

THE **STATE** OF **B2B** BRAND *BUILDING* 2022

Key insights into the opinions, challenges,
and priorities of 500 B2B brand marketers
across the world.

TRANSMISSION.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Transmission's State of B2B Brand Building Report 2022

For too long, B2B brand building has found itself relegated to the sidelines of the marketing priority league table. Businesses have struggled to connect their brand to their revenue engine and have frequently ignored the impact of brand on demand or sales performance.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the silos between brand and demand are breaking down, and attitudes towards the importance and value of brand building are shifting. This change has been accelerated in part by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also due to the pioneering work of marketers like Binet and Field, and Lombardo and Weinberg at The B2B Institute who tirelessly remind us to remove our short-term blinkers and focus on building better brands that build stronger businesses in the long term.

61% say brand is now considered to be a strategic business priority for their CEO and board members.

Our research reveals that brand building is firmly back on the B2B boardroom agenda. Of the organisations surveyed in this report, **61% say brand is now considered a strategic business priority for their CEO and board members.** As a result, financial investment in brand building programmes is expected to accelerate over the coming fiscal year.



INTRODUCTION

But what does this mean for the marketing leaders who have suddenly gained greater accountability for brand success? Are they concerned or confident? Do they have the support to redefine their brand strategy and propositions, or are they hampered by limited budgets or talent?

We surveyed 500 senior marketing leaders worldwide in B2B organisations of all sizes and industries to understand:

- How B2B brands are currently performing on their brand health indicators
- The relationship between brand and the boardroom
- Key challenges and barriers to brand building success
- The risks and realities of building a purpose-driven brand
- The role of employee insights in brand building
- Top brand building priorities for the year ahead

Along with many more revealing opinions, challenges and perspectives on the current and future state of B2B brand building.

We hope the data and analysis generated in this report will provide B2B marketers with a clearer, more informed perspective, and aid in the critical planning and decision-making of brand building strategies and programmes over the next 12 months.

KEY

HIGHLIGHTS

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

■ B2B BRANDS ARE PERFORMING “WELL” BUT NOT “BRILLIANTLY” ON THEIR BRAND HEALTH INDICATORS

Brand trust, likeability, and compassion are the highest-scoring brand health indicators. Brand differentiation and brand activism are the lowest performing.

■ B2B BRANDS ADMIT THAT PURPOSE-WASHING IS “LIKELY”

56% of B2B marketing leaders admit they are “highly likely” and “somewhat likely” to be promoting misleading cause-based messages or claims to their customers.

■ B2B BRANDS ARE THINKING ETHICALLY, BUT NOT ALWAYS FOR ETHICAL REASONS

76% of B2B marketing leaders “feel a lot of pressure” and “some pressure” to take an active stance on societal issues. **66%** champion societal causes for “both commercial and ethical reasons”. **Only 9%** build cause-based brands purely “for ethical reasons”.

■ BRAND IS NOW A BOARDROOM PRIORITY DUE TO COVID-19 AND HYPER-COMPETITION

Over 60% of B2B marketing leaders say that brand is now considered a strategic business priority for their CEO and Board. **32%** believe it to be of “very high importance” in the boardroom and **54%** rate it of “high importance”.

■ BRAND BUILDING IS “EQUALLY AS IMPORTANT” AS DEMAND GENERATION AND ABM

54% of respondents state that brand building is “equally as important” as demand generation in achieving their marketing goals. **61%** say brand building is “equally as important” as account-based marketing (ABM) in achieving their marketing goals.

■ A LACK OF CREATIVITY IS IMPACTING BRAND DIFFERENTIATION

Brand personality, brand stand out, and creativity are the lowest performing brand platform components. **42%** of respondents state that improving creative stand out and creative identity was the second most important brand building focus area for the year ahead.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

■ WHILE CONFIDENCE IN BRAND BUILDING IS HIGH, BUDGETS ARE NOT

Over 50% of respondents say they are “reasonably confident” that they will fulfil their brand building objectives. Despite brand being firmly placed on the boardroom agenda, brand building investments average “**between 5-20%**” of annual marketing budgets.

■ THE FOCUS IS ON CUSTOMERS. EMPLOYEES ARE OVERLOOKED

B2B brands are being built to be highly customer-centric and less employee-centric. Talent acquisition and employee retention is a much lower brand building priority than new customer acquisition and customer loyalty.

■ B2B MARKETERS STRUGGLE TO MATCH BRAND EXPERIENCES TO THEIR BRAND PROMISE

Over 50% of B2B marketers believe their brand only reflects their brand promise “quite well”. **36%** say their ability to control brand reputation and risk through brand experiences is a number one brand building challenge.

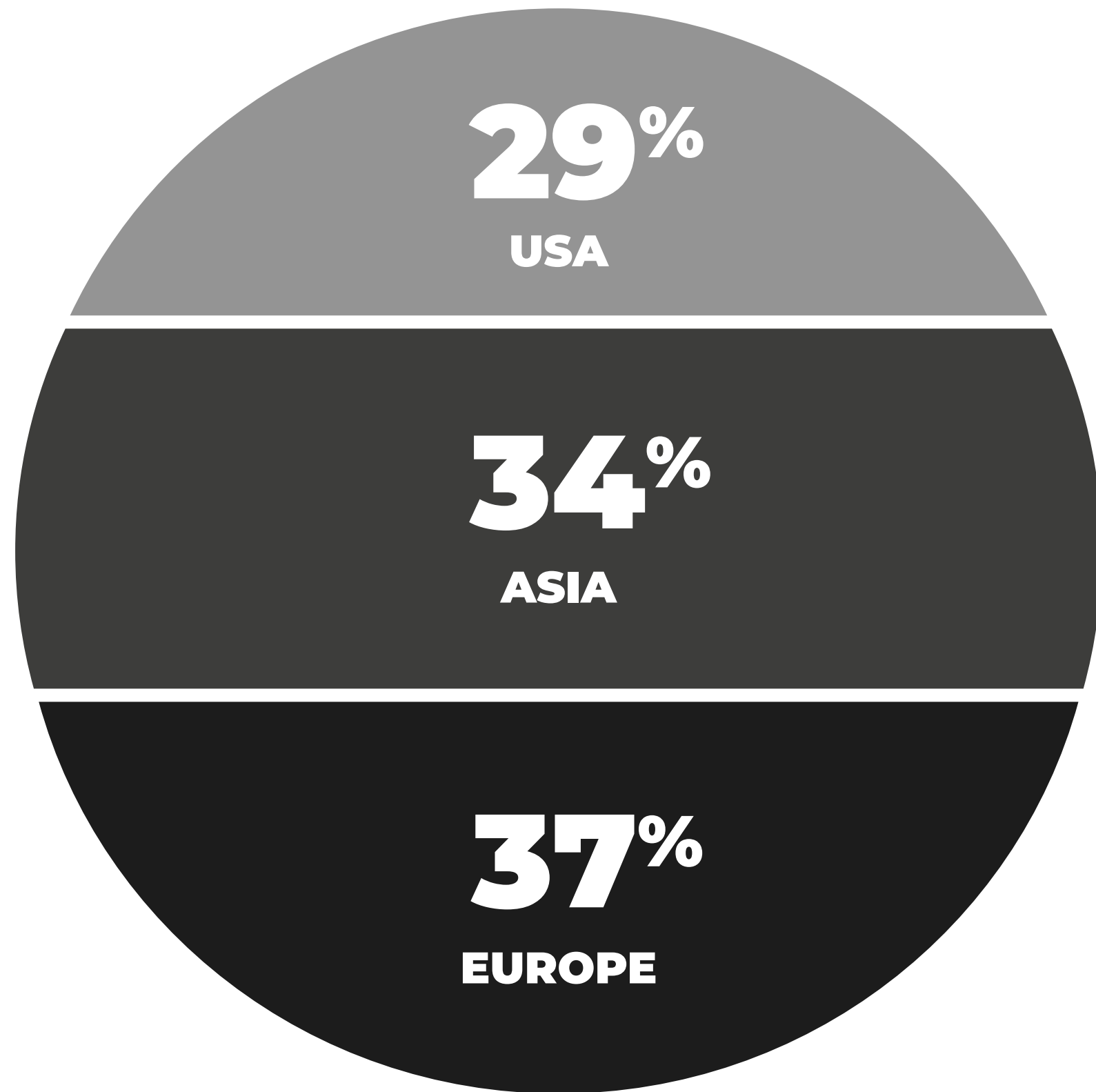
■ PLANNING FOR METAVERSE B2B BRAND EXPERIENCES IS UNDERWAY

Only 21% of B2B organisations say they are actively using the metaverse to create immersive brand experiences. **35%** of B2B brands are “planning to use the metaverse in the next 12 months” and **22%** say it will be in the next 24 months.

■ EMPLOYER BRANDS IMPROVE INTERNAL CULTURE AND COMMS, BUT NOT BELONGING, INCLUSION, AND JOB SATISFACTION

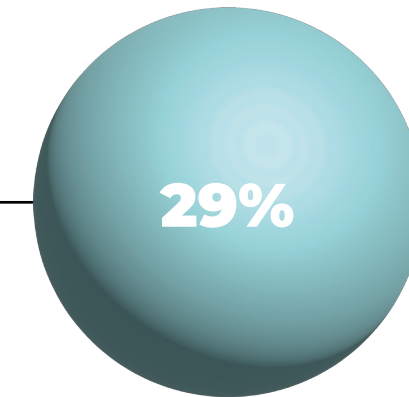
41% state that their employer brand has transformed company culture “very effectively”. Over one-third say their employer brand is “not very effective” at increasing employee job satisfaction.

THE DEMOGRAPHICS

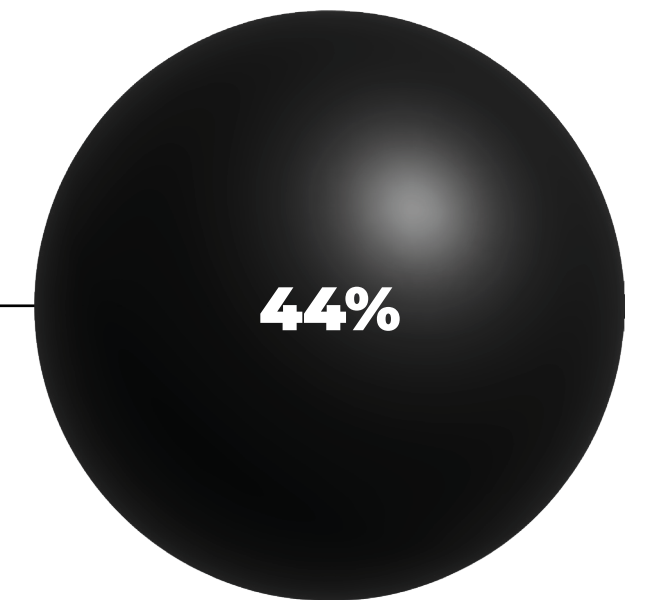


Company size by global sales revenue

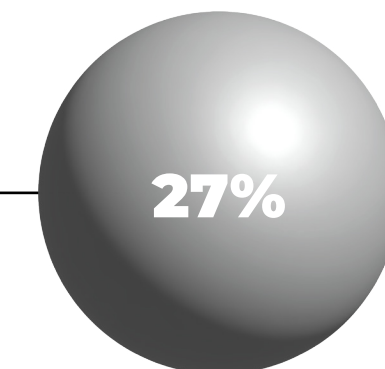
Small to medium businesses (\$5-10 million): 29%



Small to medium enterprises (\$10-500 million): 44%



Large enterprises (\$500+ million): 27%



THE DEMOGRAPHICS

Industry sector:

