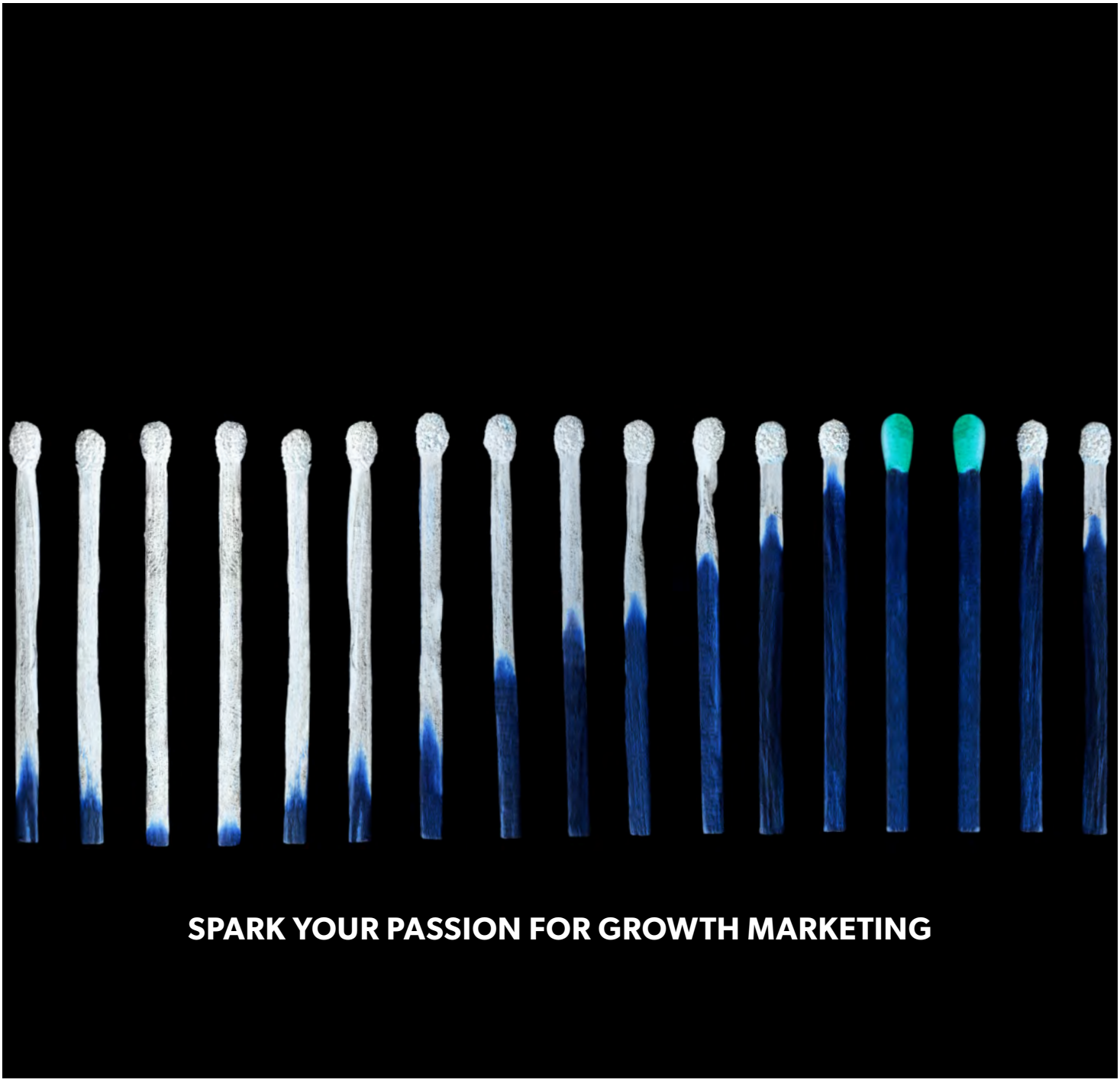
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It's time to re-Ignite B2B marketing

Some highlights from this year's agenda:

Rory Sutherland: Described as the father of behavioural science in marketing, Rory will be kicking off Ignite, in an unconventional irreverent keynote not to be missed.

ABM stream:
This is the hottest topic right now and will be laser-focused on how businesses of all shapes and sizes can deliver business growth.

Transformation stage:
Features keynote sessions from global B2B marketing leaders, including SAP, Deloitte, Thomson Reuters, Amazon and Microsoft.

B2B Gurus:
Get up close and personal with some of the most inspirational and innovative speakers we've ever put together in The Studio.

Leadership stream:
Whether you're already a leader, or planning to emerge as one, this stream will give you vital insight into the procedural, cultural and strategic challenges B2B leaders face in their roles, and how these experts have overcome them.



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Your key to ignition

You can feel a little spoilt working at B2B Marketing. Not many people have the ability to sit down with the industry's most successful and promising marketers. It can be pretty fun, and it's certainly very enlightening.

Recently the team has been pooling our efforts to finalise the agenda for our Ignite conference in July. It's allowed us to speak to some familiar faces, and other slightly newer ones, each offering an impassioned view on their corner of the B2B marketing space.

We've covered a lot in our conversations so far, including influencer marketing, budgeting for your ABM campaign and how to audit – and even build – your own martech. Some of those chats are what we present to you in these pages, but there is plenty more to deliver at the Business Design Centre on 10 July 2018.

This issue is our introduction both to this year's Ignite conference and to some of it's many great speakers. I hope it gives you something to talk about, plenty to think about, and an insight into the things that inspire and invigorate your industry peers.

Mary-Anne Baldwin
Head of content,
B2B Marketing

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Antonia Wade of Thomson Reuters advises on how women can make it to the top; the latest developments from the world of social media; Siniat launches its latest B2B campaign into space; and Molly muses whether it's now okay to swear in marketing emails

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Marketing leaders explain how they're proving their value to the business and making a significant impact on the bottom line

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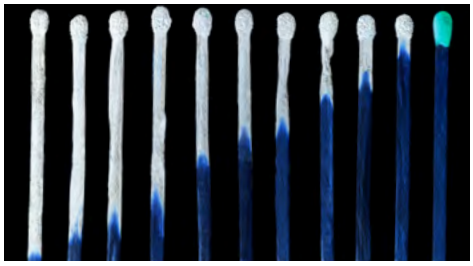
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To discuss membership options, call **Sarah Casswell** on **+44 (0)20 7014 4924**

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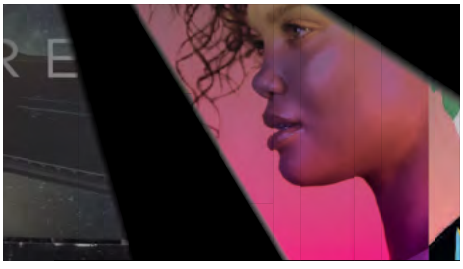


Running an audit for your marketing technology can seem like a daunting task, but the key may be to look for what's missing, rather than overhauling your systems. Rebecca Ley talks to Ben Rees, CMO at Redgate

22–23 **Building your own tech: How to do it and when to bother**

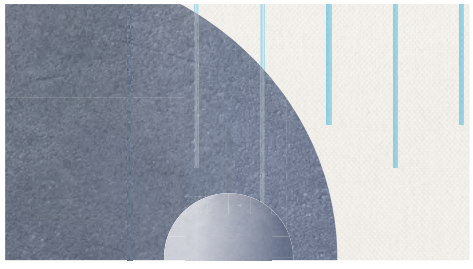
Self-built tech is on the rise in B2B. It no longer sits in the lap of specialised vendors, as agencies and clients take on building unique software and machinery to service their business. Molly Raycraft sits down with Clive Armitage, founder and CEO of Agent3, to discuss the concept

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The UK's most successful B2B agencies have forged very different paths, and have been prosperous for very different reasons. While the environment is uncertain, all remain positive about the opportunities for the future, and their prospects for success. By Joel Harrison

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If you've been cynical about the term 'digital transformation' in the past, you'll have been in good company. But now's the time for B2B marketers to board the bandwagon, says Joel Harrison



Antonia Wade
Head of global marketing, Thomson Reuters

WORKING YOUR WAY TO THE TOP

Having held a number of senior roles at Accenture and HM Treasury, Antonia Wade is now head of global marketing at Thomson Reuters. She shares her advice for women wanting to make it to the top

Let's talk about that infamous glass ceiling. Is it something you've felt has held you back?

No, and in general I think as a woman, if the company that you are in isn't attracting, promoting and providing opportunities for you then you should have a long think about whether it's the right company for you. Marketing tends to attract a lot of women and is a very sought after skill, so you have options.

What's your advice on women wanting to fast track themselves up the ladder?

I think at some point in your career it is important to build out your experience by taking a different role – perhaps in other areas of the business such as sales so that you can bring that insight back into your marketing career. Also be realistic about your mid-term life ambitions. When I knew I wanted to start a family I began planning my five year career horizon well before I got pregnant, so I changed jobs and pushed hard to get promoted knowing I was going to be more static in my career while I was on maternity leave and in the year or so after going back to work.

It's often said women don't negotiate pay as well as men. What's your advice on that?

Get advice from women or men about how to negotiate pay. This is particularly important when moving to a new job or getting an internal promotion – we all deserve to be paid what we're worth! You may also need to negotiate on flexibility when returning to work after having been out on maternity leave. It's good to get advice on how to do that and a woman may well be more sympathetic on the topic than a man would.

How important is it for young people to have strong female role models at work?

The role senior women play in recruiting and retaining female talent, as well as acting as role models for younger women is incredibly important. I've been extremely lucky to have a number of female leaders – both in marketing and outside the function – to inspire and guide me. You can learn a huge amount from seeing how successful senior women operate and present themselves.

I've also really benefited from having female mentors and sponsors. They play a different role in your career, but will be instrumental in helping you build your presence, understand how you're being perceived, giving you advice and providing opportunities.

Should women look for a female or male mentor?

I find women will often give more direct feedback to another woman than men feel comfortable doing, and if you really want to grow your career you need candid and specific coaching. I have male mentees too, and have had male mentors, but some of the things that you want to discuss through your life are quite specific to being a woman in the workplace and it's good to be able to get the perspective of someone who has been in a similar position as you.

STAY SOCIAL

B2B MARKETERS PRIORITISE VIDEO

62% of B2B marketers value video as the most important content format, LinkedIn has found.

In a survey, respondents agreed video offered the opportunity for more creative storytelling, building brand awareness, and lead generation.

But many felt metrics and reaching the right audience were challenges, with 75% believing publishers and platforms should address these.

AN EMOJI INCREASES CLICK-THROUGH RATE

Marketing messages are more likely to resonate with audiences if emoji are used.

According to Hubspot – which analysed 19.6 million of its own social media posts – the octopus, horse and jeans emoji were the most effective at increasing clicks.

A girl with her hands in the air, cherry and fish emoji were also found to be the best drivers of engagement.

SOCIAL, THE FIRST CHOICE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

Some 56% of small businesses use social media marketing as their primary form of SEO advertising.

Research from Clutch found accessibility and low costs made social media an attractive option for those with small budgets.

Yet despite predictions that 74% of small businesses would invest in SEO this year, the research discovered only 55% currently had.

STAR CAMPAIGN

BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO B2B CAMPAIGN HAS GONE BEFORE

Siniat launches product into space to prove its capability, before sending prospects video and material from the mission

Building materials supplier Siniat came up with a novel way of proving the durability of its products – by putting them to the "ultimate test" and launching them into space.

Capsules made from the firm's 'Weather Defence' plasterboard were launched into space by weather balloon from Ferrybridge in West Yorkshire. Names of 75 leading architects – the targets of the campaign – were written inside the capsule, and once it returned to Earth (in Norwich) the plasterboard was sent to the prospects alongside video footage of the mission.

Bristol-based creative agency Mr B & Friends, which worked with launch specialists Sent into Space on the project, ran a teaser campaign in advance with the message "Keep up", focusing on Siniat's technical expertise.

Wendy Baker, commercial marketing executive at Siniat UK, said: "We wanted to prove that our products and our appetite for innovating are one step ahead, and this campaign does exactly that."





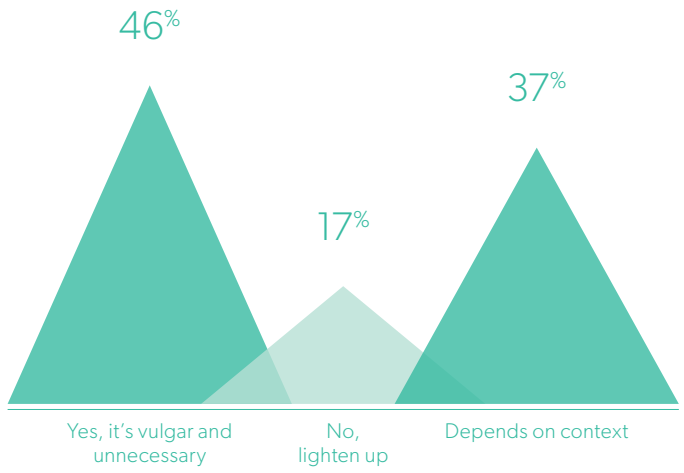
MOLLY MUSES...



IS IT OKAY TO SWEAR IN YOUR MARKETING EMAILS?

B2B writer and Twitter pollster quizzes the industry @molly_b2b

IS USING SWEAR WORDS IN YOUR EMAIL SUBJECT LINES A BIG 'NO-NO'? #POLLOFTHEDAY



Explicit language seems to be increasingly part of the mainstream – it's even an accepted element of a 12A-rated film. Yet when it comes to using profanities in marketing aimed at adults, the consensus in my poll was pretty split between the cautious and those that frankly didn't give a… But ultimately the clean speakers edged the win.

Of the 46% who felt swearing in marketing was unnecessary, it was described as unprofessional, with another (hopefully/ironically) describing its use as "utter crap". Some 37% of people weren't adamantly against explicit language but were wary and based the decision on the context. It's understandable if you envision what a campaign with effing and blinding in every message would look like.

And 17% don't care a fig (or words to that effect), feeling free to curse away at the audience, saying the rest of us should lighten up.

