



The Marketing Gap: Why businesses could be missing out.

A report detailing the findings of The Marketing Pod's Business Marketing Survey and what the results could mean for UK businesses.



January 2018

Introduction

During October 2017, The Marketing Pod conducted a comprehensive marketing survey of 110 businesses across the UK. The Pod's Marketing Survey comprised a range of carefully designed questions on the approaches taken to marketing and PR by marketing professionals and marketing decision-makers within UK-based businesses. The findings of that survey are presented and evaluated in this report.

The survey responses provided by businesses enabled The Marketing Pod to do two things. Firstly, it uncovered the different approaches to marketing and PR adopted by businesses, revealing marketplace trends, activity or knowledge gaps and potential problem areas. Secondly, The Marketing Pod was able to create a combined benchmark score, as well as individual scores by which other businesses might measure their marketing activity and its potential for success.

The maximum overall score was 200; a full score signalling that a business has insight into its customer-base, a fully documented marketing strategy, and a properly devised marketing and PR plan capable of delivering measurable results and excellent return on investment. The benchmark score is the average achieved by the 110 respondents of the Business Marketing Survey: a score of 126.

We discovered that...

Almost half of
all businesses

49%

don't know what
their customers
think of them

Executive Summary

The world of marketing is changing. Across every sector, businesses must compete more fiercely for new customers and work harder to retain their existing customers.

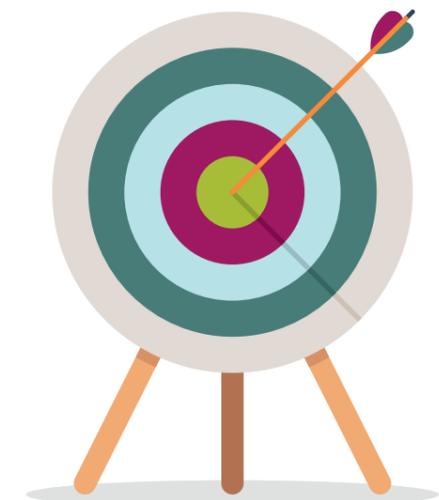
Brand awareness and the customer experience journey now begin in the digital world, often long before first direct contact is made. The Marketing Pod's survey highlights the strengths and weaknesses, trends and gaps, in the current business approach to marketing and PR strategy and planning – providing a benchmark by which businesses can measure themselves and revealing the areas where businesses might instigate or renew activity for better results.

Marketing strategy

While more than two thirds of businesses have a documented marketing strategy that is aligned to business objectives, 42% have not reviewed that strategy in the past 12 months. For those who do have a documented strategy but have not recently reviewed it, this raises the question: how closely aligned to business objectives can it be if it is not up to date? For those who have no documented strategy in place (almost a third) there must be concern about how effective marketing activity will be and how it can possibly be measured against wider business objectives.

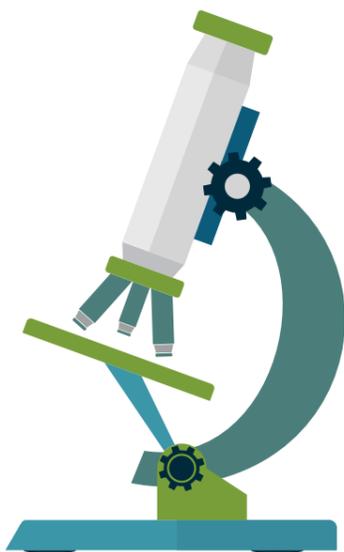
Targeting

While those businesses surveyed scored relatively well on audience targeting, almost one third of businesses have only partially identified their audience or have not done so at all. Furthermore, more than a third of businesses do not target their marketing activity to their priority customer base. Truly effective marketing relies on a real understanding of its target audience and how to reach them; investing time and resources into gaining this knowledge and creating carefully targeted campaigns could make a real difference to marketing success. Although two thirds of businesses report that their marketing fully addresses their customer needs, the remaining third are potentially missing out on valuable opportunities. Identifying their audience by sector, segment, role and product could be the key to gaining commercial advantage over the competition.



