

The Agency Edge

R E S E A R C H S E R I E S

Getting Hired In 2024

New Insights to Help
Agencies Get Found,
Hired, and Retained



Drew McLellan
CEO
Agency Management Institute



Susan Baier
Founder & CEO
Audience Audit Inc.

Details

- Updated & re-fielded the survey we used in 2014 and 2019
- Fielded March 2024 — 400 respondents
- 400 respondents
 - All marketing decision-makers in agency clients
 - <\$500M revenue, <\$20M marketing budget
 - 87% have participated in hiring a new agency
- +/- 4.2 point margin of error at 95% confidence level

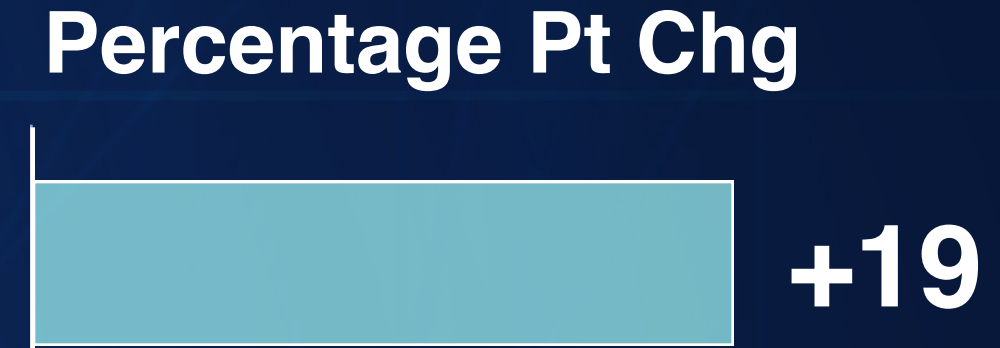
This Year's Question:

**How Can Agencies
Get Hired in 2024?**

Good News for Agencies!

Significant Changes since 2019: The Value of Agencies

Main value of agencies is developing strategy



Agencies are the best resource for tactical marketing execution

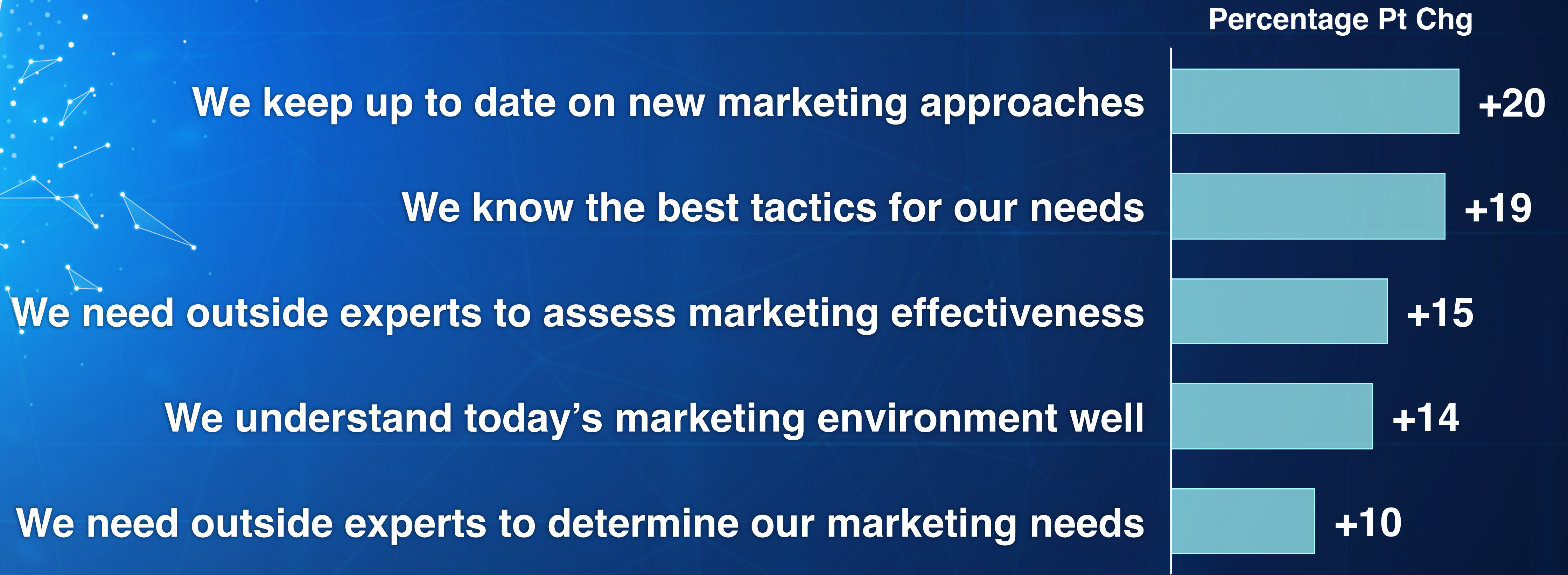
Agencies are the best resource for the latest marketing trends

Main value of agencies is unbiased opinion about our marketing

Main value of agencies is new ideas

Agencies are the best resource for effective marketing strategies

Significant Attitude Changes since 2019: Client Acumen



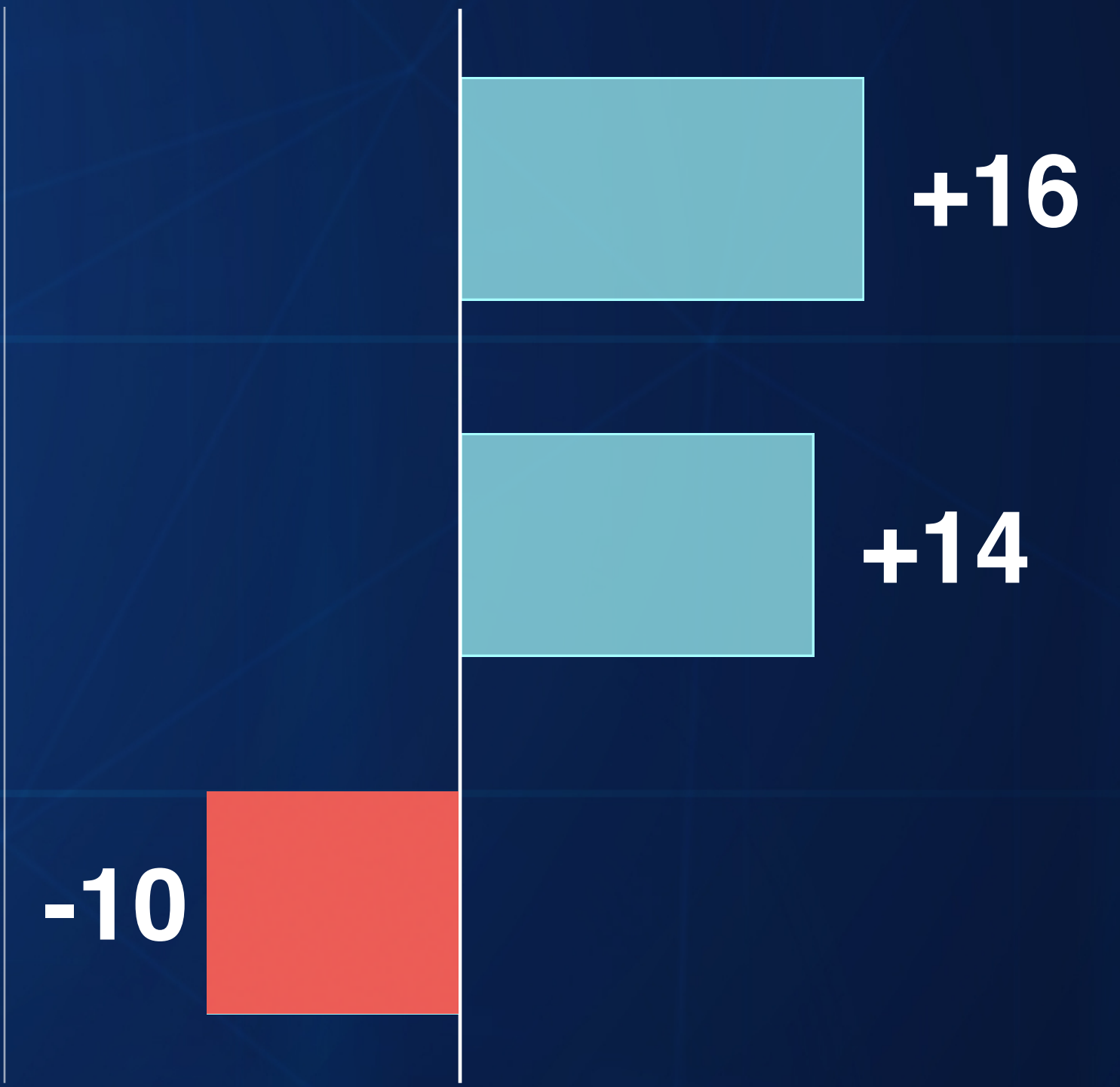
Significant Attitude Changes since 2019: Agency Relationships

Long-term relationships are important

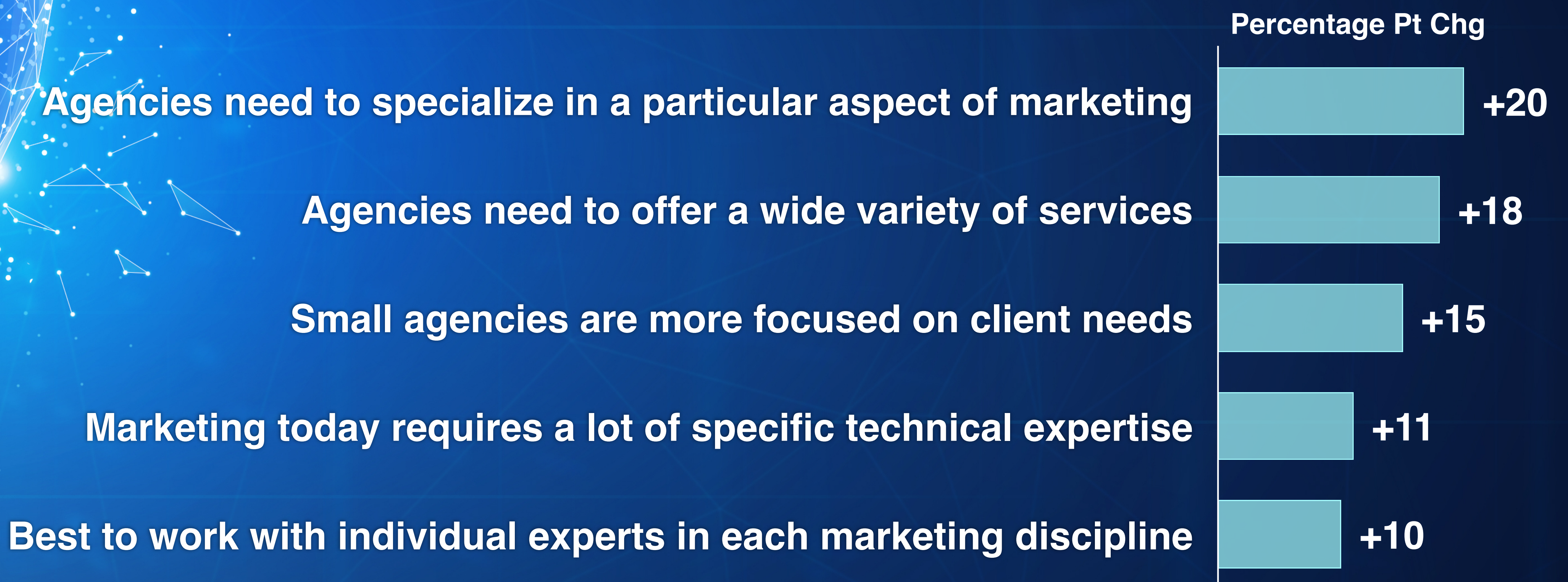
Agencies are a critical partner for success

