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The B2B Marketing US Agencies Benchmarking Report 2018

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Introduction: B2B agencies ride the tide of economic confidence



Joel Harrison
Editor-in-chief,
B2B Marketing

It's a great time to be running a B2B marketing agency in the USA – so says the data from the *US Agencies Benchmarking Report 2018*, which paints a picture of a buoyant community, showing strong growth and lots of opportunities.

At B2B Marketing, it's our belief that the B2B sector has generally never been a more interesting, exciting or rewarding place to work than it is today, but in agency land that appears to be particularly the case, with a strong average year-on-year growth rate of 18%, and many agencies showing performances well in excess of that.

Indeed, it's likely these annual figures don't really tell the whole story of the year just gone, given they reflect varying financial periods, which almost certainly don't include the successes attained in the last quarter, when many agencies reported the number of opportunities increased strongly in response to tax cuts, and general growth in the global economy. These successes could be the tip of the iceberg in terms of what we can expect to see in next year's league table.

But it's not just tax cuts driving the strong growth in this sector – the interviews I've done with many of the agencies at various levels in the league table reveal an industry that's successfully innovating and iterating to employ new technologies, devise new techniques and embrace new opportunities. The agencies listed in this report are rising to the challenge of adapting the way they work and the services they offer for an environment that's never been so fluid or dynamic. In many circumstances, it's a very different way of operating than it was even five years ago.

What's also been notable is the increasing international dimension to this league table, reflecting the globalisation of the business and marketing world, with a growing proportion of agencies having operations outside the US – often in multiple locations. It's likely such international reach, either through direct relations, network partners, or more informal relationships, is going to become increasingly key to success in the future.

The *US Agencies Benchmarking Report 2018* is only the second report of its kind that we've published, but we're happy it's building on the success of 2017. While the league table is still far from an exhaustive picture of the US agencies community, we're delighted that we've been able to persuade more agencies than before to participate. We're determined that in time, we can progressively build on this engagement to ensure this report becomes an increasingly critical market analysis tool for both clients and agencies alike. We would welcome any thoughts or suggestions about how to enhance its usefulness and relevance to you.

Thanks in advance for your interest in report.

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Section 1

League tables

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Top 32 US B2B marcomms agencies

Rank	Agency	GI in $m (US) in latest full financial year	Rank in 2017	Change	International GI in latest full financial year	% of GI from US operations in latest financial year	Number of permanent staff at present (US)	% of GI from B2B operations in latest full financial year
1	gyro	80	1	–	80	60	375	90
2	Siegel+Gale	**	6	↑	**	83	127	95
3	Bader Rutter	41.5	4	↑	41.5	100	275	78
4	Eric Mower + Associates	31.9	3	↓	31.9	100	180	78
5	Yesler *(see page 44)*	29	5	–	30	96	230	100
6	Jellyfish	20.8	New entry	*	35.9	99	433	100
7	The Mx Group	12.2	8	↑	13.5	95	110	100
8	Somnio Solutions	10.9	New entry	*	10.9	100	32	100
9	Quarry *(see page 38)*	10.6	New entry	*	14.9	71	95	87
10	Stein IAS	10.5	7	↓	16	50	165	90
11	Godfrey *(see page 34)*	10.3	11	–	10.3	100	88	100
12	DWA Media, A Merkle Company	10.2	New entry	*	111.2	11	64	100
13	Walker Sands	8.7	New entry	*	8.7	100	83	100
14	Slack and Company *(see page 40)*	6.9	17	↑	6.9	100	47	100
15	CG Life	6.8	14	↓	6.8	100	43	100
16	BusinessOnline	6.6	19	↑	6.6	100	34	85

**Submitted information kept confidential under the Sarbanes-Oxley Act

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Key:

New entry:
Included in the survey for the first time
Re-entry:
Returning to the survey after a year's absence
New agency:
Newly formed agency

Gross income is calculated by deducting external media and production costs from the invoiced total. It includes income from all above-the-line and below-the-line activity. If the agency has been subject to a takeover or merger during the financial year in question, gross income includes the combined figure.

Rank	Agency	GI in $m (US) in latest full financial year	Rank in 2017	Change	International GI in latest full financial year	% of GI from USoperations in latest financial year	Number of permanent staff at present (US)	% of GI from B2B operations in latest full financial year
17	CBD Marketing *(see page 32)*	5.3	20	↑	5.3	100	35	85
18	Stirista	4.8	New entry	*	4.8	99	25	88
19	Schermer	4.6	23	↑	4.6	100	33	100
20	April Six	4.4	21	↑	11.8	37	30	100
21	MarketReach, Inc.	4.4	New entry	*	4.4	70	34	97
22	The Marketing Practice	3.6	New entry	*	12.3	30	14	100
23	Littlefield Agency	3.3	25	↑	3.6	100	24	70
24	Elevation Marketing	2.9	New entry	↑	3	100	25	100
25	Red House B2B Marketing	2.5	New entry	*	2.5	98	25	100
26	Peppar Group	2.4	New entry	*	2.4	100	18	100
27	ER Marketing	2.3	28	↑	2.3	100	19	100
28	Omobono	2.4	New entry	*	10.3	22	23	100
29	David James Group	2.2	27	↓	2.2	100	18	100
30	Kingpin *(see page 36)*	1.3	New entry	*	14	13	3	100
31	Acumen Studio	0.4	New entry	*	0.4	100	5	100
32	Tomorrow People *(see page 42)*	0.3	New entry	*	2.9	10	5	100

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Top 20 fastest-growing US B2B marcomms agencies

Rank	Agency	International GI YoY change in $m	International GI YoY change as %	International GI in latest full financial year	GI in previous full financial year	Net change in headcount YoY	Number of permanent staff at present	Number of permanent staff 12 months ago
1	DWA Media, A Merkle Company	33.2	30	111.2	78	32	64	32
2	Jellyfish	7.9	22	35.9	28	100	433	333
3	Bader Rutter	6.8	16	41.5	34.7	25	275	250
4	Kingpin	5.3	38	14	8.6	2	3	1
5	Quarry	4.2	28	14.9	10.7	9	95	86
6	Stein IAS	4	25	16	12	15	165	150
7	The Marketing Practice	3.5	96	3.6	0.1	9	14	5
8	Stirista	2.1	44	4.8	2.7	7	25	18
9	Yesler	2	7	30	28	-4	230	234
10	Schermer	0.8	16	4.6	3.9	2	33	31
11	Somnio Solutions	0.8	7	10.9	10.1	-16	32	48
12	Walker Sands	0.6	7	8.7	8	5	83	78
13	The Mx Group	0.5	4	13.5	13	5	110	105
14	Red House B2B Marketing	0.5	19	2.5	2	1	25	24
15	Peppar Group	0.4	17	2.4	2	3	18	15
16	Slack and Company	0.4	6	6.9	6.5	2	47	45
17	ER Marketing	0.3	13	2.3	2	1	19	18
18	Tomorrow People	0.2	78	0.3	0.1	5	5	0
19	Acumen Studio	0.2	56	0.4	0.2	3	5	2
20	Littlefield Agency	0.2	4	3.6	3.5	-2	24	26

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Section 2

Survey analysis

The times, they are a-changin' 12

The times, they are a-changin'

B2B marketing agencies are riding a wave of optimism into 2018, with numerous exciting transformation projects under way. But new technology and changing client expectations are driving an evolution in the agency business model; the savvy ones understand they'll need to respond dynamically and pragmatically to maintain momentum, writes **Joel Harrison**

Sometimes there's nothing like a well-worn sporting metaphor to sum up a complex and nuanced situation – and that's exactly what Howard Belk, co-CEO and chief creative officer of global brand agency Siegel+Gale, uses to describe the financial year to 2017 (which is used to calculate the *US B2B Marketing Agencies League Table*). "It was a game of two halves," he says.

Belk elaborates: "The first half was quiet – there was lots of uncertainty about Trump and Brexit, because there were various potential implications around tax and trade treaties, which caused our clients to pause. But the second half was very strong. and was one of our top three years. We finished with a solid performance, and some great momentum going into 2018."

This perspective is widely shared, to a greater or lesser extent, across the rest of the top performing B2B agencies in our league table. Jeff Young, president and CEO of Bader Rutter, says: "From a new business perspective, it's definitely hot and heavy compared to a few years ago. Barely a week goes past without some kind RFP being responded to or considered. But we don't go for all of them!"

"We found clients were extra cautious after the election," says Matt Ferguson, MD and EVP of Eric Mower + Associates. "But after the first full year of the new administration, 2018 is so far, so good."

Andrew Mahler, CEO of The Mx Group, agrees. "Both in the US and globally, the market is strong, and that's driving a new sense of urgency. We're seeing some big activities from clients, which are beyond their normal marketing budgets. They are capitalizing – it's an investment year. I'm not sure whether this is about creating competitive advantage or playing catch-up with competitors, but either way the speed of change is impressive." Mahler adds this urgency is not just coming from Mx's more ambitious or dynamic tech clients – it's also coming from the more traditional industrial client businesses. "These guys have really got religious about this," he says.

Clearly, for agencies working in this climate, it's a case of making hay while the sun shines.

The seeds of uncertainty

But amid the positive agency vibes, and the sense of clients on a mission to

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Howard Belk,
co-CEO and chief creative officer,
Siegel + Gale



Jeff Young,
president and CEO,
Bader Rutter

get things done, there's also a feeling that the nature of what they do is changing, and that this has far reaching implications for their business models. This partly relates to the changing nature of what marketing is and what it looks like, but also to the consequent shift in the agency model, the competitive environment and the nature of client/agency relationships.

"We're seeing more new competitors from every direction," says Ferguson of Eric Mower + Associates. "We're now increasingly up against consultants like McKinsey. It's becoming a very cluttered market."

"We have to fight for each job, and our competitive set is shifting," agrees Belk of Siegel+Gale. "We're increasingly coming up against profoundly different agencies. It's not just brand agencies any more: at one recent pitch, we were up against an ad agency and a specialist digital agency. Clients are really asking themselves: 'What does success look like for us? What's the right agency for our needs?' I'm not worried about this – I think it's smart. It shows clients are doing the thinking upfront. It makes things more interesting for agencies. It means we have to walk in with really empowered thinking."

Christoph Becker, CEO and COO at gyro, goes further, suggesting the shift in client behaviour is driven by the overall ongoing transformation of many markets. And, he implies, sometimes by sense of dissatisfaction in what they've experienced in the past. "Many marketing agencies are drowning in commodity. Clients are bored," he says. "They are seeing the same old story. They are looking for something to take them to an unexpected place. They are less under the spell of marketing than they were – agencies need to provide greater creative relevance."

New relationships for a new era

So what should the client/agency relationship look like in this emerging world? Christoph Becker has a clear perspective on this. "Great client/agency relationships are no longer based on chemistry alone. We need to move away from this. It's culture that's critical, and it's more important than capability." He says some of gyro's best recent work is where the agency's culture has mirrored that of the client. "This facilitates completely new forms of collaboration."

All of the agency principals interviewed agreed the nature of engagement between clients and agencies was continuing to evolve, driven by ongoing evolution in their customers' expectations. "Our clients are doubling down on CX," says Belk of Siegel+Gale. "Brand reputation today is based on mobile and digital experiences. These kind of enquiries just didn't exist a few years ago, at least at a brand level."

Andy Mahler at The Mx Group agrees. "Great B2B marketing is increasingly focused on truly one-to-one customer experiences, based on digital interactions. I don't want to minimize the power of the big creative idea, but great B2B is about being where people are, when they are there, and building messages based on what we know about them. That's where it's all going."