Customer insight

Customer insight is one area which stands out as a potential problem for many businesses. Survey results reveal that less than half of businesses have conducted primary customer research during the past 12 months. Furthermore, almost half of all business report that they have no idea what their customers think of them. Whilst some businesses may find that customer attitudes shift only slightly during a 12 month period, this overall lack of up to date customer insight is a significant concern. It could mean that marketing and PR activity is falling well short of the mark. Regular primary research helps businesses to stay in touch with customer attitudes and opinions, resolve issues, identify ways to push customer satisfaction levels up, and formulate marketing strategies that will attract and retain a more loyal customer base.



Brand

Brand strength is vital if a business is to protect itself from the ever-increasing pressures of a hyper-competitive marketplace, yet only 55% of businesses say that their brand currently reflects their company's aspirations for the future. A successful brand will not only be instantly recognisable, but will display values that resonate closely with those of the target market and embody the features they want the most; such as quality, reliability or unparalleled customer service. In a world where products may be similar to those of a competitor and where the decision-making process often begins online, the brand is king and should reflect not only what the business is but what it aspires to be.

Measuring success

Almost two thirds of UK businesses do not have measurement tools in place for all marketing activity, while only half regularly review the success of their marketing activity. For those who scored poorly in this area, the failure to monitor and amend activity is concerning and would most likely be unthinkable in any other area of the business. How businesses approach measurement of their marketing will depend on the activities undertaken and the business objectives driving them, but measurement and regular reviews are vital to ensuring good return on investment and the long-term health of any marketing strategy.

Monitoring your customers' world

While 70% of businesses know who their competitors are, almost half fail to monitor competitor activity and more than a third fail to monitor the activity of their marketplace. As is the case for a lack of customer insight, this lack of marketplace insight could put businesses at a significant commercial disadvantage. Missing key trends and failing to match up to or exceed a competitor's offering could result in lost customers or even damage to the business's brand reputation; leaving you in the situation of having to compete on a price basis alone. Awareness of the marketplace enables businesses to stay ahead of the curve and plan proactive or reactive marketing activity as appropriate.

Marketing channels

Although 76% of businesses have a documented social media plan, almost two thirds do not have a content plan and almost half do not have a wider customer communications plan. Additionally, almost two thirds do not have a documented PR plan. This is concerning because the wide range of marketing channels available to businesses are most effectively used when an integrated multi-channel (or even omni-channel) plan exists. Social media should ideally form one part of a wider comms plan, where carefully crafted content is distributed across appropriate channels in a way that

complements other marketing activity and builds on brand messaging. On one hand, it is a positive thing that many businesses have a social media plan that is aligned to their business and marketing strategy. On the other hand, it seems strange that some other marketing channels are not currently receiving the same attention.

The benchmark

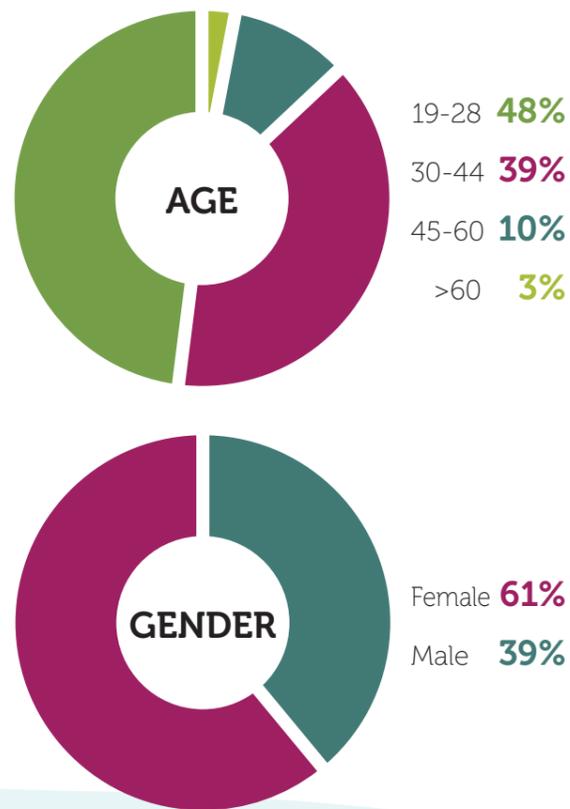
The average marketing score for those businesses who took part in the Pod's Business Marketing Survey was 126 out of a possible 200. This translates to 63%. While the figure serves as a useful benchmark by which other businesses may assess their marketing health, it also highlights that there is much more for businesses to do if they want to maximise the success of their marketing activity. Areas for improvement of particular note are customer insight, marketplace insight and measurement.



