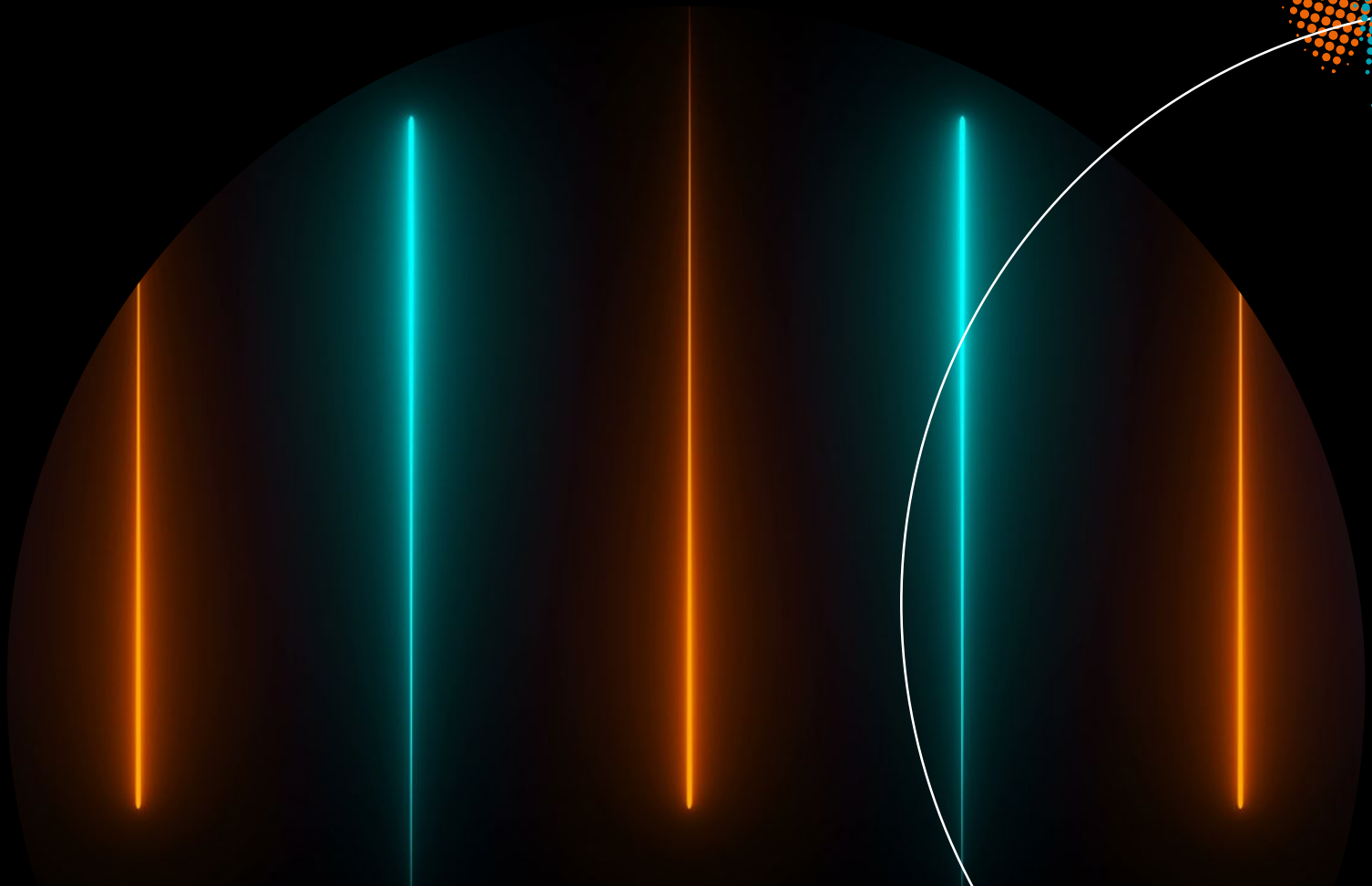
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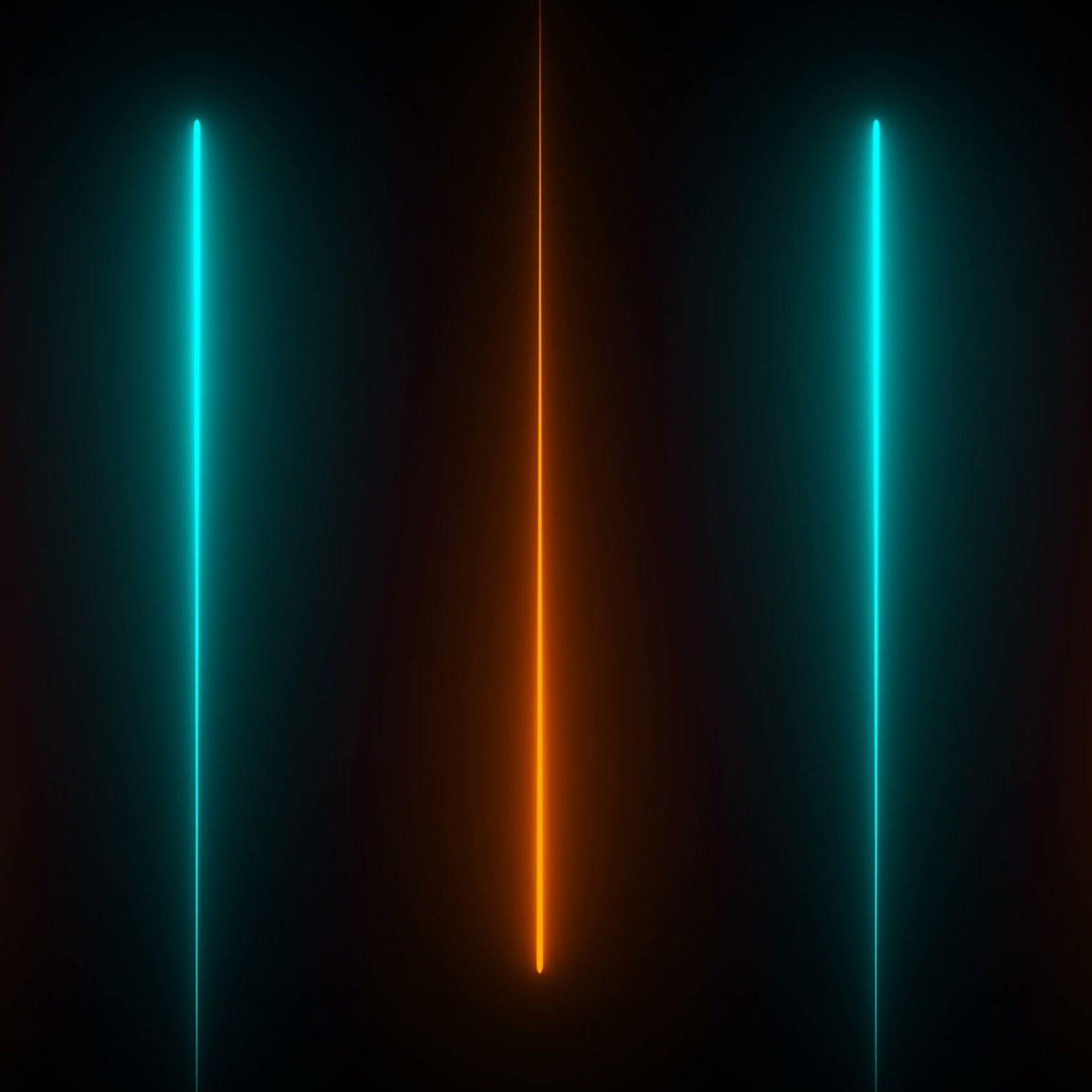
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From career success to succession

The B2B Marketing Leaders Report 2019





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Introduction

Why succession is crucial for success



Today most of us recognise that our job has a shelf life. There is a finite period in which we'll want to hold any position in an organisation – or (perhaps just as importantly) in which the organisation wants to hold us in that position.

This is not generally a reflection of commitment, or fickleness. Rather, that situations, companies and people change increasingly rapidly in today's world.

Consequently, the role that was perfect for you yesterday simply may not be tomorrow. The concept of a 'job-for-life' seems increasingly redundant – increasingly quaint or nostalgic.

As a consequence, B2B marketing leaders inevitably have one eye on the future. They are thinking about what could come next, where they might progress to, and which challenges are going to really excite them. Most are unlikely to be actively looking for something new, but will be tacitly aware of their options and changing potential trajectories. Not to do so seems naive at best, foolish at worst.

It follows that most B2B marketing leaders are invariably thinking about the future for their teams and organisations too. There are various reasons for this; perhaps most immediately that it's easier to extricate yourself when you have a robust succession plan in place and a strong talent pool of potential successors. Thinking more holistically, if you do a good job not only in your role but also in handing over, it can only benefit your personal brand – in other words, you'll create good

‘karma’ from your bosses, your colleagues and your team, which can only enhance your opportunities in the future. What goes around comes around, as they say.

For these reasons and many others, it’s pretty clear that career planning and succession go hand in hand. That’s why this reports explore these issues in parallel, to understand the way B2B marketing leaders consider the future, both for themselves, and their teams and organisations.

