B2B DIIV

2024 Insights & Trends Report

BEADO

1,500 B2B Buyers Speak Up A Digitalzone Special Report

Triple Threat:
3 Game-Changing
Insights
New Guidelines for
Rocking the B2B Buyer
Journey

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Effortless "It" Brand Status Yes, It's That Easy! (With the Right People OFC)

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Marketing
Mind
The Future
Is Here, and
It Looks
Millennial

digitalzone

MALETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In just five years, we've seen significant technological leaps in AI, changing political tides, and major shifts in the global economy. These transformations have reshaped industries, altered consumer expectations, and increased competition. Enter new B2B buying behavior, with decision-makers reporting feeling increasingly pressed for time, brand authority making a comeback, and a growing generational gap in media consumption—things have changed.

B2B companies are at a challenging, but exciting, inflection point full of opportunity—and the B2B buyer is here to help roadmap the way. **Welcome to the age of the empowered B2B consumer.**

Where brands were once the drivers of the journey and authors of the funnel, they are now riding in the passenger seat while buyers take the wheel. And as the modern B2B buyer continues to evolve, it's difficult to pinpoint what's driving their buying decisions and influencing their motivations in the market–forcing a new culture dominated by dynamic listening over rigid assumptions.

With this new era in mind, we've gathered insights from **1,500 B2B purchase decision-makers** from around the world to hear straight from the source about what makes B2B buyers tick.

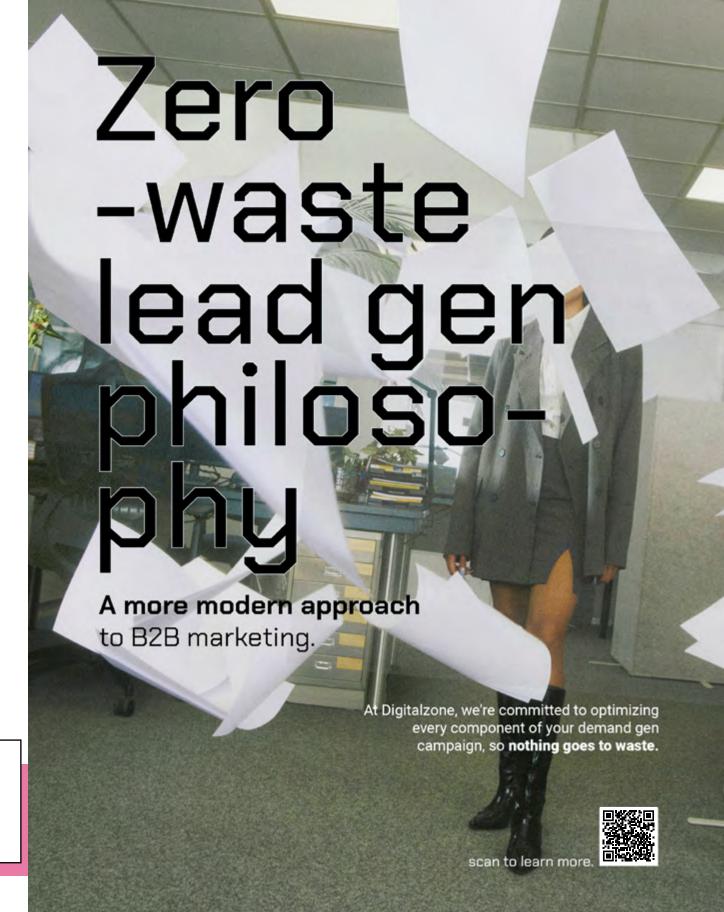
From the initial stages of identifying a need to the final selection of a vendor, we examined the preferences of today's B2B decision-makers to answer the questions we get most from our clients and fellow B2B marketers:

- What does the B2B purchase journey currently look like?
- What factors influence purchase decisions most?
- How do media and content preferences shape the buying process?

We hope that this report inspires you to create more meaningful interactions with your buyers and that you find opportunities in the challenges.

Love always,

VP of Marketing at Digitalzone



GAME-CIHANGING INSIGITE

Timing is everything

The top challenge for B2B buyers is navigating time constraints in the mix of countless variables and considerations. Reaching decision-makers at the right moment is undeniably the most critical factor in achieving a successful purchase decision, but also the most fickle.





How to become the "It" brand

Reputation, authenticity, and renowned expertise are the key qualities that compel B2B buyers to purchase with a new vendor. Buyers are looking for knowledgeable partners when making purchases—they rely on brand reputations to guide their decisions and seek brands that offer a human connection.

p.22

The great social media divide

Millennials and Gen Z B2B buyers are more likely to use social media in their buyer's journey compared to their older peers. While generational differences are often overemphasized, social media usage—especially platforms like TikTok—highlights just how different their media engagement is.

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Survey Methodology

Digitalzone surveyed 1,500 B2B decision makers across the world directly involved with vendor purchases averaging \$1,000+.