The devil's in the data

Looking ahead at the attributes and expertise that are going to be essential to success in this rapidly evolving future, there's a growing emphasis on data and analytics capabilities to balance the creative credentials, which most of these agencies have



Andy Mahler,
CEO,
The Mx Group



Christoph Becker
CEO and COO,
gyro



Matt Ferguson,
MD and EVP,
Eric Mower + Associates

put center-stage historically. "We're in the middle of restructuring the agency around data," says Jeff Young of Bader Rutter. "Increasingly in the future, we'll be driven by customer and user insight. We need to focus on knowing our customers better."

Despite his relatively new-found evangelism for data, Young is quick to make the case for creative, and implies this may need to be re-imagined for the data age. "Neither data nor technology are going to become less important. But we can't ever forget that the 'sell' is emotional. We're starting to become increasingly left brain as an agency, but must remember that the right brain still sells. Growing levels of competition means it is trench warfare out there – the winners will be the ones who are able to communicate emotionally. And this isn't getting any easier with attention spans shrinking and brand engagements becoming increasingly fleeting. You need to know how to hook them."

This point resonates with Ferguson of Eric Mower + Associates too. "Great marketing needs to move beyond just the facts, and it needs to add more heart. There's a danger of data-driven marketing being too clinical or scientific. But this isn't how people buy." Clearly this need to balance creative and analytical skills is not going to disappear any time soon.

Marketing is not an island

So as agencies move enthusiastically into this new era, what are the factors that could derail their evolution and ultimate success? Both Howard Belk of Siegel+Gale and Christoph Becker of gyro believe failing to integrate and be open could be the downfall of many marketers – on either side of the client/agency fence. "Marketers need to recognise that integration is crucial," says Belk. "Marketing can't build a great brand by itself. It needs to integrate and collaborate with other functional areas."

Becker adds: "Lots of agencies operate in a kind of creative apartheid, with their creative development unconnected. Agencies need to be generous and inclusive. They can't just let the process be run by a couple of creatives in a closed room."

Allied to this, recruitment and retention of the right staff is a challenge that all agencies can relate to, and one that has come into particular focus recently. "You can't deliver without talent," says Belk. "There's near full employment in the US right now, and there's a talent war going on." He says building a compelling employee proposition is a multi-faceted challenge that must be shared by the whole agency. "Everyone must be involved."

The agency principals B2B Marketing interviewed were broadly optimistic for the future, but all sounded a note of caution that in this dynamic and constantly evolving environment, there 's no room for complacency – again for agencies or clients. "The key is to keep changing, constantly," says Christoph Becker of gyro. "It's a very big mistake to find a position and stick to it when technology changes every six months. Marketers need to understand what [they] stand for, and where [they] stand. We stand in a wild river, not a big lake. Be prepared for constant change, or you will not survive. You need to make change your friend."

This underlying sense of fluidity and evolving nature of the agency model, and the inherent business challenge, is summed up pithily by Howard Belk of Siegel+Gale, who says: "Build movements, not monuments."

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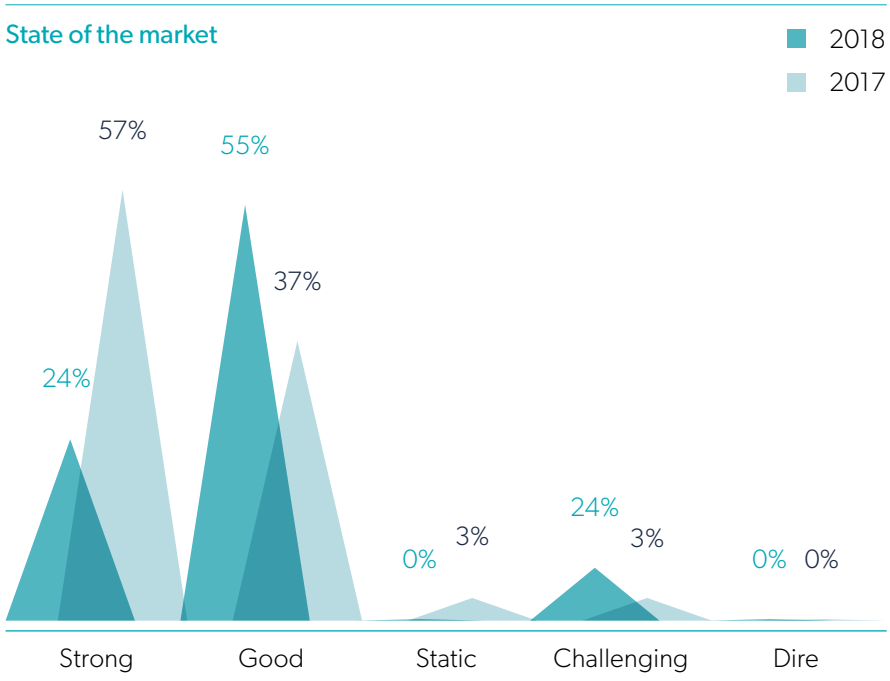
Section 3

Industry trends

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The future starts now

Business is booming for B2B marketing agencies in the US, but pressure on talent and tech means it is no time for complacency, reports **Joel Harrison**



B2B marketing agencies in the US are in rude health – that's the most obvious finding from the trends survey which was conducted alongside the financial data capture process for the league tables, and it reflects anecdotal comments made by agency principals in our survey analysis (see page 12).

When looking at the overall respondent pool of agencies, just under a quarter described the state of the market as 'strong', while 55% described it as 'good' – this represents an impressive near four out of five who are currently experiencing a positive market environment and presumably both profitable work and good financial performance. By contrast, only one in five described the environment as 'challenging'.

It's a people business

This sense of an agency sector enjoying healthy financial performance was further underlined by the response to question posed by the survey about key challenges faced by agencies. As ever, the number one challenge cited was 'pressure on client budgets' – this is fundamental to the nature of B2B, and doubtless will always be the case, and it belies the comments in the analysis feature on page 14 that shows some of the larger agencies are potentially unlocking transformational budgets which are beyond their normal scope or remit.

More interestingly, however, was the fact 'pressure to attract/retain quality staff' moved firmly into second place in the list of challenges. This strain on talent is indicative of a strong economy, with employment markets coming under pressure, and in that sense it can be seen as a 'nice problem to have'.

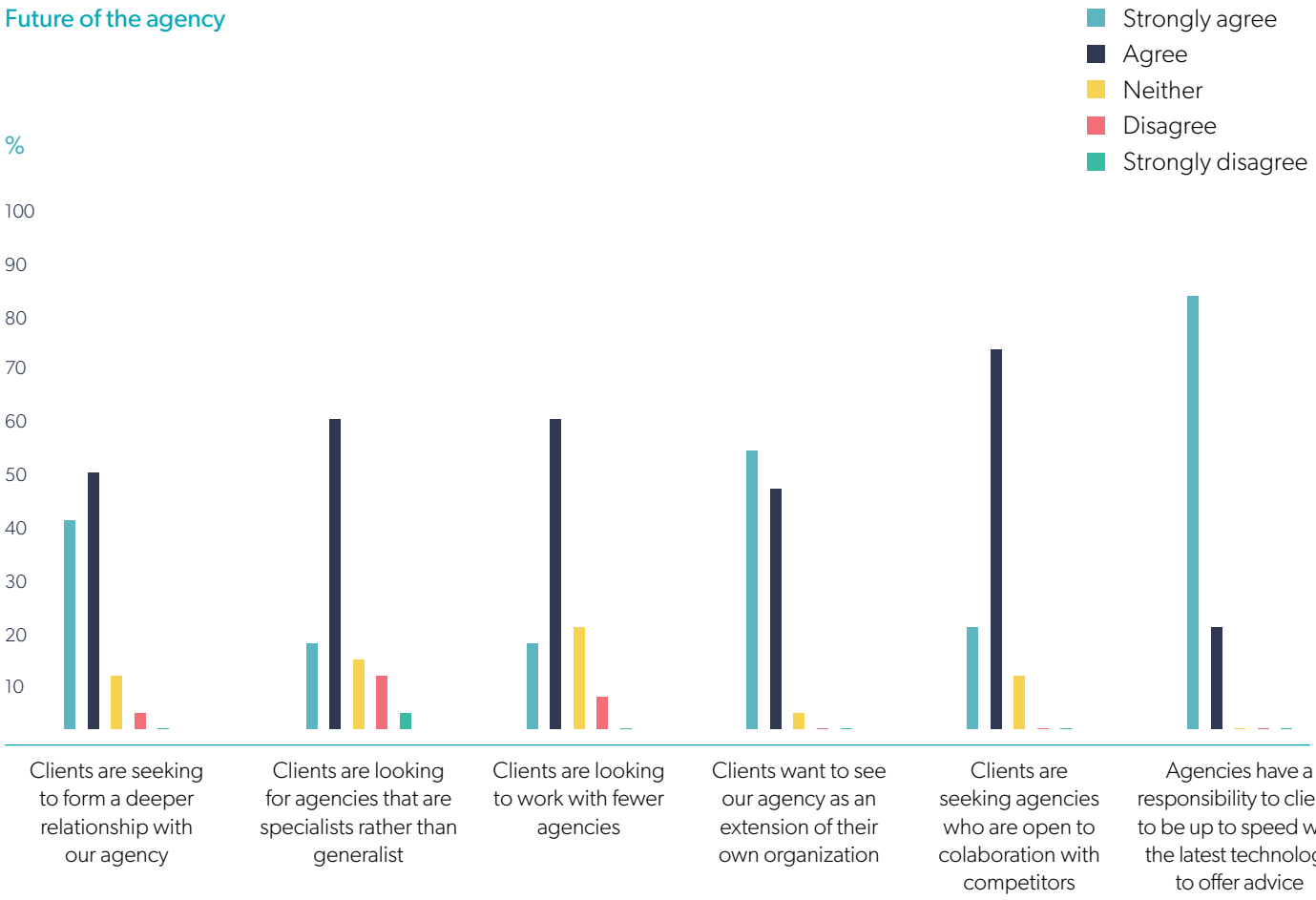
There's more significance still that talent management has become as important as it is, because it's leapfrogged 'ability to measure campaigns', which has historically been the other thorn in the side of B2B agencies and their clients. It's likely this switchover has not only been driven by the increased acuteness of the talent management game, but just as significantly by the increasing savvy with which agencies are able to address the measurement/ROI challenge, given their increasing focus on tech, data and measurement. This was certainly borne out both by anecdotal responses to the survey (see box) and the comments of principals of leading agencies and, as such, represents a significant step forward for the agency sector if many players have started to overcome this longstanding obstacle.

Tech becomes a cornerstone of the agency model

This growing focus on technology, which undoubtedly to a large extent is aimed at delivering more measurable marketing, was further highlighted by the results to this survey, with a growing number of agencies moving into the tech development game themselves. Almost 60% of those responding have to date developed

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Future of the agency



their own technology for use in servicing clients – the tech and data game clearly goes way beyond just becoming proficient in deploying martech developed elsewhere: it's becoming a key facet of who agencies are and what they do. This was hard to imagine five years ago. The importance of agencies being able to prove their competence around technology was also highlighted by the response to the final question highlighted in chart 5, with 81% in agreement that agencies had a responsibility to keep their clients up to speed with the latest technological developments.

Another area where agencies have increased their focus significantly in the last year, and presumably invested in their skills and competencies, is around CX. Almost four out of five agencies have increased their focus on customer experience in the past 12 months, with none reducing it – the remainder seeing it unchanged year-on-year. This echoes the finding of our trend tracker survey (see page 24).