It’s been fascinating and revealing to explore these twin topics in tandem – what we’ve found is that B2B marketing leaders are very sophisticated in some aspects of their career planning and thinking, and surprisingly simplistic in others. I’m sure these findings will help enlighten and inform your thinking, and hopefully guide you towards a happy and fulfilling future, for both yourselves and your marketing colleagues.

Joel Harrison,
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Section 1

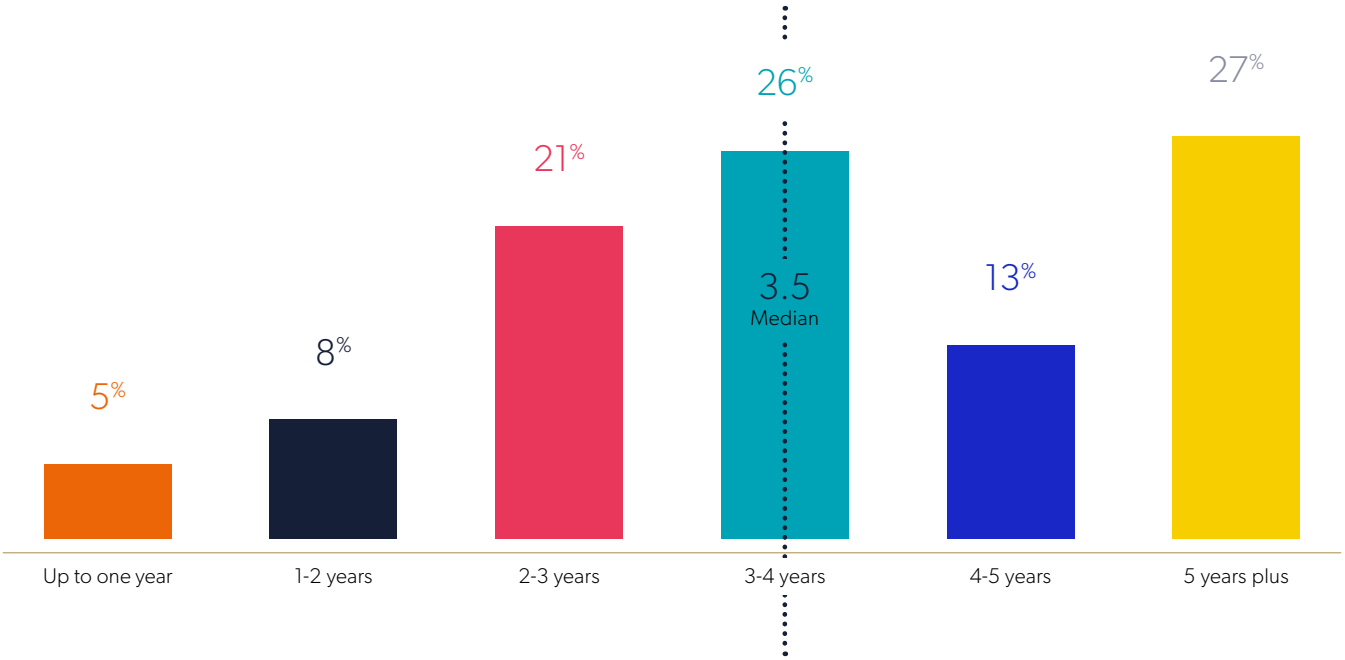
Your current role

How long are B2B marketing leaders typically in their role – and how long does it take to make an impact?

1.1 Longevity of B2B marketing leaders

Figure 1. **Tenure**

Q. How long do you expect to be in your current role before you leave?



The tenure of marketers in B2B organisations has been widely discussed and speculated, for senior leaders it's typically thought to be a dizzyingly short 18 months or less.

It's hard to believe they would have achieved anything significant during that tenure, unless the marketing in their organisation was very basic prior to their arrival, conforming to the age-old stereotype of promotional pen purchasing, or arranging golf days.

So it was a relief that our data from the research underpinning this report thoroughly confounded this rumour. In reality, tenure for B2B marketing leaders was shown to be about three and a half years, which seems much more realistic in terms of providing scope for those marketers to make a demonstrable impact – both for themselves and their organisations.

We asked respondents to tell us both how long they had been in their current roles, and (more significantly) how long they expected to be there before moving on.

True, a small proportion (less than 15%) expected to last less than two years; but more significantly, around two thirds expected to hold down their existing marketing leadership role for at least three years – 40% for more than four years. This shows B2B marketers are committed to delivering in the long-term, and suggests their organisations are supporting them (otherwise, presumably the average would be much lower). In short, this is a very positive picture all round.

"When you think about the responsibility you have in a CMO role, could you really demonstrate the impact you could make in just 18 months? I do think three to four years – depending on the stage and maturity of the business – feels about right. You need time to understand, articulate and demonstrate the value you and your team have brought."

Cara O'nions, global marketing director, Bottomline Technologies

Despite the commonly held belief that a marketer's tenure is 18 months or less, our recent research finds it to be 3.5 years

1.2 Internal versus external opportunities

Given the depth and variety of the headhunting sector, and the apparent dominance of LinkedIn as an engagement mechanism, you would be forgiven for thinking that the vast majority of appointments are driven by these twin mechanisms.

But our data shows that recruitment of senior marketers isn't that simple. Although more existing senior marketing roles were externally sourced than internally (45% versus 40% of respondents respectively), roles that were filled via a head-hunter (what we're calling 'reactive external') accounted for just under 30% of the total.

Most positions were filled by internal promotions or sideways moves. By contrast, 'proactive external' (i.e. responding to advertisements) accounted for 17% of respondents.

While there are a variety of ways to recruit senior marketers, internal promotion remains the most successful. This is a more effective and less costly route in many situations, and is unsurprisingly popular given the cost of headhunters. It also supports the longstanding tradition of senior marketers being hired from backgrounds outside the profession – something that can be extremely positive. Finally, it suggests that organisations do more to support existing internal talent when planning for, or seeking to bolster, their marketing teams.

"The company I worked at previously didn't hire from outside - they moved people around. I had a lot of different jobs there. It was almost like I wasn't in one company. I kept moving to learn different skill sets. I always sought something new."

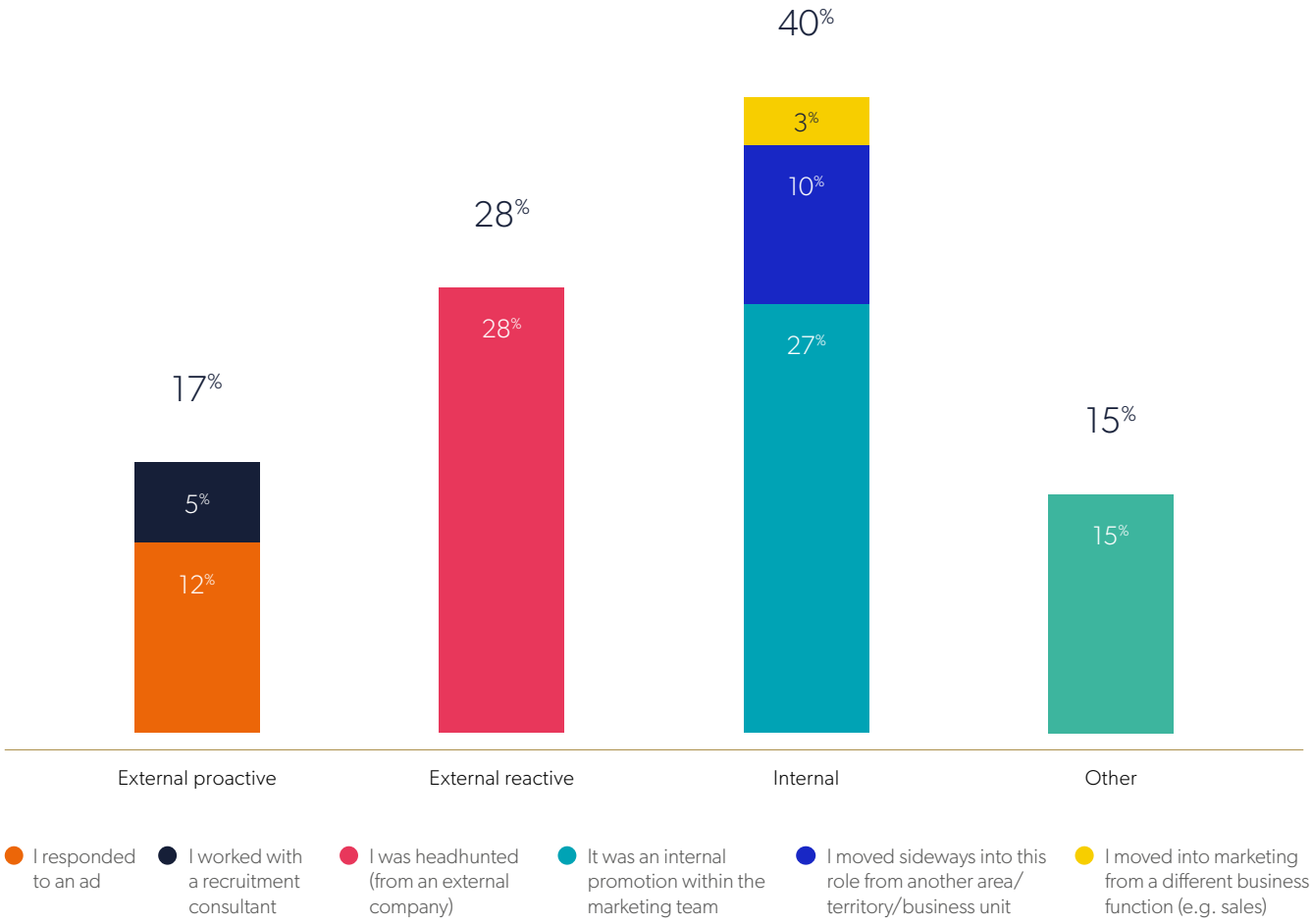
Philip Martin, managing partner, DMA Partners – Agency

"You can gain a lot of targeted experience from bouncing between roles within the same company but candidates want change. About 35% of our revenue comes from repeat placements. A lot of the people we've placed will come back to us telling us they fancy a change, don't feel fulfilled or are looking for more from their role."

