



**B2B
MARKETING**

B2B Creativity: Busting Myths

AUGUST 2026

**CONCLUSIONS/
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
& RECOMMENDATIONS**
PAGES 5-11

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BACKGROUND

Some say B2B advertising is boring. B2B advertising is purely rational. B2B advertising is focused on short-term results and not longer-term brand building. There is minimal creativity in B2B advertising.

Are these myths or reality?

The purpose of this work is to explore creativity in B2B advertising. Our conclusion is that B2B creativity is on the rise. This was the result of the collective perspective of 327 B2B industry leaders who are jurors for the ANA 2026 B2 Awards, dedicated solely to recognizing excellence in results-driven B2B marketing and now celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Further, B2B is big business. While it's often overshadowed by B2C, it shouldn't be. [One economist](#) estimates that B2B is twice the size of B2C, representing about 65 percent of global revenues and profits, 68 percent of global assets, and 63 percent of global enterprise value. Big business, indeed. Yet B2B marketing has rarely received the attention it deserves. But that is changing.

METHODOLOGY

Jurors for ANA award programs complete a questionnaire that includes basic information including job title and contact information. This year for the B2 Awards, members of the jury were asked to provide their POV on a dozen questions focused on creativity in B2B advertising and marketing communications. Details on the respondents:

- **It's a robust sample.** 327 industry leaders participated; 155 (47 percent) are client-side marketers; others are primarily with agencies followed by various marketing solution providers (e.g., media companies, consultants).
- **They know B2B.** 53 percent work at companies that are primarily B2B; 44 percent work at companies that are both B2B and B2C.
- **They are senior.** 48 percent are either CMO or VP level; 86 percent are at least director level.
- **They are experienced.** 61 percent have 20 years or more experience in the marketing industry; 87 percent have at least 15 years of experience.

Complete details about the respondents can be found in the appendix.

The quantitative research took place between December 2025 and March 2026 (as ANA on-boarded jurors) and was supplemented with qualitative interviews in April and May 2026.

CONCLUSIONS/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a new standard for B2B creative effectiveness. For years, B2B marketing has followed a familiar playbook: build strong creative, balance brand and demand, leverage data, and increasingly adopt AI. The findings from this year's study, based on the perspective of 327 jurors of the ANA B2 Awards, confirm that these fundamentals still matter. But the more important conclusion is this:

- The definition of creative effectiveness in B2B has fundamentally changed.

What distinguishes the highest-performing work today is not better execution of traditional practices, but a shift in how creativity is designed, deployed, and measured.

There are three defining shifts:

1. From Campaigns to Systems

The most effective B2B organizations are moving beyond campaigns and building growth systems. A campaign is temporary. A system is continuous. A growth system is a connected ecosystem of brand, content, customer experience, sales enablement, data, technology, and measurement that works together over time to create trust, demand, customer value, and business growth. This shift is being accelerated by several forces:

- Brand and demand are converging into a single growth system.
- Buying journeys are becoming more complex and less linear.
- AI is reshaping how customers discover, evaluate, and engage with brands.
- Content creation is becoming easier, making orchestration more important than volume.

As a result, creativity is no longer just a campaign output — it is becoming infrastructure for growth. Creative assets now power content ecosystems, customer experiences, sales conversations, and AI-enabled interactions across the entire buyer journey. The organizations that outperform their peers are increasingly those that build integrated systems rather than isolated campaigns. They create repeatable, scalable engines that continuously reinforce trust, preference, demand, and business value. The competitive advantage of tomorrow will not come from creating better campaigns. It will come from building better systems — connected ecosystems of creativity, content, experiences, technology, data, and measurement that compound in value over time and continuously drive enterprise growth.

2. From Measurement as a Capability to Measurement as a Requirement

While marketers recognize the importance of measurement, a gap persists between perceived and actual ability to connect marketing to financial outcomes. In today's environment, that gap is no longer a capability issue — it's a credibility issue. Measurement is now a prerequisite for relevance at the executive level. Leading organizations are those that can clearly link marketing to:

- Pipeline and revenue
- Pricing power and differentiation
- Long-term enterprise value

CONCLUSIONS/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3. From Messaging to Buyer Enablement

Winning work reflects a shift from storytelling to decision enablement. The most effective creative supports buying groups, reduces friction, and provides utility across the buyer journey. The role of creative has evolved from persuasion to enabling confident decisions.

What This Means

Together, these shifts signal that B2B marketing is entering a new phase — one that requires more than incremental improvement. The organizations that lead are not simply optimizing campaigns. They are:

- Building integrated brand-to-demand systems
- Embedding measurement into strategy from the start
- Aligning marketing with finance and enterprise value
- Designing for buying groups, not individuals

The ANA Point of View

Based on these findings, ANA defines modern B2B creative effectiveness as:

- The ability to build systems that enable decisions, scale across the buyer journey, and drive measurable enterprise value
- The reflection of a broader shift in the role of marketing — from a functional discipline to a strategic driver of growth

The Opportunity Ahead

While marketers increasingly understand what effective B2B marketing looks like, fewer have fully operationalized these principles. Closing this gap will require:

- Stronger alignment between marketing, sales, and finance
- Greater investment in measurement capabilities
- Talent that bridges creativity, data, and business strategy

The Bottom Line

The future of B2B marketing will not be defined by better campaigns, but by the ability to design systems that consistently deliver impact.

Creative excellence is no longer about what is produced; it is about what is enabled, what is measured, and what value is created.

The organizations that win will be those that treat creativity not as an output, but as a system that drives decisions, scales impact, and creates measurable enterprise value.

CONCLUSIONS/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following summarizes survey results:

- It is the opinion of 98 percent of survey respondents that creativity in B2B advertising and marketing communications is extremely or very important.
- Is creativity more important in B2B or B2C advertising? Almost 60 percent feel it's about the same. For the remainder, they lean toward creativity being more important in B2B.
- What matters more for B2B brand building: emotional connections or functional benefits? More than half (56 percent) feel that emotional connections and functional benefits matter equally. The other respondents lean more toward emotional connections mattering more.
- The use of data to enhance creativity is extremely/very important to 90 percent of respondents. Confidence in one's company's ability to use data to enhance creativity is moderate: 65 percent are either extremely or very confident.
- Artificial intelligence (AI) is extremely or very important to enhance creativity to 66 percent of the total respondent base. Less than half of all respondents (47 percent) are extremely or very confident in their company's use of AI to enhance creativity.
- Only 57 percent of total respondents are extremely or very confident in their ability to measure marketing's impact on financial performance.
- Measuring the impact of creative is extremely or very important to 78 percent of respondents. Less than half (47 percent) are either extremely or very confident in their company's ability to measure the impact of creativity in advertising and marketing communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are six key recommendations to this work.

1. Great creative work starts with a strong creative brief.

Strong briefs inspire the creative team to deliver that great work. A strong brief is the art of sacrifice, the discipline of clarity, and the spark of inspiration, all rolled into one. It's not just a tool; it's a strategic act of leadership that can make or break a campaign.

Per ANA research, “A tight brief with clearly defined objectives” was rated as the top enabler for the achievement of great creative work by the respondent base of 914 client-side and agency senior executives who were judges for ANA awards programs. Meanwhile, “Poor creative briefs, lacking in focus and clarity” was rated as the top roadblock by both client and agency judges by a wide margin. It's illuminating that briefs are both the top enabler and roadblock of creative work.

The ANA's “[Better Creative Briefs for Better Brand Building](#)” provides guidance, templates, and examples to help develop the best briefs, to deliver that the most effective work, and to build brands and increase brand value.

2. Emotional connections matter in B2B brand building.

Emotional connections can carry even more weight in B2B brand building than functional benefits. It was pretty clear from our qualitative discussions that B2B is really B2H — brands selling to humans, where emotions matter. While both emotional and functional benefits may have their respective places, there is the perspective that emotional connections should be made first, and then functional benefits can help justify those emotions.

3. Balance brand and demand investment, and unify brand and demand creative messaging.

B2B marketers need to make two related but distinct decisions: how to balance investment between brand and demand, and how to ensure that brand and demand creative messaging work together as a connected system.

First, the investment question. According to the “[2025 Brand-to-Demand Maturity Study](#)” from ANA and Stein, demand programs dominate B2B budgets, while brand building is consistently underfunded.

- B2B spend tilts heavily toward demand — 46 percent of respondents describe their current mix as demand heavy, 28 percent brand heavy, and only 26 percent as in the balanced “sweet spot.”
- In contrast, respondents told us their ideal brand-to-demand mix would be radically different: 72 percent optimally seek spend in the balanced brand/demand “sweet spot” versus the 26 percent who actually do. Only 11 percent would remain in the demand heavy zone. The remaining 17 percent believe that being brand heavy is ideal.

Yet, as is also evident from the findings of that ANA and Stein study, unifying brand and demand is now mission-critical to elevate marketing effectiveness and efficiency and drive long-term business outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A key driver of balanced brand to demand investment is the **95-5 rule**, based on research from the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute of Marketing Science and widely promoted by the LinkedIn B2B Institute. The rule reflects the fact that, on average, only 5 percent of B2B companies are in-market for a specific product or solution at a given time, with 95 percent out of market. To grow a brand, you need to advertise to people who aren't in the market now, so that when they do enter the market your brand is one they are familiar with. The rule suggests that B2B marketers should invest to build brand salience and mental availability among out-of-market buying groups to create future demand. The key recommendation here is to rebalance investment toward a 50-50 brand-demand mix, flexing one way or the other depending on specific objectives.

The second consideration is creative messaging. Brand and demand do require different creative approaches. Brand creative often has to build distinctiveness and trust among people who may not be ready to buy. Demand creative often must activate intent and drive measurable action. But those differences should not result in disconnected messaging or fragmented creative.

A unified campaign shows cohesion across brand and demand. The message may become more specific as a buyer moves through the journey, but it should still feel like it comes from the same brand and the same promise. Distinctive brand assets and a core value proposition should carry through from awareness building to lead generation to conversion. In other words, brand and demand creative can be different by role, but unified by strategy.

4. The future of B2B creativity is creativity powered by data.

The **ANA Data Practice** provides marketers and data practitioners with the leadership, resources, and peer community to become better customer-centric, data-driven marketers with a focus on increasing growth while ensuring consumer privacy. The practice provided the following guidance regarding the use of data in the B2B advertising creative process:

- The future of B2B creativity is not creativity versus data. It is creativity powered by data — fueled by intent signals, behavioral patterns, and contextual intelligence — and directed by deliberate data collection strategies, smart data acquisition, and a deep understanding of buying group psychology.
- In this model, data enables creativity to engage multiple stakeholders, align priorities, and accelerate decision-making across the buying group. Success is measured by its ability to build confidence, reduce risk, drive consensus, and deliver business outcomes, turning creativity into a true decision catalyst.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. AI can enhance creativity.

The [ANA Technology Practice](#) empowers marketers with pragmatic resources to improve their effectiveness in the selection and utilization of AI and marketing technology tools so they can better understand and connect with their customers. The practice provided the following guidance regarding the use of AI in the advertising creative process:

- Use AI before the creative process begins to identify audience needs, uncover market trends, analyze competitors, and generate strategic insights. Better inputs produce better creative outputs.
- AI lowers the cost and increases the speed of exploration. That allows marketers to test more concepts, headlines, visuals, and campaign approaches before selecting the strongest ideas.
- AI is enabling unprecedented levels of personalization. Creative can now be adapted by industry, account, buying stage, persona, geography, and channel at a scale previously impossible.
- Emotion can play a significant role in B2B purchasing decisions. AI can help marketers identify emotional themes, messaging patterns, and storytelling opportunities hidden within customer data.
- As AI-generated content becomes commonplace, original thinking, strategic judgment, storytelling, and brand intuition become more valuable. The future belongs to marketers who combine human imagination with machine capability.

