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FUTURE OF B2B MARKETING

The content marketing agency for thought-leading B2B brands

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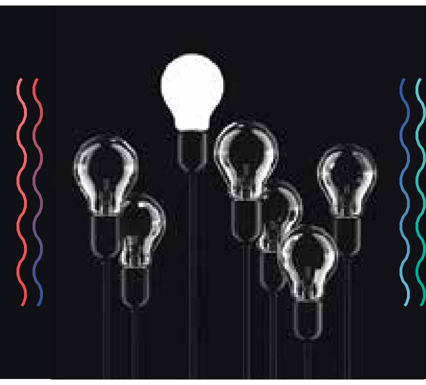

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FUTURE OF B2B MARKETING

Distributed in
THE TIMES

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BEING AUTHENTIC

When marketing becomes a question of values

Business brands can only speak with an authentic voice if their values are rooted deep inside the organisation

Raymond Snoddy

It is legal to sell rapid-fire, military-style guns to consumers in America. Yet some of the country's biggest B2B firms, including banks, are refusing to do business with the firms that make them.

The move eloquently raises the issue of how it has become almost impossible to draw the dividing line between what is a business issue and what is not, creating both threats and opportunities for B2B marketing.

It was a theme that came up repeatedly as Raconteur spoke with senior marketers to develop the themes for this, the first Raconteur report on the industry.

This report in *The Times* aims to help B2B marketers cope with the most significant industry challenges, including the rise of account-based marketing, the impact of technology and the ongoing quest to align marketing with sales. But it was issues of values and authenticity that generated the most discussion, perhaps because they are both vital and difficult to measure and so do not connect well with the industry's drive towards metrics and performance indicators.

Stephanie Buscemi, chief marketing officer of Salesforce, which has taken stances against military-style weapons and supporting LGBTQ rights, says: "People want to work with brands that have a purpose."

Traditionally B2B marketing has focused on spreadsheet-friendly metrics, such as return on investment, but Ms Buscemi, interviewed later in this report, says B2B marketing needs to engage both the head and the heart of the buyer.

The head says 'Yes, it meets a business need, it helps me to solve my problems and makes my business more successful'. But the heart asks 'Am I engaging with a company that is giving back and has the same values I have?'

This is a balancing act consumer-facing companies have managed for decades; Benetton's first marketing that challenged racial stereotypes is now 35 years old. However, authenticity, purpose and similar concepts, with some notable exceptions, are now an integral element in B2B marketing.

> **The thing that differentiates is the way you do business, not the business you do**

On the surface, this trend seems to be pulling in the opposite direction to the other big shift in B2B marketing, the move to account-based marketing and a relentless focus on metrics.

Yet Ms Buscemi sees no conflict. "We're saying we're going to do right by people first," she says. "And it will probably, in the long run, create greater longevity and deeper relationships with our customers who share those same values with us."

In marketing terms, the distinction has long become blurred between buzzwords, such as authenticity in the B2C industries, and the application of the concept to B2B relationships.

To take a universal example, the green performance of companies, beyond existing legal requirements, will inevitably in future feed into every aspect of a company's behaviour, selling and marketing, as well as production; it amounts to basic authenticity, whatever the corporate sector.

Authenticity, particularly when applied to B2B organisations, is of course a portmanteau term, shorthand for a range of crucial concepts and values that include trust, reputation and purpose, and even feeds into talent retention.

THE B2B VALUE PYRAMID

Management consultants Bain organised 40 B2B buying factors into a five-level pyramid which mirrors the "hierarchy of human needs" diagram proposed by psychologist Abraham Maslow. Bain says that the battle for differentiation is moving up the pyramid towards factors that are increasingly difficult to measure

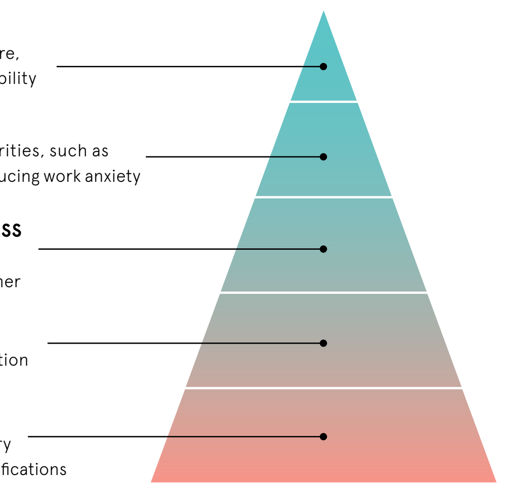
INSPIRATIONAL VALUE
Giving a vision for the future, enhancing social responsibility

INDIVIDUAL VALUE
The buyer's personal priorities, such as helping their career or reducing work anxiety

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS
Vendor cultural fit, seller's commitment to the customer

FUNCTIONAL VALUE
Quality, scalability, innovation

TABLE STAKES
The basics: price, regulatory compliance, meeting specifications



Almquist/Cleghorn and Sherer/Bain/*Harvard Business Review* 2018

Senior marketers at two Raconteur roundtables in March and April agreed there was strong agreement authenticity was now an essential part of B2B marketing and that authenticity must mean what it means and cannot easily be faked. Any message, above all else, has to be genuine and carried forward by all employees, rather than just the sales team.

And in the internet age, all such characteristics of an organisation can be boosted, or undermined, at the speed of light, at the same time as competition between rival suppliers knows few limits and never stops.

David Wheldon, chief marketing officer of RBS, believes the purpose of the company needs to be embedded throughout the firm for it to work; something that needs a slow and deliberate process.

83%

of executives say culture is among the most important attributes when researching a B2B vendor

FT Commercial Insights/gyro 2018

This purpose has to be aligned with strategy, and be engaging and motivating for colleagues who increasingly, at least for top talent with a choice, look for more than just financial rewards from employers.

"The talent war that we need to win now means you need to be purposeful about how you go about business. You need to have a purpose that's authentic and drives everything, because that's what it needs to be. But that is not easy," Mr Wheldon explains.

According to Scott Stockwell, editor in chief at IBM Europe: "Most B2B suppliers have competitors that offer something very similar. The thing that differentiates is the way you do business, not the business you do."

The day when sales were based on a few significant personal relationships, sealed and signed over lunch or a gin and tonic, have long gone.

Mr Stockwell is one of those who believe B2B sales are made by talking to a lot of different people in a company, and this inevitably involves taking the necessary time and includes many different relationships.

"If all those relationships have the same kind of foundation, I think the consistency is the key contributor to trust and this is one of the things that enable the sale," he argues.

Tara Allison, UK and Ireland marketing director of Trend Micro, the cybersecurity and defence specialist, is another who believes in the importance of having a sense of purpose and finding an authentic way of getting the associated message across despite the obvious difficulties.

"Trend Micro has a purpose and it's to make the world safer. Internally it's very strong in terms of what these values are and how we are achieving them. The challenge is to get that message across in the marketing. Making it sound authentic, rather than just a marketing play, is actually hard," Ms Allison acknowledges.

The messaging challenge is compounded in organisations that face both businesses and consumers in many countries, where the corporate message has to be plausible throughout the company's activities.

Banking group Barclays is one of those companies that has to balance both approaches. Alison Tattersall, corporate marketing director at Barclays, which has established cybersecurity as a theme for marketing, notes that a lot of brands have no choice but to try to make messages work across their entire business.

"I think when we get it right, for example some work we have done on cyber-protection, it works really nicely," Ms Tattersall says.

"I think a lot of brands can identify the sweet spots, where you can work across the board, then all our investment goes into one goal, which makes it really effective."

'Don't forget your 'why''

Will Brookes, managing director of Raconteur, introduces this report with a call to focus on strategy instead of chasing the latest trend

They say delivering a winning B2B marketing campaign is like waging a successful war. The strategy comes first. Then, the tactics help you achieve your strategic goals.

Virtually all senior marketers will pay lip service to this idea. But when you look at their actions, a different picture starts to emerge.

Rather than taking the time to understand their audience, develop their messaging and consider how they'll differentiate their brand from the other voices in the market, they'll jump straight to the campaign plan.

They get excited by the new ideas this industry adopts – artificial intelligence, account-based marketing, customer experience – seemingly one a month, and want to put them to work. That's understandable and indeed this, the first Raconteur report in *The Times* on B2B marketing, explores the most mission-critical tactical thinking.

But this report's central focus is strategy and for good reason. The latest figures from the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) show that marketers with a documented content strategy are almost four times more likely to be successful than those without. Yet just 38 per cent have a documented strategy in place.

This statistic should startle anyone working in B2B, especially if you suspect you may be one of the 62 per cent of businesses that plan their marketing activities on the fly.

If there's one thing I learnt during my seven years in B2B sales, it's that people don't buy what you do. It's why you're doing it that matters. Running blindly into the fray rarely yields results.

Take the booming martech industry, for example. Gartner's latest *CMO Spend Survey* shows that martech investment surged last year and now makes up 29 per cent of a typical chief marketing officer's budget. This report's central infographic is an outline of this fast-shifting landscape. Yet research from martech specialist Ascend2 suggests that 91 per cent of marketers either don't have all the tech they need or aren't getting the most out of what they have.

That's what happens when you decide what you're going to do before you pin down why you're going to do it. And it's the same with every element of your marketing strategy.

The B2B buying process involves a series of "value exchanges". Someone who gets value from the articles on your content hub will consider exchanging their contact details for some gated content. If that content proves valuable, they might be open to spending some of their time talking to your sales team. And if those conversations prove valuable, they'll probably decide to do business with you.

Of course, the B2B sales cycle usually spans many more touchpoints than that. Plus, prospects often won't move through the buying process in the same linear or predictable fashion. They might go back and read more content after their first sales conversation, for example.

The crucial thing to realise is that a disappointing experience at any stage of the process will derail the whole operation.

So, it's not enough to be using the latest tools or following the latest trends. It's not enough to be "doing content".

Research from the CMI shows that the most successful B2B marketers spend 40 per cent of their budget on content marketing. But it's not what they spend that makes them successful. It's how that investment feeds into and supports their overall marketing strategy.

We always challenge our clients to start with the "why". It's the only way to develop content solutions that guide your prospects swiftly through the customer journey. Remember that as you explore this special report.

B2B marketing may be evolving rapidly, but there is one fundamental truth that will always stay the same: strategy comes first.

Will Brookes
Managing director
Raconteur

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

Millennials: the catalyst for a B2B marketing revolution

Marketers need to adapt to changing purchasing patterns triggered in part by the increased professional influence of digital natives

Anna Codrea-Rado

The cohort of people born roughly between the early-1980s and mid-1990s are increasingly senior leaders and executives of companies, and their buying habits are changing the face of B2B sales.

