

mark-making\*

B2B More Human<sup>TM</sup>

Be memorable. Be meaningful. Be bought.



Hello  
there.

**We're really pleased to share with you our  
brief guide to B2B More Human™.**

Over the coming pages, you'll be given a whistlestop tour of the 'whats', the 'whys' and the 'hows' behind our approach. Better still, you'll also get a first taste of how it can be used to make your own B2B brand flourish.

It's tip-of-the-iceberg stuff for now – but hopefully enough to show you just how influential being more human can be.



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# What's it all about?

B2B More Human™ is a distinctly *(un)radical* approach to successful brand building.

It's born of a simple observation we've made, having worked with countless B2B clients over nearly three decades.

In a space known for championing facts over feelings, products over people, and the short-term over the bigger picture, we've witnessed first hand one simple truth – the most successful B2B brands are those that swim against that tide.

These are the businesses that recognise and embrace the reality that, when all's said and done, **business to business is just people to people.**



# Why should I care?



**It's a noisy world and our attention is at a premium.**

On top of that, only 5% of B2B buyers are in the market for goods and services at any one time.\*

So, for any brand to thrive long-term, it's crucial that they're front of mind when buyers are ready to buy. And the only way to make sure of that is by being not just meaningfully different, but distinctly memorable, too.

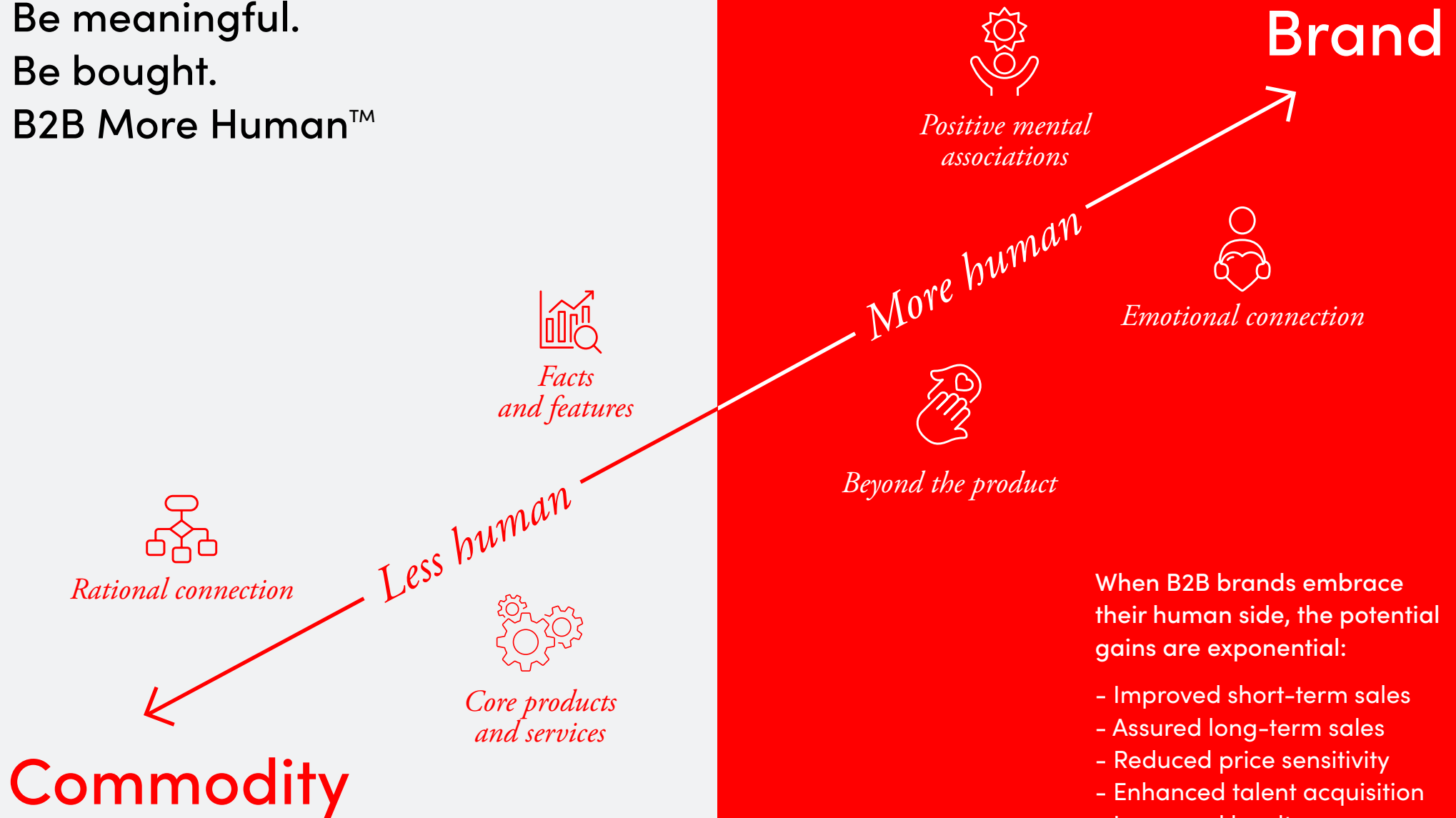
In the fiercely competitive world of B2B, there's little to separate brands at a product or service level, and 'business' too often equals corporate, rational and soulless. There's a stand-out opportunity, then, in remembering that in B2B, just like B2C, we're still talking to people.

