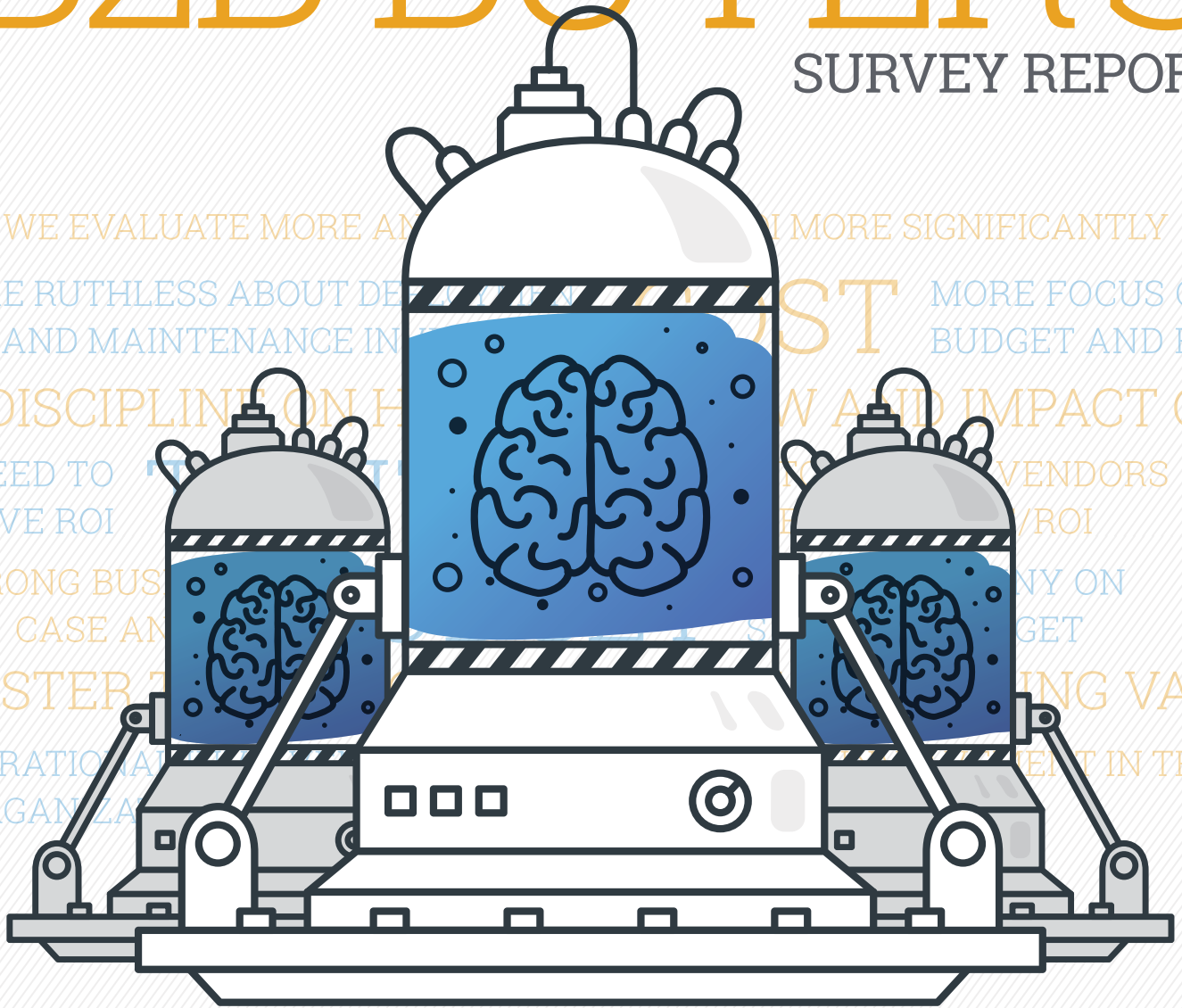


THE 2016 B2B BUYER'S SURVEY REPORT



Wanting It All: B2B Buyers Demanding More Personalization, Seamless Deployment, Peer Validation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Countless studies demonstrate that today's consumer demands an exceedingly high level of customer service from brands. Our annual survey reveals that B2B buyers are becoming similarly scrupulous when making purchases.