How this millennial generation buys and how it influences the buying patterns of other demographics is an issue that all marketers are seeking to better understand.

"As they grew up online, it makes sense that millennials may prefer to do business online as well," says Lucy Moran, vice president of marketing, digital and brand at the global commercial data analysis company Dun & Bradstreet. "Face-to-face conversations are less common in the millennial generation, as texting and social media have come of age, so it may not be uncommon for a millennial to want the entire buying process to take place online."

A key way in which millennial influence is changing buying habits is by blurring the lines between B2B and B2C marketing. Research published by Adobe in May found traditional distinctions between B2B and B2C marketing are dissolving, and purchasing behaviours once prevalent among consumers are now echoed by enterprise buyers.

The report found that the biggest purchasing drivers for business buyers now include brand transparency – a consideration for four fifths of B2B buyers – while more than two thirds factor brand-purpose into the buying decision and half expect a personalised customer experience.

The research shows how behaviours typically associated with digital natives are now associated with all age groups. Even buyers in their 60s can be "millennials" now.

Ines Van Gennip, head of UK marketing for Amazon Business, the B2B arm of the global online retailer, says it is a myth that only millennials want a digital, easy purchasing experience.

"Some of our biggest advocates in large organisations are really not millennials; they're what we would consider a traditional buyer," she says. "They're used to buying for themselves in the digital world, so they are expecting the same experience when they come into the office."

This comes as no surprise to VaynerMedia, the digital marketing agency founded by serial entrepreneur Gary Vaynerchuk, which is at the cutting edge of millennial buying trends. The company has worked on advertising and marketing campaigns for the likes of Budweiser, Diageo and PepsiCo.

VaynerMedia's head of strategy for the company's London office, DuBose Cole, says: "Cultural shifts brought about by millennials and the forces that impact them directly shape the operations of the organisations they are beginning to lead."

Mr Cole explains that as the wider B2C market adapts to forces brought about by millennial consumer demands, a greater understanding of purpose, transparency and clarity in how you market and approach them should become more important for an organisation. "The way we are sold to as consumers implicitly shapes our expectations of how we are sold to as employees and business owners," he adds.

But there is a lot more going on than a switch from phone to messaging. Ms Moran explains the importance of B2B marketers evolving their go-to-market approach to be relevant in a world where potential customers are starting their research online and who, ultimately, would prefer to complete as much of the purchase process as possible online.

> **How do you find the right way to measure marketing effectiveness on things that are a little less tangible, but nevertheless very important?**

32% of UK working age population will be millennials (born 1981-1996) in 2020

Raconteur projection using ONS data

"This means investing in digital content that enables prospects to get a sense of what a company's product has to offer," she says. Where possible, companies need to enable ecommerce, even for what might be considered somewhat complex solutions, she adds.

Marketers in Raconteur roundtables attested that buyers of all ages are now presenting themselves later in the buying process. Extensive online browsing and research meant by the time their potential purchasers identify themselves they may have already made key decisions that would shape an eventual choice of vendor and which can be difficult for a salesperson to challenge.

Sarah Rutherford, director of solution marketing in the UK for software and analytics company FICO, says creating content for these early-stage potential buyers is vital. Even longstanding customers may not know your whole product range and may go to a rival if a quick web search doesn't show your offering.

However, tracking the effectiveness of this content when customers have not yet identified themselves is a problem. She says: "Marketing can't stand around not being measured and not having key performance indicators (KPIs). But how do you find the right way to measure marketing effectiveness on things that are a little less tangible, but nevertheless very important?"

Ms Rutherford says this becomes particularly acute as companies shift to account-based marketing, which typically sees an even greater focus on metrics and less effort on brand-building and other difficult-to-measure activities.

Connecting with this trend, Google recently changed how it talks about search advertising, moving away from a product-first mindset to a solution one. Instead of describing the search products, Google now talks about business challenges and articulates how its search solutions can enable marketers to overcome them.

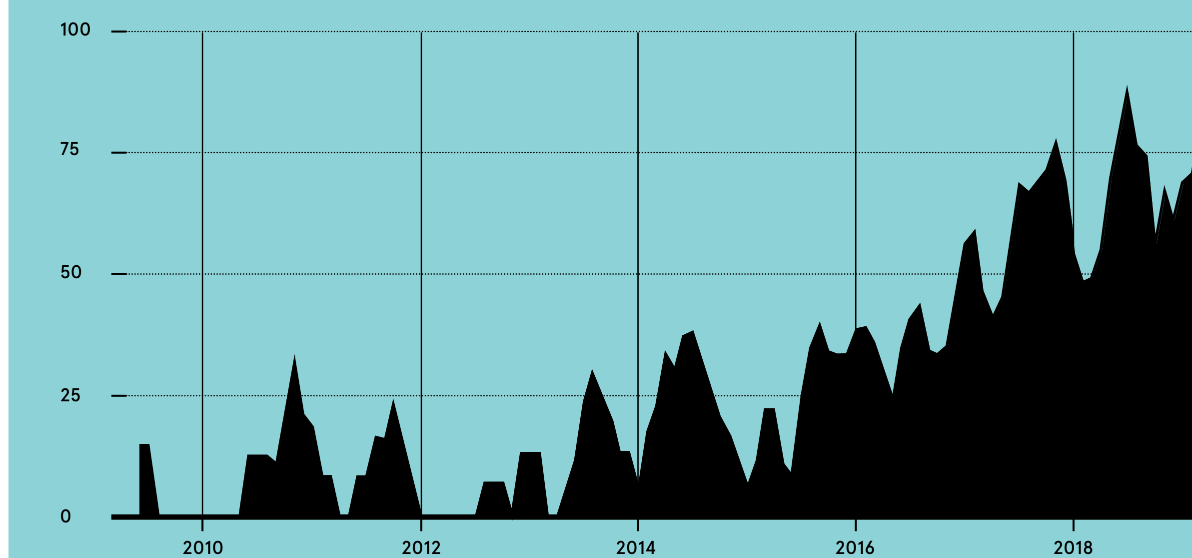
"Call it millennial influence or a widening competitive set in the B2B space, but there is a need for marketers to change how they talk about products to potential buyers," says Alessandra Alari, head of search and digital user experience at Google UK.

"A less 'straight sales' approach works for millennials who are looking to achieve specific KPIs like 'measuring success' or 'increasing market share' and need to understand how Google's search capabilities can assist them," she says.

Ms Moran at Dun & Bradstreet is already thinking about the next set of challenges. Marketers also need to start considering Generation Z, the cohort that only knows digital, and have just begun moving into decision-making and buying positions.

"Unlike millennials, Gen Z may not be as willing to give up information online," Ms Moran warns. "Which means marketers will have to find new ways to get the data they need to personalise campaigns for Gen Z."

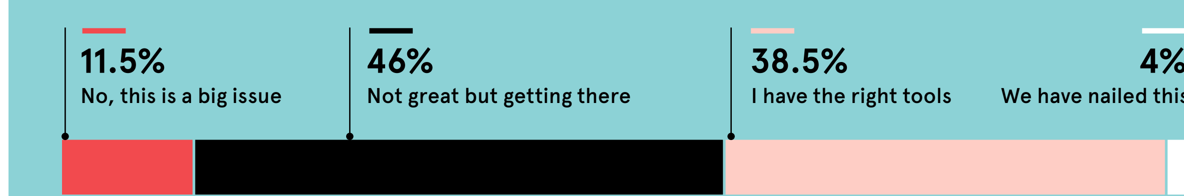
ONLINE SEARCHES FOR "ACCOUNT BASED MARKETING" IN THE UK



Google Trends, three-month rolling average

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TOOLS AND METRICS IN PLACE TO MEASURE YOUR MARKETING?

Poll of senior marketers at Raconteur roundtables



Raconteur 2019

STRATEGY

The new thinking that brings marketing to account

The move to account-based marketing requires a complete overhaul of pre-sales activity

Maisie McCabe

Focus on existing customers? Or try to hook new ones? It's a debate as old as marketing itself and one that is raging in B2B marketing.

The trigger has been the sharp switch to account-based marketing (ABM), which sees marketers working with their sales colleagues to build revenue from an existing pool of clients and possibly a small, focused pool of firms that are considered highly likely to buy.

ABM is a conceptual flip from the concept of the marketing funnel, which aims to interest as many potential buyers as possible and then lead them step-by-step into making a purchase, with some being lost at every stage of the journey until some fraction drop out the bottom as customers.

Pierce Calnan, planner at Communisis-owned agency Twelve, believes the approach is a fundamentally different discipline to traditional B2B marketing. "It places the emphasis on the customer from the start," Mr Calnan explains. "And forces you to empathise with their situation to develop your approach. It starts with a human and their business objectives, rather than your revenue target and product or services you want to sell."

Moving to ABM not only means throwing away a mental model that dates back more than a century, it also goes against the message of perhaps the most influential book on marketing of the last decade, *How Brands Grow*, by Byron Sharp, professor of marketing science at the University of South Australia. His data-driven marketing approach recommends reaching all potential buyers as often as possible.

Yet 61 per cent of large organisations believe ABM will influence their marketing and insights strategies in the next three years, according to Dentsu-owned market research company B2B International. The enthusiasm was strongest in North America (69 per cent), compared with 51 per cent in the UK and 58 per cent in the rest of Europe.

The switch has been triggered, like many of the changes in B2B marketing, by technology. Tech not only enables personalisation at scale, it also provides the metrics that can prove, if done right, it is boosting the bottom line.

"What has changed, and is making account-based marketing increasingly relevant to more businesses is the ability to be highly targeted, by profile, by interest and by behaviour," says Sam Williams-Thomas, head of business to business at Ogilvy. He cites Oracle and Fujitsu as two companies that have been using the method in its updated form for a couple of years.

Luella Ben Aziza, strategy director at gyro, says: "Even if the principles are not new, the hype and the technology to make it even more effective certainly are. Salespeople often say they have been using these principles for a long time. This is about marketing taking some of the things your best salespeople do really well, scaling them, bringing the creative side and owning it."

One impact is on company websites. Instead of hosting white papers to feed email addresses into the top of the funnel, under ABM they need to provide tailored, region-relevant messaging that adapts not only to the visitor's organisation or industry, but also to how they interact with the content.

Amit Sharma, global head of marketing strategy, operations and strategic alliances at Tata Communications, says: "A combination of the above converts loosely held web content into dynamic, personalised and meaningful experiences."

