

Building a Memorable B2B Brand: Who Will Be the Next Iconic Brand?



LinkedIn Collective

“Imagine that I could show you a dozen new brands that will go on to be as big as Nike, Coca-Cola, Adidas or Ford? Imagine that I could show you 10 companies that you’ve never heard of who, with the help of all of you in the advertising industry, will change the economic future of the world?”

Ryan Roslansky,
2022 Cannes Lions



Collective
Contributor

We know which sports brand told us to “Just Do It.” We are aware that “I’m Loving It” probably refers to a Big Mac. And who doesn’t want to visit “The Happiest Place on Earth” to meet Mickey and Minnie?

To most of us, big consumer brands like Nike, McDonald's and Disney are household names; the iconic advertising campaigns they’ve created have made sure that we know exactly who they are.

But are B2B brands like ServiceNow as well-known?

Would it surprise you to know that ServiceNow, which is a cloud-based platform that enables companies to automate routine tasks, has a bigger market cap than Ford and Ferrari combined? That nine of the 10 biggest tech IPOs last year were all B2B companies that have eclipsed the world's biggest advertisers in terms of value? That they are the companies poised to change our economic future?

The question is: **Why don't we recognize them as easily as we do Nike, McDonald's or Disney?**

It's because, historically, B2B companies haven't invested in building their brands.

Since their addressable markets are much smaller and much more targeted, B2B marketers rely on lead generation efforts to fill the pipeline for sales. However, when the goal is to generate a lead and not to generate a memory, brand building ultimately suffers.

Being focused solely on lead generation does not work well for long-term brand building, which requires talking to people before they come to market. These people are much less interested in product information right now, so they either screen product messages out or quickly forget them. That's why brand is so important. It's about memory. Though consumers may not be immediately interested in business automation software, they are still likely to have an experience with the brand selling that software in either the workplace or at home. So it's essential to combine lead-gen efforts with brand building.

Brand or Demand?

LinkedIn's *recent research, conducted in partnership with YouGov, found that most B2B businesses are overly focused on performance marketing – i.e., lead generation – resulting in a de-prioritization of creative advertising. In fact, according to [research](#) from our think tank, [The B2B Institute](#), nearly 80% of B2B marketing budgets are spent on performance marketing, or lead generation.

Evidence suggests that B2B companies prioritize performance marketing over brand building. Why do you think this is the case?

- 42%** Sales want to see immediate results
- 40%** B2B marketers find it difficult to prove the ROI of brand building to the business
- 40%** Performance marketing is easier than brand building

LinkedIn/YouGov Survey, May 2022



What's more, because B2B sellers are intent on proving the ROI of their usually complex product, they prioritize communicating functional benefits rather than the power of emotion in their marketing. This leads to a shortage of impactful B2B creative that underestimates the amount of emotion tied up in our decision-making, whether about a product we use in the office or in the kitchen.

Do you think B2B marketing is more, less, or equally as challenging as B2C marketing?

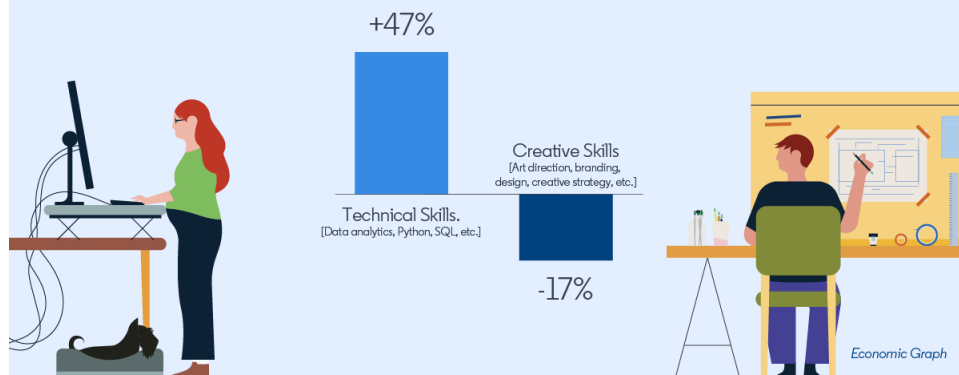
- More challenging** 56%
- Less challenging** 13%
- The same** 29%
- Not sure** 2%

LinkedIn/YouGov Survey, May 2022



Consequently, B2B companies are investing in talent that can show them the money immediately rather than talent that can help build a brand that drives long-term profitability. As demand for hard skills, such as data analytics has grown dramatically in the last five years, the demand for creative skills, such as design, creative strategy, branding and art direction, have dropped precipitously. LinkedIn's Economic Graph shows that while the share of technical skills in the ad industry has increased by 47%, the share of creative skills has decreased by 17% over five years.