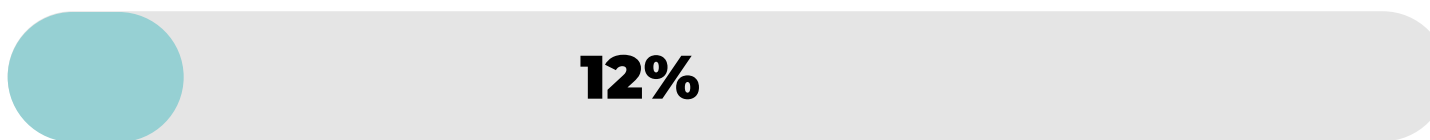
Technology and IT



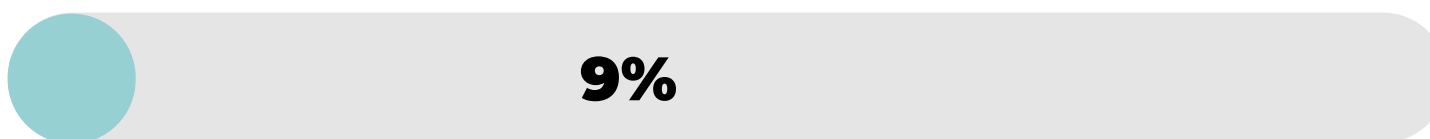
Retail



Manufacturing



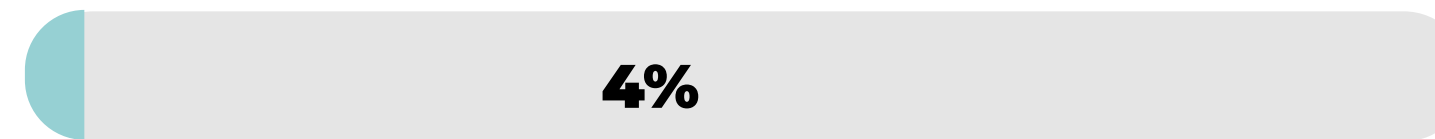
Financial Services



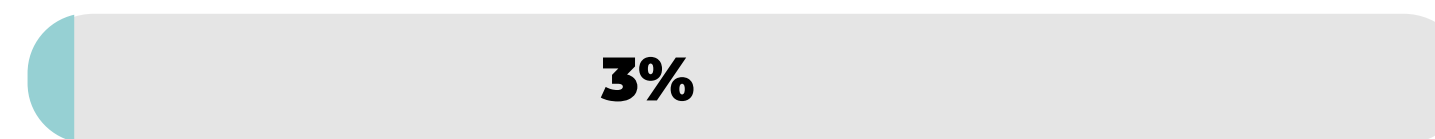
Professional Services and Consulting



Construction and Real Estate



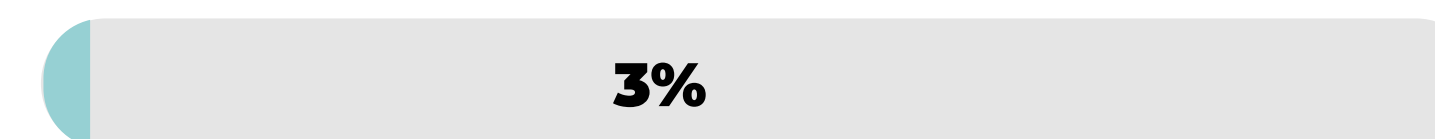
Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals



Education



Consumer Services



Telecommunications



Travel and Transportation



Energy and Utilities

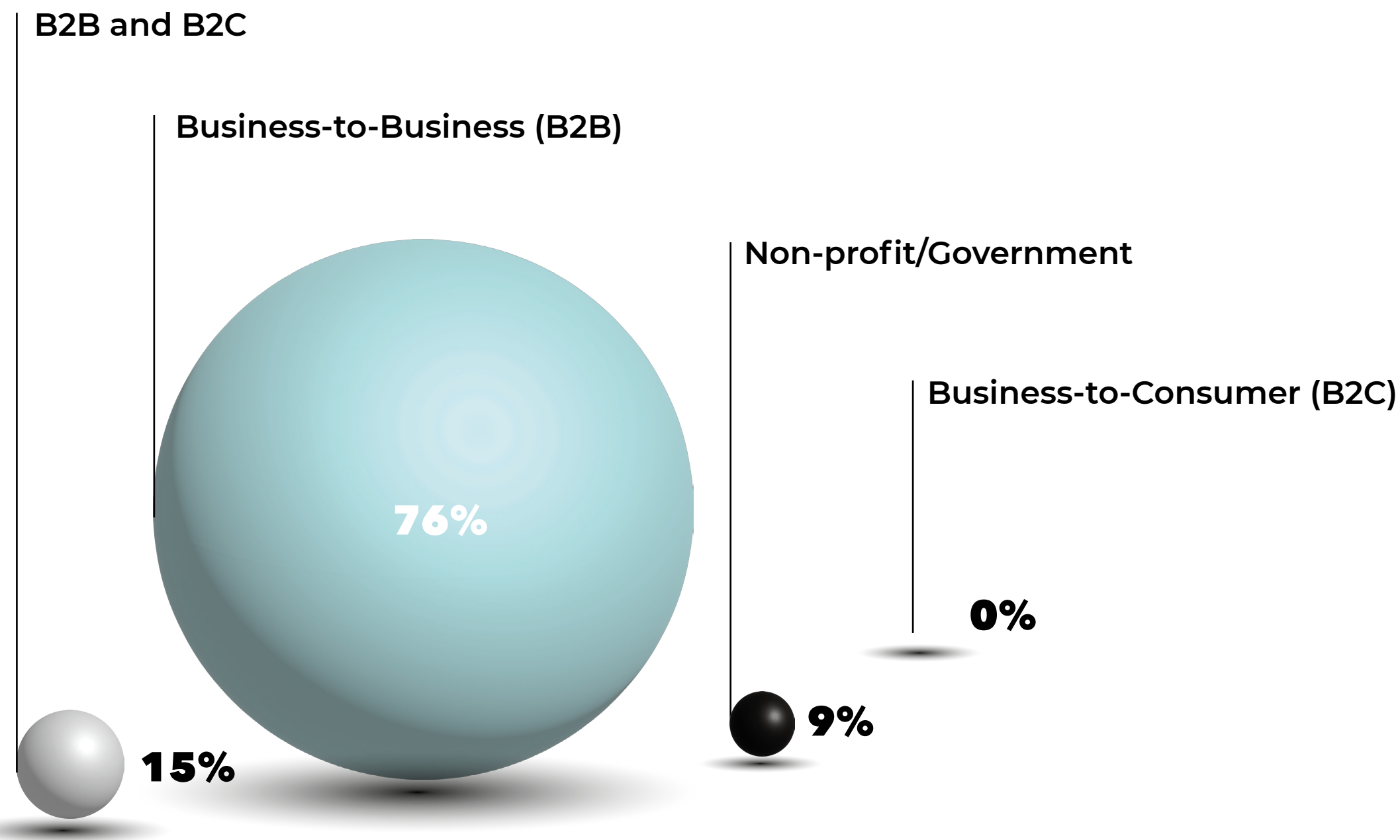


Communications, Media, and Entertainment

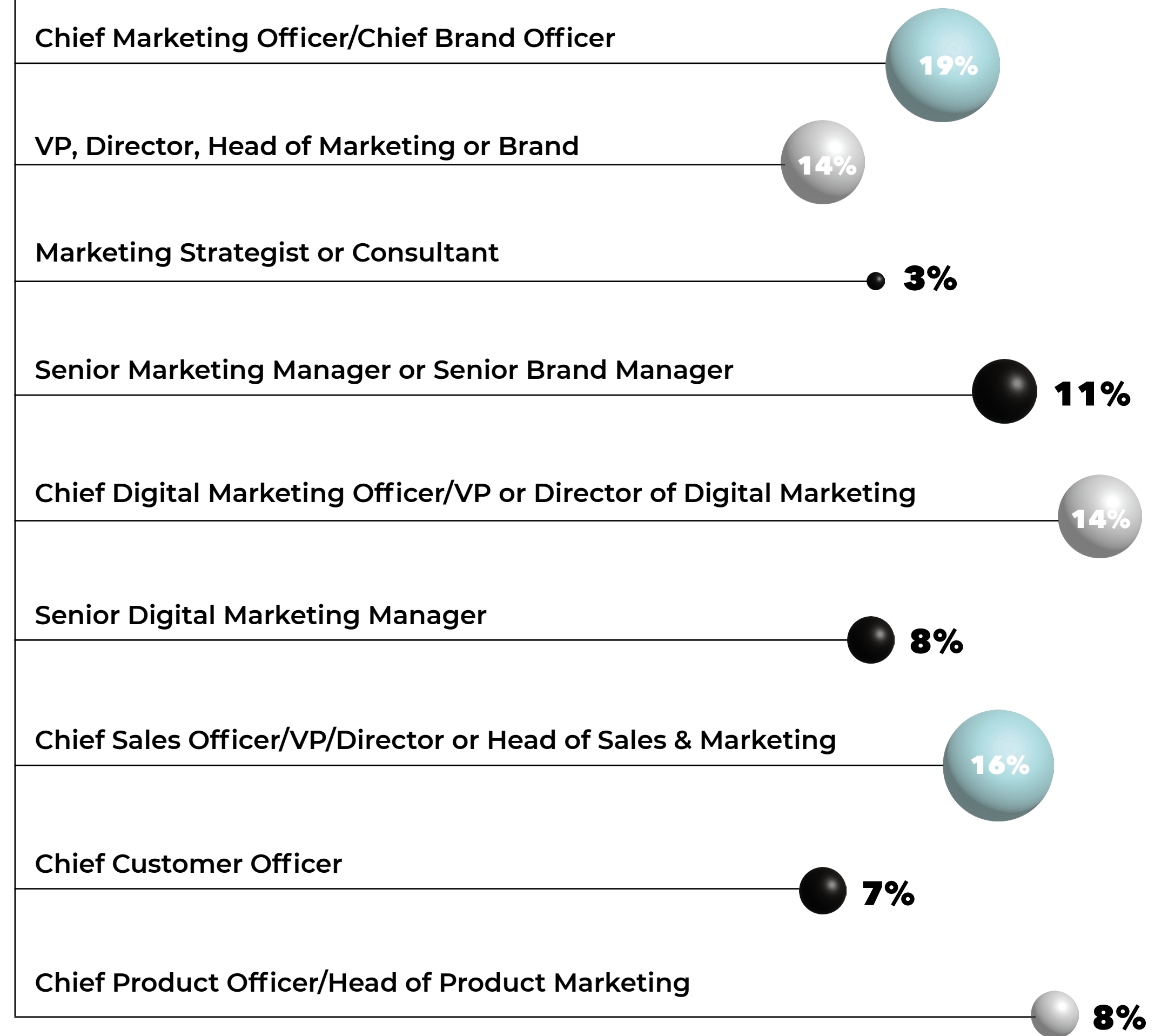


THE DEMOGRAPHICS

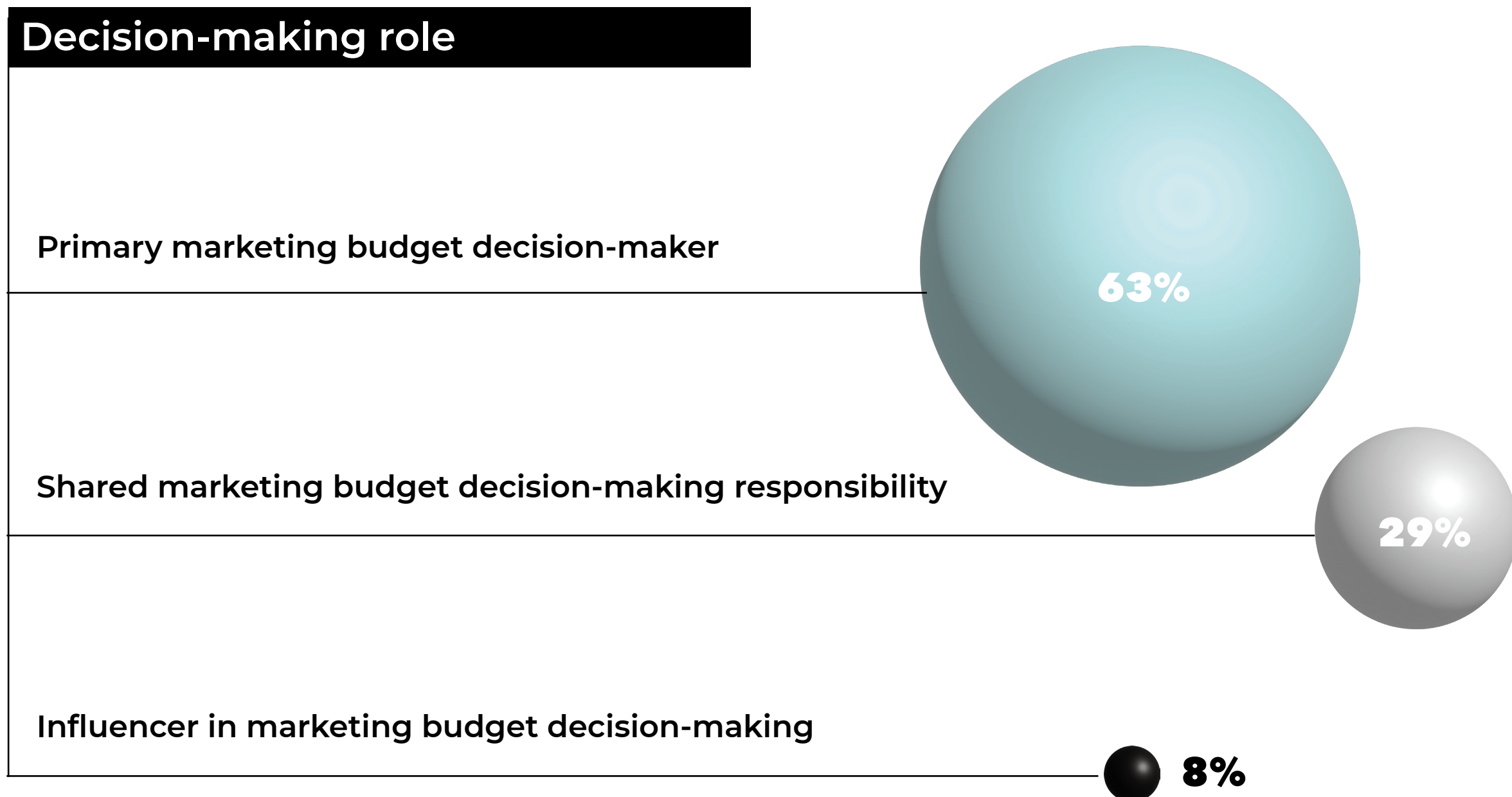
Type of organisation



Job function/title



THE DEMOGRAPHICS



RESEARCH *FINDINGS*

CHAPTER 1

THE *PERFORMANCE* OF B2B BRANDS TODAY

Marketers have a steeper hill to climb to earn their buyers' trust, respect, and advocacy in 2022.

