Agency & Vendor Experimentation Ecosystem 2025

The blueprint agencies need to grow & thrive in a changing market.

Based on 40 interviews, 136 directory survey entries, and 75 agency research survey entries.

convert®

About convert

Convert is on a mission to leave the world better than we found it! This includes supporting & creating inclusive, diverse communities. And equipping businesses that are engines of positive change with the tools to do more with less.

For the last 15 years, we've been the preferred A/B testing platform of rebels.

The optimizers, the growth experts, the marketing teams that questioned why apps came with exorbitant price tags, a heaping side of bureaucracy, and nasty billing surprises.

When the rest of the market moved enterprise, we recognized the resilience of builders & doers who also deserve to experiment their way to success. That's why our motto is: **enterprise-grade testing, self-service prices.**

This agency report is yet another way we're giving back to the space. Agencies lead the charge of innovation. Yet, they often neglect their own growth processes. The insights we've gathered here make the world's first growth template crafted for CRO & Experimentation agencies to use as a competitive edge in today's disrupted market.



About Craig Sullivan

Craig has been blending UX, Analytics, AB Testing and Discovery Toolkits for over 13 years, powering growth for companies like Google, Amazon, Spotify, Eurostar, Lego, John Lewis, Facebook and Red Bull.

He has helped over 500 clients to unlock the latent value and growth inside their products or services.

Using a mixture of Experimentation, Data, User Research and Cultural Change, he's gained them over £5Bn in incremental revenue. Understanding digital leakage is his speciality - fixing the flows of engagement, revenue and customer delight.

Table Of Contents

Executive Summary 4

Introduction 5

The Agency Landscape 6

Trust is everything 9
What's happening? 14
What about services? 20
Experimentation trends 24
Teams & roles: Generalists to specialists 25
AI & experimentation 26
Embedded enablement 28
Growth pathways 29
Agency scorecard 32

The Vendor Landscape 34

The 2025 vendor challenge 39
Earning trust as a vendor 40
One size doesn't fit all 41
Misaligned priorities 45
Support expectation vs. reality 46
AI & automation: The SaaS vendor reckoning 48
You grow, we grow: The new contract 49
Vendor scorecard 52
A Note from Convert 53

Executive Summary

The A/B testing and experimentation ecosystem feels like it's at a turning point. For founders, leaders and sales teams, the message is clear: adapt your partnership strategy to this new reality, or leave growth on the table.

Our study with 40 interviews and 200+ survey responses shows the current state of the agency-vendor landscape and the future growth opportunities. Here are six key insights to explore:

Trust is the true currency

Vendors that compete for clients or ship unreliable products lose agencies quickly. Integrity, simple and transparent pricing, rock-solid core features are the foundation of partnership.

Agency & client evolution

More clients are insourcing and seeking strategic guidance. Winning agencies move upstream - embedding with teams, enabling in-house capability and proving true business value.

Misaligned priorities

Just having a partnership program isn't enough. Agencies want priority support and visibility of releases, features and roadmaps.

One size does not fit all

Agencies are different in size, maturity and volume of tests they run. Their business models are different too. Partnership structures should reflect their needs at different stages of growth.

AI & automation

AI is already eating research, build and analysis time with workflow automation. To be prepared for the future, tools should have rich APIs and agent-ready integrations.

'You grow, we grow'

Partnerships that share aligned incentives at every step—lead gen, onboarding, activation, renewal and co-marketing—drive shared growth.

Introduction

This report is for anyone navigating the ecosystem of experimentation, whether you're an agency looking to scale or a vendor building partnerships.

Originally, this began as a simple investigation into the experimentation agency and SaaS vendor ecosystem. As we dug deeper, it became clear there was so much to share that we expanded it into a full-scale study.

By the end, we'd conducted 40 hour-long interviews with agency leaders and founders, and gathered over 200 survey responses. We performed a deep analysis of all the data - to share insights, inspiring quotes and a hint of the "future" for our ecosystem.

This isn't a quick poll or a superficial take: we spent many weeks on the research, crafting the questions, digging deep into strategy, positioning, messaging, growth and problems. We discovered a big gap - between expectations and reality.

If you're a SaaS (or A/B testing) vendor ***or*** you run an agency, this report will tell you how to ***work optimally*** with your partners, **grow** your business and **differentiate yourself** in a crowded marketplace.

From the start, Convert insisted that the results be open and free for everyone. Their reasoning?

"A rising tide lifts all boats."

We hope that by sharing this research and starting great discussions, we learn more about how to grow, improve our work and get the best out of tech partnerships.

Craig Sullivan & Dennis van der Heijden

The Agency Landscape

When we first posted on LinkedIn about creating an agency directory, we got an overwhelming response:

- We estimated **100-125** agencies, but discovered **237** worldwide.
- Most existing agency directories are low quality - they either list only a few companies or include many agencies that don't run AB tests.
- It's a truly global and multilingual ecosystem, with services available nearly everywhere and in most languages.

Scan the QR to open the agency directory

We interviewed **40** agency leaders and founders.

We added **136** companies to the directory.

Our target is to have **200** agencies listed.

Key insights from the research: To start, we set the scene with the agency landscape.

What kind of agencies did we find?

Both interviews and survey identified three main types of agency:

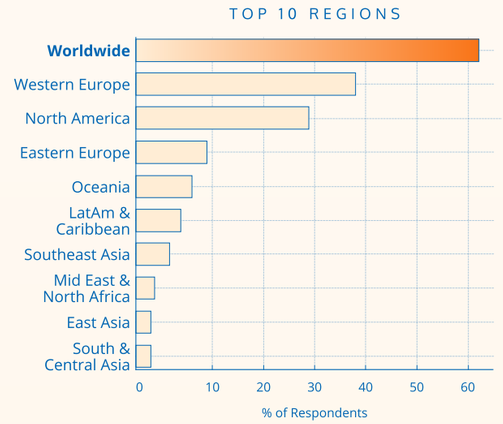
55%
Dedicated Experimentation Agencies
Focus on experimentation and adjacent services that power testing.

43% Full or Multi Service Agencies
Offer full service covering more than experimentation (e.g., SEO, Paid Media)

2% Dev & QA Agencies
Specialize mainly in outsourcing QA but also offer consultancy and build.

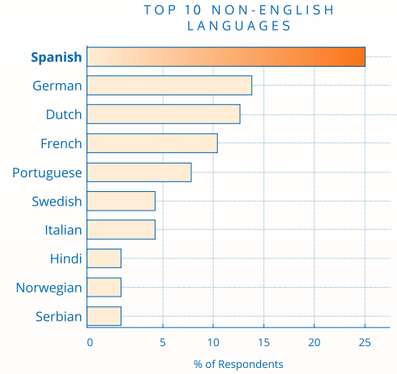
Where do they operate?

Although many agencies tick the box to offer worldwide services, there's a huge distribution of agencies across all regions. Some are growing faster than others too, like South & Central America.

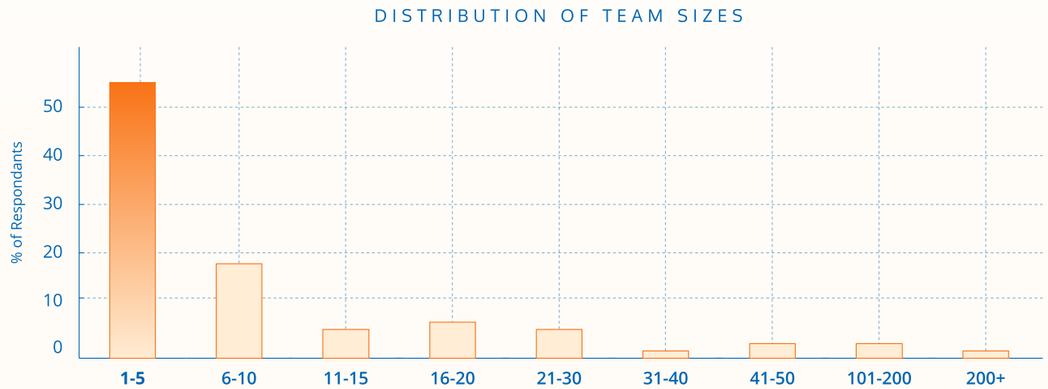


What languages do they speak?

Most agencies offer English as a language but many are multilingual, offering several options for international or local markets.



How big are the agencies & teams?



This is always a difficult one to measure accurately. Agencies that are **full or multi service** will often quote their headcount for the **entire organization**.

So for dedicated agencies, the **team size** is the same as the **org headcount** - as they're all working on experimentation. For multi service agencies, we asked them to **specify the team size** for their experimentation function within the larger agency.

Over half of the agencies have **small teams**, with the numbers spread across a wide range. Agencies with **more than 30 people** are less than **7%** of the total. The pattern is pretty similar for the main two types of agency.

What experience do they have?

90% of agencies have **5 or more years** of experience, with **40%** having **more than 10 years**. Agencies are already experienced and continuing to mature and improve their work.

51%
Growing
5 to 10 years testing

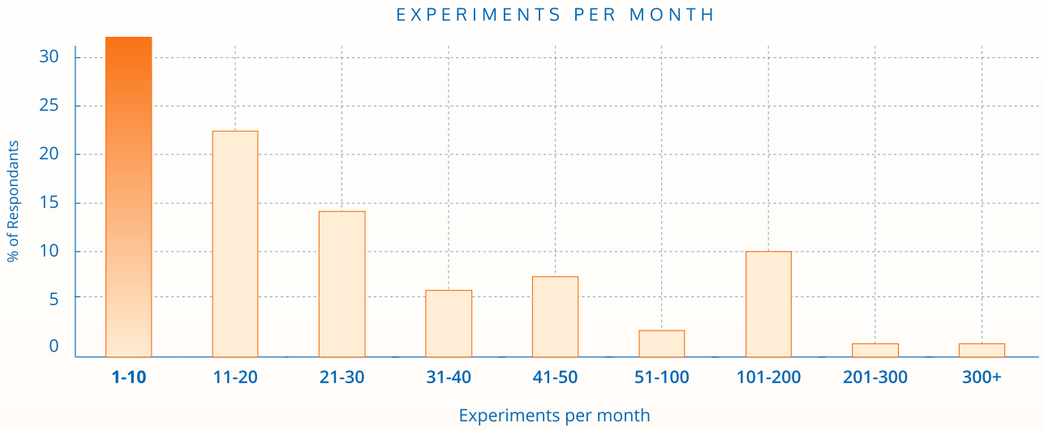
11% Starter
1 to 4 years testing

28% Mature
11 to 15 years testing

11% Legend
>15 years testing

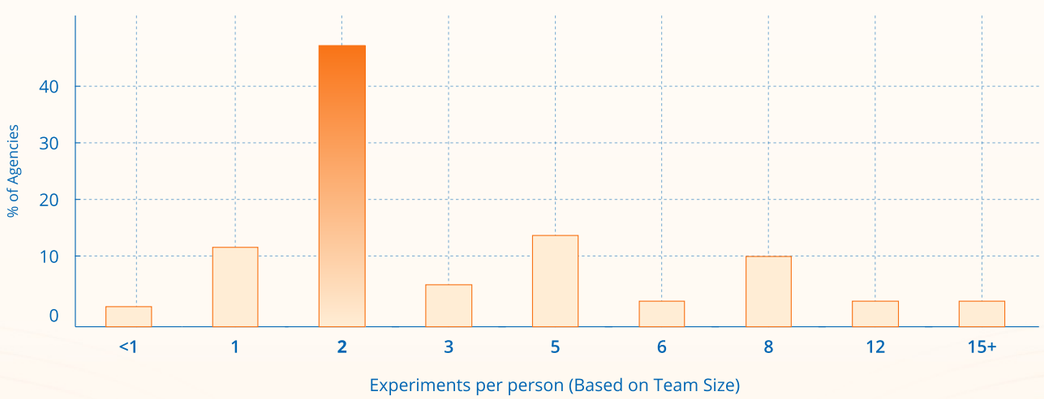
How many tests do they run?

Nearly a third of agencies are running **10 or fewer** experiments a month. Another third are running **11-30 a month**, the rest **even higher volumes**.



Tests per person per month

We share this rough calculation to highlight the wide variation in output from teams. About 60% manage 2 or fewer tests per month (per head), another 20% manage 3-6, and the remaining 20% manage even more.