Share of Technical Skills vs Creative Skills Over the Past 5 Years



Give the People What They Want

However, when you talk to B2B buyers, you learn that they value memorable creative that drives emotional impact as much as their B2C counterparts – even if B2B brands aren't delivering.

Much of B2B Content is creatively un compelling

Almost 30% of thought leadership is considered mediocre or worse

Edelman & LinkedIn Joint Study 2020 B2B Thought Leadership Impact study

48% of B2B purchase decision makers find B2B advertising boring

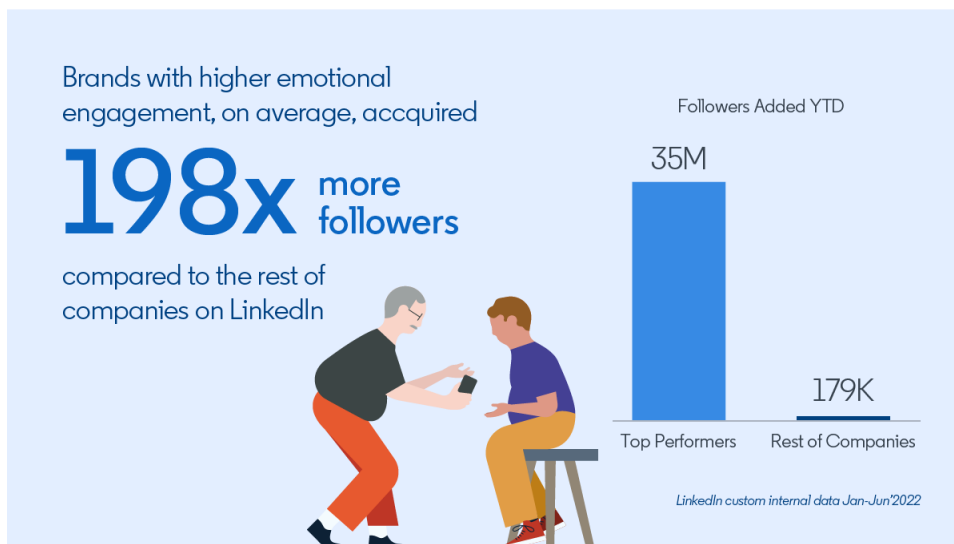
WHM Survey, 2018

71% of B2B ads are likely to generate no sales

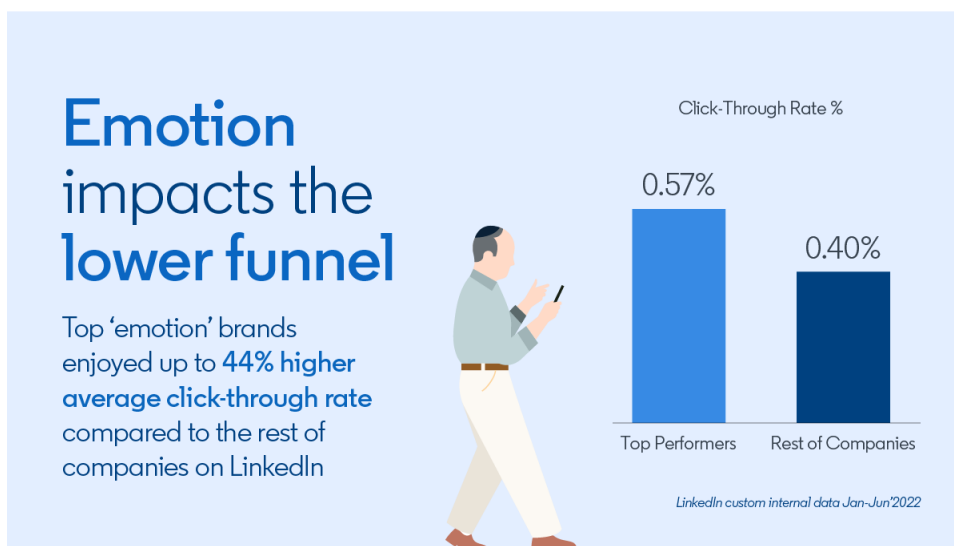
LinkedIn B2B Institute & System 1 research, 2021

Currently, B2B buyers don't believe brands are engaging them with their creative. According to [The B2B Institute](#), **71% of B2B ads score 1 on a 1-5 scale of creative effectiveness**, with five marking the most impactful creative. Meanwhile, research shows that creative is the biggest contributor to sales in an ad campaign (47%) with **great creative driving 10-20X more sales**.

