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Thriving in a recession: the new deal for B2B sales & marketing

2023

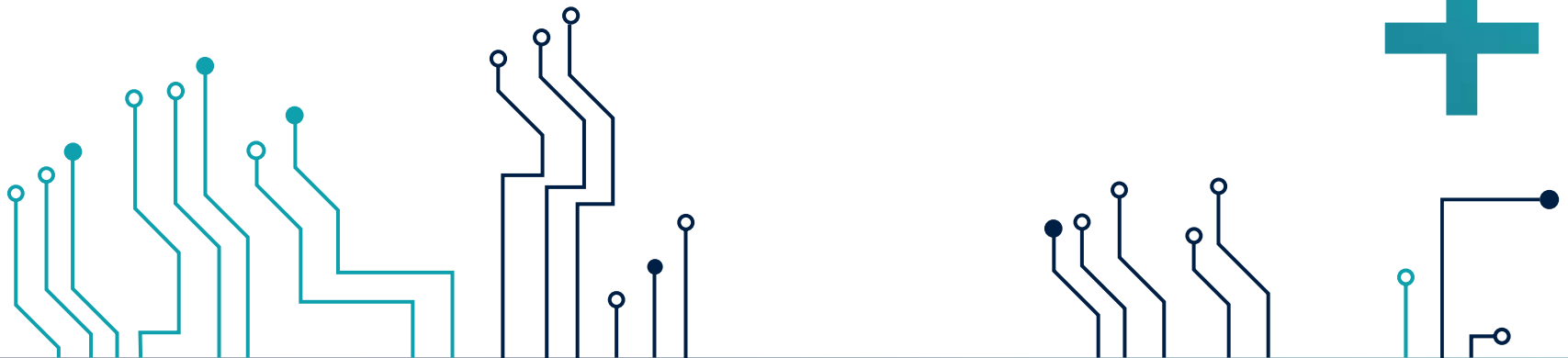


Introduction

For too long B2B lurked in the shadows of B2C marketing.

As innovation turns into best-practice, what lessons can tech marketing professionals learn? How can we build hybrid, virtual marketing teams to respond to the new deal between B2B tech buyers and sellers?

Here we break down our thinking, based on real-world experiences, to show how a change of approach can yield extraordinary results.



B2B tech's Big Bang

B2B marketing pros who understand how deep technology works are blessed. Unlike their B2C counterparts, they get to develop new concepts and build brands from scratch. There's nothing new about ice cream, holidays or car insurance.

A 'Big Bang' of new thinking by B2B marketing pros is detonated as they learn lessons from today's B2C marketing tactics.

Three concepts Positive has pioneered over the last decade have helped to harness this new world.

1. AIDA+E

The digital extension of the traditional sales funnel

2. The B2B Buyer Maturity Model?

A new way to serve B2B buyers

3. Virtual Marketing Teams

The agile approach needed to serve today's B2B tech buyers

Those who choose tech marketing in their career realise at an early stage that deep technology knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient, for success.

The real B2B marketing challenge comes from communicating clearly the core differentiation of new technologies and creating compelling messages about the new possibilities this creates.

In our view, there's never been a better time to market B2B tech. Just as the future is shaped by technology, tomorrow's B2B tech marketing teams are destined to lead the marketing profession.

B2B tech marketing is now cool.



What B2B marketing learnt from B2C

Most marketing pros believe innovation happens mostly outside the B2B space. B2C used to be the place to be and boasted the largest budgets. Not any more.

Today tech powers the services we rely on every day — from smartphones and streaming to transport and health. Tech firms are now the most highly valued companies on the planet, no longer losing out on top marketing talent to B2C.

B2C campaigns once looked cooler, reached further and involved a wider range of skills, from creative to planning, execution to evaluation. Once upon a time B2B and B2C targeted starkly different audiences with distinctive strategies and tactics.

B2C marketing captures consumers' imaginations with emotional content, triggering purchases based on psychological biases.

