



Quick-start strategy toolkit

The CMO's buyer alignment blueprint

**Actionable tools & tactics to benchmark,
prioritize, and accelerate your marketing
strategy for today's buyer**



Inside the toolkit:

- ➔ Insight from IDC's 2025 Tech Buyer Behavior Survey
- ➔ Self-assessment: How future-ready is your strategy?
- ➔ Prioritization matrix: Identify quick wins and align efforts
- ➔ Buyer alignment checklist to activate with your team

Today's buyers are rewriting marketing's playbook.

It's up to you to listen to them.

As AI, digital self-service, and shifting buyer expectations redefine the path to purchase, CMOs and their teams must move faster than ever to meet their audiences where they are, and where they're going next.

This toolkit distills insights from IDC's latest buyer behavior research into a practical, actionable guide to help you:

- Assess your organization's readiness for the new era of buyer engagement
- Identify quick wins and long-term priorities for Q4 and beyond
- Align strategy, data, and storytelling to deliver measurable impact

Based on the 2025 Tech Buyer Behavior Study, this actionable diagnostic tool offers the frameworks and guidance you need to benchmark your organization against buyer expectations, prioritize quick wins, and accelerate success for 2026.

About IDC

IDC's Executive Insights team brings the global data, market intelligence, and advisory frameworks CMOs need to transform insight into advantage and connect marketing performance directly to business growth.

What's inside

Steps

- 01 Understand today's top 5 buyer behaviour shifts
- 02 Assess your team's readiness for digital-first buyers
- 03 Prioritize marketing efforts for buyer engagement
- 04 Activate your buyer alignment strategy
- 05 Accelerate with IDC expertise



Step 1: Understand today's top 5 buyer behaviour shifts

1. Buying tasks go digital

71% of B2B tech buyers prefer digital channels, even for complex purchases.

The digital-first buyer is permanent. High-value, multi-stakeholder purchases are increasingly executed through digital and e-commerce channels.

CMO imperative: Optimize the journey for digital-first discovery and decision-making.

2. Connection moments redefined

Human engagement still matters, but only at precise, trust-building moments.

Human touch points are no longer linear handoffs. They are targeted, contextual interventions that deepen trust or clarify complexity. Buyers expect orchestrated digital + human journeys.

CMO imperative: Integrate digital experiences with human interactions like events, intentionally.

3. The rise of AI as a buyer

80% of buyers now use AI agents to assist or perform buying tasks.

AI-agents are now part of the buying team. Your content and data must be structured for human and machine consumption.

CMO imperative: Optimize content for both human and AI discovery.

4. Interactive, in-the-moment engagement

Buyers expect engagement to be instant, interactive, and personalized.

Static content journeys are being replaced by real-time digital interactions that anticipate intent and provide answers instantly.

CMO imperative: Replace static content with interactive, real-time tools.

5. Purpose and values influence buying decisions

88% of buyers say brand alignment with their values influences their choice of vendor.

Emotional connection and purpose alignment are emerging as decisive differentiators in B2B. Brand authenticity now drives trust and loyalty.

CMO imperative: Make authenticity and purpose visible in every touch point.



The greatest danger in times of turbulence is to act with yesterday's logic."

Peter Drucker



Step 2: Assess your team's readiness for digital-first buyers

Rate your organization on each dimension below from 1 (exploring) to 5 (optimized). Then, total your score to see your readiness level and IDC guidance on next steps.

Be candid, this diagnostic tool is designed to spotlight your biggest opportunities for growth.

Scoring legend

- 1 - Exploring** Efforts are informal or ad hoc. Your organization recognizes the importance of this area but has taken little to no structured action.
- 2 - Initiating** Initial frameworks or pilots are in motion. Teams are testing ideas or tools, but processes are inconsistent and results vary.
- 3 - Building** Structured programs are in place and expanding. Efforts are coordinated across functions, with early measurement and refinement underway.
- 4 - Operational** This capability is integrated into key marketing workflows, supported by governance and data, and regularly measured for performance.
- 5 - Optimized** Fully embedded, continuously improved, and delivering measurable impact.

Scorecard

Category	Description	Score (1-5)
Digital maturity	Digital enablement across the full buyer journey, from discovery to renewal.	
Human-digital balance	Integration of human touch points and digital interactions at key decision moments.	
AI-readiness	Systems and data structured to support AI-assisted discovery, engagement, and transactions.	
Content responsiveness	Ability to deliver personalized, real-time content to match buyer intent signals.	
Brand resonance	Emotional and values-based alignment between your brand and target buyers.	



Understanding your score

Total score	Readiness	Interpretation
5-10	Emerging	You're early in your digital-to-AI evolution. Focus on foundational data and content readiness.
11-17	Developing	You've begun integrating digital and AI elements, but gaps remain in orchestration and real-time engagement.
18-22	Maturing	You're aligning with most new buyer expectations. Focus on embedding emotional and AI-personalized experiences.
23-25	Leading	You are a model for digital-first, AI-augmented marketing excellence. Prioritize continuous optimization and governance.