Tom Howe, managing partner, The Jefferson Group – Recruitment agency

Figure 2. **Internal versus external opportunities**

Q. How were you recruited for your current role?



1.3 A job for life?

Not only are B2B marketing leaders confounding conventional wisdom about tenure, they are confounding their own. More than a third said they believe their tenure will ultimately be longer than they anticipated when they took the role. This compares to only one in ten who anticipated a shorter tenure than they previously expected.

Thirty percent expected their tenure to be 'about the same' as previously anticipated, while the remaining (one in four) said it wasn't something they had considered.

Why are B2B marketing leaders spending longer in their roles than first expected? Perhaps it's taking longer to make an impact, or the size or nature of the challenge is growing. In either instance, it suggests leaders are demonstrating real commitment to making a difference and it's certainly a long way from the 18-month rapid turnover that is often touted.

> "[A three year tenure] seems about right to me. In the past 10 years I've done two CMO roles – both three years. I'm just exiting my current role at three years, two months. The twist is that in the same 10 year period I've done two roles less than 18 months because they were very tactical and I had to get the company to a certain place in a very short space of time."
>
> **Nick Eades, CMO, Wincaton**

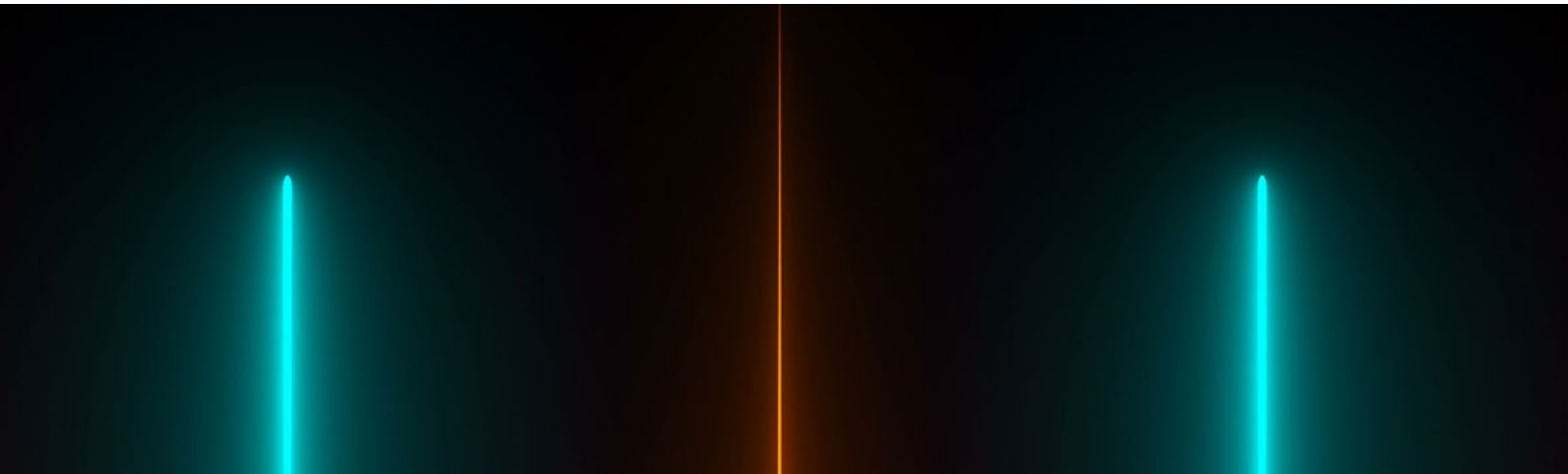


Figure 3. **Tenure versus expectations at inception**



1.4 The company comes first, careers come second

There are two main contributors to a leader staying in their role longer, our research has found. The first is 'autonomy, and the ability to make decisions' – in other words, having genuine clout within the organisation, and not (as was often the case) just being a puppet for sales or the CEO. This response confirms that marketing leaders are determined to set and follow their own agenda – albeit one that is most likely aligned to the organisation. Arguably this response should be expected from a professional audience, but it's far from reality in B2B companies of the not-too-distant past.

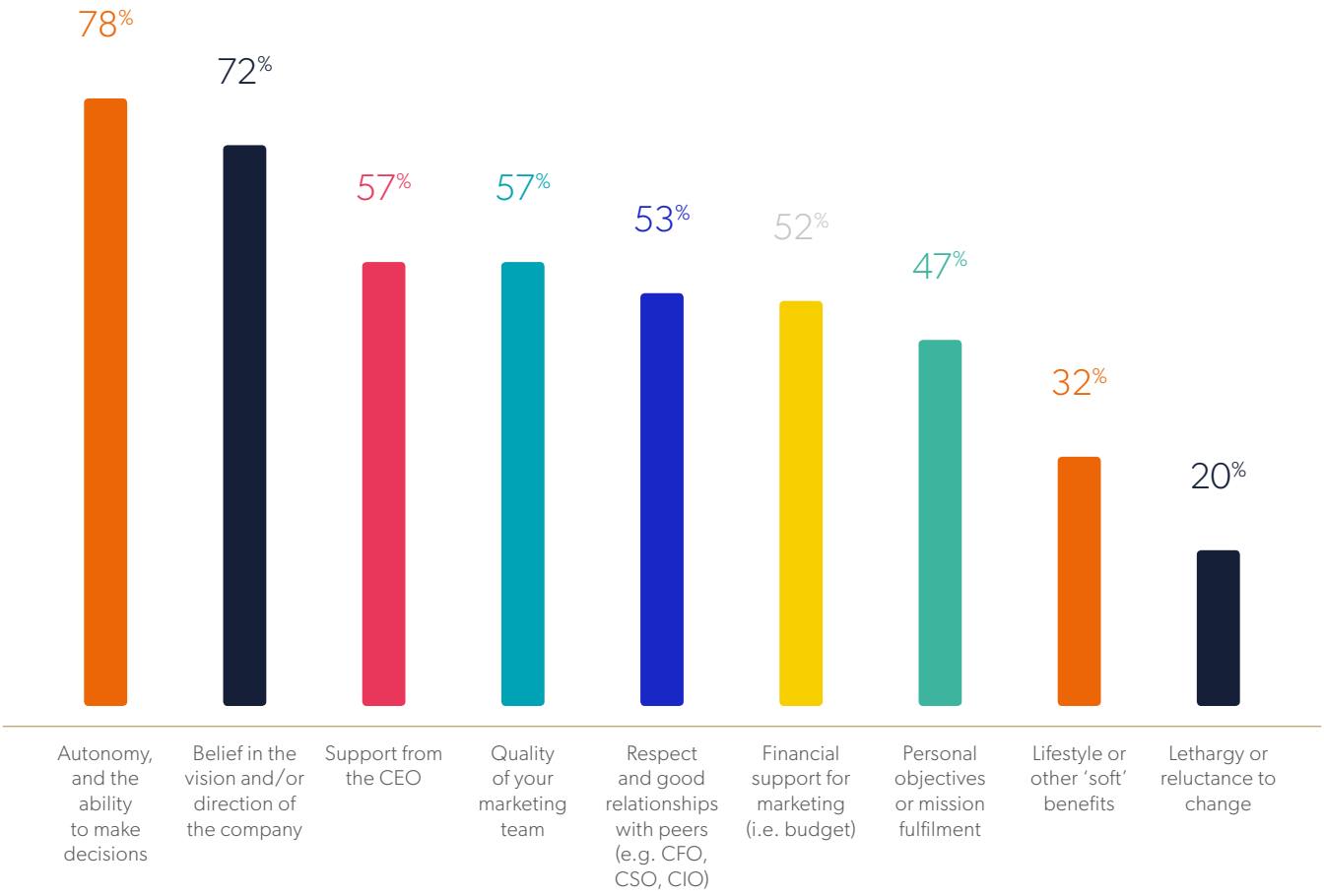
The second most important factor is 'belief in the vision or mission of the organisation' – in other words, they've got to feel the organisation is taking the right and meaningful action. B2B marketing leaders really need to feel good about their employer in order to stay loyal and this is another welcome example of the critical role of emotion in B2B. This may mean turning down opportunities that could provide better remuneration or opportunities for faster advancement.

