

STATE OF CREATIVITY

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY



| ADVISORY



State of Creativity

Outwardly optimistic, inwardly at odds

Welcome to the fourth annual State of Creativity study from LIONS Advisory.

We've surveyed 3000 marketers and creatives from around the world to gain insight into the current state of the creative industry.

Our findings reveal a more optimistic outlook regarding growth and marketing investment following some caution and uncertainty last year. However, behind this positivity are evident tensions in crucial relationships.

This report puts a spotlight on areas of concern within the creative industry and offers insights into effective solutions. Drawing from the wisdom of brand and agency leaders who have overcome these challenges, we provide actionable guidance for tackling the issues at hand.



SPENCER FOX
SVP, BUSINESS LEAD
LIONS ADVISORY

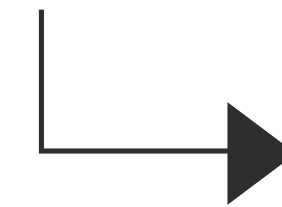
Optimism is back.

Positive growth and increased marketing investment signal a fresh momentum for businesses.



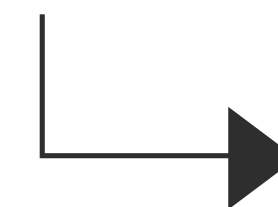
But there are barriers hindering creativity.

Communication breakdowns are causing tension between agencies and brands, while marketers express frustration over their CEOs' lack of trust in creativity.



Drawing on proven techniques will help elevate creative work.

Develop systems and tools for idea sharing, enhance feedback loops, reframe failure, and deeply understand the problem to be solved. This will help strengthen creative work during this opportune time.



Experiment where momentum's highest to keep pace.

Find inspiration in successful creative work that stands out in the three key areas of investment: AI, social commerce, and targeting interest-based communities.

Optimism is back

A promising path for growth and investment

51%

of brand and agency respondents said they anticipate stronger growth this year.

Gloom in 2023...

This time last year, a sense of foreboding gripped the industry. An impending recession, seismic global events and 'the rising inflation and cost of living' were the biggest external challenges your businesses faced. 60% of last year's survey respondents said they'd cut back on their creative investment over the year ahead.

...bloom in 2024

But there are encouraging signs on the horizon. 51% of survey respondents anticipate stronger growth. Rather than cutting back, 69% of the brands we heard from will be maintaining or upping their marketing investment this year.

Tension between key creativity stakeholders? Turns out you're not alone.

This period of growth is promising for businesses.

However, a simmering conflict between brands and their creative partners could harm the opportunity to take advantage of this momentum.

Brands and creative partners should be channelling energies into how creativity can help them succeed. But instead, respondents were distracted by the divisive blame game that occurs when creative endeavours fail to hit the mark.

Two key tensions
stall momentum

- 1 Client–agency
relationships
**under significant
strain**
- 2 Frustrated
marketers point
fingers at **‘play it
safe’ leadership**

Tension 1

The client–agency relationship is under significant strain

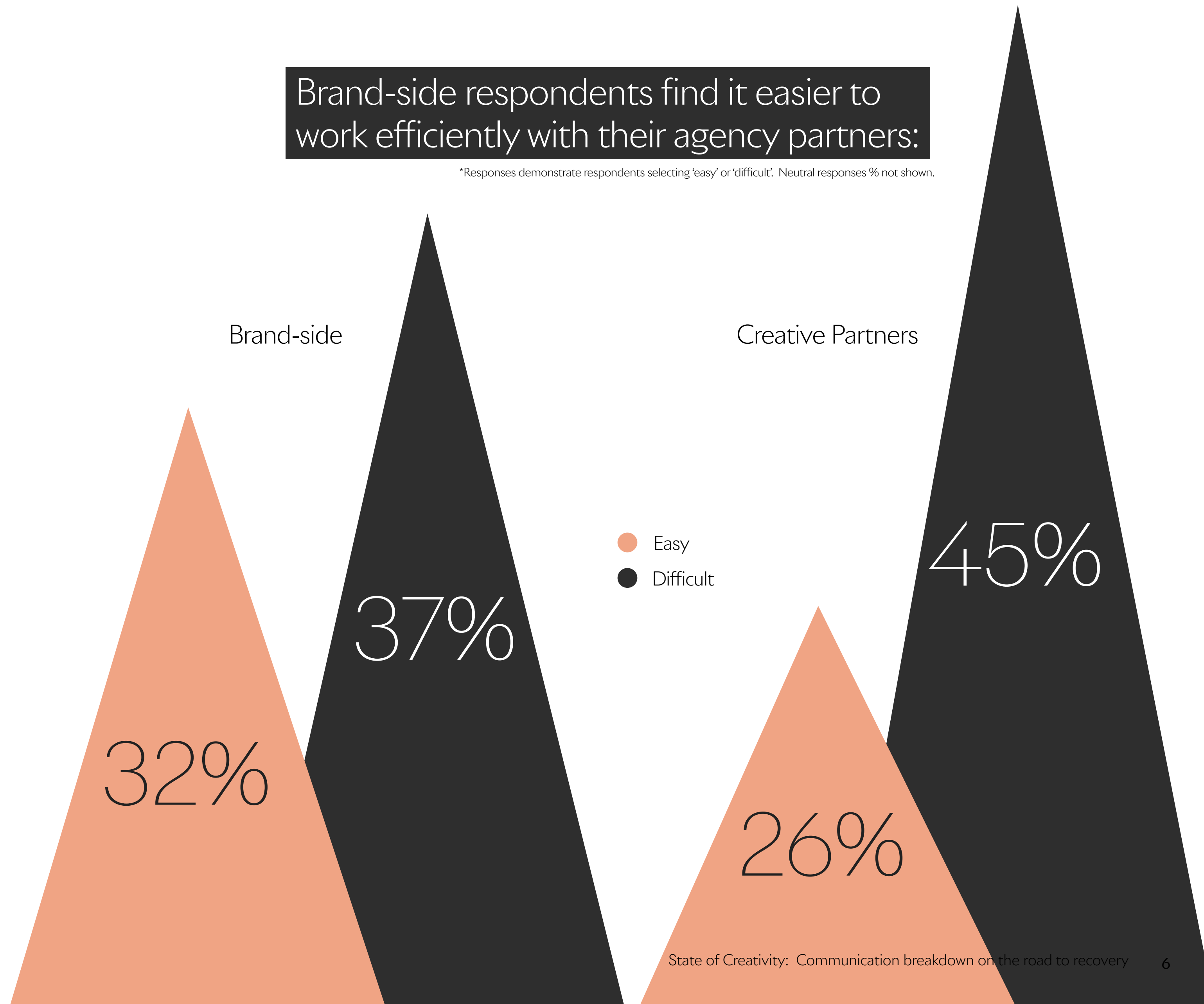
A lot of the Lion-winning work shows the crucial impact of a healthy client–agency partnership on the quality of creative output. But your survey responses highlighted something worrying – the fabric of this relationship is wearing thin for nearly half of the agencies.

