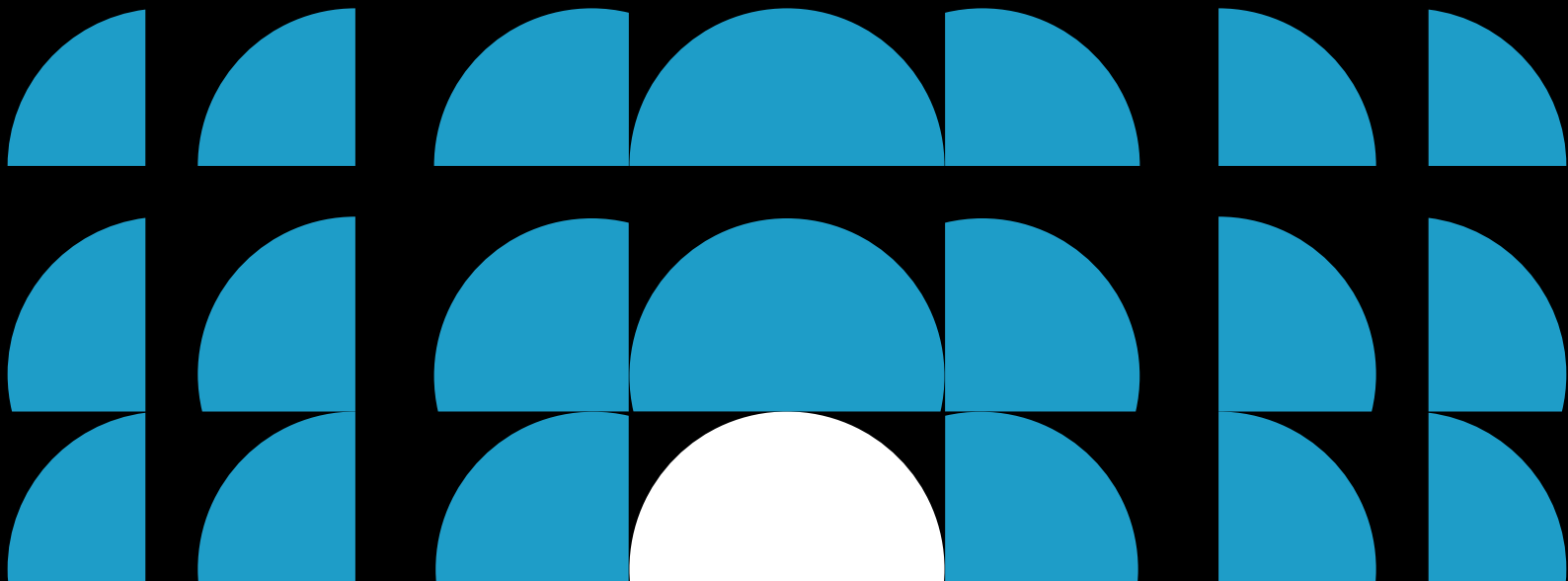




Mental Equity™

**The Growth System That Makes
Brands the Reflex Choice**

A new way to build and measure the kind of
preference that makes choice feel easy.



About Bader Rutter

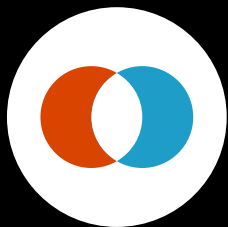
Bader Rutter is a full-service, employee-owned B2B agency built for categories in which decisions carry real stakes. We help marketers break free from stale B2B playbooks and turn bold ideas into real business momentum. In a world of hyperdistraction and look-alike messages, you don't win by pushing people down a funnel; you win by building emotion, memory and meaning that lives in their heads between decisions. That's why we unite brand and demand as one force, designing integrated work across strategy, creative, media, CX, content, PR, analytics and real-world experts to shape the behaviors that matter. The result is Reflex choice: your brand as the default reach, proven through deeper signals and the business outcomes your CFO cares about.

About Mental Equity™

We developed Mental Equity™ for one reason: B2B has plenty of measurement but not enough clarity about what makes a brand easy to choose. We can track activity all day. But preference doesn't live in a dashboard. It lives in the mind, formed over months and years, and then is triggered in moments of pressure.

Mental Equity is the growth system that helps build and measure the conditions that make a brand the Reflex choice. In plain terms: It shows whether brand and demand are reinforcing each other over time, so the brand becomes easier to recall, easier to trust, easier to recommend and easier to choose.

What Mental Equity adds:



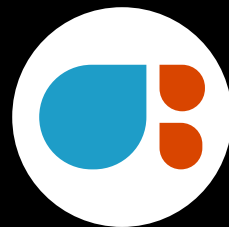
One governing view that ties brand and demand together.



An index that demonstrates how brands build belief and drive action.



A diagnostic read that shows why preference is rising or stalling.



A growth readout that explains why results get easier or harder over time.

