

B2B's brand budget problem is a confidence gap, not a belief gap

On the surface, convincing someone to grab an energy drink looks nothing like persuading a buying committee to sign a multi-year contract for payroll software or a new fleet of forklifts. One is a low-stakes, impulse decision. The other can take months of research, internal debate, and approvals.

But in both cases, the decision still runs through a human being. There's always emotion, risk perception, and trust involved. That human layer is exactly why brand matters so much in B2B — and why it's a problem that most B2B budgets don't reflect what marketers already believe about brand.

In survey after survey, marketers say the ideal is a more balanced split between long-term brand and short-term demand, because a strong brand makes every down-funnel dollar work harder — lifting conversion rates, supporting pricing power, and making it easier for sales to win competitive deals.

The brand–demand budget mismatch

Ask most B2B marketers what a healthy budget looks like, and you'll hear a similar answer: roughly half should go to building long-term brand awareness and trust, and half to short-term demand generation that fills this quarter's pipeline.

Reality doesn't match the ideal.

In [our recent research with the Association of National Advertisers \(ANA\)](#), only 40% of B2B companies are actually allocating roughly the same amount of money to the top of the funnel as they are to the bottom. Another 44% of budgets skew toward demand over brand — even though only about a quarter of marketers say that's the right mix.

So the issue isn't that marketers don't believe in brand. Most do. The issue is that, when it's time to defend line items in a budget meeting, brand often loses to activities that are easier to measure and easier to credit for short-term revenue.

The real barrier: a confidence gap in measurement

The ANA + NewtonX study identified a pivotal segment inside the B2B marketing world: The Confident B2B Marketer — the 39% of leaders who say they are very or extremely confident in their ability to measure marketing's financial impact.

That confidence isn't just a nice-to-have. It changes how marketing is treated inside the business:

- Confident marketers enjoy greater strategic influence and trust at the leadership table because they can show how marketing ties to commercial outcomes, not just impressions or clicks.
- They are nearly twice as likely to increase long-term brand investment in the next year (61% vs. 36% among their peers).

In other words, B2B's brand budget problem is less about a belief gap and more about a measurement-confidence gap. When marketers can't credibly show how brand connects to revenue, brand becomes vulnerable whenever quarterly pressure rises.

What Confident B2B Marketers do differently

So what are Confident B2B Marketers doing that others aren't? The research points to a few important differences that directly affect their ability to defend and grow brand investment.

1. They've solved sales–marketing alignment

Confident marketers are nearly four times more likely to report a fully aligned relationship with sales, defined by shared goals and joint planning (22% vs. 6%). When marketing and sales are pulling in the same direction, brand is no longer “nice creative on the side” — it's part of a shared go-to-market strategy.

That alignment shows up in performance. Leaders in the study noted that tight sales–marketing alignment can multiply demand generation results by three to five times. It's easier to protect brand dollars when sales leadership believes those investments are making their pipeline healthier and their close rates stronger.

2. They invest in data and AI readiness

Confident B2B Marketers are more than four times more likely to say their data ecosystem is ready for AI-driven personalization at scale (48% vs. 11%). That level of data maturity lets them connect the dots between brand touchpoints and downstream outcomes: opportunity creation, win rates, expansion, and lifetime value.

If you can trace how a prospect's early interaction with your brand content or thought leadership influences the probability of closing — and the size of that deal — it becomes much easier to make the case that brand is a growth driver, not a cost center.

3. They focus on buying groups, not just leads

The study also shows a clear shift away from thinking in terms of individual leads and toward influencing the full buying committee. Confident marketers are three times more likely to be very confident that their work influences the entire buying group (22% vs. 7%). The data suggests that engaging a larger committee can improve win rates by 50%.

That's where brand quietly does some of its most important work — building familiarity and trust across multiple stakeholders before a single sales conversation even starts.

Scorecards over slogans: how to make brand a performance multiplier

If belief in brand isn't the issue, what is the fastest path to a bigger brand budget?

In our conversations with B2B leaders, one idea came through clearly: stop treating brand as "awareness" in isolation, and start treating it as a performance multiplier. Brand gets funded when it's measured like a growth asset, not debated like a matter of taste.

Daniel Sills, VP of Partnerships at NewtonX, puts it this way: marketers win budget when they "bring a scorecard, not a slogan." The marketers who succeed don't just argue that brand is important; they connect it to outcomes the business already values — reputation, competitive win rates, customer lifetime value, and pricing power.

A practical starting point is to build a simple brand scorecard that links:

- Leading indicators
 - Branded search volume in key markets
 - Direct traffic and repeat visits from target accounts
 - Share of voice among priority topics or categories
 - Engagement with high-intent thought leadership and benchmark reports
- Commercial proxies
 - Win rates in opportunities where buyers engaged with brand content vs. those that didn't
 - Average deal size and expansion rates for customers who show strong brand engagement

- Price realization in competitive deals where brand preference is high
- Time-bound trends
 - How these metrics move over 3–6 quarters as brand investment and creative distinctiveness increase

Confident B2B Marketers go a step further by using proprietary data to create thought leadership that shapes their category and arms sales with a powerful door-opener — the kind of benchmark content a buying committee will gladly circulate internally. That thought leadership becomes both an engine for brand and a measurable contributor to pipeline.

Closing the confidence gap

Most B2B marketers don't need another reminder that brand matters. They feel it every time a cold outbound email lands differently when the prospect already knows — and trusts — the logo in the signature.

What they do need is a way to prove, consistently and credibly, how brand contributes to financial performance. That's what separates the Confident B2B Marketers from the rest: they've built the measurement muscles, alignment, and data foundations that turn brand from a vulnerable line item into a compounding growth asset.

To see where you stand — and what it takes to join the 39% — [explore the full ANA + NewtonX report on The Confident B2B Marketer](#) (and how you can be one too).