According to the results of our Sixth Annual *Demand Gen Report 2016 B2B Buyer's Survey*, B2B buyers are scrutinizing potential vendors more closely than ever. While timely deployment, personalized messaging and potential for ROI have always played a crucial role in the buyer's decision, this year respondents cited the factors as even more important than in previous years.

Personalization ranked as especially crucial in the purchase process. When researching potential products, for example, buyers overwhelmingly gravitated toward companies that demonstrated "a stronger knowledge of our company and its needs." In other words, B2B buyers are asking sales reps and marketers: What can your solution do for *me*?

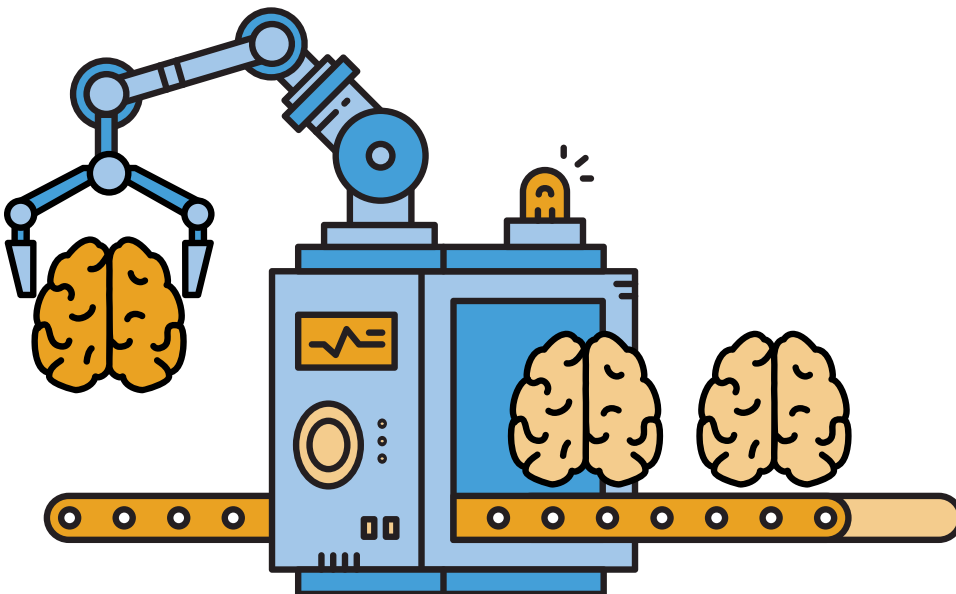
Not only do buyers want to know how products can help their company, they also want ones that can do it quickly — and easily. "Deployment time/ease of use" jumped up from 49% in 2015 to 83% this year, ranking as one of the most important variables that set vendors apart.

ROI AS INFLUENCE

"IT IS
IMPORTANT TO
ENSURE ROI
AND ABILITY TO
IMPLEMENT
NEW
SOLUTIONS."

"TIGHTER
BUDGET."

Comments from respondents



Buyers also reaffirmed that ROI remains a top consideration when selecting a new product or solution — especially as many respondents reported increased oversight from company leadership.

Despite the growing pressure on vendors to deliver quick, seamless service, buyers themselves continue to thoroughly and carefully consider new purchases before committing. Almost half of respondents (48%) said their purchase cycle has increased somewhat since last year. Reasons for the lengthy buying cycle include:

- Buyers conduct a more detailed ROI analysis before a purchase;
- The number of people — especially executives — who participate in the B2B buying process has increased; and
- As the solution marketplace continues to expand, buyers spend more time conducting research and use more sources to investigate purchases.

Facing more scrutiny from company leadership and an increasingly crowded marketplace, it's no surprise the survey revealed that more and more buyers are relying on input from peers and colleagues. In fact, peers and colleagues ranked as the third most important resource that informed buyers about their purchase, behind "web search" and "vendor websites."

Surprisingly, the growing reliance on colleagues didn't translate to social media: The number of buyers who used social media to research their purchase dropped this year to 53%, down from 75% in 2015. However, the survey found that LinkedIn remains a powerful player in the social media arena, and video is emerging as a popular research resource for buyers.

"STRONG
BUSINESS
CASE AND ROI."

"WE TAKE
MORE TIME TO
EVALUATE
PRODUCTS &
SERVICES AND
CALCULATE
ROI."