The ANA Technology Practice provides dozens of resources, including a report specifically focused on “[Generative AI in Creative and Content Generation](#)” as well as an [AI Case Study Compendium](#), an [AI Tools Navigator](#), over twenty [AI for Marketers training programs](#), guidance on [AI Transparency and Provenance](#), and much more at ana.net/ai.

6. A measurement reset is required for B2B creativity.

The findings from this and broader ANA research point to a clear conclusion: the definition of creative effectiveness in B2B has fundamentally changed — and measurement must evolve with it.

- Historically, creativity has been evaluated using campaign-level metrics such as impressions, click-through rates, and short-term engagement. However, the strongest work emerging today demonstrates that these measures are no longer sufficient to capture the true value of creative.
- Instead, leading organizations are redefining creativity as a system-level growth driver, operating across channels, markets, and time and connecting buyers across journeys, while measuring it accordingly.

This shift requires a corresponding change in measurement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The unit of analysis is no longer the campaign — it is the system. As a result, organizations must move beyond surface-level metrics and begin tracking depth and quality of engagement; repeat interaction and sustained usage; and scalability across geographies and channels.

A second major shift is the growing expectation that creativity must demonstrate direct business outcomes, as creativity is increasingly seen as a driver of growth, contributing to differentiation, pipeline development, and long-term enterprise performance. However, there remains a gap between aspiration and measurement capability. Research highlights that many marketers believe they are measuring impact in financial terms, but in practice are not, revealing a significant opportunity to improve measurement rigor. Creative effectiveness must now be measured as:

- **Business impact:** pipeline, revenue, conversion
- **Brand impact:** trust, perception, differentiation

Work done by the ANA with NewtonX in both 2025 and [2026](#) identifies the confident B2B marketer as someone “extremely or very confident in their ability to measure marketing’s impact on financial performance.” A defining characteristic of “confident marketers” is their ability to clearly connect marketing activity to business outcomes — and to align stakeholders around that impact.

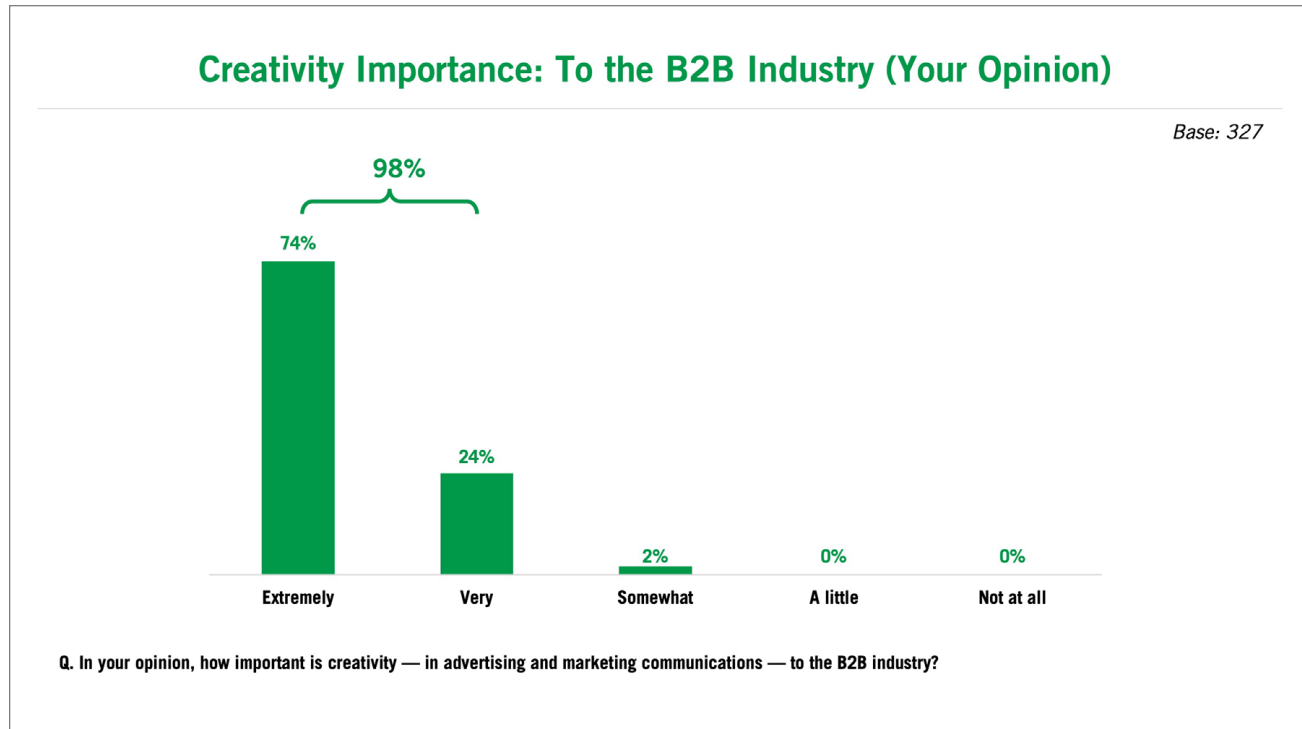
The future of B2B creativity is not a creative challenge but a measurement challenge.

Creative effectiveness in B2B is no longer measured by attention — it is measured by its impact on decisions, systems, and enterprise value.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Importance of Creativity to the Industry

It is the opinion of 98 percent of all survey respondents that creativity in B2B advertising and marketing communications is extremely or very important.



Responses specifically from client-side marketers are in full agreement, also totaling 98 percent for extremely important (70 percent) and very important (28 percent).

There were mixed opinions in our qualitative discussions about the relative importance of creativity, comparing B2B versus B2C:

- “In B2B, the importance of standing out is even more important than in B2C. In B2B there's often a sea of sameness with lots of brands that focus on functional benefits. When we do a competitive analysis, very often our reaction is ‘Wow, everybody looks exactly the same.’ When you walk on a trade show floor, every client looks the same, says the same thing, same color palette, same messaging. Therefore, creativity in B2B is important in order to stand out.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

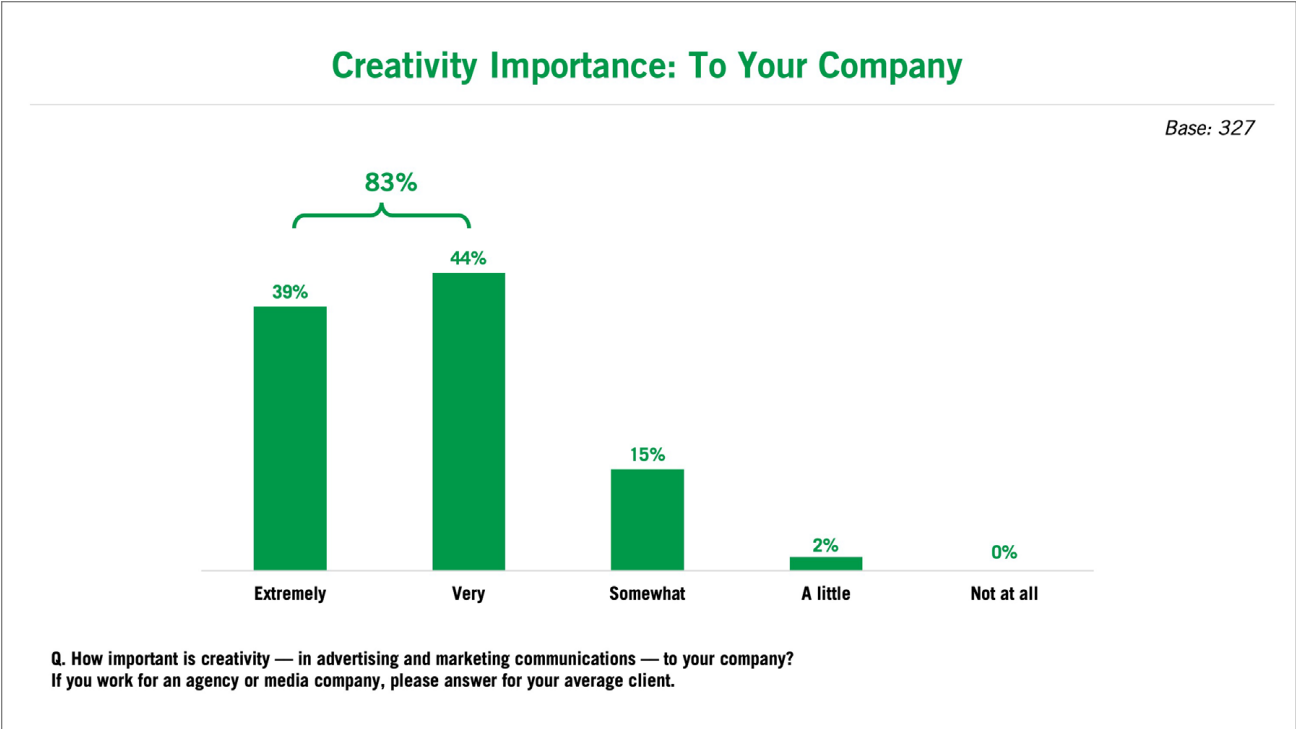
Importance of Creativity to the Industry

- “B2B isn't necessarily as creative as it needs to be. These can be multi-million-dollar decisions. If you start by persuading from an emotional standpoint, which comes from the creative side, then the rest of the argument is a lot easier. I think creative has got to be much more important right now in the current B2B landscape.”
- “I think it's about the same in B2B and B2C. You're dealing with people, they want to buy products and services, you're trying to convert people to buy. In my opinion, I don't understand why it wouldn't be equal.”
- “Some of our B2B clients are passionate about doing very creatively driven work. But for others, creativity in B2B is sometimes looked at as a ‘nice to have.’ If you get it, that's great and if you don't, that's still okay.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

Importance of Creativity to Your Company

Respondents also feel that B2B creative is important to their respective companies — extremely or very important per 83 percent of respondents.