Markets Surveyed US, EMEA, APAC

Field Dates 5/29/24 - 6/4/24

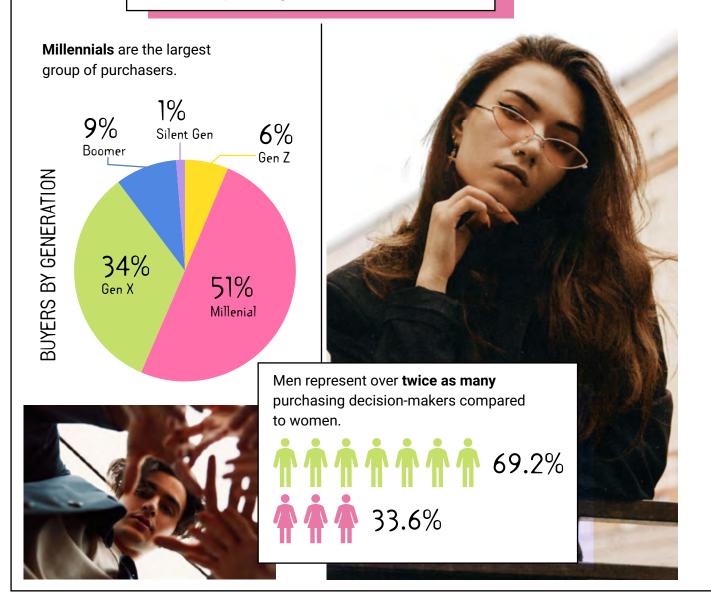
Survey Length

6 minutes and 57 seconds 39 questions total

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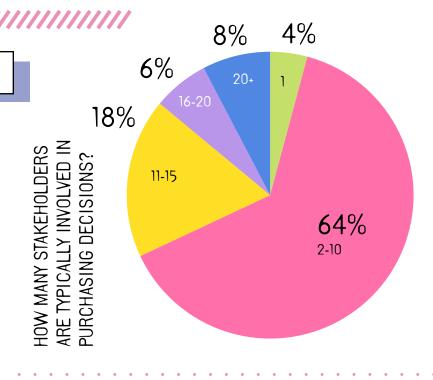
Set the scene with some foundational context of today's B2B buyer demographics and their operating environment.



Buyers in the Workplace

With buying committees often comprised of diverse players sometimes spanning different departments, capturing their attention and swaying their preferences is tough.

However, don't mistake the buying committee for a group decision. While the opinions of each stakeholder can play a crucial role in shaping the purchase decision, the final call is typically made by an individual (92.5%) rather than by consensus (7.5%). This means that one key stakeholder ultimately makes the decision, though identifying this person can feel like finding a needle in a haystack.



We also found that buyers come from all types of departments and internal teams.





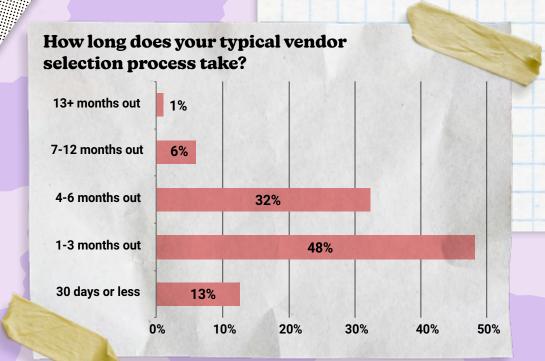


Buyers face a

ticking

as their journeys stretch out.

An overwhelming 80% of buyers report that it takes up to six months to select a vendor. And if six months wasn't long enough, the buyer's journey is dragging out even more. Over half of buyers now report that decision-making has been taking longer in recent years.





80%

of buyers said that it **takes up to six months** to choose a vendor.

Buyers said time constraints, limited resources, and tight budgets are the top challenges to making a purchase decision.

They're feeling the time crunch as internal issues such as limited resources and budgets compound their challenges—like a chicken-and-egg dilemma where each factor exacerbates the other.

In addition to internal setbacks, outside obstacles are getting in the way.

When purchase decisions face delays, buyers said 70% of hold-ups stem from external factors like a market shift or bad contract timing with other vendors.

And when buyers are eyeing something pricey, you can bet they'll take even longer to mull over their options— buyers are twice as likely to take more than 6 months when purchases are more expensive.

In the last two years, the average amount of time it takes to make a purchase decision has:

The Takeaway?

It's more important than ever to consider your buyers' mindset. Roadblocks, especially those out of their control. can lead to understandable frustration. Aim to create content that makes their experience smoother. Being easy to reach, clear about costs, and flexible with timelines makes a big difference. Strive to deliver precisely what your leads need at each moment. mindful that their status can quickly change from hot lead to cold.

Position yourself as a **no-strings-attached guide.**

After all, choosing a vendor is hardly a linear endeavor—it's a dynamic process. *Your goal?* To ease their path towards that final decisive action and purchase.

Pinpointing

a purchase trigger is anything but easy.

46% of B2B buyers operate from an annual budget.



The main drivers of purchasing decisions are vendor evaluations and budget changes, which are both tied to perceived value.

It's those fresh influxes of cash-like recent funding or an increased budgetthat tend to get buyers in a spending mood. Budget cuts? Not so much.

TLDR?

Milestones like regular vendor reviews and annual budgeting are key checkpoints for buyers—and prime times for marketers to strike, especially since nearly half of buyers stick to an annual budget. While there are no magic dates, these periods are ideal for initiating engagement.

