



**How Clients and Agencies  
Differ With Measuring Marketing  
Moving Forward.**

**With BONUS  
Client Buyer Persona!**  
Creative inspiration derived  
from insights, designed to  
improve your agency's  
marketing TODAY!

**STRATEGIC INSIGHTS  
FOR AGENCIES**  
based on a nationwide survey of  
marketing firms and marketing clients.

Pub. January 2021

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Fast insights for busy marketers!

The S2 Research Marketing Agency and Client Goals, Objectives and KPIs survey measured how both clients and communications firms feel about marketing measurement in 2021. The survey revealed several insights that, when employed in a marketing agency setting, can help those teams attract and retain more clients, and produce more meaningful marketing (as valued by the clients) as a result.

Below is a quick overview of the highlights from this study's findings.



Clients are placing social media, digital marketing, SEO and content at the forefront of their 2021 marketing strategies.



Clients are planning to measure their marketing in 2021, and have specific plans in place to do so. Most often, the metrics they're measuring involve customer satisfaction above all else.



The majority of clients have already established measurable 2021 marketing goals. They're most interested in partnering with agencies who can support those goals and their existing strategies.



The majority of agencies are not in alignment with their clients when it comes to thinking about marketing measurement. The agencies that can demonstrate that their thinking and measurement strategies are similar to their clients' will have the highest likelihood of winning new business this year.



The majority of agencies have established 2021 marketing goals for their own firms, but lower shares are also tracking objectives and KPIs with their marketing as well. Research has shown us that measuring all three of these factors helps businesses succeed more often, and the agencies with a higher priority on internal measurement will see the highest results.

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YOU ARE  
HERE



For more information on this survey and other deep-dive explorations into the marketing agency industry, be sure to visit [S2Research.com](https://S2Research.com)

# ABOUT THIS STUDY

The S2 Research Marketing Agency and Client Goals, Objectives and KPIs survey was designed to understand two major components about agency clients:

- What are the goals and tactics agency clients are most emphasizing in 2021?
- How are they measuring marketing success – both their own work, and their agency's?

Based on these priorities, a 20-question survey was developed, designed to measure both client marketing priorities, and agency expectations of their own clients to measure alignment. To view this survey yourself, [click here](#). **Please note**, the survey remains open for review, but collection for this project has been completed.

# MARKETERS, READ THIS!

*Hey there, it's Matt – the Market Research guy! Look, I've worked in agencies my whole career, and I get that if you work in a marketing agency, communications firm or even a busy marketing team, you're in a hurry. That's why **I wanted to give you a cheat-sheet** to get you through this report quick, while still sharing the right insights you need to do more business in 2021!*

**Step 1: Skip the next page.** Seriously, it's the market research methodology mumbo jumbo that's going to suck an entire minute from your day.

**Step 2: Read the Executive Summary on p. 2.** At a minimum there's, like, five major insights you'll want to take away from this report, including some points you'll want to quote to your coworkers. They're all in there.

**Step 3: Read the Strategic Summaries on p. 7 and 18.** I scooped those sections' specific insights into a map to help your agency's 2021 client marketing strategy get a whole lot stronger.

**Step 4: Read the Agency Client Buyer Persona on p. 15.** In fact, share it with your executive team, and bring it to the next agency brainstorm. That doc will seriously align your whole firm on the same page in the book about growing your agency!

*That's it! Follow these steps and you'll have all the info you need. And, if you want even more info, peruse the whole report. Better yet, **I'm available to share these insights with your team via webinar too.** [Click here to get in touch!](#)*

*Remember, the insights in this study will **help your agency do better marketing** in 2021. We're all in this together, and I can't wait to see you succeed!*



# GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND KPIS



A major part of this study emphasized the importance of goal setting within the context of business and marketing. Based on myriad studies that have helped prove the link between business goal setting and the achievement of business success ([click here for further reading](#)), this study hypothesized that businesses with clear goals, objectives and key performance indicators (KPIs) **would be more likely to achieve marketing success in 2021.**

Likewise, we also know that marketing measurement plays a major role in how businesses value marketing – specifically **how likely a client is to know their marketing performed**, as well as **whether their agency provided value** ([click here for further reading](#)). With that in mind, this study also sought to demonstrate what share of clients are measuring marketing, and what metrics they're using within that measurement plan.

## METHODOLOGY



The S2 Research Marketing Agency and Client Goals, Objectives and KPIs Survey was administered through an online outreach program through LinkedIn. Individuals who worked in marketing at any level – including in-house marketing teams, those with agency decision-making power, and agency employees themselves – across a variety of industries, company-sizes and North American regions were contacted, and their responses aggregated and included in the results.

From the period of October 1 through December 14, 2020, a total of 309 usable survey responses were collected. Based on a total est. 286k individuals working in advertising, promotions and marketing management roles ([according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)), at the 95% confidence level this study has a margin of error of  $\pm 5.6\%$ . That means, if the survey were to be replicated again exactly the same with different respondents, 95 times out of 100 the responses would be within 5.6 points of the results presented in this report.

The survey results were then cleaned and checked for accuracy, and cross-tabulated using advanced data analysis and visualization software, in order to compare agency clients and agencies separately.

Want to learn more about using surveys to better understand your marketing audiences? S2 Research can help! [Click here to find out more.](#)

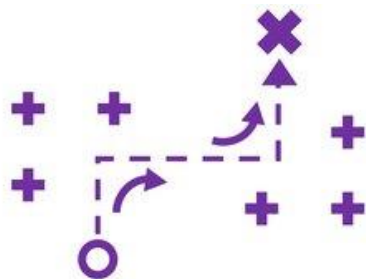
# How are agency clients approaching marketing?





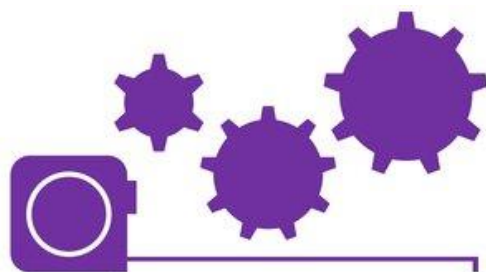
# MARKETERS: READ THIS FIRST!

Below are the top-level insights from the client-specific results from the survey, detailing how agency clients are thinking about marketing in 2021 – what tactics they're including in their strategies, how they're measuring success, and how they're looping agencies into the strategy.

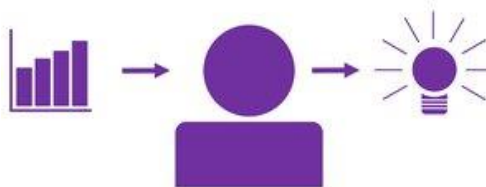


Clients are prioritizing **Social Media, Digital Marketing, SEO and Content** in their **2021 marketing strategies**.

Clients are determining if **marketing is successful** in 2021 by measuring **sales and revenue, customer lead and customer experience metrics**.



The majority of clients have **established 2021 marketing goals**. They believe **goals are an important part of marketing and team-member alignment**.

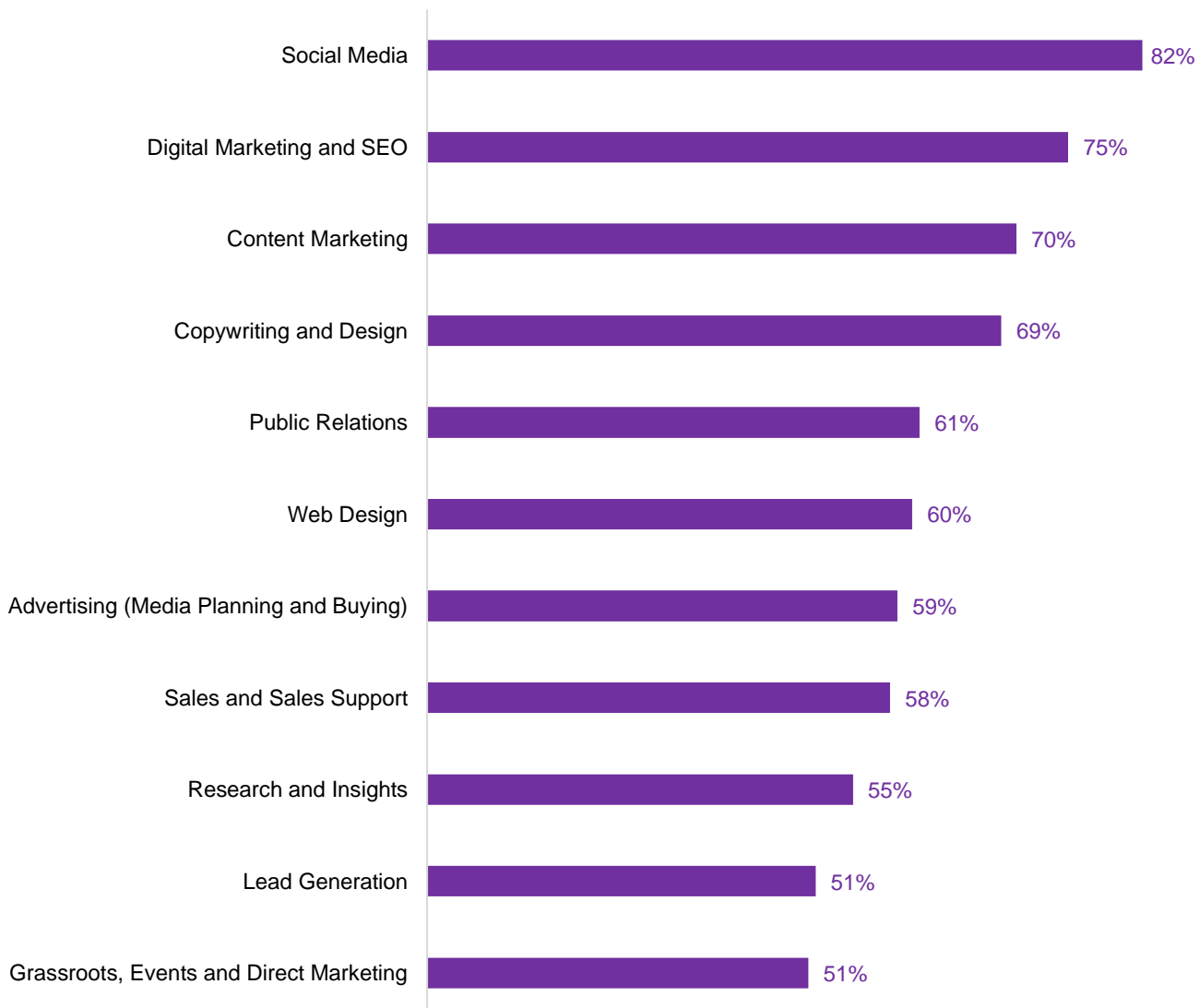


Nearly every client agreed that **marketing is an important part of their business**. They're making it a priority, but not always including agencies in their planning processes.