For the B2B brands that embrace that simple idea, there's no limit to what they can achieve.

What's more, when B2B is more human, the positive impact goes beyond commercial success. It's not just good for business – it makes the world a nicer place, too.

\*Source [B2B Institute](#)

Be memorable.  
Be meaningful.  
Be bought.  
B2B More Human™



When B2B brands embrace their human side, the potential gains are exponential:

- Improved short-term sales
- Assured long-term sales
- Reduced price sensitivity
- Enhanced talent acquisition
- Increased loyalty
- More defensible position
- Increased brand equity

# The central premise

Human nature hasn't changed

With the world around us evolving at a blistering pace, it's easy to forget just how little the human brain has changed since we first rose up on two feet.

We're the same illogical, contradictory, curious, fallible, emotion-led beings we've always been.

And, when we look at B2B marketing through this lens, well, that's when the real magic happens.



# The four principles of B2B More Human™

Each firmly grounded in our central premise, the B2B More Human™ principles are a great place to start, providing a practical framework for building (and maintaining) a flourishing brand.

01

People  
before  
product




02

Keep  
it real



03

Head  
and  
heart



04

Dare  
to be  
different





B2B More Human™

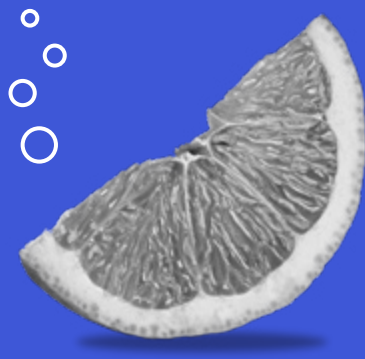
The principles

01

People  
before  
product



**Start with the customer and their needs, not your shiny product and how great it is. Only by truly understanding your audience can you deliver meaningful solutions to real problems.**



Products. Services. Tools. The B2B world is full of them. And it's packed to the rafters with brands that love to talk about these things, too – much more so than in B2C.

But in the excitement of telling audiences how clever their latest offerings are, brands often forget about the audience themselves. And, as people like to be central characters in the story they're being told, that's a big problem.

Effective marketing begins with knowing your customer and understanding their needs. That way, you can present products, services or tools as solutions to human problems. And that makes them interesting.

The B2B brands that talk about themselves sometimes survive. But the ones that talk to their audience almost always thrive. And that's the difference.

## B2B More Human™

### The principles in practice

01

# People before product

At the forefront of digital preservation software, Preservica is changing the way organisations around the world future-proof, and access, critical long-term digital information.

We helped them define a clarity of purpose far beyond the technicalities of their product, to capture the hearts and minds of customers, employees and investors alike.



Before

*A focus of the product (the 'what')*

After

*A focus on purpose (the 'why')*

The world's cultural, economic, social and political memory is at risk.

Our mission is to protect it.



B2B More Human™

The principles

02

Keep

it real



**Acting naturally and authentically, makes you relatable. When you're relatable you're more likeable. Being likeable makes you memorable. And when you're memorable, then you're really in business.**

From ROIs to KPIs and stuffy suits to sterile ads, B2B has a rich history of soulless corporatism. More recently, though, with the likes of inclusion and accessibility coming to the fore, it's been waking up to what the real world wants – and the pandemic has turbo-charged this.