Consumers in B2B, as in B2C, demand a lot more from the brands they engage with. Emotional expectations and moral standards are a lot higher. Beliefs and opinions on brands travel faster and further. And since the start of the pandemic, the value businesses should be bringing to our daily lives and wider society has skyrocketed.

Our research shows that **78% of B2B marketing leaders** believe brand marketing plays a "critical" or "very important" role in the financial value of their company. **A further 81%** say brand marketing is "critical" or "very important" to their organisation's revenue growth.



SAY BRAND MARKETING IS "CRITICAL" OR "VERY IMPORTANT" TO THEIR ORGANISATION'S REVENUE GROWTH.

Yet only **47% of B2B organisations** say they formally measure the perception of their brand among target audiences. And of those respondents, **50%** just track and measure brand perception on a quarterly or biannual basis.

In our experience, CMOs and marketing leaders who don't keep a close and consistent eye on their brand health* – a collection of metrics that determine how well a brand is delivering on its goals and promises to customers – are putting their business at huge risk. For example, brand awareness might be increasing, but if you don't know whether it's positive or negative awareness, you're missing half the picture.

***Brand health can be defined as a measure of how well a company or brand delivers on certain attributes of the proposition or solution it promises its target audiences.**

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

Insight #1

The majority of B2B brands are performing “well” on core health measures

B2B marketers feel positive about the current health of their brand. **43% of respondents** globally say their brands are performing **“very well”** across eight core brand health indicators (BHIs).

25% say “brilliantly”
25% say “quite well”
and only 7% say “poorly”

B2B Brand Health Indicators (BHIs)

Brand visibility

Our brand is easily recognised and recalled by our audience



Brand likability

Our brand is seen positively and is well-liked by our audience



Brand trust

Our brand is seen as reliable, truthful, and trustworthy



Brand differentiation

Our brand stands out from competitors in a good way



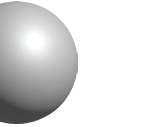
Brand momentum

Our brand is leading the market



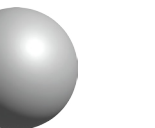
Brand compassion

Our brand is caring towards customers, employees, and wider society



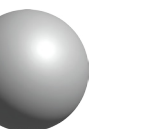
Brand focus

Our brand fits the specific needs and interests of our audience



Brand activism

Our brand takes a strong ethical and moral stance on societal issues



When analysing why certain B2B brands perform “brilliantly” or “very well” on their BHIs compared to others, we can see that BHI performance is directly related to three key variables:



CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

When digging deeper into each BHI, we can see that some are performing better than others.

Question: How well does your B2B brand currently perform against the following brand health indicators (BHIs)?

Overall summary by mean score		Mean Score
Brand trust	Our brand is seen as reliable, truthful, and trustworthy	4.00
Brand likability	Our brand is seen positively and is well-liked by our audience	3.95
Brand compassion	Our brand is caring towards customers, employees, and wider society	3.90
Brand focus	Our brand fits the specific needs and interests of our audience	3.90
Brand visibility	Our brand is easily recognised and recalled by our audience	3.87
Brand momentum	Our brand is leading the market	3.84
Brand activism	Our brand takes a strong ethical and moral stance on societal issues	3.71
Brand differentiation	Our brand stands out from competitors in a good way	3.66



CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

Insight #2

B2B brands believe they are trusted

Brand trust was voted the highest performing BHI, with a mean score of 4.00 out of 5.00. **74% of B2B brands** said their brand trust performs “brilliantly” or “very well”.

Interestingly, when we cross-correlate those brands who answered “brilliantly” to brand trust with how well they felt their brand promise reflected their brand experience, **60%** said “very well”. This indicates that the B2B brands delivering on their brand promises are rewarded with deeper levels of perceived customer trust.

The next highest BHI was brand likeability (mean score of 3.95), followed by brand compassion and brand focus (mean score of 3.9).

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today**Insight #3****The focus is on customers.
Employees are overlooked**

Putting your customer at the heart of your brand is often heralded as a cornerstone of B2B brand building. When we analyse our responses, we find that brand centricity for customers received the highest brand platform component score (**mean score of 4.0**). In contrast, the lowest-performing brand platform component was brand centricity for employees (**mean score of 3.6**).

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

Question: To what extent does your brand currently deliver on the following brand platform components?

B2B Brand Platform Components



Our brand is relevant to the needs/priorities of our customers.	4.00
Our brand vision aligns to corporate business goals.	3.99
Our brand purpose aims to positively impact people's lives and society.	3.98
Our brand connects with audiences on an emotional, human level.	3.92
Our brand takes a strong stand against societal issues	3.88
Our brand promise reflects our customer experiences and engagements.	3.84
Our brand values authentically represent our culture and working practices.	3.78
Our brand personality that is expressed well visually and verbally.	3.76
Our brand has creative stand-out and distinction.	3.71
Our brand is relevant to the needs/priorities of our employees.	3.6

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

We uncover this insight again when exploring the importance of brand building on business success.

Question: How important a role does B2B brand marketing play in delivering to the following areas of your company's business?

Both the attraction of new customers (**mean score of 4.20**) and the retention and loyalty of customers (**mean score of 4.15**) sit in the top three most important roles of brand building.

Overall summary by mean score	Mean Score
The attraction of new customers	4.20
The revenue growth of your customers	4.17
The retention and loyalty of your customers	4.15
The generation of sales opportunities	4.09
The financial value of your company	4.08
The competitive advantage of your company	4.04
The generation of quality marketing leads	4.04
The ability to expand into new regions, verticals or categories	4.00
The ability to negotiate better payment terms	3.95
The attraction of new talent	3.86
The attraction of industry analysts	3.91
The retention and loyalty of staff	3.80
The ability to charge higher prices	3.68

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

Conversely, the attraction of new talent (**mean score of 3.91**) and the retention and loyalty of staff (**mean score of 3.81**) sit at the lower end of the importance table. This suggests that brand building is centred on winning the hearts and minds of buyers over the very people bringing authenticity and life to the brand for customers.

ONLY
27% OF RESPONDENTS MEASURED
EMPLOYEE RETENTION RATES
AS A BRAND HEALTH METRIC.

This theme continued when we asked B2B brands how they currently measured their brand health and performance. Customer retention rates and sales revenue from new customers accounted for two of the top three measures, while employee retention rates **only accounted for 27%** of respondent answers.

We explore the topic of employee insights and employer brand further in [chapter five](#).



CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

Insight #4

Brand experience isn't delivering on brand promise

Our research tells us that brand experience is a top challenge for B2B marketing leaders today.

When asked if their brand promise reflects the brand experience they give customers, **only 51% of respondents** said “quite well”.

To compound this issue, **a sizeable 68%** went on to admit that their organisation manages brand experiences just “quite well” or “not very well” at all.

51%

OF B2B BRANDS SAY THEIR BRAND PROMISE REFLECTS THEIR BRAND EXPERIENCE “QUITE WELL”.

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

36%

SAY THEIR ABILITY TO CONTROL BRAND REPUTATION IS THEIR NUMBER ONE BRAND BUILDING CONCERN.

This experience gap is made even clearer by the fact that over one-third of B2B marketing leaders **(36%)** say their ability to control brand reputation and risk through brand experiences is their number one brand building concern or barrier to success.

Brand experiences have long been criticised for their lack of comparable measurement and correlation to clear business results and outcomes. And as expected, when we investigate why brand experiences are so difficult for B2B marketing leaders to manage, we discover that the **inability to measure them accurately and insufficient budget allocation** for enhanced brand experiences are the top two causes.

Interestingly, **33% stated** their leadership team do not see brand experience as a priority relative to other brand building initiatives like driving brand awareness or consideration. Though this is likely due to the difficulty in measuring the performance of brand experiences, it also signals that leadership teams respond more favourably to hard commercial metrics like brand awareness levels.

New website visitors, an acceleration of sales opportunities, or higher win rates demonstrate performance much clearer than softer, more emotional cues like positive brand sentiment or brand trust found in tools like Net Promoter Score. As such, it should come as no surprise that **improving brand experience (digitally and physically) is in the top four brand building objectives and priorities for the year ahead.**

33%

STATED THEIR LEADERSHIP TEAM DO NOT SEE BRAND EXPERIENCE AS A PRIORITY.

CHAPTER 1: The performance of B2B brands today

Insight #5

Planning for metaverse B2B brand experiences are underway

Though there are still uncertainties around how B2B brands will come to use the metaverse, it is undeniable that this new technology has the potential to revolutionise the B2B industry.

Only 21% of the B2B organisations surveyed say they are actively using the metaverse to create more immersive brand experiences today. Excitingly, we found that **35%** of forward-thinking businesses are “planning to use the metaverse for brand experiences in the next 12 months”.

A further 22% will be incorporating its use into their brand experiences in the next 24 months – with only a small proportion (5%) of the belief that “the metaverse is not appropriate for our B2B audience”.

Question: Which of the following describes your thoughts about using the metaverse in your B2B brand experiences?

We are already using the metaverse for our brand experiences

21%

We are planning to use the metaverse for our brand experiences in the next 12 months

35%

We are planning to use the metaverse for our brand experiences in the next 24 months

22%

We are not exploring the metaverse right now for brand experiences

14%

The metaverse is not appropriate for our B2B audience'

5%

I still don't understand what the metaverse is

3%

CHAPTER 2

THE *RELATIONSHIP* BETWEEN *BRAND* BUILDING AND *THE BUSINESS*

In 2019, the FT partnered with the IPA to publish the Board-Brand Rift Report.* Their research revealed that **over half** of business leaders rated their knowledge of brand building as “average” to “very poor” – with **less than a third** of organisations (B2B and B2C) discussing brand health metrics in the boardroom.

While discussions on the commercial value of brand still echo around boardroom tables across the world, we are thankfully seeing a shift change in the attitudes of CEOs and board members towards brand building investments.

***Footnote 1**

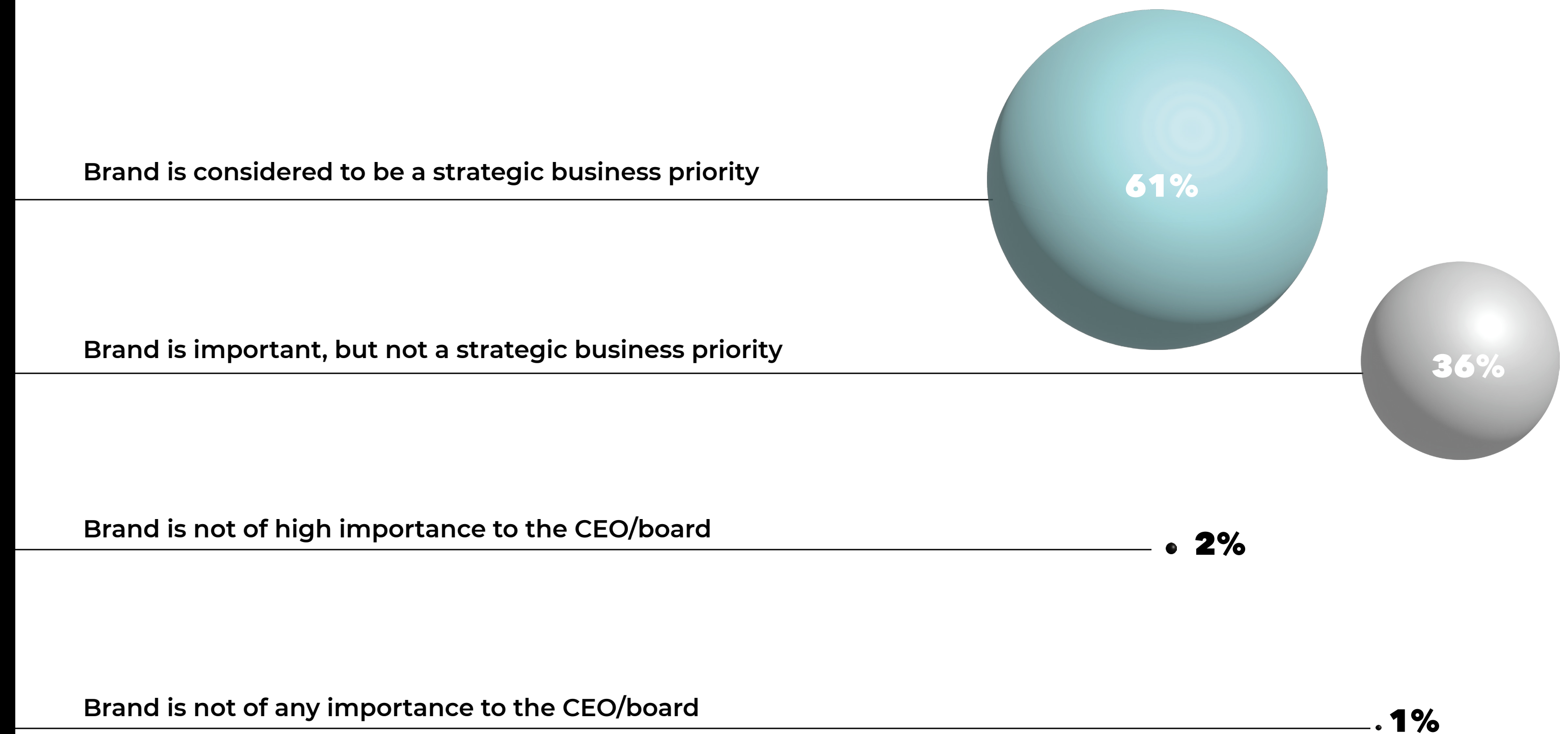
CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

Insight #6

Brand is now a boardroom priority

Over 60% of B2B marketing leaders say that brand is now considered a strategic business priority for their CEO and board members.

