Superpowers INDEX

2024 EDITION

A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THE B2B BUYER AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING AND LOSING

dentsu B2B

Foreword

We admit it – we are obsessed about B2B buyers and what drives them.

Four years ago, we started a journey to understand the B2B buyer better, asking B2B buyers about their recent purchase experiences. We wanted to understand what was making the difference between winning and losing. And we wanted to go into detail we didn't see in other studies.

We've been collecting that data now for four years. Covering over 25,000 brand experiences, we believe The Superpowers Index is the largest ever systematic study of B2B buying behaviour globally.

Superpowers has become much more than a piece of research to us. The Superpowers data powers two proprietary insights tools that our creatives, strategists, media planners and experience designers use every day. We also use the data to help our clients benchmark their performance in the B2B buyer journey and plan ways to improve their impact.

This year's update gives a new perspective on many of the big trends in B2B: the importance of trust and brand building; the ever-narrowing gap between winning and losing; the growing influence of thought leadership and the challenges of scaling ABM.

This report has some of the big headlines from The Superpowers Index. We'll be sharing much more over the coming months...for now, we hope you enjoy seeing the world from the buyer's point of view!

The largest ever global study of B2B buying behaviour

Superpowers INDEX

We set out to understand...

THE DRIVERS BEHIND B2B BUYING DECISIONS.

What's important to buyers and what makes the difference between winning and losing.

THE B2B BUYING JOURNEY.

Who's involved and what makes a difference to them at each stage.

COMMERCIAL IMPACT.

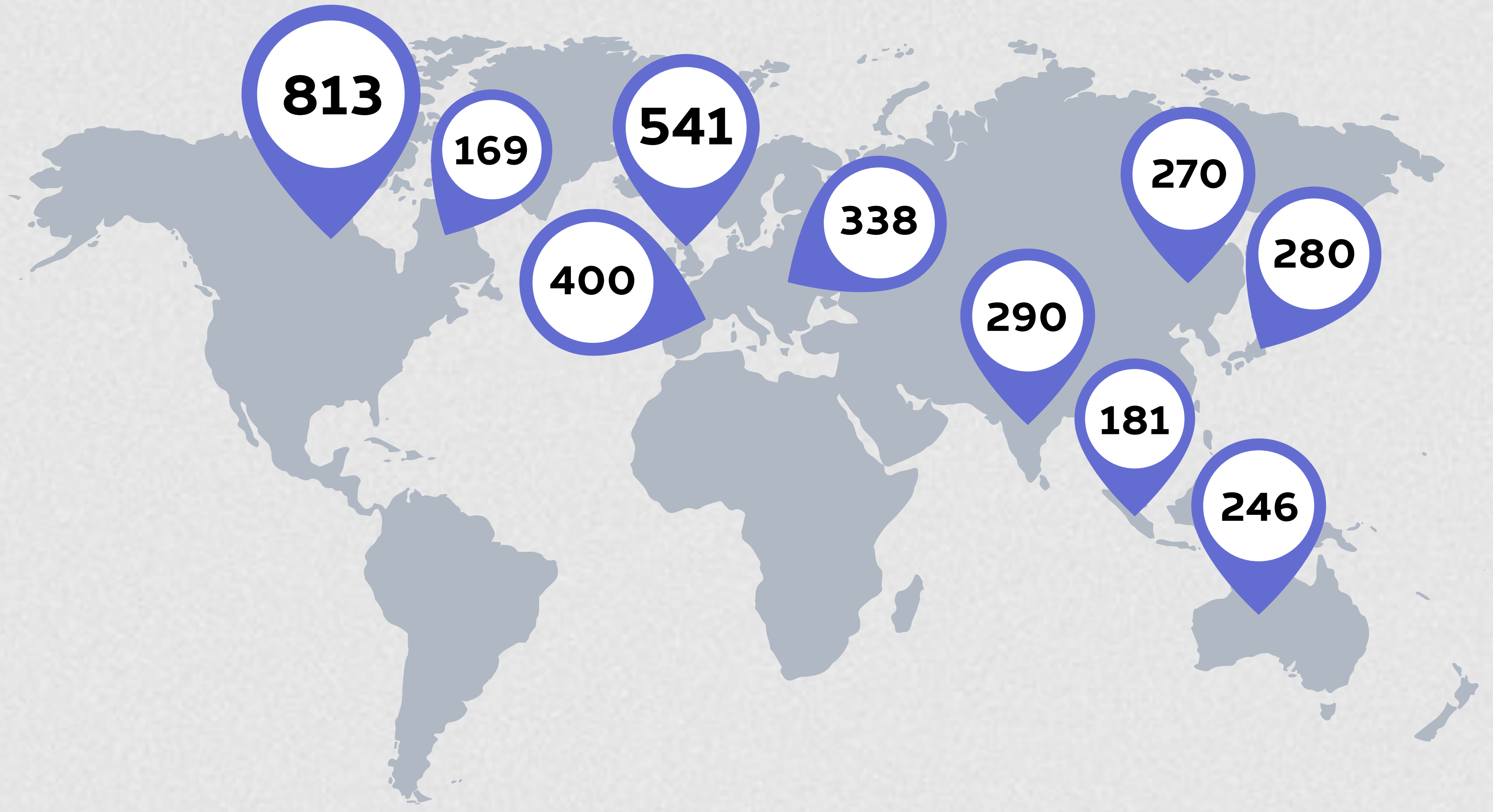
How improving the buying experience drives commercial outcomes.

To do that, we interviewed.

3,528

B2B BUYERS GLOBALLY

(~14k since 2021)



About...

6,539

B2B BRAND EXPERIENCES ACROSS 4 INDUSTRIES

(25k B2B brand experiences in the full database)

- Professional Services
- Manufacturing
- Financial Services
- Technology

How The Superpowers Index works

1

Each year, we survey B2B decision makers and ask them in depth about recent buying experiences

MAP RECENT B2B PURCHASE JOURNEY

BEHAVIOURS

BRAND EXPERIENCES

DECISION DRIVERS

2

We identify the factors that make the biggest difference between winning and losing

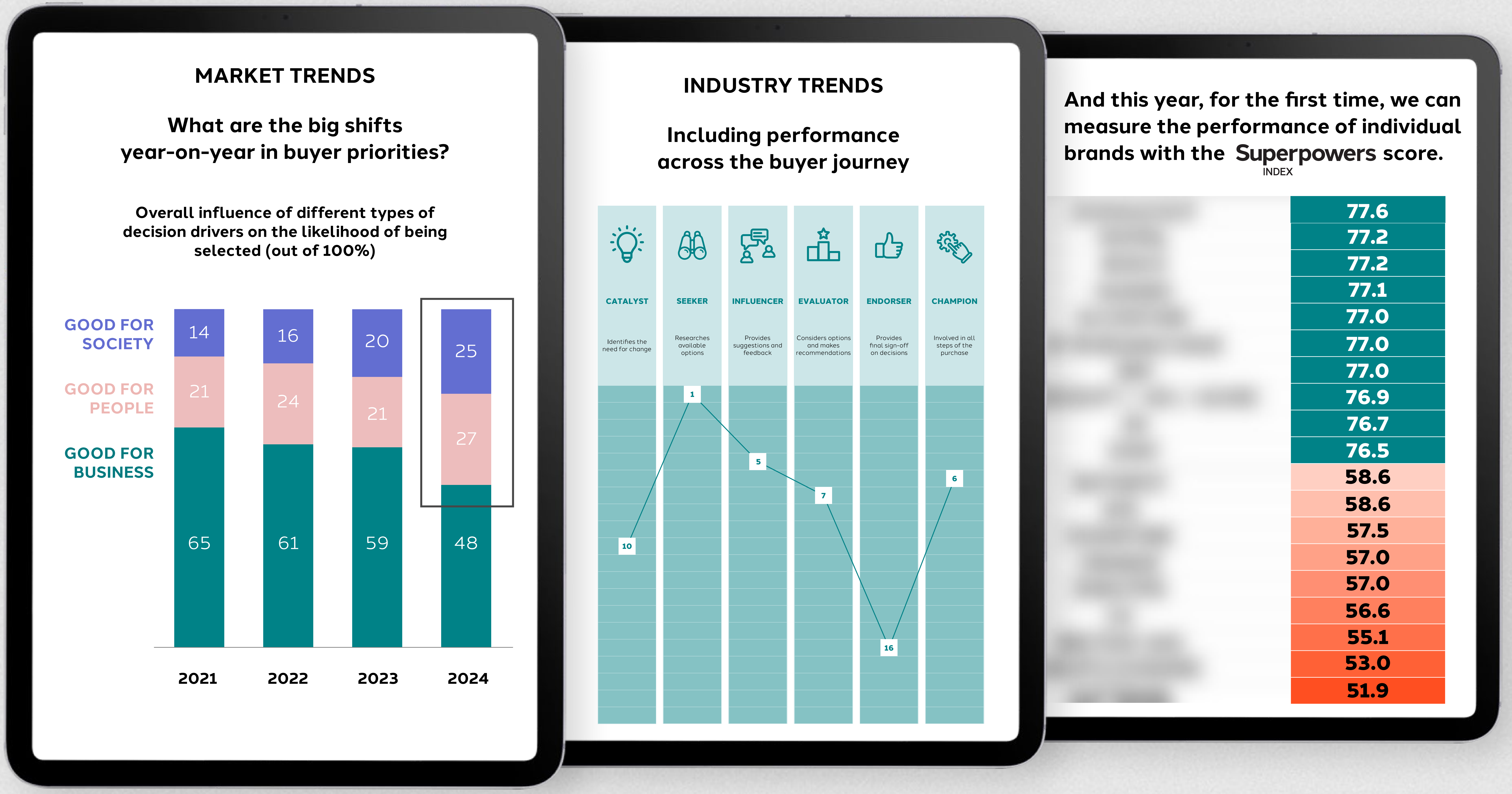
IDENTIFY THE 'HIGH IMPACT' FACTORS

3

We connect this with commercial outcomes: size of the deal, propensity to re-purchase, consideration for other categories, loyalty metrics etc.