If B2B ads did a better job of engaging them, business buyers would make better decisions. LinkedIn's internal data shows that delivering creative that resonates emotionally with your targets will boost the results of your campaign on our platform. We found that brands that harnessed emotion in their ads acquired, on average, 198X more followers than the rest of the other companies on LinkedIn this year.



We also found that emotion impacts the lower funnel. Brands that elicited emotion with their ads had a 44% higher average click-through rate compared to the rest of the companies on LinkedIn. This shows that creativity also drives growth in the lower funnel and is very much worth the investment.

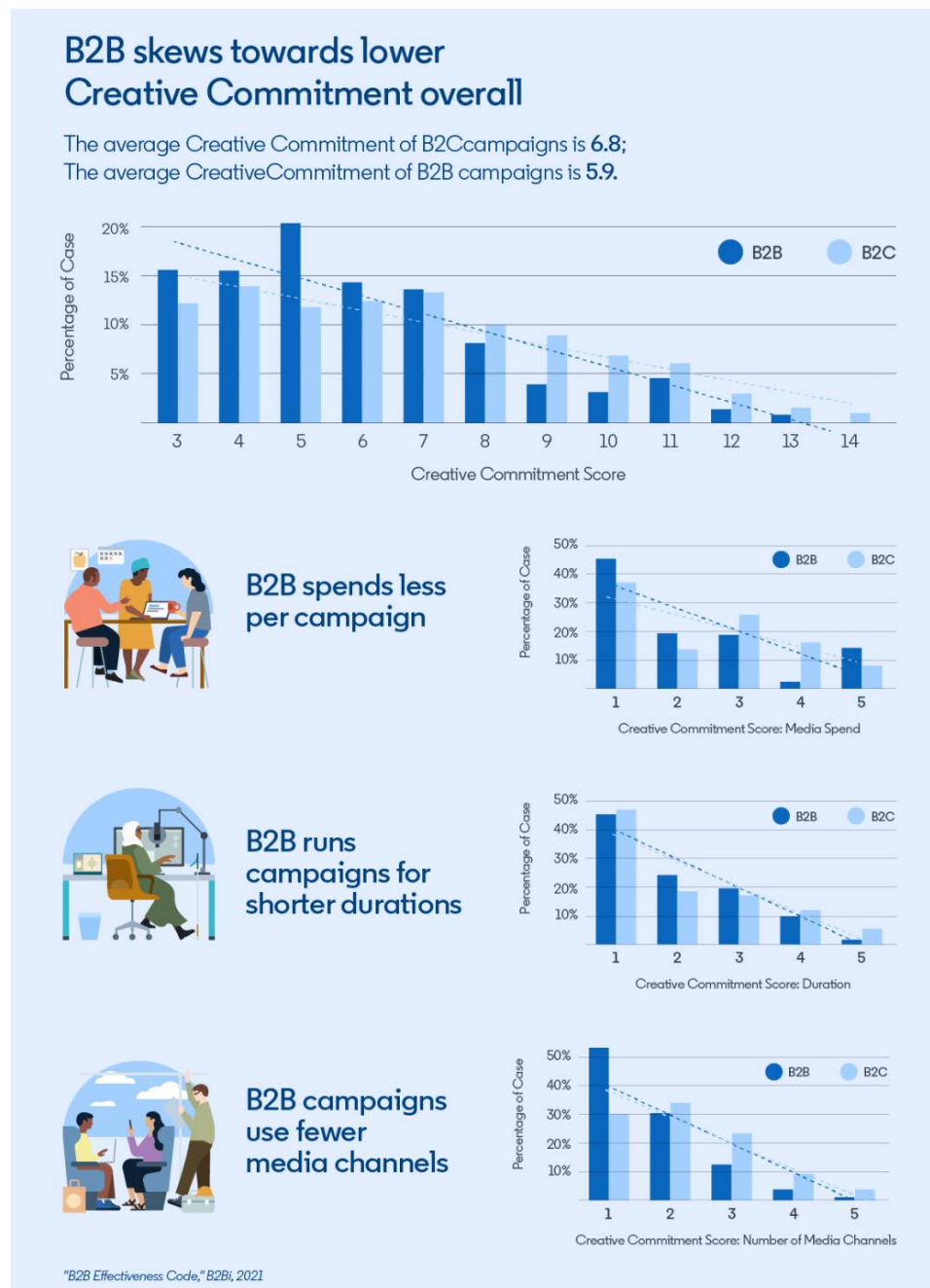


Showing the Value of Creativity

[The B2B Institute](#) along with WARC showed how to prove the worthiness of your creative investment in the report [The B2B Effectiveness Code](#). The metric dubbed Creative Commitment serves as a composite measure of the media budget (money), duration (time) and number of media channels applied to a creative campaign or initiative – that provides a score from 3 (the lowest possible level of Creative Commitment) to 15 (the highest possible level).

The [research](#) shows that B2B campaigns tend to have lower Creative Commitment than B2C campaigns.

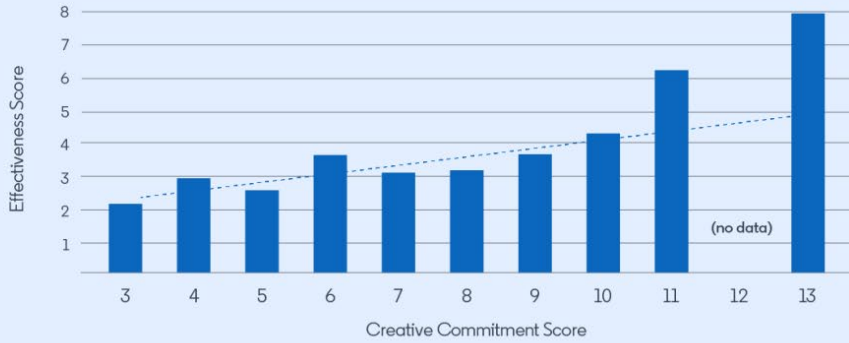