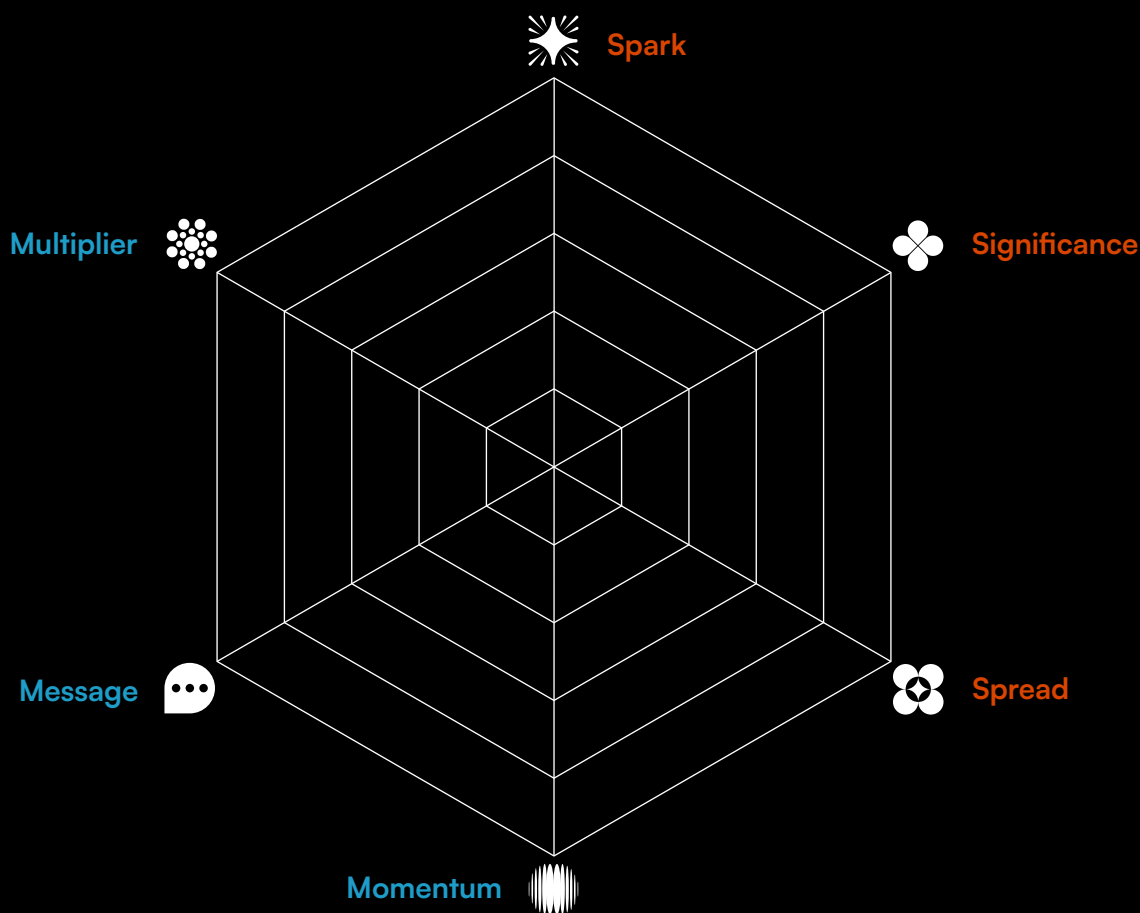


An easy path for buying groups, risk analysis and internal justification.

Methodology

Mental Equity™ was built in partnership with an independent group of experts in data science, psychometrics and analytics. Together, we developed a research-based, psychometrically validated score designed to measure the conditions that make a brand feel like the Reflex choice, capturing both the belief people hold about a brand and the behavior they're primed to take because of that belief.

The result is a single governing index called the Reflex index. It combines six factors, 12 drivers and 36 underlying items, demonstrating strong consistency and stability over time. The model was tested with 750 B2B and 400 B2C marketing decision-makers. To validate that the Reflex index reflects real commercial relevance, not just "positive opinion," we tested its relationship to outcomes that matter, including likelihood to choose, word of mouth, brand advocacy and social engagement. Across these outcomes, a higher Reflex index consistently aligns with stronger intent to choose and greater organic support for the brand.



B2B is starting to name the problem. Now, we need a way to govern it.

B2B is finally talking about what holds growth back. We just haven't had a way to govern it.

B2B marketing is finally having the right conversations.

We're talking about how **most buyers are out of market most of the time** — the 95/5 reality explained by the LinkedIn B2B Institute — and how growth is often won before anyone fills out a form.

We're talking about how long-term brand building and short-term activation work best together, not as rivals, but as partners. Work that's been made hard to ignore by Binet and Field (*The Long and the Short of It: Balancing Short and Long-Term Marketing Strategies*. IPA; 2013).