The lesson to take away is an age-old one: Know your audience (before sending out a 12A-rated email) or expect some explicitly worded complaints in return.



Sakina Najmi

Do the little things right to deliver the big idea

Marketing's contribution as a revenue generator is often the culmination of many small, critical steps says Sakina Najmi, global marketing director, mid-market at Criteo

As passionate marketers, we're all looking for the big idea; that beautiful creative concept that resonates immediately with an audience, multiplies sales many times over and ensures senior leadership teams recognise the value in an outstanding marketing concept, well delivered.

In reality, success in marketing and business is often much more measured, thoughtful and hard won. It's the culmination of a multitude of small, critical steps – research, focused plans, robust testing and analysis – that lead to a successful marketing campaign and demonstrable ROI. And ROI 's the key, as the more we coherently align marketing with sales, the more it becomes a revenue generator, not a cost centre. When this is achieved, stakeholder perceptions of marketing change dramatically.

I'm a firm believer it's 'doing the little things right' that leads to significant success and growth. At Criteo, we work to the powerful adage 'we win or we learn'; a simple, highly-effective process predicated on three principles: Making consistent marginal gains, placing a laser focus on the objective, and ensuring expectations are managed from the outset. We build small first, then test, iterate, test, succeed, or repeat until we do. And, when we do win, we undertake the same forensic analysis to understand why.

The first step to achieving this is to build a team of creative and critical thinkers – those who 'conceptualise the creative' and those who 'dissect the data', all motivated by a skilled leader who can build a high performance marketing operation that reflects these complementary skills. A good marketing team should always bring the discussion back to its primary objective – to play a key role in creating a favourable selling environment for the company's products or services. It seems obvious, but not always that common. We need to spend more time talking in a language our stakeholders understand, with solid evidence how marketing can drive the business forward.

The more we take considered steps, analysing the data and making qualified decisions, treating marketing as a revenue generator rather than 'just' a creative process, the more we can show where the real value in marketing lies. Do this and I assure you, your efforts will not be wasted.



Martin Häring

Customer-centricity drives growth opportunities

If you're serious about driving growth, putting the customer at the heart of everything you do is crucial, says Finastra's CMO Martin Häring

There's no doubt about it – behind every great business you will find a great marketing team. Regardless what you provide, without good marketing no one will know who you are or what you stand for. The best marketing teams not only build a company's brand but drive sales and open opportunities for growth.

Generating business from existing customers must be a priority and is proven to be far more cost effective than acquiring new ones. By implementing customer lifecycle marketing strategies that drive customer loyalty at multiple touchpoints, and using persona-based marketing techniques, CMOs can maximise successful outcomes and propel customers along the path-to-consume, as well as creating long-term engagement opportunities.

To achieve this, businesses and marketing departments must adopt a customer-centric approach, putting the customer at the heart of everything they do. While customer-centricity can't be built overnight, it's important to start sooner rather than later. Key areas of focus for B2B marketers will revolve around harnessing data and technology to deliver a truly personalised experience.

Thanks to social and digital channels, businesses today have access to a wealth of data and should use this to understand the best ways to engage with customers. Smart marketers will also use this data to complement CRM systems, ensuring all interactions are of high quality and make customers feel their needs are understood and are being met or even exceeded.

Forward-thinking CMOs will also explore how AI and machine learning technology can support their strategies. Using AI to analyse data collected from all sources, savvy marketing teams can create and deliver personalised services, offering the most appropriate products to customers exactly when they need them.

To be truly effective, a customer-centric approach needs buy-in from the whole organisation – starting at board level and cascading down so that it becomes an integral part of company culture.

Your customers should feel they are being heard without having to shout. With a customer-centric approach, happy customers will become your driver for business growth – recommending your products or services and becoming an extension of your sales force.



Sarah Lewis

Benefits flow from the waterfall

Adopting a demand waterfall approach to marketing has been a game-changer for growth at Ivanti, allowing it to see the direct impact of marketing on revenue, says director of field marketing Sarah Lewis.

One of the many great things about working for Ivanti is our obsession with being an organisation that operates with best-in-class marketing strategies and processes. We do this by utilising industry best practices, cutting-edge technologies, and by empowering our teams to all help drive our closed-loop marketing processes.

We have been doing this for some time, but about a year ago we embarked on a project to implement new improved processes. These were based on the SiriusDecisions Demand Waterfall, and it has been an absolute game-changer for the organisation.

We now have full visibility into our sales and marketing funnel, and can see the direct impact that our marketing efforts have on our revenue. We are seeing dramatic pipeline growth in our organisation, and we can attribute an accurate proportion of this directly to our marketing activities. We can also map marketing activities onto sales cycles to see at which point marketing is contributing to, and influencing, the overall funnel.

A big benefit of this style of marketing pipeline management is that it involves regular report reviews, which enable us to adapt our marketing strategy to target various stages of the funnel, as and when needed. Our enhanced agility has been instrumental in the improvement of our lead and pipeline generation and, of course, our company growth.

Being able to see how marketing is contributing to the growth of our business is not only great for internal promotion of the marketing function, it's a reliable way to secure future budgets and, even more importantly, is a fantastic way to motivate our hard-working team.

I've been in marketing a long time and I still get really excited when I can see the fruits of our labour in the form of impressive numbers and pretty graphs.



Kylie Webb

When it comes to growth, you can't go it alone

Accountability and understanding each other's roles has been key to growth says Deltek's senior marketing director Kylie Webb.

Marketing's contribution to growth at Deltek is intrinsically tied to expanding our market presence and filling the sales funnel.

The keys to achieving these goals are accountability, understanding the role that marketing plays within the wider organisation, and how we intersect with sales and other stakeholders. Further still, it's about collaboration and communication. You can't build success in a silo, everyone needs to understand each other's roles. One of the great things that happens at Deltek is both bottom-up and top-down communication. There is transparency over what's going on across our entire business. It's not just reporting at the end of the year or every quarter. We consolidate our performance in real time – taking it from our tools and putting it into dashboards, so everyone in the business knows where they are against their targets, can be action-oriented and understand the impact of every activity.

Within my EMEA and APAC region I can access a consolidated view, but I can also drill into performance of a certain product line in Australia, for example. Each campaign manager knows how they're tracking against their goals and how they match up to the sales reps they're working alongside and supporting. Those connected objectives and transparency have driven better results for the business and allowed us to grow. People know what they're working towards together, so there's no lost accountability. Another positive consequence is individual empowerment, as people develop a results-driven mindset which contributes to the positive culture Deltek fosters.

Our approach isn't a case of producing information for the sake of it; data is meaningless if it doesn't deliver insights and inform actions, so measuring the right things is critical. You won't build relationships and credibility if stakeholders don't believe in what you're doing or if they can't connect that work to what it means to them.

I believe marketing is constantly evolving for the better and we should be proud to be recognised as a key contributor to business growth. Marketers have a great opportunity to develop collaboration and commercial skills that will continue personal development and contribute to the growth goals of their organisation.

INFLUENCER MARKETING MYTH BUSTERS

Still not convinced by the potential for influencer marketing in B2B? We canvassed the experts and asked them to debunk some common misconceptions



Christoph Kastenholz, *CEO and founding partner, Pulse Group*

1. Myth: Influencer marketing is not suitable for B2B

Busted: Influencer marketing by definition leverages key opinion leaders on social media. That doesn't just includes beauty or fashion icons on YouTube or Instagram, but equally any industry professional on LinkedIn who regularly shares their views on professional topics. Clearly, there is no less potential using influencer marketing in a B2B context.



Conor Coughlan, *CMO, global head of marketing, Fenergo*

2. Myth: The same rules for B2C audiences apply in B2B

Busted: Any influencer programme must align with your overall B2B marketing strategy. If you approach B2B influencer marketing solely with the aim to shift more units, you will be doomed to fail in the long run. Which credible influencers want to solely talk about your product? If all they do is redistribute product messaging their influence will lessen.

To be effective such programmes must add value to all parties – your firm and its campaign, the influencers and the people they influence. It can't be a one-way conversation.



Maureen Blandford, *B2B marketing strategist and advisor*

3. Myth: Influencers don't care about me

Busted: You'd be surprised how many champions there are. Extreme relevance gives you agency. Unpaid influencer relations has the potential for you to benefit in a big way. You can materially grow unpaid reach and credibility (super important for unknown people or brands). It takes work but the only investment is time. You've got this.



Tim Williams, *CEO, Onalytica*

4. Myth: Influencer marketing and influencer advertising are the same

Busted: Many believe that influencer marketing is all about paying influencers to endorse your brand/product. It's not – that's influencer advertising. Brands have so much more value to offer influencers than a pay cheque.

Influencer marketing is give and take; it's a mutually beneficial collaboration for the influencer, brand and both audiences. Give your influencers exposure, a platform; help them become more influential. If you are going to pay them, pay for their time, not their opinion.

5. Myth: You have to pay influencers in B2B



Nicolas Chabot, *EVP EMEA, Traackr*

Busted: The B2B influencer ecosystem is very different from the B2C one. Most B2B influencers are professionals who are part of the industry: they grow their influence on social media as a way to increase their own visibility, and sometimes their own business (many are consultants) – or out of sheer interest and passion for the topic they cover. There are almost no professional influencers in B2B.

While consultants who get invited to events and contribute to content might expect to be compensated for the time they invest in your project, it is clearly not the rule for most B2B influencers.

6. Myth: It's difficult to track influencer activities



Heather Hurst, *director, corporate marketing, Workfront*

Busted: I'm a huge believer in leveraging influencers in B2B activities. But measurement isn't always straightforward. Think of it in two ways:

1. Use influencers in activities with established measurement such as emails, webinars, field events, etc. Measure likes and check the lift against your baseline.

2. Talk to your influencer partners about when they mention you on social media and in their consulting agreements.

7. Myth: You can't get enough good content



Steev Glover, *director, Brew'd*

Busted: Less is more. A better way to stand out is to create content that's audience focused, endorsed, validated and shared by influencers, experts and partners, and where the UX is engaging, enlightening and enjoyable.

Better to be seen by 100 of the right people than 1000 vaguely interested ones. Time to ditch the vanity metrics of social for good.

8. Myth: Influencer marketing is not something for the whole team



Tim Gibbon, *director and founder, Elemental Communications*

Busted: There will be fantastic expertise internally, it just needs to be nurtured. Viewing staff as internal influencers is ideal because they're specialists that customers want to call upon for expertise, feedback and ultimately perspectives that external influencers cannot provide. Activity or campaigns should consider both. Moreover, this approach should be ingrained into the DNA of the business.

9. Myth: An influencer campaign can only exist on social media



Simon Hurrell, *head of digital experiences, The Crocodile*

Busted: Enabling conversations between prospects and an influencer at your event or roundtable is a powerful way to build trust in your brand and a deeper understanding of its value to them.

Collaborate with influencers based on their ability to engage and inspire rather than the number of Twitter followers they have.

10. Myth: Influencers must come from outside the company



Dan Smith, *head of digital, Growth Capital Ventures and GrowthFunders*

Busted: You don't need to hunt around for influencers. Every organisation has its own, free-to-use influencer marketing resource – its CEO.

No matter what else changes in the world, people buy from people. And if you have a CEO who is known and respected, couple this with a regular content strategy that focuses on building their position as a voice of authority, and a strong social media profile, you have a CEO who can be particularly influential in various respects.

