

GROUP.MIND.SET.

HOW GROUP DYNAMICS IMPACT B2B DECISIONS



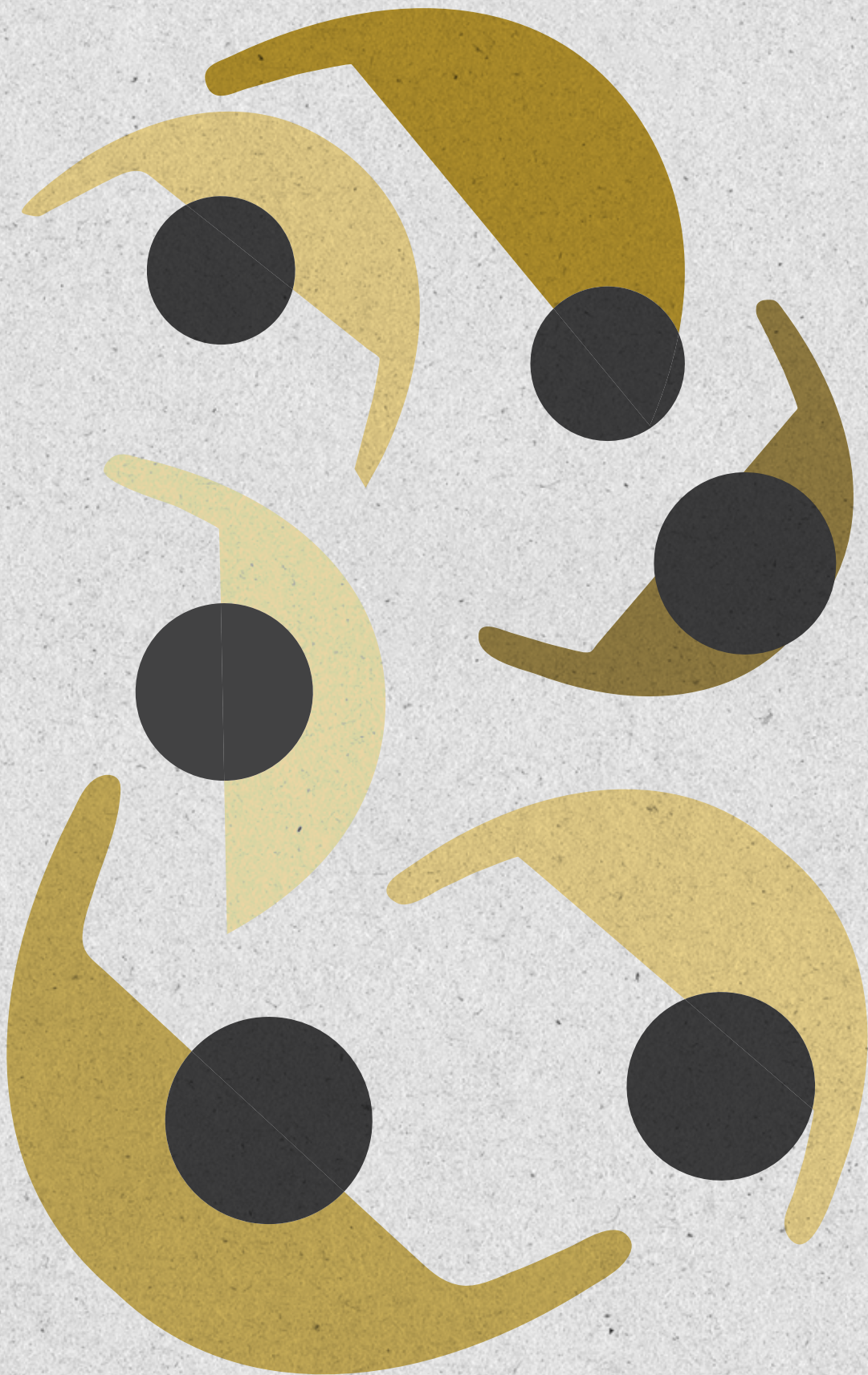
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For more, visit gyro.com/groupmindset



INTRODUCTION

It is an unfortunate but familiar refrain: Despite your outstanding offering, effort and intelligence, your team has lost the pitch.

The reality is that influencing one person is difficult. But, influencing the five-plus decision-makers responsible for a major business-to-business purchase decision can feel like an impossibility.

B2B Marketing, in conjunction with leading full-service global B2B agency gyro, set out to find the truths about today's group dynamics. We asked decision-makers to discuss the impact of the precision of rapidly advancing marketing technologies. At the same time, we explored the role that feelings play during these high-risk, high-cost, career-defining moments.