CEOs now speak from bedrooms, as well as boardrooms. Pressed shirts have made way for labelled hoodies. Meetings are paused by Amazon doorbells and pets pop up for unannounced cameos. In short, we've shown each other that behind the veneer, we're all basically the same – and it's made us closer.

This is all down to the fact that we're drawn to imperfection (The Pratfall Effect, as the scientists call it), and the fact that vulnerability breeds trust.

Bottom line, an audience that 'feels' you will always be more likely to part with their pennies. And if you keep on being authentic, they'll keep on investing in you.

# B2B More Human™

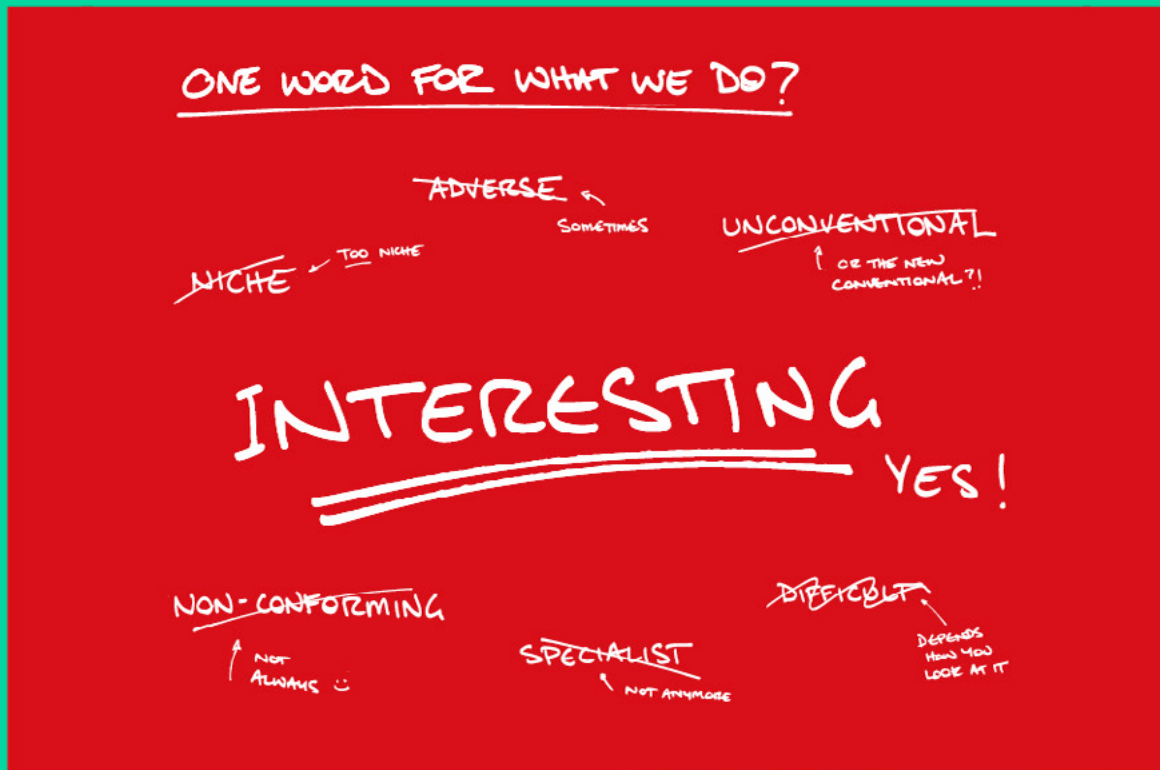
## The principles in practice

### 02 Keep it real

In an market characterised by less-than-flattering and often-negative descriptions, we saw an opportunity for specialist mortgage lender Pepper Money to change the vernacular.

By demonstrating empathy for borrowers with imperfect credit histories, and presenting themselves to brokers as the lender for ‘interesting’ cases, Pepper successfully differentiated itself in a meaningful way. Huge uplifts in broker registrations, lending volumes, and Unprompted Willingness to Recommend\* followed.

\*Data from BDRC BVA's Project Mercury



Cash BTL, no mortgage history?  
**We're interested.**

We love the cases often described as "difficult" or "unconventional". To solve them, we have to focus on the people as well as the paperwork, that makes them interesting.