Tired old tactics no longer work on today's sophisticated tech buyers. In fact, today:

1. Tech is no longer just for nerds by nerds
2. Non-techies expect great tech at work as well as at home
3. B2B marketing has to be as buyer-centric as B2C



As tech is now mainstream, B2B tech marketing has to reimagine how it targets, persuades, and closes deals. Tech buyers share concerns in and outside of work on issues like climate change, data privacy and work/life balance.

Today, B2B buyers are consumers and vice versa.

Outside the B2C world of consumer fads and transient trends there is a world of marketing possibilities. We believe there are more opportunities than ever for B2B tech to explore fresh ideas and shine.

Five radical changes to B2B tech buying



Ultra short buying cycles

- Remote workers attend fewer events
- Quick and easy purchasing via video explainers and chat

Accelerated buying decisions mean marketing needs to add value earlier in the buying process than ever



Greater focus on first impressions

- Expectation of attention-grabbing B2C-level content
- Easier to understand products are easier to buy

Messages need to be short, hard-hitting and different, delivering the most value early



Sky-high experience expectations

- Generic materials don't cut it. B2B buyers want their specific issues solved completely
- Want to look like 'first to use' heroes

Buyers want their needs met throughout the sales process, no matter how brief



Bias towards free

- Prefer to pay for results, not advice
- Peer endorsements and early price discovery not analyst reports

Buyers hold the cards in the sales negotiations thanks to low cost, no cost trials