Hiring an agency is a necessary evil

Percentage Pt Chg



Significant Attitude Changes since 2019: Agency Size/Niche



2014 & 2019



Looking for Love



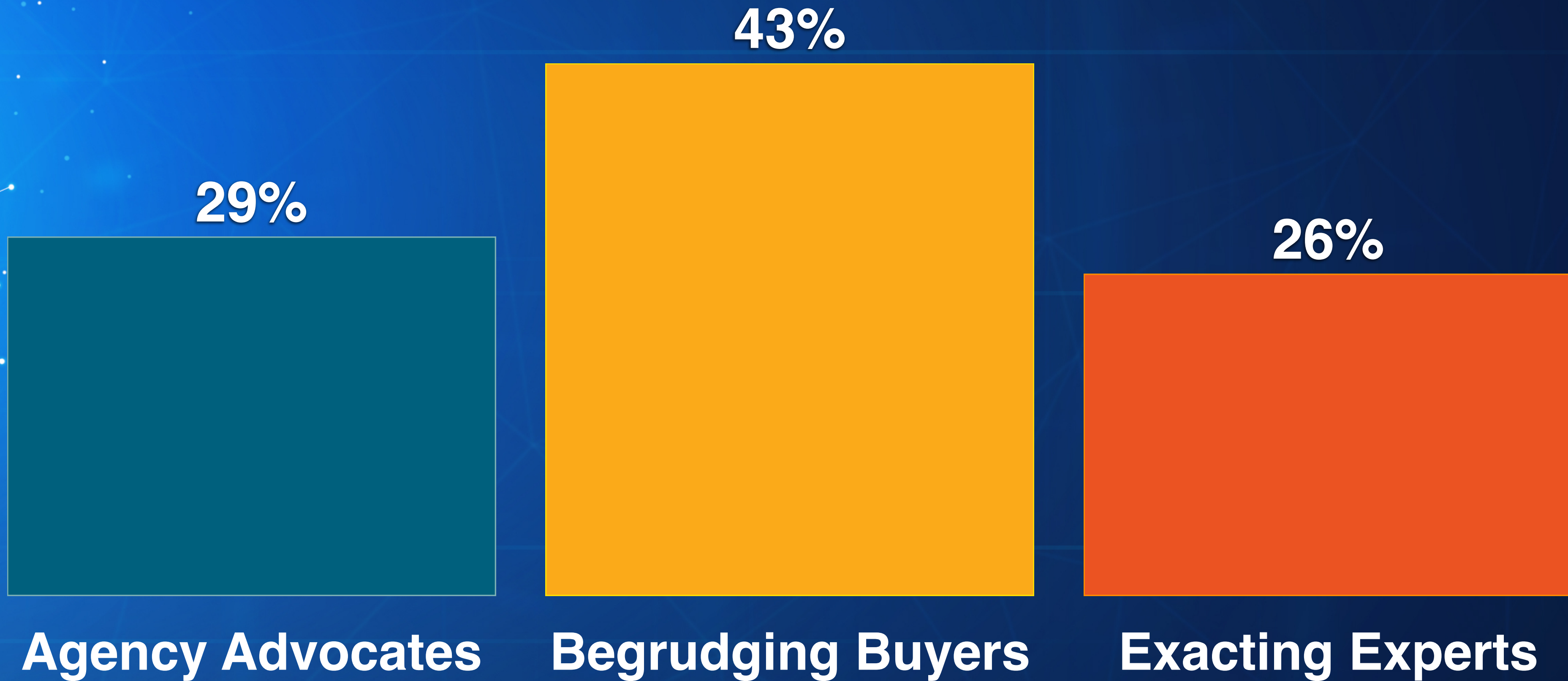
Playing the Field



Single and Satisfied

New Segments in 2024

2024 Attitudinal Segments



Agency Advocates

“Agencies are critical long-term partners for success.”

- **Agencies are the best resource for effective strategies and tactical execution.**
- **Agencies bring new ideas, unbiased opinions, and insight into the latest marketing trends.**
- **Agencies should be experts in a specific marketing discipline, but also offer a wide variety of services.**

Agency Advocates: Our Take



“Full-service, integrated agencies will align well with these clients. They need an **emotional support agency!**”

“While many have smaller budgets, they’ll **work with you for years** if you have their trust.”

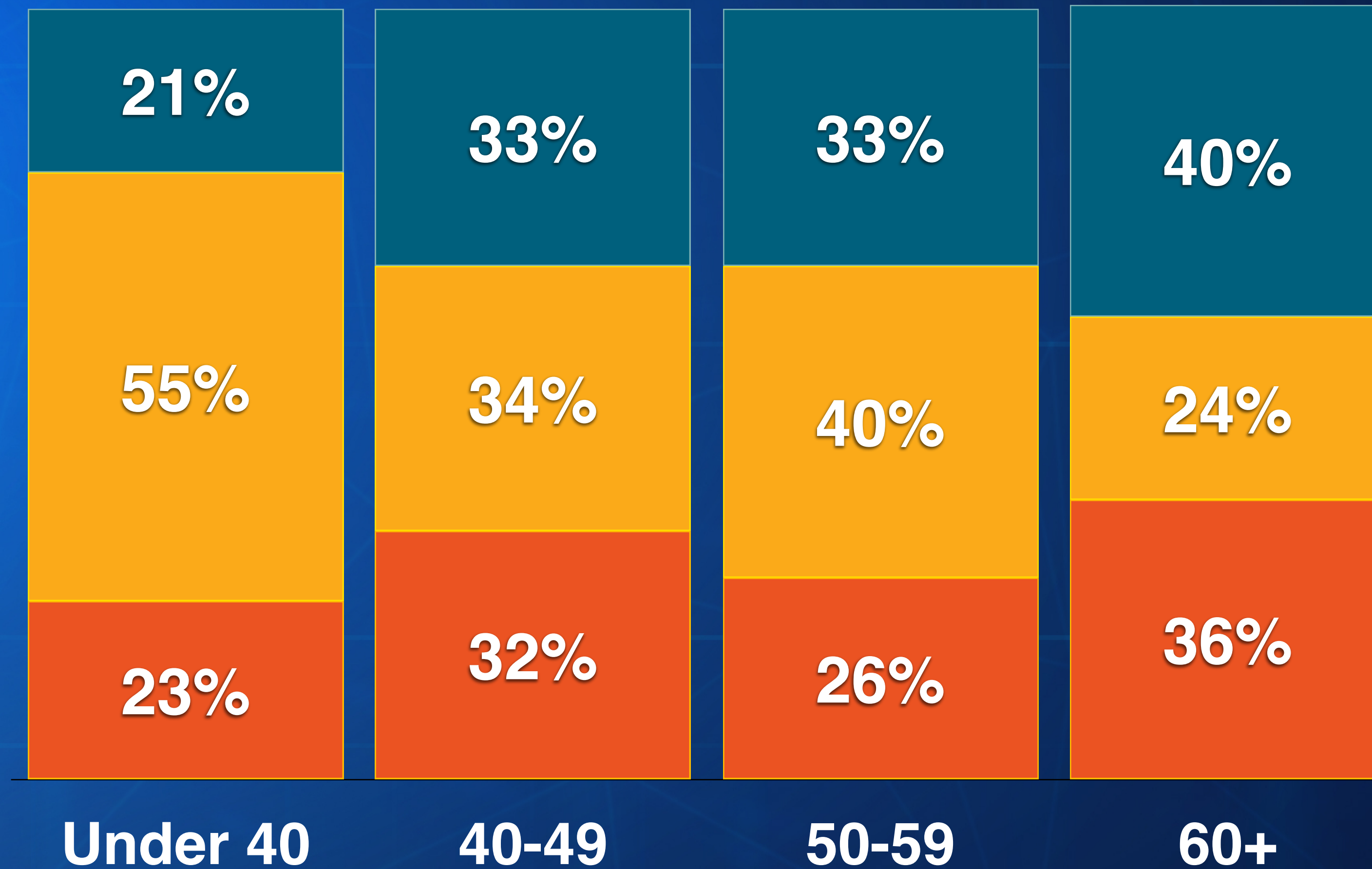


Begrudging Buyers

“Agencies are necessary, but marketing isn’t a high priority for us.”

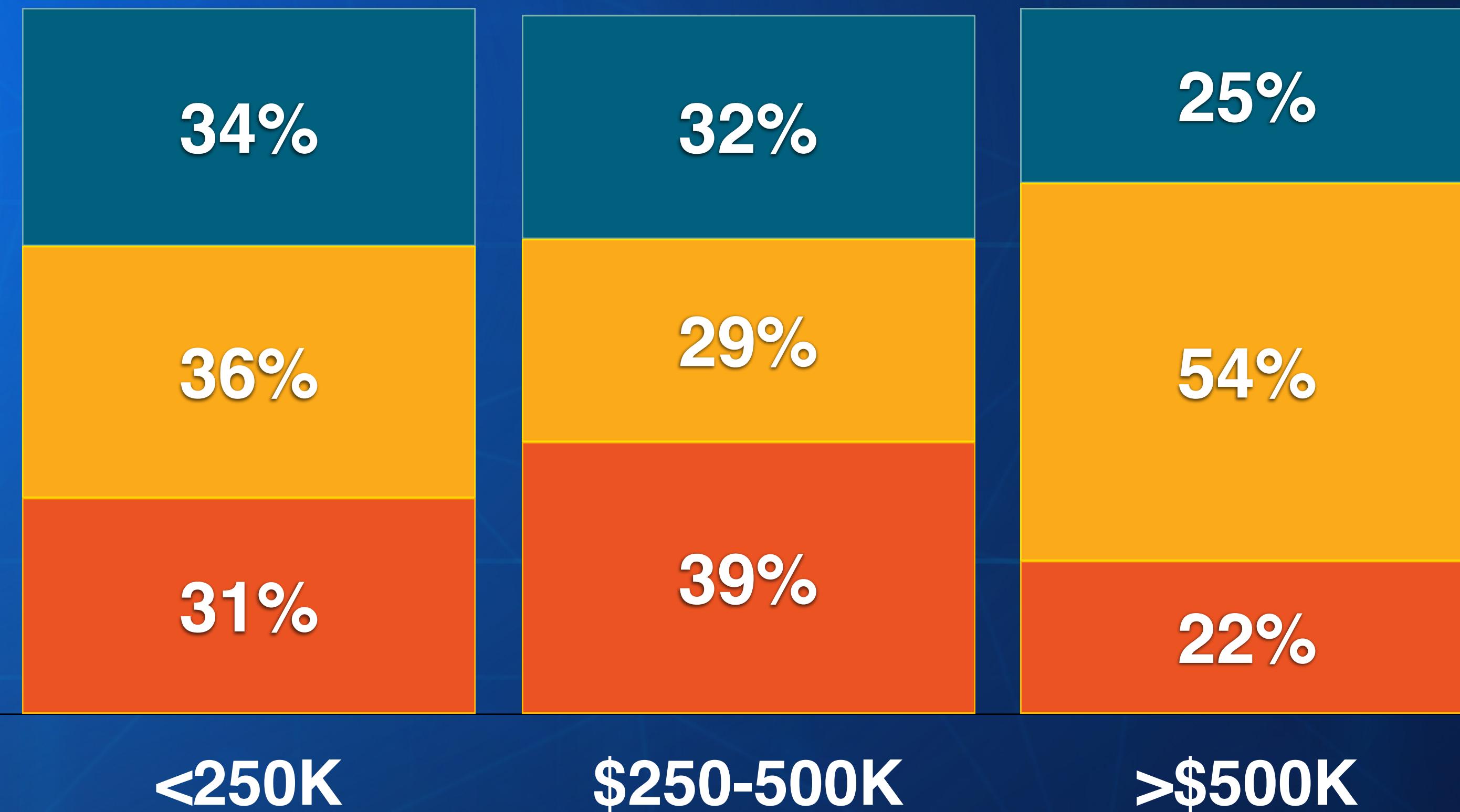
- **Outside marketing help costs more than it should.**
- **We have the time to do our own marketing, but not the expertise.**
- **Marketing is too complex to do without the help of professionals.**

Under 40 = More Begrudging Buyers



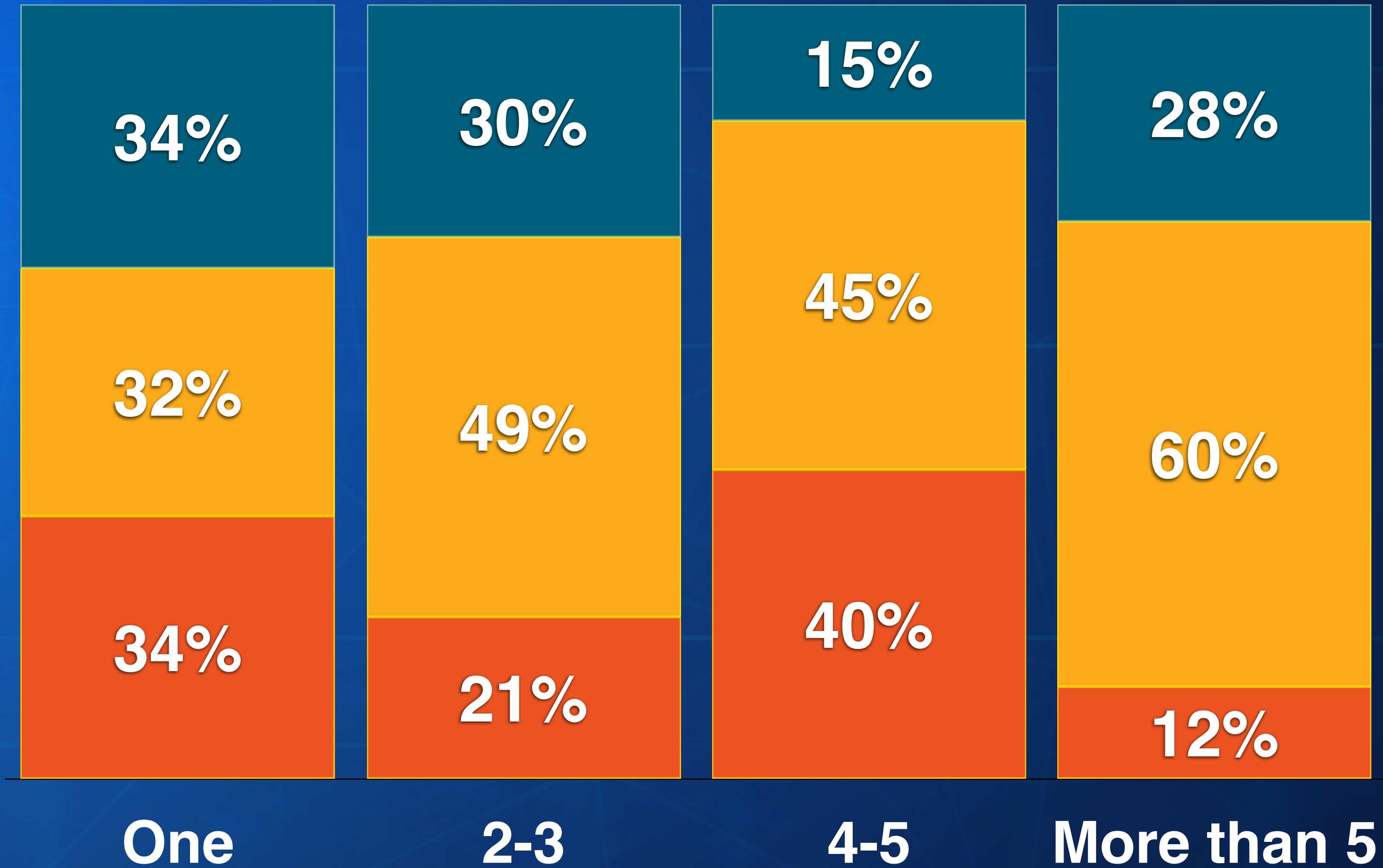
Agency Advocates
Begrudging Buyers
Exacting Experts

Budget >\$500K = More Begrudging Buyers



■ Agency Advocates
■ Begrudging Buyers
■ Exacting Experts

More Agencies = More Begrudging Buyers



Agency Advocates
Begrudging Buyers
Exacting Experts

Begrudging Buyers: Our Take



“Because they don’t tend to invite agencies to the strategy table, **you don’t have to be a specialist**. A generalist agency that delivers the goods requested will fit the bill for these clients.”