From financial hardship to a minor blip or an immature credit history, we find an answer without reaching for a credit score. Complex income? Recently self-employed?

Talk to Pepper.

Hot off the press  
Register With Pepper today to find out more and get your free copy of our little red book.



Call 0333 370 1105  
or visit [peppergroup.co.uk/lending](http://peppergroup.co.uk/lending)



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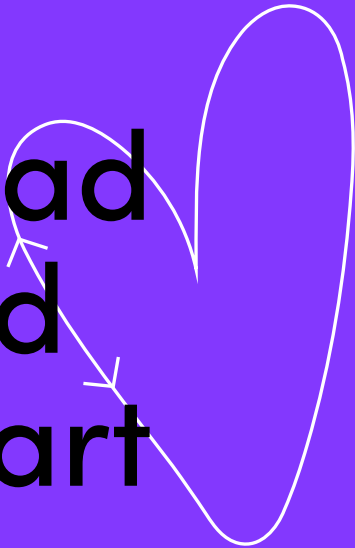


B2B More Human™

The principles

03

Head  
and  
heart

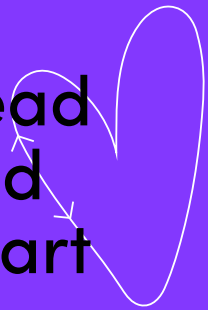




**Facts vs. feelings? It's about balance and timing. Use emotive storytelling to connect and be remembered. And when your buyer's set to buy, be ready to dish the data and let the features flow.**

With all this talk of heart and feelings, don't go thinking there's no room for the facts and the functional. There's a time and a place for emotional and rational messaging. In fact, it's absolutely vital to use both.

The point is, because we're human, we mainly make decisions based on emotion – and often, the bigger the decision, the more we rely on our heart. But we'll



always use our head to rationalise these decisions. So it makes sense that good B2B brand building should follow this path.

Binet & Field's classic brand-building study, the 'The Long and the Short of it: Balancing Short and Long-Term Marketing Strategies', talks about emotion being the key to long-term growth and profit, but this only being possible when balanced with short-term audience interactions grounded in more rational messaging.

The aim of the game is to make your brand stick in people's memories, give them reason to consider it and, when the time comes, serve up the facts they need to decide if it's for them.

B2B brands need to capture both their audience's heads and their hearts – first with an emotive story that creates desire, and then with the factual bones that seal the deal.



## B2B More Human™

### The principles in practice

# 03 Head and heart

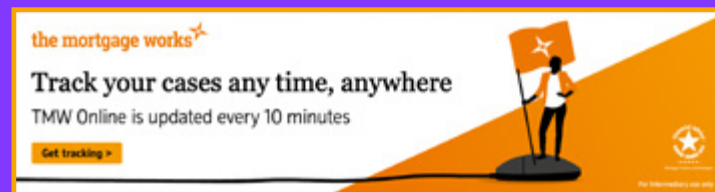
The Mortgage Works (Nationwide's specialist buy to let lender) has led the competition for nearly 20 years. In an industry where attaining standout and brand salience is notoriously tricky, that's an exceptional achievement.

It's testament to the consistent reinforcement of a well-crafted story – TMW's relentless commitment to supporting brokers – balanced with effective, sales-focused product campaigns.



Heart  
*Emotional long-term brand building*

Head  
*Rational short-term tactical marketing*



B2B More Human™  
The principles

# 04 Dare to be different



B2B More Human™

The principles

With B2B buyers 'shopping' just 5% of the time, being front of mind is the name of the game. And as we curious humans are drawn to the different and the disruptive, fortune really does favour the brave.



## 04 Dare to be different

Humans are fundamentally creative creatures. That's why every one of us welcomes having a drab day interrupted by something a little different – and that includes the marketing we encounter.

We've written extensively about the 'blanding' that's blighted the B2B sector for years now. And when 'bland' sets the tone, it takes bravery for a brand to embrace distinctiveness.

The great news is that bravery is what people want. And with creative quality cited as being able to multiply profits by a factor of 12\* (making it the biggest opportunity for competitive advantage), it's what brands need to be doing.

The best B2B marketing doesn't just educate, it entertains. Because when somebody's entertained, they remember you. And as the vast majority of buyers aren't in the market at any given time, it's hard to argue that anything beats being remembered.

