DATA UNIFICATION & MANAGEMENT

A RESEARCH-BASED GUIDE FOR MARKETERS

Research Series Conducted in Partnership with Leading Providers of Marketing Technology and Digital Marketing Agency Services.

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METHODOLOGY

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing strategies, tactics and the technology that drives them with a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format.

This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing professionals and marketing research subscribers.

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SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Primary Marketing Channel

B2B (Business-to-Business)	33%
B2C (Business-to-Consumer)	51%
B2B and B2C Equally	16%

Number of Employees

More than 500	23%
50 to 500	27%
Fewer than 50	50%

Primary role in company

Owner / Partner / C-Level	38%
Vice President / Director / Manager	30%
Non-Management Professional	32%

DATA UNIFICATION & MANAGEMENT

As an organization grows, disconnected data can impact everything from internal communication and decision-making to the entire customer experience.

How are marketers unifying and managing data to improve campaign effectiveness?

To help answer this question, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded The Outlook on Performance Marketing survey. We thank the 297 marketers who responded to this survey between August 16, 2021 and August 26, 2021.

This Survey Summary Report, titled *Data Unification and Management,* represents the opinions of all the market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments from the survey are reported on separately and exclusively by our participating Research Partners.

This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

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MOST IMPORTANT GOALS

Disjointed and poorly managed data can cause ripple effects throughout an organization and can be a driving factor in how a customer interacts with and experiences a brand. That is why marketers are focused on **improving customer engagement** and the overall **customer experience** by unifying and properly managing data, according to 46% and 43% of those surveyed, respectively.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT GOALS FOR A DATA UNIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY?

Goal	Percentage
IMPROVING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT	46%
IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	43%
STREAMLINING MARKETING AND SALES EFFORTS	29%
IMPROVING LEAD QUALITY	25%
IMPROVING ROI	24%
IMPROVING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION	24%
INCREASING NUMBER OF LEADS CAPTURED	20%
IMPROVING MARKETING ATTRIBUTION	19%
CREATING A SINGLE VIEW OF THE CUSTOMER	17%
IMPROVING MULTI-CHANNEL TOUCH	15%

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STRATEGIC SUCCESS

A 60% majority of marketing professionals have experienced **some success** at unifying and managing data in order to achieve their strategic goals like improving the customer experience. Just over one-third (35%) of those surveyed would classify their success as **"best-in-class"** compared to the competition, while only 5% say their data unification efforts have been **unsuccessful**.
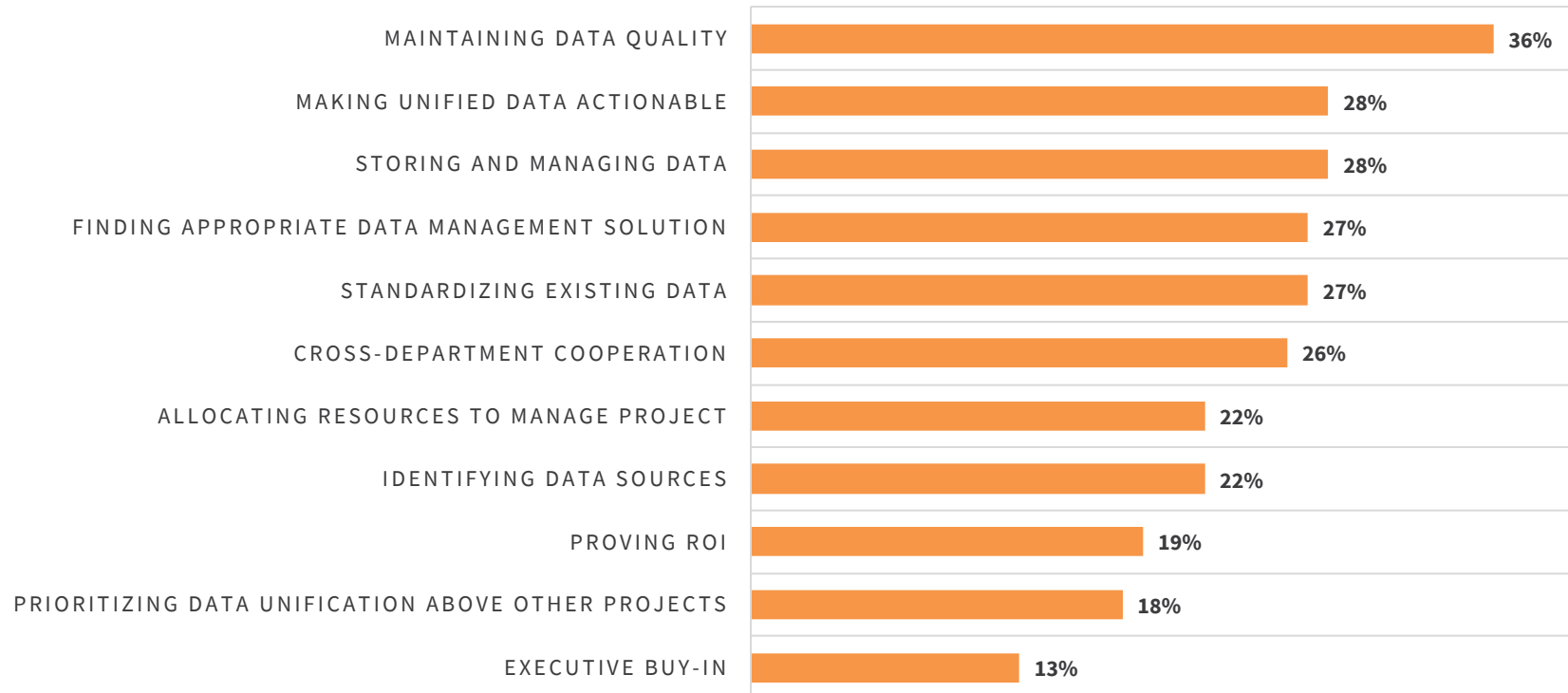
WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR (OR YOUR TYPICAL CLIENT'S) SUCCESS AT UNIFYING AND MANAGING DATA TO ACHIEVE YOUR STRATEGIC GOALS?

