

What marketing talent wants

Company and marketing
department attributes that
resonate with today's marketer

February 2021



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About this document

A true fit

There's often a disconnect between what employees want and what employers think employees want. Not least due to Covid-19, people's priorities all around the world are also changing. Competitive pay, good benefits and work-life balance are often no longer enough for companies to attract the best marketing talent. This report outlines what attributes truly resonate with the marketer of today both in a company, as well as a marketing team.



12

National
associations



432

Online survey
responses from
marketers across
the globe

What we did

To inform this report, we conducted an online survey with 20 questions in Q3 2020. **Four hundred thirty-two client-side marketers** from around the world took part, who were employed at over 200 different companies within more than 15 sectors.

Thank you to the 12 national advertiser associations who helped make this project possible, by sharing the survey with their respective local marketers.



Executive Summary

- **The #1 attribute a company** should embody to attract respondents to work for them is **‘Strong and clear corporate purpose and mission’**
- **The #1 attribute a marketing department** should embody to attract respondents to work for them is **‘Strong consumer centricity and obsession’**
- **The culture of a marketing department that respondents would like to work for is:**
 - **Dynamic** over considered
 - **High energy** over well balanced
 - **Informal** over formal
 - **Output** oriented over process oriented
 - **Speed** over precision
 - **Agile** over structured work teams
 - **Strong internal progression** over hiring more external talent
 - **More experimental** over more predictable
- **Respondents are divided about which company’s marketing department** most closely aligns with the attributes they prefer – **Apple, Unilever, P&G, Nike and Coca Cola** were the only companies that were mentioned by more than 5% of respondents, but none of them scored above 10%
- **There seems to be a mismatch between what respondents want and what they see in their own marketing department** – only 7% of respondents list their current marketing department as the one that most closely aligns with the attributes that they prefer



Stephan Loerke
CEO, WFA

“ Marketing talent is more selective than ever; seeking to work for brands and companies that have clear values and a vision that goes above and beyond driving business performance and delivers meaningful and measurable societal benefit. This report helps identify some of the ways in which companies can attract the best talent.

”

On a company level: Working with a purpose

Respondents ranked a ‘**strong/clear corporate purpose & mission**’ as the #1 attribute a **company should embody** to attract them to work for them. Having strong brands in the company portfolio ranked second in importance and having a solid track record of performance came in third.

Q: Please rate the below key attributes that a company may embody to attract you to work for them in terms of importance, from most important to least important

(1=least important; 7=most important):



What does this mean for brands?

In a world where it’s incredibly challenging to attract top marketing talent, aligning with their priorities is paramount.

As marketers around the world look for a more meaningful workplace experience, companies standing for more than functional delivery of products and services will set themselves apart in the future of work. Increasingly, this translates to a company’s products and services to be authentic, inclusive, sustainable and ethical.

The advertising industry has recognised this trend for a while. In WFA’s Global Brand Purpose survey, 88% of respondents agreed that purpose will be increasingly important to building brands and 87% agreed that it was important for brands to

have a sense of purpose. 74% also believed that having a sense of purpose is critical to hiring the best talent.

There are many examples of brands that have used the power of purpose to attract talent and ignite passion in their employees. Think of the Body Shop and its motto “enrich, not exploit”, Nike’s mission to expand human potential or Patagonia’s environmental activism. And purpose need not be about saving the planet. Southwest Airlines describes itself as a customer service company with airplanes.

However, this is often a longer-term strategy that few *CMOs are given the time for and one that doesn’t* meet the short-term ROI objectives of the board and shareholders.

Antonio Lucio
Former CMO at HP
and Facebook



“ The most important thing that a company needs to have to compete today is a very clear and deliberate sense of purpose. Your purpose or vision will set the parameters for which fights you want to lead on, which fights you want to fly as a flock and which fights you’re going to avoid. ”

Source: WFA’s ‘Putting People First’ report

WFA has outlined 7 steps to getting corporate purpose right

In WFA's 'Putting People First' report, we talked about corporate purpose in more detail and outlined the seven crucial steps to establishing and getting corporate purpose right

1. Pick the right issue

Do the hard work up front to identify what issue you want to lead on. It needs to be deeply aligned with the business and brand. It needs to be something that the business is in a credible position to address. People need to be able to see and believe that it makes sense for you to take the lead on it.

2. Start internally

Inspire your workforce to be a part of what you are creating. If you are operating from a place of genuine impassioned purpose, and people believe in it, they will be your best advocates.

3. Be authentic

Do it because you really believe in it. Don't do it as a one-off campaign because people, and millennials in particular, will smell the bullshit. Commit for the long term.

4. Don't tell the story, be the story

Intentionally integrate purpose into the core of your company, ensure that you live it across all your brand operations. Only once you've done this should you share your purpose with the outside world.

5. Take a stand

You can't please everyone all the time. Focus your purpose on one issue, one message, one cause, one effort. You might take some flak along the way, but if you're true to your purpose people will forgive you. And a good dose of humility will always help.

6. People make the difference

Stop thinking of people as consumers, targets, demographics or dollar signs. Real people are those that actually make stuff happen. If you put yourself out there from a place of authenticity, chances are there will be people out there who personally connect with your purpose and want to support it.

7. Be more creative

People are bombarded with up to 10,000 brand messages a day. Every space is a crowded one. Like it or not, the brand must connect, must be attractive, must feel elevated. Brand aesthetic, tone and voice are important, if you want to stand out from the crowd. Obvious maybe, but it really does matter.

