

## CAPABILITY BUILDING

# The Capability Gap Audit

An 8-question diagnostic for Filipino marketing leaders assessing 2027 capability investment — grounded in Project Alphabet, Acumen's proprietary study of Filipino generations.

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*For CMOs, CHROs, and marketing leaders planning the year ahead*

## INTRODUCTION

# The landscape your team was built for has changed

This diagnostic is built on two foundations. The first is more than two decades of Acumen's work with over 150 Filipino marketing teams — across multinationals, large local enterprises, and family corporations. The second is Project Alphabet, Acumen's fourth and most comprehensive study of Filipino generations, completed in 2025.

The Filipino marketing landscape in 2026 is not the one your team was built for. The median Filipino's age has moved from 25 to 30 in five years. Top values have shifted from survival and ambition to health and balance. Four generations now sit inside most marketing organisations — and four generations of consumers sit on the other side of the brief.

The right capability for this landscape is not what it was a decade ago. Weak capability is no longer a quiet inconvenience; in a slower-growth year, it is a commercial cost paid on the P&L before it is ever named in a performance review.

This audit gives you a structured way to see where your team stands. It produces a directional read, not a score. Use it in a leadership meeting. Use it with your HR partner. Use it as the opening of a 2027 capability planning conversation.

***Marketing capability is not just a line on the training budget. It is a commercial performance lever — one that moves sales, share, and growth when it is built well.***



## THE RESEARCH GROUNDING

# What Project Alphabet reveals about 2026

Three findings from Project Alphabet reshape what a Filipino marketing team needs to be capable of. Each carries a direct marketing implication.

# 30

### FILIPINO MEDIAN AGE, 2025 (FROM 25 IN 2020)

The consumer your team briefs for in 2026 is a fundamentally different person from the one it briefed for at the start of the decade.

**Implication:** frames built on the early-decade consumer are quietly ageing out.

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### THE FILIPINO HAS SHIFTED FROM SURVIVAL TO BALANCE

2015 priorities — budget, simple happiness, family, faith, education — have given way to 2025's: health, family, education, money, and work-life balance. Each generation defines these five differently.

**Implication:** a single brief targeting “the Filipino consumer” no longer holds.

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# 75%

### OF THE 2024 WORKFORCE IS GEN Y AND GEN Z

Yet Gen X and Boomers still hold most senior leadership roles. Implication: the marketers writing the brief and the leaders approving it are increasingly from different generations — with different definitions of work, communication, and success.

Four generations now sit inside Filipino marketing teams and across the brief: Boomers (1940–1964, the Legacy Guardians), Gen X (1965–1980, the Steady Providers), Gen Y / Millennials (1981–1996, the Connectors), and Gen Z (1997–2005, the Changemakers). The brief that lands across all four breaks through. The brief that lands across none is wasted budget.

## THE DIAGNOSTIC FRAME

# Two layers of capability

This audit assesses your team across two layers. The first three signals are the classic capabilities that build a commercial marketing team. The fourth layer — generational fluency, drawn from Project Alphabet — is what most Philippine teams have never measured. Two behavioural signals sit underneath, predicting commercial drag.

## THE ACUMEN CAPABILITY MAP

### LAYER 2 — GENERATIONAL FLUENCY · FROM PROJECT ALPHABET

#### Reading, briefing, and developing across four Filipino generations

As consumers on the other side of the brief — and as colleagues writing and approving it

*Makes classic capability relevant to the 2026 Filipino*

### LAYER 1 — CLASSIC CAPABILITY · THE COMMERCIAL FOUNDATION

1

#### Analysis

Read the business,  
not just report it

2

#### Insighting

Understanding the  
customer deeply

3

#### Strategy and Communications

Make & express a  
sharp choice

ANALYZE → UNDERSTAND → STRATEGIZE

### BEHAVIOURAL LAYER — THE PREDICTORS OF COMMERCIAL DRAG

#### Decision velocity

Do decisions convert, or stall on  
the agenda?

#### Methodology vs. Curriculum

Does L&D spend change behaviour,  
or issue certificates

*Reveals whether either layer above is actually taking hold*

Read the layers from the ground up: classic capability is the foundation, generational fluency is the layer that makes it relevant to the 2026 Filipino, and the behavioural signals reveal whether either is actually taking hold.

## Three questions on the fundamentals

### Signal 01 — Analytical Fluency

**In your last three business reviews, did the team identify the commercial drivers of performance — or only the symptoms?**

**Yes** suggests the team can read the business, not just report it.

**No** — reviews that stay on the surface — means plans are built on weak diagnosis.

*Commercial implication: Weak analysis scatters effort and budget across initiatives that never touch the real driver.*

### Signal 02 — Insighting Craft

**In the last six months, did any member of your marketing team spend face-to-face time with a consumer — in a home, a sari-sari store, a waiting room — outside of formal market research?**

**Yes** means insight is a practice, not a deck. **No** means strategy is being built on assumption and dashboards rather than lived consumer reality.