UNSUCCESSFUL
5%

VERY SUCCESSFUL
(BEST-IN-CLASS)
35%

SOMEWHAT
SUCCESSFUL
60%

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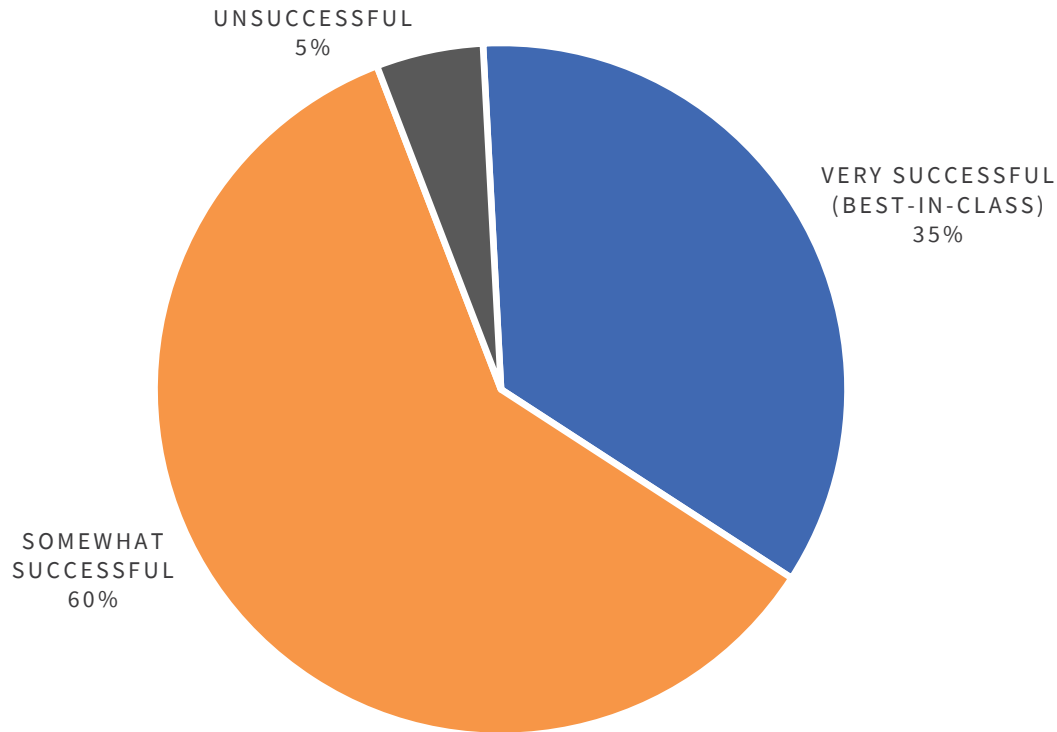
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Maintaining consistently accurate and relevant data is considered a most essential element to implementing a data unification and management strategy according to 36% of marketers. Factors concerning how data is handled are also considered critical to success for the 28% of marketers who listed **making unified data actionable** and **storing and managing data** as top essential elements.