11. Myth: Influencer marketing doesn't yield real results

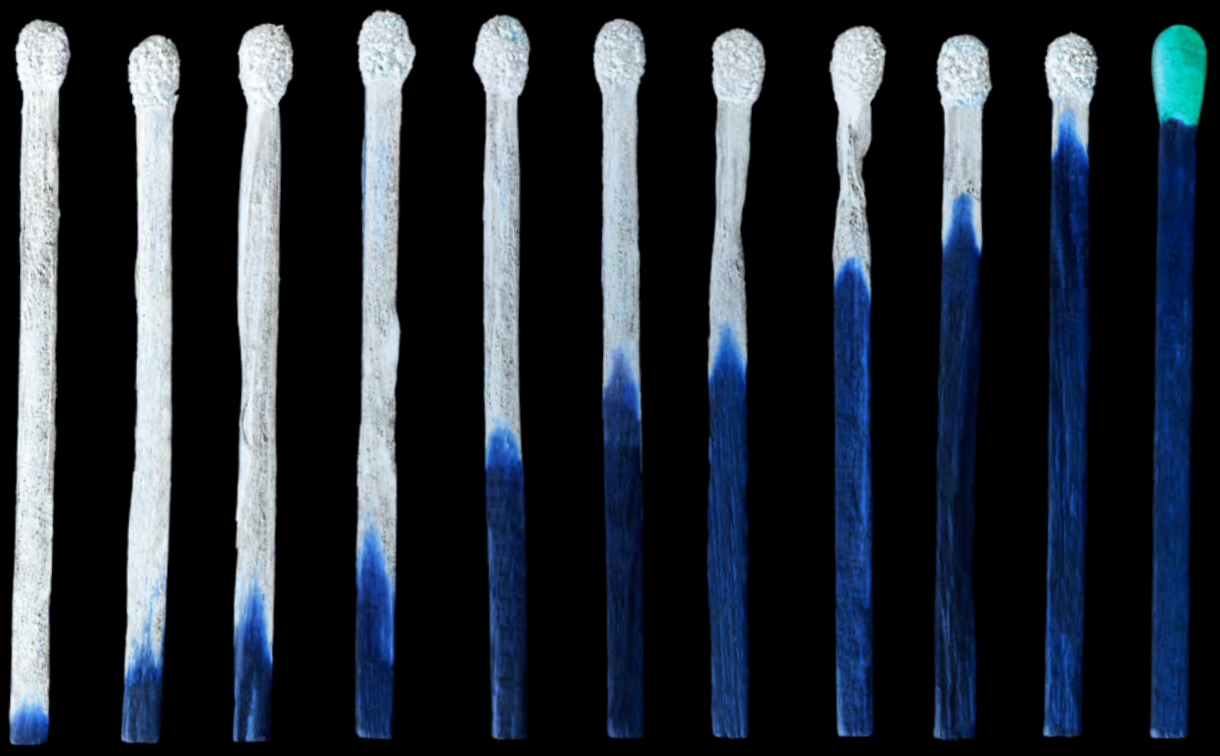


Minaz Tejani, *group account director, Twogether*

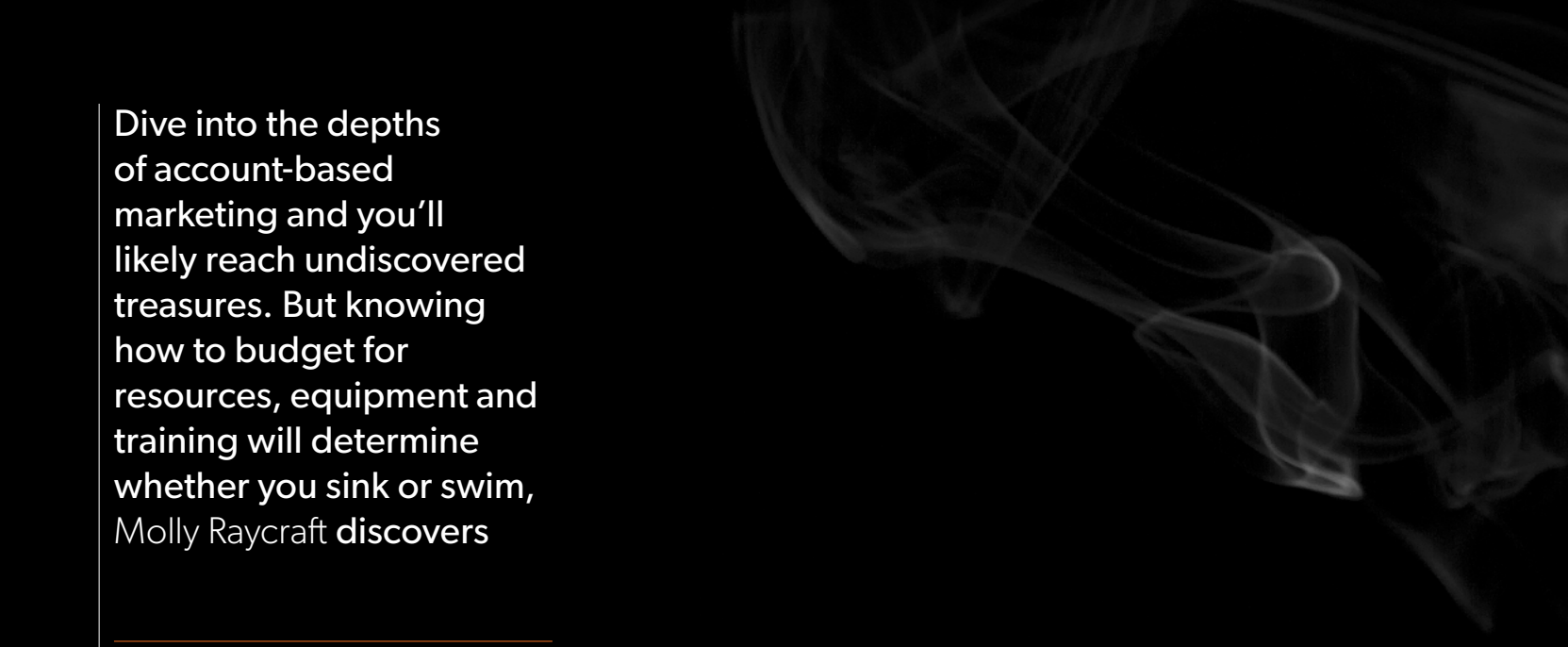
Busted: Customer advocacy as a platform for influence is gaining rapid traction in the B2B space, as brands realise that their customer voices speak the loudest. We listen more to the people we feel we can relate to.

This gives rise to new multi-channel, integrated advocacy programmes that use social, personalised digital experience and events together, turning stories into opportunities.

If you want to learn how to integrate influencer marketing into your marketing mix, join Tim Williams of Onalytica on the Engagement stream at B2B Ignite at 1.35pm.



ENSURE YOUR ABM STRATEGY DOESN'T FIZZLE OUT



Dive into the depths of account-based marketing and you'll likely reach undiscovered treasures. But knowing how to budget for resources, equipment and training will determine whether you sink or swim, Molly Raycraft discovers

ABM has its own dedicated stream at B2B Ignite this year, with presentations including 'How to steal a march on ABM', 'How to go from pilot to roll-out, without losing your mind', and using ABM to change perceptions in the tech industry.

ABM is like the coral reef of the marketing industry; a relatively unknown environment that presents a sense of trepidation, yet also a wealth of great things to discover. The scope of what's there to explore can intimidate some, but having the right resources on hand will ensure you reach the lucrative deals that lurk below.

Of course, targeting prospects in a personalised way means plunging beneath the surface of your usual research, and this can come with a heavy price tag. Lisa Skinner, VP of marketing at Localytics is under no illusions of the cost. "Most of your ABM tactics, if they're highly personalised and targeted, are going to be more expensive, but the whole idea is that the return is greater," she says.

It's during the initial momentum-building stage that budget must be carefully allocated. And with ABM rising in popularity in the B2B sphere, the pressure is on to devote sizable budgets to the strategy. A big budget means it's easy to go above and beyond your competitor, but for those who don't have it, smart budgeting can be the answer.

Factors to consider in the budget plan

You wouldn't buy a rain jacket if you lived in the desert. Yet many waste their budget on resources they don't need – tech being one of the most commonly misconceived 'essentials'. It's vital you pinpoint the exact areas of your ABM programme requiring financing and differentiate them from those that are less important.

Budgeting for tech

When initiating a new strategy it can be easy to pour budget into a mountain of tech that no one in the company has the expertise to use. It's a huge misconception that you even need tech to start out in ABM. Lisa says: "If you're dipping your toe in the water with a pilot, you don't need any technology at all.

"That's where we started, and we only looked at expanding to other channels when we wanted to scale," she explains.

Vera Loftis, MD at Bluewolf, notes that tech often comes up during the discussion of essential tools for success, and marketing automation seems to be the common answer. But like Lisa, Vera agrees it really isn't necessary during the implementation stages.

"I don't think it's an investment you have to make on day one, but I do think making sure you have the proper resources to both benchmark the data and get the data back from a return on investment standpoint is critical," she says.

While technology is in no way the focus of ABM, many find it useful in navigating their decision-making and activities. Claire Nash, group strategy director at Momentum ABM advises to "think about how to apply technology to free up human minds for the more valuable parts of ABM". Although she's careful to note that tech should be a secondary consideration in reaching goals.

Taking the time

As the classic saying goes: 'time is money' and if you know anything about ABM you'll recognise that researching a prospect is not a five minute job. Your team will have to spend time digging deep to uncover the companies' structure, decision-makers and pain points.

What's more, they should be creating content uniquely designed to complement their findings. "It's more labour intensive," says Lisa. "The media, direct mail and some of the other channels we're using are all more expensive but if you look at the return and the ROI you're able to demonstrate why it makes sense to make this investment."

The time to even complete research, let alone a sales cycle can feel frustratingly long. Vera notes that it's something businesses don't always consider when budgeting. "I think people vastly underestimate the amount of time, new resources, and training it can take," she says.

Allocating your budget to accounts

It's going to take a lot more treats to train a heavyweight elephant than it is a mouse. And the same theory can be applied to accounts. "Not all accounts are created equal," explains Claire. "It can be tempting to take your £200,000 annual spend and divide that up across your account list. But before you do, look at your accounts and how best to prioritise and segment them. You might find that just five accounts warrant 50% of your budget as they have a higher likelihood of return. You might also discount some accounts immediately, for example if the sales teams are not engaged. You might then look for economies of scale by grouping accounts of a similar profile – for example a shared challenge, sector or proposition alignment."

It's imperative to remember that allocating more of the budget than you can reap will sabotage your successes. "You can't spend more on an account than it's going to generate in revenue," warns Vera. "Make sure the investment you're putting forward does attribute to real revenue."

It can be tempting to take your £200,000 annual spend and divide that up across your account list. But before you do that, look first at your accounts and how best to prioritise and segment them

Claire Nash, group strategy director, Momentum ABM

Claire says it's a case of calculating expenditure at account level and what the likely return would be – this can unnerve some as they begin to see that one account requires a hefty serving of the budget. "If this leads to multi-million deal opportunities then you need to hold your nerve and remember that ABM is about value not volume," she assures.

With this method, the most valuable one-to-one accounts receive the most funding, but Lisa points out there can be anomalies to the rule. "It's not always as black and white as that, there may be someone in the one-to-few tier that's getting good traction but maybe needs a little help, so marketing will jump in," she says.

Finding the money to start

If you've been given a budget to implement account-based marketing you're one of the lucky few. For many it's a case of scraping together money from other areas, until there's solid evidence of success which gives an argument for a bigger budget.

This is a process Lisa knows far too well, having experienced it herself. "There was no extra pot of money. I had to take money from other places that weren't performing as strongly as I needed them to. I knew what I could put at risk and I knew what I needed to generate from a pipeline perspective, in order to make the ROI from an ABM pilot positive and strong."

Piloting a plan

It's better to walk before you can run. And while sometimes it may feel ABM is the answer to all your problems, it isn't for every company. Piloting allows you to find the wrinkles and iron them out before roll-out, and this is where you can decide if it's actually the right shade of marketing for you.

Lisa's pilot ABM programme meant she was able to demonstrate potential impact through business meetings and the pipeline created, as well as being able to show they were supporting other investments in the business, such as sponsorships. This in turn galvanised a number of things that propelled the project forward. "One element was short term; we were able to shift more money to ABM because the programme was clearly impactful. But it also allowed us to ask for additional budget, because at some point you're not going to have enough to cover all the bases you want to. You've got to try this within your existing

We were able to shift more money to ABM because the programme was clearly impactful. But it also allowed us to ask for additional budget

Lisa Skinner, VP marketing, Localytics

budget and then the board will entertain a conversation about additional funds."

Lisa is adamant this is the best approach, believing that a pilot mitigates the risk. "It allows you to understand what's working, what's not working, and to optimise and tweak, then invest more. I think the real benefit is that you're proving the concept first, and validating the assumptions about the market and the shift for the enterprise."

ABM on a small budget

Most marketing teams operate on a small make-do budget before gaining investment. Vera says a small amount doesn't necessarily limit your revenue but can stump how much activity you do, so it's all about being creative. "I think from the beginning it's about looking at what you've already produced that you could recycle, even if it's packaging something up and rolling it out differently."

But Lisa believes a small budget could mean refining your activity until you're able to scale. "If you only have very limited funds, you could focus on the one-to-one; that's where you'd spend your money, providing less investment in one-to-few and even less investment in programmatic," she says.

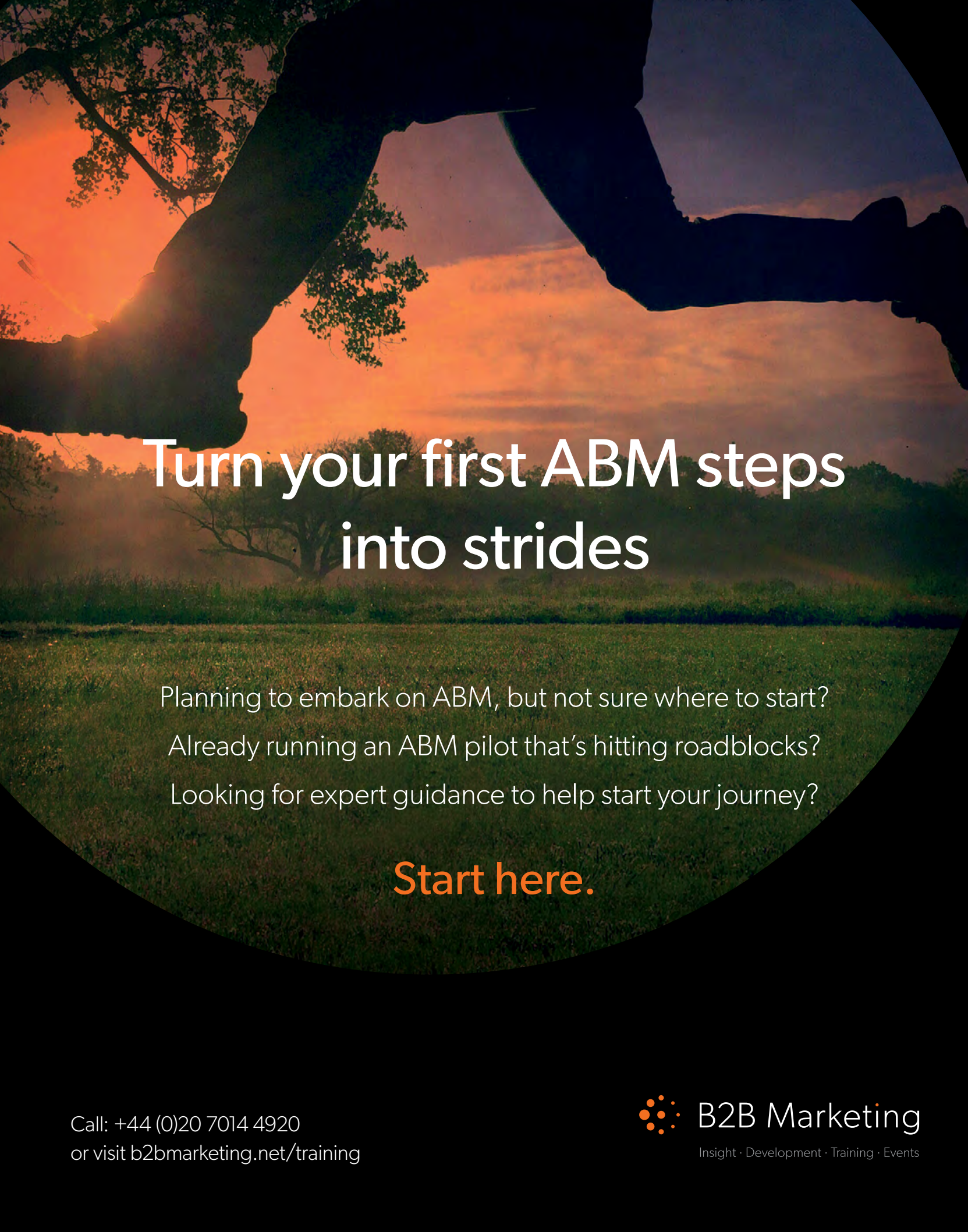
Pitfalls to watch out for

The road to successful ABM isn't always smooth, so be mindful of where the common pitfalls lie. This will allow you to monitor them closely and pull out a safety net if you do happen to slip.