“They bring bigger budgets, but **swap out agencies often**. Don’t plan on a long-term relationship.”



Exacting Experts

“We know marketing, but we want new ideas from experts.”

- **We understand the marketing environment and the best tactics for us.**
- **We have the expertise to do our own marketing, but not the time.**
- **Agencies should consistently bring us new ideas and recommendations without us having to ask.**

Exacting Experts: Our Take



“These clients demand a **depth of expertise** that matches their abilities as marketers. They also expect you to be open to learning from them.”

“For these clients, **specialists are critical**. Niche agencies willing to work hand-in-hand with them fit the ticket.”



Segment Changes: Our Take



“Our work has become more sophisticated, and we need to provide a **higher level of thinking and support**, and be bolder about bringing big ideas.”

“As trust in almost everything has collapsed, it’s good to see that **having a trusted agency partner** matters more than ever.”

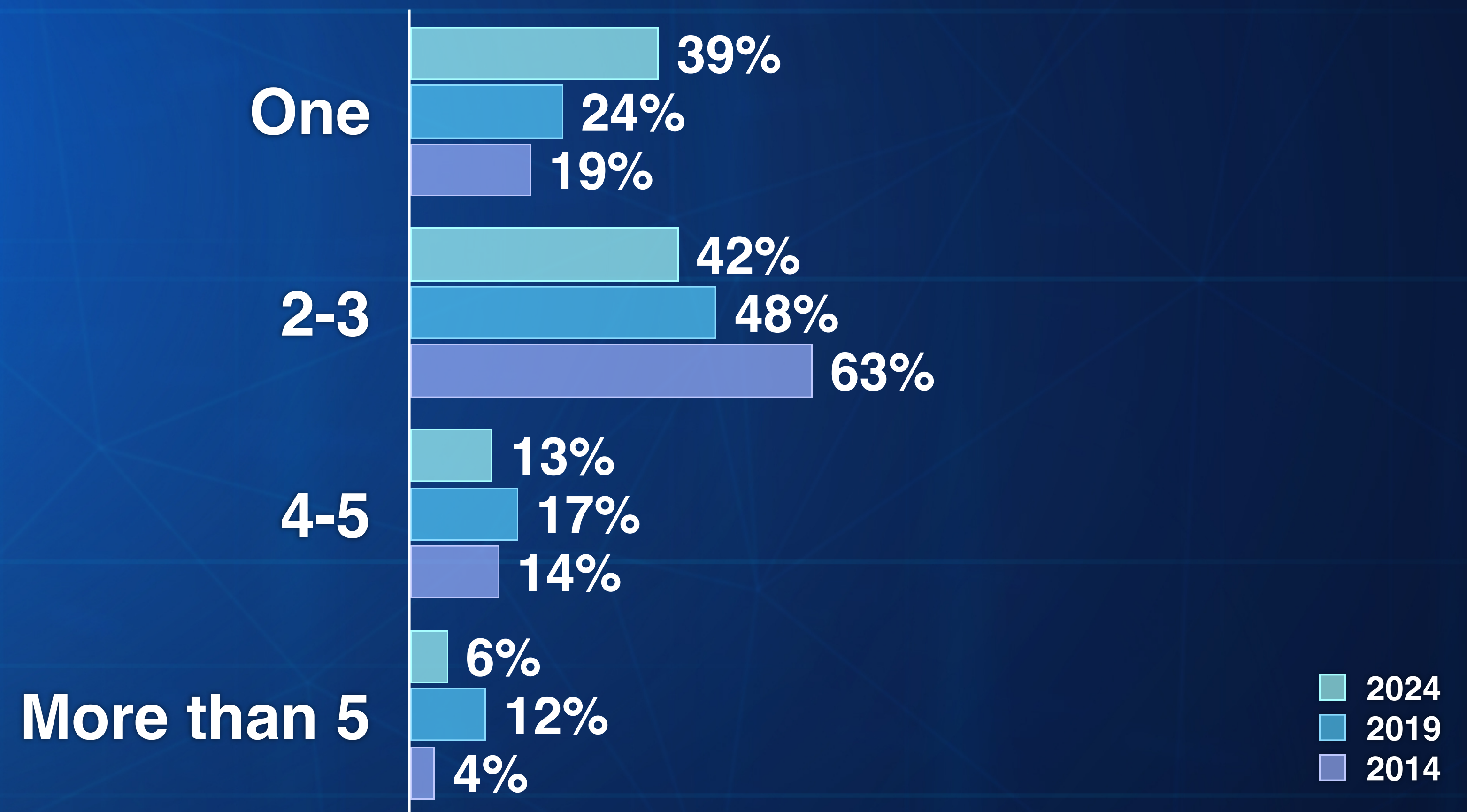


Other Differences in 2024

In-House Teams More Common, and Smaller than in 2014/2019

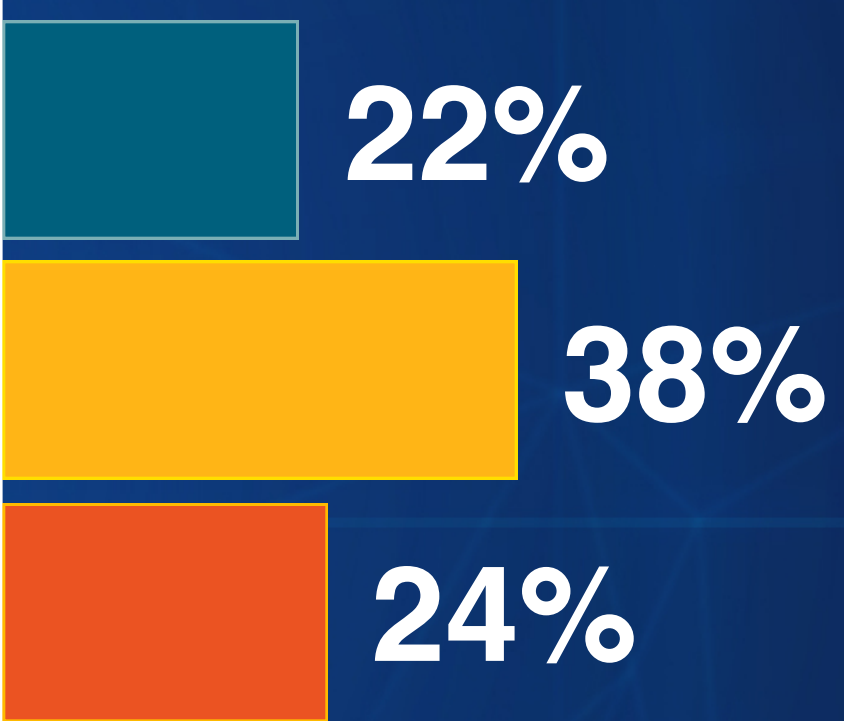


More Clients Working with One Agency than in 2014/2019

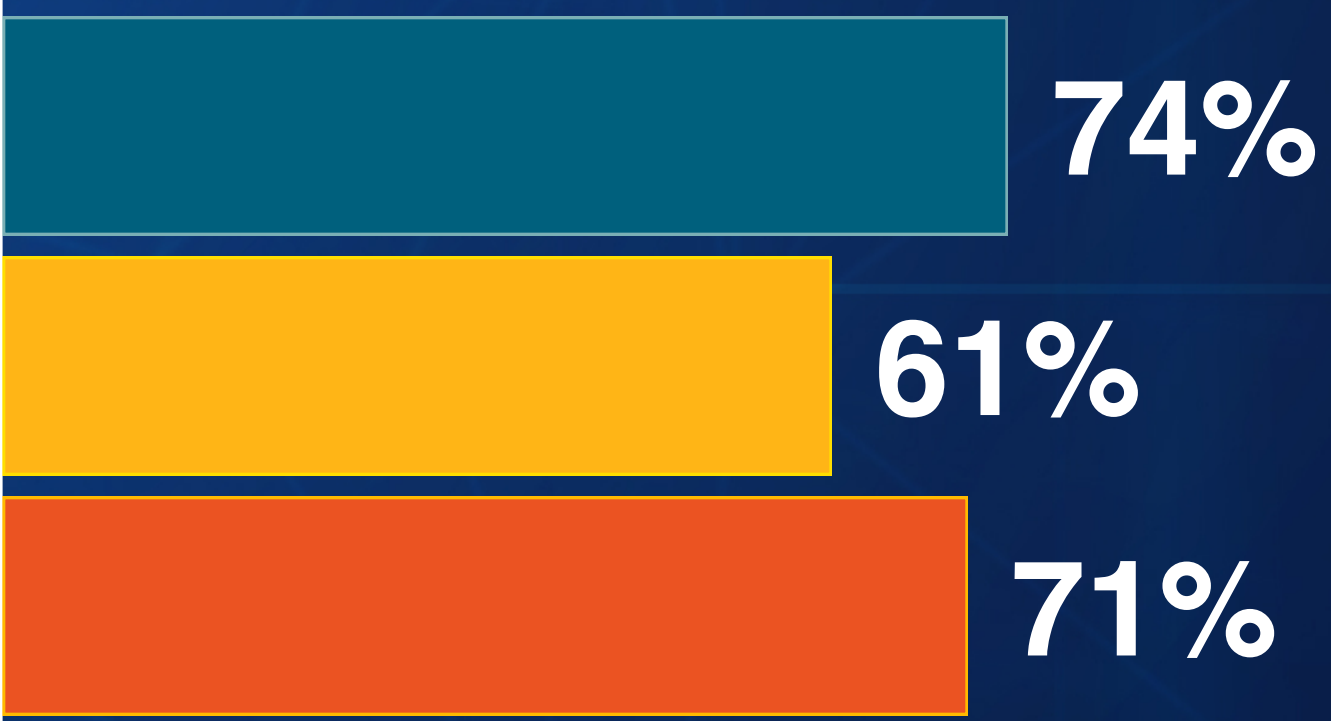


Most Clients Say Working with Fewer Agencies is Now Optimal for Them

Greater # of agencies



Smaller # of agencies



Agency Advocates
Begrudging Buyers
Exacting Experts

Differences in 2024: Our Take



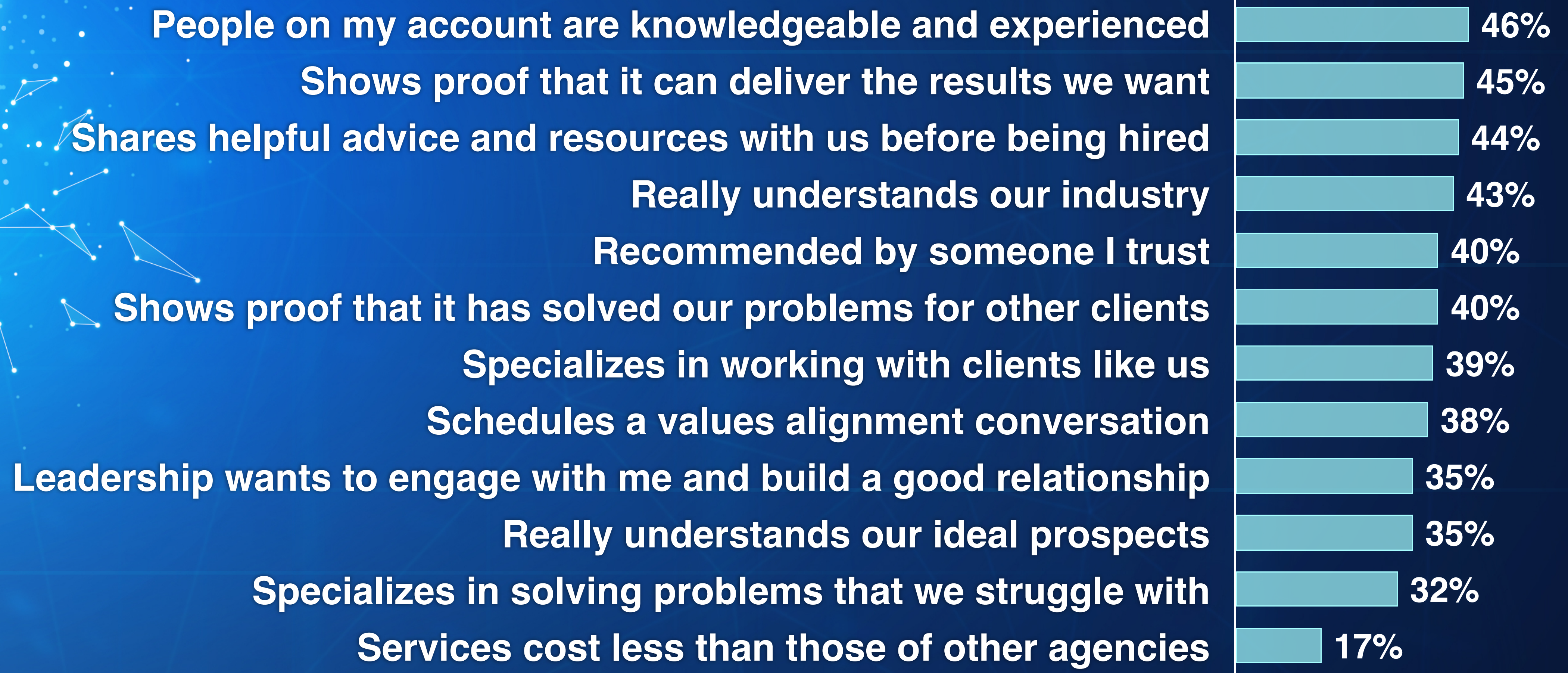
“Clients are looking for expertise, proof of impact, and new ideas. **Agencies who can deliver are harder to find** and of great value to clients.”

“This shift over the last ten years has been significant. Clients want more from their agencies and their agency relationships — and fewer of them. They want **expert advisors.**”



Building Trust with Clients

Trust = Expertise, Results, Relationships



Building Trust: Our Take



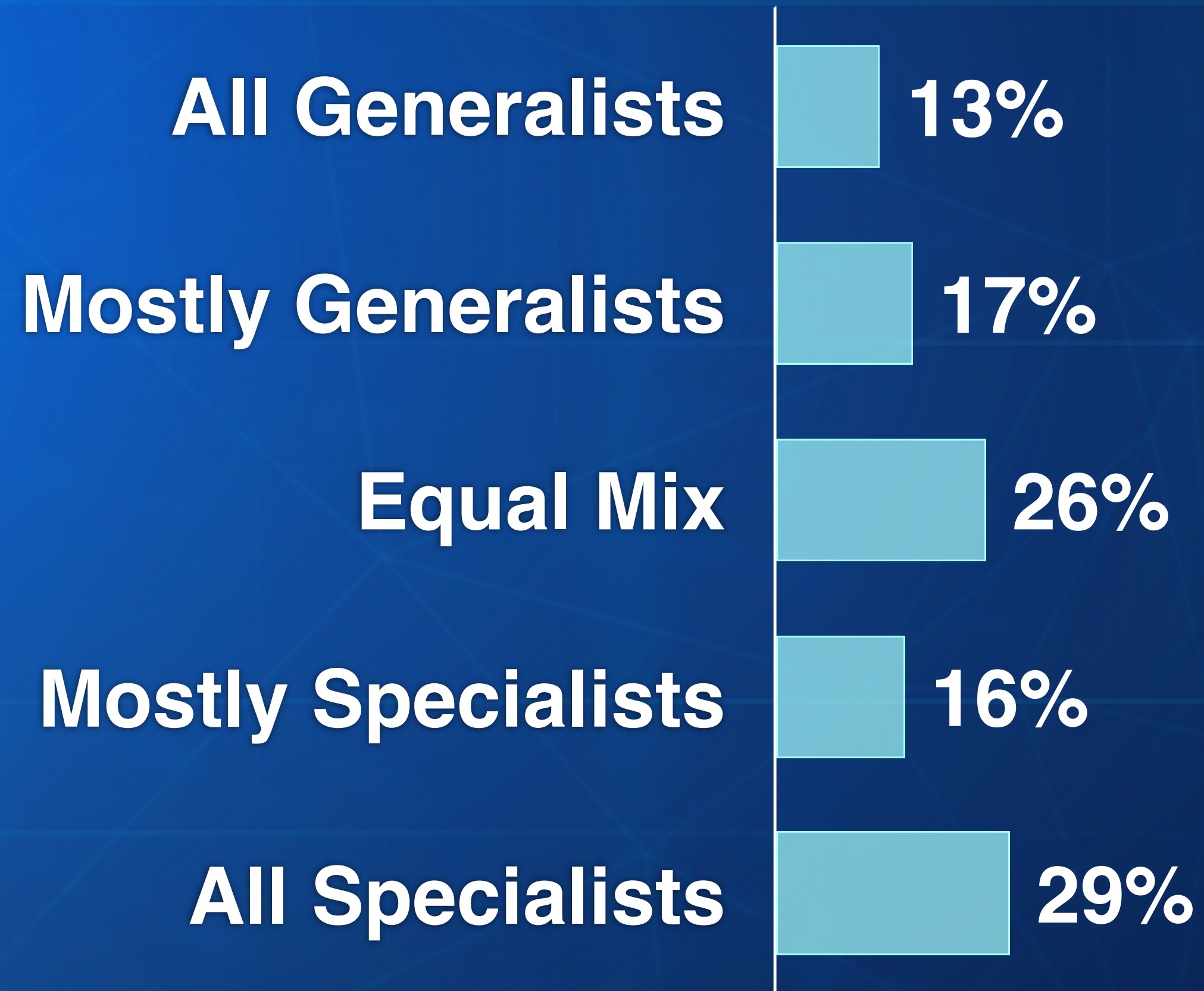
“Fantastic news for agencies! So much of our work has been commoditized, but by shifting more of our efforts to **delivering strategic thinking**, we can charge a premium for that deliverable.”

“Clients research agencies long before they make themselves known, and **helpful thought leadership** content can win them over before any other agency gets the chance.”



