

creating materials that drive buying decisions

state of the conversation report

making marketing memorable

corporate visions

memory drives decisions



Digital content and changing buyer preferences are pushing marketing much further down the funnel—everything from nurture campaigns to keep prospects warm, to structured cadences to reignite cold leads, to buyer enablement tools to support customer self service.

Marketing also owns a bigger chunk of the sales process.

Whether you call them BDRs, LDRs, or SDRs, business development functions are folding into the marketing organization. In fact, some industry leaders now believe that eventually, more than 50 percent of Sales Enablement will report to Marketing.

It's no longer enough to drive awareness or interest with your messages and content—you are now in the business of influencing buying decisions.

How, then, should you adapt your marketing for this new reality?

Our research shows that **the primary factor that drives decisions is memory**. Your buyer interacts with your marketing in one moment, but they decide to purchase later on.

If you hope to influence and guide buying decisions in your favor, your messages, your content, your stories, and the visuals you create must all be powerful enough to stick in people's minds. And that's what you'll learn more about from the all-new research findings in this report.



Dr. Carmen Simon
Chief Science Officer

most marketing is forgettable



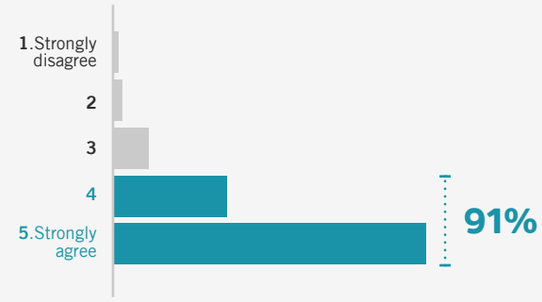
Memory drives decisions. Unfortunately, most marketers don't think that their content is memorable or actionable.

In a recent Corporate Visions survey, 87 percent of B2B marketers told us that they're unsure or don't believe that their audience acts on their content.

And, even though the vast majority (91 percent) say it's important that their audiences remember the content they share, 74 percent are unsure or not confident that the marketing materials they produce are, in fact, memorable. Worse yet, a meager seven percent of respondents believe their marketing materials are both memorable and actionable.

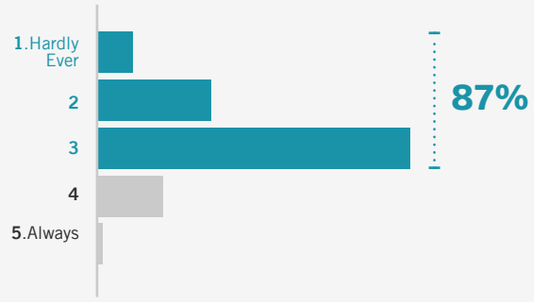
According to our B2B Marketing industry survey:

It is important that our audiences remember the content we share



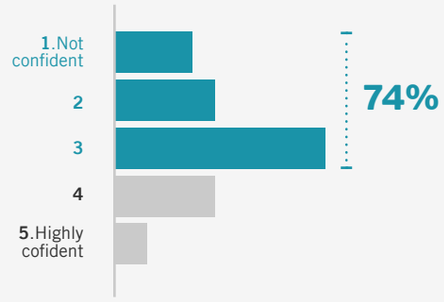
91 percent believe it's important that their audiences remember the content they share.

Our audiences always act on content we share with them



87 percent said they were unsure or did not believe their audience acts on their content.

Overall, we are confident that our marketing materials are memorable



74 percent said they were unsure or not confident that their marketing materials are memorable.

2020 Corporate Visions Survey: How Memorable is Your Marketing?

Every marketer aspires to create persuasive content. And even if you haven't yet achieved this goal, our research shows that it is possible. To make it happen, you must overcome people's natural tendency to forget most of the information they view.

control your message

Our research shows that **people remember, on average, only 10 percent of your content after 48 hours**. This percentage varies—sometimes, they may remember three percent, sometimes 12 percent, but, on average, it's a tiny portion.

As a general measure, we refer to the small amount of information people remember as a metaphorical "10%." And it's important that you control that 10% if you hope to be memorable.

Think of the 10% message you would like your audiences to remember. With this message in mind, ask if it meets these criteria:



FOCUSED

Do you have one main message with no more than 3-4 supporting points?

REWARDING

Is your main message linked to something your audience finds rewarding?

DIFFERENTIATED

Can someone else in your field claim your message, or is it unique to you?

REPEATABLE

Does your message come to mind easily so that someone can tell it to someone else?

ACTIONABLE

Is your message phrased as an action you want your prospect or customer to take?

help the brain

see the essentials

When you create marketing materials, such as e-books, presentations, whitepapers, infographics, or videos, you often appeal to people's vision. You want your audience to see what you offer. Do you ever wonder why the human brain needs to see?

The brain needs to see to acquire knowledge. In its constant quest to see the world, your brain looks for essentials—for characteristics of objects, people, or situations that are permanent in an ever-changing environment. This is evolutionarily useful, because it would be exhausting for your brain to process every piece of information as if it were new every time. So it needs essentials to easily process what's familiar and not work too hard when something is ambiguous.

One of the best things you can do in marketing is to **help your buyers' brains see what is essential**. When you do that, you become instantly unforgettable. That's because you're helping your buyers see what they need to retain and use in future situations. And when they remember you in the future, you can influence their actions because memory fuels decision-making.

Use the guidelines below to help your customers remember your message in the future, where decisions happen.

01. repeat responsibly

02. invest in aesthetics

03. harness complexity













- help the brain
  see the essentials

01.

repeat
responsibly



repeat
repeat
repeat

repeat *responsibly*

When you repeat something often enough, the brain starts recognizing patterns. Those patterns indicate to the audience that something is important, and it should be retained in the future.

Repetition is also useful for helping the brain process information more easily, which, in turn, gives your audience the feeling that it's effortless to do business with you.

And of course, it's no secret that repetition influences memory, and earlier you learned that it's critical to help your audience remember your 10% message. So repeating that message is a must. But how often should you repeat it? After all, there's a fine line between repetition and nagging.