[More information on this topic can be found in WFA's report on 'Putting People First'.](#)



Jane Wakely
Lead CMO, Mars Inc.

“No one responds well to a person that thinks big and acts small. And I think it's the same for brands. If we commit to a purpose, we need to ensure our actions really follow through”

Source: WFA's 'Putting People First' report

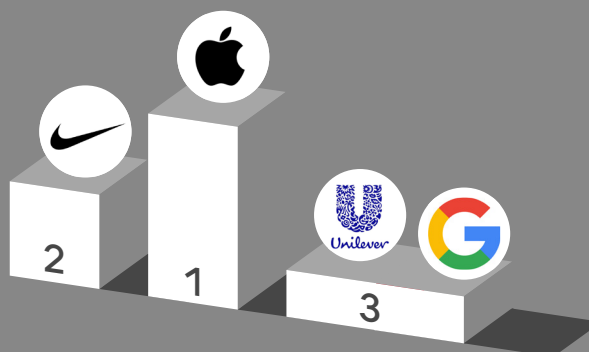
Detailed insight (company attributes)

Outlined in this section are more detailed insights for each of the ranked attributes plus top brands associated with each specific attribute by respondents who named that attribute their top priority.

The research highlighted that different facets of corporate culture and business approach appeal to different groups and regions. For example, a strong, clear purpose and mission ranked highest for the overall sample, but was less important for media and digital marketers, those based in South East Asia and entry-level marketers.

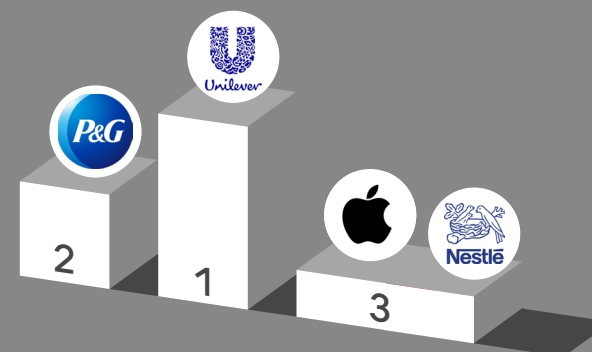
Male marketers were more keen than other groups to work for companies with strong brands in the portfolio, while female respondents and those based in Europe over-indexed on sustainable and ethical business models.

#1 Strong/Clear Purpose & Mission



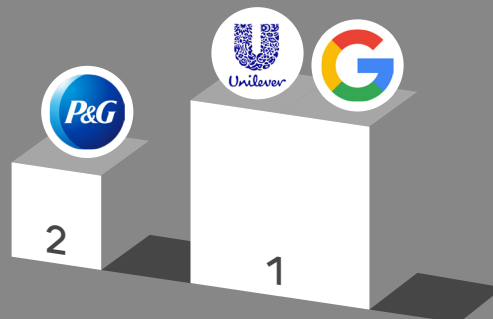
- I. Less important for marketers working in 'Media & Digital' than to the total sample;
- II. Less important for marketers based in South East Asia than to the total sample;
- III. More entry-level marketers ranked it as one of the bottom two attributes than to the total sample.

#2 Strong Brands in Portfolio



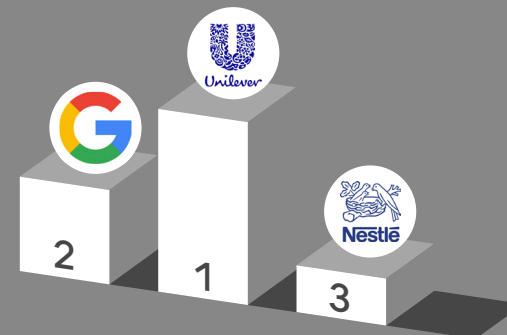
- I. More important to male marketers than female marketers;
- II. More important to marketers based in Oceania than to all other regions (except SEA);
- III. Less important for marketers in procurement roles than to the total sample.

#3 Solid Track Record & Performance



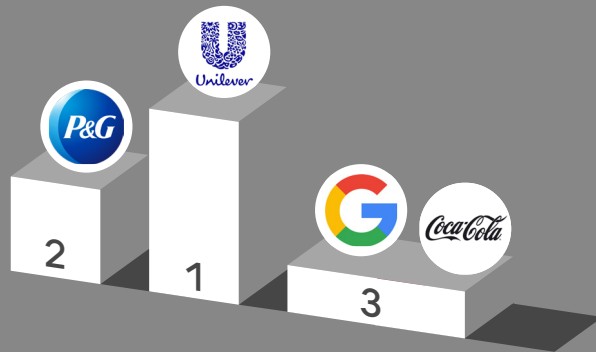
- I. More important to marketers from North America and Oceania than to marketers from Europe, LATAM and MEA;
- II. More marketers with a career time of less than 5 years in marketing ranked it as one of the bottom two attributes than marketers with more experience.

#4 Sustainable & Ethical



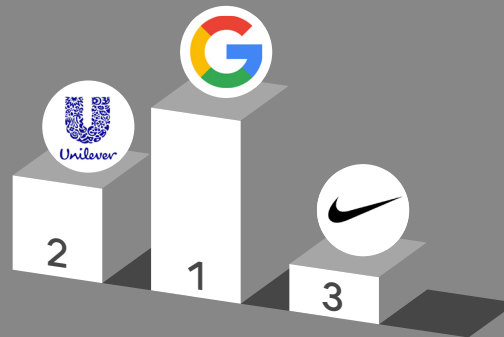
- I. More important to female marketers than male marketers;
- II. More important to marketers based in Europe than to the total sample;
- III. More marketers at a level of VP or above/with a career time of more than 20 years ranked it as one of the bottom two attributes than the total sample.