MONITOR THE COMMERCIAL OUTCOMES OF DOING THE HIGH IMPACT THINGS WELL

Superpowers helps us look at B2B buying from multiple perspectives



How are B2B brands doing at meeting buyer needs?

INTRODUCING THE SUPERPOWERS INDEX SCORE

For this year's study we've created an Index score: A single metric that captures overall brand experience.

The Index is measured from 0-100, weighted according to a brand's delivery on the most important decision drivers.

The Index also takes account of cultural factors to ensure the score is comparable between countries, industries and company profiles.

BETTER EXPERIENCES, BIGGER DEALS!

A ten-point improvement in the Superpowers Index Score correlates with a **14%** uplift in the dollar value of an opportunity, on average.

WE'VE MEASURED PERFORMANCE FOR OVER 120 NAMED B2B BRANDS IN 2024

Grade	SP Index Score	Proportion meeting this standard in 2024
Exceptional	>90	15%
Very Strong	85-90	14%
Strong	80-85	12%
Average	70-80	37%
Poor	60-70	17%
Very Poor	<60	22%

Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2022-2024 | Countries included: UK, DE, FR, US, CA, JP, SG, IN, AU, CN

Better B2B experiences deliver top line impact

Our research shows a strong correlation between a better buying experience – measured by strong performance on the top decision drivers for B2B buyers – and commercial impact.

WHEN B2B BRANDS PERFORM WELL ACROSS **THE 10 MOST IMPORTANT DECISION DRIVERS** FOR 2024...

THEIR SALES CYCLES ARE 27% SHORTER ON AVERAGE

..AND THEY RECEIVE MUCH HIGHER NPS SCORES

(+83 VS +23 FOR OTHER BRANDS)

THEY ARE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY TO BE ADOPTED FOR FURTHER PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

(41% VS 23% FOR OTHER BRANDS)

THEY ARE NEARLY 3 TIMES AS LIKELY TO SEE INCREASED SPEND FROM THEIR CUSTOMERS IN THE FUTURE

(33% VS. 13% FOR OTHER BRANDS)

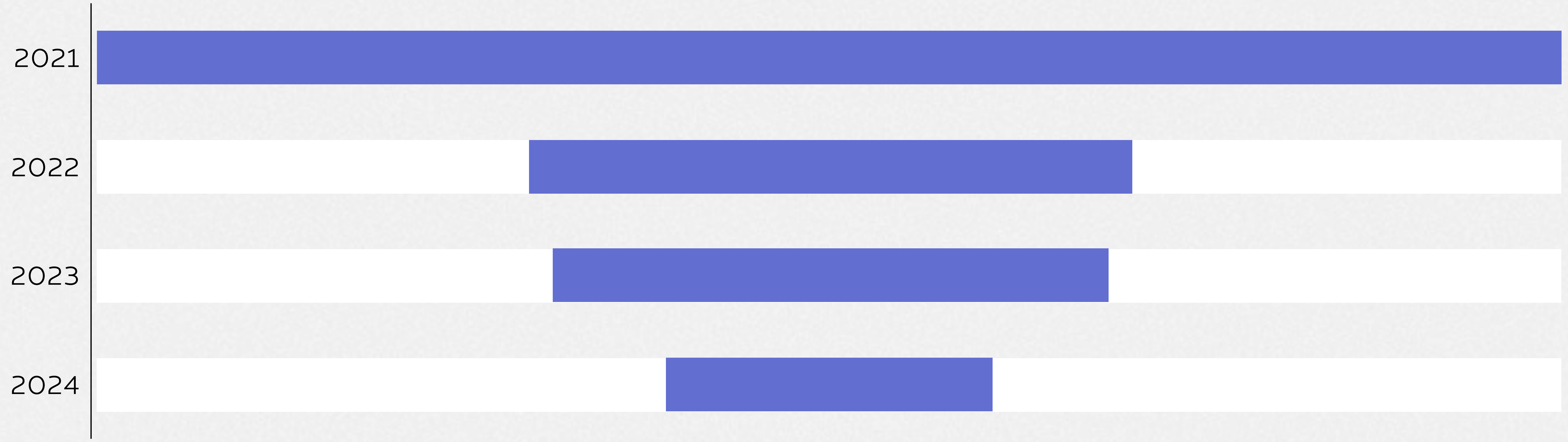
The margins between success and failure are fine … and getting finer every year

Superpowers shows us just how competitive it is out there for B2B brands. The gap between winning and losing brands has been shrinking every year. As small margins increasingly tip the balance between success and failure, reviewing the strength of your buyer experience in detail is imperative.

SINCE 2021, THE GAP HAS SHRUNK 78%

The competitive gap between the winning brand and the second-placed (losing) brand

(performance across all 30 decision-drivers tracked in Superpowers Index, based on mean average score gap)



Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2021 - 2024 | Countries included: UK, DE, FR, US, CA, JP, SG, AU, CN

More brands and more decision makers are involved, while incumbency is a waning advantage

As buying groups grow so does the complexity of the experience. As we shall see, buyers are also finding it hard to spot the differences between brands, making the competitive environment more volatile.

+62%

BRANDS CONSIDERED

The number of brands considered as part of B2B buying journeys vs. 2021

7.4

GROWING BUYING GROUP

Growing number of people in the B2B buying group; now 7.4 (+6%YoY)

17%

LOSS RATE

The incumbent loss rate increasing (34% vs 29% last year)

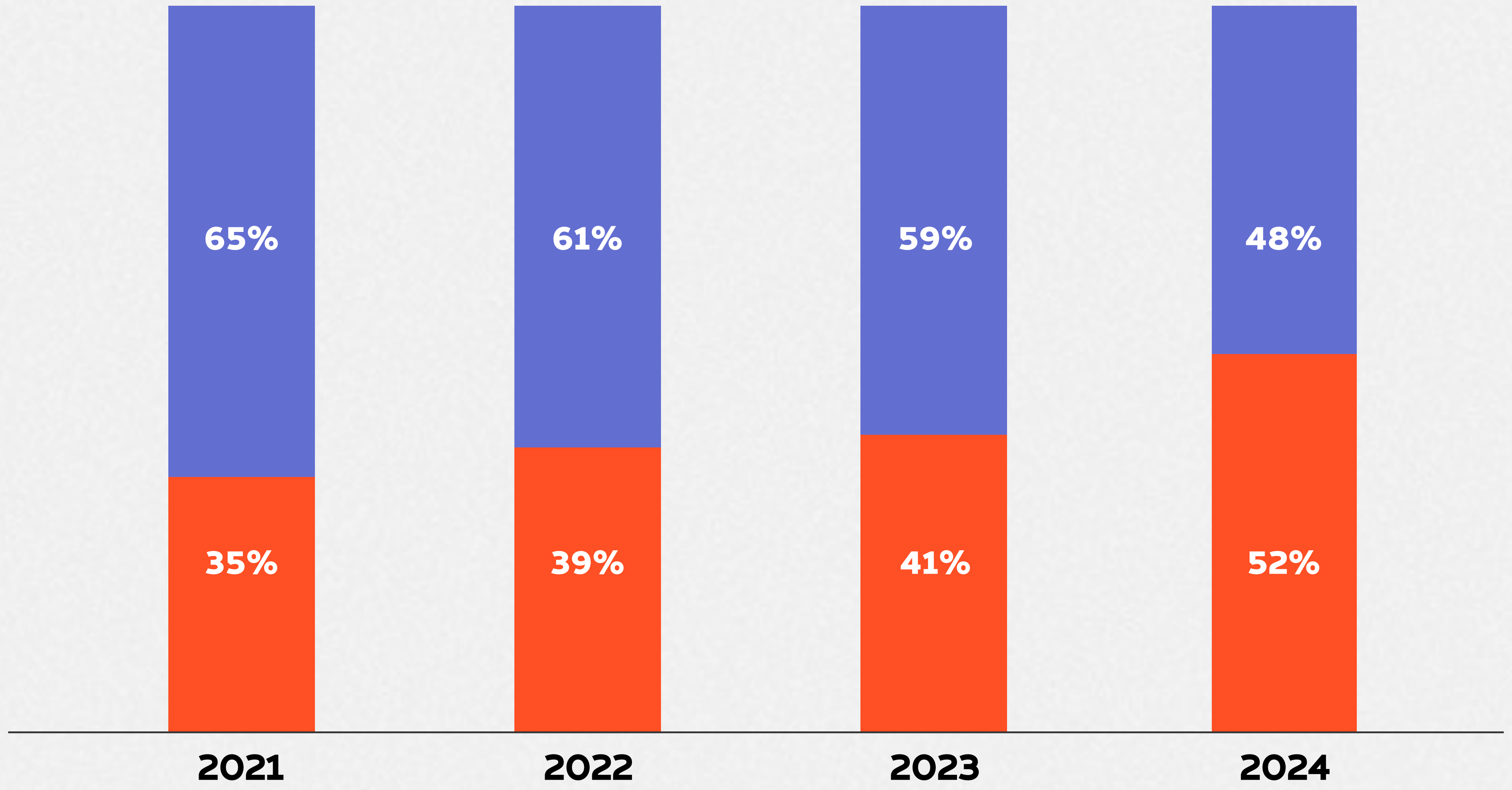
A watershed moment for B2B: personal outweighs professional for the first time