\*Source: WARC / Accelero Consulting

B2B More Human™

The principles in practice

04

Dare  
to be   
different

Leading commercial law firm BrookStreet des Roches, didn't just see themselves as different – they were brave enough to present themselves that way too.

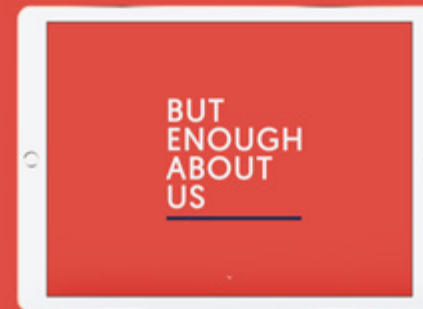
The rebrand got straight to the heart of the firm's personal touch, bringing it to life in a uniquely ownable way, that defied all category conventions.

And it served its purpose. BrookStreet des Roches was acquired by renowned legal firm, Knights, within just a few years of rebranding.

BROOK  
STREET  
DES  
ROCHES

LAWYERS  
WITH  
UNIQUE  
PROPERTIES

YOU  
THRIVE  
WE  
THRIVE





# Where do I start?

Making your brand more human might simply involve a few nip/tucks here and there. On the other hand, it might demand surgery that's more than skin deep.

## Introducing the B2B More Human™ Healthcheck

To find out where your brand is now, get the ball rolling with our top-level self-assessment tool. Just follow the instructions over the next few pages to find out how your brand stacks up against the B2B More Human™ principles.

Don't overthink it. Remember – this is intended to give you a quick sense of how human your brand is right now – no more than that.

# 01

# People before product

Let's see how customer-centric or product-centric your marketing is. Imagine looking at your website cold, with no prior knowledge of your brand and answer the questions opposite, circling a score between 1 and 10 in response to each.

## 1. Value proposition

Q: How clear is it who your brand is for, and the problem it solves?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*1 = not clear at all. 10 = crystal clear and immediate.*

## 2. Features vs benefits

Q: Is your top-level content weighted more towards what you do (product, features, facts), or how you make your customers' lives better (benefits, value)?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

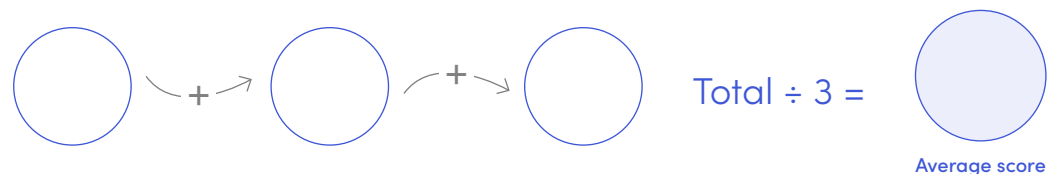
*1 = heavily focused on what you do. 10 = heavily focused on the difference you make.*

## 3. 'We' vs 'You'

Q: Does your copy contain more references to 'we' than it does to 'you'?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*1 = we, we, we. 10 = you, you, you.*



# 02

# Keep it real

Next up, it's about figuring out how clear, natural and authentic your brand image is – and your language is a great place to start. Again, pretend you're seeing your website for the first time and answer the questions opposite, circling a score between 1 and 10 in response to each.

## 1. Jargon & corporate waffle

Q: Would a prospective customer understand all the terms and language you're using?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = jargon & complexity-heavy. 10 = clear, simple, and not an acronym in sight.

## 2. Accessibility & inclusion

Q: Do your words and language meet a reasonable reading-age requirement?\*

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = Well above or below FK Grade 8. 10 = Bang on FK Grade 8.

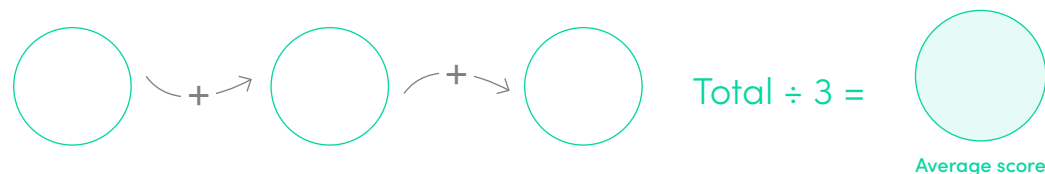
\*The Flesch Kincaid readability calculator can help here. Search 'good calculators Flesch Kincaid', drop a paragraph of your web copy into the box and hit 'Calculate'. Then do the same with two other paras. The widely-accepted reading age gold standard in FK is US Grade 8 (age 13).