#5 Multi-Country/Global in Presence



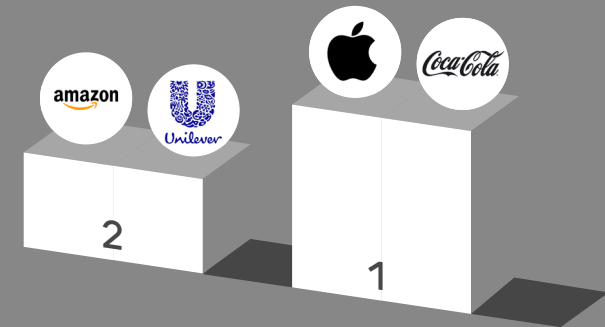
- I. More important for marketers with a career time in marketing of less than 5 years than to marketers with a career time in marketing of more than 20 years;
- II. More marketers in 'Media/digital' roles ranked this attribute in their top #2 priorities than the total sample;
- III. Less important to marketers with a level of VP or above than the total sample;
- IV. Less important to marketers based in North America than the total sample.

#6 Strong Diversity & Inclusion Credentials



- I. More female marketers ranked this attribute in their top #2 priorities than male marketers;
- II. More entry-level marketers ranked this attribute in their top #2 priorities than marketers at Director level;
- III. Less important to marketers based in South East Asia than to the total sample.

#7 Strong Market Capitalisation



- I. Less important to marketers based in Europe than to the total sample.

Disclaimer:

(1) Due to the nature of their worldwide presence, large organisations have an advantage to be named more often than smaller, more regional/local brands (2) Certain industries participants are working in are over represented, thus might contribute to a biased picture here

On a marketing department level: Putting customers first

The results also reveal the **marketing approach** and **key capabilities** that were most likely to appeal to marketing talent. Respondents to the survey thought that companies that **put the customer first** were **most attractive**, followed by those with a strong innovation pipeline and those with a high reputation for producing strong marketing talent.

Q: Thinking specifically about the marketing attributes/competencies that a company should excel at, which of these are critical for you in choosing a company to work for.

Please rank them from most important (8) to least important (1):



What does this mean for brands?

Marketing talent around the world wants to work for an organisation that puts customer-centricity at the heart of their business, influencing every decision they make.

By creating a culture around their customers and their needs, a company will thus not only enhance customer loyalty and improve business growth (by up to 60% according to Forbes), but also attract top talent!

Both Apple and Amazon are prime examples of brands that understand the unique problems and expectations of their customers and offer a cohesive customer experience that meets those expectations. The technology and e-commerce giants have always been all about their customers, constantly innovating with



new design, functionality (e.g. Apple's focus on a handful of core products) and customer solutions (e.g. Amazon's one-day shipping and easy returns).

Ukonwa Ojo
Global Chief
Marketing Officer,
Prime Video and
Amazon Studios



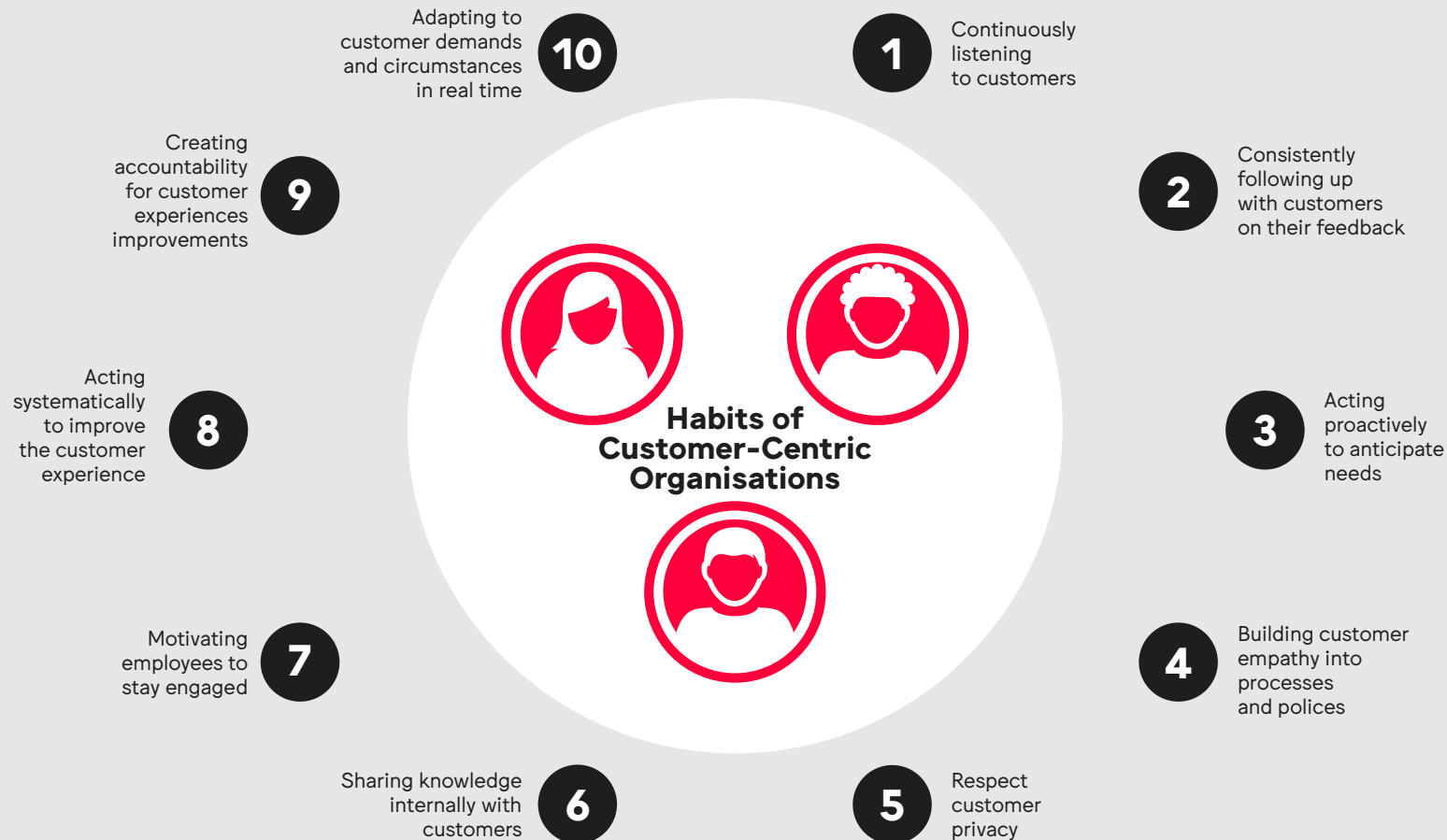
“How do we become better marketers? I think that by becoming more empathetic people, by listening to others with an intent to make their lives better. If we do that, I believe we will win every time.”