What’s interesting is that there are discrepancies in how brands feel compared to their agency partners. When asked about the efficiency of the client–agency team, brand-side voices report more ease in the working approach – but creative partners paint a different picture. One frustrated practitioner even told us the relationship “lacks professionalism” and is “getting harder and harder” as a result.

These feelings frequently came up in free-text responses too. Agencies were particularly vocal about the issues that are causing the most friction, including not feeling like valued or trusted partners.

Brand-side respondents find it easier to work efficiently with their agency partners:

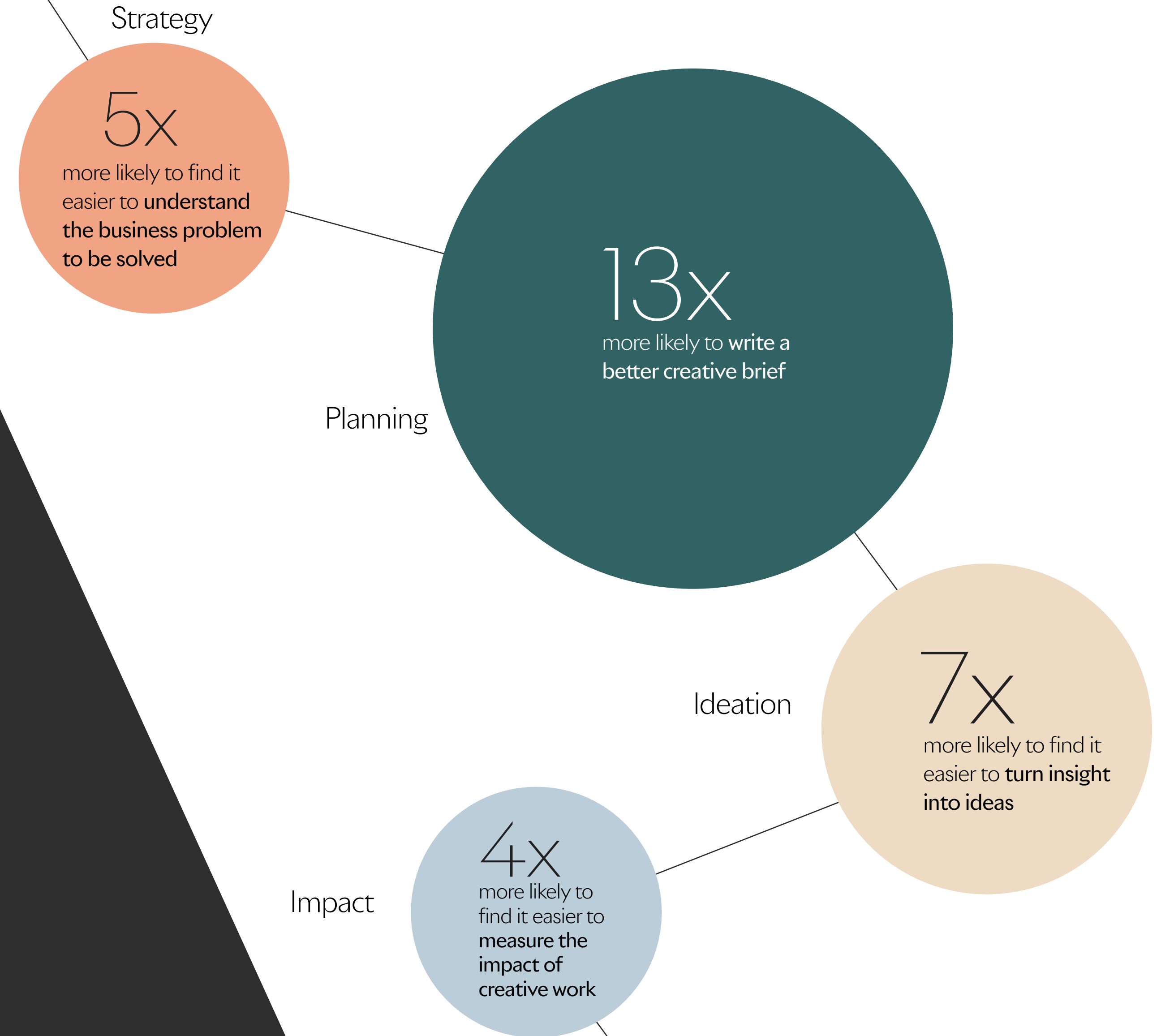
*Responses demonstrate respondents selecting ‘easy’ or ‘difficult’. Neutral responses % not shown.