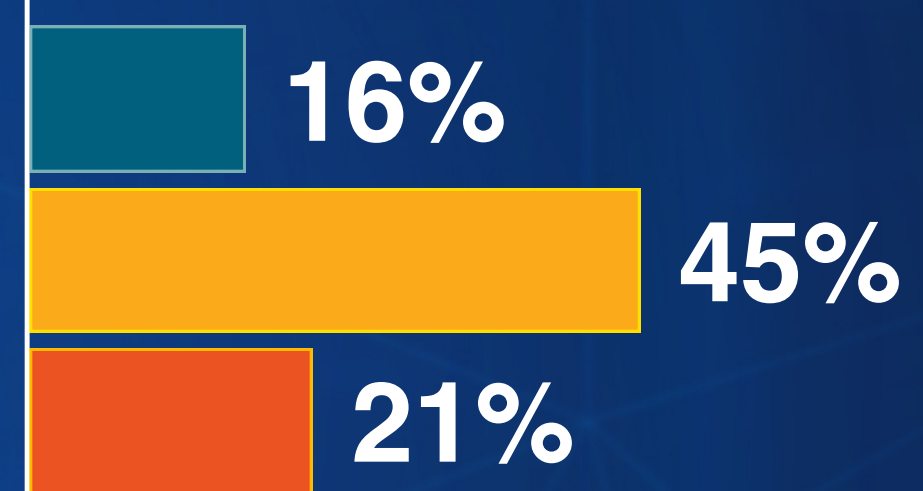
Niche or Generalist? A Deeper Dive

87% Want At Least Some Specialists

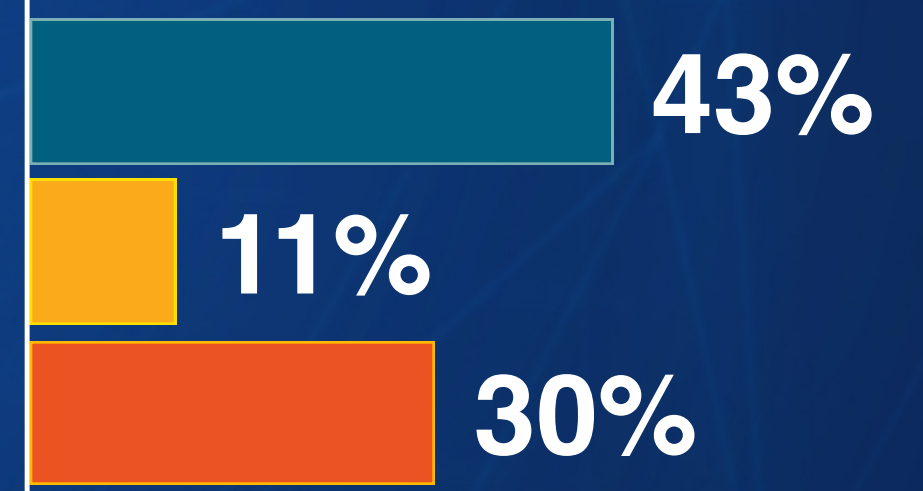


Most Prefer Specialist Agencies

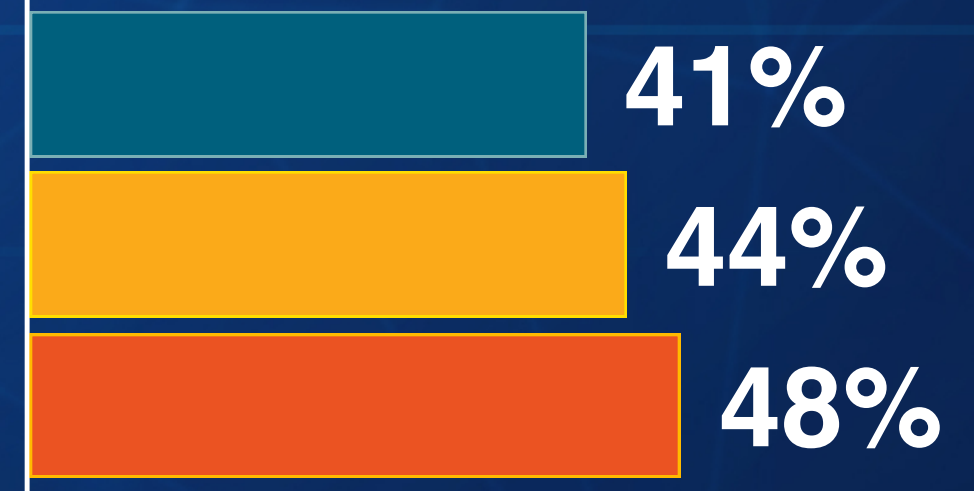
Prefer All/Mostly Generalists



Prefer Even Mix

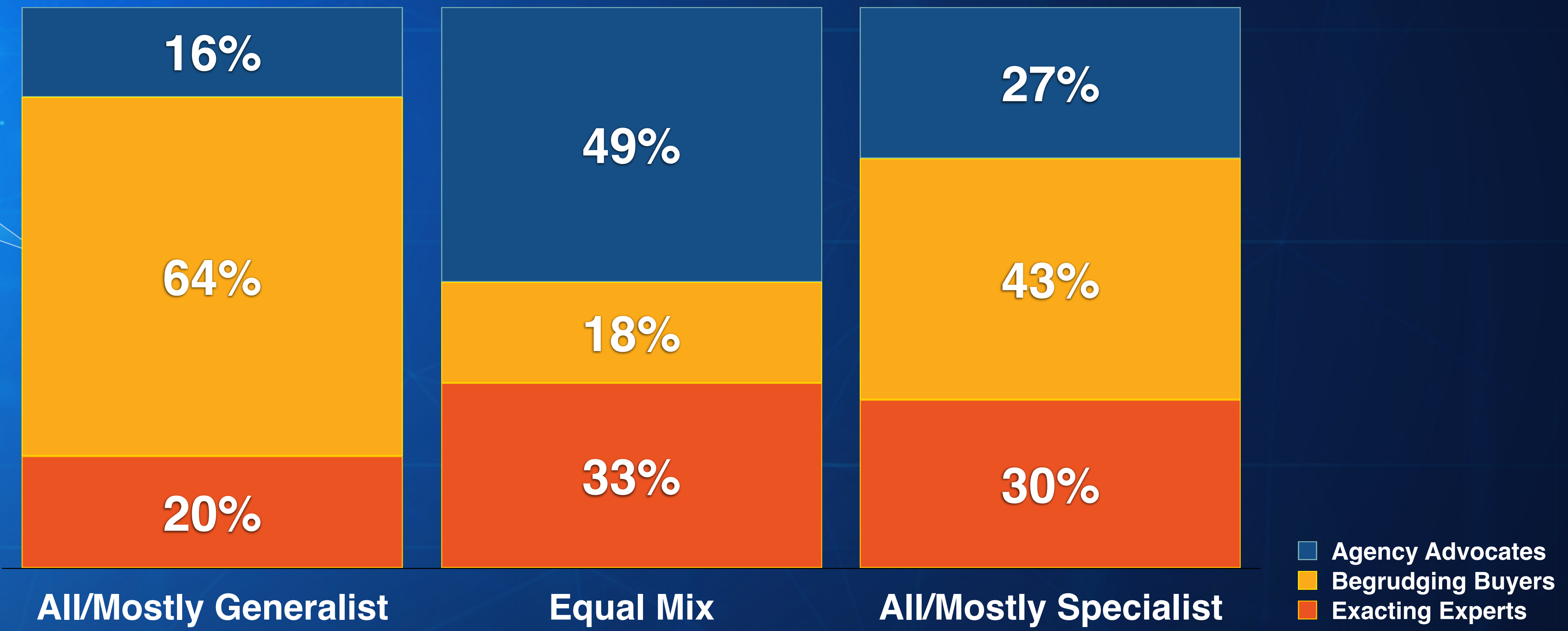


Prefer All/Mostly Specialists



■ Agency Advocates
■ Begrudging Buyers
■ Exacting Experts

Generalist Agencies = More Begrudging Buyers



Niched Clients Hire Niched Agencies

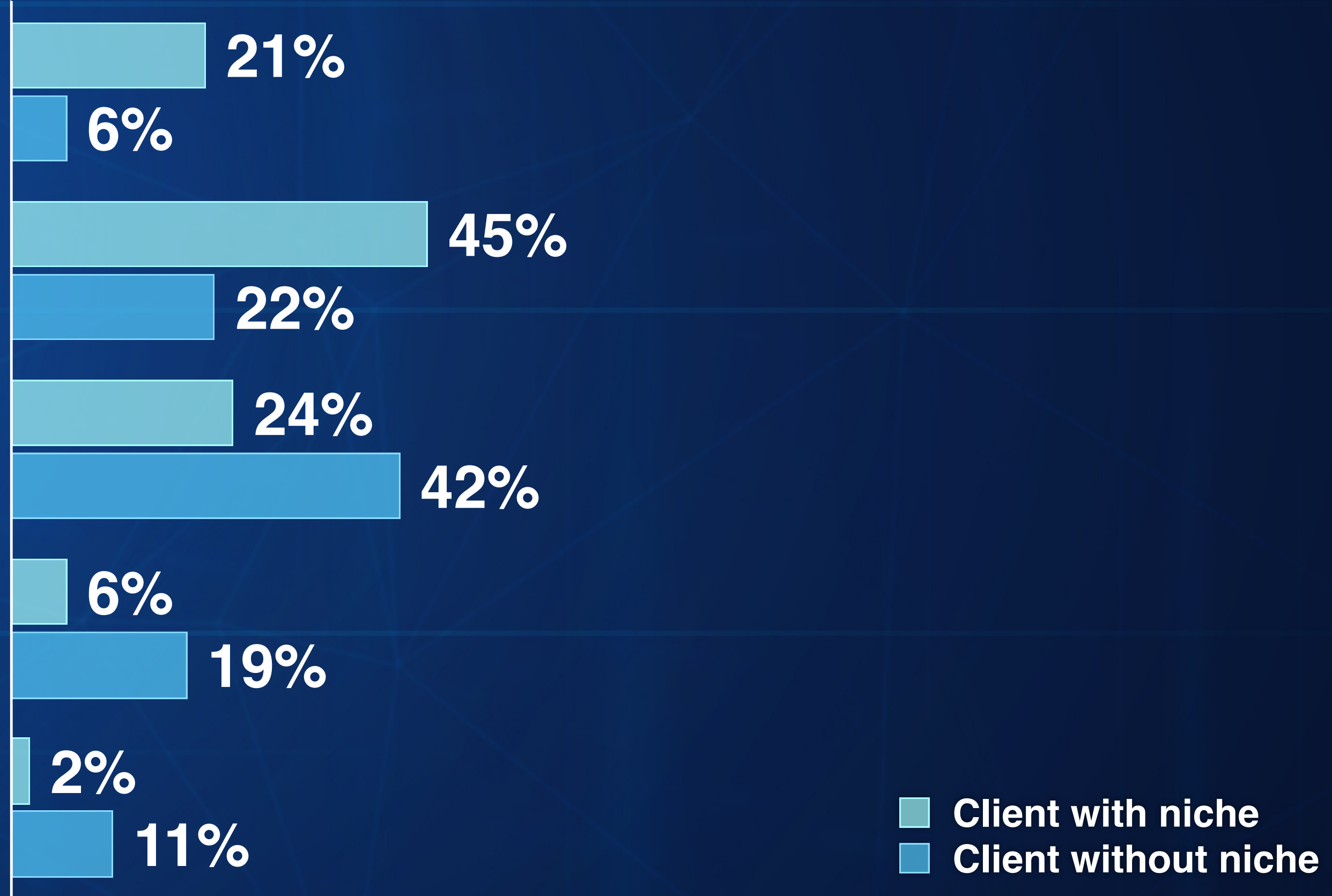
All agencies have niche

Most agencies have niche

Some agencies have niche

A few agencies have niche

No agencies have niche



Niche or Generalist? Our Take



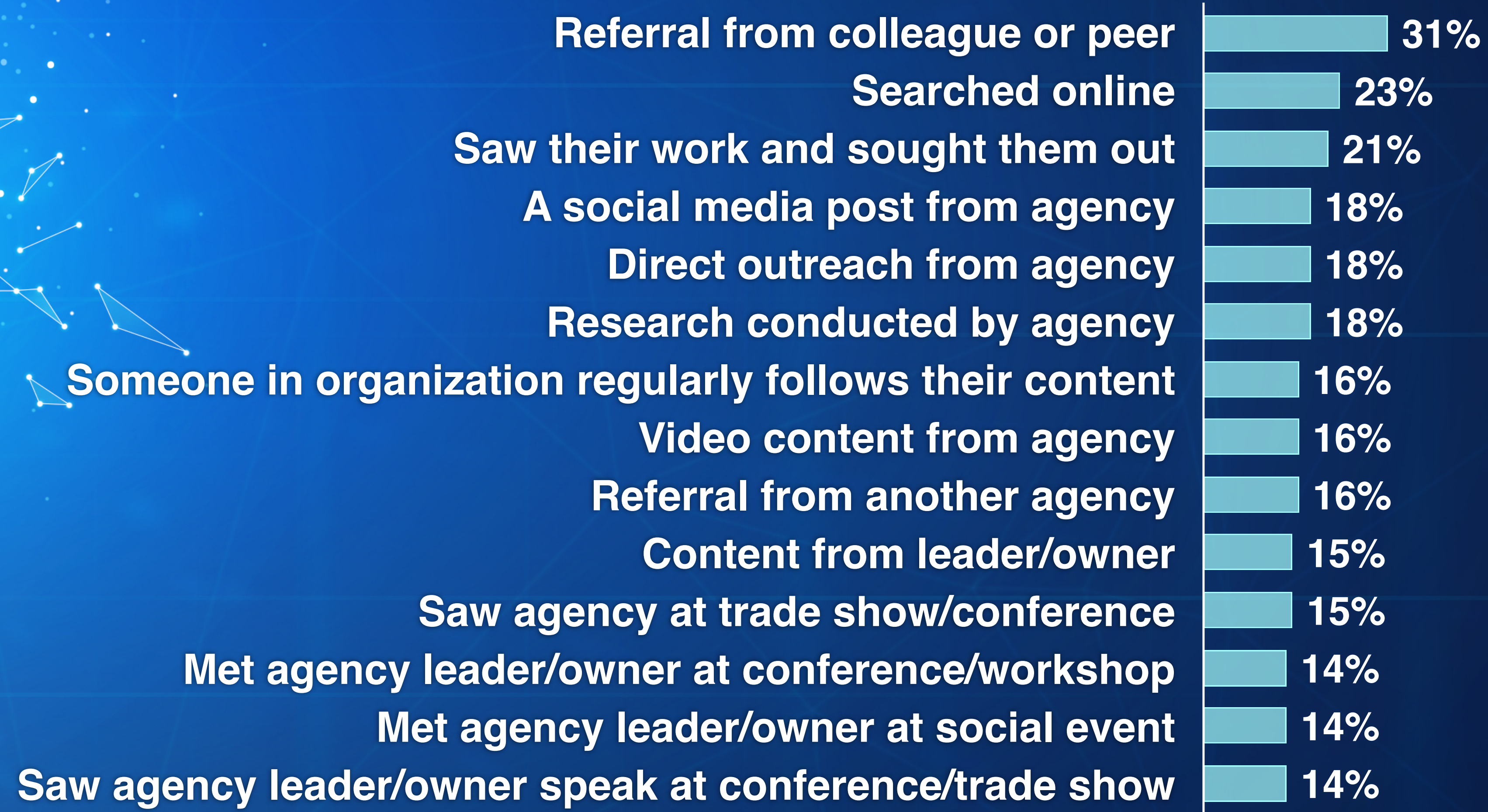
“Most agencies have the nucleus of a niche in their DNA. They just haven’t embraced it or shouted it to the world. That’s like carrying the weight but not **enjoying the perks.**”

“It’s clear from this study and others that **most clients prefer specialists to generalists.** Defining your niche — and being outspoken about it — puts you in a strong competitive position.”



