

*Field Guide to the
B2B Buyer*

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Section 1 Overview

Today's b2b buyer knows that he must marshal a unique set of tactics if they're going to reach the contemporary b2b buyer. The b2b buyer is increasingly younger, creating challenges that long-time marketers must take into account. The b2b buyer is impatient, demanding that information be available when and where they are researching. Finally, the b2b buyer doesn't act alone, they are part of a growing committee. This field guide will help identify the characteristics that make the b2b buyer unique and how you can best reach him in his natural habitat.



Section 2 The B2B Brain

Let me talk to you about the b2b buyer. They are different than b2c. They have different concerns, different needs that a consumer doesn't consider. The same marketing tactics that are used to influence a consumer don't necessarily apply to b2b.

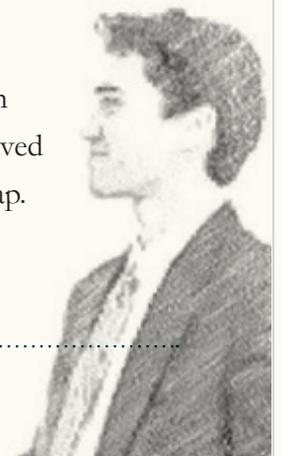
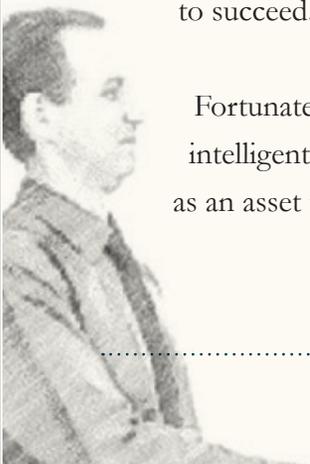
B2b buyers have both business and personal needs

The b2b brain is divided in two, and like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde one half of it is dedicated to the greater good while the other half focuses solely on the self. A savvy b2b marketer should be keenly aware of these two halves and craft their messages accordingly.

The Dr. Jekyll half of the b2b mind seems selfless. It is the half that wants its company to succeed. It focuses on the bottom line: increasing sales, gaining a competitive advantage, etc.

The Mr. Hyde half of the b2b mind is the selfish half. It is the half that wants the self to succeed. Important to it is career advancement, job security, etc.

Fortunately, the goals of these halves are mostly aligned. A buyer who makes an intelligent decision that has real positive impact for his or her company is perceived as an asset to a company, and therefore that decision is a feather in that buyer's cap.



B2b buyers aren't interested in how great you are

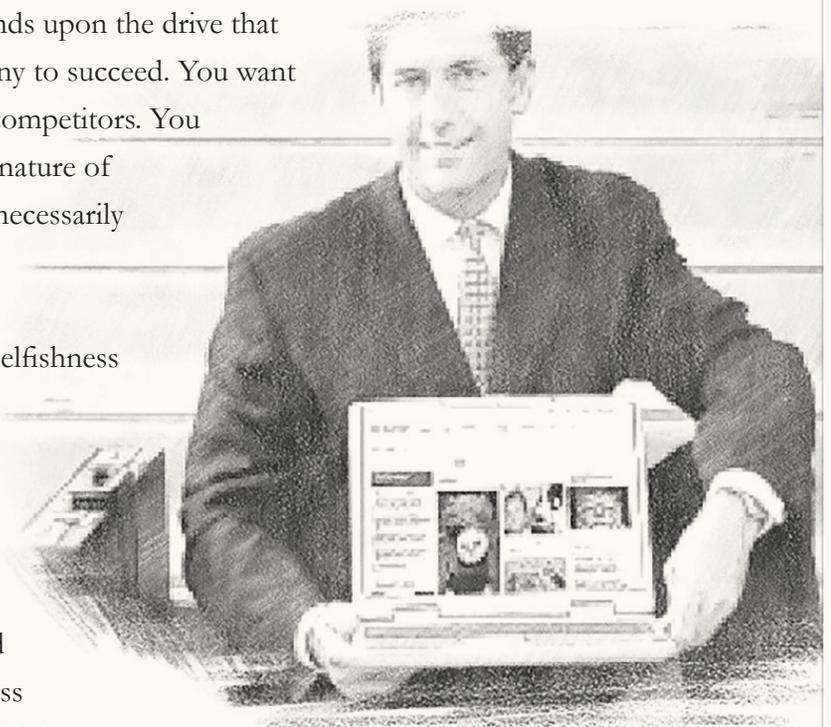
B2b marketers should avoid focusing on their own products. Bad marketing content is heavily laden with possessive pronouns (we provide, our solutions). It positions the product as the hero of the story. This is an example of a marketer's own b2b brain doing the talking, promoting its needs and desires above those of its prospects. To be successful, a marketer must suppress their inner Jekyll and Hyde and adopt a customer-centric approach.