A good client–agency relationship will streamline your entire creative process

The State of Creativity revealed that an easier (as opposed to difficult) client-agency relationship has a positive effect on the entire creative development process.

Those companies that find it very easy to work efficiently as a client–agency partnership are:



Invest in your
client–agency
relationship.
It will boost
your chance of
growth.

Businesses that find it
very easy
to work efficiently as a client–agency
partnership are:

4.6x

more likely to predict better
growth in 2024

Those that find it
very difficult
to work efficiently as a client–agency
partnership are:

3x

more likely to predict a decline
in growth in 2024





“Agency partnerships **play a pivotal role** in achieving successful brand building. A fact underscored by the strong relationships seen in the Cannes Lions winners over the years.”

MUSTAFA SHAMSELDIN
CATEGORY GROWTH OFFICER AND CMO
INTERNATIONAL FOODS | PEPSICO

CAUSES OF TENSION

Frustration with alignment, trust and feeling undervalued is harming creative potential

1. UNDERVALUED & UNDERUTILISED

Frustrated creatives from all around the world told us they feel undervalued by their clients – claiming they’re seen as “an extra pair of hands”, rather than a valued partner from the start. Many say that this dynamic is leading to lower-quality, less effective creative work.

“Clients consider us **contractors**, not partners”

Creative Director,
ROMANIA

“The agency is **not seen as a partner**, rather a maker that only exists to do what they are told, **leaving no room for experimentation**, feedback or even bold ideas to be executed”

Creative Director,
ECUADOR

“More and more clients seem to be focused on a supplier-based relationship rather than a **long-term creative partnership**, and this is impacting our ability to get on and do brilliant creative work”

Senior Creative Manager,
UNITED KINGDOM

Despite this, the need for the specialised skills agencies offer is clear. When we asked brands how they ranked themselves in several different digital capacities, on average, they rated themselves low in all of them. These included collaborating with content creators, developing cut-through content and customising that content for different digital channels. Agencies, on the other hand, rated themselves far closer to excellent. There’s a clear need for agencies to assert their value as specialist partners.



“You will succeed or fail based on you as a client. You are half of the relationship, so if there is a problem, 50% of it is your problem”

VICTORIA SJARDIN
VP OF MARKETING, INTERNATIONAL
THE KRAFT HEINZ COMPANY

CAUSES OF TENSION

2. POOR ALIGNMENT ACROSS PARTNERS

Agency respondents also highlighted difficulties collaborating with the other external partners their clients brought onboard. A lot of respondents felt that there should be better alignment to ensure everyone's working towards a common goal and able to communicate effectively throughout. Agencies would like more freedom to pick partners.

“Every partner works in **silos**”

Creative Director,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

“Usually, the agency and external partners have **different agendas and goals**”

Executive Creative Director,
UNITED STATES

“We have a **very hard time working** with external partners that don't match our ambition. We go above and beyond to deliver creative and find that these partners tend to do the bare minimum to deliver”

Creative Director,
UNITED STATES

CAUSES OF TENSION

3. RESTRICTED BY THE TRUST DEFICIT

Agency respondents also raised concerns around a lack of trust coming from their clients.

“Clients **don’t trust** us to do daring creative work”

Chief Creative Officer,
UGANDA

“Client’s **don’t trust** the power of ideas”

Creative Director,
NEW ZEALAND

“There’s **no belief or trust** from marketers that creativity sells”

Creative Director,
FRANCE

Skinny's 'Phone it in' highlights the pivotal importance of trust

Lion-winning work like '[Phone it in](#)' for telco brand Skinny by Colenso BBDO, Auckland shows the vital role trust plays in strengthening creative output.

Interestingly, Skinny had attempted the idea before but without much success, so we asked what changed this time. They told us they **let go of creative control and fully trusted in the expertise of each of their partners.**

Skinny's role became strengthening the synergistic culture its partners would operate in, ensuring there were moments throughout the process for everyone to come together to develop the strategy. By doing so, they could be confident that the concept would work through the line.

PHONE IT IN | SKINNY

2023

Call 0800 555 110
to record our radio ad

“

To keep prices low, Skinny has printed this radio script on a wall next to an exotic dance club that I definitely wasn't just visiting, in the hope that someone like me might call the number provided and record it on their mobile for free, saving Skinny thousands on recording costs.

I might be in a questionable part of town making questionable decisions, but there's no questioning Skinny's great prices and incredible mobile network. What are you waiting for? Get the Skinny!

”



“The relationship between agency and client was so tight that I had to laugh when the idea was re-presented, but I also had to trust that they wouldn't push the idea if it wasn't going to drive results for us. What was different this time around? The strength of our relationship had grown”

ALLY YOUNG
FORMER BRAND LEAD | SKINNY

COLENZO BBDO, AUCKLAND

GRAND PRIX, RADIO & AUDIO LIONS



“We involve our agencies in our strategy sessions and actively seek their counsel. This collaborative approach has led to some of our most innovative ideas.”

RAJA RAJAMANNAR
CHIEF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,
MASTERCARD

WAYS TO SUCCEED:

Lion-winning
brand leaders
encourage greater respect
for agency partners

Conduct reverse appraisals

“Reverse appraisals with our agencies are part of the quarterly and annual reviews. It gives a regular chance for us to chat about what is and isn’t working.”

VICTORIA SJARDIN
VP OF MARKETING | INTERNATIONAL

Stay in close contact

“Successful client–agency relationships are built on continuous communication.

It’s crucial for both parties to engage in regular meetings, exchange daily emails and texts and meet in person to foster creativity and ensure full immersion in the business.”

RAJA RAJAMANNAR
CHIEF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
MASTERCARD

Remove the barriers to collaboration

We’re continually strengthening our agency ecosystems across PepsiCo. We’ve set up internal SLAM [stop, look, assess, manage] teams that galvanise around a shared goal of producing award-winning work.