Source: WFA's 'Putting People First' report

Gartner identified

10 Habits of Customer-Centric Organisations

Implementing these 10 common habits of organisations exercising customer centricity in the age of digital business are a great start for any organisation that is striving to become more customer centric.

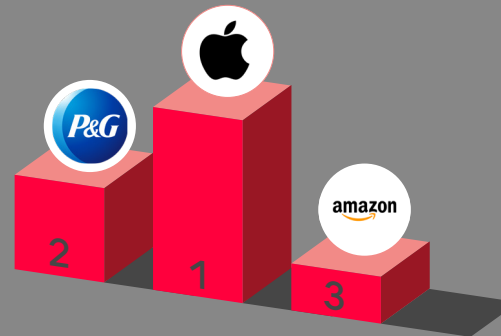


Detailed insight (marketing specific attributes)

Outlined in this section are more detailed insights for each of the ranked attributes plus top brands associated with each specific attribute by respondents who named that attribute their top priority.

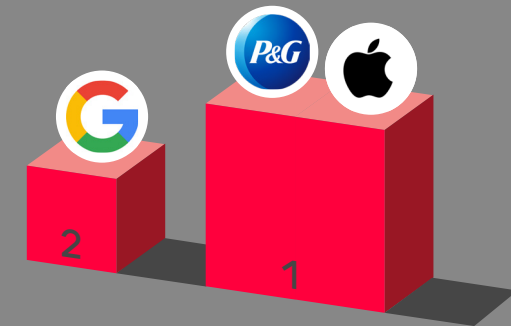
Again, the research highlighted some differences in appeal to different groups and regions. For example, consumer-centricity was more appealing to marketers with more than 20 years' experience, product innovation indexed more heavily in Latin America, while European marketers were more keen that their employer should be known for its pipeline of marketing talent.

#1 Strong consumer centricity/obsession



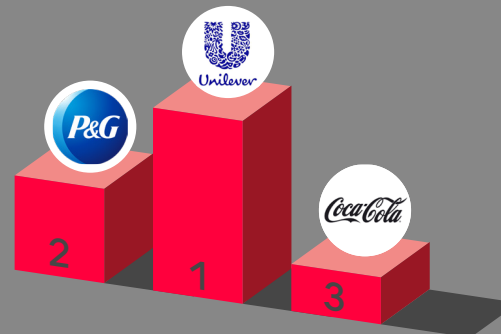
- I. More important for marketers with more than 20 years in a marketing function than to the total sample;
- II. Less important for Entry-level marketers than to the total sample.

#2 Strong product innovation pipeline



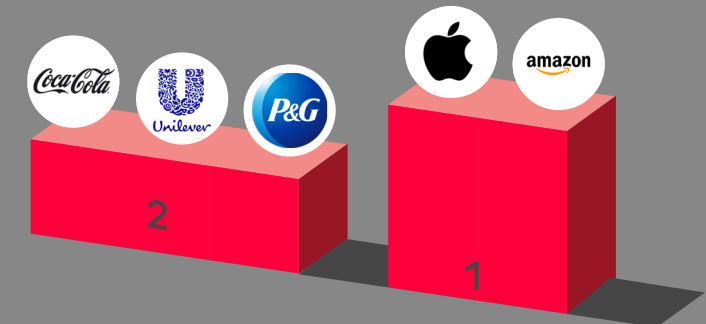
- I. More important to marketers based in LATAM than to marketers based in SEA.