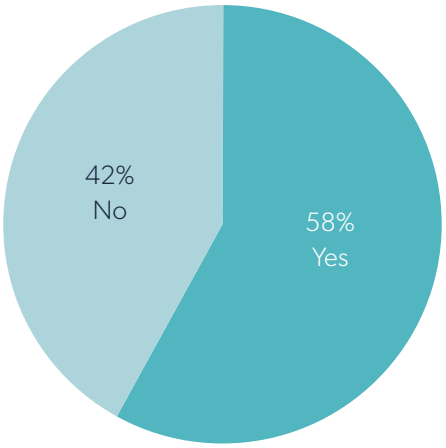
Relationship matters

Perhaps most interesting of all, the changing nature of client/agency relationships was highlighted by the responses shown above. In particular, a staggering 95% agreed or agreed strongly that clients increasingly sought to work with agencies as an extension of their organization. It seems as if the days of client management by smoke and mirrors, with aloof and unresponsive creatives are increasingly a thing of the past. Similarly, more than 85% agreed or agreed strongly that clients are seeking to form deeper relationships with their agency. There's a new spirit of collaboration, which is likely driven and enabled by technology, but agencies need to enable this to get the best out of relationships and maximize the value of each client.

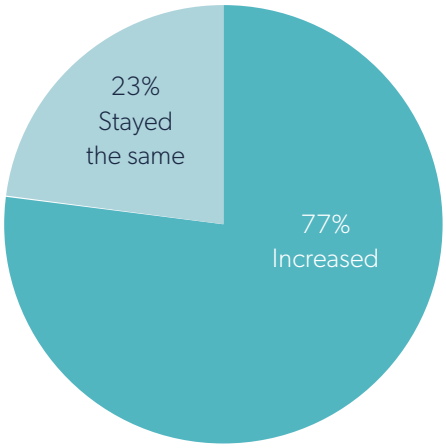
Furthermore, agencies believed clients are looking to rationalize their use of agencies, and to ensure those they do work with are increasingly capable of collaborating with one another. This suggests clients are seeking to take the hassle out of working with agencies, and make inter-agency bickering (as can happen on the largest accounts, with multi-agency teams) a thing of the past.

While B2B agencies may be enjoying good times, they come with significant associated challenges given our transformational times, and we can expect the B2B agency sector that emerges from this period to profoundly different to that which entered it. And that means agencies need to keep a firm eye on the future to ensure they are fit for purpose in both the immediate and long-term futures.

Have you developed your own technology?



Has your focus on CX changed in the past 12 months?



Top agency trends: ABM, data and analytics, ROI

When asked what they perceived to be the biggest trend impacting the B2B sector (and consequently their business) at present, there were three clear winners, as identified above. While ROI is a perennial in B2B, and the focus on data and analytics is relatively new (although well-established), the interest in ABM is very new and once more underlines the level of interest and hype that's underpinning its rise in prominence. Below, we've listed some of the more interesting comments made by agencies in completing their data for the benchmarking report, some of which correspond to this trend, and some that don't.

On ABM

"The trend we're watching in 2018 might be counter-intuitive at first: rising tensions between sales and marketing, driven by a spike in ABM adoption. With all the talk of ABM lately, you might think the relationship between sales and marketing is getting stronger. And while that has the potential to be true in the long run, in the short term, the spike in ABM adoption may actually put their relationship under pressure. That's because ABM is not simple. It requires both teams to be bought-in at the highest levels. It requires cross-functional collaboration and tight operational alignment. It can get complicated, and requires open communication and high levels of trust. And, unfortunately, that's not the kind of relationship most marketing and sales teams have."

On data and analytics

"B2B marketers will fully embrace and leverage the power of data, and use it to sequentially message and engage audiences across all addressable channels."

"Creating ever-stronger brand relationships in the face of personalizing, new media opportunities (think OTT and streaming), and emerging channel platforms (think Amazon Business) will force clients and agencies to accelerate data, analytics and technology as strategic imperatives."

On ROI

"Clients' focus is on efficiency and productivity, rather than investment and growth. Client budgets are down, so they'll be looking to achieve more with less through machine learning and programmatic media. They'll also continue to bring more digital marketing and media services in-house to keep costs down and their business closer to their data."

"As we continue to gain more and more data on our targets, marketers will be challenged to continue to focus on turning those insights into relevant communications with our targets."

On CX

"Creating differentiated B2B customer experiences to support clients' business growth with measurable ROI."

"Resurgent focus on emotion and creativity in the forms of iconic brand ideas and experiences. Greater focus on brand and purpose. Fusion of creativity, technology and data to deliver post-modern marketing experiences that differentiate across the buyer journey and, ultimately, drive funnel velocity and demand."

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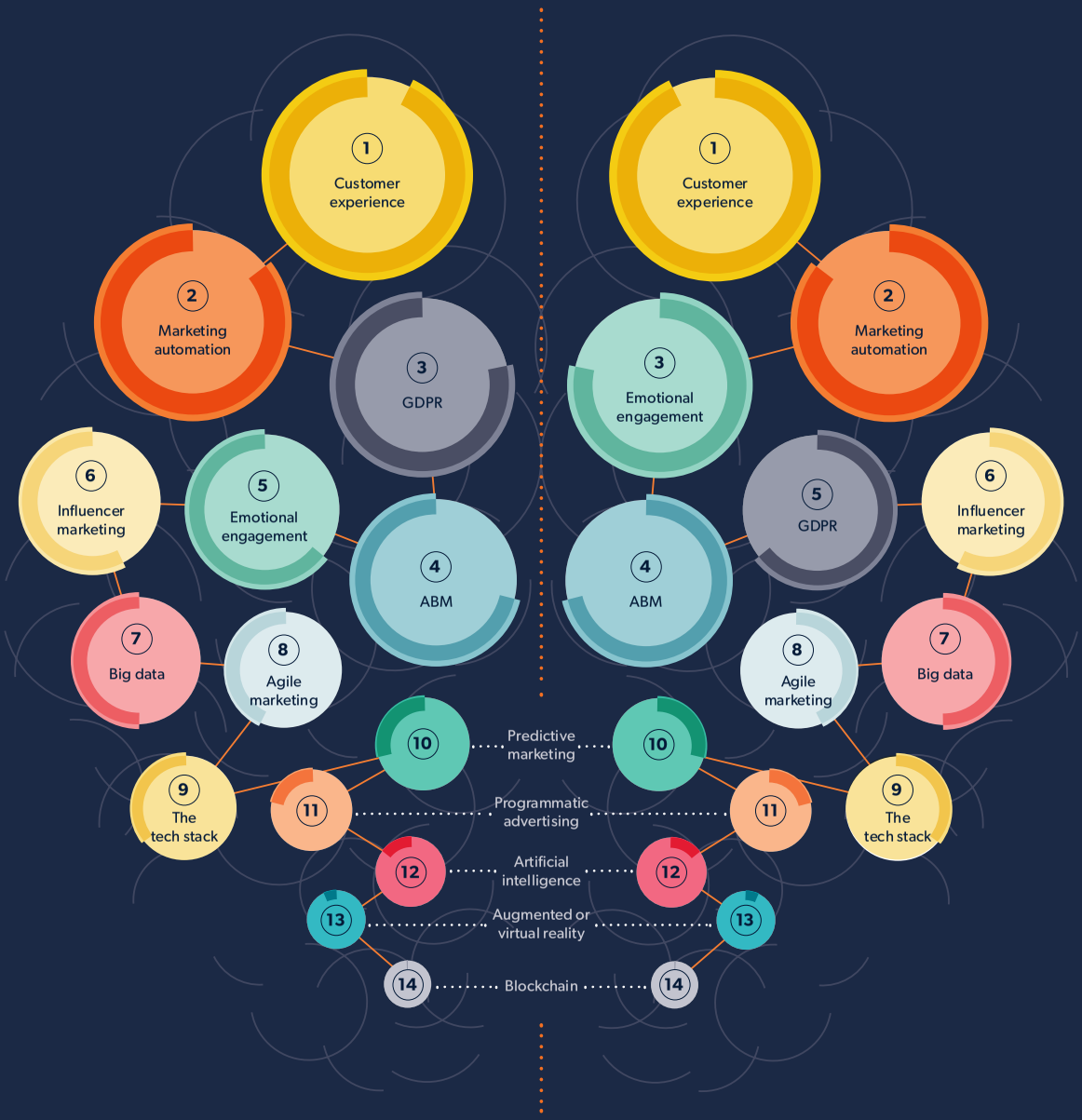
Getting your message out there is one thing.
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The B2B Marketing trend tracker: The B2B mind

Client-side

1. Customer experience 79%
2. Marketing automation 69%
3. GDPR 65%
4. ABM 60%
5. Emotional engagement 56%
6. Influencer marketing 56%
7. Big data 54%
8. Agile marketing 54%
9. The tech stack 49%
10. Predictive marketing 45%
11. Programmatic advertising 42%
12. Artificial intelligence 38%
13. Augmented or virtual reality 30%
14. Blockchain 26%



Agency-side

1. Customer experience 81%
2. Marketing automation 70%
3. Emotional engagement 69%
4. ABM 67%
5. GDPR 63%
6. Influencer marketing 61%
7. Big data 59%
8. Agile marketing 56%
9. The tech stack 53%
10. Predictive marketing 51%
11. Programmatic advertising 48%
12. Artificial intelligence 47%
13. Augmented or virtual reality 37%
14. Blockchain 29%

Marketers were asked to rate the attributes shown, 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.
Those in orange show a variance between the two sides.

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B2B Marketing, together with its partner Circle, delved into the minds of clients and agencies to determine what they are investing their attention and coffers into. **Mary-Anne Baldwin** reports.

B2B Marketing's Trend Tracker provides a snapshot of which market opportunities B2B marketers are paying attention to – and whether you should switch tack.

The clients and agencies ranked 14 of the most talked about marketing trends to show which your competitors and customers are paying attention to. So what did it find?

It's no surprise, and indeed a relief, that customers are at the heart of B2B marketing. Employees both across the pay scale and the client-agency divide believe that first and foremost, customer experience must receive the most care and attention.

Ranked as the second most important area of interest is automation, along with the productivity and services it can deliver. Looking at the two together, the onus for B2B marketers will be to implement automation with the customer in mind. While it is a means to personalize and offer a bespoke customer experience (both key trends discussed in this report), when carried out badly, automation can quickly dissolve the customer experience. Working towards a seamless and positive transition to digital-enablement will be key.

GDPR. Whose problem is it anyway?

The need to pay great attention to the customer is also being played out in both legal and business terms as marketers prepare themselves for GDPR – another of the industry's focus areas. While customers expect a personalized response and highly relevant offerings, they want them delivered in the knowledge that their data privacy is both protected and respected.

Agencies are slightly less interested in (or perhaps see themselves as less responsible for) GDPR than clients, ranking it the fifth most important trend out of 14, versus third place for clients.

Yet, overall there is a close parity between the views of agencies and clients on all emerging trends, the only variance being that agencies ranked emotional engagement above GDPR, and clients vice versa.

So what about the big operational methodologies everyone is talking about? Our analysis shows that account-based marketing (ABM), influencer marketing and the use of big data are all high on the agenda for both clients and agents. ABM is chief among them.