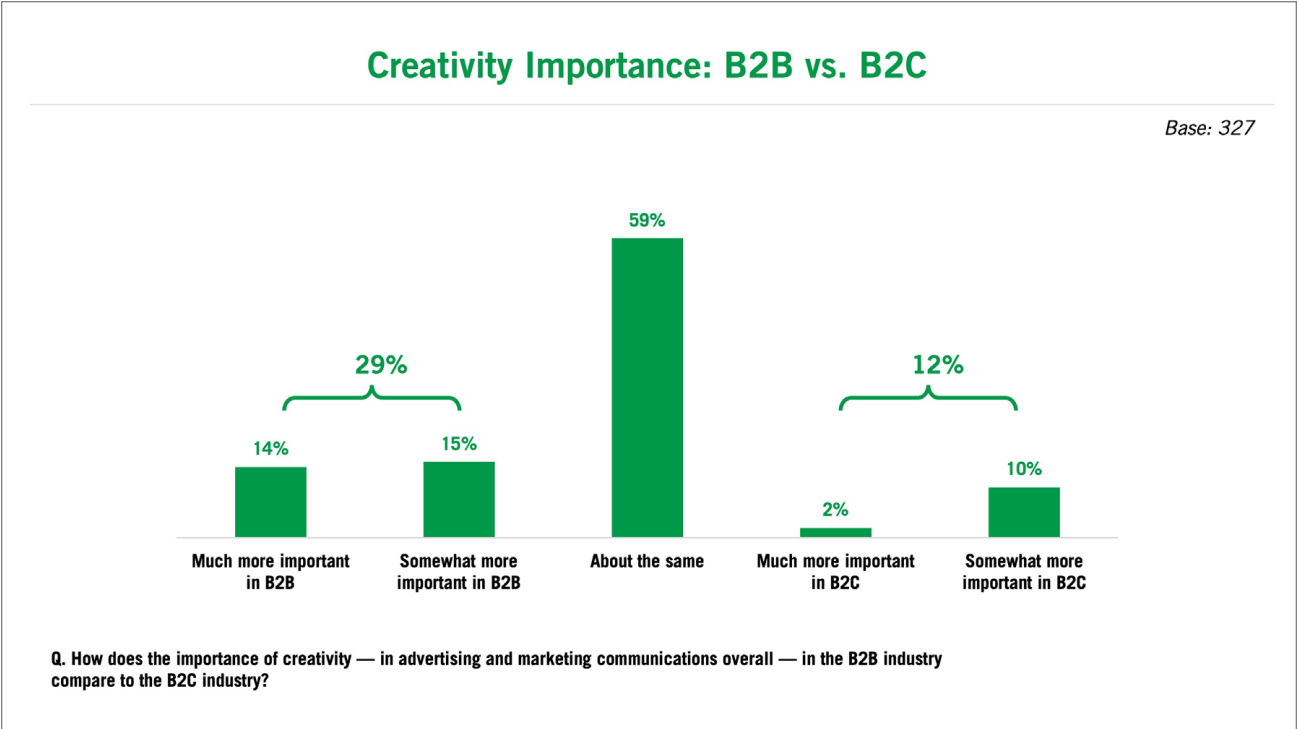
Responses specifically from client-side marketers are in agreement, also totaling 83 percent for extremely important (32 percent) and very important (51 percent).

It’s interesting to note that the total among all respondents who cite that creativity is important to their company is lower than the 98 percent who feel B2B creative is extremely or very important in their opinion (the prior question). One qualitative interviewee provided perspective here, “In the first question, respondents were providing their personal opinion as marketers; in the second question they were speculating how the broader organization would answer. Those of us who are in the know are aware, but perhaps the finance guy sees things differently.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

Creativity Importance: B2B Versus B2C

Is creativity more important in B2B or B2C advertising? Almost 60 percent feel it’s about the same. For the remainder, they lean toward creativity being more important in B2B.

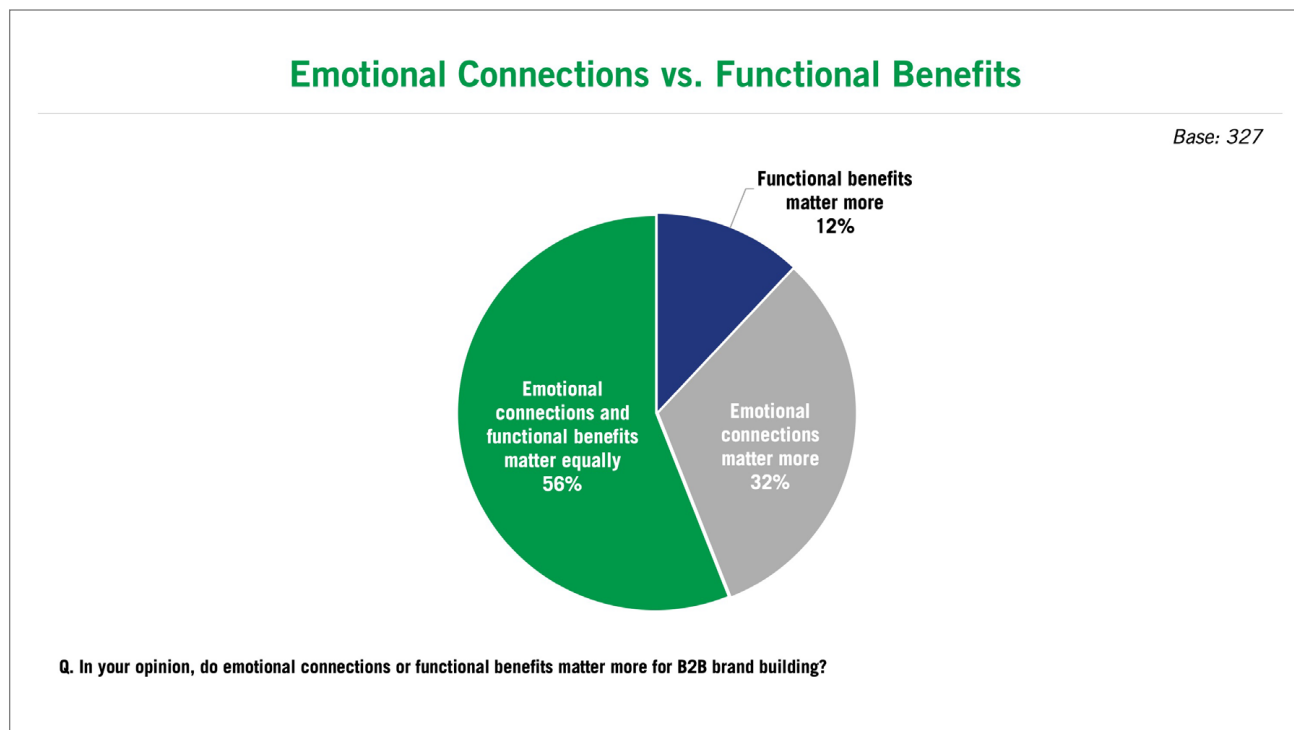


For client-side marketers, 55 percent feel the importance of creativity is about the same. As it was for the total sample, among client-side respondents there is a leaning to creativity being more important in B2B.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Emotional Connections Versus Functional Benefits

What matters more for B2B brand building: emotional connections or functional benefits? More than half (56 percent) feel that emotional connections and functional benefits matter equally. The other respondents lean more toward emotional connections mattering more.



Among client-side marketers, 63 percent feel that emotional connections and functional benefits matter equally. Meanwhile, emotional connections matter more for 21 percent, and functional benefits matter more for 16 percent.

While qualitative interviewees feel that there should be a balance between emotional connections and functional benefits, there was very strong support for emotional connections:

- “Study after study says that the unconscious mind, which is the emotional mind, is where 95 percent of decisions are made and that the logic or functional benefits are then used to justify those decisions. But it’s really an emotional decision that’s made, and logic is brought in afterwards. I believe it’s important to have balance, but the emotional connection and the relationship piece matter greatly.”
- “I think it’s an ‘and’ not an ‘or’ as you need both. The first touch or initial engagement with an audience has to be anchored in the emotional.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

Emotional Connections Versus Functional Benefits

- “There's so much noise out there right now, no matter what sector you're in. The emotional always breaks through better and faster than the rational or the functional.”
- “Going all the way back to cave person times, our limbic brain was wired to respond emotionally to things and then rationally we would justify whatever that emotion was. And that holds true to this day.”
- “Every now and then we get something where the functional benefit is truly simple, compelling, and unique. But most of the time it's not. In the B2B space, because we can have a long list of features and benefits, we can fool ourselves into thinking we're selling something different and more than what we really are. That's why I believe the emotional connection matters the absolute most, because we're just not in a place where there's that much separation between products.”

“

“We have to take off the suit. Many of us used to think that B2B had to be so serious, rational, frowny, maybe even a little emotionally distant. B2B is not business to business. I would advocate it's human to human. The person making that multimillion-dollar procurement decision is the same person who scrolls TikTok at 2 a.m. in the morning and wants to feel heard. Yes, they do make decisions based on logic, but they validate those decisions with instinct and emotion. The lesson is that lightness, empathy, and even humor can sit side by side with a high-performance brand. Empathy and performance are not opposites. They actually serve to reinforce one another.”

— EMILY KETCHEN, SVP AND CMO, INTELLIGENT DEVICES GROUP AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, LENOVO

Lenovo

From her remarks at the ANA 2026 Masters of B2B Marketing Conference

CASE STUDY: ICU MEDICAL AND MOWER

FINDING NURSING NIRVANA: REPOSITIONING AN INFUSION SYSTEM TO INSPIRE TRUST AND SPARK ADOPTION

Situation

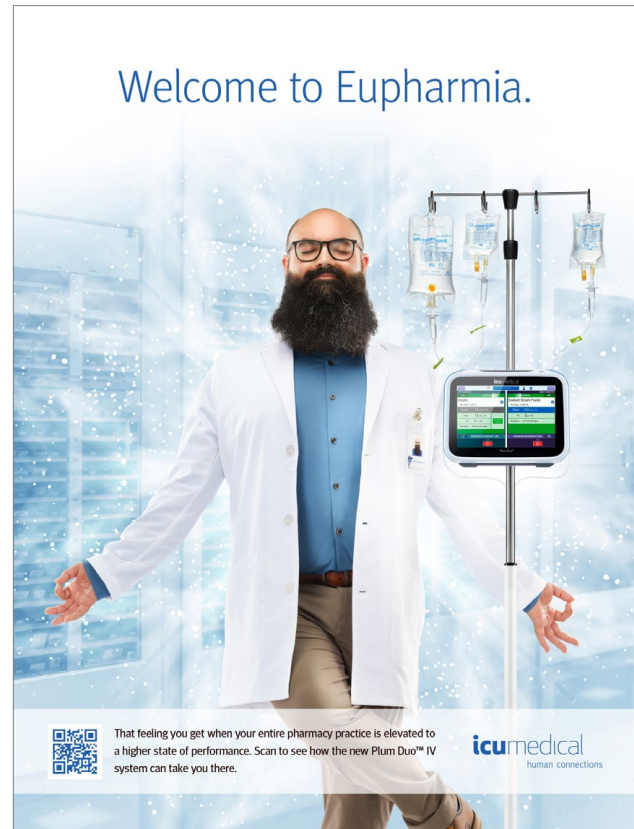
When ICU Medical acquired the Plum infusion system, it came with a perception problem. Competitors were claiming the technology was outdated and the user base was shrinking. ICU Medical completely reengineered the product into one of the most advanced infusion systems in the category. The challenge was relaunching it to a skeptical audience of nurses, pharmacists, and IT professionals in a way that cut through the category's clinical, sterile tone and overcame the baggage of the legacy product.

Insight

Research revealed that the primary motivator across all three audiences was user confidence. Early adopters who used the new Plum Duo IV system reported that it went above and beyond in addressing their biggest daily challenges. That single, consistent finding became the creative brief.

Solution

We built a campaign that matched the ambition of the product. Rather than leading with specs, we visualized the emotional payoff, portraying each professional in an enlightened state of calm and competence. For nurses, Plum Duo delivered Nursing Nirvana. For pharmacists, it was Eupharmia. For IT professionals, IT Utopia. Each audience received messaging and imagery tailored to their specific workflow challenges, delivered across print, digital banners, landing pages, email, and trade show materials.



Creative Approach: Both Functional and Emotional

Research across three distinct clinical audiences pointed to confidence as the common thread, and that data insight shaped every creative decision. We used AI to assist with the conceptualization of the campaign and the cost-efficient placement of clinician imagery in layouts. Functionally, each execution addressed the real performance needs of its audience. Nurses needed streamlined medication delivery and an intuitive interface.