We empower teams and agencies with the freedom of ideation without restrictions.

In a large global organisation, this practice allows for a self-organising, lean, autonomous and multidisciplinary creative approach”

MUSTAFA SHAMSELDIN
CATEGORY GROWTH OFFICER AND CMO
INTERNATIONAL FOODS | PEPSICO

WAYS TO SUCCEED:

Agency leaders
call for deeper communication
and more curiosity

Ask more questions

“It’s the agency’s responsibility to go and ask as many questions as possible about their client’s business. This is what builds trust, as it helps you structure responses in a way that lands in future business plans.”

LOUISE JOHNSON
CEO | FUSE

JURY PRESIDENT 2024 | ENTERTAINMENT LIONS FOR SPORT

Be generous

“If you want to create history, you have to create chemistry. My way of creating chemistry with our clients is to be generous with ideas. Think of your ideas as gifts. People are grateful for gifts. Ideas as gifts break down client–agency defences and build trust. That’s how you create history.”

JOSY PAUL
CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER
BBDO INDIA

Start the conversation sooner

“The earlier you bring strategy and creative teams to the table, the better. It shortens the travel time of comments or ideas. A more direct conversation, where you can be on the same page, will lead to better collaboration.”

WENDY CHAN
HEALTH CREATIVE LEAD | ASIA PACIFIC
EDELMAN | APAC

JURY PRESIDENT 2024 | HEALTH & WELLNESS LIONS

Tension 2

Frustrated marketers point fingers at **‘play-it-safe’ leadership**

Senior leadership was the second big target of criticism. On the brand side, you expressed difficulty in getting executives to embrace creativity – due, in part, to an absence of creative thinkers in the boardroom. More traditional, risk-averse marketers are taking up seats. So, although many people want to push the boundaries of their creative work, conservative leaders make them feel like they can't.

Junior and mid-level employees were particularly focused on this issue – but it's interesting to note that directors also raised it, meaning this is a more common problem than you might think.

“The CEO is the
number one
blocker”

BRAND MANAGER,
FINANCIAL SERVICES, UNITED STATES

CAUSES OF TENSION

Conservative leadership, internal politics and creativity's image problem fuel the divide between senior leaders and marketing teams

1. CONSERVATIVE LEADERSHIP

Marketers want to experiment more with creativity but they feel their senior leadership present too many barriers.

“We’re open to new ways of showing our products to our potential and real customers. But sometimes our **CEO wants our department to lower the level of creativity and use more common patterns**”

Junior Brand Manager,
UKRAINE

“The idea of being creative is spoken about a lot, but when final decisions are to be made, **leadership always defaults to the tried-and-tested options**”

Junior Brand Manager,
AUSTRALIA

“Our biggest challenge is convincing leadership that greater risk leads to greater reward. **Limited budget means limited testing opportunities**, so we have to rely on theoretical assessments”

Marketing Executive,
AUSTRALIA

CAUSES OF TENSION

2. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

Even director-level respondents said their leaders don't fully understand the impact creative marketing can have on driving business success.

“The rigidity and lack of understanding of marketing and its impact on bottom line by business teams and leadership is our biggest challenge”

Marketing Director
NIGERIA

CAUSES OF TENSION

3. INTERNAL POLITICS

A culture of internal politics came through as another challenger to creativity – an aspect people feel leadership should address better.

“Internal politics is the biggest challenge. Driving growth is usually in the hands of senior business managers who aim to look good and stay in control. Collaborating with creative teams means being open and sharing information, sharing ideas and collaborating to define a unique plan for growth. **People don’t want to collaborate for fear of sharing power.** Leadership needs to nurture a creative culture”

Marketing Director,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

“Creativity is coming out of the door less and less due to internal politics, client politics and mediocre leaders”

Creative Director,
GERMANY

Senior leaders favour short-term wins over creative leaps

Short-term fixes are killing creativity

Businesses are often locked in this loop. Leaders won't accept riskier ideas until they're certain of their impact, but you can't demonstrate effectiveness without taking the leap and doing the work.

This doesn't just put pressure on the relationship between senior executives and their teams – it also shifts the focus away from high-quality, brand-building creative and towards short-term remedies that are easier to evaluate.

“We often find that creative ideas are less likely to get budget approval than standard, short-term filler campaigns”

Junior Executive,
UNITED STATES

A widening gap undermines progress

A strong link between those in charge of the budget and those working on it allows creative work to flourish. Each side of the equation has skills that, when combined, strengthen the case for creativity – so why wouldn't brands be pushing for a closer relationship?

For example, senior executives told us they have a harder time linking disparate data sources to build a coherent story than their junior and mid-level peers. A more collaborative partnership, where those closest to a campaign's data work with leadership to convey its impact, will help to enhance the case for increased investment.

Struggling to make the case for creativity? ▶

THE CASE FOR CREATIVITY

Numbers your board needs to see

Brands that predict higher growth for 2024 are...