Interestingly, predictive and programmatic marketing ranked lower down the list (at 10 and 11 out of 14,

Senior level marketers are more focused on current marketing methodologies, which are seen to improve their business over the near-term

respectively). And while the purchase and integration of technology is both high cost and high risk, it ranked at a surprisingly low ninth place.

Opinion divides the ranks

We also asked whether there's internal alignment regarding the importance of these key 14 trends. The answer was, not quite. Senior level marketers are more focused on current marketing methodologies, which are seen to improve their business over the near-term. These trends come with the promise of strong ROI, so are well in line with marketing leaders' need to deliver shareholder value.

In comparison, their more junior and often younger, colleagues are more interested in early stage innovation including blockchain, AI and augmented and virtual reality.

So are junior marketers more attuned to the changing landscape than their out-dated bosses? Most likely not.

The difference of opinion is probably a reflection of the CMO's short-lived tenure and the impetus to deliver near-term results. They must dance a fine line between being responsive to trends yet accountable to immediate shareholder demands.

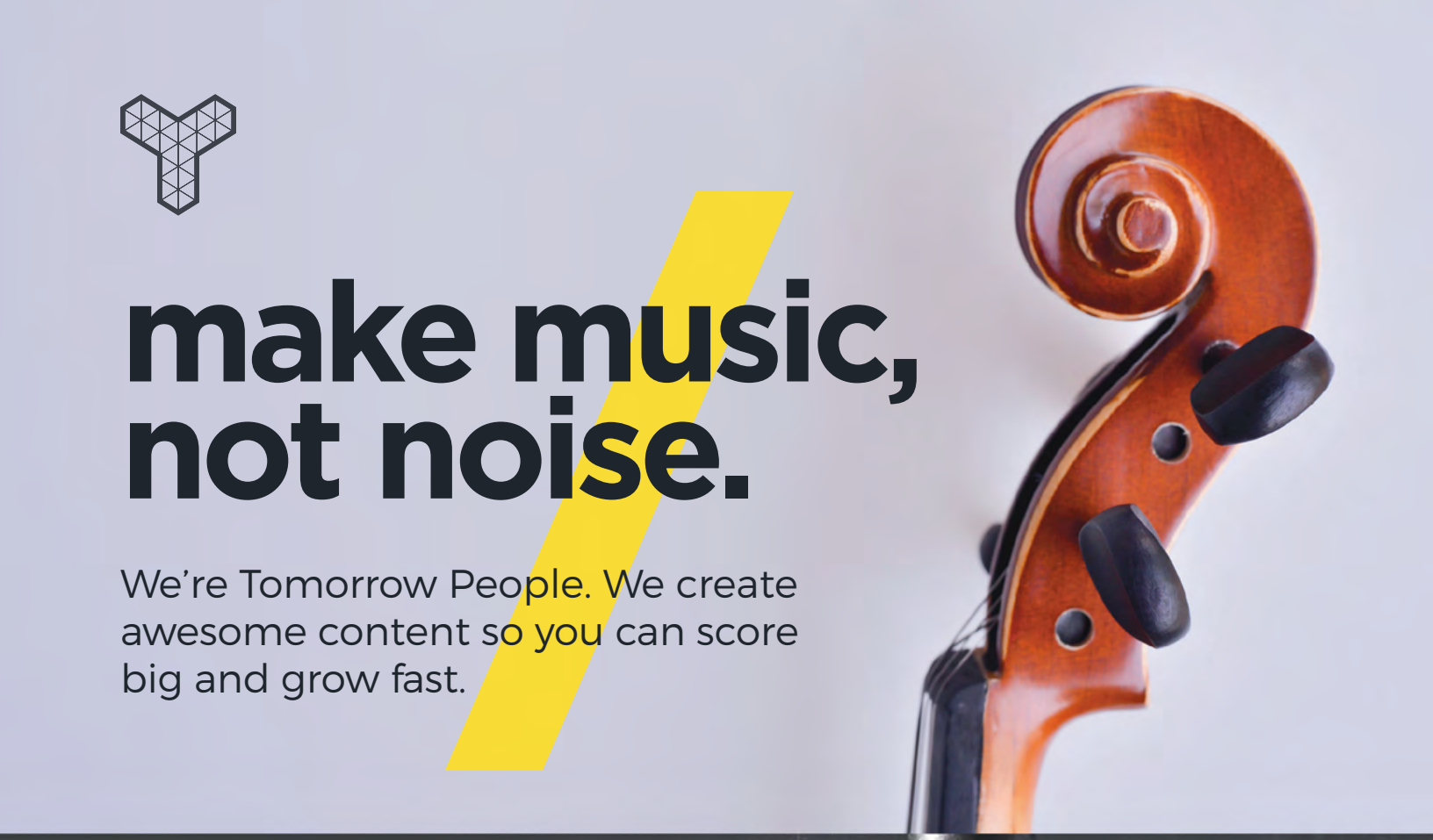
It's the next generation of marketers who are buying into, and will have to deliver on, those futuristic opportunities.

Trend Tracker by seniority of those surveyed

	Marketing leaders	Middle/junior marketer	More focused?
Customer Experience	8.3	8	Leader
Marketing Automation	7.2	7	Leader
GDPR	6.4	7.4	Junior
Account Based Marketing (ABM)	6.3	5.6	Leader
Emotional Engagement	6	6.1	Junior
Influencer Marketing	5.8	5.4	Leader
Big Data	5.6	5.3	Leader
Agile Marketing	5.3	5.8	Junior
The Tech Stack	5	4.6	Leader
Predictive Marketing	4.7	4.6	Leader
Programmatic Advertising	4.5	3.9	Leader
Artificial Intelligence	3.7	3.9	Junior
Augmented or Virtual Reality	3.1	3.2	Junior
Blockchain	2.6	2.7	Junior

Marketers were asked to rate the attributes shown, 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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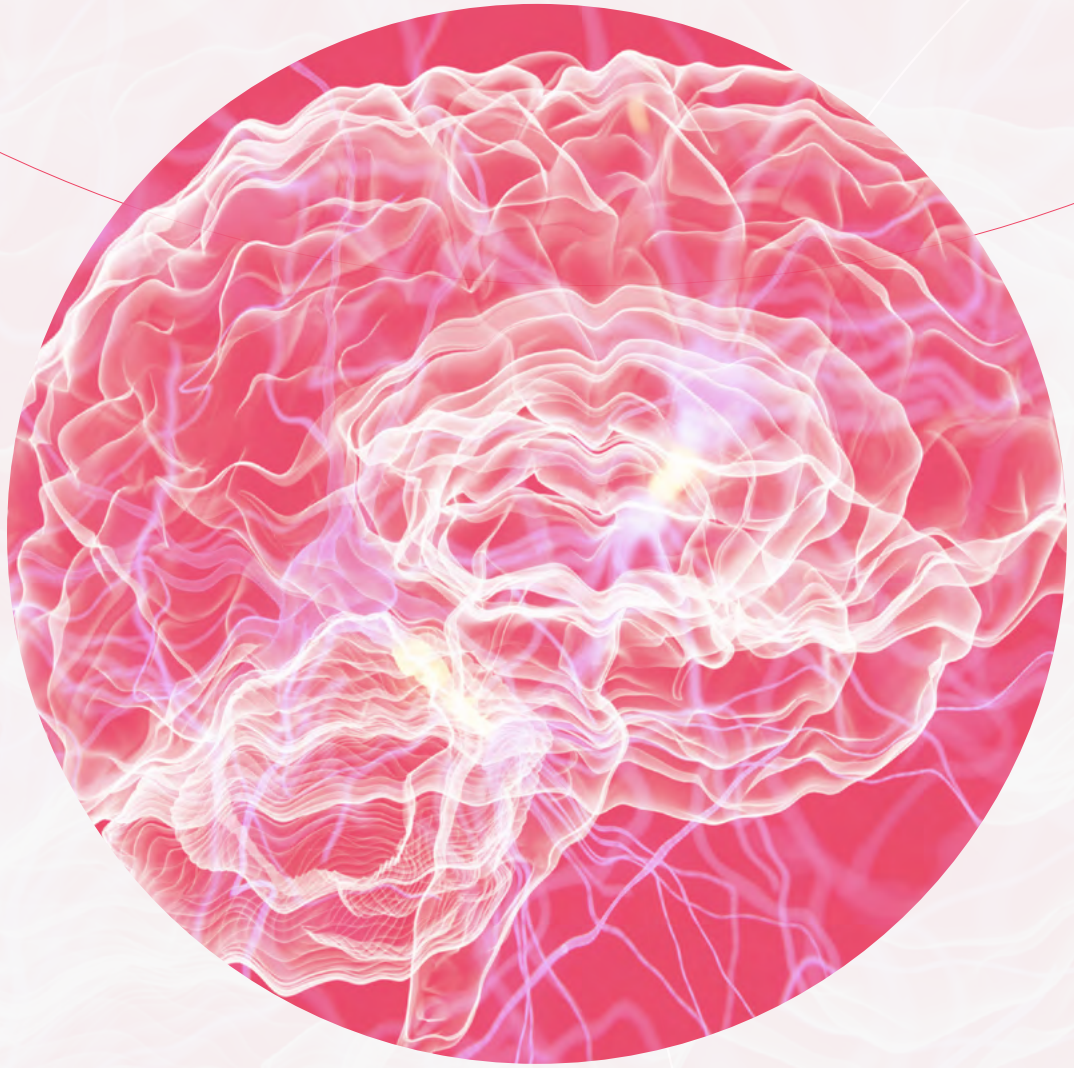
Fancy talking?

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4 predictions: What agencies can expect in 2018



Following B2B Marketing's annual Agencies Benchmarking results for 2018, **Paul Snell** reports on the four key industry predictions we've made for the year ahead.

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There is a saying that "predictions are hard, especially about the future". Nevertheless, we've stuck our neck out. Based on the findings of B2B Marketing's 2018 Agencies Benchmarking Survey, and having listened to both agencies and client-side marketers, we've noted four key things dictating the market in the year ahead.

1. The trend for ABM is going strong

Our previous survey predicted that 2017 would be the year in which the hype around account-based marketing (ABM) would drop away, creating clarity on what it can really offer.

We see that the hype is not abating, yet the market is considerably more confident about the benefits ABM can deliver. This year's survey shows that a third of respondents see ABM as the biggest trend in the year ahead. A fifth of agencies already cite ABM as one of the three top revenue-generating services for their business.

This marries well with another key piece of market analysis we carried out, which you can see on page 22. Our Trend Tracker measures the areas in which agencies and clients are investing most attention. Both place ABM as the fourth significant interest, preceded by CX, marketing automation and GDPR. We offer more analysis on those findings on page 23.

Driving this surge of interest in ABM is the demand for a personalised, tailored approach, which we examine more on pages 46–51. Necessity is the other crucial factor behind the enthusiasm for ABM. As returns from traditional mass lead generation continue to dwindle, coupled with the potential of GDPR to dramatically reduce the size of marketing databases, both enterprises and agencies will look for alternatives to drive better results and replace lost revenue streams.

Yet ABM also has the potential to create new pressures. Marketers are already reporting difficulties in finding talent with the right skills and experience. Competition for individuals with a proven track record will only become more acute as agencies endeavor to increase their in-house ABM capabilities.

2. The appetite for B2B acquisitions will continue

The number of mergers and acquisitions involving marcomms agencies in the wider market was relatively flat in 2017, but the past year did feature a flurry of B2B agency and market researcher acquisitions.

Notable M&A deals included Next 15's purchase of Velocity Partners, Centaur's deal for MarketMakers and as 2017 came to a close, Dentsu Aegis Network's purchase of DWA. In addition were the acquisitions of Circle Research, Optimisa Research and Brand Learning.