For years the B2B industry has pushed against the perception that B2B buyers are rational decision-makers, driven primarily by business outcomes.

But this year, for the first time since we started Superpowers, we see ‘personal’ decision drivers outweigh the more functional professional drivers in their overall importance in the B2B buyer journey.

This should add fuel to the call for more creativity, storytelling and emotional resonance in B2B.

Overall influence of decision drivers on B2B purchase decisions



PERSONAL DECISION DRIVERS

e.g. Feel safe signing a contract, aligns with personal values / ethics, teaches me new skills / knowledge

PROFESSIONAL DECISION DRIVERS

e.g. Competitively priced, products and services just work, variety and choice

WHAT MAKES THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING AND LOSING IN 2024?

KEY TRENDS IN B2B BUYING

Three trends that define winning buyer experiences in 2024

We've identified three major trends that are making the difference between winning and losing for B2B brands

#1

BRAND HAS NEVER MATTERED MORE IN B2B

As buyers emphasise trust and expertise, B2B companies must strengthen their brand building muscles.

#2

EXPERIENCE CAN SHORTEN THE SALES CYCLE

Buyer inertia is a growing problem but there is evidence that hybrid digital-physical experiences that have impact from minute one can accelerate deals.

#3

THE RISE OF THE PERSONALIZED, ADAPTIVE GTM

For the first time ever, personal decision drivers outweigh professional drivers in importance – but how do B2B brands scale personalized approaches?

TREND #1

Brand has never mattered more in B2B

Disillusionment with the effectiveness of lead generation, tougher economic conditions and research from the likes of HBR and LinkedIn have driven a renaissance for brand building.

Despite this, buyers still struggle to see the difference between brands swimming in a sea of sameness.

#1

TOP 10 REVEALED: **Buyers prioritise trust and expertise amid uncertainty**

For the second year running, the top priority for buyers is feeling safe signing a contract. When we dig further into what this means, we find buyers want it to be “easy to convince my colleagues on the brand’s credentials” and to be “reassured by the brand’s track record”.

Along with the rise of being “known as a good employer” – a proxy for a brand’s trustworthiness – we can see the rising importance of brand.

The rapid rise in the importance of thought leadership, we can see buyers looking for integrity to help navigate uncertainty.

Top 10 ranked ‘Decision Drivers’ based on their overall influence on winning and losing in the B2B buying experience

	Rank, by year	
	2023	2024
I feel safe signing a contract with them	1	1
Is known as being a good employer	10	2
Active thought leaders in their category / sector	20	3
Comply with regulations, law, industry standards & ethical practices	2	4
Takes care of its suppliers, business partners and communities	7	5
Is a brand that aligns with my personal values and ethics	3	6
Meet my company’s minimum quality / functional needs	9	7
Support us with expertise	8	8
Offer enough variety and choice	14	9
Provides the support, information and expertise we need	5	10

B2B marketers are responding by prioritising brand

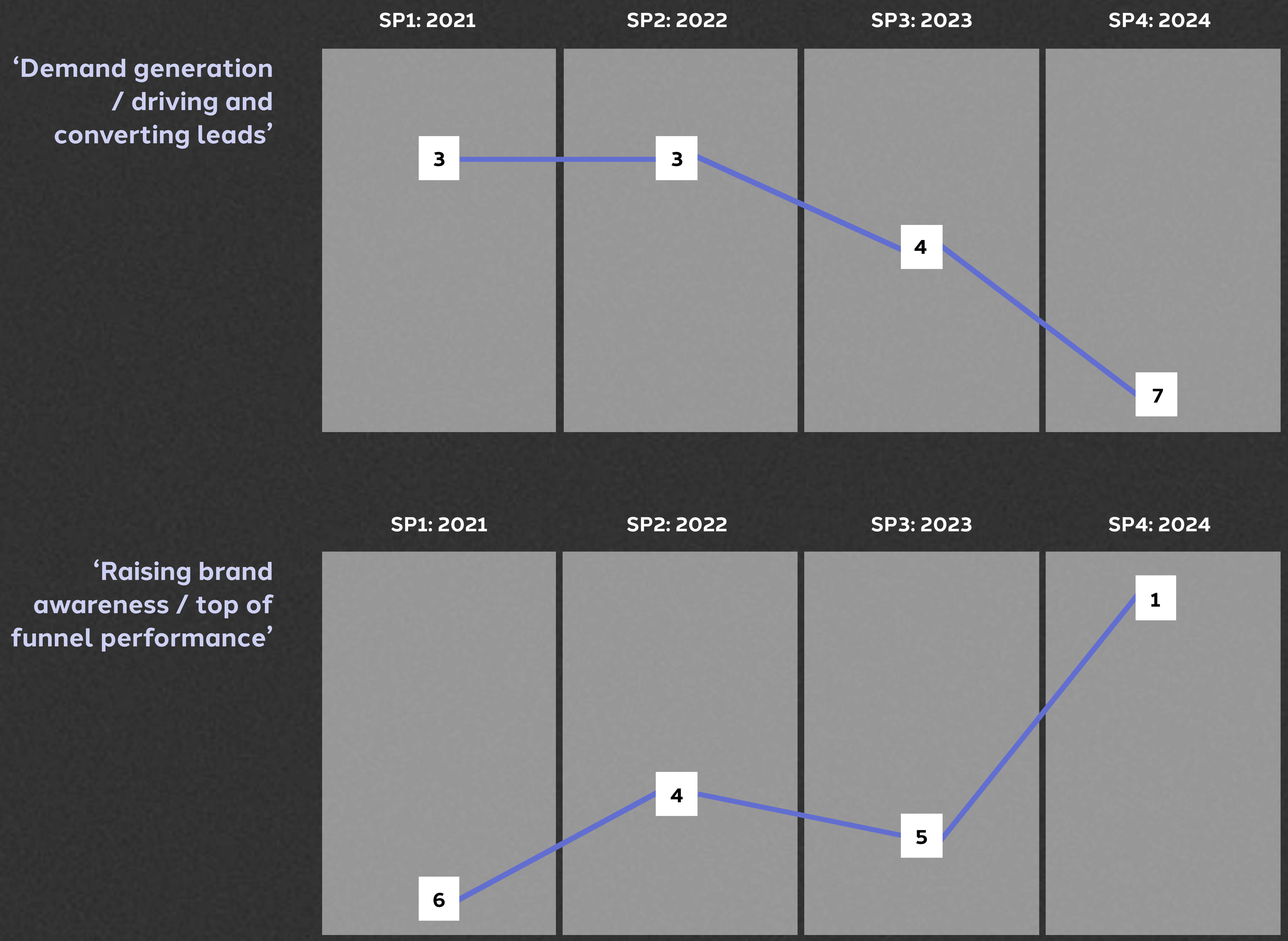
It's no surprise to see the intent from B2B marketers to invest in brand. Lead gen has come under increasing fire; brand has momentum. The influence of lobbying from LinkedIn, concepts like the 95/5 rule, research from Ehrenberg Bass and others all add to a strong case for brand investment.

Superpowers data backs this up: the top three most influential drivers are all about building trust.

But there's a twist in the tale

BUYERS AREN'T GETTING WHAT THEY NEED...