How much repetition does the brain need to remember what you want it to remember—and to find your repetition useful, not annoying?

Before answering this question, you need to first consider one important aspect of memory.

Read on.



do you want customers to remember **exactly** what you said or *sort of what you said?*

When you share your marketing materials with an audience, they can either remember your content verbatim (exactly what you said) or they can just get the gist (which implies some familiarity with the content).

If you operate in a highly competitive space, you want your audiences to remember your message verbatim—with precision. Otherwise, your buyers get the gist from you and the gist from competition, after a while they won't be able to remember who said what. This means that even if you're creating truly great content, someone else could get credit for it. Maybe this is why **only 21 percent of the marketers we surveyed believe their messages are both differentiated and memorable**.

Gist-based memory is not always accurate. Sometimes people forget where they first saw the content. And if they only vaguely remember it, their memories may not even be correct.

One way to help your audience remember with precision is through a lot of repetition. Without repetition, gist-based memory is more likely, especially if your content is devoid of other characteristics that impact memory, such as emotion or distinctiveness.



So, don't settle for any kind of memory—**focus on improving your audience's precision memory**. Your buyers should remember and act on your message, precisely how you intended.

Repetition helps. But how much repetition is needed to influence your buyers' precision memory, so they remember what you want them to remember?

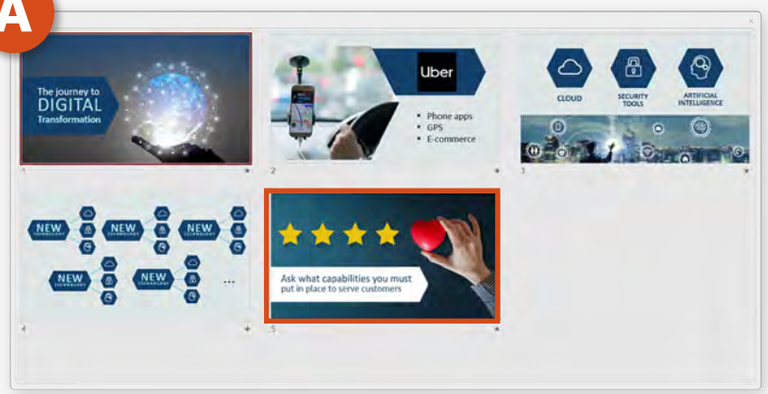
Our research found the answer.

how much repetition for *precision memory?*

To study how much repetition is needed for precision memory, we invited two groups of B2B participants to watch a business presentation. Participants were asked to imagine they were executives at a company that was looking for a digital transformation solution to serve their customers better.

Each group watched one of these two presentations:

A



The 10% message was mentioned **only once**.

B



The 10% message was repeated **six times**.

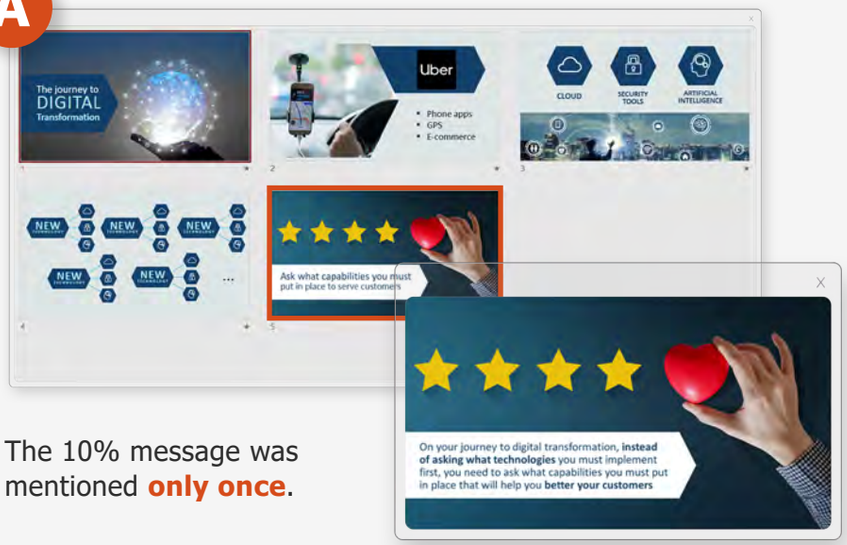
89% remembered with precision

Both presentations were five minutes long, and each contained the same number of words about the same topic of digital transformation. During the research, our goal was to see if repetition enabled audiences to remember a single, precise message.

The results? **89 percent of people who watched Presentation B remembered the phrase with precision immediately after viewing the presentation**. And, this percentage only dropped to 77 percent when we tested the participants' memories two days later, which is not a significant drop.

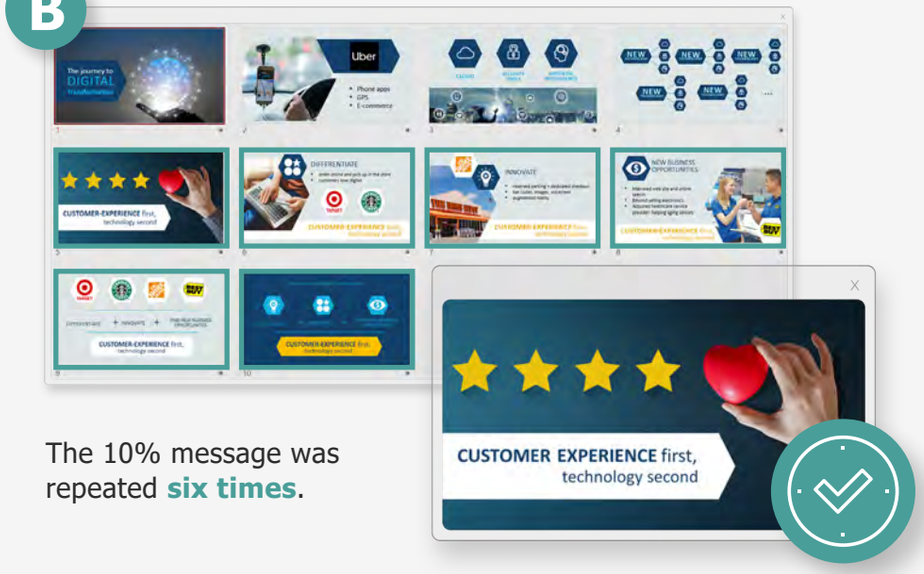
Participants who watched Presentation B remembered the main message more precisely. And it's clear from the participants' responses that there is no consensus as to what the main message was in Presentation A.

