Research



How B2B Buyers Find, Evaluate and Choose Technology Today

B2B Content Engagement & Buyer Behavior Report

informa techtarget

ANNUAL BUYER RESEARCH · 2026 EDITION



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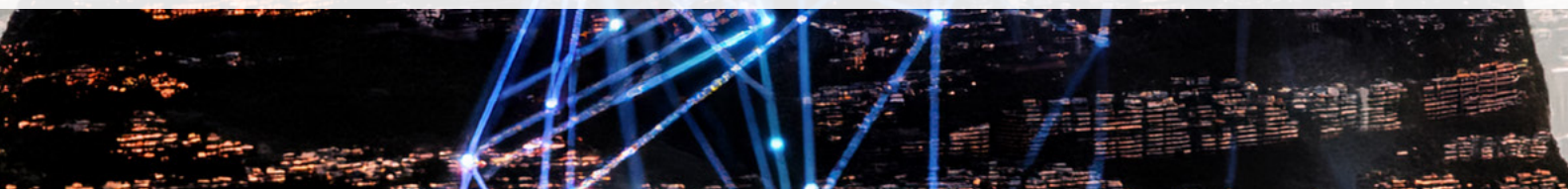
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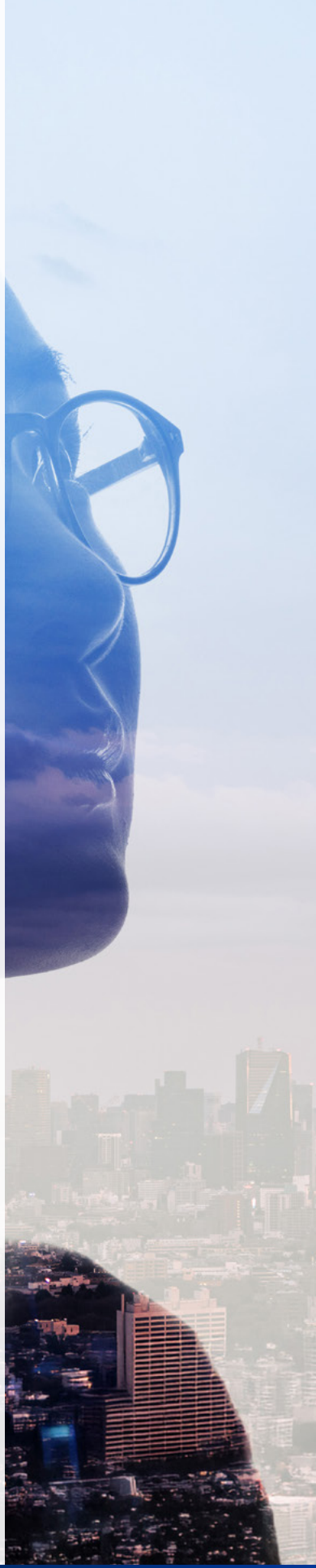


Buyers have changed how they decide. Here's what 499 of them told us.

AI now shows up in nearly every research path, and buying committees have outgrown the programs built to score them. Decision-makers are also pulling from far more sources than the traditional funnel accounts for.

Every year, Informa TechTarget surveys the people behind B2B technology buying to find out how research and purchase decisions really happen, instead of how the funnel says they should. This year, 499 global respondents told a consistent story across content, channels, AI, and the buying process itself. Buyers are using more sources and pulling more stakeholders into the decision, and AI now sits alongside the channels they've always trusted.

You may notice a new name this year. Our annual read on media habits, formerly called Media Consumption, is now the B2B Content Engagement & Buyer Behavior Study. Media habits alone stopped being the whole story. Buyers are also deciding differently, with more people in the room and AI acting as a key assistant throughout the research journey. This report is built to work as a reference, whether you read it cover to cover or jump to the findings that matter most to your team. Trend Watch covers the four biggest shifts. The two sections after that dig deep into the content engagement and buyer behavior data underneath these shifts, with practical takeaways you can use to sharpen your strategies today.



4 Things Buyers Are Telling Us

The four shifts underneath every section in this report.

1 Being surfaced by AI earns visibility, not belief

58% CLICK THROUGH — **−16 pts** — **42%** GAIN TRUST

AI is now a top-three source during active research and evaluation, and it drives real clicks. But only 42% say a citation builds trust. Put the investment into the sources instead: the analyst coverage, newsletters, and independent media the models already read. Optimization alone can't manufacture the kind of holistic authority that builds real buyer confidence.

2 Competence is now the baseline



72% believe half or more of what they read is AI-generated

72% of buyers believe half or more of what they read is AI-generated. Named experts and original data are fast becoming table stakes. What clears the bar is what a machine can't fake: specifics and a point of view only you possess.

3 Your funnel is scoring one buyer while a committee decides

6 in 10



● BUSINESS ● TECHNICAL ● STAFF

buying teams that changed shape in the past two years

6 in 10 buying teams have changed shape over the past two years, with business and technical stakeholders joining the decision. But most demand gen programs are still built around the individual lead. If you're scoring the one contact who filled out the form, you're only managing a fraction of the room that moves the purchase forward. So the lead converts, but the committee still says no.