Agencies fall into **three main types**.

Most experimentation teams are **small and mature**.

Experiment output and volume vary widely across agencies.

The agency ecosystem is larger and more distributed than expected.

Trust is everything

This pyramid shows the layers of Trust and Needs that build successful agency-vendor partnerships. Each level forms a foundation for the next: without these, the higher activities don't matter.

97% of agencies say trust is the single most important factor for a successful agency-vendor partnership.



Vendor integrity

Agencies stressed that vendors **must not compete with them for client business.** Many shared frustration about vendors 'poaching' clients by offering services directly to them behind the agency's back. Several agencies even require formal non-compete agreements as assurance. Agencies want vendors to protect the partnership - involving the agency in client opportunities, not bypassing them.

> *Trust is knowing that the vendor will do the right thing by you - that your interests are aligned and that they care about the relationship.*
>
> **Johann Van Tonder,** AWA Digital

> *Recommending or even offering services that compete with the agency erodes trust.*
>
> **Ben Labay,** Speero

> *To have a partnership that isn't superficial and only sales driven, you need an understanding of the client's problems that you can solve better together. Tool vendors should never be in competition with you.*
>
> **André Morys,** konversionsKRAFT

Product reliability

Even with a great vendor relationship, the product itself must be reliable. Many agencies cited bugs, data accuracy problems, or integration failures as deal-breakers.

- Agencies emphasize that it's their reputation on the line when tools fail with clients.
- Core functionality that's used 'every day' has to do what it promises - with no bugs or flaws in data collection, accuracy, reporting or the UI.
- Good quality and up-to-date documentation matters more than badges or certification programs.

> *Lack of transparency and honesty makes vendors untrustworthy. No tools are perfect. Some have great features in one area but lack in other areas. You can have an amazing stats engine and clunky set up. Stop pretending that you're perfect in every way.*
>
> **Joe Doveton**, Binary Bear Limited

> *Partnerships get killed by over promising what their platform can do and then not delivering on that.*
>
> **Garret Cunningham**, Columbus Global

> *Rather than discounts I'd much rather have a tool we like and is not going to cause any issues. If there are issues with the platform, the support people are going to be on it. As an agency, if there are issues, even if we aren't responsible for bringing the platform in, it's still going to affect us and the program*
>
> **Stephen Pavlovich**, Conversion.com

Predictable, transparent pricing

Pricing was another hot issue and is part of product trust. Agencies can accept paying a fair price, but many complained about complex, opaque pricing models and surprise overage fees. As one agency put it, "If we can't figure out the costs, how do we manage this with clients?"

Offer a simple model (e.g., a flat per-user rate) that allows agencies to forecast and manage costs.

> *Nothing kills trust like feature gating. Clients feel annoyed when some features that were previously available on their plan now needs an upgrade.*
>
> **Sandip Amlani**, Conversion Punkt

> *Charging for overages or jacking up the pricing significantly at the end of the year can be really annoying and causes the client to start looking elsewhere.*
>
> **Chris Gibbins**, Creative CX

> *Complex pricing models can make it really hard to work out how much it's going to cost to run a CRO-program. Complex pricing makes it hard to set a reliable budget.*
>
> **Robert de Kok**

Releases, features & roadmap

Keep agencies in the product loop - surprises are trust killers, as are client issues from unexpected changes. Visibility and feedback loops turn agencies from end-users into co-creators and partners. The most respected vendors:

- Flag upcoming releases, feature changes (e.g., Slack), and with changelogs. Agencies prefer to fix stuff before it breaks, not afterwards.
- Make the roadmap two-way. Share what's coming and invite agency feedback on priorities.
- Include the dev community. Bringing engineers into the loop on early release feedback, features, pilots or betas is a smart move.
- Invest in core features, stuff used every day. Tools with friction, UI problems or complex navigation add delay to workflows.

Priority support

Agencies expect prioritized support for themselves and their clients. They frequently have deep expertise with vendor products and multiple client tech stacks to handle, so their support needs are different from in-house teams. Slow vendor support tarnishes the reputation of both vendors and the agencies that recommended them:

"We thought you were a Gold Partner - why can't you get an answer either?"

- Agencies were often frustrated with delays in resolving issues. Having to go through several people, support layers, or scripted responses delayed critical work, often for weeks.
- Rapid escalation paths for critical issues were mentioned as a key differentiator for agencies, and having a dedicated support rep or partner-specific support channel was a major trust builder. Unless they're starting out, treat them as domain experts, not end users.
- Our survey and interviews showed that support quality and priority heavily influenced agencies' willingness to recommend vendors.

> *It harms trust when issues are not solved immediately. This has a direct negative impact on our revenue stream and client satisfaction.*
>
> **Erik Lauwen**, Fingerspitz

> *I had issues with AB testing tools in the past that left me 'hanging' while my client was losing patience and threatening to cancel our experimentation program.*
>
> **Jim Martin**, Align Digital

Support teams can provide a lot of value but can also be a big cause of frustration... If we're continually referred back to documentation, that's a point of friction and there isn't always a great process to escalate.

Greg Wendel, Drumline Digital

Leads & biz dev

92% of agencies said that lead gen activities are an important part of their relationships.

A strong partnership develops opportunities where incentives are aligned: Agencies hope vendors will introduce them to clients, involve them in developing clients, and vendors hope to grow their client base and volume usage of their tools.

Co-marketing around real customer problems, working on integrations or new markets, helping with onboarding, or rescuing 'stuck' clients were all examples given where both parties benefit. The best examples we heard were from **both** parties working **together**.

- Several agencies said that "lead sharing and development was the clearest proof of real partnership". In interviews, a few vendors were praised for "bringing us into their sales conversations".
- Agencies valued being brought into RFPs or sales opportunities, especially where they had deep expertise.
- Lack of business development, collaboration, and purely transactional relationships based only on discounts or referral fees were seen as indicators of a "shallow partnership".

Focus on the whole piece of partnership, not just 'where's my lead?

Oliver Walker, Hookflash

Take us earlier into the sales process. We can bring in more real world cases... act a little more trustful to the customer because you're not the vendor itself.

Anian Leistner, Up Reply

Co-marketing

Agencies expressed negative sentiment about co-marketing that's driven by branding or feature-promotion—more megaphone than microphone.

Agencies value vendors collaborating on webinars, research, white papers, case studies, content, or solutions that reach new audiences, address real customer problems and boost authority.

I would prefer it to be real leads, warm leads, but it doesn't have to be. It could be the step or two before that and those come from meaningful co-marketing.

Johann Van Tonder, AWA Digital

Press into your partnerships by creating co-marketing opportunities to showcase shared expertise. Listen to what they know about their clients and the shifts in the market.

Anthony Wallace, praella

Discounts & referral fees

Compensation in terms of referral fees, commissions, and discounts matters, especially to smaller agency teams, but it's the last thing in the hierarchy of trust. Without trust and alignment at the lower levels, money incentives can't fix a broken relationship.

74% of agencies said these incentives are important, although this was more pronounced in small teams (77%) than in larger teams (55%).

- In interviews, agencies said they'd trade lower discounts and fees for stronger partnership fundamentals.
- Smaller agencies place higher emphasis on these discounts or fees - but all agencies say that no discount can replace trust in the vendor and product.

We are never going to recommend a tool even if the kickback is good, but it's not the best tool for the job. The thing that's going to sway us more than anything else is whether we believe that this tool will let us deliver exceptional service for these clients and therefore retain them for years.

Jon Crowder, Journey Further

We don't take kickbacks. We pass down any kind of 10% referral fee that might come along to the client. There have been exceptions to this in the past but it's the general rule now.

Ben Labay, Speero

Fees are the cherry on the cake, not the cake itself.

Stephen Pavlovich, Conversion.com

What's happening?

Top 5 shifts for agencies:

CRO	Experimentation & Growth
Tactical delivery	Strategic enablement
Marketing or Trading	Product & C-suite
Execution	XP ops, Org design & Program support
"We run tests"	"We drive business outcomes"

> *The biggest shift for us has been that our primary stakeholder is now product, and their scope is much broader. What's exciting is that, in a marketing-led world, our work was largely limited to CRO and optimisation. Essentially tweaking a product that had already been built. Now, we're able to influence the product itself, much earlier in the process.*
>
> **Mark Pybus**, Creative CX

> *Experimentation is not just UI layout testing. We're testing pricing models, product strategy, new markets - that's where this needs to head.*
>
> **Ben Labay**, Speero

As part of our interviews and survey data collection, we wanted to understand where agencies are evolving from and where they see their future. We asked a range of questions across the survey and interviews to surface both **internal agency evolution** and **shifts in client demand**, providing a broad view of how the experimentation landscape is changing.

How have clients changed?

- **Clients are maturing:** Many are building in-house experimentation programs, hiring senior specialists and gaining experience. They expect agencies to elevate their capabilities, instead of just doing execution work. **65% of agencies** agreed that clients are bringing more testing in-house.
- **Shift in focus:** Clients expect provable value (ROI) and greater velocity in testing - nearly **80% of agencies** agree. But we also found that ROI is about proving business value, not the odd test win. We can see this in the metrics that agencies are being measured by.
- **A shift to product teams:** Engagements are increasingly led by product-side stakeholders. This means experimentation becomes product-led and often more strategic. Product teams also bring different needs and expectations for what they want from agencies. Several interviewees confirmed that Heads of Product are now key stakeholders, especially in larger orgs. **60%** of agencies agree that their work is shifting to product teams.

> *A couple clients have graduated, so to speak, they brought testing in house with their team and we are doing more of that.*
>
> **Brian Schmitt**, Surefoot

> *In our operating areas a maturity has been reached that means budgets are focused on working in a data driven way. The trend now is that the optimisation work is moving into the product development teams.*
>
> **Marianne Stjernvall**, ConversionHub

How has sales strategy changed?

- **Sales cycles are longer and more consultative:** Agencies invest more in the early sales cycle—and beyond—through mini audits, maturity assessments, or workshops, to establish credibility and trust. Smaller project engagements are often used to get a foot in the door, prove value, win over clients and increase budgets.
- **Shift to higher-level buyers:** There's a clear trend toward selling to product, ops, and C-level executives.

> *There is much more focus on providing consultancy around how to improve a CRO program and to turn it from a cost centre to a growth engine.*
>
> **Sandip Amlani**, Conversion Punkt

> *We would get leads where someone would just drop into our contact form and be ready to sign a contract a week later. Now it's a process. People are coming in, but it's a discovery call, a pitch, another pitch call.*
>
> **Brian Schmitt**, Surefoot

> *I went from selling a process to selling how my service helps the marketing team be more efficient - and I now talk more to CEOs than analysts.*
>
> **Leonard Castro**, Conversion Lab Consulting

> *There's an element of this that coincides with our own timeline and our maturity in how we sell, but as more organisations demonstrate more mature needs it's becoming critical to have a better understanding of how to identify and talk to businesses in different stages of experimentation maturity rather than having blanket conversations like they're all early-stage.*
>
> **Greg Wendel**, Drumline Digital

What about messaging & positioning?

- **From "CRO" to "Experimentation" or "Growth":** This repositioning is near-universal and typically used to signal maturity and broader business relevance. Many agencies sell Growth or Experimentation Strategy.
- **More focus on business value and strategic enablement:** Messaging has shifted to emphasize ROI on growth, customer outcomes, and decision-making support.

> *We're making sure our messaging reflects the things Product teams care about. It's not just individual A/B test results but instead programme level metrics and achievements.*
>
> **Chris Gibbins**, Creative CX

> *We've positioned ourselves more as a fractional experimentation team rather than an agency, to highlight our ability to integrate into their teams and systems instead of making them adapt to us.*
>
> **Ryan Thomas**, Koalatative

> *Despite the debate, I still think it's fine for marketing teams to call it CRO, especially when they're focused on optimizing acquisition and conversion. But the moment you shift beyond landing pages and into product, that label starts to fall short. I prefer to call it experimentation, and I also agree with CXO (customer experience optimization), because it better reflects the bigger picture. It's about improving the entire user experience and optimizing our (digital) products, not just getting more conversions from a page. Framing it this way helps teams think more holistically and collaborate across silos.*
>
> **Ruben de Boer**, Online Dialogue

How has the approach changed?