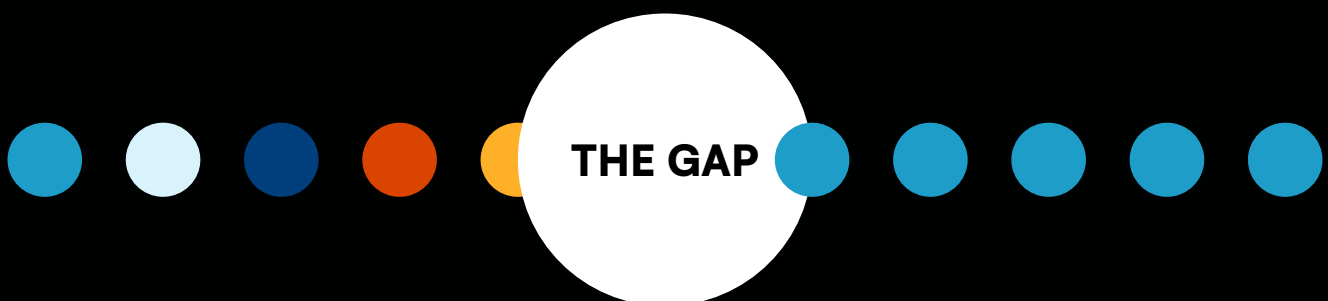
And we're talking about how creativity compounds — how consistent, memorable advertising builds memory that makes future selling easier, backed by System1 and Effies awards research.

And still, the day-to-day reality looks like this: more noise, more channels, more dashboards and too much work that feels technically correct and emotionally blank.

Because performance metrics became the only marketing scoreboard over the years, B2B learned to optimize what's easiest to track. Over time, "optimized" became "safe." Safe became neutral. Neutral became forgettable while still costing full price.

Here's what's missing: **not data, but a single governance metric — one that shows whether all that work is actually making the brand easier to choose.**

That's the gap Mental Equity™ is built to close.



Most decisions are won before the buying moment and then justified during it.

Choice is often decided early and then defended later.

Most of your market isn't buying today. Audiences are forming impressions. Building shortcuts. Learning which brands feel safe to bring into a meeting.

When an RFP, a demo request or a vendor review arrives, the decision doesn't start at zero. It starts with what's already in memory:

- **Familiarity**
- **Confidence**
- **Reduced perceived risk**
- **Stories people can repeat internally**

That's why the real advantage is earned early — not with more noise but by being the brand people reach for when they need to move forward and feel certain.

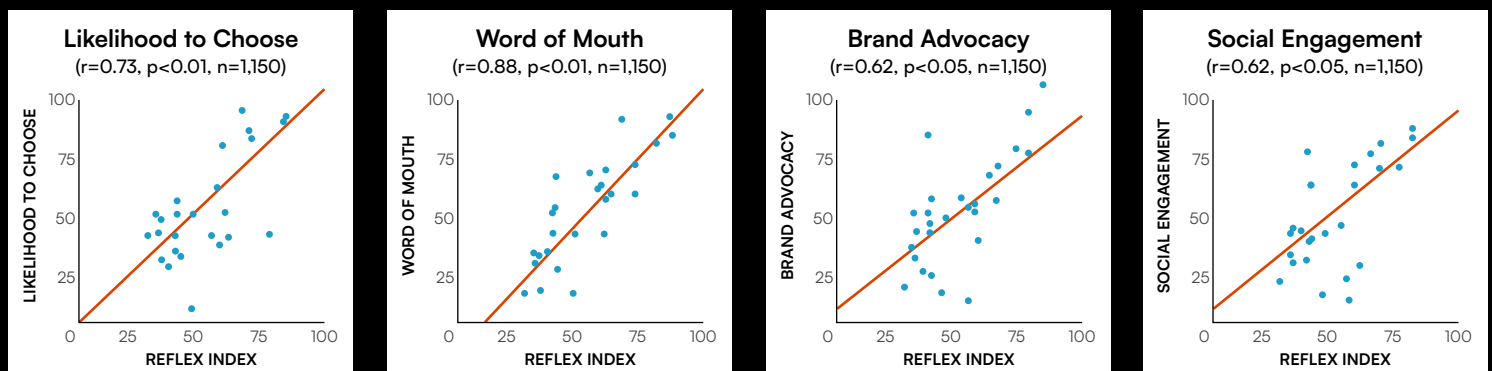
Mental Equity™ tracks the two forces that shape that reach:

- **Belief** — what people remember and believe about you
- **Behavior** — what people are primed to do when the moment arrives

The goal in plain terms: **Become the Reflex choice** — automatic, obvious, low friction.

And this is where governance begins: If you can't see whether belief is turning into behavior over time, you can't manage growth — you can only report activity. Our study shows Reflex has a statistically significant, positive relationship with outcomes leaders care about (see Figure 1). For example, a Reflex index of 50 predicts roughly 51 in likelihood to choose.

Figure 1. Relationship between Reflex index and outcomes



Buyers experience one brand. Most organizations measure with two scoreboards.

This isn't about choosing sides. It's about seeing compounding clearly.