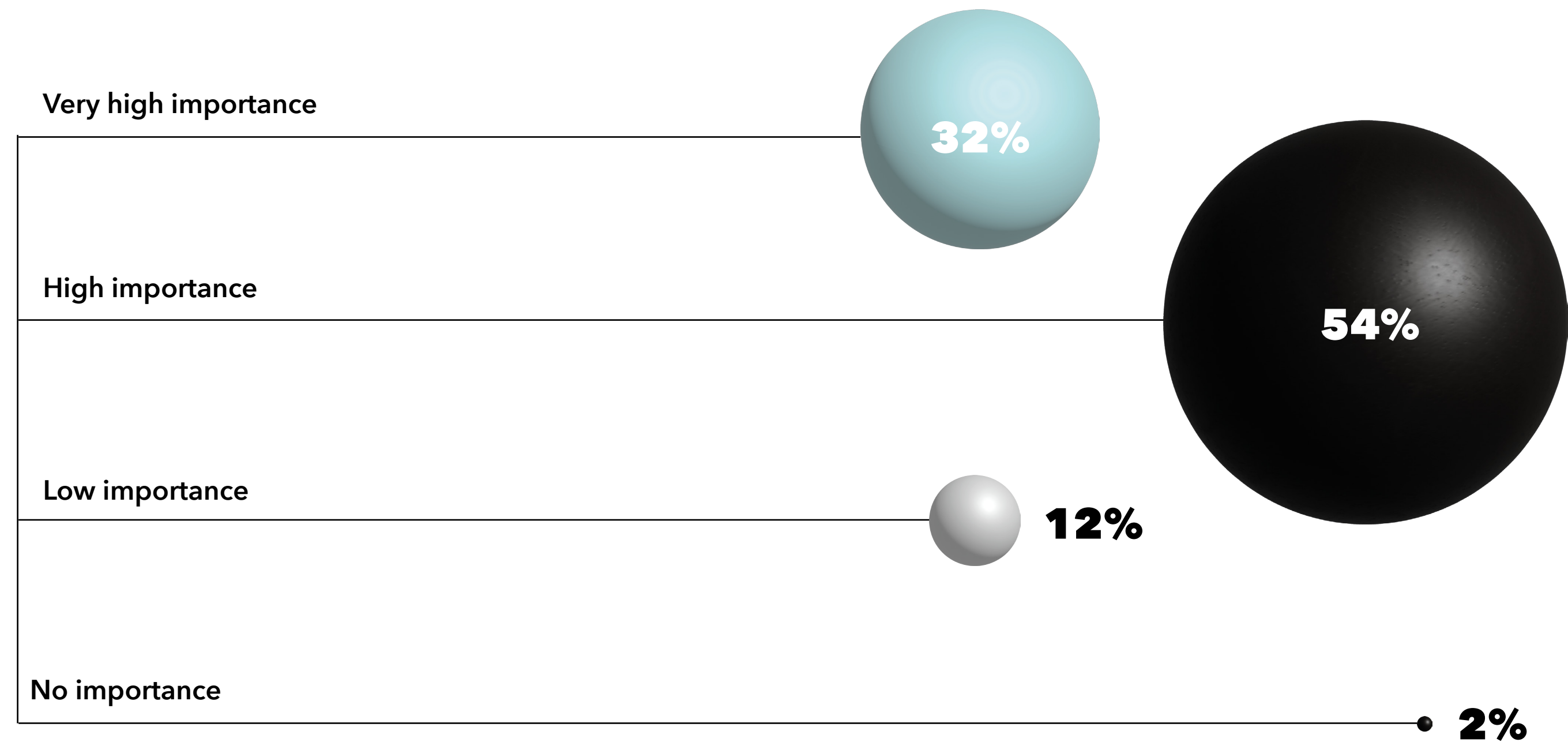
Question: To what extent is brand considered to be a strategic business priority for your CEO and/or board members today?



CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

32% believe brand marketing to be of “very high importance” in the boardroom, and 54% rate brand marketing to be of “high importance” in the boardroom.

Question: How much importance is placed on brand marketing by your board and/or leadership team of your company?



And perhaps most pertinently, 71% of our respondents acknowledge that the views of their board and leadership team towards brand building have changed significantly in the last 12 months, citing that “brand marketing has increased in importance” to their company.

CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business**Insight #7****COVID-19 and competitiveness have refocused attention on brand**

When we look into why brand has become a boardroom priority among those surveyed, we find two principal reasons: **Changes in B2B buyer behaviour caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and the saturation and competitiveness of the B2B marketplace.**

Over one-third (37%) said they needed to reset their brand strategy and proposition to strengthen the emotional connection with their audience. Many of our respondents also mentioned their drive to improve their social purpose to become more authentic, empathetic, and transparent in their relationships with customers and employees.

CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

“ **COVID-19 HAS ACCELERATED THE NEED FOR OUR BRAND TO HAVE A REAL AND MEANINGFUL PURPOSE. ONE THAT CONTRIBUTES MORE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY AND IMPROVES LIVES. THIS IS WHAT OUR BUYERS NOW EXPECT FROM US.** ”

A further **42% highlighted** the need to better define their brand to improve brand stand out and differentiation in an increasingly competitive, fast-paced marketplace. For some, it means repositioning themselves away from the traditional ‘safe and steady’ values of B2B corporates. Others said their brand enabled them to take a more unique positioning to attract attention and intrigue from new customers.

“ **MARKET COMPETITION AND M&A ACTIVITY HAS INTENSIFIED. WE NEED TO KEEP OUR COMPANY IN USERS’ MINDS. CREATING MEMORABLE IMPRESSIONS AND STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD THROUGH OUR BRAND IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER BEFORE.** ”

Quotes taken from the B2B marketing leaders surveyed.

CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

Insight #8

Brand building is just as important as demand generation and ABM

For as long as we can remember, B2B marketers have wrestled with the dilemma of prioritising short-term sales activation over long-term brand building goals. Nine times out of ten, commercial pressures have caused us to lean more heavily towards lead generation campaigns that drive faster pipeline and revenue opportunities.

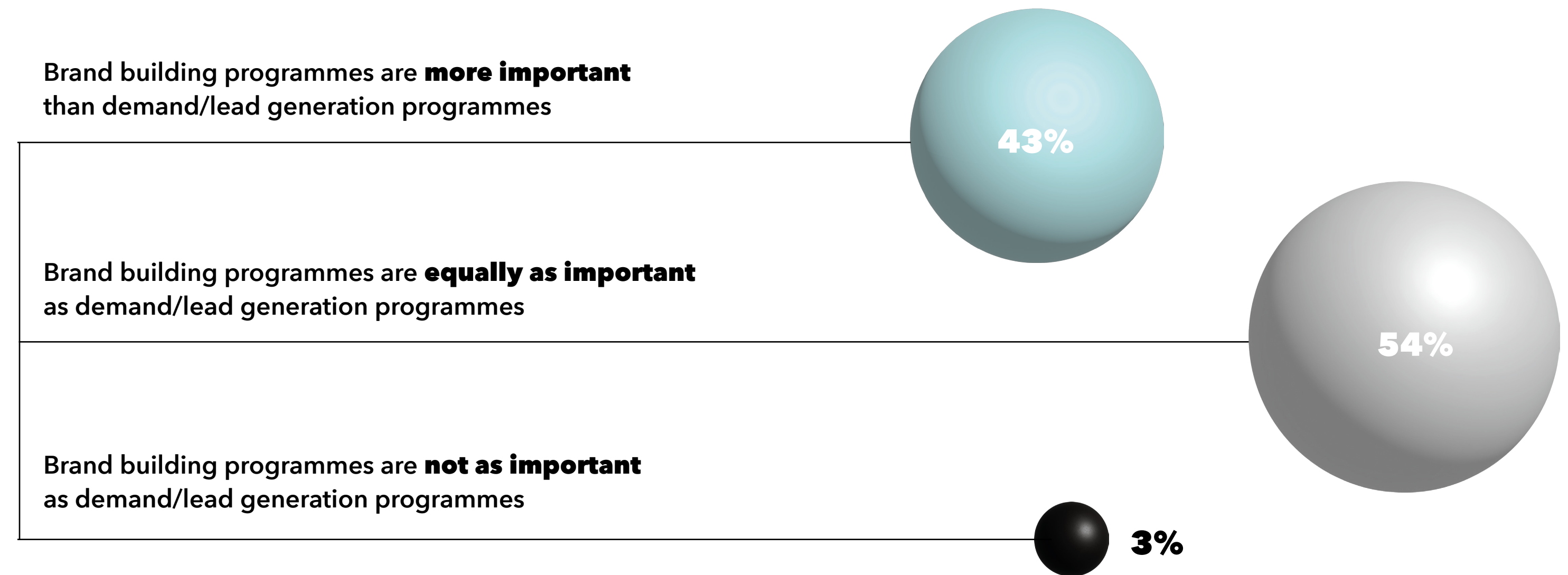
And to a certain degree, this quandary is still felt by some of our respondents. **31%** of the B2B brands that did not believe brand building was a strategic business priority attributed this to the length of time taken to generate leads, or to the fact that brand marketing does not integrate well with existing demand generation strategies.

CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

Fortunately, the majority of our audience is experiencing a rebalance in their marketing priorities.

54% of B2B marketers now state that brand building programmes are “equally as important” as demand generation programmes in achieving their marketing goals. While 43% say that they are “more important” than demand generation programmes – a huge shift in prioritisation compared to previous research studies of this nature.

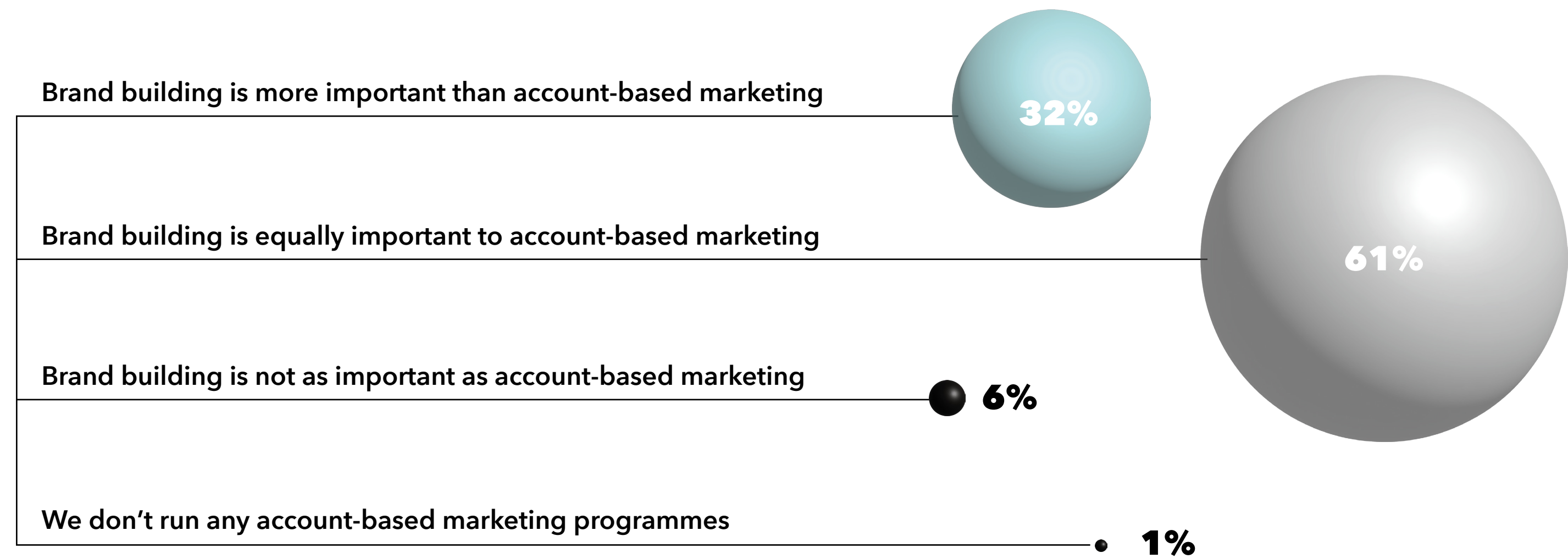
Question: How important are brand building programmes compared to demand/lead generation programmes in terms of contribution to your marketing goals?



CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

We see a similar rebalance when comparing the importance of brand building to account-based marketing (ABM) programmes. 32% say brand building is “more important” in achieving their marketing goals than ABM. And a further 61% say it is “equally as important”.

Question: How important are brand building programmes compared to account-based marketing (ABM) programmes in terms of contribution to your marketing goals?



CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

Insight #9

Brand building programmes are a top priority for B2B marketing leaders

It appears that the boardroom's renewed belief in brand has triggered a flurry of brand marketing activities. Of the B2B marketers surveyed **44% say growing brand awareness is their top marketing priority** for the next 12 months.

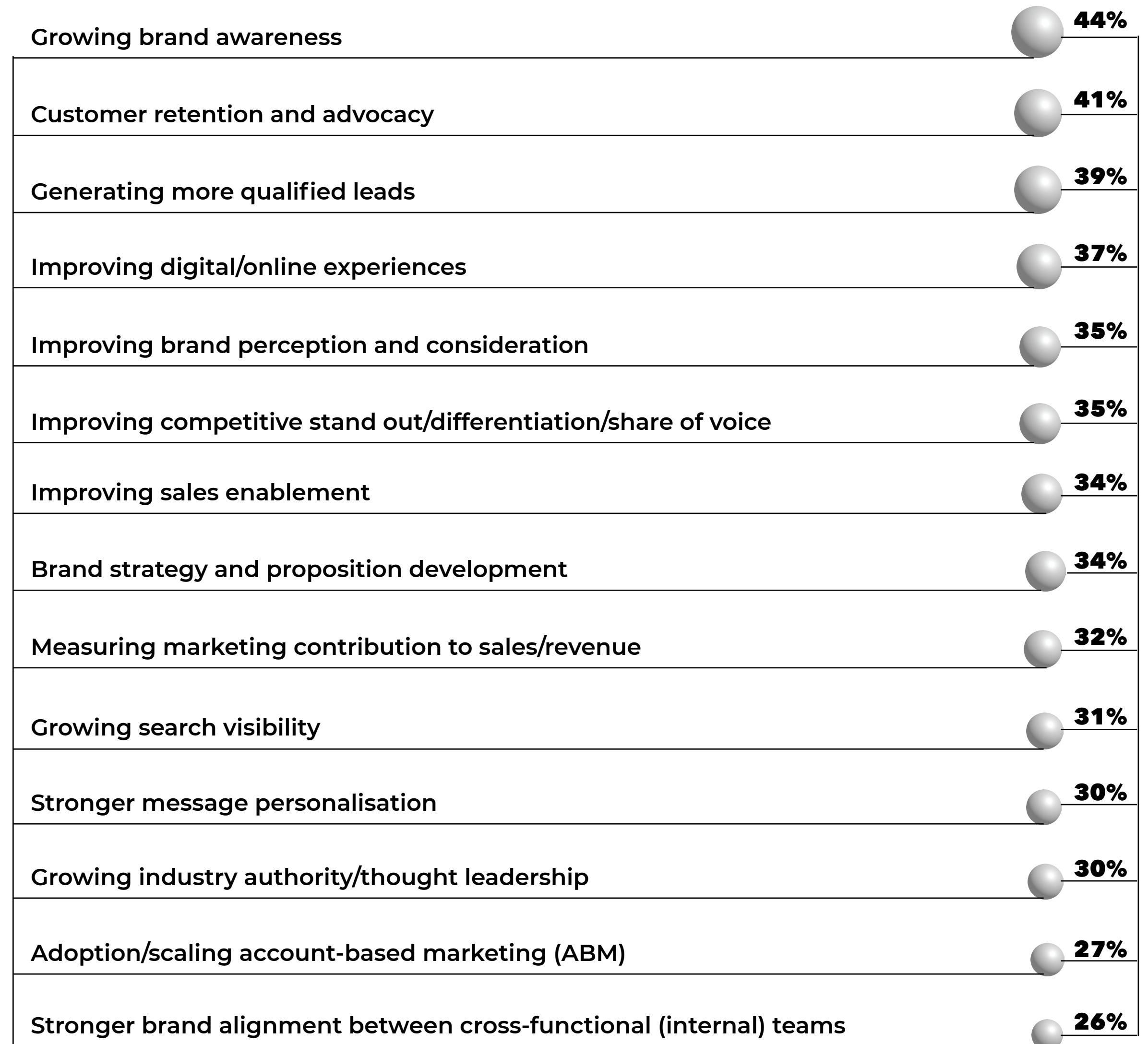
Improving customer retention (**41%**), generating more qualified marketing leads (**39%**), and improving digital experiences (**37%**) are also ranked of similar importance. While improving brand perception and consideration levels (**35%**) and strengthening brand strategy and proposition development (**34%**) both took strong positions in the top priority table.

CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

These results demonstrate that B2B marketing leaders are taking on a more robust balancing act between brand and demand marketing in 2022.

Question: What are your organisation's top five marketing objectives or priorities for the next 12 months?

44%
OF B2B MARKETERS SAY THAT GROWING BRAND AWARENESS IS THEIR TOP MARKETING PRIORITY FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS.



CHAPTER 2: The relationship between brand building and the business

Insight #10

ABM plunges down the B2B marketing priority list

Although not strictly related to brand building, it is important to recognise the surprising dip in focus on ABM for 2022/23 marketing activities. It could be that the majority of B2B brands surveyed already have a fully operational ABM programme in place – we know that **only 1% of our respondents do not implement any form of ABM.**

Alternatively, we may be starting to see B2B marketers apply Professor John Dawes'* brilliant 95:5 rule observation. By refocusing their marketing efforts on the **95% of out-of-market** B2B buyers, brands can build up mental availability instead of hyper-targeting the **5% who are in-market.**

*Footnote 2

CHAPTER 3

THE KEY BARRIERS *TO* BRAND BUILDING SUCCESS

Confidence among B2B marketing leaders in achieving their brand goals is high. **Over 50%** of respondents say they are “reasonably confident” that they will meet their brand building objectives, with **46% “very confident”**. On the contrary, only a small number admitted they are “not confident”.

46%

**VERY CONFIDENT THAT
THEY WILL MEET THEIR
BRAND BUILDING
OBJECTIVES.**

Evidently, the knowledge that brand building is now considered a strategic business priority in the boardroom will spur many marketing leaders to feel, perhaps for the first time, fully supported in their brand marketing efforts.

CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success**Insight #11****Confidence is high, but brand building budgets are not**

Despite brand being placed firmly on the boardroom agenda and brand marketing cited as “critical” to revenue growth (by 39% of respondents), we learn that budget investment in brand building programmes is still worryingly low.

40% of respondents told us that only “between 5-10%” and “10-20%” of their annual marketing budget was allocated to brand building programmes.

These results come in stark contrast to the Binet and Field research* recommending that brand building in B2B should, on average, account for **46% of marketing spend** versus the **54% of budget spent** on lead generation. Sadly, it seems that only 20% of the B2B brands surveyed have been able to apply that advice.

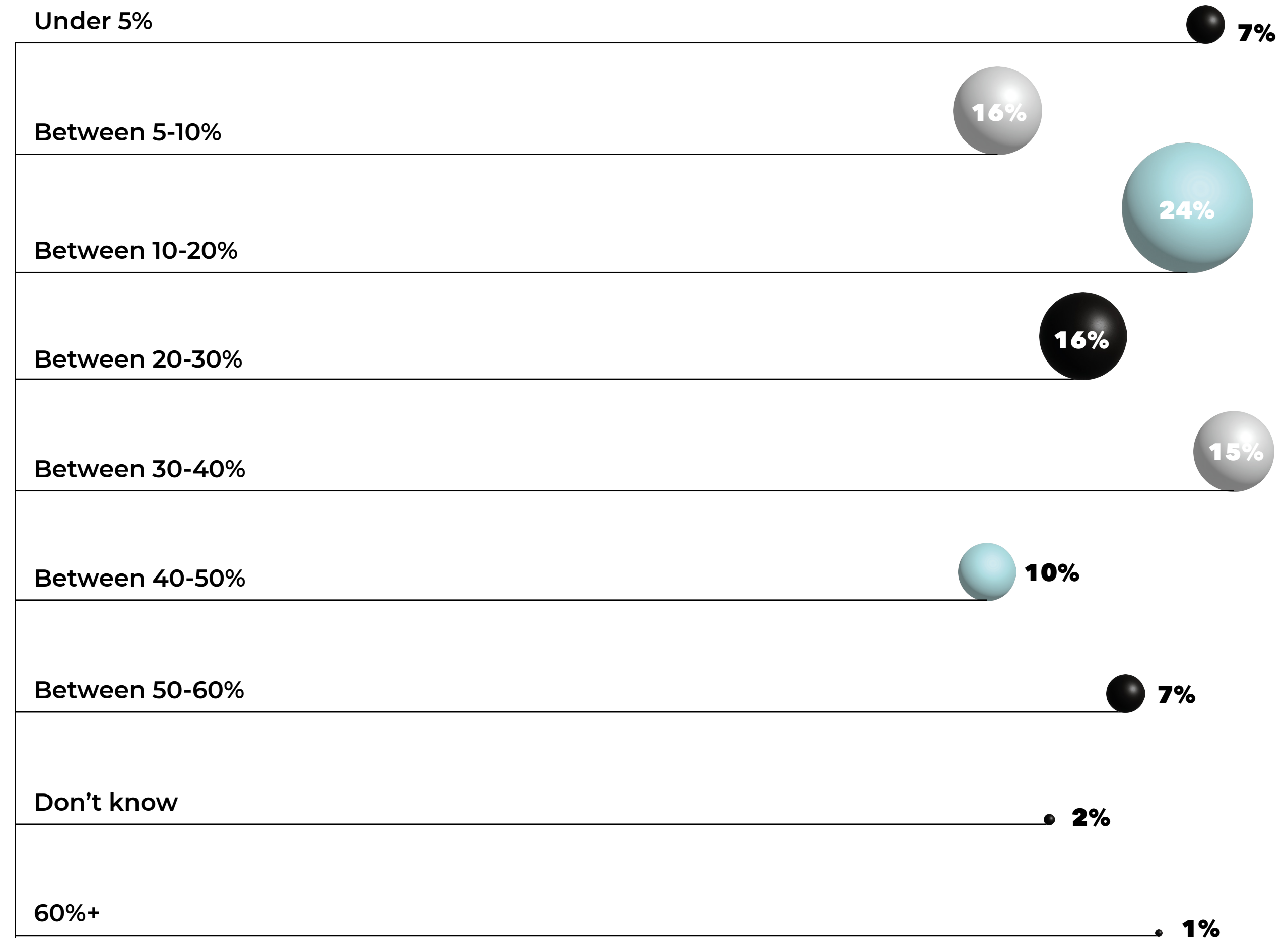
***Footnote 3**

CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

Question: What proportion of your organisation's marketing budget for the current fiscal year is specifically allocated to B2B brand building and brand marketing programmes?

40%

SAY "BETWEEN 5-10%" AND "10-20%" OF THEIR ANNUAL MARKETING BUDGET WAS ALLOCATED TO BRAND BUILDING PROGRAMMES.



CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

With the average annual marketing budget for B2B organisations in 2022 standing at **9.5% of total sales revenue**,* we can assume that brand building budgets sit somewhere between **0.95%** and **1.9%** of total sales revenue.

57% SAY THAT BRAND BUILDING BUDGETS WILL INCREASE IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR

Reassuringly, when respondents were asked if they anticipated their brand marketing budgets would increase in the next fiscal year, **57% believe** they “will increase”. A further **38% think** they “will stay the same as the current year” and **only 2% say** they “will decrease”. **2%** didn’t know.