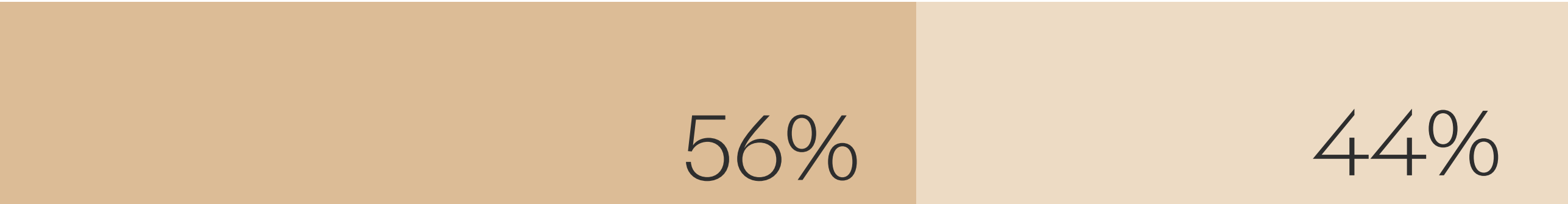
6x

more likely to prioritise creativity

4.6x

more likely to have a higher marketing spend than 2023

Balance of investments for those expecting growth



Balance of investments for those expecting a business decline



 Short term  Long term



WAYS TO SUCCEED:

Lion-winning
brand leaders
encourage unity with
creative frameworks,
competitions and
collaboration programmes

Create a common language

“At Molson Coors, we’ve worked with LIONS Advisory to create a framework we call “MUSCLE” - an acronym for all the elements we believe powerful creative needs to have. This framework allows us to all speak the same language when it comes to creativity, whether that’s with the most junior members of the team or even up to our CEO. When you speak the same language, it’s then much easier to all work together to accomplish the same goal, which for us is making the most creatively effective work in the industry. It also allows for us to have rich discussions and critically assess not only our own work but also work we admire within the industry – continuing to raise the creative bar even further.”

SOFIA COLUCCI
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER | MOLSON COORS

Give people the opportunity to think beyond their usual role

“At Mastercard, we work to ingrain innovation and ideation into our company culture. One way we do this is through our “Sandbox” challenges – an innovation challenge for every Integrated Marketing and Communications employee worldwide. We encourage employees to submit ideas that solve a specific problem or embrace a new technology in a way that allows us to authentically reach new audiences and strengthen our current connections with consumers and customers. The enthusiasm for these challenges has been remarkable, as they give everyone the opportunity to think beyond their usual roles and display their creativity.

“Whenever we have a big brainstorm or creative session, it’s important and valuable to involve different members of the organisation – finance, marketing, communications, product and others, all in one room. Embracing diversity in all its forms enriches the creative process by bringing together different perspectives and skill sets, fostering collaboration and innovation.”

RAJA RAJAMANNAR
CHIEF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER | MASTERCARD

Give access to cutting-edge digital thinking and learning

“Marketing excellence today, by virtue of the consumer, is linked to digital excellence. And to cut-through, digital excellence needs to be at the cutting-edge. So one simple notion we have today is to say that every marketer is a digital marketer.

With that in mind, ask yourself: are you enabling middle marketers to feel that they are working on the cutting edge? Do they have the tools? Do they have the ecosystems?
Are they meeting digital entrepreneurs?
What can you do to help them build this important capability?

ANIL VISWANATHAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR | MONDELEZ VIETNAM

Strengthen your creative effectiveness

Many of you are investing more into marketing this year. So to help you get the most out of your money – here are some creative techniques most commonly rated as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ in elevating the quality of creative work.

Want to build creative excellence and improve effectiveness? Doubling down on these is the best place to start.

SHARE IDEAS, CELEBRATE SUCCESS, COLLABORATE

the most impactful techniques
to elevate creativity

3000 of your marketing and creative
peers told us how effective different tools
and techniques are in elevating the quality
of their creative work.

Here's how many of you rated each of
these techniques as 'good' or 'excellent'.

82% Encouraging the confidence to share ideas

78% Celebrating successes

78% Offering collaboration opportunities

71% Giving people freedom to fail

70% Making time for creative thinking

65% Creating strong feedback loops



New techniques take time – but it pays off

Companies that experience better growth and get higher marketing investment do things differently. Here are their standout creative techniques:

1. A SYSTEM TO SHARE IDEAS

Encouraging the confidence to share ideas is the highest-rated practice to elevate the quality of creative work. Psychological safety fosters community and encourages different perspectives to contribute to new solutions. Lion-winning businesses like AB InBev and McDonald's have developed new platforms that allow all employees, regardless of department or seniority, to express their ideas and contribute to a piece of creative work.

In its 'Creative Hub', McDonald's has created an online portal where all employees and agency partners are connected – coming together to view and share best-in-class McDonald's briefs and work.

McDonald's took '[Raise Your Arches](#)' to 35 markets and it credits this system for allowing the idea to be so keenly picked up around the world.



2. CELEBRATE SUCCESSES

Celebrating successes might seem an obvious activity, but do you really give them enough attention?

Victoria Sjardin, VP of Marketing, International at The Kraft Heinz Company says you have devote time and space to celebrate creativity. People value recognition on every level day in, day out.

“Day-to-day **we encourage a sense of communal cheerleading** across global and local teams, which in itself encourages confidence and a sense of team spirit, Whether in Teams or Whatsapp groups - we encourage people to highlight qualities in the work. At quarterly reviews in global town halls, we take a moment to review all the great creativity alongside the usual discussion on the financials. We also have our **Ace Awards - our internal awards for creativity**. Our CEO Miguel Patricio personally attends these; he hands out prizes and takes photos with the winners.

This celebration and endorsement by our CEO helps reinforce the value of creativity.

And beyond that, **recognition in external awards** allows people to get seen, heard and celebrated - and again gives that focus to the value of creativity.”



DRAW KETCHUP | KRAFT HEINZ
RETHINK, TORONTO | 2022
GOLD, PRINT AND PUBLISHING LIONS

3. STRONG FEEDBACK LOOPS

Feedback loops also came up as one of the more significant levers to pull to affect positive creative output.

“If we want better client relationships and better feedback, we as agencies have to be a part of the solution. We offer training programs to our senior clients and their teams to teach them how to give feedback and that’s proven super valuable to them and us”

NANCY CRIMI-LAMANNA
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER | FCB CANADA

Effective feedback sessions require all parties to adopt an **appropriate mindset**, says author and effectiveness expert James Hurman:

- a **‘winning’** as opposed to a ‘not losing’ mindset – focusing on big gains rather than defending against losses, and accepting and acknowledging an element of risk
- a **‘learning’** rather than ‘justifying’ mindset – generating value by learning from what didn’t work, instead of defending specific actions
- an **‘anticipation’** mindset – expecting there to be opposition to ideas because you know it’s natural to fear the unfamiliar.



