

BRAND. Your key to B2B success.

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For years, we at Bray Leino have banged the drum for 'common sense B2B marketing', hosting talks and publishing articles about marketing which connects with a business audience on a human level. At B2B Ignite conference 2020, we hosted a panel event with representatives from our spectrum of B2B Clients – automotive engineering company Cummins, workforce payments service Fleetcor, and technology and connectivity business Marlink – exploring the role of B2B brand value.

This report is a development on our B2B Ignite panel talk, drawing on our experience as a top 3 B2B Agency to build the case for full funnel marketing – balancing Martech with brand, featuring valuable real-world insight from our panel members.

About the authors



Head of Planning at Bray Leino, Edd Southerden has an impressive pedigree of game-changing Agencies and the hefty portfolio to boot—spanning complex B2B operations and major B2C brands' global ad campaigns.



Katherine Almond is Head of Insight. Katherine moved to strategic planning after a decade in market research – Katherine works with many of our biggest B2B clients helping them unlock their brand purpose.

Contributors: **Nick Webb** (VP Marketing & Product Management, Fleetcor), **Bill Lovejoy** (Global Brand Director, Cummins), **Jessika Dammert** (Chief Marketing Communications Officer, Marlink)

This shouldn't be difficult...

Quantifiable on a balance sheet.

A shortcut to authority, trust and credibility.

A source of precious and often intangible value.

Brands drive differentiation, credibility and margin.

Why then, is brand building such a hot topic in B2B?

The answer's obvious; all the innovation in B2B marketing is at the bottom of the funnel – wizardry to manage, massage and predict the next lead; always on, real time, on the fly.

Accountability matters and Martech gives you something you can count.

But the value of marketing is about much more than developing assets to secure the sale.
What about:

- Defining the customer experience
- Generating conviction and passion from our people
- Protecting profitable price points in the face of product parity
- Reducing the cost of a sale
- Getting on a consideration list in the first place
- Aligning a disparate array of stakeholders around an important decision

In short, brand building is about value; finding it, growing it, selling it and defending it.

Culture eats strategy for breakfast

The culture of B2C businesses like Coca-Cola or Unilever is built around the notion of a strong brand.

Even modern tech-led companies recognise this – Compare the Market, Samsung, Airbnb. For these companies, brand and product go hand in hand to create value for a consumer.

Whereas, if a B2B business thinks about brand it will usually only focus on it as a sales tool. The brand makes a product easy to buy, rather than defining the customer experience.

It's an understandable mistake – Brands get deprioritised in B2B because where B2C brands tend to focus on the mass market; B2B brands are usually focused on smaller, more valuable segments, sometimes down to an individual level. In this context the role of the salesperson conveys many of the attributes we would typically associate with a brand in a B2C environment.

B2C is often a low-involvement decision, so subconscious brand associations are everything. Whereas in B2B the purchase process tends to be longer and more complex, involving larger sums and a wide array of stakeholders.

The below table is an oversimplification, but summarises some of the differences in context that need to be taken into account when building brands in a B2B environment:

Area	B2C brand building	B2B brand building
Audience	Large segments of category buyers	Discreet, narrowly defined, hard to reach, often at an individual level
Product	New innovations within established categories	Technical categories often requiring expert knowledge
Loyalty	Function of category buying habits	Function of switching costs – trust, reputation, ecosystems
Communications model	Mass reach, low involvement	Low reach, high involvement
Culture	Brand-led culture	Sales-led culture

However, focusing solely on brand as purely a sales lever is a missed opportunity.

There is unrealised commercial power of brands to a B2B business.

Brands add value beyond the sales funnel thanks to their ability to command a more premium price, to increase switching costs, or inspire a workforce. Marketing's role includes creating, nurturing and evolving a clear and powerful brand, that provides a longer-term commercial benefit to the product, brand or company.

It's really important for your customers to understand what you stand for as a company and there are many different benefits associated with branding – it helps with recall, attracts talent and investment, engagement with employees, facilitates communication and, most importantly, helps the customer trust and understand your company.