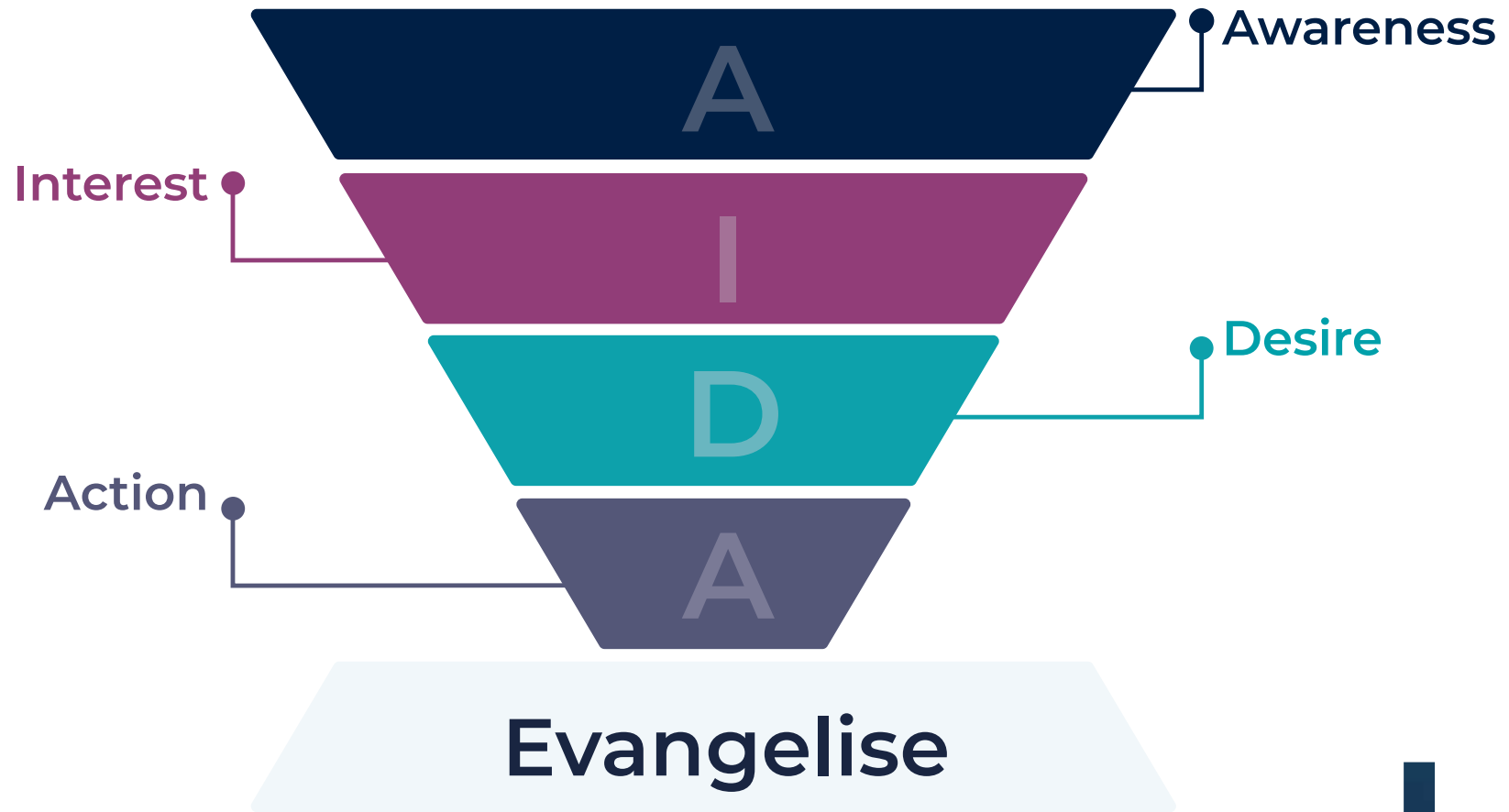


Reduced brand loyalty

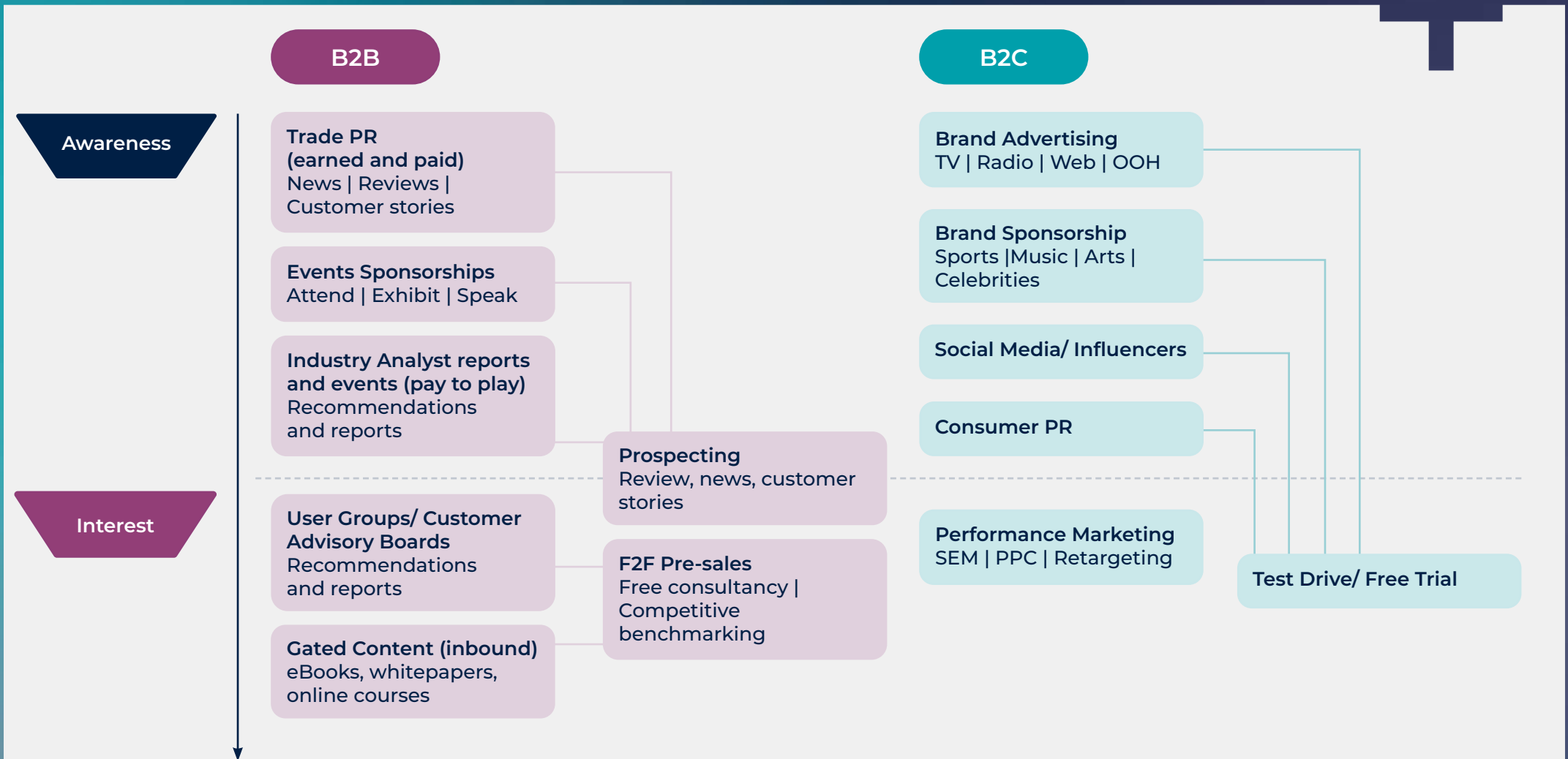
- Zero-guilt 'walk away'
- Buyers favour asynchronous 24x7x365 online marketing