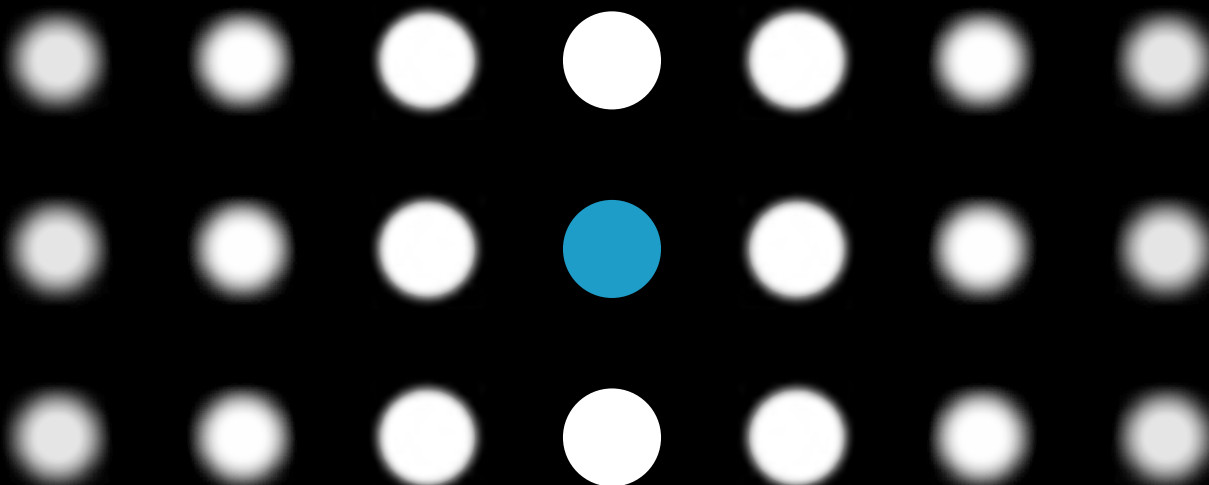
The debate is familiar: how much to invest in long-term brand building vs. short-term demand capture. It's not a bad debate; it's just incomplete.

Because the real issue isn't whether teams do both. Many do.

The issue is leadership rarely has a single, **defensible view** of whether brand and demand are reinforcing each other over time or just running in parallel.

Most measurement systems are excellent at reporting activity. They are poor at explaining how preference is formed. So leaders are left making high-stakes decisions with low-stakes signals: a lot of certainty about what happened last week, and not enough clarity about what's being built. And now, AI is accelerating the problem. As more research and vendor discovery gets mediated by LLMs, the brands that benefit won't simply be the brands with the most content. They'll be the brands with the **clearest, most repeatable meaning**, because AI tends to summarize the world the way the world talks. If your meaning isn't consistent in human language, it won't be consistent in AI language.

Mental Equity™ was built to answer one executive question without turning marketing into a weekly optimization contest: **Is our brand becoming more fragile, more stable or more powerful?**



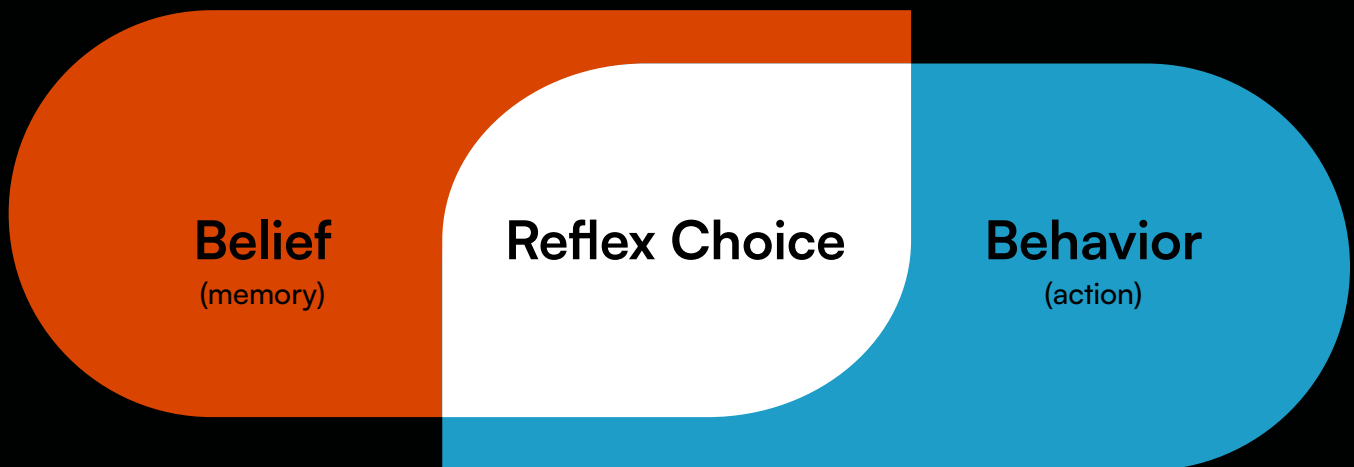
Mental Equity™ measures how a brand is used in decision- making, not just how “strong” it is.