Bill Lovejoy,
Global Brand Director,
Cummins

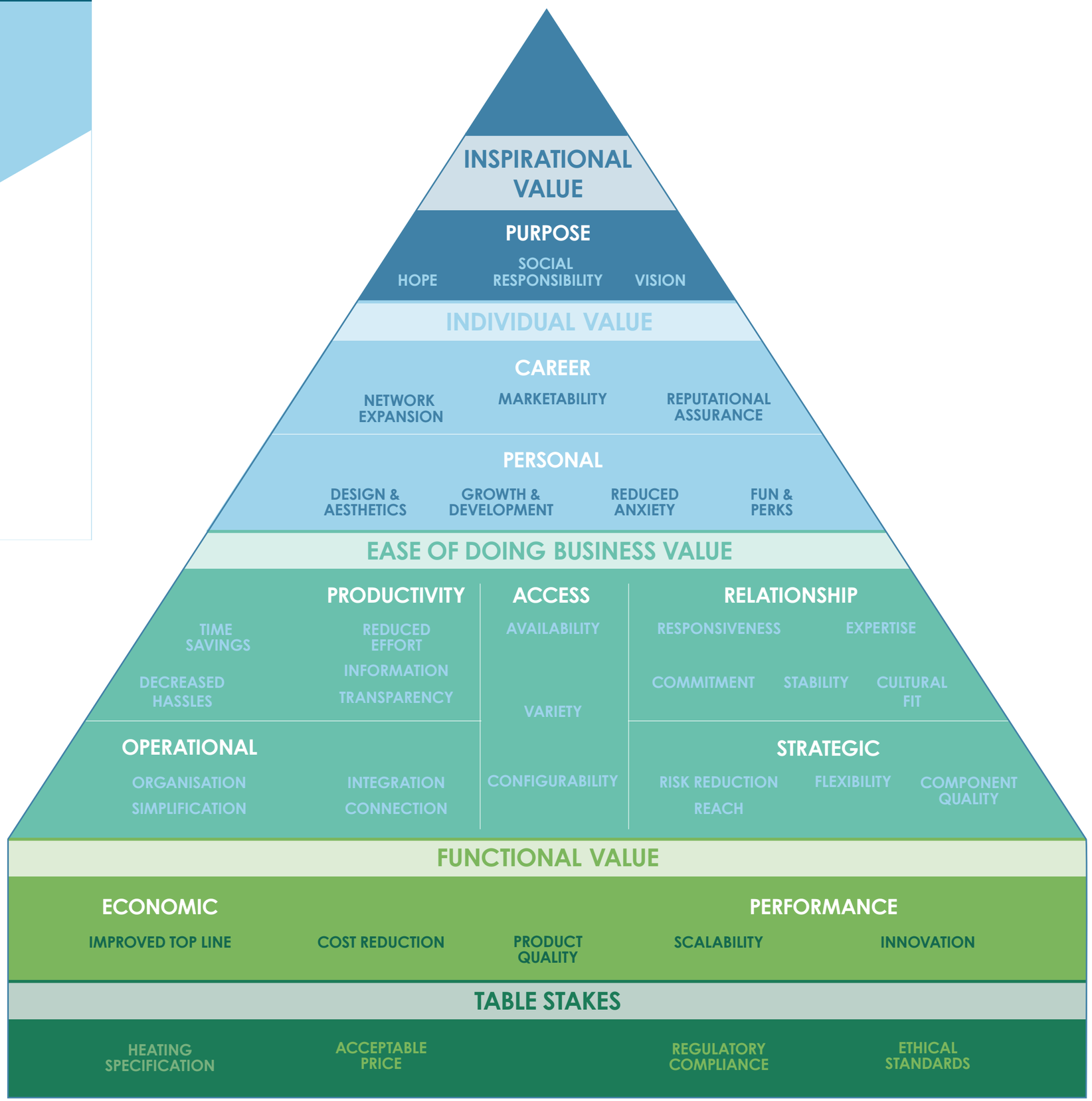
Unlocking the rational and the emotional

The nuances of the sector mean B2B businesses tend to adopt the 'rational persuasion' marketing model, but decision making in B2B is as emotional as it is rational.

People become more emotional when it comes to the big decisions. Think about when you buy a house or a car. It's the same with B2B purchases – you need to know the product does what it promises, but you also need to believe in it and be able to convince others. So much is at stake.

Analysing scores of quantitative and qualitative research over decades, Bain & Co identified 40 'elements of value' and arranged them into a value 'pyramid', with objective value at the base and subjective value at the top.

The elements at the base of the pyramid – such as specifications and price – are easier to replicate or match, whereas those at the top, such as reputational assurance or expertise, are more difficult. This is the domain of emotional appeal.

