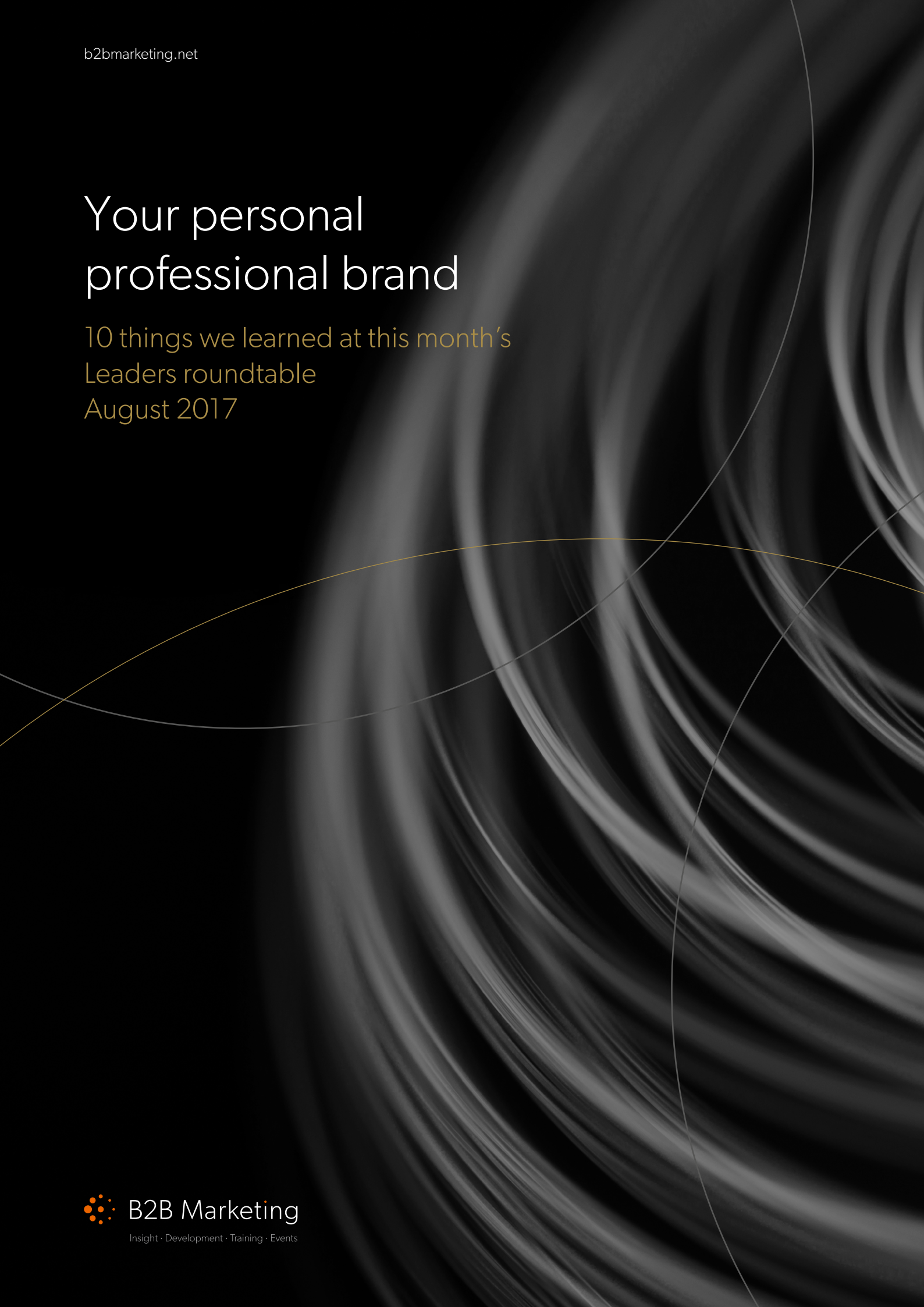
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Your personal professional brand

10 things we learned at this month's Leaders roundtable August 2017



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10 things we learned at this month's Leaders roundtable

We've all been told relentlessly about how important it is for the c-suite to be on social media. We've all sat down with our CEO and explained Twitter and LinkedIn, and why it's in their interest to update both regularly.

We also spend our time on employee advocacy programmes, informing our technical experts that the benefits of their personal brands are numerous and it's a no brainer to work on it. But we're not always the best at taking our own advice, and our own brands suffer as a result.

For many, the prevailing thought is the needs of the company come first, and there isn't time to commit to more selfish pursuits. But that doesn't have to be the case. A strong personal brand can be used to improve your marketing function in a number of ways, and is never there simply to bolster your CV.