4 Your budget may not match how buyers discover you

FIRST DISCOVERY OF A NEW VENDOR

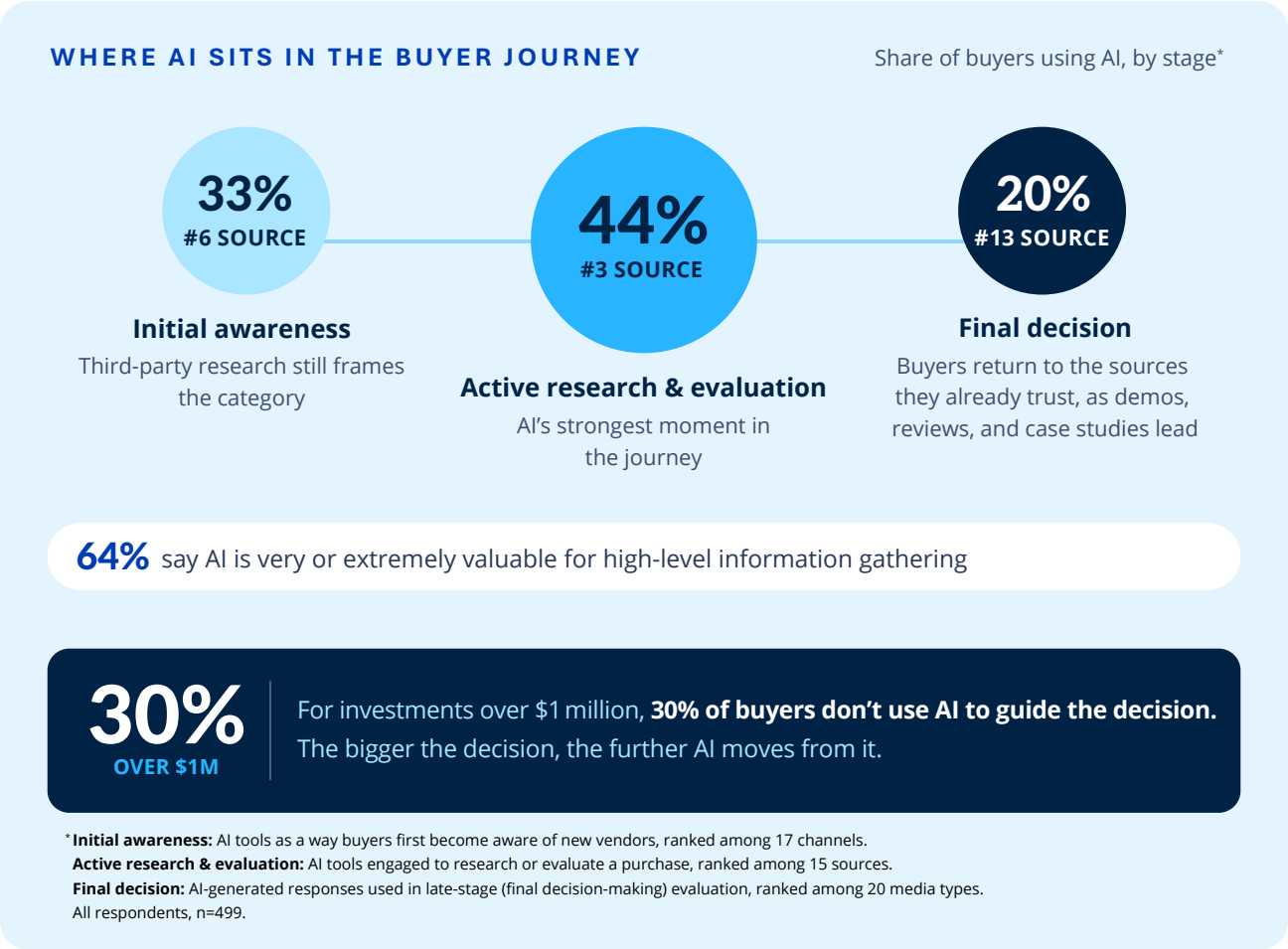


Newsletters outperform every other first-discovery channel, while vendor outreach trails at 31%. Yet the channels buyers credit with discovery are often the hardest to connect directly to pipeline. When measurement rewards what's easiest to attribute, it can undervalue what buyers say actually put a vendor on their radar.

TREND ONE

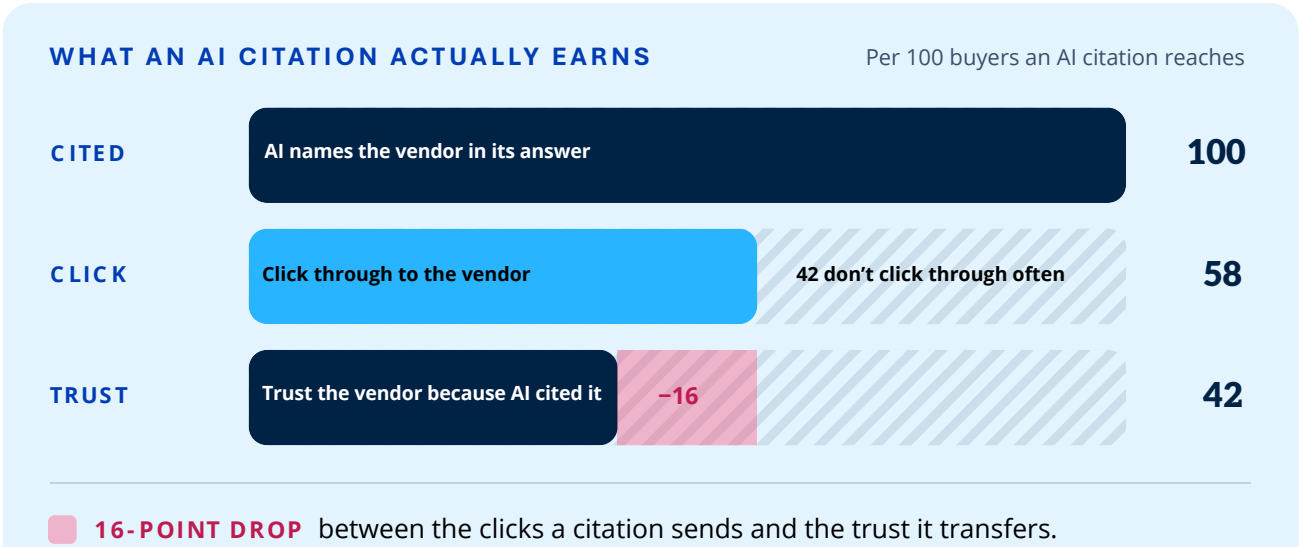
AI Visibility Is Built on Human Credibility

At both ends of the buyer journey, from first awareness to final decision, buyers still lean on human-vetted sources.



AI is changing how buyers evaluate technology, but it hasn't replaced the sources they trust. At the beginning of the journey, buyers still turn to third-party research to understand a category and identify what's worth considering. AI is part of that mix, but its role changes as the journey progresses: 33% of buyers use AI during initial awareness, while 44% use it during active research and evaluation, making it the No. 3 source at that stage. And 64% say AI is very or extremely valuable for high-level information gathering.

AI doesn't disappear at the decision stage: 20% still use AI-generated responses in final evaluations. But buyers lean harder on proof they can verify, led by free trials and demos (42%), product reviews (40%), and case studies (40%). An AI citation alone doesn't create belief: only 42% say they trust a vendor because AI cited it. But when AI does point buyers toward a vendor, 58% often or very often click through to the vendor's website to learn more.



AI's strongest moment is the middle of the buyer journey, but human-vetted sources still matter most when buyers form awareness and make decisions. Many of the sources that help a company get discovered are also part of what AI draws on. So AI visibility starts with the same credibility buyers have always looked for.

> "No amount of AI model optimization will make AI reflect credibility you haven't built. On the decisions that matter most, buyers take the question straight to the sources they already trust."

Lieu Thi Pham
VP of Strategy, Brand and Content, Informa TechTarget



Optimization alone won't save you

Many budgets are already shifting toward AI visibility. The risk is spending too much of it on the surface and too little on the source. Structure, parseability, metadata, and other technical fixes make content easier for models to find and cite, but they can't manufacture the authority behind it.

THE SHIFT

Build a body of credible, useful information that both human-vetted sources and AI can find and trust. Instead of optimizing for buyers and AI separately, make the underlying credibility strong enough to work for both.

Read: Closing the Gap Between Brand and AI Authority

See Where You Stand: Take the B2B AI Authority Assessment

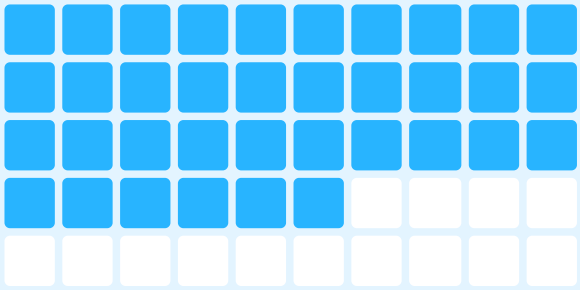
TREND TWO

A New Content Standard, Set by AI

When competence is cheap to produce, it stops setting you apart. What stands out now is named expertise, original data, and the specifics and point of view only you can provide.

