C3 Partnership

Putting the customer at the heart of communication

About The C3 Partnership

A joint initiative bringing together combined expertise in commercial capability, media and technology to support and enable brands to deliver truly customer centric communications

About the research

Although the age of digital connectivity brings with it great opportunity for brand marketers, many organisations still struggle to remain truly connected with their customers throughout their entire journey.

However, getting it right matters more than ever before, with the impending changes to data laws and overwhelming evidence which indicates the incremental value brands can create through more customer centric communication.

This research study, a collaboration between MediaSense and OxfordSM, reveals current attitudes towards customer centric communication, and the key challenges facing brand marketers today in becoming more customer centric.

80 brand marketers from major multinational brands representing $10 billion in advertising spend participated in this research, across all major industry sectors:


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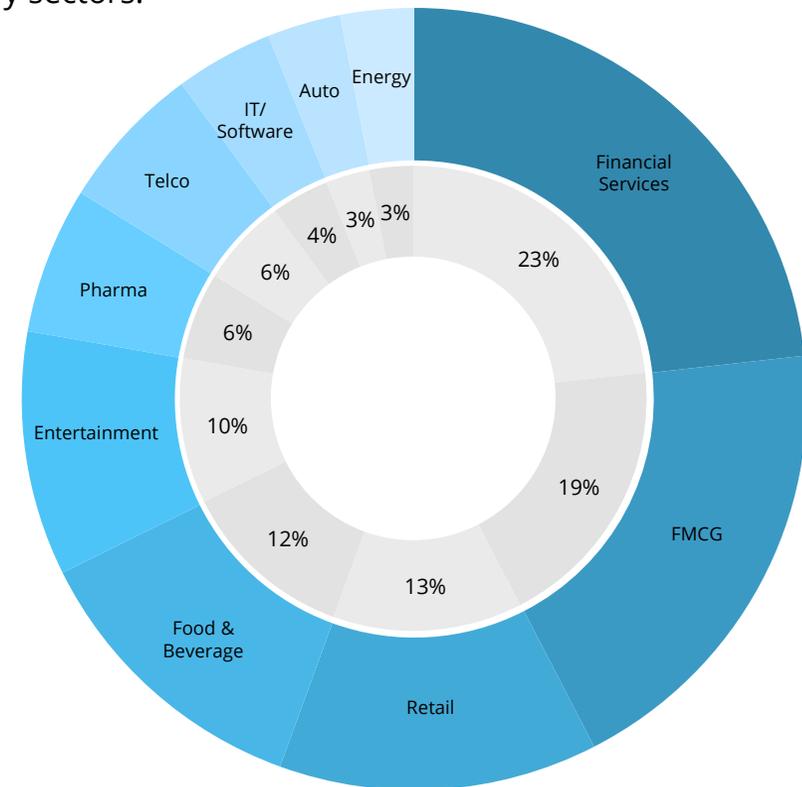
Only a third of companies deliver customer centric communications

We were surprised that only a third of companies were delivering customer centric communications: targeting communications accurately, flexing communications in line with new customer preferences, and varying it according to how far along customers are with the brand journey.

For all the talk and effort around customer centricity, and the technology that is available to support the widely shared objective, it remains a real challenge for most.

The following analysis demonstrates why many companies find it hard, and some of the changes they can make to deliver communications in line with their desire to be more customer centric.