A



The 10% message was mentioned **only once**.

B



The 10% message was repeated **six times**.

"Potential fragmentation if not conducting your digital transformation in a holistic manner."

"I remember that the presentation emphasized that a lot of things can go wrong when a company is going through digital transformation, and that is why it is so important to work with a trusted partner."

"It was about small problems that could have a chain effect and multiply out as it showed with the graph. That would be the single most important message."

"The most important information is about digital technology... how it is affecting every business and forcing everybody to find the best way to digitally transform the company, which means buying new technologies and making transfer of data faster and positive results."

"Customer experience first, technology second."

"The thing I remember the most is that digital transformation is about serving and customers first. It's then about technology second."

"Customer experience is more important than the technology behind it."

"Customer experience first, digital trends second."

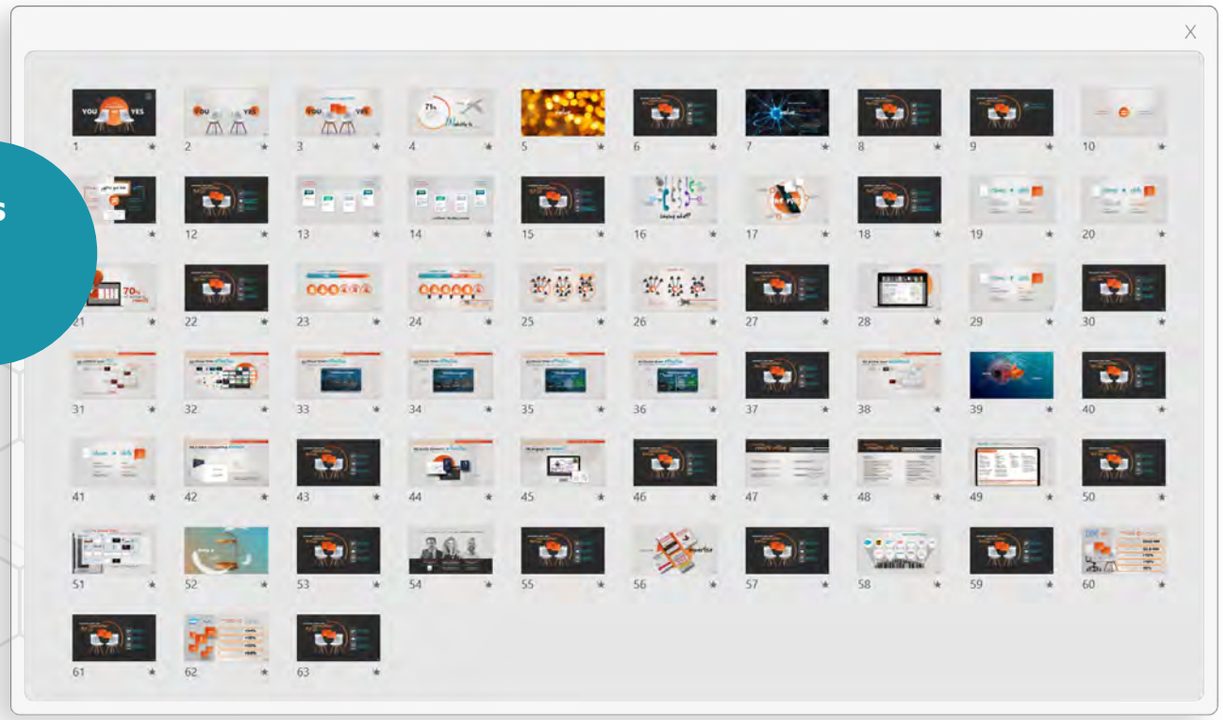
more repetition improves precision memory

More repetition improved precision memory for these five-minute presentations. But what about longer presentations?

In a subsequent study, we asked three different groups of participants to view a 20-minute presentation. In one version of the presentation, the 10% message was repeated six times. A second version repeated the 10% message 12 times. And the third version of the presentation repeated the 10% message 20 times.

More repetition helped participants remember the message better after longer presentations. In fact, 46 percent of people who viewed the 20-minute presentation in which the message was repeated 20 times remembered the 10% message with precision.

Repeating the message 20 times led to precision memory in 46% of participants.



So, you need a lot of repetition to achieve precision memory from your marketing content. But repeating a message is only one part of the equation.

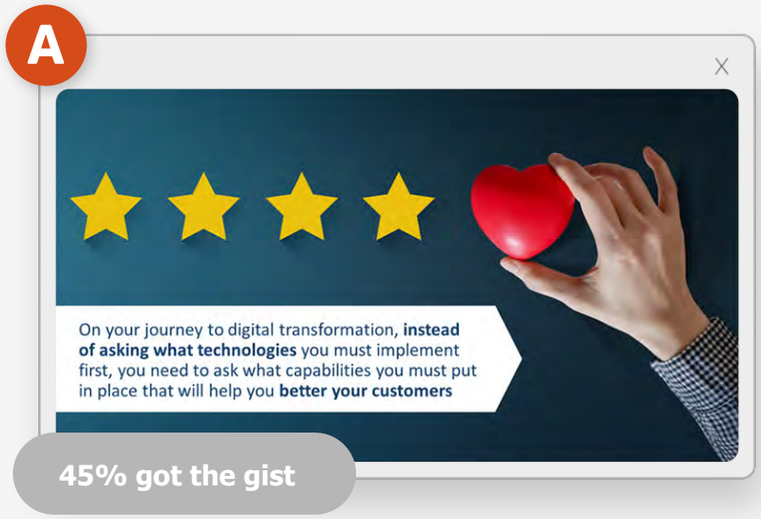
For your buyers to remember your content, you must also create a repeatable message.