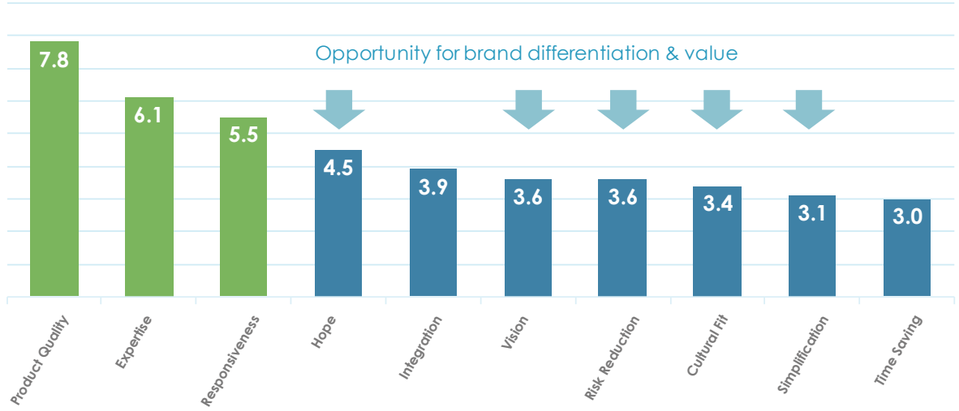


Higher order benefits, the ones we associate with emotional brand building – drive greater NPS and loyalty (source: Bain & Co / HBR).

And they're also harder to copy – these are the areas where marketers should look to develop their focus.

Impact on Customer Loyalty

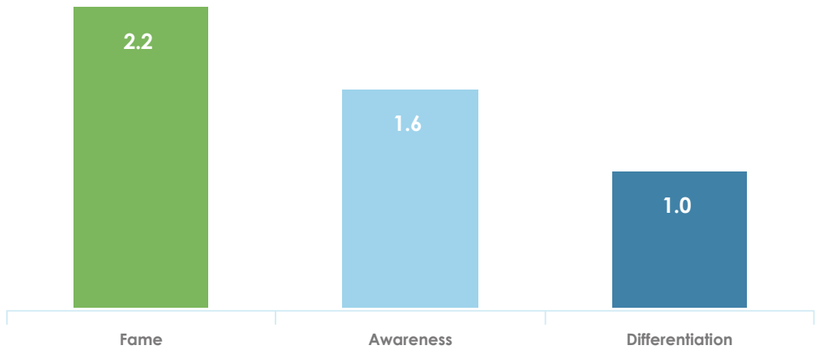
Percentages indicate how much each element contributed to predicting that a customer would be a loyal promoter of the vendor



Functional benefits = table stakes

Source: Bain & Company, April 2018

Functional differentiation is a weak strategy in B2B



Source: IPA Databank, 1996-2016 B2B campaigns

Nowadays, with so much information available digitally, if you want to stand out – if you want to have that premium position – then you need to have something distinctive about your brand, and be creating positive feelings towards it, in order to be successful with all your marketing activities.

Nick Webb,
VP Marketing & Product Management,
Fleetcor

It’s not one size fits all

We don’t always make it easy for ourselves. Merrily waving the flag for brand and emotion can exhibit an insensitivity towards the realities of the business environment.

Brands play a different role depending on your B2B business problem.

Consider the following framework. Again a simplification but a useful one: what’s the category reality, what’s the role of a brand in the value equation.

Having a clear idea will point the way towards the most effective brand development strategy.

This simple matrix below outlines the different approaches based on the value of the purchase and the level of customer interest:

	High customer engagement		
Low value	**Pet Project –** matters to the decision-maker, even if the capital cost is not high. **Role of brand:** Build distinctiveness around an engaging brand purpose	**High profile project –** need to reassure stakeholders and provide convincing and credible rationale. **Role of brand:** Mass saliency is key, and for project owners a rational core laddering up to authority and reassurance of around decision	High value
	Indifference – who cares? **Role of brand:** Education – elevate the standing of the category and thus your position in it	**Commodity –** feeling that all products are the same **Role of brand:** Add Value - personal and career - value above and beyond the core product	
	Low customer engagement		

Allstar is a leader in one category – fuel cards – and a niche player in another category – the expenses/ payments market. So we’re able to see the differences in, for example, the cost to acquire a new customer, and a lot of that is down to brand. It means we’re able to pretty much put a number to the difference brand makes.