The responses portray a clear picture. Before the group gathers, most have a preference as to whom they would like to select. They have spent a significant amount of time and energy reviewing the potential partner's content, communications and culture.

Once the group is assembled, the ultimate decision is often driven by a senior executive who serves as the brand champion for the winning vendor. This key player, as well as those who influence his or her thinking, is the ultimate target of the B2B marketer.

This report explores the many drivers that marketers must embrace to impact the group as a whole as well as the all-important brand champion. It also delves into the mistakes marketers must absolutely avoid in order to bring a group to a positive consensus. The findings are supported by interviews from top marketers and supplemented by contributions from gyro.



INFLUENCING THE FIVE-PLUS DECISION-MAKERS
RESPONSIBLE FOR A MAJOR BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS PURCHASE
DECISION CAN FEEL LIKE AN IMPOSSIBILITY.

WHAT WE LEARNED

PURCHASING PREFERENCE EXISTS BEFORE THE BUYING COMMITTEE IS EVEN FORMED:

Some 97% of B2B marketers say group members are likely to have a preferred vendor in mind before the purchase group is established.

A CHAMPION WILL RISE:

In 84% of cases, the group contains an individual who acts as the 'champion' for the winning vendor. And in more than half (59%) the cases, this champion's opinions are cited as the biggest influence.

GROUPS WANT THOUGHT LEADERS:

More than two-thirds of respondents cited content, research and expertise as the most likely way to influence them prior to the group's formation.

GROUPS WANT TO FEEL UNDERSTOOD:

The most important thing the group wants to feel from a vendor is that their needs have been understood (89%). Groups also want to feel energised and excited by the prospect of working with the vendor.

PURPOSE, VALUES AND CULTURE ARE MAJOR INFLUENCES:

A vendor's purpose, values and culture are the biggest influences on the group's decision for almost two-thirds of marketers. Eighty-three percent say they are more likely to buy from a business whose culture and personality closely match that of their own business.

DON'T GET COCKY:

You may feel you have the premium offering, but for more than half of those surveyed, pitching with an air of arrogance negatively impacts the group's perception of a vendor.



84%

In 84% of cases, the group contains an individual who acts as the 'champion' for the winning vendor.

FIND YOUR CHAMPION

Amidst the increased commoditisation of products and services, decision-makers are going out of their way to educate themselves about your brand, your knowledge and expertise before the group discussion takes place.

The data shows that nearly all of the respondents (97%) have a vendor in mind prior to ever starting a group conversation.

These findings are in line with an influential CEB study that estimated that 57% of the purchase process is complete in advance of direct contact with a vendor.

Consider this a powerful reminder that the customer-influencing process should

be constant, says Simon Mouyal, CMO, Medidata. "The decision is often made even before the selection process for a new vendor or an RFP has even started. It questions the efficacy of an email nurture programme that kicks off only after a customer has watched a webcast or has downloaded a white paper about a specific topic; because by the time you score them up, it's just too late."

Amongst the group, there is often one powerful decision-maker who matters most: We will call that person the brand champion. Our findings revealed that in 84% of cases, the buying committee is swayed by a single key influencer who acts as a champion for the vendor.



It is crucial for the B2B marketer to identify and target this individual early. The research also reveals, in more than half (59%) the instances, a single individual possesses immense influence on the group's final decision.

Understanding who these brand champions are, and what makes them tick, is crucial to ensuring your message will be heard, says John Harmeling, CMO, Grant Thornton. "The ingredients for locating and appealing to an internal champion are meeting the unmet needs with a solution that you can expertly deliver. Then, find ways to make that individual, in his or her role, more successful personally."