make your message *repeatable*

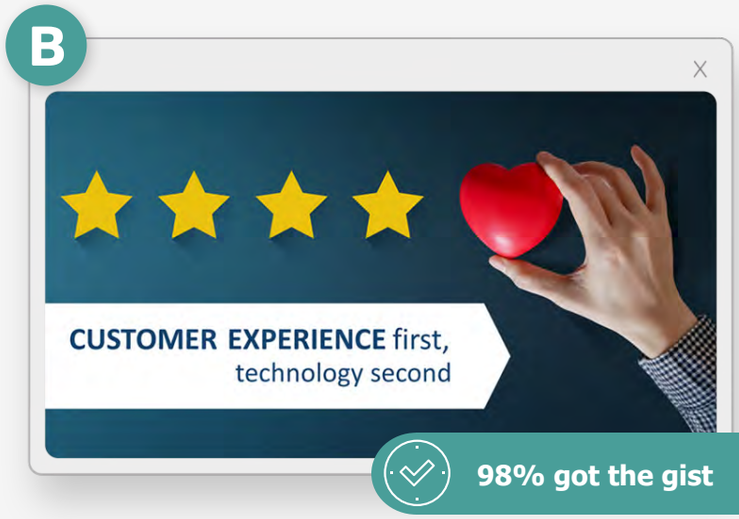
It’s not just repetition that makes people remember your marketing. Your message must be repeatable as well.

In the first study, when we compared the two five-minute presentations, we also tested two different ways of presenting the 10% message.

Based on the participants’ responses, only 45 percent got the gist of the message in Presentation A. But almost everyone (98 percent) got the gist of Presentation B.



In Presentation A, the main message was somewhat hidden among complicated phrasing and flowery words. It wasn’t immediately clear what message the presenter wanted people to take away.



In Presentation B, by contrast, you can instantly identify the main message and what the presenter wanted their audience to repeat later.

Now, think about your 10% message and how it can potentially influence both precision memory and gist memory. How can you make your messages more focused, rewarding, differentiated, repeatable, and actionable?

help the brain
see the essentials

02.

invest in *aesthetics*



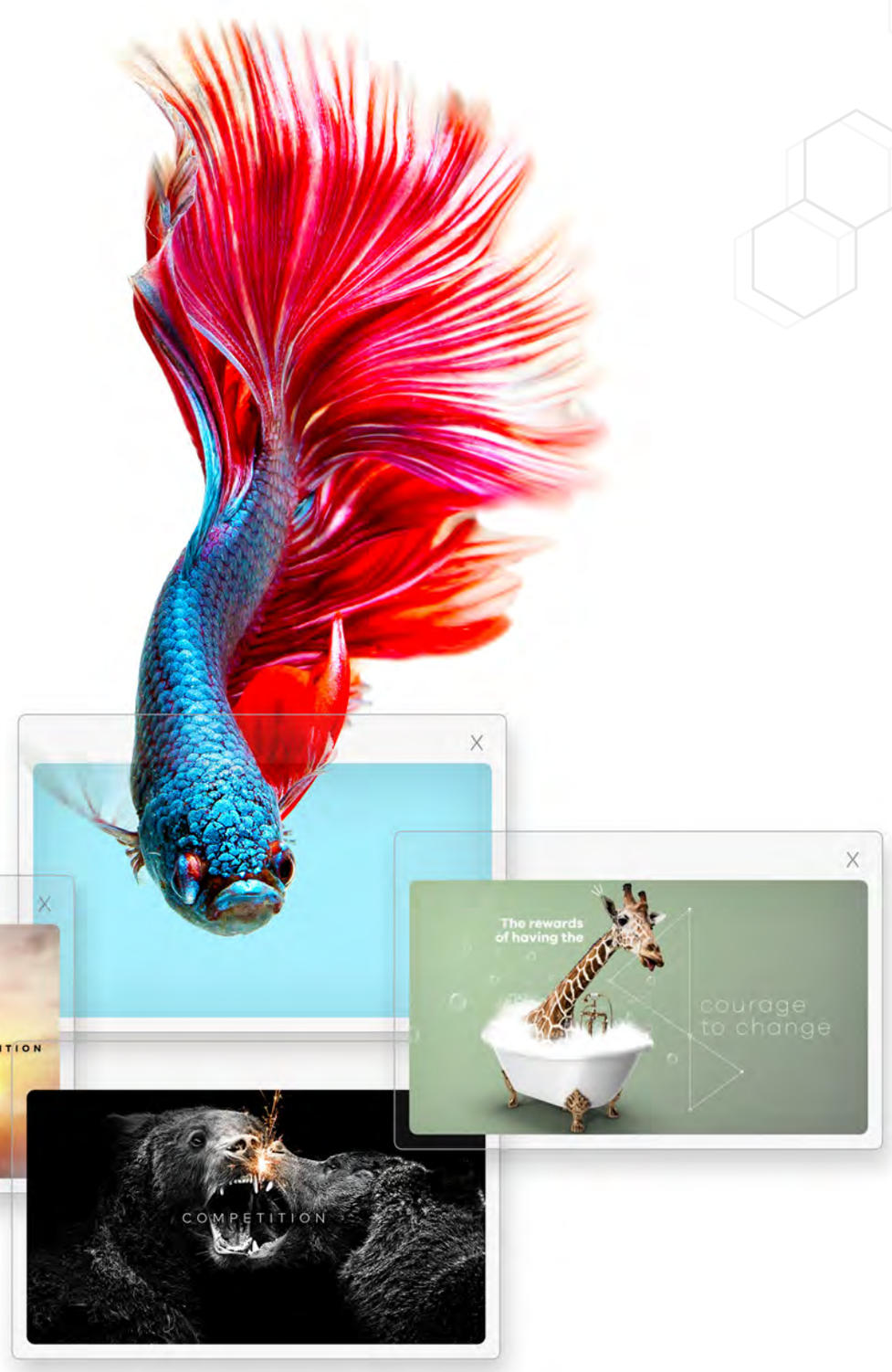
invest in *aesthetics*

When you repeat a message frequently, you create "processing fluency", which means you're helping your buyers' brains process information faster, easier, and with more precision. You can also create processing fluency when your marketing materials include aesthetic elements.