While this is another positive indicator of brand building growth, it also puts increased pressure on B2B marketing leaders to demonstrate brand ROI. Of those surveyed, **49% said** pressure to prove brand value had “increased in the last 12 months”.

***Footnote 4**



CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

Insight #12

A lack of creativity is impacting brand differentiation

Of all the BHIs assessed by B2B marketing leaders, brand differentiation received the lowest mean score (3.66). **Only 22% of respondents** said they performed this “brilliantly”, with the majority admitting brand differentiation was currently performing “quite well”.

We should highlight this as a key concern – especially as **77% of B2B organisations** claim that brand building plays a “critically important” or “very important” role in their company’s competitive advantage.

The concern is exacerbated further when we assess how B2B brands deliver against their Brand Platform components’ – the fundamental components that make up your brand, i.e., brand purpose or brand values.

B2B Brand Platform Components

Brand purpose

Our brand purpose aims to positively impact people’s lives and society

Brand values

Our brand values authentically represent our culture and working practices

Brand promise

Our brand promise is reflected in our customer experiences and engagements

Brand vision

Our brand vision aligns with our corporate business goals

Brand personality

Our brand personality is expressed well visually and verbally

Brand stand out

Our brand has creative stand out and distinction

Brand connectivity

Our brand connects with audiences on an emotional, human level

Brand centricity for customers

Our brand is relevant to the needs and priorities of our customers

Brand centricity for employees

Our brand is relevant to the needs and priorities of our employees

CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

In general, 40% of B2B brands globally believe their brand platform is performing “very well” across all nine components. While 25% say “brilliantly”, 29% say “well”, and 6% say “poorly”.

Question: To what extent does your brand currently deliver on the following brand platform components?

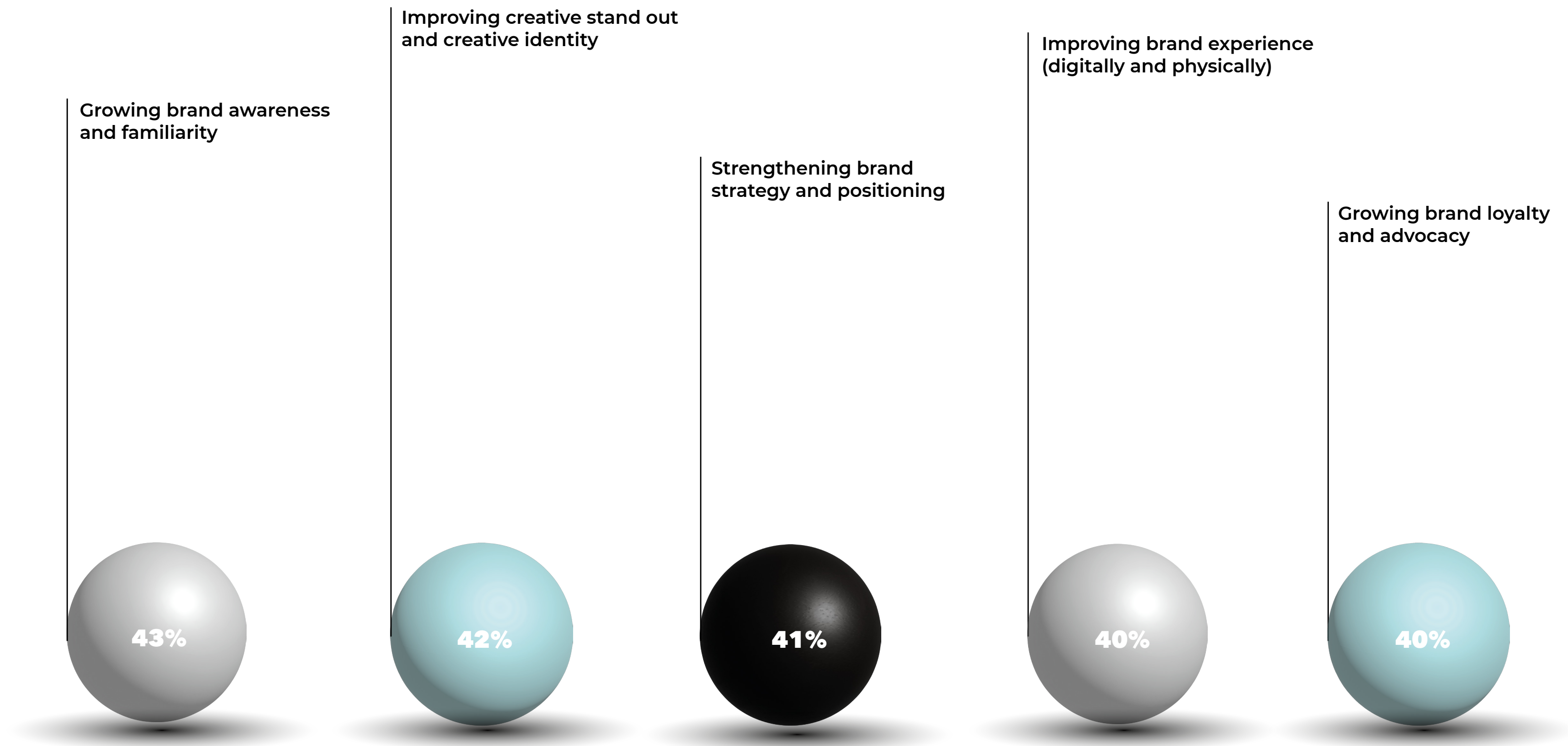


We can see that brand personality (score of 3.76) and brand stand out (score of 3.71) are among the lowest mean score results, especially in relation to how the brand is expressed creatively or visually.

CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

Cross-correlating these results against the top five brand building objectives or priorities for B2B marketers in the next 12 months, we learn that 42% say improving creative stand out and creative identity was the second most important focus area. This makes it the second most voted “top priority” by B2B marketing leaders for the year ahead.

Question: Summary of Top 5: Looking ahead to the next 12 months, what are your top five brand marketing objectives or priorities?





CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

Insight #13

Concerns over in-house brand skills and talent

Of the B2B brands surveyed, **54% say** they have 15+ marketing team employees dedicated to brand strategy or brand marketing programmes.

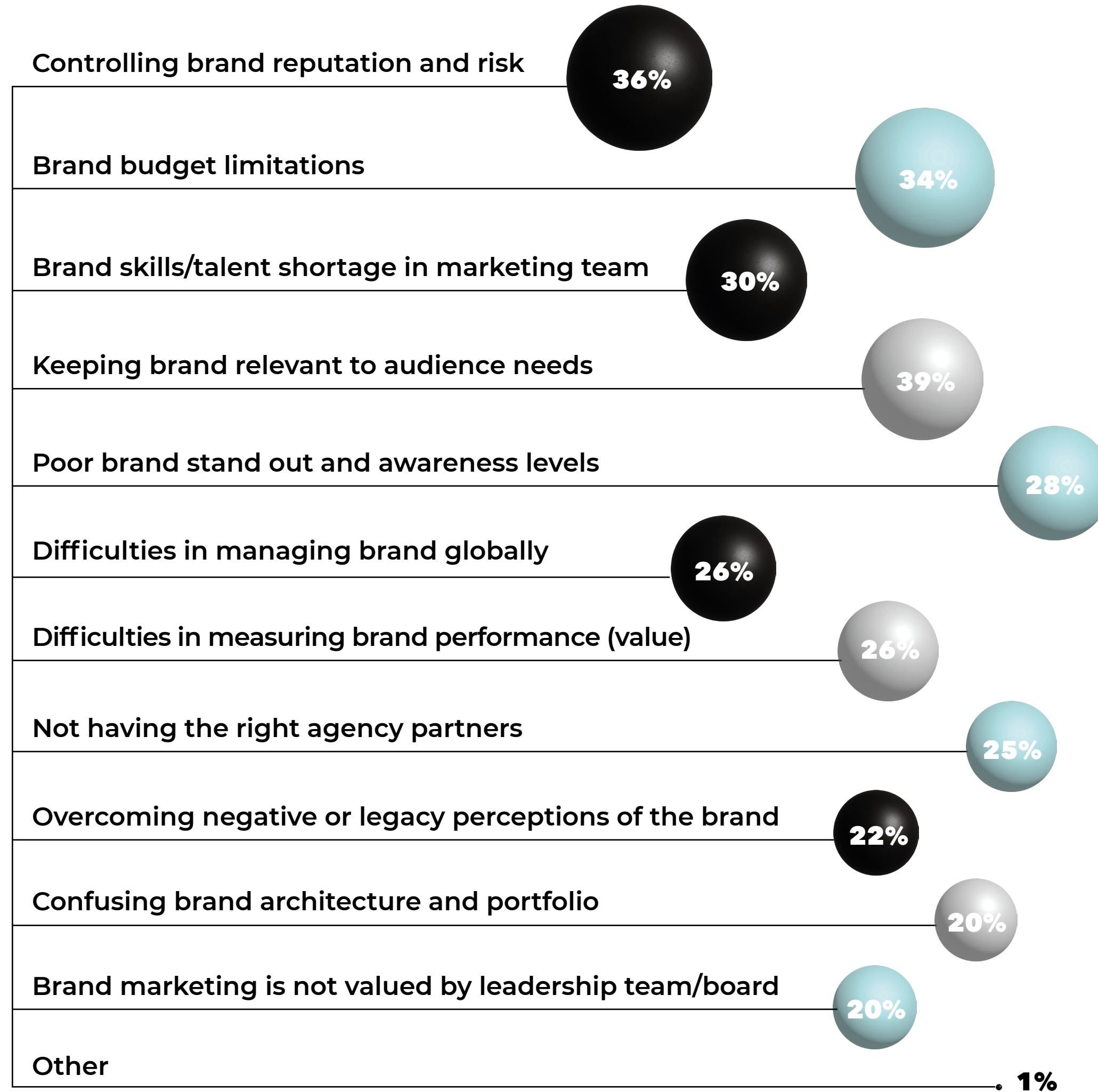
Despite this, a shortage of brand skills and talent in the marketing team was flagged as **the third greatest** potential challenge in achieving their brand objectives or priorities over the next 12 months – voted for by **30% of respondents**.

CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

Question: What are the greatest barriers or challenges that could stop you from achieving your brand objectives or priorities over the next 12 months? Select up to five.

36%

CONTROLLING BRAND REPUTATION IS THE #1 CHALLENGE.



CHAPTER 3: The key barriers to brand building success

Gartner's annual 2022 CMO Spend and Strategy Survey* was conducted during a similar timeframe to this research. Interestingly, and in contrast to these results, their survey suggests that CMOs are confident in their ability to manage brands. In fact, brand was one of the lowest-ranked capability gaps in their survey, whereas marketing data and analytics, customer understanding, and experience management were ranked top.

Perhaps we could presume that the B2B marketing leaders in our survey are referring to their inability to manage brand experiences as well, through either a lack of skills or talent. We know that **30% of our respondents** said their business managed this “not well at all”, and **28% admitted** this was due to poor brand experience training.

28%

ADMITTED THAT THEIR INABILITY TO
MANAGE BRAND EXPERIENCES WAS
DUE TO POOR STAFF TRAINING.

***Footnote 5**

TRANSMISSION.

CHAPTER 4

THE RISKS AND REALITIES OF BUILDING A PURPOSE-DRIVEN BRAND

We all recognise the importance and value of building a purpose-driven brand that puts saving the world above profit.

The 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer,* alongside many other studies, highlights that societal leadership is now a core function of business. Nearly **60%** of consumers (B2C and B2B) will buy or advocate a brand based on their societal beliefs, while six in ten employees will choose a workplace based on their shared societal values.

*Footnote 6

CHAPTER 4: The risks and realities of building a purpose-driven brand

Insight #14

B2B brands are taking an active stance on societal issues

Our research revealed that redefining or developing a more meaningful brand purpose was in the top six brand building priorities for the year ahead for over a third of B2B organisations looking to strengthen audience trust, emotional connectivity, and loyalty.