#3 Highly regarded marketing talent reputation



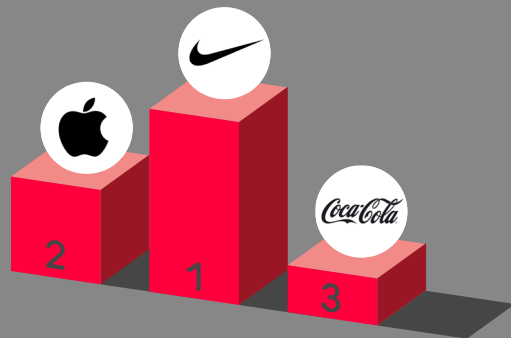
- I. More important for marketers based in Europe than to the total sample;
- II. More mid-level managers ranked it as one of the bottom two attributes than the total sample.

#4 World class insights organisation



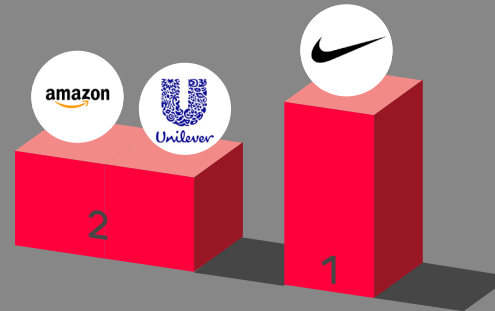
- I. More important for female marketers than to male marketers;
- II. Less important for marketers in a procurement function than to the total sample.

#5 Delivers very strong creatives/advertising/activation



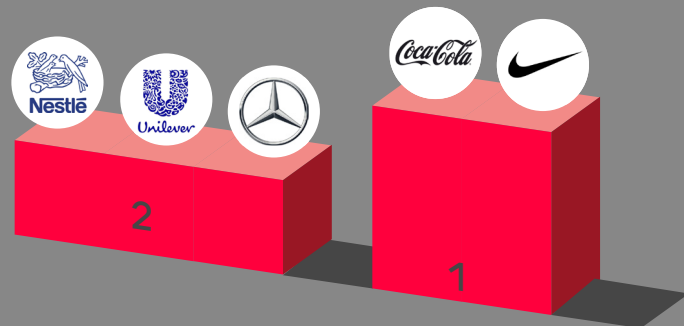
- I. More important to marketers based in South East Asia than to the total sample;
- II. More important to entry-level marketers./marketers with less than 5 years in a marketing role and less important to VP level or above than to the total sample.

#6 Known for strong digital marketing competencies



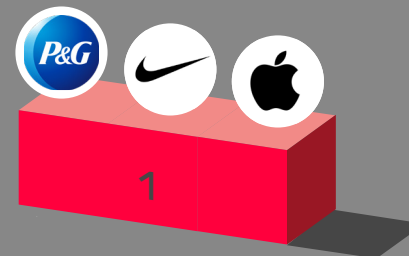
- I. More important to marketers in 'media/digital' roles than to the total sample;
- II. More important to marketers with 5-10 years in a marketing function than to the total sample;
- III. Less important to marketers based in LATAM than to the total sample;
- IV. Strong presence of agency partnerships.

#7 Known for award-winning marketing campaigns



- I. More important to entry-level marketers than to all other levels;
- II. More important to marketers in 'marketing (brand/product) roles than to the total sample;
- III. More important to marketers based in MEA than to the total sample.

#8 Strong presence of agency partnerships



- I. More important to mid-level managers than to the total sample;
- II. More important to marketers in procurement roles than to the total sample;
- III. More important to marketers based in North America than to marketers based in all other regions (except Oceania);

Disclaimer:

(1) Due to the nature of their worldwide presence, large organisations have an advantage to be named more often than smaller, more regional/local brands

(2) Certain industries participants are working in are over represented, thus might contribute to a biased picture here

Cultural preferences for a marketing department

An organisation's culture is visible through its unique customs, traditions, rituals, behavioural norms and its general ways of doing things. A strong organizational culture is a key to success, and also an important means of attracting and retaining the right talent.

We asked participants to drag a slider closest to the attributes of an organisational culture that they would like to be a part of:

- **Dynamic** over considered
- **High energy** over well balanced
- **Informal** over formal
- **Output oriented** over process oriented
- **Speed** over precision
- **Agile** over structured **work teams**
- **Strong internal progression** over hiring more external talent
- **More experimental** over more predictable

Please see the full details in the appendix.



Lisa Hawksworth
Senior consultant
scarlettabbott.

“ Culture feels intangible, but it's impossible to miss. It's the patterns, beliefs and assumptions that collide when people get together – a manifestation of the meaning we attach to things and can include processes, behaviours or our physical spaces. Organisational culture is made of the same components, just defined by the boundaries we call 'work'.

Culture can often taken for granted or perceived as too nebulous to get a handle on. It can also be a false goal to aspire to. We've all known leaders who want their organisation to 'be like Google.'

But, with the right frameworks, you can understand and harness it.

”

scarlettabbott. has outlined

5 ways to understand, and leverage your organisational culture

Your culture is the DNA of your organisation – the more you understand it, the better you can leverage and influence it. And that means a smoother and more effective path to your strategic goals.

1. Get to know your culture

Take the opportunity now to get to know your culture and its characteristics. Understanding your organisational culture typology will put you on the right path to making the smart strategic decisions with the most positive impact. What makes you strong? Who do people look to? What motivates your people? What gets in their way? Are just some questions to explore.

4. Take time to listen

It seems an obvious point but are you actively and objectively listening to your people? Not just through surveys, but through objective and unbiased one-on-ones or workshop style focus groups. Observe rather than elicit the answer you want, understand what your people's worlds of work feel like right now.