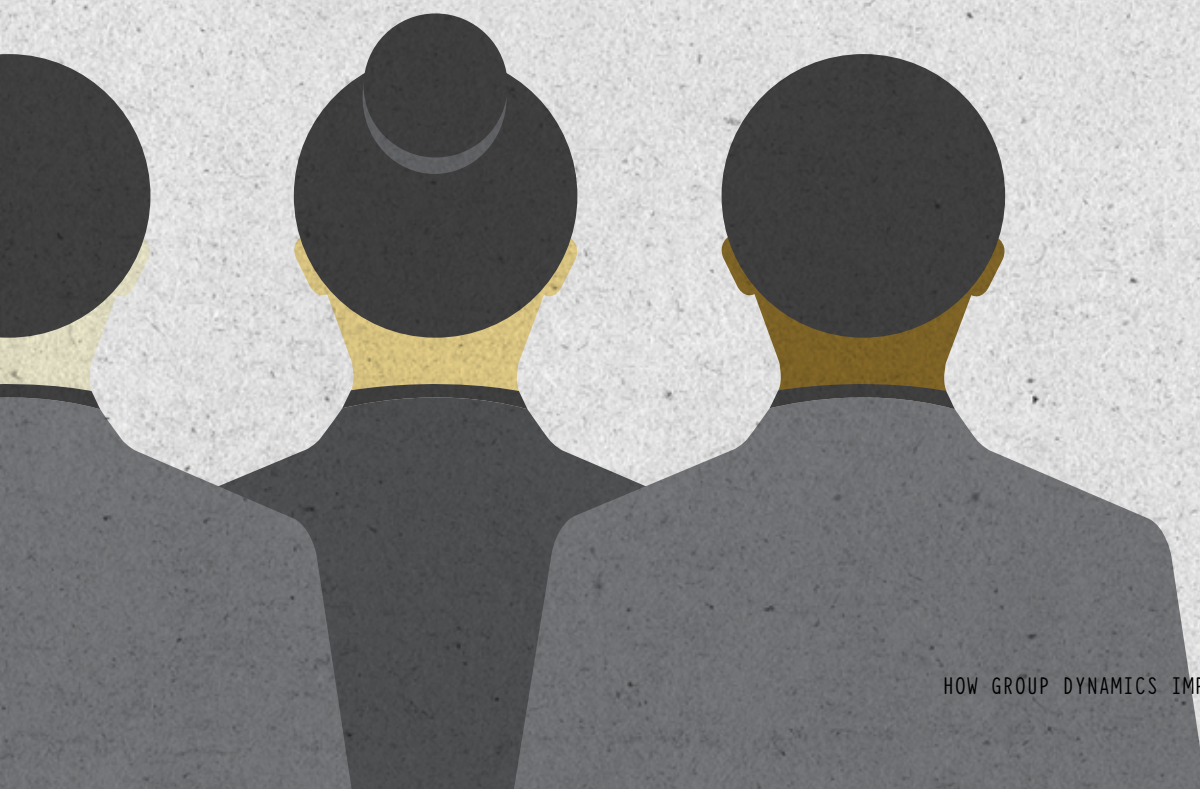
Echoing Harmeling's statement is the fact that decision-makers say the thing they

want most is to feel like the vendor understands their needs. We will explore this point later in the report.

So, who are these champions? In most cases (59%) they are senior executives who, unsurprisingly, have sway over those who are junior in the business.

Finding them has become more precise than ever and it continues to evolve, says Mouyal. "We need to rethink the way we do ABM, for example. We need to capture more real-time insights, but also engage in real time with audiences through social media and the phone."

The end result: Find your champion and you've found a clear path to a closed sale.



LEADING THE CONVERSATION

LEADS TO SALES

What's the best way to develop a relationship with these influential executives once you've properly targeted them? More than two-thirds of respondents cited content, research and expertise as the most likely ways to influence them prior to the group's formation. This was placed above face-to-face contact.

This supports CEB research that states more than 10 sources of information have already been reviewed by the time a vendor has been contacted.

Both of these data points reinforce the need to establish your brand as a trusted source of knowledge and advice before the buying journey begins.

"I'm a real believer in pull marketing in B2B. Feeding insightful, and not even necessarily proprietary, information is a great way to break through," says Grant Thornton's Harmeling. "One vendor shared

some really interesting data about ROI measurement with us; and when we responded favourably, we didn't become a lead, but it led to more data and information. It got to the point where they were so useful, and often so pertinent, that we had to reach out and see if they had more for us."

These efforts help establish and grow brand reputation, which was one of the influential factors amongst groups, per the findings. Reputation for excellence was cited as one of the biggest influencers according to 37% of respondents.

"The biggest impact can be made through sharing past accomplishments and proven successes," says Jill Donohue, Senior Director, Marketing, Enterprise Solutions at Connection, a Fortune 1000 National Technology Solutions Provider. "Provide specific details of what you have done to help customers work through their challenges and, most importantly, show what the impact was for the client. This builds awareness and trust."



CONTENT, RESEARCH AND OTHER EXPERTISE PROVE
TO BE MOST INFLUENTIAL ONCE YOU'VE FOUND
YOUR PATH TO KEY DECISION-MAKERS.

"There needs to be a feeling of intimacy
that exists. Igniting emotions is what
ignites business decisions."

- Christoph Becker
Global CEO + Chief Creative Officer, gyro





MAKE THEM FEEL UNDERSTOOD

Group decision-making is about more than just the facts and figures; it's about how the vendor makes the buyer feel. This study demonstrates that emotion is the ultimate driver of our actions.