CASE STUDY: ICU MEDICAL AND MOWER

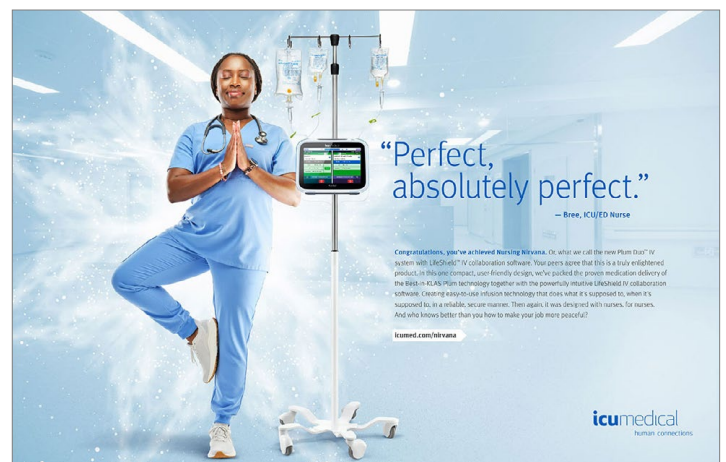
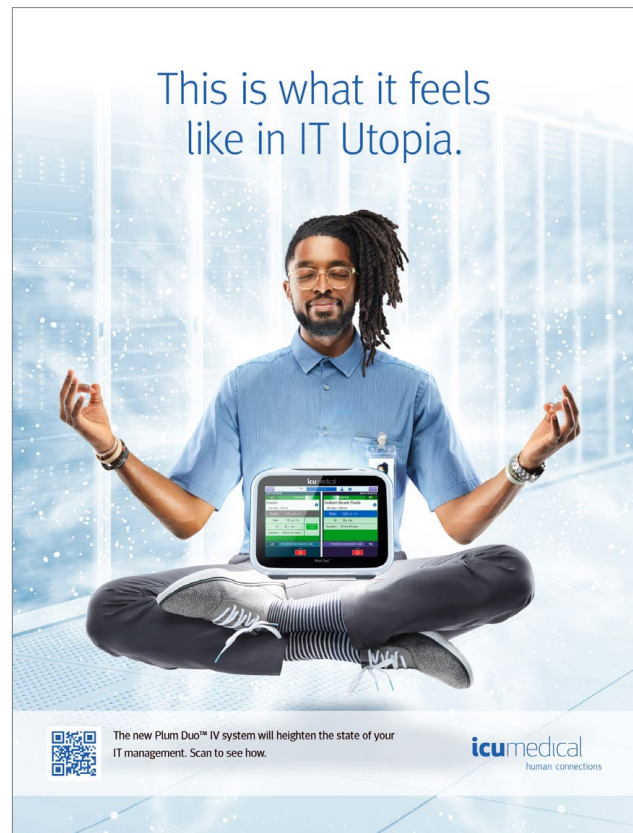
FINDING NURSING NIRVANA: REPOSITIONING AN INFUSION SYSTEM TO INSPIRE TRUST AND SPARK ADOPTION

Pharmacists needed accurate drug library management. IT pros needed real-time monitoring and enterprise-wide system control. Emotionally, the creative tapped into the confidence and peace of mind that comes from technology that simply works. Pairing that emotional state with proof points specific to each audience helped the campaign earn credibility while breaking through the noise of a traditionally clinical category.

Results: Measured Across the Full Funnel

Success was measured across awareness, engagement, and pipeline quality, critical benchmarks for a multi-million-dollar system purchase with a long sales cycle.

- **Reach:** 3M-plus impressions across digital and print channels
- **Engagement:** Programmatic banner CTR at two times the industry average, demonstrating the creative resonated far beyond category norms
- **Consideration:** 11,000-plus landing page visits driven by audience-specific messaging
- **Pipeline:** Thousands of marketing qualified leads and 12-plus product demonstrations scheduled, high-value outcomes for a complex B2B purchase

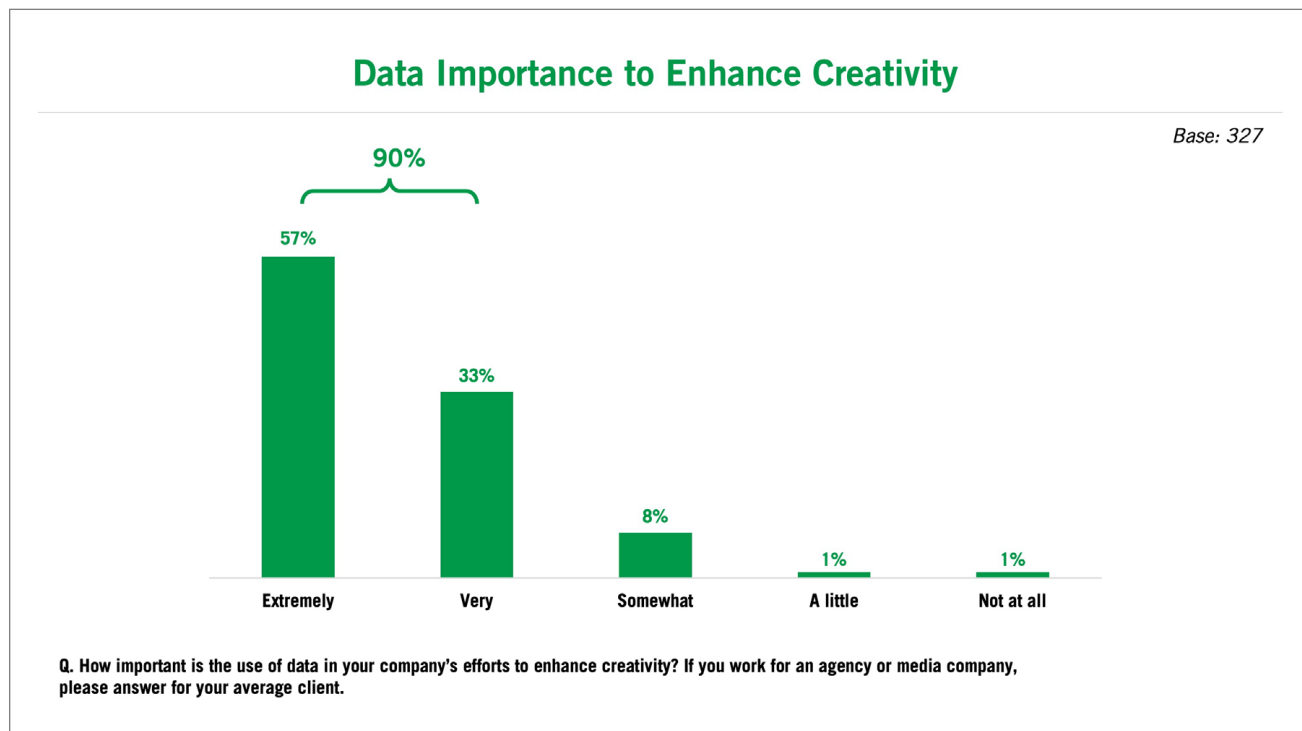


This campaign was recognized in the ANA 2026 B2 Awards as a Gold winner in the Business to Government/Business to Public Sector category.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Data Importance to Enhance Creativity

The use of data to enhance creativity is extremely/very important to 90 percent of respondents.



Client-side marketers are in agreement: 91 percent responded that the use of data to enhance creativity is extremely (59 percent) or very (32 percent) important.

What type of data would you use to enhance creativity? The ANA publication, “[Using Data to Supercharge B2B Marketing](#),” recommends the creation of buyer personas — a set of target buyers — to enable marketers to choose marketing strategies, generate content, and promote their products and services. Before beginning the process of creating buyer personas, one must gather data and can use one or a variety of data sources:

- **Basic contact information:** name, job title, email address, phone number, and company name
- **Firmographic data:** Firmographic targeting involves analyzing B2B entities and grouping them by shared characteristics and/or buyer(s)’ history. This method categorizes businesses based on specific attributes to target and serve them, much like demographic segmentation does for individuals. That could include industry, company size, revenue, location, and number of employees.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Data Importance to Enhance Creativity

- **Intent data:** insights into the topics and products that potential customers are actively researching or showing interest in
- **Engagement data:** how contacts have interacted with your marketing efforts, such as email opens, clicks, and website visits
- **Demographic data:** age, gender, education level, and other personal attributes of the contacts
- **Behavioral data:** purchase history, online behavior, and content consumption patterns
- **Technographic data:** details about the technology stack used by the company, including software, hardware, and other tools

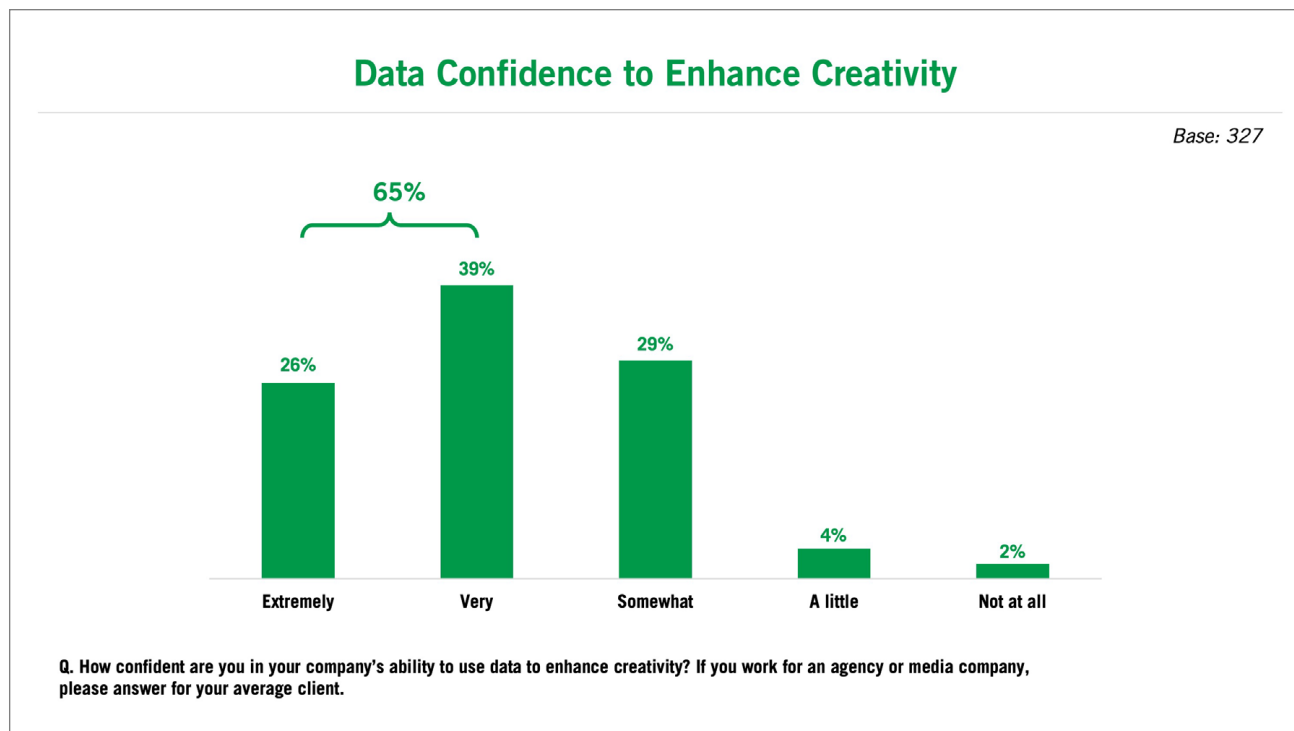
Further, one can use first-party data, which is data collected directly from your interactions with customers via touchpoints including website, email and SMS, point of sale, CRM, call center, and newsletter sign-up.