When used well, technology can provide users with great experiences, says David Balko, chief client officer at digital agency Tribal Worldwide London. He warns, though, that it can be very expensive: "Going deeper at each level requires investment and this could prove wasted if the target proves unsuccessful." But he says it is crucial to ensure that in this post-General Data Protection Regulation world, all data used for targeting is compliant with the law.

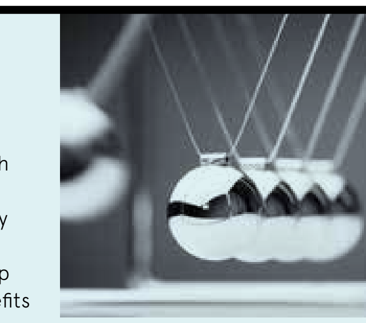
Hanan Belarbi, Europe, Middle East and Africa head of data at IPG's R/GA, believes blockchain will be a key technology for companies looking to ensure data privacy and remain compliant. In the United States, the Interactive Advertising Bureau has tested a tool called PrivacyChain that can track users' privacy consents across data supply chains.

For ABM to work, each department in a company must be signed up. Louis Fernandes, vice president and country manager for UK and Ireland at fintech software company Basware said it was vital that any move to ABM be part of a wider plan.

"There is no such thing as an account-based marketing only program," he said. "It has to be an account-based sales and marketing program with symbiotic interactions and relationships between marketing and sales."

"Real account-based marketing is a completely different way of thinking about engaging your customers," gyro's Ms Ben Aziza concludes. "So if your wider organisation is not open to change and being customer led, you'll probably fail."

> **If your wider organisation is not open to change and being customer led, you'll probably fail**



ABM: fad or fate?

Experience suggests that the pendulum, currently very much swinging to account-based marketing (ABM), will eventually turn back to a lead-based approach. Maybe it should stop halfway and combine the benefits of both.

Recent research from Les Binet and Peter Field seems to slow ABM's momentum. The study, which was commissioned by LinkedIn, found B2B marketers who reach all the companies in their target category get the best returns. The answer, according to Binet and Field, is a relatively even mix of brand-building campaigns (52 per cent of ad budgets) with targeted messaging.

Even when done properly, ABM is not the "be all and end all" of marketing strategy, says Conor Wilcock, director at B2B International. In the Binet-Field study, more marketers thought digital transformation (87 per cent), people-based marketing (73 per cent) and omnichannel marketing (70 per cent) would influence them, in the next three years, compared with ABM.

THREE TIERS OF ACCOUNT-BASED MARKETING

HIGHER INVESTMENT PER ACCOUNT

1 **ONE-TO-ONE**
Creating highly customised programs for individual accounts

2 **ONE-TO-FEW**
Lightly-customised programs for clusters of accounts with similar needs

3 **ONE-TO-MANY**
Using technology to tailor marketing campaigns for specific, named accounts at scale

Adapted from ITSMA 2017

Most B2B content gets ignored.

It's dry, uninspiring, and ineffective.

INNOVATION

Keeping it human amid the rise of the machines

The rise of marketing technology makes human creativity more, not less, vital

Ian Burrell

When Google created a B2B marketing campaign to celebrate 20 years of Google Search, it could have used its renowned data science capabilities to build a solid, scientific case for investment in search advertising. Instead, it turned to the hapless BBC TV comedy character Chabuddy G.

The bungling hustler from *People Just Do Nothing*, played by Asim Chaudhry, is an unlikely poster boy for a company that has helped transform the global landscape of modern business through technology and data. Google's choice underlines, even in the world of big data and fast-rising martech budgets, creativity and emotional connection remain a vital part of selling business products.

"It's really emotional marketing because we are using humour and comedy to create a mini-series that is demonstrating the power of search for entrepreneurs and businesses to reach audiences," says Nishma Robb, Google's director of ads and industry marketing for the UK.

The *Search Like a G* series sees the deluded Chabuddy brand himself Alan Brown Sugar, an internet expert and a true entre-paneer (sic). Designed to remind Google's B2B client base of the power of search advertising, this campaign wins "cut-through" because of the presence of a funnyman, says Ms Robb.

Annabel Rake, partner and chief marketing officer at Deloitte UK and North and South Europe, says: "I find 'B2B' as a phrase quite disappointing for our trade.

"While it is about a business working with another business, at its heart it is about a human who you can identify in one business working with another human you can identify in another business."

The power of human emotion in B2B marketing was revealed by a 2013 survey of 3,000 B2B buyers conducted by Google, Gartner and Motista. It found emotional connection was more prevalent in B2B customers (more than 50 per cent) than with B2C (10 to 40 per cent). This was partly attributed to the relatively high degree of risk in B2B purchases.

Google used emotion to promote the B2B value of YouTube by prioritising human stories over viewing statistics in a campaign called *More Than Just Viewers*, says Ms Robb. "Rather than saying to businesses you can buy these ads and it will give you this reach and effectiveness, we tell them a story around how their products are being used by consumers on our platform."

Unsurprisingly, though, the tech giant regards data science as integral to modern business. "The value of being able to use data and technology to deliver great marketing is really the joy of being a marketer," says Ms Robb.

It's a question of balance and Heidi Taylor, author of *B2B Marketing Strategy*, is convinced that the sector's obsession with numbers has gone too far. "There's a huge dearth of creativity in B2B," she says. "We have filled our teams with data scientists and technologists; people who are really good at using the tools, but without fundamental understanding of what drives and grows a business."

Data is fallible, she points out, decrying as "B2B marketing fake news" the industry's embrace of the idea that human attention spans have shortened to less than those of goldfish, an assertion exposed as based on dubious statistics. "I am concerned that we use data to confirm our own biases," says Ms Taylor.

The tension between creativity and data, the emotional and the rational, has long been a yin and yang of marketing. The legendary creative director Bill Bernbach, famed for iconic campaigns such as Avis' *We Try Harder*, told a previous generation of advertising professionals: "We are so busy listening to statistics, we forgot we can create them."

Since then there's been a digital revolution and Nick Udall, author of *Riding The Creative Rollercoaster,* says data is "a key" to the "deeply personalised and transformational experiences" that modern marketing demands. He also argues that time is up for the "creative hero" model of classic marketing, where a "superstar" director or agency is given rein to create a campaign "driven by ideation, ego and fads".

Yet Paul Marsden, consumer psychologist at digital agency SYZYGY, who lectures at University of the Arts London on the impact of digital culture on human behaviour, believes empathy is essential for effective B2B marketing. SYZYGY offers "empathy mapping" services so B2B marketers can "get into the shoes" of clients and better understand their feelings and anxieties.

"While we are a technology business, we believe ultimately it's humans who pay, humans who buy stuff and it's the human experience that really matters," says Mr Marsden.

Gonzalo Garcia Villanueva, Bloomberg marketing director for Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific, points out: "Where some B2B companies have been guilty is not being human in terms of their marketing to clients. When you're selling something like a big IT contract which may be a multi-million, five-year deal, it's easy to start treating buyers as if they don't have feelings."

Many B2B campaigns categorise audiences into marketing personas created from data analysis. "We try to put some more emotion into our persona," says Kristina Flickinger, marketing director of Mind Foundry, an artificial intelligence spinout from Oxford University. "It's not just their needs and pain points, but making them more human."

Brian Macreadie, head of marketing at law firm Addleshaw Goddard, who has won multiple awards for creativity in B2B marketing, says: "There's no such thing as a boring product, just boring marketing," he says. "I have done stuff with NFL [American football] clubs, book publishers, internet companies, and we have had tactics with stilt walkers, X-ray specs, video games and guerrilla stunts; there's as much creativity in B2B as in B2C."

Mr Macreadie would never ignore the insights that come from data. "We can't act from intuition alone," he says. But something extra is needed to break through the "email overload" of busy B2B clients. "Creativity is a necessity to stand out from our rivals in an over-communicated world," he concludes.

Google turned to comic character Chabuddy G to promote search marketing to a business audience

> Creativity is a necessity to stand out from our rivals in an over-communicated world

The challenge of left-brain and right-brain thinking

67% of marketers agree that "digital growth in advertising has come at the expense of the quality of creative"
Sizmek 2018

79% of marketers say tighter European privacy controls means creative quality is becoming more important
Sizmek 2018

£800+ typical daily rate for a senior copywriter
ProCopywriters 2018

2x revenue growth versus rivals for marketers who integrate data and creativity
McKinsey 2018

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MEET THE **B2B CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER** OF 2025

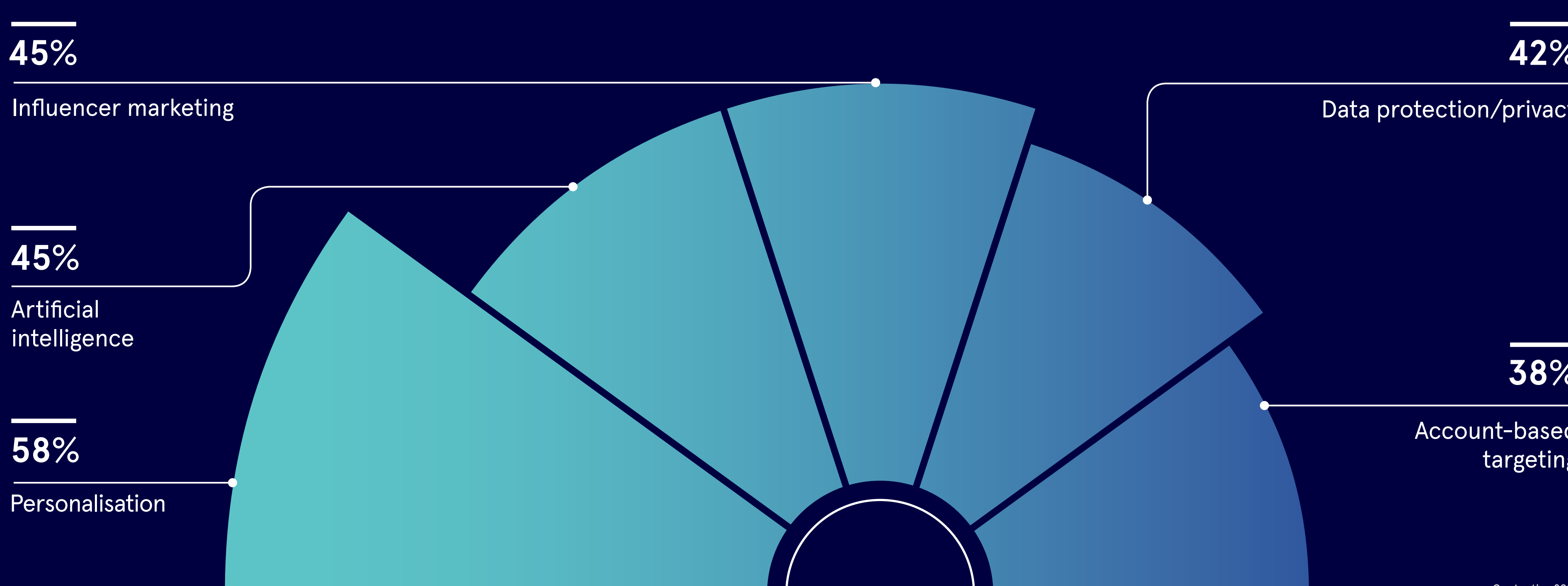
The digital revolution is creating an historic opportunity for B2B marketers, but also real challenges as marketing transforms into a technological arms race. Here are the skills needed to succeed