- The long sales cycle – demotivation may strike during the wait for revenue. Seek support from your CEO, update them regularly of your milestones and let them assist you in encouraging ABM efforts.

- ABM versus demand generation tactics – be careful in diving in at the deep end of ABM. It's important to decide how much of the marketing budget will be given to carrying out day-to-day demand generation tactics. Drop them completely in favour of ABM and you could be left without a life jacket.

- Marketing and sales alignment – it may be a benefit but it's equally a challenge. Whipping your marketing and sales team into a collaborative shape can be hard. The word 'marketing' in ABM puts an onus on your team to plan, pay and deliver the strategy but really it shouldn't be like that. Ensure sales understand their role, and update each other regularly.


Turn your first ABM steps into strides
Planning to embark on ABM, but not sure where to start?
Already running an ABM pilot that's hitting roadblocks?
Looking for expert guidance to help start your journey?
Start here.
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You can't be spending more on an account than it's going to be generating in revenue. Make sure the investment you're putting forward does attribute to real revenue

Vera Loftis, MD, Bluewolf



Build a business case for the board

You need to get buy-in from the board. No one likes asking for money, but like most things with seniors, it's best to be armed with a business case.

How to pitch ABM

- ABM drives improvement of sales and marketing alignment. It pushes marketing and sales to operate together, alignment is a common challenge for many businesses, and so should be a major selling point.
- ABM delivers higher ROI – due to its concentrated nature, businesses are keen to spend more in exchange for a better dedicated service, and the stats support this.
- Achieve quick-wins – it's important to ensure the board aren't under any illusions that ABM will see quick returns, but propose a pilot plan to demonstrate the better pipeline and more valuable engagement than can be achieved. This will get the team excited.
- ABM isn't just a marketing tool – ABM goes against the grain of traditional marketing techniques. This is a change of mindset that could keep the business current and profitable.
- Present clear metrics – don't go promising the moon when you know a pilot isn't going to achieve that. At the same time don't make your results cryptic. You need to be realistic and transparent. This comes back to managing expectations.
- Expanding existing account spend – this isn't just about gaining new accounts. Loyal customers of your brand may be very receptive to ABM and this will likely increase your wallet share of these companies.



HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL TECH AUDIT



Running an audit for your marketing technology can seem like a daunting task, but the key may be to look for what's missing, rather than overhauling your systems. Rebecca Ley talks to Ben Rees, CMO at Redgate



Ben Rees,
CMO, Redgate

Catch Ben at B2B Ignite where he'll discuss how to build a martech stack at a small organisation in the Martech stream at 2.10pm.

B2B marketers want to make the most out of their technology. Understanding the software you already use – your tech stack – should be the first port of call in maximising efficiency, reducing costs and driving revenue. So before you start costing up the new eye-catching bit of kit, it's time to reflect on what you could stand to lose, and where the gaps are.

Strategy first

"Something would have to be working really badly, be a complete waste of time, or create real headaches for us to replace it," says Ben Rees, CMO at software company Redgate. Ben's annual tech review, which is "more about what's missing than a review of what we have", offers time to reflect on the gaps in their tech stack, and what needs to go in to support the business strategy.

"If you don't have a decent strategy," he says, "you can spend all the money you like on technology, you can audit your stuff, you can change things, but all you're going to do is waste time." Ben advises building your infrastructure around your strategy and looking at what you're going to change in the next few years. "If social media is a big part of your strategy for the next two years and you've got no infrastructure for it, you must look at those platforms. But if it's not part of your strategy, or you've already got a system that works, leave it alone," he warns.

Ben advises being wary of system change and the massive headache it can cause. "Any IT infrastructure project is always much worse than you think at the start. You have to change all the links, processes, and the worst part of it is data migration."

As a first step, Redgate's marketing team lists all the technology they currently use and assess if it's fit for purpose. "Most of the time we sit down and say 'yes, that's fine'. We won't spend a lot of time thinking about replacing an email or social media platform because they're basically good enough. What's more interesting are the gaps."

Personal recommendations

It's crucial to find the right vendor and domain before implementing new technology. "There are thousands of pieces of software that do lots of different things," Ben explains. "The vast majority will make

no impact on your business." Therefore, recommendations for the right technology are the most important part of an audit.

Ben suggests going to conferences and talking to people in similar jobs who have been through similar situations. "We have a rule of thumb that if someone has been through the pain, just ask them so you don't make the same mistakes."

The pain of navigating the martech landscape is at best bewildering; there are so many vendors vying for your business and an overload of information online. But networking with thought leaders and experts can alleviate the trauma, they can tell you what's really worked for them, suggests Ben. "For the last 18 months, we've been aware that we need to be better at ABM, and we've been struggling to do that with our existing systems. So we went to a martech conference, and found out about two or three bits of software that could really help us and chimed with our problems."

That piece of software was Engagio, an ABM platform that Redgate recently integrated into its business. Although Ben goes on recommendations, there is of course a formal process when acquiring new software. "We have business analysts to determine the main vendors. They'll do a short-listing process, with demos and get salespeople in," he explains. By the time it gets to the last round, when two vendors compete against each other, pitching for business, it should be clear who's the winner. "It's not a democracy," says Ben. "If the process has worked it should be pretty obvious who's the best."

Avoid magpie marketing

Marketing is a fashion-led industry, those in it can be as seduced by shiny new things as their own customers are.

"A lot of people in marketing get really excited about new technology," says Ben. "The skill is in finding the needle in the haystack – something genuinely useful that will make a difference."

He speaks from experience. After spending a year implementing an email platform at Redgate and training everyone up to use it, it was deemed useless and was ripped out. "We threw it away and replaced it with something else," he says. "It was a poor piece of software and an enormous project." It simply didn't enable the marketing team to do anything different. "We were still sending the same emails a week after launch as we were before, but we'd spent a year putting in a new system."

The way to find valuable software is to look at whether it's going to affect your revenue and costs – and don't be fooled by people saying this new system will drive efficiency

The way to find valuable software, says Ben, is to look at whether it's going to affect your revenue and costs – and don't be fooled by people saying this new system will drive efficiency. "You still have the same number of employees, doing the same amount of work. They're just doing different work on a different system." If you don't save money or increase revenue with a new piece of software, you shouldn't implement it.

Predicting the revenue and cost is Ben's biggest barrier to introducing new technology, but he sees it as a justified obstacle. "We've spent a lot of money in the past on toys and bits of software, and people spend millions on implementing projects that don't change anything," he says.

Know your business

You must understand your own needs in order to develop a clear strategy that avoids time-wasting technology, advises Ben.

Being conscious of the size of your business and its lifecycle is crucial to understanding what platforms are actually needed. "The technology necessary for a company of 100,000 people is very different to one of 50," Ben explains. "You've got to be really smart about it, because some vendors will try to sell you anything, convincing you to buy their wares by saying it will make a big difference."

Some technology will only make a big difference to a company like PepsiCo or Apple. "If you're a small company with small revenue and a handful of customers, there's a good chance that it's massive overkill," he says.

"Martech is really about enabling the team to execute on its strategy. A good audit relies on a decent strategy and finding the technology to enable it. We look at the objectives for the next year and what we can change to fit that."

While Ben advises to look for gaps in your tech stack first, there's always an exception to this rule. "Eventually the pain gets so bad that it's worth replacing something," he says, "When you've done an audit and found your software is wrong, you do have to replace it."

5 TOP TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL AUDIT

Shane Redding, digital, direct and data marketing consultant at Think Direct Ltd shares her hints and tricks for conducting a successful a martech audit.



Shane Redding,
digital, direct and data marketing consultant, Think Direct

1. **Conduct a martech audit as part of your strategic review.**

   First ask yourself why you're doing a martech audit. "What is it you want to know?" asks Shane. She recommends looking not just internally at what's working, but to the customer. "Take an outside-in approach and look at the pain points you're trying to solve in your current customer journey," she suggests.

2. **Look for gaps.**

   Sometimes having an overlap in your stack is no bad thing, says Shane. "An overlap can be useful, even desirable, and can reduce costs. I know one CMO found it was more effective to continue to run two marketing automation systems as it allowed the company to use the best of both." The other advantages can be a lower renewal rate and not being a hostage to one vendor, she says.

3. **Involve different stakeholders.**

   "IT must be involved and fully briefed as to the marketing needs, otherwise technical requirements can override the functionality required by customers," she says. "An agile approach with relevant stakeholders always improves the quality and speed of an audit."

4. **Audit the data as well as the tech.**

   "If you don't audit the data, you're in danger of investing in tech, such as a marketing automation system, and finding that you only have 30% usable email addresses, rather than the 100% you did your ROI calculations on," says Shane.

5. **Culture trumps everything.**

   "If you are in a traditional siloed hierarchical, change is hard. It may be easier to use small plug-and-play tools to start with than go through a whole transformation," Shane says. "If you're in an agile digital high-growth business with plenty of tech resource, there is a temptation to do-it-yourself using open source tools – a term recently coined by IBM as 'dark martech'." But with more than 5200 martech options to choose from, you should ask whether this the best use of your time.

Hear Shane's advice on how to unlock your potential during her panel discussion at B2B Ignite 'How do you make your way to the top' on the B2B Gurus stage at 3:45pm.

BUILDING YOUR OWN TECH: HOW TO DO IT AND WHEN TO BOTHER



Self-built tech is on the rise in B2B. It no longer sits in the lap of specialised vendors, as agencies and clients take on building unique software and machinery to service their business. Molly Raycraft sits down with Clive Armitage, founder and CEO of Agent3 to discuss the concept

If the three little pigs from that well known nursery rhyme taught us anything, it's that building your own house, or in this case tech, can go very wrong. One strong wind and it can all fall down. For B2B marketers, the big bad wolf comes in the form of security issues, low traction and dwindling UX. But choose correctly and you could have the delights of a system that has everything you want, services your every marketing need and is comfortable to use.

Having overseen Agent3's in-house team of 10 create (and recreate) the business' own solutions platform, Clive Armitage, the company's CEO, admits that doing it yourself is a task riddled with hurdles. Yet the success its solution has received in the market demonstrates what can be achieved.

Where do you start once you've decided to build your own tech?

If you're ambitious enough (or mad enough given the quality and amount of existing martech solutions) to build your own tech, you must start by really understanding the problem you want to solve. From there, you must determine the outcome you need to deliver. Remember, technology is a means to an end, not the end itself, so first work out where your value is going to come from.

What resources does the build require?

If you're building a solution for internal use then you obviously have to cost the process closely to ensure you avoid scope creep and consequent delays. You must have access to the right skills to both manage and develop the project.

If you're building software as a market solution, you must have enough funding to develop the product without the commercial pressure to drive revenue. So you need to have a well-designed business plan that details your product's 'time to value' and then secure funding that will support you through that process.

How long does it take to build a piece of tech?

This is impossible to answer. It's a bit like asking how long does it take to build a house – it depends on the size, complexity and sophistication of what you're building. One thing is for sure though, it will take longer to build

There's so many ways to screw up when building tech that what can be a straightforward task can quickly unravel into something that takes much longer than originally anticipated

CLIVE ARMITAGE

something if you don't have prior experience. There are so many ways to screw that up. What can be a straightforward task can quickly unravel into something that takes much longer than originally anticipated.

Are there some areas of tech that are better suited to a DIY build than others?

On one level this is really down to commercial need; if there's no solution out there that meets your requirements and your need is great enough, you'll obviously have to develop something. That said, if you are going to build, it's best to focus on smaller solutions that enable quick outcomes. Often the best piece of technology is that which leverages existing products but enhances or complements what is already in existence.

It's becoming popular for agencies to build their own tech for clients. Is this threatening the vendor space?

Most agencies I see building their own tech are not really building commercially viable ones insomuch that they're not fit as standalone solutions people would buy outright. Instead, they're building solutions that allow them to sell more consultancy services because that's agencies' main goal.

This is common sense from a financial perspective because it provides a commercial differentiator as well as not demanding huge levels of funding and resource to build software that will fall to external scrutiny. On that basis, these kinds of technology projects are not going to threaten the specialist tech vendors.

Why do companies choose to rent instead of build?

Because it's cheaper, easier, and quicker to deliver value. It's also, pragmatic, because most businesses are smart enough to recognise that they need to focus on the thing they're most proficient in, then find solutions from others with specialist skills and products.

Is a lack of resources for building tech, a primary driver for renting?

It's obviously a significant one (and when we say resources, we mean everything from funding to skills). But there are other reasons; not least the obvious one, that building tech can be a distraction to your core business. And if there is a cost effective, efficient and robust solution already available to meet your needs, why try and reinvent it yourself?

Are there alternative rent options that can be explored with vendors?

Ultimately, this is always going to come down to a negotiation. Experience tells me that vendors are flexible in agreeing commercial terms and will work with the buyer to find a structure that works for both parties. You just need to ask.

HOW DO YOU OVERCOME COMMON CHALLENGES WHEN BUILDING TECH?

It's an obvious thing to say, but bears repeating; building great software is hard. You can't tinker with it and hope it'll be successful. To overcome hurdles you need:

- Deep pockets.
- Access to suitable skills.
- Determination to focus on the core objective behind building your solution (without being distracted by other avenues of development).
- Patience – because great software takes time, consideration and nerve.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN DRIVERS FOR BUILDING TECH?

Ultimately, building your own tech means one of four things:

- You have an amazing idea and someone has funded you in building a solution that is commercially viable.
- You're already a software company and building tech is part of what you do.
- You're an 'enthusiast' and just want to create tech.
- You can't find a suitable solution for the particular business challenge or opportunity you face (this is the most common reason).