- **Shift from tactical execution to strategic coaching/enablement:** Agencies now help internal teams build their own programs, rather than just executing tests.
- **Formalization and productization of delivery:** Structured processes, experimentation frameworks, and XP ops practices are increasingly common to help clients increase velocity and scale of testing.
- **Expanding reach:** The scope of agency work has gone from running website tests to working across teams, channels, and testing surfaces. Many now solve cross-silo business problems and change how companies run and measure testing.

> *You're not just paying us to build some A/B tests for you. You could do that cheaper than us. What you're paying us to do is give you an experimentation program that works and to drive that experimentation program so it performs.*
>
> **Jon Crowder**, Journey Further

> *We are helping to set up an experimentation system - from research and insight to dashboarding, test design, learning culture and scaling it across product and growth. It's changed from us being the people doing the work, to us helping them do the work themselves - and do it better.*
>
> **Mark Pybus**, Creative CX

What used to be an advantage, but is now table stakes?

- **A/B testing capabilities, tool integration, platform fluency:** These were once seen as advantages but today are just basic expectations.
- **Process and workflow:** What matters most is reliability, quality, and trust in delivery. Agencies are expected to run structured, repeatable, low-friction testing programs that consistently produce results.
- **Methodological and statistical literacy:** Agencies are now expected to bring scientific rigour to experimentation: good knowledge of sound Experiment Design, SRM Detection, MDE, Samples, Power, and Pre-Test Planning.

> *We used to educate clients on statistical confidence levels and significance thresholds - now they quiz us.*
>
> **Cathal Saunders**, Converted.co.uk

> *Experience with A/B testing tools and running experiments used to be our biggest value prop and now it's expected.*
>
> **Ashna Rana**, Studio Gro

Where is the greatest growth opportunity?

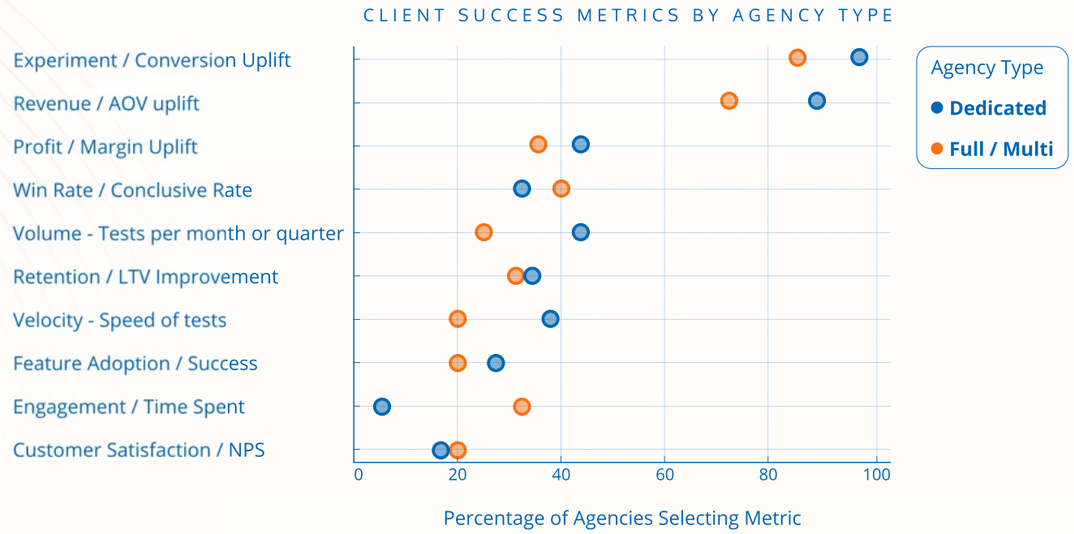
- **Product-led orgs:** One interesting effect of working with product teams is that agencies are getting closer to strategic testing: feature design, cross-channel & surface, product roadmaps, models & pricing - experiments that are impactful and transformational.
- **Enablement & capability building:** Helping clients run their own programs with Frameworks, XP Ops, Workflows, Test Repositories, Program or Center of Excellence design, Governance, Education, and Maturity Development. It's about building internal capability, not dependency. If done right, both grow.
- **Embedding experimentation:** Execution is just one part. The real opportunity is embedding experimentation consultancy deeper into teams, org structures, and decision-making processes - with more C-suite support & alignment.
- **AI & automation:** Moving beyond ad-hoc usage: AI-driven experimentation, personalization, agentic tech, and workflow integration will change the velocity and quality of experimentation work irrevocably. Automation frees more time for higher-order strategic thinking, increases test velocity and reduces costs.
- **Org-wide experimentation:** Product orgs are already testing across surfaces and channels - web, app, customer support, supply chain, services. Agencies see this area as an opportunity if they can position and sell their value at this level.
- **Higher org level and value:** Experimentation is increasingly being viewed as a strategic function. One opportunity here is in moving up the value chain - having board-level conversations about experimentation and growth, running cross-org strategy or change projects, becoming a fully trusted partner.

> *More than half our clients are product. That's where we are. That's where we're seeing the most growth.*
>
> **Mark Pybus**, Creative CX

> *The greatest opportunity for agencies is getting experimentation into the boardroom.*
>
> **Olf Koekoek**, ClickValue

> *Companies are getting more comfortable to embrace experimentation as a way to do product development in its own right. We're finally seeing a bit of a shift from product development being how much random stuff we can ship this month - to how we can actually move the needle on what our customers and our business cares about.*
>
> **Stephen Pavlovich**, Conversion.com

What test metrics are they using?



Two metrics topped the chart: Experiment/CR uplift and Revenue/AOV. Dedicated agencies show a greater mix of other metrics than multi-service agencies.

The research reveals a clear direction of travel:
Agencies that once competed on execution are now being asked to shape strategy, scale capability, and operate at the intersection of product, data, and decision-making.

"What was once a craft is becoming infrastructure."

The agencies that thrive will be the ones that embed deeply, think upstream, and turn experimentation from a service to a function that drives growth and competitive edge. The bar is rising. The value has moved. AI is changing everything. And the best agencies are already ahead of this.

What about services?

- Clients are now demanding **more than core execution capability**. Experimentation agencies, particularly the large ones, are offering many **adjacent and related services** at their clients.
- **Nearly all agencies** claim to offer ‘strategy’, but in practice this ranges from simply picking test ideas to providing high-level program design and consulting.
- **Most teams** offer 4-5 core experimentation services, typically:

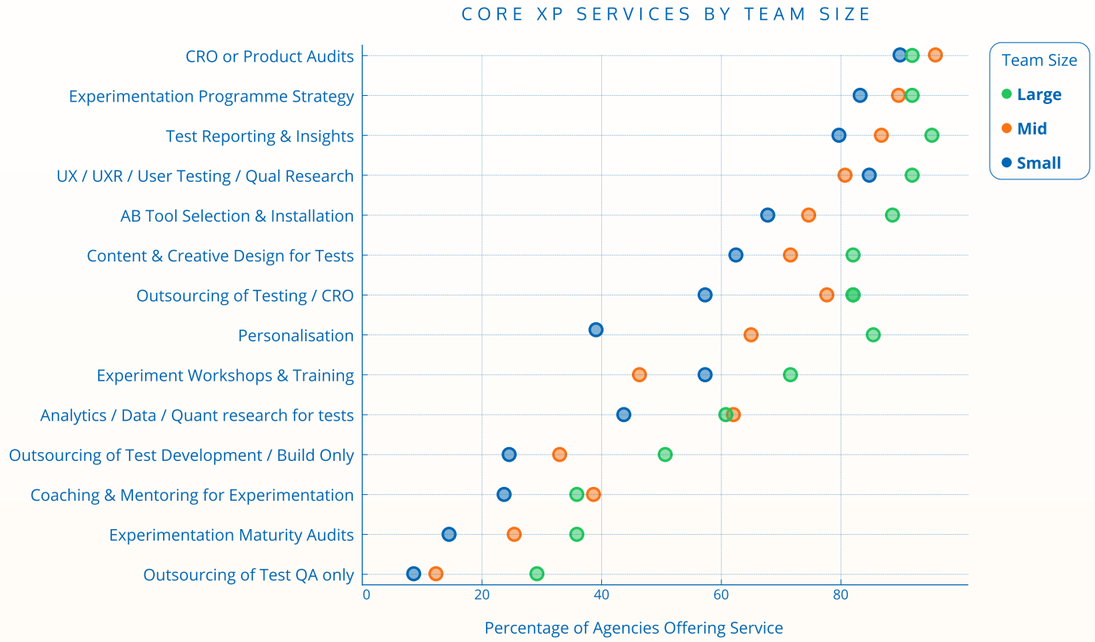
Audits	Running test programs	UXR or qual research for tests
Test reporting & insights	A/B tool selection & installation	

- **Larger agency teams** offer a much wider range of outsourcing options and services to clients, adding strategic services like:

XP program design & governance	Frameworks, process design, experimentation ops
Assessment - experimentation maturity audits	Coaching, training, workshops & education program

- Mid-large agencies not only cover the basics but over index in areas that drive higher value than execution focused work.
- **Large agencies** often integrate these offerings into a comprehensive program that embeds strategy, operations, training, and execution.
- **Smaller agencies** stay agile by having team members cover multiple functions, but this limits specialization. As an agency grows, it can hire specialists for dedicated roles, expanding its service depth.
- **Full or Multi service agencies** tend to fold experimentation into a broader set of services covering paid media, SEO, design & build, branding & creative design, digital strategy, social media, email & app design.
- **Enablement offerings** like coaching, education, workshops, and in-house training programs help agencies shift from ‘executors’ to trusted advisors, especially when clients are insourcing more work and building their own capabilities.

Services and team size



Here are the main service offerings for different sizes of agencies.

Substantially higher in large agencies:

39% in small vs **85%** in large
PERSONALIZATION

11% in small vs **33%** in large
QA SERVICES

25% in small vs **52%** in large
BUILD-ONLY OUTSOURCING

67% in small vs **88%** in large
A/B TOOL SELECTION & INSTALLATION

16% in small vs **37%** in large
MATURITY AUDITS

56% in small vs **70%** in large
WORKSHOPS & TRAINING

Agency maturity doesn’t make a huge difference to the service mix beyond increased QA and test outsourcing.

Average services offered

Service offering increases with team size. Larger teams are offering 25% more core experimentation services than the smallest agencies:

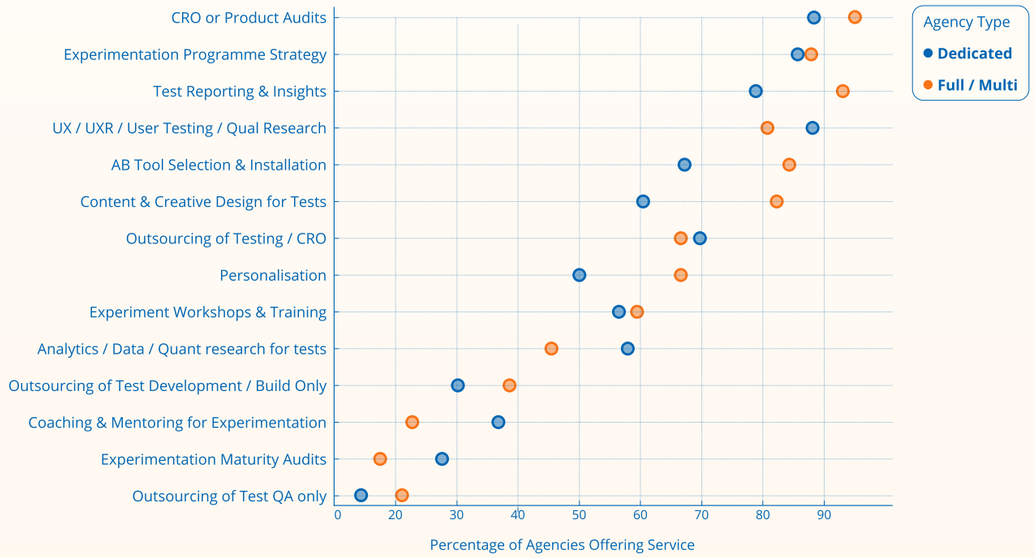
7.5	8.8	**9.6**
SMALL	MID	LARGE

Larger agencies also offer more of these:

Personalization	Different outsourcing models	Experiment workshops & training
Coaching & mentoring		Content & creative design for tests
A/B tool selection & installation		Experimentation maturity audits

Services by agency type

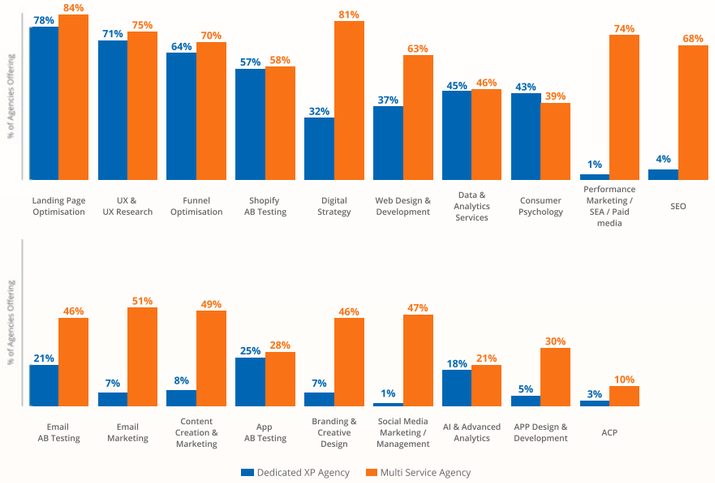
CORE XP SERVICES BY AGENCY TYPE



Dedicated agencies over index on UXR or qual research, analytics & data work for tests, coaching & mentoring and maturity audits.

