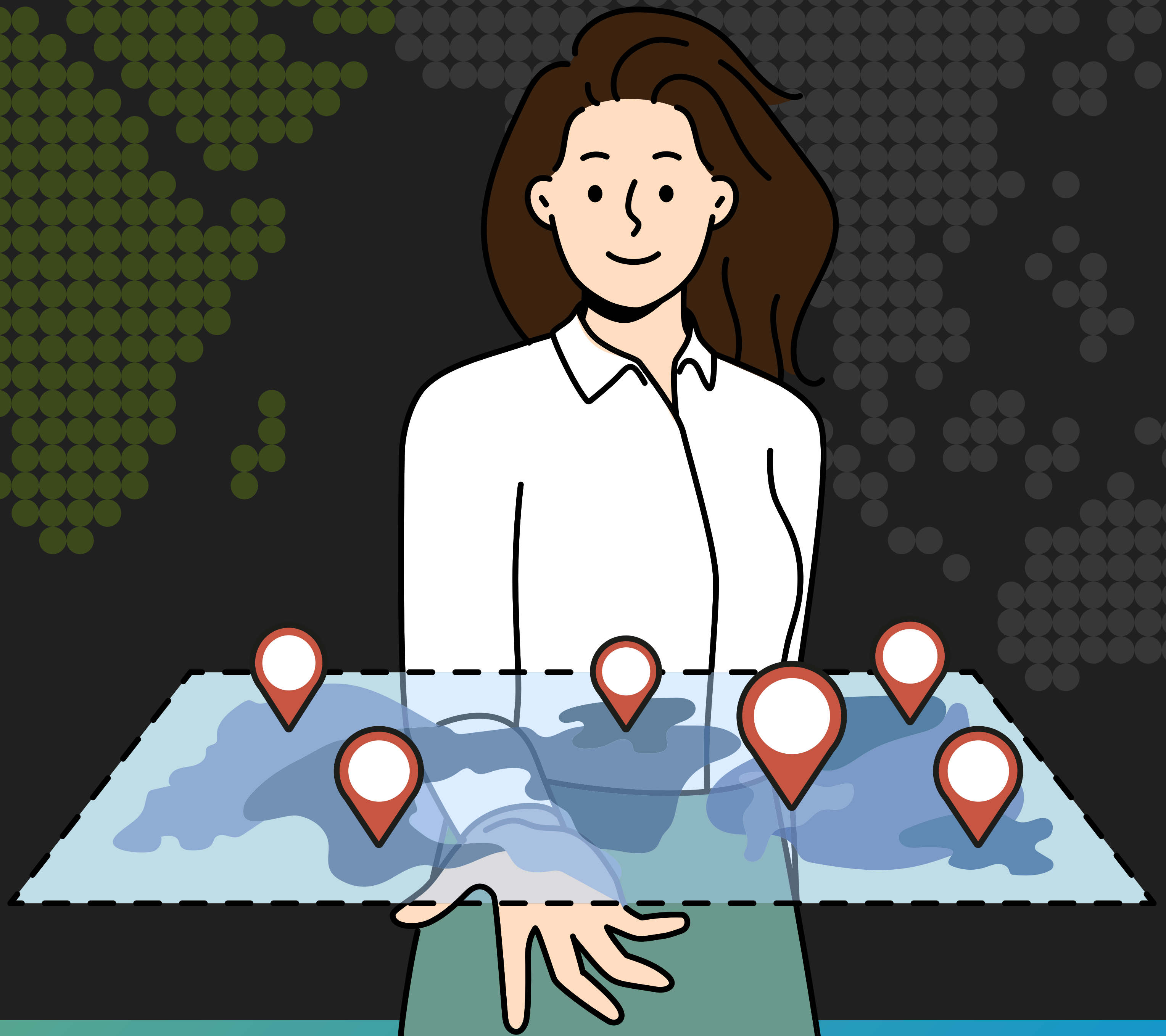
Anteriad

B2B Marketing Edge 2026: UK & EMEA

How to Win With Data-Driven Marketing In the Age of AI: 3 Best Practices



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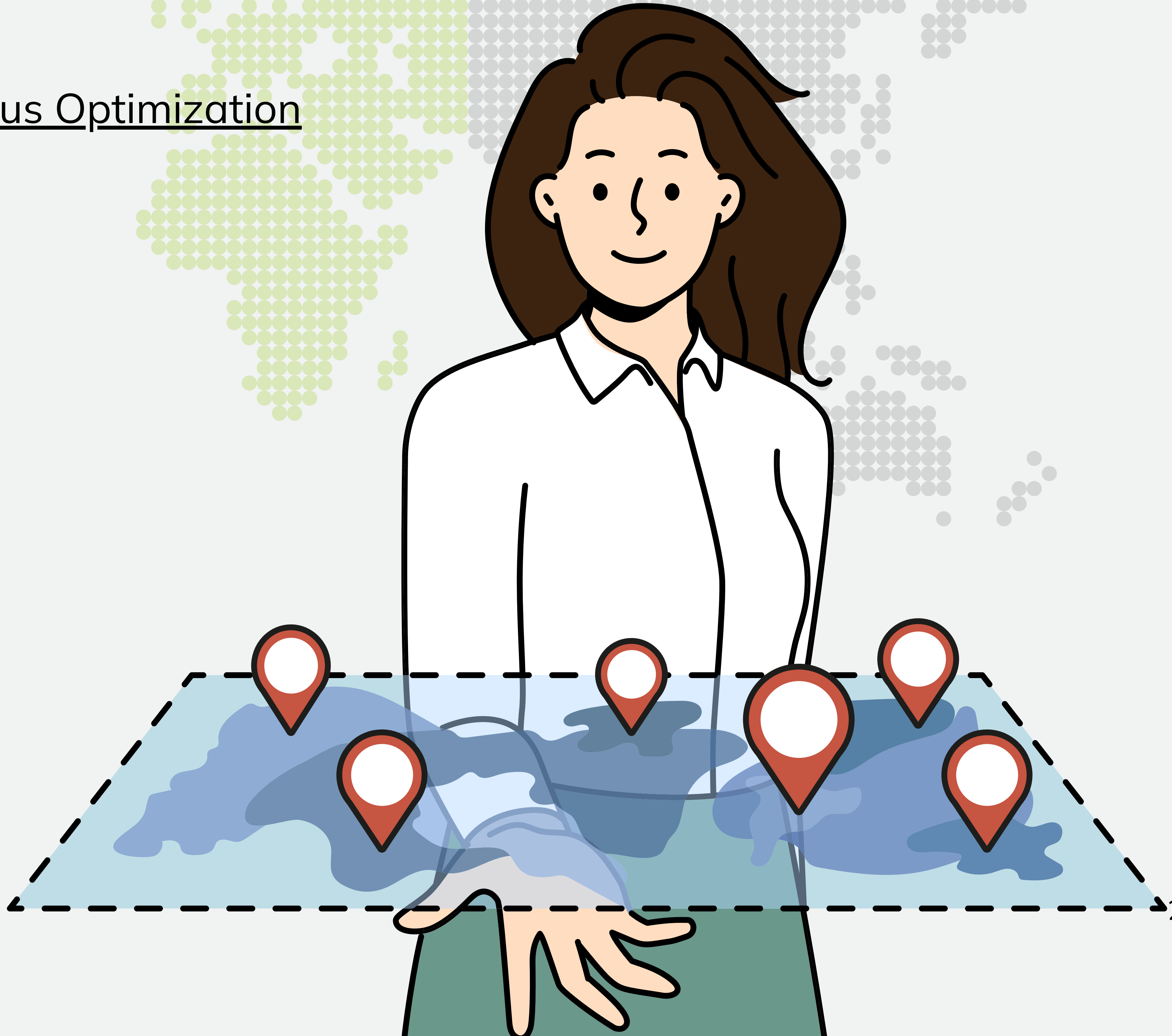


Methodology

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of business strategies and the tactics and technology that drive them. Anteriad partnered with Ascend2 to survey 631 marketing decision-makers across all levels of marketing leadership, located across the United States, United Kingdom, and APAC. These marketers represent B2B and B2B/B2C organizations with 250 or more employees. The survey was fielded in March 2026. The findings in this report reflect responses from UK marketers and offers insights for B2B marketers across EMEA.

Around the world, AI is changing how B2B marketers analyze data, execute campaigns and measure results. McKinsey's 2026 European marketing research found that most organizations there haven't yet matured their AI capabilities, with gen AI ranking surprisingly low on CMOs' list of priorities for the year ahead. That gap is the opening. The marketers who build the right data foundation now, before AI adoption accelerates, will be the ones who pull ahead. Having good audience insights and campaign performance data is critical, and being able to access that data at the right moment is just as important to your success.

Even for marketers without a focus on AI, data is the fuel that drives a successful marketing engine. That's the focus of Anteriad's 2026 B2B Marketing Edge research. This UK/EMEA edition draws on the 221 UK respondents from that global study, offering insights for B2B marketers across the wider region.

