

B2B Now

A study on the value of consumer relevance to B2B brands

+ siegel
gale

simple is smart

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Why we conducted this study

Most business-to-business companies (B2Bs) still debate the ultimate business benefit of building a strong brand that everyday consumers can understand and relate to.

Now, a new global research study from Siegel+Gale sheds definitive light on the value of building simple B2B brand experiences that can even engage and be relevant to consumers.

Key takeaways

Business decision-makers are more likely to consider B2B brands that consumers know and feel connected to. Our analysis reveals that the most relevant B2B brands:

1

Make their impact tangible to consumers

3

Generate demand through cohesive brand experiences

2

Foster consumer-centric cultures of innovation

4

Use simplified design to clarify their offerings

B2B brands that build consumer relevance reap significant business benefits.

Drives demand

B2B decision-makers are 10% more likely to consider brands that consumers know and feel connected to.

10%

Boosts the bottom line

In a side-by-side comparison between the 10 most and least connected brands, the Top 10 showed:

27%

more growth in stock value from 2010–2013

8%

higher ratio of intangible assets to total assets in 2012

31%

greater growth in revenue from 2010–2013

How we evaluated B2B brands

To measure the business impact of a consumer-centric approach to B2B branding, Siegel+Gale conducted a worldwide study with close to 9,500 consumers and 450 business decision-makers to assess 64 B2B-focused brands.*

Respondents were asked to identify the brand they felt most connected to across any category or context. They then rated that brand on 16 attributes, including personality traits and personal benefits. Participants then rated B2B brands they were familiar with in the same fashion. Additionally, business decision-makers indicated how likely they would be to consider respective brands for products or services their companies might need in the future.

In our analysis, we scored B2B brands based on two dimensions:

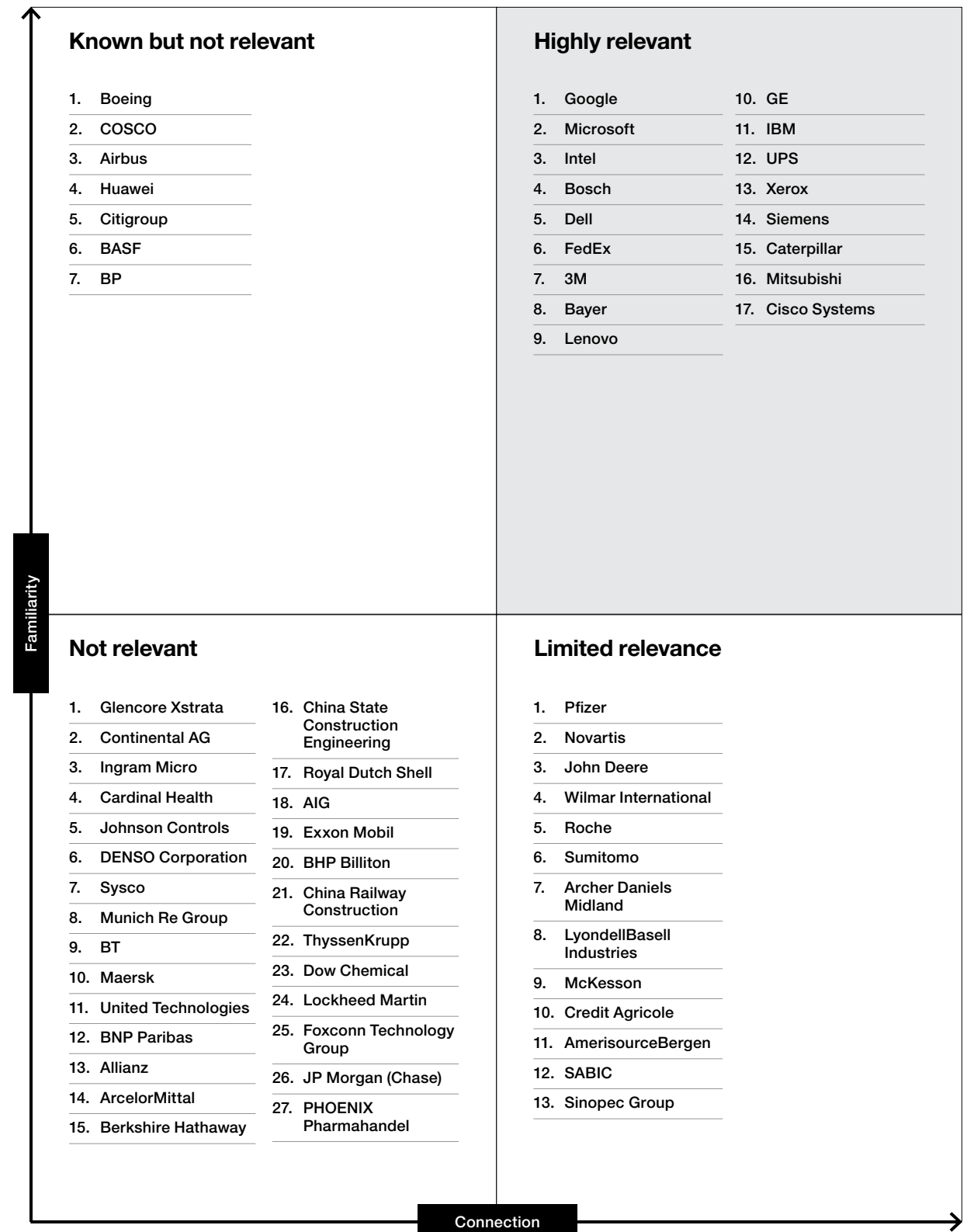
- + How **familiar** are consumers with the brands
- + How **connected** do consumers feel to the brands based on the attribute ratings**