For those seeking a deeper exploration of data importance to enhance creativity, the forthcoming “ANA Mastering the Use of Data for B2B Buying Groups Playbook” offers a comprehensive view of the B2B data ecosystem and the processes required to make data-driven decision-making as systematic and reliable as it is in B2C marketing. The playbook operationalizes this vision by helping marketers understand the full range of data available in the marketplace and how to structure it to determine the “who, what, and when” of B2B sales and marketing — enabling organizations to better understand buying group composition, mental models, intent, and timing. At its core, this work underscores a fundamental shift in how creativity is approached in B2B. The future of B2B creativity is not a choice between creativity and data; it is creativity powered by data, directed by buying group psychology, and measured by its ability to shape confidence, consensus, and business outcomes.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Data Confidence to Enhance Creativity

Confidence in one's company's ability to use data to enhance creativity is moderate: 65 percent are either extremely (26 percent) or very (39 percent) confident.



Meanwhile, 62 percent of the client-side respondent base are either extremely (22 percent) or very (40 percent) confident.

In discussing the confidence marketers have in using data to enhance creativity, key commentary from our qualitative respondents demonstrates that confidence is mixed:

- “In the B2B world, data is challenging, especially data that links to business results. That’s because these are complicated journeys with multiple players within a sales funnel and getting accurate data can be really challenging.”
- “Data is constantly changing. It’s a moving target. With the increasing volume of data, we are starting to see conflicting data — two platforms measuring the same thing and telling a different story — and that’s reducing confidence.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

Data Confidence to Enhance Creativity

- “The giant wealth of data can create its own paralysis, creating information overload. Then trying to figure out the things to look at that are going to make a difference can be tough.”
- “In B2B, marketers sometimes question the actual data that they have and even more importantly, their ability to do something with it.”
- “Data on its own isn't going to drive creativity. It's really the interpretation of data ... the human judgment on the data that is going to drive creative that has the greatest emotional and behavioral impact.”

Marketers can become more confident in using data to enhance creativity by referring to the ANA publications “[Using Data to Supercharge B2B Marketing](#)” along with the forthcoming “ANA Mastering the Use of Data for B2B Buying Groups Playbook.” That will be available at ana.net/data.

CASE STUDY: ROTO-ROOTER AND PARK & BATTERY

ELEVATING ROTO-ROOTER'S STANDING AMONG COMMERCIAL DECISION MAKETERS

Situation

Everyone knows Roto-Rooter. Or do they ...?

Roto-Rooter is America's most trusted name in residential plumbing. Its jingle about how "away go troubles down the drain" is steeped in the national consciousness — so much so, it received a memorable parody in the classic "Mr. Plow" episode of *The Simpsons*. Trouble is, from a B2B perspective, many business owners don't realize Roto-Rooter's expertise extends beyond homes to include high-stakes commercial environments.

Challenge

This knowledge gap presented a significant business challenge: elevate Roto-Rooter's standing among commercial decision-makers and drive demand in industries where downtime can be catastrophic — restaurants, retail, healthcare, hospitality, and property management. The assignment wasn't simply about awareness. It was about transforming perception and creating emotional relevance in a category people rarely think about until disaster strikes.

Insights

Data played a critical role in shaping both the strategic and creative approach. Research revealed the immense financial and operational consequences of plumbing failures, including the fact that 40 percent of small businesses



never reopen after serious flooding. Audience targeting data helped identify high-value commercial segments most vulnerable to downtime risk, while behavioral and channel insights informed a hyper-targeted pilot rollout in Metro Atlanta designed to test, learn, and optimize before national expansion.

The brand's positioning challenged category expectations head-on: Roto-Rooter Means Business. The brand was explicitly aligned with the operational and emotional realities commercial customers face every day: lost revenue, stressed employees, customer disruption, reputational damage, and the constant pressure to keep operations moving.

Solution

The creative idea, "Talking Commercial Plumbing," leveraged both functional benefits and emotional storytelling. Anthropomorphic plumbing fixtures — a wise old toilet, a jittery sink, a feisty mop, and a grizzled toilet brush — became the campaign's unlikely

CASE STUDY: ROTO-ROOTER AND PARK & BATTERY

ELEVATING ROTO-ROOTER'S STANDING AMONG COMMERCIAL DECISION MAKETERS

spokescharacters, bringing humor, humanity, and memorability to a highly functional service category. These characters weren't gimmicks; they became emotional proxies for the anxiety and chaos businesses experience when plumbing problems threaten operations.

AI-enhanced creative workflows also helped accelerate production efficiencies and creative iteration throughout the campaign. AI-supported ideation, rapid visual development, and content optimization tools enabled the team to produce and test variations quickly while maintaining a highly crafted, character-driven creative system across channels.

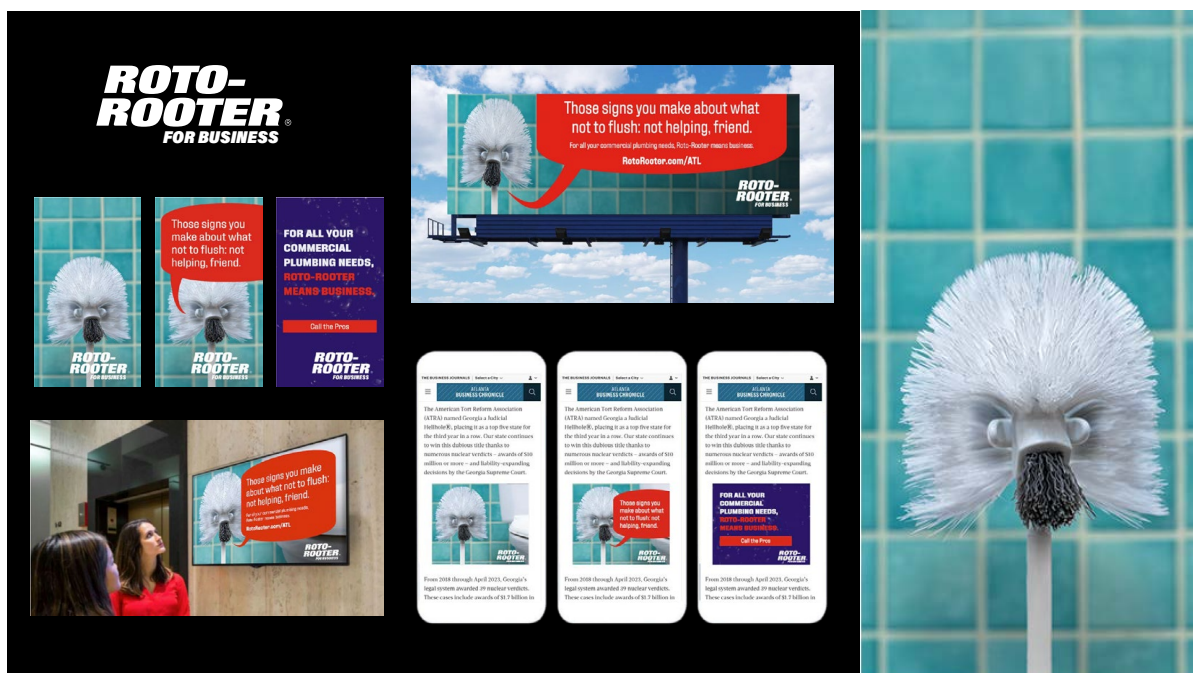
The integrated campaign launched across digital display, programmatic, paid social,

Google Performance Max, Spotify, OOH, landing pages, and email — connecting emotionally resonant storytelling directly to measurable business outcomes.

Results

The impact was substantial, especially for a campaign funded at less than \$250,000:

- 10 percent year-over-year increase in weekly call volume
- 14.6 percent growth in commercial ticket volume
- 12.4 percent increase in new and returning commercial customers
- 16.8 percent increase in home service calls



CASE STUDY: ROTO-ROOTER AND PARK & BATTERY

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- 8.2 percent growth in residential plumbing revenue, outperforming the broader industry
- 4.7 million impressions
- 30 times ROI in terms of marketing attributed pipeline
- 55 percent of leads demonstrated commercial intent
- 30 percent lower cost-per-lead
- 2 times conversion rate compared to Google benchmarks

What's more, the campaign was named to the Cannes Lions Creative B2B shortlist and has been awarded four ANA B2 Awards for Integrated Marketing Program, Media Strategy, Demand Generation, and Business and Professional Services.

This campaign was recognized in the ANA 2026 B2 Awards as the:

- **Gold winner in the Demand Generation:** Small or Medium Business category
- **Gold winner in the Industry Sector Spotlight Award:** Business and Professional Services category
- **Gold winner in the Media Strategy** category
- **Silver winner in the Integrated Marketing Program:** Small to Midsize Business category

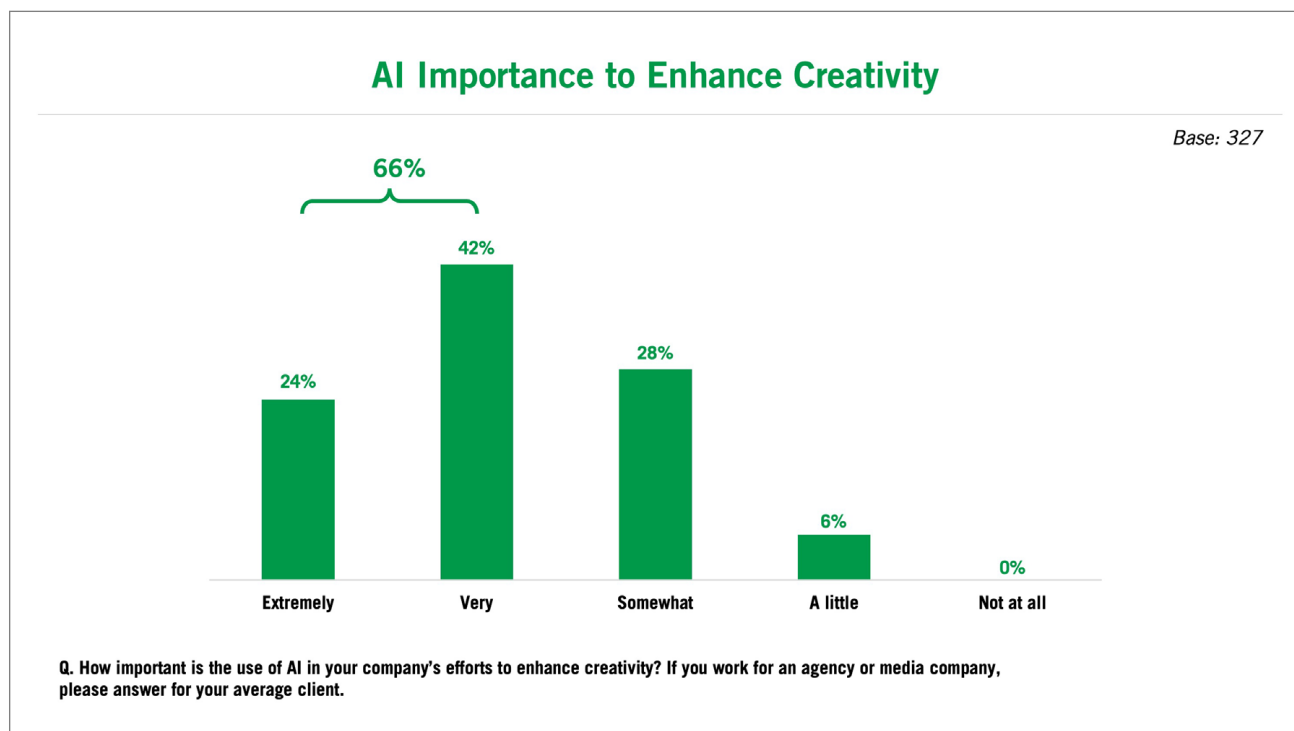


View Roto-Rooter's "Talking Commercial Plumbing" video [here](#).