Accessing necessary data in the UK/EMEA can be a bit more challenging than in other regions we surveyed because of strong privacy laws. Despite this challenge, we found that many are adopting best practices that can boost any marketing campaign AI or not. Those best practices include:

- **Focusing on buying groups**
- **Moving from audience-first planning to continuous optimization**
- **Improving campaign attribution and measurement practices**

By improving these three areas of focus, which are all interconnected, B2B marketers can get better outcomes for their current marketing activity and set themselves up for higher returns.

B2B Marketer Overview

Before any campaign is delivered, the internal structure of the marketing team needs to be set up to succeed. As EMEA marketers work to deliver results for their teams, they need their activity to be tied to company goals and revenue - in a way that's transparent and aligned with KPIs the CEO, CFO and head of sales can relate to. Who they report to and how they communicate with these stakeholders can make a big difference.

More than a third (37%) of the top ranking B2B marketers in the UK report directly to the CEO of their organization, one third report to the top commercial role (President, CRO, etc.) with another 18% reporting to the COO and 10% reporting to the CFO. As a marketing leader, you need to be an ally, not a rival, to the C-level leaders you don't report to. For example, if the marketing leader reports to the CEO, they need to form a tight strategic partnership with the head of sales, sharing KPIs and goals, rather than seeing them as competition.

