

How To Win Mindshare In The GenAI Race

By Derek Yueh

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Foreword

The generative AI revolution has arrived, and with it, a curious paradox: the more sophisticated our technology becomes, the more human our decision-making reveals itself to be.

This research began with a simple question about how B2B buyers choose their GenAI vendors. What we discovered challenges rational purchasing decisions and carefully mapped customer journeys. The executives evaluating enterprise AI platforms aren't operating in some sterile boardroom bubble, they're bringing their weekend ChatGPT experiments and daily interactions with LLMs directly into their procurement processes.

Most GenAI brands are caught in a race to demonstrate technical superiority while buyers are making choices based on familiarity, comfort, and cognitive shortcuts. The sophisticated evaluation matrices and feature comparisons? Often just elaborate justifications for decisions that were made the moment someone recognized a name they trusted.

This research doesn't just reveal how buyers behave, it illuminates our responsibility as marketers navigating this technological shift. As we help shape how organizations adopt AI, we're not just competing for market share; we're influencing how humans relate to technology that will fundamentally change how we work.

The findings ahead will challenge assumptions about B2B marketing in the AI era and reveal what it truly takes to build memorable brands when technical capabilities alone aren't enough. The brands that will thrive are those that understand buyers as whole people, not procurement committees. They'll speak to both analytical minds and instinctive responses, building memory structures that matter when decisions get made in the quiet moments between meetings.

This research shows you how to be one of them.

[Ty Heath](#)

Director, The B2B Institute

About The Author



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Derek leads primary research at The B2B Institute, where he advises marketers on brand strategy, creative effectiveness, and measurement. Or, as his friends and family understand it, he moonlights as a brand therapist for B2B marketers—helping them untangle the paradox of why ads work best on the people who need them the least.

Prior to LinkedIn, Derek worked as a market researcher at Nielsen, helping global brands launch new product innovations. He holds an MBA from Wharton and a soft spot for pop culture, which means his modus operandi is to sneak in as many [unserious references](#) to serious research as his team will allow.

He is also the author of [How B2B Tech Brands Grow](#) and [Building A Customer-Led Growth Strategy](#), which he assures you are more fun than they sound—even if their publications happen to coincide with a noticeable uptick in his white hairs.

Acknowledgments

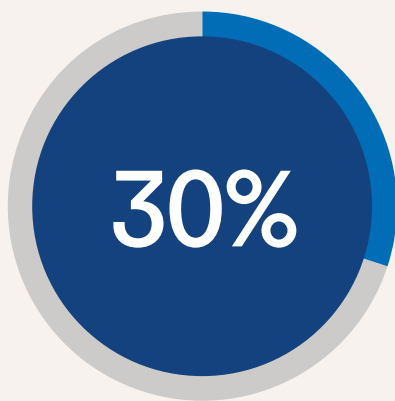
First and foremost, I'd like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Jenni Romaniuk and Lara Stocchi from the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute who have been invaluable partners in shaping this research. Your expertise is designing questions that yield true insight—not just noise—is a gift. And to Jamie Lyons who always manages to make the data sing and somehow knows what I need before I even do.

And a big thanks to my exceptionally talented team at The B2B Institute. To Haley for being the best “talent agent” in the biz. To Lisha, the reigning queen of PR and punctuation. To Ty for your steady guidance and video editing skills. To Kate for being my second set of eyes and the global megaphone for research. To Marielys for running interference on operations so I could actually find the time to write. To Vita and Caroline, our newest captains, for your fresh perspectives and leadership. And to everyone else—whether you lent a hand, shared a take, or caught a typo, your contributions made this far better and more fun to make!

Part I:

The GenAI Buying Journey: 3 Stats That Will Change Your Growth Strategy

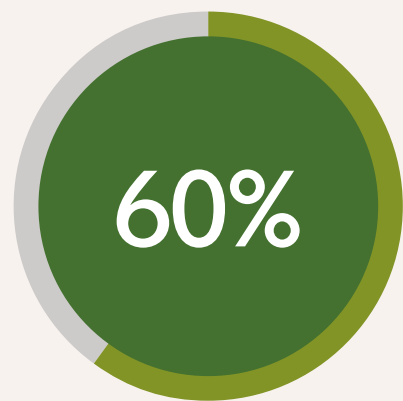
The 3 Stats That Will Change Your Growth Strategy



Percentage of B2B Buyers that purchased a GenAI solution in the past 3 months



Average number of brands GenAI Buyers considered before making a purchase



Percentage of GenAI Buyers that made a purchase from an existing vendor

Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

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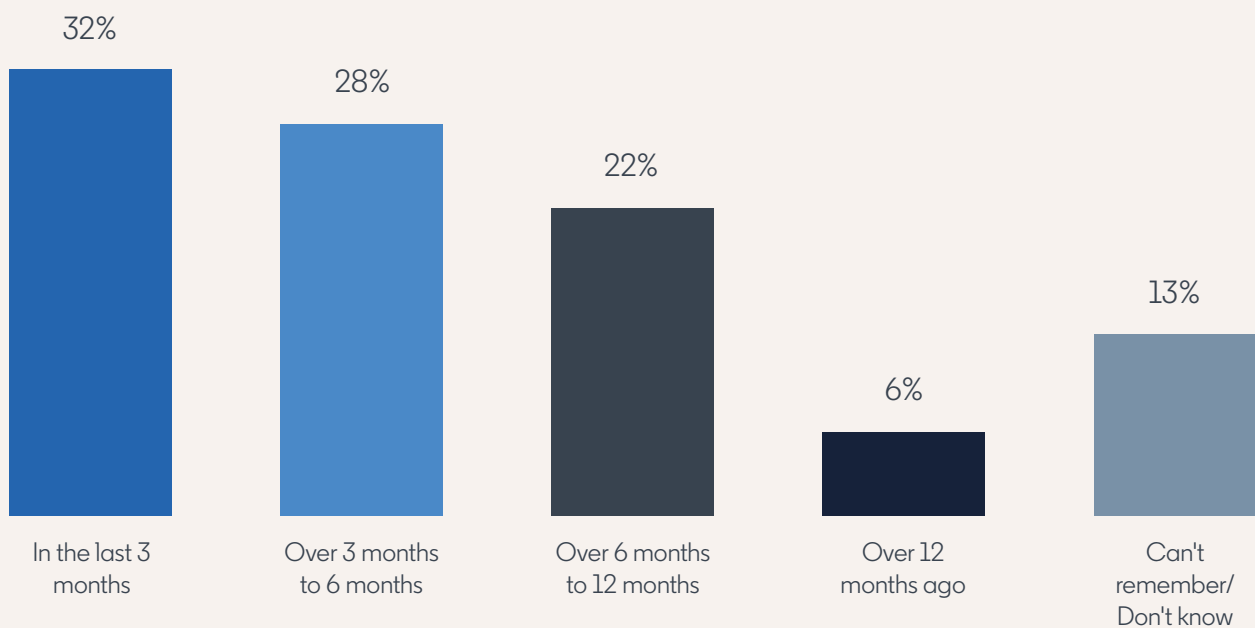
In theory, Generative AI is a technological shift that will completely transform the business world; it's being pitched as every solution under the sun, from corporate Ozempic for slimming down cost structures to corporate Viagra for enhanced executive performance in the boardroom. In reality, GenAI is being procured and bought like just any other item in a company's tech stack. So what does this mean for the B2B marketer trying to win the GenAI Buyer?

B2B marketers like to imagine the buying journey as a rational, orderly affair: detailed RFPs, competitive vendor evaluations, and months of careful deliberation. Clinging to this fiction offers a comforting illusion of control — a belief that, if the process is logical, we can win customers by hitting them over the head with stats and feature lists. But the reality is far messier. The B2B marketers who understand their B2B buyers as time-starved, emotional, and irrational decision makers (instead of neat customer profiles) will be the ones who win their business.

In our latest study conducted in partnership with the [Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science](#), the data shows that GenAI buyers are doing less shopping than we think and are operating more on autopilot than we realize. If you're trying to sell GenAI, these three stats about how GenAI is being bought will help B2B marketers see how the competitive landscape actually operates and what it takes to win with a strong brand, not just a strong product.

1. Only ~30% of Organizations Have Purchased a GenAI Solution in the Past 3 Months.

When was the last time your company bought/contracted a new generative AI tool for application to enterprise software (e.g. CRM, Cloud, ERP, etc.)?



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

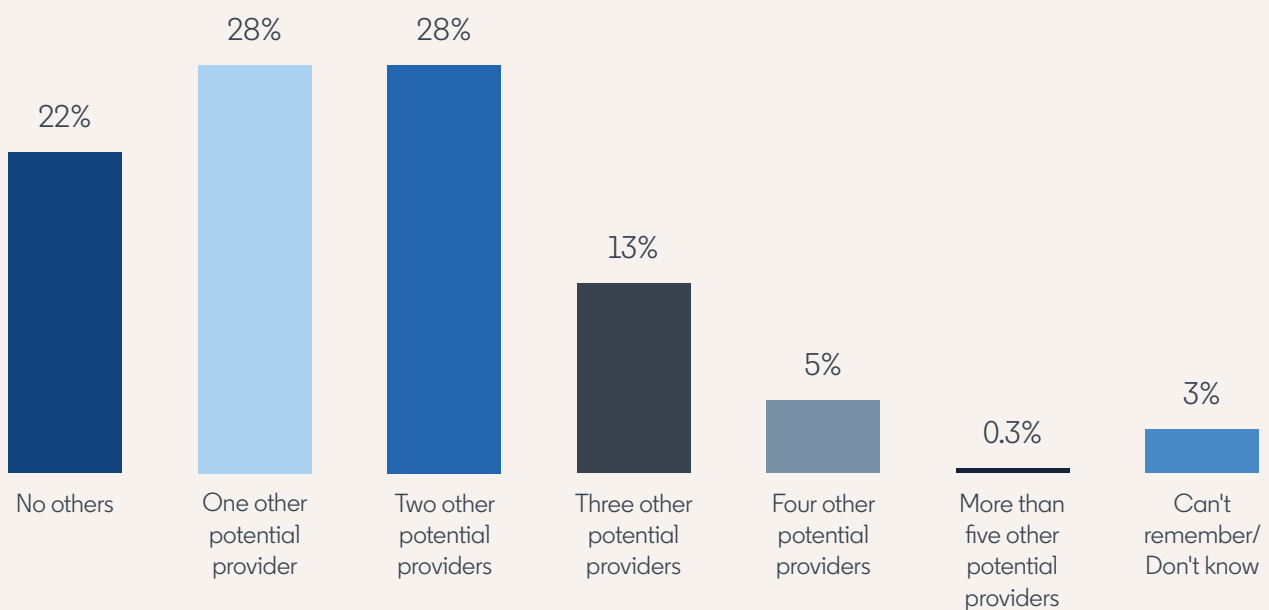
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B2B marketers may be chasing quarterly metrics, but the reality is that just 30% of B2B buyers have made a GenAI purchase in the last three months. Another 28% made their last purchase between three to six months ago, and about 22% more purchased within the past year. GenAI adoption is unfolding slowly and unevenly, suggesting that the GenAI arms race is a long game.