THE ASSUMPTION OF MACHINE AUTHORSHIP

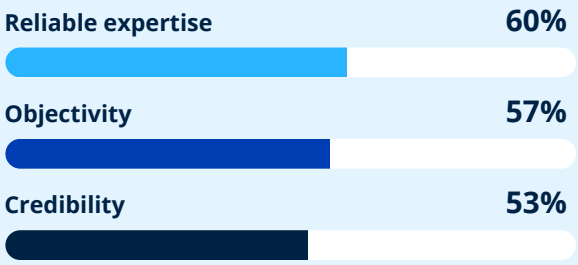
Each square = 2% of buyers



72% believe 50% or more of the content they encounter is generated by AI

AMONG THE TOP CRITERIA FOR CHOOSING A SOURCE

Share of buyers naming each



+38% C-suite and senior management are 38% more likely to prioritize source credibility than other buyers

Nearly 3 in 4 buyers believe half or more of the content they encounter is generated by AI. That perception changes how buyers approach content: polished, competent information is now the expected baseline rather than proof that a piece of content has something distinctive to say.

Reliable expertise (60%), objectivity (57%), and relevance to their pain points (55%) top buyers' criteria for choosing information, with credibility close behind (53%). And standards rise with seniority: C-suite and senior management are 38% more likely to prioritize source credibility than other buyers.

Content still matters, with vendor websites ranking in the top five media types in both early- and late-stage evaluation. But 61% of buyers say high-quality vendor content is hard to find. Buyers have plenty of information. What they're missing is content that speaks directly to their pain points, with enough original value to stand out and be worth consuming.

61%

say high-quality vendor content is hard to find

Different moments need different proof

What buyers expect from content changes as they get closer to a decision, so one format rarely covers both moments. Early on, they want education, and white papers and webinars hold more weight in the pre-shortlist stage. Trials, demos, and spec sheets help close the decision, while reviews and case studies stay in the top five at both stages.

WHAT CARRIES EACH STAGE

Pre-shortlist → decision

PRE-SHORTLIST · EDUCATE

- White papers
- Webinars

DECISION · PROVE

- Free trials/demos
- Spec sheets

TOP FIVE AT BOTH STAGES

- Reviews
- Case studies

THE SHIFT

Match the format to the stage and the audience, and make sure it brings something buyers can't get anywhere else, like original data or unique conversations that only your brand can own.

> "Nearly three in four buyers assume at least half of what they read is AI-generated. Polished, competent content is now the baseline, however it was made. What stands out is what only you can bring: your data, your experts, and a point of view you'll defend."

Lieu Thi Pham
VP of Strategy, Brand and Content,
Informa TechTarget



TREND THREE

The Lead Converts. The Committee Still Says No.

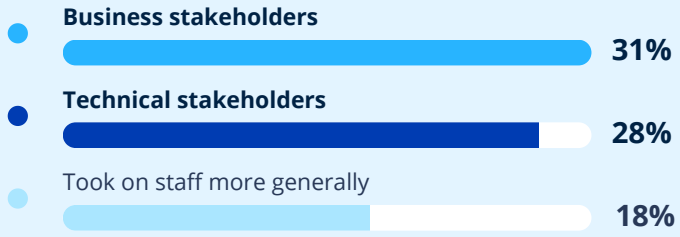
Your funnel is scoring one buyer while a growing group decides.

HOW THE BUYING TEAM CHANGED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS



6 in 10 buying teams have changed shape

WHO JOINED THOSE TEAMS



WHAT IT DOES TO THE PROCESS

48% describe it as **collaborative**, the top descriptor two years running

24% spend **more time discussing solutions internally**

The buying group is changing, and so is how it makes decisions. 6 in 10 buying teams have changed shape in the past two years, with 31% adding business stakeholders and 28% adding technical stakeholders. And the process itself is becoming more shared: 48% now describe their purchase process as collaborative, the top descriptor for the second year running, while 24% say they spend more time discussing solutions internally than they did before.

For demand gen, that means a lead can convert while the rest of the buying group stays unconvinced. MQL scoring, single-threaded nurture, and stage-based attribution are still mostly built around one person's journey. Meanwhile, that person is researching alongside colleagues who bring their own questions and priorities to the same decision.

The buyers your pipeline never reaches

Arming the champion only works if you know who else in the room needs convincing and you've built something for each of them. Several stakeholders can take separate research paths to a single purchase decision. Yet much of the demand gen infrastructure around the champion is still optimized for one contact's engagement, even though the committee makes the call.

That mismatch shows up further down the line as delay. Buy-in from business decision-makers (27%), lack of in-house expertise (29%), and ROI uncertainty (30%) are among the top reasons deals stall. A single lead score won't fix any of them. They usually mean the wider buying group still needs to be reached and convinced.

THE SHIFT

Measure the buying group instead of the individual lead. Track which roles have entered the conversation, then build parallel paths for each. Preference forms early, so make sure you're mapping and influencing the complete buying group long before initial demand surfaces.

> "Pipeline reviews keep blaming sales velocity or lead quality for stalls that are really about coverage. A deal marked 'stalled, no clear reason' often comes down to a committee member your funnel never reached."



Tara Faulkner
VP of Campaigns & Demand Generation, Informa TechTarget

STALLS A LEAD SCORE CAN'T FIX

Buyers naming each as a reason deals stall



All three live with people a single-threaded program never reaches. Full stall picture on page 25.

UNIFIED DEMAND

Make the buying group your unit of measurement. Use intent signals at the market, account, and person level to understand who's entering the conversation, then build parallel paths for the business and technical stakeholders those signals surface. Redefine "engaged" as multiple roles reached inside an account rather than one contact's activity score.

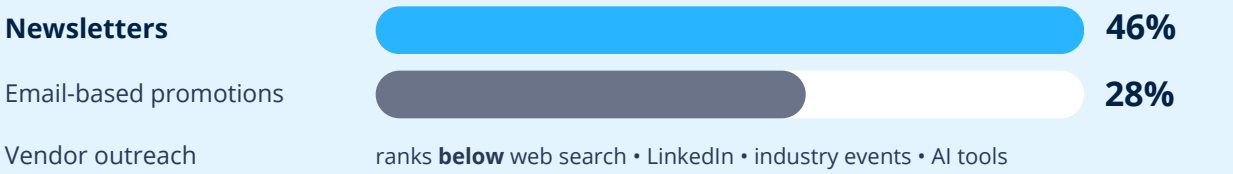
Read: Unifying Demand Generation

TREND FOUR

Are You Funding What's Easy to Attribute, Not What Works?

Your dashboard tells you what you can measure. Buyers tell you what actually got them there.

MEASURED · WHERE BUYERS FIRST BECOME AWARE OF A VENDOR



74% receive **four or more professional newsletters a week.** Buyers haven't tuned this channel out.

INTERPRETATION: NOT A MEASURED VARIABLE IN THIS STUDY

Paid and outbound are easier to attribute in a closed loop; newsletters, independent media, and analyst placements are harder to tie to a conversion. Attribution ease reflects common measurement practice. Buyers weren't asked about it.

Newsletters are the leading first-discovery channel in the study, with 46% of buyers naming them as where they first become aware of a new vendor. And buyers are reading plenty: 74% receive four or more professional newsletters a week.

Yet digital advertising sits near the bottom of early-stage media usage, at around 10%. Vendor outreach (emails and calls) ranks below web search, LinkedIn, industry events, and even AI tools as a first-awareness source.

Paid and outbound are easier to attribute in a closed loop, while newsletters, independent media, and analyst placements are harder to tie directly to a conversion. That creates a familiar budget problem: channels that build preference can get classified as "brand" or "comms" even when they influence demand.

Discovery doesn't show up in the budget

Paid and outbound still do real work later in the funnel. The problem is treating them as the default demand gen line item and everything else as a nice-to-have. That's the same siloed thinking **Unified Demand** is designed to fix. Brand builds preference and demand converts it, so both halves need a place in the budget.

TWO HALVES OF ONE JOB

Brand builds preference.