# How clients are focusing their marketing...

Overall, the majority of agency clients and in-house marketers plan to focus their 2021 marketing efforts on social media, digital marketing and SEO, content marketing and copywriting and design. A larger share than among other previous surveys of ad agency clients are also interested in public relations than ever before ([click here for further reading](#)), while about 3 in 5 agency clients are also very focused on their website this year.

## Share of Clients Using Specific Tactics in Their Marketing Strategies

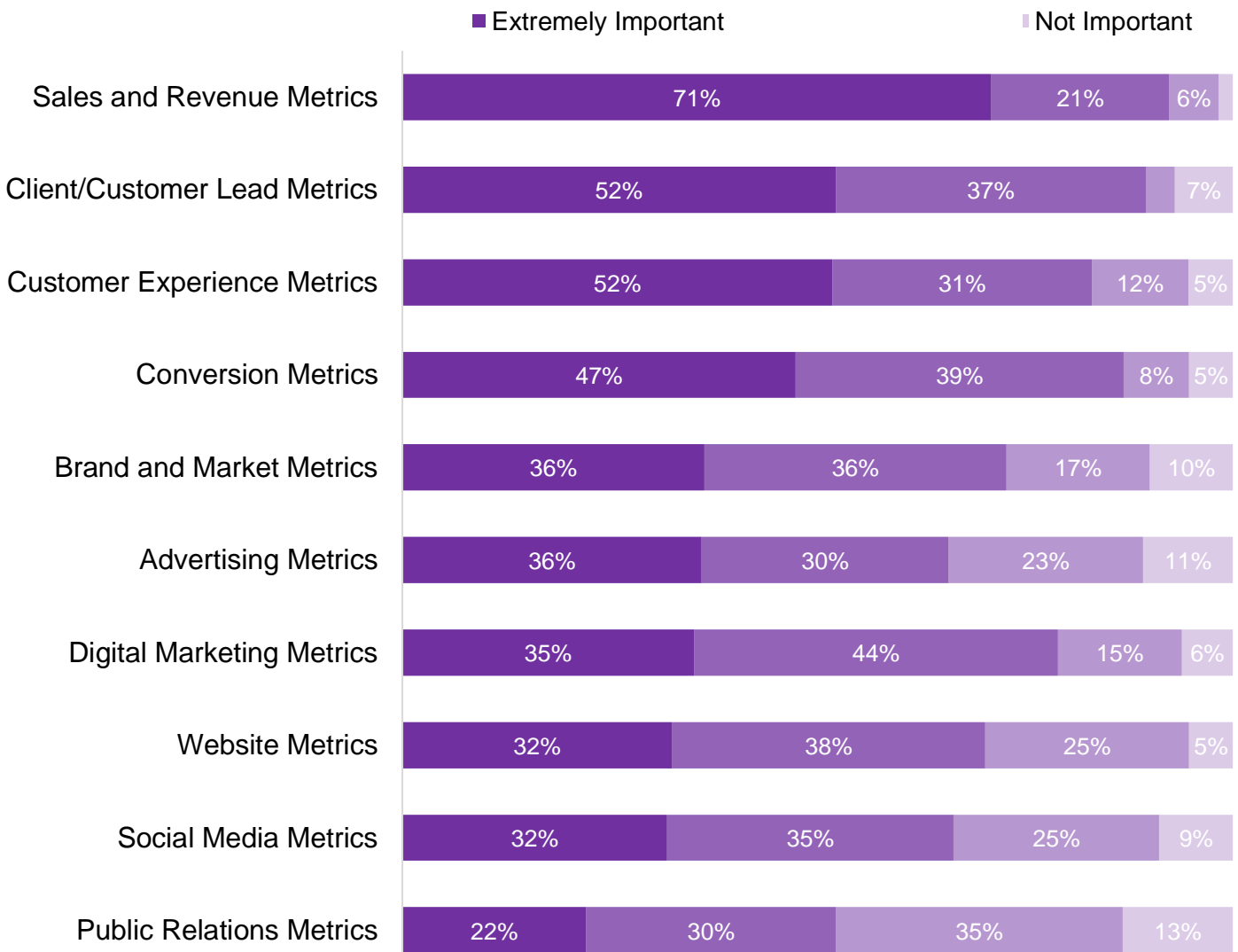




# How clients measure marketing success...

Nearly every client respondent said that sales and revenue metrics were the metrics that mattered most when determining marketing success in 2021, while more than 4 in 5 clients also said that conversion metrics greatly mattered. Meanwhile, about half of the audience also said that client/customer lead metrics and customer experience metrics were extremely important in measuring their marketing's effectiveness.

## How Important Clients Consider Various Metrics When Measuring Marketing Success



## Client marketing goals...

Two thirds of agency clients said that their business will have established, measurable marketing goals in 2021. Meanwhile, about a quarter said their business does not have established goals, and another 1 in 10 weren't sure.



### Agency Marketing Insight!

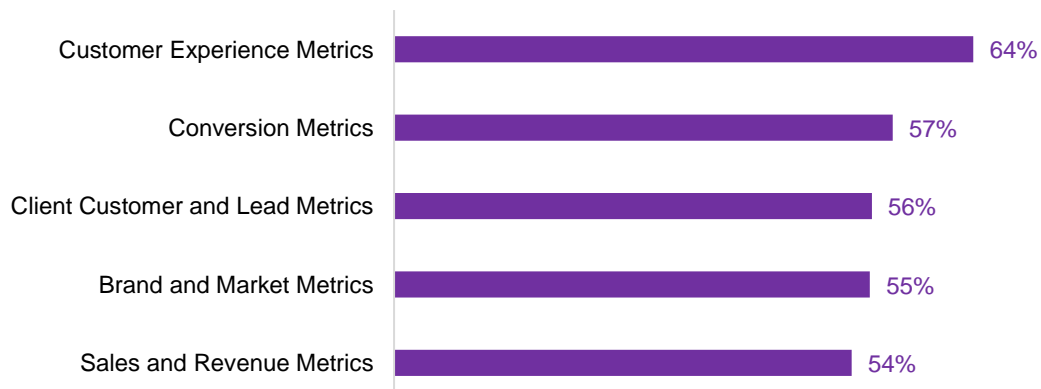
Research shows us that establishing measurable goals hugely increases the likelihood of business success. Capitalize on this by aligning with your clients who have goals, and helping those without establish them!

**65%**  
of agency clients  
have established  
specific marketing  
goals for 2021

## The metrics that matter to client goals...

Among those clients who have established marketing goals for 2021, two thirds said that customer experience metrics were a part of those goals. Meanwhile, more than half also said their goals included measuring client/customer lead and conversion metrics as well.

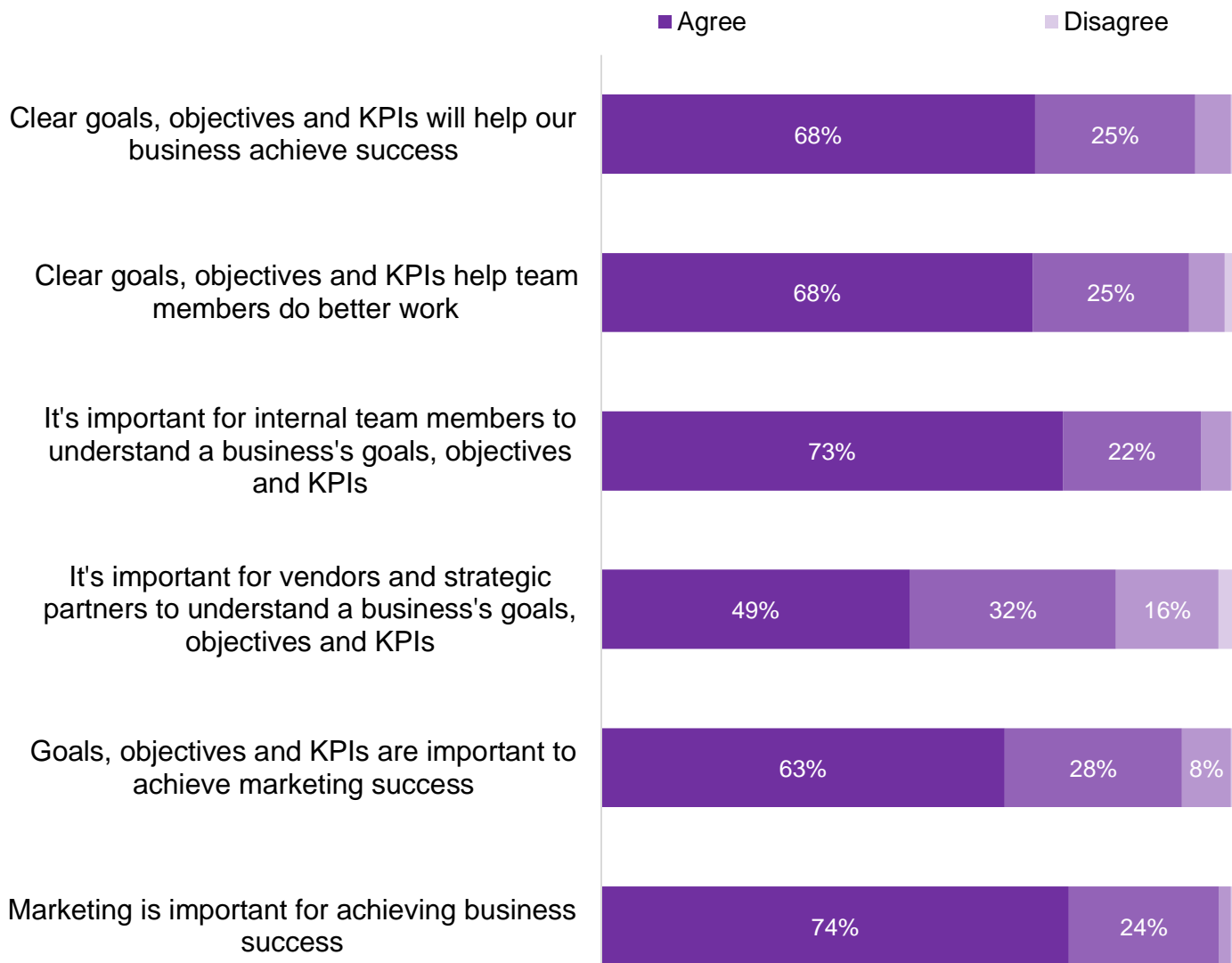
### Top Client Marketing Goal Metrics



# Attitude toward goals, objectives and KPIs...

On the perception of importance of marketing and goals, clients believed above all else that marketing is important toward achieving business success in 2021, and that establishing measurement goals, objectives and KPIs was important for internal team members and the business in general. Meanwhile, while two thirds of the audience did believe in establishing measurable goals, about a third of the client audience felt that establishing goals, objectives and KPIs was not important toward achieving marketing success.