In addition to martech having its own dedicated stream at B2B Ignite, 2018 sees the return of the Tech Playground where you can test out the latest cutting edge technology.


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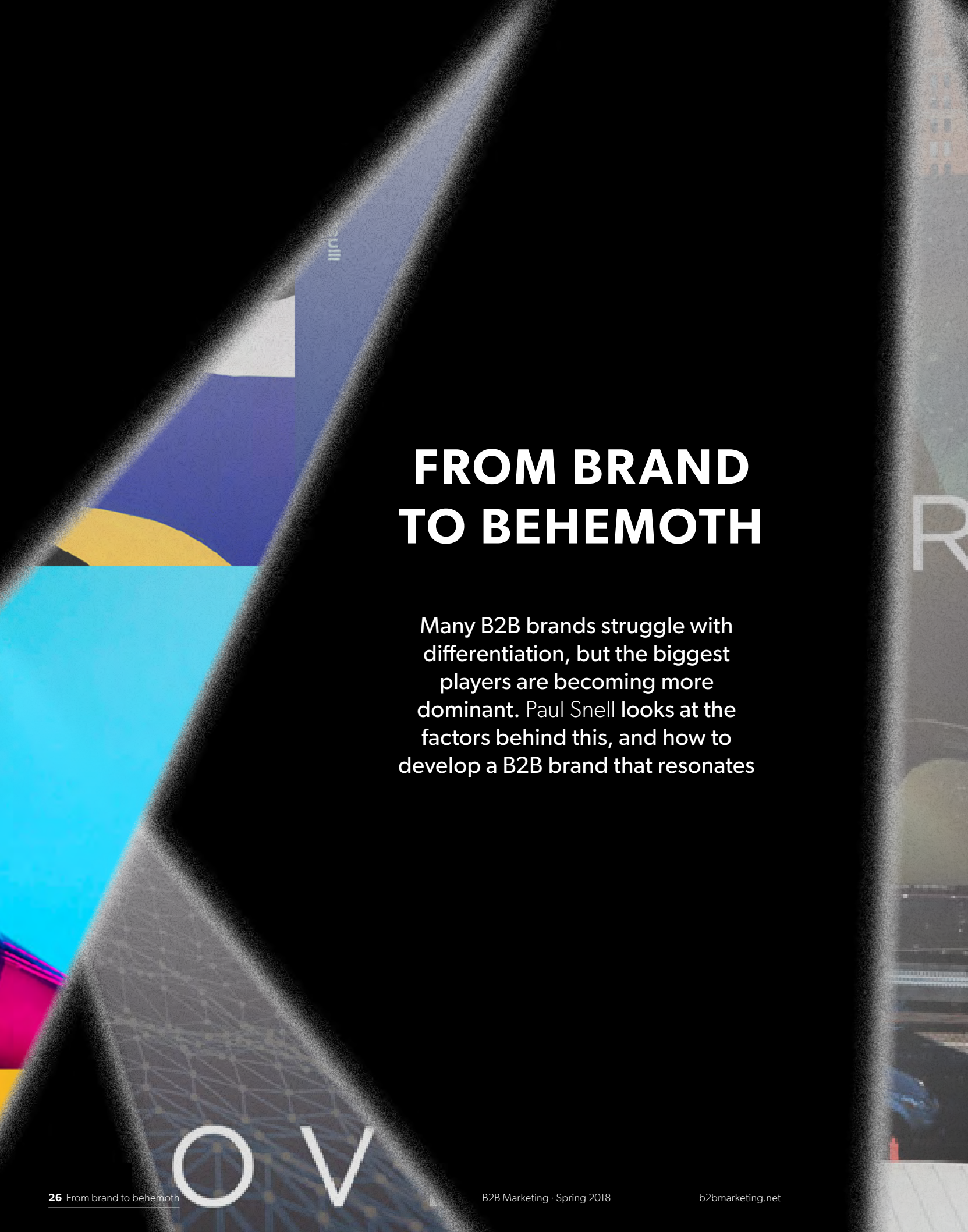
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FROM BRAND TO BEHEMOTH

Many B2B brands struggle with differentiation, but the biggest players are becoming more dominant. Paul Snell looks at the factors behind this, and how to develop a B2B brand that resonates





Sophie Leang,
global head of marketing,
OpenGamma

There's an epidemic currently running through the world of B2B, according to Sophie Leang, global head of marketing at fintech business OpenGamma.

"Companies are not standing out, they're not being bold, and they're not using [their brand] as a point of differentiation," she says. It's the same images of happy business people collaborating together, accentuated by the same blues and greens. And the messaging is just as interchangeable.

"We all say we're the leading innovator, the leading technology platform – everyone's saying the same thing and we're not explaining why customers should pick us as a vendor or why we're different. We're losing out on huge opportunities in such simple ways," she adds.

Sharing with her audience at B2B Marketing's InTech in February, Sophie said: "Not standing out is the same as being invisible. Customers are completely bombarded with so many different vendors, products and messages. The only way to stand out is to be different and stand for something – otherwise you'll be completely invisible and may as well not bother."

There are multiple reasons behind this current state, she says. From the perceived risk of doing something different to senior leaders not understanding the importance of marketing. But whatever the reason, it leads to the same result – bland brands that look identical to one another. And it means marketers are missing the opportunity to differentiate from the competition.

Why are tech brands so strong?

So what makes the best B2B brands so special? If you were to look at any of the three major rankings (on page 29), you'd be forgiven for thinking that being a tech brand was a pre-requisite. In Brand Finance's ranking of the top 500 global brands, the top eight positions are held by technology companies, with the number one spot swapping between Amazon, Google and Apple in the past three years.

At the Brand Finance Global Forum in London, professor Patrick Barwise of London Business School gave his view on why these brands continue to rule the roost. Of course, there are a variety of factors at play.

"Don't look for a single reason," he says. "There are multiple mutually reinforcing reasons why the tech market is the winner-take-all." Leaving aside the sheer size of their market capitalisation and that many of these are 'experience' businesses. He identified five reasons why these brands (and in particular the GAFA companies – Google, Amazon, Facebook and Apple) have such a hold over the market.

The first factor that reinforces this sectorial dominance is "economics 101" Patrick says – high-fixed costs, low variable costs plus classic economies of scale, scope and learning, driven by very low marginal costs.

Not standing out is the same as being invisible

Network effects – essentially where the volume of participants improve the value of a product – are also at play. Barwise says there are two types of network effects, direct and multi-sided. An example of direct is that more people with the same product, makes it more valuable. Hotmail's an example of this: "Being able to email isn't useful unless those you want to communicate with are also on email. Hotmail was able to say 'recruit your friends, it's free'."

Multi-sided (sometimes known as platform economics) is the concept exemplified by Airbnb. "The more properties available on the site, the better it is for people who want to go on the system and vice versa. And, the more properties on there, the more valuable it is to go on Airbnb," Patrick says. "This platform effect applies to all these big brands as they're all platform businesses," he adds.

They've also benefitted from advancements in big data and machine learning. "In the world of tech the key word is 'big'," says Barwise. "One very big reason for all of those wonderful services offered by Google, is big data. More is

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST B2B BRANDS (TECH BRANDS HIGHLIGHTED)

	As ranked by Brand Finance 500	As ranked by Superbrands UK	As ranked by Brandz B2B
1	Amazon	Apple	Microsoft
2	Apple	BP	IBM
3	Google	Microsoft	Well Fargo
4	Samsung	British Airways	UPS
5	Facebook	Emirates	GE
6	AT&T	Google	SAP
7	Microsoft	Paypal	Accenture
8	Verizon	Shell	Intel
9	Walmart	Visa	Oracle
10	Industrial and commercial Bank of China	Mastercard	HSBC

more. The more data they have to play with, the more powerful the results. We aren't even at the races in terms of being able to handle or regulate that."

The professor also urges not to underestimate the importance of geographic clustering, noting many similar firms are based in the same location on the West coast of the US. It's not just the human capital advantage in terms of talent and the labour market, but the gains from social capital such as interaction and competition between people. It's this geographic clustering that explains the success of the city of London and why the world's best ceramic tiles come from a small area of northern Italy.

In addition to being consumer brands, Barwise says these firms are talent brands too. Individuals want to work for them because they're a great addition to the CV, and are even willing to be paid less to do so because of the reputational boost from being associated with the brand. Another crucial element, is the cult of the founder, and the appreciation of entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs and Jeff Bezos.

In truth, once tech brands such as these are established they can be eclipsed, but not displaced, from the market. IBM was the dominant provider of mainframes in the sixties – and still is today – but was eclipsed by Microsoft and Intel in the PC market, which in turn were overshadowed by new players in search, ecommerce, social networking, and mobile internet.

It's unlikely they'll be knocked off the top tier anytime soon. "A brand is like a kind of flywheel for your business," Patrick says. "It takes a lot of energy to build up a strong brand. Fortunately, it's actually quite difficult even for the stupidest brand manager to do much damage to a very well established brand as they exist in people's heads."



Nathalie Burdet, head of marketing and brand strategy at NEX, will explain what to do when the CEO of your market-leading multi-billion dollar financial services firm calls you to say he's selling part of the business (and brand) check out the Leadership stream at B2B Ignite at 12.05pm.

HOW TO MAKE WAVES WITH A START-UP BRAND

Even the biggest B2B brands have to start somewhere. We spoke to Stuart Lewin, founder and creative director at BTL Brands about where to begin when developing a brand for a start-up, as he recently did for WaveMetrix



Stuart Lewin,
founder and creative director,
BTL Brands

Developing a new brand – whether a start-up or for an established company – always starts in the same way, says Stuart. Most agencies have a variation on what Simon Sinek brought to popular attention in his TED talk on understanding a brand's 'why, how and what' (see page 31).

"We ask them what they do, which most can manage. Then we ask them how they're different or how they do it, and that lets us tease more information out of them. But when it gets to the why, it can cause friction between founders," he says. "We've come into contact with so many brands where there are incredible people with incredible ideas, but you really have to prod them to understand why they're doing it."

Following that, the agency uses a pyramid style of questioning to dive into position, proposition, personality and persuasion in regard to their message. That should be sufficient to come back to the client with a first stage presentation suggesting brand names, positioning, personality, tone of voice, and research on competition and the market.

WaveMetrix, software used by film studios, tracks what audiences are saying about movies online. BTL came up with an initial brand for the business seven years ago, but this was a chance to look at it again in the face of greater competition in the market. "We ended up with a brand message that was 'discover more'," says Stuart. "[Co-founder] Alan Ault kept coming back to the same point – you get more insight, more deliverables, and more human interaction with WaveMetrix. And it also came down to the idea that when you discover something you're not necessarily manufacturing it. In most cases the brand message includes words that are used in the workshop, which we rearrange and hand back to them."

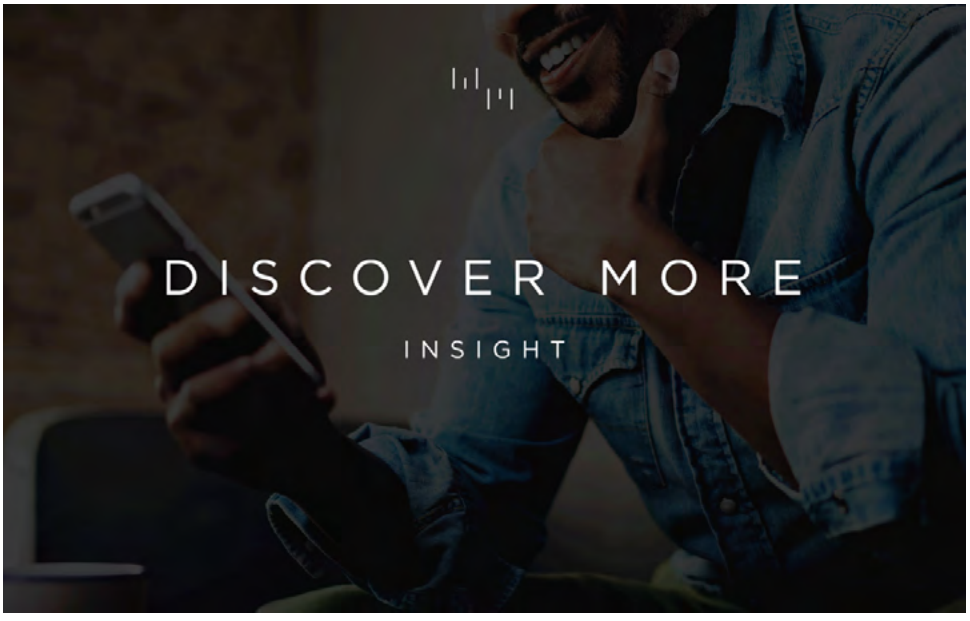
When it came to the creative, BTL focused on aligning the brand and the company's founder. "Because Alan is quite low-key, we really wanted to have something that was very subtle as a brand marque, but still had a concept behind it. The personality is key because it has to sit with him."

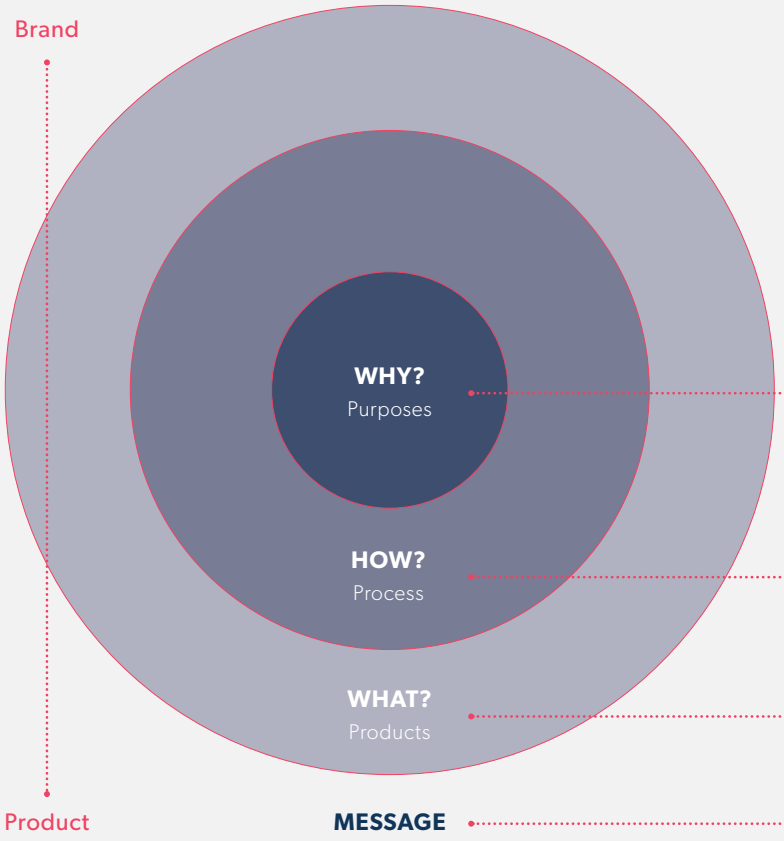
The creative reflected WaveMetrix's ability to measure both positive and negative sentiment with an identity that brings both aspects to life.