Newsletters, editorial programs, analyst research: the sources buyers credit with discovery.

→

Demand converts it.

Paid and outbound: the closed-loop half your dashboard already rewards.

FUND ONLY THE RIGHT HALF and you're paying to harvest preference you never planted.

> "Dashboards reward attribution, which isn't the same as effectiveness. Keep funding what's easy to measure and you'll keep paying to re-reach buyers whose shortlist is already set, while the channels that could make you the front-runner stay underfunded."

Staci M. Gullotta
CMO, Informa TechTarget



THE SHIFT

Put discovery into the demand budget. Fund the channels that build preference alongside those that convert it, and judge them on outcomes like shortlist inclusion and buying-group coverage in addition to last-click attribution. Sponsor the newsletters, editorial programs, and analyst research your buying groups already use, with KPIs that reflect their role in creating demand.



A Closer Look

The Data Behind the Trends

The buyer journey doesn't happen in a funnel. Uncover the research path behind the purchase.

Trend Watch covered four big shifts in how B2B buyers make decisions. The behavior underneath them tells the fuller story: where buyers start, what they come back to and what they skip, who else joins the decision, and what holds a purchase up. The next two sections break that behavior down for the teams who create demand and the teams who convert it.

Content Engagement 14

Where buyers discover information, which channels and formats earn their attention, what they expect from vendor content, and how that changes as a decision gets closer.

Buyer Behavior 23

How buying groups are changing, why deals stall, and how AI is becoming part of the path to the shortlist.

The Throughline

Buyers follow whatever research path makes sense to them, across channels, content, colleagues, competitors, and AI, and it rarely matches the funnel built around your programs. The data shows where those paths go and where your current model may be missing them.

Content Engagement



THE CROWDED MIDDLE

8%

of buyers call vendor content excellent. 44% call it average, which leaves plenty of room at the top.

What earns buyer attention, and what makes it worth keeping?

Trusted channels, the content buyers choose, and AI's growing role are all changing what it takes to earn attention and hold onto it. Here's where the data says content teams have the most leverage.

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Preferred Channels & Content 15
The journey begins in trusted channels

Newsletters 17
Never lost their grip on buyers

Vendor Content 18
Buyers are grading your relevance

Webinars & Video 19
Your webinar's next stop could be your competitor

Industry Events 20
The show ends. The research doesn't

Artificial Intelligence 22
The click that comes after the AI citation

PREFERRED CHANNELS & CONTENT

The Journey Begins in Trusted Channels

Buyers already know where to look. What they find there is the problem.

FIRST-DISCOVERY CHANNELS, RANKED

1	2	3
46%	**43%**	**41%**
Newsletters	**Web search**	**Independent media**

4	Industry events	**39%**	8	Peers / colleagues	**32%**
5	LinkedIn	**38%**	9	Professional org. / trade assn.	**32%**
6	AI tools	**33%**	10	Webinar / streaming platform	**32%**
7	Technology vendor sites	**33%**			

10+ pieces of content consumed researching a single purchase, most of it before a vendor ever knows they're in market.

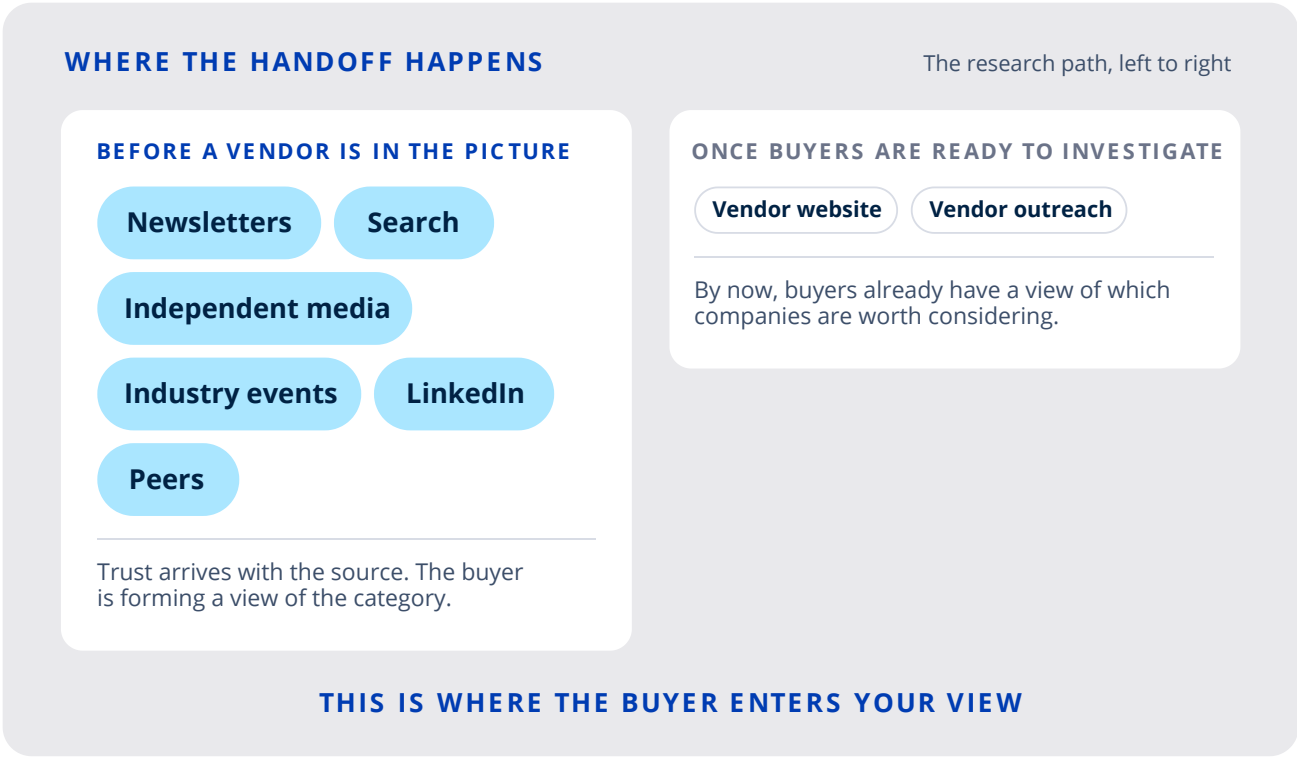
Buyers consume 10+ pieces of content researching a single purchase, and most of that happens before a vendor knows they're in market, usually in channels the vendor doesn't own. Newsletters, search, independent media, industry events, and LinkedIn all outrank vendor outreach, and even AI tools, as the place buyers first learn a solution exists.

Call it a trust pattern. The strongest discovery sources already have a relationship with the buyer, and they've been offering guidance, market context, and an independent view long before a vendor shows up.

Buyers start with the people and outlets they already trust to explain the market. The vendors who want to sell to them come later.

Third parties lead early discovery

The advantage of these channels is their reach and the trust already attached to them. Buyers search, read newsletters, attend events, subscribe to industry media, and follow people on LinkedIn because those sources help them understand the market before they're ready to hear from a vendor.



That makes early discovery different from conversion. By the time buyers reach a vendor website or respond to outreach, they're already forming a view of the category and which companies are worth considering. The brands that show up in the sources buyers already rely on get into that conversation earlier, carrying credibility that comes from the source itself.

TAKEAWAY

Build awareness where trust already exists. Earn a place in the sources buyers already use to understand the market by investing in the relationships and useful content that get you there. Then let owned channels pick up the journey once buyers are ready to investigate.