> "Autonomy is the greatest contributor to happiness in your job – it's true in life as well. If people can't make their own decisions they're generally not as happy. That comes with responsibility because if you make those decisions and they go wrong you have to be accountable for them. I think working for a company where the values are aligned with your own is important, although in marketing you can still do interesting and challenging things even if the company isn't exactly to your liking."
>
> **Dan Roche, European partner marketing director, Automation Anywhere**

> "I think belief in the vision and direction is most important. If I don't believe in where we're going then the best team in the world and all the autonomy I can handle doesn't matter. I also think emotional intelligence is vital, particularly in stakeholder management. You've got to find sponsors and sources of influence or you'll be flying blind. Your EQ is fundamental in building those relationships."
>
> **Helen Tupper, CEO, Amazing If**

Figure 4. **Motivation and satisfaction for B2B marketing leaders**

Q. How important are the following factors in maintaining satisfaction and motivation in a B2B leadership role?



Section 2

Planning for the future

2.1 Relationships are the key to a successful career

There are a plethora of ways ambitious professionals (in all areas of business) can get ahead and build a better career, but our data shows that the factor head and shoulders above the rest is the quality of relationships – both on a personal and professional level.

Interpersonal relationships are regarded as twice as important as MBAs or other forms of further education (despite the tremendous hype surrounding the former). This was also significantly ahead of business coaching or membership to professional groups (such as B2B Marketing).

It's worth noting that, partly in response to this data, we're seeking to ramp up the networking potential of your B2B Marketing Leaders membership through a variety of activities, which we'll tell you more about over the next few months. We're confident that this will directly contribute to your further learning and career building activities.

Putting that aside, you could regard the answer to this question as proof that progression is more a matter of who you know (and how you leverage that) versus what you know.

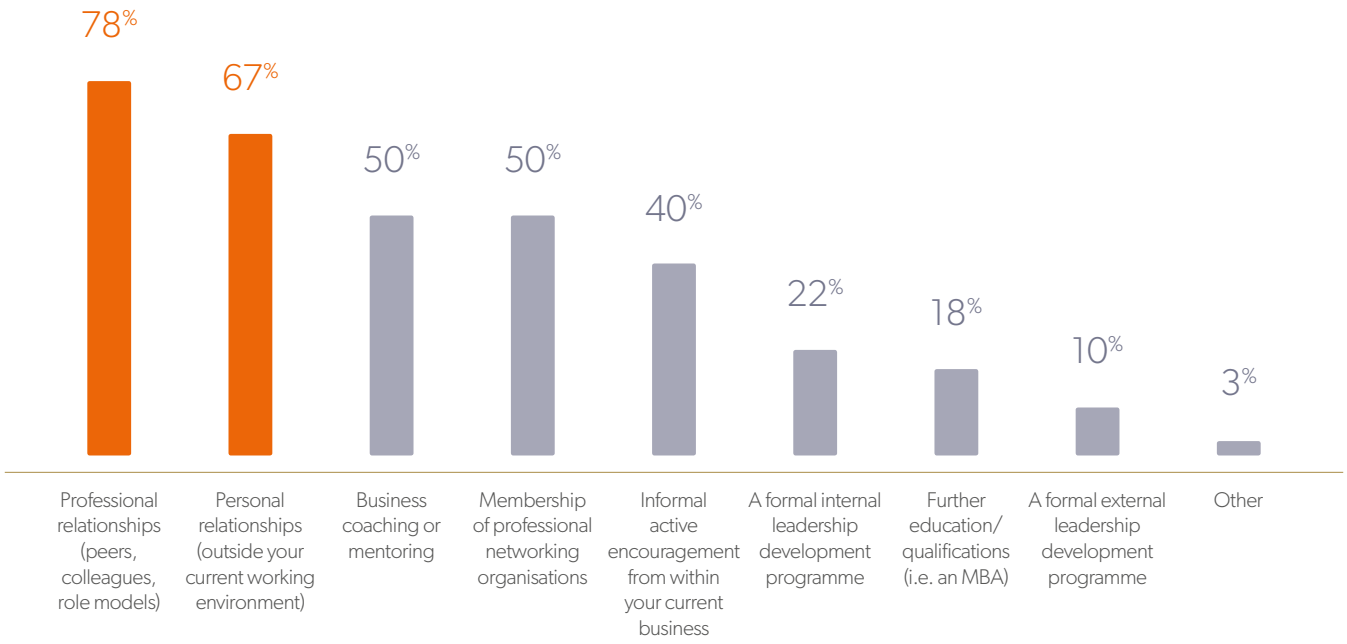
> "Over the past 15 years or so, I've built a handful of key relationships that have stood the test of time – former colleagues, former customers. I try to circle back to them as often as possible. I was brought in by my group CEO, he's also the chairman of the subsidiary I run. I have a good relationship with him. He was my customer when I was at Google, so I've known him for a long time. While his job is to give me a hard time on day-to-day matters, we also have a strong relationship."
>
> **Pete Danks, CEO, Carbon**

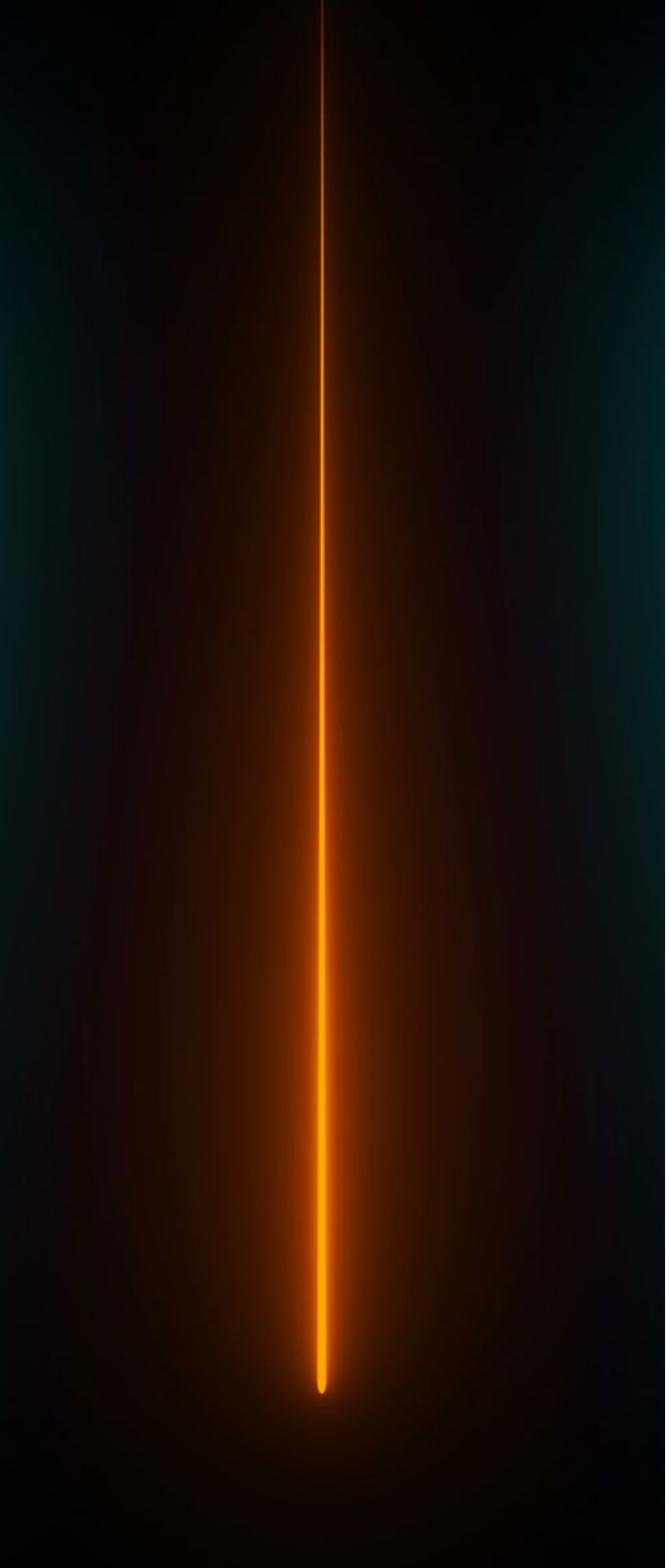
"I've always been fortunate to have business and marketing leaders within the organisations I've worked for who I've admired and tried to learn from, both agency and client-side. At Azzurri, my boss instigated a coaching course for her team and that was really helpful. The coach was an ex-marketing director himself and had moved into career/life coaching. It helped develop emotional intelligence and softer skills like stakeholder engagement. He provided a framework and structure to think about what was important, which made a huge difference in knowing what to work towards in three or five years' time."

Dan Roche, European partner marketing director, Automation Anywhere

Figure 4. **Career planning**

Q. Which of the following activities have been informative or instrumental in helping you develop ideas or refine your plan for the future?





2.2 What's the next step for B2B marketing leaders?

What do marketing leaders want from their next role? In short, a bigger marketing role at a different company.