Full/Multi service agencies over index on audits, test reporting & insights, A/B tool selection & installation, content and creative design and personalization.

OTHER SERVICES OFFERED BY AGENCY TYPE



Other services

- Nearly 30% offer app A/B testing; nearly 60% provide Shopify testing.
- Digital strategy, SEO, email, content, social media, web design & build, app design are mainly the preserve of full-service agencies.
- Experiment adjacent activities remain broadly similar across agency types.

Most agencies share the same services but the mix expands with headcount. Small outfits juggle all the tasks in hybrid roles; as agencies grow, we see that services become more specialized, roles separate, and the support offered to clients gets deeper and more strategic.

If you want to see where the market is heading, look at what the biggest and most embedded agencies are doing. They're not only executing; they're building capability, running programs, shaping strategy, and helping their clients mature.

> *As a consultancy, we aim to combine helping clients build out their own teams whilst simultaneously delivering the required service such as end-to-end optimisation. The bigger clients we work with want to build their own experimentation team/program that is integrated with product, for example, a Centre of Excellence model, and that is the sweet spot that we fill. When their challenges are really complicated and ambitious on the data, technical or scaling side of experimentation, this is where we come into our own.*
>
> **Chris Gibbins**, Creative CX

Experimentation trends

The data and interviews show a clear move away from tactical testing and towards strategic, product-led experimentation.

Agencies report that clients now expect faster cycles, higher ROI, and experimentation programs that go beyond shifting pixels. As in-housing is increasing, agencies are shifting to support teams with strategic guidance and operational maturity.

Key data points (% who **agree** or **strongly agree**):

97%
Trust is an important element in agency-vendor partnerships

92%
Lead gen activities are an important element

87%
Clients are bringing more experimentation in-house **(large agencies)**

62%
Clients are bringing more experimentation in-house **(all agencies)**

79%
Agencies handle first-line tech support for vendors

77%
Clients are expecting greater ROI and velocity from testing

81%
AI is now a key part of our experimentation workflow **(small agencies)**

70%
AI is now a key part of our experimentation workflow **(mid/large)**

70%
We focus more on strategic, less on tactical testing

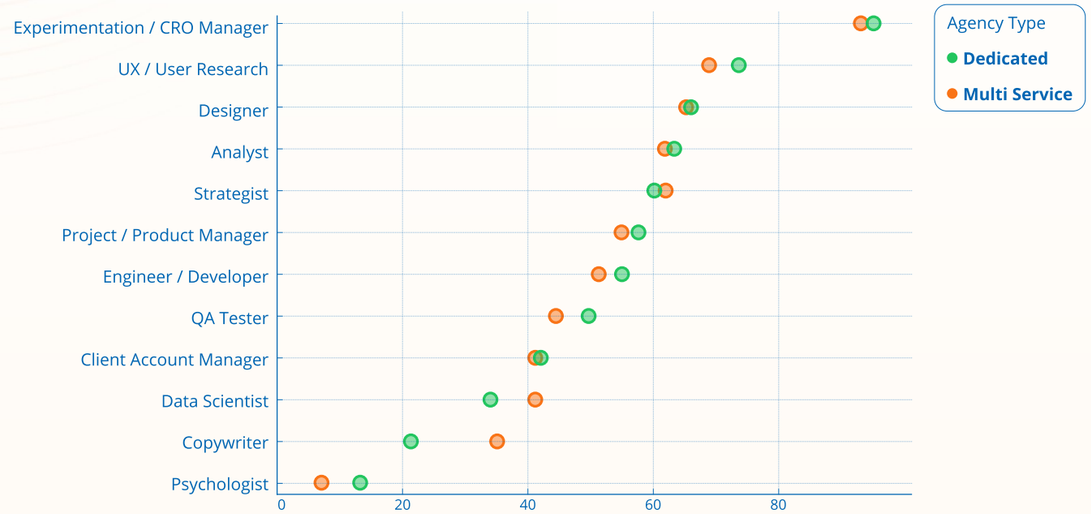
74%
Discounts and referral fees are an important element

18%
We do more server-side, app testing & cross-platform testing*

*Everyone talks about doing this more, but agencies disagree that this is happening broadly. Larger agencies at 25% might be doing more of this type of testing, but it represents a growth area, not a general trend.

Teams & roles: Generalists to specialists

Job roles by agency type

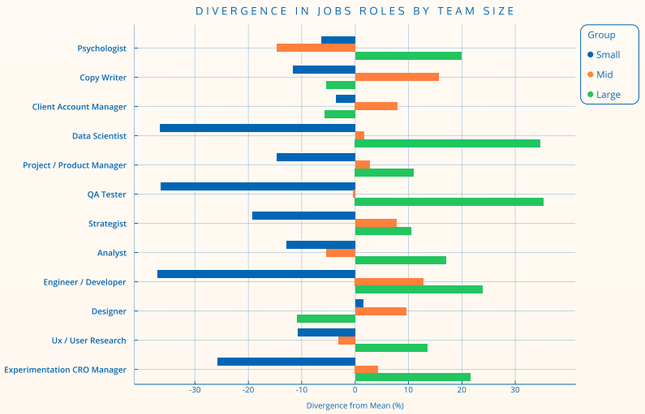


Dedicated & Multi/Full service agencies are almost identical in terms of the job roles they have in their experimentation teams.

Job roles by team size

Smaller teams lean on hybrid roles with individuals handling multiple job functions.
But as agencies scale, test volumes grow, and clients demand more, we see a clear shift: **specialist roles emerge.**

Across the dataset, larger agencies and those running higher test volumes consistently show more roles in **data science, engineering, QA, analytics, UX research, and strategy:**
Maturity plays a role, too. More mature agencies carry a deeper mix of analysts, strategists, and technical experts, reflecting their evolution.



AI & experimentation

76% of agencies said **AI is now a key part of their experimentation workflow**. Usage is highest at newer and less mature agencies.

- The top use case is **research & analysis:** UXR, raw data, transcripts, assets, reviews, feedback. Almost all agencies are using tools to help process video, audio, raw text, surveys, data into summaries, meta insights, or theme explorations.
- **Ideation** is also something most agencies are using LLMs for either on an ad-hoc basis ("give me ideas") or as part of tool integration (e.g., Airtable, experiment repositories).
- **Coding experiments** by AI isn't there (yet), at least not for anything but simple tweaks, but a skilled developer can now build tests way faster than before. Agencies are using the productivity benefits of AI assist during dev work, as well as automating simple experiments or coding variants for tests.
- **Hypothesis formation and experiment design** are also mentioned by agencies as an assist to building better experiments, picking the right metrics, and giving critical thinking support to teams.
- **Content and copy:** Teams are using LLMs to assist with content production (adverts, tests, pages, buttons, error messages, microcopy, variants). With recent improvements to image generation, they'll be doing more graphical content and assets in the future.
- **Communication & reporting:** Almost everyone is using LLMs for client communication, test reports, presentations, documents, emails, and creating graphics or diagrams.
- **Test analysis:** AI isn't good enough (yet) to do complex test analyses. However, automating the analysis of basic tests, where a human signs them off, is already possible. Simpler tests can be automated, leaving more time for deep analysis.
- Most agency usage is **ad-hoc** or **on the side** of an existing workflow. **Some agencies** have rewired their workflows to include LLM and image handling for specific tasks. **A few** agencies have built and tuned their own LLMs, or are running agentic technology to automate all or part of the experimentation process.

> *I use AI to speed up writing, summarising data, organising thoughts. I haven't seen a total replacement yet, but it's a game changer. I'm building the mindset across the team now.*
>
> **Eduardo Marconi,** AIM, Conversion Experts

> *In the next three years AI definitely presents an opportunity to move towards a more strategic, holistic approach to experimentation. Not just tactical testing but truly scaling with the help of AI*
>
> **Andra Baragan,** Ontrack Digital

Additional insights on AI usage patterns

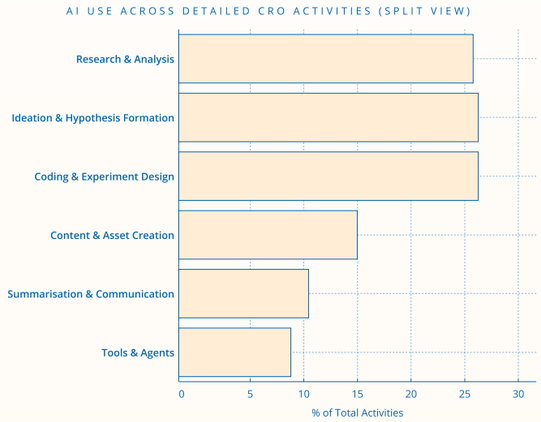
A separate survey from Conversionboost (76 respondents) adds some interesting texture to our findings on AI usage patterns.

Research & analysis tasks show up in over half of responses, but it's just one task theme among many when you break things down. That's why it ranks higher in mentions (Graph 2), but lower in task spread (Graph 1).

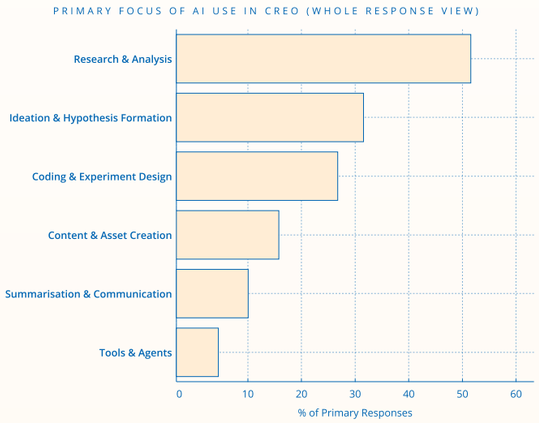
AI is commonly associated with research - it's the most regularly mentioned use case. But when you look at the distribution of tasks, AI is being used just as much for ideation, hypothesis, coding & experiment design and more...

HOW AI SUPPORTS CRO WORKFLOWS: ACTIVITY VS PRIMARY FOCUS

GRAPH 1



GRAPH 2



Left: This chart shows the distribution across all tasks used with AI.

Right: This chart shows the percentage of people who use it for this task.

A sample of 76 respondents from Conversionboost which aligns closely with our research.

As AI accelerates execution, it's also reshaping agency roles - less time spent on mechanics, more on higher order thinking, enablement, education and strategy.

Embedded enablement

This change is already visible in how agencies work. Many now work directly with multiple client teams, acting as enablers and advisors.

Trends (% agree)	Small	Mid	Large
Clients are expecting greater ROI and velocity	83	71	71
Clients are bringing more experimentation in-house	57	53	87
Experimentation is shifting towards product teams	58	53	54
We focus more on strategic, less on tactical testing	73	71	64
Services (%)	**Small**	**Mid**	**Large**
A/B Tool Selection & Installation	67	75	88
Workshops & Training	56	50	70
Coaching & Mentoring	23	39	36
Experimentation Maturity Audits	16	25	36
Analytics & Data Support	44	61	61

One of the clearest shifts in agency service models is balancing execution with **enablement**, especially amongst larger teams.