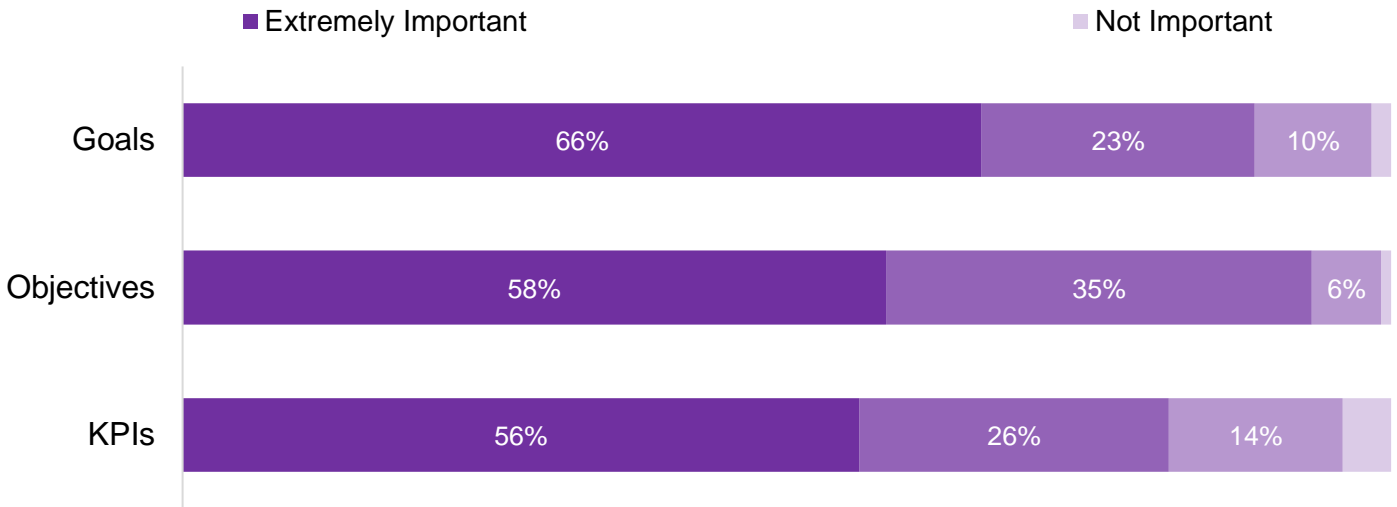
## How Much Clients Agree With Various Statements About Goals, Objectives and KPIs



# Attitude toward marketing measurement...

Clients believed more than anything that goals must be measured, while slightly smaller shares believed in the importance of measuring objectives and KPIs as well.

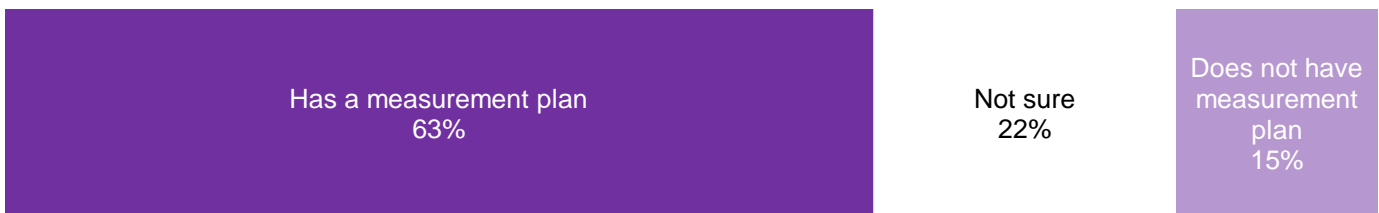
## How Important Clients Consider Establishing Goals, Objectives and KPIs for Their Business



# Marketing measurement plans...

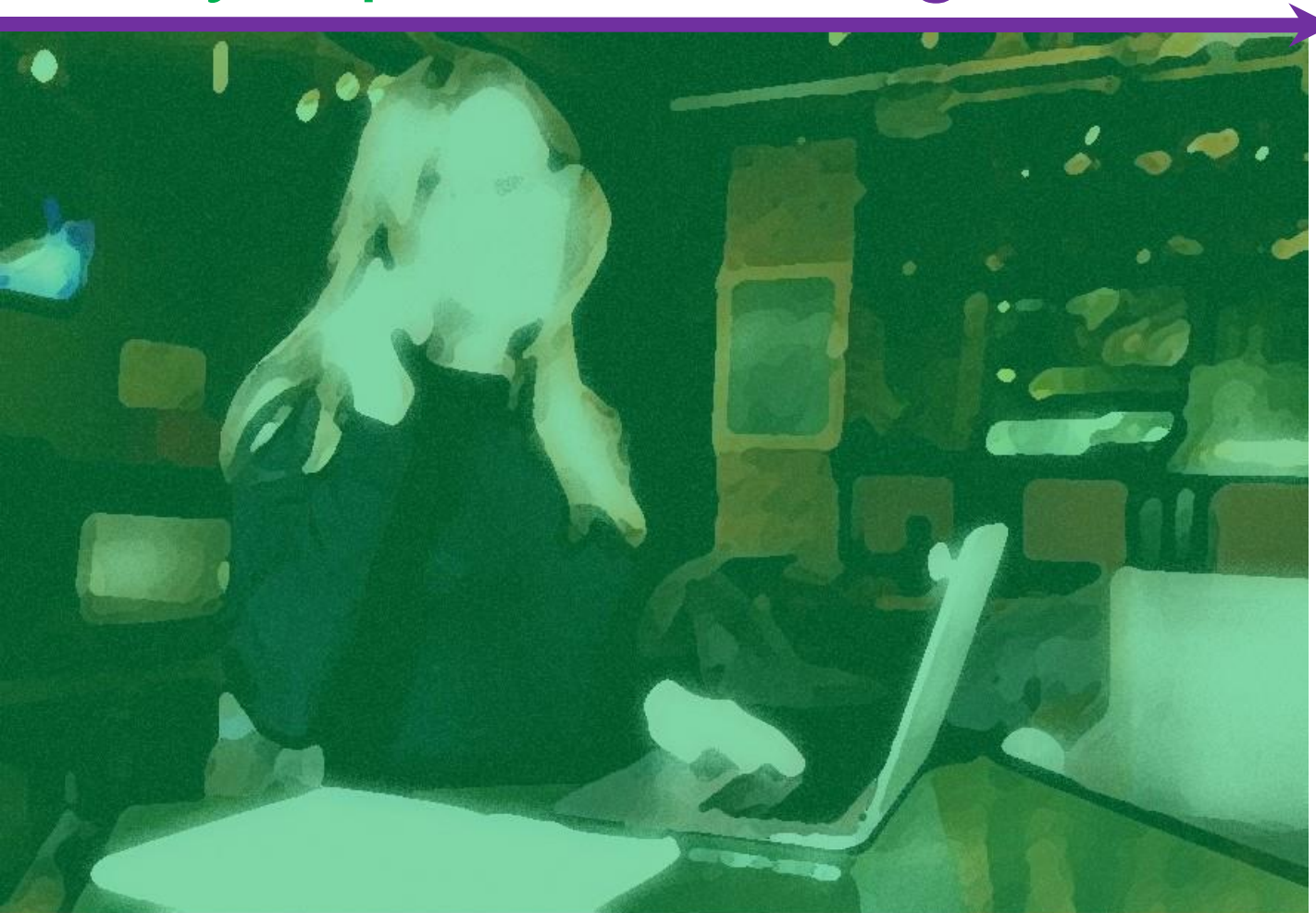
About two third of the client audience has an established marketing measurement plan in place for 2021. Meanwhile, about a fifth of the audience wasn't sure if their business had a plan in place to measure marketing success.

## Share of Clients With an Established Marketing Measurement Plan



# Who is the client?

## A buyer persona for agencies.



## BUYER PERSONAS EXPLAINED

There's a reason so many marketing masters are preaching the importance of establishing buyer personas in their agencies. It's because they are proving incredibly powerful in modern marketing settings at keeping marketing teams laser-focused on the person that matters most to their marketing: the client. [Click here to read more about buyer personas in action at agencies like yours.](#)

### Know their story.

Buyer personas are the story behind your audience – in this case, your future clients. It answers the important marketing questions, helping you paint a picture of **who your marketing is truly trying to reach**. And it takes that information and shares it back in a way that's deeper and more engaging than traditional stats and facts. **Personas are literally creative inspiration for your marketing team!**

A buyer persona is the difference between 'young-adult farmers seeking intergalactic adventure' and 'Luke Skywalker.' **Which description would help you create better marketing?**

## THE CLIENT BUYER PERSONA...

*Hey, it's Matt again! As I was putting this study together, I realized I had a ton of great information to develop an effective **agency client buyer persona** that you could use with your marketing team today! The persona can be found on the next two pages.*

*While based on much of the data found in this report, I've also incorporated information from several other studies I've conducted recently, along with a few additional secondary sources. To take a look at the full list of the agency research studies available, [click here](#).*



### **Agency Marketing Insight!**

You need to be using Buyer Personas in your marketing. Personas align your entire team on messaging, strategy, and segmentation priority. Simply put, they help you produce better results!

**Even better**, developing marketing personas annually for your clients can also become a new revenue driver for your business – and clients appreciate it because they see the results! **Everyone wins!**



# Buyer Persona for Agencies

## Agency Client Alex



Alex is a small business owner who handles marketing in house. He started his company less than 10 years ago, and while he's been relatively successful, 2020 wreaked havoc on his normal business operations.