*Commercial implication: Briefs built on demographics that no longer behave coherently produce work that misses.*

### Signal 03 — Strategy & Communications

**Can the most junior member of your team state your brand's positioning in one sentence that matches what the most senior member would say — and when creative comes in on-brief but off-target, does the team trace the failure back to the brief itself?**

**Yes** on both means the strategic choice is sharp and travels intact into the work.

**No** means positioning is soft and the brief, not the creative, is where budget is lost.

*Commercial implication: A choice that was never sharp enough to brief becomes spend that funds noise instead of share.*

## Three questions Project Alphabet makes measurable

### Signal 04 — Reading the Generational Consumer

Does your last campaign brief reflect that Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z define “health” or “work-life balance” differently — or does it treat “the Filipino consumer” as one audience?

**Differentiated** means the team is briefing for the market that exists. **One audience** means the brief is built on a consumer who no longer exists as a single person.

*Commercial implication: The undifferentiated brief lands across none of the four generations — the definition of wasted reach.*

### Signal 05 — Reading the Generational Team

In your last brief discussion, were the loudest voices and the writing hands from the same generation as the eventual approver — or did the brief travel across at least two generations before it was signed?

**Across generations** means multiple lenses sharpened the work.

**Single generation** means blind spots went unchallenged on their way to approval.

*Commercial implication: A brief shaped by one generation speaks confidently to one slice of a four-generation market.*

### Signal 06 — The Generational Handoff

When a Boomer or Gen X leader briefs a Millennial or Gen Z executor, is there a translation layer — explicit or implicit — that quietly determines what actually gets executed?

**Acknowledged and managed** means intent survives the handoff. **Invisible** means the strategy that ships is not the strategy that was approved.

*Commercial implication: This is the most expensive language gap inside a 2026 marketing organisation — and the least visible.*

## Two questions that predict commercial drag

### Signal 07 — Decision Velocity

**How many of the strategic questions on this half's leadership agenda are the same questions that sat on the agenda a year ago — still undecided?**

**Few or none** means the team converts analysis into decisions. **Several** means decisions are stalling, and the cost of every delay is landing on the commercial result.

*Commercial implication: A decision deferred for a year is a year of compounding opportunity cost no scorecard captures.*

### Signal 08 — Methodology vs. Curriculum

**If you removed all the certificates, completion rates, and attendance data from your current marketing L&D reports, what behaviour change inside your team could you still defensibly point to?**

A clear answer means your spend is building capability. A blank means you are buying a curriculum, not a capability journey — activity that certifies attendance without changing the work.

*Commercial implication: Training that issues certificates without changing behaviour is cost with no return.*

## INTERPRETING YOUR READ

# Three modes, not a score

This is a directional read. Look at the pattern across all eight signals and locate your team in one of three modes.

### Build mode

Most signals point to active capability work in progress — including conscious generational fluency. The work here is sustaining and revalidating what has been built.

*Where to focus first: protect the methodology; resist the urge to stretch the curriculum.*