Survey data backs this up: **70% of agencies agree they now focus more on strategic experimentation, and less on tactical testing**. Agencies describe roles that look more like strategic consultancy, helping clients mature faster while maintaining high-quality delivery.

Nearly 80% **of agencies say their clients now expect greater ROI and testing velocity**. This has pushed many agencies to embed more deeply, improving process, team maturity, and internal decision-making infrastructure.

This isn't just about helping clients "do it themselves." **The smartest agencies are positioning themselves as trusted advisors inside the system**, not service vendors knocking at the door.

> *We see our growth coming more from external consultancy with in-house teams - giving them research, insights, and roadmap guidance.*
>
> **Garret Cunningham**, Columbus Global

Growth pathways

Growth is hard to benchmark. We rarely get reliable data on whether success comes from luck or strategy. So while we can't draw strict causal conclusions, a few clear patterns emerged:

Competency is the baseline

Expectations have outpaced capability. Several agency leaders admitted the reality is often worse than clients assume - there is still wide variability in the quality of work 'out there'. We often see case studies or presentations with concerning patterns:

- No hypothesis. Poor research. Bad stats. SRM. Conclusions not backed up - lots of reasons where it fails to meet basic expectations.
- Even properly run tests can be uninspiring, moving pixels but not shifting the needle.
- Overstated claims about experimentation expertise and results.

Agencies are improving. Some now grasp the essentials—samples, MDE, SRM, pre-test planning, hypothesis, connection with problem—but they're still the minority.

As the market matures, clients are savvier. What once 'passed' for competency is now not enough to get in the door. With more in-house teams hiring experienced experimentation staff, this quality bar will continue to rise.

Macroeconomics

Many regions and countries are seeing budget cuts, bringing work in-house and moving away from retainers to more flexible, project-based models. Yet other regions, like South and Central America, show growing demand for experimentation services. Meanwhile, execution work is becoming commoditized and industrialized - a trend AI will only accelerate. Clients will now have more choice, greater competition among agencies, and more leverage to demand measurable outcomes.

In this environment, not every agency will survive. Some will struggle to differentiate; others will pivot toward higher value strategic services or specialize in a niche. Some will productize their offerings, turning IP into scalable offerings to complement existing services.

Competency → Tactical → Strategic

One differentiation strategy for agencies is demonstrating to mature clients that they can run high-velocity and table-stakes execution work that's trustworthy and drives the right decisions. This may sound basic, but not every agency has a truly validated experimentation process. Too many are still chasing statistical ghosts. Your internal investment in education and core competence will be reflected in the output for clients.

Clients will eventually notice when they're just spinning their wheels, burning lots of rubber in the A/B testing car park while the **business goes nowhere**. Agencies shared stories of clients who "crashed and burned" through multiple prior agencies, often because those partners lacked essential experimentation skills.

The bigger shift is moving from pure execution to program enablement — teaching clients **"how to fish"** for themselves. Crucially, enablement doesn't mean **abandoning execution**; clients want both. Agencies taking this path find that execution becomes just **one part** of their overall value proposition.

One agency described their future success as building a "value ladder", blending execution with strategic advisory to grow the client's long-term maturity. Many see this hybrid approach as the most reliable growth route for the next 3 years. But it's not the only growth pathway.

AI and automation

Execution work isn't going away, but it's getting faster, cheaper, and more automated. The time and cost to perform research, analyze data, ideate, build, run, and analyze tests will keep dropping.

If you're an agency leader or founder, you should be ***over-indexing*** on AI investment. Those that ignore this shift risk competing with an increasingly commoditized or productized **lower end of the market**, driven by 'AI only' or 'low human' services. In the near future, you might find yourself pitching against much cheaper offerings. To win those deals, you'll have to show why your higher-priced, human-supported solution delivers superior results..

Remember, your clients are using AI too. If you don't invest in your team's AI skills, you'll fall behind both faster in-house teams and AI-enhanced competitors. Clients already demand faster ROI, higher testing velocity, and more efficiency and AI is only raising those expectations.

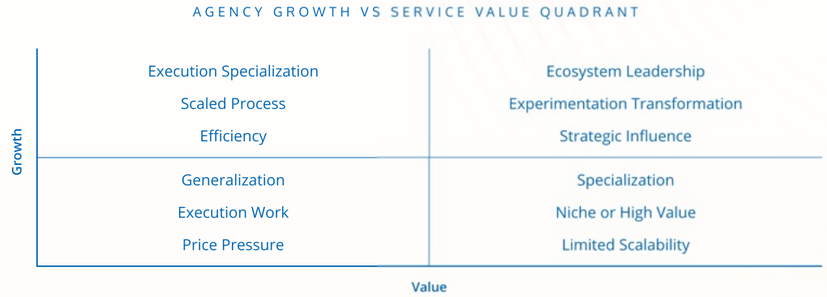
In the near future, there will be three types of agencies pitching:

1. **Primarily AI-driven**
   Offering mostly AI-driven services or AI-powered products
2. **Hybrid AI + human**
   Combining AI with skilled people to deliver better outcomes
3. **Low or No AI**
   Those who haven't embraced AI at all

When cost and outcomes are the two main drivers—as they always are—that third group will be the least attractive. They'll be more expensive than AI-only providers, but without the speed, insight, or efficiency that comes from using AI well.

To stay competitive, agencies need to position themselves firmly in the second group: AI-augmented, outcome-obsessed, and demonstrably more effective. Some larger agencies will be able to offer both AI-driven and hybrid services, covering a wider range of market and client needs.

Growth quadrant



Here are some of our pathways. Larger agencies can often span multiple parts of this diagram:

1. **Core Competency**
   Rock solid experimentation fundamentals still set you apart. Clients can't tell from your pitch deck how trustworthy your testing is, but sloppy stats or process will make a big difference to results and retention. If you ignore these basics, clients won't get what they are looking for and won't stick around.

2. **The value ladder**
   Supplementing execution with enablement services, program design, governance, XP ops, education, skills transfer. In short, moving from "We run tests" to "We transform teams, growth, outcomes".

3. **Vertical or niche specialization**
   You can also grow by specializing in a market vertical (ecom, fintech, SaaS) or a service area (personalization). There's also growth through specializing in a platform ecosystem (Shopify, Mobile Apps). In every case, you're coupling strong testing expertise with deep experience in that niche.

4. **Productization or commoditization**
   Agencies are already building 'productized' offerings: methodologies, playbooks, documents, ops models, frameworks, creating products or artifacts, sharing research and using this as a way to get introduced to clients and build authority.
   Some agencies are leaning into automation or semi-productized services to scale their delivery and differentiate from pure consultancies. We already see this in terms of outsourced QA and build services.
   We also see examples of early-stage 'AI / CRO' tools. These automated products and services will now become competitors:

   "Our tool does everything that an $8000 audit would cost you."

5. **Geographic**
   Remote work has removed many geographic barriers, enabling agencies to serve clients worldwide (over 60% do). Expanding into new regions still requires an understanding of local pricing, regulatory systems, client needs, and maturity levels.

6. **AI services & products**
   I expect some agencies to build AI-powered experimentation tools as products - either as an entry-level service to their human-powered service, or to scale a product for market reach.

Agency scorecard

Area	✅	❌
Vendor Trust & Fit	Choose partners who don't compete with you, whose product is solid, and who act in your best interests.	Work with vendors that minimize or bypass your role.
Product Visibility	Demand open roadmaps, early feature updates, and clear release comms	Accept lack of updates or changes that impact your clients without warning.
Agency Positioning	Position around business outcomes and product growth, not only "CRO services".	Call yourself a CRO agency without explaining your unique strategic value.
Strategic Value	Move from tactical testing to strategic advisory, program design, and cultural leadership.	Stay stuck running isolated A/B tests with no tie to wider strategy.
Client Maturity	Help clients build experimentation skills, governance, and internal maturity.	Just execute tests and ignore your role in leveling up your client.
Agency Maturity	Continually invest in your own team's skills, tools, processes, and statistical literacy.	Neglect internal capability - clients will notice.
Priority Support	Work with vendors who offer priority support for agencies - direct, fast-track expertise.	Don't put up with slow or scripted systems that delay critical client problems.
Vendor Relationships	Work with vendors who include you in product feedback, planning, and co-development.	Don't tolerate being sidelined with no voice, no roadmap access, no influence.
Partner Selection	Choose based on strategic fit and values, not logos or incentives. Reassess regularly to ensure continued value and alignment.	Pick partners just because of name recognition or discounts. Assume the vendor from three years ago still fits.
Aligned Incentives	Look for support that helps you grow, not commission or a badge.	Chase discounts while missing the bigger opportunity for growth.

Agency scorecard

Area	✅	❌
Co-Marketing	Collaborate on content, events, and workshops that solve real client problems and build joint authority.	Treat co-marketing as a box-tick webinar or vendor PR moment.
Business Outcomes	Measure and communicate your impact on client business level OKRs and KPIs.	Focus only on test metrics, without linking to real business impact.
AI & Workflow	Adopt and integrate AI into your process for productivity, automation and agentic tech.	Ignore how AI is transforming workflows and get left behind by clients and competitors.

Agencies aren't standing still. The best are evolving, layering strategy on top of execution, combining speed with core experiment skills, and finding new ways to deliver value across platforms, markets, and teams. But they can't do it alone.

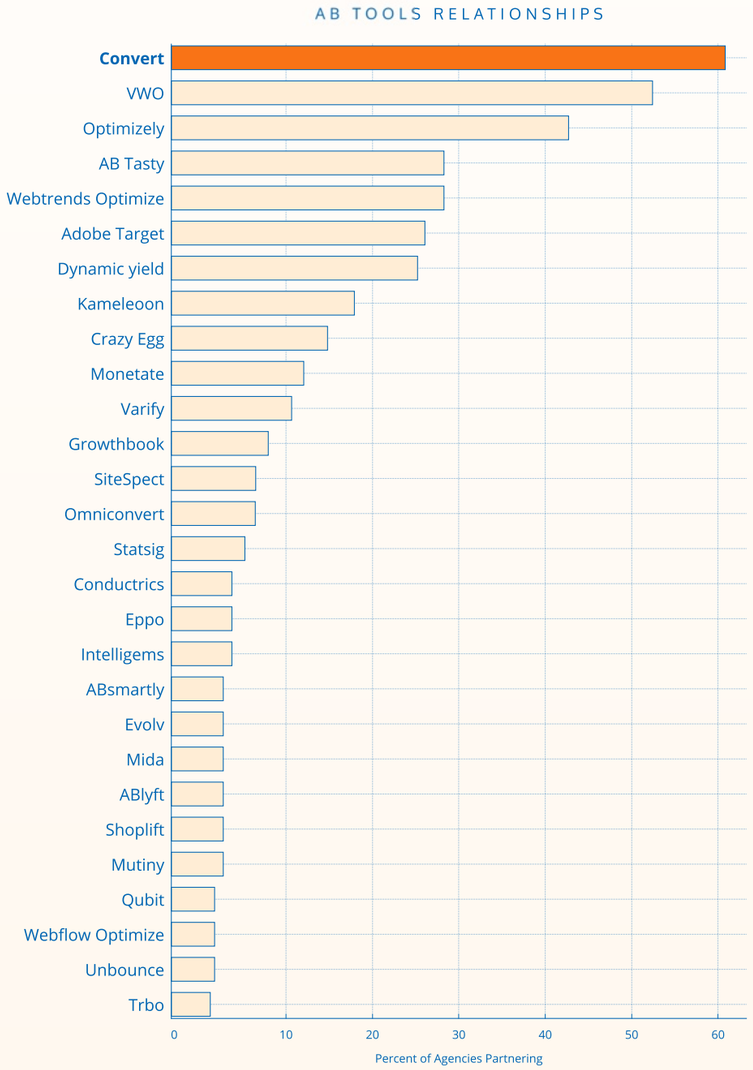
As the landscape shifts and clients raise their expectations, the next phase of growth and maturity will depend on internal capability, but also the **strength of your partnerships**. That means the role of vendors—and how they show up for agencies—is more critical than ever.

Let's turn the spotlight now onto the vendor side of the ecosystem.