### What is his current situation?

Alex's business survived 2020, and he's mentally made it his mission to make 2021 a better year. He's put a marketing plan together, predominantly built around social media, search and content, and has a small team in house to help execute.

His No. 1 marketing goal is to improve customer experience, but he plans to track sales and revenue metrics heavily as well.

### What does he want?

Alex wants a successful 2021, which for him will mean satisfied customers and increases to his bottom line. He's been on overdrive since the Pandemic started, and even though he's busy, his business is still struggling. His marketing plan is strategic, and he even has steps in place to measure its success. However, he wants to know it's the best strategy possible, and that it will be executed perfectly – because he believes his customers will leave him if they witness anything less.

### What problems does he encounter? How does this make him feel?

Alex and his team routinely run out of time when it comes to making their marketing work. He's also pretty sure everything he does isn't working, at least not as well as he'd expected, and wonders if that's because his team isn't experienced enough to handle everything they've come up with. This adds to his stress, and makes him question which marketing tactics are most important.

### What are his beliefs about these problems?

Alex believes that success in 2021 will revolve around happy customers, and is focusing on creating great customer experiences with his marketing as a result. He also believes his customers aren't spending as much money as they once were, and he must do everything he can to attract as many as possible to keep his doors open and revenue strong.

### What might lead him to seek a solution?

When marketing becomes too much, and Alex can see that he's leaving real results on the table, he'll seek a solution. He's aware of agencies, but would still rather keep marketing in house if possible. Ideally, he'd like to find an agency that can support the strategy he and his team are already doing, and will start looking for a firm once he recognizes a real gap in how much he wants to accomplish and what his own team can manage.

## Buyer Persona for Agencies (Cont.)



### What noise does he hear in the marketplace?

Even though it's hard, Alex has managed to continue business networking, albeit through Zoom, and has developed some good relationships with other business owners sharing advice. He's also hit every single day with dozens of ads online from business experts and consultants offering to help save his business – as long as he pays a ton of money ahead of time. He reads all of it, but so far they all seem like they're too good to be true, which usually means they probably are.

### Why would he trust an agency? What would give them authority?

Alex has been approached by agencies before, but most have never worked directly in his industry, and even fewer have real previous results to show him. If an agency could help him understand the value they bring – and, for Alex, it has to be real value he can plan for and count on – and also made sure they appeared easy to work with, he'd recognize that agency as a trusted marketing authority. As a bonus, if that agency already had a positive reputation working with businesses like his, especially with trusted referrals, he'd value that agency's authority even more.

### What is he thinking before he considers an agency?

There's so much to do, and Alex isn't a marketing expert. He just wants his business to succeed, and is overwhelmed by the amount of marketing ideas to consider and measure.

### What is he thinking when he's made aware of an agency?

Everyone seems to have ideas, but they all want money, a precious commodity right now. Most look like scams, or that they'll end up creating more work for Alex and his team in the end.

### What is he thinking when considering an agency?

There's some good marketing firms out there that can help him, and now he just needs to find the right one to hire. That needs to be the firm that's easiest to work with, and has produced the best results in the past. Next, he just needs to vet them – if only there was more time.

### What does he feel like if he loses?

Well, that was a waste of money. The agency wanted Alex and his team to basically do all the work, and they were charging an arm and a leg to do it. He didn't get any new customers, lost a ton of cash, and really feels the weight of 2021 on his shoulders.

### What does he feel like if he wins?

Wow, what an awesome experience. Aside from Alex and his team feeling tremendously less stress, his business is actually making more money. He's even recognizing new customers and leads, and his return customers are excited to do business with him again. He's considering partnering even more with this agency, because they're great at taking things off his plate and helping him see more business success!

# Are agencies and their clients in alignment?

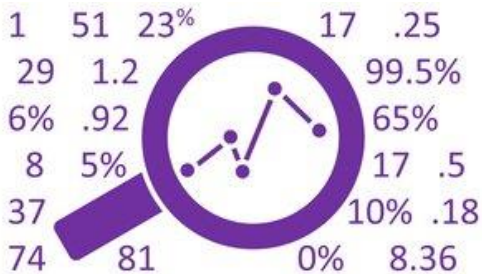
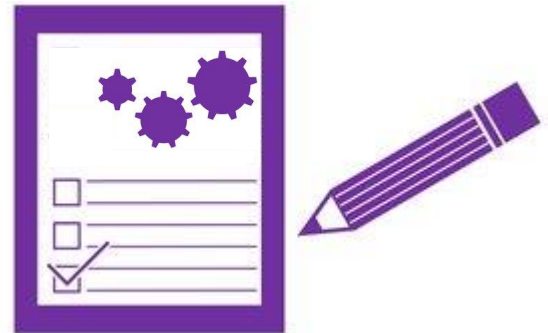


# MARKETERS: READ THIS FIRST!

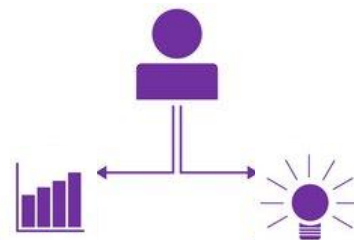


Below are the top-level insights from the survey that compare actual client marketing perceptions against agency preparedness and thinking alignment. While clients are prioritizing specific tactics in their marketing that many agencies offer, priorities on other tactics can help agencies differentiate themselves. When combined with detailed measurement plans to help maximize and prove results, those agencies are then much more likely to build authority within the minds of their target client audiences.

While most agencies offer Social Media, Digital Marketing and Content, clients are asking for **Public Relations** and **Sales Support** in 2021 as well. **This is an opportunity for agencies.**



Clients are placing a **greater emphasis on marketing measurement** in 2021 than most agencies believe. Those agencies who can **prove the value of their results** will be the agencies clients trust most.



Overall, clients are asking for **marketing partners** who can deliver **great ideas** that deliver real, **measurable marketing results** that complement their in-house strategies.

# Agency services v. client strategies...



Nearly every client in the study said they're planning a 2021 marketing strategy heavily based on social media and digital. Only about half of agencies, meanwhile, said they were currently offering those services, and slightly less offering content marketing as well.

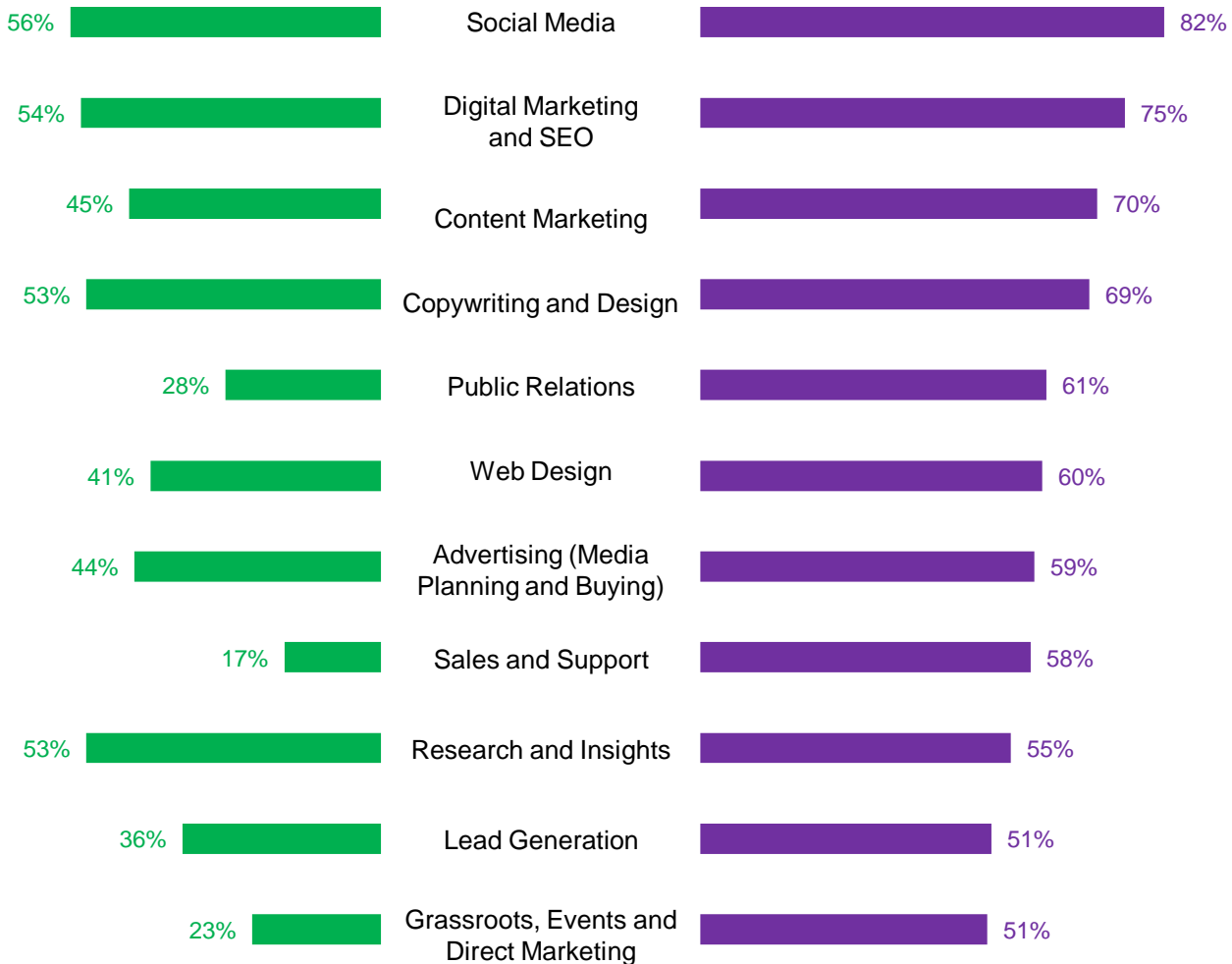


### Agency Marketing Insight!

Differentiate yourself. The majority of agencies interviewed said they're not currently offering public relations or sales support marketing services. Meanwhile, about 3 in 5 clients plan to incorporate these tactics into their 2021 strategies! Wow them!