65%	66%	70%
35%	34%	30%
We are targeting our communications accurately	We flex our communications to customer preferences	Our communications reflect the customer journey
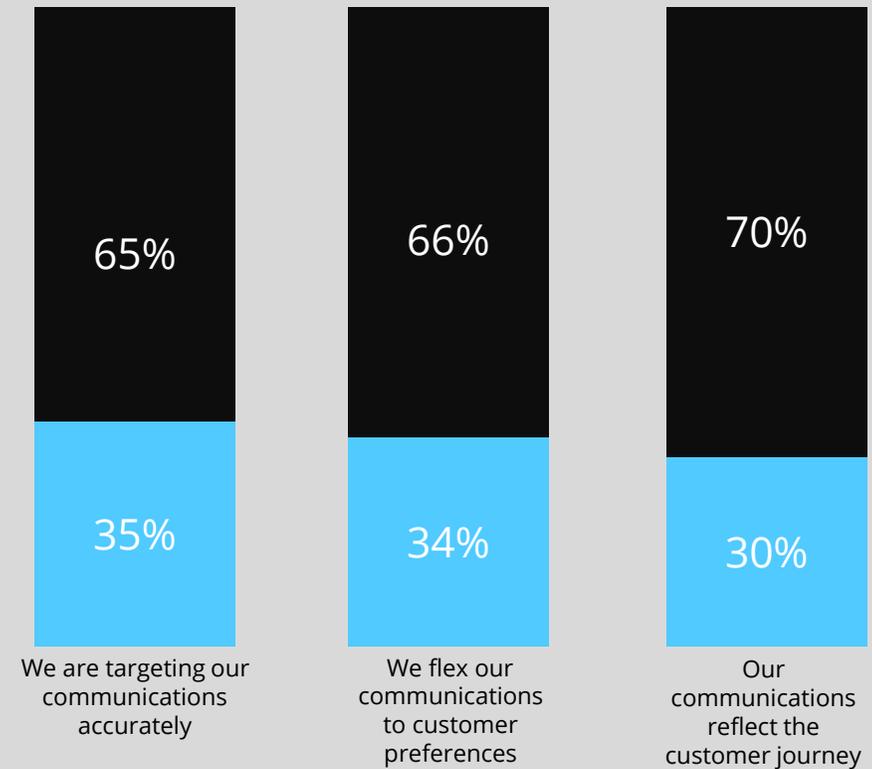
AGREE   DISAGREE

The five critical barriers to Customer Centric Communication

75% don't share a common view of their customers

Many marketers are encumbered by legacy operating models which are not configured around the customer journey. Breaking down such silos across multiple departments and geographies is incredibly challenging

60% don't have the right agency model
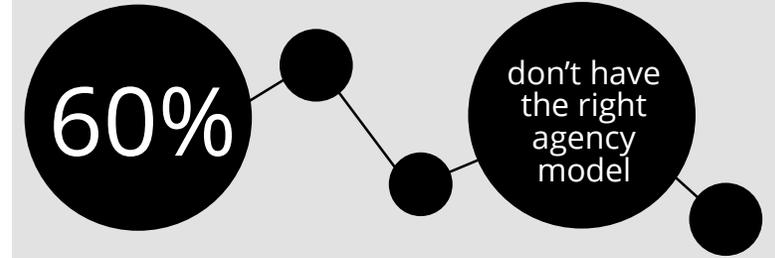
Joining the dots across a magnitude of communications channels is particularly challenging when brands are faced with conflicting agency models operating in their silos

**87%** of marketers don't have easy access to good data

Major challenges highlighted with the quality of data and ability to connect that data across the customer journey. Organisational silos, capabilities, and data access all highlighted as major barriers

73% don't have the right tech resources
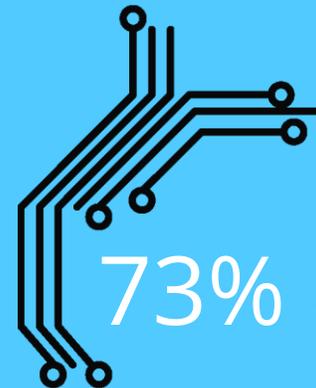
Technology is a considerable enabler in delivering customer centric communications, but many lack the skills & investment in this area
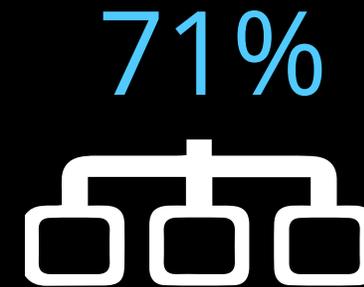
71% believe teams don't collaborate effectively

Many marketers highlighted the ambiguity with customer centricity with many believing their organisations to be more data or sales centric, than customer centric

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We asked five questions to diagnose where companies stand on the journey to customer centric communications:

Are ways of working insight driven, agile and collaborative?