WHAT ARE THE MOST ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT A STRATEGY TO UNIFY AND MANAGE DATA?

Element	Percentage
MAINTAINING DATA QUALITY	36%
MAKING UNIFIED DATA ACTIONABLE	28%
STORING AND MANAGING DATA	28%
FINDING APPROPRIATE DATA MANAGEMENT SOLUTION	27%
STANDARDIZING EXISTING DATA	27%
CROSS-DEPARTMENT COOPERATION	26%
ALLOCATING RESOURCES TO MANAGE PROJECT	22%
IDENTIFYING DATA SOURCES	22%
PROVING ROI	19%
PRIORITIZING DATA UNIFICATION ABOVE OTHER PROJECTS	18%
EXECUTIVE BUY-IN	13%

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COMPLEXITY OF IMPLEMENTATION

Organizations large and small now have access to increasingly large amounts of data across many sources, and the strategic application of this data to effectively improve marketing efforts can be complex. 71% of marketers agree, reporting that implementing a strategy to unify and manage data is **complicated**, with 17% of those surveyed listing the task as **extremely complicated**.

HOW COMPLICATED IS IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY TO UNIFY AND MANAGE DATA?

EXTREMELY COMPLICATED	SOMEWHAT COMPLICATED	SOMEWHAT UNCOMPLICATED	EXTREMELY UNCOMPLICATED
17%	54%	25%	4%

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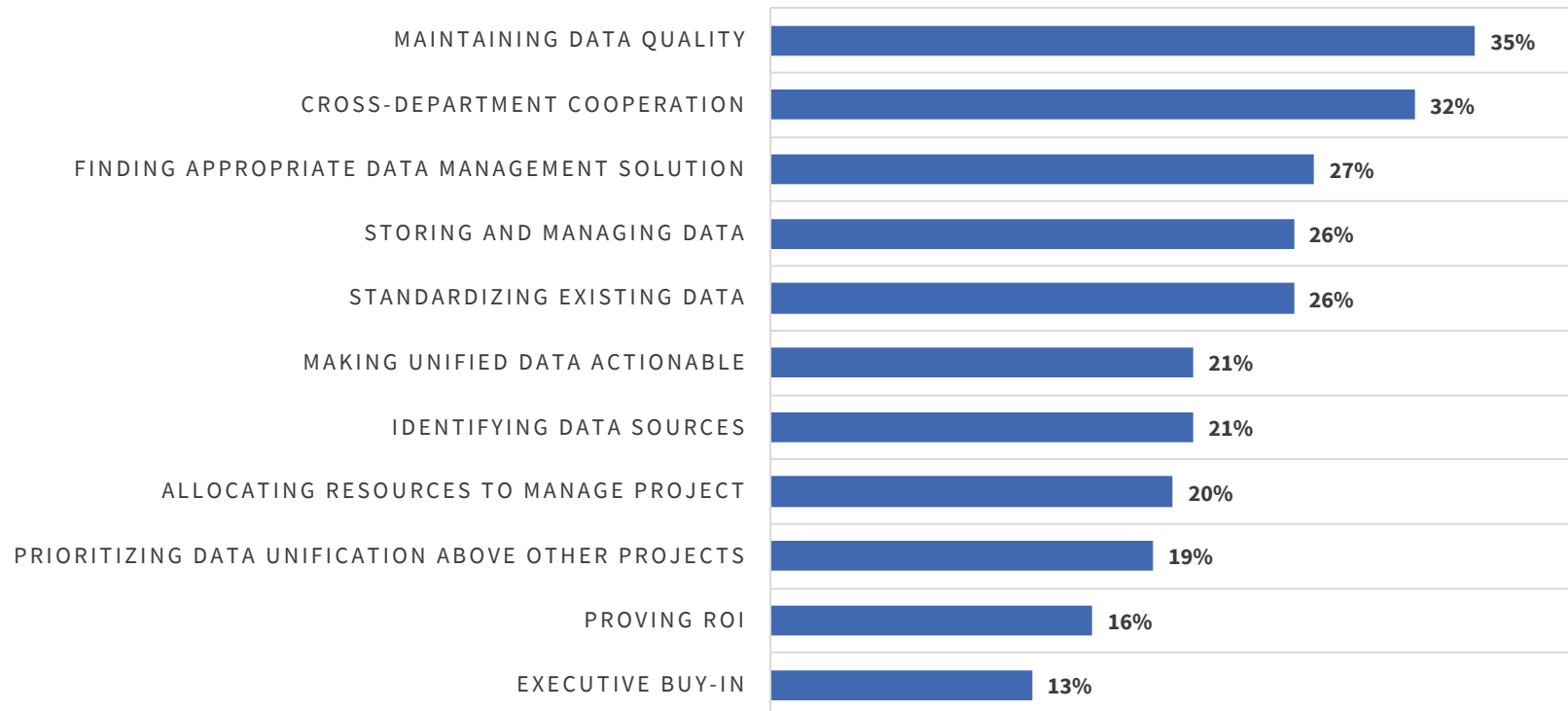Published September 2021
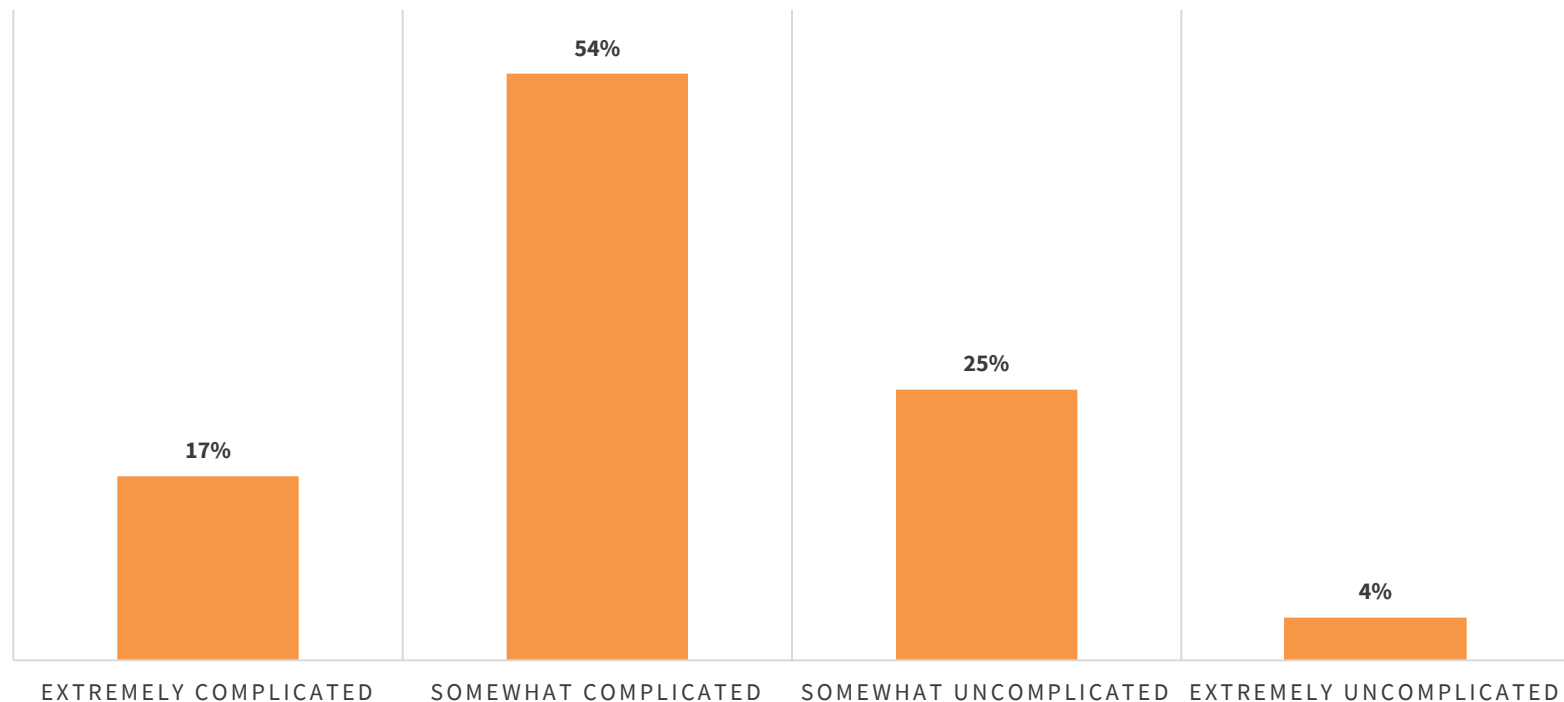
GREATEST CHALLENGES