Traditional brand equity tells you how strong a brand is. Mental Equity tells you **how a brand shows up in the mind when a decision needs to be made.**

Mental Equity is the value a brand holds in people’s minds — built through memorable, meaningful, consistent experiences over time — until choice becomes Reflex (see Figure 2).

And it’s built for what B2B actually looks like: buying groups, long cycles, high stakes, risk reduction and internal justification.

Figure 2. Mental Equity model



Think of Mental Equity as creditworthiness for your brand.

When the decision hits, some brands get approved fast. Others get reviewed to death. Reflex shows which one you are and why.

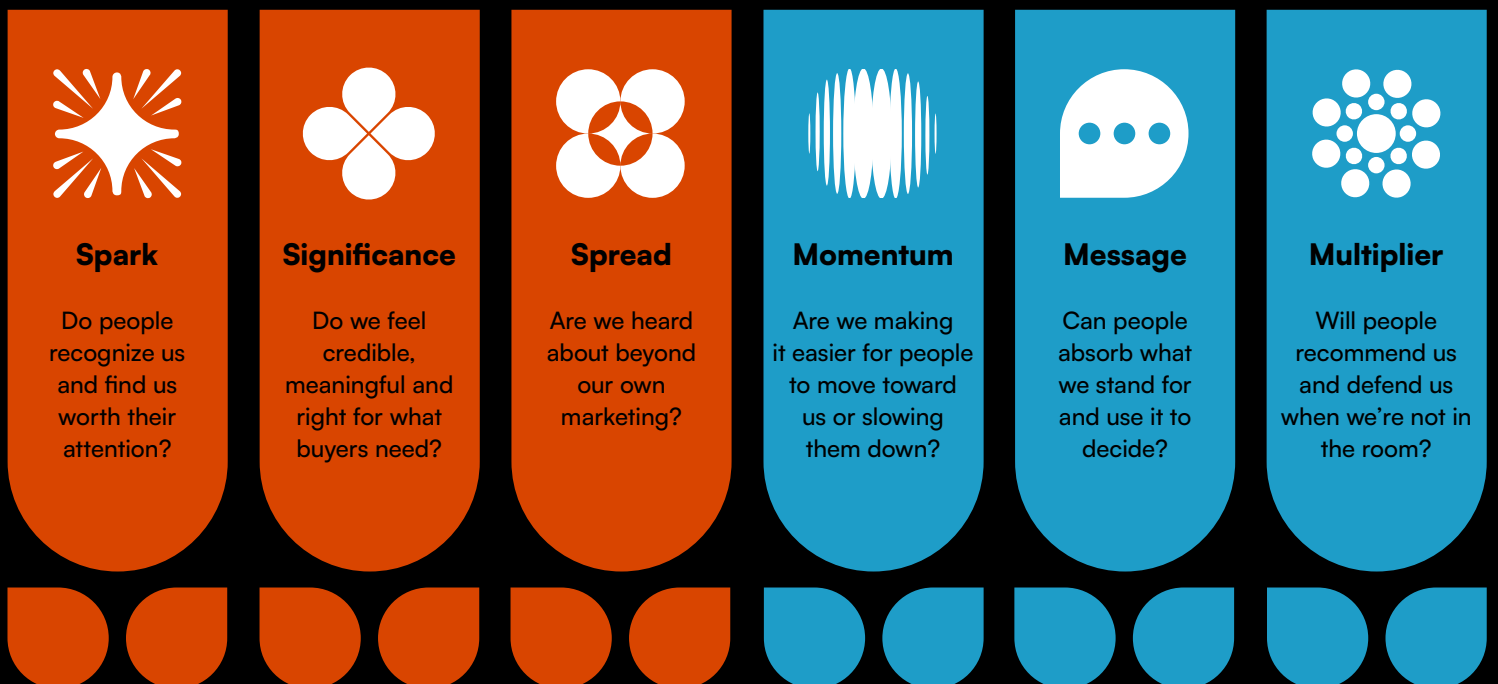
So the aim isn’t “more brand” or “more demand.”
It’s more Reflex choice, because Reflex is the easiest form of demand to convert. It requires the least effort.

The Reflex index is the governing metric inside Mental Equity™.

The Reflex index is a single number that summarizes two simple questions: How easy is this brand to choose right now, and how likely is it to become easier over time?

Awareness and consideration tell you whether a brand is known or being looked at. Reflex tells you whether the brand is becoming the easy choice — ready to be chosen when pressure hits. It's not a report of last week's performance. It's a read on the brand's readiness to be chosen, based on the human drivers that create preference and reduce perceived risk (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Reflex index composition:
one index, six factors, 12 drivers and 36 items



Reflex isn't a report. It's a growth condition.