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters Never Lost Their Grip on Buyers

The inbox is still one of the first places buyers go looking for what's next.

A WEEKLY HABIT FOR MOST BUYERS

Professional newsletters received per week

34% ten or more

74% four or more

fewer than four

The 34% receiving ten or more a week, the single largest group in the study, sit inside the 74% receiving four or more.

46%

first discover a new vendor through a newsletter

AHEAD OF EVERY OTHER FIRST-DISCOVERY CHANNEL

Web search · Industry events · LinkedIn · AI tools · Vendor outreach

The #1 discovery channel is still measured as comms

Newsletters rank #1 for first discovery, yet they're often treated as a brand or communications channel and measured on opens and clicks. That misses the role they play in creating demand. Buyers read multiple newsletters every week, so a vendor gets repeated exposure inside a channel buyers chose to make part of their professional lives.

74% receive four or more professional newsletters a week. And 34% receive ten or more, the single largest group in the study. More importantly, 46% say newsletters are where they first discover a new vendor, putting them ahead of web search, industry events, LinkedIn, AI tools, and vendor outreach.

THE SAME CHANNEL, TWO LEDGERS

What it earns vs. how it's counted

HOW IT'S USUALLY MEASURED

Common marketing practice, not study data

- Opens
- Clicks
- Filed under brand or comms

A one-off impression, counted once.

WHAT BUYERS SAY IT DOES

#1 channel for first discovery of a vendor

46% first hear of a new vendor here

74% read four or more every week

Repeated exposure in a channel the buyer chose.

Put together, those numbers describe a weekly habit built around sources buyers already trust for analysis, expertise, market context, and recommendations. That trust gives newsletters something most vendor-owned channels work much harder to earn: attention before the buyer even decides to look.

TAKEAWAY

Give newsletters a real role in demand. Earn a place in the newsletters your buyers already read with useful expertise, original data, and coverage worth passing along. Since they're the top way buyers discover new vendors, they belong in your demand strategy as well as the comms plan.

VENDOR CONTENT

Buyers Aren't Grading Your Writing. They're Grading Your Relevance.

Buyers are scoring for relevance, credibility, and expertise.

WHAT MAKES CONTENT VALUABLE

Buyers ranked nine traits · top and bottom shown · n=472



9x

Buyers are 9x more likely to call relevance their top priority than writing and design quality.

"Good" is where most vendor content gets stuck

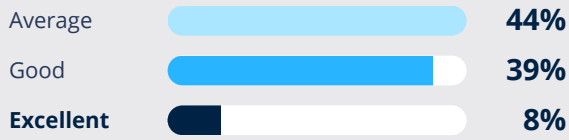
When buyers rate vendor content overall, 44% call it average and 39% good. Only 8% call it excellent. That's a crowded middle, and the traits that would move you out of it aren't the ones content teams control most easily.

Buyers rank relevance, credibility, and expertise highest, and creativity and design lowest. Vendor content still has an audience, though: despite the flood of AI-generated material, 58% of buyers say their trust in it is unchanged. Getting out of "good" just takes more work than getting into it.

Asked to rank nine traits that make content valuable, buyers put relevance to their priorities first at 30%, followed by credibility of the source at 23%, and valuable expertise at 12%. Creativity and originality landed near the bottom at 6%, while writing and design quality came in last at 3%.

Craft still matters. It just isn't what earns the decision to keep reading. A beautifully written piece that misses the problem in front of the buyer is still the wrong piece.

HOW BUYERS RATE VENDOR CONTENT



Remaining share: ratings below average.

TAKEAWAY

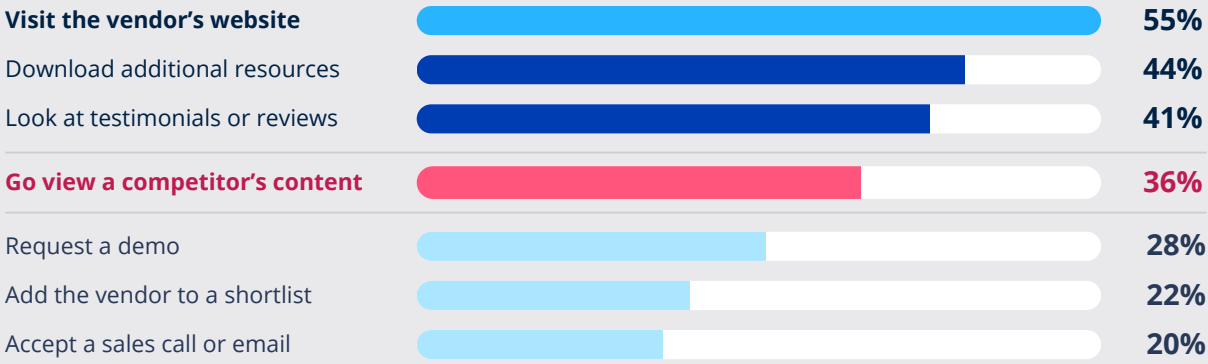
Start with the buyer's priorities. Before deciding whether it should be a report, video, infographic, or designed campaign, figure out where your potential reader is in their buying process and how their industry shapes the problem. Put credible expertise behind the answer. Then worry about making it clever.

WEBINARS & VIDEO

Your Webinar's Next Stop Could Be Your Competitor

A relevant webinar gets buyers moving. Just don't assume they're only moving toward you.

WHAT BUYERS DO AFTER RELEVANT WEBINAR OR VIDEO CONTENT*



More buyers go check out a competitor than request a demo, shortlist you, or take a sales call.
For more than a third, interest kicks off comparison shopping.

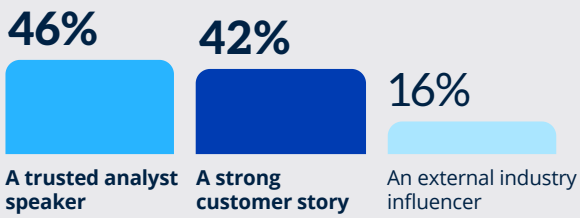
*Selected actions

Analyst credibility beats influencer reach by nearly 3x

Who you put on screen matters, and buyers make a clear distinction between credibility and reach. Trusted analyst speakers are the strongest draw to a vendor webinar at 46%, followed closely by a strong customer story at 42%. By contrast, just 16% cite an external industry influencer as a reason to register.

After watching relevant webinar or video content, 55% visit the vendor's website, 44% download additional resources, and 41% look at testimonials or reviews. But 36% go view a competitor's content, more than the share who request a demo (28%), add the vendor to a shortlist (22%), or accept a sales call or email (20%). The webinar created interest, and that interest sent a good share of the audience off to compare you with whoever you're up against. Treat every session like an audition.

WHY BUYERS REGISTER



Registration drivers point the same way. Credible vendor experts, proprietary research, and a unique angle all outperform external influencers. Familiar names help, but buyers show up for expertise that helps them evaluate a real decision. And with 36% heading to competitor content afterward, that expertise also has to hold up in the comparison.

TAKEAWAY

Whatever earns the registration should earn the memory. Build the session around evidence buyers can carry into the comparison, like your own research, real customer stories, and a point of view a competitor can't copy. Assume competitor content could be the next tab open.

INDUSTRY EVENTS

The Show Ends. The Research Doesn't.

For buyers, an industry event kicks off a research trail that runs well past the show.

66% of buyers plan to attend more than one industry show in the coming year, and they keep consuming long after the show ends.

BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE SHOW

Post-event consumption · n=499

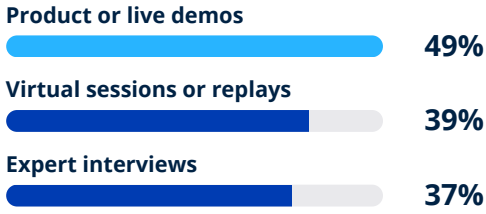
BEFORE

Newsletters and industry coverage shape what they'll notice

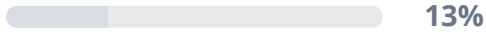
ON SITE

Sessions, demos and conversations worth capturing

AFTER: WHAT BUYERS SEEK OUT THEMSELVES



Conference coverage · case studies · news



4 : 1 Sponsored content lands at the very bottom of the list at just 13%. **Demos beat it nearly 4 to 1.**

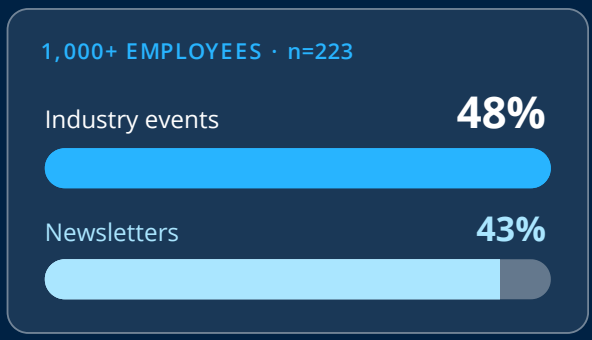
66% of buyers plan to attend more than one industry show in the coming year. And when the show ends, they keep consuming: 49% plan to watch product or live demos, 39% virtual sessions or replays, and 37% expert interviews. Conference coverage, case studies, and news continue the trail from there.

At the very bottom of the list is sponsored content, at just 13%. For event marketers, that's a helpful signal. When buyers leave the show, they're telling you what they want from it next: access to the product, the sessions, and the expertise they didn't get to the first time.

CALL OUT

At enterprise scale, events move to #1.

Across the full sample, newsletters are the leading first-awareness channel. But among buyers at organizations with 1,000+ employees, the hierarchy flips: 48% first encounter new vendors through industry events, compared with 43% through newsletters. For enterprise buyers, the show is where discovery happens most.



Online, demos beat sponsored content nearly 4 to 1

The strongest event strategies extend well beyond the show floor. Buyers are already encountering vendors before the event through the newsletters and industry coverage that shape what they'll pay attention to. The sessions, demos, and conversations on site create material worth capturing, and afterward buyers go looking for the demos, replays, and expert content that let them keep researching on their own time.

That makes the post-event library part of the event itself. It also changes how to think about sponsorship: if sponsored content is the least-consumed post-event format at 13%, the investment has to produce something buyers will still choose once the show is over.

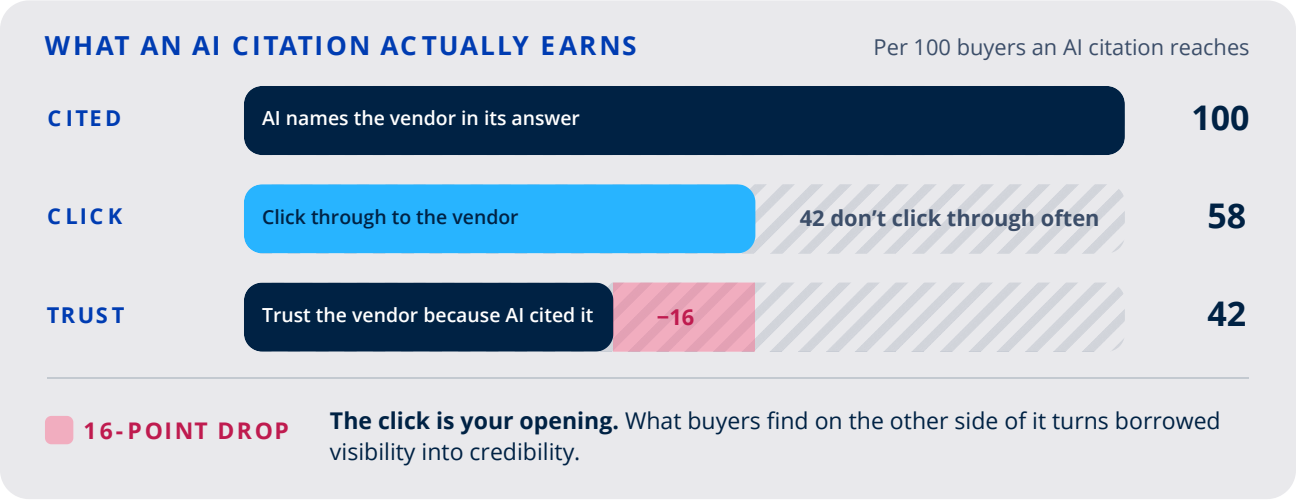
TAKEAWAY

Build a complete journey (not just a nice-looking booth). Plan pre-event visibility, the on-site experience, and the content buyers seek afterward as one program. Capture the demos and conversations worth coming back to, and give buyers somewhere to keep researching after everyone goes home.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Click That Comes After the AI Citation

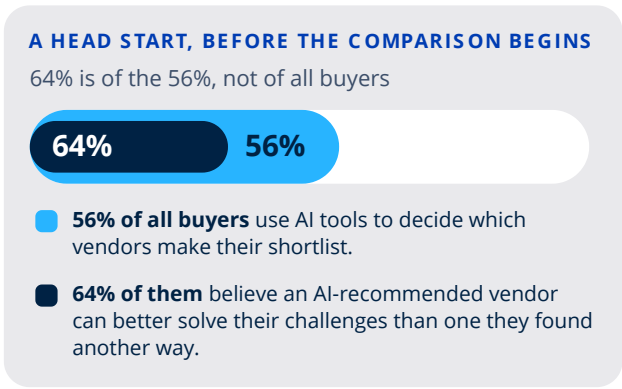
Being cited by AI earns attention. What happens next determines whether it earns anything more.



AI-recommended vendors enter with an advantage

The influence of AI goes beyond sending traffic. 56% of buyers already use AI tools to decide which vendors make their shortlist. And among those buyers, 64% believe an AI-recommended vendor can better solve their challenges than one they found another way.

As noted earlier, an AI citation earns a click (58%) more reliably than it earns trust (42%). AI already works as a referral source, sending buyers from an answer back to the company behind it, but the citation doesn't finish the job. Most buyers still need a reason to believe once they land. That's where your content has to turn borrowed visibility into credibility.