IDC guidance by readiness level



Emerging

Begin by establishing a clean, connected data layer and consistent measurement framework. Pilot an AI-driven content or chat engagement use case. IDC's Data-Driven Marketing Benchmarks and AI Readiness Assessments help teams define the right data sources, KPIs, and technology architecture to support growth. [Learn how here](#)



Developing

Map, then align your digital, human, and AI touch points across the buyers' journey, and invest in journey orchestration. Use IDC's Buyer Journey Mapping and Digital Experience Maturity Framework to prioritize where automation and personalization will have the greatest impact. [Learn how here](#)



Maturing

Refine your content supply chain and brand storytelling to strengthen emotional connection and trust. Implement personalization engines and emotional brand storytelling. IDC's Content Intelligence Research and Brand Performance Index help CMOs benchmark against top performers and identify next-stage differentiators. [Learn how here](#)



Leading

Shift your focus to governance, ethics, and innovation at scale. Establish AI governance and trust frameworks to sustain competitive advantage. IDC's Executive Advisory Programs and Marketing Leadership Councils provide future-focused insights and peer collaboration to sustain competitive advantage and long-term trust. [Learn how here](#)



Step 3: Prioritize marketing efforts for buyer engagement

Quadrant	Definition	Examples	Priority action
High impact/ Low effort	Fast wins that align with immediate buyer needs and boost engagement.	- Add AI chat on pricing pages - Optimize metadata for AI search - Create quick value calculators	Execute immediately
High impact/ High effort	Strategic transformations that build long-term buyer alignment.	- Redesign content supply chain - Integrate real-time personalization - Align brand purpose storytelling	Plan upcoming execution
Low impact/ Low effort	Minor improvements that can supplement higher-value initiatives.	- Update campaign visuals - Refresh nurture emails - Improve landing page UX	Complete opportunistically
Low impact/ High effort	Projects that consume resources but add limited strategic value.	- Large, non-targeted event sponsorships - Redundant tool integrations	Defer or eliminate from your plan

Template: Prioritization matrix

Complete this template with your ongoing and planned initiatives, then reference the guide above to align priorities and focus your efforts on those that will yield the highest impact for your organization.

High impact/Low effort Execute immediately 	High impact/High effort Plan for upcoming execution
Low impact/Low effort Do opportunistically 	Low impact/High effort Defer or eliminate from your plan



Step 4: Activate your buyer alignment strategy

Complete the checklist to turn insights into concrete action. Mark your progress and identify dependencies across your marketing and operations teams.

- ☐ Audit your data and confirm AI readiness
- ☐ Map where digital and human engagement intersect
- ☐ Rework your top-performing content into interactive formats
- ☐ Optimize content metadata for LLM and chatbot visibility
- ☐ Pilot an AI-guided engagement touchpoint (e.g., pricing chatbot)
- ☐ Integrate emotional brand storytelling in 2026 campaigns
- ☐ Define AI governance and responsible use policies
- ☐ Train teams on AI-assisted sales and marketing tools
- ☐ Build a cross-functional content supply chain
- ☐ Schedule your IDC Strategy Briefing to validate and accelerate your roadmap



Step 5: Accelerate with IDC expertise

IDC helps CMOs turn those ambitions into **measurable results through data-driven insight, advisory expertise, and peer-validated benchmarks**, tailored to your organization's stage of maturity.

Your focus	What you need	What you gain with IDC
Explore AI implementation Book a strategy call →	Direction on where to start, high-ROI AI use cases, and clarity on your data gaps.	Access 11B+ tech datapoints to quantify market opportunity and validate investment priorities, and ROI models of digital and AI initiatives, providing credible, data-driven justification for growth. Outcome: Faster AI adoption with reduced risk and measurable impact.
Build integrated strategies & programs Book a strategy call →	Tools and insights to connect data, content, and execution across teams.	Tailored research and advisory projects that align buyer journeys, messaging, and GTM motions. Leverage IDC's Strategic Market Insights to identify emerging opportunities and shape go-to-market priorities. Outcome: Integrated marketing strategies that accelerate pipeline and growth.
Optimize & measure impact Book a strategy call →	Visibility into what's working, ROI, channel performance, and business impact.	Research-driven benchmarks, dashboards, and performance frameworks to validate ROI and refine spend. IDC's analytics and enablement tools translate insight into measurable sales and marketing efficiency. Outcome: Proven marketing impact and measurable ROI.
Trust & thought leadership Book a strategy call →	A platform to elevate brand credibility, purpose, and thought leadership.	Co-create credible, analyst-led content, white papers, and campaigns backed by IDC research. Engage in analyst-led events and community forums to amplify visibility and trust. Outcome: Elevated brand authority, stronger buyer trust, and thought-leadership differentiation.

Explore how IDC partners with marketing leaders