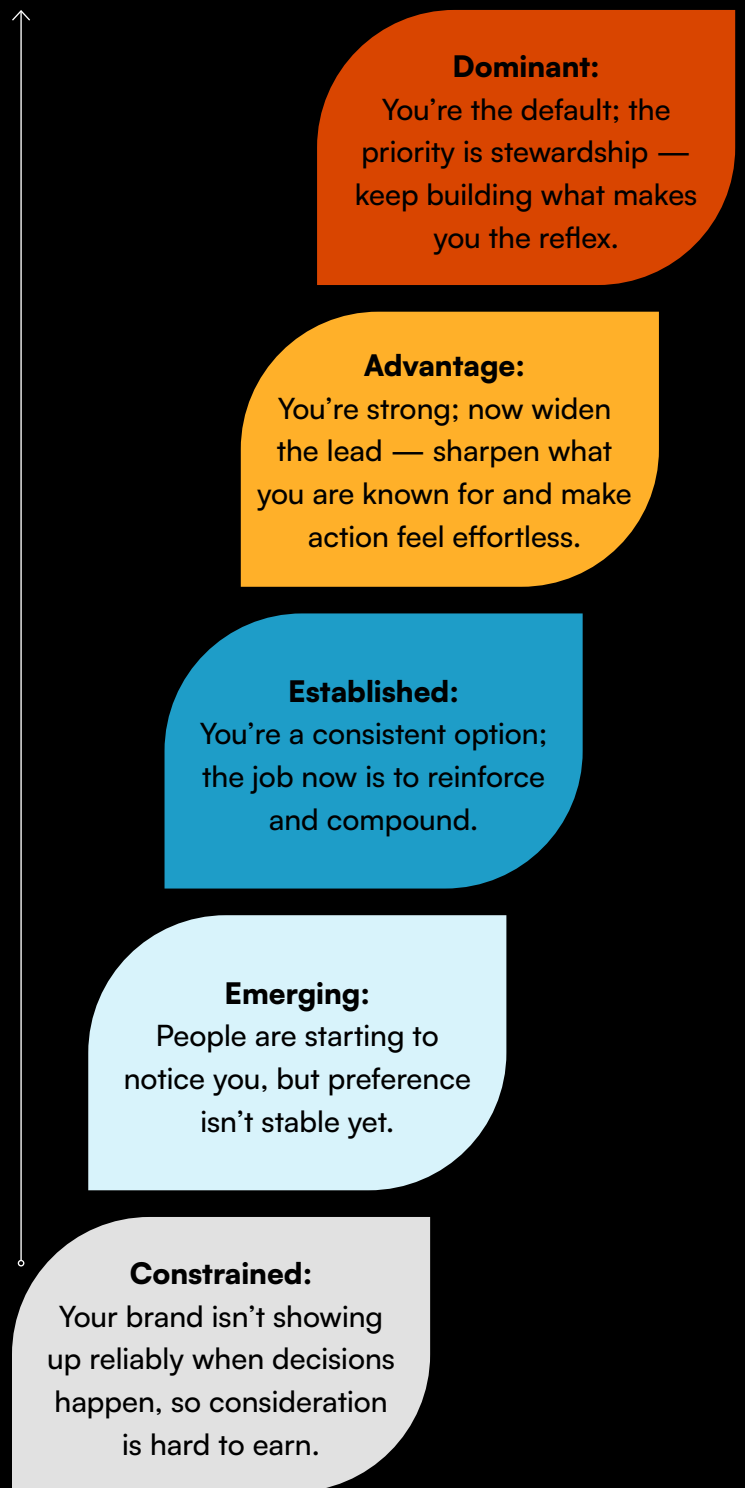
Now that you can see what Reflex is made of, the next question is how to use it. Mental Equity™ isn't built to explain last week. It's built to guide what you do next.

It's a **growth readout** designed to explain why results get easier (or harder) over time, so teams can make better strategic decisions, not just faster optimizations.

That's why we frame Reflex not as "levels" but as a set of growth conditions* (see Figure 4), a structural read on readiness (more like a credit rating than a report card). It's executive-ready, diagnostically serious and long-term-oriented without turning into a gamified grading scale.

*It's not another dashboard.
It's a governance metric for growth.*

Figure 4. Growth conditions



**These growth conditions reflect current reflex readiness and not brand size, age or revenue.*

Reflex is built through memory and then proven through behavior.

Reflex choice isn't built by saying more. It's built by work that earns emotion, repeatable meaning and memory across the entire experience.

In crowded markets, the job isn't to outexplain competitors. It's to become the brand people instinctively recognize, trust and choose. And when belief and behavior reinforce each other, growth stops feeling like constant reinvention and starts feeling like motion. Below, you can see some implications revealed by the research.

Strong belief can exist without easy action.

People can feel positively about a brand and still hesitate when it's time to move. That's not a more content problem. That's friction.

Recognition is the quiet bottleneck.

You can have goodwill and still lose consideration if the brand isn't mentally available in the moment that matters.

In B2B, your story has to survive a meeting.

Your message has to travel across a buying group. If people can't repeat it simply, it can't spread internally.

Creativity compounds.

When brands commit to emotionally clear, distinctive work, they build memory. And memory reduces perceived risk over time. That's when "selling" gets easier.

Here's what it looks like when creativity builds Reflex: emotionally clear, distinctive work doesn't just perform, it deposits memory. And memory is what makes a brand easier to choose.