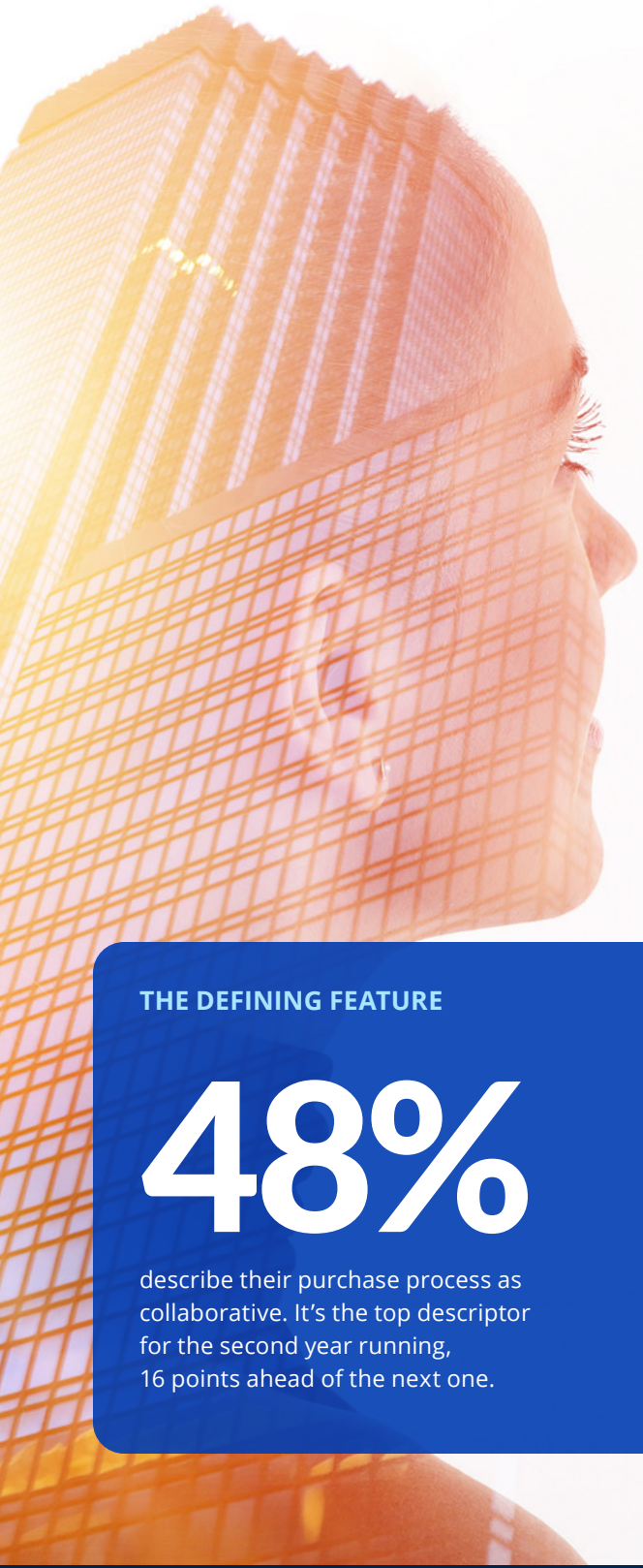


AI's role now reaches into vendor evaluation, shaping who gets considered and how capable they look before buyers compare options side by side. It can surface your name and help shape the shortlist. From there, the advantage has to hold up once buyers meet you directly.

TAKEAWAY

Treat the click as the start of the pitch. Know what buyers find when they follow an AI citation back to you. The landing experience should add what the AI summary couldn't, with credible expertise and original evidence that give buyers a reason to keep you on the shortlist.

Buyer Behavior



What actually moves a buying group from interest to purchase?

The buying decision belongs to the group, but each member takes their own path to it. Buyers research on their own, build consensus together, and stall for different reasons. Here's where the data says demand gen can help.

IN THIS SECTION

Buying Committees 24
The rest of the room is still deciding

Stalled Deals. 25
"Stalled, no clear reason" has a reason

Artificial Intelligence 26
AI assists. Humans decide.

THE DEFINING FEATURE

48%

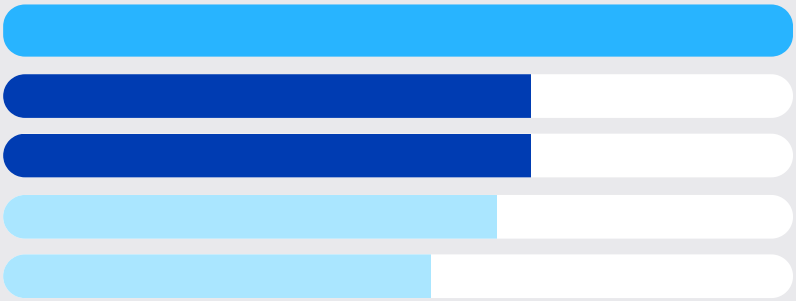
describe their purchase process as collaborative. It's the top descriptor for the second year running, 16 points ahead of the next one.

BUYING COMMITTEES

The Rest of the Room Is Still Deciding

Buying teams describe purchasing as a group activity. But that group is changing.

HOW BUYERS DESCRIBE THEIR OWN PURCHASE PROCESS



"Collaborative" has been the top descriptor for two years running, 16 points ahead of the next one. Respondents could select more than one.

The people collaborating on a decision have different POVs

31% **added business stakeholders**

May need to establish the business case and long-term value.

28% **added technical stakeholders**

May need to understand implementation, security, or integration.

ONE DECISION, MADE WHERE YOU CAN'T SEE IT

24% spend **more time discussing solutions internally**

A stage of evaluation that happens largely outside the vendor's view.

Collaboration is the defining feature of the buying process. Nearly half of buyers describe purchasing this way, well ahead of "research-heavy," "effective," or "complex." So the journey demand gen is trying to influence plays out across a group, with different people researching, poking holes, and weighing in on the same decision. It rarely looks like one contact moving neatly through a funnel.

The composition data matters less for its size than for who's entering the room. Business and technical stakeholders bring different responsibilities to the same purchase. One may need to establish the business case and long-term value; another may need to understand implementation, security, or integration. The decision is shared, but the evidence each person needs to get there isn't necessarily the same.

That makes internal discussion part of the buyer journey itself. Nearly a quarter of buyers say they're spending more time discussing solutions internally, a stage of evaluation that happens largely out of the vendor's view.

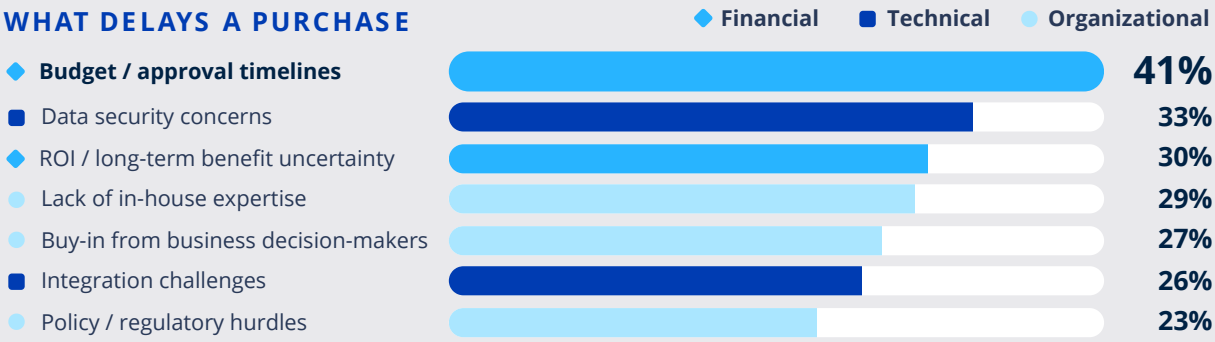
TAKEAWAY

Use multi-layer Buyer Intelligence to surface what each stakeholder cares about. Then build the business case and the technical case to work together, and give buyers material they can carry into the internal conversations where the purchase is actually being decided.

STALLED DEALS

"Stalled, No Clear Reason" Has a Reason

Budget gets the most blame. But it's far from the only thing holding deals up.



Budget leads, but **six other causes cluster within 10 points of each other,** and they split three ways. Financial friction is just one of them; organizational friction accounts for three of the seven.