The prospect should be the hero of every piece of content a marketer creates. The active pronoun here should be "you." Good marketing content focuses on the prospect's needs, problems, and challenges. It should express a keen understanding of these issues and only position a product as solution that can help address that issue.

Never Be Selfish

It is clear that it is the very nature of the b2b mind to be selfish. In business, success or failure often depends upon the drive that selfishness creates. You want your company to succeed. You want to gain competitive advantage over your competitors. You want to advance your career. It's the very nature of competition. However, selfishness is not necessarily the way to win.

The best b2b marketers understand that selfishness has no place in their messaging. Companies should position themselves as "trusted advisors" who genuinely want their customers to succeed. B2b marketers that have eliminated selfishness from their organization should nonetheless strive to understand selfishness—especially as it relates to the b2b brain—if they are to succeed.



Section 3 The Three Characteristics of the B2B Buyer

There's a Latin saying, *omne tium perfectum*, which loosely translates as "a set of three is complete." Wikipedia suggests that a set of three is funnier, more satisfying or more effective because it "combines both brevity and rhythm while having the smallest amount of information to create a pattern. It makes an author or speaker appear knowledgeable while being both simple and catchy." So here they are, the three most salient characteristics of today's b2b buyer.

Today's B2B Buyer is Impatient

Today's B2B buyer is autonomous. If your website, and even worse your salesperson is the primary source of information, forget about it...you're lost. As we have seen, b2b buyer is already 57% of the way down the path to a decision before they deign to perform an action on your website. And, according to Sirius Decisions, they're 70% completed with the research before engaging a sales rep.

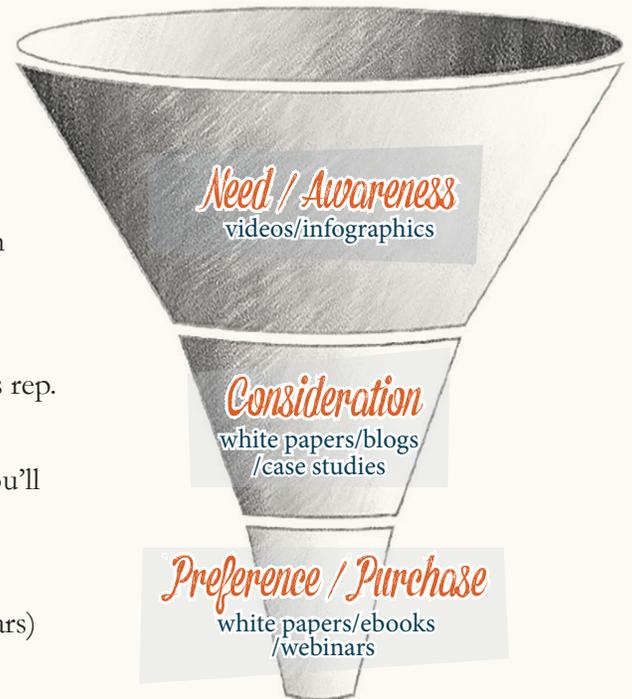
The B2B buyer wants their info and they want it now. You'll need a strategy for this. non-gated, bite-size, "snackable" content (videos, infographics) for early in the funnel and gated, more robust content (whitepapers, ebooks, webinars) for later in the funnel.