### Defend mode

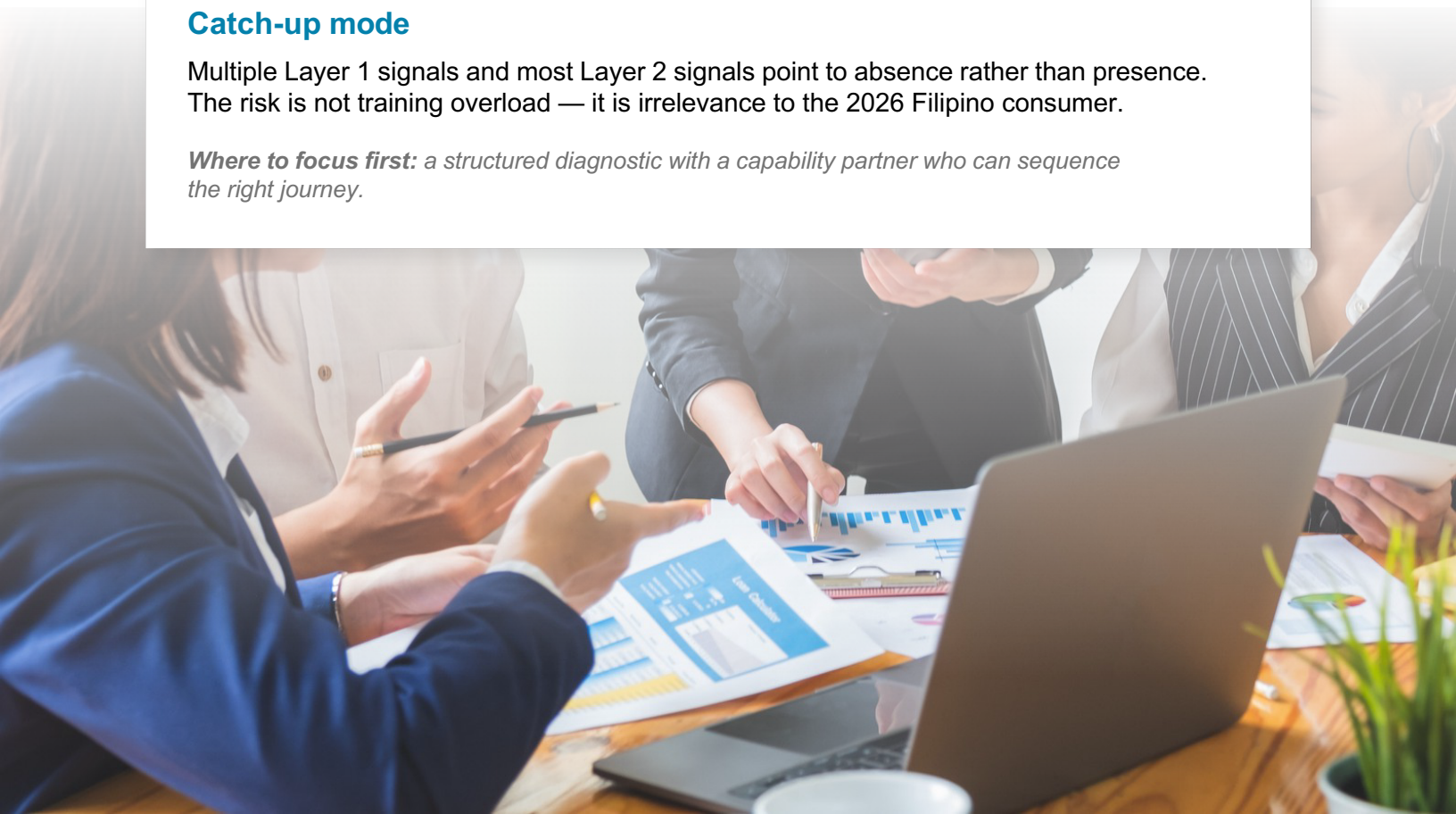
Layer 1 capabilities are largely in place, but Layer 2 generational fluency is unaddressed. Most Filipino marketing teams are here in 2026 — sophisticated on analysis and brand, blind on generations.

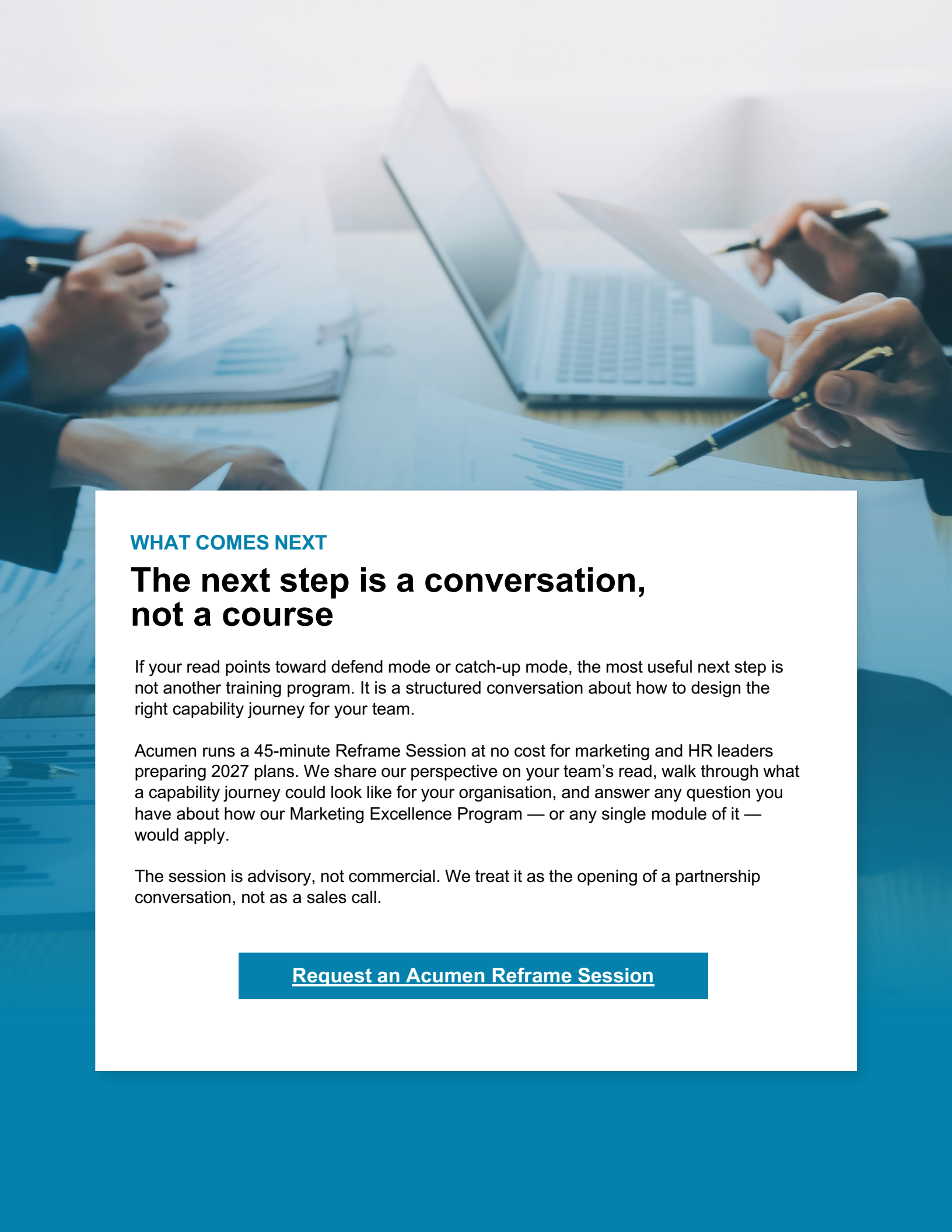
*Where to focus first: close the generational fluency gap before it becomes a commercial gap.*