BUYERS EXPECT A PERSONALIZED, KNOWLEDGEABLE EXPERIENCE

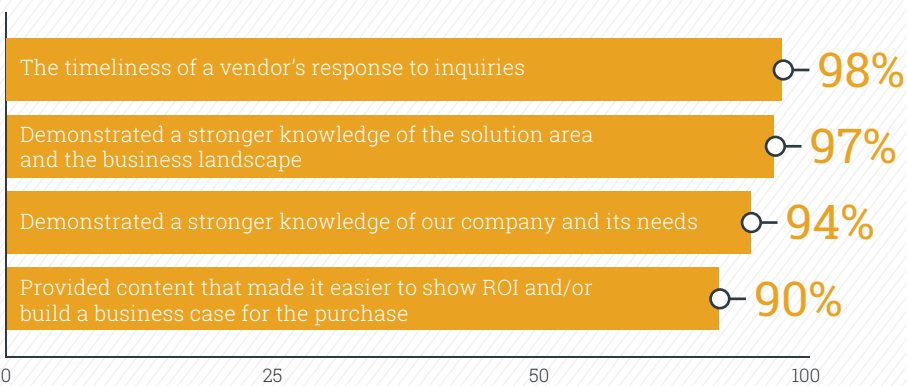
It's not enough for vendors to be familiar with their own product. Today, B2B buyers expect them to be knowledgeable about the companies they are pitching, as well as the wider business landscape.

For many buyers, it's all about personalization. They want to know how any new product will ultimately benefit their business. Of the top four most important reasons why respondents went with the winning vendor, 64% said the fact that the vendors "demonstrated a stronger knowledge of our company and its needs" was "very important," and 30% said it was somewhat important. Overall, it was the second most influential reason why buyers chose the winning vendor.

ROI AS INFLUENCE

"MORE PEOPLE,
MORE SCRUTINY,
MORE DEMAND
FOR ROI
CALCULATIONS
UPFRONT."

Top 4 Reasons Why Buyers Chose The Winning Vendor



“WE ARE RUTHLESS ABOUT DEPLOYMENT & MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT.”

The same is true when buyers are visiting a vendor’s website to conduct research. While factors like easy access to pricing and search and navigation tools are important, respondents said the single most influential aspect of any vendor’s website is “relevant content that speaks directly to [my] company.” In fact, 69% said it was “very important,” while 27% said it was “somewhat important.”

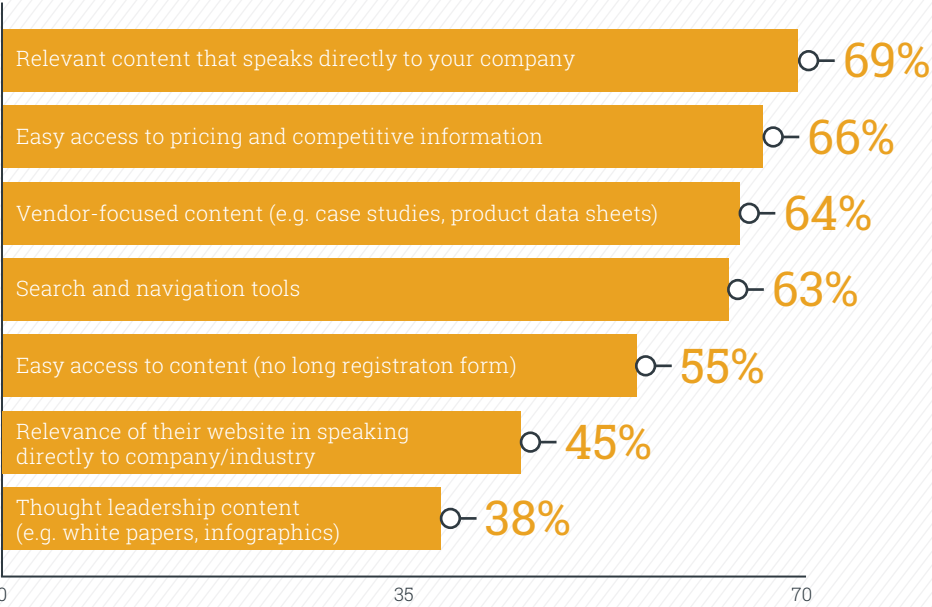


the single most influential aspect of any vendor’s website is “relevant content that speaks directly to [my] company.”