For B2B marketers, that means if your brand isn't already top-of-mind when B2B Buyers eventually decide to pull the trigger, it's already too late. Think of the GenAI Buying Journey as a game of musical chairs. B2B Buyers may be curiously watching, patiently waiting, and cautiously circling around different vendors, but when the music stops and they're ready to make their decision, they'll default to the most familiar brand, not necessarily the best one...which leads us to our next finding.

2. Buyers Consider Only 2.4 Brands Before Making a Decision.

How many other GenAI tools did your company consider before selecting your supplier?



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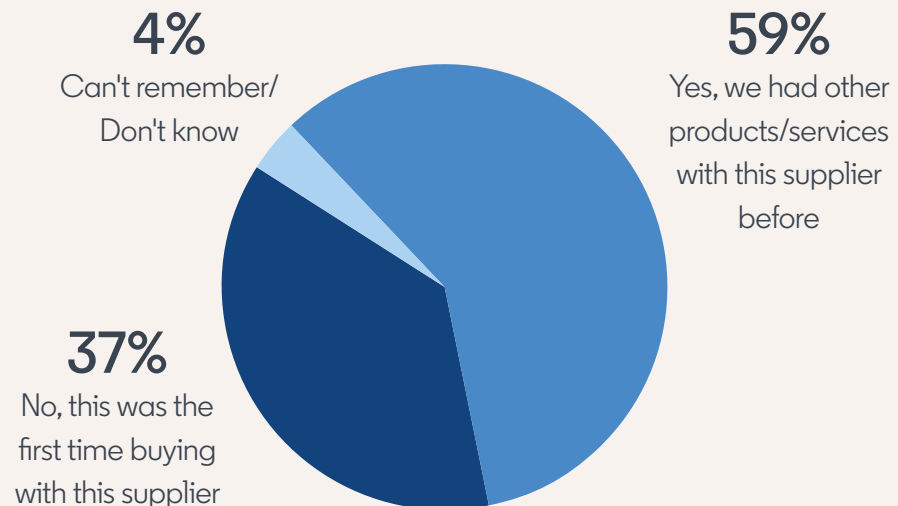
B2B buyers are barely shopping around before picking a GenAI vendor. 22% didn't consider any alternatives at all. Nearly 60% only looked at one or two other providers. And just 5% considered four or more. The average number of brands considered? Just 2.4.

In our data, we see that even large enterprises, known for rigorous processes, behave almost identically to small businesses. Formal RFPs may still be written and benchmarking exercises still performed, but most of it amounts to procurement theater — a polite fiction buyers use to justify decisions they've largely made long before Day 1 of their buying journey.

For B2B marketers, if you're not one of the first two brands a buyer thinks of, every marketing dollar spent down the funnel ultimately becomes an expense instead of an investment. Your biggest competitors aren't just other AI vendors; you're competing against organizational inertia, time constraints, and ingrained cognitive biases. Buyers aren't making decisions by maximizing information; they're minimizing regret, which leads us to our last finding.

3. ~60% of GenAI Buyers Purchased From An Existing Vendor.

Has your company had other products/services with the same supplier before?



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The majority of GenAI buyers didn't choose a new vendor. They stuck with one they already knew. In other words, for most companies, GenAI isn't a new buying decision; it's an add-on to an existing relationship.

For B2B marketers, understanding this dynamic is crucial to shaping the right strategy. If you're an incumbent vendor, congratulations, you have a massive advantage, but it's your sale to lose. If you're not, it's an uphill battle for your brand, because you're not just competing on features, but fighting the gravitational pull of existing relationships.

History has shown that the future heavily favors the brands that are already in the building, not those waiting outside with a better demo.

The Big Lesson For B2B Marketers

The GenAI race won't be won by the company with the best model. It will be won by the company with the strongest brand. Don't be fooled by the theater of procurement. Winning requires a strategy that's grounded in how B2B purchases actually get made. In a market driven by shortcuts and snap decisions, being remembered beats being better.

For B2B marketers, advertising remains the most powerful tool we have to build memory. In the next section, we'll dive into the state of GenAI advertising and where B2B brands can find their edge.

Part 2:

The State of GenAI Advertising

You don't have to look far to find an ad selling GenAI these days. Just open LinkedIn, turn on your TV, or blink, and you'll see one. But this begs the philosophical question... if a GenAI ad gets served, but nobody's eating...did it even cook?

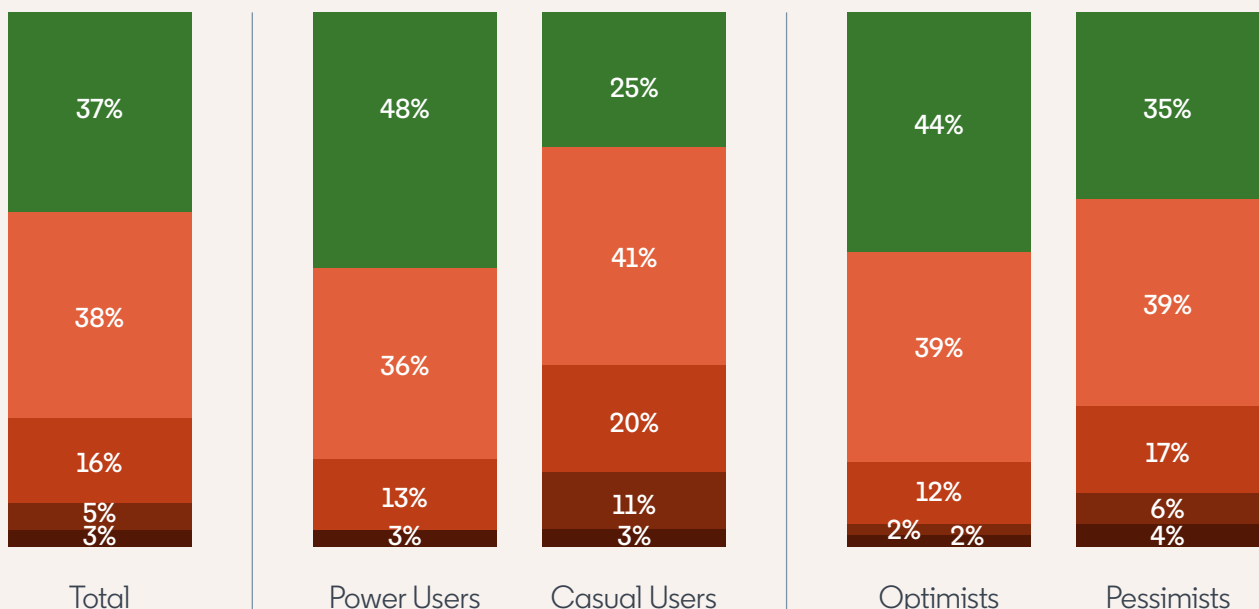
Our data shows that while nearly 75% of GenAI Buyers recall seeing a GenAI ad in the past three months, almost 2/3rds of them found the ads to be only slightly relevant at best, totally irrelevant at worst. That's because most ads are just noise in an echo chamber; the messaging is uncannily vague and interchangeable between brands. And even worse, they're mostly preaching to those who have already bought into the GenAI hype, instead of new audiences that matter most for incremental growth.

If you're a B2B marketer trying to grow adoption of your GenAI products, running more ads won't help if the creative isn't cutting through. These three findings show where GenAI advertising is really falling short and where the real opportunity lies if you want your ads to really make a difference.

1. Most GenAI Ads Are Noise In An Echo Chamber.

How relevant was the ad to you and the business you are currently working for?

■ Totally irrelevant ■ Not very irrelevant ■ No opinion ■ Slightly relevant ■ Extremely relevant



Power Users (n=186): Use GenAI daily across many tasks

Casual Users (n=184): Use GenAI occasionally across limited tasks

Optimists (n=210): Hopeful about GenAI's promise and potential

Pessimists (n=88): Concerned about GenAI's risks outweighing benefits

Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

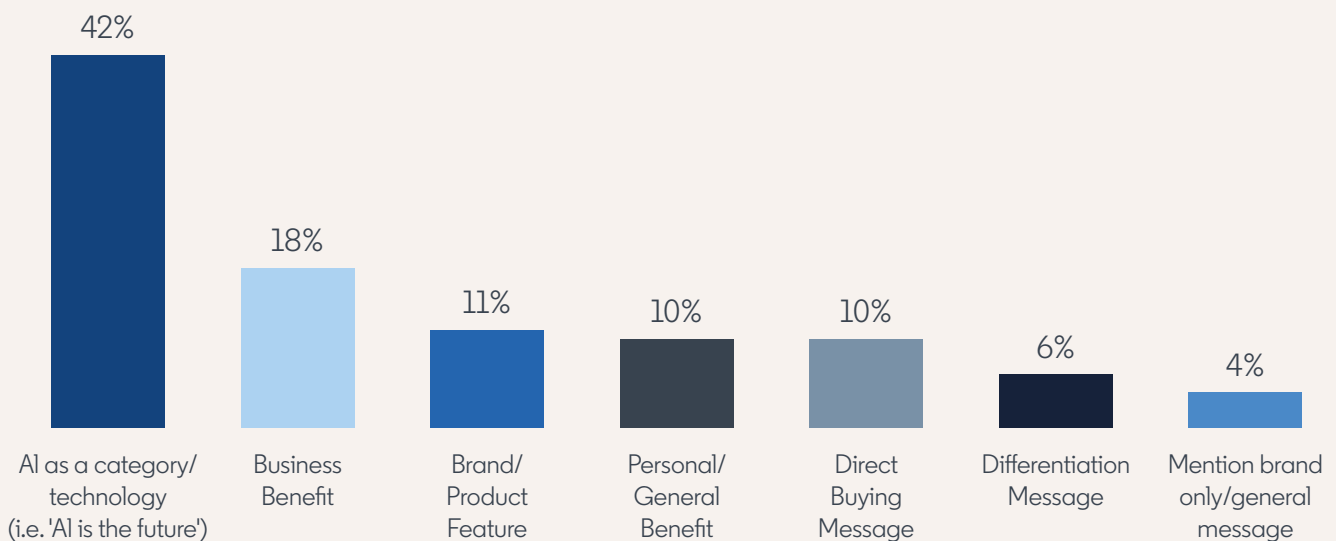
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Most GenAI ads aren't growing the category; at the very best, they're just validating decisions that B2B buyers have already made. We see hints of this when we look at the difference in Top Box ad relevance scores between GenAI Power Users vs Casual Users (48% vs 25%) and GenAI Optimists vs Pessimists (44% vs 35%).