Buoyed by strategic purchases carried out by traditional publishers and broadcasters, 1H deals for martech firms were at the second highest recorded level, Results International found.

We also examine the spate of M&A deals more on page 46–51. For now we will say that we believe interest in agencies from more 'unconventional' sources will continue this run of B2B acquisitions in the next 12 months.

Last year saw consumer brands including Domino's Pizza and Shiseido sign six-figure deals for creative and communication agencies, and this trend could catch on in B2B as brands look to take greater control of marketing. Salesforce has already been active in this area, buying the UX design agency Sequence for a reported $56 million. Most of the large consulting firms, including

Deloitte and PwC, have made strategic acquisitions to boost their own creative offer.

These M&A deals could be perceived as another facet of the war for talent, as companies – particularly those outside the marketing sphere – look for fast access to groups of talented people to quickly scale operations in areas where they don't traditionally hold such expertise.

Speaking to B2B Marketing following Next 15's acquisitions last year, CEO Tim Dyson reiterated the importance of access and retention of talent as part of the group. "Whenever we look at an agency as an acquisition target, we ask ourselves how rigorous they are about talent and customers," he said.

3. Agencies will have to learn to work together

There is no doubt client-agency relationships will continue their evolution in the year ahead and agencies acknowledge that a shift is taking place. According to our survey, more than three-quarters believe clients are looking to form deeper relationships with their agencies. Almost two-thirds believe clients want agencies that are specialists, rather than generalists.

This links to the trend for clients working with numerous companies, each one delivering on a different aspect of the program. As such, agencies will have to collaborate with, rather than compete against, their rivals.

Chas Moloney, marketing director at Ricoh UK, says: "Historically, we have tried to work with a limited number of agencies. We've struggled to find one that can do everything well. Our aim now is to have a lead agency that can work with other specialists and optimise relationships with them."

As one senior marketing leader shared at a recent B2B Marketing roundtable: "If they can't collaborate they're not someone I can see a long-term relationship with. It reflects badly on them. I don't care if they feel slighted – if they want my money, they're going to have to do it."

4. Agencies will continue to transform into tech vendors

The agency benchmark survey's revelation that 71% of agencies are exploring the development of their own bespoke technology solutions is indicative of how serious the challenges and opportunities of martech really are.

Developing technology internally has multiple benefits, says Paul Hewerdine. He is partner and planning director at Earnest, which developed Event Wallet, an app that allows delegates to collect and share content from exhibitors and sponsors.

"If agencies can build a product and get the commercials right, this enables a different kind of business model. It creates recurring revenues (rather than fee-based work) and the ability to scale without adding more people," he says.

Some agencies are also developing their own tech out of necessity MomentumABM built an insight platform because nothing existed in the market. CEO Alisha Lyndon says its need for a solution "was so integral to our business that briefing a third-party wasn't viable. In addition, spending time customizing and integrating a third-party stack would've taken a similar investment level versus building a priority solution ourselves."

With almost two-thirds looking to take on the tech vendors at their own game, it will be interesting to see whether the year ahead will lead to greater competition between agencies and vendors, or greater collaboration — perhaps resulting in mergers or acquisitions, as discussed previously.

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The new era of brand protection

Your brand is at risk in the omnichannel era if you don't manage it properly. And for that, you need the right technology

As marketers, we love the speed, flexibility, and dynamism of digital channels. It's giving us unprecedented opportunities to reach our customers and prospects at unbelievable speed, with exciting new creative formats emerging, and the ability to respond and refine in real time.

But with every opportunity, there are challenges – one of those becoming increasingly important in this omnichannel era is how you manage (or, more specifically, control) that sheer scale, breadth, and diversity of content that most B2B brands create every day.

Omnichannel digital marketing creates brand integrity or consistency challenges, where different teams, departments, functions or even business partners often use brand assets inappropriately. This is frustrating for those that care about the brand, but in isolation rarely a direct and immediate business threat – at least in the short term. Potentially more serious, however, are the range of other threats created by omnichannel digital content, including security issues like compliance and access, legal issues like trademarks for names and logos, and rights management issues like copyright and licensing terms.

"This challenge has really escalated in the past 10 years, in the wake of the huge increase in the amount of content being produced," says Jake Athey, VP of marketing at digital asset management (DAM) provider Widen. "We know marketers don't lose sleep over legal issues and file management, but we do know that they care about CX and lost revenue, and this is where we can help." Other benefits include accelerating product launches, enabling ROI assessments of digital assets and centralising creative and marketing workflows.

DAM has evolved as a MarTech category in response to this evolving context – it was previously regarded as a 'command and control' tool for brand marketers in the print era. "Today it's about command and control in the omnichannel or CX world," says Athey. "And it's integrated into the tech stack. The whole category is seeing a big resurgence as a consequence. All of our data suggests this is set to continue."

His confidence is backed up by data from analyst firm Research & Markets, which predicts the DAM category will grow from $1.42 billion in 2015 to $5.36 billion in 2020.

Access for all

It's not just the explosion in digital techniques that's driving the resurgent interest in DAM – Athey says changes in the client/agency relationship is creating a review of how content and assets are managed. "It used to be the case that most brands worked with a single or lead agency, and their DAM platform was used to sharing assets between them. But increasingly that relationship is being decoupled. Brands are often working with several agencies, so they need to take care of their asset library and enable equal access to all."

But he says the agency sector itself is a key market for Widen. "We work with agencies of all sizes and have a specific model for them. The functionality of the platform, which includes things like workflow, can be a differentiator for them, allowing them to use it for work on several clients at once. We're happy on either side of the client/agency fence."

Outside of the marketing/agency relationship, Widen says use of DAM is also spreading. "Content extends into many areas – including product, operations, customer service, HR, etc. DAM technology allows all teams in any relevant departments to have access to these assets, as well as channel partners and distributors, etc. Manufacturing is a big sector for us, and using a DAM enables firms to build bridges with their channel partners, which in turn enables them to have speed to market. You're more likely to sell more products from those companies for whom it is easy to work with."

It seems pretty clear that DAM has come a long way in the last few years – but what does the future hold? How is the technology going to change as we continue to race headlong into digital transformation?

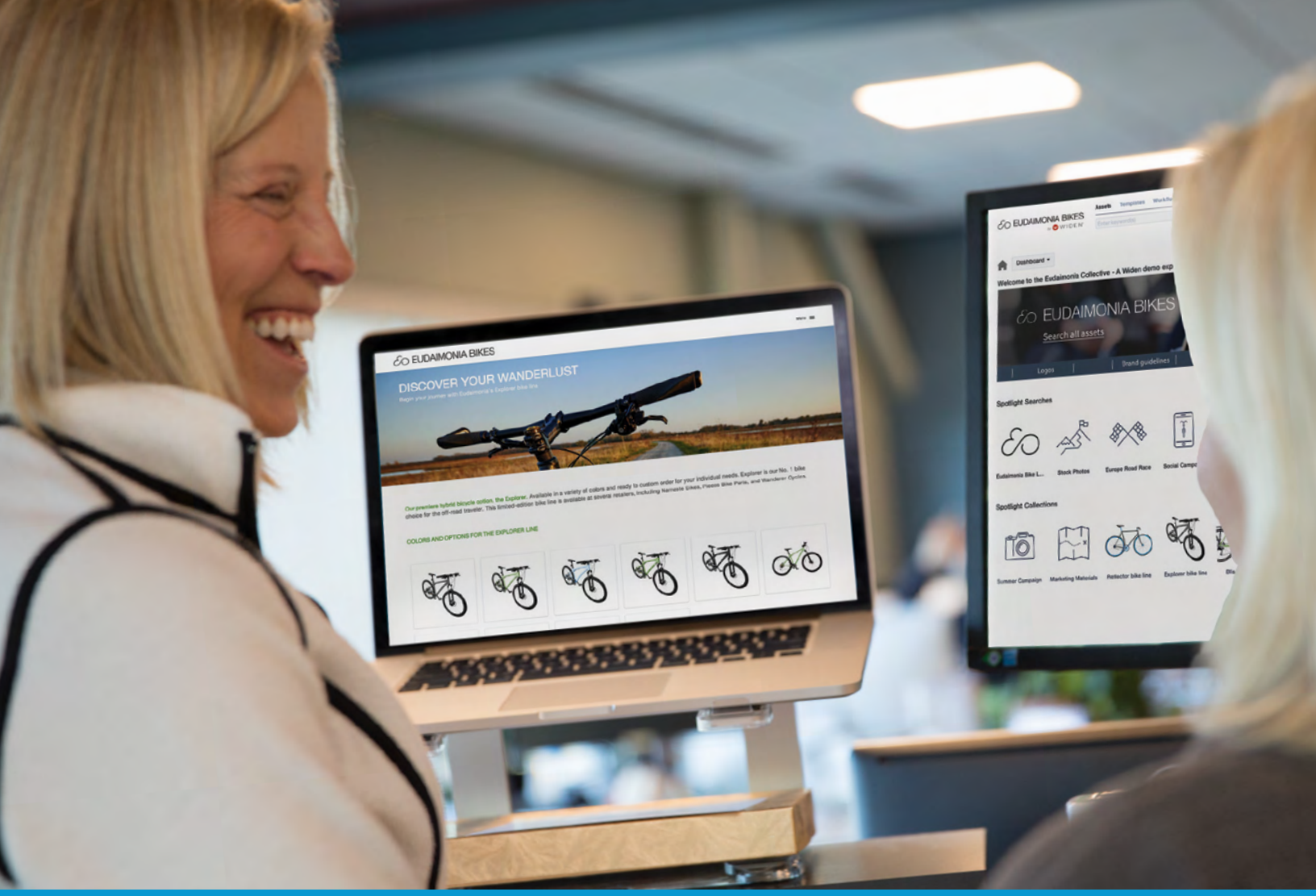
"With technologies like 3D, AR, and VR becoming more and more important, this creates a whole load of new challenges for DAM," says Athey, "and will only make it more critical as part of your marketing tech stack."

> **We know marketers don't lose sleep over legal issues and file management, but we do know that they care about CX and lost revenue**



Jake Athey
VP marketing, Widen

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Section 4

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CBD Marketing

Philosophy

Market What's Meaningful™
…for Results that Matter.

CBD Marketing helps B2B and B2C clients solve complex marketing challenges that can, at first glance, seem impossible to achieve.

We immerse ourselves in your business and your industry. We're with you in the field, gaining hands-on experience. We pore over data and analytics. We hone personas and move mountains to deeply understand your audience and what motivates them.

Then, we tap into our behavioral marketing expertise to reveal the places, prompts and game-changing ideas that inspire your customers to act.

At CBD, we're exceptionally dedicated to bringing your success to life in a way no one else can. We strategize and solve. Test and triumph. Opine and optimize.

We're ready to do it all for you.

Awards

Chief Marketer US 2018	Top 200 agencies
The Drum B2B Brave Awards 2017 (finalist)	Best integrated content campaign
23rd Annual International Communicator Awards	Gold Communicator Award of Excellence
PRSA Skyline Award of Excellence 2017	B2B marketing category
Platinum Hermes Creative Awards 2016	Trade show exhibit

Key clients

- American Dental Association
- Blue Diamond Almonds
- James Hardie
- Matsutani
- Rabobank
- Whirlpool Corporation

Specialist sectors

- Building and home products
- Food/food ingredients
- Financial services
- Professional services

Date founded	1988
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Twitter	@cbdmarketing

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Preparing CBD for the next 30 years

Co-CEOs Lori Colman and Liz Brohan on the need for continuous reinvention

It's a big year for Chicago-based B2B agency CBD Marketing (CBD), as 2018 marks their 30th anniversary. Co-CEOs Lori Colman and Liz Brohan agree that three decades' tenure is a hugely significant achievement in anyone's book. So, did they ever think their fledgling agency would still be gaining strength and momentum in 2018?