By far the most important feeling groups want to experience is that the vendor understands their needs (89%). Doing so proves you understand their challenges and the problems they are trying to solve.

More than half of respondents (57%) also say they want to feel that the two parties will work well together. Decision-makers also said they need to feel energised about the prospect of working together as well as optimistic about what you'll be able to achieve together.

"There needs to be a feeling of intimacy that exists," says Christoph Becker, Global CEO + Chief Creative Officer of gyro. "Igniting emotions is what ignites business decisions. The only way to achieve that is by speaking to them in a way that is humanly relevant."

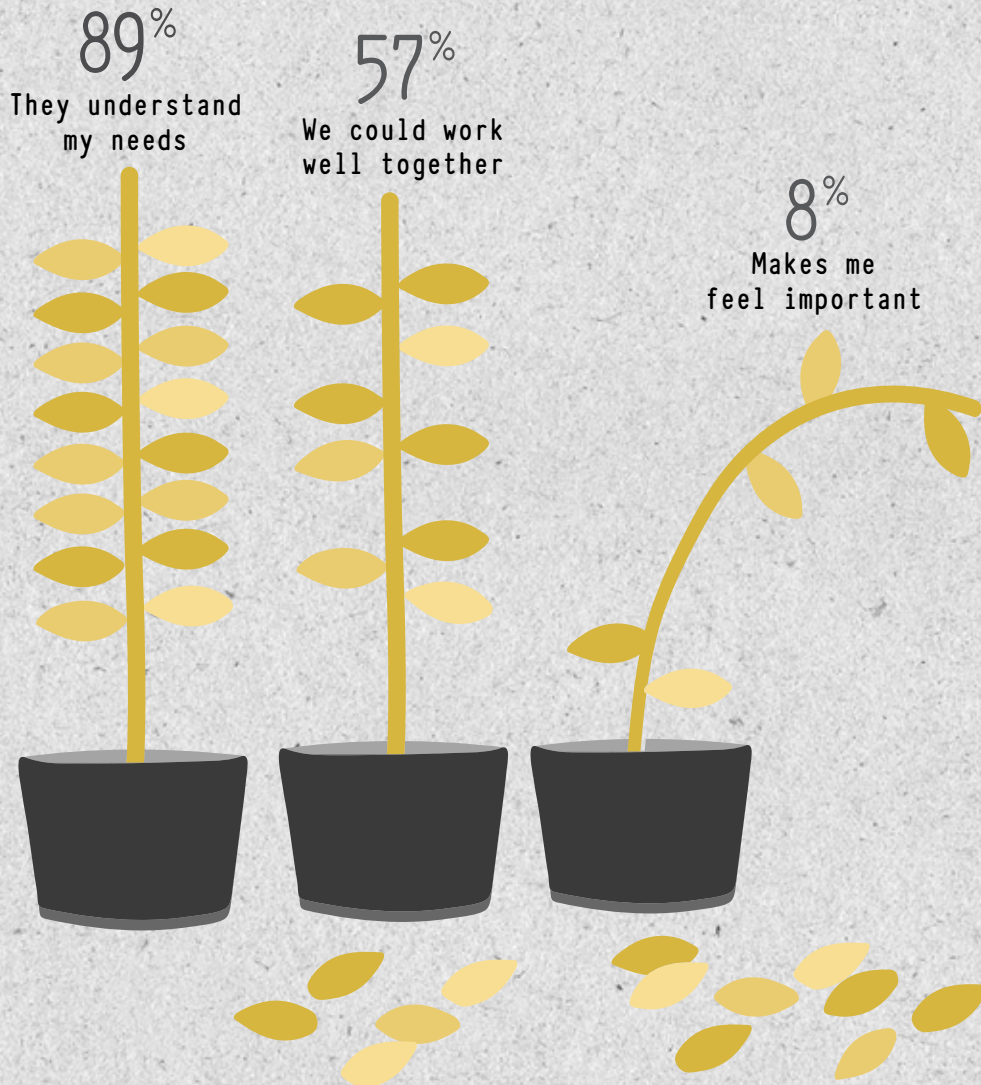
Culture, purpose and values are the biggest influences on the group's choice of vendor for the majority (65%). Buyers want to be able to understand exactly what your culture and values are, and how well they marry up with their own.

In fact, 83% of respondents say they are more likely to buy from a business that has a culture matched to its own. "For a firm like ours that has invested so much

"Alignment with our values, both explicit and observed, is something we absolutely look for, and something we try to consistently live out."