Most importantly, this content should be easy to find. You should develop a robust social strategy and optimize your landing pages for organic search. But even more, you need to be in places where your prospects are likely to look first. Work with partners to align your content with industry publications where your prospects are likely to do research.

In short, you need to surround your prospects with the most useful information possible.

Today's B2B Buyer is Connected

According to Google, 68% of people check their smart phone within 15 minutes of waking up in the morning. A recent survey revealed that 61% of us have used our mobile phone in the bathroom.



Our screens are everywhere. And so is the b2b buyer. A whopping 91% of them are using their smartphones throughout the path to purchase. In other words, if screens are being used in the buyer's journey, you want your products to be everywhere those screens are being used.

To do this, you must stay one step ahead of your prospects by powering your demand generation programs with intent data. Intent data tells you who is researching what and when. With this info, you can target only those prospects actively doing research, wherever and whenever they're doing that research.

Today's hyper-connected buyer essentially re-writes the language we use for demand gen. We should begin thinking not of discrete demand generation campaigns, but of always-on demand generation programs that are ready to go when your prospects are ready to consume information.

Today's B2B Buyer is Informed

The days of company-centric content are over. You should be creating customer-centric content.

If a b2b buyer has come across your content, he has recognized he has a problem and is now seeking its solution. It's up to you as a marketer to provide that solution. However, it's difficult to produce exactly the right content for every prospect and every problem. Intent data can help here too.

Every month billions of intent signals reveal what topics are surging in the marketplace. These intent signals depict the topics that your prospects are researching right now. By harnessing these intent signals you can create content that precisely aligns with these research trends, making your content that much more likely to produce content that addresses your prospects problems.

The Three Characteristics of the B2B Buyer

B2B Buyer Characteristic

- The Impatient Buyer
- The Connected Buyer
- The Informed Buyer

Content Strategy

- Be Easy to Find. You need to be in places where prospects are likely to look.
- Be Everywhere your prospects are.
Be always-on
- Be Educational. Be hyper-relevant.



Section 4 *The B2B Buying Committee*

The b2b Buyer does not act alone.

Today, research shows that buying committees can be composed of between 5-12 individuals. This is composed of people from many different departments and many different functional levels. All of these people are stakeholders in the process, so the savviest marketers need to target all of them.

What's more, your prospects are increasingly expecting content to be relevant to their particular needs and preferences. A study conducted by

DemandMetric found that 82% of consumers feel more positive about a company after reading custom content.