Rank given by B2B marketers based on importance to future strategy



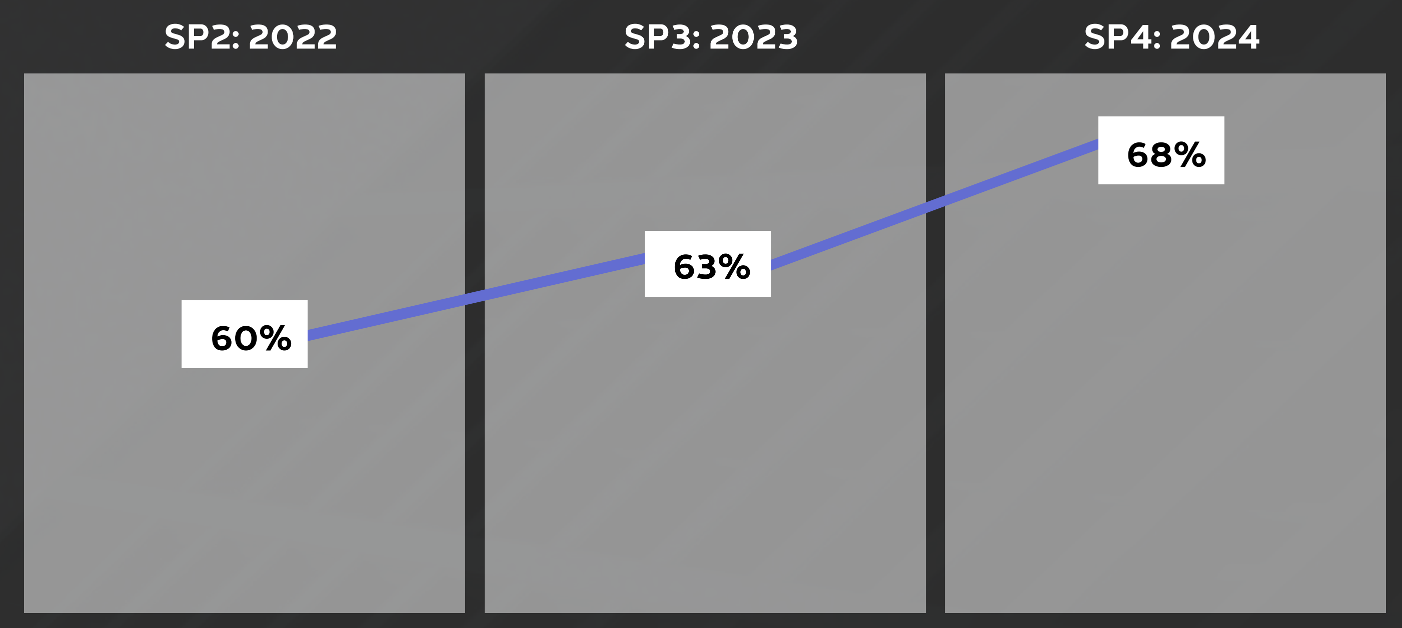
There’s a big gap between buyer perception and marketers’

MARKETERS RATE THEIR PERFORMANCE HIGHLY…

71%

of B2B marketers rate their performance as strong for “communicating a distinct brand position or strong USP”

…BUYERS, NOT SO MUCH



% of B2B buyers agreeing with the statement 'Many of the brands I see at work have very similar marketing and communications messages – they all sound and act the same'

Question: Q47 – B2B solution buyers

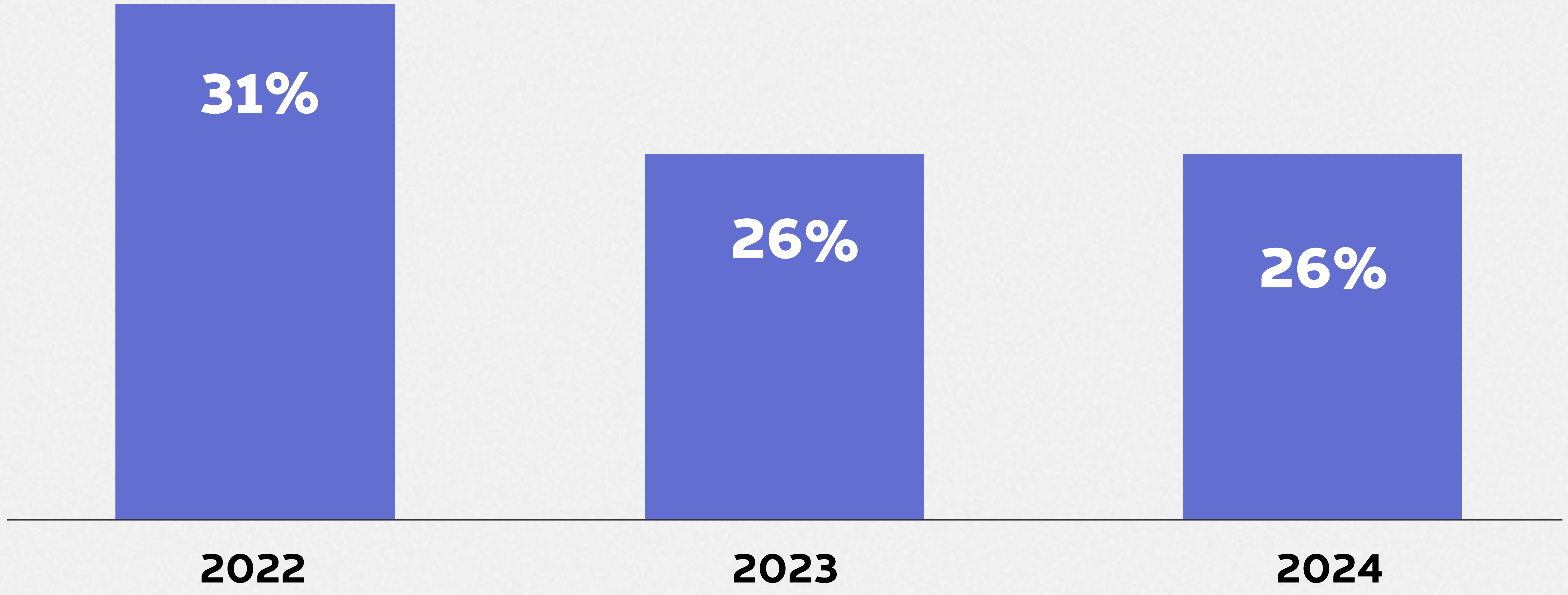
Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2022 - 2024
Countries included: UK, DE, FR, US, CA, JP, SG, AU, CN, IN

Buyers crave expertise, but few B2B brands do thought leadership well

As AI accelerates disruption in every industry, buyers are understandably looking to brands that can demonstrate genuine expertise, with “Being seen as an active thought leader in my category” rising from 20th to 3rd most important decision driver.

But only just over a quarter of B2B buyers rate B2B brands efforts highly. It’s a big opportunity for those brands that get it right to set themselves apart.

The proportion of B2B buyers giving brands high marks for being ‘active thought leaders’ isn’t improving over time…



Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2022 – 2024 | Countries included: UK, DE, FR, US, CA, JP, SG, AU, CN

TREND #2

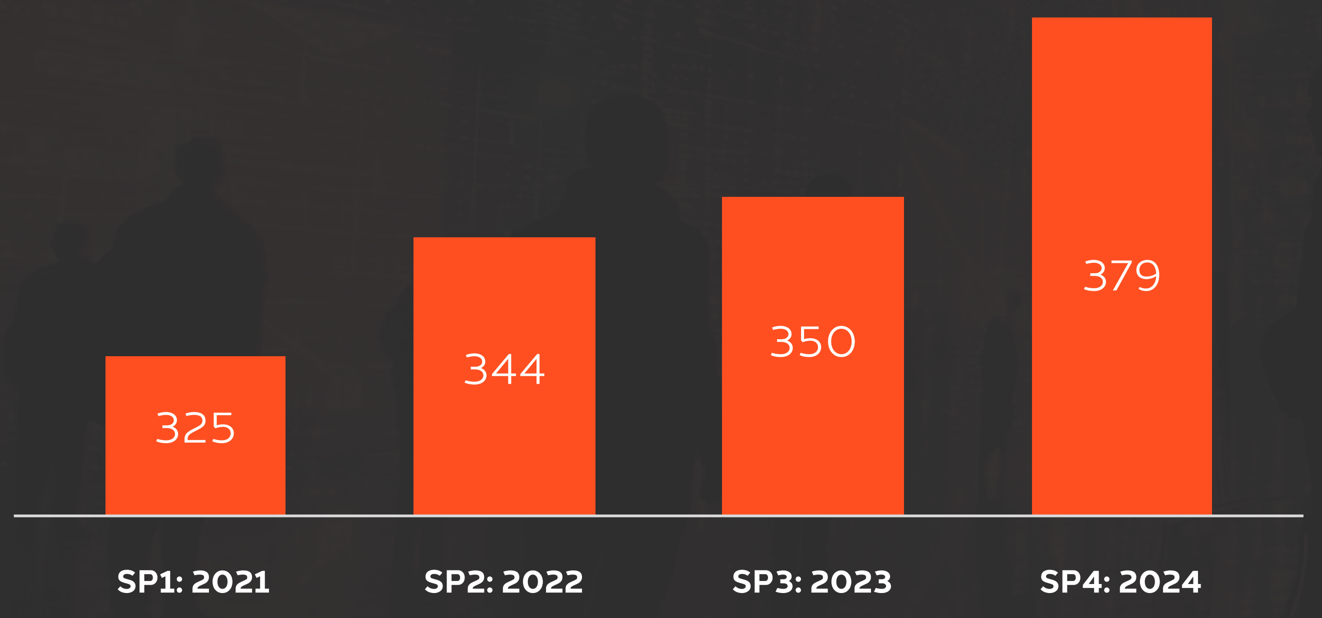
Experience can shorten the sales cycle

Growing numbers of decision makers and a growing cautiousness means buying decisions are taking longer and are harder to close – but there are steps we take to tackle the problem.