DETAILED FINDINGS

AI Importance to Enhance Creativity

AI is extremely or very important to enhance creativity to 66 percent of the total respondent base.



Client-side respondents were slightly more bullish on the importance of AI to enhance creativity: 73 percent feel it's either extremely (24 percent) or very (49 percent) important.

The qualitative interviewees provided the following insight on the importance of using AI to enhance creativity:

- “I use AI every day, all day. I don't think I could live without it now. It's used to enhance my work, not do the work for me. You obviously need a human being to oversee it.”
- “We're using AI every day for a variety of reasons — speed to insight, summarizing research, identifying patterns, headline development. It comes back to the belief that AI enhances and doesn't replace expertise and creative leadership. We use it to spot what humans miss.”
- “We use AI in the ideation phase. It's helping the creative departments move ideas down the journey faster and expand their field of play. ‘Oh, I didn't think about that. What if we went in this direction?’”

DETAILED FINDINGS

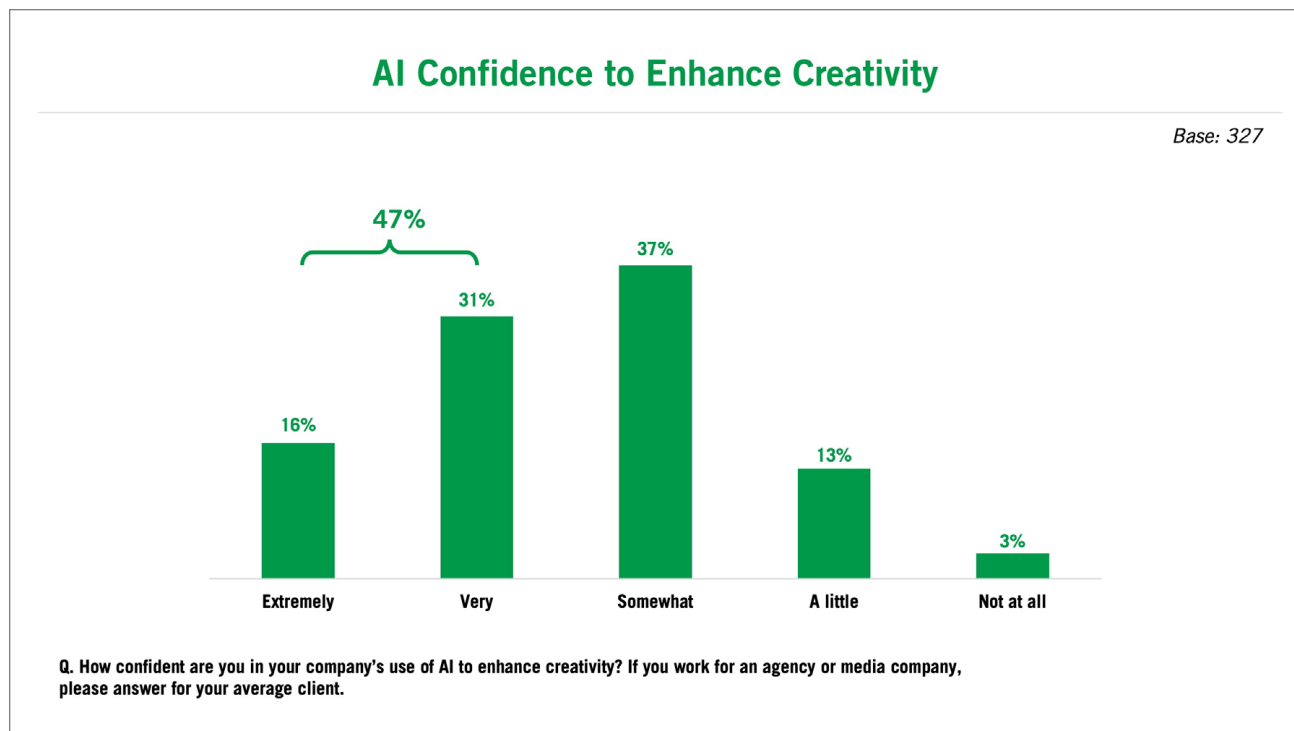
AI Importance to Enhance Creativity

- “AI should never become the detour or the shortcut for human invention and ingenuity. If people start using it as a shortcut, we lose the ability to be critical thinkers, and to drive ingenuity. Because AI is scraping the things that exist in the world, it will give a return that's an average. It won't give a return that's about invention and ingenuity. That can only come from the talent that we have in the building or at the agency. To me, AI is not about necessarily enhancing creativity, it's more about enhancing the scale of creativity.”

DETAILED FINDINGS

AI Confidence to Enhance Creativity

Less than half of all respondents (47 percent) are extremely or very confident in their company's use of AI to enhance creativity.



Less than half of client-side marketers (45 percent) are extremely or very confident in their company's use of AI to enhance creativity.

In our qualitative discussions, there was clear consensus that marketers are still very much at the beginning of their respective journeys in using AI to enhance creativity. Marketers have more confidence now than they did a year ago and that confidence will increase with time.

A word of caution from one of the qualitative interviewees:

- “If you are using AI, you have no doubt experienced AI hallucinations. Prompts are the key to everything. You're inputting a bunch of prompts and it gives an idea or direction, but it's so off strategy because the AI system didn't comprehend what the task at hand really was. Then the work received back or the output from AI is far off strategy. It decreases the confidence level in what AI is going to do with creativity.”

CASE STUDY: JLL AND STEIN

PUTTING BRAND AT THE HEART OF BUSINESS STRATEGY AND GROWTH: USING AI TO DELIVER A PROJECT IN RECORD TIME

Situation

JLL is a leading global commercial real estate services and investment management company and a Fortune 500 firm. As JLL emerged from the pandemic in 2022 (with commercial real estate brands and clients facing challenge and complexity), it repositioned and relaunched its brand with the platform, “See a Brighter Way.”

JLL’s opportunity was to showcase the positioning through its greatest competitive advantage — proprietary intelligence and deep lifecycle expertise.

The commercial and internal result of the brand rollout inspired JLL’s C-suite and board to elevate brand to a key strategic pillar in its Accelerate 2030 five-year corporate strategy. Marketing’s mandate: Win with the JLL brand.

Strategy

With brand playing its most strategic role ever across clients, its people, and the investor community, JLL and Stein sought to establish the brand as a distinctive, differentiated growth driver.

Research revealed that to navigate unprecedented change, clients needed trusted intelligence that strengthened confidence and enabled faster, better decisioning. And while the category talked about AI as a tool for efficiency, JLL focused instead on its combination of high-quality data, expert interpretation, predictive foresight, and proven execution as the means to see beyond buildings to the human and business outcomes made possible by JLL.



To communicate this distinction in a largely undifferentiated category, JLL needed to break from convention — moving beyond the expected commercial real estate marketing playbook to create a bold, memorable expression of its intelligence and point of view.

Solution

The Accelerate 2030 strategy was rolled out at JLL’s Investor Day in New York. To own the moment and signal its intent, the largest activation in JLL’s history was launched in Grand Central Terminal’s vast Vanderbilt Hall. This was the ignition point for brand-led marketing investment and seamless brand-to-demand execution.

CASE STUDY: JLL AND STEIN

PUTTING BRAND AT THE HEART OF BUSINESS STRATEGY AND GROWTH: USING AI TO DELIVER A PROJECT IN RECORD TIME

A near 20-foot-tall tower projected stories across the hall, showcasing the role real estate plays in shaping a brighter future. Surrounding out-of-home (OOH) media spread these stories even further. JLL's leadership and 100,000-plus workforce amplified the activation on social media to turn a moment into many thousands of digital moments globally.

JLL owned the moment, from nearly 20 million OOH impressions in a little more than a week to 50,000 social engagements. Fast-follow campaigns targeting occupier and investor audiences leveraged the momentum to out-perform prior campaigns. JLL was “winning with the brand” as never before.

AI was used extensively. From pre-visualization to final delivery, AI generative art was used to deliver a project at the scale of the Grand Central activation in record time. Before, a project like this would have taken months to conceive, design, and produce. This activation was delivered within 6 weeks. It was an accelerated process, allowing changes and iterations to be addressed on the very same day. Notably, the concept, messaging, and overall creative direction were entirely delivered by a human creative team, but the visuals and video were rendered by multiple AI platforms.

The campaign had a multi-channel activation including digital OOH, social (LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube), email, paid digital (programmatic and CTV), public relations, and the immersive installation in Vanderbilt Hall in New York's Grand Central Terminal.



Results

Key results:

- 19M-plus impressions across OOH and social
- 14.25 percent engagement rate — 141 percent above benchmark
- 54 percent year-over-year search volume (NYC)
- 82 percent follower growth
- 94/100 net sentiment; 0 percent negative

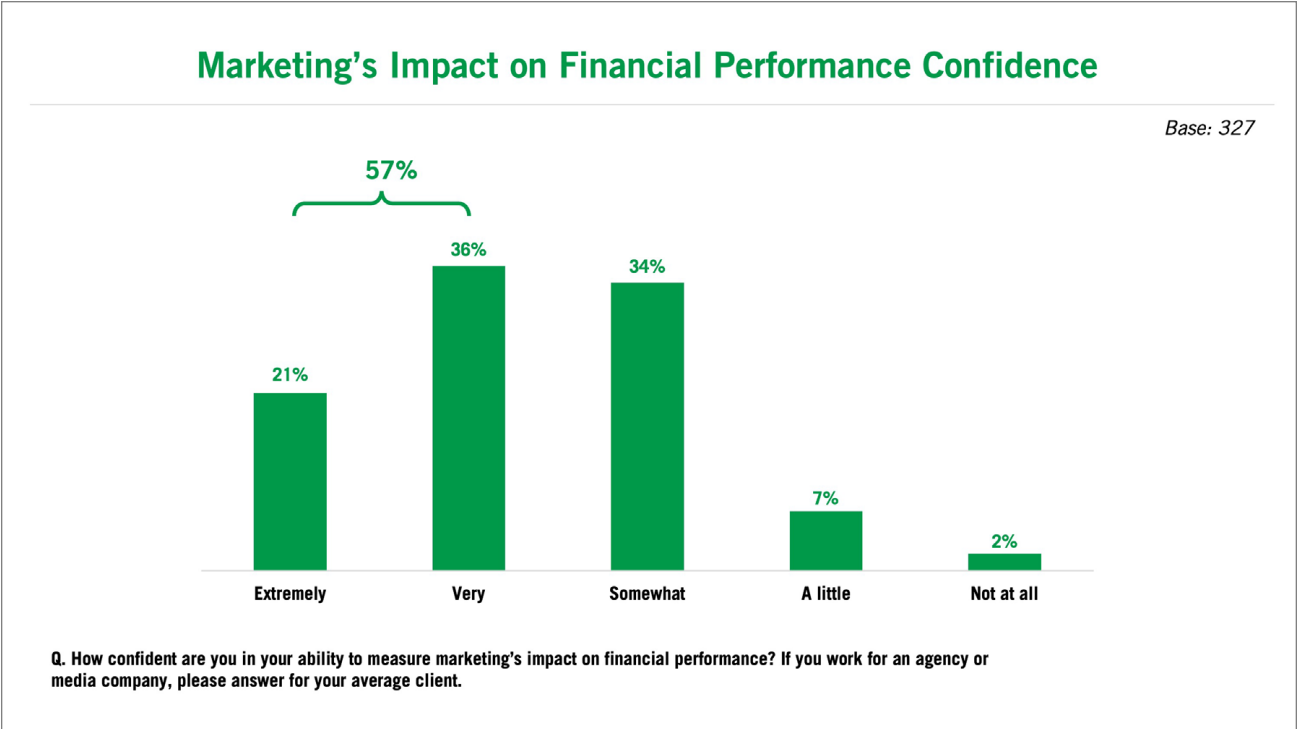


View JLL x Stein Sizzle Reel [here](#).