Budget and approval timelines are the most common reason purchases slow down, cited by 41% of buyers. But look beyond the top line and the reasons deals slow down spread across the purchase: confidence in security, uncertainty about long-term value, internal expertise, stakeholder buy-in, and integration all create friction.

A third of buyers cite data security as a source of delay, nearly a third point to uncertainty around ROI and long-term value, and 26% cite integration challenges. These are standard questions for any technology purchase, which means demand gen can start answering them well before they turn into late-stage objections.

The same principle applies to the internal case. More than a quarter cite buy-in from business decision-makers, while 29% point to a lack of in-house expertise. Content can't eliminate every source of delay, but it can give buyers clearer evidence to evaluate the purchase and stronger material to carry into the conversations happening inside their organization.

The best time to answer an objection is before it becomes one

Data security 33%	→ Security documentation built into the journey, before procurement asks for it
ROI uncertainty 30%	→ Long-term value evidence the business case can be built on
In-house expertise 29%	→ Implementation guidance that shows what adoption actually takes
Integration 26%	→ Integration detail up front rather than in a late-stage objection

THE INTERNAL CASE More than a quarter cite buy-in from business decision-makers (27%), while 29% point to a lack of in-house expertise. Both sit with people outside the vendor's reach.

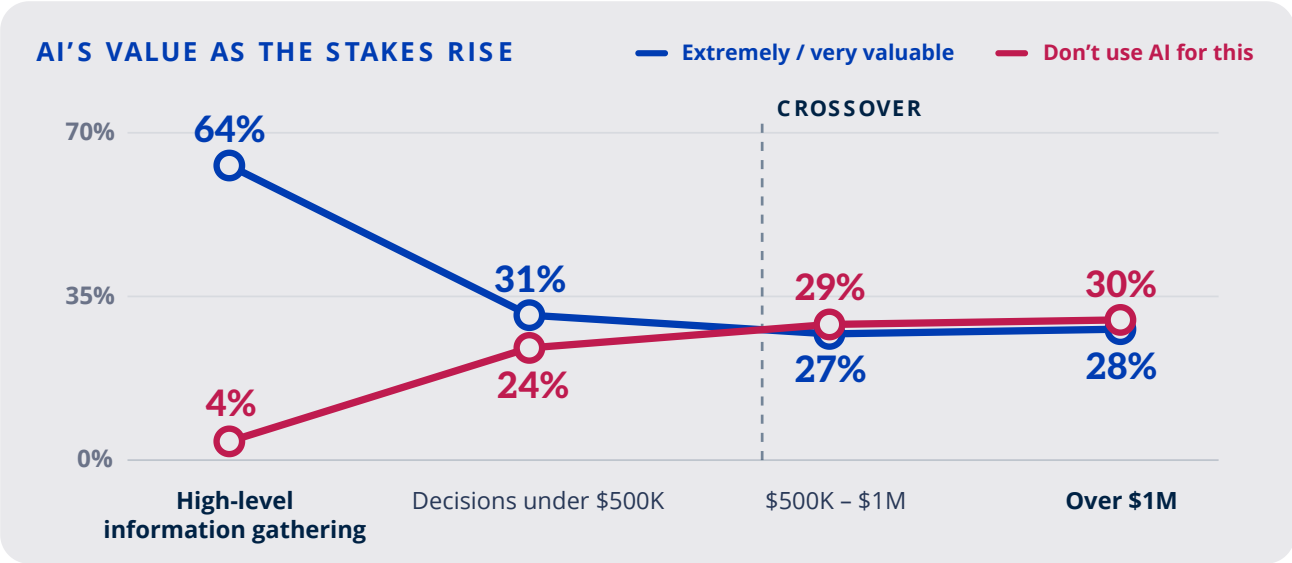
TAKEAWAY

Answer the questions before they slow the deal. Build security, ROI, integration, and implementation guidance into the journey before buyers have to ask for it. And give champions material designed to travel internally, so the case for moving forward doesn't depend on one contact retelling it.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI Assists. Humans Decide.

Buyers lean on AI when they're exploring. The bigger the decision gets, the more they pull back.



AI has more influence on who gets considered than who gets chosen

WHERE AI'S INFLUENCE PEAKS

64% is of the 56%



56% use AI to decide which vendors make the shortlist; **64% of them** think an AI-recommended vendor is the better fit. That influence lands before the buying group weighs any evidence.

WHERE IT HAS TO SURVIVE

30% don't use AI to guide the decision on investments over $1 million

Just 28% still call it extremely or very valuable at that level.

AI is most useful to buyers when the job is broad and exploratory: nearly two-thirds call it very or extremely valuable for high-level information gathering. That confidence falls sharply once AI is asked to help guide an investment decision. For decisions over $1 million, roughly as many buyers don't use AI for the decision as consider it highly valuable.

The same shortlisting effect covered in the content section (56%/64%) shows up again here, with different stakes for demand gen. AI's influence lands before the buying group starts weighing evidence, when stakes are lowest and AI's credibility is highest. By the time real money is on the table, that AI-built shortlist has to hold up under scrutiny from people who no longer trust AI's judgment on the decision itself.

TAKEAWAY

Use AI to get into the consideration set. Make it easy for AI to find and accurately represent what you offer while buyers are researching and building their shortlist. Then make sure the proof they need to validate that choice is waiting when the decision moves beyond AI.

Buyers Already Told You What to Do Next

The buyer journey has changed. The mandate for marketing is becoming clearer.

1 Build one credibility strategy for buyers and AI.

Earn visibility through the expertise, authority, and third-party trust signals that buyers and AI already rely on.



Take the B2B AI Authority Assessment

2 Raise the bar on what you publish.

Prioritize original data, defensible points of view, and useful expertise over more content that buyers can get anywhere.



Close the Gap Between Brand and AI Authority

3 Go beyond the lead. Market to the buying group.

Build coverage across the stakeholders who research on their own but decide together.



Unify Demand Generation

4 Fund discovery like it drives demand.

Invest in the channels that put you on the shortlist before attribution can see the buyer. Then measure them for the demand they create.

The opportunity is in connecting work that marketing has spent years separating. Brand earns the credibility that gets you discovered. Content gives buyers something worth passing along, and demand gen makes sure it reaches everyone in the buying group. AI touches all three by surfacing what's already there.

Buyers have changed how they find, evaluate, and decide. The next move is ours.

About This Study

499 global B2B technology buyers told us how they research, evaluate, and purchase technology for their organizations.

SAMPLE AT A GLANCE

499
global B2B technology buyers

4
company-size bands, from fewer than 100 employees to 10,000+

5
seniority groups, from staff to C-suite

COMPANY SIZE

Fewer than 100	30%
100 – 999	25%
1,000 – 9,999	24%
10,000+	21%

SENIORITY

Management	26%
Senior management	22%
Staff	19%
C-suite	17%
Consultant / other	15%

The 2026 B2B Content Engagement & Buyer Behavior Study is based on responses from 499 global B2B technology buyers involved in evaluating or purchasing technology solutions for their organizations. Respondents span the full seniority range, from C-suite to staff-level buyers, with Networking & Infrastructure, Information Technology, Security, and Data & Analytics among the most represented departments.

Where a finding is reported specifically for enterprise organizations, the base is respondents from organizations with 1,000+ employees (n=223) and is labeled accordingly. Some questions were answered by a subset of respondents; bases are noted where they differ from n=499.



About Informa TechTarget

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