- John Harmeling, CMO, Grant Thornton

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT WAYS
YOU WANT TO FEEL ABOUT A BUSINESS PARTNER?
THE TOP THREE CHOICES:



in culture, and in how we deliver quality to our clients in a truly distinguished way, it would be disingenuous if we did not place culture and values at or near the top of attributes we look for in external partners," says Grant Thornton's Harmeling. "Alignment with our values, both explicit and observed, is something we absolutely look for, and something we try to consistently live out."

This is in line with the FORTUNE Knowledge Group/gyro report entitled, 'Beyond the Brand: Why Business Decision-Makers Buy into Strong Cultures.' It found 59% of executives surveyed say a company's values were more important when choosing a partner than innovation or market domination. (See the sidebar on page 18 for more.)

COMMUNICATE REPEATEDLY AND RESPECTFULLY

The vendors most successful at sparking the desired emotions are clear and frequent communicators. This was cited by more than half (54%) of the respondents as the most positive differentiator. The ability to tell your story, and push those emotional responses through your marketing, is crucial.

"Great products and services are one thing - great working relationships take it to another level," says Stephanie Smith, Vice President of Marketing and Brand Development, Sentry Insurance. "There is no substitute for the personal touch. We believe this as a company when working with our customers and we gravitate towards vendors who share the same philosophy."

Almost as significant were those partners who were active listeners (51%) and asking good questions - again, reiterating the requirement to make the buyer feel like their needs have been understood.

Respondents are also very clear about what they didn't want from their prospective partners. Whilst incompetence and missing deadlines were the top turnoffs, a less obvious issue is vendor arrogance, which

is cited by half of the respondents. Buying groups want to make a connection with the brand they wish to work with, and a vendor that acts with superiority isn't going to cut it.

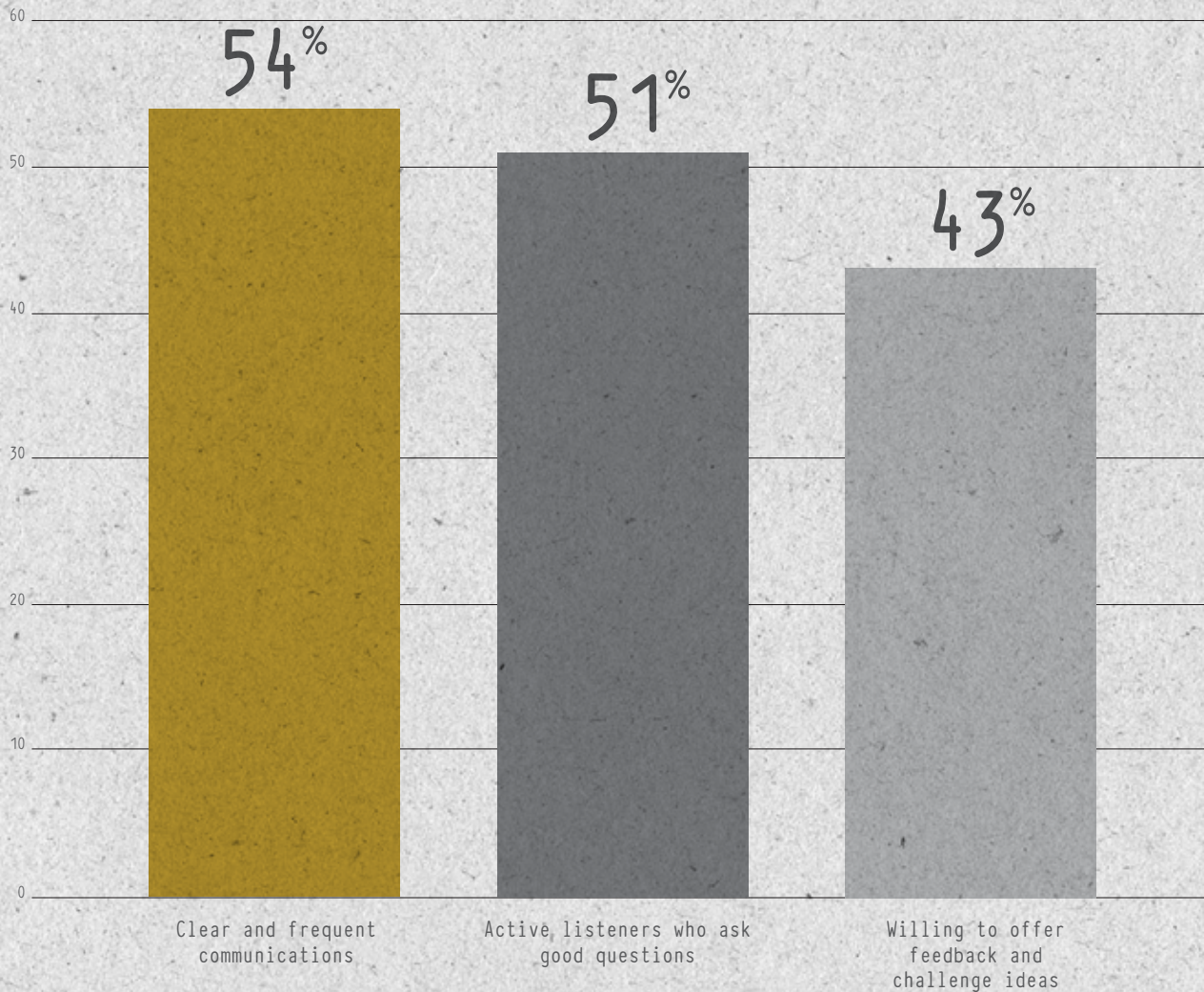
"I had an intro call with a marketing agency, prior to working with gyro, that I was considering. When they started to position themselves literally as the 'Ferrari of marketing agencies' I knew that despite their creative strength and reputation, it wouldn't be a good culture fit," said Mouyal.