JAMES HURMAN
LIONS ADVISORY CONSULTANT
FOUNDING PARTNER, PREVIOUSLY UNAVAILABLE

4. REFRAME FAILURE

When inventing the light bulb, Thomas Edison said: “I have not failed. I have just discovered 10,000 ways that won’t work”.

Learning from mistakes and missteps is an integral part of the creative process, and as an industry, you agree. **70% of respondents rated ‘giving people freedom to fail’ as good or excellent at elevating creative work.** We asked two industry leaders their view:

Create a learning culture

“Creativity is a pure growth accelerator so creating a culture where creativity thrives is central to any leader’s role. As I reflect on the key conditions for creativity - the key is to create an ambitious, fearless culture built on deep trust and learning. A learning culture is where teams can evolve and grow together– dream bigger, be more unreasonable about their collective vision or goal, and learn from the journey. Using their learning and trust in each other to propel them forward, ever closer to that sometimes elusive success. Happier, more engaged, more alive, more belief. Success is more likely!”

JANE WAKELY
EVP, CHIEF CONSUMER AND MARKETING OFFICER AND CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER
INTERNATIONAL FOODS | PEPSICO

better with

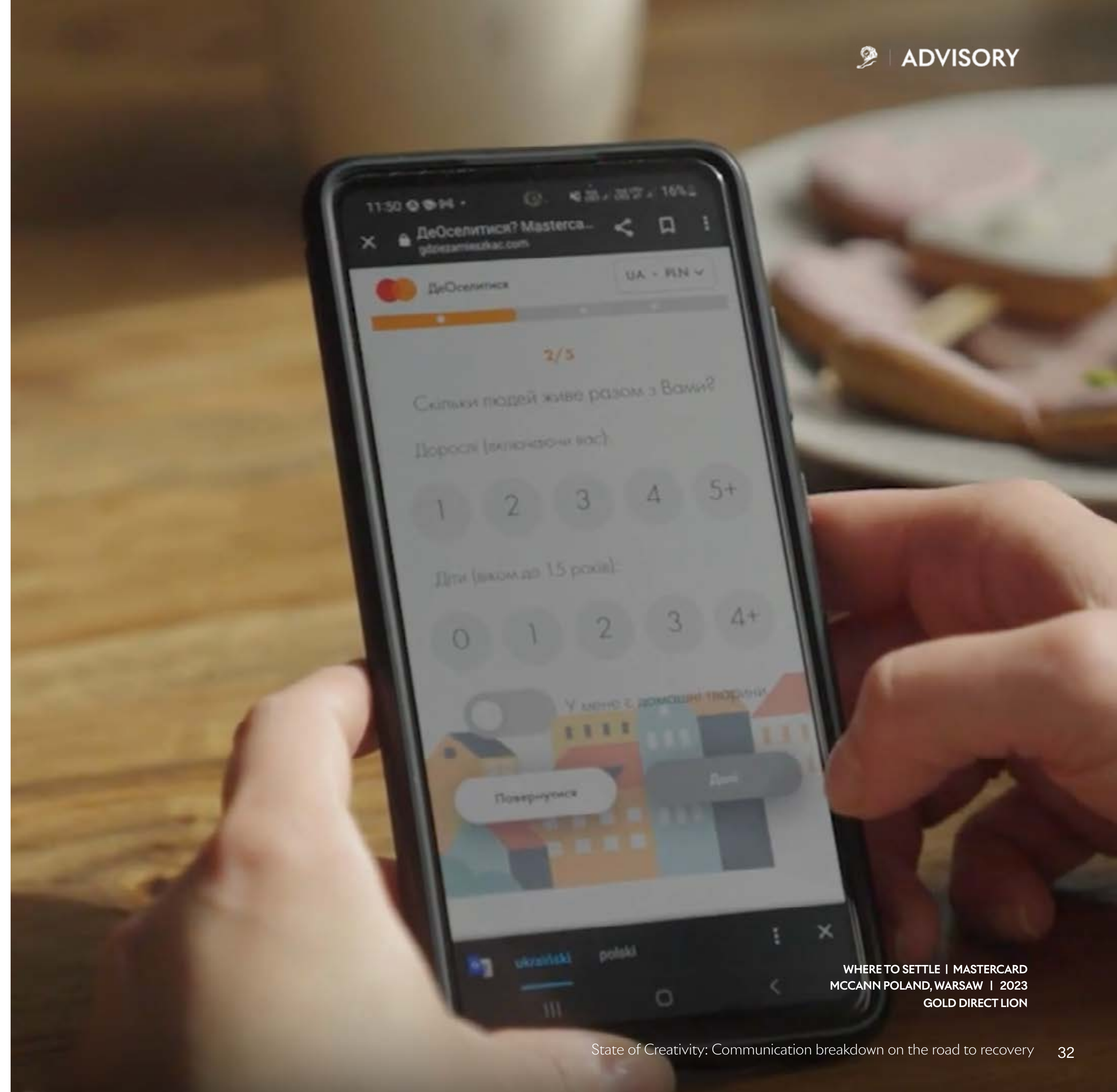
BETTER WITH PEPSI | PEPSI
PEPSICO, PURCHASE | 2022
GOLD, PRINT AND PUBLISHING LIONS

4. REFRAME FAILURE

Ring fence innovation

“Failure is a crucial element of success. It indicates that we’re pushing ourselves to think differently and innovate. The key is to fail fast. **One way I foster this approach within my teams is by allocating a separate innovation budget dedicated to experimentation and learning, without the immediate need for tangible results.** This grants my team members the freedom to explore new ideas without the fear of falling short of a traditional benchmark. Although testing and learning often lead to necessary pivots, they provide valuable insights that bring us closer to our consumers.”