What are the major differences when working with a start-up and founders compared with corporates and marketing directors? "When you're working with a founder it's their own money behind a project so they really do value what you do. They question you less and tend to trust you more," Lewin says.









The why, how and what of WaveMetrix

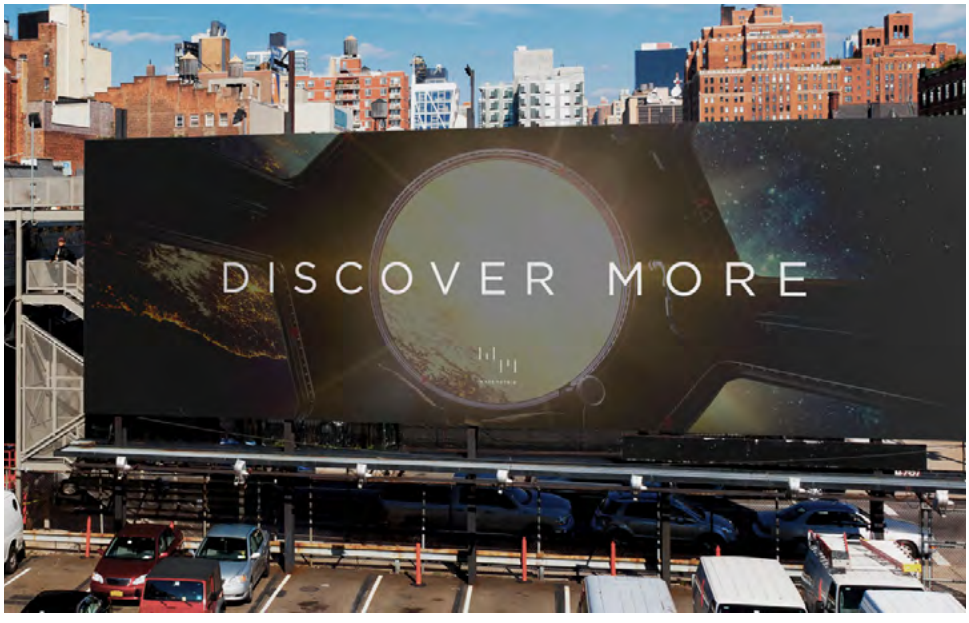
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'DISCOVER MORE'

When you're working with a founder it's their own money behind a project so they really do value what you do



UNLEASHING DROPBOX'S CREATIVE ENERGY

In October collaborative software Dropbox announced the biggest rebrand in its history, overhauling its visual identity and messaging. We spoke to Jessica English, head of brand marketing, and James Keating, head of marketing EMEA, about what the project involved





Jessica English,
head of brand marketing, Dropbox



James Keating
head of marketing, Dropbox

What was your objective for the rebrand?

Jessica: Our over-arching goal with this rebrand was to shift perceptions of Dropbox from a place where you store your files to a place where active collaborative work happens – simply put, from the 'file, sync, and share' category to creative collaboration. We did a competitive analysis and recognised we were swimming in a sea of sameness among our competitors – both in the way we looked and in what we were saying.

Where do you start when embarking on this type of project?

Jessica: Any company focused on long-term growth needs to consider the importance of creating a deeper connection between your brand and your customers. This is especially important for Dropbox given the increasing competitive nature of the category in which we compete. Around January 2017 we started making more public statements about our philosophy and how work can be done better.

James: It would be fair to say this is the biggest rebrand Dropbox has had in its 11-year history. There was a lot of soul-searching internally because employees feel very emotionally attached to our brand and there was a ton of work done to make sure we got that right so people buy into it internally as well.

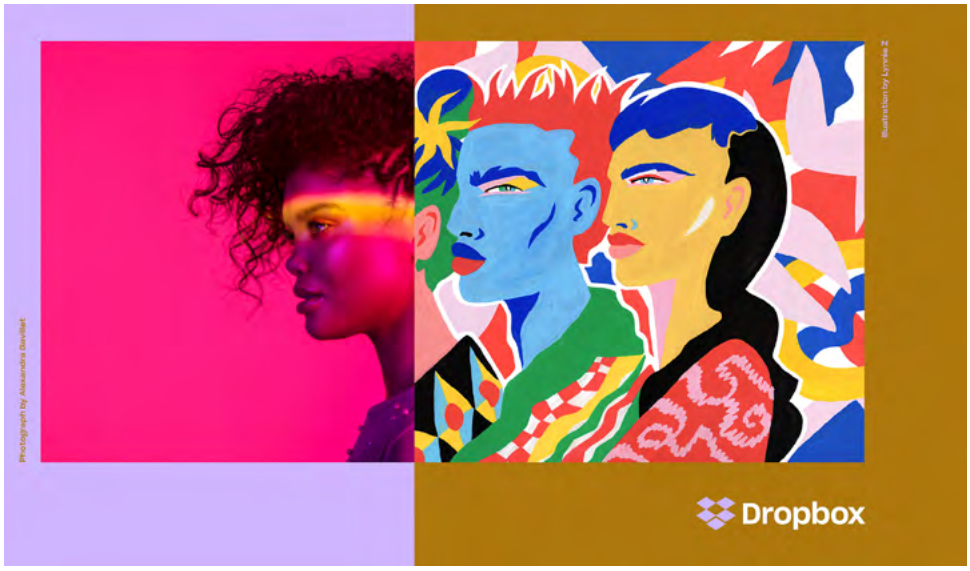
What's the challenge in undertaking a global rebrand?

Jessica: The challenge you face is polarisation and perceived audience exclusion. We definitely received some 'spirited' responses, especially toward our new design identity, because it was so dramatically different from where we were. For us to make a statement and turn heads toward Dropbox we had to do something different and bold. Our belief is if we didn't spark a conversation, we didn't do enough. You have to be prepared as a brand to do that.

The larger business risk when you are setting out to shift perceptions of who you have always been, is that you are no longer for the people you already serve. It's really important you do this in a way that's not excluding your core audience who already have an affinity and brand loyalty for you.

James: In EMEA the risk is that the campaign is created in isolation, with messaging and creative that doesn't resonate. It was a really





good process to go through working with the teams in San Francisco. From campaign inception, we were involved as much as we wanted to be, and we were regularly consulted, not just in terms of creative and messaging, but media plans were also aligned.

How do you balance a radical rebrand with an existing audience?

Jessica: Although we wanted to rebrand pretty wildly from a visual identity perspective, our products did not change. To find the balance is to maintain the integrity of the solutions we offer and communicate to customers that we're not changing the way they interact with Dropbox. We're just putting a finer point on what we stand for in customer service.

When you've launched a new brand, how do you keep the momentum up, internally as well as externally?

Jessica: We firmly believe that great brand work starts from the inside out. We were incredibly transparent with the company, having conversations with our internal teams to make sure they felt motivated and inspired by this new brand story. It's really important for internal teams to have a north star, something to point to and base their strategies on, and that goes all the way from our people team to those that are making the products for our customers.

James: This campaign was launched around November when we got everyone together in Dublin for a "creative energy" day. It punctuates a lot of the stuff we do internally. Last month we celebrated women's history month so we had a bunch of t-shirts that said 'unleash your feminist energy'. And we regularly ask people in internal surveys whether they're still inspired by our brand to make sure it does resonate.

As a tech brand, how important is it that the marketing aligns with the user experience?

Jessica: It is a Herculean effort! The way we ensured this was integrated across every customer touchpoint – whether that's media marketing or the product interface – everything flipped at the same time so you wouldn't see an advertisement out in the world and then get to an old-brand experience both in product and any of our information. It really only works if everything feels as if it was written from the same pen, and that's both in the language we're choosing and the design.

James: At Dropbox we have a team called EPD, which is a combination of engineering product and design, coupled with marketing. We worked really closely together to ensure there was a continuous flow from campaign to product experience to our customer experience team.



TIME FOR MARKETING TO MEASURE UP

Marketing's ultimate objective should be to contribute to the growth of the overall business. But how easy is it to determine success? Measuring tape in hand, Alex Clarke **explores the issue**



John Warner,
marketing and content exec,
Click Consult

John Warner will share how to automate monthly reporting with delegates at B2B Ignite in the Insights stream at 10.35am.

It's the age-old question. An issue marketing has been grappling with for decades; how can you comprehensively prove your value to the wider business and, more pertinently, celebrate marketing's contribution to business growth?

Should you focus purely on the hard metrics – those lapped up by the c-suite like a thirsty dog? Or should the impetus lie with softer marketing metrics?

With help from the experts, we're going to determine how best to measure marketing's contribution to growth, which KPIs to track, and how to make the most of them.

The rise of hard metrics

"The good thing about digital marketing is that it's the most incredibly measurable aspect of all marketing strains," says John Warner, Ignite 2018

speaker and content executive at Click Consult. "We've got access to pages and pages of statistics and figures."

Yet herein lies marketing's main issue: communicating the value of this data to the wider business. As John explains: "Outside of the digital marketing bubble, a lot of people don't have any idea what those numbers actually mean.

"There are loads of experienced marketing managers, who've worked in the industry for 10 to 15 years, and are still looking at traditional media for ROI – they're not as au fait with the point blank analysis you can give with digital marketing.

"As a result, it doesn't matter what statistics you throw at them, if they don't understand them, it's not going to make a difference."

Every marketing team member, at every level, must understand the aims and direct affect they have on the business.

"From the get-go, sales don't matter if your ROI isn't meeting your aims. If your cost per acquisition outweighs the actual value of the product, then you can sell millions of units and still make a loss. The definition of your aims must come prior to the campaign starting," says John.

John explains that education has to come from the top. "It's a real filtration process," he says. "At the inception of a marketing campaign, you must agree KPIs and aims, mapping them onto those of the c-suite.

"You then know at the end of the campaign, when you're presenting results to the board, that they'll know exactly what you're talking about. There has to be communication from the very outset."

The good thing about digital marketing is that it's the most incredibly measurable aspect of all marketing strains

The fall of soft metrics?

A stagnating spend on traditional media channels reflects the relative difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of so-called 'softer' marketing metrics: such as content, creativity, and social.

The value of such metrics largely depends on the objective of a particular campaign or marketing activity. As Brian Macreadie, head of brand and campaign marketing at law firm Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner (BCLP), points out: "It's critical to work backwards from the desired response to the point of measurement – because if you don't know exactly what you want to achieve, how can you know if you've succeeded?

"Of course, there are many different types of response that us marketers might want to achieve," he continues. "For example; brand building, client relationship enhancement, lead generation, improving SEO performance, even muddying the waters for our competitors – and so there are many different types of content and corresponding measurement strategy."

For example, if your aim is to boost the value of your average purchase, then 'hard' metric re-marketing tactics can work a treat, but if you're trying to raise the profile of a brand, then a creative campaign is likely to drive most interest.

Creatively-minded, scientifically-sided

No sane marketer (even in B2B) would say there's no longer a place for creativity in advertising, but with digital advertising spend finally overtaking traditional channels in 2017, it poses the question as to whether B2B marketers actually have any say in the matter.

Yet despite the fact John's expertise lies firmly in the digital marketing sphere (PPC, Adwords and SEO), he still defends the use and prioritisation of a creative-led approach, as long as it's applied in the correct forum.

"Creative campaigns have potential to generate domain authority and a level of interaction through third-party sites that you wouldn't normally acquire by other means," he explains. "Possessing high-standard creative assets will give people a fantastic first impression, even if they have no idea who you are.

"For example, if someone stumbles across your infographic, and clicks through to your website, they are already primed with a positive impression of the brand.

And John points out the knock-on effect these campaigns generate is where the real value lies. "Obviously, they're less measurable than your average PPC campaign," he admits. "But at the same time, if your overall campaign aim is to improve organic positioning and traffic, then you can certainly make a case for any campaign with high-quality creative."

Einstein famously said that creativity is intelligence having fun, and taking a scientific methodology to campaign management and measurement is an approach John strongly advocates.

Content, content, everywhere

Measuring the effectiveness of content has always been tricky; it's a B2B marketer's second biggest content challenge. According to Curata, it's trumped only by the struggle to make it engaging in the first place.

BCLP's Brian says, B2B marketers should establish short- and long-term goals in order to effectively measure the value of content.

"Short-term tactical goals like lead generation and improving natural search rankings lend themselves to easy-to-measure



Brian Macreadie,
head of brand and campaign marketing, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP

soft metrics," he says. "In my experience, most B2B marketers are doing a pretty awesome job of measuring those.

"The issue is that our companies often won't give a damn about lead gen or SEO," Brian laments. "Rather, they will care what the lead gen and SEO turns into."

The main struggle for B2B marketers in measuring content lies in long-term objectives, such as brand building.

"It can take years to build brand awareness and favourability, and it's hard to demonstrate which specific tactics shifted the needle," confesses Brian. "Boards instinctively know they need to build their brand, but it's also a topic they struggle with because it's so intangible – and because we can't say with certainty what individual tactics (including individual content) contributed.

"Attributing specific content to a three-year improvement in a hard metric like market share is bloomin' tough," he says. "This means we're reliant on soft indicators that our brand is strong and that content is helping."

Brian advocates metrics such as return traffic, share of voice, and invitations to pitch as valuable long-term content metrics, while warning marketers not to get too bogged down in vanity metrics and also pester the board into carrying out a brand audit.