Once all of these factors have been considered and it comes time to choose, 72% of respondents say there is still a healthy debate over the group's final selection decision, which often comes to a compromise.

That's why it is essential for marketers to not only create a targeted message aimed at these key decision-makers, but also to forge an emotional connection that makes them want to fight for their partner of choice.

After all, whilst organisations establish purchasing committees to provide a more objective and analytical approach to

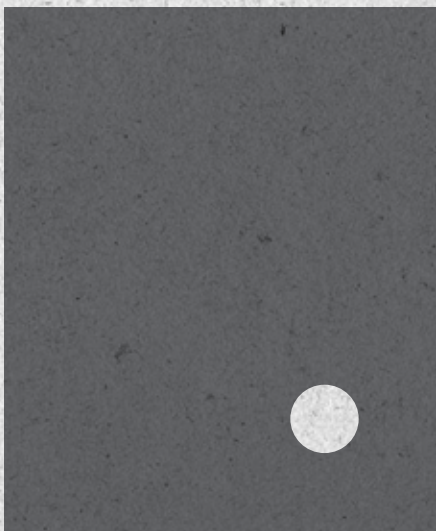
TOP THREE DIFFERENCE MAKERS
DURING THE SELECTION PROCESS:



decision-making, the individuals within them don't switch off their feelings when they get together. Instead, they leverage their feelings to influence others within the group.

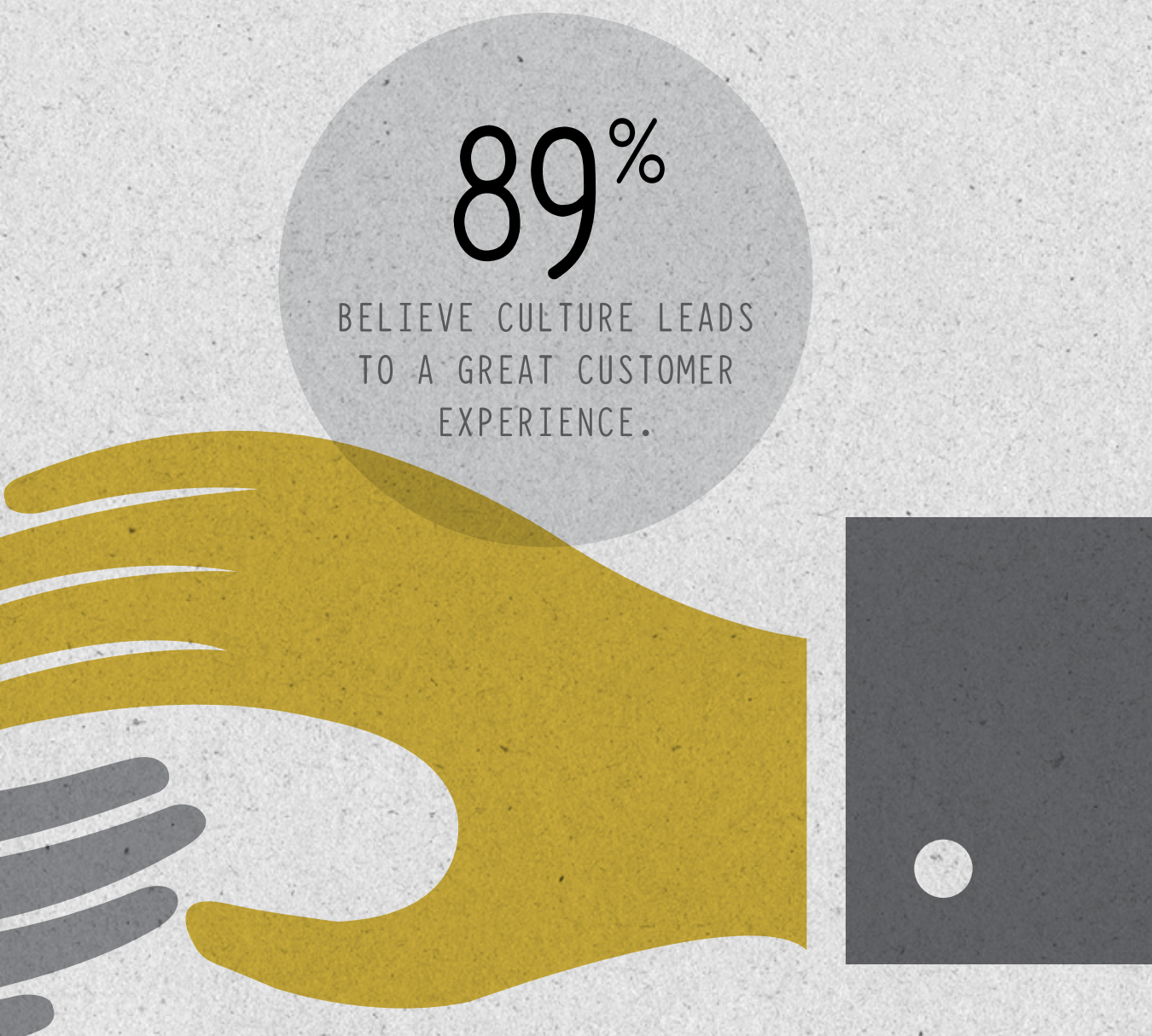
That's why B2B marketers must engage with the heart if they want to win over the head.