While these golden opportunities exist, they're like hidden gems-nobody's throwing a parade to tell you about them. To seize these perfect moments, you need to keep your ear to the ground and marketing always on.





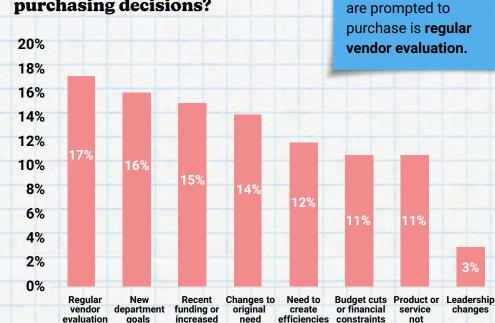


reason buyers

delivering

Besties (7

What usually prompts your purchasing decisions?



scope

budget





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Embrace an "" "always-on" marketing strategy.

Today's buyers are feeling rushed and bombarded by numerous variables influencing their decision-making process. This can make it challenging for them to commit to a purchase on the spot.

Remember, only 5% of buyers are actively in the market at any given time. To capture the remaining 95% of future buyers, a calm and steady approach is essential.

Instead of overwhelming potential customers with infrequent but aggressive campaigns, aim for a continuous and pervasive presence. This means staying topof-mind with potential buyers even when they aren't in the market, so you're ready when they need you. Meet your audience where they are, understand their preferences, and tailor your communications to remain relevant. Patience is key—you want to be the easy-to-workwith vendor who supports buyers at every step of their journey.

Intelligent demand generation is crucial for refining and honing your strategy. It empowers you to get in front of your audience even before they think about needing a product or solution like yours. And when those leads are eventually ready to act, you need to be poised to swiftly yet gently guide them down the marketing funnel, carefully considering their needs every step of the way.

Remember, it's an always-on brand approach that keeps you consistently visible and always there for your buyers. By continually gathering and applying behavioral insights, you can ensure that any content you present resonates. Gently nurture your buyers through their decision-making process with understanding and care. Just like a friendship bracelet, be there for your buyers at all times-embody the essence of #B2BESTIES. That way, you can turn potential into purchasing power when those future buyers finally raise their hands.



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Meet Your B2B BFF

Jessica Frasier, VP of Client Success at Digitalzone, shares her pro tips on topics ranging from display ads to lead quality.

Dear Jess.

Are ebooks still a thing? I'm torn about whether they should be included in my content strategy.

Hey Friend,

Yes, ebooks are still a valuable component of a content strategy, but their effectiveness hinges on your audience. In today's fast-paced digital world, people are increasingly accustomed to consuming short-form content. To make your ebooks more appealing, ensure they are snackable. Incorporate breakout copy, bullet points, quick tips, summaries, and engaging visuals to keep readers interested. Repurposing your ebook is my favorite way to maximize my content budget, while increasing your audience reach with a variety of content formats like infographic or videos. This allows you to test and learn what your audience prefers.

Need help repurposing? Scan to learn more about Digitalzone's content creation services.



Dear Jess,

Does display advertising actually work in the B2B space, or am I just throwing money away?

Hey Friend,

Absolutely, B2B display advertising is a powerful tool—especially for enhancing brand recall. In fact,

83% of B2B buyers need 3-10 touches to consider a brand reputable. B2B buying cycles can be quite long too, so keeping your brand visible for effective recall and influence is critical when penetrating the entire buying committee. My favorite way to utilize display in the B2B market is combining display ads with identity resolution and intent data for precise targeting. This approach leads to successful lead-level display and retargeting campaigns that make the most of your marketing budget. But display has many use cases, and it really depends on your target audience and budget.

Scan to learn more about display ad with Digitalzone.



Dear Jess,

Every demand generation vendor claims to have their own database. Why does this matter, and how can you choose the right vendor if they all seem similar?

Hey Friend,

Proprietary databases are unique and secure systems. They offer automation, scalability, and compliance with privacy laws, ensuring high data quality and avoiding data redundancies seen with other vendors.

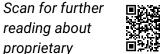
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However, some vendors with proprietary databases also use partner networks, which can compromise data quality.

These networks, consisting of third-party vendors, help expand customer reach but often lead to data duplication and quality issues. While vendors can set guidelines for lead sourcing, they cannot fully control their partners' daily

activities. This may result in leads that are either noncompliant with regulations or of poor quality. To choose the right vendor,

ask them the following questions: do you use partner networks to bolster your data? How engaged is your database? Does your database include my ideal



Have a

question for

Jess? Scan

here to ask it.

you should select a vendor

who follows best practices

and delivers results without

relying on partner networks.

databases.

customer profile (ICP)? What measures do you take to ensure data quality and compliance? Ultimately,

Dear Jess.

How do I generate quality leads that won't make my sales team roll their eyes?

Hey Friend,

Marketing and sales teams must first align on what they define to be a sales-ready lead, determining the state of readiness sales expects. Clear communication and defined lead criteria are crucial for this alignment. Then once aligned, nurture, nurture, nurture. Intentional nurturing,

mindful segmentation, and delivering genuine value are key to generating quality leads. Group B2B leads by job function and subindustry to deliver more relevant content and focus on fewer but higher-quality engagements that create value rather than noise.