Is the customer truly at the heart of decision making?

Are the data access, technology, and content management aligned?

Is the organisation structure aligned to the customer journey?

Can marketing teams map the customer experience and manage the touchpoints?

Ways of working

Direction

Resource & Technology

Organisation

Skills

AGILITY & COLLABORATION

BEHAVIOURS & MEASURES

PEOPLE & DATA

STRUCTURE & PROCESS

QUALITY & EXPERIENCE

Direction

Is the customer truly at the heart of decision making?

This section clearly confirmed the commitment among brands towards customer centric communications with an overwhelming **77%** agreeing that customer centricity is a key strategic imperative for their organisation.

Unfortunately, for almost **4 in 10** businesses, the reality is still some way from this vision: in fact, they are more data centric than customer centric, despite strong commitment from the leadership. This is a theme we found more commonly in the financial services and telecommunications verticals.

"Being an acquisition business, daily sales results carry more importance than what the customer wants."

| 77% | 73% | 39% | 66% |
| 23% | 27% | 61% | 34% |

Customer centricity is a key strategic pillar for our organisation in 2018

We have a clear view of the role of communications in delivering a more customer centric experience

Our organisation is more data centric than it is customer centric

Our leaders are customer focused and committed to customer first

AGREE   DISAGREE

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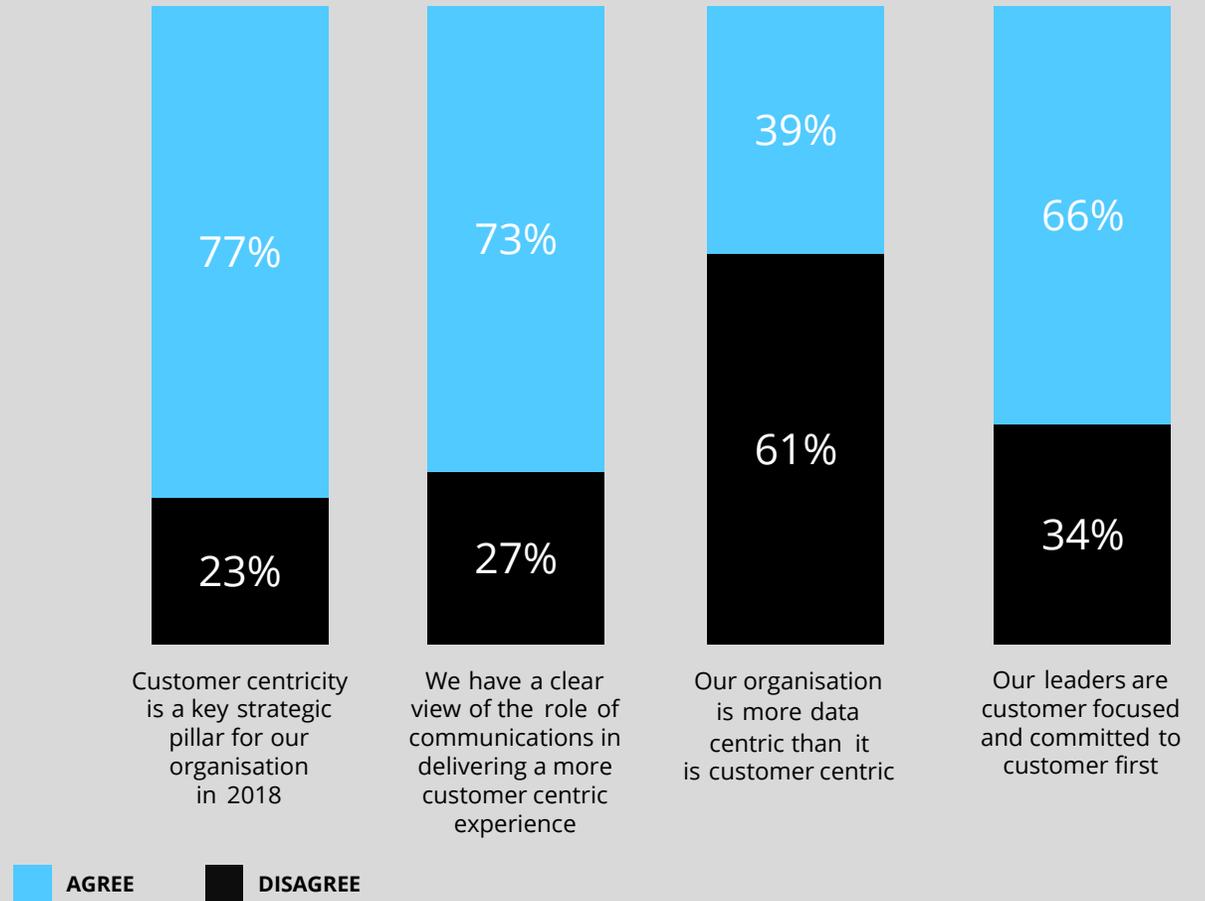
Organisation