Methodology

The Marketing Pod invited 110 marketing professionals and decision makers from businesses across the UK to complete an online survey about the marketing and PR activity conducted within their organisation. All businesses which took part in the survey had 10 or more employees. The survey comprised 14 quantitative questions with multiple choice responses.

The demographics of the participants are shown right:



The questions we asked...

1. Does your company have a documented marketing strategy in place aligned to your business objectives?
2. Has your marketing strategy been reviewed in the last 12 months?
3. Have you identified your target audience? E.g. by sector, segment, role, product, etc.
4. Is your marketing activity today targeted to your priority customer base?
5. Is your marketing activity today segmented to your audience needs?
6. Have you held primary customer research within the last 12 months?
7. Do you know how your customers perceive your business today?
8. Does your brand today reflect your company's aspirations for the future?
9. Do you have predefined success metrics against all of the marketing activity, for each marketing channel?
10. Do you review your activity's success regularly against targets set?
11. Do you know who your key competitors are today?
12. Do you monitor competitor activity regularly? (e.g. monthly)
13. Do you monitor market place activity regularly? (e.g. monthly)
14. Which of your marketing channels does your business have a documented plan for that is aligned to both your business and marketing strategy? (Tick all that apply)

Results

The results of the Pod's Business Marketing Survey serve to highlight the areas in which businesses are performing well and those in which improvements could be made. They are presented as easy-to-follow charts with highlights drawn out for the user.

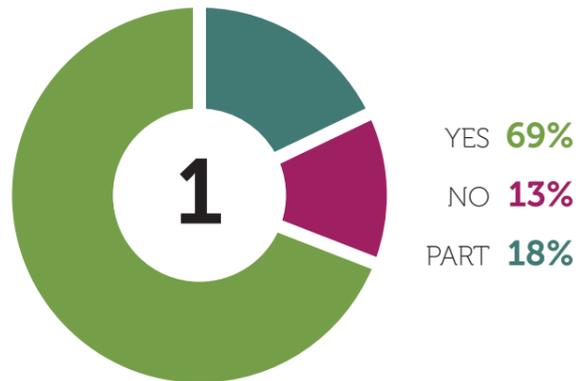
These results provide businesses with a starting point from which they may begin to assess their own marketing health and address any gaps in their systems, processes and employee skill-sets.



Businesses wishing to find out their own marketing score can do so by using the quiz link provided on the final page of this report.

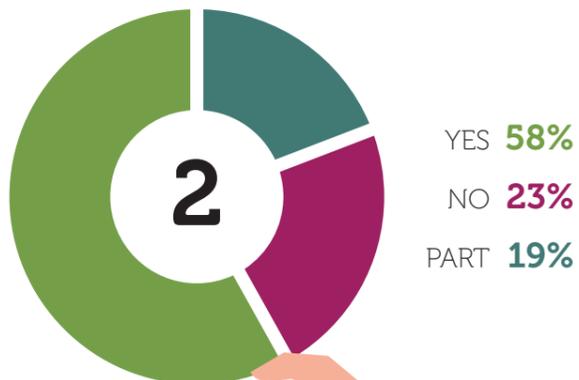
Results Marketing Strategy

1. Does your company have a documented marketing strategy in place aligned to your business objectives?



Over 30% of UK businesses don't have a fully documented marketing strategy in place.