STRONG CULTURE
CREATES
STRONG RELATIONSHIPS



In an age of feeling, a strong corporate culture has become a primary driver of long-term business relationships, according to a global survey of 500 executives (director level or above) carried out by the FORTUNE Knowledge Group and gyro.

Some 81% of executives say a company's beliefs and how they choose to do business directly correlates with building successful long-term relationships. More than half (59%) said a company's values were more important than innovation or market domination when choosing a partner.



89%

BELIEVE CULTURE LEADS
TO A GREAT CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE.

The research identified six elements of corporate culture: a founding idea; vision and mission statement; values; practices and processes; a narrative; and people.

The benefits of a strong corporate culture goes beyond its ability to drive relationships; 89% believe culture leads to great customer experience.

For more, visit: gyro.com/beyondthebrand

CONCLUSION

When aren't group dynamics complicated? Any time you pull a group of intelligent, passionate human beings into a room, sparks are going to fly, especially once you factor in the complexity and the risk of a B2B decision. No one is taking it lightly.

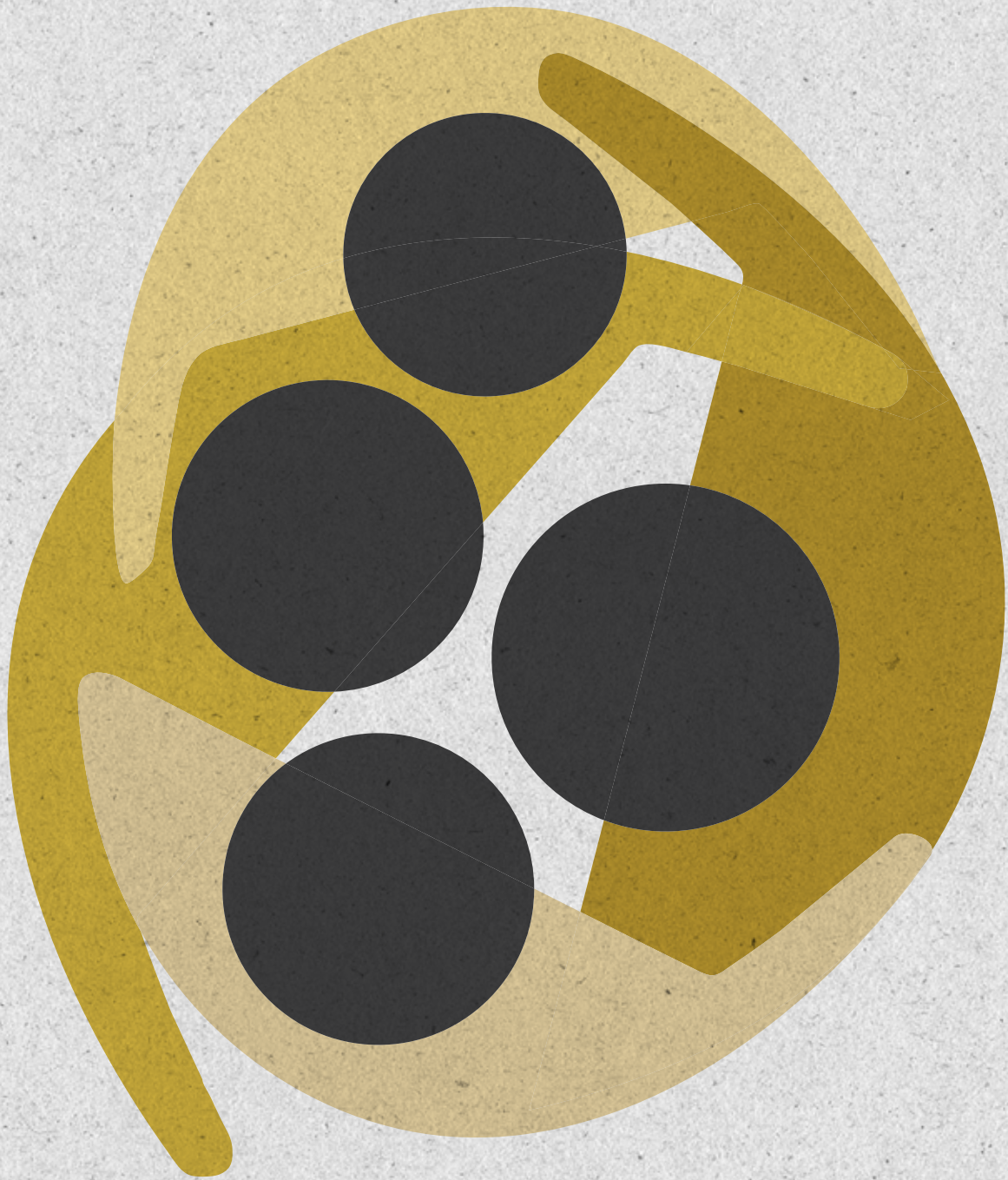
This study proves that you simply must get to these decision-makers as early as possible with the most powerful proof to select your company.

What's more, you must identify, target and convince your brand champion with all of the vigour possible. To do so, your content and communications need to be honed to show not only brand excellence, but also that you understand the client's needs like no other.

Your culture is a clear illustration of who you are. Leverage your company's cultural vision and beliefs to convince the group that you are the ideal match. After all, you will likely be working together for many years to come.

Once they have engaged, your communications must really shine. Stay in constant contact, give them reasons to believe and always be an active listener. Never, ever act like you are too good for your partner. Aside from outright incompetence, arrogance is the quickest way to make a current client an ex-client.