## 3. Tone of voice

Q: How clearly do your brand values and personality come through in your copy?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = Not clearly at all – we sound soulless. 10 = Loud and clear – sounds exactly like us.



# 03

# Head and heart

Now let's get to grips with how much of your work is rationally-led (short-term performance) vs emotionally-led (long-term brand building). You'll need to think back over your last 12 months' marketing activity and answer the questions opposite. You know the drill.

## 1. Campaigns

Q: What was your rough split of brand vs tactical marketing?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = Heavily weighted to one or the other. 10 = A pretty even split.

## 2. Sales presentations

Q: Are you telling a clear, audience-first story that starts with a customer problem, then presents you as the solution – before finally highlighting the products/services that enable this?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

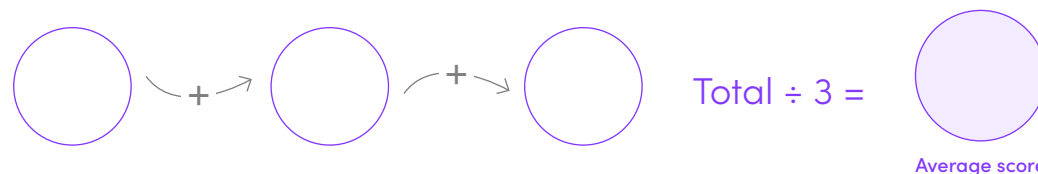
1 = No story, and product first. 10 = Clear story with problem, solution, then product.

## 3. Tracking & measurement

Q: Are you tracking brand associations and brand salience as well as short-term sales performance and ROI metrics?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = It's all about the short-term numbers. 10 = We track the feelings and the figures.





# 04 Dare to be different

Last but not least, we're getting under the skin of how distinctive your brand is compared to your peers. Pick your three fiercest competitors. Fire up their websites and have a scan of their main pages, then, as before, consider the questions.

## 1. What you're saying

Q: How similar is what they're talking about to what you are?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

*1 = We're all saying the same stuff. 10 = We're saying totally different things.*

## 2. How you're saying it

Q: How similar is the way they're talking to the way you do?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

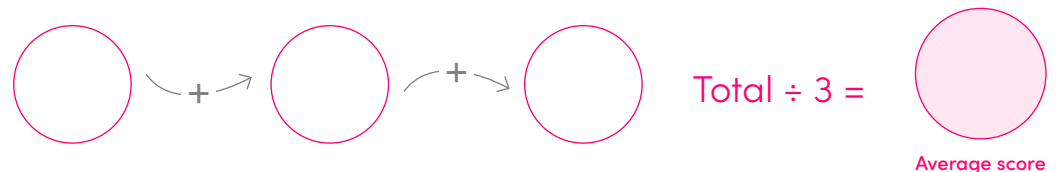
*1 = Just like us. 10 = Worlds apart.*

## 3. What you look like

Q: How similar is their visual treatment to yours?