"Well, we certainly never thought it wouldn't," says Brohan. "We're not the same agency we were all those years ago. To be successful, you need to reinvent yourself continuously, sometimes driven internally, sometimes by client needs."

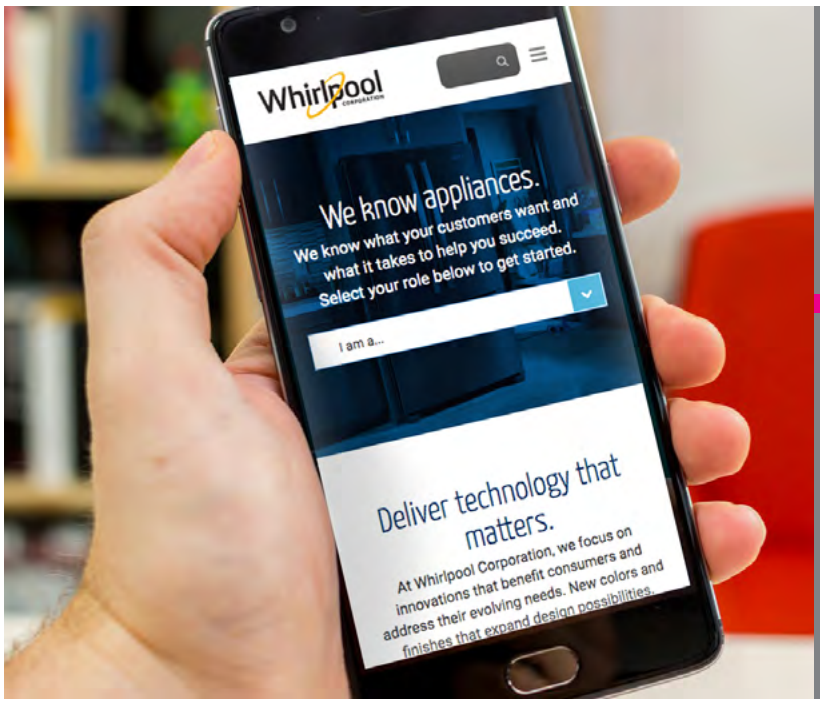
In recent years, CBD's success has been increasingly driven by its use of martech, and particularly AI, programmatic and online listening tools, providing completely new levels of insight. "We're using much more analytics, and this is fuelling opportunities and growth," says Colman. "Online listening is a firehose of data – but you need both tech and the skillsets to access and make sense of it."

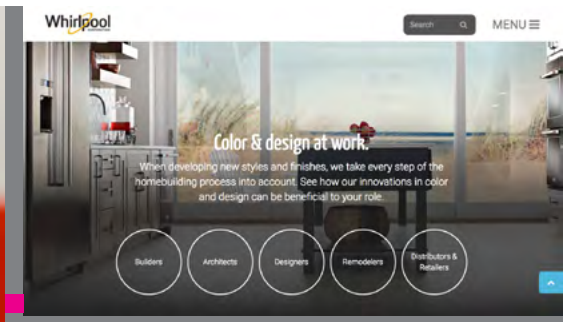
> We need to show clients AI isn't about taking over the world – we'll feel its impact in small doses

One technology that CBD believes is going to become progressively more important to effective B2B marketing is Artificial Intelligence (AI), which it has already deployed effectively for its media offering. But Colman adds that the nature of the tech can be off-putting. "We need to show clients AI isn't about taking over the world – we'll feel its impact in small doses. It's our job to make AI understandable and doable."

They also predict the ongoing fascination with video in B2B. That, plus the need to deliver marketing faster, will put a greater focus on live streaming and real-time video, including video webinars. "It's an extremely powerful tool," she says.

So, what about the future – will Brohan and Colman still be running CBD in another 30 years' time? "Never say never! There are lots of exciting things going on – it looks set to be another great year."







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Godfrey

Philosophy

Ask any Godfrey person, and they'll tell you: We love marketing complex industries more than any other agency in the world. After all, complex industries make the world work better.

But there's a problem. On the corporate side, B2B marketers have way more complexity than they know what to do with. They're constantly absorbing old roles and picking up new responsibilities. But their customers usually have it even worse.

Every day, a new marketing trend springs up to solve this problem, but most marketers don't have the time to keep up. That's where Godfrey comes in.

We understand the client's industry, so we'll sync up with their team right away. And that ever-changing toolbox of marketing practices? We get that too. So we can engineer an experience that feels just right for each and every customer. Then, we fill that experience with stories that really mean something in their complex industrial space.

So we get the complexity we love, our clients get the extended team they need and customers get a simple experience that leads them straight to the client's brand.

Awards

Chief Marketer US 2018	Top 200 agencies
Worldwide Partners	Perfect partner award

Key clients

- Avantor Performance Materials
- JLG Industries
- Johnson Controls
- nora systems
- Oshkosh Corporation
- Quaker Chemical Corporation

Specialist sectors



Industrial manufacturing



Property and construction



Innovation and science

Services offered

- Advertising
- Branding
- Content
- Digital and creative
- PR
- Research and strategy

Date founded	1947
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Transforming tradition

Godfrey president Stacy Whisel explains how emerging technologies are keeping the agency ahead of the curve

The industrial manufacturing sector may not have been the first industry to experience disruption from digital technologies, but, in 2018, these technologies are impacting the ways the industry works. "We're seeing a big shift to digital, with a focus on data and ROI. This disruption is creating opportunities," says Stacy Whisel, president of Godfrey, a digital-first B2B marketing agency that has specialized in this area for 40 years.

She says this growing focus on data is touching every part of how these industrial companies operate, with implications flowing back to marketing. "It impacts all the way down to the factory floor and how products are made, and it enables marketing to make connections and show its relevance across the business. For agencies, it allows us to create deeper relationships."

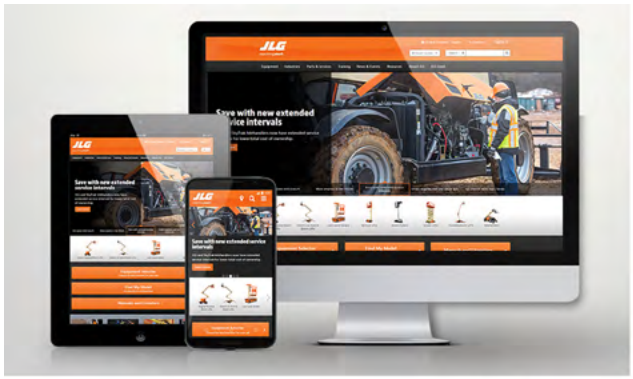
Exploiting these opportunities has challenged Godfrey to explore new technologies and build new proficiencies, which has been both challenging and rewarding. She points to two recent projects where Godfrey has worked with clients using emerging technologies.

> We're seeing a big shift to digital, with a focus on data and ROI. This disruption is creating opportunities

In the first, Godfrey built a chatbot to function as the 'voice of the brand' for one of its manufacturing clients. "It's a complex product – there were so many questions it could potentially have to answer, so we had to test it in thousands of different ways."

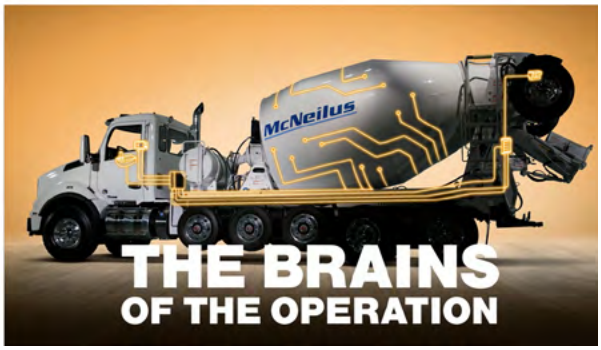
For the second, Whisel points to an AR solution that allowed a client's customers to 'see' its products being created, from raw materials to finished items. "This is so much more powerful than video could ever be," she says.

But beyond all these technologically-enabled solutions, Whisel says the agency has not forgotten the need to deliver conventional forms of marketing that underpin its offering – everything from SEO to brochures. "It all comes back to understanding your audience and putting together programs that work in an omnichannel world."









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Kingpin

Philosophy

Our philosophy is built on our principle of addressing the audience first. It doesn't matter what we think looks or sounds good, or indeed what our clients and partners do. What matters most is what *their* clients and prospects think, feel and respond to.

Our core mantra is simple: 'Dive deeper. Reach further'. It's something we live and breathe every day. It's a cliché perhaps to say it's in our DNA. But it is.

Through a combination of insight, experience and knowledge we develop real-time intelligence that keeps up with your target audience, including what motivates their purchase decisions. This means we always know exactly how to position your brand, to who and when. We turn data into execution and turn execution into pipeline. We're not into spending for the sake of it.

Awards

Computing's Tech Marketing & Innovation Awards 2017 (winner)	Marketing agency of the year
Computing's Tech Marketing & Innovation Awards 2017 (winner)	Multi-channel campaign of the year

Key clients

- LogRhythm Ltd
- McAfee
- Microsoft Corporation
- One Identity
- Qualys
- Quest Software

Specialist sectors

Financial services

Technology

Media

Date founded	1997
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Email	enquiries@kingpincomms.com
Twitter	@KingpinComms

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Look beyond the budgets

Rapid growth on both sides of the Atlantic is built by focusing on what really matters to clients, says Kingpin's US EVP Paul O'Malley

Kingpin achieved a unique distinction in this year's League Tables as the first (and only) agency to be named in the top five of the fastest-growing B2B agencies on both sides of the Atlantic.

> Our mantra has always revolved around being trustworthy partners for our clients

So what's at the foundation of this rapid success?

"It's our determination to prove our concept, experience and willingness to look beyond the marketing budgets and to the things that really matter for our clients – the results," says Paul O'Malley, the agency's EVP US.