Aesthetics, in a marketing context, is defined as the visual attractiveness of your marketing materials.

When your marketing materials are attractive, or aesthetically pleasing, they generate processing fluency, which helps the business brain see the essentials and solve a business problem more easily. In addition, when your content is attractive, your audience will want to stay with it longer, and they will remember it better.

But what kind of aesthetics make your marketing stick in your buyers' minds?



how do *aesthetics* impact memory?

People who view business content tend to react to the arrangement of specific aesthetic elements, such as images, lines, shapes, color, proximity, hierarchy, texture, scale, movement, icons, and balance.

So, we measured whether these aesthetic elements impact marketing content in terms of memory and enjoyment.

For this study, we once again invited a group of participants to view two five-minute business presentations. Both presentations contained the same number of words and used the same script and voiceover.

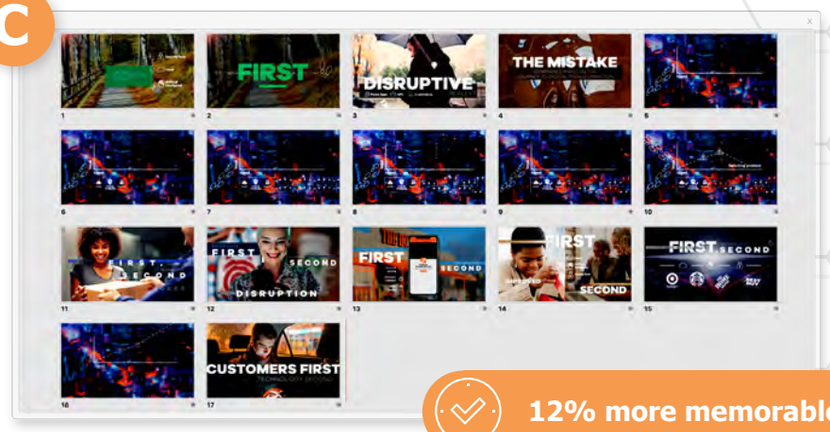
B



10 slides, 5 min

- Typical PowerPoint
- Simple color palette
- Few icons
- No animations

C



12% more memorable

17 slides, 5 min

- Animations on fonts, icons, and images
- Icons to help illustrate important points
- Images covering the entire slide
- Use of Photoshop to edit images
- Use of Photoshop to combine images and convey the story
- Different layouts that enhance information hierarchy

Presentation C, with more intense aesthetic elements, was 12 percent more memorable than Presentation B.

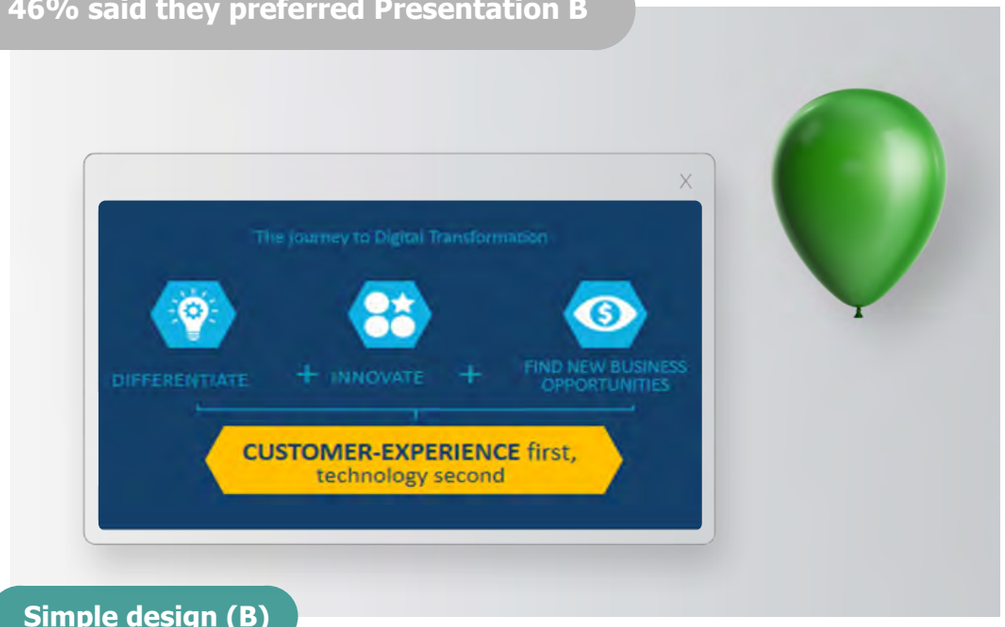
89 percent of participants remembered Presentation C with precision two days after they watched both presentations, versus 72 percent who remembered Presentation B with precision. But don't redesign all your content with intense aesthetics just yet...

Surprisingly, participants liked the two presentations almost the same.

Forty-six percent said they preferred Presentation B, while 54 percent said they preferred Presentation C. So, even though one presentation was more memorable, it wasn't necessarily more enjoyable. Why?

