0)20 7014 44920



B2B LEADERS

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.

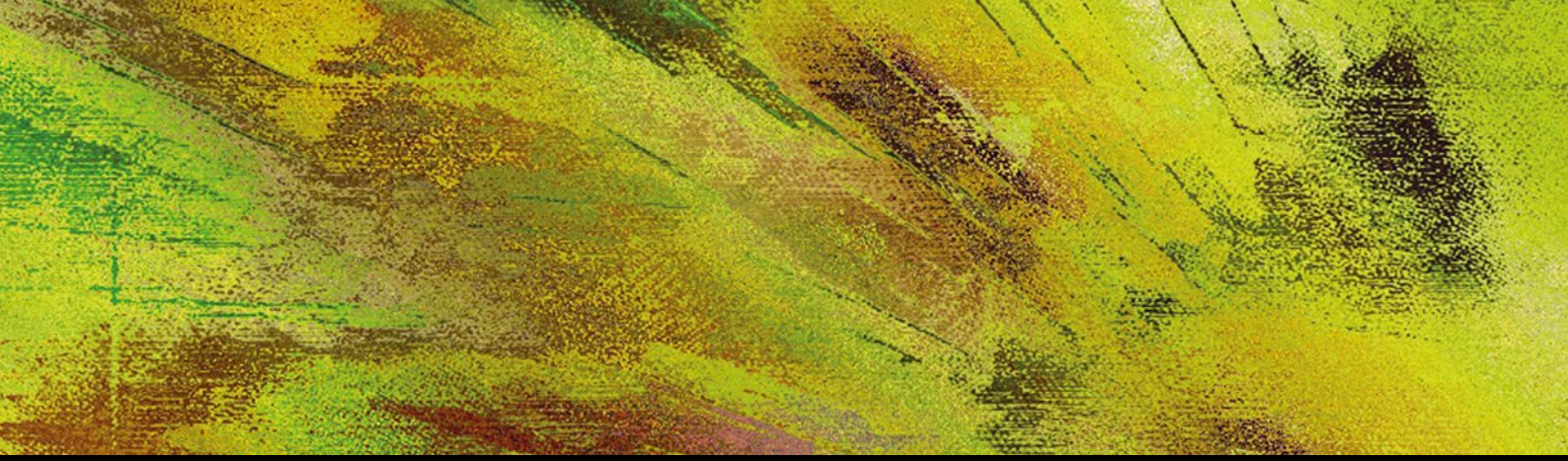
Here's why:

- 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 on andrew.dalglish@circle-research.com

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The B2B experts



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