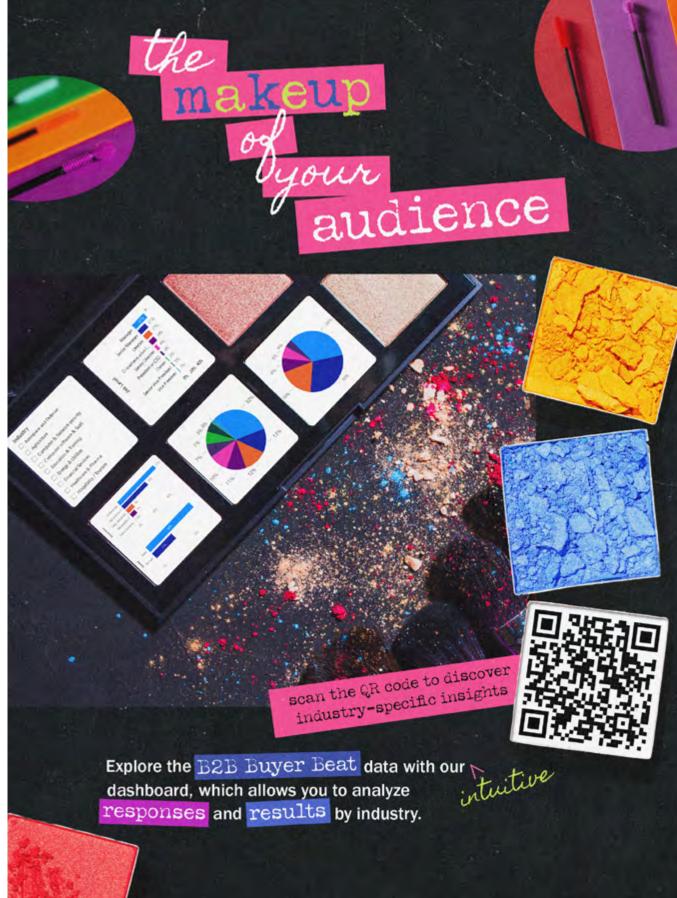
Finally, ensure the handoff is seamless by equipping your sales team with everything they need to continue meaningful conversations with those leads. Unified

efforts and thoughtful segmentation will produce leads your sales team will eagerly engage with, assuring a seamless customer journey and eliminating any friction.

Scan for further reading on creating effective nurture campaigns.









A BRAND'S REPUTATION IS THE "IT FACTOR" FOR TURNING HEADS AND CLOSING SALES.

WHAT ARE
THE TOP
CULTURAL OR
ORGANIZATIONAL
REASONS YOU
SELECTED
THE WINNING
PROVIDER FOR
YOUR PURCHASE?

Brand/reputation	1st
Ease of doing business	2nd
Understanding our company	3rd
Previous experience working with provider	4th
Commitment to sustainability/enviornment	5th
Good employer	6th
Dedicated diversity, equity, and inclusion program	7th

A brand's reputation is the #1 reason an org will select a new vendor.

All things considered; the other leading reasons are established through effective branding.

MIC DROP

B2C marketers approach brand reputation by focusing on the intersection of their brand and the human experience. But don't forget, those same B2C consumers that crave an emotional connection to a brand are the same humans that make up your B2B buying committee. Find ways to differentiate not just in features and benefits, but in eliciting a human connection to your brand.

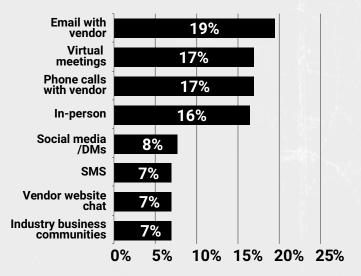
Creating a reputation is multifaceted. It's important to be excellent at what you deliver as a product or solution, but there is also weight in how your brand makes your buyer feel. And with brand reputation climbing in importance for the modern B2B buyer, forging a human connection with your brand is a must.



BUT BUYERS PREFER A HUMAN TOUCH, EVEN IF It's DIGITAL.

More than half of buyers love 1:1 digital interactions—think short emails and virtual meetings with a real person.

HOW WOULD YOU PREFER TO COMMUNICATE WITH A VENDOR DURING THE PURCHASE PROCESS?



What type of content do you find most impactful in helping you during your purchase decision?

- 1) Speaking with a product expert
- 2) Speaking with a sales rep
- 3) Speaking with customer success



SOMETHING TO PONDER

B2B buyers, though busy, want more than product specs and features. The desire for human connection is wrapped in authenticity—one of the top brand qualities that compels buyers to choose a new vendor. And with B2B buyers prioritizing speaking with brand ambassadors, the people who represent your brand are critical. This means your campaigns no longer stop at the digital

channels you activate on. They now extend to

the humans who take

your brand directly to

your buyer.

If you decide to invest more in one channel this year, make it the investment in the people representing your brand because they play a pivotal role in influencing buyer decisions.

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THE HEART OF YOUR BRAND.