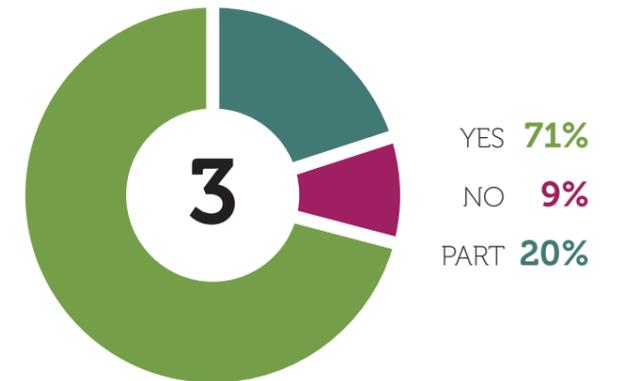
2. Has your marketing strategy been reviewed in the last 12 months?



Of those UK based marketing professionals who do have a documented marketing strategy in place, only 58% have reviewed it in the last 12 months.

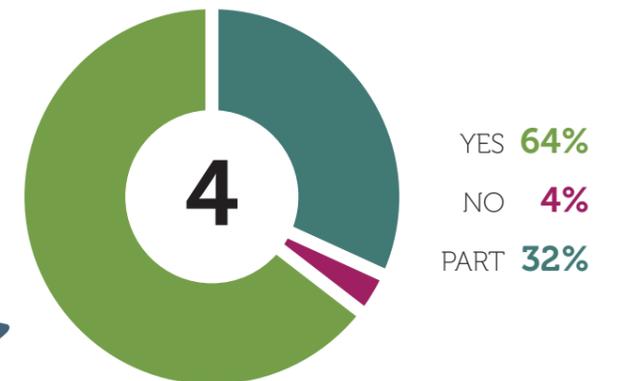
Results Targeting Your Audience

3. Have you identified your target audience? E.g. by sector, segment, role, product, etc.



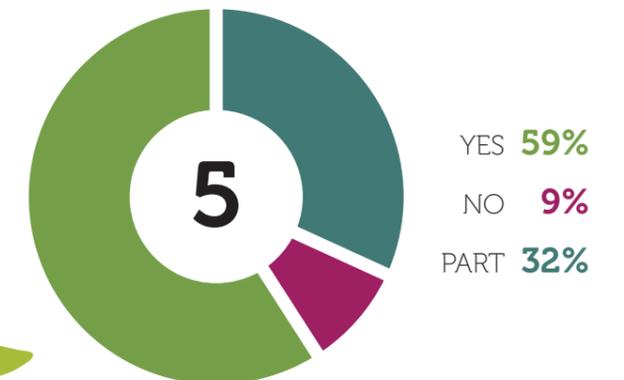
29% of UK based marketing professionals have not fully identified who their target audience are.

4. Is your marketing activity today targeted to your priority customer base?



36% of UK based businesses don't have a full understanding of who their target audience are.

5. Is your marketing activity today segmented to your audience needs?



Almost two thirds of UK businesses said that their marketing fully addresses their customers' needs.

Results Customer Insight

6. Have you held primary customer research within the last 12 months?

Only 48% of UK businesses have held primary customer research in the last 12 months.



YES **48%**
NO **34%**
PART **18%**

7. Do you know how your customers perceive your business today?

Only 52% of UK businesses actually know what their customers think of them.



YES **52%**
NO **14%**
PART **34%**

Customer insight stands out as a potential problem area for businesses. A lack of up to date customer insight could mean that marketing and PR activity is falling well short of the mark and customer satisfaction levels drop without businesses becoming aware or developing the tools to fix it.



Results Brand

8. Does your brand today reflect your company's aspirations for the future?

Only 55% of UK businesses said that their brand today reflects their business' aspirations.



YES **55%**
NO **9%**
PART **36%**

The importance of brand

The most successful brands are not only instantly recognisable, but also display values closely aligned with those of the target market, embodying the features they desire the most; such as quality, reliability, sustainability, cutting edge technology or unparalleled customer service.

