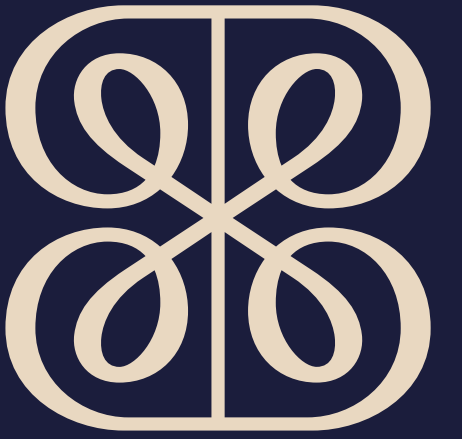
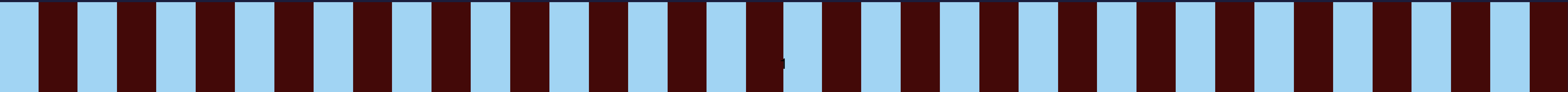


September 2026



The end of everything

*How focus drives growth, and the pursuit
of “everything” gets in the way*





We are living in an age of Everything

More audiences. More trends. More channels. More data.
More opportunities. More pressure to respond.

Somewhere along the way, “more” became synonymous with
growth. But strategy has always demanded something harder.

Choice. Sacrifice. Conviction.

Growth doesn't come from doing everything.
It comes from what you give up.

To better understand what makes focus so difficult in an age of Everything, we partnered with Ipsos to survey more than 200 marketers across North America.

We brought the findings together with our own perspective to understand not just why focus breaks down, but what it takes to put it into practice.