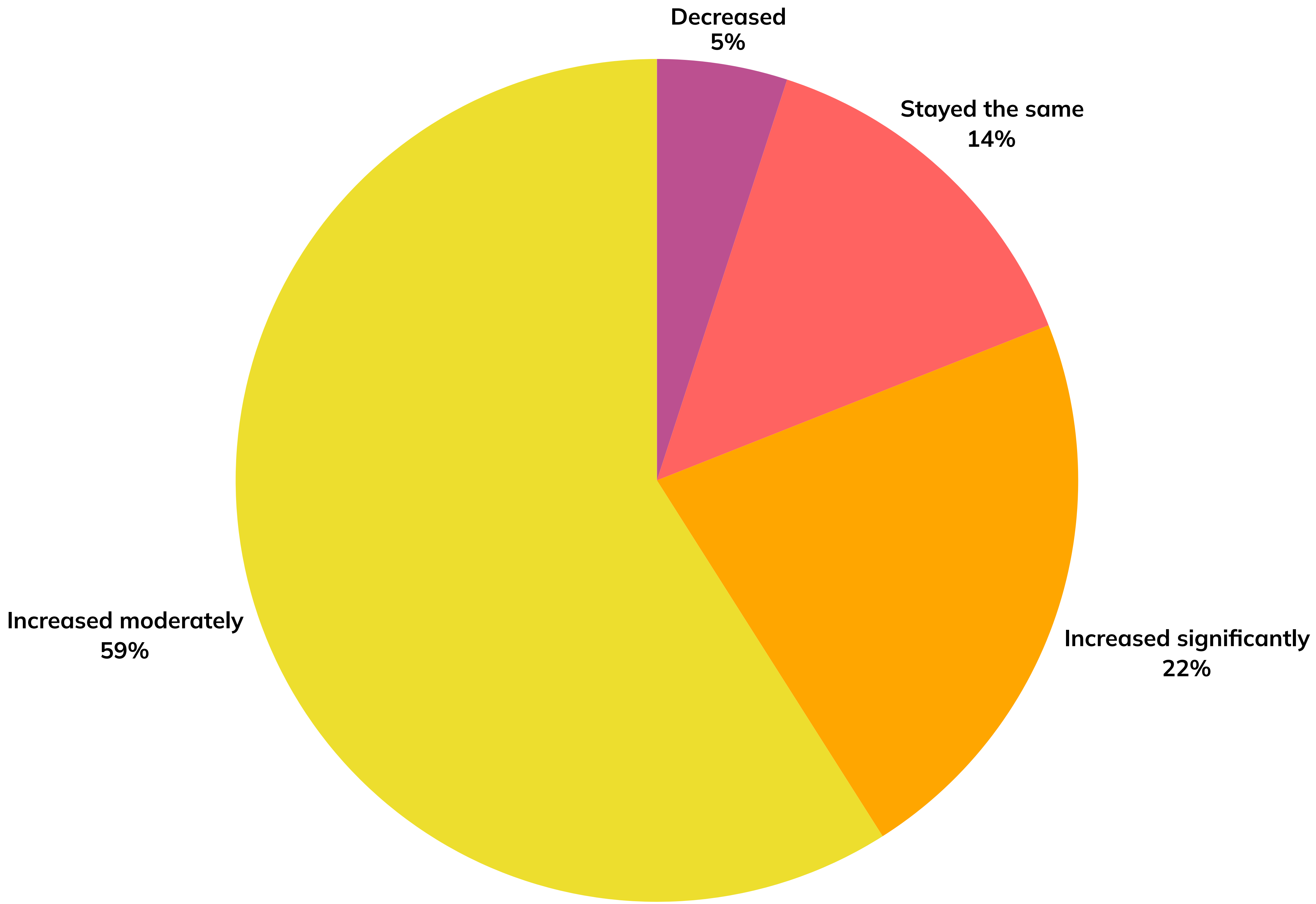
While it is unusual for marketing to report to the CFO, it is also critical for marketing teams to have a good relationship with finance leaders at their organizations. Marketers in the UK cited increased scrutiny of marketing spend and reduced marketing budget as the two most significant consequences of misalignment with their CFO. That tension shows up in how marketers view their own process, too. More than half of UK B2B marketers (56%) say they aren't 'very confident' in their organization's budget decision process, a higher share than in the US (50%).

Speaking of reduced marketing budget - our survey found that while revenue growth was largely quite good, budget growth didn't keep pace. In the past year, 81% of B2B marketers we surveyed from the UK reported increased revenue for their organization. This was across a variety of industries including these top five:

- Technology
- Retail
- Professional Services
- Financial Services
- Manufacturing

We found that 22% increased significantly while 59% increased moderately.

Which best describes the change in revenue at your organization in the last year?