With a majority of marketers reporting that implementing a data unification strategy is complex, which aspects of the process do they find the most challenging? Over one-third (35%) of marketers are challenged by **maintaining data quality**, and 32% of marketers report that **cross-department cooperation** creates difficulties during this process.
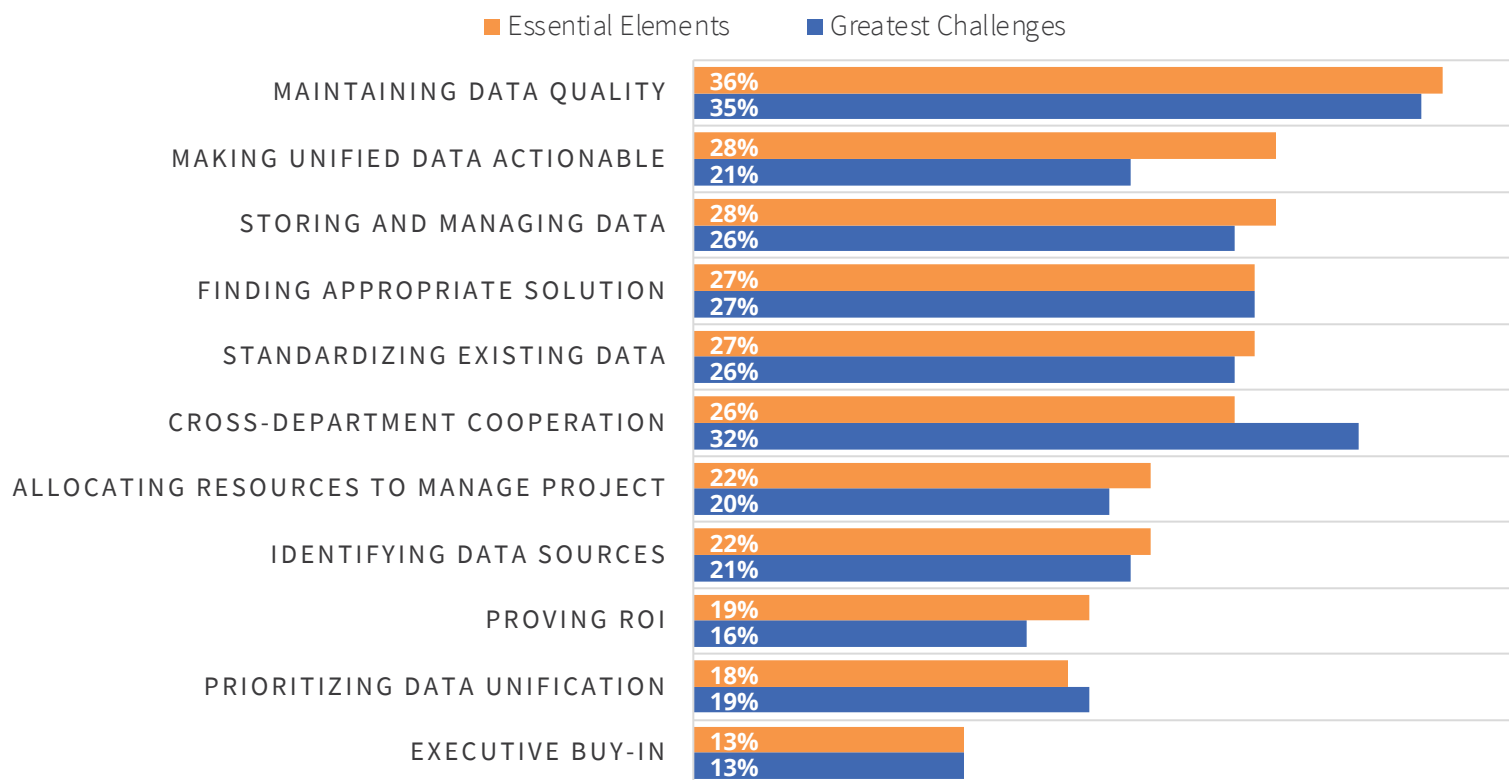
WHAT ARE THE GREATEST CHALLENGES FACED WITH IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY TO UNIFY AND MANAGE DATA?