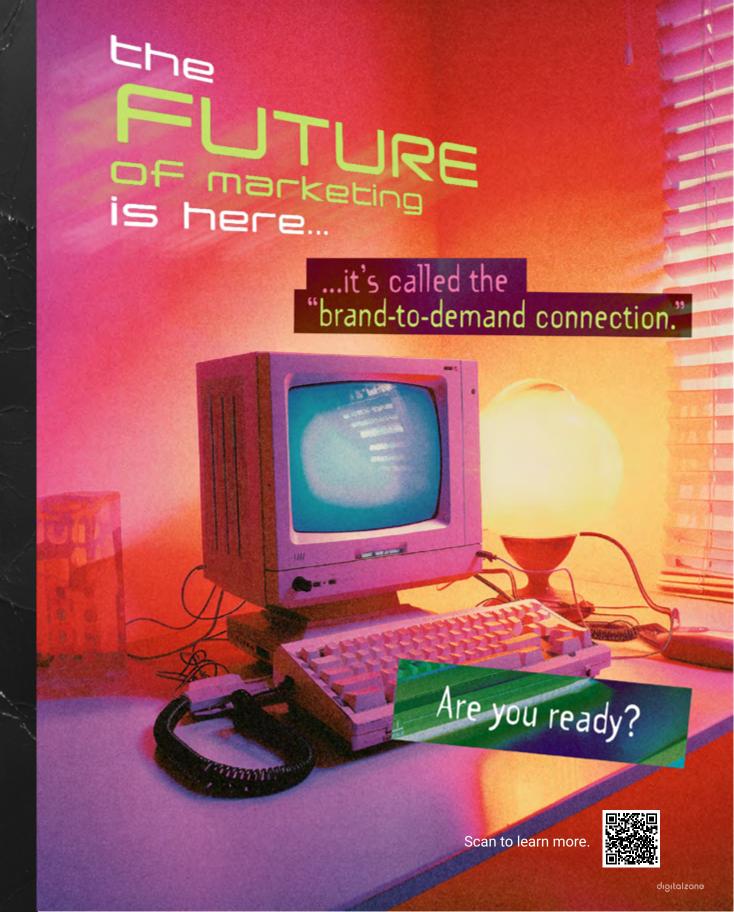
A cutting-edge website, visually stunning social posts, and eye-catching ads are just pieces of the puzzle when it comes to attracting B2B buyers. The real differentiator is the intangible "it" factor that can't be bought, no matter the size of your marketing budget.

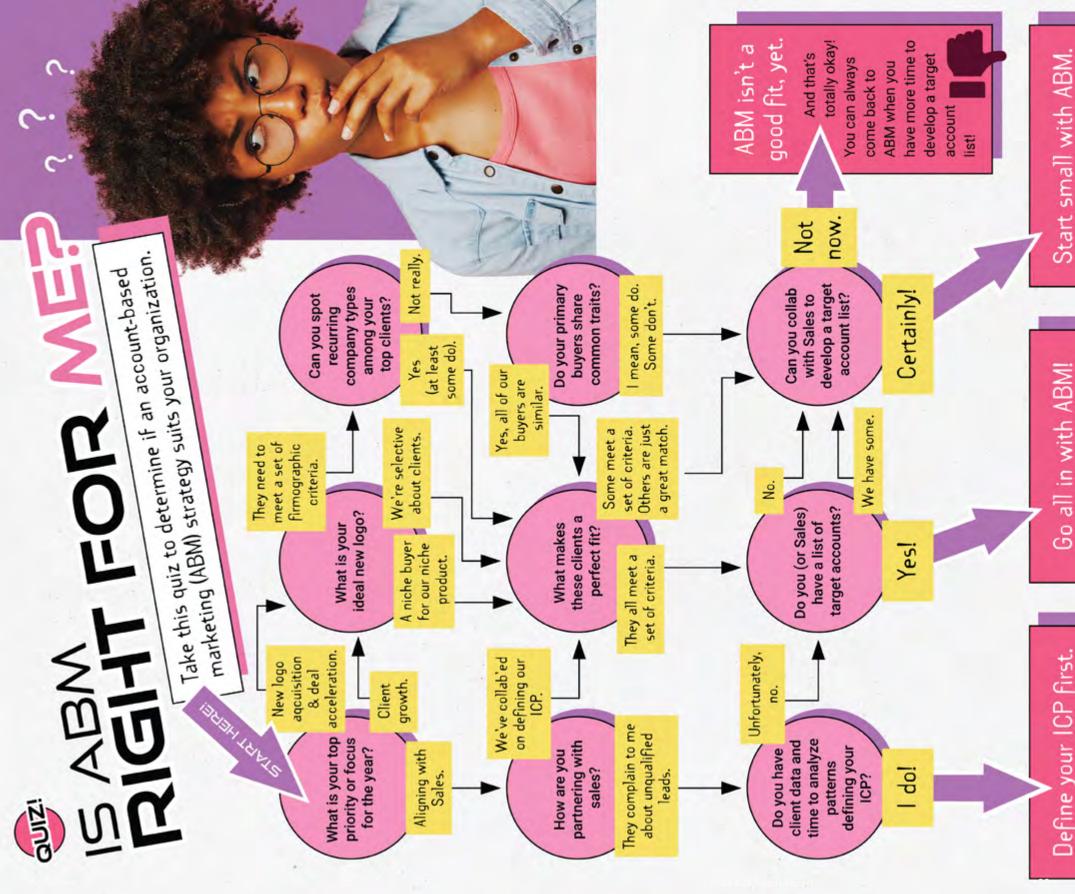
Don't just tell people why your brand has expertise - show them.