#2

Buyer inertia is a real problem

THERE'S BEEN AN INCREASE IN AVERAGE DECISION TIME OF 54 DAYS SINCE 2021



Total mean decision time (in days) from initial research to final decision

Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2021 - 2024
Countries included: UK, DE, FR, US, CA, JP, SG, AU, CN, IN

EACH DAY OF DELAYED B2B PURCHASE DECISIONS IS MONEY LOST...

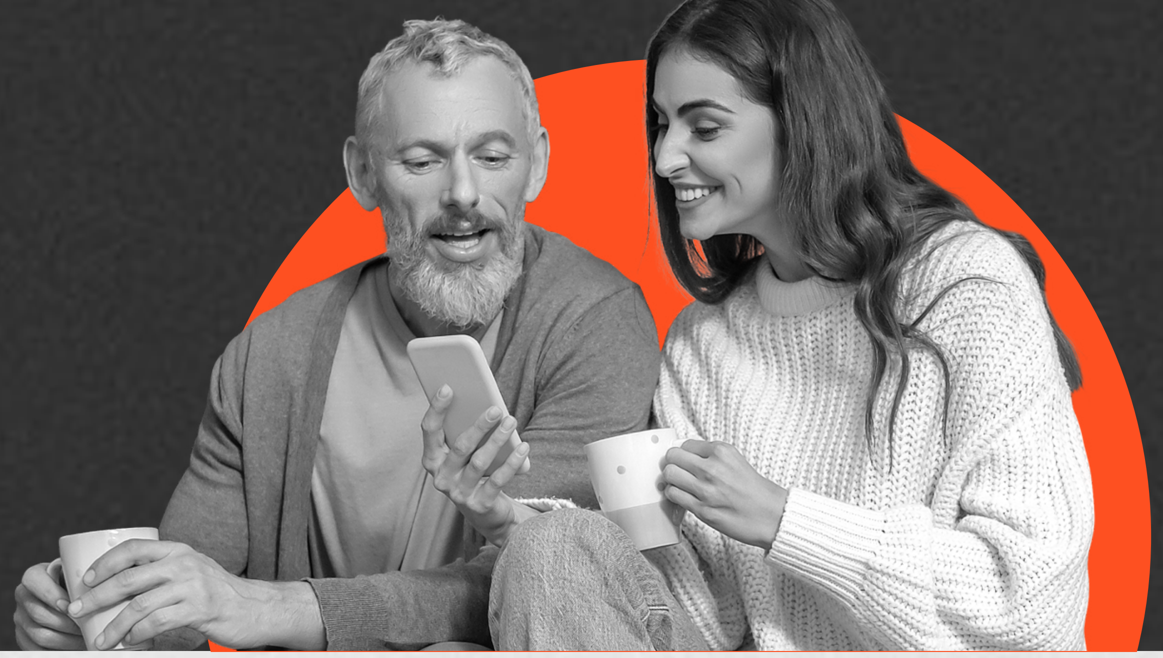
In fact, we estimate that the value to the world economy of these delayed b2b opportunities is around...

$1.9tn

(or around 2.2% of global GDP)

Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2024 and analysis of GDP and business spend data reported by national statistical institutes.

Experience is the biggest influencing factor



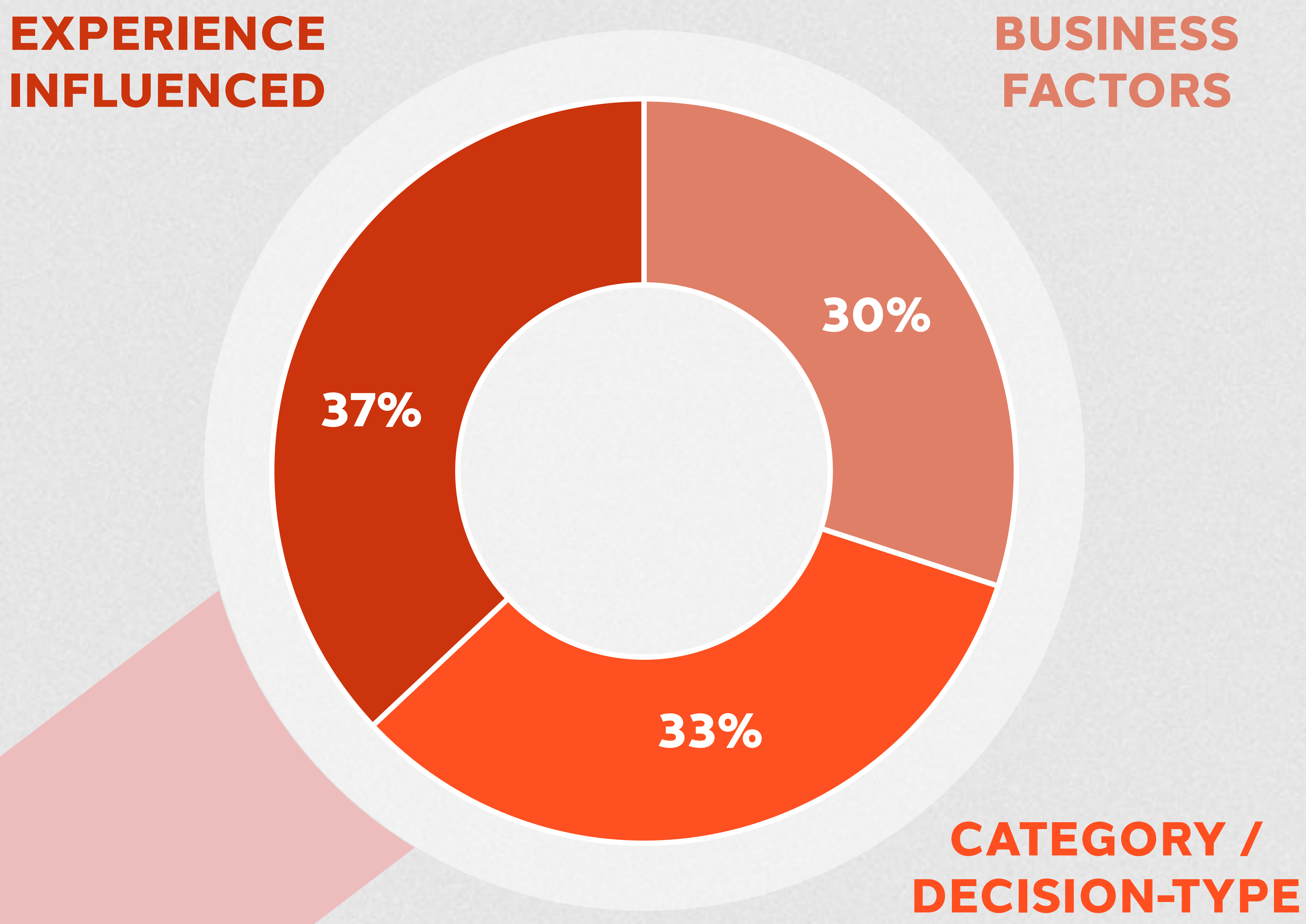
Using our Superpowers dataset, we've conducted statistical modelling to understand what factors most affect the length of the decision-making cycle.

In our modelling, we looked at the impact of 3 types of factors:

1. **BUSINESS FACTORS:**
   The size of the organisation, the financial circumstances of the business etc.

2. **CATEGORY / DECISION TYPE:**
   To account for the fact that decisions in some categories / for certain levels of investment take longer than others.

3. **Once we control for (1) and (2), that leaves other factors that marketers can influence through IMPROVED EXPERIENCES.**



What we can do to accelerate decision times

Once we control for other factors, we can see that decisions are significantly quicker where B2B brand experiences excel at hybrid experiences, blending strong digital and human interactions and making it easier for buyers to buy.