Challenge	Percentage
MAINTAINING DATA QUALITY	35%
CROSS-DEPARTMENT COOPERATION	32%
FINDING APPROPRIATE DATA MANAGEMENT SOLUTION	27%
STORING AND MANAGING DATA	26%
STANDARDIZING EXISTING DATA	26%
MAKING UNIFIED DATA ACTIONABLE	21%
IDENTIFYING DATA SOURCES	21%
ALLOCATING RESOURCES TO MANAGE PROJECT	20%
PRIORITIZING DATA UNIFICATION ABOVE OTHER PROJECTS	19%
PROVING ROI	16%
EXECUTIVE BUY-IN	13%

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS VS CHALLENGES

Comparing the most challenging aspects of implementing a strategy for data unification and management with the most essential elements to the success of a strategy can produce helpful insights into what marketers can expect from the process and possibly which efforts to prioritize.
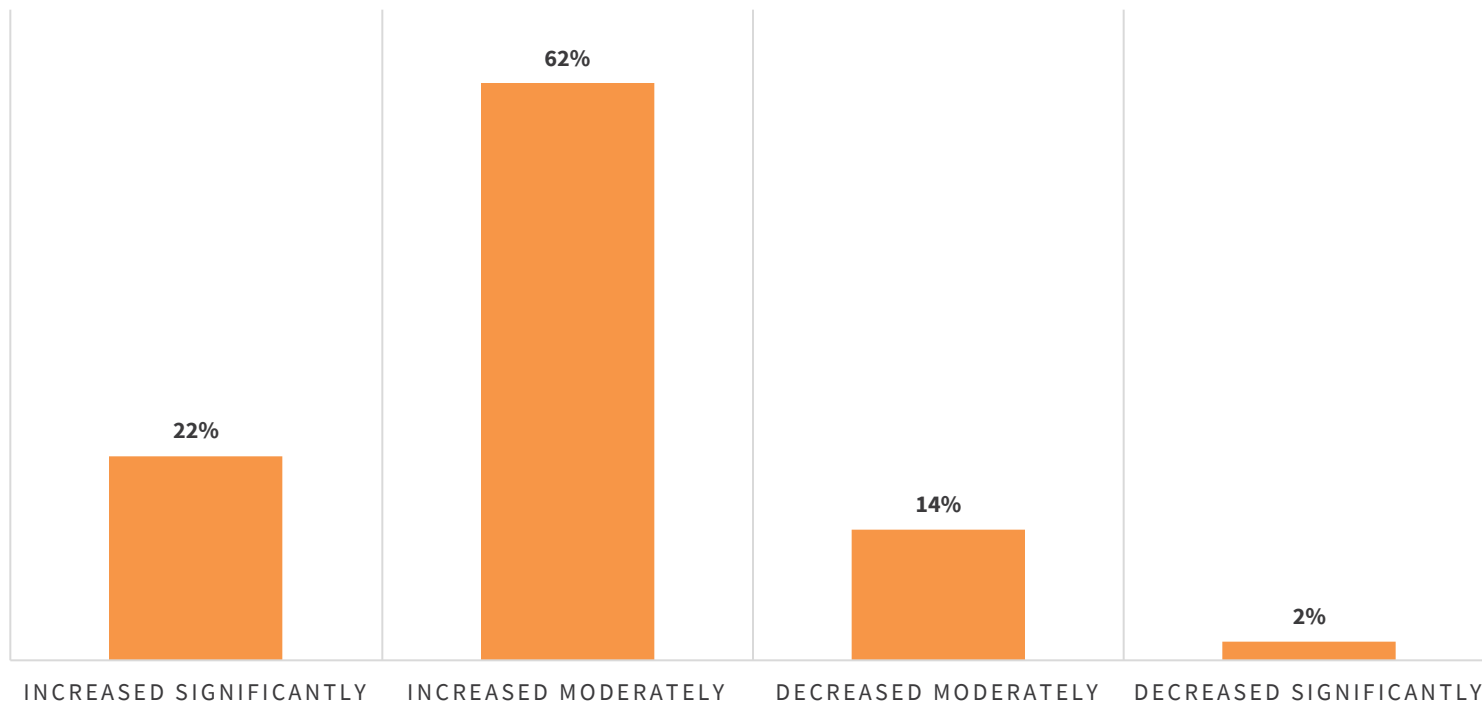
COMPARING ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS AND GREATEST CHALLENGES

■ Essential Elements   ■ Greatest Challenges

Category	Essential Elements	Greatest Challenges
MAINTAINING DATA QUALITY	36%	35%
MAKING UNIFIED DATA ACTIONABLE	28%	21%
STORING AND MANAGING DATA	28%	26%
FINDING APPROPRIATE SOLUTION	27%	27%
STANDARDIZING EXISTING DATA	27%	26%
CROSS-DEPARTMENT COOPERATION	26%	32%
ALLOCATING RESOURCES TO MANAGE PROJECT	22%	20%
IDENTIFYING DATA SOURCES	22%	21%
PROVING ROI	19%	16%
PRIORITIZING DATA UNIFICATION	18%	19%
EXECUTIVE BUY-IN	13%	13%