These two dimensions enabled us to then determine B2B brands' overall relevance to consumers.

*To qualify for the study, a brand had to be on the Fortune Global 500 list and have the majority (over 50%) of its revenue come from B2B operations.

**Attributes that mattered most to consumers were given the most weight.

How B2B brands stack up



How B2B brands build consumer relevance

1. Make their impact tangible to consumers
2. Foster consumer-centric cultures of innovation
3. Generate demand through cohesive brand experiences
4. Use simple design to clarify their offerings



IBM

Highly relevant

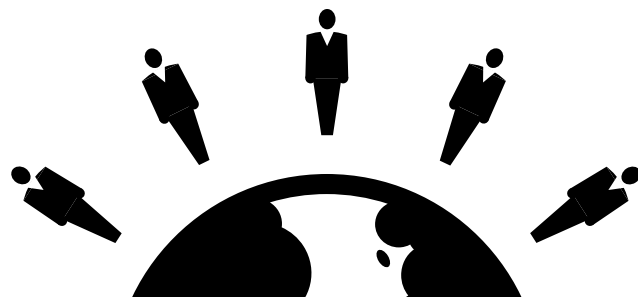
Answers call for change with purpose

In late 2008, with the world seemingly on the brink of economic collapse, IBM turned adversity into opportunity with its “Smarter Planet” initiative. As a “mandate for change” swept through business and government, IBM tapped into the public’s need for a different approach. By positioning itself as a forward-thinking company tackling the world’s most complex challenges, IBM demonstrated how it not only advanced entire industries but directly benefited consumers.

In its most recent “Made with IBM” campaign, IBM changed the conversation with 62 snapshots of how different organisations use the brand’s technology to create smarter experiences. By allowing customers to tell their stories of transformation, IBM made a notable shift from focusing on the “why” to elevating the “how.” The campaign is a natural evolution

of Smarter Planet, clarifying IBM’s relevance to consumers in an even more granular, tangible way.