EXPERIENCE AREA	DECISION TIME THAT COULD BE SAVED
Where the **initial interaction** with the brand is strong, and where essential credentials of the brand are quickly established	**16 weeks**
Where **peer recommendation and advocacy** for the brand is strong	**11 weeks**
Where the **negotiation and contracting process** is streamlined	**11 weeks**
Offering **market-leading digital purchase** experiences: • Being able to conduct significant parts of the purchase through a digital channel • Having a strong brand / vendor website	**9 weeks**
Where there is a **strong, 1-to-1, human interaction** with the brand during the purchase process	**4 weeks**
Where a brand's engagement with the buyer's **procurement function** is strong	**2 weeks**

Shortening of decision timeframes associated with B2B purchase experiences with the above characteristics.

TREND #3

The rise of the personalized, adaptive GTM

B2B buyers want experiences that are relevant to them, but what’s relevant varies significantly depending on the role of the buyer.

Experiences that are tailored to the needs of the buyers are more effective, and maturing technology allows brands to increasingly deliver this personalization at scale.

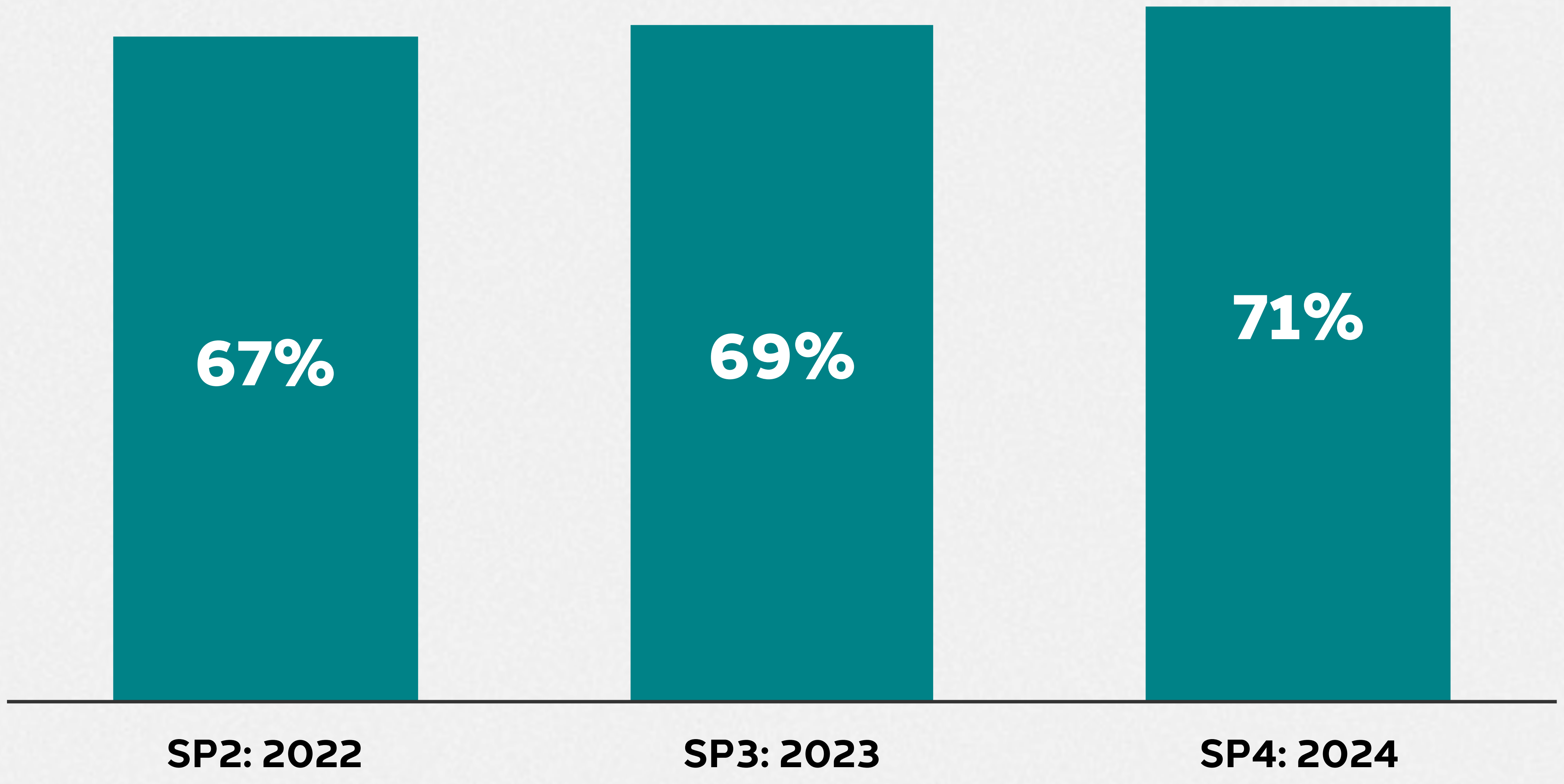
#3

B2B buyers want experiences that reflect their needs

There's lots of talk in B2B about personalisation, but more than anything it is relevance that buyers crave. Right now, they don't feel they're getting it as often as they should be...

% Of B2B buyers and influencers agreeing that:

"I would like business suppliers to spend more time seeking to understand me and how it can solve day-to-day problems I face at work" (Q47)