That's not surprising. Ads tend to resonate most with those already engaged in the category. But that's also a trap. If your ads only speak to early adopters and believers, you're limiting your marketing budget's potential to really grow your brand. The real growth opportunity is in closing the gap, making sure you have ads that speak to those who aren't engaged yet. The brands that are able to turn casual users into power users, and GenAI pessimists into optimists, will be the brands that win. Now let's take a look at why the ads aren't resonating.

2. Most GenAI Ads Blend Into Category Wallpaper.

What message or messages do you think this ad was trying to communicate to you?



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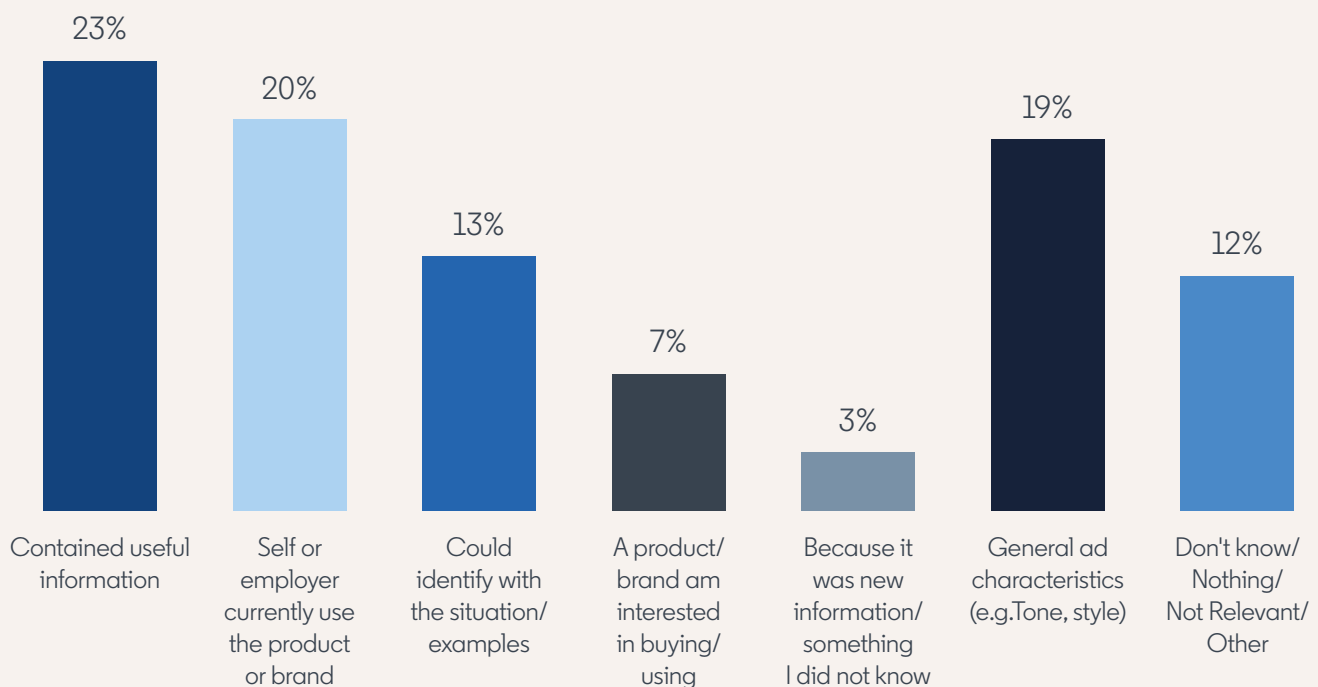
If you've seen one GenAI ad, you've seen them all. Most follow the same vague script: "AI is the future," "AI makes work easier," "Try our AI". And that's exactly how they come across to audiences: interchangeable.

We wish this weren't true, but the data doesn't lie. When we asked people what advertising messages they remembered, an overwhelming 42% only recalled a generic message about GenAI's importance as a category. Only 18% recalled a business benefit and a measly 11% remembered a specific brand or product feature.

It's not that most GenAI ads are bad, per se. But in the competition for attention, even the most painstakingly crafted ads turn into wallpaper if your creative isn't distinctive. If your messaging sounds like it could come from any of your GenAI competitors, then you won't get your brand remembered. And if your brand is not remembered, your brand won't be chosen.

3. Relevance Comes From Solving Problems, Not Listing Features.

What about the ad made it relevant to you?



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If GenAI ads want to break through, marketers must remember that advertising should be a two-way value exchange. In return for your audience's attention, you owe them something useful — whether that's information, insight, or even just a moment of clarity. Otherwise, your ad is just another interruption to be scrolled past. Too many GenAI ads forget this. They talk about the future of AI instead of answering the question buyers actually care about: What does this solve for me, right now?

When we asked buyers why an ad felt relevant, 23% cited how it contained useful information, and an additional 13% said they could identify with the situation/example featured in the ad. But only 7% said it was because the ad featured a product or brand they were interested in and just 3% said it was because it featured new information.

That's the problem. **Most marketers are pitching tomorrow's innovations when buyers are looking for today's solutions. Relevance doesn't come from novelty, product features, or prognosticating about the future.** It comes from solving recognizable problems. So if your GenAI ad doesn't speak to a real business need — a decision moment, a workflow gap, a practical pain point — it's less likely to stick. **The brands that win will be the ones who translate features into stories and hammer those stories into memories.**

The Big Lesson For B2B Marketers

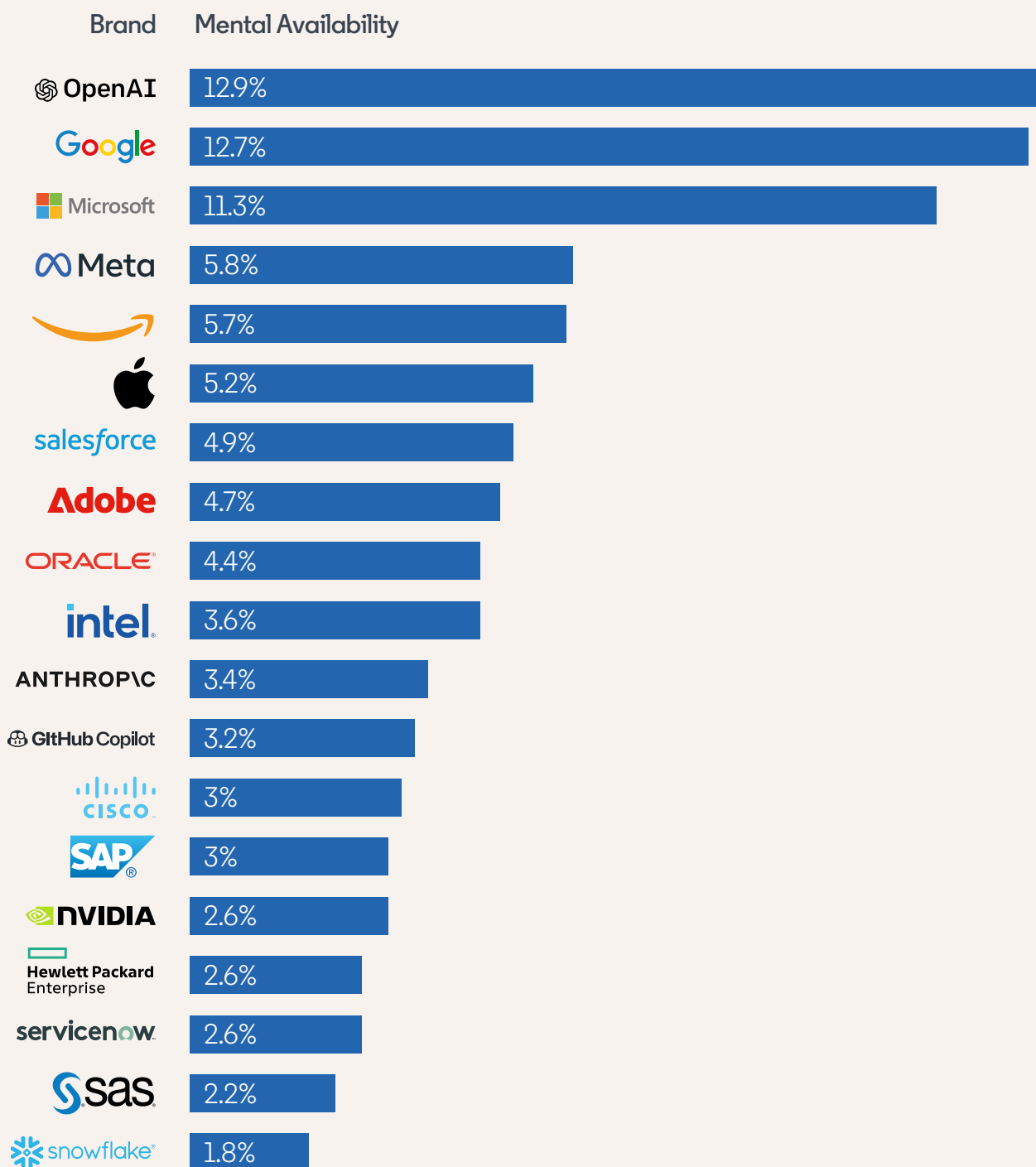
Most people don't buy the future. They buy whatever solves this quarter's headache, and then reverse-engineer a PowerPoint narrative that makes their snap decision look like strategic foresight.

If GenAI ads don't start with a real customer problem, they never get a chance to break through. If your ads don't break through to new audiences, they never get a chance to grow your brand.

The real opportunity for GenAI ads is to meet buyers in the moment—by aligning with the decisions they're already trying to make, their Category Entry Points (CEPs). In the next section, we'll explore how different brands are performing across Category Entry Points, and where the real, winnable messaging opportunities lie.

Part 3:

Who's Winning The Battle For Mindshare?



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Is The GenAI Brand Race A Power Law Game?

Is the rising tide of GenAI lifting all boats – or mostly the yachts captained by Altman, Pichai, and Nadella? OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft dominate, holding nearly 40% of the GenAI “mindshare market”, while the drop-off from Microsoft (11.3%) to Meta (5.8%) marks a steep cliff.

Most buyers seldom explore the long tail. Instead, they default to what's familiar (because of cognitive biases), what fits (because of network effects), and what feels like a safe choice (because buyers have a full-time job beyond procurement and due diligence). So what does this mean for B2B marketers if what looks like competition just might be the beginning stages of consolidation?