Is the organisation structure aligned to the customer journey?

30% / **70%** — Our organization structure is aligned to our customers' journey

41% / **59%** — There is a clear accountability for the customer

50% / **50%** — As marketers, we find it natural and easy to do the best thing for customers

AGREE   **DISAGREE**
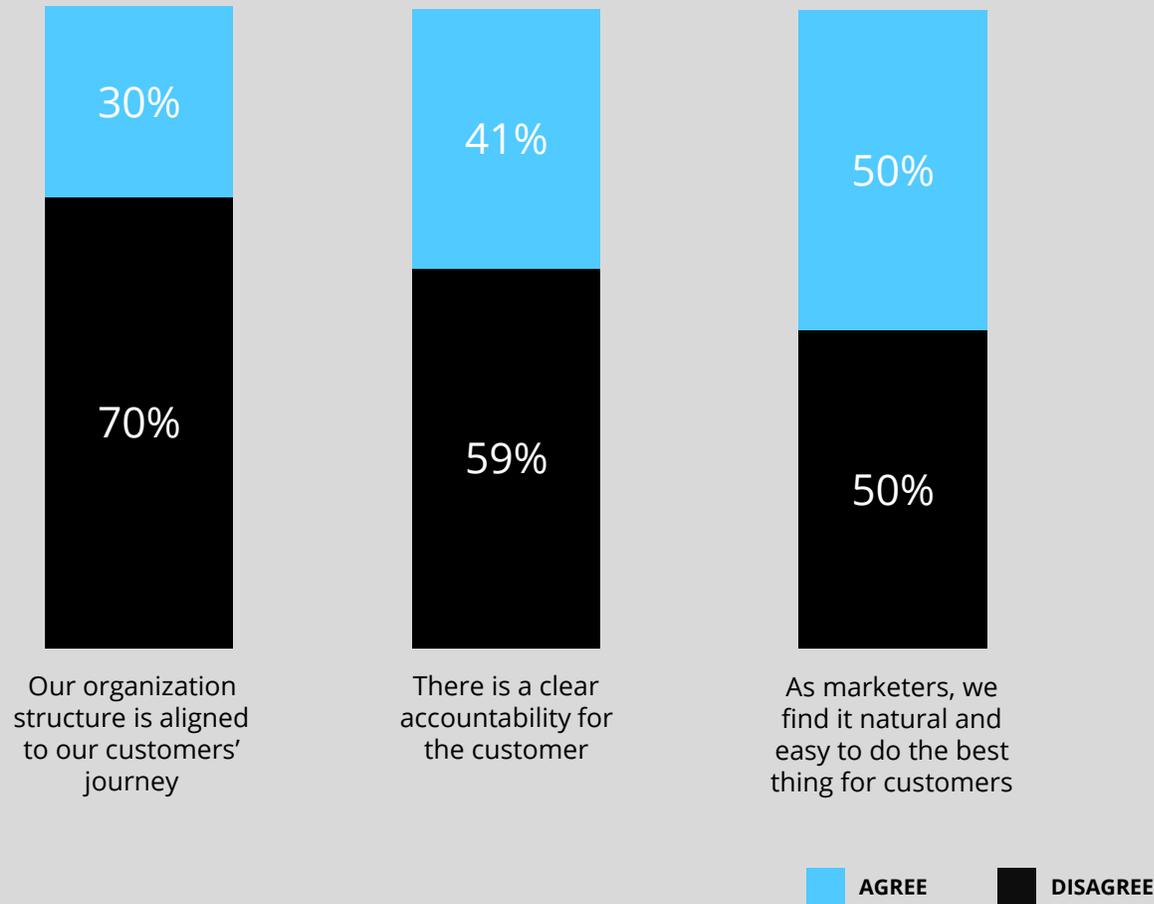
70% of marketers highlighted their "toughest challenge": most companies are organised in ways which are incompatible with the customer journey. Internal silos, politics and the lack of accountability (only **41%** believe there is clear accountability for the customer) prevent businesses from doing what is right for the customer.