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HOW EFFECTIVENESS IS CHANGING

Solutions for organizing data and creating a unified view of the customer are rapidly improving, and marketers are experiencing the benefits of this with 84% of those surveyed reporting an **increase in the effectiveness** of unified and strategically managed data over the past year. Nearly one-quarter (22%) of those surveyed describe this increase as **significant**.
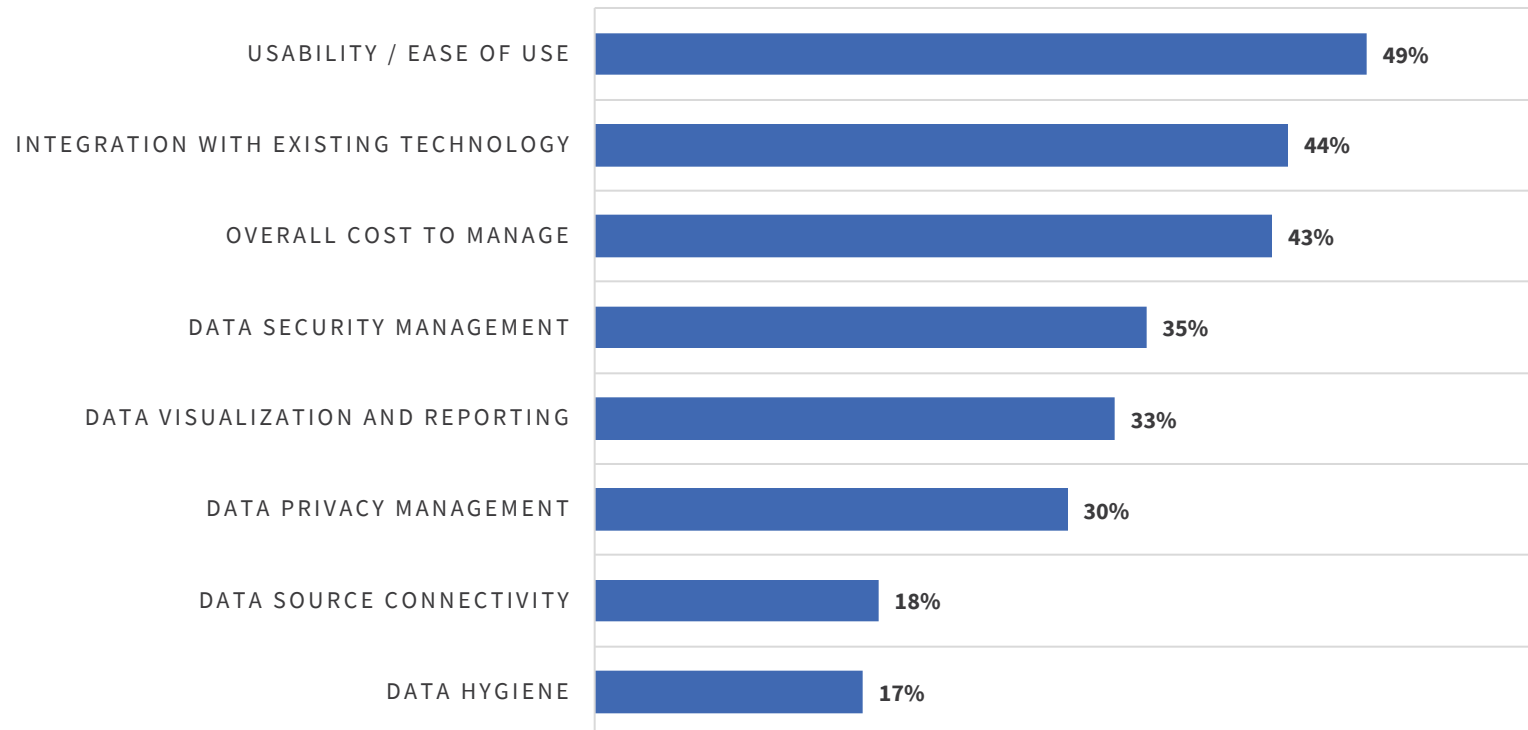
HOW HAS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DATA UNIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT CHANGED IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?

INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY	INCREASED MODERATELY	DECREASED MODERATELY	DECREASED SIGNIFICANTLY
22%	62%	14%	2%

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CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF A SOLUTION

Over one-quarter (27%) of marketers report that finding an appropriate data unification and management solution is essential to the successful execution of a strategy, but what are the key components they are looking for in a solution? Ease of use, integration with existing technology, and overall cost to manage are critical factors to consider according to 49%, 44%, and 43% of marketers surveyed, respectively.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ARE THE MOST CRITICAL COMPONENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING A DATA MANAGEMENT SOLUTION?