Unless your brand is already one of the top 3, your job as a marketer is not about fighting for dominance but fighting for memory. The goal isn't to outscale OpenAI, but to be remembered in the moments where OpenAI isn't. Because in this game, being remembered is the single biggest multiplier of growth.

B2C Halo = B2B Head Start

The leaders in GenAI (OpenAI, Microsoft, Google) all have consumer-facing arms, which means they're winning before the B2B game even begins. While it's not a fair fight, it's a reality because while you're marketing to the buyer's "innie" work self, their "outie" home self already has a bias. B2B marketers might be selling GenAI as enterprise-grade software, but the decision is being filtered through B2C brains—brains that spend their off-hours asking ChatGPT to plan their vacation itineraries, letting Google auto-compose their way out of weekend plans, or relying on Microsoft to draft their resumes when they're ready to move on from their "mysterious and important" jobs that feel one microchip away from [Lumon](#). (Shout out to the *Severance* fans!)

OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft aren't necessarily playing an entirely different game with a different set of rules; they're just starting on third base, benefitting from B2C parents that bankroll their way to the top of the shortlist and past the procurement committees that favor pedigree over product specs. That means brands with a household name are already halfway into the consideration set and B2B brands must work twice as hard to get a shot at the RFP. For B2B marketers, this further illustrates that brand marketing isn't a nice-to-have; it's the only way in.

The Long Tail Is Crowded— And Nearly Invisible

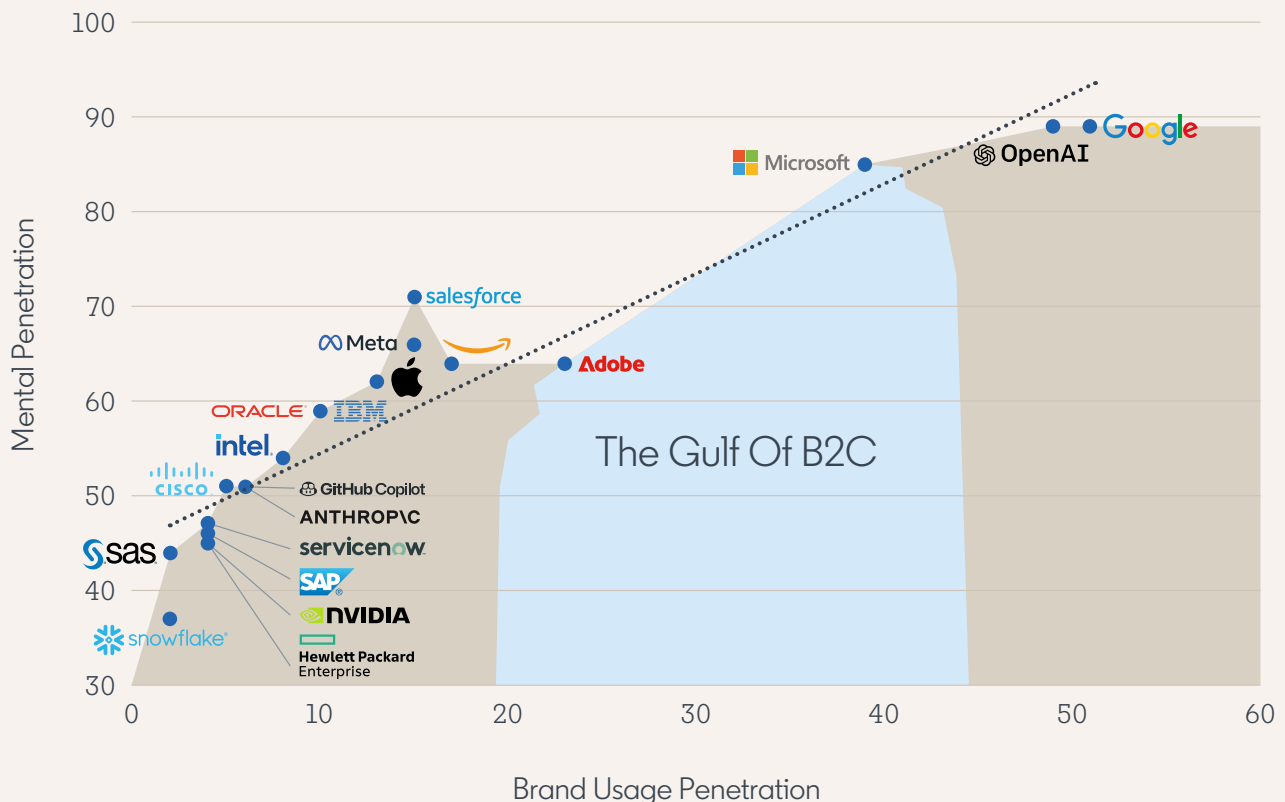
Below the top 6, most brands cluster tightly between 2–4% in terms of mindshare. That means they're rarely mentioned, rarely recalled, and almost never dominant.

In GenAI, it's not death by competition but rather death by indifference. Most brands aren't losing. They're just not being thought of at all. And if you're not being thought of, you're essentially losing. Sorry!

To survive in this long tail, you don't need to win every mind; you just need to win specific moments. That's where Category Entry Points (CEPs) come in.

When The Big Get Bigger, B2B Brands Better Get Smarter

Mental Penetration vs Brand Usage Penetration



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1. Some Brands Punch Above Their Weight...

Brands like Google, OpenAI, and Microsoft don't just dominate on mental salience—they convert it. Google, for instance, turns nearly 57% of its mental penetration into actual usage, outperforming even OpenAI and Microsoft. These brands aren't just memorable; they're habitual. They're the first names people reach for when navigating the challenges of the modern workday—whether it's replying to passive-aggressive emails with saint-like diplomacy, summarizing meetings that should've been emails, or confronting the blinking cursor of a blank page when you need to coax out a passable point of view.

They've embedded themselves into workflows. Google spans everything from docs to data centers. OpenAI powers tools across the stack. Microsoft's Copilot is already sitting inside your Office suite. They don't just live rent-free in the minds of customers, they're the landlords that skim the credit whenever smaller players run yet another indistinguishable ad.

2. Other Brands Are Remembered... But Not Chosen.

On the other hand, there are brands like Meta and Salesforce. They show strong mental penetration but convert at far lower rates than the leaders, suggesting that 1) awareness alone isn't moving the market and 2) awareness isn't translating into adoption at the same efficiency as the leaders.

Something is getting lost in translation. Maybe these brands are known, but not known for the right things. Or maybe they simply haven't reinforced the right memories often enough to make the buyer's decision reflexive. The data doesn't offer a final verdict but it does offer a starting point. When salience doesn't convert, the smart question isn't "What's wrong?" but "What's missing?". That's where informed hypotheses and insightful marketing begin.

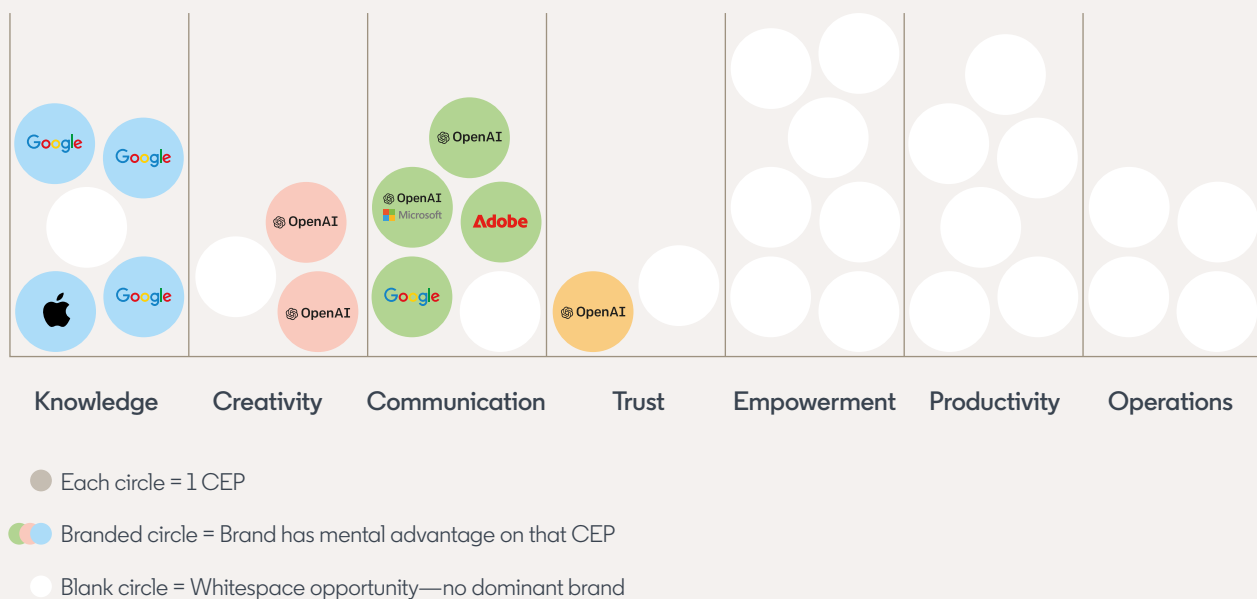
3. Low Mental Salience = Low Conversion Potential

These brands sit at the bottom of the curve, with low mental penetration and low usage. Their AI products might be strong under the hood, but the market doesn't associate them with GenAI broadly or memorably. In other words, they're not necessarily losing on capability so much as losing on memory. For these brands, it will be a fight to build distinctive memory structures that will anchor them to the category.

The Takeaways:

- **To punch above your weight**, it's not enough to be known — you need to be known for something useful. According to our data, Google wins because it's associated with search, speed, and answers, while OpenAI wins because it's associated with content and creativity.
- **To convert salience into growth**, you need to shift from ambient awareness to sharp, problem-first positioning. Be the brand buyers think of when their pain point flares.
- **To escape the bottom tier**, you need to focus. Own 1-2 winnable Category Entry Points and repeat them until they stick. Salience grows from specificity.

The CEP Battlefield: Where Brands Win—And Whitespaces Await



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How To Read the Chart - Example: We evaluated 5 CEPs tied to Communication needs. OpenAI leads on two (one shared with Microsoft), while Google and Adobe each lead on one.

Where Brands Are Winning Now: The Gateway CEPs

The CEPs in which GenAI brands are winning today are less transformational and more practical: brainstorming, writing, summarizing, and slide-making. Tasks tied to knowledge, creativity, and communication tasks are easy to understand, easy to try, and easy to build trust. These low-friction Category Entry Points span across every level of the org chart, across every department, making them the universal gateways to adoption. It's no coincidence that OpenAI, Google, and Microsoft dominate here — they're top-of-mind in everyday moments of work.