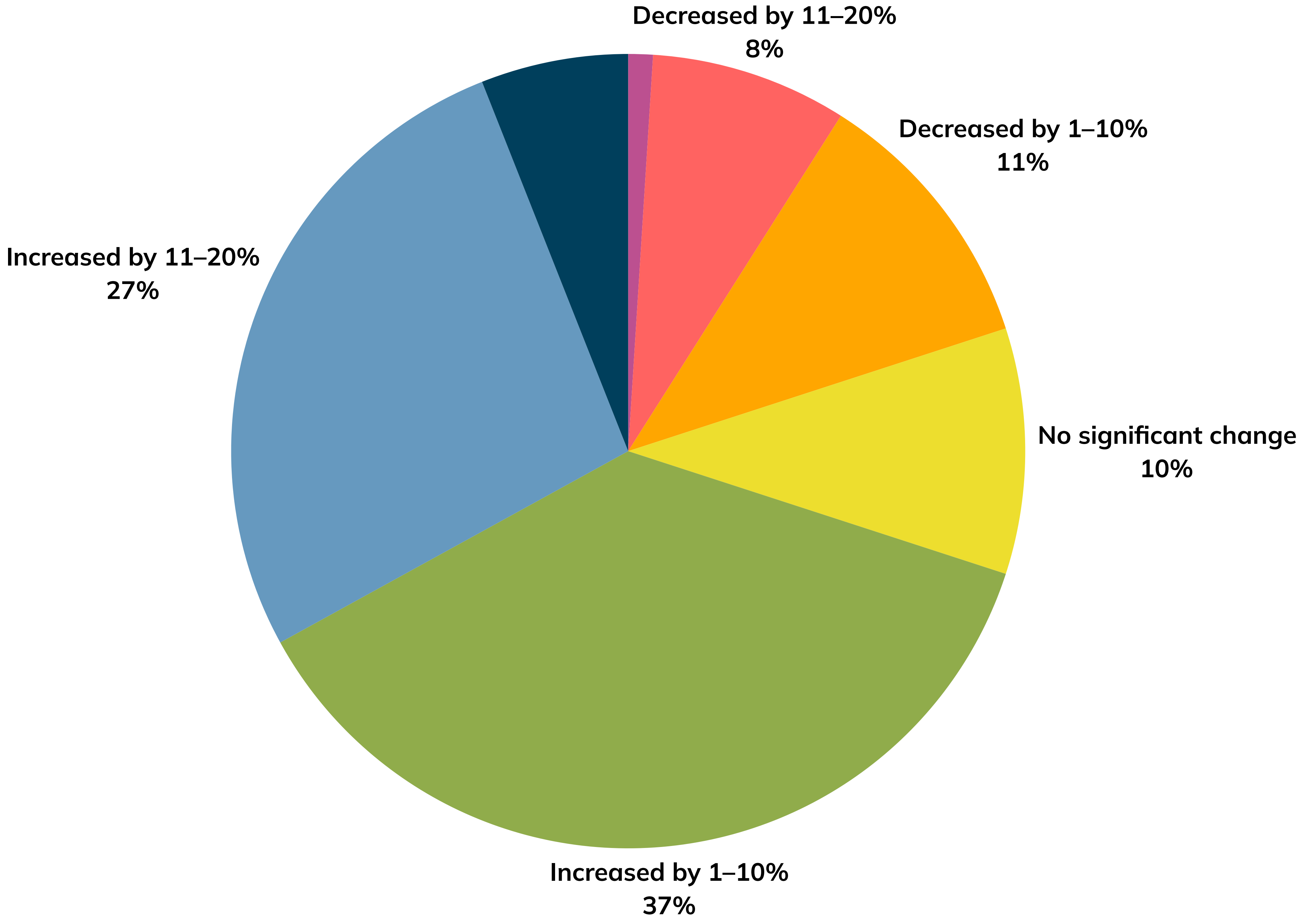


Marketing teams' success mostly mirrored the same success rates as their overall organizations, with 83% exceeding goals including 24% who significantly exceeded goals.

Despite the success, marketing budgets, while they increased on average, did not go up as much as company growth. A total of 70% of marketers got a budget increase, but only 6% got an increase of 20% or more. Marketers are expected to contribute to company growth, but don't always get the increased budgets to do it. Instead, they must find efficiencies and better tactics and strategies to squeeze higher performance out of the resources they have available to them.

The better communication and alignment is with other C-suite leaders, the more effective marketing will be at proving their value and tying their outcomes to larger company goals.

How did your marketing budget change for the 2026 fiscal year compared to 2025?



Three Best Practices for Growth in EMEA

When budgets don’t grow as much as revenue does, B2B marketers can find themselves with added pressure. Goals for next year are almost always higher than this year. So, how do you succeed?

Anteriad asked B2B marketers about everything from identifying and reaching the right audiences, to planning and measuring campaigns. From what we know works best from our experience with B2B marketers around the globe compared to survey results, three areas of opportunity emerged for B2B marketers in EMEA: a focus on buying groups, audience-first planning and measurement connected to revenue. In a market where more than half of UK marketers don't fully trust their own budget process, control isn't a nice-to-have, it's the only path to earning the budget and trust to compete. That's what these three practices build.

1. Expand Buying Group Focus
2. Move From Audience-First Activation to Continuous Optimization
3. Improving Measurement Practices

GOAL ONE:
Expand Buying Group Focus

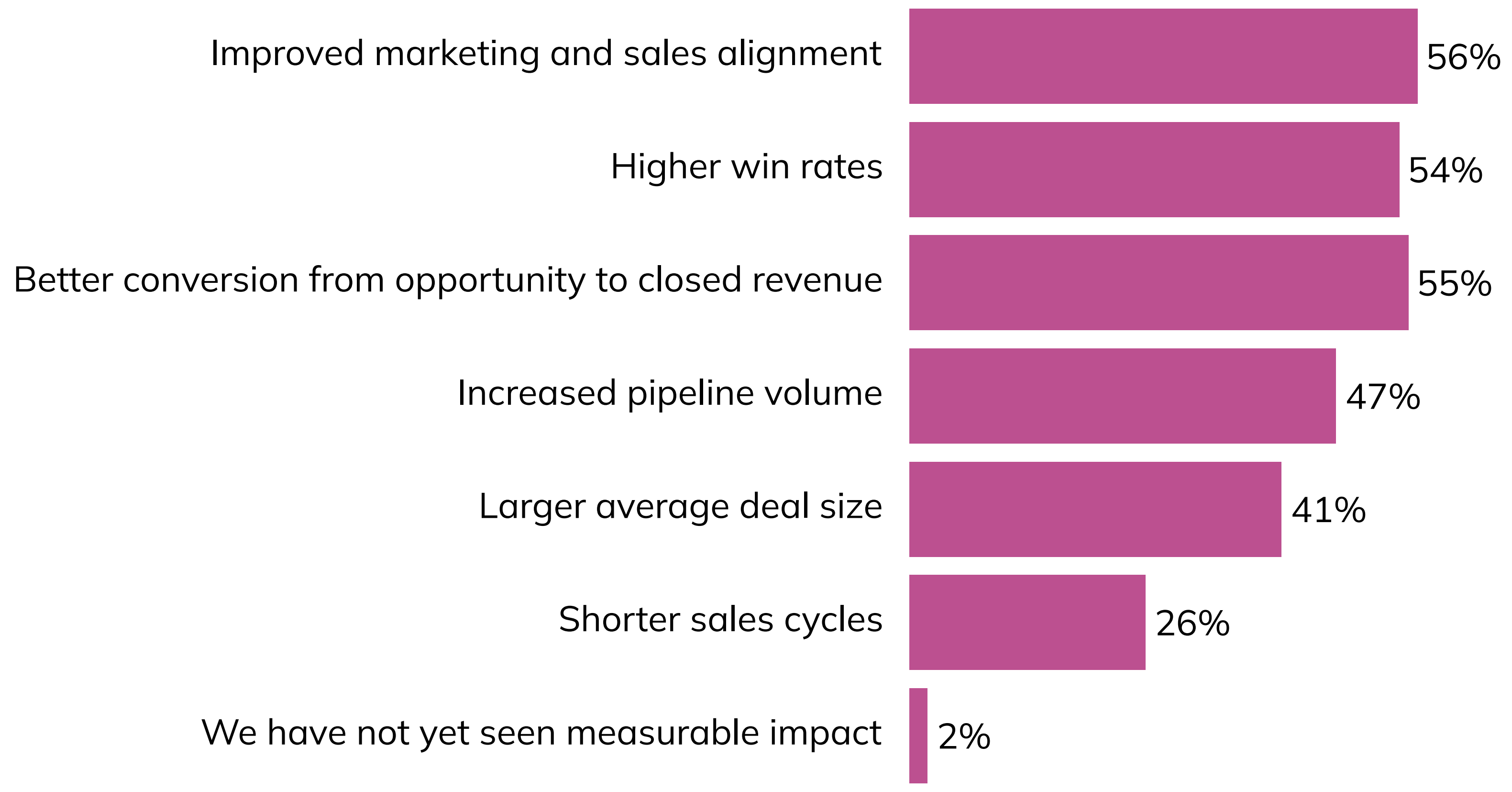
Forrester finds that a typical B2B business buying decision includes an average of 13 stakeholders across a variety of departments and levels of seniority. The old approach of marketing to a single lead is giving way to buying group marketing, which accounts for the collective group of stakeholders as a whole account.