At a high level, participants shared this feedback about the two presentations:

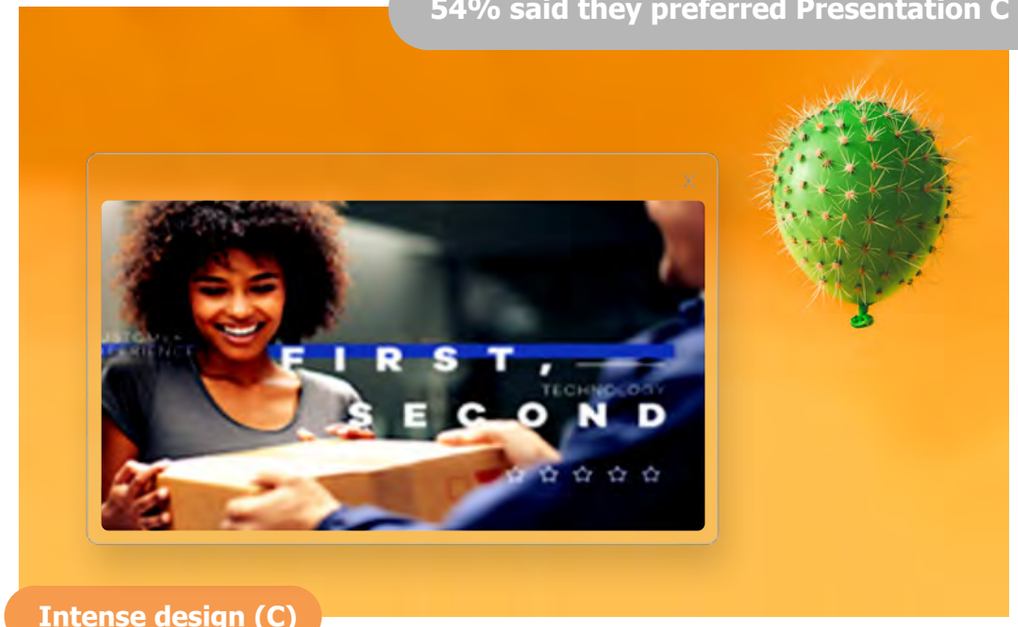
46% said they preferred Presentation B



Simple design (B)

- Less busy (not overloaded)
- Bigger visuals
- Less complicated
- No distractions (e.g., backgrounds)
- More "corporate"
- Easy to follow layout

54% said they preferred Presentation C



Intense design (C)

- Engaging
- Attention-grabbing/vibrant visuals
- Maintains attention with animation
- Able to "see" through examples, extra details
- Modern, trendy
- Shows extra work, which means the vendor is willing to do extra

Based on this feedback, we set out to answer a new question: How much aesthetic intensity is too much? Can you give the brain the best of both worlds, so it enjoys something that's not overwhelmingly intense?

when is aesthetic intensity *most impactful?*

Before we re-did the study, we considered that one way to determine the intensity of your aesthetic elements is to note whether the concepts shared with an audience in marketing materials are simple or complex, and whether the information is new or familiar to them.

Looking at the quadrants formed at the intersection of these variables, note how you don't need so much aesthetic intensity when you're addressing complex content, and your audiences find it familiar. But you do need more intensity when your content is simple, and your audiences are familiar with it.



Also, when your content is new and complex, you still need some intensity because you will have to manage that complexity for someone else's brain. For example, animations that help display content gradually, using lines and shapes to organize complex content well, will help your audience's brain process complex information easily.

finding the *balance*

Our previous study showed that **intense aesthetic elements can make marketing content more memorable, but they don't make it more enjoyable** to your audience.

So, we conducted another study to find the balance. The goal was to determine whether reducing the number of animations and overall visual effects in the presentation could impact how much people enjoyed it.

In this new study, we once again invited participants to view the two five-minute business presentations. As in previous studies, both presentations contained the same number of words and used the same script and voiceover.

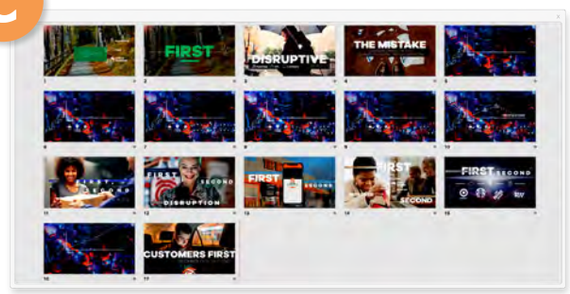
B



10 slides, simple aesthetics

- Simple color palette
- Few icons
- No animations

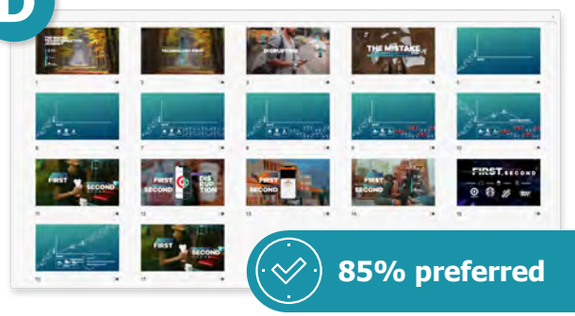
C



17 slides, intense aesthetics

- Average of 23 animations per slide
- Heavy use of Photoshop
- Full images on all slides

D



85% preferred

17 slides, balanced aesthetics

- Average of 16 animations per slide (more animations for complex content)
- Removal of backgrounds for complex and familiar slides
- Extra effects for simple and familiar slides

While there was no consensus in the previous study between Presentation B (simple aesthetics) and Presentation C (intense aesthetics), **participants in the new study decidedly preferred Presentation D, which balanced the two aesthetic approaches**.

In fact, 85 percent of participants said they liked and preferred Presentation D over Presentation B.

As these studies show, using the right balance of aesthetics to complement the kind of content you're sharing can significantly impact how memorable and enjoyable your marketing is for your buyers.

help the brain
see the essentials

03.
harness
complexity



harness *complexity*



There's a trendy piece of advice out there that marketers need to "simplify complexity."

But that just isn't true. As our studies have shown throughout this report, **less is not more when creating marketing that people will remember**.

In fact, in some studies, to influence what people remembered and were willing to act on, we did not remove content—we added more. In one study, one presentation had five slides and another 10, even though both presentations were five minutes long. The presentation with more slides was remembered with better precision.

In another study, we more than tripled the number of slides, while keeping the time length constant (five minutes), and the longer presentation was yet again more memorable.

You don't need to simplify complexity. Instead, **you must harness complexity to influence memory and decisions.**

A practical way to harness complexity is to use a technique called "elaboration."

make room for *elaboration*

Elaborating on the information you share improves precision memory by helping the brain see the essentials.

To illustrate this concept, consider the two presentations mentioned on page eight of this report.