"We're structured, brand first, not audience first. The true challenge lies in agreeing ownership and control of the data sets."

Furthermore, marketers' comments highlighted how this issue is further magnified for global brands, who face the additional challenge of enabling local empowerment and flexibility in communications.

"We need to allow local business units to be more flexible in its approach to how we speak to our local customers."

Skills

Can marketing teams map the customer experience and manage the touchpoints?

Marketing teams' ability to deliver customer centric communication is hampered by limited skills, internally and externally. Data and insight capabilities are critical here, but only **46%** believe they have an effective data and analytics function.

"We don't have the ability to generate actionable customer insight."

Several also commented about the need to be better at curating and sharing customer insight.

"We lack the ability to synthesise insightful data."

In addition, only **25%** of respondents believe that all teams work with a single view of the customer.

Our creative development is media neutral, and leverages insights from our customer data
46% 54%

All communications teams work with a single shared view of the customer
25% 75%

We deliver communications tailored to our audience and their stage of the journey
41% 59%

We have an effective data and analytics function which serves the business needs
46% 54%

AGREE   DISAGREE

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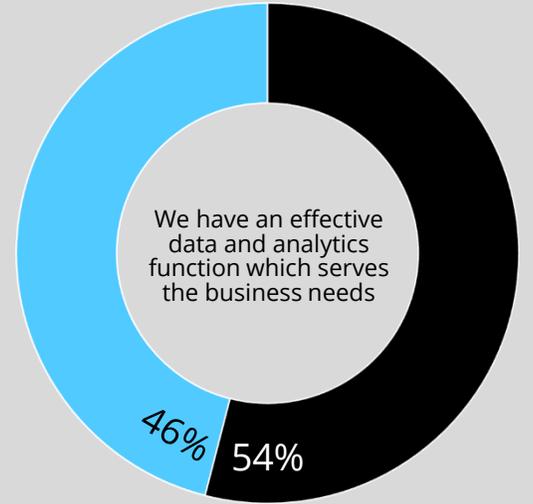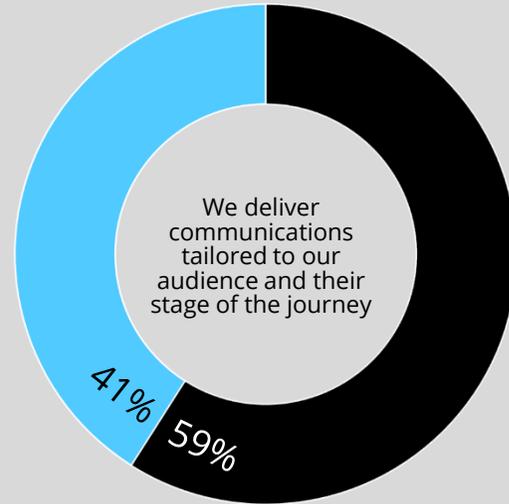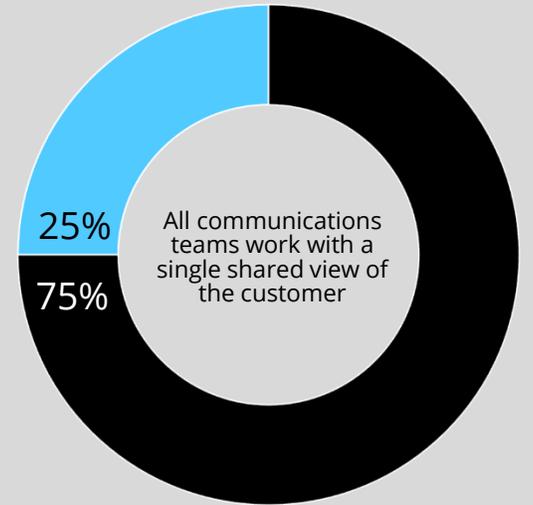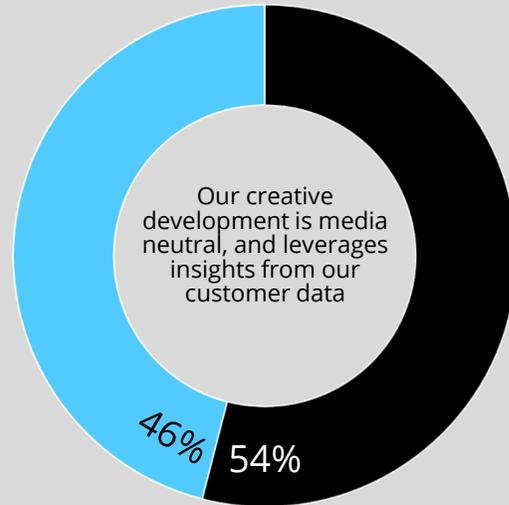
Resources & Technology

Are the data access, technology, and content management aligned?

We have the right technologies for managing and activating our customer data

73%

27%

Our customer data is joined up, easy to access and used by marketers and agency partners alike

79%

87%

21%

13%

We have the right resources to deliver dynamic, customer relevant content that is up to the minute