## Agency Services

## Client Strategies



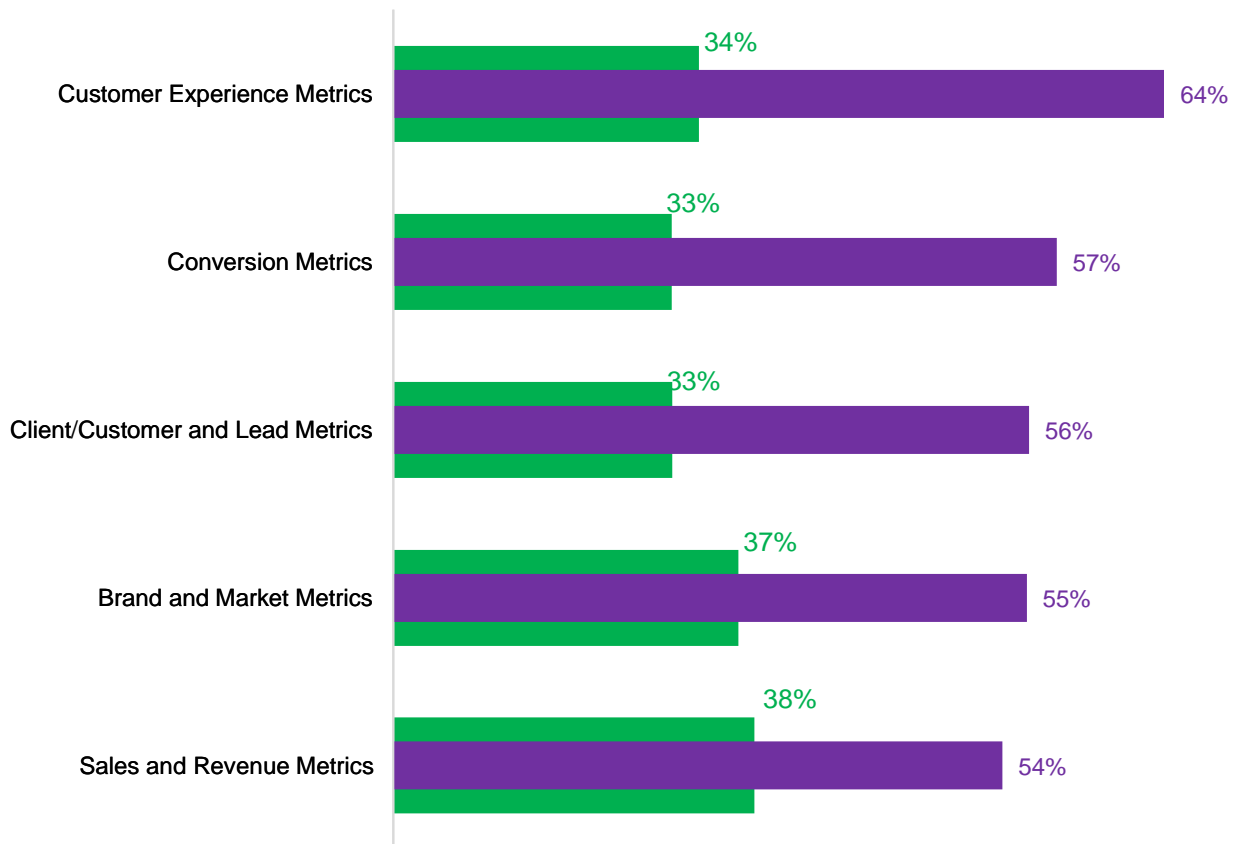
## Agency perceptions v. client goals...



Agencies in this study, overall, vastly underappreciated the share of their clients who were planning to measure specific marketing metrics as part of their 2021 strategies. More than half of clients included in this survey said they were planning to measure at least one of the marketing metrics assessed, and a full two-thirds of clients said that customer experience metrics were the most important of these measurements.

This is compared with just a third of agencies who believed their clients who were planning to track these metrics in 2021. **Bottom line, clients are measuring their marketing's performance, and agencies that can help them will be the ones that stand out.**

### Share of Clients Measuring Various Metrics in Their 2021 Goals Compared Against Agency Beliefs Regarding Clients and Goal Metric Measurement

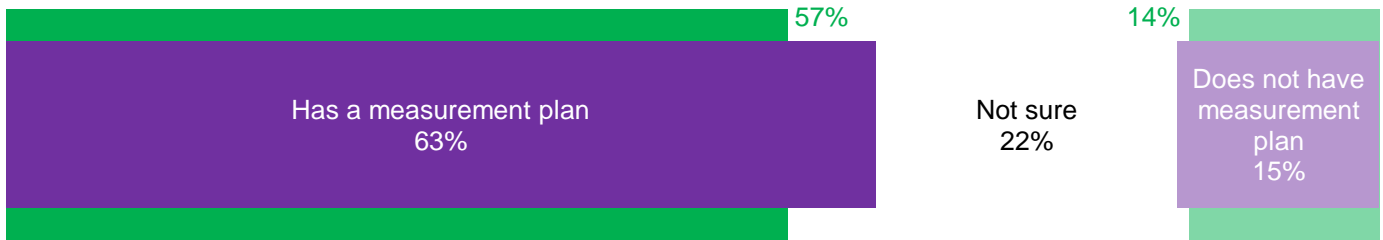




# Agency perceptions v. actual client plans...

Two thirds of clients said they have a specific marketing measure plan they will be using in 2021 to measure their marketing’s effectiveness. While we saw on the previous page that agencies believed clients were overall not focused on measuring any of the metrics tested, the majority of agencies did believe their clients had a plan in place to measure marketing in 2021.

## Share of Clients With a Marketing Measurement Plan Compared Against Agency Beliefs Regarding Share of Clients With Measurement Plan

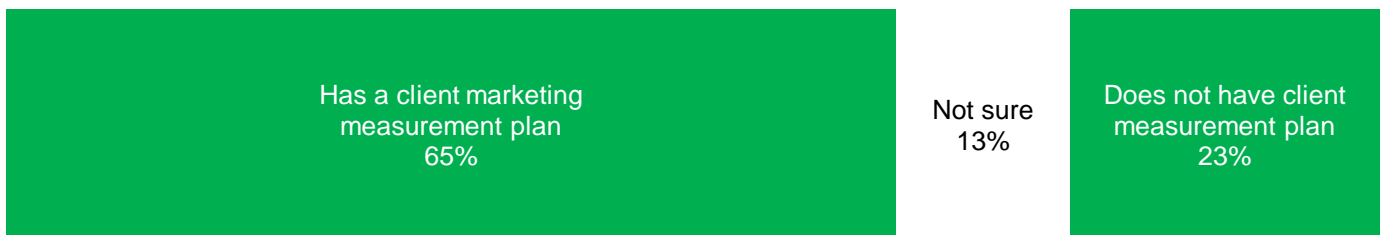


# Agency plans for client measurement...

Considering the emphasis on client marketing measurement, two thirds of agencies included in this study said that have a specific plan in place to measure the effectiveness of their clients’ marketing in 2021. This audience has acknowledged that marketing measurement is a priority for their clients, and is putting steps into place to offer marketing measurement services.

Meanwhile, about a quarter of agencies have not put steps into place to measure client marketing results in 2021.

## Share of Agencies With a Plan to Measure Client Marketing

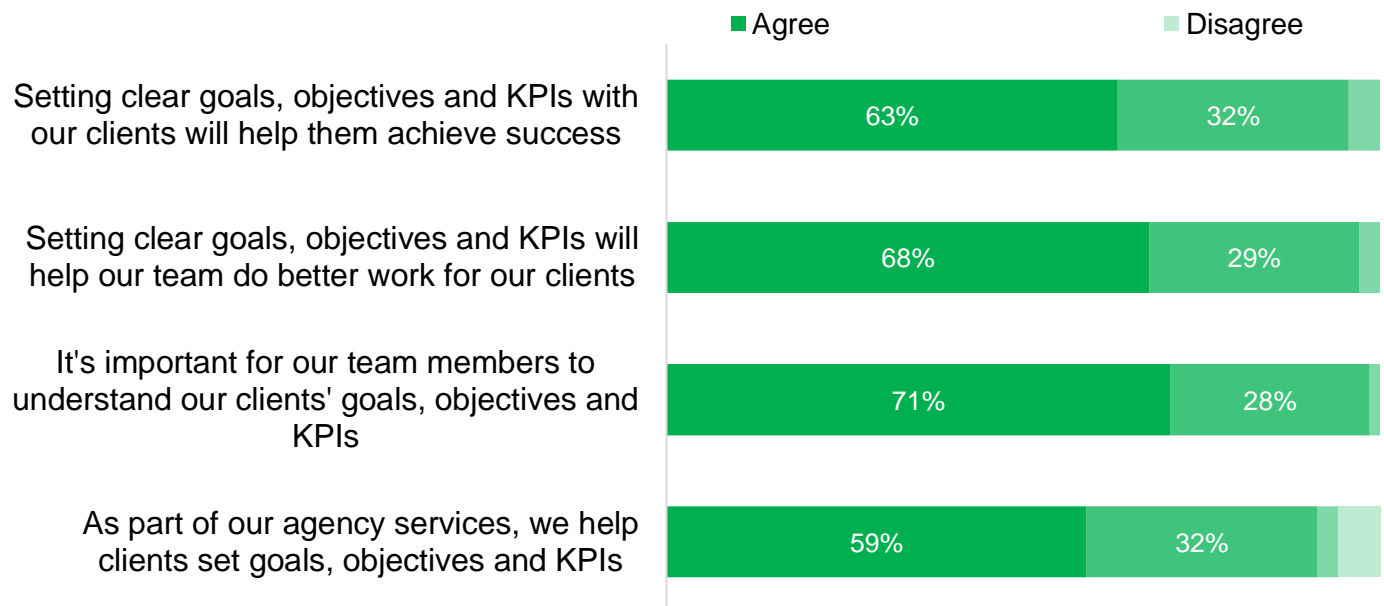


## Agency perceptions of client goals...



Nearly every agency believed that understanding their clients' goals, objectives and KPIs was important for their own team members to do better marketing, and, as a result, produce better work for their clients. Meanwhile, a smaller share of the audience said their agency actually offers marketing goal-setting consultation services to their clients, **presenting an opportunity for savvy agencies moving forward.**