In an increasingly crowded B2B marketplace that offers more options than ever, buyers also want to work with vendors that deeply understand their industry. In fact, this was a top reason why buyers chose the winning vendor. Of the respondents, 77% said it was “very important” that the vendor “demonstrated a stronger knowledge of the solution area and the business landscape.” By comparison, just over half of buyers (51%) said the same in 2015.

Conversely, those that don’t may get left behind. Lack of knowledge was another common reason why some respondents were dissatisfied with their decision. They wished their vendor had: “Knowledge of my local market,” “Tailored their presentation to us,” “Better discussion of our needs,” and “Better understanding of how the product could integrate and [be] leveraged within our existing marketing technology stack.”

Rank the importance of each of the following when you visit a vendor website to conduct research:



BUYERS WANT FAST AND EASY SERVICE AND IMPLEMENTATION

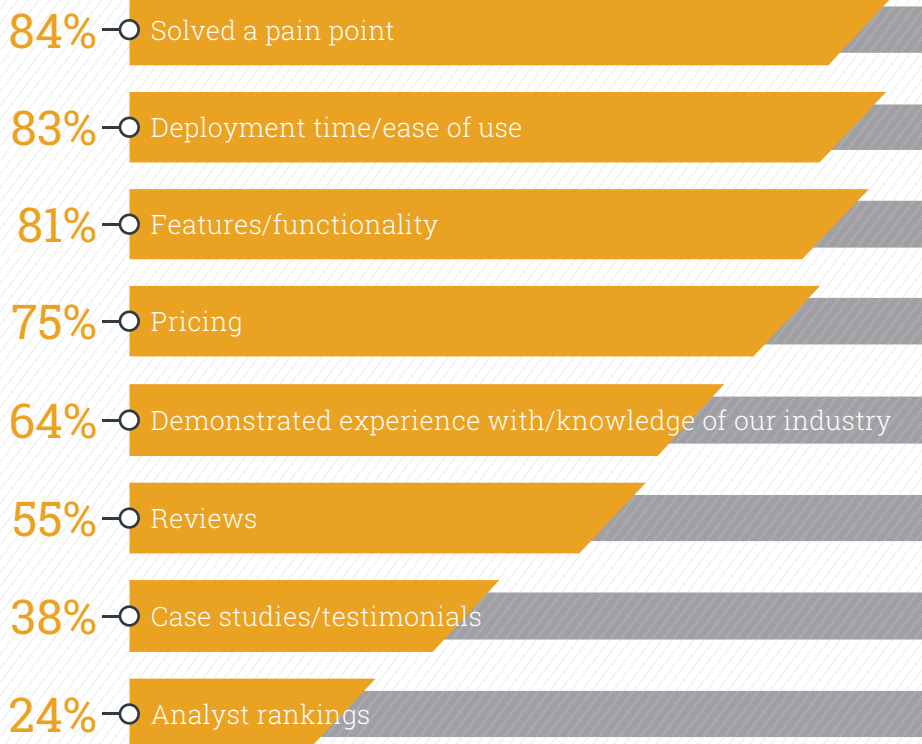
Today's B2B buyers may be taking longer to make purchase decisions, but they expect solution vendors to be timely. That dichotomy is particularly true when it comes to purchasing technology solutions: As most companies' tech stacks continue to expand, it's more crucial than ever for new platforms and services to quickly and seamlessly integrate into existing systems.

Our respondents selected **timeliness as a key purchase driver at several points in the survey**, which asked buyers about their last major B2B buying decision. In fact, once they were at the point of evaluating a set list of solution providers, 83% said "deployment time/ease of use" was a "very important" variable. This is up significantly from 49% in 2015. (It ranked as the second most important variable, behind "Solved a pain point.")

ROI AS INFLUENCE

"NEED TO DEMONSTRATE ROI."