Nick Webb,
VP Marketing & Product Management,
Fleetcor

Do it properly and do it quickly

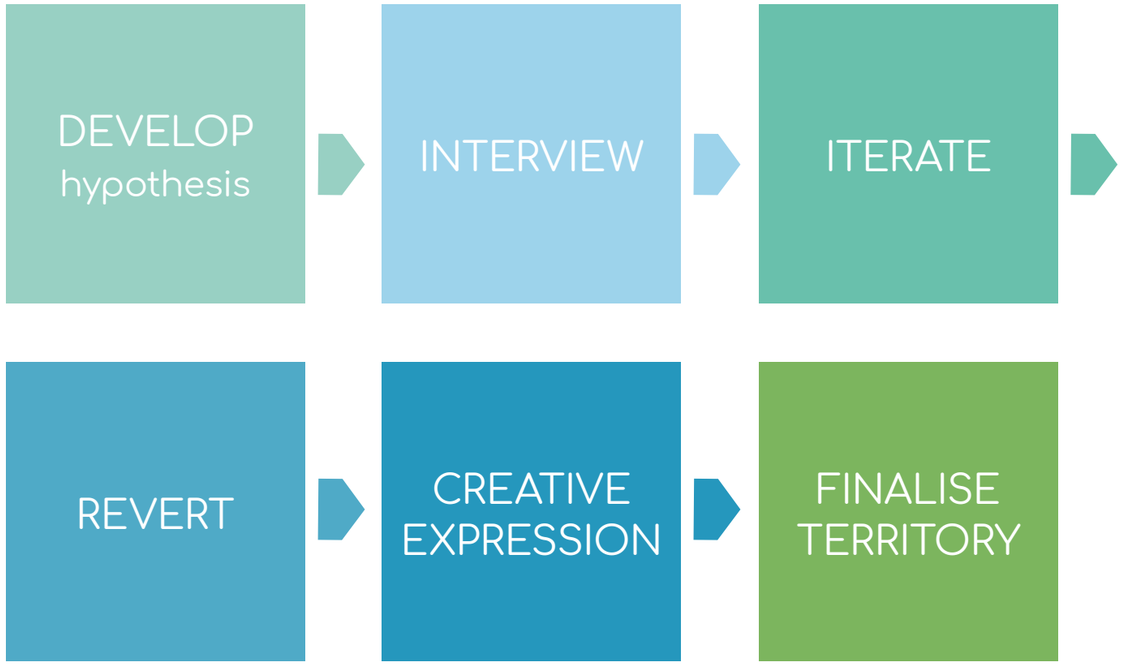
One of the biggest frustrations we hear from B2B businesses is the slow and ponderous pace some can take to develop a brand strategy.

We avoid this by adopting a Brand Sprint approach – ensuring the positioning is developed, with right inputs, quickly and efficiently.

This process includes a framework for getting input from all the right stakeholders - e.g. customers and potential customers alongside sales and marketing. It also explores the market and the pinch points in the process. And audits the distinctive attributes that a B2B brand has, the emotions a brand connotes. But crucially it does it quickly.

In partnership with research experts MonkeySee, Bray Leino has developed a Brand Sprint product specifically for B2B brands.

It's thorough, cost effective and fast. We take the lid off this process to produce a compelling positioning to grow your B2B brand in under 4 weeks. We get to the truth about your brand, develop and test positionings, use insights to define the final proposition and help you sell it into your stakeholders, all to help unlock the innate value of your B2B brand. To find out more, contact us via the details on the back page.



Do things in the right order

Coming out of the Ignite conference, one of main learnings when developing a B2B brand was to not rush into the comms development.

Too often marketing leaps to the big advertising idea, when in reality this should be the icing on the cake. The ideal process looks like this:

1 DEFINE and execute the brand (quickly as defined above)

2 IMPLEMENT against the customer experience – audit all aspects of the customer experience and validate it against the proposed brand positioning. If you're positioning as a high end but human solution, you need to ensure your website delivers

3 ENGAGE Sales and customer teams will need support and coaching to drive the brand message home in all aspects of their work.

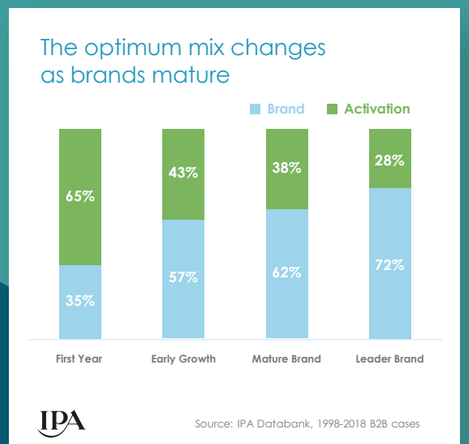
4 LAUNCH tell the world, confident that you've earned the right