### How Much Agencies Agree With Various Statements About Establishing Client Goals, Objectives and KPIs

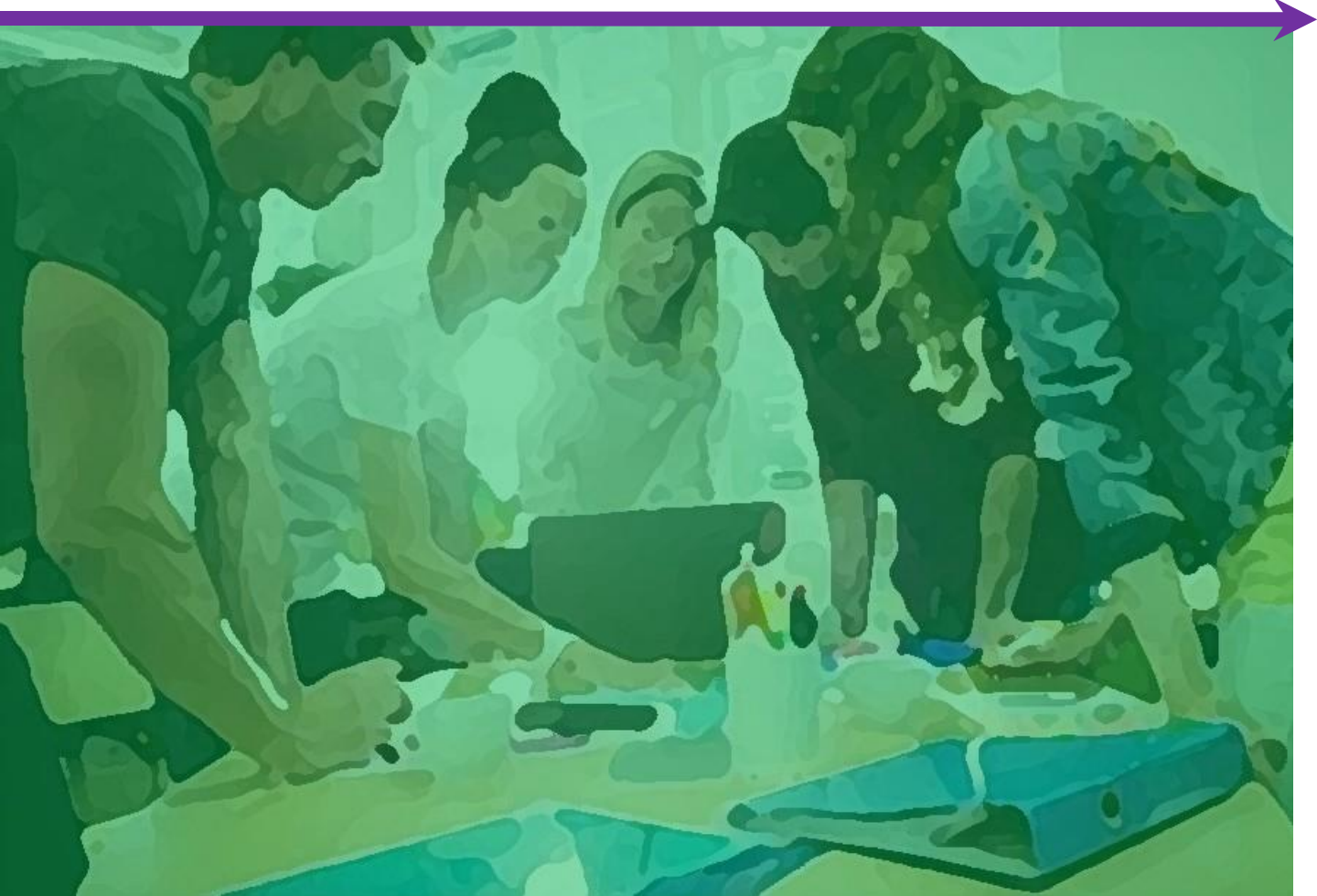


Clients want an agency  
that delivers **real marketing results!**



**Differentiate your team by sharing  
how your firm measures client marketing!**

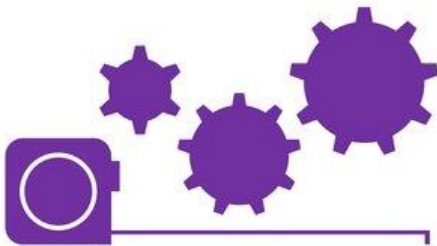
# How are other agencies thinking about marketing?



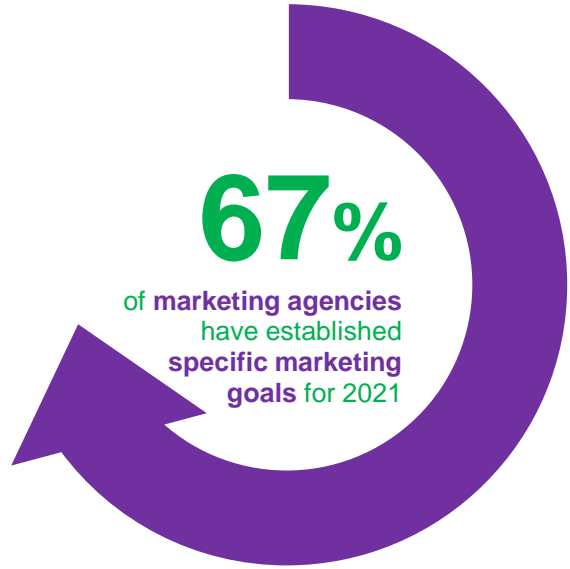
# Agency marketing goals...

When it comes to marketing their own brands, more than two thirds of agencies have established specific, measurable marketing goals for 2021.

**What is your firm planning to achieve this year?**



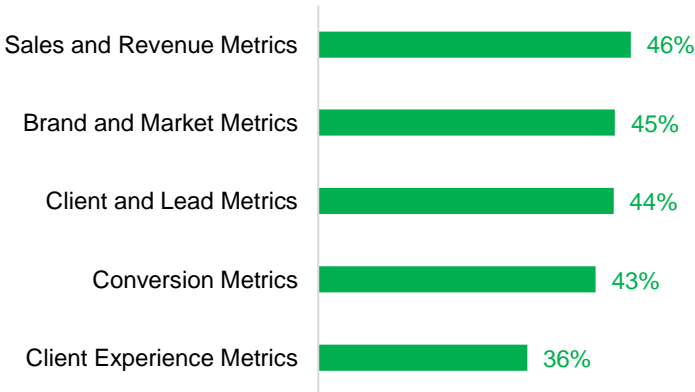
[Want to add marketing measurement services to your agency? Click here!](#)



# The metrics that matter to agency goals...

Above all else, clients are focused on measuring sales and revenue metrics as part of their 2021 goals, followed closely by brand and market metrics (their awareness in their industry, vertical, area or niche) and client lead metrics. Agencies, meanwhile, placed less of a priority focusing on client experience metrics.

## Top Agency Marketing Goal Metrics

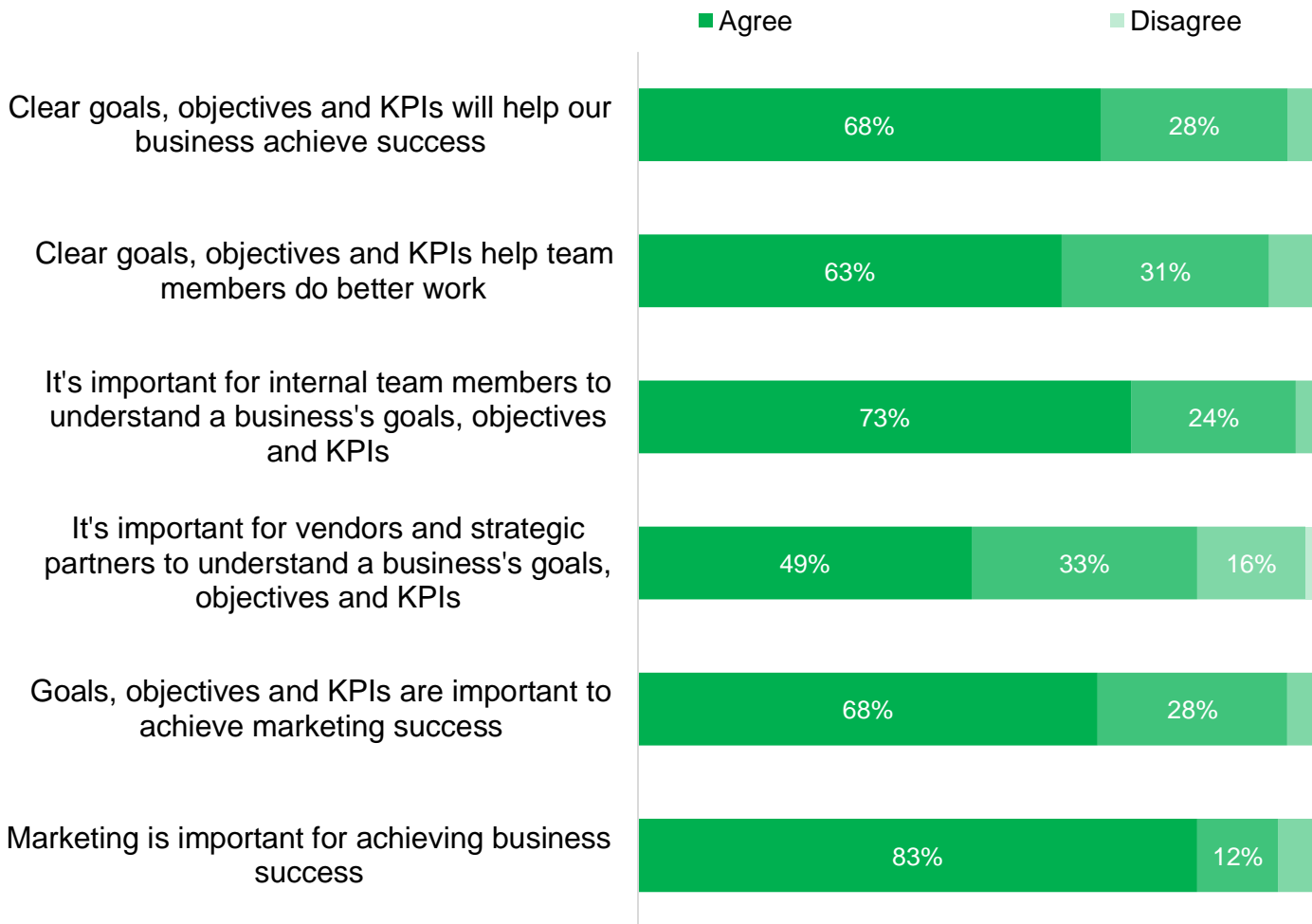


**Agency Marketing Insight!**  
Most agencies aren't prioritizing client experience into their goals. **Stand out from the crowd** by being the firm that Wow's your clients!