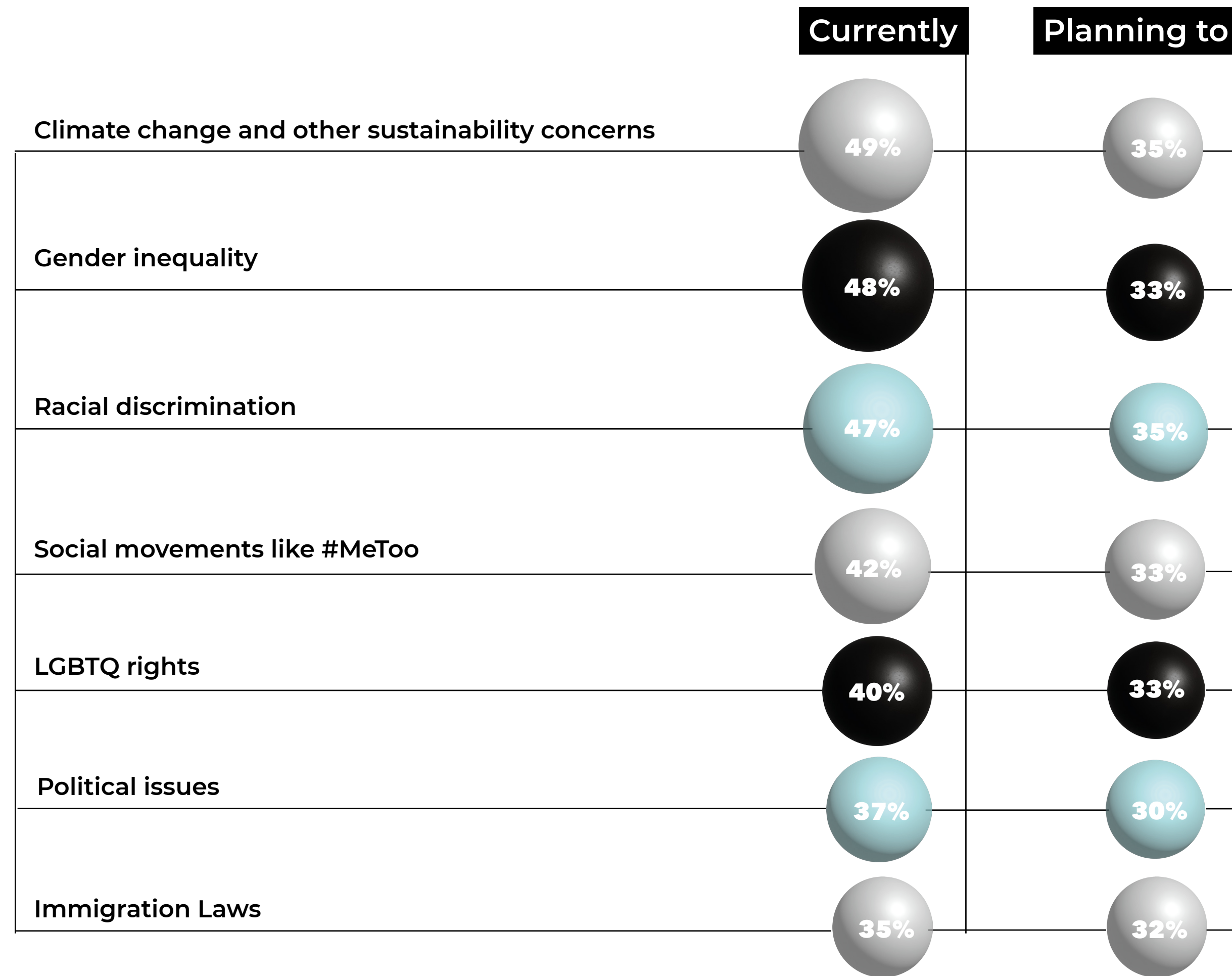
The desire to become a 'force for good' is even more apparent when we learn that **43%** of B2B brands are currently taking an active stance on some of today's most important societal issues. Of those not currently taking an active stance, **34%** said they are planning to in the next 12 months. While just under one in four (**24%**) of our respondents do not wish to take an active stance at all.

The top three societal issues tackled are climate change and sustainability issues (**49%**), gender inequality (**48%**), and racial discrimination (**47%**). Fewer B2B brands are currently taking a stance on LGBTQ rights (**40%**), political issues (**37%**), and immigration laws (**35%**).

However, when looking at the societal issues B2B brands are planning to take a strong stance on in the next 12 months, we learn that LGBTQ rights and social movements like #MeToo had moved into the top four of the table.

CHAPTER 4: The risks and realities of building a purpose-driven brand

Question: To what extent is your brand currently taking, or planning to take, a public-facing stance on the following societal issues?



CHAPTER 4: The risks and realities of building a purpose-driven brand

Insight #15

B2B are thinking ethically, but not always for ethical reasons

Our research reveals that adopting a cause-based brand strategy is very much a business growth goal. Attracting new customers, increasing revenue, or improving competitive advantage are found to be core considerations for the B2B brands focusing on societal issues.

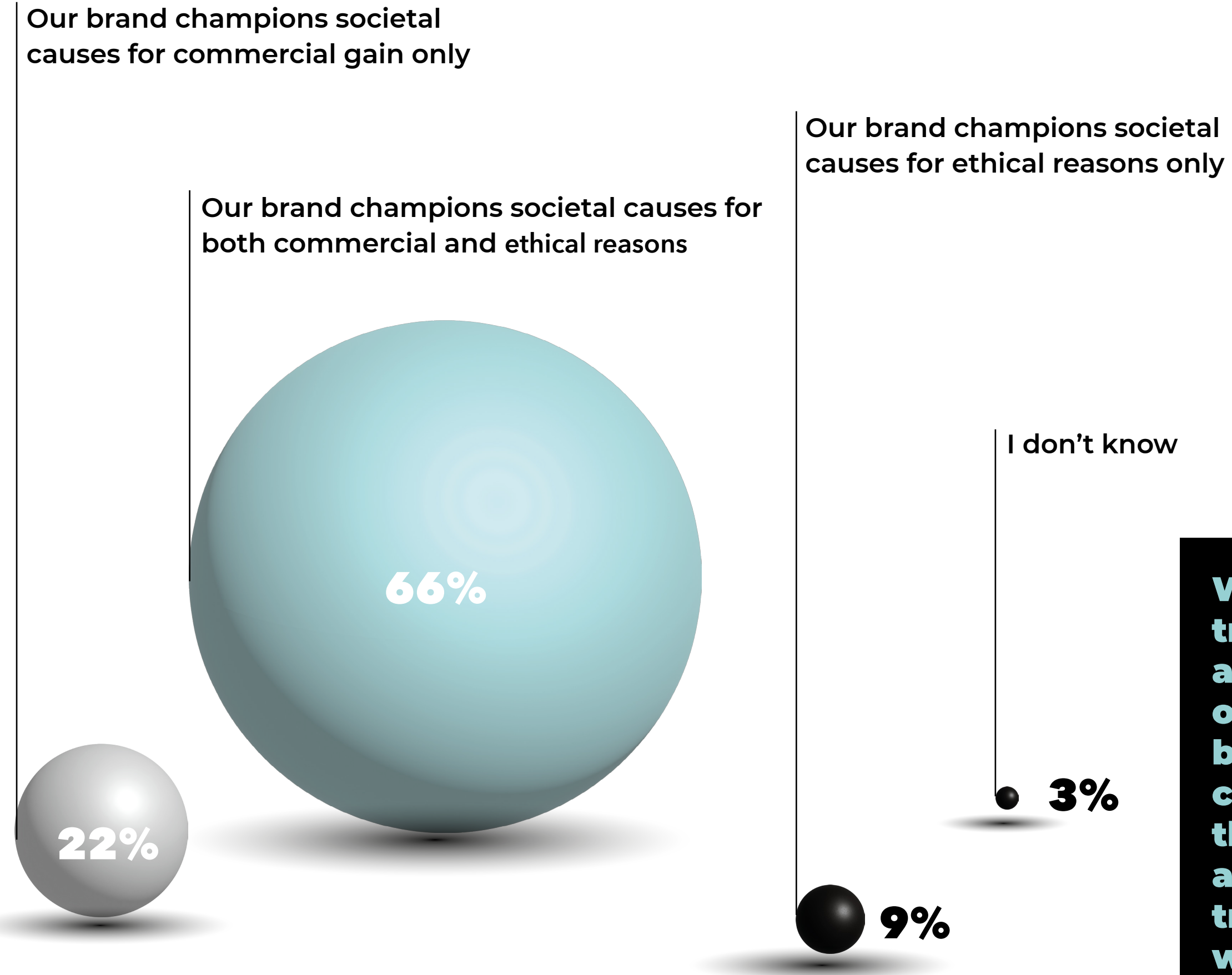
Three out of four B2B marketing leaders (**76%**) admitted they “feel a lot” and “some” pressure and expectation from their target audiences to take an active stance on societal issues.

Moreover, when asked the extent to which their brand is championing societal causes for commercial gain versus ethical reasons, we discover that **only a tiny 9%** of all the B2B brands surveyed are building cause-based brands purely “for ethical reasons”.

CHAPTER 4: The risks and realities of building a purpose-driven brand

Of those surveyed, 66% admit championing societal causes for “both commercial and ethical reasons”. And 22% say it is for “commercial reasons only.”

Question: To what extent do you believe your brand is championing societal causes for commercial gain rather than for ethical reasons?



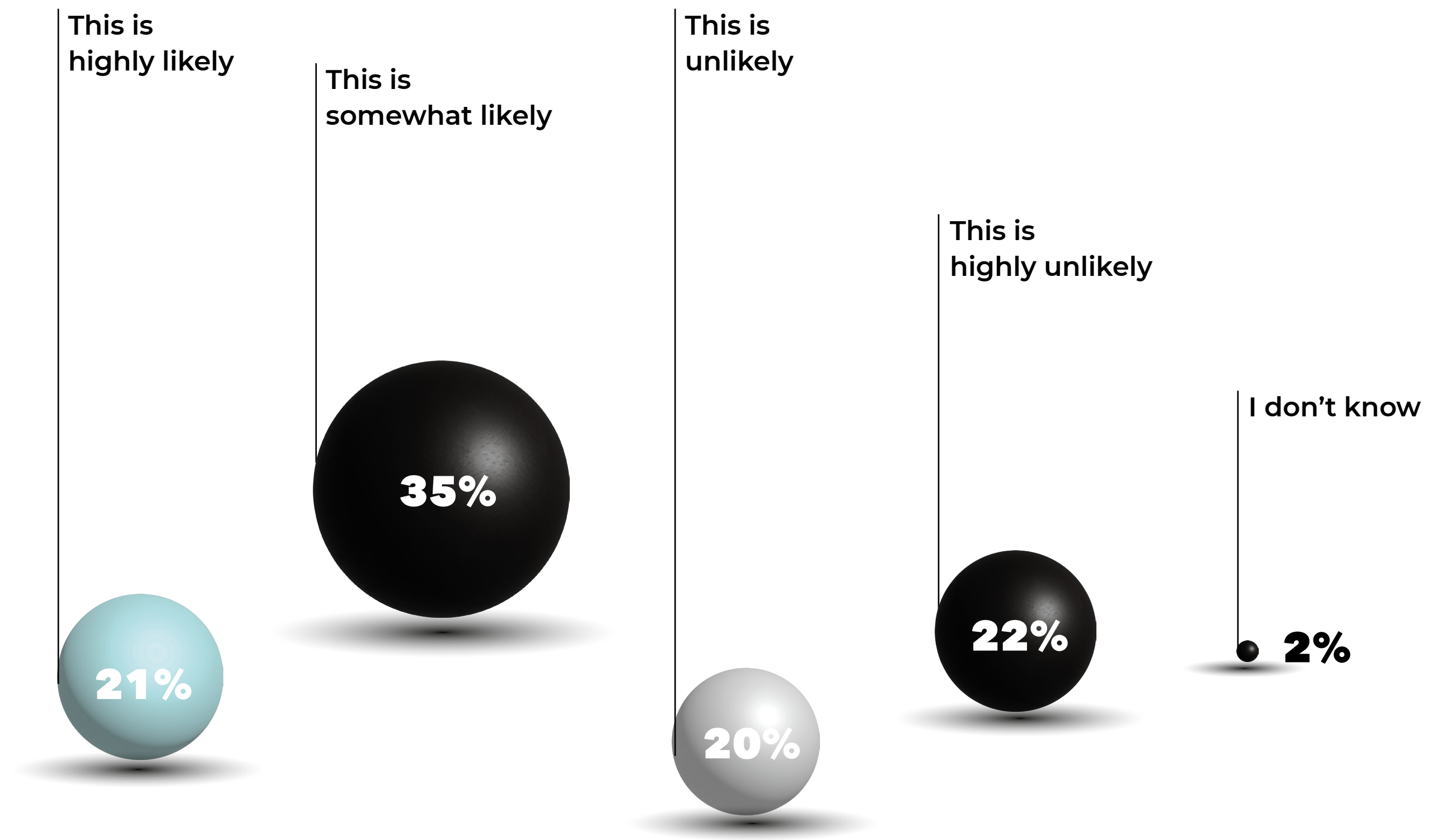
With brand trust, transparency, and authenticity so high up on the customer's brand selection criteria, we should flag these results as alarming. It should also trigger us to question whether the compassion and intent of B2B brands are genuine.

Insight #16

B2B brands admit that purpose-washing is “likely”

Concerns over brand authenticity are fuelled further when we investigate the issue of purpose-washing. We learn that **56%** of the B2B marketing leaders we surveyed admitted they are “highly likely” and “somewhat likely” to be promoting misleading cause-based messages or claims to their customers, without checking if they are actually true.