DETAILED FINDINGS

Confidence in Marketing's Impact on Financial Performance

Fifty-seven percent of total respondents are confident in their ability to measure marketing's impact on financial performance.



Among client-side respondents, 60 percent are either extremely (21 percent) or very (39 percent) confident.

This question helps define what ANA and NewtonX call “confident B2B marketers.” A confident marketer is defined as someone “extremely or very confident in their ability to measure marketing's impact on financial performance.” [The Confident B2B Marketer 2026](#) was released in June; 59 percent of the respondents are either extremely (18 percent) or very (41 percent) confident. There is high correlation with the respondent base for this “B2B Creativity” work.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Confidence in Marketing's Impact on Financial Performance

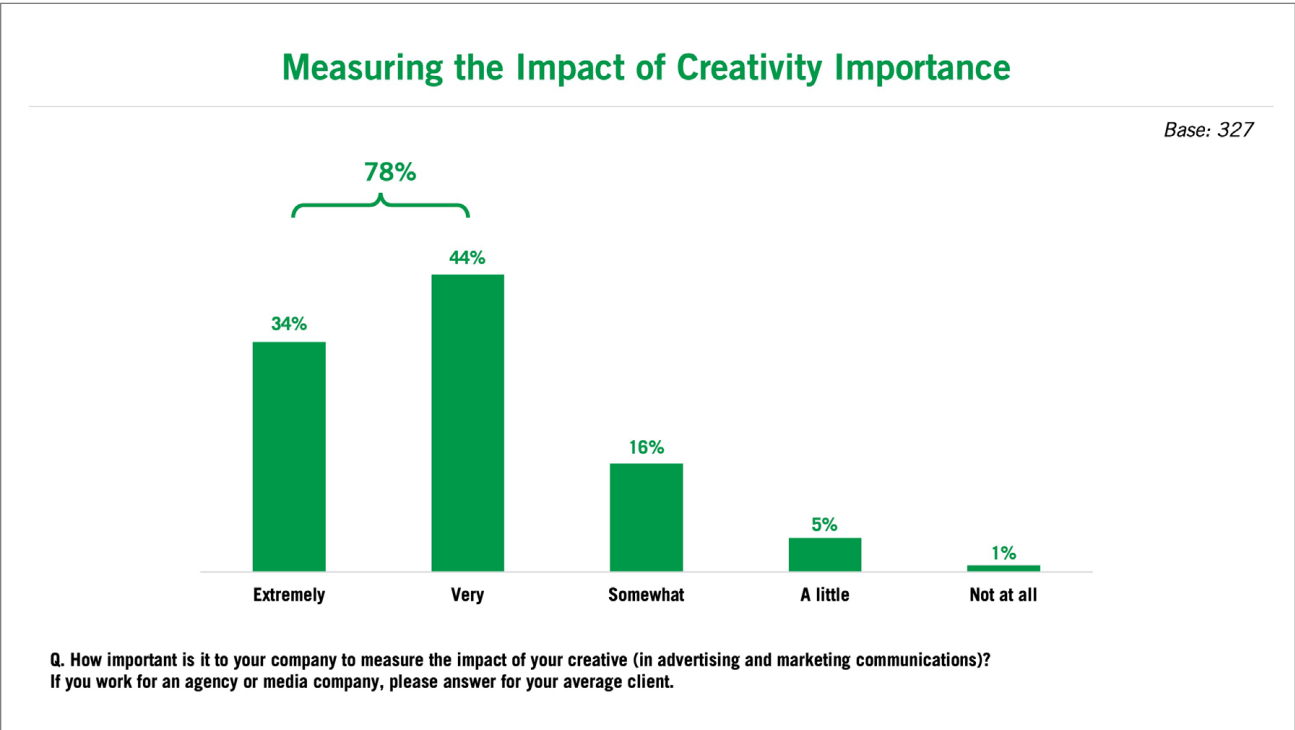
Qualitative interviewees had various opinions on the confidence they have in their company's ability to measure marketing's impact on financial performance:

- “In the B2B world there's complexity in the media mix, complexity in the sales funnel, as well as complexity with buyer groups, channel partners and distribution. All that really takes marketers farther and farther away from the data. So the challenge is about being able to be confident that we can attribute our marketing activity to business. And then there are silos within the organizations that often seem to be jockeying for credit for the performance.”
- “I think confidence increases every year. We're more confident now than ever. In the last year, I've had more conversations with CFOs than I've had with CMOs. Marketing and finance are definitely trying to get more tightly aligned. The reporting systems are enabling alignment. I also think it's a shared language, a shared understanding, shared goals between marketing and finance.”
- “I absolutely think AI is playing a role in increasing the confidence marketers have in measuring their impact on financial performance. I honestly believe that you've got a lot of marketers who haven't really been sure how to tell the story before. And I see AI helping tell the story. ‘Here's our data, create a presentation for me, put it into these formats, give me the information.’”

DETAILED FINDINGS

Measuring the Impact of Creativity Importance

Measuring the impact of creative is extremely or very important to 78 percent of respondents.

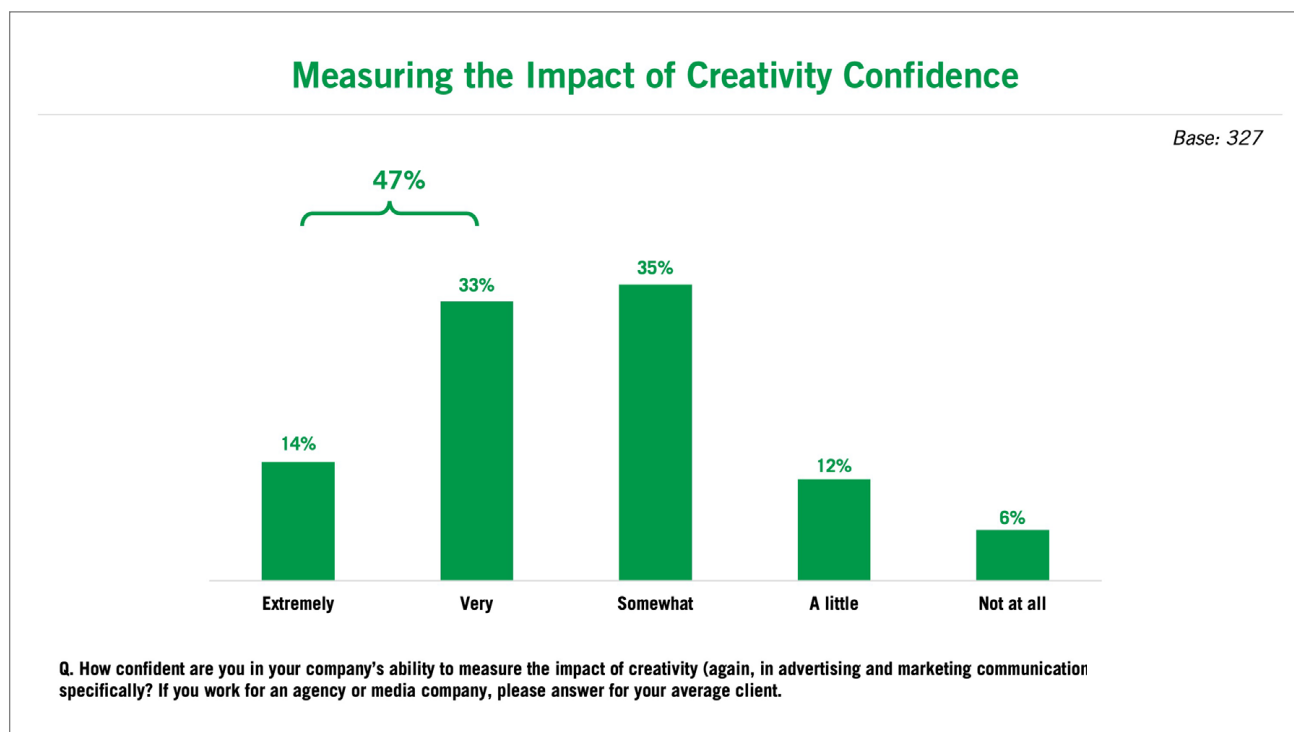


Client-side marketers are in agreement: 76 percent feel measuring the impact of creative is either extremely (36 percent) or very (40 percent) important.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Measuring the Impact of Creativity Confidence

Less than half (47 percent) are either extremely or very confident in their company's ability to measure the impact of creativity in advertising and marketing communications.



Meanwhile, among client-side respondents, confidence is even lower. Only 42 percent are either extremely (12 percent) or very (30 percent) confident.

Perspective from qualitative interviewees on measuring creative:

- “A lot of marketers or agencies are chasing attention and engagement. Instead, when you're thinking about the impact of creative, it should be trust, relevance, creating advocacy, repeat business. If you're only measuring a piece of that and you're only measuring short-term performance, like click-through rates and conversion rates, then you're not looking at longer-term brand effectiveness of lift, awareness, emotional resonance, etc. The best creative performs in the short term and compounds brand value over time.”
- “I think there's now enough data out there to show the importance of creative and impact on pipeline, brand valuation, and even stock performance. For advanced marketers, those who have been at this for a while, there is a correlation between creativity and the impact on business performance.”
- “My metrics to measure the impact of creative include everything from engagement (i.e., how many people are sharing) to earned media placements.”

CASE STUDY: ZOETIS AND BADER RUTTER

BUILDING BRAND RECOGNITION

Situation

Zoetis is a Fortune 500 company and the world's largest global animal health company, dedicated to developing vaccines, medicines, diagnostics, and genetic tests for both pets and livestock.

Zoetis had a strong product foundation. Its B2B audience of ranchers and dairy producers bought solely on the product name and its effectiveness. But it had limited to no recognition of the brand behind the product.

Challenge

With the product coming off patent and significant generic pressures looming, this audience's purchase behaviors would change dramatically. There was a need to create meaning in Zoetis and provide the audience with an emotional connection to stay with the brand.

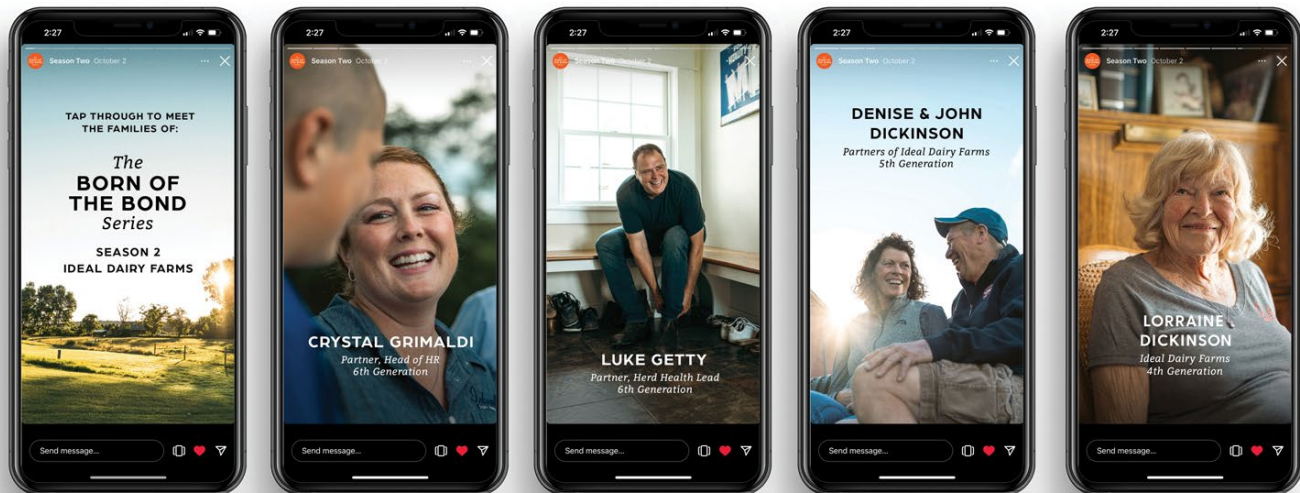
The brand recognized that for ranchers and dairy producers, the relationship they have with their animals is not transactional. It's actually a deep, emotional bond, as the ranchers and dairy producers care for the lives of these animals. Zoetis wanted to recognize, understand, and celebrate these people.