In both examples, the topic of digital transformation is quite abstract. But Presentation B makes room for elaboration with recognizable examples of digital transformation from well-known brands. As a result, details in Presentation B are easier to remember with more precision.

A



- Five minutes
- Five slides
- One example of digital transformation (Uber), tied to a blurry message
- 0% precision memory

B



77% remembered with precision

- Five minutes
- Ten slides
- 10% message repeated six times
- Five examples of digital transformation (Uber, Target, Starbucks, Home Depot, Best Buy), tied to the main message, which was "customer experience first, technology second"
- 77% precision memory

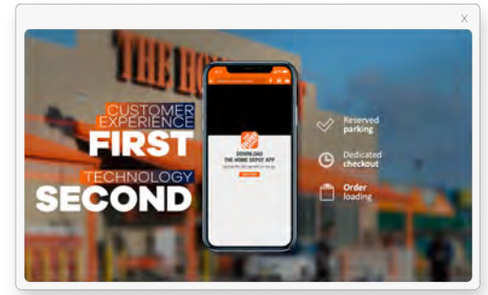
make room for *elaboration*

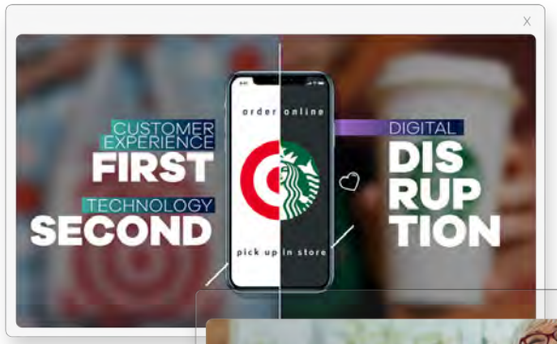
When you elaborate on something, you're sharing extra details that link to semantic networks that already exist in your buyer's brain.

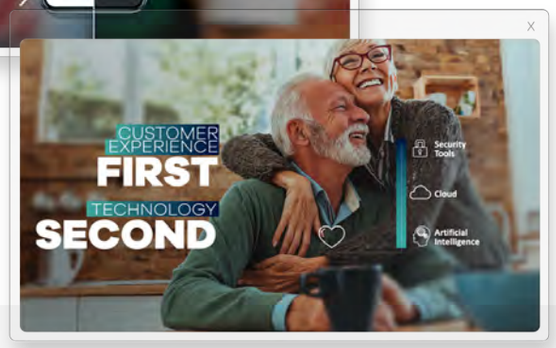
For example, if you said, "Digital transformation helps you differentiate yourself," that message is abstract, so it's more difficult to remember. But if you elaborate with examples from recognizable brands like Starbucks or Target, you're helping the brain see what using technology for differentiation means.

Telling audiences, "Digital transformation can help you innovate" is abstract. Showing how Home Depot innovated using technology to help customers identify items on shelves through an app, and even use augmented reality, helps the brain see what innovation means.

You can see how much elaboration impacts precision memory from participants' responses:







"I remember specific examples from Home Depot, Target, Starbucks, and Best Buy—all thinking about customer needs first, and technology second. I also remember the message that just rushing to put everything into the cloud can cause issues rather than solve them."

"I remember the examples: Uber, Best Buy, Home Depot, Starbucks. I also remember at the bottom of ALL slides, the key phrase (customers first, tech second). I also remember a slide about cloud, security, and AI flow."

"The two [concepts] I remember the most would be how Best Buy is using a healthcare service to monitor seniors at home and how Home Depot does parking."

Reflect on the next marketing content you create. Make room for elaboration. When you do, you will impact how precisely your audiences remember your content.

Of course, when you elaborate, you add to the complexity of your content. Are there any disadvantages to complex content?

is complexity bad for the brain?

When you elaborate, your marketing materials may seem more complex. But is complexity that bad for the brain?

Not at all!

The brain needs some complexity to pay attention and process information. If your messages, content, or visuals are too simplistic, your marketing becomes forgettable.

The problem with business content is not complexity; it's randomness. And to combat randomness, consider offering the brain patterns—a set of rules to make sense of complex information and retrieve it more easily later.

As you elaborate, consider expounding on your ideas around the same theme established in your 10% message, so the brain can recognize patterns, whether it's looking at one paragraph, one page, or the entire piece of content.

When managing complexity, you can find inspiration in fractals, which are patterns that repeat themselves again and again, at any scale. For instance, the baby branches of a tree look like the parent trunk.

It's the same with your content. Regardless of how complex it gets, if you elaborate around the same theme, it will be easier to process. And any segment will maintain its "tree-ness."

Complex content does not seem complex when it's governed by the same set of rules throughout.



don't simplify complexity... *manage it*

In a recent study, we analyzed EEG data from 35 participants. Fourteen participants viewed highly simplistic videos (Study 1) and 21 participants viewed videos with more complex topics and effects (Study 2).

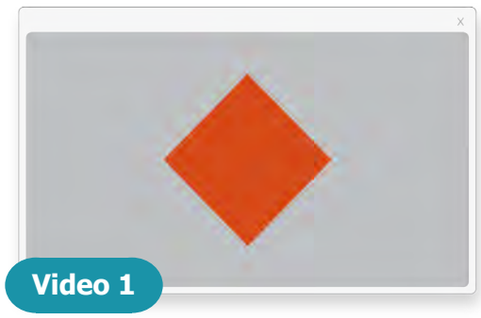
- Video 1 explained several sales compensation plans
- Video 2 explained several sales strategies for approaching prospects

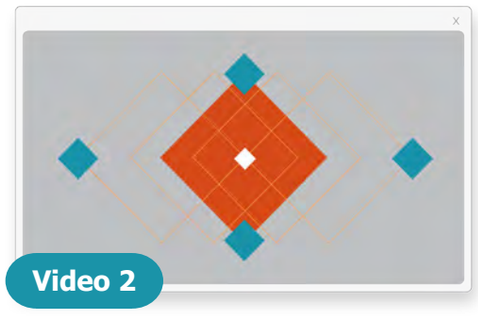
The more complex videos in Study 2 attracted more attention, were more engaging, and overall were more memorable than the simple videos.