64%

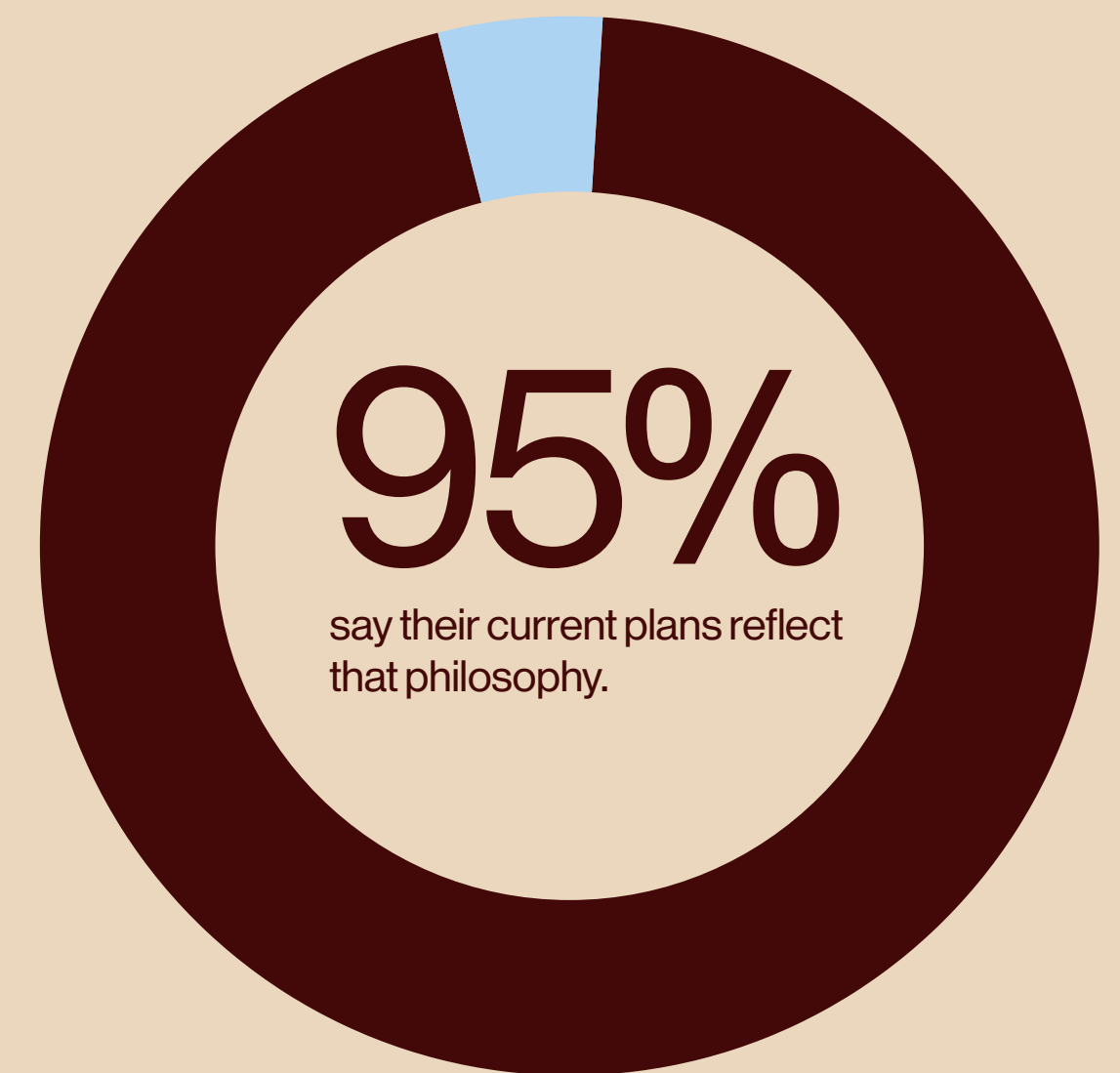
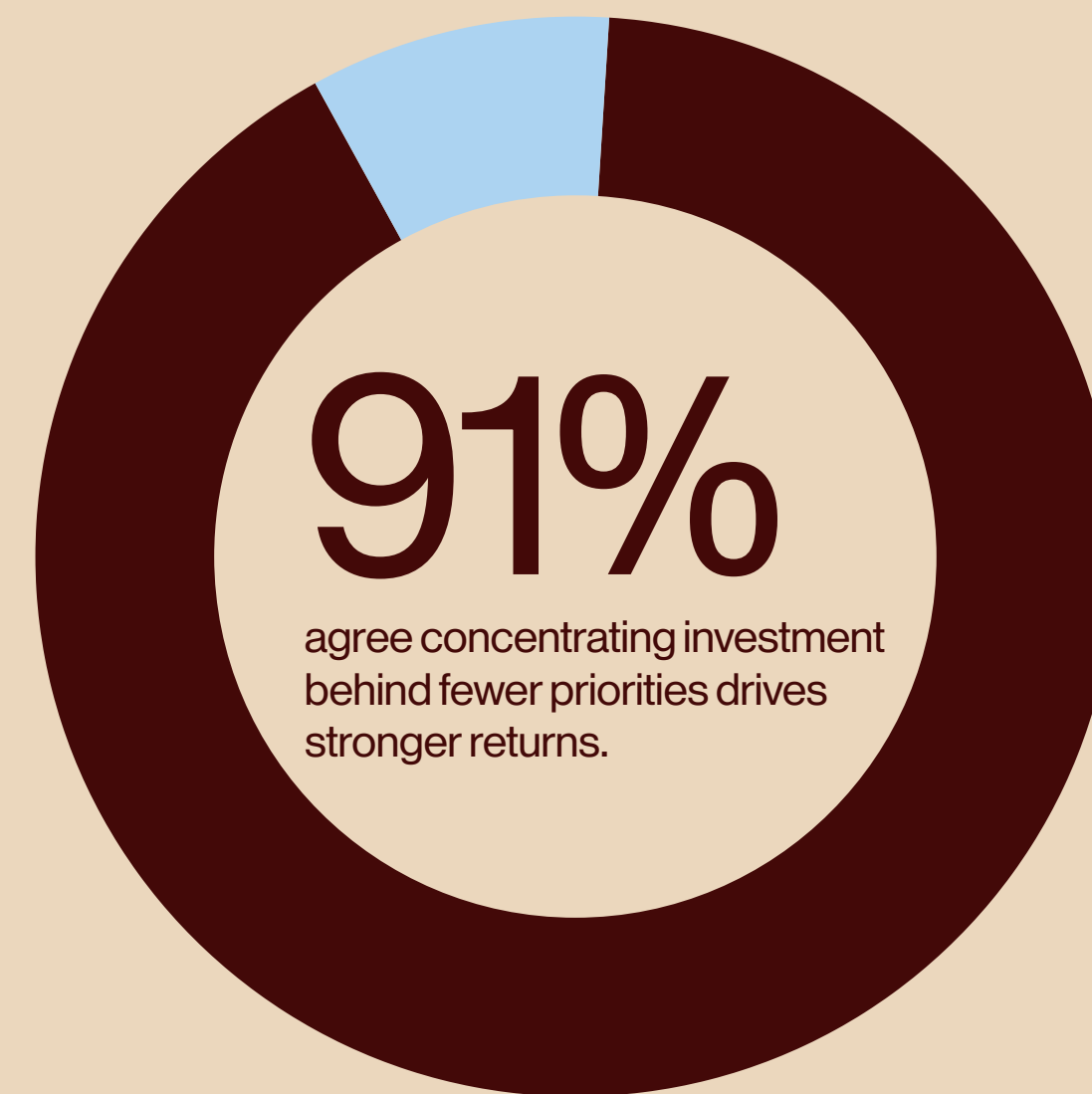
of marketers acknowledge that greater focus would have improved their results over the past year.