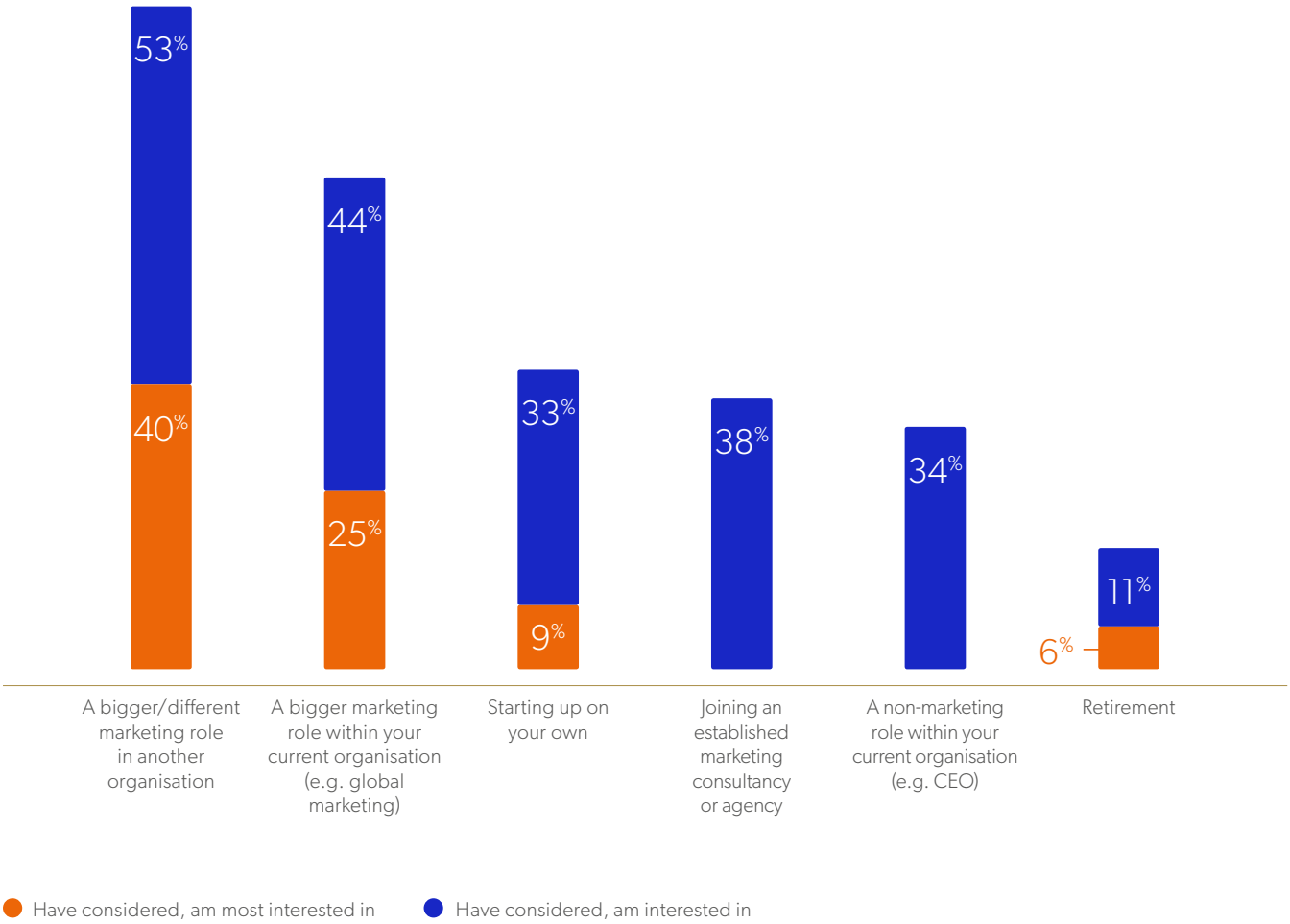
Despite earlier findings that internal promotions or sideways moves account for almost half the marketing leadership appointments, the desire for external promotion outweighs that of internal progression. This suggests at least some marketers are missing opportunities closer to home, and that the grass isn't always greener elsewhere.

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

> "There are some natural roles CMOs can move to – whether that's chief commercial officer, chief product officer – but you may reach a point where it's not about bigger or better, it's about cultural fit or the opportunity within the organisation. There are a whole bunch of personal and professional variables."
>
> **Cara O'nions, global marketing director, Bottomline Technologies**

Figure 5. **Career next steps**

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



2.3 Assessing the options for your next career move

Starting up on your own

"I was working as head of marketing in the management part of Virgin when I set up my company, Amazing If, which I now work at full time. It wasn't supposed to become a business, I've just focused all of my time on what I love the most and where I'll have the most impact. That's been my filter.

"Virgin was so supportive because it's part of its DNA to be entrepreneurial and try things out. If you look at the research on side projects it's clear that rather than be a threat to the day job, it helps make somebody more creative and passionate."

Helen Tupper, CEO, Amazing If

The step up to CEO

"One skill I've had to learn is making peace with the idea that you can't be the go-to expert for every part of the business. That isn't your job as CEO and that's why you need a strong leadership team who drive their functions. I'm never going to know more about tech than my CTO, and I just have to be comfortable with that and understand that my job is to help the CTO in other ways. One of the ways you get there is learning to ask the right type of questions. That's a skill I've had to get good at because the wrong kind of questions come across as micro-management. It's about getting the answers I need to run a business to report to the chair at a macro level but also let my team get on with their day job. The final thing I've become aware of is the idea of always being on the record. As a CEO, a casual chat in the kitchen is still a chat with the CEO."

Pete Danks, CEO, Carbon

Client versus agency roles

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

What I've learned – and been learning for the past four years – is that a key skill at an agency is having a consultative approach. So it's not about telling people what to do, it's about asking what they need, and want. It's a lot more than delivering creative work. It's about helping someone get through their career, because they've got other problems and that's why they're outsourcing to an agency."

Philip Martin, managing partner, DMA Partners – Agency

Winding down

"It's tough for marketers past a certain age. I see some unbelievable talent, both client-side and from agencies, with a wealth of great experience. They've had career defining moments, sometimes run their own companies, but because they're in their mid-50s they're deemed old hat and can't find roles. I place a few marketers in NED roles, typically those who have run their own business and want to come in and do a few days a month, but it's not that common. A lot of marketers who worked at global, well-known organisations now contract as one-man-bands sent in to troubleshoot. Eighty percent of the time it will be because they have an existing relationship with the company. But it can also be tough to earn enough from consultancy to keep the wolf from the door."

Tom Howe, managing partner, The Jefferson Group – Recruitment agency

B2B marketing leaders don't feel they are financially savvy enough to take on the CEO's role

2.3.1 Skills and attributes for onward progression

We get a good sense of why most marketers aren't eager to take a CEO role in the response to our question on the skills and attributes required for the job.

The orange bar in the chart below indicates areas where marketers feel they would need to improve. The blue indicates things they would need to improve significantly.

The area needing most improvement is 'financial literacy and fluency'. To put it another way B2B marketing leaders don't feel they are financially savvy enough to take on the CEO's role. This is not surprising, although it is disappointing. Financial literacy has always been perceived as a weakness in the B2B marketing industry. Although recognition may be the first sign of resolution, it seems not enough has been done to address this.

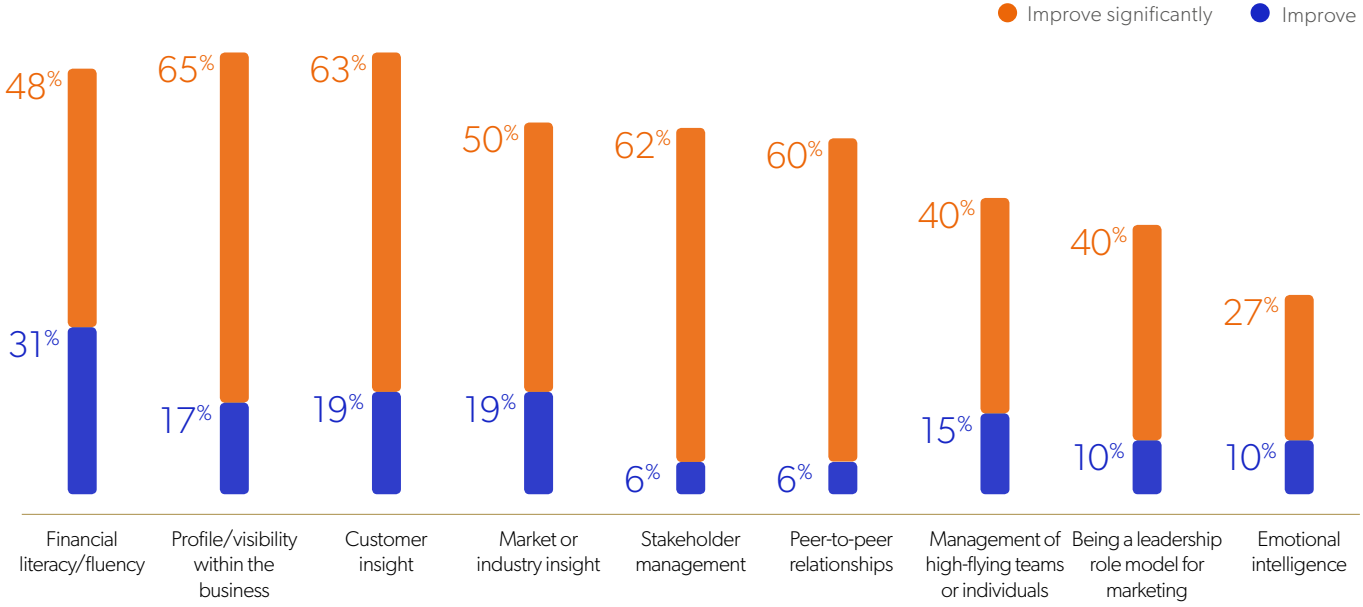
That said, arguably marketing leaders require many of the same financial skills as a CEO in order to conduct their own roles. Therefore this result could say more about confidence and perception than anything else.