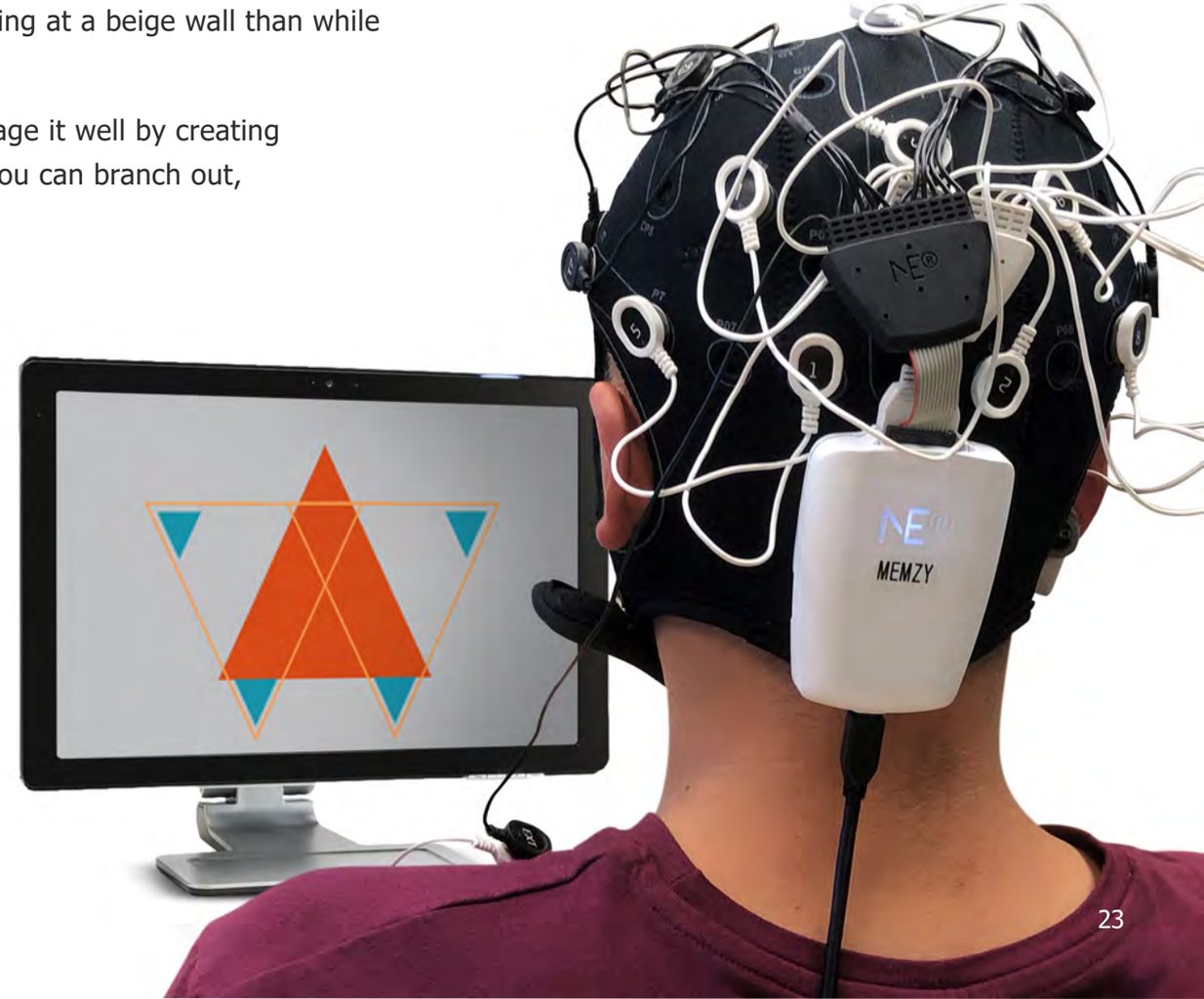
During EEG studies, we typically take a baseline of participants' brains while they're staring at a beige wall. Then we compare that baseline with what happens in the brain when it's stimulated by business content.

In Study 1, the data showed that the brain was more stimulated while staring at a beige wall than while watching simple video.

This is why we advocate to not simplify your complexity but rather to manage it well by creating organized structures and allowing your audiences' brains to detect them. You can branch out, but don't lose sight of the tree.







help the brain

see the essentials

In its constant quest to see the world, the human brain looks for essentials—constant and familiar characteristics of objects, people, or situations. So in your marketing materials, help your buyers' brains see what is essential, so they will recognize the most important information that they should remember and apply in future situations.

When your buyers remember you and your message, you can influence their decisions, because memory fuels decision-making.



01. repeat responsibly



02. invest in aesthetics



03. harness complexity

Memorable Marketing™ Training
from Corporate Visions

People make buying decisions based on what they remember, not what they forget.

Only with Corporate Visions' Memorable Marketing™ skills training will you get science-backed strategies to:

- Develop the most effective **messages** for new prospects and existing customers.
- Bring your messages to life with unforgettable **content** that impacts buying decisions.
- Use compelling **visuals** to create memorable designs that inspire action.
- Tell remarkable **stories** that drive decisions using neuroscience principles.

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author



Dr. Carmen Simon
Chief Science Officer,
Corporate Visions

Carmen Simon, Ph.D., is Chief Science Officer at Corporate Visions. A Silicon Valley entrepreneur, cognitive neuroscientist, and keynote speaker, Dr. Simon has developed a groundbreaking approach to creating memorable messages that are easy to process, hard to forget, and impossible to ignore—using the latest in brain science. Dr. Simon is the author of *Impossible to Ignore: Creating Memorable Content to Influence Decisions*.

contributors



Erik Peterson
Chief Executive Officer,
Corporate Visions



Tim Riesterer
Chief Strategy Officer,
Corporate Visions



Doug Hutton
Senior Vice President, Products
Corporate Visions

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