Component	Percentage
USABILITY / EASE OF USE	49%
INTEGRATION WITH EXISTING TECHNOLOGY	44%
OVERALL COST TO MANAGE	43%
DATA SECURITY MANAGEMENT	35%
DATA VISUALIZATION AND REPORTING	33%
DATA PRIVACY MANAGEMENT	30%
DATA SOURCE CONNECTIVITY	18%
DATA HYGIENE	17%

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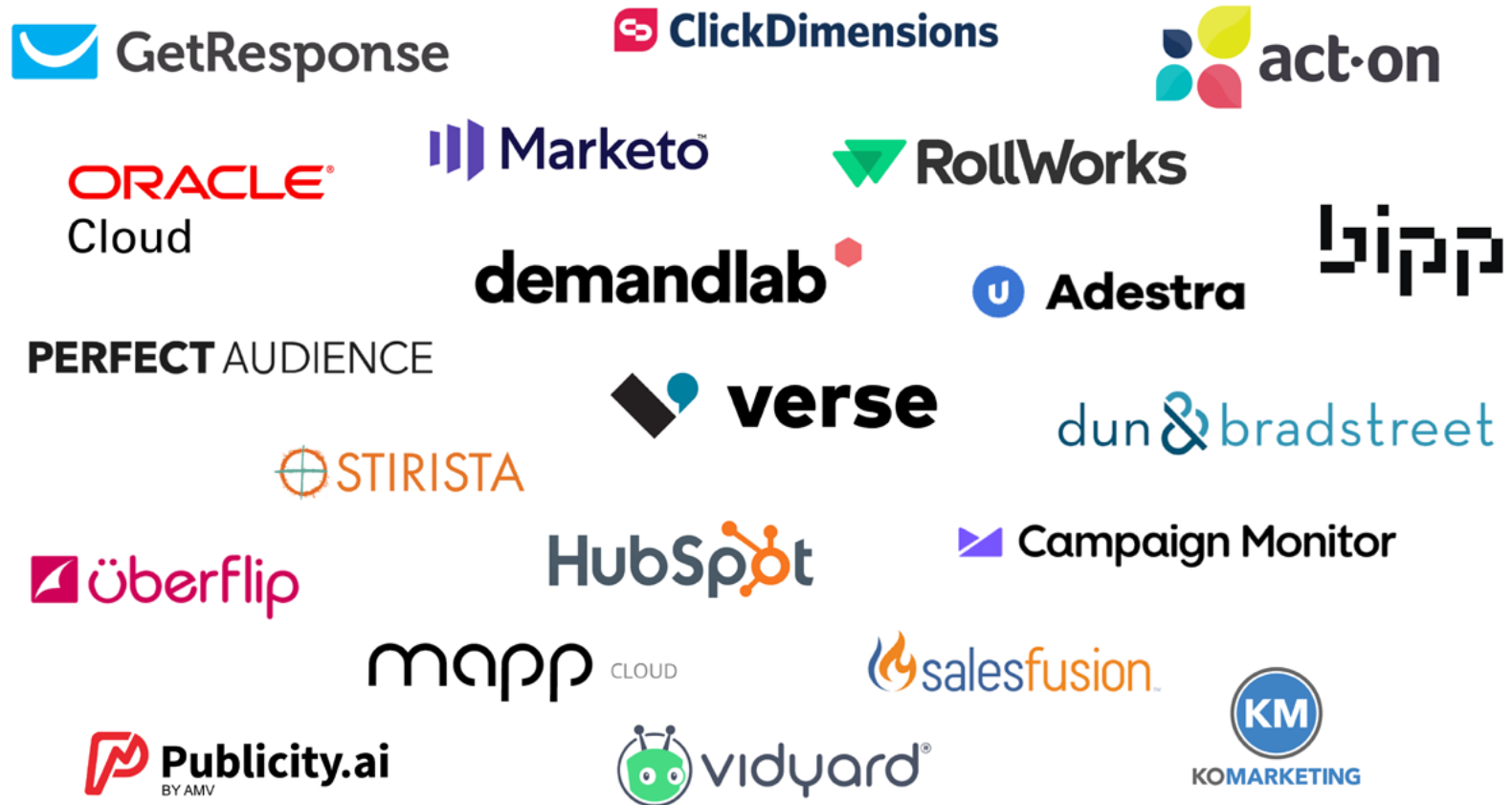
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