2. Encourage your influencers

Different cultural types will have different 'influencers'. These are the micro-leaders your people look to in times of change and uncertainty, or for inspiration. Right now, these people might be less visible than before. Getting them front and centre is a way to establish some reassuring norms.

5. Keep working on it

Maintaining a healthy culture isn't something that just happens. It takes work and vision to make sure any gaps aren't crowbarred apart. Nobody really knows how remote working will impact our cultures, and that's our golden opportunity as we stay close, listen, be prepared to react, and evolve.

3. Unite people behind a common purpose

If you feel your culture is slipping, it can't change overnight. Neither can it be forced. Instead, you need to work out where your culture is weak, where it is strong, and make the tiny incremental tweaks to move it forward.

That means going back to basics and thinking about where your people feel connected, uniting them behind that common purpose. Draw out the big picture, and encourage your people to map their own path towards the vision.

Attractive companies

Respondents are divided about which company's marketing department most closely aligns with the attributes they prefer - Apple, Unilever, P&G, Nike and Coca Cola were the only companies that were mentioned by more than 5% of respondents, but none of them scored above 10%.

There seems to be a **mismatch between what respondents want and what they see in their own marketing department** – only 7% of respondents list their current marketing department as the one that most closely aligns with the attributes that they prefer.

Q: In your opinion, which company's marketing team embodies most attributes you prefer?

Apple	8.9%
Unilever	7.5%
P&G	6.5%
Nike	5.8%
Coca-Cola	5.5%
Amazon	4.7%
Google	3.1%
L'Oréal	2.3%
Nestlé	2.0%
Netflix	1.7%
Adidas	1.4%
Microsoft	1.4%
Airbnb	1.3%
PepsiCo	1.3%
Samsung	1.1%
TESLA	1.1%
Disney	1%

Facebook	1%
IKEA	1%
Spotify	1%
Burger King	0.8%
Danone	0.8%
Diageo	0.8%
Heineken	0.8%
J&J	0.8%
Lego	0.8%
GSK	0.6%
Mastercard	0.6%
McDonald's	0.6%
Mercedes	0.6%
Oatly	0.6%
RB	0.6%
Volkswagen	0.6%
Other	31.1%

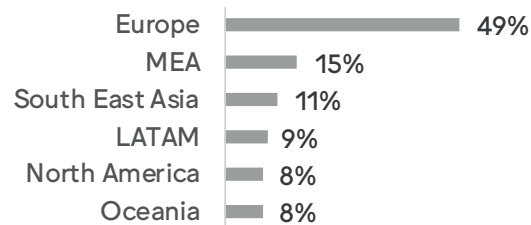
Demographic snapshot – who are our survey respondents?

Gender

1% do not wish
to disclose



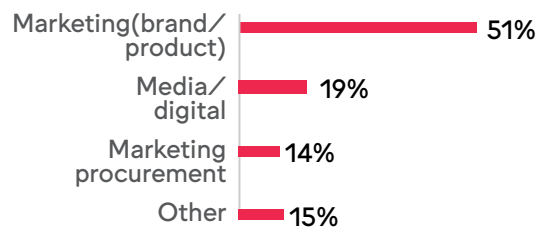
Regions



Industry



Functions



Years in Marketing



Seniority



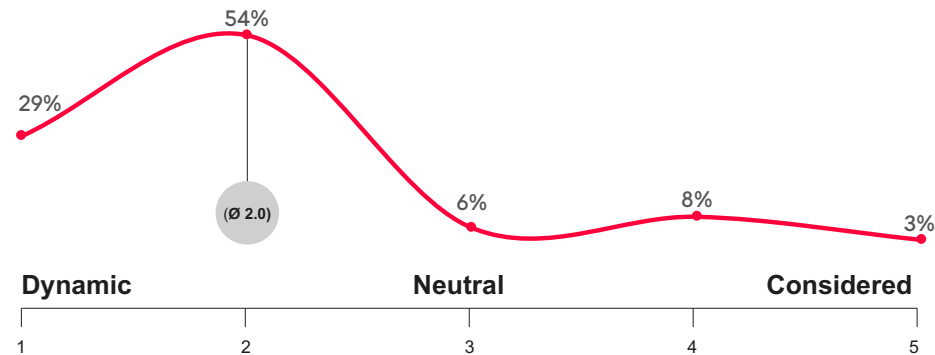
Source: WFA survey amongst 432 marketers across the globe; Date: Q3 2020

Appendix

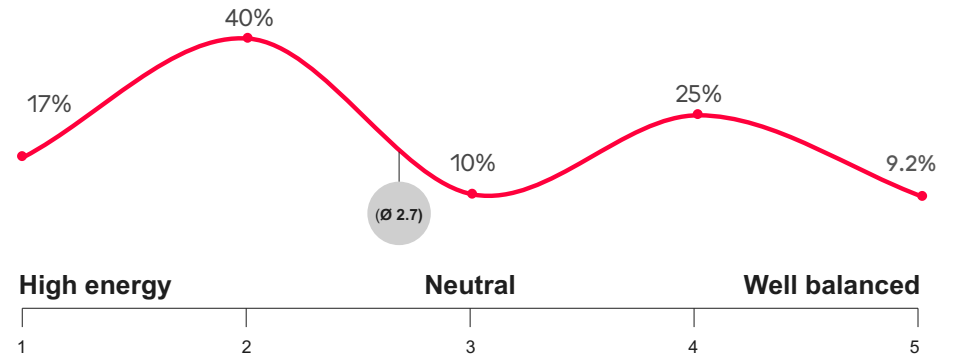
Cultural preferences for a marketing department (detailed)

