

The B2B Buyer Persona Framework

B2B buyer personas differ from B2C personas in a few important ways. B2C personas are often built on demographics and personal preferences, but marketers should focus B2B personas on business needs and environments. By building personas using the attributes outlined in this report, marketing can focus on clear business needs and value propositions and ensure that messaging is targeted and compelling. They can also use these attributes to build persona profiles that can be activated across the buyer's journey, instead of using an interesting but vague picture of the organization's buyers. In this report, we describe the types of information required to build B2B buyer personas.

Functional Attributes

A B2B buyer persona is a representative aggregation of individuals with similar characteristics based on job responsibilities. Organizations should define and aggregate that B2B buyer personas in terms of the following functional attributes:

- **Job role.** Buyer persona definition is centered on job role. Individuals should be grouped by their day-to-day responsibilities and accountabilities, as well as how their performance is measured.
- **Common titles.** Most personas encompass multiple job titles. For example, the job role of head of marketing may be represented by various titles (e.g., CMO, senior vice president of marketing, global marketing vice president) depending on the organization. Compile the titles commonly associated with the job role to pull lists from marketing databases and help sales reps identify prospects by persona.
- **Position on organizational chart.** The persona's position in the organizational structure can be an important indicator of decision-making impact and influence. Depending on the size and complexity of the purchase, senior-level individuals and lower-level staff have different information needs and priorities. Defining where they fit within the organization also helps sellers identify the right person to seek out.
- **Buying center.** The entity that holds the budget for a purchase is typically a business unit, department, or team. It's essential to identify the persona's buying center to target the right individuals and — because each type of buying center has distinctive objectives — understand their buying needs and buying processes.
- **Firmographics.** Personas typically differ by organization type, geographic region, or segment. For example, the head of marketing at a Fortune 500 company will have needs and behaviors that differ from those of the head of marketing at a startup. If possible, subdivide persona definitions by market segments and pertinent firmographics. If firmographic levels cannot be subdivided (due to timing or a lack of data or because marketing resources can't support multiple go-to-market pathways), start with a horizontal global persona that includes all segments.

Emotive Attributes

Insight into each persona's aspirations and goals — along with fears and worries — is used to create meaningful messaging, content, and sales scripts, and even provide input for product or service innovation. To enable these uses, buyer persona profiles must include the persona's needs, challenges, and initiatives. Be as precise and detailed as possible during the collection of initiatives, challenges, and business drivers, reflecting the information that relates to business and personal value delivered to the persona:

- **Initiatives.** Determine what programs and projects the persona is tasked with and capture each persona's feelings and aspirations about these initiatives, as well as motivations and personal career aspirations. How does the persona earn credibility and get promoted?

The B2B Buyer Persona Framework

Functional Attributes				
Job Role	Common Titles	Position on Organizational Chart	Buying Center	Firmographics
Emotive Attributes				
Initiatives	Challenges	Business Drivers	Buyer Needs	Vocabulary
Behavioral Attributes				
Content Asset Preferences		Interaction Preferences		Trusted Sources
Decision-Making Attributes (based on buying group defined in the go-to-market architecture)				
Buyer Role (Within A Buying Group)	Engagement Level	Provider Selection Drivers		Category Perceptions

- **Challenges.** Identify the persona's business issues, fears, problems, and pain points, including factors that could impede the attainment of objectives and the persona's feelings about these challenges (e.g., uncertainties, doubts).
- **Business drivers.** These are imperatives based on the persona's functional responsibility and business agenda — the lenses through which the persona evaluates the impact of purchasing the offering. Decision drivers can be operational, financial, or strategic. Personas focused on financial decision drivers are interested in how the purchase will affect revenue growth, profitability, and cost. Personas focused on operational decision drivers are interested in the offering's effectiveness and how it will improve operational efficiency and productivity. Personas focused on strategic decision drivers are interested in the offering's impact on growth, expansion, and competencies.
- **Buyer needs.** Using information gathered about the persona's initiatives, challenges, and business drivers,

marketers must now articulate a clear and concise buyer need, stated as a desired outcome that has business value for the persona. The most common type of need is a need for something — to achieve a business or technical goal through the application of an offering that provides distinct benefits. Another type of need is a need to do something, which has a timeline for completion and highly motivates the buyer to take action (see "Defining Customer Needs And Understanding Needs Dimensions"). A persona may have multiple needs; prioritize relevant needs that are most likely to attract the persona to the offering, isolating the primary buyer need when possible.