Despite having no consumer business, IBM engaged consumers in the mass market, too. It showcased the power of its supercomputer Watson on TV’s *Jeopardy!* and gave tennis fans unique insights into their favorite players with SlamTracker analytics. Additionally, IBM’s THINK exhibits at Lincoln Center and Walt Disney World offered visitors the chance to directly interact with IBM technology—and realise its transformative potential—in ways they could see and touch.



Cisco

Highly relevant

Connects on a human level and makes it real

Though Cisco officially left the consumer market in 2013, it hasn’t stopped thinking about consumers. While its product lines are typically sold to top IT executives, the networking design company has long spoken to its B2B audiences like they were consumers.

Cisco also still invests heavily in consumer relevancy with, for example, its high-profile presence at this year’s International Consumer Electronics Show. Its “Tomorrow Starts Here” advertising realises its vision in the most human terms. The spots take a lofty message that predicts the Internet of Things will change “...the trajectory of virtually every person on the planet,” but grounds it in how Cisco will impact everyday life.



“We can’t just say it provides 322 terabits per second of processing. What we need to say is that 322 terabits per second is enough for every man, woman and child in China to be on a video call at the same time.”

–Doug Webster, director, strategic communications, worldwide service provider marketing

Fail to make their impact tangible to consumers



Huawei

Known but not relevant

Questions, not answers, abound

One of the world's largest telecommunications companies is having major signal problems. As China-based Huawei, a telecommunications infrastructure brand, tries to become a top smartphone player, its vague messages and opaque operations raise more questions than answers.

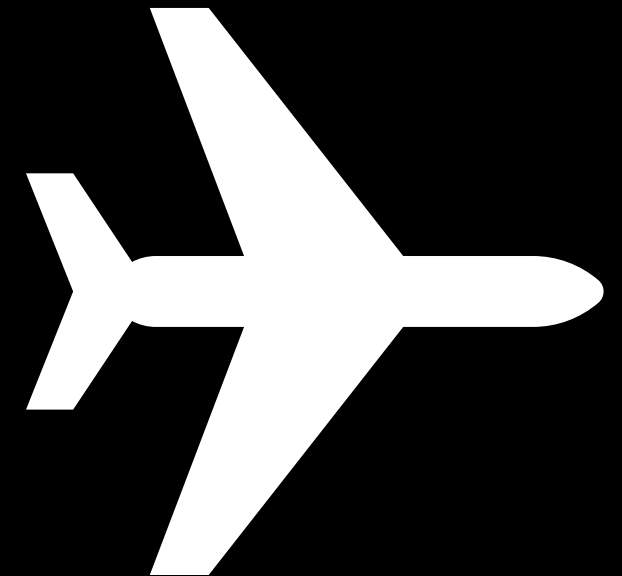
The company's past attempts to launch consumer-facing campaigns, "Make it Possible" and "Welcome Possibilities," only underscored the disconnect between Huawei and consumers. Generic, vague and trite, Huawei's ads were devoid of relatable specifics and failed to make Huawei's role or benefit to consumers tangible.

These empty appeals make an already uphill climb into consumer markets that much harder, especially in the US. The company already faces scrutiny as a potential security risk based on its relationship with the Chinese government and People's Liberation Army. Its opaque operations and finances aren't helping, either. Add Cisco's charges that Huawei "doesn't play by the rules" on intellectual property, and you get a decidedly consumer-unfriendly brand scenario.

Boeing and Airbus

Known but not relevant

Missed connections



While aircraft manufacturers Boeing and Airbus understandably market themselves to a finite universe of B2B buyers, both miss profitable connections to consumers or fly above their heads entirely.

Today, passengers not only have a choice of airlines, but they can easily access ticket information that includes the type of plane that will carry them to their destination. Still, most advertising from Boeing and Airbus circulates in industry publications. When the brands do appear in general circulation, they are often defined in the minds of consumers by their failures. Boeing's full-page ads in a major Japanese newspaper following the worldwide Dreamliner grounding in 2013 reinforced this notion.