Overall, buying groups are starting to become a major part of B2B marketing strategy in the region. Just over one third of UK B2B marketers have implemented buying groups in their organizations, while another 41% have partially implemented them.

The benefits from switching to buying groups are significant. More than half of UK B2B marketers cite improved marketing and sales alignment, higher win rates and better conversion from opportunity to closed revenue as improved business outcomes.

Which business outcomes have improved as a result of implementing buying groups?

(Select all that apply)

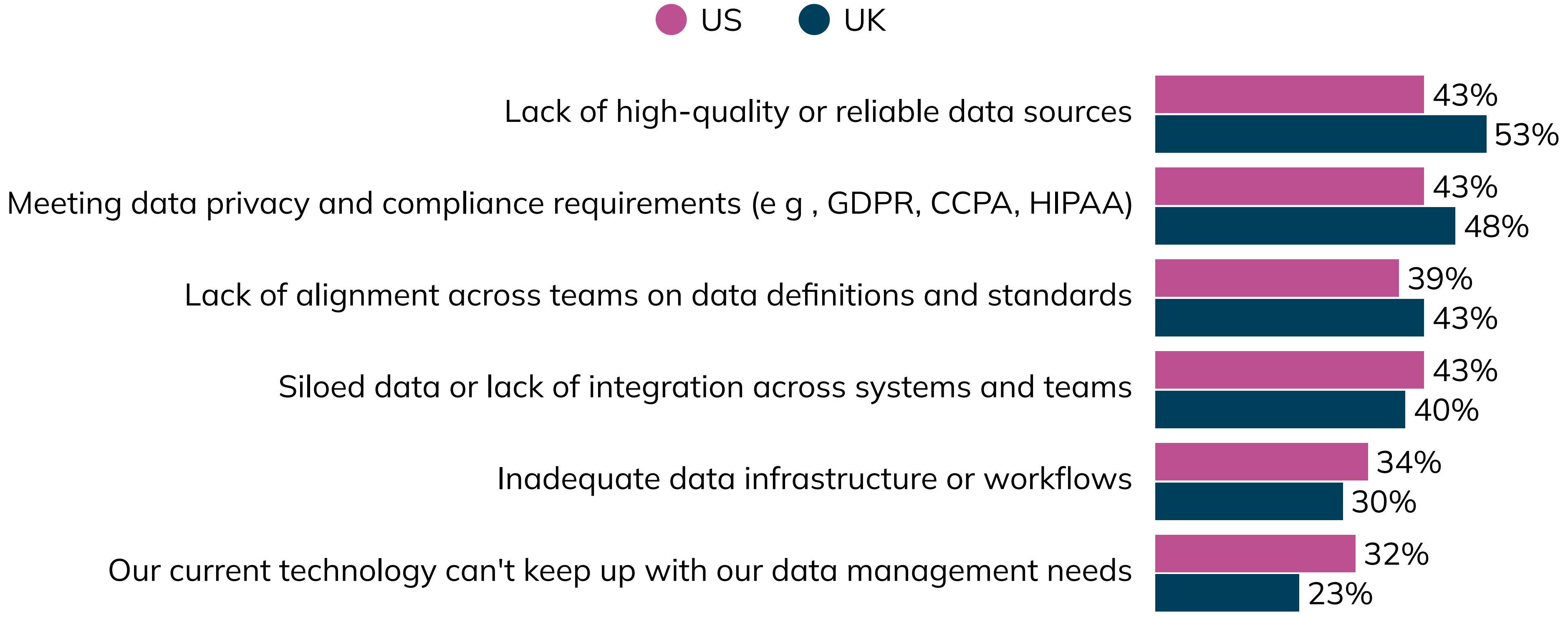


In UK/EMEA, moving from lead-based marketing to buying groups can be a bit more challenging because of more limited data collection and privacy regulations around targeting. Our survey found that the top data challenge for B2B marketers in the UK was "lack of high quality data" at 53% compared to only 43% in the US. Meeting data privacy and compliance requirements was also a challenge. B2B marketers in EMEA benefit from strong data partnerships that provide breadth and depth needed to identify and reach the right stakeholders in a buying group. It's worth noting that the biggest barrier to buying groups isn't budget. UK marketers point to 'perceived complexity or length of implementation' (41%) well ahead of budget constraints (36%), suggesting the real obstacle is process, not spend.