How Clients Find Agencies

How Found Most Recently Hired Agency



Clients Like Agency Outreach

Prefer to find agencies ourselves

25%

Prefer agencies reach out to us

18%

Prefer both

53%

No preference

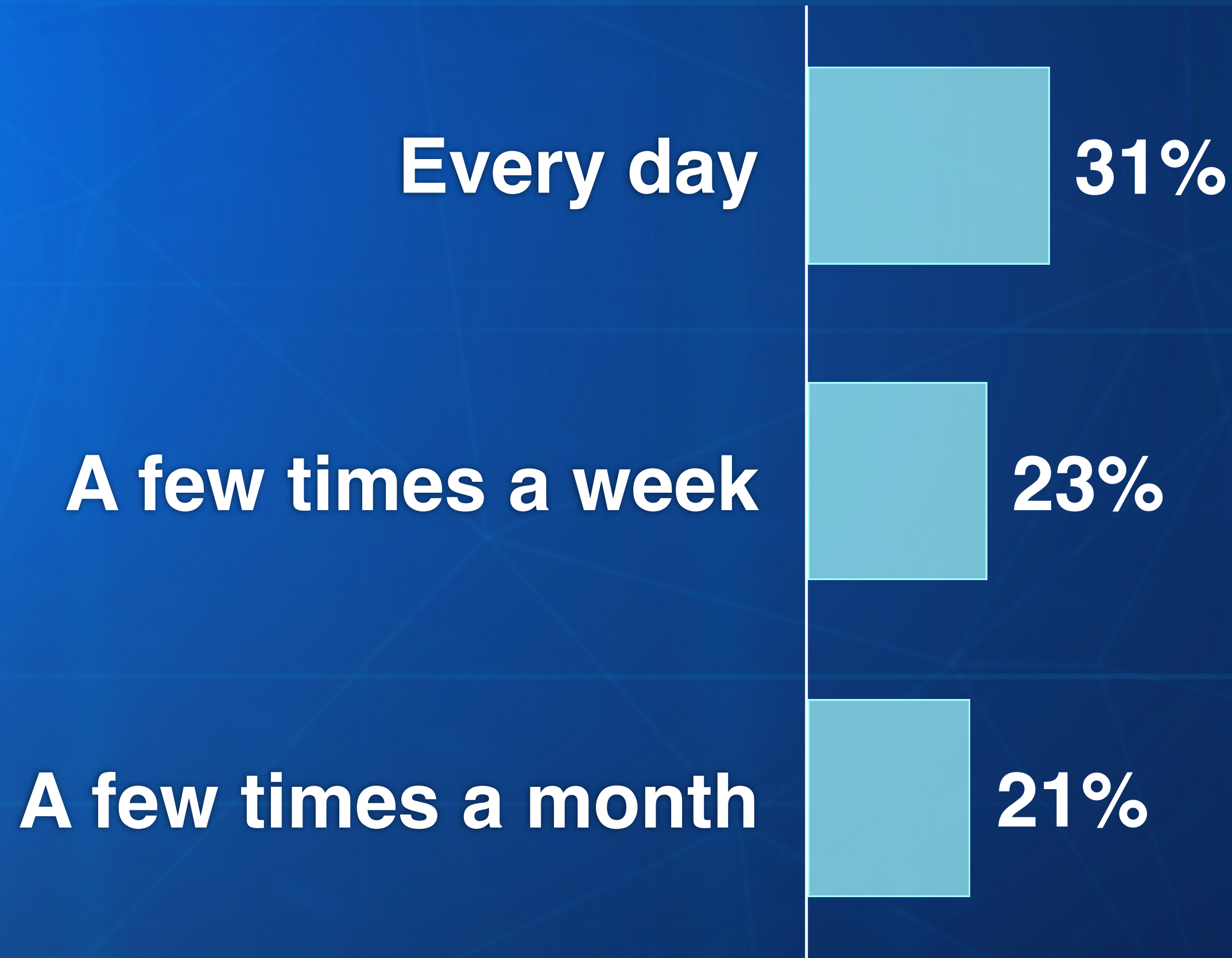
6%

How Clients Identify Prospective Agencies

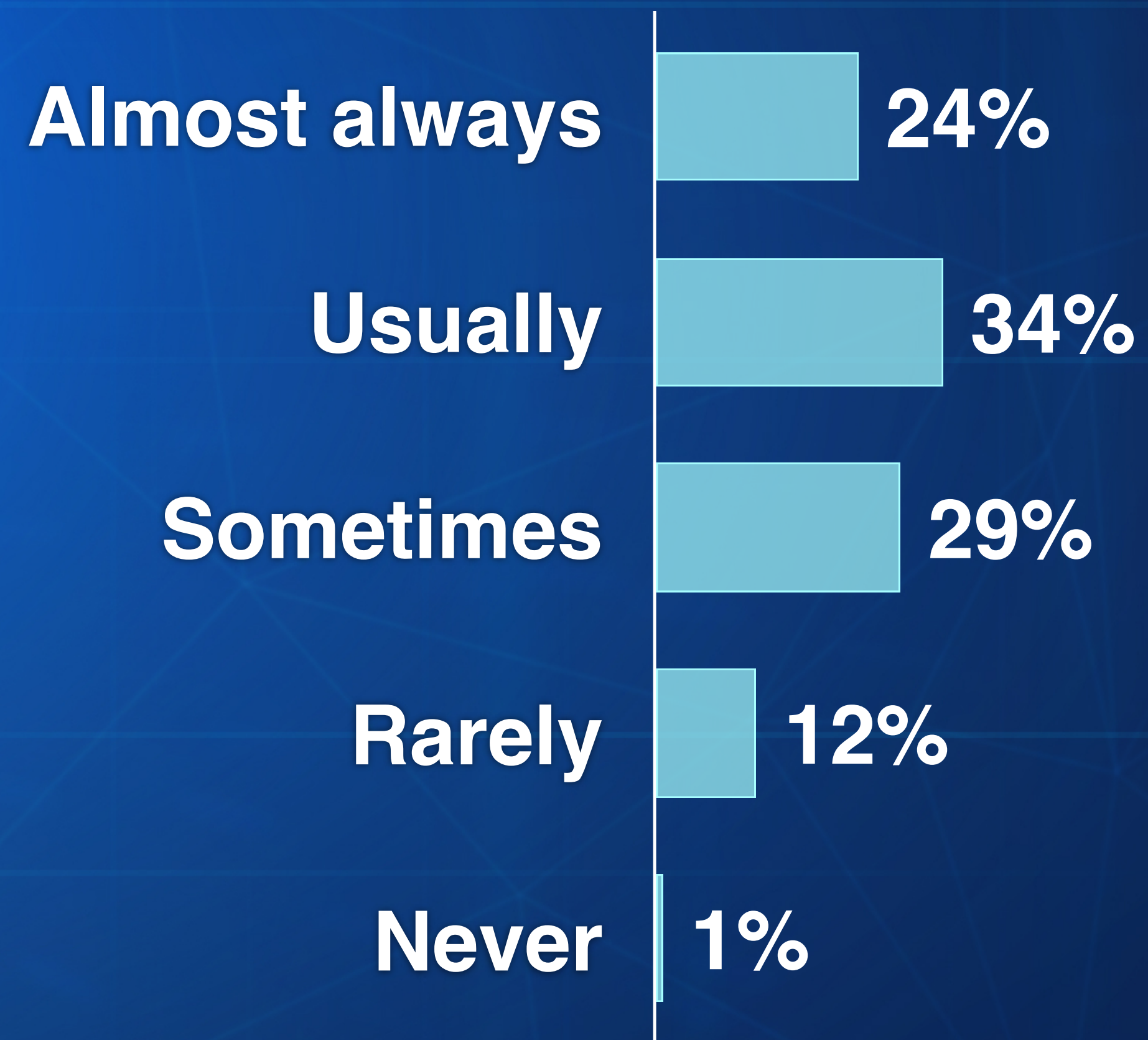


The Impact of Agency Outreach

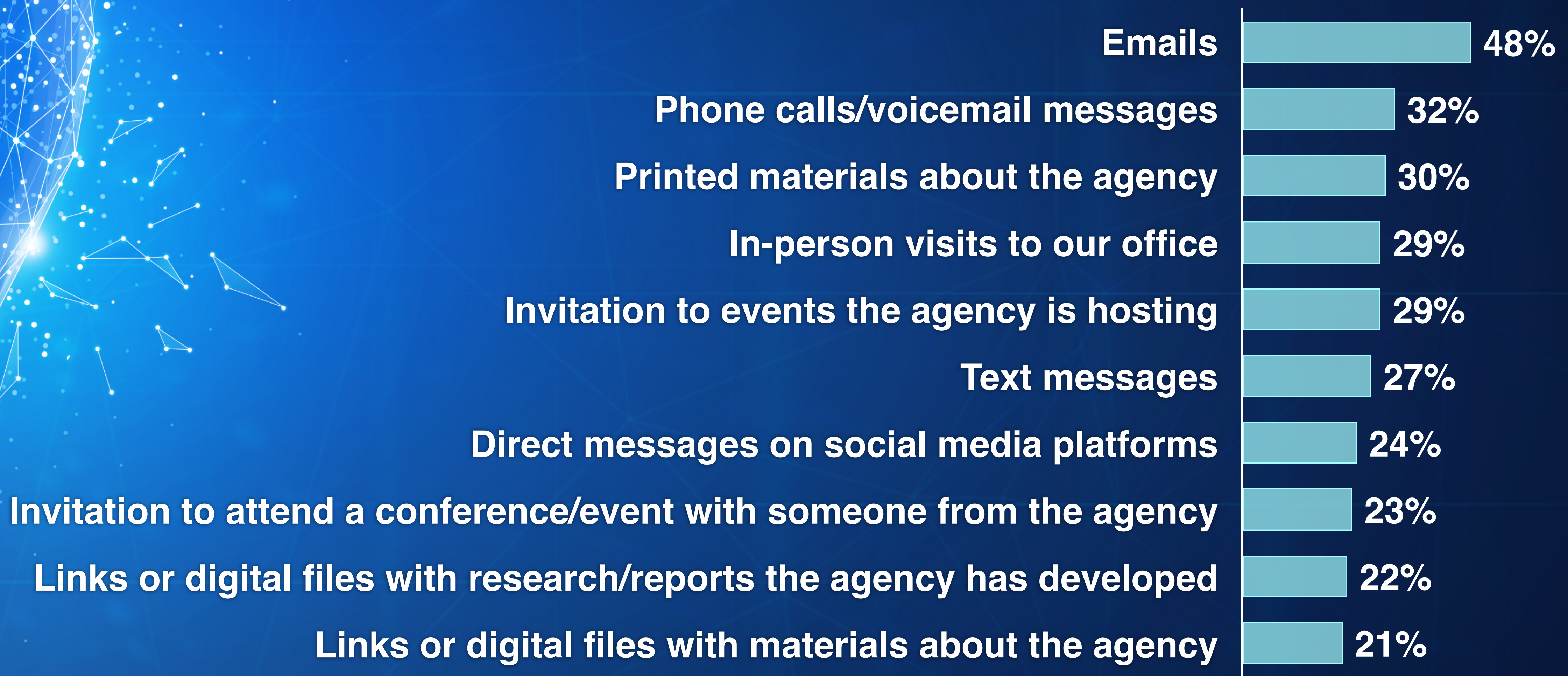
Clients Receive Agency Outreach Often



Most Have Heard of Agencies Reaching Out



Types of Outreach Most Often Experienced