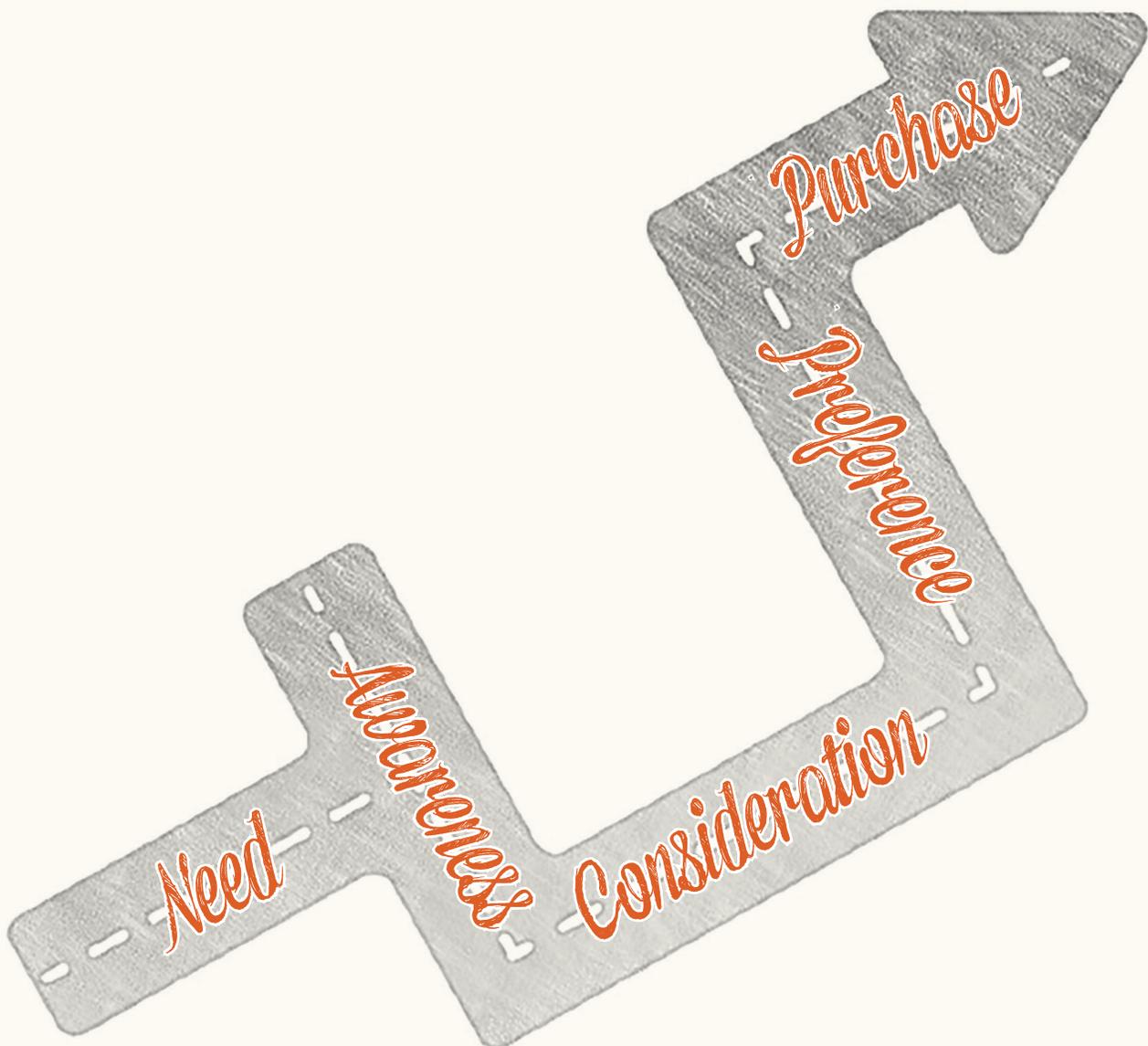
Clearly it is more important than ever to know all you can about your prospects as you create content for them. Taking a one-size-fits-all approach may give your prospects the impression that you don't understand them, making it more likely that they'll stop listening to you in favor of a brand that does understand them.

This is the idea that Account-based Marketing was born for. It's been around a long time. In the early days, we called it 1:1 marketing. Way back then (in 2004) ABM was a direct marketing process. We identified the accounts and execs we most wanted to reach and courted them with such things as cold calls, emails and even direct mail. Eventually, as Internet technologies became increasingly robust, ABM vendors rose to meet the challenge with varying degrees of accuracy and granularity. The digital revolution has veritably transformed b2b marketing. What was a powerful idea before, is now a supercharged reality. In short ABM is reaching the potential that it could only promise just over a decade ago.



In our new world B2b buyers no longer expect to be regarded as an approximation and instead expect brands to know exactly who they are. In b2b terms, this means knowing where they are in the buying cycle and using account-based marketing to power your targeted advertising and content syndication programs to supply the entire buying committee with the content they need when they need it.

In this way you're nurturing prospects before you even know them, and before they even know that they're being nurtured.