RAJA RAJAMANNAR
CHIEF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
MASTERCARD



WHERE TO SETTLE | MASTERCARD
MCCANN POLAND, WARSAW | 2023
GOLD DIRECT LION

Brief writing

Do you really know the problem to be solved?

Poor understanding of the core problem is the biggest brief blocker

Writing a great creative brief was a top skill of those who are both experiencing better growth and getting more marketing investment this year.

As LIONS Advisory Consultant and Founder of the Marketing Capability Academy Cinzia Morelli-Verhoog says, more often than not, it's not writing the brief that's the issue: it's recognising what the problem is that needs to go in it.

The problem is the backbone of the creative brief. And the goal is to influence the beliefs and behaviours of a large number of people who share a problem that your brand is uniquely positioned to solve.

Understanding what that is becomes essential and is often the Achilles' heel of a brief. Without it, your agency is left guessing what direction they should give to the narrative, failing to focus on the real barrier to knock down and ultimately developing generic, less persuasive content instead.

Is the brief explicit in asking the agency to produce work that will change people's minds?

1. Will the work make an impact?
2. Is the consumer insight brought to life in a creatively brilliant way, as opposed to a literal way?
3. Is the work emotionally engaging?
4. Do the production and craft contribute to making the work more creative?
5. Is the work going to trigger brand fame?



CINZIA MORELLI-VERHOOG
LIONS ADVISORY CONSULTANT AND
FOUNDER OF THE MARKETING CAPABILITY ACADEMY

WAYS TO SUCCEED:

Lion-winning
agency leaders
advocate for more
immersive discussion and
inspiration to improve the
briefing process

Agree on the work's purpose

"I think it's up to us as an agency to take a detailed brief from the client and then distil it down to its most powerful and inspiring form for creatives. But more than that we need to ensure it's approved by the client so we're not setting our teams up for failure. As part of that process, we use a creative scale to agree on what the work needs to do in the world. The scale also gives us a common language to assess the work and hold each other accountable to our objectives."

SOFIA COLUCCI
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER | MOLSON COORS

Immerse yourself in the context

"The one thing I think we should get back to is inspirational briefing sessions. These sessions give a chance to experience the environment and the people with whom you're trying to connect."

"For example – if you're trying to come up with a campaign on one of your sponsorship properties – take your agency to the stadium and have a briefing session there in the midst of the people and the passion. It will give context to what you're talking about and help inspire the brief."

RAJA RAJAMANNAR
CHIEF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER | MASTERCARD

A conversation, not a production line

"It can't become a production line. Get the client brief. Check. Review the brief. Check. Await client feedback. Check."

It must be more natural and organic than that. It's so much better to make it a fluid conversation altogether and get everyone in the mindset. It might seem more disorganised from the outside, but it works so much more effectively."

ANIL VISWANATHAN
MANAGING DIRECTOR | MONDELEZ VIETNAM

What's next?

Where you're investing in 2024

Despite challenges, the upcoming year is ripe with potential. **AI, social commerce, and targeting interest-based communities** are the key areas seeing the biggest increase in investment by the brands predicting growth. It hints to where the opportunities lie.

These key areas are still burgeoning spaces, setting the stage for a year of dynamic experimentation and innovation.

Artificial Intelligence, interest-based communities and social commerce lead the investment charge

These top three areas of investment surpassed the others, pointing to a future of speed, scale, and even greater personalisation. They are not only ones to watch, but areas to be a part of.

Lower budgets don't deter higher AI spend

62%

of brands getting less 2024 marketing investment **will still increase their AI spend.**

7.3% of Cannes Lions entries used AI in 2023 compared to 3.7% in 2022. Using AI for content generation was the most commonly selected application (54%) across brand-side and creative partner respondents. As the industry navigates Gen AI application, 2023's Dan Wieden Titanium Lions Jury President David Droga highlights the importance of human imagination:

"Generative AI will bring up best practices for everybody, but it's not going to create next practices or fresh practices, that's the responsibility of the human."

Lion-winning inspiration: In ['The Outside In Experiment'](#), biotech company Horizon Therapeutics added patient testimonials into generative AI software, spawning thousands of images that embodied their experience. These pictures were converted into films using a different AI system, then set to music, creating vivid content that depicted the pain caused by gout.

Further reading: Discover more examples of Lion-winning work harnessing AI [in this report](#).

Interest-based communities are a key brand target

54%

of respondents will invest more into interest-based communities this year.

As more companies recognise the value of targeting interest-based communities, the landscape grows more competitive. This strategy hones in on communities with specific interests and values, similar to those of the brand, to build better connections and drive more impactful results. This will become increasingly important to satisfy younger generations. Nearly half (48%) of Gen Z consumers actively want to engage with brands on platforms such as TikTok to influence product innovation according to Euromonitor.

Lion-winning inspiration: Junge Helden, Germany's leading organ donation awareness association, leveraged the power of communities in ['#OPTINK'](#) and turned ink-lovers and tattoo artists into advocates for its cause and tattoo studios into organ donor recruitment centres.

Further reading: Discover more examples of Lion-winning work harnessing AI [in this report](#).

Social commerce reshapes the landscapet

44%

of respondents **will invest more into social commerce this year.** Only 8% won't spend in the space at all.

With social media, e-commerce, and shoppable content merging even closer together, social commerce becomes a key channel for engaging consumers. According to Statista, global social commerce sales are projected to reach \$8.5 trillion by 2030.

Lion-winning inspiration: '[Go to Your Happy Price](#)' by Priceline created a whole new type of social commerce for the travel sector.