A: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

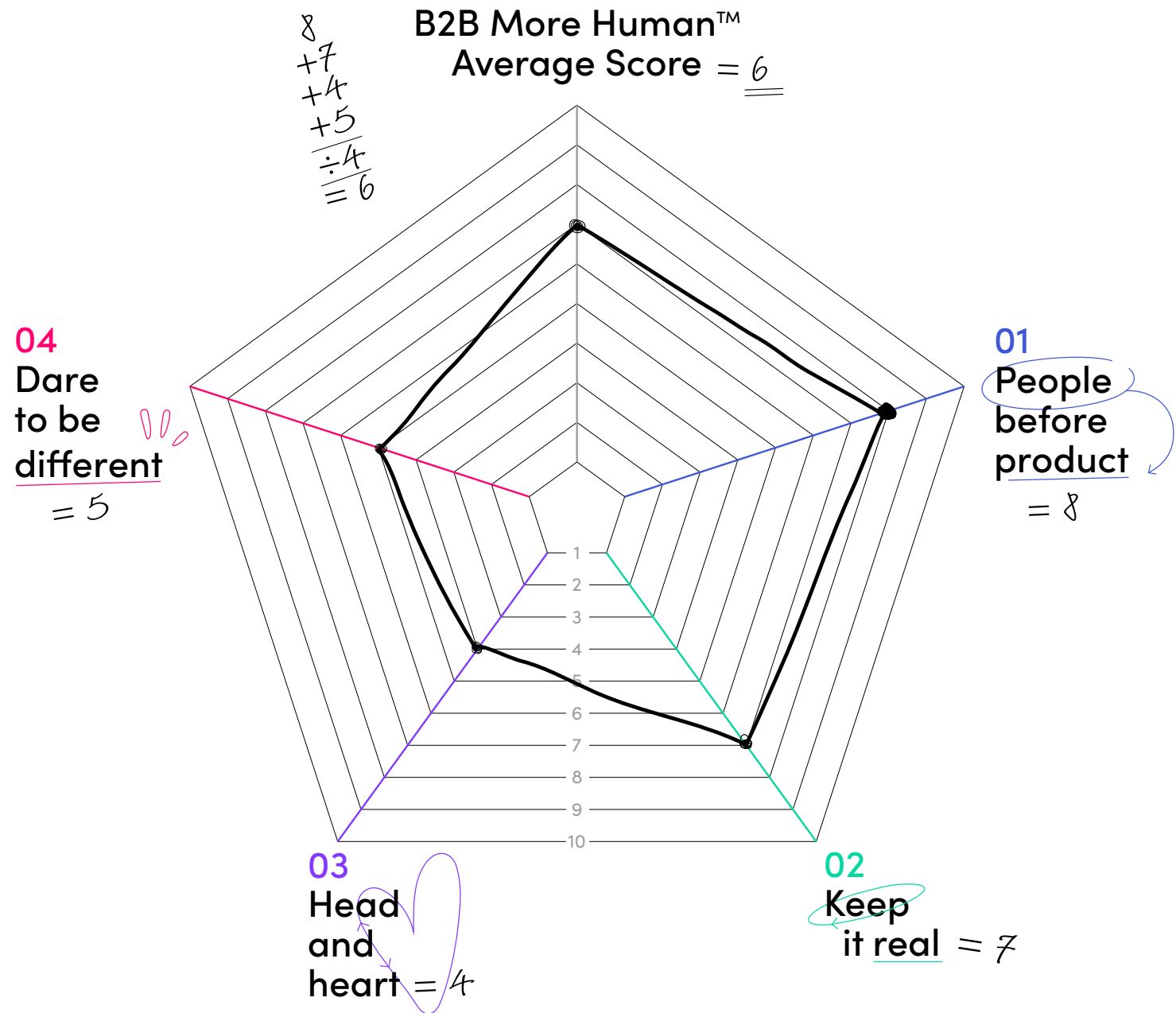
*1 = We look identical. 10 = Completely unlike.*



# How human?

Now, armed with your average scores from the previous pages, it's time to create a visual snapshot of where your brand is now.

We'll create yours on the next page, but to give you an idea of what a complete one looks like, check out the fictional example here.



# B2B More Human™ Healthcheck

## Now it's your turn

### Step 1:

Take your average score for each of the principles and mark it on the corresponding axis.