The Vendor Landscape

The experimentation landscape is more complex than ever – most agencies juggle multiple A/B testing platforms plus a stack of analytics and insight tools.

Top A/B testing tools



The table below shows the top tools in our survey. Note: the research was shared widely by Convert, so this data does not reflect market share.

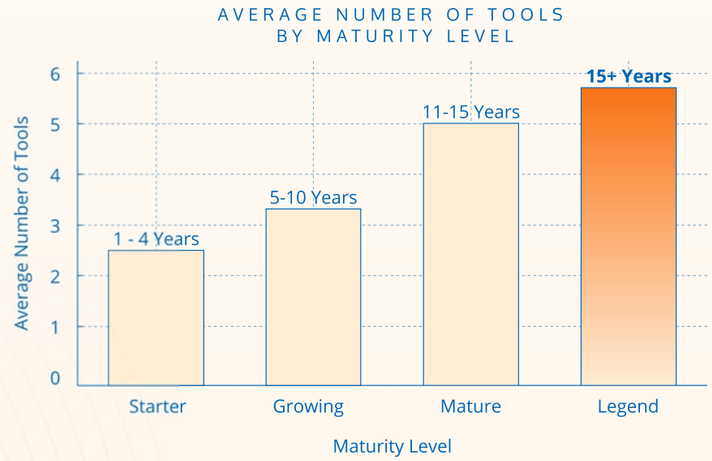
Top 5	Team Size	Maturity	Test Volume
Convert 61%	**Mid-sized teams:** Highest usage (73%). Small and large teams lower (~53–57%).	**More mature agencies:** High usage (60–70%). Starters much lower (38%).	**21–30 tests/month:** Very high adoption (80%+). Other volumes ~50%.
VWO 51%	**Small & Large:** Strong in small (54%) and large (66%). Mid-sized: Only 31% use.	**All maturities:** Even usage (~50–60% across all).	**Low/High volume:** Good uptake at 1–10 tests and >30 tests. Mid-volume (11–30): Significantly lower.
Optimizely 42%	**Large teams:** 73% use (far more than mid at 21% or small at 40%).	**Very experienced:** 66% usage at 11–15 years in business. Only 25% for 1-4 years and 33% for 5-10.	**Low & High volume:** Peaks at 1–10 tests (46%) and >40 tests (42%). Mid-range volumes less.
WTO 27%	**Large teams:** 47% usage. Small/Mid: ~22% each (much lower).	**Mature agencies:** (11–15 yrs): ~50% use. Younger agencies (1–10 yrs) only 15–25%.	**Mid/High volumes:** Higher adoption (40%+). Low volume: ~20% use.
AB Tasty 27%	**Growth with team size:** ~20% small, 30% mid, 40% large.	**Growth with maturity:** 13% of starters (1–4 yrs) up to 38% of mature agencies (>10 yrs).	**All volumes:** Steady usage across low to high test volumes.

Small, Mid, Large = 1-5, 6-15, 16+. Test volumes 1-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, >40
Maturity = Starter (1-4), Growing (5-10), Mature (>10 years)

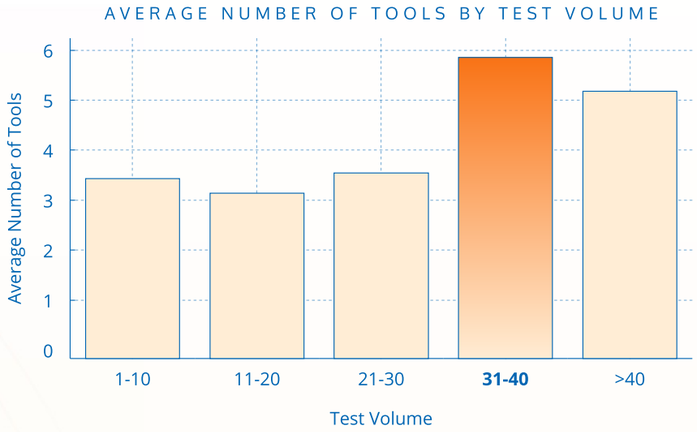
Tools grow as you grow

The more tests you do, the more experienced you are, the larger your team - the more tools you partner with and support.

Tools grow with maturity

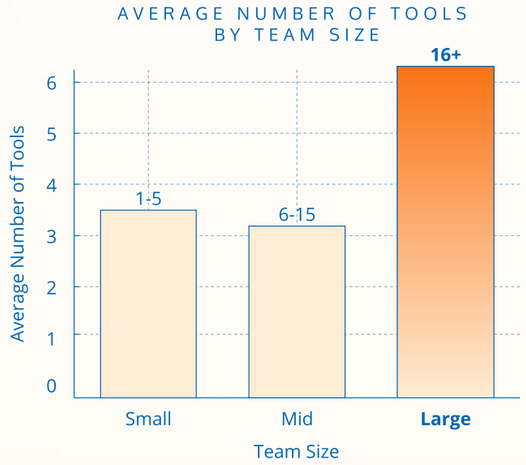


Tools grow with testing volume



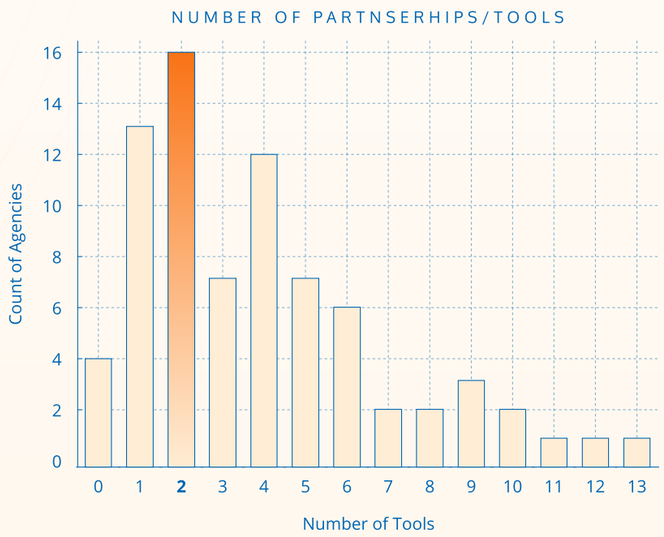
Tools grow with team size

There's a dip with mid-sized agencies. Large teams (16+ people) support nearly double the number of tools.



Tool distribution

Most agencies support one, two, or four main tools.



Other tools

We have a complete range of analytics, behavioral, survey, polling, and insight tools.

1. Google Analytics (75%)

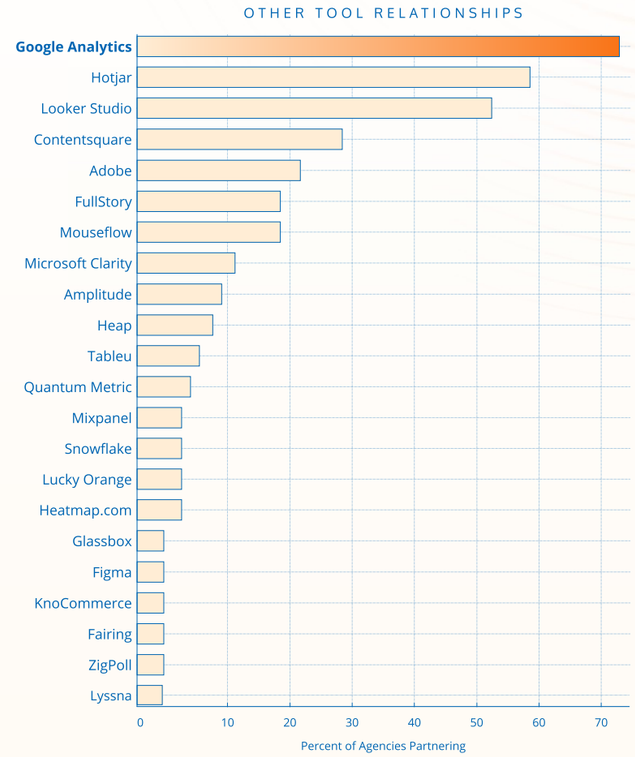
- Universally adopted: GA is the main analytics tool agencies work with, showing only a slight dip for mid-sized agencies.

2. Hotjar (59%)

- Usage increases with agency size - it's more popular with larger teams.
- Only 12.5% of all starter (1-4 years) agencies use Hotjar. Also more popular with higher volume testers (>40 tests a month).

3. Looker Studio (53%)

- Used more by smaller teams (55%) than larger teams (46%).
- Mature agencies (>10 years) use it much less (~30%).
- Adoption much higher with high volume testers (>40 tests).



4. Contentsquare (28.9%)

- 3x more likely to be used by large agencies (66%) than small or mid-sized agencies (17-21%).
- More likely to be used by mature agencies (40% of agencies with >10 years experience) than starter agencies (12.5%) with 1-4 years experience.
- Adoption much higher with high volume testers (>30 tests monthly).

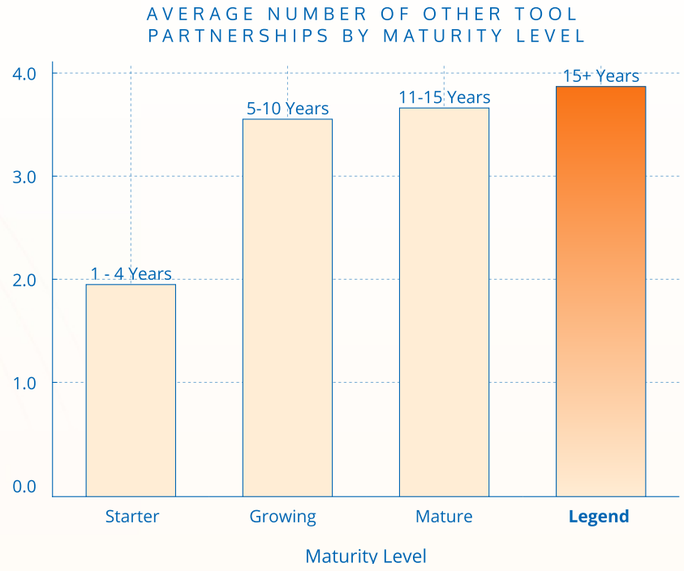
5. Adobe Analytics (21.1%)

- Used by over 2x as many large agencies as mid or small (40% vs 17%).
- Usage increases with maturity level - from 0% for starters (1-4) all the way to 30%+ for mature and legend agencies (>10 years).
- Highest usage is amongst the 11-20 a month test group.

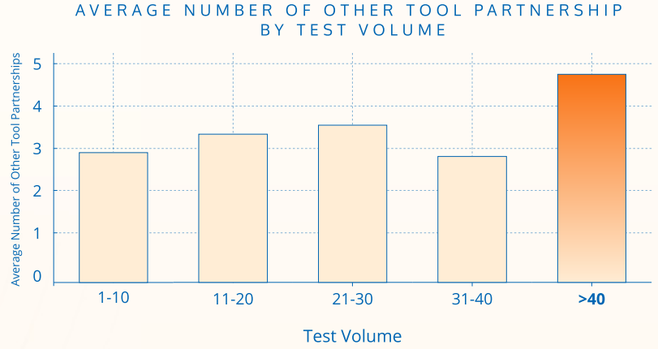
Adjacent tools grow too

The same pattern applies to insight and analytics tools, just not as pronounced:

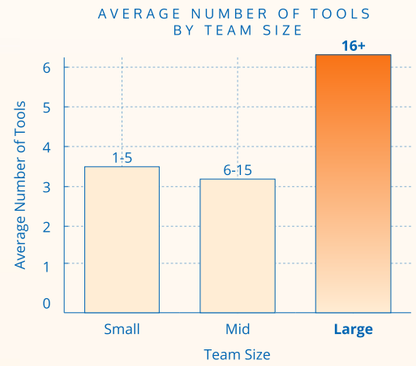
Tools grow with maturity



Tools grow with test volume



Tools grow with team size



There's a clear pattern here with the entire toolkit: growing means you'll be using an increasing number of tools, both A/B testing vendors and experiment-adjacent products.