Brains, brands and David Beckham's package will be under discussion on the B2B Gurus stage at 12.05pm at B2B Ignite, as Brian Macreadie looks at the factors that could make or break your marketing.

Applying the scientific method to marketing measurement

1. **Ask a question.** What are the aims of this campaign? What questions would you like your data to answer? Don't be afraid to be specific.
2. **Construct a hypothesis.** Create a potential solution to your question. Are you testing a new CTA, or comparing email subject lines? Will increasing your SEO spend bump up your search engine ranking?
3. **Test hypothesis.** Start making changes as results come in. Refine and repeat.
4. **Analyse.** What happened in your experiment or campaign? Does your data support your hypothesis?
5. **Communicate findings.** Share results with the wider business. If you've clearly communicated what you're measuring from the outset, along with the impact certain metrics have, you're onto a winner.

As long as you follow this pathway, you have a logical progression all the way through your reporting. So you can then make a good go of accurately reporting the aims and results to the wider business

5 tips for measuring content
Brian Macreadie, BCLP

1. Before you do anything, be clear on what role your content is performing and set metrics accordingly. Never create content for the sake of it.

2. Short-term, sales activation campaigns must have a hard metric, but the reality in many B2B sectors is that it can't always be revenue or profit – particularly if buying cycle times are long. Hard metrics could be sales meetings, the number of demos booked or pitch opportunities with potential customers, which most B2B companies understand have a nominal value.

3. Don't focus on vanity metrics such as 'likes', but do keep an eye on how your engagement is faring relative to rivals, as a proxy for how interesting, helpful, entertaining or provocative your marketing communications are. Understanding your share of voice is helpful in all aspects of marketing.

4. Find the easiest way to determine brand health. If you can persuade your board to do a brand audit (even by asking them 'do you know how many of your target audience have heard of you?'), then it'll give you an important business benchmark you can measure against.

5. Most importantly of all, remember that 'content' isn't always the answer – and it can't ever be the default starting point for a B2B marketer. Always pick the right tool for the right job.

Attributing specific content to a three-year improvement in a hard metric like market share is bloomin' tough

Case study: BCLP achieves stand-out through content storytelling 'Heist' series

BCLP's challenge was to infiltrate the so-called 'Magic Circle' law firms – the UK's four largest and most prestigious firms.

With content marketing and storytelling at the heart of the campaign, BCLP generated 515% more leads than the campaign target, 1108% ROMI, international press coverage and a robust future pipeline.

Brian Macreadie is head of brand and campaign marketing at BCLP, which won the 'Content marketing campaign of the year' at last year's B2B Marketing Awards.

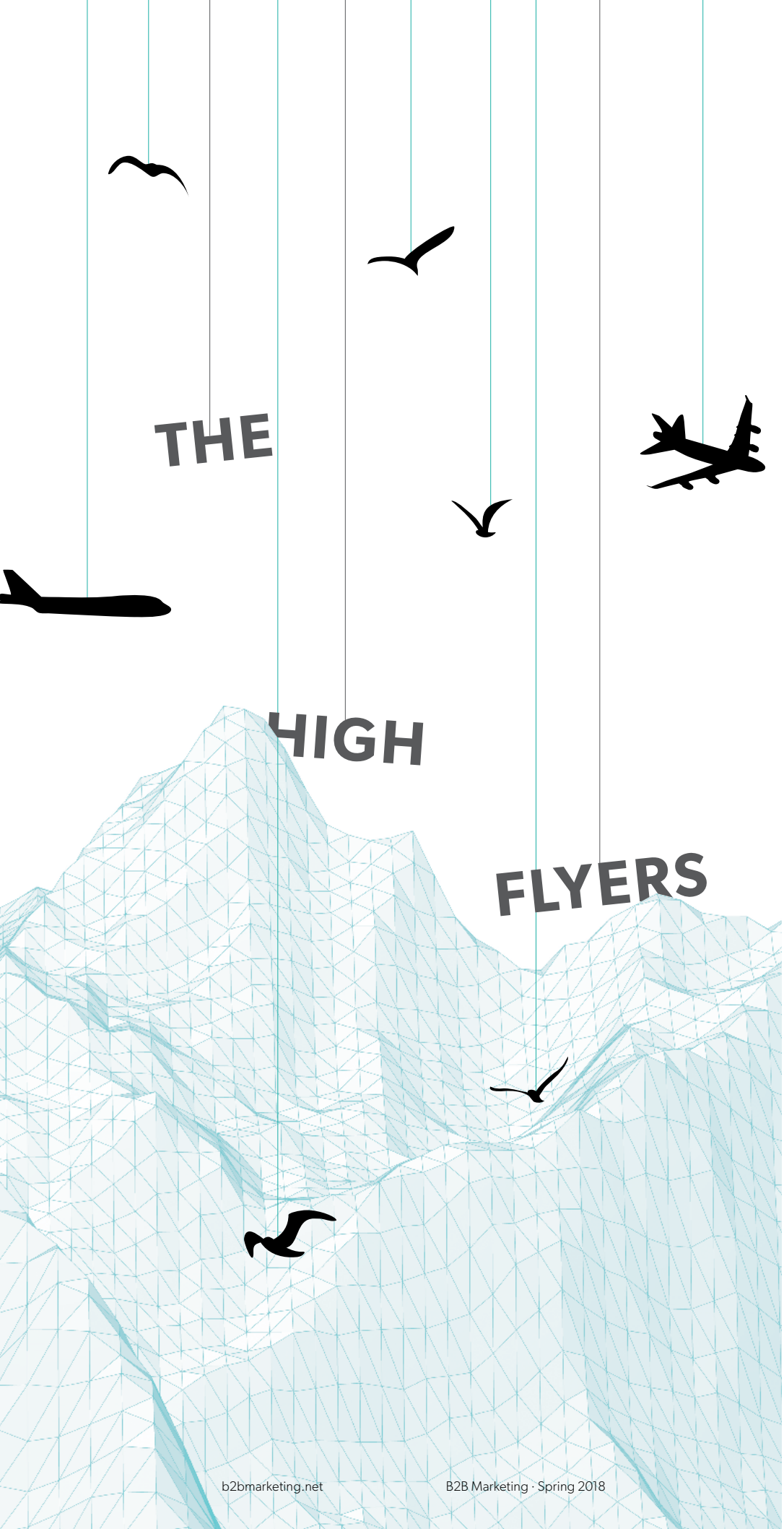
"While I'm not a fan of the hype that 'content marketing' has received over the past five years, content does sit at the heart of much of what we do as a business," he says.

"In the case of our 'Heist' campaign, we knew that a group of potential customers had a specific challenge they needed help with, and we knew that we could help them overcome that challenge. We spotted the proverbial win-win – and the important thing is that it was a timely and specific win-win. It was both important and urgent to our target audience.

In subsequent campaign planning, Brian's team started by focusing on its desired campaign outcomes, with an ideal target segment in mind and a solid insight into what that segment was interested in.

"All of that meant we knew how our content was going to help, what we wanted it to achieve, and therefore how we could prove its value. We consequently put in place the appropriate metrics to measure if we had achieved our goals.

"That included soft metrics, such as monitoring and improving conversion rates on different channels and harder metrics, including customer meetings held, requests for proposals received and consequent revenue."



THE HIGH FLYERS

The UK's most successful B2B agencies have forged very different paths, and have been prosperous for very different reasons. While the environment is uncertain, all remain positive about the opportunities for the future, and their prospects for success. By Joel Harrison

There are some subtle yet profound differences in this year's B2B Marketing agencies league table, compared to last year's. These differences are both across the board and in the top five.

Looking at the league table (p8) as a whole, the most obvious thing to note is that the number of participating agencies has dropped from 75 to 70, with a significant proportion of those included providing data for the first time this year. Correspondingly, this means a significant number of those who have previously featured have declined to be included – and in most cases this is likely to be due to their figures showing a lack of growth, or even a decline in revenues over the previous financial year. It will be interesting to see if they reappear the following year, as is often the case.

Of the top five agencies, the list is largely unchanged, albeit with the significant absence of last year's highest-placed agency Amaze, presumably for the reasons outlined above. Conveniently, or perhaps ironically, Amaze have been replaced in the top five by St Ives Group stable mate Realise, which appears in this

league table for the first time. This demonstrates that even 14 years after we started reporting this data to the market, we still find previously unknown agencies popping out of the woodwork. There are, as yet uncharted depths and breadths to B2B marketing.

New ways of working

So, how did the top five agencies perform this year, and what were the keys to their success? For runaway table topper Oliver, the success it has achieved over the past 12 months is due to a combination of international expansion plus the maturation of their model, which builds and manages in-client marketing teams.

"Our ethos and model has really taken off," says Sharon Whale, CEO of Oliver. "It's always been successful, but increasingly so over the past two or three years. Knowledge of this model is significant – understanding of the market has fuelled our growth. Competition is increasing, but we're still the only people set up from scratch to enable this. The speed of our expansion has increased recently."

So why are B2B brands switching on to the benefits of in-client agency teams? Whale believes CMOs are focusing on flexible and pragmatic working models and processes. "It's an increasingly agile world, and marketers need to respond in real time. This is what can make them more effective."

She adds that the age-old pressure on client budgets has also contributed to Oliver's success. "Clients are looking to reclaim more value from budgets, and they're coming to us to achieve this," she says.

Budget pressure has also been a significant factor in the success experienced by third-placed Expandi Group in the last 12 months, says Raffaele Apostoliti, president and CEO. "Everyone is under pressure to do more with less. There's lots of downsizing inside clients, but at the same time they're being asked to do more with digital and social. We're finding clients are buying into an omni-channel agency approach that can manage all solutions and touchpoints. And they're looking for better data and analytics capabilities."

Everyone is under pressure to do more with less. There's lots of downsizing inside clients, but at the same time they're being asked to do more with digital and social

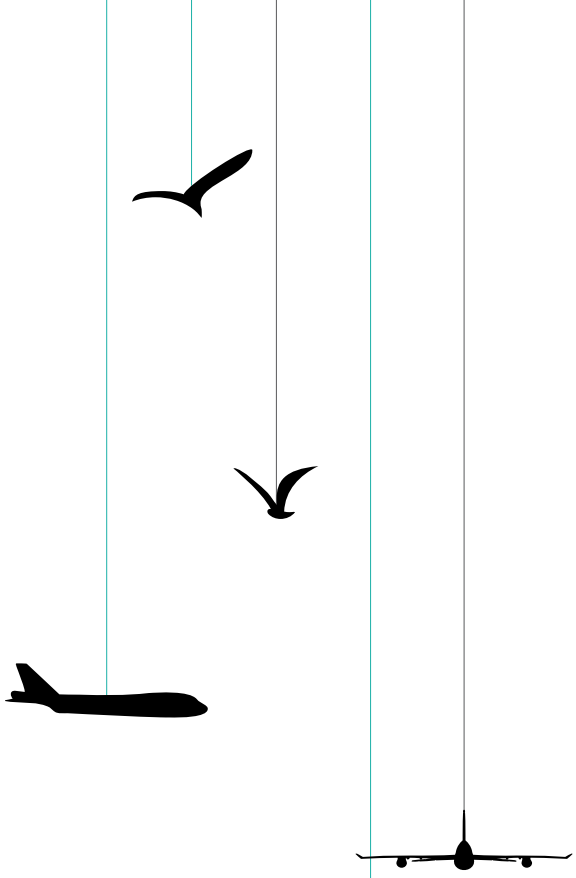
Internal opportunities and existing relationships

Meanwhile, the factors that drove success for second-placed agency OgilvyOne Business are quite different, according to its CEO Sam Williams-Thomas. He says: "We're focusing on existing clients and getting more deeply involved with them. This has really paid off. There are huge opportunities in the wider client portfolio in the Ogilvy group. What was once the 'dirty secret' of doing B2B has become a highly valued specialism, and much appreciated. Other parts of the group are coming to us for advice and support. Their clients are looking for people who understand B2B, and speak their language."

This approach to collaboration is also highlighted by Neil Clayton, commercial director at Realise, no better underlined by the fact that his agency shares an MD with sister agency Amaze (which, as previously mentioned, does not appear in this year's league table). "There are five agencies in the group that are operating in the digital space," says Clayton. "They're all separately branded and commercially independent, but increasingly collaborative. This means we don't need to build teams for each specialism in each agency – we can leverage expertise from within the group."

Realise, OgilvyOne Business, and fourth-placed agency Bray Leino each highlight the decision to be more selective in pitching as the key to their success over the past 12 months. Kate Cox, CEO of Devon-based Bray Leino, says: "There are lots of opportunities around, but we need to be careful that we're not spreading ourselves too thinly. We've changed how we qualify what we should and shouldn't go for. Our starting position is now 'no' and then we try to persuade ourselves to change our mind. The key questions that we ask ourselves are: can we deliver real value and can they become a long-term client? If the answer is no, we will probably decline."

Sam Williams-Thomas of OgvilyOne Business, adds: "There's a fierce market for net-new business, and this will only get worse. There are more agencies on pitch lists, and chemistry meetings have often gone. It will continue to be tough, but we believe the B2B marketing space is as buoyant as ever."



Unpredictability on the rise

So what are these leading agencies' assessments of the current market, and what are their prospects for growth in 2018? All of the agency principles I spoke with steadfastly presented a bullish face, as you would expect, only hinting at challenges or concerns.

Hinting that factors such as Brexit seemed to have dented confidence, Neil Clayton of Realise, says stability is starting to return. "Six months ago, I would have said [the market] was quiet. Other agencies in the group said it was the same. But it has bounced back in the past two months. Not really sure why. We're working on lots of opportunities over Christmas," he shares.

Kate Cox of Bray Leino says the market isn't necessary depressed, but suggests it is more uncertain. "Unpredictability has risen. Decision-making has slowed down, and projects are slower to hit the bottom-line. There's lots of restructuring going on, and clients are changing their mind about what they want to spend on. This isn't necessarily a bad thing. You just need to hold your nerve and be adaptable."