"Very few of the senior marketers we place get asked about financial literacy. While they do need to be commercially aware and understand the P&L, it's really not the most important thing. I'm not sure why, it's a bit bizarre. Of course you do have dedicated departments for that, but as a business leader it's so integral. It's not like the nineties when people cared more about facts and numbers, it's about more human emotion now. There has definitely been a shift to being more socially and emotionally aware. People don't just want to buy products or services, they want to buy into a business and brand."

Tom Howe, managing partner, The Jefferson Group – Recruitment agency

Figure 5. **Career next steps**

Q. If you were considering a bigger role, to what extent do you believe you have the sufficient skills?



2.3.2 Moving up in marketing

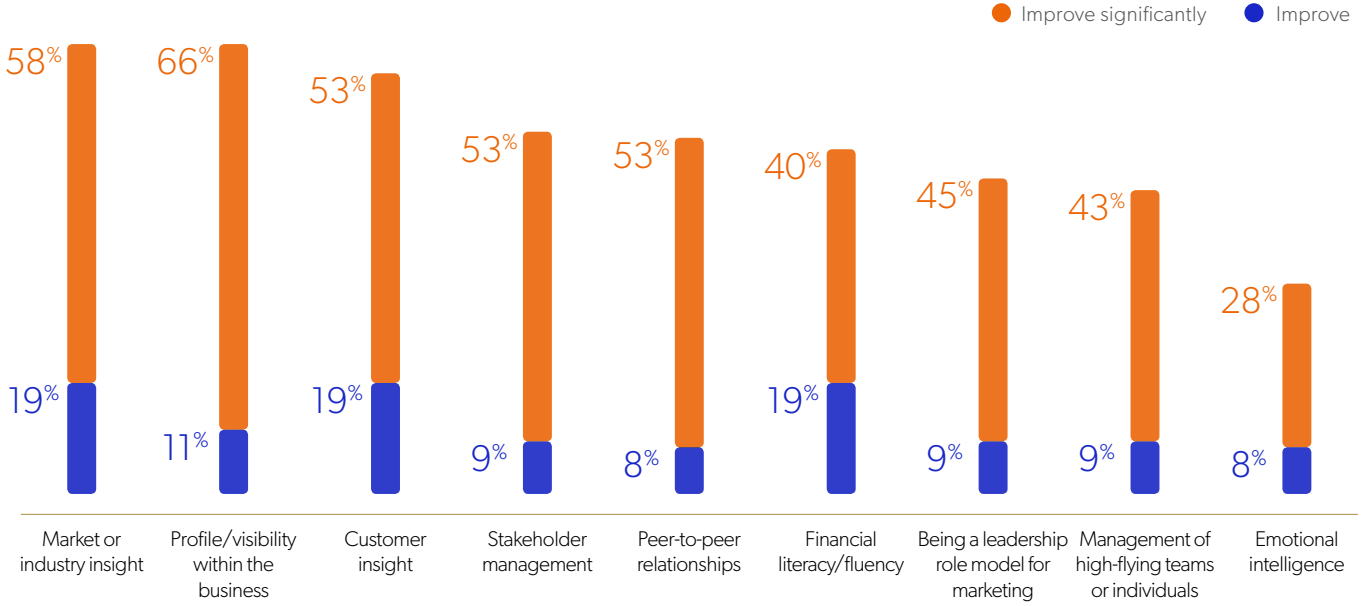
When in search of a bigger role, marketers believe their two most crucial attributes are visibility within the business (great for those wanting internal progression) and market insight (vital when stepping up in an external or internal capacity).

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

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

Figure 6. **Development priorities**

Q. To what extent do you believe your current skills and attributes will be sufficient for taking on a larger marketing role?



Section 3

Succession and legacy planning

3.1 Building the future from within

We've already seen that a significant number of B2B marketing leaders are recruited from within the existing marketing team, rather than externally. It follows that incumbent marketing leaders are cultivating the next generation of leaders. The good news is that the majority of respondents recognise this and either see it as a top priority (29%), or something that's generally important (52%) – although clearly it would be preferable if these figures were reversed.

What's worrying, however, is that almost one in five are currently making no real attempt to cultivate the leadership pipeline – even though the majority of those recognise it's something they should be doing. It's likely there are many reasons for this lack of focus. Among them are the availability of relevant candidates (particularly an issue in smaller marketing teams), and the means to provide structured development for younger talent. Indeed, it can be challenging to keep the individuals in question (typically millennials) suitably prepared yet grounded and focused on the tasks at hand.

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

> "Lots of organisations are struggling to help their employees develop in their career, because they think development is climbing the ladder. But organisations are offering fewer promotions because they're becoming flatter. What they really want are employees who can take ownership of their career development and not just in a linear way."
>
> **Helen Tupper, CEO, Amazing If**

> "I'm surprised more people are not saying succession a high priority. If you are in a CMO or marketing director role you should

be laser-focused on career-planning for your team. It's about understanding who those people are in your team, their skillsets, and being able to spot those gems. You should take personal time and personal accountability – it's not something you outsource to HR, it sits with you as a leader."

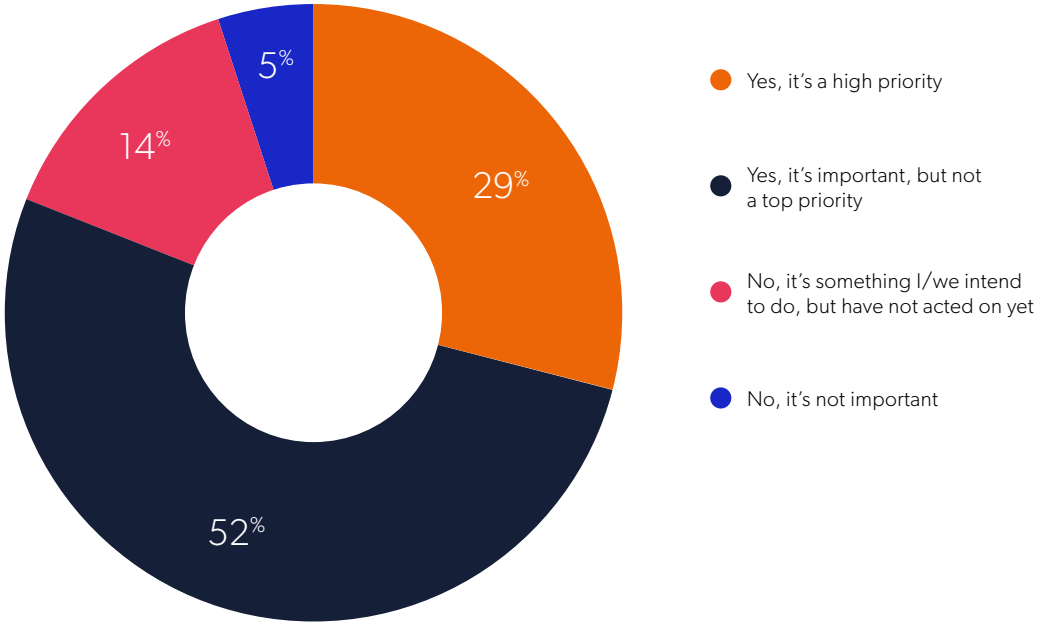
Cara O'nions, global marketing director, Bottomline Technologies

"Marketing agencies have one of the highest rates of staff turnover. Most agencies don't truly invest in their own talent, some do it very well and invite external trainers in, but most don't. So most staff leave after about two years. Agencies often complain about recruitment costs but they wouldn't be nearly as high if they were recruiting less for replacement and more for expansion."