No one sets out to do Everything

Leaders understand that focus is fundamental to growth. That spreading resources across too many priorities dilutes their impact. And that making clear choices about where to concentrate effort creates stronger returns.

That belief in focus is nearly universal. Leaders recognize the value of concentrating investment behind fewer priorities, and overwhelmingly feel their plans reflect that intention.

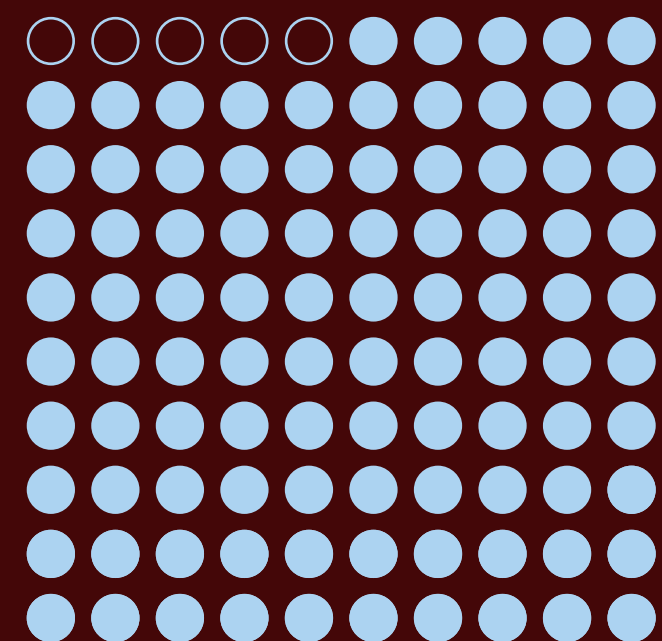
But belief alone is not enough.



Belief doesn't always translate into behaviour

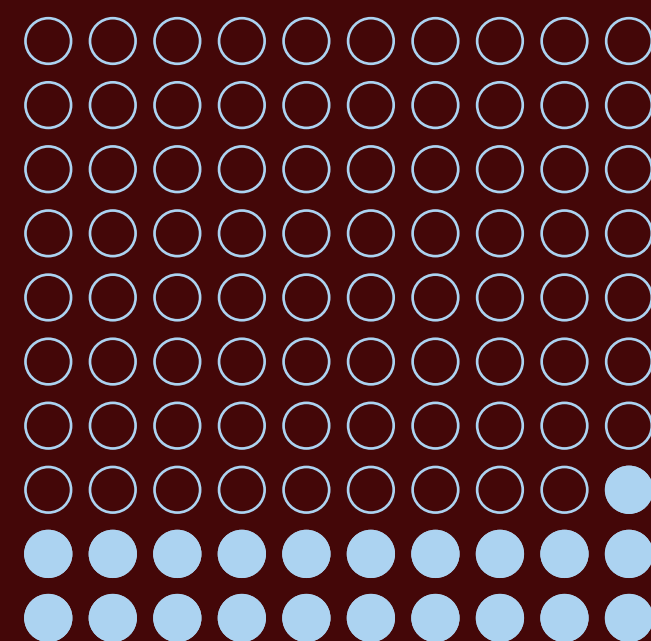
Despite a strong belief in focus, the majority of leaders still allocate a quarter of their activity and a fifth of their budget outside their strategic priorities.