Q: Thinking specifically about the culture of a marketing organisation you would like to work for, drag your slider closest to the attribute that describes your preferences. Base: 391

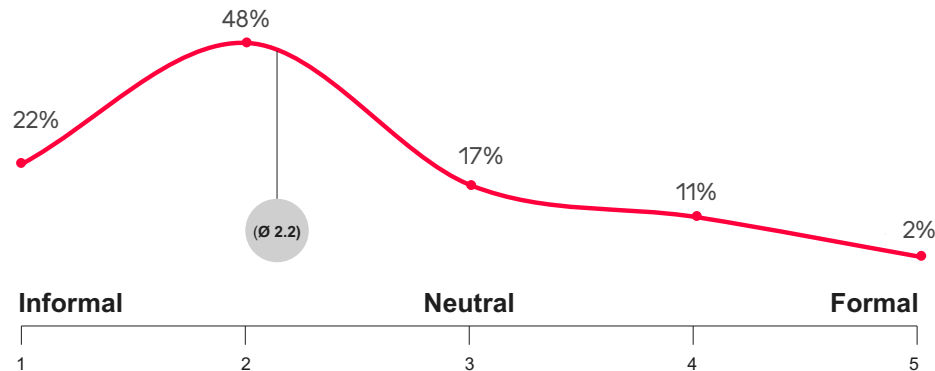
Dynamic vs. Considered



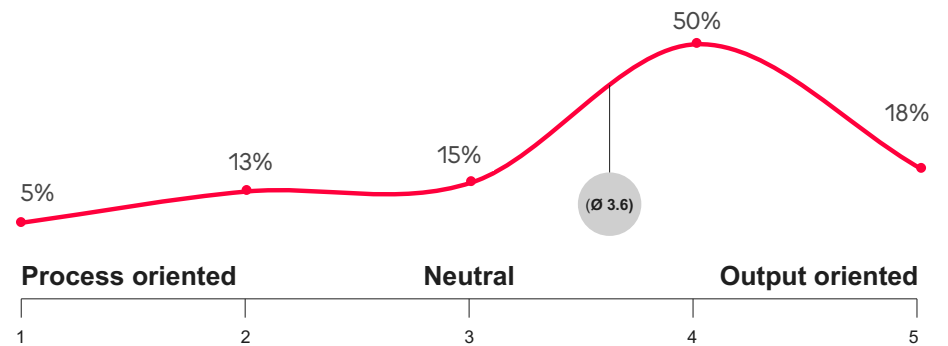
High energy vs. Well balanced



Informal vs. Formal



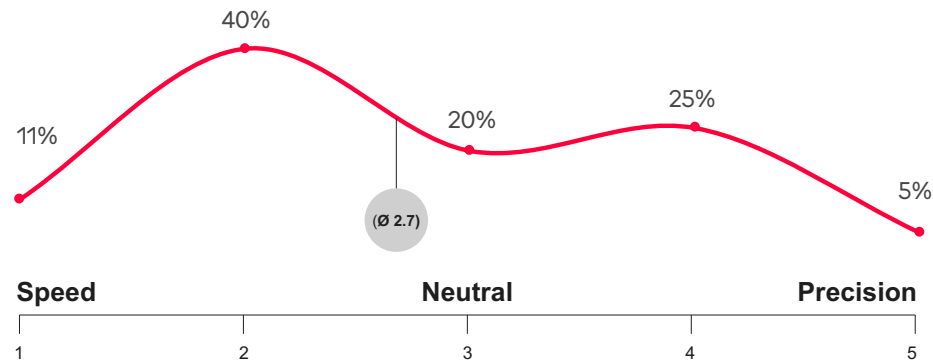
Process oriented vs. Output oriented



- Marketers based in NA (Ø 2.5) scored closer to neutral than marketers based in Europe (Ø 2.1)

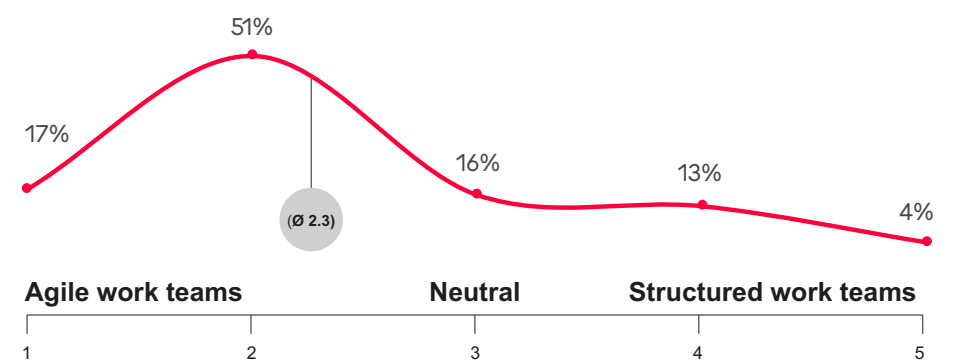
- Marketers based in Europe (Ø 3.8), those working in Marketing (brand/product) (Ø 3.8), Marketers with 20 years or longer in a marketing function (Ø 3.9), entry level marketers (Ø 4.1) and VPs or above (Ø 4.1) scored closer to output oriented than the total sample