In B2C, the average Creative Commitment score is 6.8. In B2B it's 5.9. B2B campaigns generally spend less, run for (slightly) shorter durations, and use fewer media channels than B2C campaigns. This illustrates again that B2B marketing skews towards shorter-term, rational, tightly targeted marketing.



This lack of creative commitment is hindering B2B businesses. The B2B Effectiveness Code research found that as B2B campaigns increase in media spend, duration and number of media channels used, they also increase in effectiveness. The implication is, if we want to maximize the effectiveness of B2B campaigns, we should be working to maximize B2B brands' Creative Commitment and raise their Creative Scores.

B2B campaign effectiveness increases as Creative Commitment increases

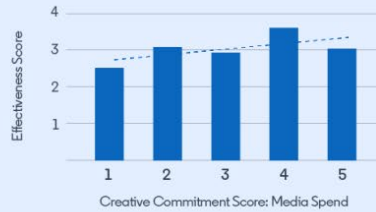
Just as we found with B2C cases, B2B campaigns become more effective as they spend more, run for longer durations and spread across more media channels.



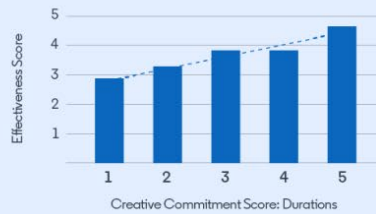
B2B campaigns become more effective



as their media spend increases



as they're run for longer durations



as they're spread across more media channels



"B2B Effectiveness Code," B2Bi, 2021

A Huge Opportunity for B2B

LinkedIn Collective

“Many of these companies don’t yet know that they need you. You are going to have to persuade them that you can transform what they are trying to do. But these companies could be the winners of the future, and there’s huge scope for your industry to help them to build their brands.”