Knowing what matters is one thing.
Having the conviction to give up what doesn't is another.



95%

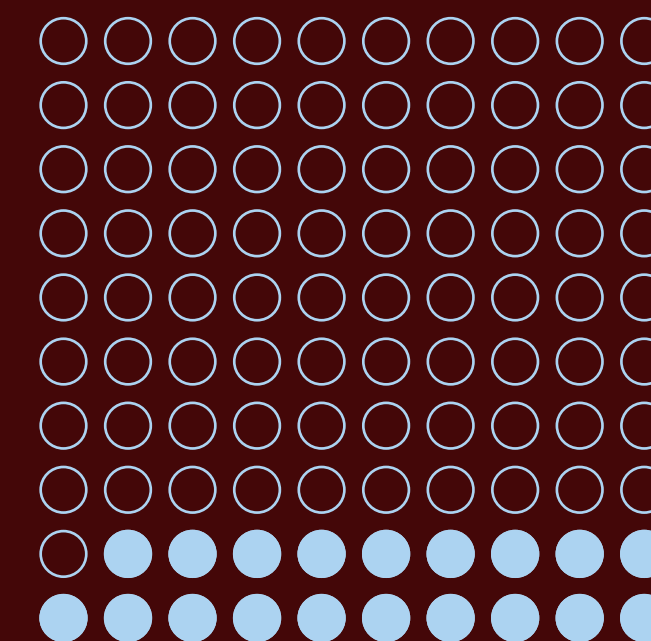
of marketers say their
plans reflect focus



But only

21%

put more than 80% of
budget behind priorities



And only

19%

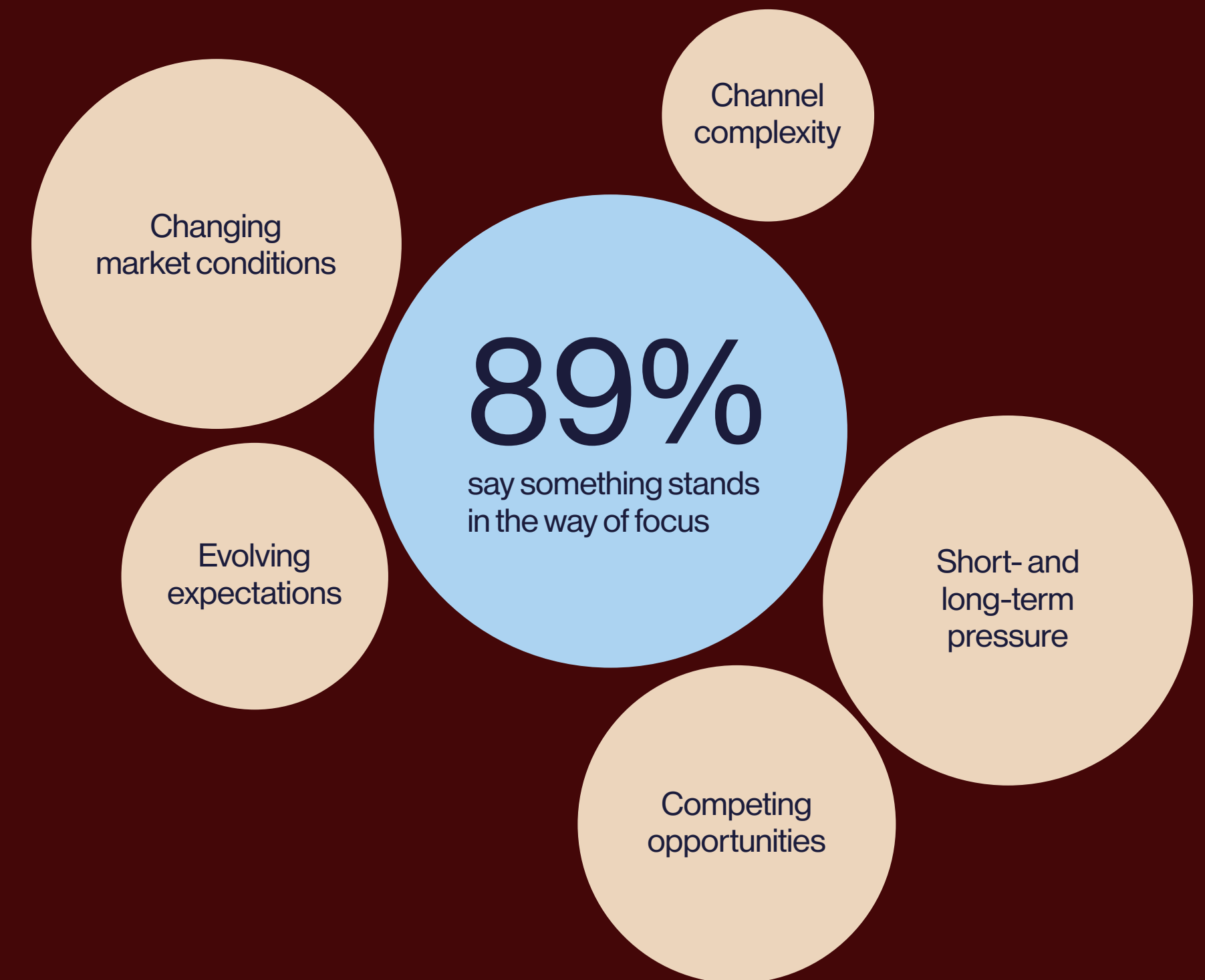
direct more than 75% of
initiatives behind priorities