The implication for B2B marketers? Winning on communication and creativity is great for building awareness and starting adoption, but the billion-dollar question still remains: will this ultimately transform how businesses operate? Because when it comes time to unlock bigger budgets, the purse strings will open wider for tools that drive business outcomes, not just outputs. And as we'll see next, that's where most brands are still missing the mark.

The Productivity Paradox

The CEPs tied to Productivity and Operations should be the holy grail for B2B GenAI brands — they speak directly to the decision-makers who control budgets: CFOs, IT leaders, and Ops executives.

These are the people who greenlight org-wide adoption. But despite the strategic value, no brand has built mental advantages in this space — not for lack of trying, but for lack of distinction.

Of course every B2B brand wants to win on productivity by helping customers reduce tedious tasks, speeding up data analysis, and automating admin work. But in a crowded field with interchangeable claims and lookalike creatives, no brand has yet built the distinctiveness to own these moments.

This is the paradox of productivity. Everyone sees the prize, but no one is winning the mental real estate on these CEPs. The result? A wide-open opportunity, hidden in plain sight. Although every brand is in the game, none have built the memory advantage to break away from the pack.

The Most Human CEPs Are Being Ignored

GenAI is undeniably useful for organizations. But it should also feel useful to those deploying it.

Not everything GenAI can do is strategic. Some of its most powerful effects are emotional. We uncovered a surprising number of Category Entry Points tied to how GenAI makes people feel: more capable, less stressed, better prepared, more collaborative, more confident. So if productivity is the metric, confidence is the multiplier. Without it, productivity stalls before it even starts.

However, no brand is leading here either. None own “helps me feel smarter” or “reduces stress” or “makes remote work easier.” And yet, these are the moments that actually drive usage. Because people don’t just use GenAI tools to impress their boss. They also use GenAI to survive their inbox, finish their deck, and feel like they’re not falling behind.

GenAI’s emotional utility is real, but deeply under-leveraged. In a market flooded with generic promises of productivity, brands are miscalculating what makes advertising effective, treating the human element like a rounding error when it’s the one variable that drives the whole equation. As GenAI tools become increasingly commoditized, the human story may very well be the only defensible brand advantage. Brands that understand and own the emotional dimensions of GenAI — the friction, the fear, the small but meaningful wins — won’t just get remembered. They’ll get chosen.

The Big Lesson For B2B Marketers

In the GenAI brand race, memory is the real moat. While OpenAI, Microsoft, and Google dominate thanks to their B2C halos and habitual presence in our daily workflows, most GenAI brands are stuck fighting for attention, let alone adoption. Our research shows that brand awareness alone isn’t enough; what separates the winners is their ability to own specific moments through distinct Category Entry Points (CEPs). Whether it’s helping people feel smarter, speed through tedious tasks, or survive their inbox, the brands that win aren’t just solving problems but shaping how people feel about their work. Because in a world of feature parity, the human story is the only differentiator left.

In the next section, we’ll take it a level deeper and unpack how to make your GenAI message feel less like a product demo that gets forgotten and more like a human story that gets remembered.

Part 4:

How to Tell Your GenAI Story (Once More... With Feeling!)

In the science fiction world of [Blade Runner 2049](#), Dr. Ana Stelline, a talented memory designer, explains the secret behind the verisimilitude of artificial memories:

If you have authentic memories, you'll have real human responses... They all think it's about more detail. But that's not how memory works. We recall with our feelings...

While she's referring to the architected memories that get implanted inside replicants to shape their identity, motivations, and emotions, she could just as easily be describing the mechanism of advertising that creates the brand memories that shape how buyers think, feel, and act. Marketers, in that sense, are also memory designers, not because they deal in facts, but because they shape how those facts feel and get constructed into the emotional scaffolding that underpins every purchase decision. The best marketers understand it's not the most technically accurate moments that people remember, but the ones that feel real.

It's perverse (or strangely poetic) that a dystopian parable exploring what it means to be human in a world of artificial intelligence ends up offering the clearest insight into how to sell artificial intelligence back to humans. The insight is in the paradox: AI is most compelling when it speaks to what makes us feel real and human, not just intelligent. Because at the end of the day, artificial intelligence can't be sold without a touch of emotional intelligence.

Today, every brand is chasing the same story: "we make you more productive." But the current messaging rarely resonates and clearly no brand is breaking through. Not because the features aren't impressive, but because they lack the emotional weight to be memorable. They confuse detail for depth, and detail without emotion is just noise. To break through the noise, you don't just need to communicate the right Category Entry Points (CEPs). You need to anchor those CEPs into memories, through narrative, emotion, and real human motivation. Although an ad is a piece of fiction, if it shapes how someone remembers your brand, it ultimately functions like a memory.

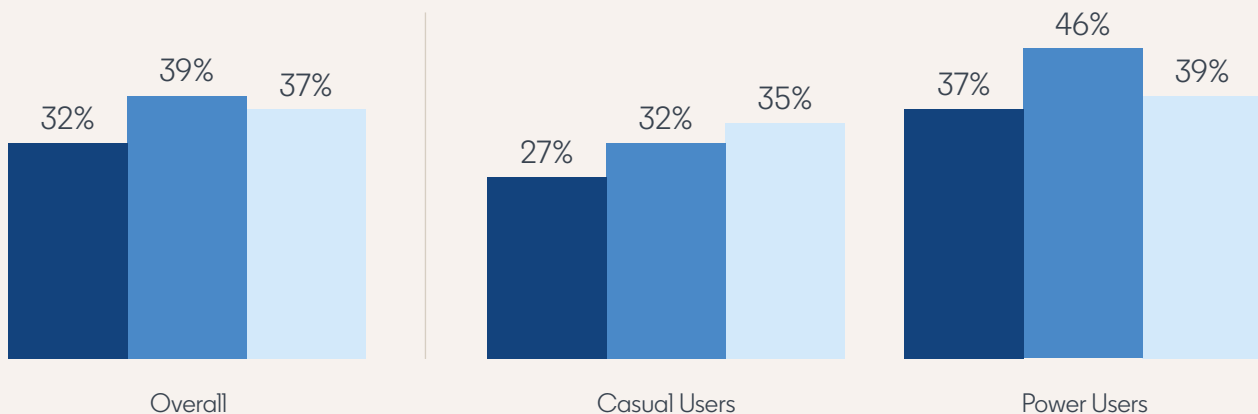
That's why our research also explored the human side of the equation—what drives people to use GenAI, how they evaluate GenAI's capabilities in relation to their own, and what all this reveals about identity and the meaning of work in the age of automation. **Because the more AI becomes embedded in our world of work, the more central the human experience becomes in our messaging.** As tools get smarter and outputs get faster, the thing humans still want, and marketers still need to provide, is meaning. Below are three creative implications about how **B2B ads can start depicting their GenAI products more effectively.**

1. Let The Human Shape The Story

The Role GenAI Plays

In the last few months, for which of the following reasons have you personally used Generative AI for?

- To help with a task you didn't like/want to do
- To help with a task you like/enjoy doing
- To help with a task you don't know how to do, or can't do very well



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

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The dominant narrative that has been designed to neuter the existential threat of GenAI is that it simply serves to take the grunt work off your plate so you can focus on doing more strategic tasks that require higher human cognition. **However, our data shows that people are more likely to use GenAI for tasks they enjoy than for ones they avoid.** Power Users in particular are leaning on GenAI to enhance tasks they already feel confident and motivated to do.

It's a surprising but important insight that suggests GenAI adoption isn't just about efficiency. Adoption also hinges on a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between work and personal identity, between effort and innate talent. Whether you love your job or just tolerate it, work often becomes part of how we see ourselves, so the fidelity of GenAI's output matters because it reflects back on us.

What our tech gatekeepers often miss (or choose to ignore) is that not everything should be frictionless. Sometimes the friction is the whole point. The struggle is what gives work meaning. We want to feel like active participants in our own lives, but when things are too frictionless, we become stuck in the passenger seat while GenAI overtakes the wheel.

Vintage Betty Crocker ad



The tension between ease and effort isn't a new phenomenon. The often told (but likely apocryphal) story of Betty Crocker cake mixes endures because it's based on an emotional truth despite its unclear origins. The tale goes that 1950s housewives rejected these instant mixes that required only water because the pride from baking just isn't as sweet without a bit of sweat; the emotional dissonance made their effort feel performative instead of personal. The frictionless nature didn't feel authentic to or congruent with their identity as a homemaker. But once General Mills changed the instructions to include adding a fresh egg, sales rose. Whether fact or fable, the story reveals something real: the effort more than the output makes people feel ownership.

Today's GenAI equivalent might be a talented data scientist using AI to ask sharper questions, surface blind spots, or speed up analysis. But the insights? Those still need to feel like their own. When craft is part of someone's identity, a tool that enhances their thinking becomes essential—not existential.

This flips the traditional industry narrative. We've been sold a story that GenAI's main value is making work disappear and render productivity invisible. But what if the more meaningful promise is that it can help us feel more present inside it instead of removed from it? The inconvenient truth for business leaders is that you can't have a productive workforce without a motivated workforce. And you can't have a motivated workforce unless your workers have some sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose over their work. So perhaps the opportunity isn't to erase the effort, but to make the effort feel like it was worthwhile. Because we often underestimate how quickly hedonic adaptation kicks in, perhaps GenAI that helps you engage, not just bypass, will be more meaningful and marketable.

Implications For Marketers

When developing your creative, ask yourself the following questions:

The Mindset: Is your protagonist someone worth rooting for?

- ☒ Are they approaching their work with skill and purpose or out of obligation and habit?
- ☒ Are they engaging with the task as something meaningful, or simply treating it as a means to an end?
- ☒ Are they defined by their work identity or just carrying out responsibilities?

The Machine: Is your GenAI product cast in the right supporting role?

- ☒ Is it riding in the passenger seat or is it taking over the wheel?
- ☒ Is it acting as a painkiller or a performance enhancer?
- ☒ Is it raising the ceiling or clearing the floor?