Ryan Roslansky,
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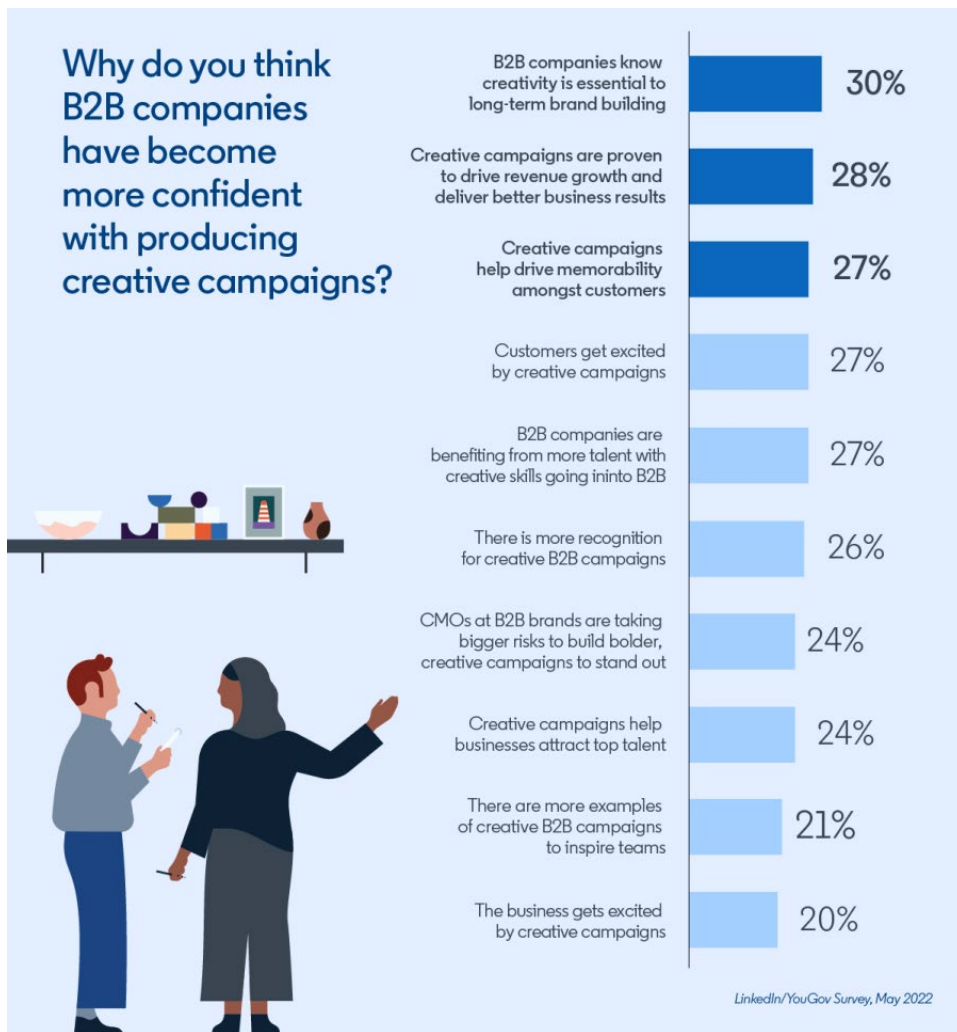
B2B marketers, there’s a massive opportunity. Now is the time to embrace your creative sides.

B2B tech companies, bigger than the biggest brands right now, are the Nikes, McDonald's and Disneys of the future. And you're the ones that can help them realize their potential.

The good news is that our recent research shows that the majority of senior B2B marketers (89%) now recognize that **brand building is just as important to driving long-term revenue growth in B2B as it is in consumer marketing**, while 69% of senior marketing leaders agree that **B2B purchasing decisions are just as emotionally driven as B2C**.

As they realize both the long-term and short-term benefits of a strong brand, B2B businesses are recognizing that they need to be more creative. More creativity is shown to boost revenue, deliver better business results, and drive memorability amongst customers, the more CMOs are taking bigger risks to lead bolder creative campaigns.

That bold attitude is trickling down to the marketing department: 82% percent of respondents of our recent survey* said **B2B companies have become more confident with producing creative campaigns**.



And some of you are saying it with a little bit of swagger: Eight-one percent of marketing leaders say that B2B companies are increasingly producing creative campaigns that could rival B2C. And we even have our own creativity award at Cannes to prove it!

But only time will tell. For now, let's take that confidence and turn it into great campaigns that can make B2B brands iconic. You can be the ones who tell the stories of B2B tech companies. You can be the ones who make consumers see how their products make their lives better. And you can be the ones creating the next generation of legendary household name brands.

**LinkedIn commissioned YouGov to survey 1,600 senior B2B marketing decision-makers in the US, UK, France, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, UAE, KSA, Brazil, Australia, India and Singapore during April 28 to May 25, 2022. The research was conducted online.*