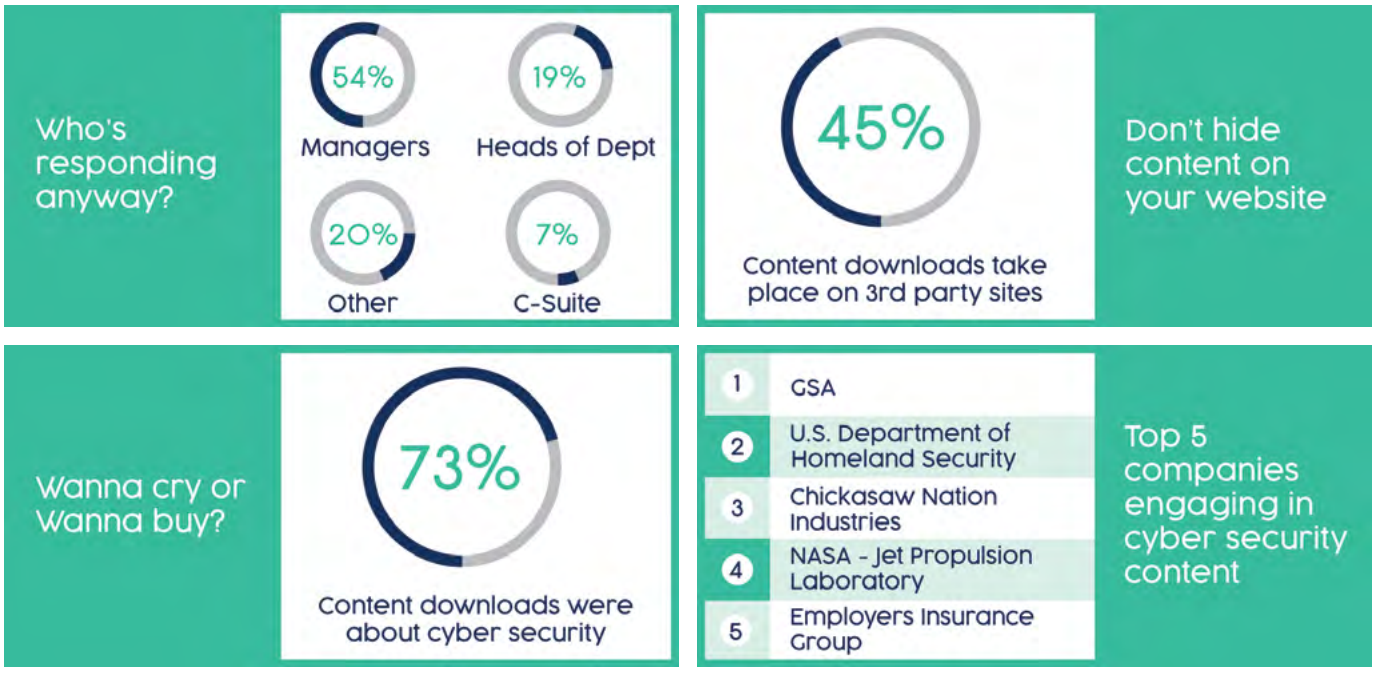
"Our mantra has always revolved around being trustworthy partners for our clients. It's also been important to us that they know we are not in this to make a quick buck. That has been reflected in a lot of the growth we have seen."

Among other tactics, targeted programmatic and account-based marketing (ABM) in combination with in-house analytics have proved rewarding.

"We've seen great success with some of our clients in driving meaningful audiences through a manner of digital tactics and seeing strong results" Paul adds. "For example, we have been driving activity for one of our clients for more than six months. They're seeing approximately 40% of trial sign-ups go on to download their product."

This focus on client KPIs also underpins the agency's approach to the latest industry trends, with excitement around the potential for programmatic in B2B. And with two new clients already on board for 2018, along with expansion for the San Francisco office and opening a new location in the US, the agency is aiming to capitalize on its growth.

"Nothing stands still in marketing so we will continue to improve our demand gen (including ABM), SEM and social capabilities to ensure that we're staying on top of technological advancements and making some of our own," says O'Malley.



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Quarry

Philosophy

Quarry is a modern marketing agency dedicated to complex B2B. That's our sweet spot and single-minded focus.

We unravel the many dimensions of how sophisticated, empowered buyers make business purchase decisions. We simplify complex stories about highly engineered solutions. We create consensus-building, customer-centered brand experiences that move buyers forward. We enable savvy leaders to drive change.

To get there, we start with deep insights into how buying groups buy. We attract, engage and mobilize the right person, with the right experiences, at the right time in the buying journey. And we power – at scale – using leading martech platform partners like Oracle Eloqua, Uberflip, Mintigo, CaliberMind, Vidyard and more.

Our expert team of insight specialists, strategists, experience designers and marketing technologists do this for North American Fortune 500 and mid-market leaders alike.

"Quarry represents a new breed of B2B marketer: one who is part artist, part scientist, and all about driving results." — Ann Handley, chief content officer, MarketingProfs.

Awards

Chief Marketer US 2017	B2B top shop
BMA New York 2017 (finalist)	Global ace award
Uberflip 2017	Service partner of the year
BMA B2 2016 (finalist)	Agency of the year

CEB Challenger Agency Partner Certification 2016

Key clients

- Broadridge Financial
- IBM Watson Health
- Kijiji
- Oracle
- Windstream Enterprise
- Workfront

Specialist sectors

Financial services

Technology and telecoms

Professional services

Date founded	1973
US address	1440 King Street North, St. Jacobs, Ontario, N0B 2N0
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Telephone	519-664-2999
Email	hello@quarry.com
Twitter	@Quarry

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Doubling down on ABM

Quarry MD Richard Hill explains why ABM will continue to grow

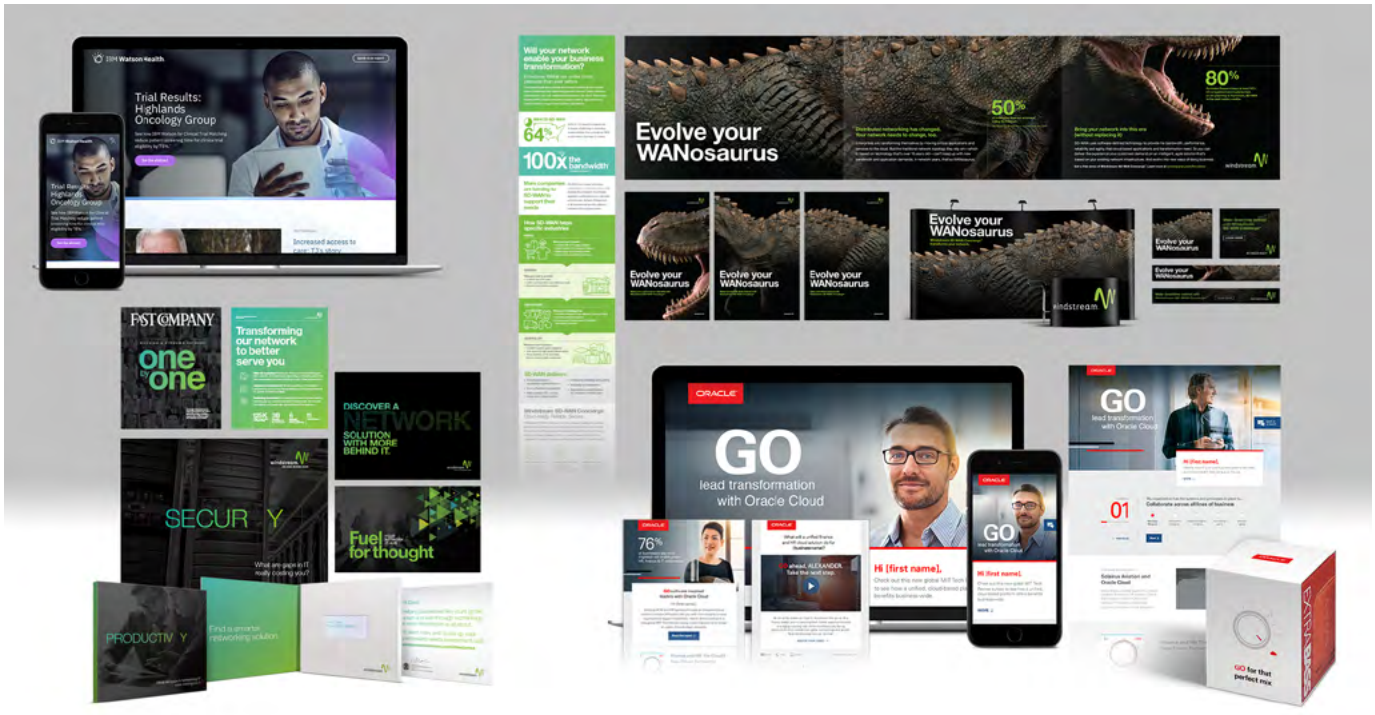
There's one very clear trend which has defined the past 12 months for B2B agency Quarry, and that's ABM – or account-based marketing. "We started experimenting with ABM a long time ago," says MD Richard Hill. "But interest really started to scale in 2017, and there's no sign of it slowing down."

Hill says Quarry combines strong credentials in demand generation and marketing automation, with a more widely ingrained culture of innovation and seeking out the 'next', which positions the agency well to ride the wave of interest in ABM. He adds, "But for ABM, marketing automation competencies are just table stakes – to do it well, you need to add many more layers of expertise and knowledge. We've really built up our broader martech muscles. A lot of agencies say they can do ABM, but you need a lot of things to come together to do it properly, from predictive modeling and account list prioritisation, to engagement planning, creative strategy and sales enablement. Data science is particularly important."

This focus on ABM is having an unexpected impact on the work Quarry is doing for its clients, including the likes of Windstream, Oracle, Workfront and Equifax, at least in some instances. "You can spend more money on reaching specific individuals, and this allows a different kind of creative thinking. This 'narrowcast' approach has seen the re-emergence of 'lumpy' DM pieces, including personalized video mailers. There are lots of interesting ideas and solutions."

> A lot of agencies say they can do ABM, but you need a lot of things to come together to do it properly

Hill clearly believes Quarry's expertise in the on-trend theme of ABM places the agency well for future growth. "I think savvy B2B marketers recognise they need savvy B2B agencies who get it, and who understand the business buyer mindset. The fact that we are fiercely independent and agile means we can respond quickly to these opportunities."



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Slack and Company

Philosophy

Taking the long view.

Our philosophy (which we prefer being caught in the act of living up to versus pontificating about) is to take the long view in everything we do. For starters, that means attracting and holding on to top talent as long as we can by providing challenging work and treating people well. Our 4.8 Glassdoor rating, the highest of any marketing agency we know of, suggests we're doing okay in that department.

Taking the long view also means putting our clients' needs first even if it shrinks our short-term results. That helps explain the longevity and depth of so many of our client relationships, with 70% of our revenue coming from clients who have been with us three or more years. It may also explain why we have received so much third-party recognition over our 30 years in business.

Taking the long view is also manifested in the many ways we have worked to elevate the B2B marketing profession since our founding in 1988. Our CEO helped rejuvenate and lead the Business Marketing Association (BMA) in Chicago in the 1990s and 2000s and later as national BMA chairman in the early 2010s, including organizing the annual global BMA conference for seven years.

Awards

Chief Marketer 2016-17	Top Shops
Chief Marketer 2018	CM 200

Key clients

- Choice Hotels
- General Electric
- Ingredion

Specialist sectors

Food ingredients

Technology

Industrial

Services offered

- Advertising
- Branding
- Demand generation
- Digital and content marketing
- Direct marketing
- IMC program planning
- Market research
- Media planning and relations

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Time to back your brand

Clients are renewing their focus on brand, and that's paying dividends, says Slack and Company CEO Gary Slack

Like all industries, marketing is a fashion industry, with techniques and technologies coming in and out of vogue, sometimes at an alarming rate. And in this environment, it's refreshing to speak to someone whose perspective cuts through this short-term narrative. Gary Slack, founder and CEO of Chicago-based agency Slack and Co, is just one such individual.

Slack and Co are celebrating their third decade, riding a wave of one of the most successful years in terms of new business in its history. "Last year's tax cuts seem to have loosened up budgets. It's allowing people to do things they've wanted to do for years – and that includes marketing."

For Slack and Co's clients, that means there's a renewed focus on the brand. "When things are uncertain, brand work takes a hit, with attention moving towards demand generation, but this ultimately drives diminishing returns. We've always tried to tread the fine line between being both a brand and demand generation agency, and we're being rewarded now because we stuck to our guns."

> When things are uncertain, brand work takes a hit, with attention moving towards demand generation

Gary Slack believes a similar resurgence needs to happen in data. "Data is always the elephant in the room. Almost every B2B company's database sucks – despite all the talk and all the hype. It needs intensive investment in hygiene. And even where the quality is good, the systems don't talk to one another creating other problems."

