

A close-up profile of a woman's face, looking down and to the left. Overlaid on her face and the background are various digital graphics: a blue dotted grid, a solid blue line graph, and a dashed blue line graph. The background is a blurred, modern interior with wooden paneling.

Digital First: A New Strategy for Today's Buyer Journey

IDC eBook



The marketing and sales landscape is currently undergoing a drastic change. Companies are facing the reality of reaching and influencing a **predominantly digital-first buyer**. Today's buyer is fully engaged across multiple digital channels and information sources throughout the entire journey, including during the purchase stage and post-sales.

The linear customer journey, which consists of a clear split between digital and human engagement, and a handover from marketing to sales quite early in the journey, has become dated. It is being replaced by a new, **"always on" digital process**, interspersed with human touchpoints, and a close and consistent collaboration between marketing and sales.

Adapting your strategy is imperative to successfully engage your customers and grow.

In this eBook, we will deep dive into steps you can take now to adapt your business strategy and successfully speak to the new, digital customer.



B2B Buyers With B2C Expectations: The New Customer

Customers' expectations and behaviors reflect those of B2C buyers. They prefer to **self-service on digital channels** such as chat and messaging applications to complete buying tasks, including getting price quotes, seeing a demo, or obtaining personalized advice. And they expect you to **understand and provide value-based solutions** to their challenges, jobs to be done, and business outcomes they want to unleash for their companies.

This calls for a new marketing and sales model. "The current marketing and sales operating model fails in customer centricity and perpetuates the challenge B2B marketing and sales leaders face in a digital-first era — to establish **relevancy, nurture, and build relationships** among a growing number of influential individuals in a buying committee", says Laurie Buczek, Vice President, CMO Advisory Practice, IDC.

The new customer chooses digital to receive information, including buying tasks that historically were delivered via a human salesperson. Buyers also expect a **blend of physical and digital experiences**, prompting marketing to step up as the leader of the digital experience across the whole journey. When you create your content, think about how you will adapt it across various channels: an eBook can incorporate more interactive elements and touchpoints, and there can also be a shorter form version available as a blog post and a virtual event or video that dives into the topic.

Let's see which steps we need to take to implement this knowledge into our strategy.



72%

of decision-making information during the exploration stage will come from digital sources in the next 12 months.

2022 B2B Tech Buyer Survey, IDC



Adapt to the Buyer Journey

Today's challenge for marketing and sales is to serve several personas, each of them in different stages, at the same time.

The number of people influencing buying decisions is now on average 14. This means engaging with 14 personas that are at different points of the buyer journey in parallel. Additionally, each of these personas expects personalization and speed. They are looking for relevant content, at the right time and right channel.

It is necessary to adapt your content and strategy to serve all personas. Some simple steps include:

- Start **mapping out the various stages of the buyer journey for each persona, from exploration to evaluation and purchase.** Use this information to identify where each persona is in the process and target your marketing and sales strategies and content accordingly.
- **Use metrics that matter:** Identify the key expectations of buyers at each stage of the journey. That could be frictionless experience during early stages, relationship quality at later stages, and long-term value like revenue growth.
- **Social media marketing:** Use social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram to connect with potential customers and share customized content.
- **Email marketing:** Create and send targeted, relevant email campaigns
- **Content marketing:** Create and share data-driven content like blog posts, whitepapers, and videos.



56%

of tech buyers agree that they won't engage with or respond to vendor outreach unless it is personalized for relevancy.

2022 B2B Tech Buyer Survey, IDC



Focus on Personalization

B2B buyers expect the same high level of personalization that B2C buyers have been accustomed to. IDC's 2020 B2B Technology Buyer Survey found that **66% of tech buyers agree that their decision to read or view something is influenced by whether it's personalized.**

Here are some ways to implement personalization for B2B customers:

1. **Continuously build a deeper understanding of your buyer:** Use technologies that support customer intelligence analytics, data aggregation, AI, and location, just to name a few. This will help you to understand the needs, preferences, and pain points of your B2B customers.
2. **Use account-based marketing (ABM):** ABM allows you to create customized content and offers for each account or customer, which can increase engagement and conversions.
3. **Personalize your website:** Use data and analytics to personalize the content and offers on your website for each visitor. This can include personalized product recommendations, targeted offers, and customized landing pages.
4. **Use targeted email marketing:** Use segmentation and personalization in your email marketing campaigns to create targeted messages for each customer or account. This can include personalized subject lines, content, and offers.
5. **Provide personalized customer service:** Train your sales team to provide personalized support to each customer. This can include using customer data to tailor responses and offering customized solutions to their specific needs.
6. **Use predictive analytics:** Use predictive analytics to identify patterns and trends in your customer data. This can help you anticipate customer needs and proactively offer personalized solutions.