Tom Howe, managing partner, Jefferson Group

Figure 7. **Nurturing the next generation of talent**

Q. Do you prioritise identifying and preparing potential marketing leaders from within your team?



3.2 Follow my leader

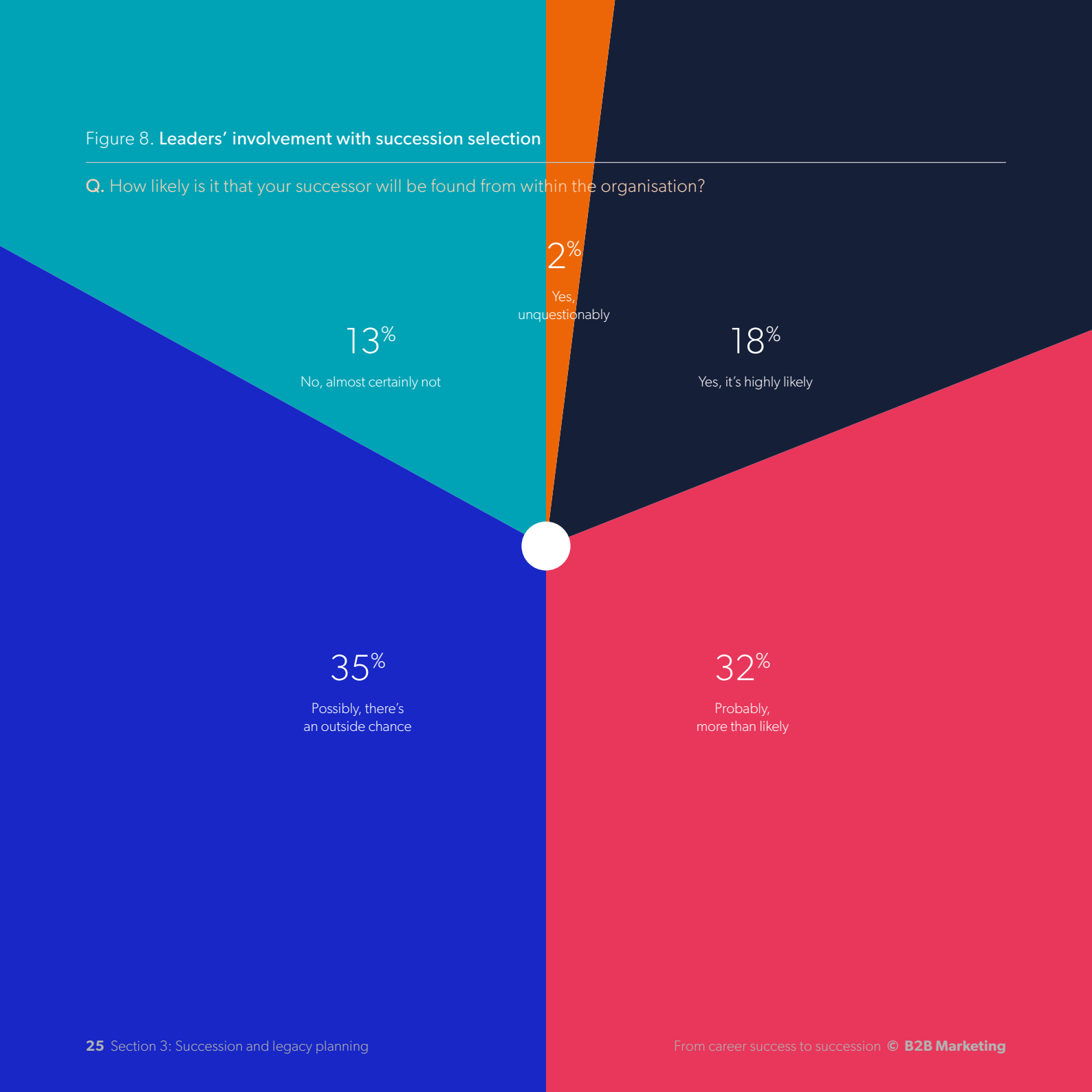
The data shown (in section 3.1) is particularly pertinent given that, approximately 50% of respondents believe they are likely to be involved in the search for their successor. In many instances this is simply a reflection of the good corporate citizenship exhibited by B2B marketing leaders elsewhere in this report (such as their willingness to remain in their role longer than expected, and the propensity to buy into the vision of the organisation). With this in mind, identifying internal leadership candidates seems like an obvious strategy, and one that will pay off in numerous ways when the time comes.

50% of respondents believe they are likely to be involved in the search for their successor

> "There were 100 people in the UK marketing team during my time at KPMG, the team was very well organised and planned from a career perspective. They took care to develop their people but there's a slight danger you can become institutionalised. Many people enjoy the structure because they have a clear career path to do different things within the organisation. But to my mind that discourages innovative thinking and bringing on board the latest marketing techniques and cool things to move the business forward on a tactical and strategic basis. That wouldn't have worked well for me, but it works for people disposed to that type of career."
>
> **Dan Roche, European partner marketing director, Automation Anywhere**

Figure 8. **Leaders' involvement with succession selection**

Q. How likely is it that your successor will be found from within the organisation?



3.3 Legacy and life after your leadership role

Leaving a positive legacy is important to most B2B marketing leaders. According to respondents, overwhelmingly the best way for a leader to achieve a positive legacy is with 'alignment of sales and marketing'. This is a difficult sentiment to argue with, as its achievement will almost certainly unlock greater success for both sides, and for the organisation as a whole. It is also something B2B marketers and sales people have been wrestling with since the terms were invented, so there is a question over whether it can be truly achieved within the tenure of a single marketing leader (however long that might be).

It's interesting in the context of the results discussed above that 'structured professional development' is seen as a much less significant factor in determining a positive legacy than the development of martech infrastructure. This latter factor should undoubtedly enable greater sales and marketing alignment, but is potentially an even bigger conundrum. Perhaps marketers shied away from it due to this complexity.

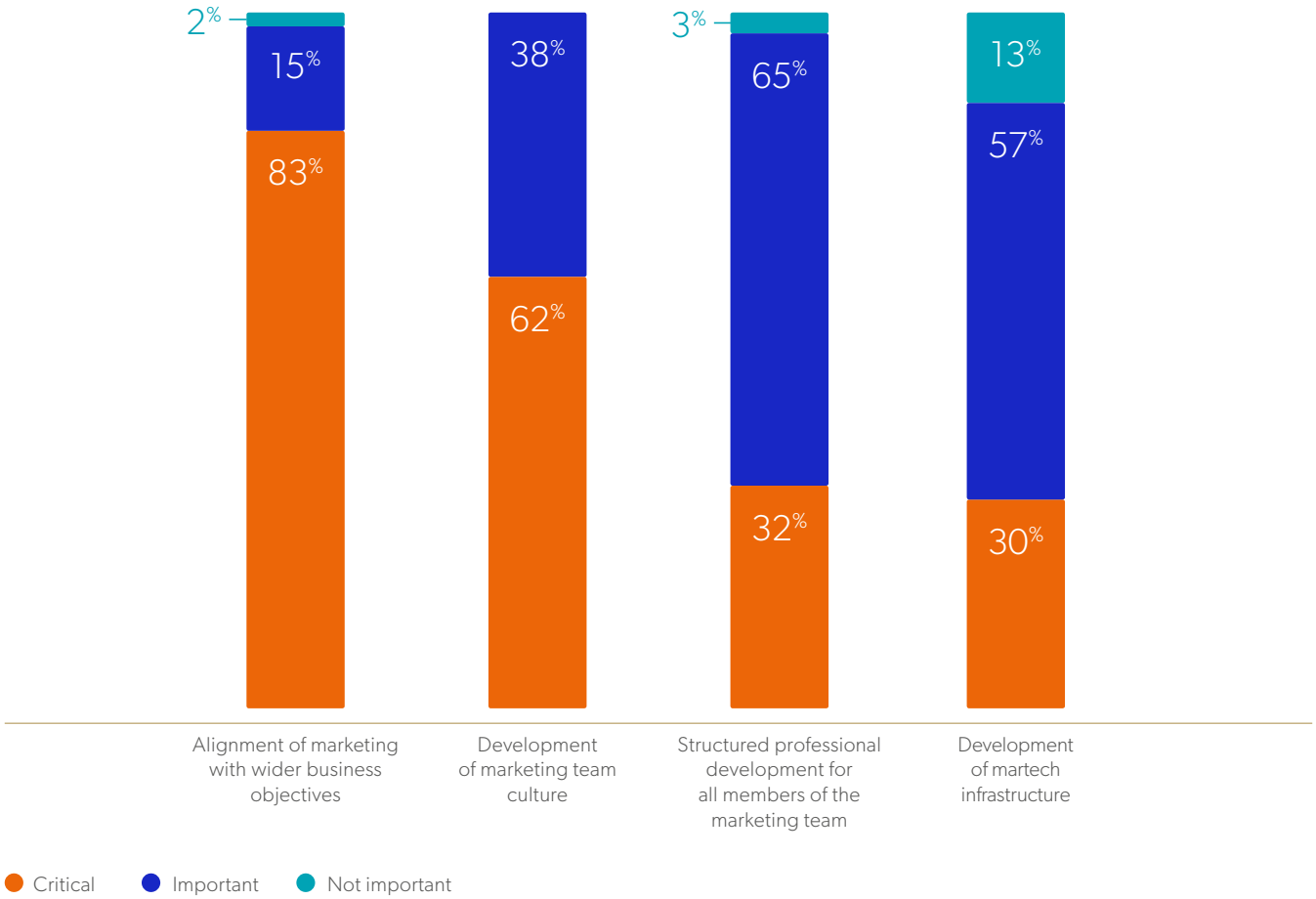
> "Good marketing means creating a platform for sustained success. It's the brand, the positioning and what the company stands for. But it's also about bringing in the right people and team. If you create that platform, you can provide consistency and continuity."
>
> **Dan Roche, European partner marketing director, Automation Anywhere**

> "You have to ask yourself which parts of your role deserve to be legacy. It's good to have fresh talent because marketing disciplines change. There's a danger of thinking it stays that way forever, which I think is the wrong mindset. Think about the areas that are really working, that genuinely have momentum such as creating value for the business and the client. That momentum should be your legacy."
>
> **Pete Danks, CEO, Carbon**

According to respondents, overwhelmingly the best way for a leader to achieve a positive legacy is with 'alignment of sales and marketing