Under pressure, doing more wins

When the stakes rise, so does the temptation to add.

Nearly half of marketers say external pressures make it harder to stay focused, and over half are spreading their attention across multiple objectives, even though the majority of them acknowledge that greater focus would have improved their results.

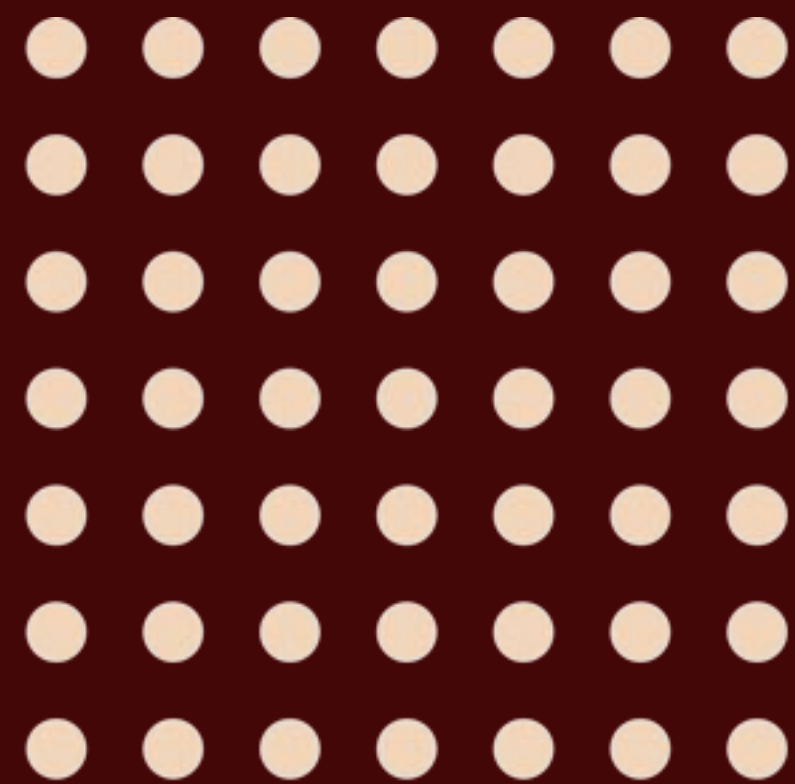
They know focus works. But under pressure, saying yes to more can feel safer than choosing less.