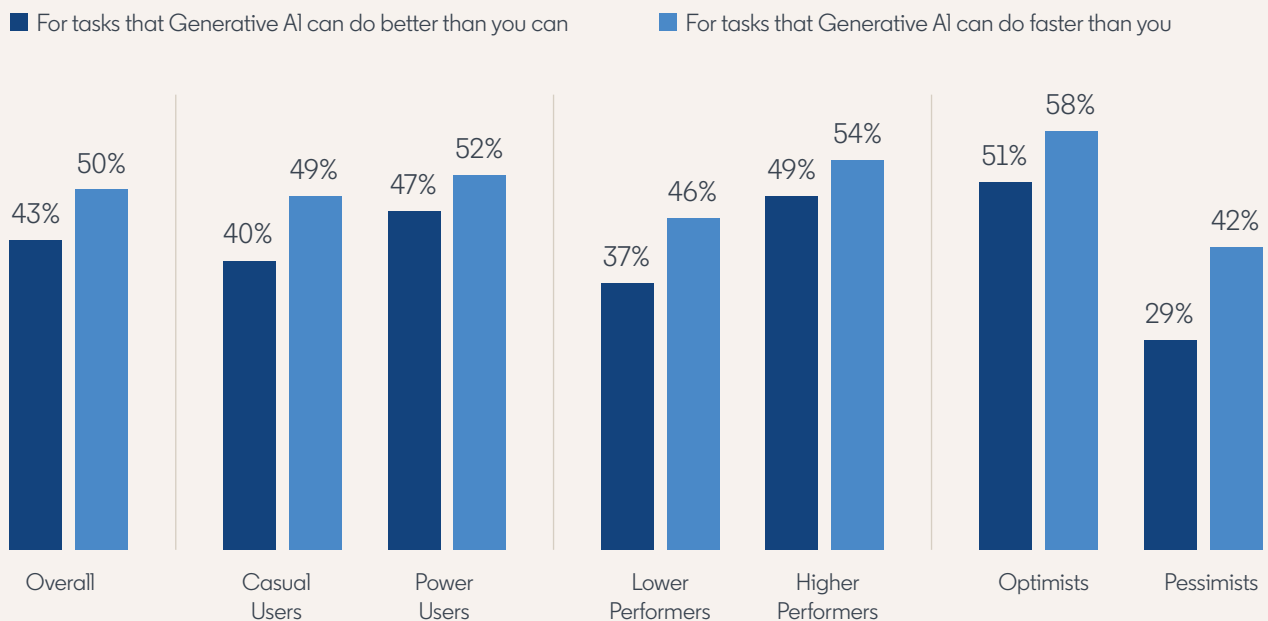
The Moment: How are you depicting when the human meets the machine?

- ☒ Does the moment feel iterative and collaborative, or instant and effortless?
- ☒ Does the moment spotlight the human's perspective, or just the product's capabilities?
- ☒ Does the moment deliver an emotional payoff, or simply a completed task?

2. Let The Human Be The Benchmark

The Value GenAI Brings

In the last few months, for which of the following reasons have you personally used Generative AI for?



Higher Performers (n=219): Exceeded job expectations

Lower Performers (n=189): Did not exceed job expectations

Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

LinkedIn | The B2B Institute

If the first step to using GenAI is knowing why you're using it, the second step is knowing when to let it take the lead.

Across the board, people are more comfortable letting GenAI handle tasks when it's faster (50%), but fewer are willing to let it take over when it's simply better (43%). This is especially true for Pessimists and Low Performers, who are less likely to leverage AI's skill superiority, even though the latter group could benefit the most from it. Meanwhile, Power Users and Optimists show a willingness to surrender control so long as the result is better, not just faster. In other words, the ability to benchmark against yourself may be the difference between dabbling with GenAI and actually integrating it into your workflow.

This distinction matters. Speed is table stakes. It might get your GenAI product into the room, but it won't win the pitch. Quality, on the other hand, is an emotional trigger. It's where identity, trust, and pride intersect, making the message not just more potent, but more memorable.

Implications For Marketers

When developing your creative, ask yourself the following questions:

The Mindset: Is your protagonist confident enough to compare themselves to AI?

- ☒ Are they self-aware enough to know when GenAI might outperform them?
- ☒ Are they focused on achieving the best result, or on preserving their ego?
- ☒ Are they aiming for speed alone, or striving to push their boundaries?

The Machine: Is your GenAI product portrayed as a worthy collaborator?

- ☒ Is it capable of elevating the work, or just accelerating it?
- ☒ Is it demonstrating an absolute or relative advantage compared to the human?
- ☒ Is it challenging the human to raise their game, or simply do the work for them?

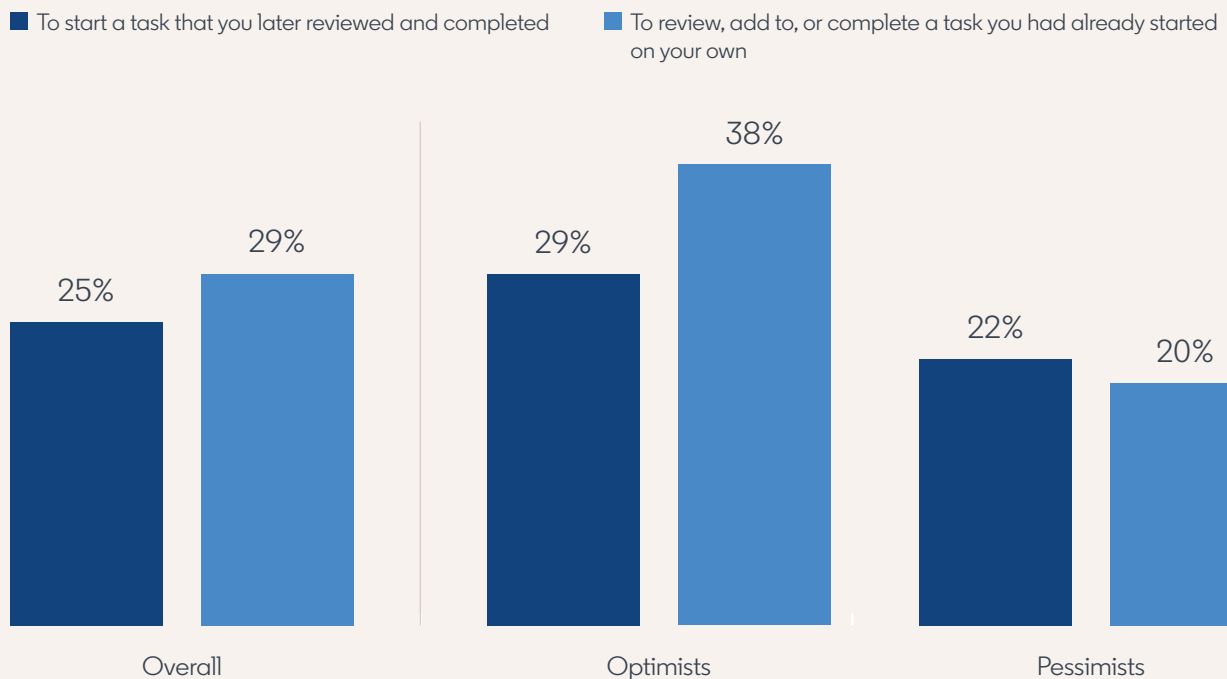
The Moment: How are you depicting the moment of comparison?

- ☒ Does the moment show a clear before-and-after that justifies the product's role?
- ☒ Does the moment depict real-world tradeoffs or a perfect sci-fi fantasy?
- ☒ Does the moment reinforce trust and partnership, or undermine human skill?

3. Let The Human Spark The Story

The Moment GenAI Enters

In the last few months, for which of the following reasons have you personally used Generative AI for?



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

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Here's a surprising insight: the more optimistic people feel about GenAI, the less they use it to start their tasks. It turns out that Optimists prefer to hand off a rough draft, not a blank page. Why? Because ownership and control still matter when it comes to how humans relate to their jobs.

This flips another common marketing instinct. Most GenAI ads show the tool generating everything from scratch, but that's not how real people use it—or want to. Again, they want to drive, not be driven. And it makes people feel like the hero of their own story, instead of a passenger in a tech overlord's dystopian fantasy.

If your ad shows AI doing all the work from start to finish, it might be sending the wrong message. To make GenAI feel more human, depict it as the tool in your hand, not the mind in control. That's how you build trust. That's how you spark belief.

Implications For Marketers

When developing your creative, ask yourself the following questions:

The Mindset: Is your protagonist driving the idea forward, or being pulled along?

- ☒ Are they proactive in initiating the task themselves, or reactive, waiting for AI to take the lead?
- ☒ Are they using GenAI to enhance something they care about, or to escape something they dread?
- ☒ Are they seeking to elevate their output, or just get something off their plate?

The Machine: Is your GenAI product shown as an amplifier or replacement?

- ☒ Is it building on a human's idea, or originating the concept entirely?
- ☒ Is it functioning as a co-creator, or a silent executor?
- ☒ Is it featured like a product demo or anthropomorphized being?

The Moment: How are you depicting the human's ownership of the output?

- ☒ Does the moment show the idea clearly starting with the human?
- ☒ Does the moment suggest whether the human feels proud of, or detached from the result?
- ☒ Does the moment show who gets the credit, the person or the prompt?

The Big Lesson For B2B Marketers

Great ads don't just show what a tool can do, but they also show what it unlocks in all of us. That's why one of the most enduring visuals isn't of action, but of anticipation. In *The Creation of Adam*, Michelangelo captures the moment just before touch, where potential transfers from creator to creation. It's not just life being passed on — it's potential, identity, and agency. For GenAI marketers, that's the deeper challenge: to tell stories not about what AI can do, but about who it can help people become.

Every creation story carries tension — not just what we gain, but what we risk. After all, possibility and peril are two sides of the same spark. In our last section, we'll explore what happens when that spark flickers and how marketers can navigate the fragile line between transformation and disruption.

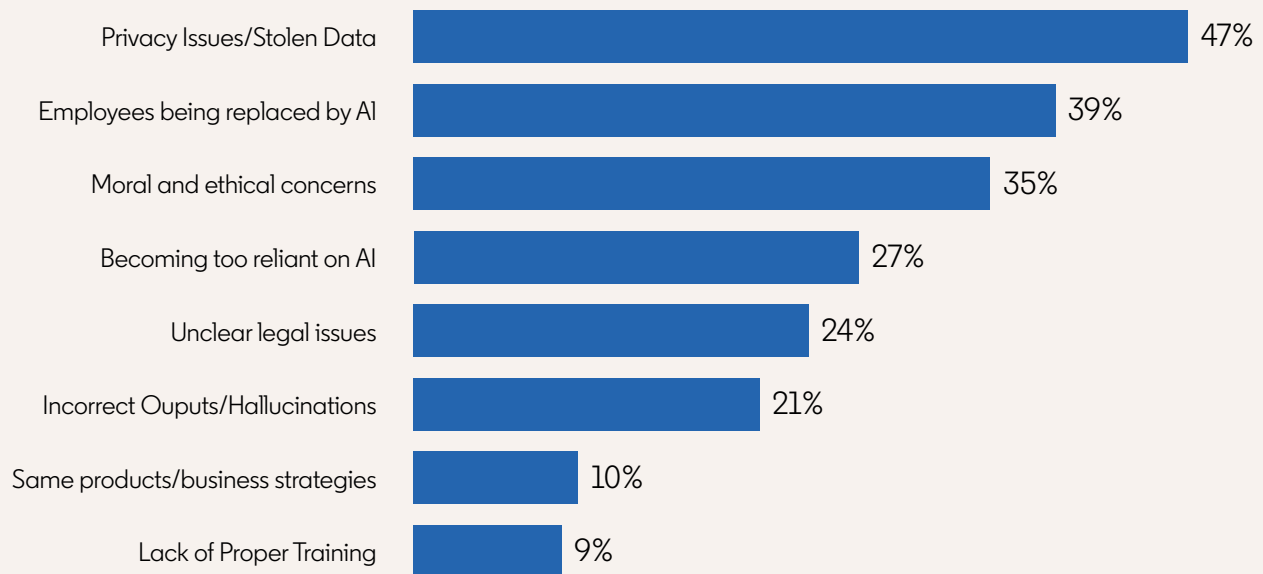
Part 5:

Mind the Subtext:
Are Your GenAI
Ads Saying The
Quiet Part Out
Loud?