Digital genius

One survey showed four of the top five emerging trends are technology-related. Senior marketers who started their careers two decades ago need to retool their skills

WHICH EMERGING TRENDS ARE MOST LIKELY TO AFFECT PLANS IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

Survey of 214 senior B2B marketers in North America and Europe



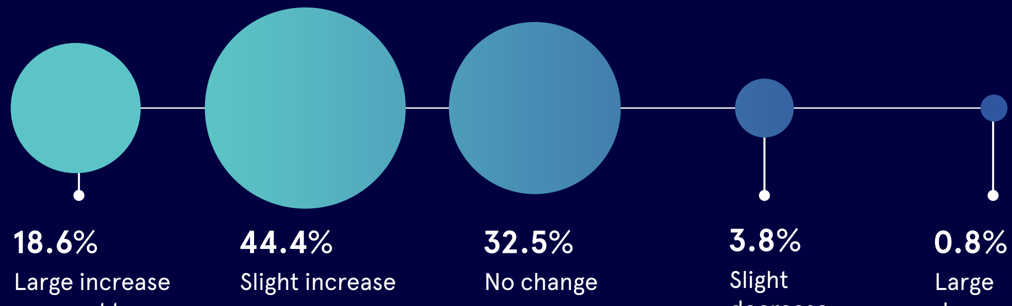
Contentive 2018

Grace under pressure

Many marketers still feel their true worth to the company has yet to be acknowledged. However, change is under way

HOW HAS YOUR FIRM'S CONFIDENCE IN MARKETING CHANGED?

Survey of 568 UK B2B marketers



Omobono/Marketing Week 2018

Lead gen machine

If the leads dry up then marketers risk losing their seat at the top table

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP BUSINESS PRIORITIES?

Global survey of 214 senior B2B marketers in North America and Europe

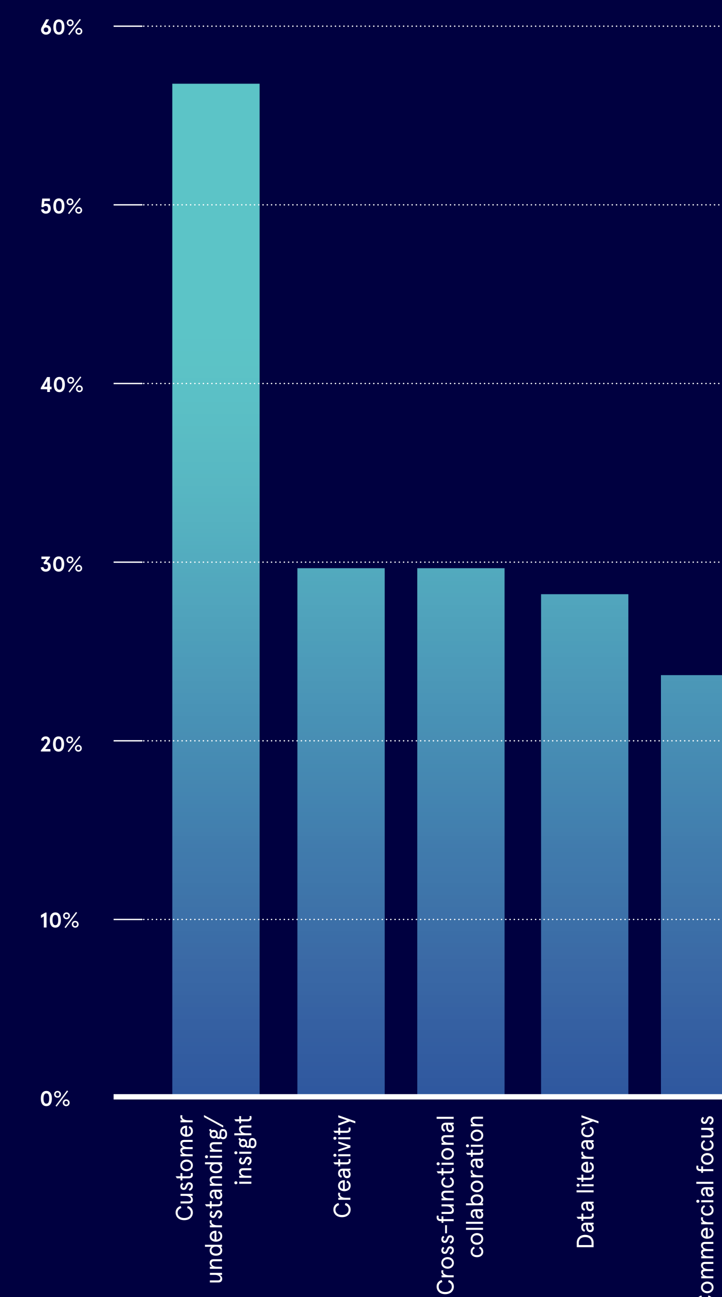
Contentive 2018

Voice of the customer

Marketers' deep understanding of the customer means they are increasingly being asked to lead company-wide customer experience programmes

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, WHAT SKILLS WILL HELP MARKETERS SUCCEED?

Survey of over 600 B2B marketers, respondents were allowed to pick up to three



The Marketing Practice/Marketing Week 2019

...AND THEIR **DIGITAL ALTER-EGO**

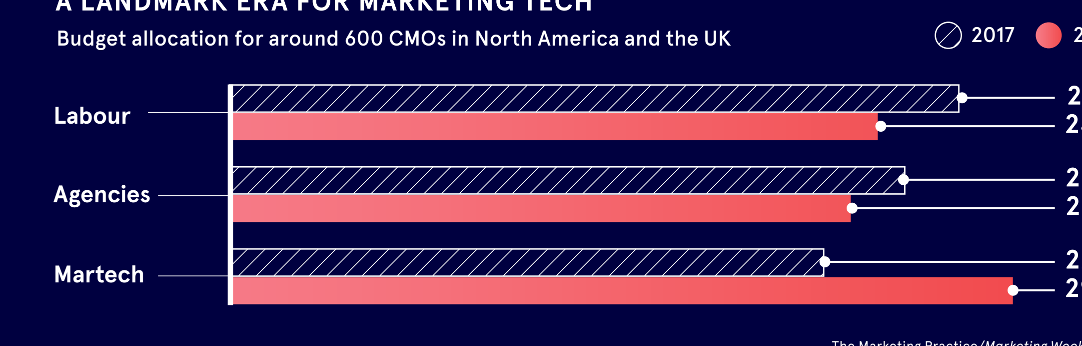
Personalisation, automation and measurement are top priorities for B2B marketers, and only technology can deliver. The best marketers know how to craft their "marketing stack", their collection of tools, to act as a supercharged digital assistant to the team

Booming budgets

A startling statistic: marketers are now spending more on technology than staff

A LANDMARK ERA FOR MARKETING TECH

Budget allocation for around 600 CMOs in North America and the UK



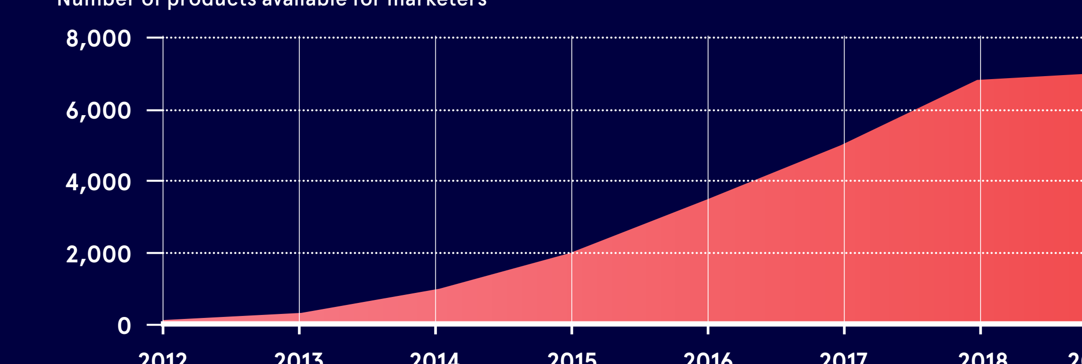
The Marketing Practice/Marketing Week 2019

A proliferation of tools

New digital tools for marketers have been launched by the thousand, making choices difficult. Thankfully the pace seems to have slowed

MARKETING TECH TOOLS PROLIFERATE

Number of products available for marketers



Marketing Technology Landscape Supergraphic, Chiefmartech 2019

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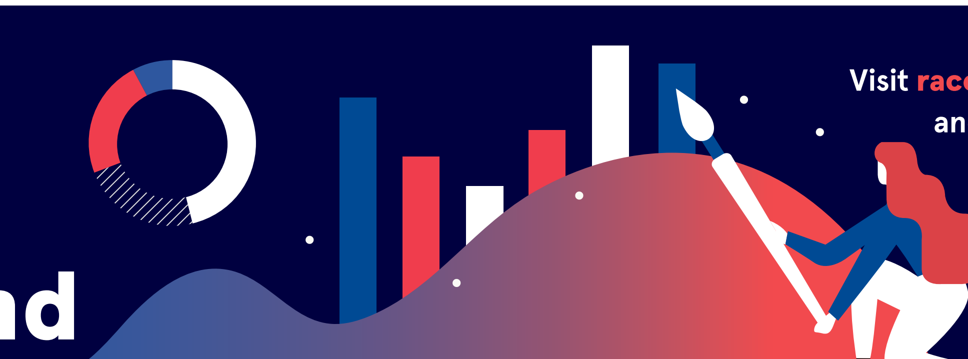

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RACONTEUR AGENCY

BUILDING A TRIBE

A question of influence

A B2B influencer is more likely to be a local builder than a Kardashian, but has key input at two key stages in the purchasing process

Nicola Smith

It's an old adage that "people buy from people" and influencer marketing is rooted in this belief. In May, Adobe took 65 influencers to its Adobe Summit in Las Vegas, a diverse group of creatives that ranged from an award-winning Generation-Z actress through to vloggers to a bunch of marketing experts. The aim was to bring together a range of professions and geographies to create a wealth of thoughtful content on topics that matter to Adobe and its users.