Create content and communications that emotionally resonate with your target audience and makes them feel seen.

B2B buyers notice when you put in the extra effort to understand them as both professionals and human beings—whether it's through personalized nurture email copy or by chatting over a casual sales call. Each 1:1 interaction is an opportunity to demonstrate your prowess.

Bolster your always-on approach by delivering a unique and humanized brand experience at every touchpoint.





Define your ICP first.

toward an ABM strategy. It's ideal historical client data while having you've got this, you can move on Sales help refine your ICP. Once Defining your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) is the first step to develop this based on target account list. to partnering on developing your

Go all in with ABM!

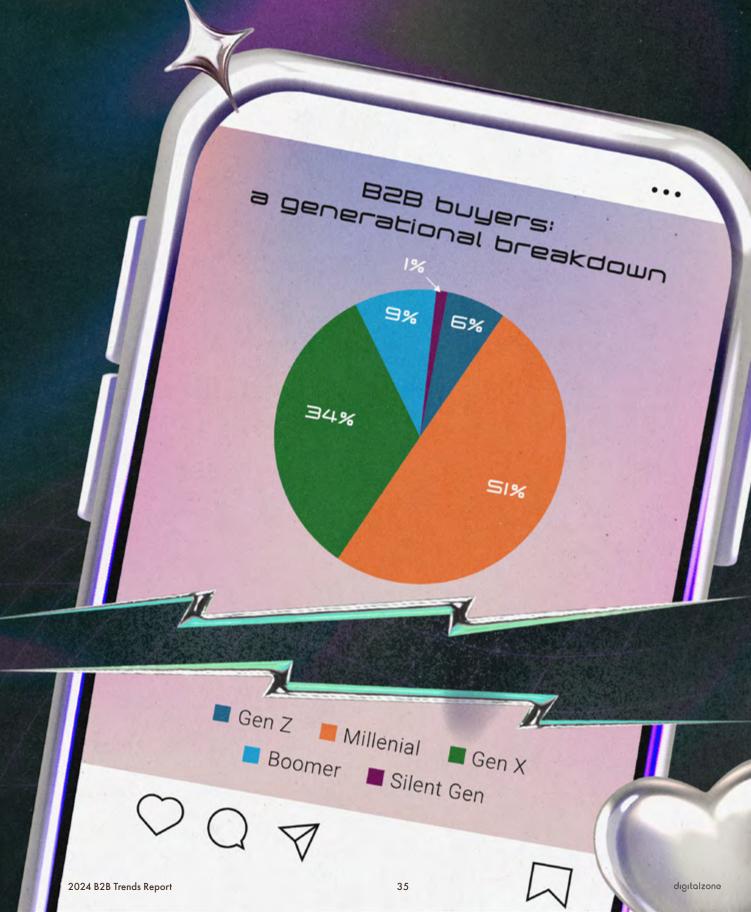
You've had success with your key accounts, so focus on optimizing your strategy and growing your remember, your target account list isn't set in stone-give months before adjusting to ensure you're making target account list. Just data-driven decisions. accounts at least 6

across your Ideal Customer Profile targeting those accounts gets you, account list. Test and learn what Draw out patterns you're seeing (ICP) to develop a small target but don't ditch firmographic targeting completely. It's working for you, so keep optimizing while adding ABM to the mix.





Aside from Boomers, today's B2B buyers are all about using social media to stay in the loop. While their differences might be overstated at times, the social media preferences by generation—especially with platforms like TikTok—really shows just how unique their social media habits are.



Millennials to Gen X run to social media when choosing a vendor.

Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen X are collectively twice as likely as Boomers to use social media for researching potential vendors.

Boomers are social media outliers. Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z are more inclined to discover and engage with new vendors on all social platforms—except for TikTok, which is squarely Gen Z's playground.

In Perspective

Millennials, Gen Z, and Gen X are much more receptive to social media throughout the purchase journey compared to Boomers. And with Millennials comprising 51% of B2B purchasers, followed by Gen X at 34%, leveraging social media is the strategy for getting in front of the majority of B2B buyers.

Boomer buying decisions are largely unaffected by social media. But Gen X shares some of the Boomer reservations—they just aren't as extreme in their stance.



How do you
generally learn
about new
vendors or
solutions?

omers

4.7% 2.6% 3.6% 1.9%

0.9%

11.6%

8.6%

13.3%

6.7%

7.1%

0.8%

1.5%

16.6%

10.3%

9.9%

	Gen Z	Millennials	Gen X	В
LinkedIn	7.8%	9.6%	7.3%	
Instagram	8.9%	8.9%	6.3%	
Facebook	8.0%	9.7%	7.0%	
TikTok	8.9%	5.6%	3.1%	
Pinterest	3.7%	3.1%	2.4%	
Email	11.2%	9.5%	8.7%	
Direct mail	6.2%	5.2%	6.4%	
nternet search	10.8%	11.0%	11.7%	
Articles	3.4%	6.5%	7.1%	
News outlets	5.0%	4.5%	5.4%	
Reddit	4.12%	4.17%	3.13%	
TV	4.8%	4.0%	3.5%	
Tradeshows	7.6%	8.8%	12.9%	
Referral	6.0%	5.3%	7.6%	
lationship with vendor	3.7%	4.1%	7.5%	

≥ 10% 6% to 10% 3%to 6% 0% to 3%

Base: Sample size varies by generation; not all response options are shown.