Types of Outreach: Our Take

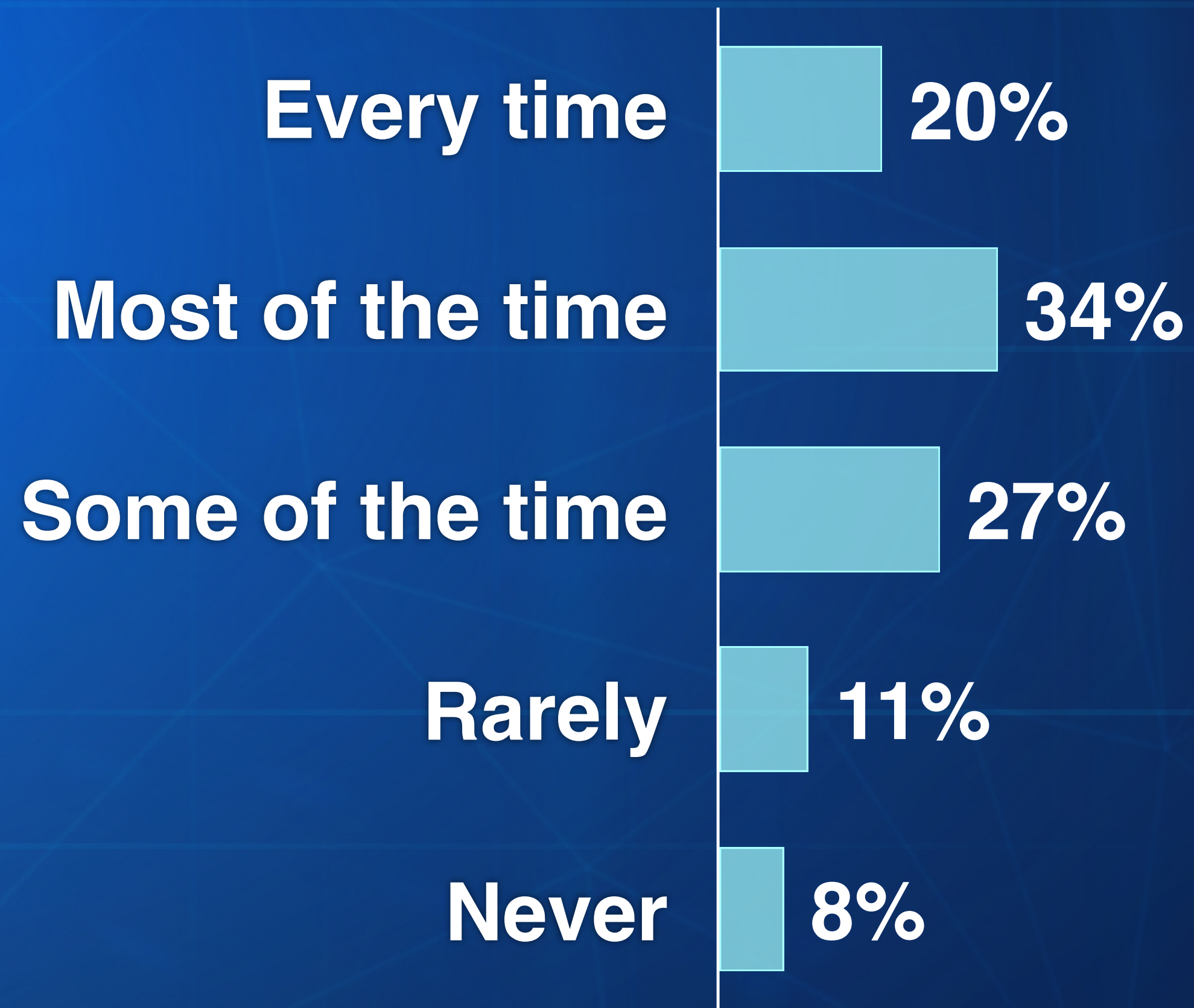


“No one needs another blind email or voicemail. Look for ways to create an actual connection. Be **interesting** until they indicate they are **interested.**”

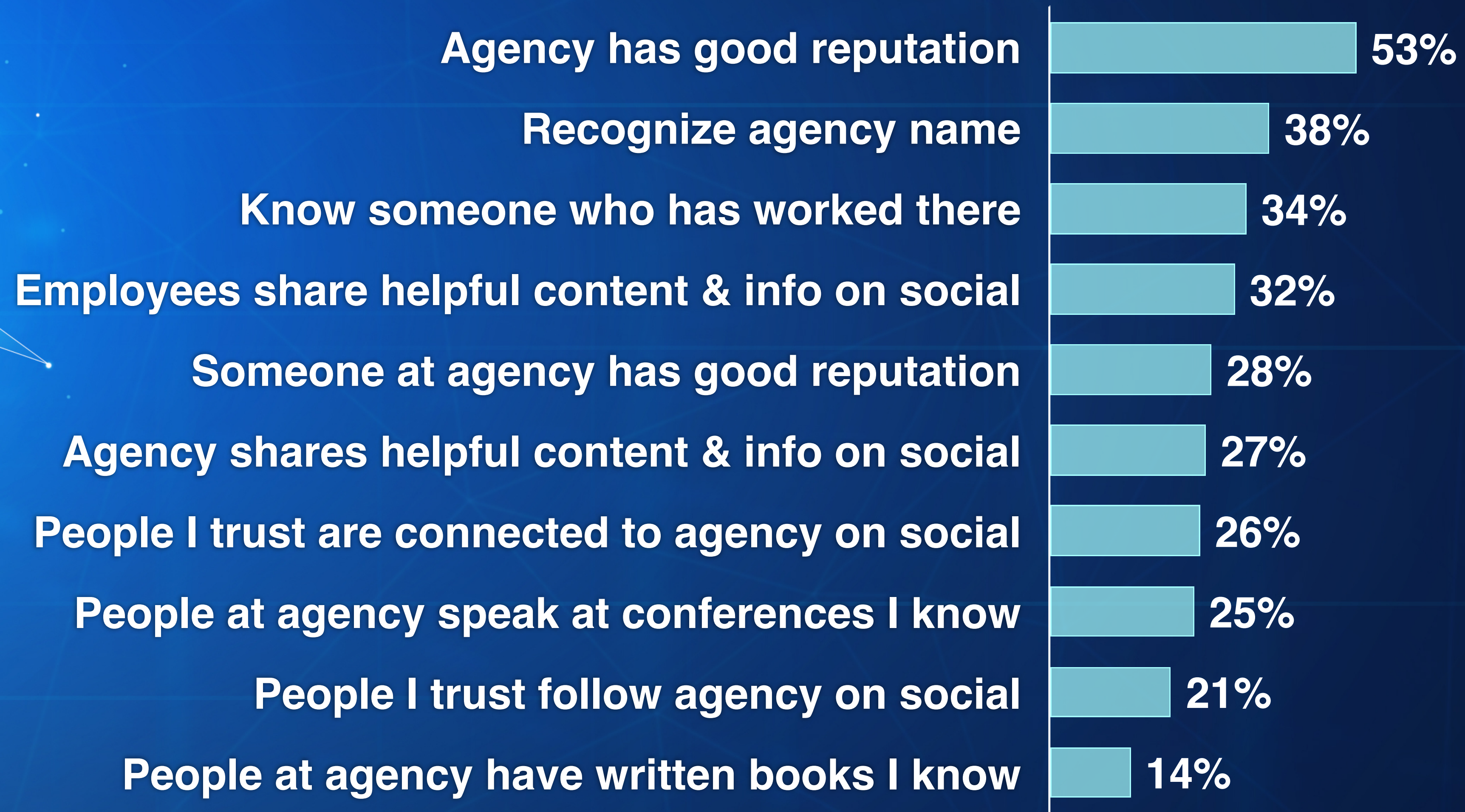
“Note the telling difference between the value of going to an event with an agency vs. going to an event by an agency. **Meet clients where they are.**”



Clients Review Agency Outreach Often



Reputation Influences Time Spent to Review



Why Review Outreach?