Here are the key findings from August's roundtable.

1 The benefits go beyond finding your next career move

What's the point of building your personal brand? There's more to it than simply raising your profile to secure your next role. A strong personal brand can help build support for your initiatives within your organisation, and raise the profile of the whole marketing team.

If you've been in the same organisation for a while, your personal brand might be in need of a refresh, as you start to appear part of the furniture. You might be dependable and delivering results, but perhaps your initial shine has worn off. Your brand might not change, but it needs to adapt to changing times.

2 The key characteristic of a strong personal brand is authenticity

Just as with corporate brands, there was consensus that authenticity is the key element of the most successful personal brands. It makes you stand out, because people can genuinely believe in what you're saying. Conversely, people are smart – "they can smell BS" – and inauthentic behaviour will be spotted immediately, limiting your chances of making an impact.

3 Your personal brand is strongly tied to that of the marketing function

The link between the personal brand of the marketing leader and the brand of the marketing function is often

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underestimated. With marketing often suffering a low profile in B2B companies, the brand of the function will often be very personality driven, which is something the leader may have to become used to. This can generate a halo effect that generates greater visibility and exposure for the marketing team.

There's a danger the department's brand could become too centred around a strong individual. It's inconsistent upon leaders to develop the team under them so the team brand is not reliant on one individual. Give them projects to manage to empower them and make sure they get the recognition they deserve in the wider business.

4 Your personal brand may stay the same, but the way it operates may change

Consistency is another key aspect of a personal brand, but you need to be aware of the context in which you operate. A personal brand that worked at a risk-hungry US multinational might be out of place at a traditional, family-owned Scandinavian firm, for example. The business environment has also become increasingly complex, with the rise of digital and constant innovation, so you have to be able to adapt your brand to new people and new ways of working.

5 The lines between personal and the professional have blurred

Whereas once your personal life was separate from your work at the office, the dividing lines are far less clear now. It's much more difficult to separate your personal identity from your professional identity. Perhaps you have two separate accounts on the same platform, or only use certain platforms for personal or professional purposes – but digital natives entering the workforce don't see a difference. This can have benefits – it adds to that all important authenticity – but all of it will impact the perception others have of you.

6 We're all curators now

While authenticity is vital, there's an understanding that the personal brand you present – particularly on social media – is an edited version of yourself. The key is making it consistent, and thinking ahead about how it will be perceived. Work out what you want to be known for, and stick to it.

7 Personal brand will be vital as we move into the age of account-based marketing

Successful brands of the future will be those that are able to identify their customers and speak directly to them. It'll be much more personal, and be far more reliant on the personal brand of the salesperson.

One marketer worked with a group of salespeople to position them as thought leaders, helping to build their network, providing them with content, while allowing them to insert elements of their own personalities. Associating a commercial value with personal brands in this way is a great way to get senior-level attention.

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8 Marketing should take the lead on personal branding just as it does with corporate branding

As the brand experts, marketing can set corporate-wide expectations of personal brand. It's the one department in the business thinking critically about public perception of the organisation, and not just about individual relationships. There is a unique chance to set the tone if you can position yourself as the voice of authority.

9 Self-awareness and self-reflection are important steps to success

One senior marketer went as far as performing a brand audit on himself – asking friends, colleagues and acquaintances what they thought of him. It was an interesting (and at times chastening) experience, but gave a great insight into how he was perceived – and how people perceive you *is* your personal brand. You could get similar feedback through a 360-degree review or appraisal process.

10 It's tough to change how people perceive you

No matter how hard you work at developing a consistent, authentic personal brand, everyone you come into contact with is still going to perceive you in a slightly different way – just as we all have different interpretations of corporate brands. If someone expects something from you, they'll judge you on delivery. If someone expects to be challenged, they'll judge you against that instead.

It's difficult to control how others perceive you, so there's value in divorcing yourself from your ego. It's what allows you to take on feedback, and question what it is you offer or are producing.

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About

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The B2B Leaders programme is a network of the most senior marketing figures at prestigious B2B brands.

Members benefit from a unique and invaluable opportunity to regularly network and collaborate with senior-level peers, sharing insights and discussing strategic challenges at events every month.

Membership is by invitation only, and includes:

- Your B2B Leaders Forum ticket, the only B2B marketing leaders event of its kind.
- Regular roundtables focusing on key marketing leadership topics.
- Monthly roundtable findings reports.
- Annual *B2B Leaders Report*, with key research data and insights.
- Monthly Premium content reports.
- A subscription to *B2B Marketing* magazine.

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

To register your interest in the programme call +44 (0)20 7014 4920 or email adam.harper@b2bmarketing.net.



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