- **Vocabulary.** The persona's language and vocabulary may vary by industry, geography, and functional responsibility. Note the vernacular used by potential buyers when discussing needs, initiatives, and challenges. These keywords and phrases are critical for creating a value proposition and messaging that resonates. Messaging should also enable the engineering of search engine marketing and optimization to attract buyers to the content.

Behavioral Attributes

Gathering behavioral attributes is critical to ensuring that the messaging developed for this persona can be activated effectively across marketing programs. To determine the best ways to reach and communicate with a target audience, marketers must understand how the relevant personas prefer to consume and access information across the buyer's journey (see "Creating Journey Maps To Enable Buying Decisions"). Our research shows that personas differ in their preferences at each buying stage:

- **Content asset preferences.** To build effective content strategy and assets, marketers must understand the persona's content preferences (e.g., type of information, format) throughout the buyer's journey. For example, a persona may prefer short-form content assets (e.g., blog post, infographic, demo, video) to long-form assets (e.g., white paper, presentation, analyst report) early in the buying stages and more detailed content types later in the journey (see "Planning For Messaging Activation").
- **Interaction preferences.** As personas move through the buyer's journey, they prefer to interact with the selling organization through various nonhuman (e.g., accessing a free trial, searching the internet, exploring the provider website) and human methods (e.g., dialogue with provider reps, attending an industry conference, conversation with a customer reference). Persona tactic preferences should inform the planning process for content activation mapping (see "The SiriusDecisions Buying Interactions Model").
- **Trusted sources.** These include anyone or anything that influences the buyer's decision-making, such as analysts, publications, and thought leaders. In addition, catalog the physical or virtual places where the persona goes to network or exchange information with peers (e.g., LinkedIn, online communities, forums, publications, events). By identifying a persona's trusted sources, marketers can better direct their program spending to effectively reach the target buying audience.

Decision-Making Attributes

Decision-making attributes capture how the persona makes choices (see "The SiriusDecisions B2B Buying

Decision Process Framework"), details around the persona's involvement, and what factors to consider. This attribute level is highly dependent on the makeup of the buying group, as the majority of B2B purchases are not made individually (see "Capturing Buying Group Dynamics In The Buying Decision Process"). The size of the buying group can vary depending on the size or importance of the purchase. Individual buying scenarios are simple purchases that involve one or two people, consensus scenarios involve several people across several departments, and committee scenarios usually involve large groups and require executive approval (see "The SiriusDecisions Buying Spectrum"). Understanding the persona's role in the buying group and how the buyer persona makes a purchase decision is key to defining that persona:

- **Buyer role.** Each persona has a specific buyer role in a buying group characterized by decision-making criteria and power level (see "B2B Buyer Roles"). The five common buyer roles are champion, influencer, decision-maker, user, and ratifier (a professional purchaser or negotiator). In individual or consensus buying scenarios, a persona may represent multiple buyer roles (e.g., a user may also be considered an influencer). In larger consensus or committee scenarios, each persona is likely tied to only one buyer role that collaborates with other roles involved in the buying process, and more than one persona may be assigned to some roles (especially with multiple influencer roles).
- **Engagement level.** Depending on their role in the buying group, buyers participate in some or all phases of the buying process, and their engagement levels may peak at different points in the buying cycle. For example, a CFO in an independent buying scenario is likely to participate in all buying phases — education, solution, and selection. However, a CFO at a large organization engaged in a consensus or committee buying scenario for a larger purchase might participate only in the last phase to sign off on the final decision. Understanding each persona's level of engagement in terms of presence (fully, significantly, moderately, slightly, or not at all involved) and authority (high, average, low, or no influence) helps marketers focus on the decision phases that are most important for a specific persona, understand the buying

group as a whole, and prioritize personas for further development and program activation.

- **Provider selection drivers.** Identify what filters the buyer uses to compare providers and choose or recommend one over another (remember that different buyer roles have different inputs — not all are decision-makers). These might include the importance of ongoing support, the provider's product roadmap, price, or how the company is perceived or behaves. In addition to buyer interviews, brand studies can provide relevant insight into provider perceptions.
- **Category perceptions.** Marketers must any existing perceptions the buyer has of the category the organization is working in. Does this persona strongly

prefer (or dislike) particular products or providers? Do these buyers typically have strong feelings about how providers in this category are or are not responding to their needs? Do they have any trust issues or frustrations with the buying process? Do they rely on any category-specific sources? As with provider selection drivers, corporate brand studies may provide useful insights. Understanding how a persona perceives the category can greatly help sellers plan their approach and influence messaging if consistencies are found across the buying group.