“I’ve heard good things about the agency that made it worth checking out.” (Agency Advocate)

**“Their mission statement aligned with our values.”
(Begrudging Buyer)**

“They were able to state their specialization without difficult or complexity.” (Exacting Expert)

Agency Outreach: Our Take



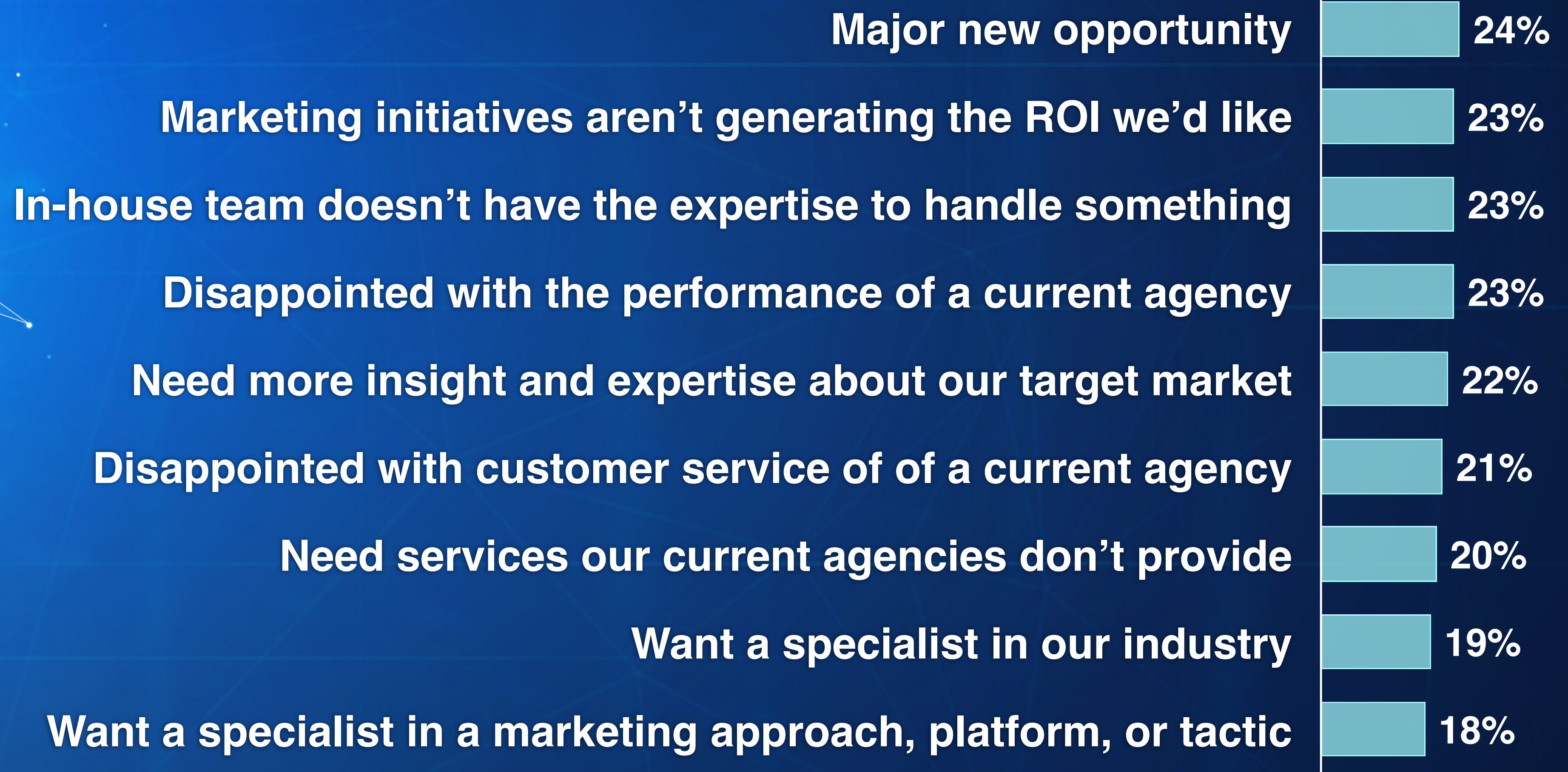
“Most who responded to outreach did so because the agency had a good reputation or they recognized the name. You have to **warm up your list** before you reach out, or you’ll be ignored.”

“Clients want agencies to provide **helpful, relevant** information, and have **something unique to say**. Demonstrate your expertise before they have to schedule a call.”

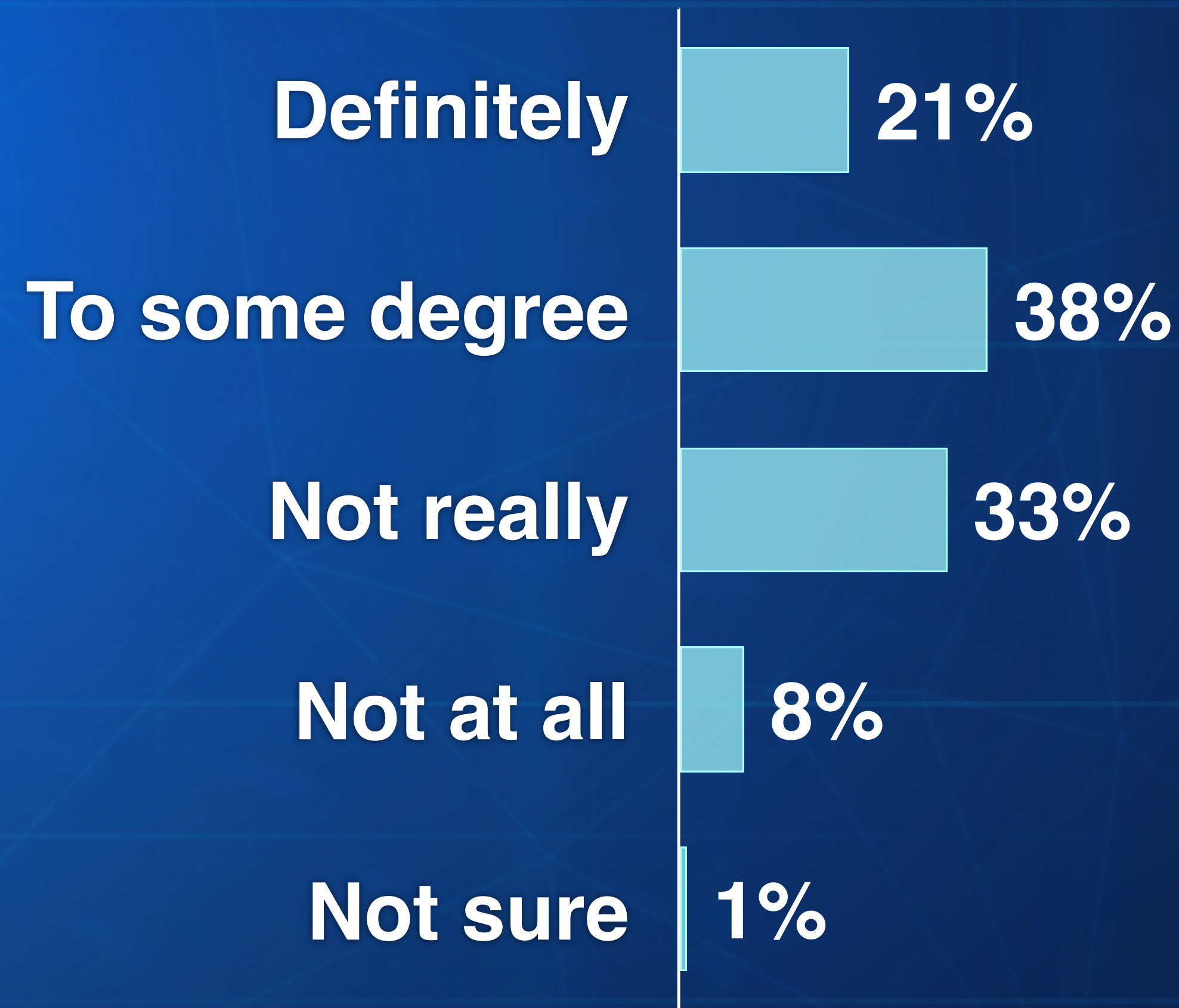


The Hiring Decision

Poor Performance Often Spurs Hiring New Agency



59% Say Their Approach to Hiring Has Changed in Last Few Years



How Approach has Changed

“We have learned more about marketing and know better what to ask and look for.” (Agency Advocate)

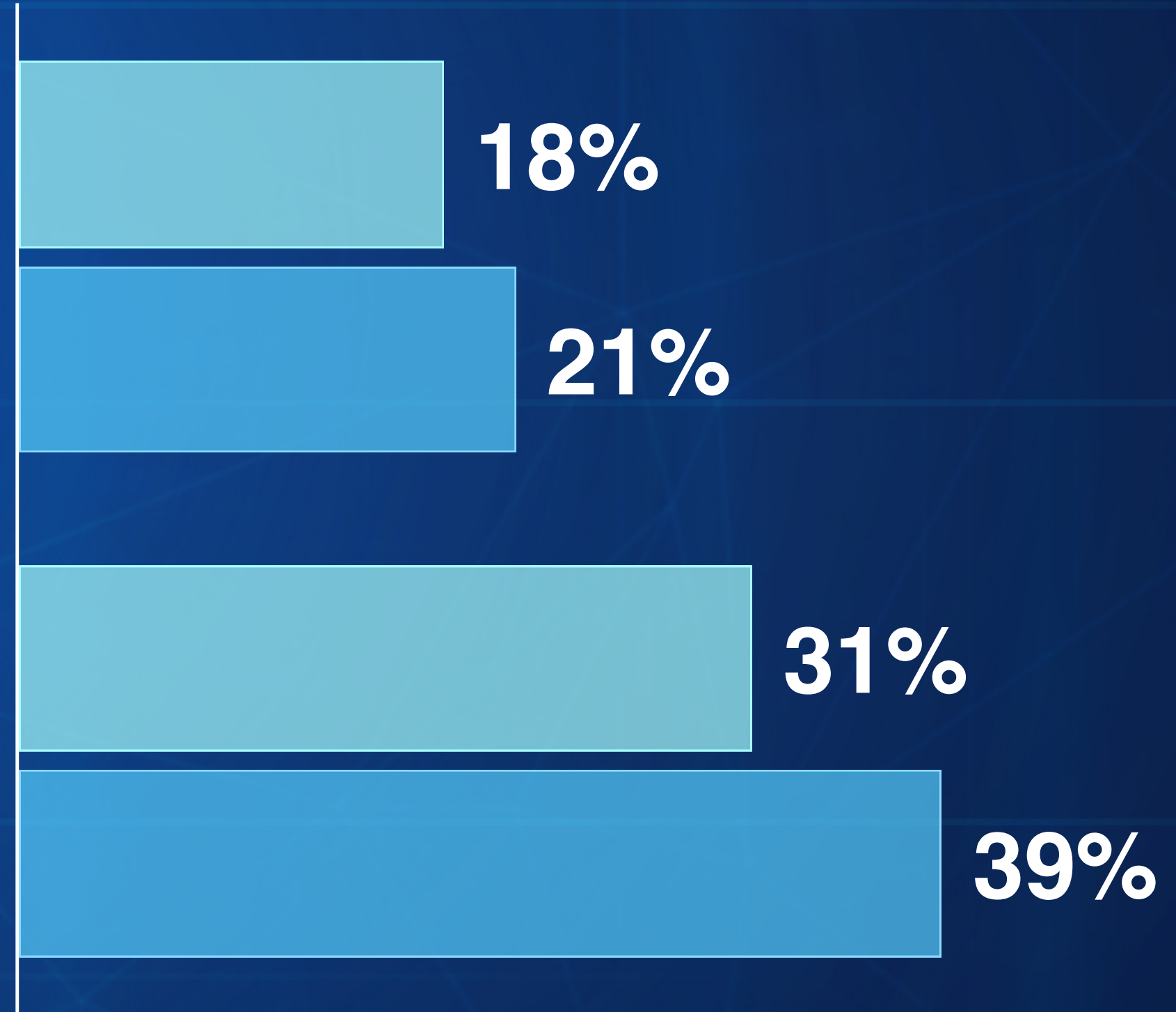
“We are looking for bigger agencies that can handle more volume.” (Begrudging Buyer)