AGREE   **DISAGREE**
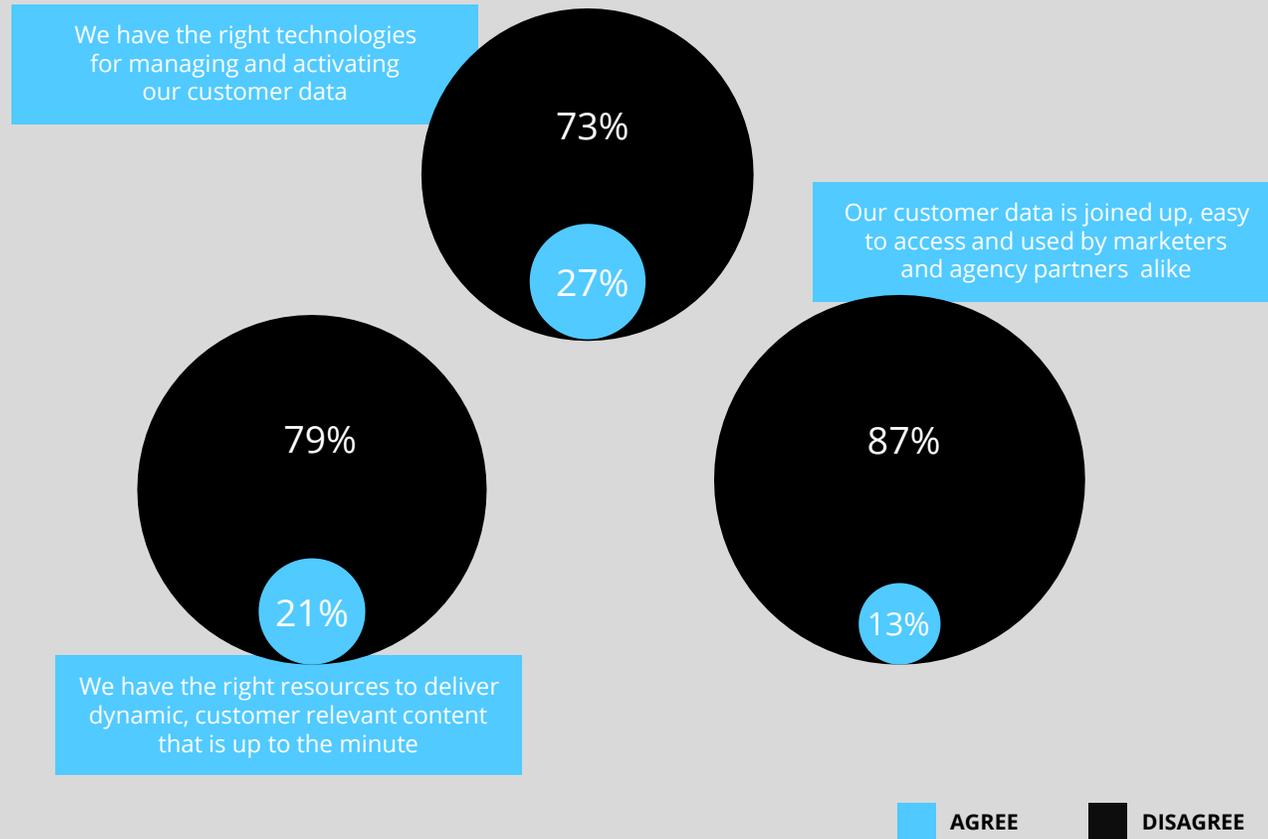
We were surprised that just **27%** agreed they had the right technologies and only **21%** the right resources to meet the demands of a more dynamic customer centric approach to their communications.

This technology deficit, when combined with the skill gaps identified above, result in the startling fact that only **13%** of brand marketers believe they can rely on easily accessible, joined up customer data.

Technology is clearly an enabler, but the resources, structures and capabilities must be in place first to extract the most value from the multitude of technologies available in the market.

"We don't have the organisational comfort with data-driven decision making and marketing, our CEO is too 'old school'"

Ways of Working

 Are ways of working insight driven, agile and collaborative?

Collaboration, both internal and external, is a major barrier, with only **29%** agreeing they collaborate well when communicating to the customer.

"Channel fragmentation and increased touch points makes it impossible to join the above and below the line media effectively."

And just **40%** believing they have a cohesive agency model, and some went further, challenging the integrity of agency partners.

"There is a real lack of trust in agency partners"

Agency models are evolving, but many are still compromised by legacy systems and approaches to collaboration. A truly neutral approach will always prove challenging particularly with competing interests and P&L pressures within the large agency groups.

Brands must optimize their own ways of working, and ensure internal alignment on the way they want to communicate to the customer - irrespective of who they use to deliver their communcations.