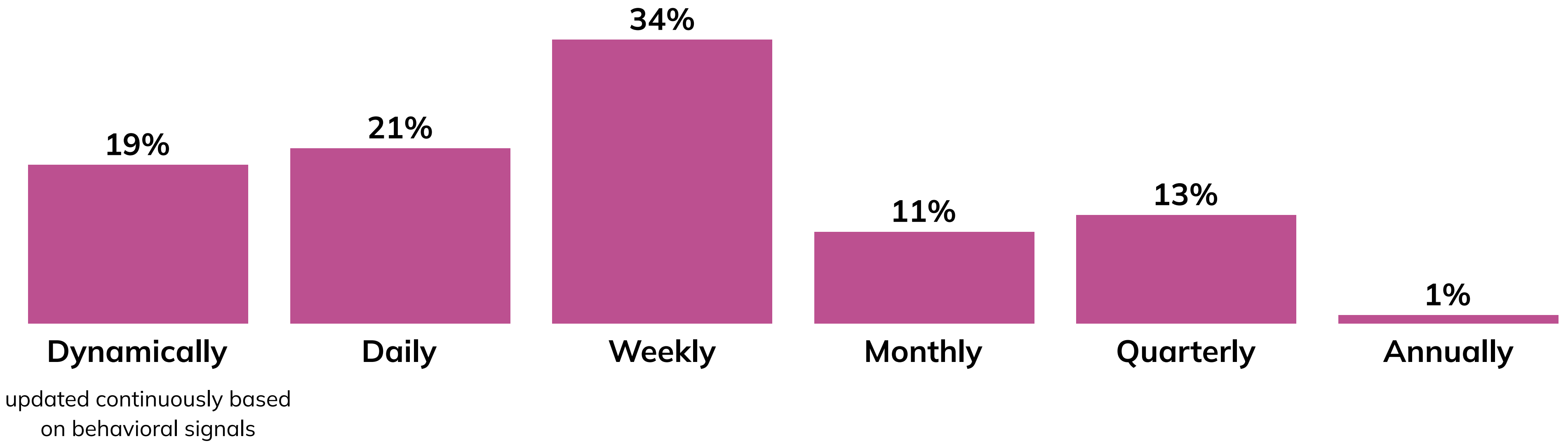
About one third of B2B marketers in the UK update buying group data weekly, while 21% update daily and 19% update dynamically. The more frequently EMEA marketers can update buying group data, the better. Anteriad finds that buying groups change frequently as stakeholders move roles, change direction or leave the company entirely.

TAKEAWAY: Keep building out your buying group insights, and work toward dynamically updated data so you always have the most accurate picture.

What are the most critical challenges your organization faces in managing and maintaining your marketing data?



How frequently does your organization update your buying group definitions and membership?

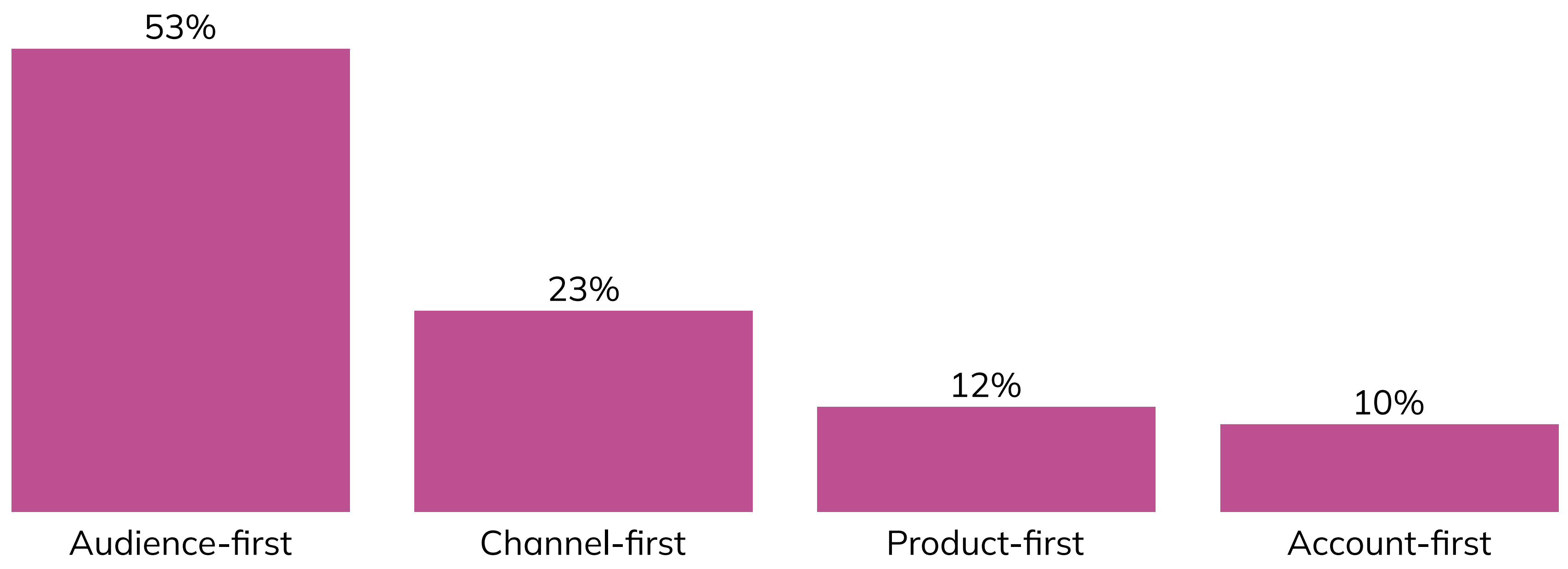


GOAL TWO:
Move From Audience-First Activation to Continuous Optimization

UK B2B marketers are much more likely to plan campaigns "audience-first" than any other approach. Despite having a harder time collecting audience data than other B2B marketers we surveyed, they actually prioritize audiences during campaign planning, more than their US counterparts, which is a best practice.