As Rani Mani, head of social influencer enablement at Adobe, says: "Influencers are extremely strategic to how we do business because they humanise our brand by being names, faces and personalities behind our logo. They are also so much more believable and authentic because they are technically not on our payroll, and yet genuinely use our products and services to put things out in the world."

Influencer marketing is a growing area. It is one of the top four tactics marketers plan to adopt in 2019, according to a survey of IT marketers in Europe and North America by Spiceworks. The survey shows influencer marketing getting more attention in Europe than, say, analytics powered by artificial intelligence or marketing chatbots.

It is important to draw a line between influencers in the consumer space, such as a Kardashian who will thrill over a packet of diet tea in exchange for a chunky fee, and the very wide range of jobs and roles that make up influencers in the B2B space. In a business context, the term ranges from "micro-influencers", such as local IT consultants, to celebrity achievers who resonate with target groups, such as Arianna Huffington and Buzz Aldrin as used in Dell's recent Dear Tech advert.

> **"My advice to any brand that's looking to build its own digital community would firstly be to ensure there is a core purpose and unified voice that underpins all content**

izusek/Getty Images

Jonathan Brown, vice president of marketing at telecoms firm GTT, says in his industry, influencers can be peers, one chief executive to another, or anyone engaging directly with a decision-maker who is going to have an influence.

"They can be analysts, industry leaders, anyone who a business leader turns to for advice or for opinion, or has respect for. And that isn't necessarily always traditional sources," says Mr Brown.

Ideally, the influencers should be a two-way communication channel, providing honest feedback from the marketplace that can help a company improve both products and messaging. Ms Rani believes its influencers give Adobe an "outside-in point of view" on what's going on in the world, what matters to them and their communities, and how the company is faring in relation to the competition. "This feedback and collaboration is mission critical," she says.

In the Raconteur B2B roundtables, senior marketers said influencers had a vital role at two points in the sales process where potential buyers were sometimes unreachable by other means.

The first was at the initial stage of the buying process when a buyer may be invisibly collecting information by downloading reports from consultants or an influencer group with strong power, especially in technology and software. Information absorbed at this early stage in the process can have long-lasting effects in terms of framing the business problems and the type of solution that should be purchased.

The second critical moment is just before a buying decision when a buyer may disconnect from the sales dialogue to make last-minute vendor checks with a more personal circle of influencers, such as former colleagues or contacts in trade associations.

"If you're a builder, then you're going to ring other builders," says Mark Clisby, chief marketing officer (CMO) at Yell, saying this shows how contented customers are, in effect, one of the most vital influencer groups.

But quantifying the value of influencer impact can be challenging. As Debbie Grishman, vice president of global content for commercial services at American Express, says: "While it's hard to measure, we believe the return on investment (RoI) is in brand awareness, affinity and consideration."

Alicia Tillman, CMO at SAP, says two of the most important ways the company measures RoI on influencer marketing are brand awareness and brand lift. Influencers make up 30 per cent of overall share of voice on social media during major events, such as SAPPHIRE NOW, SAP's annual conference for users and partners, and the company sees a significant increase in its SAP brand channel numbers during these events. "Influencers are certainly contributing to that," says Ms Tillman.

But Adobe's Ms Mani maintains the biggest RoI is the influencer relationships themselves. "Having a trusted cabinet of advisers on speed dial is priceless," she concludes.

Kelvin Murray/Getty Images

BUILDING A TRIBE

When fans become customers

It's easier than ever to build an online fanbase for a B2B brand—but don't forget the link to revenues

Belinda Booker

Imagine your company's content marketing grows such an engaged audience that investors start fighting for a stake in it. That's exactly what happened to Terminus, an account-based marketing platform.

As a small startup, Terminus launched an account-based marketing content hub called FlipMyFunnel, which has mushroomed into a portfolio of live events, daily podcast and Slack channel with an active community of more than 7,000 B2B sales and marketing professionals. The company is now being courted by venture capital firms that want to spin off FlipMyFunnel as a separate content brand.

It's a particularly successful example of using supercharged content marketing to build community, publishing such a wealth of high-quality content that it becomes not just an online publication, but the online hangout for a digital tribe.

Done right, it provides a route for sophisticated messaging, and data collection, that would be prohibitively expensive through conventional social and media channels. Some B2B firms have even bought conventional publishers to capture this effect. Done wrong, though, it can swallow a lot of cash with little or no return on investment.

It begs the question, if FlipMyFunnel has become such a success, why doesn't Terminus shift its focus to publishing? According to Sangram Vajre, Terminus co-founder, a product with a community built around it is a powerful thing.

"That is the secret to growth and category leadership," he says. "Just look at Salesforce with Dreamforce, Hubspot with Inbound and now Terminus with FlipMyFunnel. We are trying to create meaning, purpose and a sense of belongingness, beyond the product. Without a community, you are simply a commodity."

Other examples of brands that have developed successful content creation arms include American Express with its Business Trends and Insights hub, and Adobe with its digital magazine *CMO.com*.

By disintermediating trade media, these companies have grown engaged audiences, which they fully own and control. It's a compelling proposition, but there is a risk that comes with investing in this type of venture over traditional marketing as there's no guarantee your audience will be interested in becoming customers.

Financial services company UBS disbanded its content initiative Unlimited after admitting it was not driving business results. The glossy site, launched in 2016, aimed to engage a new generation of millionaires for UBS's wealth management business with interviews with Stephen Hawking and Lewis Hamilton, and images by renowned photographer Annie Leibovitz.

However, according to UBS global head of marketing communications Thierry Campet: "I thought people would read Unlimited and go to UBS and sign up." Ultimately, they didn't. Visitors to the site are now redirected to conventional financial content on UBS's main site, such as a report on the Swiss property market.

Bridget Perry, Europe, Middle East and Africa vice president of marketing at Adobe, warns: "It takes time to build a site's audience and influence, and take the customer from reading an article to signing that final contract.

"My advice to any brand that's looking to build its own digital community would firstly be to ensure there is a core purpose and unified voice that underpins all content. That content then needs to be integrated with effective audience segmentation and retargeting tools to drive engagement and conversion."

The truth is, the return on investment of content marketing that has been largely unlinked from its parent brand can be hard to measure. However, for some companies there is more to building an online tribe than quick financial returns.

Among them is electronics company RS Components. In just two years, the company has grown an award-winning community of 580,000 electronics professionals around a content hub and forum that mixes in-depth technical discussions with inspiring content about how electronics is making the world a better, safer place.

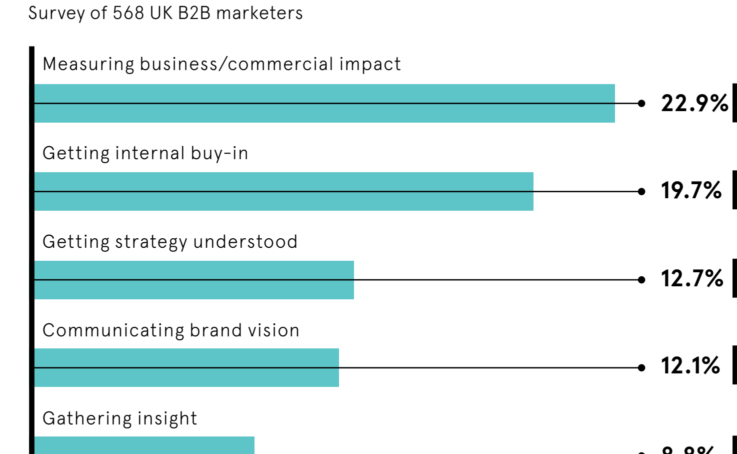
"We've seen such a positive impact from this type of content in the past two years," says Adam Pridmore, brand campaign manager. "It's such a powerful way for businesses like RS Components to elevate ourselves above the functional, tell real-life stories and give real-life examples of how our products are enabling engineers all around the world to do amazing things."

But in a world where more and more brands become publishers, will there be enough readers to go round? Tim Walters, vice president and the privacy lead at consultancy The Content Advisory advises keeping efforts highly targeted.

"Don't try to capture every potential customer. Think, where does your competitive differentiator lie? What are the profile types that you really want to talk to because you know you have a distinctive value proposition for them? It might be a relatively small number of people, but that's who you should be creating content for," he concludes.

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Survey of 568 UK B2B marketers



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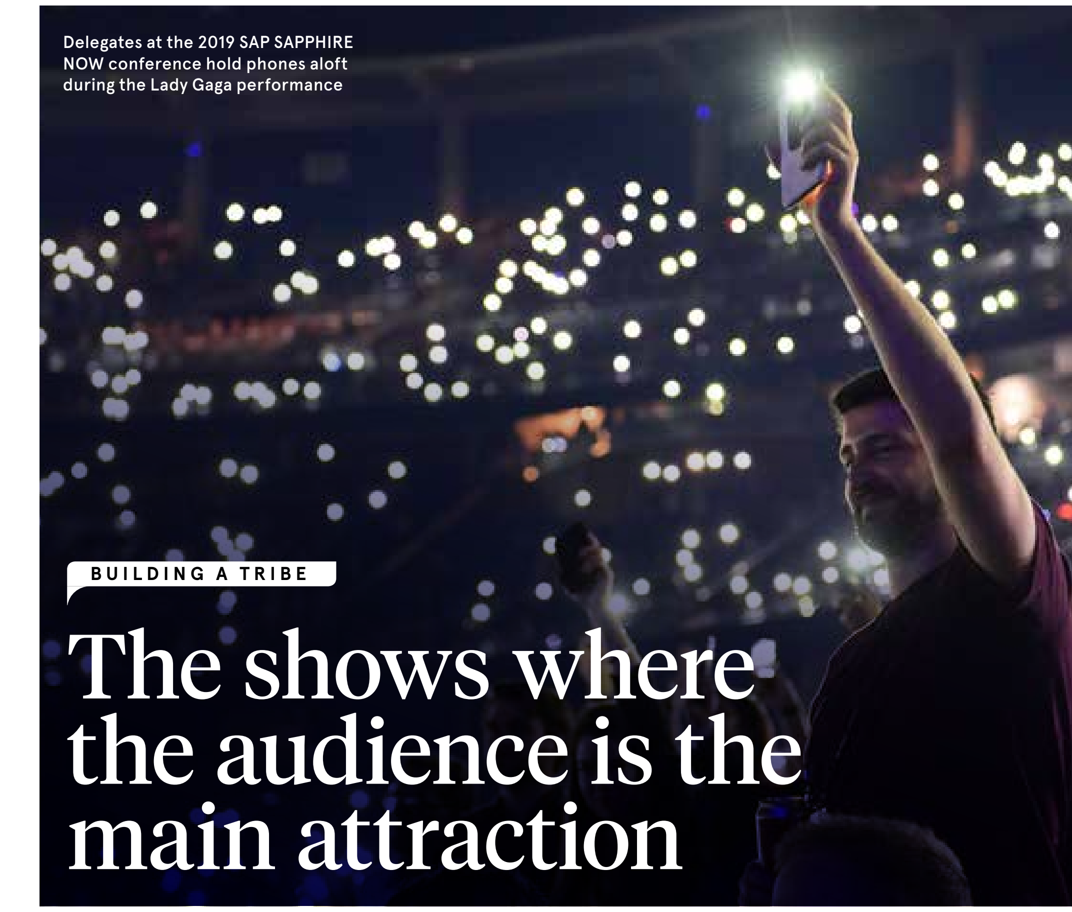