Results Measuring Success

9. Do you have predefined success metrics against all of the marketing activity, for each marketing channel?

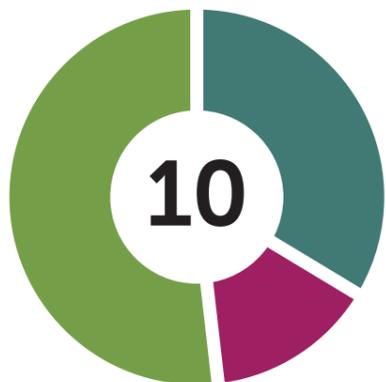
Almost two thirds (64%) of UK businesses do not have measurement tools in place for all of their marketing activity.



YES **37%**
NO **28%**
PART **35%**

10. Do you review your activities success regularly against targets set?

Only half (51%) of UK businesses regularly review the success of their marketing activity



YES **51%**
NO **15%**
PART **34%**

A failure to monitor marketing activity and amend plans accordingly is concerning and would most likely be unthinkable in any other area of the business.

How businesses approach measurement of their marketing will depend on the activities

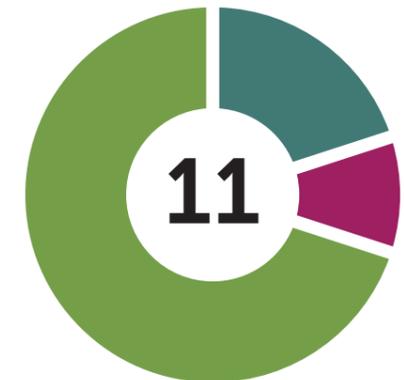
undertaken and the business objectives driving them, but meaningful measurement and regular reviews are vital to ensuring a good return on investment and the long-term health of any marketing strategy.

Results Monitoring Your Customers' World

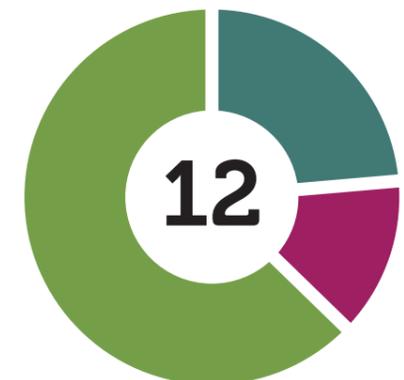
11. Do you know who your key competitors are today?

12. Do you monitor competitor activity regularly? (e.g monthly)

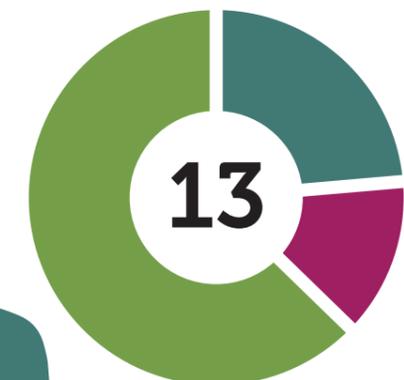
13. Do you monitor market place activity regularly? (e.g monthly)