Buyers want to make quick informed decisions. Communicating over months won't work

AIDA+E - The new buyer lifecycle



AIDA+E - Awareness and interest



B2B

B2C

Desire

Proof Of Concept
(paid or unpaid)

“Short-term paid trial”

Customer
reference call(s)

F2F sales presentation

Online consumer reviews

Action

Perpetual License
Plus maintenance c 20%

Price promotions
Point of Sale/ online offers

SaaS Subscription

Buy Now Pay Later

Evangelise

User Groups/ Customer
Advisory Boards
Recommendations
and reports

Customer Reference
Program
Case studies/customer
quotes

Subscription/ Renewal

“Word of Mouth”

Positive online review

New buyers, new formats

Buyers hold the power

The abundance of B2B tech vendors offering fast and efficient trials, extended free demos, and the ability to change their minds every 30 days has de-risked purchasing decisions.

Merging of worklife and personal life means buyers want to solve problems on the move, online and offline, 24/7. Acting more like B2C buyers, they're making decisions faster but changing their minds more often.

To reach these new buyers requires fewer, more frequent 'touches'; snackable content rather than considered polish.

Getting the content right

Our increasingly digitally-led and attention deprived world has led to content catatonia; the inability to cut-through with samey content.

Today's always-on buyers might drive faster sales cycles, but more of the same will not convert. They want more relevant content across more formats, tailored precisely to their persona and where they are in the Buyer Lifecycle. One size fits nobody.

B2B tech vendors face a stark choice; speed up and become as creative as their B2C cousins, or risk being out-competed.

LAIYE

Launching a Chinese B2B tech company in EMEA

The brief

Reach out across five verticals and identify new leads for the EMEA sales team

Our strategy

Create separate customer journeys for each sector, feeding into a LinkedIn Connections programme. Support this with desk-based research to create and design an ebook on the evolution of RPA

The result

We generated 581 leads in just one month including Superdry, Vodafone, Amazon, NHS, Sainsbury's, Barclays

The virtualized marketing team

Recruiting for multiple marketing skill sets is hard. Arguably it is also no longer worth the effort. The alternative is to create a hot-shot virtual marketing team, where external help backfills multiple internal marketing skills gaps.

Aided by modern collaboration platforms, campaigns can be built and deployed fast enough to catch buyers' attention in the early stages of a sale, a key criteria for success in today's marketplace, fast decisions mean there may be no second chance.

In-house marketers are starting to lean on agencies to fill the gaps in their own marketing capability. World-class Virtual Marketing Teams can gain press coverage in the morning and deliver an SEO audit for a client in the afternoon.

Virtual marketing teams understand how their particular tasks affect other client work. Gone is the traditional siloed agency model, replaced with agile processes which nurture information-sharing across workstreams as client results dictate.