Delegates at the 2019 SAP SAPPHIRE NOW conference hold phones aloft during the Lady Gaga performance

BUILDING A TRIBE

The shows where the audience is the main attraction

The world's most gigantic B2B marketing events keep the marketing low key

Francesca Cassidy

It is a Thursday afternoon and you are in a crowd of 20,000 people. You have just listened to entrepreneur-supermodel Karlie Kloss and later you will watch Metallica. Are you at Glastonbury? Coachella? No. You are at a B2B event organised by a software company and you are being marketed to.

But why are you there? For years, you have seen this software company on a stall at a big third-party tech conference. Why has your organisation paid nearly $2,000 for you to attend something which looks more like a rock concert than a business event?

Because, as a client, you no longer buy in the same way and savvy technology companies realise this. "We noticed that we were simply pushing messages at our audience with previous events," says Mark Johnston, who spent 14 years at Microsoft and helped launch the company's B2B event Future Decoded.

Now European marketing director at cloud software company Domo, Mr Johnston explains how Microsoft decided to turn their events into efficiency engines, rather than merely product launches. "We wanted to use them to hit desired outcomes, which obviously included revenue and demand but, more importantly, greater customer experience and satisfaction."

B2B events are now about creating value and helping customers do business better. "For a long time we led with our products," says CMO of SAP, Alicia Tillman. "But at our most recent SAPPHIRE event, with the customer and their experience as our focus, we brought together world-class customers, senior leaders, SAP experts and partners to learn how to build intelligent enterprises and win in the experience economy."

Paradoxically, many of the companies that are making the world of work more digital are also those running the biggest human-to-human events. "The best B2B events have the right mix of networking and learning," says Steven McMullen, director of business intelligence at AdHawk, who was a speaker at business intelligence platform Looker's event Looker Join.

"I would push towards 60 per cent learning, 40 per cent networking because that was the most powerful thing for me the first time I went. I got to learn many things and see implementations I didn't know were possible."

The forward-thinking organiser understands that these B2B events are about forming a tribe, which goes far beyond networking. "Understand who it is you want to serve," says Linda Gray Martin, general manager of RSA Conference. RSA's security conference shows you don't have to be a giant software company to start. Its first event in 1991 had a single panel and 50 attendees. Its 2019 event had more than 50,000.

Community must be created before the event, maintained throughout and nurtured afterwards. Looker, for example, fosters a tribe mentality by sponsoring smaller meetups for its members throughout the year. "It really keeps you in the community," says Mr McMullen. "I was able to reconnect with people I wouldn't otherwise see until the next Looker Join."

Another paradox is these events are run by companies with the technology that could, for the first time, track tens of thousands of delegates, their follow-up purchases and assess return on investment for each one. Yet that's not the point.

"The software industry has gone on a long journey with this," says Mr Johnston. "Everyone is looking at this new way of engaging, which does have a net outcome of sales, but it's really putting customer experience first to create an environment where sales can happen."

Ms Martin adds: "We see attendee experience as our key performance indicator. There is nothing better than getting people together."

Events are about building human connections, which may seem ironic for the technology industry, but crucial for organisations built on long-term engagement, such as software-as-a-service companies whose business model is based around subscriptions. "Events create an unparalleled opportunity to create lasting relationships with customers," says Ms Tillman.

76%

of senior marketers think in-person events are a successful top-of-funnel tactic

Demand Gen 2019

80%

of directors say people are likely to spend more with a brand they have met face-to-face

AEO 2018

INTERVIEW

No more pitching or preaching

From its guerrilla tactics in the late-1990s to today's global marketing machine, Salesforce's marketing strategy has many admirers. Chief marketing officer and executive vice president **Stephanie Buscemi**, who leads a team of 1,200 marketers worldwide, tells why values matter and explains the power of conversation

Bloomberg / Contributor/Getty Images

Gren Manuel

Q Many B2B marketers think core moral and ethical values are best left to B2C brands such as Nike and Gillette. Shouldn't B2B marketing focus more on price and return on investment?

A Salesforce has experienced tremendous success over the last 20 years. Why is that? We believe it is because we are committed to a core set of values and they are the compass for our business.

While our individual opinions are interesting inside the building, it's really our customers and prospect community who drive what's important. And we find pretty consistently that means striking a balance between the head and the heart.

The head says 'Yes, it meets a business need, it helps me to solve my problems and makes my business more successful'. But the heart asks 'Am I engaging with a company that is giving back and has the same values I have?'

People want to work with brands that have a purpose. So our marketing strategy is completely built around our core values as a company. And those core values weren't just made up inside the company, they are truly a reflection of our customer and partner and employee community.

Q You have been prepared to take a stance on controversial issues. In 2015 the company threatened to boycott Indiana when it passed a law legalising discrimination against gay customers, and in May this year you moved to withdraw your products from firms that sell military-style firearms to US consumers.

A I think the emotional connection can't be missed whether it's B2C or B2B, it's about building trust with the brand and having shared values, and then demonstrating those shared values. We will engage socially if we believe we're not seeing equality for all. And we do that because we see diversity in our customers and diversity in our employees.

Q But there is a cost in terms of lost business?

A Of course, we evaluate it and know what the business impact may be, but we're saying we're going to do right by people first. And it will probably, in the long run, create greater longevity and deeper relationships with our customers who share those same values with us.

> "We know our customer-installed base is a diverse audience and they want to engage with companies that have diversity

Q You have put huge effort into building the "Trailblazers", millions of people who are proud users of your platforms. Is this, in effect, what an influencer programme looks like in B2B?

A I am careful with the word influencers because I believe, historically, influencers have been paid and the Trailblazers are not compensated in any way. But they are kind of micro-influencer advocates and evangelists for driving value within their businesses in new and exciting ways. And we have hundreds of people who are coming forward and telling their story of transformation.

They can use Trailhead, which is our free online learning community that some years ago was paid and we took the strategic decision to make it free. And there was an implication in terms of losing a revenue stream around training and education, but we said we want to be open and we want everyone to have the opportunity to gain the skills they need for the future.

Q Salesforce started off as an underdog marketer, but now has 45,000 employees. Is there a risk of losing marketing innovation?

A We have a maniacal focus on customer success and so long as we keep that with us, it keeps it real. And I'll give you a very tangible example. Everything used to be just created by the brand; websites were the brand telling you about itself. The shift that we're making, and I see other great marketing organisations doing it, is that brands are moving to co-creating content alongside their customers, those influencers and those advocates.

On a quarterly basis, we go on a global tour talking to customers and prospects. It helps so much because it's not just marketing; it helps inform product strategy. We also have something called the Ideas Exchange, which is where we systematically capture feedback every day. We can show how many hundreds of thousands of things customers have put in the Ideas Exchange and then voted on, and we've actually gone ahead and put in the product.

So you can see it's not only co-creation of the marketing content, but also the product itself.

Q In what other ways have you developed Salesforce's marketing?

A While there is no finish line on our work on equality, I'm really proud of the team and what we've been doing around inclusive marketing.

We decided to look through all our content, auditing so many thousands of pieces of content across every channel, and evaluate them in terms of their tone, their visual representation and whether we were countering stereotypes.

And we found mistakes. And that caused us to ask how can we ensure that will never happen again? And also how could we share it with other marketers in the community? So we've created it as a Trail on Trailhead.

Now everyone in marketing has been certified on it, and it is now in the DNA of our marketing planning and execution.

Q Is there a return on this time?

A I definitely think there is. We know our customer-installed base is a diverse audience who want to engage with companies that have diversity. The more you are relevant to your audience and showing a cultural respect for who they are, the more trust you're going to have put in you, and a foundation to build a stronger working relationship.

Q Is the nature of B2B purchasing evolving?

A The lines are blurring between B2B and B2C, so the expectations are getting higher on B2B marketers to create this seamless engaging, personalised experience that people have been getting in their personal life.

But lines are also blurring in that marketers are trying to get a single view of their customers. They have to strike a balance of personalisation and privacy, but get a single view of not just you and your job, but the full picture of you.

Q Is this a return to the old-fashioned school of sales, where a rep and their prospect would go out for drinks and talk about sports?

A Yes, but over a table you're face-to-face so the level of trust is different. If you're engaging via text, via Instagram, via email, how do you get that same level of connection at scale?

There's definitely a trust crisis in tech; you see it in the headlines. And I think that's why it's so important right now to have a community, a rich community of Trailblazers, who are speaking authentically on their own experience and doing it in their own words.

I can't imagine in five years from now a corporate website will be all in the brand voice. The sharing economy is quickly making its way into how we market as well. No more pitching or preaching. It's about having a conversation.

> "We found mistakes. And that caused us to ask how can we ensure that will never happen again?

Q In the digital age, is there an added premium from real-life interactions? Is this why you run Dreamforce, Salesforce's giant annual event that draws in more than 170,000 attendees?

A Well, previously Dreamforce was described as the largest technology conference in the world, which is true, but it's evolved to address business as a platform for change. There is ample there on technology innovation, but there's just as much on topics of equality, wellness, on everything in terms of bettering human beings.