Other efforts, like Boeing's "Home and Away" campaign, were so generic they lacked relevancy to the everyday consumer. And its more recent "Build Something Better" initiative is far better suited to recruitment than putting passengers in Boeing seats. For its part, Airbus focuses its ads on trying to competitively unseat Boeing, which only fuels side-by-side comparisons that distinguish neither brand.



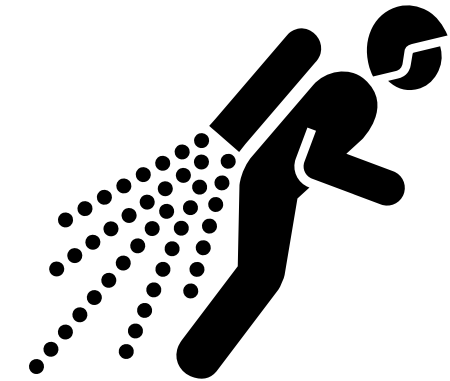
3M

Highly relevant

Culture of risk-taking and fresh thinking pays off

Proving that the only real risk is to never take a risk, 3M has not only made its brand synonymous with innovation, it has created an internal culture that generates and perpetuates fresh thinking. The payoff? Consistently ranked in the top 20 of "America's Most Admired Corporations" by *Fortune* magazine, 3M's gross margin has averaged 51 percent over a 20-year period with a 29 percent return on assets.

Striking a balance between present and future priorities, the company uses a variety of forums to spark ideas, including connecting consumers directly with scientists. And its "30 percent rule" requires that 30 percent of each division's revenue comes from products introduced within the previous four years.



3

Generate demand through cohesive brand experiences



Google
Highly relevant

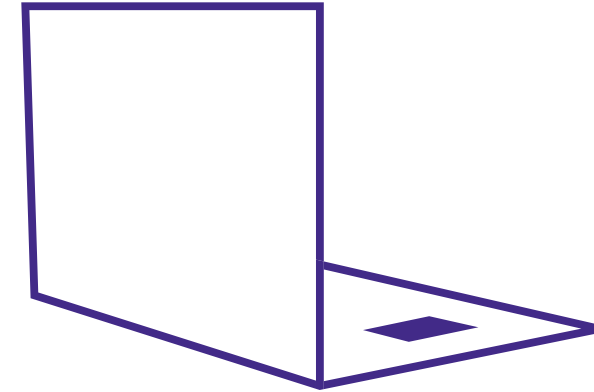
Consumer experience drives enterprise success

Google has always stood for simplicity. Despite exponential growth and innovations—from analytics and cloud platforms to virtual wallets—Google steadfastly defends the simplicity of its homepage. As Google expands content, audiences and offerings, its single search bar continues to be an uncluttered, simple entry point for consumers. This is one of the reasons it has been at the top of our consumer Global Brand Simplicity Index for 4 years.

While Google is a household name for consumers, it generates revenue mainly as an advertising platform and offers diverse enterprise solutions to companies of all sizes. Unlike many B2Bs that create different

experiences for different audiences, Google doesn't view these as disconnected efforts. Instead, Google seamlessly integrates its consumer and business offerings, realizing that consumer adoption helps them offer game-changing solutions to businesses.

If you visit Google's enterprise solutions website, you will see the line, "work the way you live." This succinctly captures their commitment to provide simple, cohesive brand experiences across consumer and business audiences. And it's a belief all B2B brands should share.



Intel
Highly relevant

Consumer-friendly messages translate to business

Saying "multinational semiconductor chip maker" doesn't mean much to most people. But showing them an "Intel Inside" sticker does.

Intel's game-changing "Intel Inside" campaign not only clarified the brand's value to consumers, it shifted buying behaviour dramatically. As a direct result, Intel's market cap grew from \$10.2 billion in 1991 (when the campaign was launched) to \$208.5 billion by 1998. Suddenly, a complicated process was translated into a simple sign of quality, and consumers responded by demanding that their computers run on Intel.