CASE EXAMPLE

When belief becomes behavior A brand platform that didn't spike but compounded.



Zoetis had a strong product foundation, but its marketing lived in the category default: features, benefits, discounts. It was correct, but it wasn't carried in memory. Then pressure arrived: major products coming off patent, real generic threat, real financial risk. It was the kind of moment when buyers don't want more information; they want more certainty.

So Zoetis shifted from competing feature by feature to building belief through a story rooted in shared purpose between the people who care for animals and the animals who rely on them. The platform was Born of the Bond. It didn't spike. It compounded. Over time, the work made the brand easier to choose — because it made the brand easier to feel.

The Reflex index positioned Zoetis in a growth condition of Advantage, with a clear opportunity to make belief more usable in the buying moment by strengthening recognition and ease. Results reported over four years included turning a projected 40% decline risk into a \$110M revenue increase, alongside meaningful lifts in Net promoter score. **Emotion didn't replace effectiveness. It created it.**



BACKGROUND

Zoetis had a strong product foundation. Marketing messaging mirrored that, focusing entirely on features, benefits and discounts.

CHALLENGE

With several key products coming off patent and significant generic pressures looming, we flipped from product to brand and created meaning and purpose in Zoetis.

40%

With the looming generic pressure, Zoetis had modeled a 40% decline in revenue. In dollars, this was \$210M.

\$1B

But the entire portfolio, nearly \$1B, was at risk.

HOW WE MOVED MINDS

As the platform continues to grow and evolve, it has exceeded even the wildest expectations and continues to compound memory and impact.



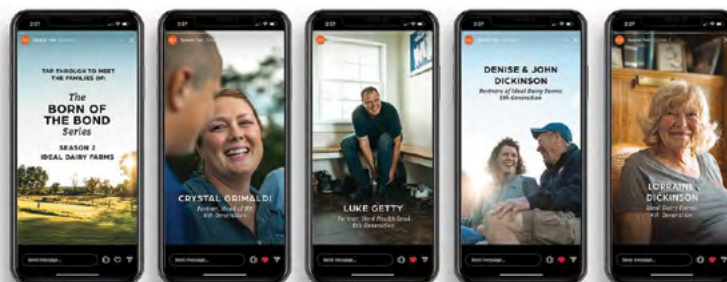
PROOF IN NUMBERS



+ 4 PTs

Net Promoter Score up four points, while the category has dropped.

- 13 PTs



What started as a U.S. campaign has gone global.

Now, a faster snapshot — how the same lens reads a different brand.

BRAND SNAPSHOT

The Farmer's Dog

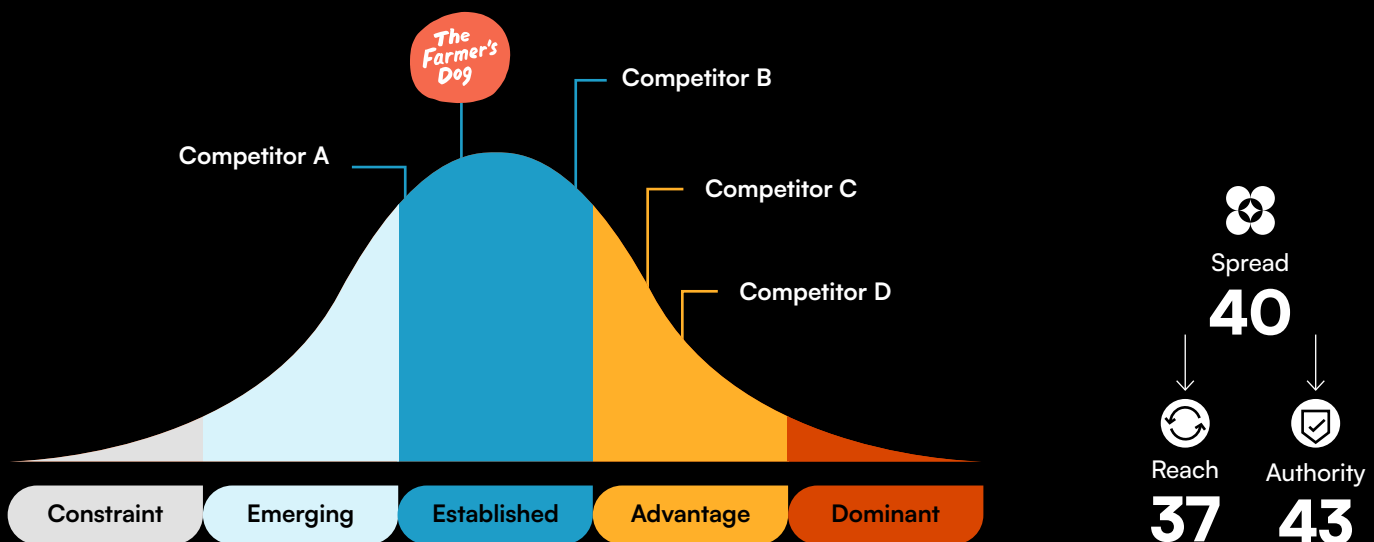
what a Mental Equity™ readout reveals.