There are two things that are critical to it. Firstly, the Trailblazers. We really bring that community in to help us shape what are the conversations we want to have. They co-create the agenda with us. It's not just Salesforce employees speaking.

And then, secondly, if you come, you'll see we have very fun and irreverent branding based on the look of a national park. People love it because, let's face it, technology conferences have been kind of dead and kind of dry, with the exception of maybe some evening rock concert or something. So we've made it really fun and playful.

Q Is Dreamforce a marketing event?

A It's so much more than that now. There's so much there around personal and professional development and wellness that it would be too little to call it just a marketing event, in my mind.

You do have to protect the space and ask yourself every step of the way, is this good for the attendee? We want them leaving the event feeling inspired, having had fun.

Q But Salesforce had 2018 revenues of more than $13 billion. Can smaller companies create events with this kind of philosophy?

A Absolutely. If I was to run a startup tomorrow, I would still want a community-based marketing approach, listening to customers and prospects in addition to employees.

Stephanie Buscemi

A timeline

August 2007
Joined SAP, rising to senior vice president for the solution marketing group

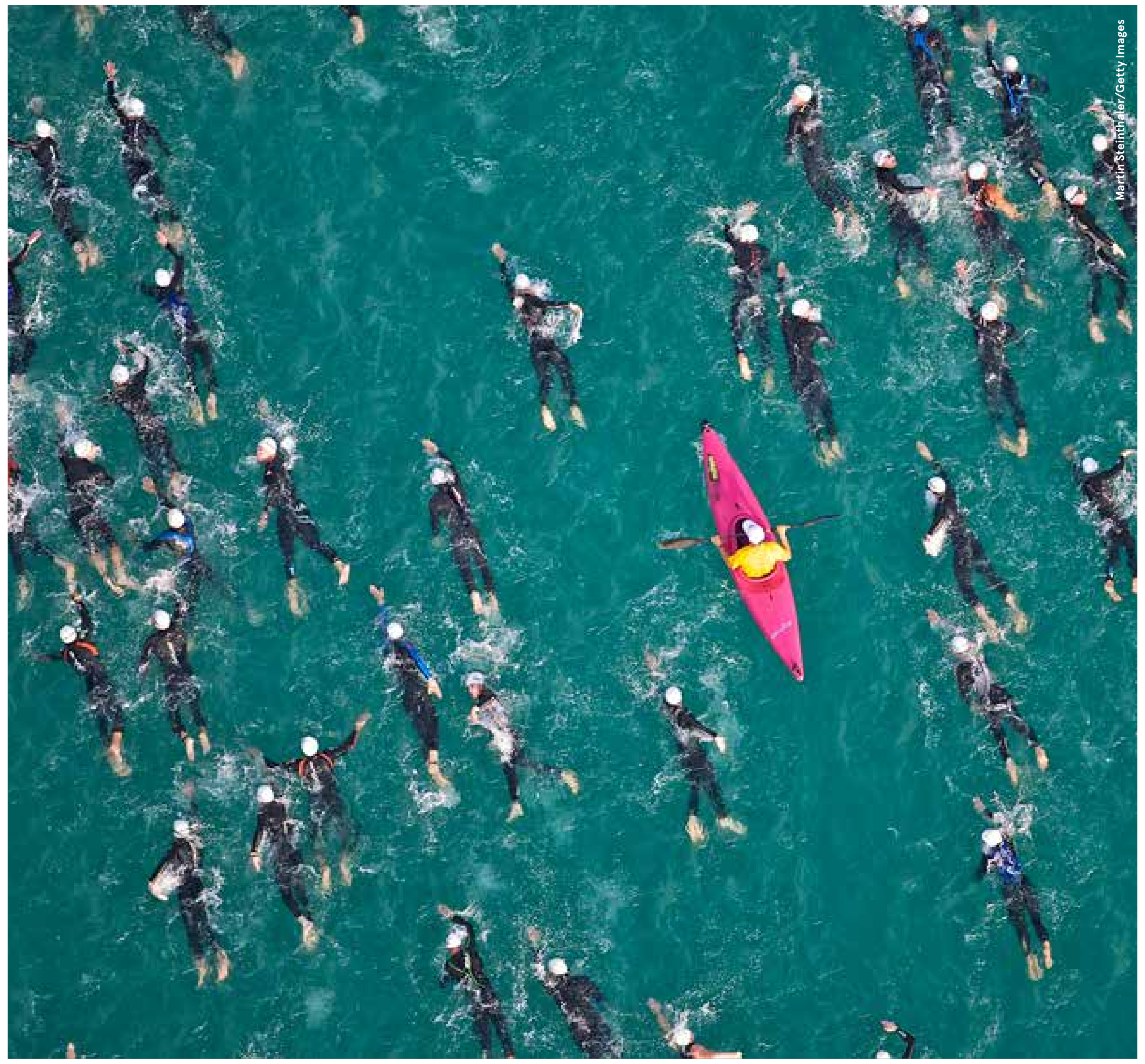
May 2009
Co-authored *Driven to Perform*, a handbook on driving business through effective performance management

October 2012
CMO of information provider IHS Markit

June 2014
Joined Salesforce, initially responsible for marketing cloud analytics

August 2018
Named Salesforce's executive vice president and CMO; global responsibilities include awareness, demand generation, product and field marketing, strategic events and communications

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019



CORPORATE CULTURE

Counting on the end of the rivalry with sales

Bringing sales and marketing into alignment requires innovative thinking as well as new technology

Solomon Radley

Animosity between marketing and sales has long plagued B2B organisations. But the historic shift towards measuring marketing effectiveness is at last helping bridge the two functions.

A lack of communication, common goals and accountability may have once prevented the two teams from working well together. But new technologies that deliver meaningful metrics are empowering brands to break down the walls between the two departments.

"The challenges historically have been around the perception of marketing," says Emily Binning, UK head of marketing at civil engineering consultancy WSP. "Marketing is, and should shift to, a place where we set metrics, we show our dashboards and we show our results."

Companies that struggle with marketing and sales alignment often cite a breakdown of trust between the teams as the problem's root cause.

Ms Binning explains: "When misalignment happens, it's because for one reason or another the leaders of that organisation or the people in those teams don't necessarily trust the other group."

She says marketing leaders must focus on building strong relationships with their sales counterparts to combat these perceptions.

"It takes modelling from the top down," she argues. "And it takes leaders that are comfortable with being vulnerable and putting the success of the business above their own individual performances."

Aligning marketing and sales successfully depends on getting both teams working together towards a common goal.

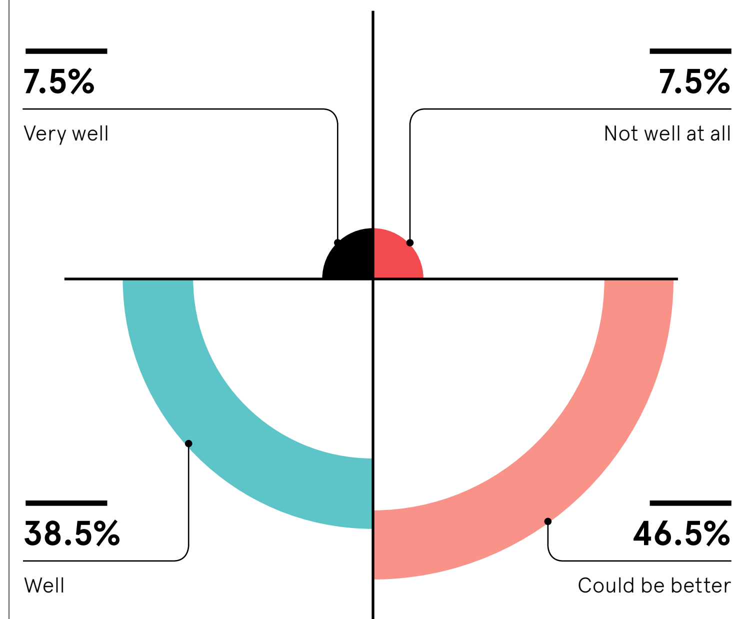
To achieve this, WSP has developed a shared account management plan. It specifies which key accounts the company should focus on and contains clear rules for sharing feedback, insights and data between the two teams.

"We're working together so much better," says Ms Binning. "Because those basics are set up and they're set up well, it's now meaning that we can move to the next stage of transformation."

> If you think you need to deliver new leads and they measure you on something else, then of course people will start fighting

HOW WELL DO YOU THINK SALES AND MARKETING WORK TOGETHER?

Poll of senior marketers at Raconteur roundtables



Raconteur 2019

Agreement cloud company DocuSign has taken things a step further. Its marketing team has moved away from lead "volume" KPIs and instead works with sales towards a shared "sales qualified opportunities" target.

"Having a common goal is so important, because at the end of the day it shows that commitment on both sides," says Jamie Bothwell, DocuSign's senior director of marketing, Europe, Middle East and Africa. "It highlights the dependency that each team has on the other. What happens when your success is tied together is that you have to find better ways to collaborate."

28%

of marketers don't know how many 'marketing qualified leads' close deals

The Marketing Practice/Marketing Week 2019

Having shared key performance indicators (KPIs) may not make sense for every business. But according to Lucio Furlani, founder and chief executive of B2B marketing boutique Crescendo, the important thing is to make sure each team understands how the other is driving the business forward.

"There is no right or wrong KPI, as long as it's agreed," he says. "But if you think you need to deliver new leads and they measure you on something else, then of course people will start fighting."

Yell chief marketing officer Mark Clisby argues that salespeople are more enthusiastic about reaching out to leads when they understand how marketing qualifies them.

He says educating Yell's sales team about what a prospect must do to be considered a qualified lead has dramatically improved its performance.

Neil Curtis, vice president of marketing at NTT Global Networks, says the sales function also gets real value from the rich insights technology provides.

"You can now trace where the organisation has touched your organisation, how many times they've visited your website or what content they have downloaded. And you can provide all that intelligence to your sales team," Mr Curtis says.

These insights will prove most effective if sales is involved in the marketing decision-making process. "If they feel part of the process, they will feel part-ownership of it," he says. "And that leads to stronger alignment. Even building marketing campaigns, you can have sales inside the team, contributing."

Developing robust datasets and reporting dashboards is a foundational step on the road to alignment. Ms Bothwell says such data insights help DocuSign's marketing and sales leaders think objectively when they assess the performance of the company's marketing campaigns.