Question: To what extent could your brand be pushing misleading cause-based messaging or claims without checking its true authenticity?



CHAPTER 4: The risks and realities of building a purpose-driven brand

Given that most of the B2B brands in our survey have signalled that they are taking an active stance on climate change and other sustainability issues, we can confidently argue that they are likely greenwashing – or more generically, purpose-washing – depending on what their brand stands for.

Although our research is unable to prove or disprove the likelihood of this being true for each brand we surveyed, we can highlight how dangerous and damaging this approach can be. B2B buyers are intuitive. They notice brand behaviour and will listen to what other customers say about them online or elsewhere.

For a B2B brand to be considered trustworthy, it needs to be honest and real. The brands that contradict themselves run the risk of permanently alienating their customer base resulting in a loss of credibility, trust, and respect.

CHAPTER 5

THE *EMPLOYEE-FIRST* APPROACH TO *BRAND* BUILDING

Companies today face fierce competition for talent amid the backdrop of “The Great Resignation”. B2B brands have since realised that a strong, purpose-driven employer brand can positively influence the attraction, retention, and motivation of their top employees.

While the concept of employer brand is relatively new, **a sizeable 62%** of B2B brands we surveyed claim to have an employer brand strategy in place. Although views are mixed on its effectiveness and impact on business results.



CHAPTER 5: The employee-first approach to brand building

Insight #17

Marketers don't listen to employees as much as they do customers

Audience insights are the foundation of modern B2B brand building programmes. However, our research indicates that organisations are neglecting the role of employee insights in the brand building process. Just over half of our respondents (**52%**) say they gather insights from their internal employees on a “continual basis”, whereas **48%** admit they only do this “occasionally, rarely, or never”.

This is in stark contrast to how frequently B2B brands tell us they collect insights from external customers and prospects. Just under **80%** of respondents tell us they collect customer insights “weekly, monthly, or quarterly” to inform brand strategy, propositions, and messaging. A further **9%** said “bi-annually”, and only **11%** did this “occasionally, rarely, or never”.

CHAPTER 5: The employee-first approach to brand building

These results demonstrate the contrasting levels of importance given to employee-related business goals when carrying out brand marketing. Both the attraction of new talent (mean score of 3.91) and the retention and loyalty of staff (mean score of 3.81) are ranked much lower in priority compared to the attraction and retention of customers.

Question: How important a role does B2B brand marketing play in delivering to the following areas of your company's business?

The attraction of new customers	4.20
The revenue growth of your customers	4.17
The retention and loyalty of your customers	4.15
The generation of sales opportunities	4.09
The financial value of your company	4.08
The competitive advantage of your company	4.04
The generation of quality marketing leads	4.00
The ability to expand into new regions, verticals or categories	3.95
The attraction of new talent	3.91
The ability to negotiate better payment terms	3.86
The retention and loyalty of staff	3.81
The attraction of industry analysts	3.80
The ability to charge higher prices	3.68

CHAPTER 5: The employee-first approach to brand building**Insight #18****Marketing and HR are “somewhat aligned”**

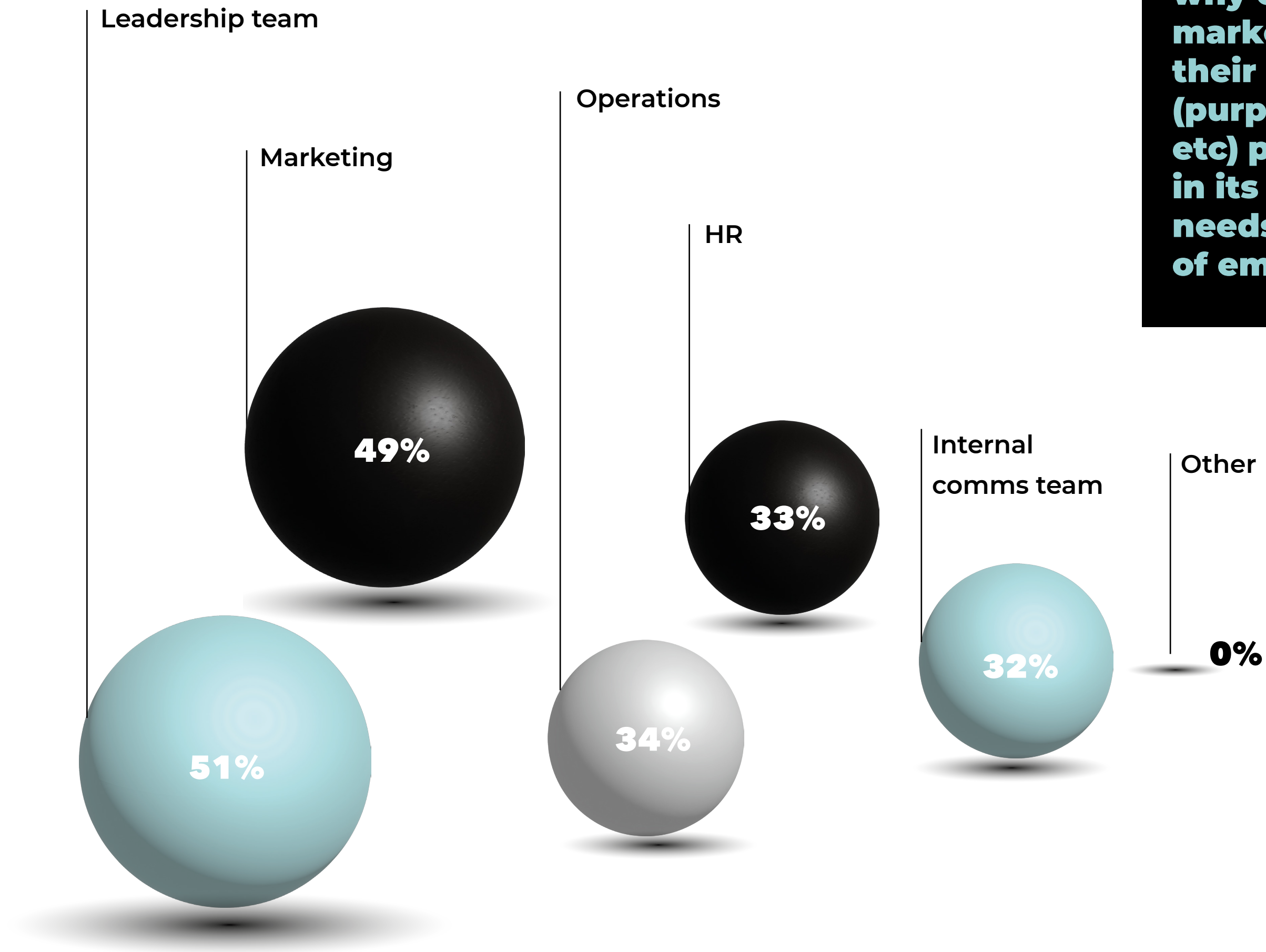
Most employer brands focus predominantly on supporting HR department KPIs like time-to-hire, employee engagement levels, employee retention rates, or Glassdoor ratings.

We are, therefore, surprised to learn that only **57%** of our audience sample say that Marketing and HR are “somewhat aligned” when building an employer brand strategy. And thankfully, just **1%** said the two departments are “not aligned at all”.

Interestingly, when asked who is responsible for building and managing their company’s employer brand, HR was only included in **33%** of responses – slightly lower than the Operations department.

CHAPTER 5: The employee-first approach to brand building

Question: Who is responsible in your company for building and managing your employer brand? Pick all that apply.



This could explain why only 20% of B2B marketing leaders say their brand platform (purpose, promise, values etc) performs “brilliantly” in its relevance to the needs and priorities of employees.

CHAPTER 5: The employee-first approach to brand building

Insight #19

Employer brands are improving internal culture and communication but not belonging, inclusion, and job satisfaction

When assessing the effectiveness of employer brands, our respondents told us that transforming company culture was the most successful business outcome for them so far (**mean score of 3.30**), with **41%** stating their employer brand did this “very effectively”.

The two next highest-scoring business outcomes from B2B employer brands are improving the consistency of internal comms (**mean score of 3.28**) and improving employee engagement and collaboration (**mean score of 3.14**).

Unfortunately, the effects of employer brand on more personal, people-centric business outcomes are considered less effective. Of the B2B marketing leaders surveyed, **45%** felt that improving employee belonging and inclusion through employer brand was “fairly effective”, and **24%** said “not effective at all”. The role of employer brand in improving job satisfaction was also deemed “not very effective” by over one-third of respondents (**36%**).

Question: In your opinion, how effective is your existing employer brand in achieving the following areas?

Transforming the company culture (in a good way)	3.30
Improving the consistency and credibility of internal comms	3.28
Improving employee engagement and collaboration	3.14
Winning stronger/better talent for your company	3.13
Reducing staff turnover	3.12
Attracting new talent to your company	3.10
Improving employee performance and results	3.09
Reducing staff requests for pay or benefit increases	3.05
Differentiating your company from the competition	2.99
Improving employee belonging and inclusion	2.90
Improving employee job satisfaction	2.82
Reducing cost per recruit	2.85
Reducing recruitment expenditure	2.77

CHAPTER 5: The employee-first approach to brand building**Insight #20****Employer brands are struggling to reduce recruitment costs**

A well-defined employer brand can play an integral role in recruiting top talent. It helps filter out potential applicants who are not a good fit and attracts those who believe their values align with that of the company, thereby saving talent acquisition teams time and money.

It is reassuring to see that the B2B brands we surveyed felt their employer brand was “very effective” in winning stronger talent (**mean score of 3.13**) and reducing staff turnover (**mean score of 3.12**).

However, reducing the cost per recruit (**mean score of 2.85**) and overall recruitment expenditure (**mean score of 2.77**) received the two lowest business outcome scores. These scores could be explained by how difficult it is to measure both outcomes relative to other recruitment initiatives or programmes.

CONCLUSION

As the role of brand building continues to become central to business success in the B2B marketplace, it is important to take stock of how the attitudes and the perceived value of brand marketing are evolving to match.

Product and solution-led marketing strategies have long been how B2B marketers go to market. However, changes in post-pandemic B2B buyer behaviour and a hyper-competitive marketplace have emphasised the need for highly authentic and resonant B2B brand building.

An overwhelming majority of the B2B executive leaders we surveyed stated that brand marketing now plays an integral role in the financial value of their company.

And though there is still a significant investment gap for brand building activities, future budgets are set to reflect this shift in perspective – with driving brand awareness and loyalty now firmly seen as core components of the B2B marketing toolkit.

Yet, these changing attitudes aren't without their points of concern. While B2B brand building is now seen as complementary to – and for some, more important than – demand generation, a focus on using brand for customer acquisition and retention initiatives has left B2B marketing leaders struggling with market differentiation.

CONCLUSION

Buying habits have evolved. And the B2B buyer journey now involves more self-service channels than ever before. Brands need to be immediately recognisable and authentic to stay front of mind throughout the sales cycle. But a lack of creativity and the sidelining of softer, more emotional cues like brand experience has meant that improving creative stand out remains a top goal for B2B marketing leaders over the next year.

We also found that while most respondents had an employer brand strategy in place, views on its effectiveness and impact on business results are mixed. Employer brand has skyrocketed in importance, and workers are looking for companies whose values match their own. However, B2B organisations still neglect the role that employee insights have on the authenticity of their employer brand. This has resulted in underwhelming performance for people-centric outcomes like staff belonging, inclusion, and job satisfaction.

This theme of authenticity also carries into our assessment of purpose-driven brand building. The drive to be a ‘force for good’ has swept the B2B marketing industry, with the majority of B2B brands currently, or planning on, taking a stance on societal issues. But as authenticity cements its significance in B2B brand building, the admission that more than half of B2B brands purpose-wash should come as cause for concern for the industry.

Brand building in B2B has come a long way from its derisive reception of old. B2B boardrooms have finally recognised the value of effective brand building, and marketing leaders now have greater accountability for brand success. Nevertheless, while the state of B2B brand building seems to be the best it’s ever been, organisations will need to exercise caution in navigating a fast-changing and increasingly purpose-driven marketplace going forward if they want to stay relevant.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on research data from a mixture of online panel participants and Transmission clients. All participants worked in B2B organisations and were senior decision-makers or influencers in regard to how marketing budgets were allocated and spent.

The research data was gathered via an online questionnaire that ran during April 2022, across Australia, China, France, Germany, India, Singapore, UK, and USA.

Research was conducted for Transmission by Jigsaw Research, an international strategic-insight agency with an exclusively senior team.

Data integrity, validation, and analyses were performed by Transmission in conjunction with Jigsaw Research. Data and outliers were validated in accordance with standard research industry rules, disciplines, and best-practice approaches.

ABOUT *TRANSMISSION*

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With offices in eight countries worldwide, Transmission has the global agility and experience to help B2B brands drive the now and define the next.

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ABOUT

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