The 2025 vendor challenge

These are the major pain points that came out:

Trust & relationship

- **Vendor trust breakers** - pricing issues, competing with agencies or unreliable products
- **Lead generation matters** - but only when it's aligned and authentic
- **Co-marketing can work well** - but it's usually performative

Market shifts

- **Cost pressure is real** - macroeconomic headwinds are squeezing revenue & margins
- **Clients are changing** - more in-housing, faster ROI expectations, power moving to product teams
- **Agencies are evolving** - still executing but increasingly strategic, AI savvy and driving enablement at clients
- **Test ops are commoditised** - value has shifted upstream to strategy & enablement
- **The partner landscape is crowded -** more choice, less patience
- **AI will reshape the entire ecosystem -** clients, agencies and vendors alike

Product & support

- **Agencies routinely act as first-line support** - without resourcing or recognition
- **Agency expertise isn't recognised** - when handling support, they're treated like a newbie
- **Support is slow, under-resourced, scripted, or routed poorly -** a major source of friction
- **New features ship whilst core functionality atrophies -** innovation without evolution
- **Onboarding support matters -** but mostly for lower volume, less mature, smaller teams
- **Developer documentation > Training -** especially for high volume testers
- **Roadmap influence & feedback loops are poor -** unless you're a large or high volume agency
- **AI & Automation raises the bar -** a rich API and MCP are now the new entry level

Growth

- **Discounts help -** but they're the cherry, not the cake (less important to larger agencies too)
- **Incentives lack alignment across these areas -** lead gen, business development, co-marketing, onboarding, rescue & retention

Earning trust as a vendor

For the foundations of vendor trust, please see the Agency section of this report, “Trust Is Everything”. We’ll now look at the gaps - and how vendors can close them to build stronger partnerships.

Why Vendor Partnerships Aren’t Keeping Up

Most current vendor-agency partnership programs were designed for an era when agencies were execution shops and resellers of SaaS tools. Today’s agencies have a different role.

Leading agencies are now working across organizational silos, driving capability and enablement, aligning with leadership, building experimentation into the fabric of how their clients operate and grow. That shift means agencies are helping clients adopt, scale and govern experimentation across teams. The vendor–agency–client dynamic is changing.

Agencies aren’t looking for “Gold Partner Badges” or quarterly calls to ask if they’ve “got any leads”. They want product partnerships that, like you, help them win and retain clients, scale reach and deliver real outcomes. But most vendors still treat agencies like sales channels. They assume they just need training, want discounts and should deliver leads.

Theme	What They Need
Support	End slow, scripted, trust-destroying support for agencies.
Enablement & Org integration	Stop treating agencies as ‘tool installers’ - many are enablers of client experimentation capability at scale.
Growth	Start **collaborating with agencies** on onboarding, activation, retention, integrations & product roadmap.
AI-Driven Shifts	Research how agencies and clients are **using AI and what they need**, before you add another AI ‘feature’ to your product.
Product Shift	Agencies still support marketing, trading & growth teams - but now work with **product orgs and leaders** too.
In-Housing	Stop treating agency partners as sales channels - they’re a critical route to help your product deploy & scale.
Testing Efficiency	Automation, API access, core features that are fast, easy, and reliable - all power efficiency of the flywheel.

Agencies don’t want a badge for their website - they want recognition and influence. They don’t want another webinar about features - they want collaboration. They don’t want a ‘program’ - they want to be part of an ecosystem.

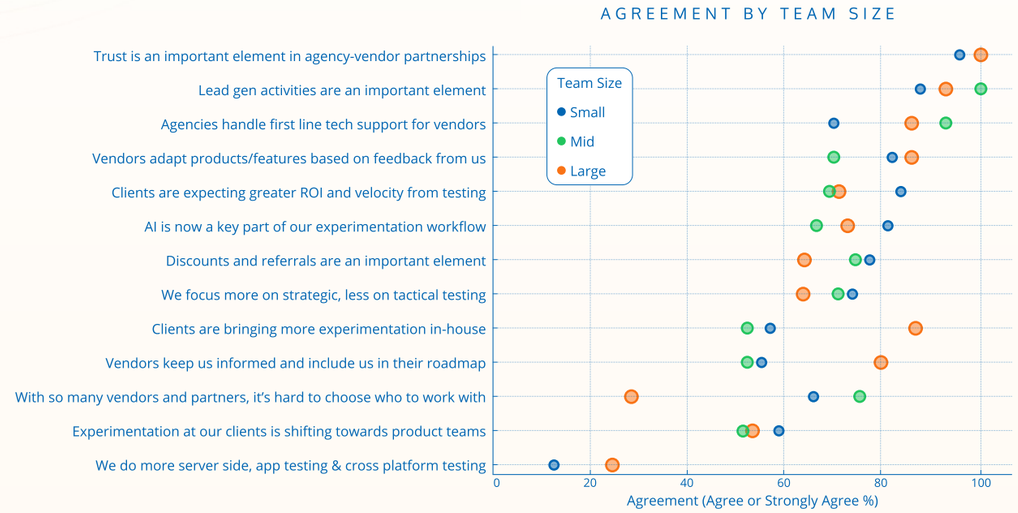
For most vendors, we discovered the gulf between expectation and reality was wide. What follows is **a playbook for closing these gaps**.

One size doesn’t fit all

Not all agencies want the same things from a vendor. Each one operates differently, and their needs shift radically based on model, size, maturity, and test volume.

Yet most partner programs **treat them as if they’re all the same**.

What small, mid, and large teams need



Small teams (1–5 people)

- **Most incentive-sensitive:** Discounted pricing is a higher priority
- **They need help:** Onboarding support, training, and workshops are much higher priorities than for other agencies.
- **Less interested** than other agencies in co-marketing
- **Lots of vendor choices:** 66% say it’s hard to choose who to work with
- **More likely to pass on support:** Cover fewer first-line queries
- **Not as informed:** Less likely to be kept informed and included in the roadmap

Mid-sized teams (6–15 people)

- **Sit in a transition zone:** Balancing delivery with growing organizational support
- **Need less help:** Onboarding, training & workshops a lower priority
- **Still value discounts:** Even more than small teams, but expect stronger support, co-marketing, and roadmap influence as they grow.

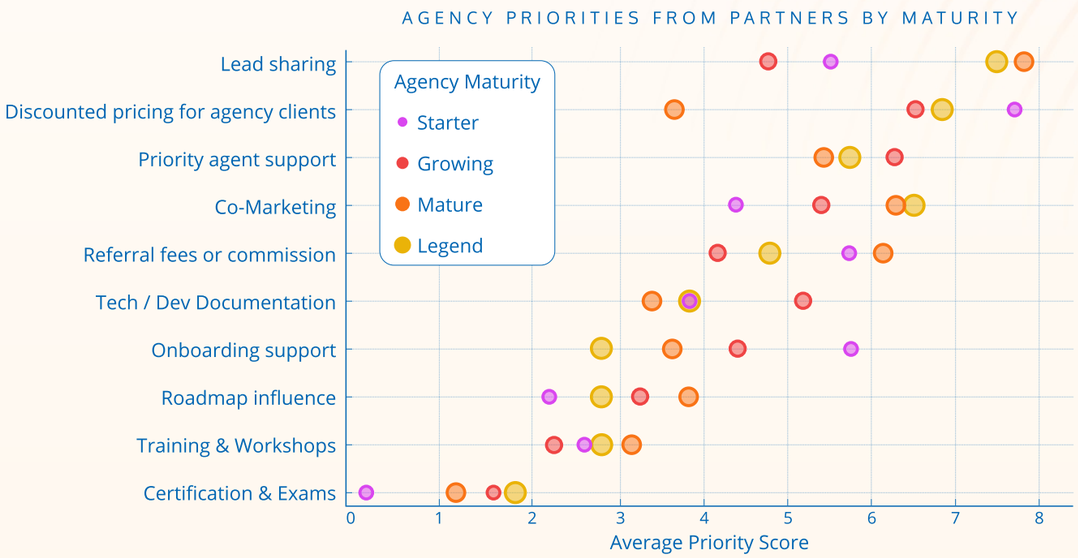
- **Overwhelmed by vendor choices:** 77% say it's hard to choose who to work with
- **High self-reliance:** More likely than any other group to field first-line support

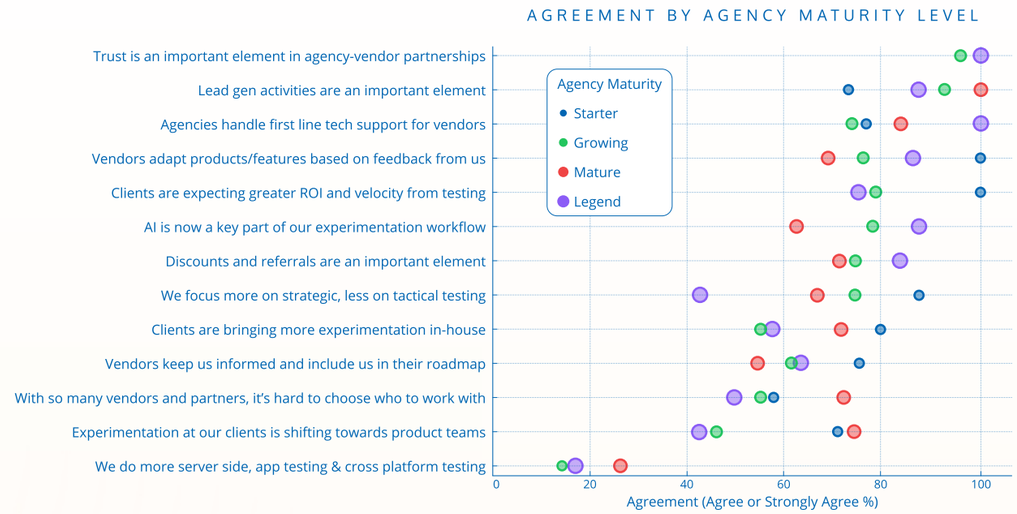
Large teams (16+ people)

- **Least incentive-sensitive:** Discounted pricing and kickbacks are a much lower priority for large agencies, lead sharing is highest priority.
- **They prioritize** co-marketing, lead sharing, priority support, and good documentation over training
- **Report the highest shift** to in-housing and a high score for seeing a shift to product
- **Know who they want to work with**
  Only 29% (versus 77% of mid-sized agencies) say they find it hard to choose.
- Unlike small and mid-sized agencies, 80% feel included in roadmaps and 85% say vendors adapt their products based on feedback (the highest scores)
- **Still value discounts**, but much less than other agencies

What about maturity?

This isn't just about team size — it's about agency experience. The data shows that newer agencies behave differently from those with 10+ years in the field, especially in how they engage with vendors, adopt AI, and prioritize features, support, and incentives.





Starter agencies (1–4 years)

- **Most price sensitive:** Score highest for discounted pricing and referral fees
- **Are being heard:** Nearly 100% say vendors adapt products based on their feedback
- **Prioritise support:** Score highest for onboarding help and priority tech support
- **High pressure:** 100% say clients expect greater ROI and testing velocity
- **Early adopters of AI:** 88% already using AI in their experimentation workflows
- **Low roadmap inclusion:** Only 57% say they're kept informed or involved in vendor roadmaps
- **Hard to evaluate vendors:** 75% say it's hard to choose who to work with

Mature agencies (10+ years)

- **More strategic priorities:** Score highest for lead gen, co-marketing and roadmap influence.
- **Lower demand for help:** Score significantly lower for onboarding, training and certification.
- **Still value discounts:** Score highly for discounted pricing - but lower than starters
- **Support themselves:** 92% say they handle first-line support for vendors
- **Use AI, but more cautiously:** 75% say AI is part of their workflow
- **More influence expected:** Score higher than starters for roadmap inclusion (61%) and feature influence (75%)
- **Some still struggle with vendor evaluation:** 59% say it's hard to choose - less than starters

What about test volumes?

The number of tests an agency runs doesn't map neatly to team size or maturity, but:

- **Roadmap influence is higher** for high-volume agencies.
- **Pricing and onboarding** are bigger priorities for low-volume teams.
- **Training demand** drops as volume rises.
- **High-volume agencies say they field more support:** 58% for 1-10 tests/month, jumping to 93% for those running more than 40.

These three dimensions reveal one thing clearly: **agencies are not a uniform partner type**. Their needs shift depending on their growth stage, how they operate and what pressures they face. Vendors often end up investing in the wrong things as a result. In the next section, we explore these misaligned priorities – the areas where vendor focus doesn't line up with what agencies actually need.