In-house, external or virtual, 'full stack' marketing teams bring new skills

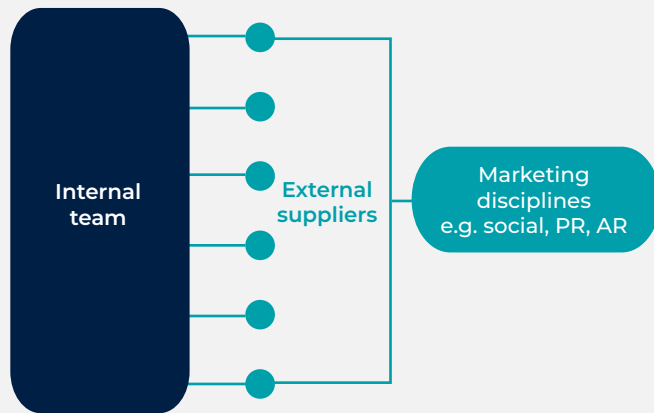
- Knowing what a key result is
- Appreciating how brand, product and viewpoint interact
- Up-to-date marketing and strategic skillsets
- Scaling activity up/down effectively
- Default is 'creative by design'
- Agility to pivot fast between ideas and activities
- Deploy digital tools to automate low-level tasks
- Focus on data-driven insights

The virtualised marketing team



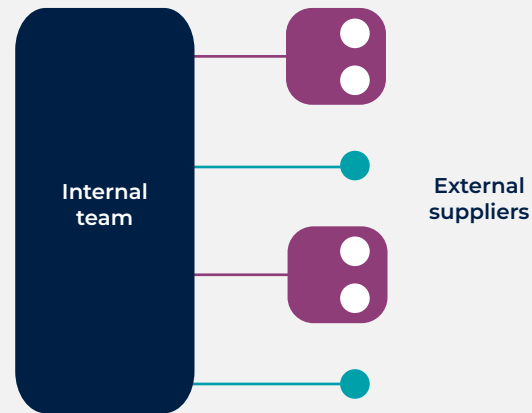
Yesterday

B2B Tech Marketing
(Traditional silos)



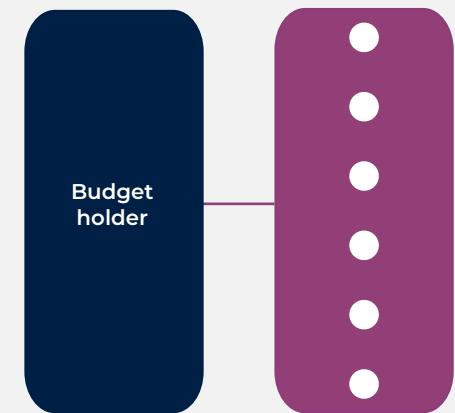
Today

B2B Tech Marketing
(Integrated agencies)



Tomorrow

Virtual marketing team



Key



What you *should* be asking your agency

Vendors ask...

But should ask...

“Has your agency done a project exactly like this one before?”

“How do I build a roster of brilliant, hard working and results driven agencies?”

“Can I save money by doing this inhouse?”

“How do I build a team who can get the best out of this external resource?”

“Will an external agency cost less?”

“How do I coordinate internal and external resources to create 1+1=3?”

“Which part of this project does my team like the least?”

“What gaps do I have in my internal processes and how can I fill them with the best people?”

Agencies ask...

But should ask...

“Which of our services do you need?”

“What is the best-fit for this specific client?”

“Can my team win this client?”

“Is this a project my team will love and learn from?”