Speed vs. Precision



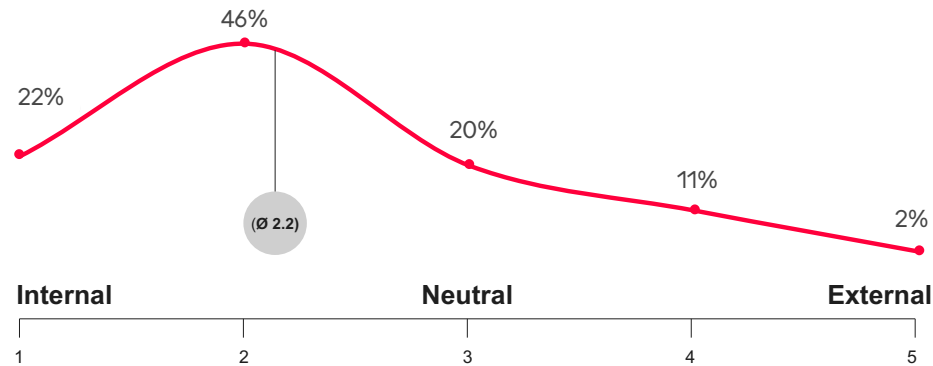
- Mid-Level Managers (Ø 2.9) score closer to neutral than the total sample

Agile vs. Structured work teams



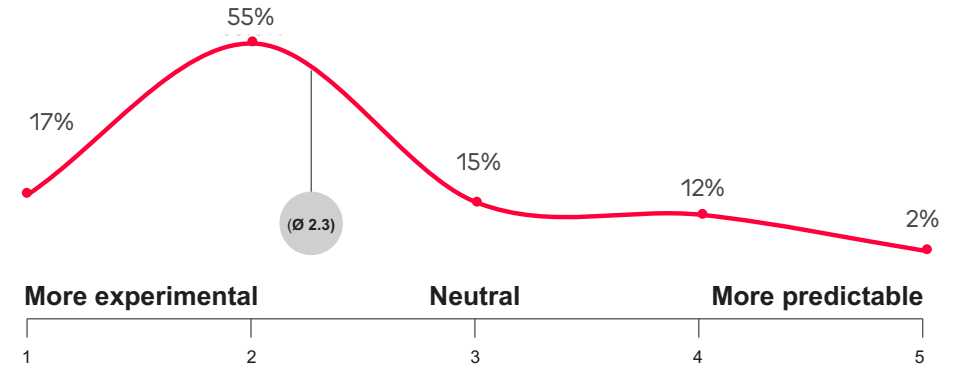
- Marketers based in NA (Ø 2.7) and mid-level managers (Ø 2.5) score closer to neutral than the total sample

Strong internal progression vs. More talent from external



- Marketers based in LATAM (Ø 2.6) and marketers in senior roles (Director Ø 2.4; VP or above Ø 2.5) scored closer to neutral than the total sample
- Marketers in entry-level (Ø 1.9) and mid-level manager roles (Ø 2.1) scored closer to 'internal' than marketers in senior roles (Director Ø 2.4; VP or above Ø 2.5)

More experimental vs. More predictable



- Marketers based in MEA (Ø 2.6) scored closer to neutral than the total sample.
- Marketers in media/digital roles (Ø 2.1) scored closer to more experimental than the total sample

Group specific break-downs

Q1/2: There are important considerations to make when choosing a company as an employer, such as competitive pay, good benefits and work-life balance.

Below are other key attributes that a company/marketing department may embody/should excel at to attract you to work for them. Please rate them in terms of importance, from most important (7/8) to least important (1):

Females



Source: WFA survey amongst 244 female marketers across the globe

Males



Source: WFA survey amongst 182 male marketers across the globe

Entry/Mid-level Manager



Source: WFA survey amongst 230 marketers in entry/mid-level roles across the globe

Director/VP or above



Source: WFA survey amongst 202 marketers in Director or VP and above roles across the globe

Marketers (Brand/product)



Source: WFA survey amongst 221 marketers in brand/product roles across the globe

Media/digital



Source: WFA survey amongst 83 marketers in media/digital roles across the globe

Procurement

Company attributes



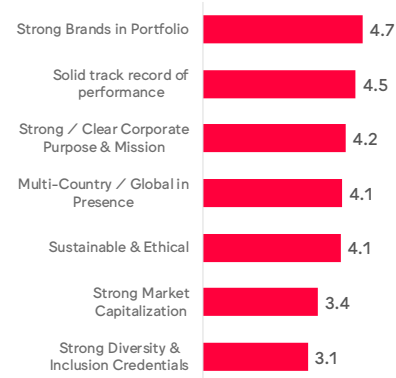
Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 62 marketers in procurement roles across the globe

South East Asia

Company attributes



Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 40 marketers based in APAC

Europe

Company attributes



Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 211 marketers based in Europe

MEA

Company attributes



Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 63 marketers based in MEA

North America

Company attributes



Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 36 marketers based in North America

Oceania

Company attributes



Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 33 marketers based in Oceania

LATAM

Company attributes



Marketing department attributes



Source: WFA survey amongst 40 marketers based in LATAM

References

WFA's report on 'Putting People First'.

50 Stats That Prove The Value Of Customer Experience

Source: Forbes

10 Habits of Customer-Centric Organisations

Source: Gartner

For more information on this report, please contact Julia Kraft at j.kraft@wfanet.org



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