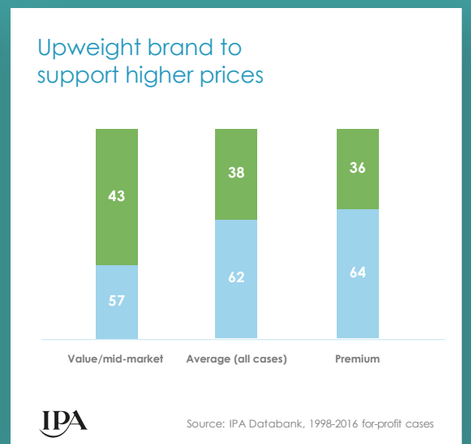
Execute the comms

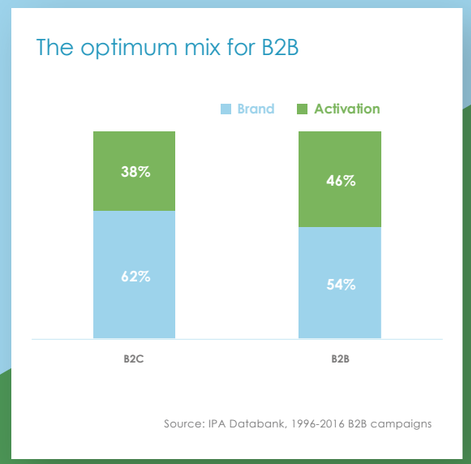
When you start telling people about your new brand, ensure you're doing it justice. That means finding the right balance between brand building and activation.

Marketing industry veterans Les Binet and Peter Field along with the IPA have done much of the hard work here – the optimum balance between brand building and activation in B2B is approximately 50:50. Make the case for that.

The lifecycle of the brand means that early on it's important to drive a short term sales spike – hence a focus on activation. But as B2B brands mature in their categories it's important to devote a higher % of their comms budget to brand, in order to protect their position and maintain their profit margin versus upstart competitors. This is increasingly true with a B2B brand that seeks to support a higher price point (see fig 3). Further information can be obtained from the Effworks section of the IPA.







We're using our own employees to help us carry the brand to the customer, and the only way to do this is to involve them from day one. For example, by using your people in internal launch videos. It's worked really well for us and I hope to convince our customers that they have the same credibility and visibility in our brand that the internal people do.

Jessika Dammert,
Chief Marketing Communications Officer,
Marlink

Measure measure measure

The tech stack can deliver a raft of measures, that's part of its appeal – what can be measured can be managed.

Part of the challenge is that 'upper funnel' measures such as Consideration and Awareness are harder to quantify in B2B, often because of the small audience sizes.

However, this doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Some of our global Clients have the scale to be able to justify global insight studies. But we've also had a great deal of success by thinking of lateral ways to garner these insights at a smaller scale. Consider working with a trade journal or organisation to run a survey on your behalf – industry notoriety is much more motivating than a financial incentive.

Consultation with stakeholders can become an important marketing tool in itself – our Castrol Ambassador Club programme is an invaluable way for Castrol to stay top of mind with their stakeholders.

Finally – consider grown-up measurements that really prove the value of brand to the business. For example, what is the A/B comparison between branded and non-branded PPC sales conversion? What is the price elasticity of your branded product versus a generic?

It's data like this that will convince a financial team, not upticks on a brand awareness chart.

Summary

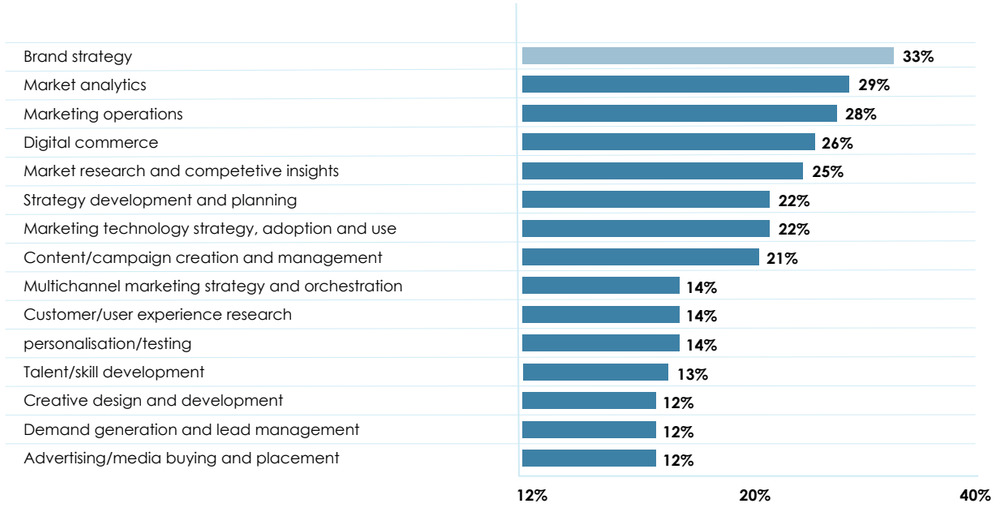
Marketing is more than sales, and profit is about more than conversion.

The innovation of the Martech stack has been a paradigm shift in how our industry measures sales, but B2B marketing needs to remain focused on the business of building B2B brands.