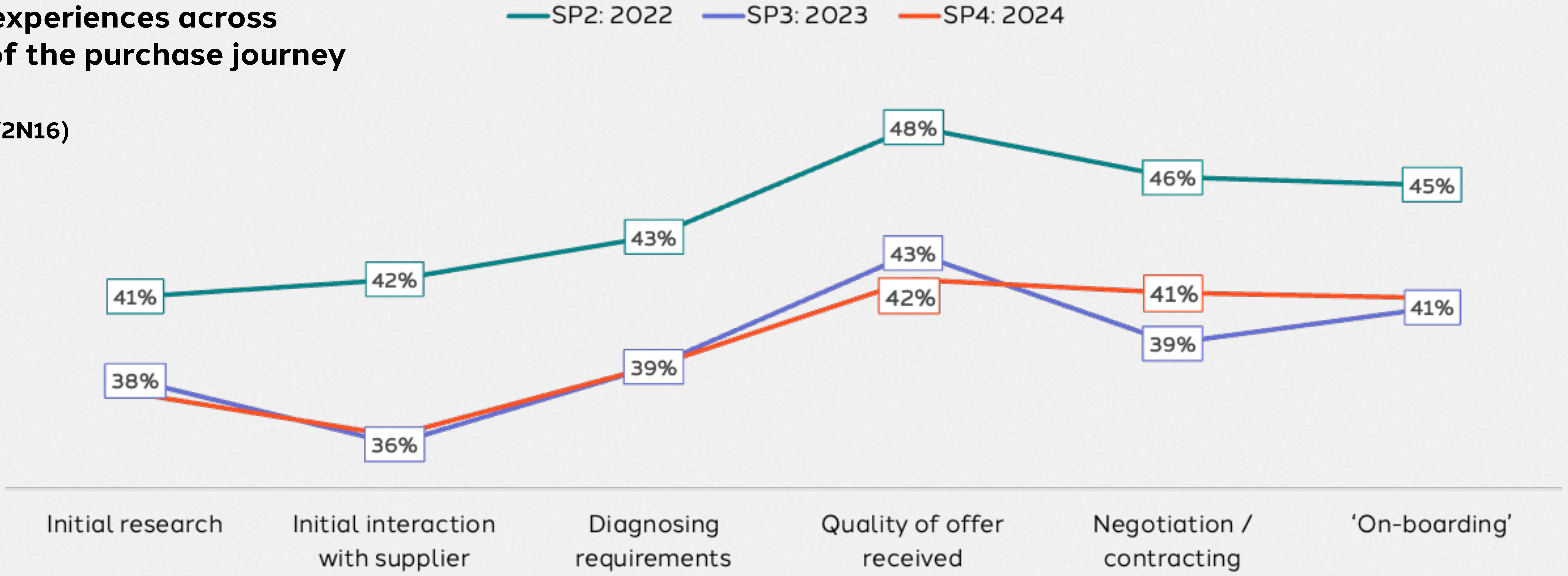


Satisfaction across the B2B customer journey is low

SCORES HAVEN'T IMPROVED SINCE THEIR DECLINE IN 2023

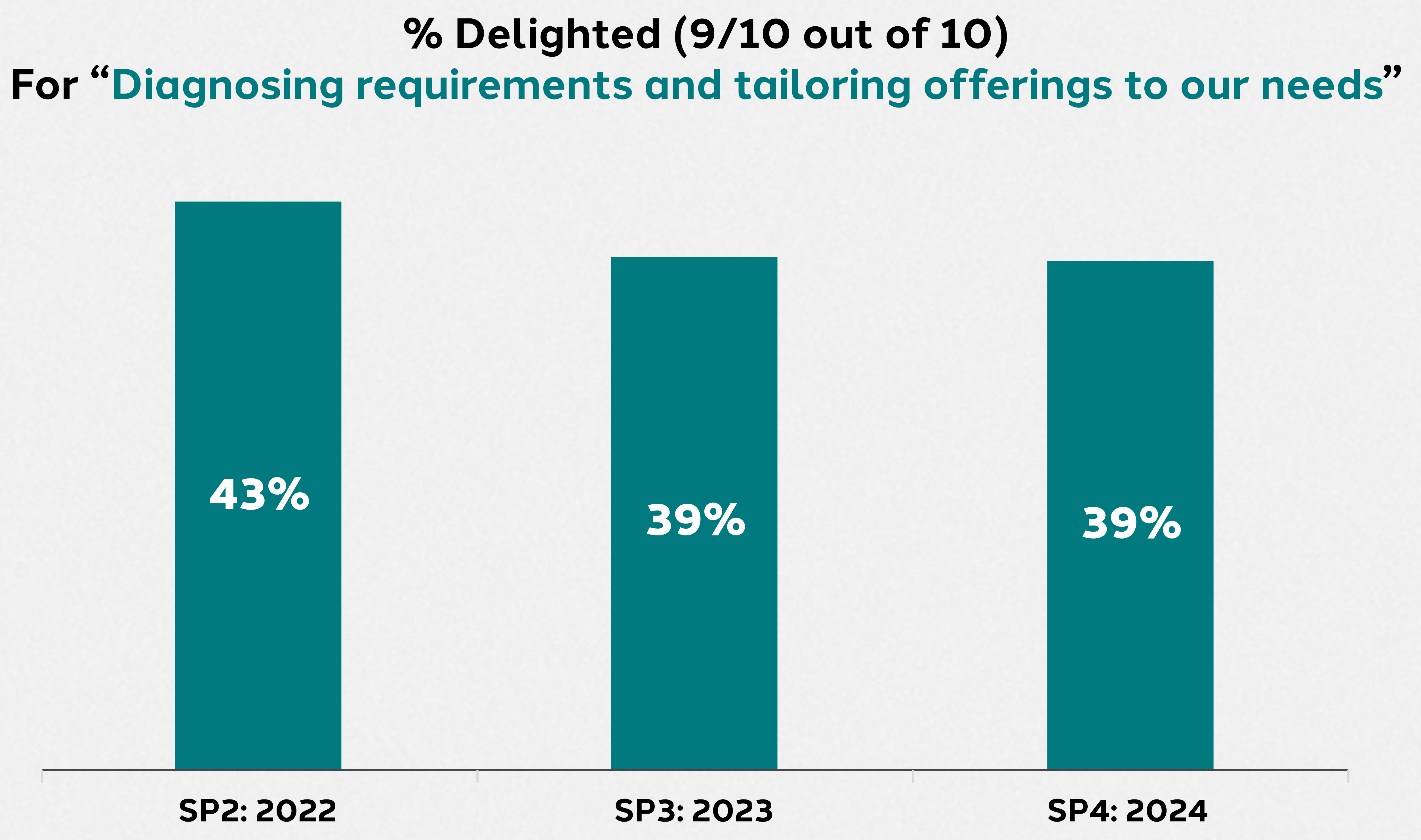
% having positive experiences across different aspects of the purchase journey

(9-10 scores out of 10, W2N16)



B2B brands struggle to fully satisfy the desire for customisation

Only around 2 in 5 business were highly satisfied with the brand they chose in terms of doing a good job for **tailoring their offering to fit their needs** ...and these scores have shown no sign of improving since 2022.



Source: B2B Superpowers Index 2022 - 2024 | Countries included: UK, DE, FR, US, CA, JP, SG, AU, CN

This appears to be linked with B2B brands not engaging sufficiently with the distinct needs of key members of the buying group

*% Delighted (9+/10) For "Diagnosing requirements and tailoring offerings to our needs"

**Measured by average difference in rank of importance from the overall picture for Superpowers attributes

	CATALYST	SEEKER	INFLUENCER	EVALUATOR	ENDORSER	CHAMPION
	More senior	More junior	More junior			More senior
Level of satisfaction with how customised / tailored experiences are with B2B brands*	Mediocre	Low	Very low	Low	Mediocre	Mediocre
Degree of difference in key needs (decision drivers) to overall picture**	Medium	Very high	High	High	High	Medium

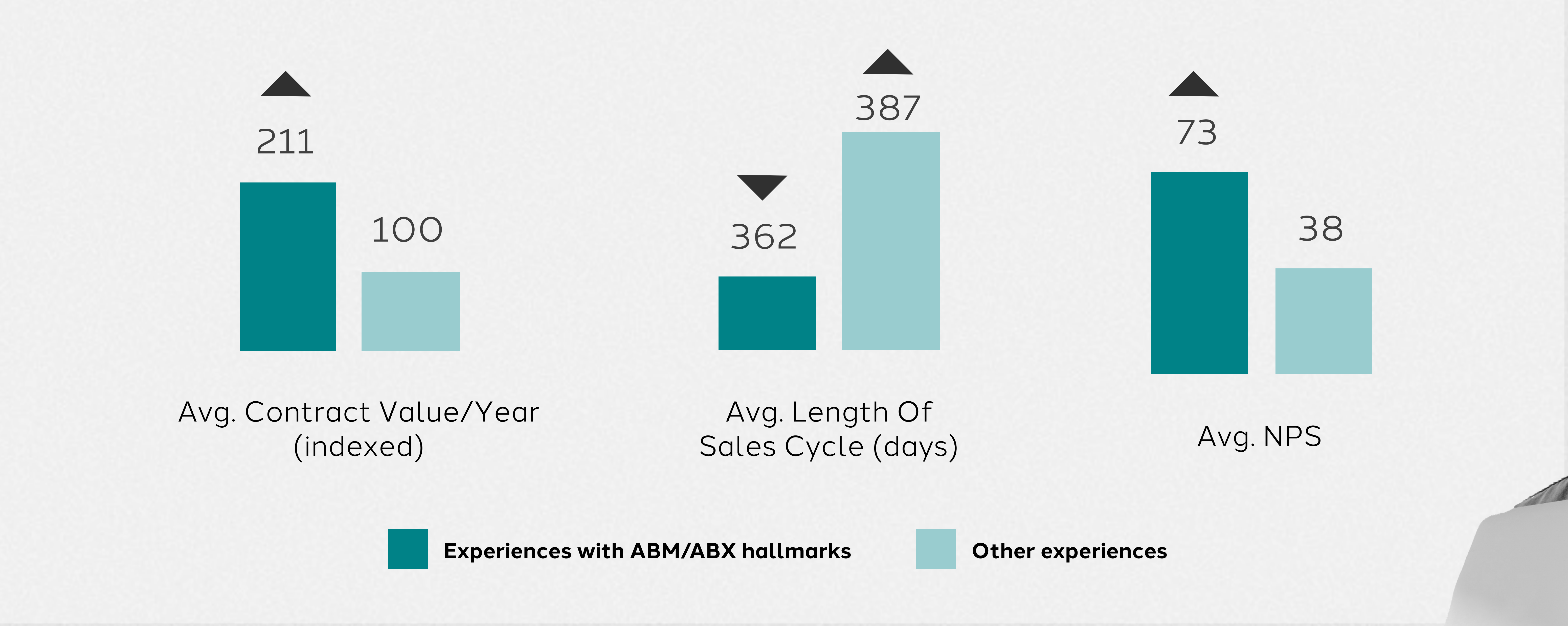
B2B brands do better at serving the needs of the more senior DMs involved in the process but can end up failing to satisfy key gatekeepers, such as Seekers and Influencers

These less-well-served roles also have decision-driver priorities that are particularly distinct from the overall picture. Under these circumstances, a more tailored approach is needed.

Those brands delivering relevant, account-based experiences are seeing clear benefits but still struggle to scale

We can use our Superpowers Index data to identify purchase experiences that bear the hallmarks of what we call an 'Account Based Experience'. This is where there has been extensive use of targeted media, where marketing approaches have been personalized and where a range of content types have been engaged with.

Where there are strong signs of ABX approaches having been taken, a range of tangible commercial benefits to brands are evident...



However, only around **5%** of all purchase experiences currently bear these hallmarks. ABX remains a nascent trend but as AI technologies and data practices mature, we believe winning brands will be those that effectively scale account-based approaches that respond to customer needs.

How can we respond?
Provocations for B2B brands to take from Superpowers 2024

We've identified three major trends that are making the difference between winning and losing for B2B brands

TREND #1

BRAND HAS NEVER MATTERED MORE IN B2B

- Brand building muscles that have atrophied in B2B in recent years now need to be rebuilt.
- Media strategies must be reconfigured to build trust and demonstrate expertise.
- Genuine, not token, thought leadership remains an untapped opportunity if brands can 'unleash their expertise'

#1

TREND #2

EXPERIENCE SHORTENS THE SALES CYCLE

- Hybrid digital-physical journeys that sustain impact from minute one are critical to accelerate revenue.
- The new B2B playbook is built on the foundations of an integrated buyer experience.