"It's really important that you have an unbiased source of truth for the data," she says. "If you don't, it introduces emotion into reporting and how you diagnose issues, and that can lead to problems."

Ms Binning at WSP agrees that measurement and attribution technology has changed the perception of marketing within her organisation. "The key to building your credibility and trust is in the results," she says. "The martech stack [collection of technology tools used by marketers] is a really interesting place to help solidify that alignment."

Kirsty Bell, head of marketing at learning solutions company Fuse Universal, concludes: "What the data-driven tools get us is accountability as marketers, which is basically what helps us keep our seat at the top table."

TALENT

Wanted: human skills amid a data revolution

Technology is rewriting the rules of B2B marketing but traditional know-how is still at a premium

Meg Carter

As marketing automation grows, does this mean the B2B marketing team of 2025 will be mostly technologists and data scientists?

Certainly, the skills mix is changing. A full one third of the people on LinkedIn UK with "data scientist" in their profile also have the word "marketing" in there.

"It's the tools and capabilities that have changed," says TSB chief marketing officer Peter Markey. "Marketers need to be far more data literate and can't rely purely on being masters of advertising creativity. Between now and 2025, I expect this only to intensify."

Before marketers start reaching for *Big Data For Dummies*, however, help is at hand. A huge slab of the martech industry is aiming to deliver data science insights to non-data scientists. At Raconteur roundtables, senior marketers said they wanted staff who were comfortable with technology and quick to put tools to productive use, not necessarily staff who understood every intricate techie detail.

Mark Lewis, corporate marketing lead for datacentre provider Interxion, says: "There is an explosion of opportunity for us as marketers to get our hands on technology that we didn't have five or ten years ago." But he adds: "For our team managers, they're struggling with this huge explosion in opportunity."

This need for flexibility was underlined when "ability to embrace change" was cited as one of the two top skills by 90 per cent of marketers in Econsultancy's *2019 Skills of the Modern Marketer* survey.

The absence of digital skills might seem strange. But with so many new platforms and channels, tools and techniques, it's hard for any marketer to master everything. And marketing departments are now populated by a diverse array of specialists for the same reason.

Modern marketing knowledge, modern marketing skills and modern marketing mindsets are what's currently most needed, Econsultancy suggests.

Moving forward, tomorrow's marketing department needs to perfect a test-and-learn culture willing to embrace uncertain outcomes. Also, it needs to be consumer centric, which can be a challenge in B2B marketing where the customer may be a global corporation buying highly complex packages of products and services.

Another challenge is that many existing skills need to be retained and refined. Print, for instance, remains a uniquely powerful platform for reaching senior decision-makers and an effective team needs to understand when best to deploy it.

Some of the changes point, on the surface at least, to B2B marketing teams shrinking. There is the rise of automation and the move to get more basic creative content produced either by in-house production teams or even in-house agencies.

Though there will be greater automation, however, many believe this will put a greater premium on creativity.

"While there are component parts of marketing that are ripe for automation, the role of the marketer will certainly still be flourishing in 2025," says Mark Evans, managing director, marketing and digital at Direct Line Group, which offers services to businesses, as well as its famous consumer brand.

"In a world of fully-realised artificial intelligence, internet of things, connected homes, driverless cars and other yet-to-emerge breakthrough innovations, it will still be marketers who have to apply their creativity and intuition to define and align the required capabilities of an organisation towards meeting evolving customer needs."

"Even in 2025, those marketing teams with brilliant and diverse human minds will be the most effective."

Some firms are widening their marketing functions into broader customer experience teams, their customer focus and experience, with technologies such as chatbots, giving them the skills needed to make this a success.

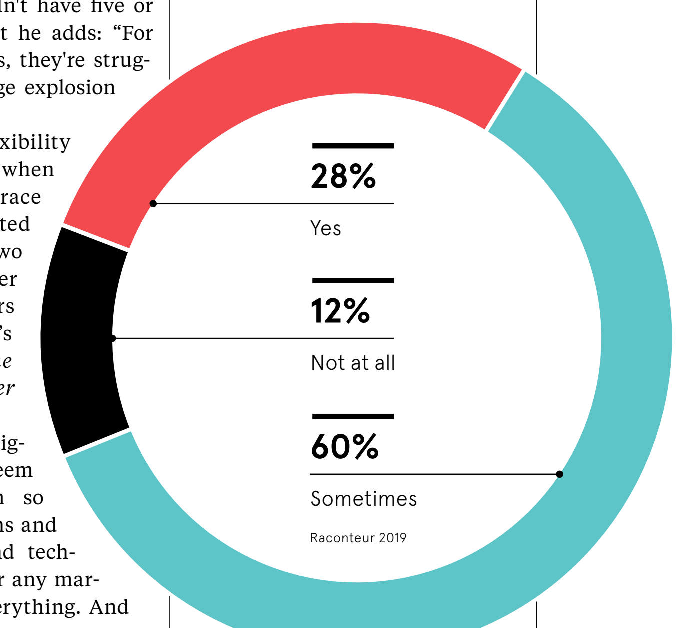
Some 45 per cent of marketing leaders say their organisation is leading company-wide customer experience initiatives, according to the most recent Salesforce *State of Marketing* report, almost double the figure from a year earlier.

"The need for a marketing function won't go away," Mr Markey of TSB concludes. "But I see teams becoming more focused on connecting marketing and every customer experience and innovation to drive a better commercial outcome."

> The role of the marketer will still be flourishing in 2025

DO YOU STRUGGLE TO GET THE RIGHT TALENT IN YOUR MARKETING TEAM?

Poll of senior marketers at Raconteur roundtables



Learning culture must start at the top

As marketing chiefs rush to future-proof their teams, they must also future-proof themselves.

"The first step for a professional marketer is to audit their own skills gap," says Gemma Butler, marketing director at the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM). Rather than focusing on one-off courses, she adds: "Skills must be continually updated and companies need to adopt a culture of learning to foster this."

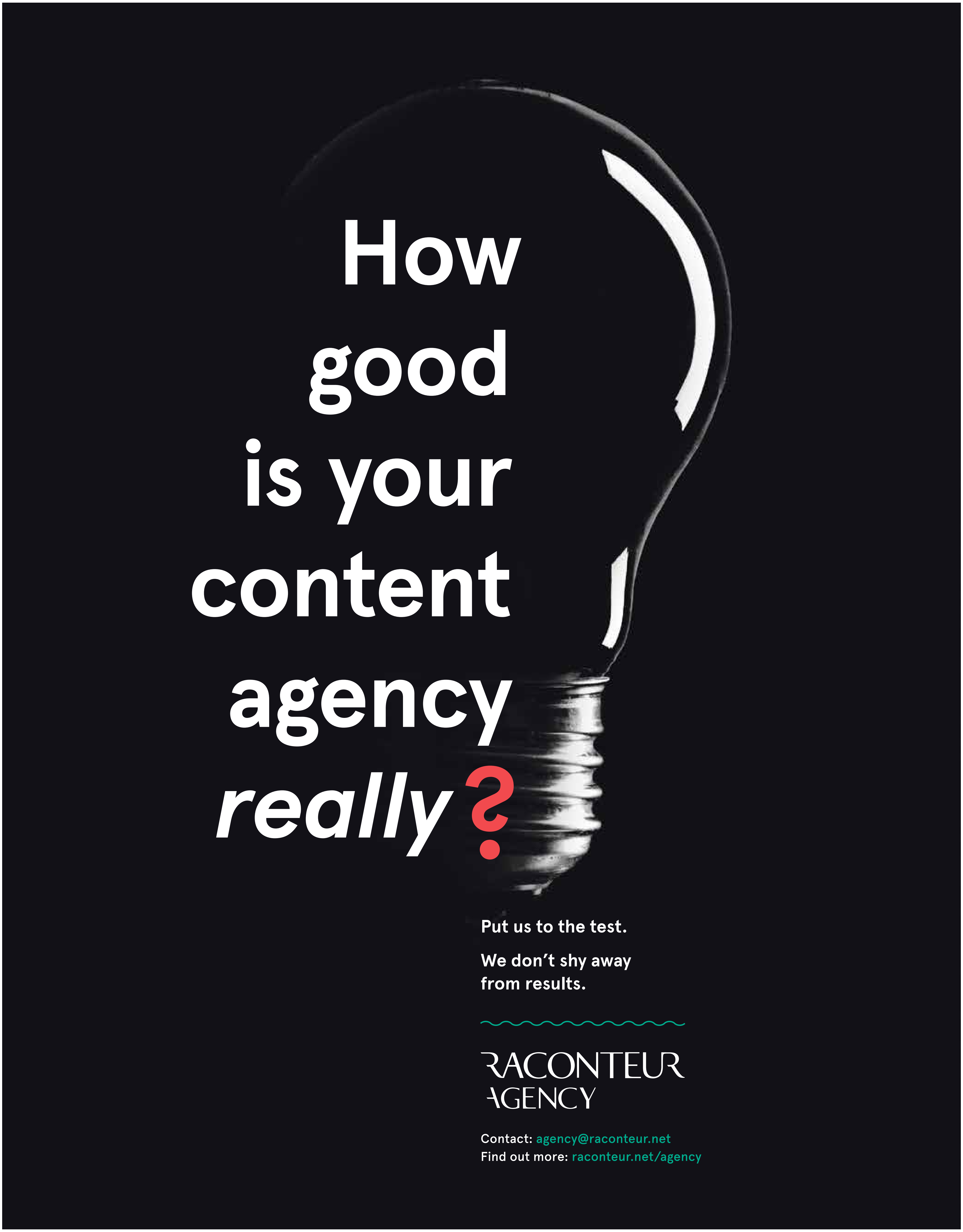
To have an edge, be the agent of change within your organisation and prioritise hiring new talent, Mark Evans of Direct Line advises. He particularly advocates hiring diverse talent, for example, neurodiverse people, who can bring breakthrough thinking.

"Senior marketers stay current by being open to the new perspectives young digitally literate marketers bring to teams," he says.

Other industries may provide pointers to how senior marketers can ensure they stay relevant. Some firms in professional services use "reverse mentoring", where a junior employee can educate a senior in Snapchat or TikTok and receive conventional mentoring in return.

Senior marketers often have more general marketing skills that may be in short supply among junior staff, perhaps because just 46 per cent of marketers now have marketing degrees or certified marketing qualifications, according to Econsultancy's skills survey.

"The evolution of digital channels has blurred lines between departments and fundamentally changed traditional marketers' way of working," says CIM's Ms Butler. "What has not changed are the core principles and need for marketing."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