YES **70%**
NO **10%**
PART **20%**



YES **55%**
NO **15%**
PART **30%**

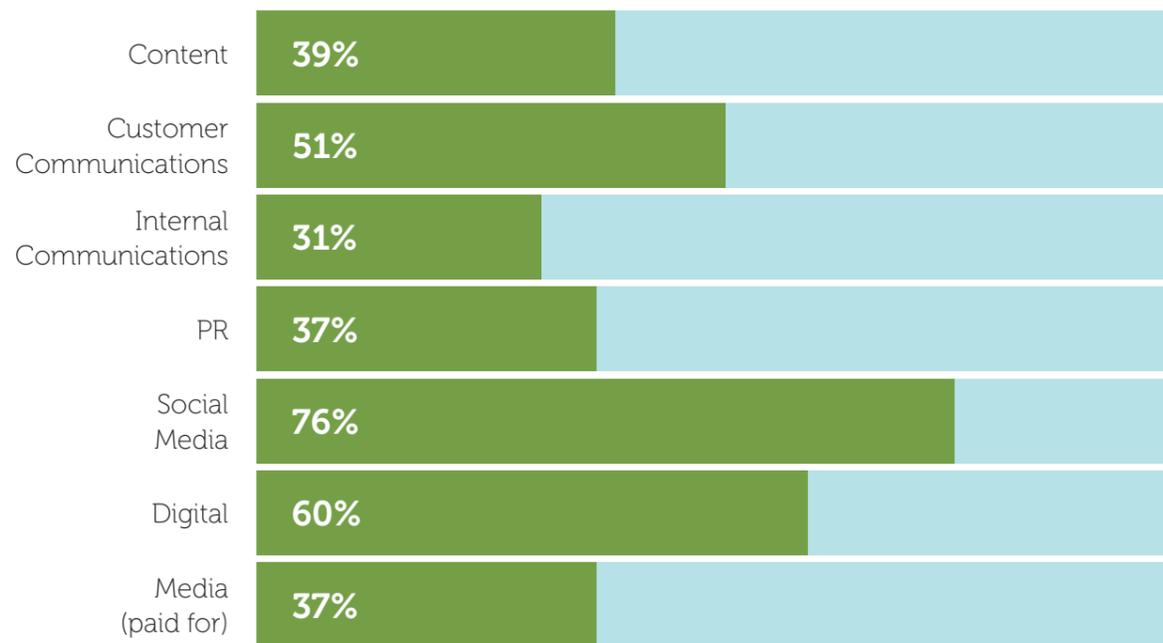


YES **63%**
NO **14%**
PART **23%**

Whilst 70% of UK businesses know who their key competitors are, only 55% monitor their competitor activity regularly and only 63% monitor their market place regularly

Results Marketing Channels

14. Which of your marketing channels does your business have a documented plan for that is aligned to both your business and marketing strategy? (Tick all that apply)



Almost two thirds (61%) of UK businesses do not have a content marketing plan. What's more, almost half (49%) do not have a customer communications plan.

The range of marketing channels available to businesses are most effectively used as part of an integrated marketing plan.

Social media should ideally form one part of a wider comms plan, where carefully crafted

content is distributed across appropriate channels in a way that complements other marketing activity and contributes to the achievement of broader business objectives.

What does this mean for your business?

This report aims to provide an insight into the approach taken to marketing and PR by UK-based businesses, and also to help businesses begin to assess their own techniques - to look for gaps in their activity and consider how filling those gaps might benefit their organisation.

The average marketing score for those businesses who took part in the Pod's Business Marketing Survey was 126 out of a possible 200. This translates to 63%; a score that is perhaps lower than many might expect.

While the overall result provides a benchmark figure for other businesses to assess their current marketing health by, it also highlights that there is much more for businesses in general to do if they want to really make an impact on the marketplace and maximise the success of their marketing activity.

Areas of particular note for improvement are customer insight, marketplace insight and measurement. Addressing the marketing gaps highlighted by this report will help businesses to achieve higher levels of success from their marketing and PR activities and remain commercially sound in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The report may also help them also to identify where skills gaps exist in their organisation and build a case for addressing these; whether that be through employee training or help from external experts.

The average score certainly highlights that businesses may not be giving their marketing and PR activity the time or attention it deserves, and many may be losing out - on better prospect conversion rates, increased brand awareness, customer loyalty, and a healthier bottom-line - as a result.

Is your business losing out? It's time to take action.

So, what's your marketing score?



To find out how your company compares to other businesses just like yours, take our short quiz at www.themarketingpod.co.uk/myscore. Plus, receive a **FREE** personalised marketing report.

Once you've completed the quiz, we'll analyse your results and give you useful, tailored recommendations and tips on how you can improve your score, completely **free of charge**.

It'll only take a moment. Let's make 2018 the year that masterful marketing made all the difference.

Take the quiz at www.themarketingpod.co.uk/myscore

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