#2

TREND #3

THE RISE OF THE PERSONALIZED, ADAPTIVE GTM

- Creativity and storytelling are the keys to connect with buyers' emotional drivers and stand out from the crowd.
- Winning brands will harness maturing technology and data to scale the power of personalization and meet buyers where they are.

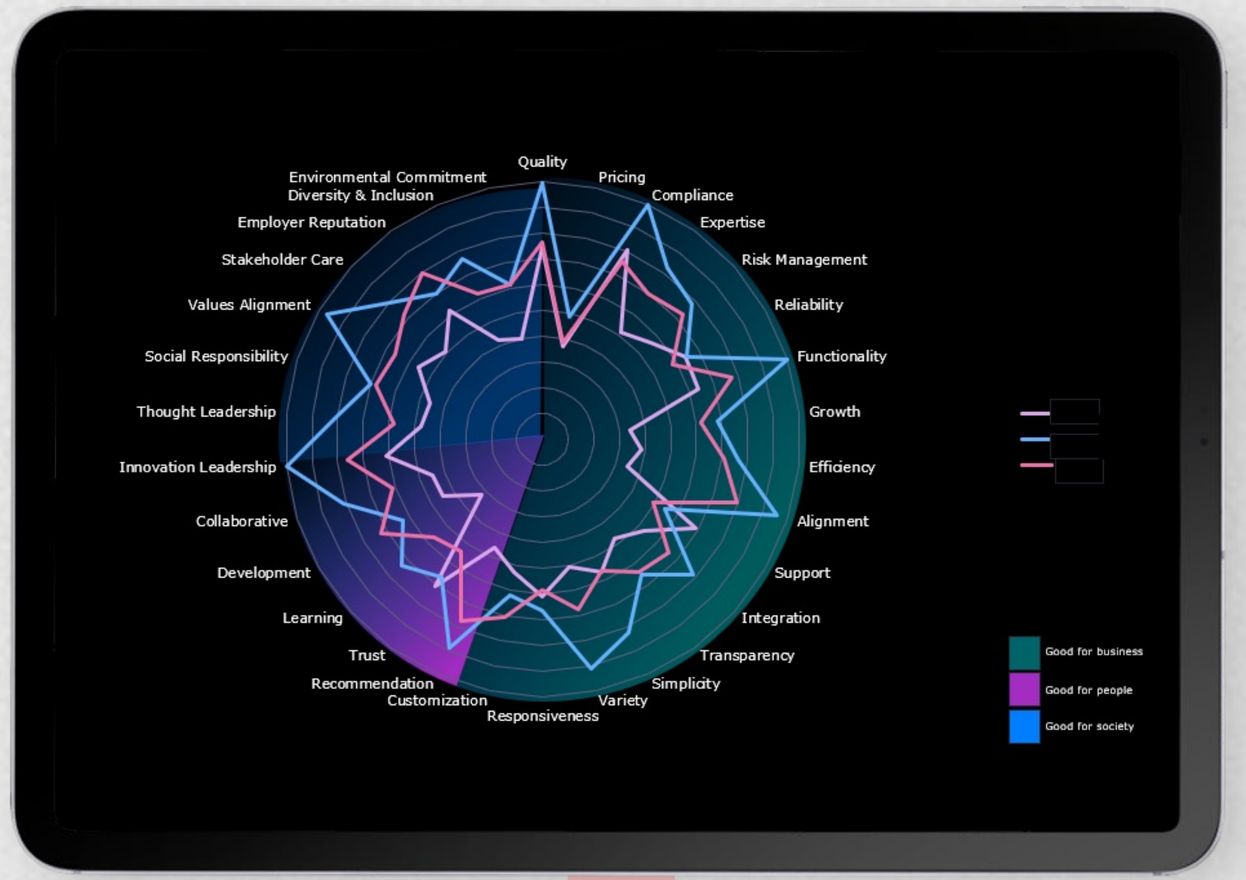
#3

PUTTING SUPERPOWERS TO WORK

USING THE DATA TO IMPROVE THE B2B BUYER EXPERIENCE

Using The Superpowers Index to improve the buyer experience

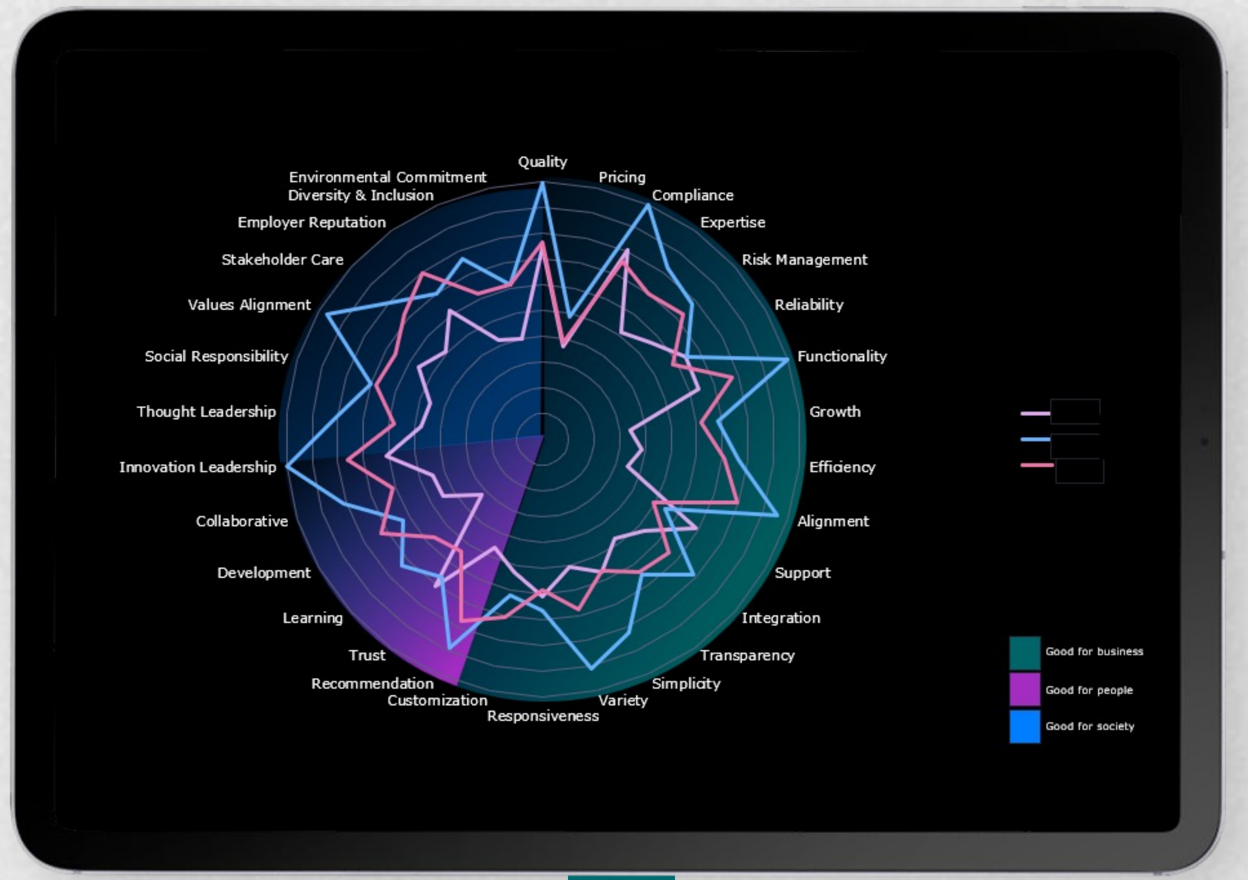
Superpowers is a diagnostic tool. We use it with our customers to provoke data-driven discussions about how to improve the B2B buyer experience, following a simple three step process.



1

LEVEL-SET

Use Superpowers to map your performance against the top decision drivers and through the buyer journey.



2

BUILD A HYPOTHESIS

Build a richer picture of where to improve and agree specific decision drivers to target.

	HORIZON SCANNERS Active thought leaders in my sector	ACTIVELY THINKING ABOUT CHANGE Is known as being a good employer	SHORTLIST Offers enough variety and choice	ACTIVE BUYERS I feel safe signing a contract with them	EXISTING CUSTOMERS Provides the support, information and expertise we need
Your brand	48	62	51	71	69
Competitor	58	80	67	54	50
Competitor	81	70	91	67	55

3

MOVE THE DIAL

Activate programs in market based on buyer insight to improve performance through the buyer journey.

If you would like to learn more about using Superpowers as a diagnostic tool, get in touch via **superpowers@dentsu.com**

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