Figure 9. **Strategies to drive leadership legacy**

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



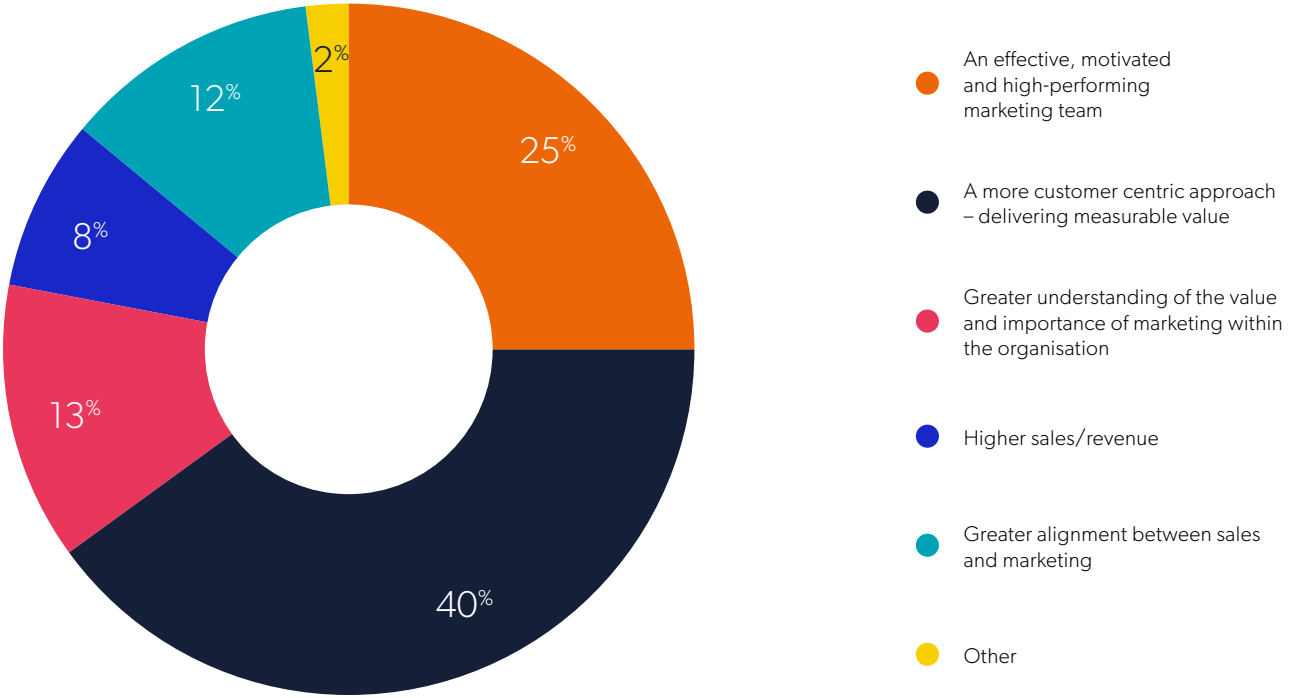
3.4 Legacy = customer centricity

According to the data collected for this report, success for a B2B marketing leader comes in the form of customer centricity. This, again, is a long burning aspiration, but is hard to actualise. This is perhaps because it is seen as a biproduct of commercial success, rather than a means of achieving it. In other words, its importance is not recognised beyond the marketing function. Ensuring customer centricity gets the status it arguably deserves is likely to be a significant challenge in its own right.

> "I see the CMO role as one where if you don't wake up worrying about what your customers are thinking, you're focusing on the wrong areas."
>
> **Pete Danks, CEO, Carbon**

Figure 10. **Legacy – the reality**

Q. What might legacy look like following your tenure in your role?



Conclusion

1. **Making an impact may take longer than you expect**

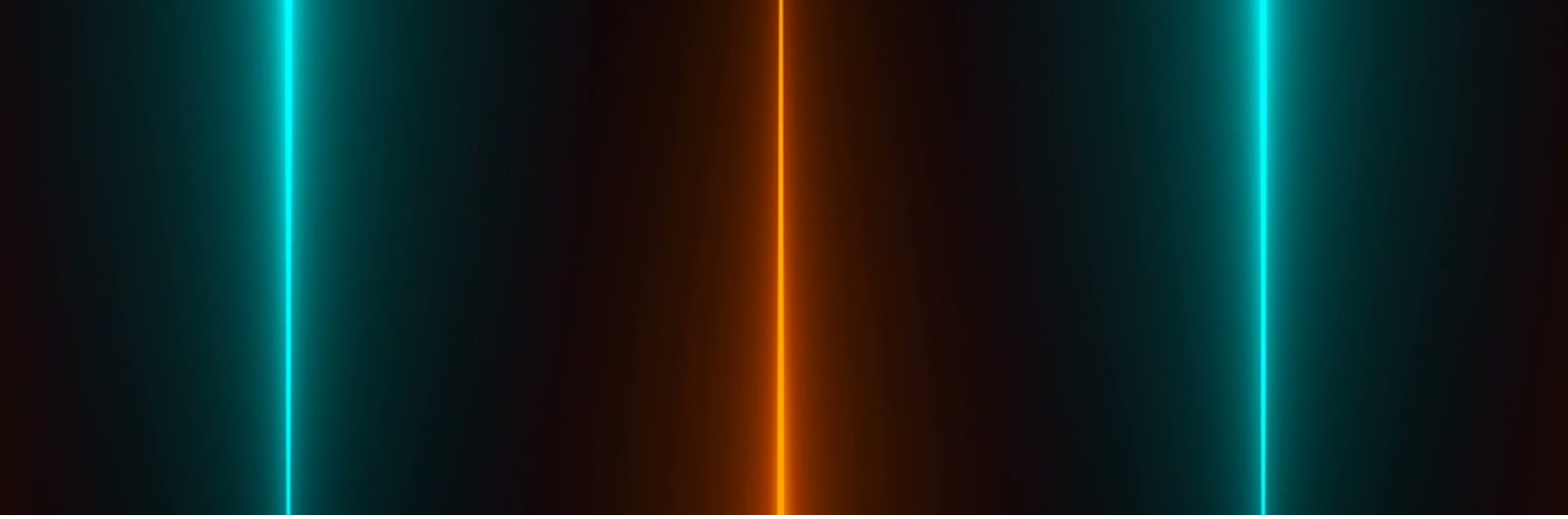
Most B2B marketing leaders want to make a difference to their organisation – few, if any, are going through the motions. But the reality is that, however long you've given yourself to achieve your vision, it will probably take longer. Ask yourself 'Is this a place I really want to be for three to five years?' And in that time, 'Do I feel I'll have achieved enough to satisfy me?' Are the pieces in place to enable you to do that? If not, is it within your power to put them in place? If the answer is 'no', you might want to reconsider the role. While possibly inconvenient in the short-term, reaching that conclusion sooner will benefit both you and your employer.

2. **Your network will make the biggest difference to your career**

The benefits of personal and professional networking are widely discussed, but at the same time too many marketers take a reactive stance to developing or leveraging these networks. There is strong anecdotal evidence that suggests a clear correlation between investing in networking and high achievement as a marketer. Sure, networks will expand incrementally as a facet of doing your job, but not as effectively as if you proactively manage and seek to grow them. There are various means to do this, but all take time and effort, all require space to be carved out. This is something we increasingly recognise at B2B Marketing and support through our Leaders programme. If you'd like to know more about these opportunities, speak to your account manager.

3. **Don't be afraid to think bigger than marketing**

Most B2B marketing leaders want a bigger marketing job in a different organisation, but few aspire to roles outside or above marketing – such as the CEO spot. Yet marketing is increasingly well placed to provide candidates



with the broad mix of skills and experience they need to perform well in the top jobs. Don't let a lack of ambition hold you back – understand the skills required to take on these roles and where you need to bridge them. Also look to emerging roles like the chief customer officer, chief revenue officer, and chief growth officer to provide a softer way of broadening your business credentials in a related area.

4. Don't lose sight of individuals while building your team

Although B2B marketing leaders generally acknowledge the importance of succession planning, there is a mismatch between a focus on team development and supporting individuals through robust professional development programmes. Both are important in equal measure, although the later will likely require more individual coaching and encouragement to ensure individuals stick to plans and achieve the milestones. Setting examples and demonstrating the success achieved is a good way of encouraging others to fall in line.

5. Become your organisation's CX champion

The most popular legacy that B2B marketing leaders want to leave behind is an improvement in customer-centricity. There is nothing new here. It's been a priority for B2B marketers for at least a decade, and somehow it's a concern that never quite gets resolved. CX is the topic for a different report (such our guide from earlier this year, *Become a CXpert: The marketer's guide to customer experience*) however, the crux of this matter is that different functions squabble over 'ownership' of the customer, yet at the same time no-one is apparently able to own the brand's customer experience. Focusing on CX – and potentially becoming the organisation's CX champion – may be an impactful way for B2B marketing leaders to deliver a lasting legacy. It may also be a way of developing your non-marketing career potential.

About B2B Marketing Leaders

B2B Marketing Leaders is a peer-to-peer membership group of more than 180 senior marketers at global B2B brands.

Through a combination of morning roundtables, evening dinners, full-day events and digital networking, our members work together to tackle the biggest challenges facing marketers in leadership positions. In conjunction with access to our best-in-class research and analysis of the B2B space, this gives marketers the tools they need to drive success in their marketing departments and across their businesses. These include team building, culture, stakeholder management, board level commitment and representation and how to stay on top of changes and innovations in marketing in 2019 and beyond.

If you're a head of marketing, marketing director or CMO at a B2B brand, get in touch to see if you qualify to become a B2B Marketing Leader.

You can find more information at **b2bmarketing.net/leaders**, email us at **b2bleaders@b2bmarketing.net** or give Adam a call on **+44 (0)207 014 4932**.

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