“We narrow the field to 3-4 agencies and then do a deep dive with each.” (Exacting Expert)

Agency Niche (and Niche Reputation) Impacts Hiring

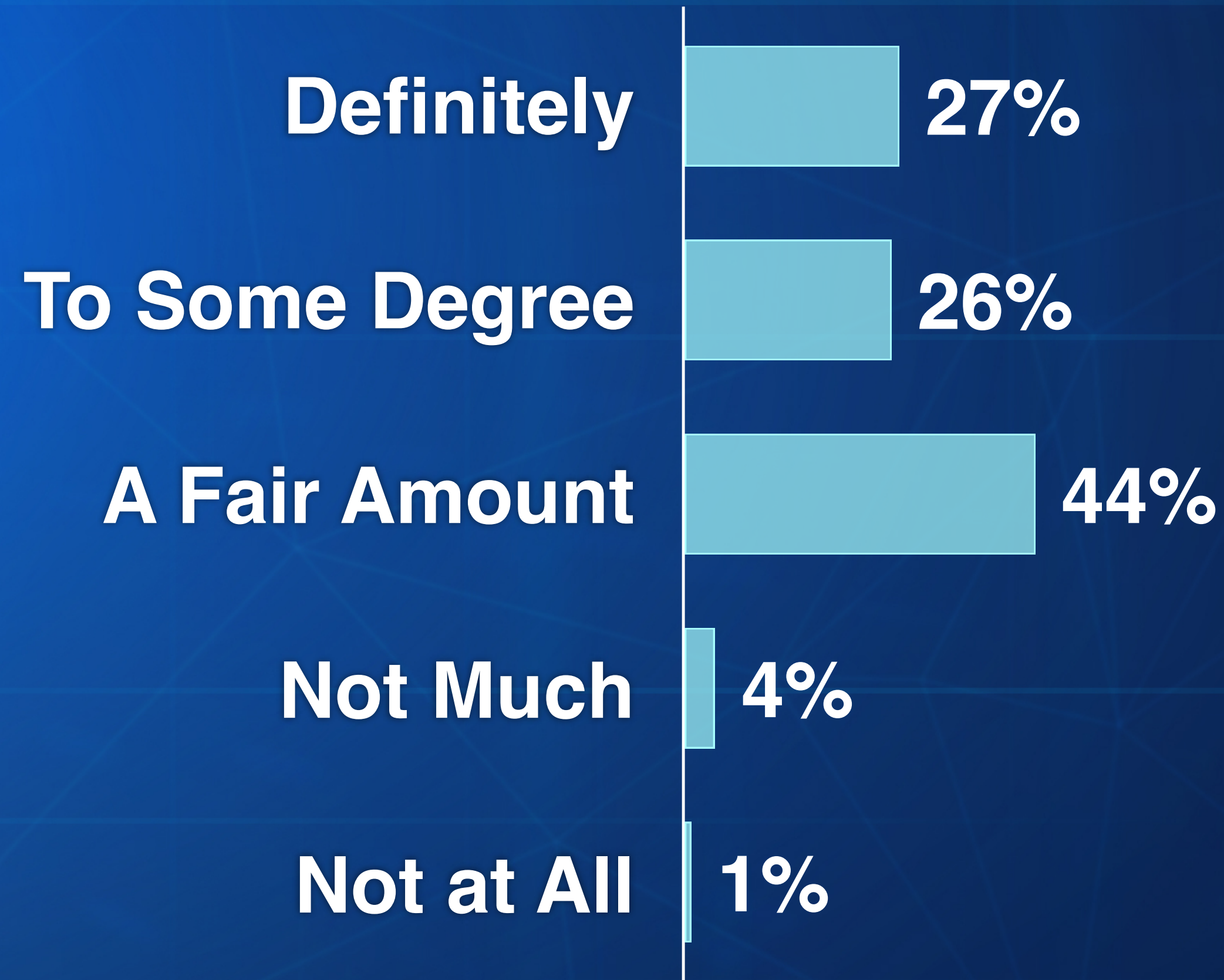
One of Main Considerations

Matters a Lot

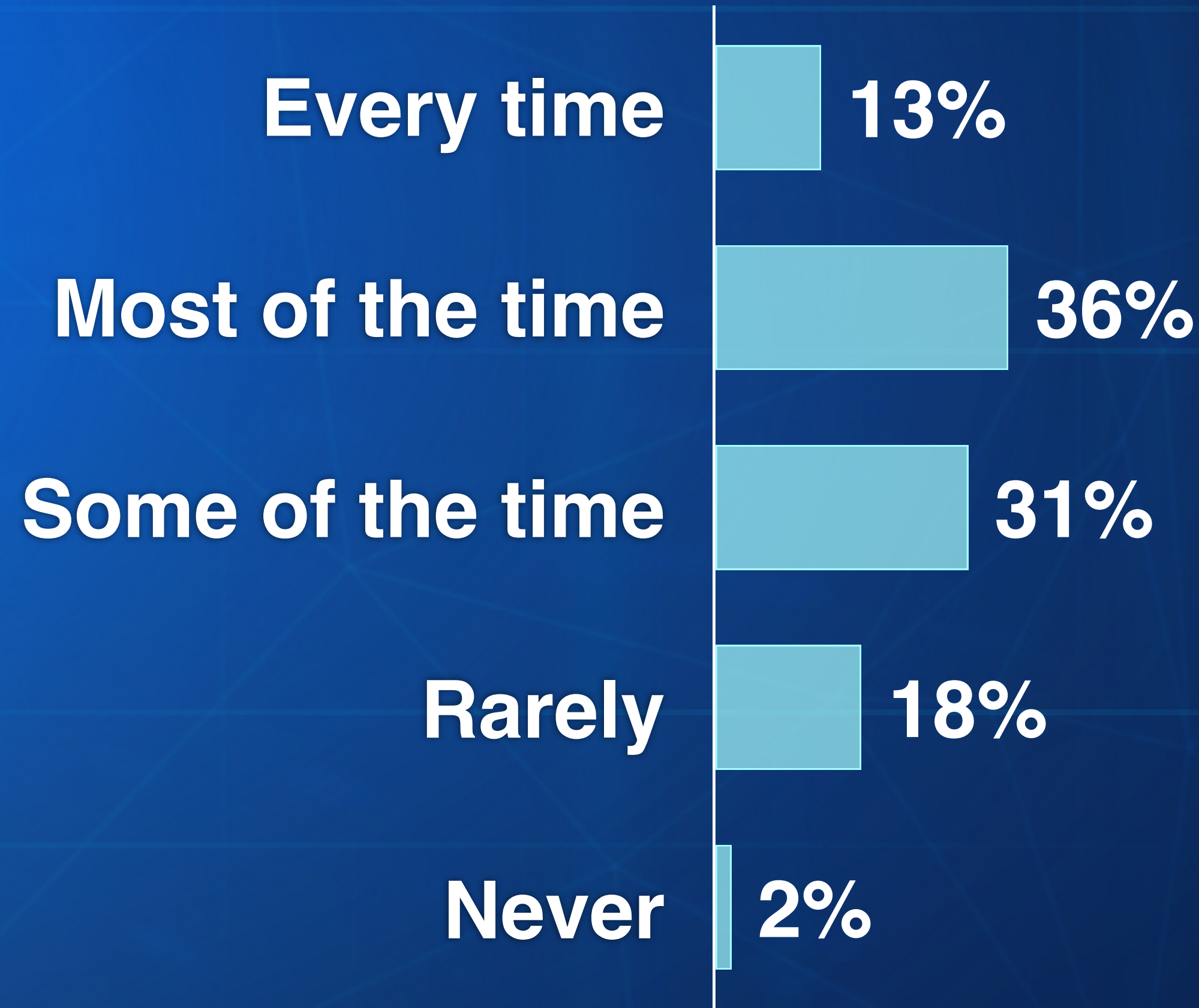


■ Niche
■ Well-Known Niche Reputation

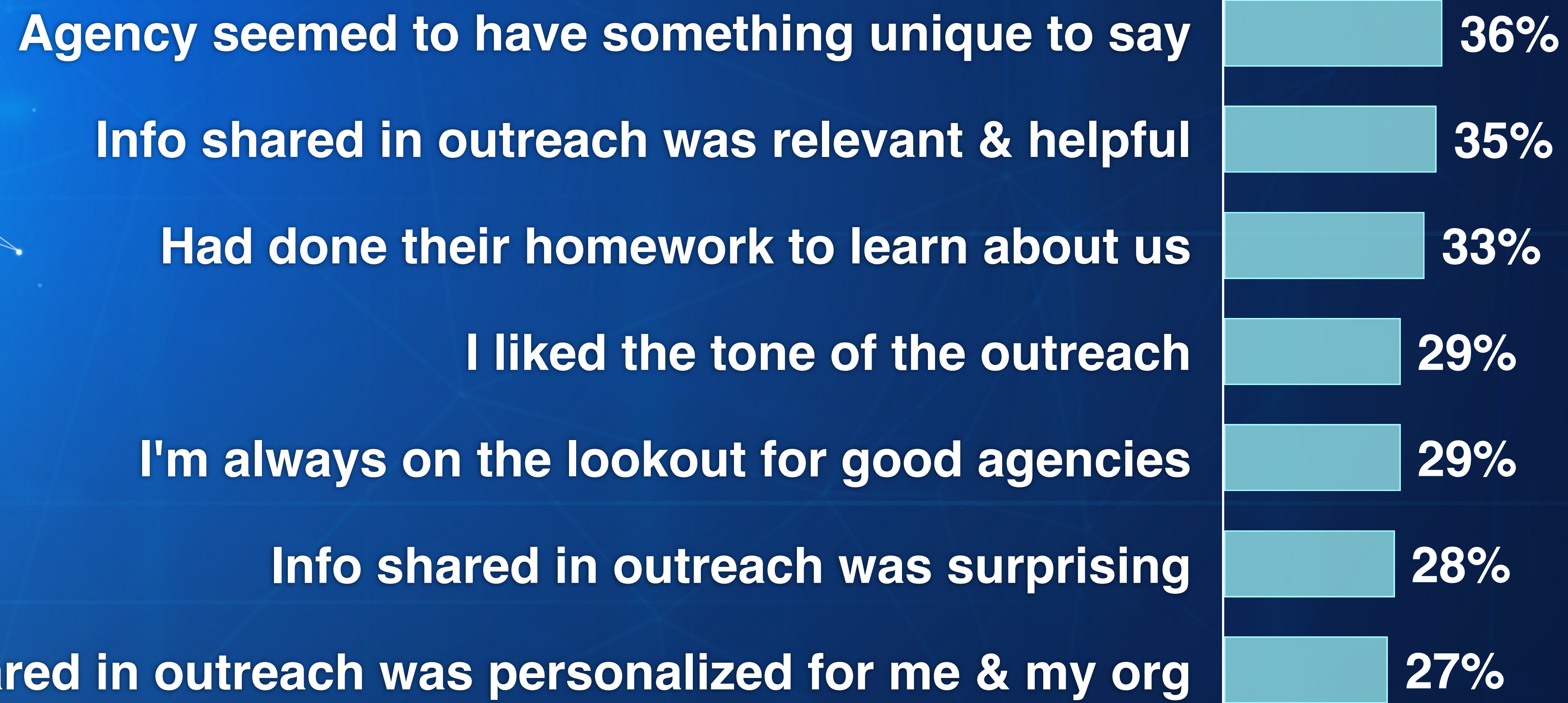
71% Say Niche Gives Agency Advantage in Hiring - Regardless of Segment



Clients Schedule Conversations Often



Unique, Relevant, Helpful, Personalized Outreach Drives Conversations



What Makes You Recognize a Poor Fit?

**“Showing a clear lack of understanding of our goals.”
(Agency Advocate)**

**“Their online presence doesn’t support their claims.”
(Begrudging Buyer)**

**“If an agency hasn’t done their homework into my
company, it’s a huge ‘ick’.” (Exacting Expert)**

Hiring: Our Take



“A client’s **tolerance for mediocre performance**, inability to hit KPIs or prove ROI, and failure to deliver quality work **is getting shorter and shorter.**”

“Client segments have some different priorities, but **expertise, results, and customer service** always top the list.”



• **Full presentation PDF**
• **60-page Executive Summary**



• **Live webinar July 9:**

- Full results
- Interactive data visualization access

**AND more insights, advice, & resources
from Drew & Susan throughout 2024!**