# Attitude toward goals, objectives and KPIs...

When asked how much they agree with various questions about marketing, goals and measurement, more than anything agencies agreed that marketing is important for achieving business success, and that it is important for internal agency team members to understand the firm's goals, objectives and KPIs. Those same goals, objectives and KPIs, however, did not hold as much overall importance among agency respondents in terms of helping to deliver real value to the agency, and even fewer believed that their vendors and strategic partners would benefit from understand their agency's 2021 goals as well.

## How Much Agencies Agree With Various Statements About Establishing Goals, Objectives and KPIs for Their Agency

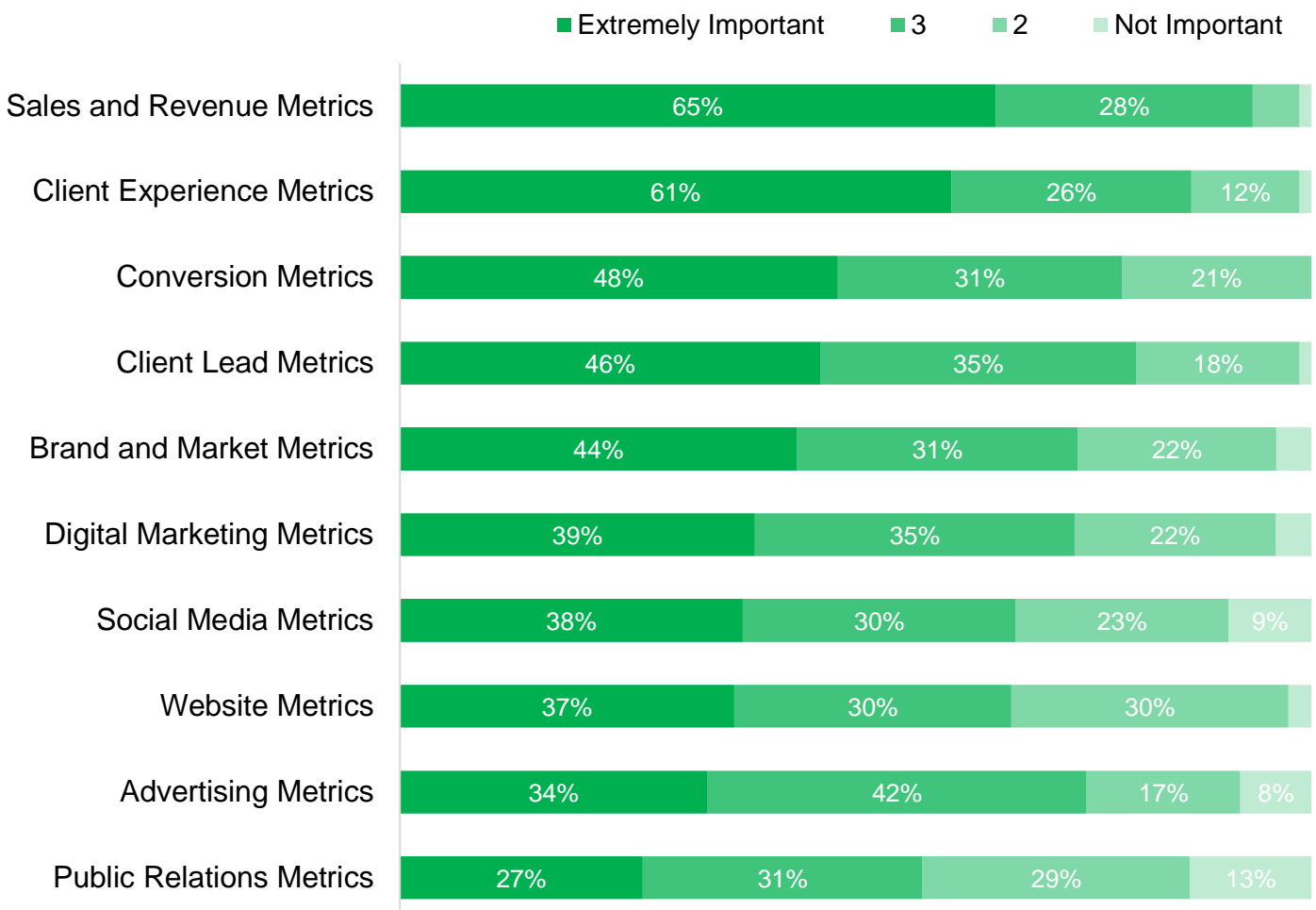


# How agencies measure marketing success...

When asked about marketing success and the metrics used to determine the value of those achievements, agencies said that sales and revenue metrics were of most important, followed closely by client experience metrics. Lead and conversion metrics followed, though at a much lower rate of likelihood of importance for this audience.

**Simply put**, while sales and revenue are the primary goals of agencies in 2021, they're making their marketing work toward two specific functions: happy clients, and better bottom line.

## How Important Agencies Consider Various Metrics When Measuring Their Own Marketing Success

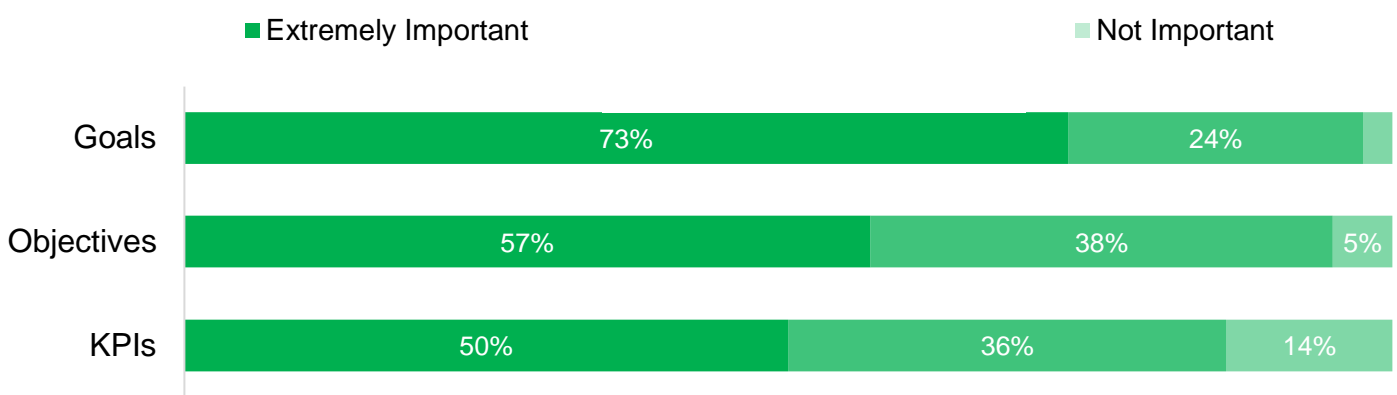




# Attitude toward marketing measurement...

Agencies believed that establishing measurable goals, more than anything, would benefit their business. However, while research has established that goals are much more likely to be accomplished when broken into specific, measurable objectives and routinely weighed against pre-established KPIs ([click here to read more about this topic](#)), agencies overall felt significantly less importance toward considering establishing both objectives and KPIs for their firm.

## How Important Agencies Consider Establishing Goals, Objectives and KPIs for Their Business



# Marketing measurement plans...

The majority of agencies surveyed stated they have a measurement plan in place to determine the effectiveness of their own agency marketing in 2021. As we saw on the previous pages, sales revenue and client satisfaction metric measurements weigh heavily on these agency strategies, Meanwhile, about 1 in 5 agencies do not have a marketing measurement plan in place for their 2021 agency marketing strategy. **Marketing research has demonstrated that measuring a firm's marketing can literally help them achieve more business. If you want to implement a plan to measure your agency's efforts, let me help! [Click here for more info!](#)**