To recap, here are the key areas we covered that will help grow your B2B brand:

1. It's about culture - get the business on board with the process
2. Emotional elements are harder to copy and carry a premium – develop those
3. Understand the role your brand plays with customers in the whole ownership lifecycle
4. Conduct a programme to define your B2B brand – make it fast
5. Know what success looks like from the outset and ensure the right measurement tools are in place to measure the right things

Top 3 rank summary



n= 432 market leaders
Q: Which of the following best describes your preferred risk tollerence appraoch for the marketing organisation in pursuit of its strategic objectives and which is actually allowed for by the broader enterprise?
Source: 2020 Gartner CMD Spend Survey
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Innovation at the bottom of the funnel has undoubtedly unlocked huge value for brands in B2B.

However, a recent report by Gartner indicated that the pendulum is swinging back towards brand strategy as a key marketing competency.

Now might be a good time to ask -

Are you positioned to take advantage of the new wave of brand building?

Case Study: PyroCore

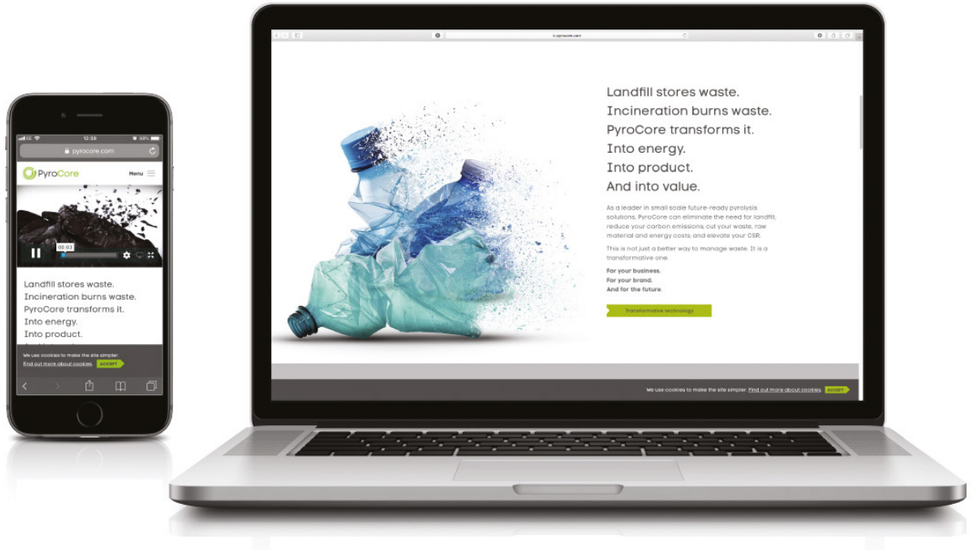
Landfill stores waste: incineration burns it. PyroCore transforms waste using pyrolysis to convert it into energy, product and value.

The Client wanted an exciting new identity to change perceptions of the process and differentiate PyroCore from the rest of the waste market.

Our insight work revealed that many businesses see waste as a 'problem' and find disposal options limited. This inspired the idea that waste needn't be waste; value can be unlocked.

'Waste transformed' brought the idea to life in an uplifting, contemporary way through a series of arresting individual images and animation, rolled out across the brand and at industry events.

As well as creating a new brand identity, we produced a new website, animation, banners and event stands, wraps for the pyrolysis containers and trucks, an interactive brochure and a suite of other assets.









Case Study: Siemens – Wylex

Electrical circuit protection manufacturer Wylex has a hard-earned reputation for quality and innovation. But were losing out to cheaper, inferior products.

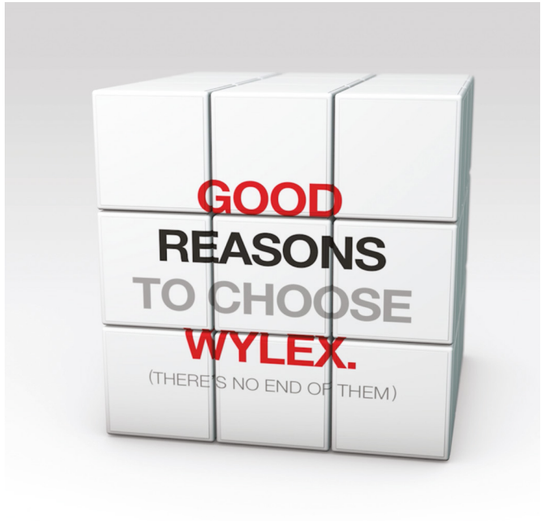
The challenge was to bring trust and respect back to this heritage brand.

We looked for one reason why customers chose Wylex. But found hundreds of them.