The importance of having the audience in mind when creating a campaign is critical to ensure messaging aligns with audience needs and that audiences are reached at the right time. In EMEA, having a data partner that can deliver reliable audience insights can improve the effectiveness of audience-first planning and ultimately, feed into more effective campaign optimization.

Which best describes how your organization typically starts campaign planning?



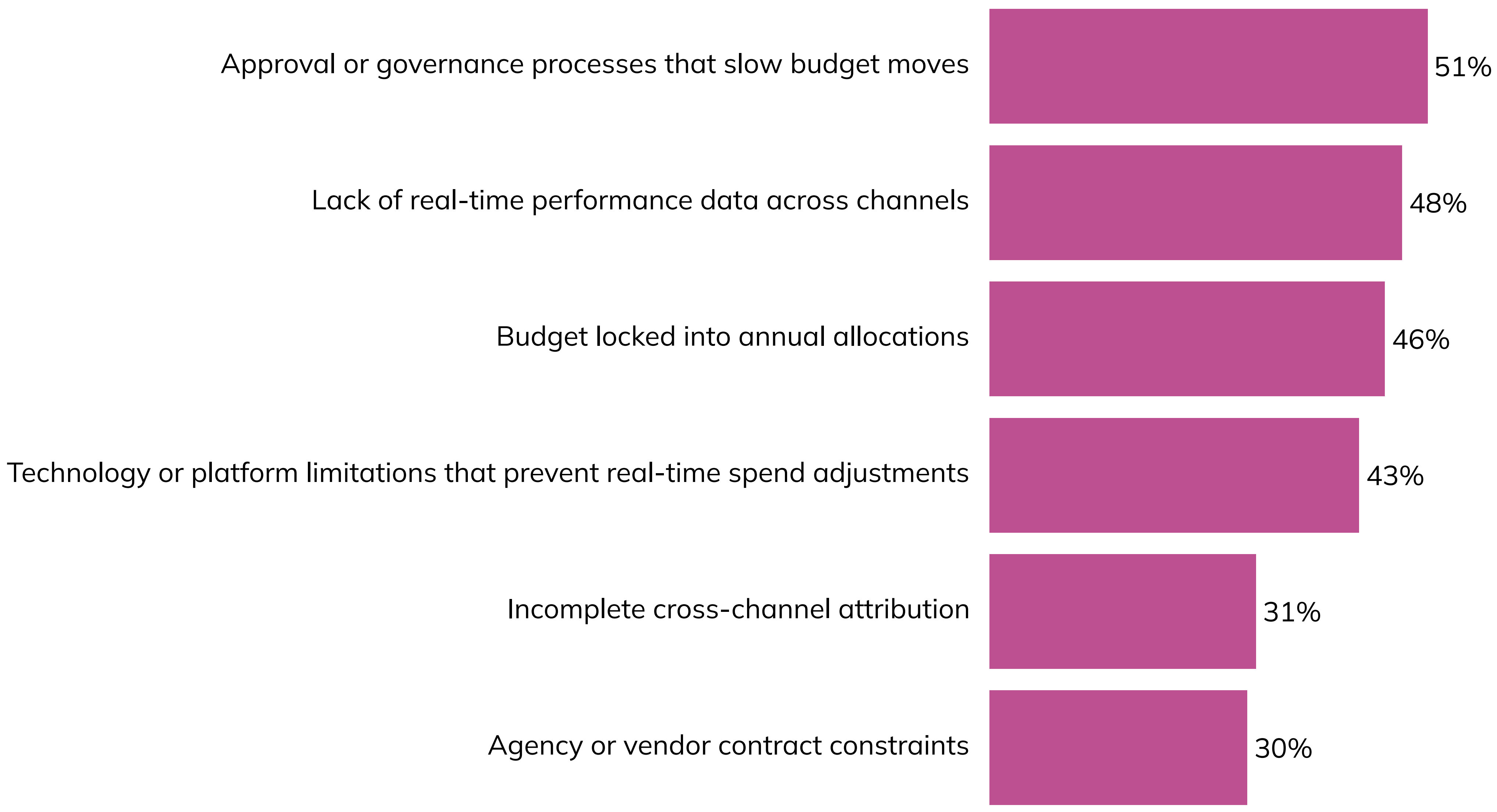
Audience-first — we define the audience, then select channels
Channel-first — we select channels, then define the audience
Product-first — planning is centered around product launches or features
Account-first — planning is driven by target account lists (ABM)

The next stage is to create a dynamic campaign optimization process, rather than having a “one way” linear process informed only by initial audience insights.

We found that 49% of UK B2B marketers update campaigns across channels occasionally based on performance data while only 38% prioritize frequently. Marketers should work towards optimizing more frequently, if not continuously, so that as buying groups and audiences interact with campaigns, marketers make adjustments to channel allocation and audience targets and fine-tune messaging. They all interact together in real time, and the better campaign planning and optimization mirror that, the better.

There are several barriers to more frequent campaign allocation including slow approval and governance processes (51%) and a lack of real time performance data (48%.)

What are the biggest barriers that prevent you from reallocating or optimizing spend during an active campaign?



TAKEAWAY: Run small tests to prove the value of more frequent optimization to your team, and tie campaign performance back to audience insights for a “closed-loop” approach.