‘AI’ -NXIETY: Top Concerns Customers Can’t Shake Off

What concerns you about using Generative AI?

Top Concerns (%)



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

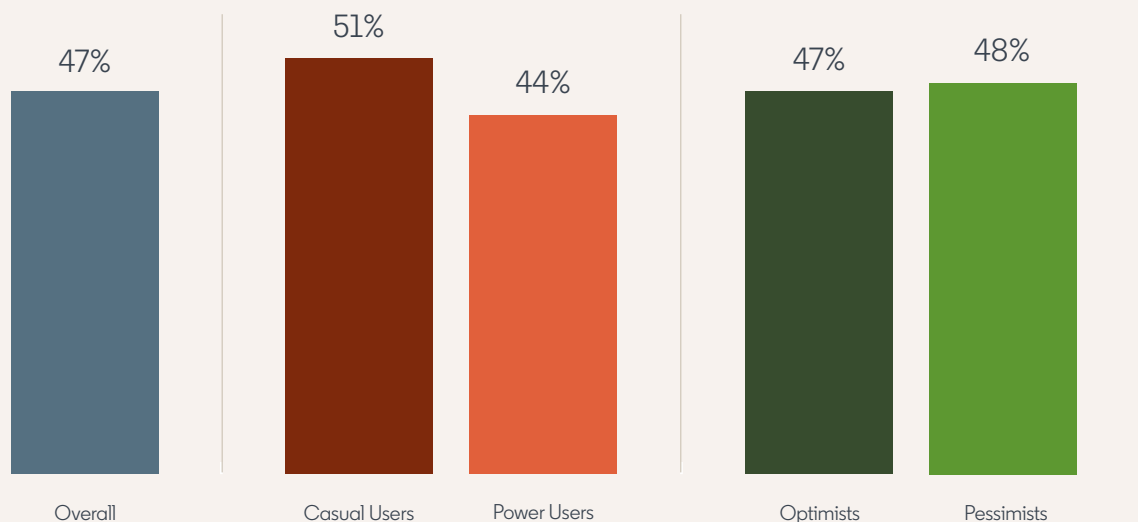
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While GenAI invites us to imagine what we could become, the same tools that promise to expand our potential also surface our deepest professional anxieties. Whether it's privacy, job security, or the slow erosion of competitive advantage, fear is the twin shadow cast by GenAI's promise. The more we embrace what it illuminates, the more clearly we see the outlines of what it might cost us. When we asked professionals what concerns they had about GenAI, the data didn't reveal denial, but rather a mental calculation between acceleration and anxiety simmering underneath every prompt. For B2B marketers, this subtext shows how every Category Entry Point is also inherently a pressure point. Trigger it the right way and you earn attention. Trigger it the wrong way and you detonate the ad's potential to connect. The difference may be subtle, but the impact certainly is not.

1. The Privacy Paradox: Everyone Cares, But Not Enough

What concerns you about using Generative AI?

% Concerned About Privacy Issues/Stolen Data



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

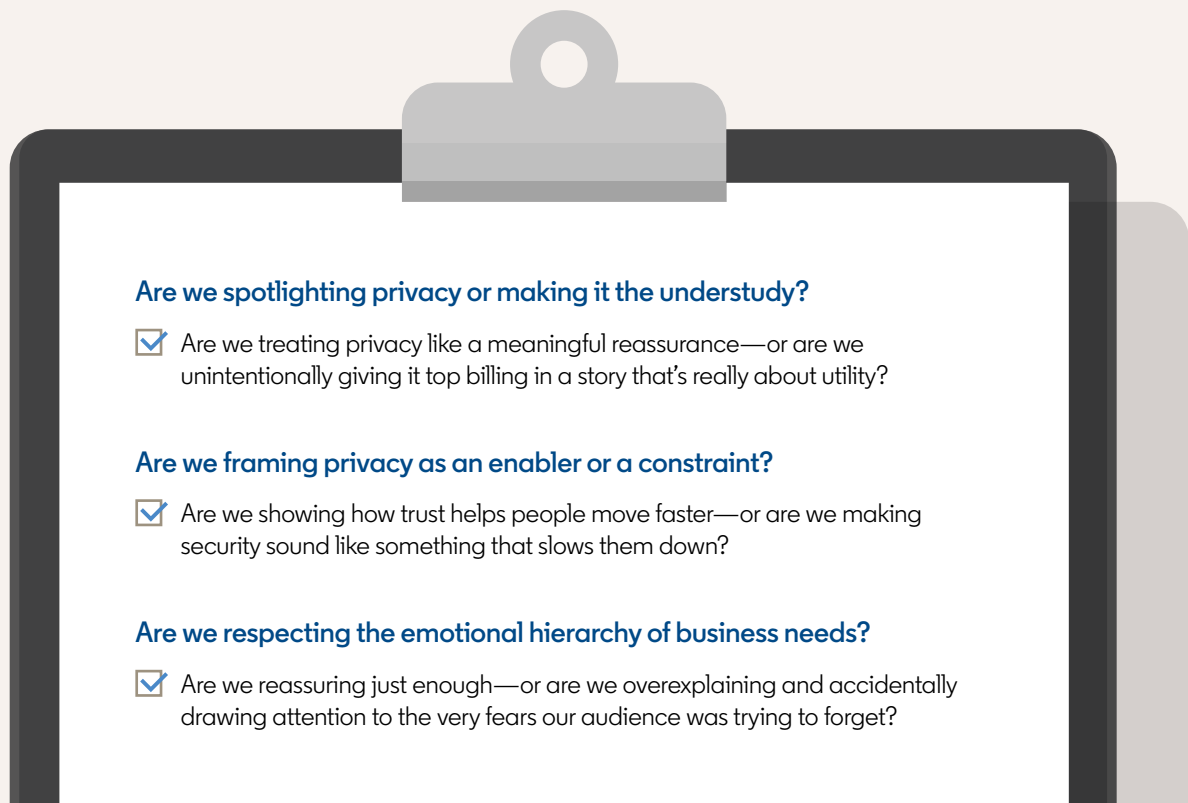
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It's no surprise that privacy tops the list of GenAI concerns. Everyone says they care about privacy, but not enough to let it slow them down. The gap between GenAI Power Users vs Casual Users reveals the classic privacy paradox: the more we use a technology, the more willing we are to trade privacy for convenience and speed. Blame it on the psychological chasm between privacy risks that feel abstract and hypothetical and GenAI's benefits that feel immediate and tangible.

The real surprise is that GenAI Optimists and Pessimists are equally concerned about privacy. That upends the assumption that optimism in GenAI is rooted in the belief that GenAI is safe. In other words, Optimists don't necessarily believe that GenAI is safer than Pessimists do; they've just made peace with the tradeoff. Privacy concerns don't get vanquished by enthusiasm; they just get deprioritized further down the list. Because in the mental calculus professionals make between immediate gratification and long-term risk mitigation, it's the outcomes that come out on top.

For B2B marketers, messaging around privacy isn't just about what you say, but also about what you signal, especially when the stakes are high and the emotions are just below the surface. The following prompts aren't a checklist of items to tick off, but to pressure-test your creative strategy:

The Creative Gut Check



Are we spotlighting privacy or making it the understudy?

☒ Are we treating privacy like a meaningful reassurance—or are we unintentionally giving it top billing in a story that's really about utility?

Are we framing privacy as an enabler or a constraint?

☒ Are we showing how trust helps people move faster—or are we making security sound like something that slows them down?

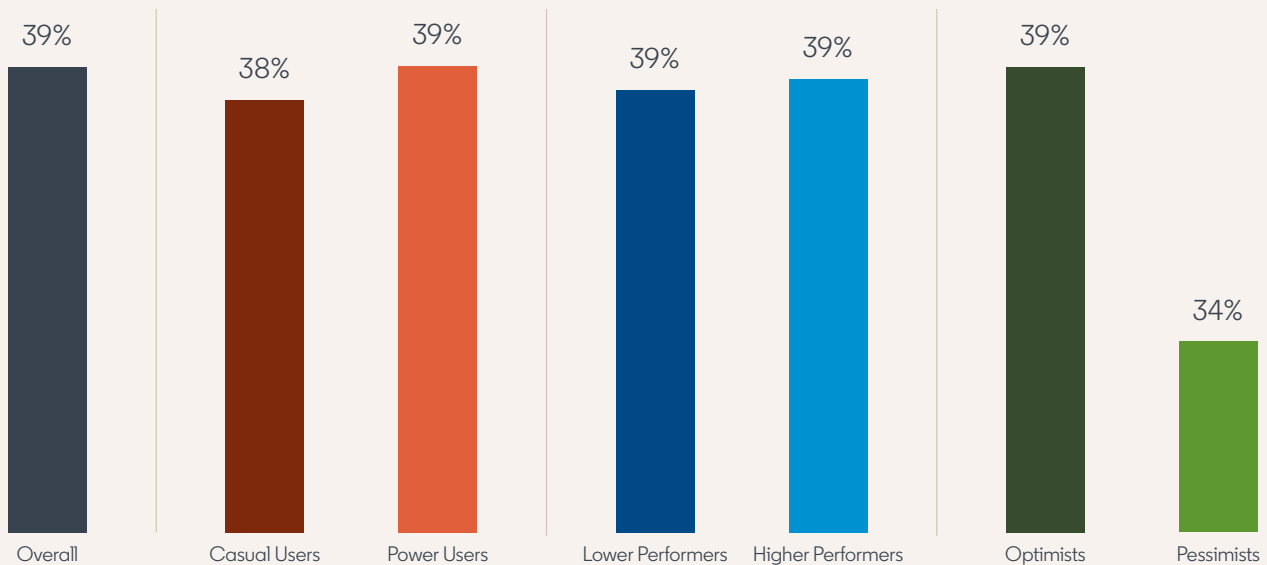
Are we respecting the emotional hierarchy of business needs?