The Reflex index for The Farmer's Dog suggests a brand with strong consumer energy and clear emotional connection — signals that often show up when people genuinely care and talk. The opportunity now is expanding how that strength travels into professional decision spaces, where credibility signals and third-party validation tend to carry extra weight.

That shows up most clearly in the Reflex index factor **Spread** (one of the six factors that make a brand the reflex), especially when you look at the **Reach** and **Authority** drivers. In plain terms: The brand has momentum, and there's room to broaden the kinds of places and voices that reinforce it. The move isn't simply to get louder. It's to build more "professional proof" that travels: credible expertise, respected partnerships and validation that help others recommend the brand with confidence in clinical contexts (see Figure 5). In Reflex terms: Keep the momentum — add authority that travels.

Figure 5. The Farmer's Dog Reflex index analysis



INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

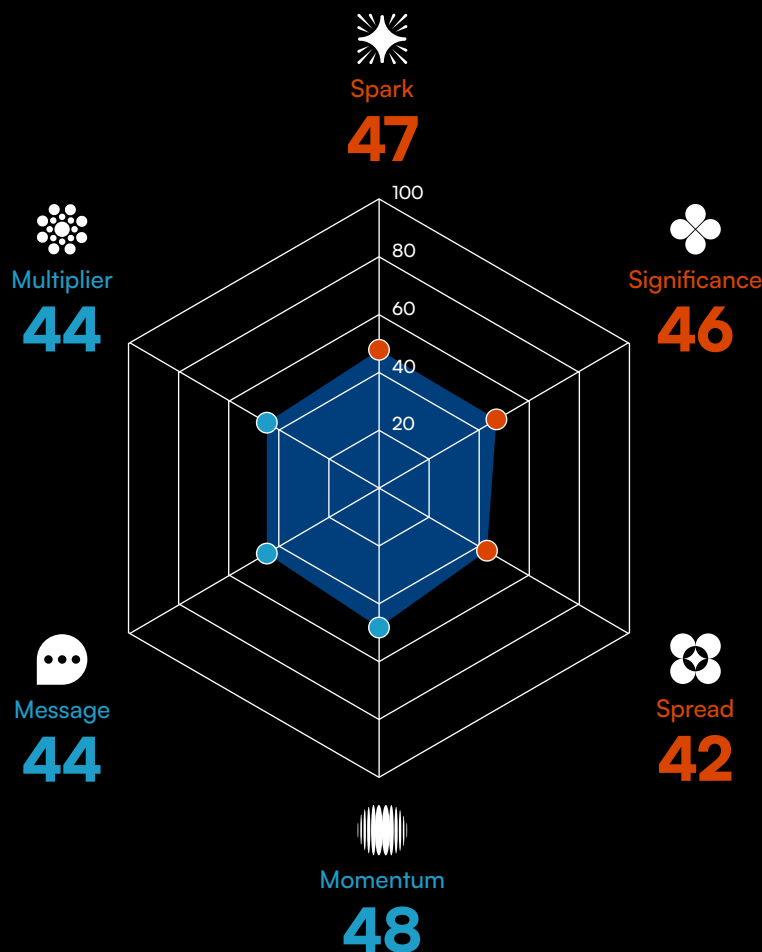
Foodservice

And zooming out: Here's what it looks like when an entire industry struggles to build memory.

Foodservice is the lowest-scoring B2B industry we tested (see Figure 6) not because the category lacks strong products but because brand meaning often gets trapped inside sales interactions. When buyers mostly experience brands through quotes, catalogs and rep conversations, memory stays thin and differentiation collapses.

The opportunity isn't "more messaging." It's more cultural presence and sharper, more repeatable meaning so buyers have a reason to prefer one brand over another and have a story they can repeat inside the organization.

Figure 6. Reflex index analysis



Belief

Behavior

Make the brand the Reflex.

Mental Equity™ is a way to see what's been hiding in plain sight:

- **Why some brands get short-listed automatically**
- **Why some get defended in the room**
- **Why some get forgotten even after great work**

B2B doesn't have a data problem. It has a human problem. Buying groups don't just compare features; they compare what feels safe, credible and worth staking their reputation on.

The opportunity is huge, because so much B2B still plays it "correct." The brands that choose to act like humans — to build belief, earn preference and create stories that travel — won't just stand out. They'll excel. **And in an AI-shaped world, the brands that surface fastest will often be the brands that are clearest to understand and easiest to choose.** They'll become the Reflex.

Mental Equity checklist for every piece of work:



- Are we building memory or just explaining?
- Are we reducing perceived risk or adding to it?
- Are we making choice feel easy and obvious?
- Can a buyer repeat our meaning in one sentence?
- Does this strengthen our growth condition or just fill the calendar?

Growth happens when people don't just know your brand — they reach for it.



[baderrutter.com](https://www.baderrutter.com)