Expandi Group is particularly optimistic about the year ahead. Recently, the company pulled back from its strategy of expanding into emerging markets, which were simply not ready for its fairly advanced technologically-enabled services. In that context, Expandi are now 'doubling-down' on mature Western European and North American markets, and actively looking to acquire a best-in-class content specialist in the UK, to bolster its offering. "We believe it's a very good time to do this," says Apostoliti.

The fundamentals of B2B are unchanged

Looking ahead, the agency principles interviewed were united on one point – that the fundamentals of great B2B marketing will not change in 2018. Kate Cox says: "Excellent B2B marketing is rooted in great insight, it's customer-obsessed, it's measurable and measured, it's a blend of paid, owned and earned, and it's built on great creative. This is the same as it's always been. Different elements of this mix have been more in focus at different times over recent years, but today we need to be more balanced and to do all of them well."

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Guarantee your spot in the ranking of the UK's best B2B marketing agencies.

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- Extensive coverage of hot topics including what clients want, the client-agency relationship and the role of technology.
- Detailed profiles of selected B2B agencies, including interviews with the key individuals and examples of creative.



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Top 70
UK B2B marcomms agencies

This year's *B2B Agencies Benchmarking Report* revealed which marcomms agencies are leading the way in B2B. Here are the top 70, ranked according to their UK gross income.

Oliver	Wyatt International	The Hub
OgilvyOne Business	Eulogy.	Silver Agency
Expandi Group	Purple Agency	Napier Partnership
Bray Leino	Ledger Bennett	Upp B2B
Realise	Torpedo	Workbrands
Radley Yeldar	Really B2B	Lesniak Swann
Reading Room	MOI	OST Marketing
The Marketing Practice	ClearPeople	Fox Agency
gyro	MomentumABM	White Clarke Creative
Kingpin	DWA	Sherpa
Gravity London	Brandformula	Considered Content
4Ps Marketing	JJ Marketing	Junction Agency
Omobono	Earnest	The Marketing Pod
Nelson Bostock Unlimited	Oakwood Agency	Bright
Technical Associates Group	BDB	Don't be Shy
Octopus Group	CleverTouch Marketing	Affari
Tangent	Brilliant Noise	Modern
twogether	Six	Digital Radish
April Six	CIB	Realia Marketing
Pulse	Miramar	Novacom
Stein IAS	The Crocodile	The Product Marketing Company
Quantum Marketing	Tomorrow People	Brew'd Marketing
Velocity Partners	Cyber-Duck	
DirectionGroup	Return	

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Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
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Infinity
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Industry expertise: Call intelligence, marketing, sales, martech
b2bmarketing.net/infinity

Data

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Services: Customer insight, data analytics, data cleansing, data owners
Industry expertise: Professional services
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Copywriting

Radix Communications
Services: Copywriting
Industry expertise: Industrial, manufacturing and engineering, IT, telecomms, professional services
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Demand generation

Incite
Services: Appointment setting, business development, ww generation, telemarketing
Industry expertise: Business services, media, professional services, publishing, IT, telecomms
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ON24
Services: Content marketing, demand generation, digital marketing, lead generation, marcomms, marketing services, technology
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, media, publishing, marketing, pharmaceuticals, professional services
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Information technology

BrightTarget
Services: Customer insight, data analytics, data management
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
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ClearPeople
Services: Affiliate marketing, business development, website development
Industry expertise: Business services
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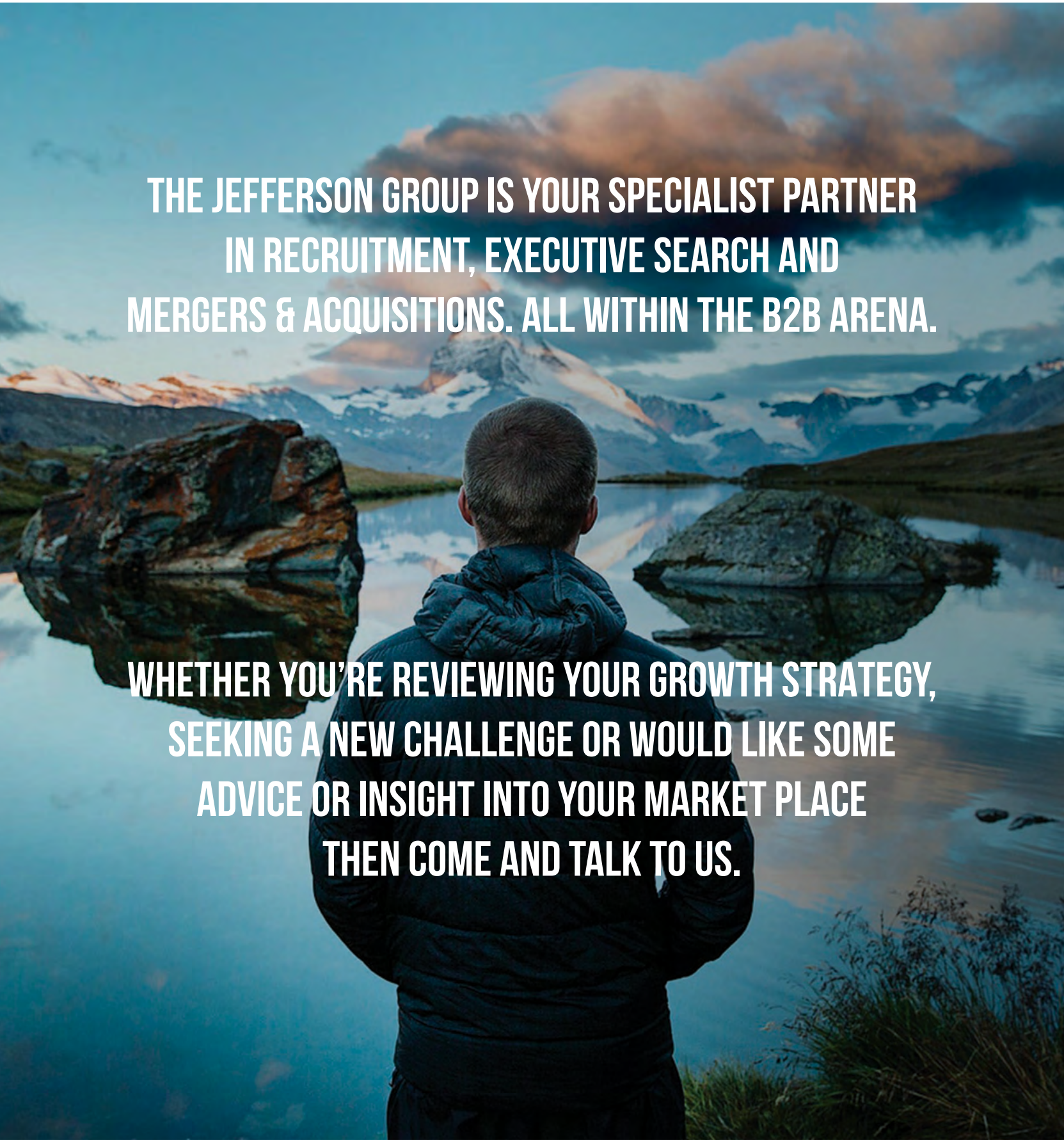
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Kingpin

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Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
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OgilvyOne Business Services

Services: Advertising, branding, digital marketing, email marketing, marcomms, social media
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms
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Marketing automation

Force24

Services: Email marketing, lead generation, marketing automation
Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
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Digital Radish

Services: Content marketing, design, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, marcomms
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, leisure and entertainment, media, publishing, marketing, retail and wholesale
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Longitude

Services: Strategy, consultancy, editorial, research
Industry expertise: Business services, IT, telecomms, public sector, financial services, media, publishing, marketing, professional services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering
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Pulse

Services: ABM, content marketing, customer insight, data analytics, demand generation solutions, digital marketing, marcomms, marketing services, technology, social media services
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
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Apteco

Services: Customer insight, data analytics, direct marketing, marcomms, marketing services/technology, marketing automation
Industry expertise: Automotive, business services, financial services, media, publishing, marketing, leisure and entertainment, retail and wholesale
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DirectionGroup

Services: Branding, digital marketing, email marketing, lead generation, marcomms
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/directiongroup

MOI Global

Services: Digital marketing, direct marketing, event and exhibition services, marcomms
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/moi

Radley Yeldar

Services: Branding, content marketing, design, marcomms, social media services, web design
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, pharmaceuticals, property and construction, public sector, retail and wholesale.
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Marketo

Services: Marketing automation, social media
Industry expertise: Marketing, media, pharmaceuticals, publishing, IT, telecomms
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Earnest

Services: Branding, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, marcomms
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/earnest

Nelson Bostock Unlimited

Services: Branding, content marketing, copywriting
Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
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Saatchi & Saatchi pro

Services: Advertising, branding, digital marketing, marcomms
Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, automotive, financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, retail, media, publishing, marketing
b2bmarketing.net/saatchi-saatchi-pro

Oracle Marketing Cloud

Services: Marketing automation
Industry expertise: Financial services, leisure and entertainment, media, publishing, marketing
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Gravity

Services: Branding, digital marketing, marcomms, PR
Industry expertise: Automotive, business services, financial services, industrial, engineering, IT, telecomms, public sector
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Octopus Group

Services: Content marketing, marcomms, PR, social media
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, media, publishing, marketing
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Stickyeyes

Services: Content marketing, digital marketing, marcomms, online video, SEO/SEM, web analytics
Industry expertise: Media, publishing, marketing
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Industry expertise: Automotive, financial services, industrial, IT, telecomms, pharmaceuticals
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Torpedo

Services: Branding, digital marketing, design, lead generation, marcomms, video, apps, websites, content
Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, business services, industrial, IT, manufacturing, engineering, telecomms
b2bmarketing.net/torpedo

Circle Research

Services: Customer insight, market research
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, IT, telecomms, media, manufacturing, professional services, property, retail
b2bmarketing.net/circle-research

Social media

Hootsuite

Services: Digital marketing, marketing communications, marketing services technology, social media services, web analytics
Industry expertise: Business services, IT, telecomms, media, publishing, marketing, retail and wholesale
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The Marketing Pod

Services: Branding, content marketing, copywriting, customer insight, design, direct marketing, email marketing, events and exhibition services, inbound marketing, marcomms, PR
Industry expertise: Aerospace and defence, automotive, business services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, media, publishing, marketing, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/marketing-pod

twogether

Services: Branding, content marketing, digital marketing, direct marketing, lead generation, website development, media, telemarketing, web design
Industry expertise: Financial services, IT, telecomms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/twogether

Public relations

Speed Communications

Services: PR, content marketing, marcomms, social media
Industry expertise: Automotive, business services, financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, professional services, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/speed-communications

UK distribution and digital printing

Washington Direct Mail

Services: Direct mail, post fulfilment, design, digital and lithographic presses, print finishing, campaign management
Industry expertise: Marketing, business services, software, health and beauty, financial services, publishing, pharmaceuticals, public sector
b2bmarketing.net/wdm

Tomorrow People

Services: Content marketing, data analytics, digital marketing, inbound marketing, lead generation, marketing services and technology, PR, social media services, web design and development
Industry expertise: Financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, professional services
b2bmarketing.net/tomorrow-people

Market research

B2B International

Services: Branding, customer insight, market research
Industry expertise: Business and financial services, industrial, manufacturing, engineering, IT, telecomms, professional services, property and construction
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Recruitment

The Jefferson Group

Services: HR, merger and acquisitions, recruitment
Industry expertise: IT, telecomms, media, publishing, marketing, professional services
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Web analytics

Google

Services: Marketing services, technology, online video, web analytics
Industry expertise: Business services, financial services, marketing, media, professional services, publishing
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WHY I'M A CONVERT TO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



If you've been cynical about the term 'digital transformation' in the past, you'll have been in good company. But now's the time for B2B marketers to board the bandwagon, says Joel Harrison

Joel Harrison is editor-in-chief and co-founder of B2B Marketing, and is an evangelist, advocate and all-round enthusiast for all things B2B. As well as speaking around the world on business marketing issues, Joel is responsible for the development of B2B Marketing's training and events activities.

If I'm honest, 'digital transformation' is a phrase I've been fairly cynical about – at least until quite recently. It seemed to be a nebulous term generally chucked around by people with something to sell. Digital transformation also seemed to originate largely from B2C – another reason why I was sceptical.

But in the past few months, my opinion has comprehensively changed after seeing presentations from Cisco's Emma Roffey, Paul Stevenson of O2 and HP's Jos Brenkel. So what did I learn that so altered my perspective?

First, digital transformation is much more than embracing channels, techniques or even technologies on an ad hoc basis. It's about profound change in the way marketers work, think, operate, behave, are organised, and (perhaps most importantly) relate to the rest of the business. To qualify as 'transformation' the breadth and depth of change should be ambitious, and potentially daunting.

Second, while the term is almost hackneyed, most B2B organisations have yet to embark on a digital transformation journey – or even started thinking about it. They don't know what they could, or should, be striving to achieve. Although that's not to say they aren't being proactive and progressive in evolving their activities to do good marketing. But that's not the same as embracing transformation, where you seek to make a step change in your marketing (or even your business). That involves making a genuine break from what went before.

Why not? Bravery and remit, or the lack of them, are the main factors. With the average tenure of a B2B CMO or marketing director about 18 months these days, their ability (not to say willingness) to build a business case to undertake and effectively deliver a root-and-branch transformation can be difficult, if not impossible. Marketing leaders are often too focused on demonstrating their worth in the here and now to seek change which may be expensive, unpopular, slow to deliver and carry a significant element of risk.

There appears to be a growing groundswell of interest in B2B in embracing such far-reaching and fundamental marketing-led change

But that's not to say they shouldn't try, and there appears to be a growing groundswell of interest in B2B embracing such far-reaching and fundamental marketing-led change.

Now that I'm a convert, it's something we'll return to regularly, first and foremost at B2B Ignite, where it's one of the main content streams.

If you're a B2B marketer who hasn't embarked on a transformation process already, it's likely to be something you'll do sooner, if not later. It's not something that can be put off indefinitely, and the sooner you start your journey, the sooner you'll start to reap the rewards.

As the old Chinese proverb goes, if the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, the second-best time is now.

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