71%

60%

29%

40%

We cross organisational boundaries easily, and collaborate well to communicate to the customer

We have a cohesive agency model, and agencies cooperate well with each other

AGREE   DISAGREE

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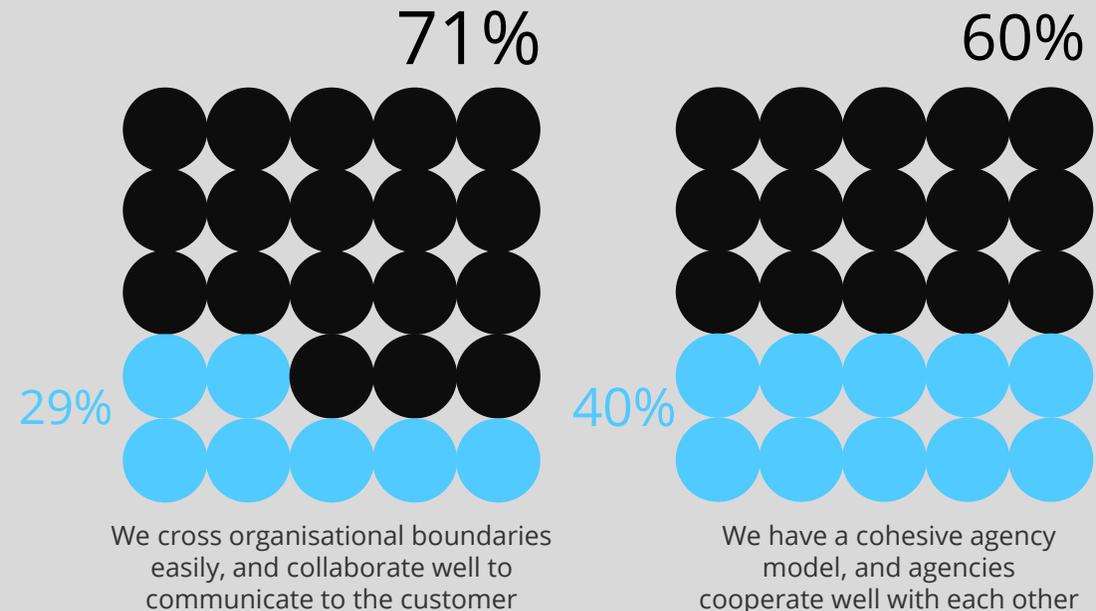
So if a third of companies do deliver customer centric communication: what are they doing differently?

From our research, companies that succeed in delivering customer centric communications generally display a number of vital signs:

ONE.

They have a clear vision for their brand, the relationship it should have with its customers, and the role communication plays in achieving that, at each stage of the customer journey

TWO.

They understand what data is required to enable this customer relationship, and have a clear plan for capturing, storing and using the data responsibly to deliver actionable insights.

THREE.

They have leadership that is committed to customers: they focus on customer KPIs and encourage a customer driven culture, where it's easy to do the right thing for customers

FOUR.

They challenge colleagues to work collaboratively across the inevitable structures and silos that obstruct progress in other companies. They share a single consistent view of the customer across teams

FIVE.

They think creatively about the capabilities needed to deliver authentic communications and make clear choices about which to own, buy or rent, and which need to be nurtured in-house

SIX.

They invest in the skills needed and think hard about ways of working to make it as simple as possible to earn loyalty and to interact with customers personally, seamlessly, and in a way that is both useful and engaging

"Our research reveals the challenges brands face in realising a more customer centric approach to their marketing, particularly where organisational silos, suppliers and their respective capabilities play such a critical role. Brands rightly so are demanding more leadership, deeper expertise and uncompromising objectivity to become more centric with their communication."

Ryan Kangisser,
Managing Partner

MediaSense®

"We work with organisations to simplify how customers interact with brand owners, and build confidence and capability for brands to deliver customer centric communication."

Jonathan Turner,
Managing Consultant

Oxfordsm

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Want to know more about customer centric communication?

🌐 www.c3-partnership.com   ✉ info@c3-partnership.com

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