This sparked a visually disruptive, highly flexible brand-boosting campaign, communicating over 120 years of industry-leading innovation through print and digital.

And when the 18th Edition annual seminar on electrical installation regulation was beamed to electricians in cinemas across the UK, we premiered the brand's first ever cinema ad, 'Reasons to Choose Wylex'.

The result? Precisely what was intended. The brand has charged back to the top spot for awareness in its category.







Case Study: Fleetcor - Allstar

Fleetcor provides fuel cards and workforce payment systems for businesses across the US, UK and Europe.

Fleetcor wanted to increase penetration and usage of their best-known UK product, all-in-one payment solution the Allstar fuel card, amongst an SME audience.

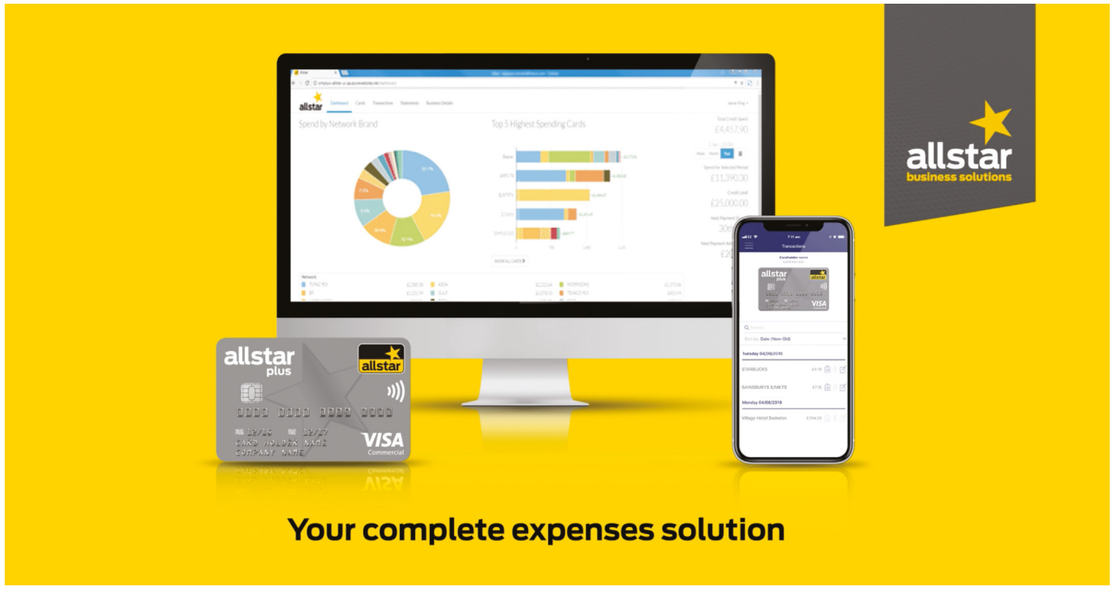
Our solution was focused on 'business worriers' – people who find the administrative tasks of running their business to be overwhelming.

Rather than adding to the admin headache, we presented Allstar as solving a people problem in a language these business owners would understand.

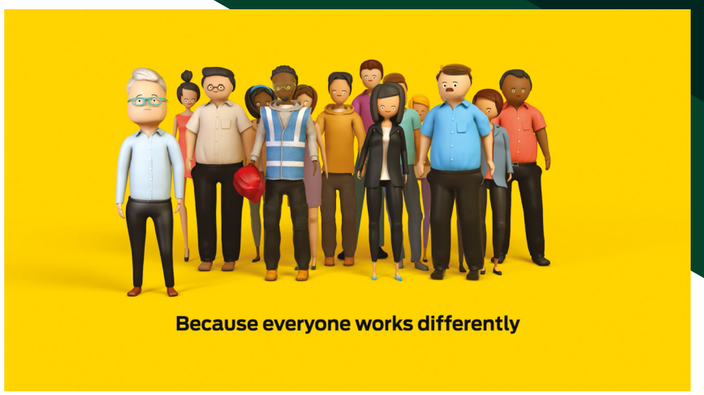
We developed a series of characters – 'No Receipts Pete', 'Premium Pamela' & 'Confused Carl' – to dramatise the everyday challenges SME business owners and employees face, and introduce Allstar as a one stop solution.

The campaign spans above the line advertising to raise awareness along with lower funnel activity online, social media, outbound calls and PPC in order to drive customers to the Allstar website.