Misaligned priorities

Despite all the data, interviews, and evolving agency roles, many vendors are still investing effort in the wrong places. Before shipping anything new, vendors must first validate that these work in the real world:

A/B Features That Must Work

Experiment Setup	Randomization
Data Collection	Targeting / Triggering
Growth	Reporting

Many vendors have at least one gap in these critical areas. When core features have problems, clients lose trust and churn. Agencies are using research and feedback to improve their clients' products – vendors should do the same. Across support, co-marketing, sales, and incentives, we found similar mismatches. Here are the biggest:

Assumption	What Agencies Really Want
More training videos, guides, courses, certifications, or badges	Up-to-date documentation, roadmap influence, and, for smaller or newer agencies, onboarding support
Adding AI sidebar features	Built-in AI tech, a rich and fully featured API, Model Context Protocol or similar for agents
Continuously launching features to stand out in the marketplace	The six core above working without friction, plus human-friendly visual editors for less-technical teams
Co-marketing focused on brand and feature awareness	Content that solves real client problems, building authority and reach for both parties
Reliance on automated, low-touch support (bots, templates, scripts)	Fast, expert help that respects their expertise and urgency; agencies contact support only when they're truly stuck
Top-down sales model drives partner success	Co-owning client onboarding, activation, retention, BD (new integrations/markets), and shared lead gen
Discounts and referral fees = loyalty	Money matters only when trust is there
'Have you brought us any leads?'	To be involved earlier and to collaborate on opportunities that match shared positioning, expertise and markets; lead gen works only when aligned and reciprocal.

> *Try not to just sell for your own sake. Aim to build a relationship and give value outside of 'here's our pitch deck' or 'see our fancy partner event'. Agencies and consultants need strong vendor partners that also go the extra mile. When they do that everybody wins.*
>
> **Nils Koppelman**, 3tech

Support expectation vs. reality

Across interviews and surveys, support quality emerged as the number-one complaint. Agencies say vendors don't understand their business model, specialisms or experience - which means they miss these two things:

- That agencies usually have **domain expertise** with tools
- They'll usually only ask for help **when they're really stuck**.

Some vendors are getting this right. Agencies highlighted those who provide dedicated support channels or direct access to engineering teams.

Agencies handle first-line support

70%	93%	84%	75%	73%	92%
SMALL (1-5)	MID (6-15)	LARGE (16+)	STARTER (1-4)	GROWING (5-10)	MATURE (>10)

Table: % who agree/strongly agree

79% of all agencies (93% of mid-sized teams) say they field support queries for vendors. Yet vendor support flows are still designed for end-users.

Scripted, low-context support fails agencies

Agencies describe layers of scripted replies, templates, stock answers, and repeated explanations, often passed between teams while urgent problems dragged on. They're frequently treated like beginners, even when they have more experience with the tool than the support rep. This erodes trust and slows resolution. Several agencies mentioned it taking over a week - with more than one vendor - to finally get to the right person.

> *The vendor's support shouldn't try to explain to me 'how an AB-test works'.*
>
> **Marianne Stjernvall**, ConversionHub

No priority pathway or fast escalation

Agencies say they often can't escalate urgent issues, even when the client relationship is on the line. Most want a dedicated support channel or rep, to bypass layers, get issues escalated, and reach the person with expertise to fix it.

Lack of ownership & accountability

Tickets get auto-closed. Issues loop between teams. Updates disappear. "Someone is looking into it". Agencies are often left guessing about progress, while their clients are kept hanging. The breakdown in communication and visibility leads to tension and impacts trust.

Product issues are deflected

Core functionality must work, especially if it's part of every build. Remove friction here, and the flywheel goes faster. Multiple teams reported unresolved issues with areas like QA, as well as bugs, gaps in documentation and UI problems. In many cases, agencies built workarounds or their own front-ends for software when the vendor failed to meet their needs.

Multi-client workflows

Agencies juggle multiple clients, stacks, and priorities. But most vendor support assumes a single user with one license. Agencies need context-aware help that recognizes their domain expertise and the three-way trust relationship.

Agencies don't want white glove treatment. They want support that reflects their expertise, protects your shared reputation, and acknowledges what's at stake: When support fails, the client's trust in both vendor and agency is broken – not only a service failure, but a lost growth opportunity.

AI & automation: The SaaS vendor reckoning

AI is already reshaping how agencies research, build, analyze and communicate experiment results. Some agencies are already using in-house machine learning, LLMs or agentic tools to manage parts of the workflow.

Automation is increasing

Continued automation of the experimentation lifecycle - from research and ideation to experiment design, build, run, monitoring, analysis and reporting - will increase demand for **integration over interface.**

Abstraction of the UI

UIs for menial tasks are already beginning to disappear from SaaS products – there will be a reduction in this type of task work. Experiment tools will start to shift from UI driven interfaces to also acting as **experimentation platform services**. Acquisitions by wider ecosystem vendors (analytics, devops, automation) may continue to feature.

Building for agents

Table stakes will be a robust, well-documented and feature-rich API. In the near future, you'll need to build for agents too. AI agents will need to **fetch, submit, modify and monitor** experiment data. That'll require detailed, structured access to test setups, logic and data. Integrating with Model Context Protocols (MCP) or equivalent will soon be a baseline.

AI and your UI

If the point-and-click interface is used less, how does your tool stay visible and valuable? We don't know the answer, but this report shows the fundamentals—core features, reliability, trustworthiness, integrations, great support—will matter more than ever.

Bottom line: AI will change how tools are used. Vendors who provide for integration, automation, and agents will become more embedded in client workflows.

You grow, we grow: The new contract

What strong partnerships share

- Incentives for the entire lifecycle, not just deals
- Collaboration across the lifecycle: BD, leads, onboarding, activation, retention
- Co-marketing that builds credibility, solves customer problems, opens markets
- Visibility on releases, features, bugs and roadmap
- Direct feedback loops into product roadmap
- Working with agency expertise to build new integrations or tech
- Partner models tailored to agency size, business model & priorities

> *The best partnerships aren't built on logos. They're built on shared outcomes.*
>
> **Craig Sullivan**

Aligned full lifecycle incentives

> *Everyone offers a year-one discount. No one rewards us if that client renews!*
>
> **Chris Gibbins**, Creative CX

Most incentive models stop at the referral - meaning agencies' post-sale efforts go unrewarded. Here are some **good examples**, all from **non A/B testing** vendors:

- **Paid onboarding:** Picking agencies to help with setup, configuration or training - which often led to deeper, ongoing work.
- **Rescue support:** Vendors involving agencies to help re-engage inactive accounts or those with low usage that hadn't completed onboarding or run their first test. Signs that clients aren't going to renew are already there in the metrics, several months before the contract ends.
- **Renewal or volume bonuses:** Aligned incentives for increasing testing volume or contracts being renewed.

There are five distinct stages where value is created - **selection, onboarding, first test, usage and renewal**. Incentives should be aligned with all of these stages. Notably, no agency we interviewed could name any A/B testing vendor that rewards beyond Year 1.

Our take: incentive alignment - common in the broader SaaS ecosystem - isn't showing up yet.

Collaboration & new markets

70-90% of agencies, depending on type, help clients pick and install A/B tools. Many large agencies have detailed tool comparison docs – so if they're frequently asking you for pricing or product info, it's likely because they're advising a client. Be responsive and helpful; get involved earlier.

Another winning strategy is to collaborate across the entire sales cycle. Dealing with compliance or regulated markets. Co-designing new products or integrations that unlock markets.

We had two great examples of this: In collaboration with agencies that specialized in a specific niche or vertical, they co-designed new integrations or features. These agencies had expertise, reach or specialist knowledge that unlocked new markets for the vendor..

Co-marketing

The successful examples we heard share all these traits:

- They tackled real experimentation or client problems
- They were co-developed with agencies
- They built credibility & reach for both parties

Events that worked well included in-person or online sessions that were focused on pain points, problems, or addressed new markets. We had great examples of artifacts too - collaborative research papers, studies, frameworks, playbooks and strategy guides.

The best co-marketing doesn't feel like branding - it feels like problem-solving for your audience in public.

Visibility

Agencies need operational visibility. What's shipping, what's changing and when. This includes everything from releases that might affect a client setup, to maintenance windows, bug fixes and feature changes. Showing them your roadmap every 6 months is missing the point.

The most respected vendors:

- Used Slack, email or other messaging systems to flag upcoming releases
- Gave early notice on feature changes, deprecations, things that impact clients
- Shared changelogs and known issues transparently and regularly
- Enabled agencies to brief clients about new functionality proactively

This isn't just courtesy – it's mutual risk mitigation. With proactive visibility, agencies can catch and fix issues before clients experience them, protecting credibility for both parties.

Feedback loops

The agencies and clients you're selling to already understand feedback and research. They're experimenting. They use research methods, tools, data, surveys, interviews, usability testing and negative feedback - to improve client products. To close the loops, vendors should:

- Validate that core or frequently used features actually work
- Create feedback loops, seek out negative feedback, test their product, ask agencies for problem areas, invite this on regular calls
- Have a clear process for flagging, tracking and resolving bugs
- Involve agency teams in early feature pilots (alpha, beta) for feedback
- Run usability testing on your core product interactions

The best collaborations work because both sides bring value and invest in the outcome. It's about building partnerships that grow your business, grow the agency, and scale the ecosystem. That's the contract.

> *It's not about money, it's more about the things that you do together. A lot of people talk about co-marketing activities, webinars, opening up new markets, addressing new markets, doing physical events with potential clients. These are all good things and generate leads but should be beneficial for both parties.*
>
> **André Morys**, konversionsKRAFT

Vendor scorecard

Area	✅	❌
Trust & Boundaries	Respect agency remit and expertise, agree on non-compete, never poach clients.	Bypass agencies, pitch to their clients directly.
Product Visibility	Share upcoming releases, feature & roadmap info; build a two-way feedback loop.	Drop silent releases or break stuff without notice, ignore feedback.
Pricing	Keep pricing simple, predictable, transparent - no hidden costs.	Complex models, overages, or surprise hikes at renewal/upgrade.
Support	Priority access to expert partner support for agencies.	Force agencies through generic, slow, scripted layers of support.
Product Reliability	Validate and maintain core functionality, frequently used features. Fix bugs fast. Up-to-date and useful tech documentation.	Ship new features, neglect the core. Poorly handle bugs or communication. Out-of-date tech docs, articles or help articles.
Aligned Incentives	Align incentives across onboarding, activation, growth and retention.	One-off referral fee only; no long-term value incentives.
Lead-Gen & Co-Marketing	Generate leads together, early involvement in sales cycle. Focus co-marketing on solving real client problems.	“Partnership” = badge on website Loads of webinars about ‘Brand’ or ‘Features’
AI & Integration	Expose rich APIs (and AI Agent access) to let agencies automate workflows.	Add a bolt-on AI feature that nobody wants or uses.
Program Design	Tailor tiers and support to agency size, model, and maturity.	One-size tiers; everyone gets the same service.
Market shifts	Tap into evolving client needs.	Ignore in-housing and product trends.

A Note from convert®

This research has been illuminating—and at times, uncomfortable. The findings reflect the unfiltered voices of agencies across the ecosystem, including feedback that brings out areas where all vendors, ourselves included, have room to improve.

It’s also affirmed much of what we’ve built into Convert’s foundation for years:

1. We maintain strict boundaries that respect agency relationships. No competing with agencies for client services, ever.
2. We keep pricing straightforward. One account serves multiple clients, with costs that scale predictably with usage.
3. Partners get priority support channels that acknowledge their expertise.
4. We're building a partnership program focused on benefits beyond badges: early access to features, roadmap visibility, and direct influence on product development.
5. We invest in resources that facilitate agencies’ growth. This research and the Directory of CRO Agencies are part of the ecosystem of support & opportunities that Convert is building for agencies.

This research has teeth. It’s not going on a shelf, but straight into our product roadmap and partnership decisions. A rising tide lifts all boats. The work continues.

Join 143+ CRO & Experimentation Agencies in a Comprehensive Directory Maintained by Convert.

Thousands of Eyeballs Every Month.
Email directory@convert.com.

View the directory

Want to Experience First-Hand How Convert Does Agency Partnerships, Structured by the Learning from This Report? Connect with our Agency Specialist Here: sales@convert.com.