With the looming generic pressure, Zoetis had modeled a 40 percent decline in revenue; in dollars that was \$210 million. But the entire portfolio of nearly \$1 billion was at risk.



CASE STUDY: ZOETIS AND BADER RUTTER

BUILDING BRAND RECOGNITION



Solution

The brand campaign, “Born of the Bond,” focused on the shared purpose of both the audience and Zoetis: the fact that Zoetis exists to protect the bond between the ranchers and dairy producers and their animals. The mission for Zoetis, through the vaccines it creates, was to strengthen that bond.

Results

Now in its fourth year, it has defended against generic pressures, grown brand belief, and increased revenue and earned:

- \$110 million revenue increase for the entire portfolio in four years
- 3 percent market share growth across the Zoetis cattle portfolio

- 4-point net promoter score increase while the category dropped 13 points
- 6 million video play-throughs on social with a 72 percent completion rate for a 20-minute film series

This campaign was recognized in the ANA 2025 B2 Awards as the:



- **Gold winner in the Multi-Year Impact** category
- **Gold winner in the Video Marketing** category
- **Silver winner in the Event Marketing Campaign** category



See a video of the case study [here](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- **Denise McDevitt**, Senior Vice President, Awards
- **Gabrielle White**, Manager, Content
- **Amy Zeng**, Senior Manager, Creative Services

ABOUT THE ANA

The Association of National Advertisers (ANA) is the definitive voice of the marketing industry. Since 1910, we have set and advanced the agenda for marketing transformation, connecting over 1,600 member companies to an influential global network, insights, and resources that drive growth. Our members represent 20,000 brands and \$400 billion in annual marketing investment. Through industry-leading research, the CMO Growth Council, and our proprietary Growth Agenda and Practices, the ANA empowers marketers to shape the future of marketing and create lasting impact for their organizations and the industry.

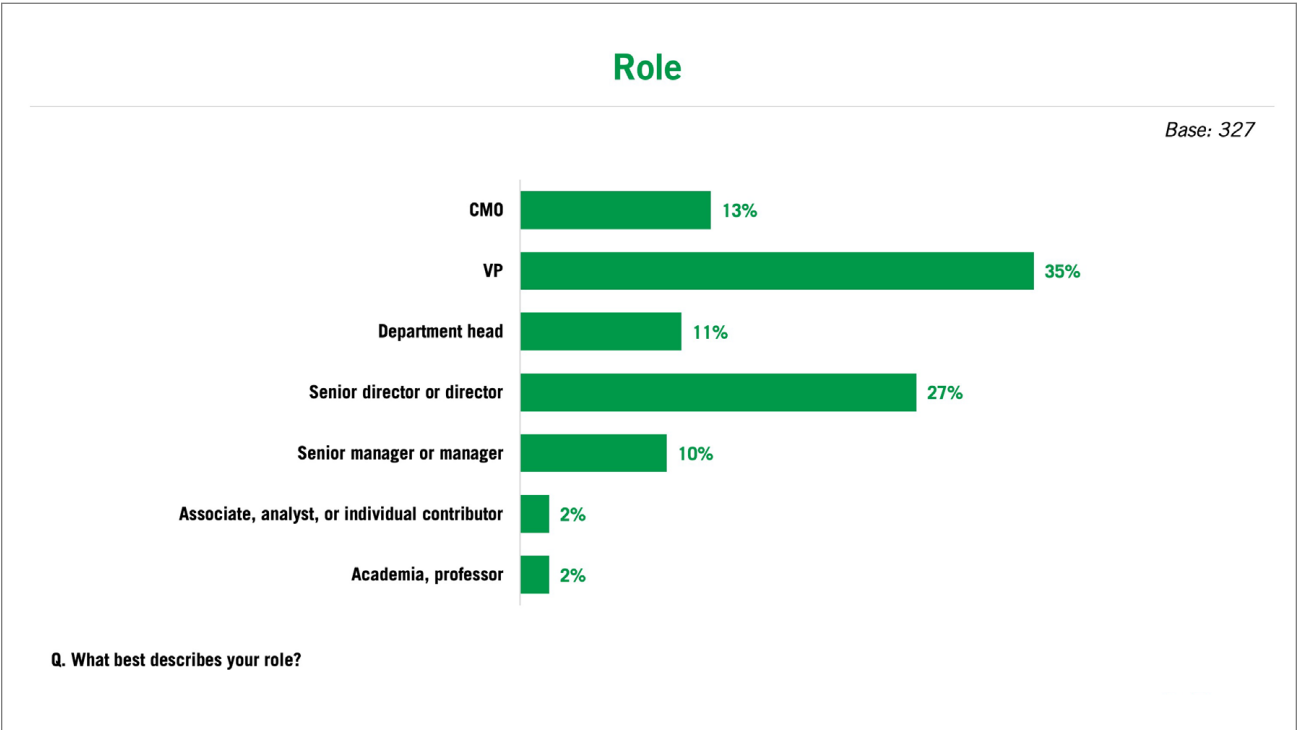
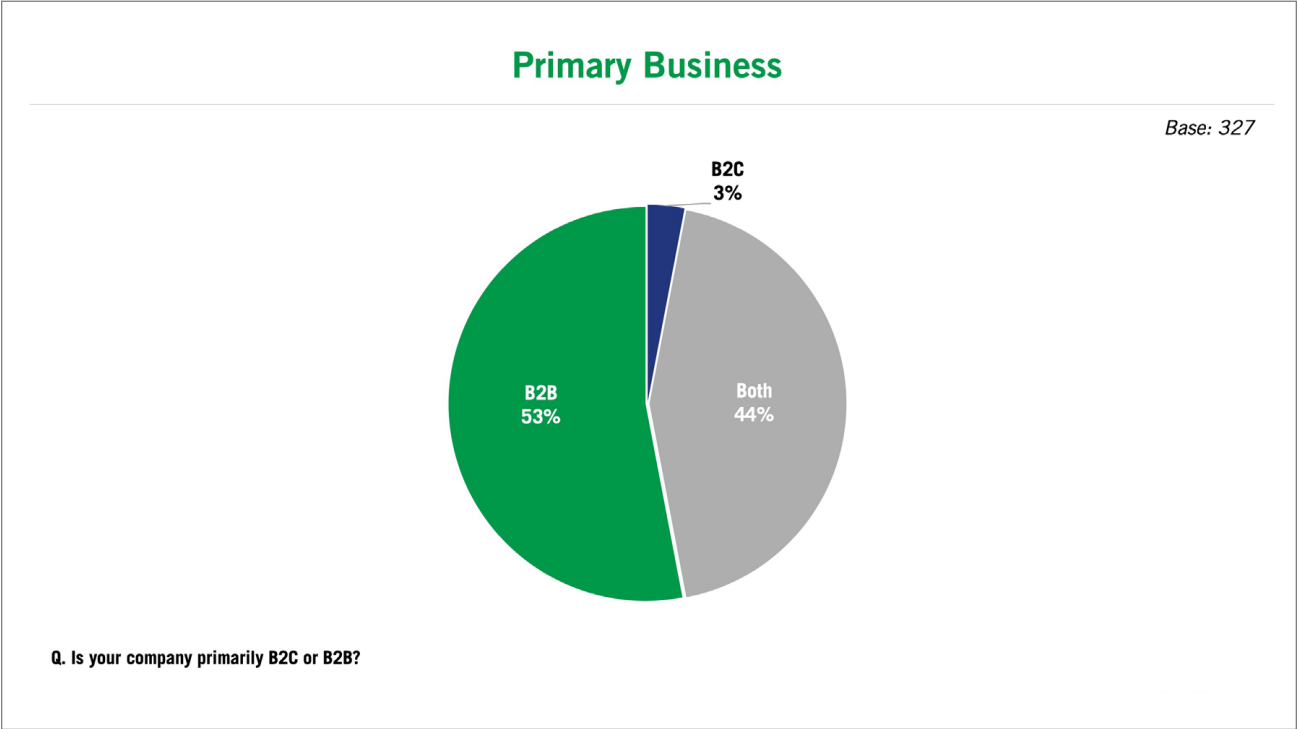
ABOUT THE B2 AWARDS

As part of the ANA's mission to set the agenda for growth, the ANA B2 Awards celebrate the best of business-to-business marketing work that demonstrates the power of strategy, creativity, and results to drive meaningful growth. Recognized as the industry's premier B2B marketing honor, the program spans categories including brand building, demand generation, account-based marketing, and digital transformation. Winners represent the highest standard of excellence, as judged by a distinguished panel of industry peers.



APPENDIX

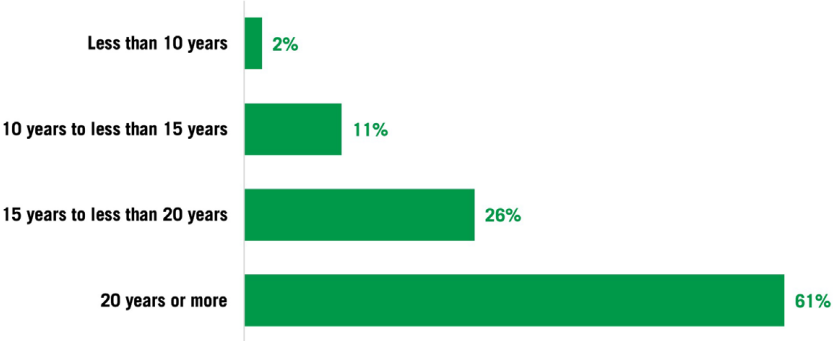
APPENDIX



APPENDIX

Years of Professional Experience

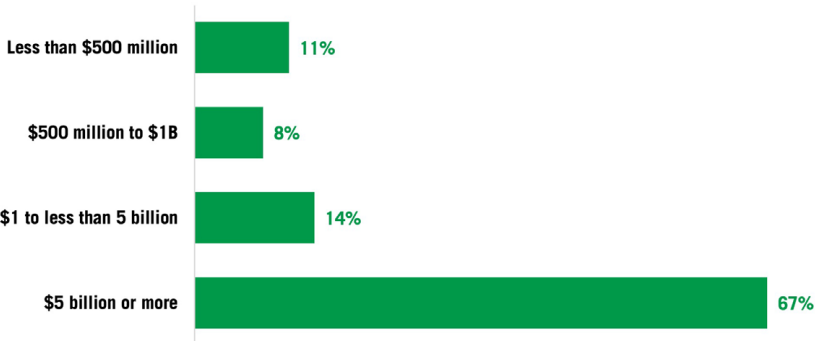
Base: 327



Q. How many years of professional experience in the marketing industry do you have?

Company Annual Revenue

Base: 155 (client-side respondents only)



Q. What is your company's size (approximate annual revenue)?



**B2B
MARKETING**

B2B Creativity: Busting Myths

AUGUST 2026

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