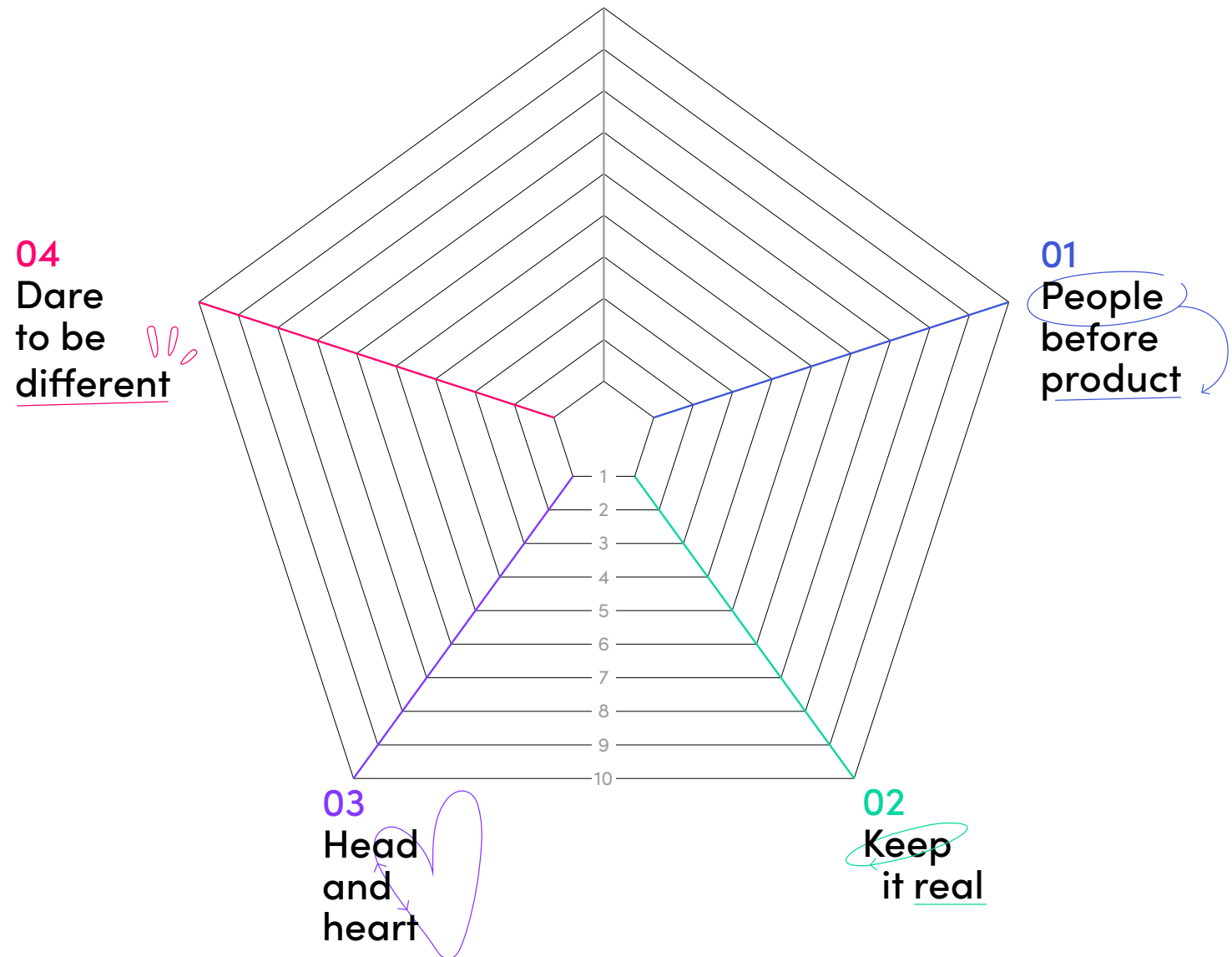
### Step 2:

Total your principle scores and divide by four to get your overall average and mark that on the Average Score axis.

### Step 3:

Now join the five dots and you'll see immediately where your relative strengths and weaknesses are.

## B2B More Human™ Average Score



# What next?



**With your B2B More Human™ Healthcheck complete, you should have a pretty good picture of just how human your brand currently is.**

If you've created an even-looking shape of perfect 10s, give yourself a pat on the back and enjoy the success you're undoubtedly having. We can say our goodbyes now as, the truth is, you probably don't need our help.

Chances are, though, you've just created a shape that's highlighted some very human room for improvement. Which means that we definitely can lend a hand.

Whatever picture your Healthcheck has painted, there are lots of reasons for the story it's telling. If you're ready to dive deeper, we have the expertise, experience, and the tools to guide you. We'll help you identify where your greatest opportunities lie, spot quick fixes for some equally quick wins, and create a longer-term strategy to fully realise your brand's potential.



# Here to help

So that's it – B2B More  
Human™ in a nutshell.

You've found out what it is, why you should care  
and how it can help your B2B brand to flourish.

If you'd like to find out more – or if you just  
want to get on with the business of becoming  
more human – drop mark-making\* Co-founder,  
Ali Williams, a line to set up a  
call. He's always happy to chat.

Email: [ali@mark-making.com](mailto:ali@mark-making.com)



# mark-making\*

mark-making\* is the B2B brand strategy and creative agency for forward-thinking and purposeful organisations looking to get ahead and stay there. By understanding what makes people tick, we help brands define their position, create memorable identities, and strengthen what they stand for at every chance. The result? Difference that's meaningful. Work that works. Brands that flourish.