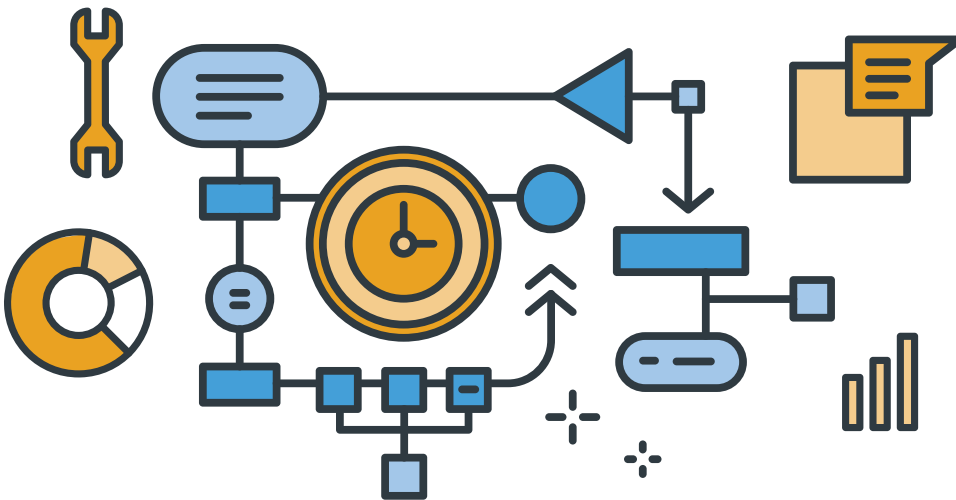
Please rate the importance of these variables when at the point of evaluating a set list of solution providers:



Not only did buyers want to be able to quickly and easily implement new solutions, but they also wanted snappy service when researching purchases. Almost three-quarters (70%) said “the timeliness of a vendor’s response to inquiries” was one of the reasons they selected the winning vendor, versus the other vendors they considered – up from 60.1% in 2015.

In fact, for buyers who were unhappy with their purchase, several pointed to poor timing as the reason for their dissatisfaction. When asked what their vendor could have done to improve the buying process, comments included: “better follow up and response time,” “better forecasting of timeline,” “turned things around a little faster,” and a “better sense of urgency.”

“WE EVALUATE
MORE AND
MEASURE
ROI MORE
SIGNIFICANTLY.”



ROI IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

One theme emerged loud and clear: Many buyers are facing tremendous pressure to prove new purchases will benefit their company's bottom line. Once buyers were at the point of evaluating a list of solution providers, three-quarters (75%) said pricing was a "very important" variable. This is up from 64.2% in 2015.

When asked how their purchase process had changed over the past year, 61% said they "conduct a more detailed ROI analysis before making a final decision."

Increased scrutiny from company leadership, smaller budgets and pressure to justify cost are just a few of the reasons why ROI is top of mind for B2B buyers. "[The] organization is more budget conscious and thus there is more executive involvement in the decision-making process," said one respondent. "Budget restrictions and requirement to show a potential for ROI makes selecting B2B solutions a high-stakes process for involved parties," said another. And yet another said, "As our company has matured and new executives have come in to influence the high growth of the company, we are getting more disciplined on how we review and impact our ROI."

ROI AS INFLUENCE

"MORE
FINANCIAL
SCRUTINY
FROM
CORPORATE."

"NEED TO
PROVE ROI."

WE EVALUATE MORE AND MEASURE THE ROI MORE SIGNIFICANTLY

WE ARE RUTHLESS ABOUT DEPLOYMENT AND MAINTENANCE INVESTMENT **COST** MORE FOCUS ON BUDGET AND ROI

MORE DISCIPLINE ON HOW WE REVIEW AND IMPACT OUR ROI

NEED TO PROVE ROI **TIGHTER** FASTER TO CHANGE VENDORS IF NOT SEEING VALUE/ROI

STRONG BUSINESS CASE AND ROI **BUDGET** ADDED SCRUTINY ON SPENDING BUDGET

FASTER TO CHANGE VENDORS IF NOT SEEING VALUE/ROI

MORE OPERATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE MORE EXECUTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

PURCHASE PROCESS REMAINS LONG AND COMPLEX

The lengthy and complicated B2B buying journey shows no signs of becoming shorter – just the opposite, in fact. Almost half of respondents (48%) said the length of their purchase cycle had increased somewhat since last year. Another 6% said it had increased significantly. (In contrast, only 10% said their cycle had decreased.)