## Share of Agencies With an Established Marketing Measurement Plan

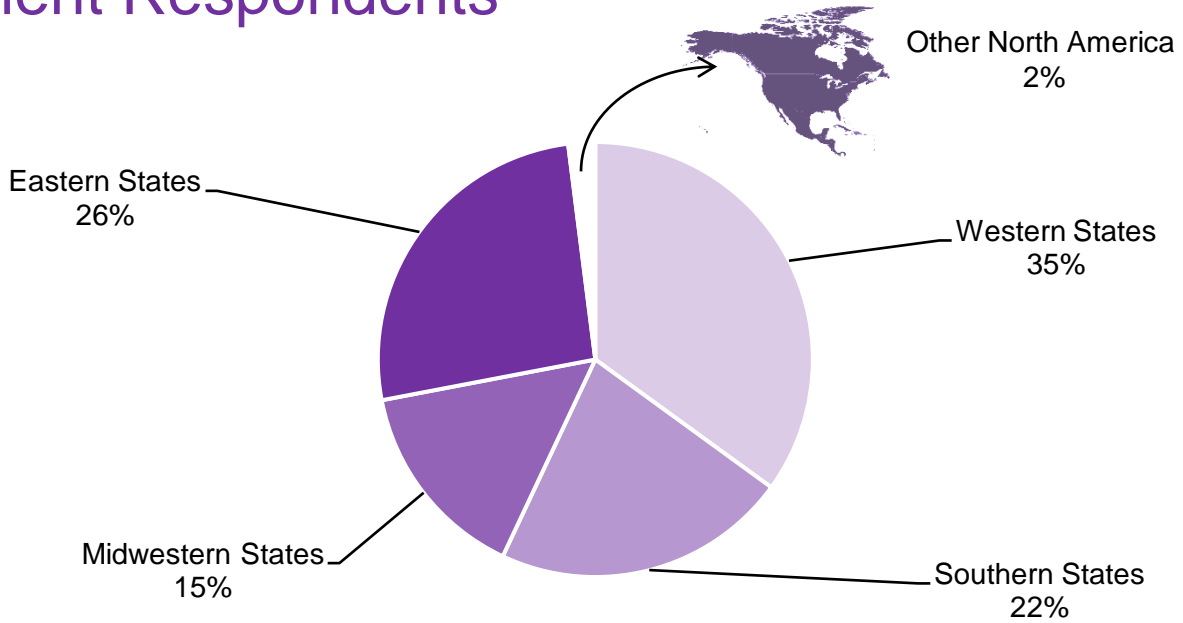


# Survey Respondent Information.

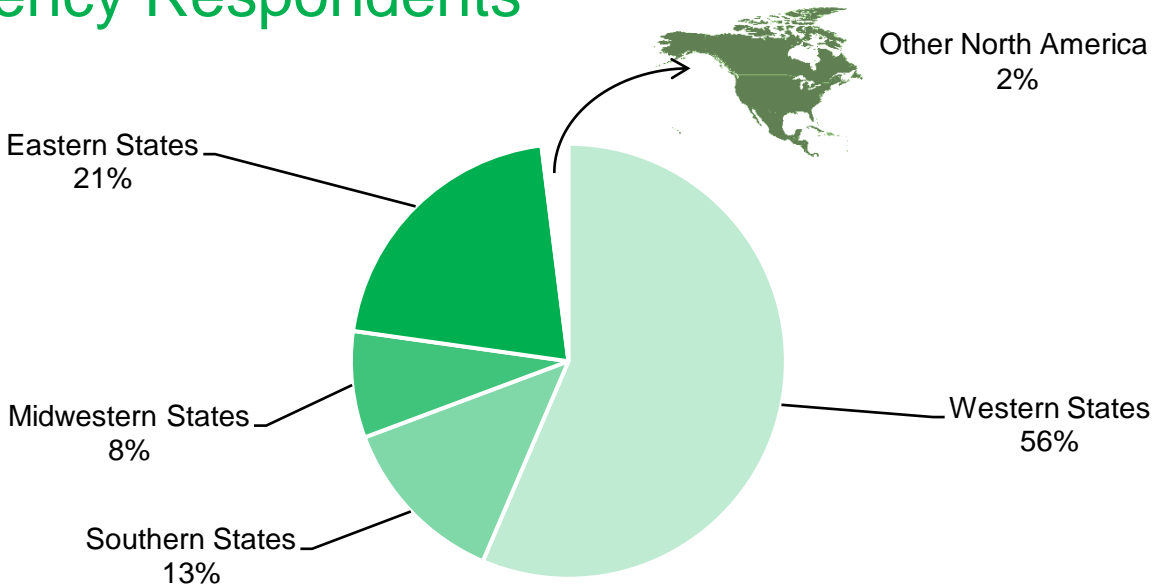


# AUDIENCE LOCATION

## Client Respondents

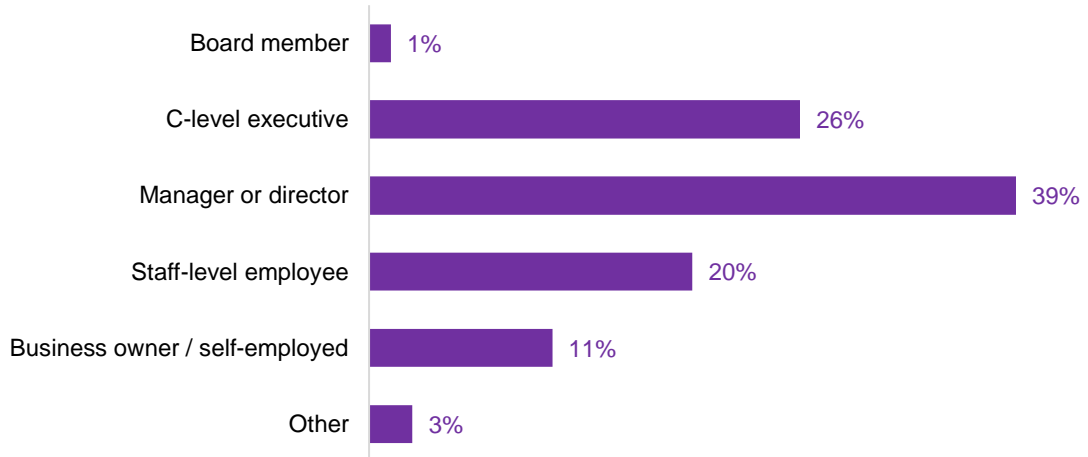


## Agency Respondents



# AUDIENCE EMPLOYMENT LEVEL

## Client Respondents



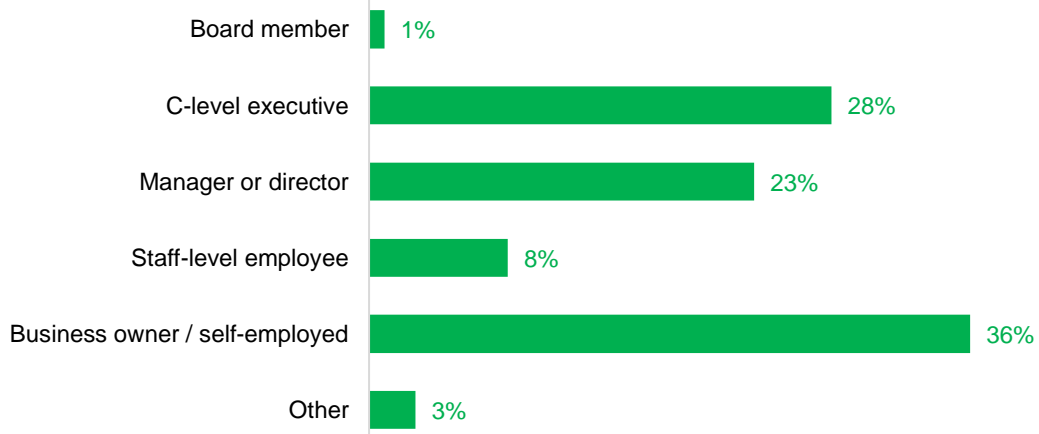
## Involvement with Marketing

Manages marketing only  
25%

Manages marketing and other operations  
48%

Not involved in marketing  
28%

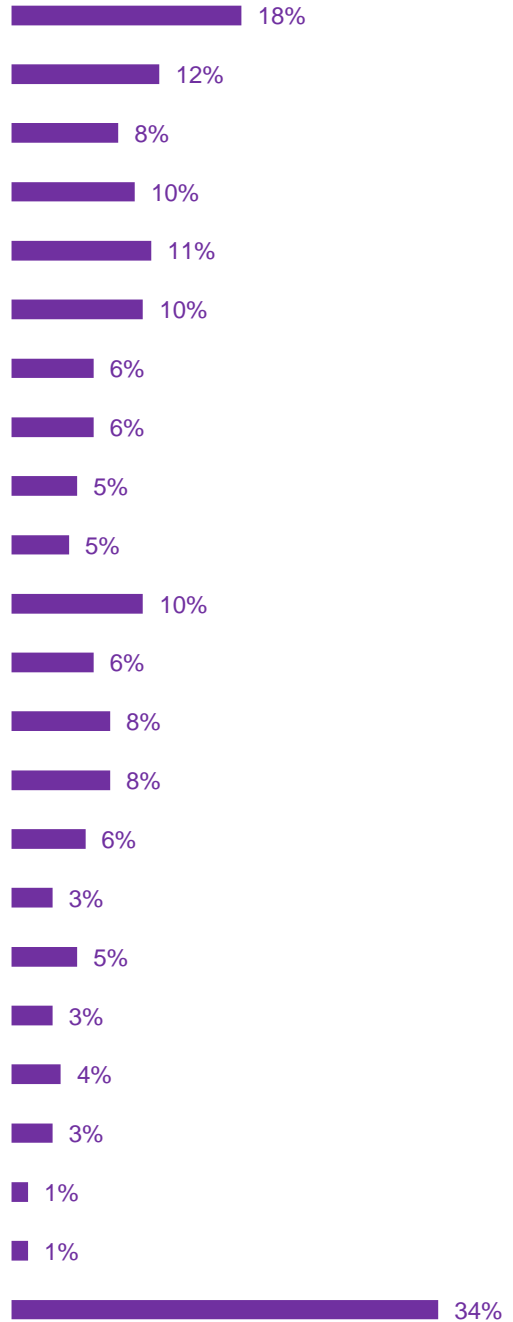
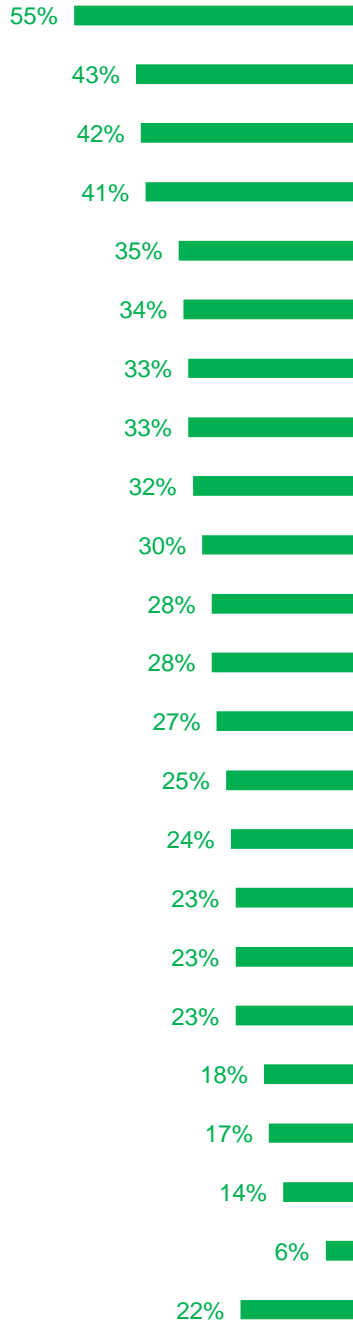
## Agency Respondents



# INDUSTRIES

## Agency Clients

## Client Respondents



# DOES YOUR FIRM DO MARKET RESEARCH?



[Matt@S2Research.com](mailto:Matt@S2Research.com)

[Connect on LinkedIn](#)

**Hi, I'm Matt Seltzer. I conduct market research for agencies like yours.**

Did you know that **95% of agency clients expect their marketing firm to conduct market research** regularly on their accounts?

**That's because clients know that great market research insights are the foundation for great agency marketing.**

Unfortunately, most small to mid-sized marketing firms don't have access to an in-house market research team. That means they're leaving results, and money, on the table.

**That's why I started S2 Research – to help strategic communications teams add research into their marketing programs and client service offerings.**

If your agency doesn't yet have a dedicated market research team, let's connect!

[Click here to schedule a meeting with me!](#)

Interested in adding the **marketing measurement services** your clients are already asking for? **I'm here to help!**

Get in touch today!



702.494.8936 | [Matt@S2Research.com](mailto:Matt@S2Research.com) | [S2Research.com](http://S2Research.com)