He suggests that some B2B marketers are trying to ignore, or shortcut this issue. "In recent years, marketers have been obsessed with inbound. While this is undoubtedly powerful, the greatest opportunities emerge when you combine inbound and outbound. Outbound is proven, but it relies on good data. It's critical to dovetail them."

Marketing trends and technologies will come and go, but Slack and Co will keep on doing what they are best at – creating great B2B marketing.









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Tomorrow People

Philosophy

Tomorrow People is an award-winning, data-driven content marketing agency with offices in New York (US), London (UK), and Birmingham (UK). We believe the secret to marketing success, no matter whether it's ABM, product marketing, inbound or any other strategy, is compelling content.

Founded by two partners in 2011, Tomorrow People employs over 30 people across editorial, web development, account management, design, and digital marketing teams, as well as working closely with a pool of sector expert copywriters and videographers.

Across five core areas of data, strategy, execution, technology, and consultation, Tomorrow People uses content to redefine marketing strategies for some of the world's best-known organizations such as Oracle, TrustPilot, Unify, Tech Data, TeamViewer, and Solvay.

Using powerful narratives and deep customer insights, we carefully craft global, growth-driven marketing strategies that are designed to monetize an audience.

Key clients

- Oracle
- TeamViewer
- Tech Data
- Three
- Trustpilot
- Solvay
- Unify

Specialist sectors

- Healthcare
- Industrial, manufacturing, engineering
- Financial Services
- Pharmaceutical
- IT and telecomms
- Media
- Professional services

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Why content is always the answer

Alistair Norman, MD of Tomorrow People, discusses his agency's rocket fuel – great content

In line with our customers' increasing demand for global growth programs, our capacity and geographical reach has grown considerably. We've acquired some large B2B organizations looking for content to help them grow faster – and, crucially, content that's measurable and has a demonstrable impact on the bottom line.

We've spent the last year working with leading IT distribution firm, Tech Data, to digitally transform its marketing operations from traditional methods to a solution that incorporates an opt-in community for its partners to quickly achieve their own growth.

We're currently working with a leading chemicals company, headquartered in Brussels, to bring its offering to life in the consumer goods and automotive markets. We're also working with an Israeli tech startup, Applicaster, to reposition it as a disruptor brand that breaks the rules and resets the agenda.

> No matter what marketing strategy you want to deliver, the unifying piece of the puzzle is great content

Throughout the rest of the year, we'll be looking to grow the business on both the East and West coasts of the United States. We've already got a base in Manhattan, but we'll be looking to expand and set up a base in Silicon Valley, helping high-tech companies fuel their varied marketing programs and ensure they run faster.

No matter what marketing strategy you want to deliver, the unifying piece of the puzzle is great content. Everyone's talking about the magic they conjure up in vertical marketing, inbound marketing, lead generation, product marketing or ABM. But they're all missing the point. The point is content. We give our customers best-in-class content to fuel whatever marketing program supports their wider objectives. It's not about the trend or specialism. It's all about the content that fuels it.







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Yesler

Philosophy

Yesler is an award-winning B2B marketing agency that blends strategy, creativity and technology to build demand, engage customers, and grow revenue. From offices in Seattle, Portland and Philadelphia, we're a team of more than 200 strategists, designers, technologists, media experts and analysts who are on a mission to change the marketing status quo.

We take an integrated approach to serving the entire marketing organization – not only the strategies, content and programs to create demand but also the infrastructure, operations and project management required to execute, measure and optimize for results.

And by results, we mean outcomes, not just outputs. Relationships, not deliverables. ROI, not vanity metrics.

We also pride ourselves on being a great place to work, earning more than 19 Best Workplace Awards over the last decade and recognized three times on Seattle Business Magazine's list of Best companies to work for.

In 2017, Yesler was named one of the Top five B2B Marketing Agencies in the US by B2B Marketing, and ranked on the Chief Marketer 200 for the third year in a row.

Awards

Chief Marketer US 2018	200 agencies
Content Marketing Awards	Best paid advertising/ content marketing integration
Content Marketing Awards	Highest conversion response from a content program
Seattle Business Magazine	100 best companies to work for
Inc Magazine 2017	Best workplaces

Key clients

- Amazon
- Code42
- Google
- Microsoft
- SAP
- Trend Micro
- Zillow

Specialist sectors

Healthcare

Technology

Industrial, manufacturing, engineering

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Getting ahead with agile

David Jones, president and co-founder of Yesler, on how the technique has revolutionized how the agency operates

David Jones, president and co-founder of Yesler, is very clear about what he'd do differently if he started his business again. This doesn't relate to something which went wrong – instead, it relates to something which Jones wishes they'd done more aggressively. And that is embracing agile techniques.

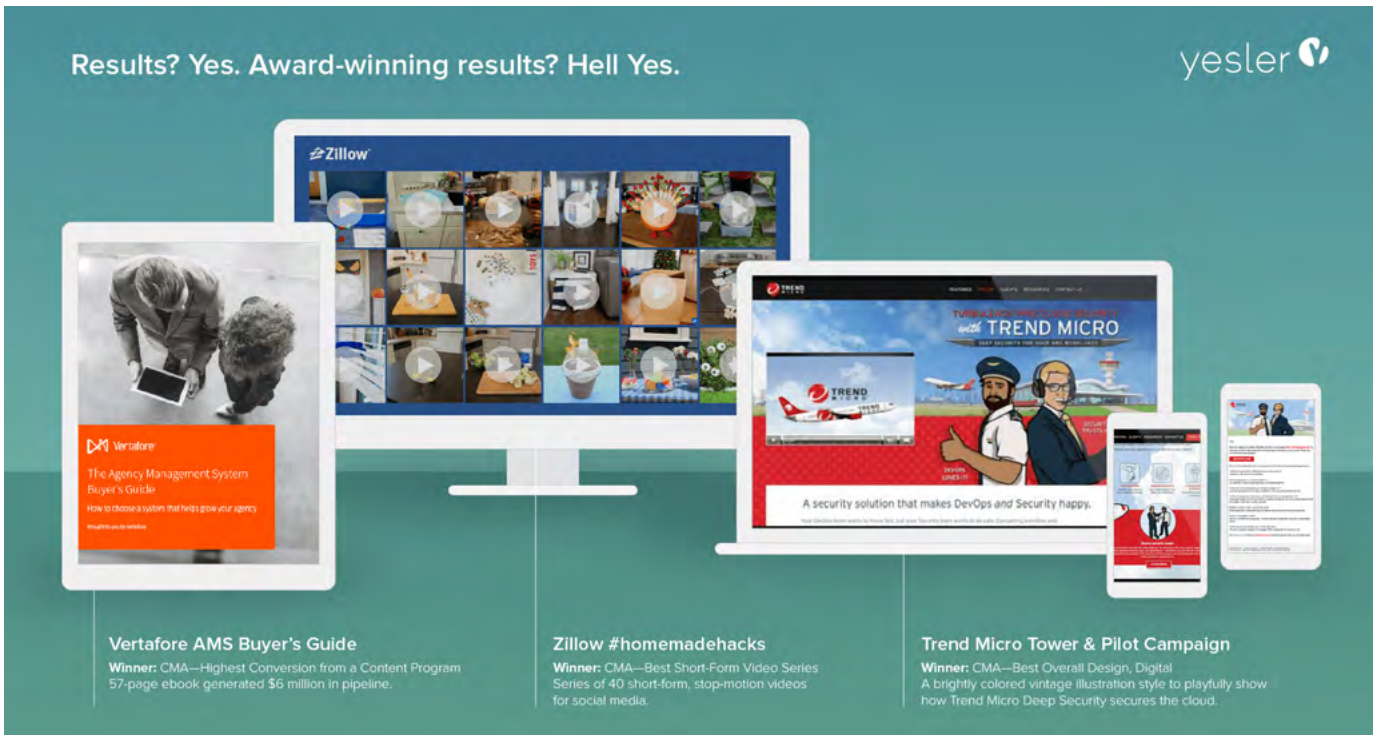
> Before ABM, it was sales versus marketing. If you have an ABM strategy, everyone is on the same page

Yesler started their agile journey two years ago, and it is no understatement to say that it has revolutionised how the agency operates, and its success. "We're seeing strong topline growth. We're just getting more done. And it's having a big impact on morale – our internal NPS scores just keep going up."

Jones believes the agile proficiencies the agency has built up, and their inherent flexibility of operation, has enabled Yesler to evolve well beyond the traditional B2B client/agency relationship, into something that looks and feels much more like an outsourced marketing department, giving their clients access to a deeper suite of knowledge, skills and proficiencies. "Today's marketers are data-driven and much more technical. The challenge for the CMO is to work out what they need and how best to use their budget. Do I need to hire more people, or can I bring in a specialist?"

Besides agile, Jones believes ABM is going to be increasingly key to effective B2B marketing over the next few years. "Before ABM, it was sales versus marketing. If you have an ABM strategy, everyone is on the same page. There is lots of momentum around this."

Jones also recognises the growing importance of marketing tech, which in part is enabling interest in ABM. But he urges a note of caution: "There is a proliferation of platforms, and marketers like shiny objects. There is no shortage of hype, but marketers need to understand what they want the outcome to be. The first tool that you need is your whiteboard."



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The agency sector and services index

Sectors	CBD Marketing	Godfrey	Kingpin	Quarry	Slack & Co	Tomorrow People	Yesler
Financial services	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Food and ingredients	✓				✓		
Health and beauty							
Industrial, manufacturing, engineering		✓			✓	✓	✓
Innovation and science					✓	✓	✓
IT and telecoms			✓	✓		✓	✓
Life sciences		✓					
Media, publishing and marketing			✓			✓	
Pharmaceuticals						✓	
Professional services	✓			✓		✓	
Property and construction	✓	✓					
Retail and wholesale							

Services							
Account-based marketing (ABM)				✓	✓	✓	✓
Branding		✓		✓	✓		
Content marketing	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Creative and production services	✓	✓		✓			✓
Data services	✓					✓	
Direct mail							
Email marketing services/marketing automation	✓						
Lead/demand generation		✓			✓		✓
Marketing planning and strategy		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Marketing technology						✓	✓
Media planning and buying	✓		✓				
Mobile	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Performance measurement				✓			
Print advertising							
Public relations	✓	✓				✓	
Research/analytics/insight	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Sales enablement						✓	
Search engine marketing (SEO and/or PPC)		✓					
Social media	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Telemarketing			✓				
Website design/development/management	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Other (please specify)							

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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.

Business development opportunities for marketing agencies

Many of the leading international marketing agencies partner with us to help drive and nurture their new business pipeline. We offer partnership options including membership, content and media outreach, event sponsorship and face-to-face ABM.

Membership

Our Agency Premium membership programmes provide a unique resource for marketing agencies targeting the lucrative B2B sector.

Agency Premium membership

Your annual Agency Premium membership brings you:

- Two bound copies of the B2B Agencies Benchmarking Report
- Our annual tech sector benchmarking report
- Two copies of the award winning *B2B Marketing* magazine, every quarter
- Access to the *B2B Marketing* magazine online.

Plus you'll receive:

- Six new industry benchmarking/best practice reports per year.
- Exclusive access to our complete Premium content hub of tactical guides and research.

To find out more about Agency membership options, call our client solutions team on +44 (0)207 014 4920.

To explore our content, media outreach and sponsorship opportunities go to b2bmarketing.net/media or call our media team on 0207 014 4932.

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