Top channels to learn about new vendors across generations

Email

Gen Z

Search

Gen X & Boomers

Tradeshows

Boomer buying decisions are largely unaffected by social media. But Gen X shares some of the Boomer reservations—they just aren't as extreme in their stance.

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Millennials



is a complex blend of old—school and new—school, juggling both Boomer and younger 828 buyer habits.

Gen X are the **true bridge between traditional media aficionados** and **digital natives**.

They've navigated the modern tech evolution, seamlessly blending their Boomer upbringing with the experience of raising digital-savvy Millennials. They're not that different from Millennials and Gen Z, but they also share some Boomer preferences.

Gen X wields significant purchasing power, dominating the older B2B buyer segment and coming in as the second-largest age group by percentage (right after Millennials).

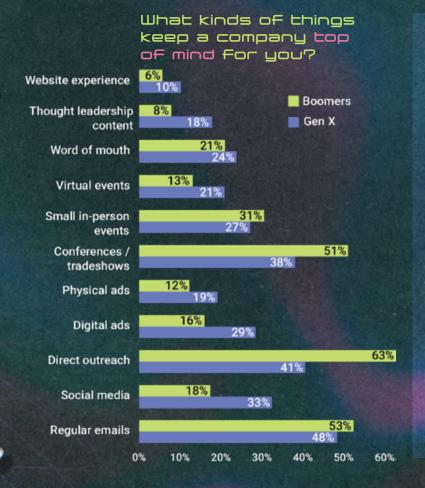
Bottom Line

Gen X engages with a wide range of media and content, making them accessible on numerous platforms. This versatility is both a blessing and a curse since they're open to just about everything. But grabbing their attention isn't about the medium or channel; it's about having a message that truly resonates.

Gen X is heavily influenced by its younger counterparts. To effectively reach them, keep an eye on the media preferences of younger generations—especially as Boomers and their impact on Gen X continues to diminish.

Boomer buying considerations aren't swayed by social media.

Boomers don't use social media to inform a purchase decision. Instead, they're nearly twice as likely to prioritize industry events or trade shows, personal referrals, and previous relationships with vendors.



Why It Matters

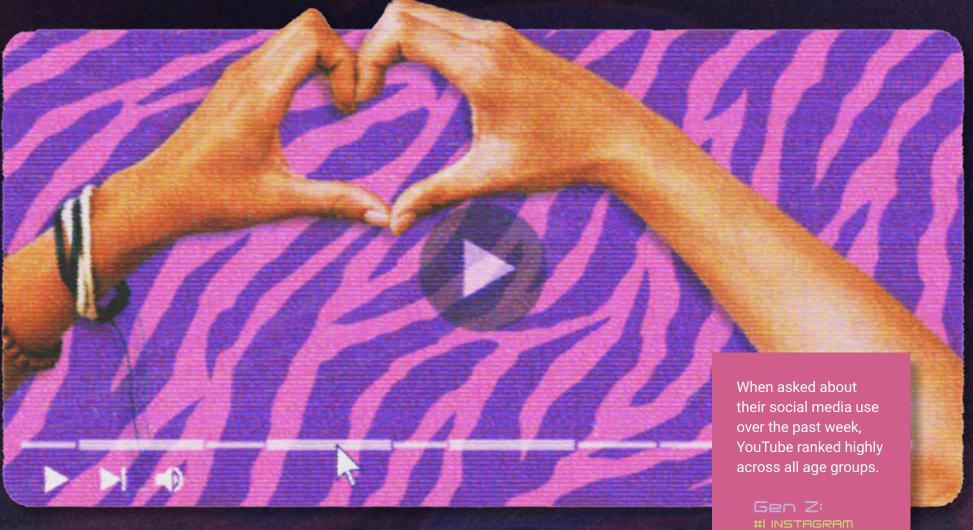
While other generations swear by email to stay top of mind with a vendor, Boomers are all about direct outreach.
Boomers are much less likely to stumble upon new vendors through social media. Instead, you should use these platforms to steer them toward what really works for them—industry events, tradeshows, referrals, and those tried-and-true vendor.

relationships.

51%

of Boomers said tradeshows and conferences keep a company top of mind. While Boomers may not be keen on endless scrolling, they're not totally MIA from social media either.

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At least everybody loves YouTube.

The research revealed that YouTube is the most frequented social media platform across buyer generations, with the exception of Gen Z. Following YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn are similarly favored across B2B buyer age groups. However, when it comes to Gen Z, overall usage of Instagram (14.72) takes the lead by a slim margin ahead of YouTube (14.34), making the video platform's dominance clear.