### Catch-up mode

Multiple Layer 1 signals and most Layer 2 signals point to absence rather than presence. The risk is not training overload — it is irrelevance to the 2026 Filipino consumer.

*Where to focus first: a structured diagnostic with a capability partner who can sequence the right journey.*





## WHAT COMES NEXT

# The next step is a conversation, not a course

If your read points toward defend mode or catch-up mode, the most useful next step is not another training program. It is a structured conversation about how to design the right capability journey for your team.

Acumen runs a 45-minute Reframe Session at no cost for marketing and HR leaders preparing 2027 plans. We share our perspective on your team's read, walk through what a capability journey could look like for your organisation, and answer any question you have about how our Marketing Excellence Program — or any single module of it — would apply.

The session is advisory, not commercial. We treat it as the opening of a partnership conversation, not as a sales call.

[Request an Acumen Reframe Session](#)

## THE STRUCTURED ANSWER

# The Marketing Excellence Program

For organisations ready to close the capability gap, Acumen runs the Marketing Excellence Program — a learning journey built around live business problems and your team's real commercial challenges, not a course catalogue. It is taught by a faculty of experienced practitioners, on customised frameworks, and built so the capability holds long after the program ends.



**Module 1 — Analyze.** Business Analysis. The shared business language and analytical fluency that separates a tactical marketing team from a commercial one.



**Module 2 — Understand.** Consumer Understanding and Insight Mining. The craft of insighting — including face-to-face consumer time — that no dashboard can substitute for.



**Module 3 — Strategize.** Marketing Strategy and Effective Communications. The discipline of strategic briefing and breakthrough creative response.

**Full program:** 6–10 months. **Single module:** 2–4 months. Designed and revalidated to embed behaviour change, not issue certificates — through Acumen's diagnostic, design, doing, and revalidation methodology

*The MEP was designed before Project Alphabet existed. Its findings have since sharpened how we apply it. Proven methodology grounded in proprietary Filipino research is the position no other capability provider in the Philippines can offer.*



## ABOUT

# Acumen and Project Alphabet



**Acumen Strategy Consultants.** For 24 years, Acumen has partnered with more than 150 Filipino companies across 16 industries — multinationals, large local enterprises, and family corporations. The firm holds a Net Promoter Score of 56, against a global consulting benchmark of 48, and brings a faculty of senior practitioners with more than 630 years of collective experience to its capability work.



**Project Alphabet.** Acumen's fourth and most comprehensive study of Filipino generations, completed in 2025. It examines how Filipino values, consumer behaviour, and workforce dynamics have shifted across four generations — and introduces the concept of Generational Fluency, the capability to read, brief, and lead across them. The full report is available at [acumen.com.ph/project-alphabet](https://acumen.com.ph/project-alphabet).

[Download the Full Project Alphabet Report](#)



**24** YEARS

**150+** PHILIPPINE  
COMPANIES

**56** NPS

**16** INDUSTRIES

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