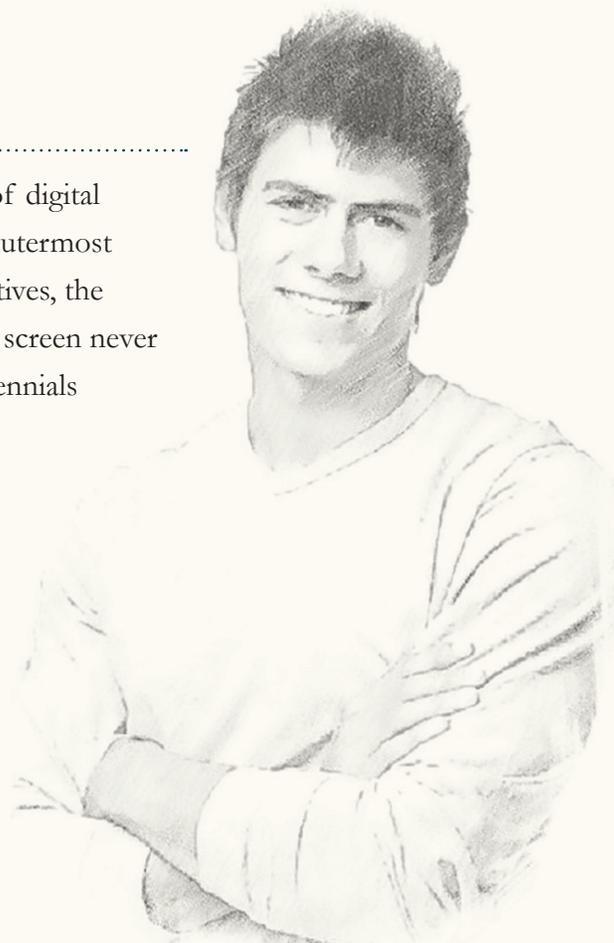


Section 5 *The Millennials*

The b2b digital landscape is changing. Long a country of digital immigrants, those hardy souls who first colonized the outermost regions of the Internet are ceding territory to digital natives, the Millennials who grew up as the digital realm matured, a screen never far from their hands. The fact that more and more Millennials are now entering the workforce every day is just one of the things that will change the way b2b marketers work forever.

The Millennial B2B Buyer

According to Google, 50% of Millennials are doing initial product research so it's essential that your company is there at the right time with the right content.



50% of Millennials are doing initial product research *(Source: Google).*

56% of Millennials feel they make better decisions at work with a variety of opinions and input from their peers *(Source: IBM).*

The B2B buying process is already **57% of the way down the path to a decision** before anybody will perform an action on your site. *(Source: Google).*

42% of researchers use a mobile device during the B2B purchasing process *(Source: Google).*

The B2B Buyer is 70% completed with the research before engaging a sales rep *(Sirius Decisions).*

82% of prospects feel more positive about a company after reading custom content *(DemandMetric).*

Here's some facts you need to think about when marketing to Millennials:

- They're committed to research. The B2B buying process is already **57% of the way** down the path to a decision before anybody will perform an action on your site*.
- They're Always On. **87% of millennials** say that their smartphone never leaves their side*.
- They're Collaborative. A recent IBM study found that **56% of Millennials** feel they make better decisions at work with a variety of opinions and input from their peers.

Marketing to the Millennial: Research

Companies do not make b2b purchasing decisions lightly, so the Millennial doing the initial research is the gatekeeper to consideration. If they can't find useful, insightful information, your company will be cut out of the game before it even has a chance. Your marketing organization should be producing content in a variety of ways: whitepapers, webinars, blog articles, and videos that give the researcher an opportunity to consume information in the way that's most appropriate to them. But more to the point, you should target your information wisely with contextual display ads and native content that lives on the publications where the prime research is actually done.

Marketing to the Millennial: Always On

Like most of us, Millennials carry work home in the form of the smartphone. B2b research no longer occurs solely at one's desk. According to Google, 42% of researchers use a mobile device during the B2B purchasing process. As such it's important that your products and services are in front of a user when and where they're engaged in the research process. Be available on all screens. What's more, the mobile experience should be user-friendly and easy to use.

Marketing to the Millennial: Collaboration

Millennials understand that part of being a team is working with that team. This highlights the importance of account based marketing. By targeting both the early researcher and the entire buying team, you can not only build awareness for your products, you can also lay the groundwork for a common language among them. Thus, when a millennial researcher turns to their peer and asks if they've heard of company X, the answer can be an enthusiastic yes.

In the end, Millennials aren't much different than prior generations. They want to do their jobs well, to be recognized for their skills, to advance and grow their careers. B2b marketers that provide them with the best, most accessible information when and where it's most needed will see the most success.



*Source: Google

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