94%

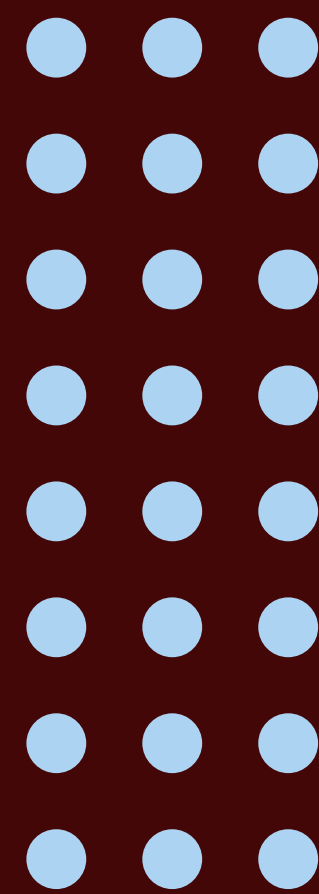
Believe in audience focus

Growth Pressure



65%

Go wider



35%

Go deeper

The first instinct is to widen the audience

When pressure demands action, one of the first moves for the majority of marketers is to reach more people.

Pursuing new audiences and adding new segments all come before going deeper with the core, despite knowing that a more focused audience is more effective.

The audience gets broader when the strategy needs to get sharper.



A low-angle, close-up photograph of a hand holding a single wooden stick over a large, dense pile of similar sticks. The scene is backlit by a bright light source, creating a strong glow and silhouetting the hand and the pile of sticks. In the background, the dark silhouette of a horse's head and mane is visible against the bright sky.

Focus dies by addition

So what does it take to hold firm under pressure?

Focus isn't a decision. It's a discipline.

More than a mindset, it requires the right conditions to put it into practice. Our research points to 4 conditions that allow it to take hold:

The courage
to leave
people out

A system
designed to
support focus

The
confidence
to commit

Permission
to say no

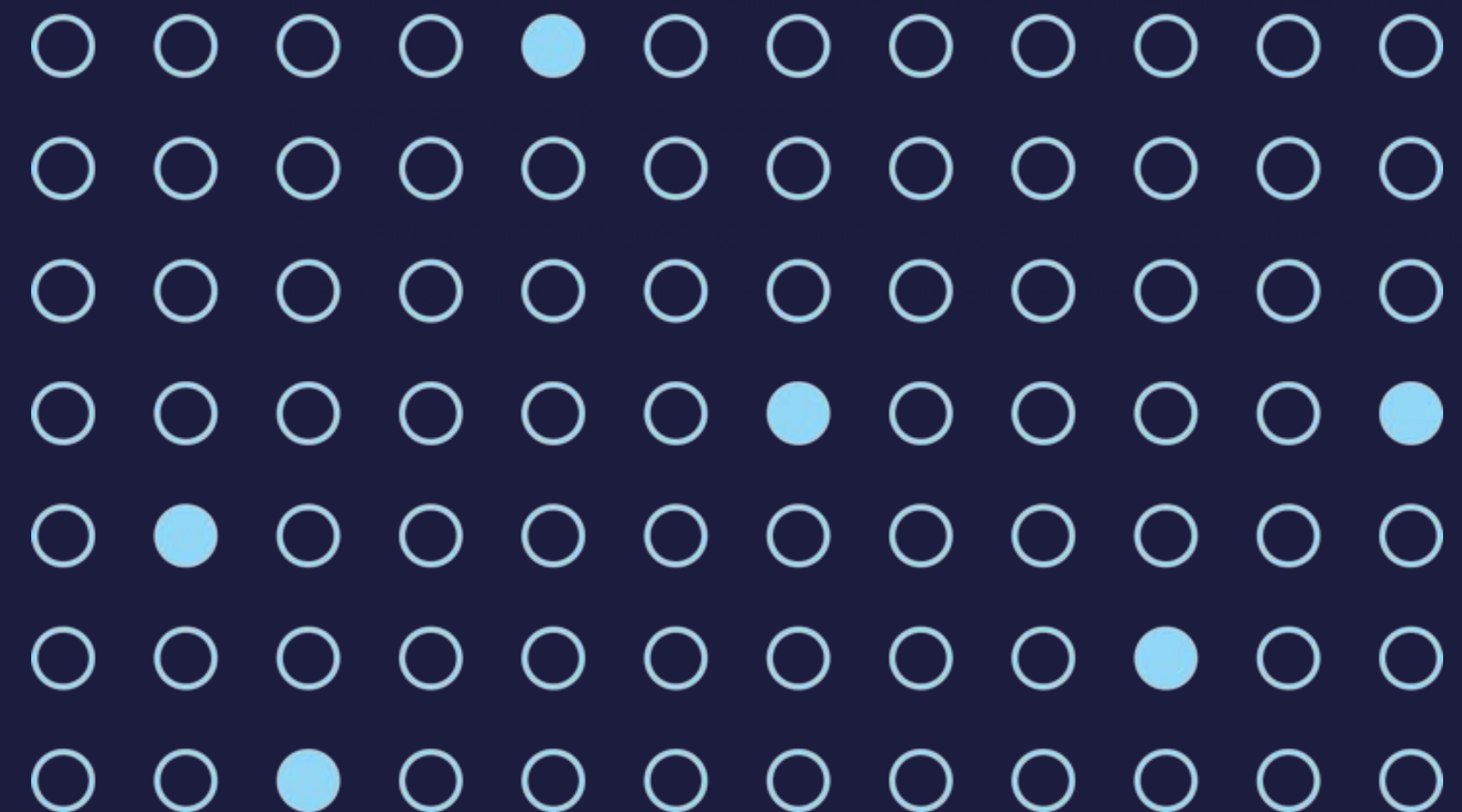
The courage to leave people out

Trying to be everything to everyone feels like the safer path to growth. But influence has never been evenly distributed. Across social movements, networks and the spread of ideas, the same pattern emerges: relatively small groups can play an outsized role in creating much larger effects.

The opportunity isn't to matter a little to everyone.
It's to matter more to the people who can move others.

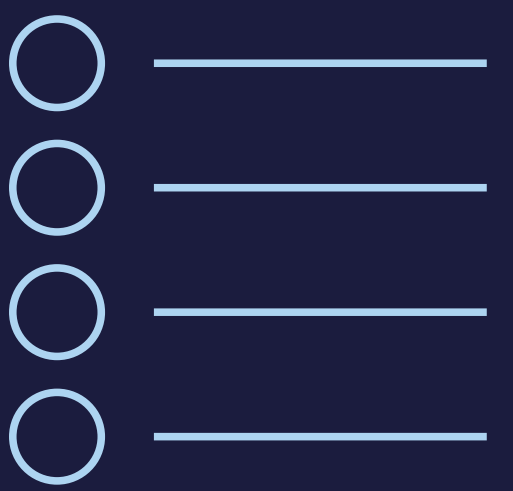
“The Law of the Few says that there are exceptional people out there who are capable of starting epidemics. All you have to do is find them.”