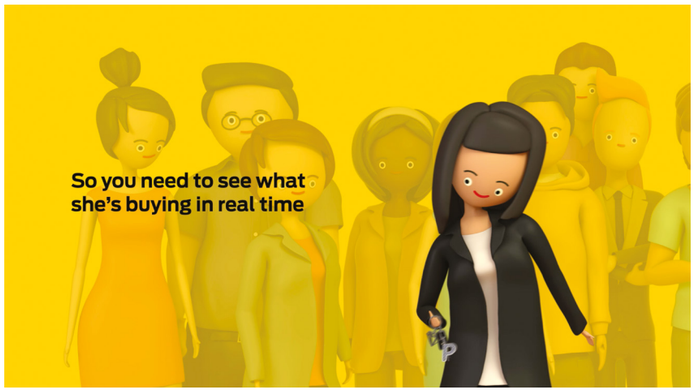
The campaign initially ran for four months and delivered strong results in the UK market, in increased brand awareness, 82% sales accepted leads and record visitors and dwell time on the campaign landing pages. There are plans to extend the campaign into the next year and across other markets.











Case Study: Infineum Insight

Infineum is a world leader in petroleum additives, marketing to highly specialised engineers from around the world.

But long sales cycles meant Infineum had to move beyond a highly functional approach to stay top-of-mind.

We developed Infineum Insight from a quarterly magazine to a digital thought leadership platform, allowing the brand to respond to the latest industry developments for its always-on audience.

The content is delivered in a highly visual format in English & Chinese, and repurposed across key industry titles and social media, positioning Infineum as a credible voice in the global fuel market.





Case Study: Cummins - ISX

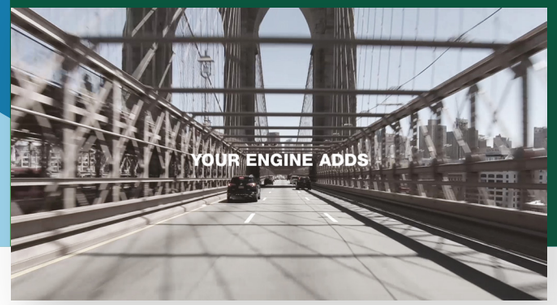
Cummins, a global leader in diesel and alternative fuel engines and generators, wanted to launch a new series of overhaul kits for its ISX engines, which power heavy-duty trucks.

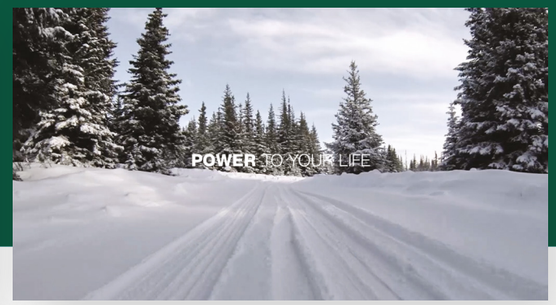
The customers are primarily long-distance drivers whose livelihood depends on the health of their engine, as well as commercial audiences such as independent repair shops.

Drivers clock up to a million miles in their trucks, so some time off the road is inevitable. But with engine life essential to their income, drivers needed to feel reassured that their overhaul would swiftly get things moving again.

Rather than leading with the functional elements of the product, the launch materials centred on how the product would benefit the end user, introducing the value propositions – uptime, value, peace of mind – upfront. Within this context, the nitty gritty of product spec is tributary.

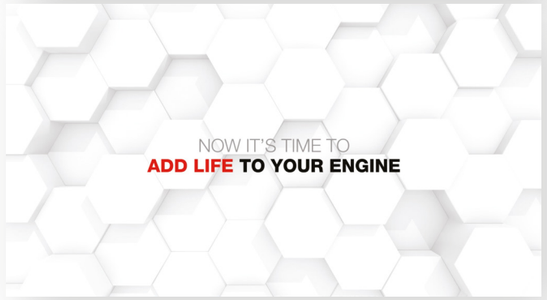
The value propositions and functional benefits were packaged into a range of launch materials from digital presentations to printed materials and a video, the latter helping showcase the emotive connection behind the concept.

















At Cummins we're powering a world which is always on. We have customers who need to be functional 24/7, they need to be reassured that the products and services we provide will help them stay in business – and in some cases influence personal lives and livelihoods. From that aspect it's really important to confirm that we are there for them when they need us.

Bill Lovejoy,
Global Brand Director,
Cummins

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Bray Leino is one of the UK's top 3 B2B Agencies, providing industry-leading business marketing solutions through an integrated offering which spans strategy, creative, digital, events and media. Our specialist teams in the UK, North America and Asia work with Clients from across the B2B universe, including energy, industrial, maritime, and financial services.

For information on how Bray Leino can drive success for your B2B brand, contact Business Development Director, Austen Donnellan, at adonnellan@brayleino.co.uk.