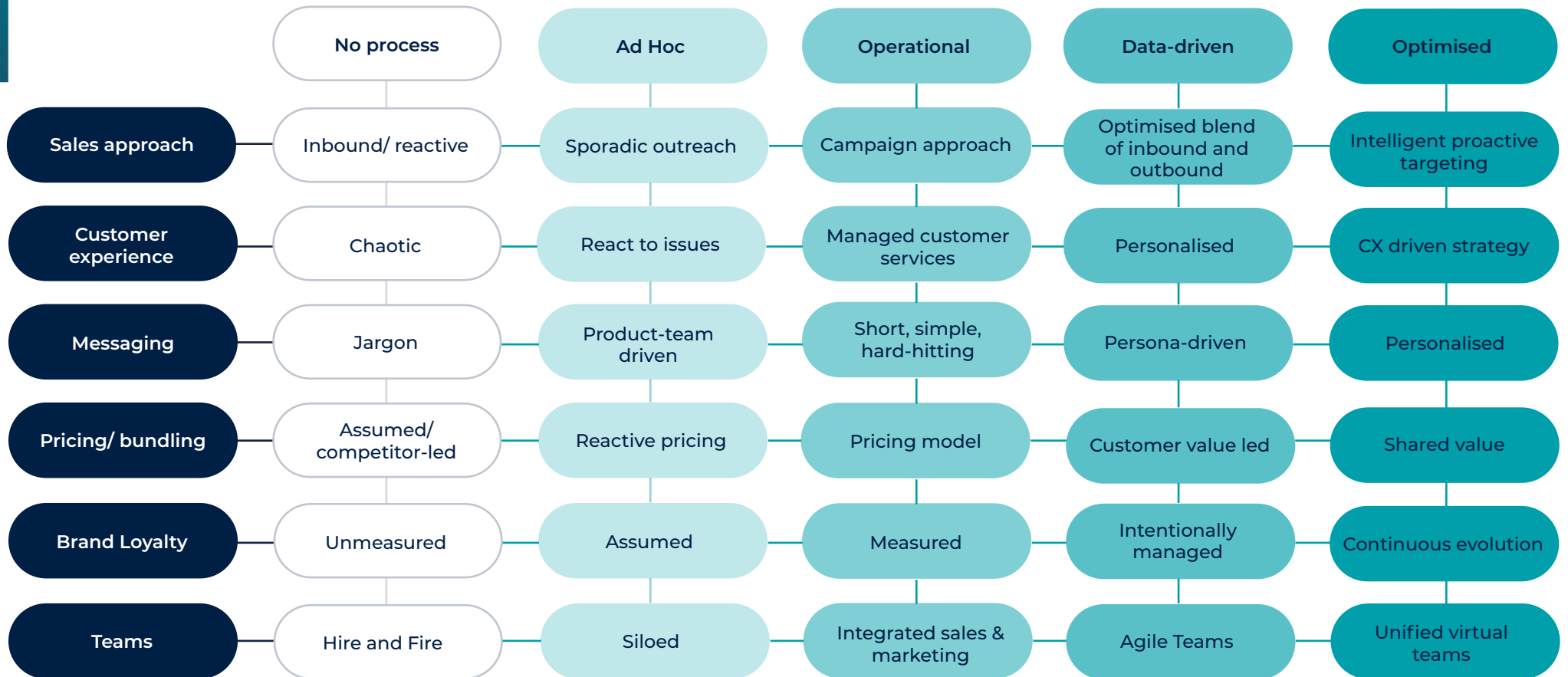
“Will I make money on this project?”

“Will we be able to show value now and gain more work over time?”

“Is this what we’re famous for?”

“What new skills are clients going to need in the coming years?”

Where are you on the B2B Buyer Maturity Model?



Why Positive

Positives Global Network

>120
clients served

20+
awards and nominations

400%
international growth

Positive lives and breathes technology. Our global network of diverse talent has the agility of a small agency, with the depth of technical knowledge and global connections usually only available from large legacy agencies with sky-high fees.

We specialise in B2B tech, whether that's monitoring K8s, building neural networks, enabling applications to connect across global networks, or ensuring security in a hostile world. If you sell tech to businesses, we can sell your story to the world.

And our expertise goes much further. Sales and Marketing only work when they align, so we've spent years diversifying our offerings to combine PR with lead generation, performance marketing, digital content campaigns, branding and more. It's what our clients demanded we do and now it is even more effective with our smart use of AI.

Our B2B tech clients agree, it's time to be Positive.

positive

We'd love to help you evolve your
B2B tech marketing and comms.

+44(0) 203 637 0640

hello@positivemarketing.com

positivemarketing.com