87% of all travel is researched on social media. But Priceline realised only tangible products had the ability to be 'shopped'. So it created a way for people to book a trip right then and there, with each mini ad episode containing millions of dollars' worth of travel deals. Viewers could simply tap to book a trip transact without leaving the entertainment.

Further reading: WARC highlights [the trends shaping social commerce in 2024](#).

Source: [Statista Global Social Commerce Sales](#)

The State of Creativity in summary

Today.

Many businesses are experiencing better-than-expected growth and renewing their commitment to marketing endeavours. But a breakdown in communication between key creative stakeholders poses a risk to creativity, precisely at a time brimming with potential.

Tomorrow.

Investment in AI, especially in content generation, will offer unmissable opportunities for speed and scale.

Brands will find creative ways to tap into niche, interest-based communities, gaining deeper insights into their needs and how best to fulfill them.

Social commerce will become an increasingly powerful tool for brands, eliminating barriers and crafting seamless commerce experiences.

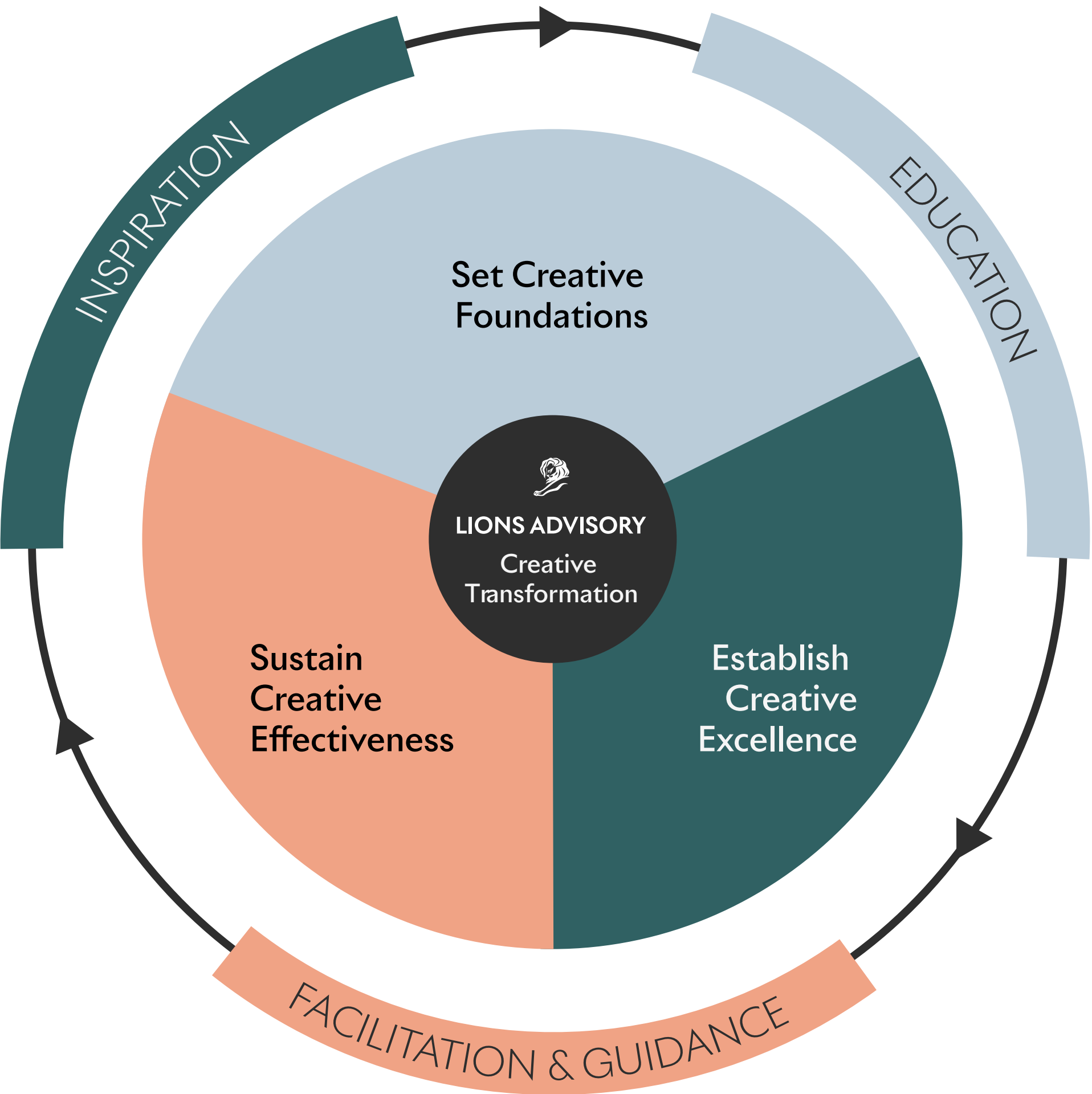
Source: Euromonitor International Voice of the Consumer Survey, Lifestyles Survey 2022

Thought-starters

- How open and trusting is your client-agency relationship? Does it need more attention?
- Have you really sold your board on the value of creativity?
- Do you have the right systems and tools in place to support creative effectiveness?
- What are you doing to build creative confidence and encourage psychological safety in your organisation?

Need help with any of the above? ▶

Unlock growth through creativity. Let us help you.



LIONS Advisory can guide your creative transformation journey to creative effectiveness.

“Companies win with creativity when it becomes a real system.”

MARCEL MARCONDES
GLOBAL CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER | AB InBev

Responses in this year’s State of Creativity survey point to growth. However, they also highlight **the critical need to reset the foundations for great creativity** to unlock that growth.

Our tried-and-tested methodology builds those creative foundational systems and structures – to help you leverage creative excellence and turn it into results.

Ready to get started?

Just get in touch with
SpencerF@Canneslions.com

STATE OF CREATIVITY

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