Above all, remember you are appealing to humans with emotions ready to be ignited. Give them a reason to love you, and they will.



LEVERAGE YOUR COMPANY'S CULTURAL
VISION AND BELIEFS TO CONVINCe THE GROUP
THAT YOU ARE THE IDEAL MATCH.

METHODOLOGY

WHO TOOK THE SURVEY?

B2B Marketing, in association with leading full-service global B2B agency gyro, surveyed 113 B2B marketers globally. Of those polled, 45% were based in the UK, 41% were drawn from North America, and the remaining 14% came from the rest of the world.

In addition, we spoke with a number of senior marketers to understand their experiences of group dynamics, where vendors got the approach right (or wrong), and their advice on how best to influence the decision-making process.

ABOUT

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B2B Marketing is the comprehensive information resource for B2B marketers. Its mission is to provide practitioners with the information they need to perform better and achieve more, whatever sector of the B2B space they are operating in.

Launched in 2004 as B2B Marketing magazine, it has since evolved into a multifaceted resource, delivering a broad range of content in a variety of different forms and formats.

Its key products are online community, magazine, awards, research and reports, training, events and membership.

For more information on any of these products or services, go to b2bmarketing.net or call +44 (0)20 7014 4920.

gyro:

As the world's first full-service global creative B2B powerhouse, our mission is to create ideas that are humanly relevant. gyro is Advertising Age's 2016 B2B Agency of the Year and the BMA's 2016, 2015 and 2014 Global B2B Agency of the Year. Our 700 creative minds in 16 offices work with top companies, including Aflac, Danone, eBay, Google, HP, John Deere, Teva, USG and Vodafone. gyro is a part of the Dentsu Aegis Network, which is the 2018 and 2017 MediaPost Holding Company of the Year. www.gyro.com

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