— Malcolm Gladwell

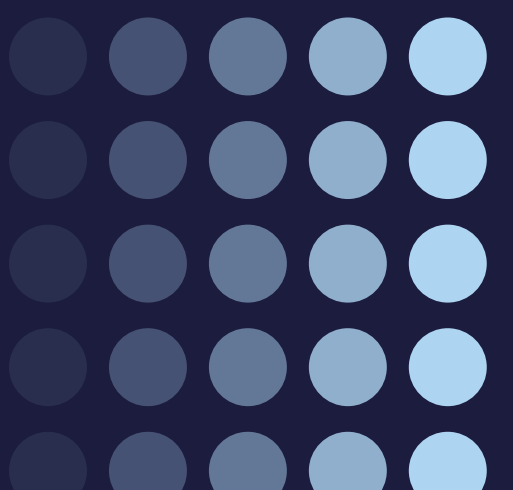




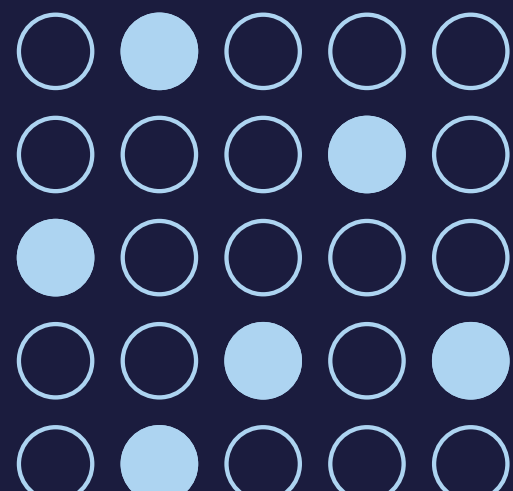
Assess



Prioritize



Execute



Assess



Prioritize

A system designed to support focus

As growth opportunities multiply, so do the demands competing for attention. And organizations are remarkably good at accommodating them. Another objective. Another audience. Another initiative. It's no surprise that priority overload has become one of the biggest barriers to focus.

An organization built to support focus treats prioritization as an active, ongoing practice: one that revisits what's important as circumstances shift, and asks what to trade off, not just what to add. Focus can't be agreed to once. It has to be embedded into how the organization works, and revisited as circumstances change.

The confidence to commit

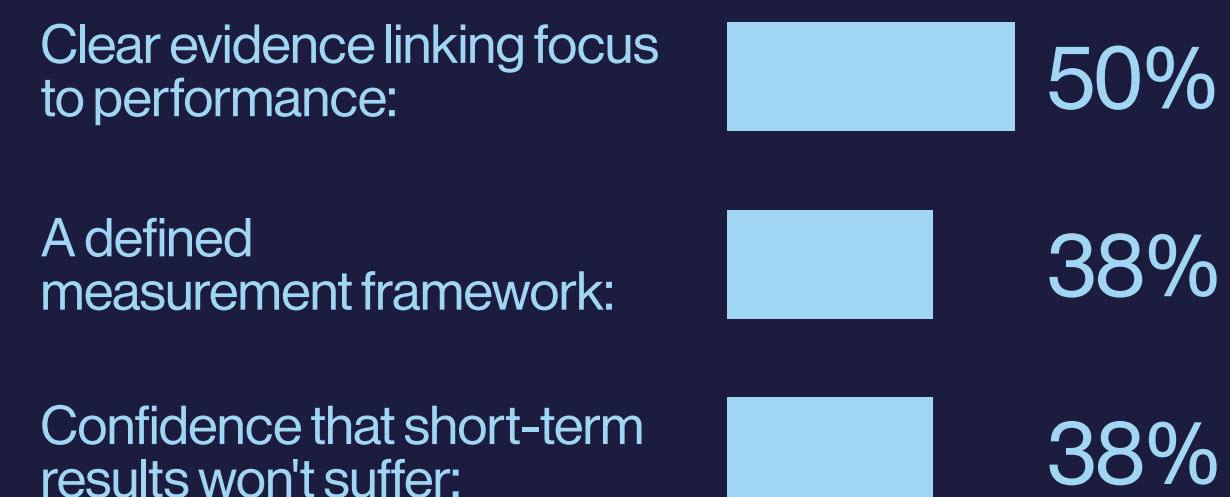
Leaders want stronger proof that focus will deliver, and greater confidence that they're placing their bets in the right places. Better data can sharpen those choices. But no amount of evidence eliminates uncertainty. At some point, focus requires the conviction to make the call and stick with it.

Evidence informs the decision. Conviction gives the confidence to act.

What would give marketers the confidence to say no:



What leadership specifically wants before backing concentrated spend:



VPs
70%



Confidence to say “no” to new initiatives

Directors
52%

Permission to say no

The further focus travels from the top, the harder it becomes to protect.

Senior leaders are significantly more comfortable saying no to new priorities than those below them. Yet it’s often further down the organization where new requests, competing demands and additional priorities have to be absorbed.

Protecting focus means giving people throughout the organization permission to say no, before another yes becomes another priority.





“The essence of
strategy is choosing
what not to do”

— Michael Porter

Focus starts where Everything ends

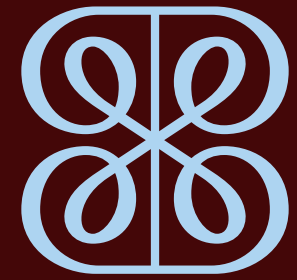
Stop asking what else you could do.
Decide what you're willing to give up.



Multi-dimensional
mindset

Business is
our backbone

Empathy armed
with evidence



BENSIMON BYRNE