

00 / THE MANIFESTO

Seen isn't *selected*

A manifesto for marketing's one job



Seen isn't selected

Marketing can make more than ever, and is less sure than ever what it achieves.

We can publish a thousand pages by Friday. We can put an ad in front of anyone, a post in front of everyone, and a chatbot on every page. And still, in most firms, nobody can say with confidence why the last deal was won, or why the one before it was lost.

I don't think that's because marketers are bad at their jobs. I think it's because marketing never agreed what the job was. So it counted what it could see: reach, awareness, traffic, rankings, followers, and now AI visibility. Each was a stand-in for the thing nobody could see, which was the choice.

In 2025, 6sense surveyed about 4,000 business buyers making purchases worth at least US\$25,000 ([6sense](#)). Each buying group weighed about five suppliers and picked one. All five were seen. Four lost.

Being seen was never the job. Being selected is.

What follows are twelve beliefs. Together they are the argument of the book *Seen Isn't Selected*, and the method behind the free *Selectability Playbooks*.

1. Marketing has one job: to get the brand selected

Not seen, not liked, not followed. Selected.

Everything else either makes that more likely or guesses at whether it happened. So ask one question of every tool, channel and campaign: will this get us selected? Take any activity and keep asking "so that what?" Every chain should end on the same sentence: so that they choose us. A chain that ends anywhere else has no job to do.

2. Selectability is the odds you're picked

Visibility is the odds you're seen. **Selectability** is the odds that a buyer, at a given moment, picks you over the alternatives, doing nothing included.

A brand can be seen everywhere and selected almost nowhere. And selectability is specific: you can be the obvious choice for one buyer at one moment, and invisible to another. One number for the whole brand hides exactly what you need to know.

3. The moment is the unit

A moment is one kind of buyer, at one step of their journey, with one need, buying in one way. The finance director building the case for the board. The owner wondering whether outside help is worth it. The plant manager who expects to be told what they already know.

Every one of those is a different question, decided by different evidence, in a different place. Marketing that starts from channels ends up with a brochure. Marketing that starts from moments ends up with answers.

4. A choice has seven stages, and being seen covers two

On the way to a pick, a buyer passes through seven stages: **Known, Found, Answered, Believed, Preferred, Bought and Kept.**

Visibility covers the first two. A grocery shop turns on two or three of the seven. A software contract needs all seven, for several people at once. Most marketing reports describe the first two stages in great detail and the other five not at all.

5. The choice starts without you

About 95% of business buyers aren't in the market for a category at any one time, by Professor John Dawes's rule of thumb at the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute ([Ehrenberg-Bass](#)). When they do enter it, the shortlist is usually written on day one, from memory. In the same 6sense survey, the winning supplier was on that first-day shortlist 95% of the time.

So most marketing works long before anyone is buying, by leaving a memory filed under a moment. The ad that matters most is the one a buyer remembers a year later, when the moment arrives.

6. Most lost sales are lost to nothing

Matt Dixon and Ted McKenna analysed about 2.5 million recorded sales calls. Between 40% and 60% of qualified deals ended in no decision ([Dixon](#)). The buyer didn't pick anyone.

The biggest competitor is rarely another firm. It's doing nothing, or doing it yourself, or buying a different kind of answer altogether. Pressure loses those sales. Safety wins them: a clear price, a small first step, an easy way out.

7. The questions you avoid are the ones that decide

Buyers want to know what it costs, what could go wrong, how long it takes and who it isn't for. Most firms answer none of these in public, and then wonder why their buyers go quiet.

An answer is finished only when it removes the next question. Publish the price range. Publish the limits. Say who should choose someone else.

8. You can't claim belief. You can only supply the evidence for it

"Trusted by leading brands" persuades nobody. A named client, a number someone else confirmed, a review you didn't write and a reference who'll take a call: that's what belief is made of.

And one contradiction anywhere can be repeated everywhere. The price on the website, the claim in the deck and the answer an assistant gives must be the same, because buyers, and machines, will notice when they aren't.

9. A reason counts only if someone else can repeat it

Buyers rarely choose the best option. They choose the option they can explain to someone else: the board, a partner, themselves at two in the morning.

So the reason to choose you has to be short enough to repeat and true enough to survive being checked. If your best customer can't say it in a sentence, you don't have one yet.

10. There are now two memories to earn

Marketing used to work on one memory: the buyer's. Now there are two. The buyer's is built by experience and advertising. The machine's is built from what's been written about you, much of it by other people.

AI is the problem and much of the answer. The machine flooding the market with content is also the first adviser a marketer can question directly, as often as they like, in their buyers' own words. For the first time, the odds of being selected can be estimated, moment by moment, before the sale rather than after it.

11. Judge every build by the moments it moves

A website, an ad, a pitch, an email, an event: each is a build, and each serves some moments and not others. The question is never "are we doing enough social?" It's "which moments does social lead, and did they move?"

Give every moment one build that leads it and a few that support it. Then judge every build by the stages it's meant to move, not by the numbers it was always going to report.

12. Measure, fix the biggest gap, and ask again

A score is only worth taking if it changes what you do next. So measure the odds at your moments, find the stage where each is lost, and fix the biggest gap first. Write down what you expect the fix to do. Then ask the same questions again, and record what moved against what you predicted.

Drop the fixes that did nothing. Keep the ones that worked. Do it every quarter. That loop, more than any single campaign, is what makes a brand selectable.

What we don't know yet

I'd rather say this plainly than have you find it out later. Nobody has yet shown that a selectability score moves with market share. The weights in any such score are judgement until they're calibrated against real sales. And no measure of the odds outranks your own sales data where you have it.

The method is published, so you can check the working, or run it yourself, by hand, for five moments this quarter.

Where to go next

The book. *Seen Isn't Selected* makes the full argument: what a choice is made of, the seven stages one at a time, the fourteen builds, and the Selectability Score. Every figure is sourced, with a note on who produced it and what they sell.

The playbooks. *The Selectability Playbooks* hold the how-to: eleven steps, fourteen builds and one worked example, with every template. They're free at rocmode.io/playbooks.

RocMode. I build software on this thinking, and I'd rather you knew that now. RocMode asks your buyers' questions of AI assistants, without your name in them, and shows which moments you win, which you lose, and the fix worth the most. If you'd like to see your own odds, join the beta at rocmode.io/beta.

Every brand is seen by someone. Very few are selected on purpose.

Seen isn't selected. Go and be selected.

Ben Stokes

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