GOAL THREE: Improving Measurement Practices

If audience data is the key to planning and executing a campaign, measurement is the key to optimizing and expanding effectively.

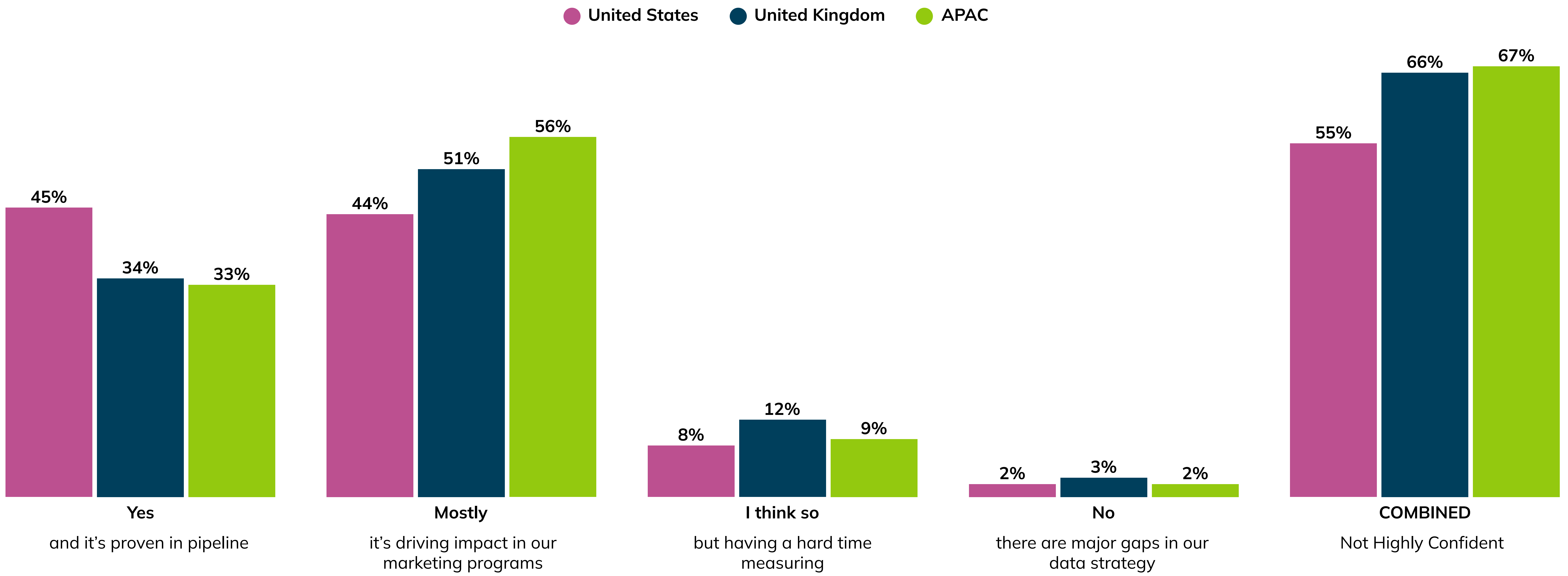
When good audience data is tied to trustworthy campaign delivery data, advertisers build confidence internally and with the C-suite. When performance is proven, B2B marketers can start connecting the dots between a target audience and campaign performance, and optimize campaigns accordingly. Ideally, understanding how campaigns directly drive revenue for the company.

Our study found that 85% of UK based B2B marketers feel they are using the right data to convert their audiences, which is only slightly less than in the US. However, they are a bit less confident about it on the measurement side, with only 34% agreeing “yes, and it’s proven in pipeline” which we define as Data Heroes, while 51% say “mostly, it’s driving impact in our marketing programs. In the US, the groups were split evenly at 44% and 45%.

The good news is that UK marketers are much more likely to say that they rely on ROI metrics than any other metric at 42%, which is focused on real revenue, not just interim audience activity. Now the goal is to tie that ROI back into audience data for true attribution, which is the top challenge for UK marketers at 38%.

UK marketers are also in a good position to prove their value to the C-suite, noting that the organization measures marketing success using ROAS. While the focus on ROAS is right, the challenge is to ensure that C-suite stakeholders see the big picture. If certain marketing activity is hard to tie to ROAS today, it doesn’t mean it’s not valuable, it just means it’s hard to measure. UK marketers are in a good position, with 53% saying they have full visibility and are able to track marketing activity through to closed revenue.

Do you feel you are using the right data to convert your audiences?



TAKEAWAY: Keep closing the loop. Attribute your marketing spend all the way to revenue, then use that data to optimize your next campaign.

Putting It All Together

AI adoption may be moving slower in EMEA, but McKinsey's research suggests that's about to change. The fundamentals of great B2B marketing, strong audience data, insights connected to revenue and a dynamic process won't change. In fact, they'll become even more important.

B2B marketers in EMEA must also keep the following in mind as they build toward AI-ready marketing:

1. Get even closer to the buying group. Move beyond single leads toward dynamic, frequently updated account-level insights.
2. Make optimization continuous, not one-and-done. Let real-time performance data shape targeting and messaging as campaigns run.
3. Close the loop on measurement. Connect audience data to ROI, and ROI to revenue, so every stakeholder trusts the numbers.

Nail these three, and you'll be positioned to make the most of AI and meet your C-suite's revenue expectations.

Ready for data you can build on?

More than half of UK marketers say data quality is their biggest blocker. See how Anteriad's verified B2B data closes that gap, wherever your team is based.

Explore Anteriad Global B2B Data

Sources:
https://anteriad.com/2026-b2b-marketing-edge#sources
McKinsey & Company, "Past forward: The modern rethinking of marketing's core," November 2025.
Forrester, "The State of Business Buying, 2026," January 2026.