Now, Intel is revisiting the idea using the simple mantra "Look Inside" across consumer and enterprise channels. The concept expresses Intel's brand promise of innovation while capitalising on what one observer calls "the tremendous equity in the word 'inside.'" Applying consumer best practices to enterprise, the campaign uses simple, relatable language, focuses on benefits and issues a clear call to action. Most important, it does so in a consistent voice that engages both B2B and B2C audiences on a human level.

4

Use simple design to clarify their offerings

FedEx
Highly relevant

Delivers clarity through colour



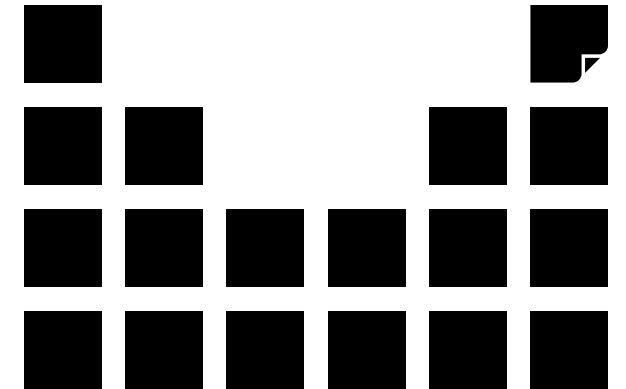
FedEx always begins with purple. Whether it's Express, Freight, Ground, Custom Critical, Trade or FedEx Office, the "Fed" is always purple. It's the "Ex" that guides customers, helping them identify and distinguish between offerings.

Through its masterbrand strategy and a consistent, thoughtful use of colour, FedEx clarifies and highlights its distinct offerings while building a cohesive whole on a simple foundation.

That's a thought reinforced on the company's own website in a piece called "5 Key Ways to Make Your Brand Successful." Among its messages to FedEx Office customers: "You want your customers to easily recognise your business and associate it with what you can do for them," followed closely by "Keep it simple."

3M
Highly relevant

Consumers explore building blocks of innovation



Rethinking the universally recognised periodic table to showcase its groundbreaking technology, 3M instantly connects consumers and businesses to its innovations in a relatable context.

But the company achieves more than making navigation intuitive by clearly and creatively linking its products and technology to these iconic building blocks. It also sends a strong message that 3M is an elemental and essential part of everyday life.

How relevant are you to consumers?

If you work for a B2B brand, ask yourself the following questions. The more often you answer “Yes,” the more relevant you are to consumers and the more likely you are to be considered by business decision-makers.

- Does your company have a clearly articulated purpose everyone can relate to?
- Do your friends and family understand what your company does and how it makes a difference?
- Can your employees say without hesitation why they proudly go to work every day?
- Do you bring consumers or consumer insights into your innovation process?
- Do you engage consumers to generate demand with your customers?
- Are the experiences you provide—from communications to products and services—consistent and simple?
- Is it easy to understand your portfolio of offerings, whether for customers and business prospects or the everyday consumer?
- Do you use design to clarify and differentiate your offerings?

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Siegel+Gale is the simplicity company.

We seek it, defend it and embrace it in everything we do to help brands reach their true potential. Simplicity is the centerpiece of the strategies we develop that reveal the unique truths of an organisation, the engaging stories we create that connect brands with their audiences and the meaningful experiences we deliver that are both unexpectedly fresh and remarkably clear.

Since 1969, global strategic branding firm Siegel+Gale has championed simplicity for leading corporations, non-profits and government organisations worldwide. We have offices in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, London, Beijing, Shanghai and Dubai, but we're willing to fly just about anywhere. We're also not alone. As part of Diversified Agency Services, a Division of Omnicom Group Inc., we have strong partners all around the world.

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