Boomers:



Let's Rewind

If there's a universally loved social platform, YouTube is it. It's a promising catchall across generations from an investment standpoint. With it being one of the first major social platforms, there has been sufficient time for adoption across all generations, so naturally older buyers feel more comfortable on YouTube than any other platform. But when compared to more modern social media channels, YouTube isn't nearly as "social"—it's often used more for its search engine functionality than for its social connective tissue.

With the evolution and proliferation of social media platforms, B2B buyers across generations have become accustomed to snackable content that makes information more digestible and quickly understood. In creating B2B content to engage your ideal customer profile it's crucial to consider the content mediums they're consuming every day to ensure you're hitting the mark with your digital touchpoints and adding value at every step along the way.

Let social media help you connect the dots.



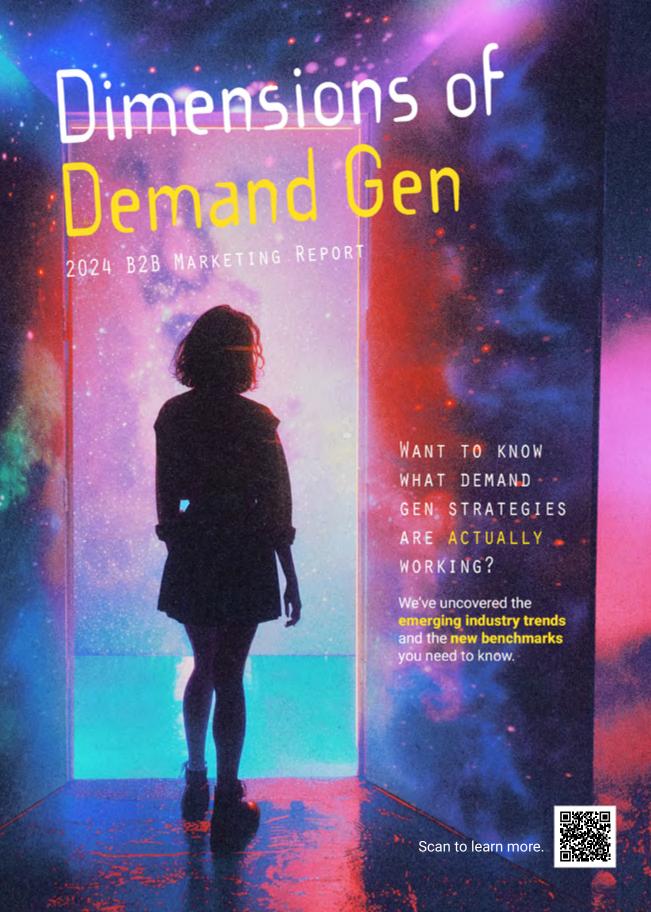
are far from uniform, making it a goldmine for marketers. Listen to what your audience shares unfiltered on social media, where their preferences—like snappy short videos or visually rich content—are shaped. These platforms are packed with behavioral data that can supercharge your content and enhance the customer journey.

But social media isn't just about showing up—it's about actively engaging with your audience.

While it's handy to know the generational breakdown of B2B buyer social media habits, these details are always in flux. In the digital age, blending **static data** (think demographics) with **dynamic data** (like social media behaviors) is powerful because they provide a holistic understanding of an audience.

Social media delivers real-time insights that connect **you** with **your audience** and enhance their journey.

As platforms and demographics shift, staying adaptable and keeping it real will keep you ahead.









FINAL THOUGHTS ,,,,,,

Humans are complicated, and your buyers are no exception.

In a B2B context, this complexity intensifies because decisionmakers aren't just considering their personal whims—they're juggling the interests and budgets of entire organizations.

The buyer's journey is not straightforward because their movements through the world are complex. Our research shows that audiences drop hints through their actions, but these signals can feel elusive. Their subtle interactions require marketers to sharpen their observational skills to keep a better finger on the pulse.

In an era awash with data from sources like website analytics and nurture campaigns, it's tempting to get lost in the numbers.

However, we must remember the marketing blend of art and science-the secret sauce.

Overemphasizing data can lead us to cookie-cutter campaigns that miss the mark. Sometimes, in our quest for reactions, we resort to exhausted marketing strategies and forget to speak to humans.

So, what's the final thought here? Keep it human. Let data drive your decisions, but never lose sight that

your audience won't always behave like predictable data points. Today's buyers want you to listen. Whether crafting web content or interacting on social media, always weave in the narrative that speaks to their humanity.

This is how you achieve meaningful engagement in the B2B world.

"Grasping the humanity of buyers is more than just important-it's a lifeline. It enables us to develop marketing strategies that genuinely connect with their evolving needs and keep us ahead in an increasingly competitive market. Without this insight, we'd be navigating without a compass."

Eboni Ryan VP of Marketing at Digitalzone

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As the only pure in-house demand gen vendor, Digitalzone is committed to delivering the **highest level of** quality, compliance, and customer service. We partner with our clients to create engaging

content syndication

All powered by our global community of 105M unique business professionals.



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Want to learn how Digitalzone can transform your demand gen performance?

Let's talk! Contact us to speak with a member of our team.

Scan to get in touch.