☒ Are we reassuring just enough—or are we overexplaining and accidentally drawing attention to the very fears our audience was trying to forget?

2. The Universal Fear: Job Loss Is Coming For Everyone

What concerns you about using Generative AI?

% Concerned About Being Replaced By AI



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

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We've all heard the line: *"AI won't take your job, but someone using AI will."* It feels vaguely empowering—and almost convincing—that we can survive this shift as long as we adapt to the new paradigm. But if GenAI is poised to outperform humans on most tasks, do we really believe that our capitalist overlords will be so benevolent to spare us our jobs at the expense of denying shareholders a marginal bump in EBITDA? It's a nice fiction that's easier to repeat than to interrogate. The numbers tell a more anxious truth in which we might be engineering our own obsolescence.

The fear of job loss is universal across all types professionals, even among those who've embraced GenAI the most enthusiastically and effectively, including Power Users, High Performers, and the GenAI Optimists. In fact, Optimists are slightly more worried than Pessimists (39% vs. 34%). That's not a contradiction, but the tell.

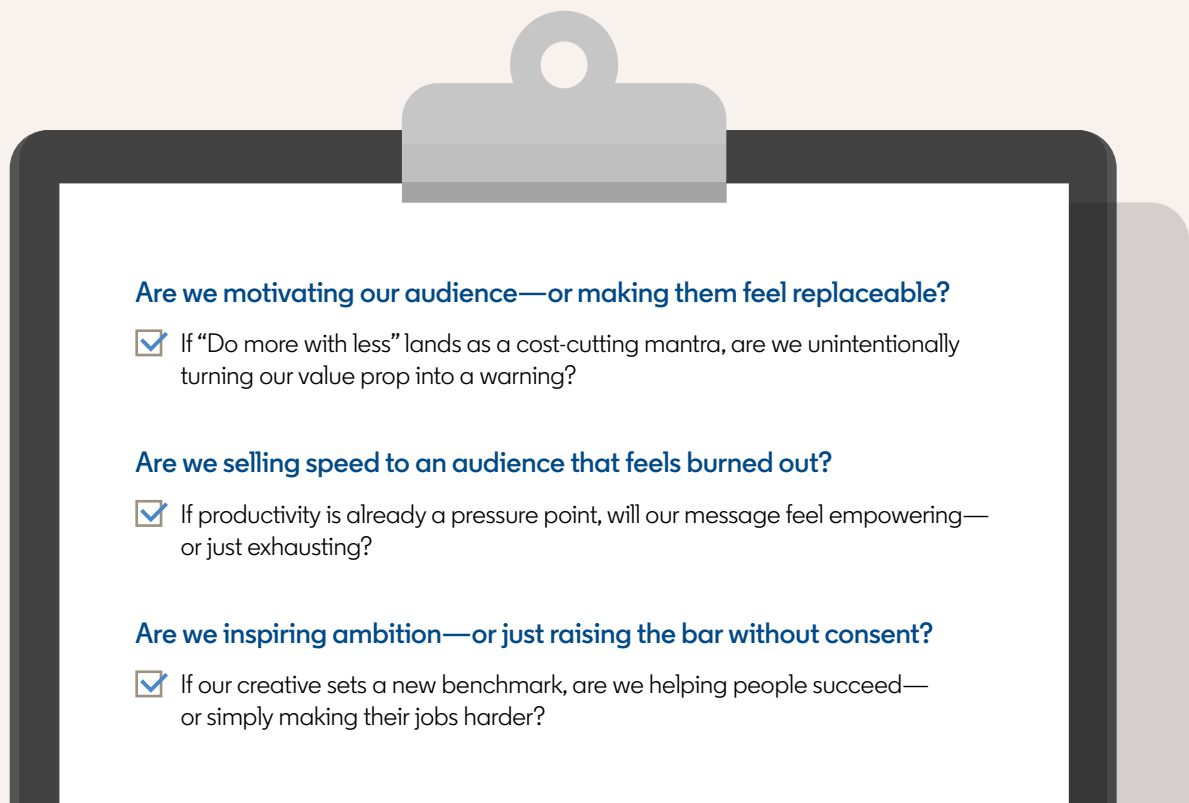
We like to think optimism as the antidote to fear, but with GenAI, it might be the mask that conceals the underlying anxieties. Being optimistic about GenAI doesn't mean you feel safe in its shadow. You can believe in GenAI's promise while quietly fearing what it means for your place in the system. Like privacy, job security is a paradox of proximity: the more intimately you know the tool, the more clearly you sense its potential and its threat. You feel empowered by what you can do with it but also unnerved by what it can do without you.

Pandora's box has already been opened and Power Users know the tradeoff better than anyone: the gift of acceleration comes with the curse of dependency. What started as yesterday's shortcut is now today's benchmark, and once organizations have had a taste of the speed and scale GenAI affords, it's impossible to shut the lid on the box. You're no longer competing with your most talented peers, but with a machine-augmented version of yourself—impossible to match yet built by your own hand. And now, there's no choice but to chase it.

High Performers are just as prone to the gravitational pull of GenAI. Unfortunately, talent, effort, and ambition don't inoculate you from replacement. GenAI doesn't just eliminate bad work but rather collapses the distance between average work and the exceptional work that once set High Performers apart. Nobody is indispensable in the age of GenAI, especially when it flattens the curve across the organization.

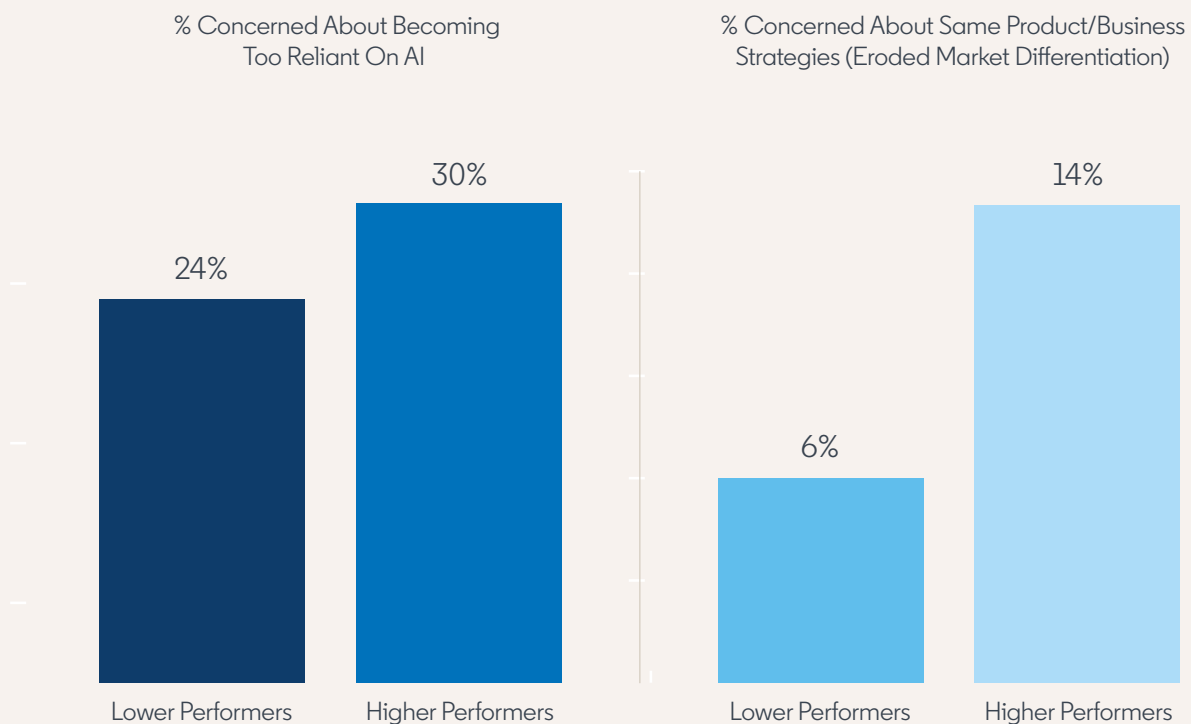
GenAI raises expectations—and the emotional stakes of your messaging. And what you say is only half the story because what people remember is what ultimately matters.

The Creative Gut Check



The High Performer Paradox: When GenAI Flattens the Curve

High Performers: The Self-Aware Are Self-Disruptive



Source: LinkedIn B2Bi Sponsored 2025 Global GenAI CEP Research Study in Partnership with EBI (US: n=408)

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High performers aren't just worried about being replaced by AI. They're also worried about succumbing to it and being leveled by it. Our data shows they're more concerned than any other group about becoming too reliant on GenAI (30%) and the risk of eroded market differentiation (14%) that comes with everyone using the same tools.

Because high performers understand that excellence is relative. It's not about hitting a benchmark; it's about beating everyone else who does. If GenAI gives everyone access to the same models, the same prompts, the same shortcuts, then the same tools produce the same outputs and performance becomes a race to the middle. The edge that once separated high performers from the pack gets sanded down by the system. And that may be the deeper fear. Not that GenAI makes them worse, but that it makes everyone else just good enough to catch up.

The Creative Gut Check



Are we selling tools that differentiate—or just democratize?

- ☒ When everyone has access to the same models, are we helping our buyers stand out—or just making it easier for others to catch up?

Are we activating aspiration—or triggering defensiveness?

- ☒ Does our message make high performers feel seen and elevated—or subtly threatened by the idea that their edge is disappearing?

Are we promising growth—or just increasing the new minimum?

- ☒ If GenAI is to become table stakes, is our product driving growth or just raising the cost of entry?

Final Thoughts

The GenAI revolution won't be televised. It will be half-read in an email, half-watched in a webinar, and half-remembered in a pitch. And that's the point. The GenAI race is not a sprint for technical superiority but will shape up to be a marathon of mental availability. And that's why memory is the real moat. The future won't reward the brand that says the most, but rather the one that's remembered at the moment that matters the most.

To win mindshare, marketers must do more than communicate what GenAI can do. They need to align with the buyer's identity—while quietly acknowledging the existential threat GenAI poses to that very identity.

Because beneath every purchase decision lies a deeper emotional calculus: a tug-of-war between acceleration and anxiety, between professional ambition and personal fear of obsolescence.

We often describe GenAI as a revolution of potential. But for many, it's also a reckoning. The same tools that promise to amplify performance also threaten to flatten differentiation—the very traits that once made us indispensable. For marketers, that changes the job. We're not just selling technology—we're shaping the narrative around it and how it makes people feel about their work, their identity, and their future.

Because the future isn't just about what GenAI can do, but about what we still want it to do for us, once it can do everything.

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