Emphasize Value and ROI

B2B buyers are increasingly focused on the value and Return on Investment (ROI) of their purchases. Make sure to articulate measurable benefits of your products and solution during all touchpoints.

Highlight cost savings: Show how your product or service can help the customer save money in the long run. This can include reducing operational costs, increasing efficiency, and improving productivity.

Focus on outcomes: Emphasize the outcomes that your product or service can deliver, such as increased revenue, improved customer satisfaction, and higher employee morale. This helps the customer see the value of your offering beyond just the price tag.

Use case studies and testimonials: Use real-world examples of how your product or service has helped other B2B customers achieve their goals and see a positive ROI. Case studies and testimonials provide social proof and help build trust with potential customers.

Use data and analytics: Use data and analytics to measure the impact of your product or service on the customer's business. This can include metrics such as increased revenue, improved efficiency, and reduced costs. Use this data to show the customer the ROI of your offering.

Offer a free trial or demo: Offer the customer a free trial or demo of your product or service so they can see the value for themselves. This can help build trust and increase the likelihood of a sale.

Provide a clear ROI calculation: Provide the customer with a clear calculation of the expected ROI of your product or service. This can help them see the financial benefits of investing in your offering.



59%

of B2B buyers are concerned about privacy when vendors seem to know a lot about them.

2022 B2B Tech Buyer Survey, IDC

Build Trust and Relationships

B2B buyers want to work with vendors they trust and have strong relationships with. Furthermore, they expect you to care about more than profits. In a recent IDC survey, 66% of all tech buyers state that a company's reputation for contributing to environmental and social causes is a very important factor to take into account when building trust.

Important factors that contribute to trust include:

- Product or service performance benchmarks
- Reputation for product reliability
- Company practices for data treatment and protection
- Reputation for great support and service
- Pricing transparency
- 3rd party recommendations (e.g. analysts, rating, experts)

Digital sales can help build trust. Humanizing ways to engage with your brand via digital channels like chat and messaging apps and optimizing customer experience will help build long-term relationships by providing **exceptional service, being responsive to their needs, and demonstrating your expertise and industry knowledge.**



Continuously Adapt and Optimize

The B2B buyer journey is continually evolving, so monitoring your sales results and adjusting your strategy as needed is essential. Forward-leaning marketing leaders are evolving into customer-focused, data-driven, precision marketers. We are only at the beginning of the new digital-first, experiential era.

Remember to:

- Use data to build **customer intelligence**. Constantly map the data gathered and the data needed.
- Establish a **team-of-teams partnership** between sales and marketing.
- Dispense with the classic content playbook. Digital-first buyers expect more **interactive, immersive, and digital content**. The days of buyers gravitating toward a downloadable PDF case study as the desired information source is gone.
- **Close skill gaps** and gather the right people on your teams.



In one of IDC's recent surveys, over 76% of companies said that closing gaps in critical skill sets is a major issue, especially when it comes to using and interpreting data.

If you want to learn more about using data and insights to adapt your strategy, we can help.

Being digital first means being one step ahead of your customer's buyer journey. It requires having a deep understanding not only of their needs but also of the context in which they operate. But how do you start?

IDC is here to guide you and help you make informed choices - from planning your strategy by sizing your market, to marketing your solution by leveraging research for your content narrative and to selling your solution by helping you generate leads.

IDC Custom Solutions

We can guide you in designing the buyer journey by helping you assess and prioritize the right market, communicate demonstrate customer value, increase qualified lead generation, target new growth opportunities and elevate your brand awareness.

- Plan better with tailored market insights and data to understand your buyer's changing behavior and new journey
- Develop strong value proposition, build and establish your brand as thought leader
- Improve demand generation and accelerate your conversations through industry-leading content
- Understand customer spending and improve targeting to accelerate decisions, and increase win-rates and customer advocacy

[Learn more...](#)

Are you ready to shape your buyer's journey? [Contact us](#) today.



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