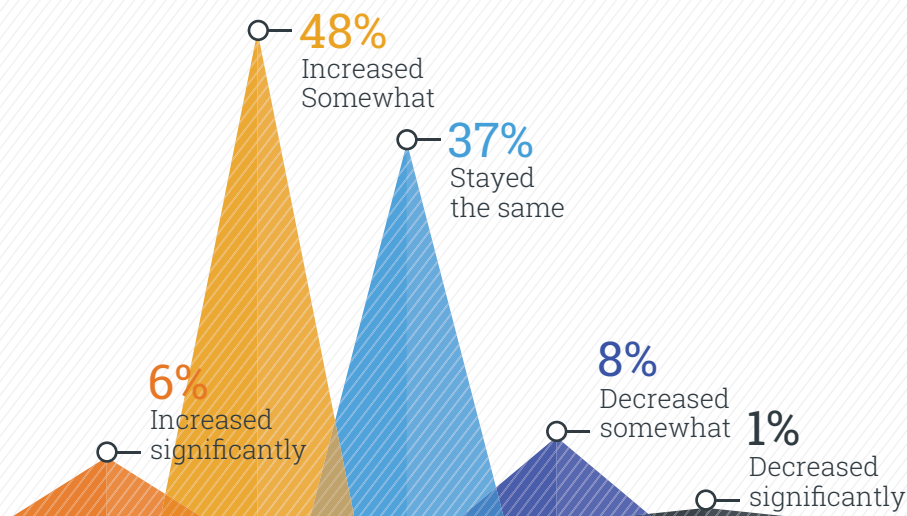
The increased focus on proving ROI is one big reason why the purchase process remains lengthy. When asked how a range of different factors impacted their purchase process over the past year, 61% reported conducting a more detailed ROI analysis.

Another reason for today's complex buying journey is the growing number of people who participate in the process – particularly at the executive level. More than one-third (39%) said the number of team members involved in the B2B purchase process increased somewhat in the past year, and 6% said it increased significantly. One respondent pointed to a “higher degree of executive input, from direct involvement to encouraging team support.” Another confirmed: [“We have expanded our executive team, including more minds in the process.”](#)

ROI AS INFLUENCE

“MORE EMPHASIS ON USING WHAT WE HAVE FULLY BEFORE MAKING A NEW PURCHASE.”

How has the length of your B2B purchase cycle changed, on average, compared with a year ago?

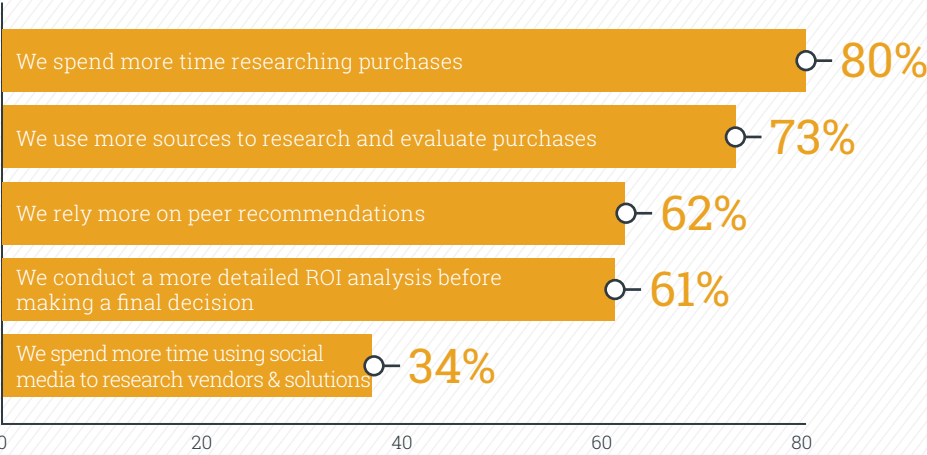


However, the biggest reason for the longer buying cycle is research. According to respondents, 80% said they spent more time researching purchases, and 73% said they use more sources to research and evaluate purchases.

That complex research process can be chalked up to today's crowded B2B marketplace and its overwhelming number of options for buyers. When asked what influenced the change in their purchase process, several respondents pointed to today's dizzying number of solution providers. "There are so many tools, we have tightened down our steps before proposing another one," said one buyer. "Due to the volume of new products and companies, it takes longer to complete the procurement process due to the additional research time," said another.

"MORE OPERATIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE."

Please rate how each of the following aspects of your purchase process have changed over the past year:



PEER REVIEWS AND INFLUENCE GAIN GROUND

Given today's long and winding purchase process – and the sheer amount of research involved – it should come as no surprise that more buyers are turning to trusted sources for advice when choosing between vendors.

In fact, buyers pointed to their “peers/colleagues” as the third most important resource that informed them about their purchase (behind “web search” and “vendor websites.”) Almost half (49%) listed their peers and colleagues as a top source of information, up significantly from 20% in 2015.

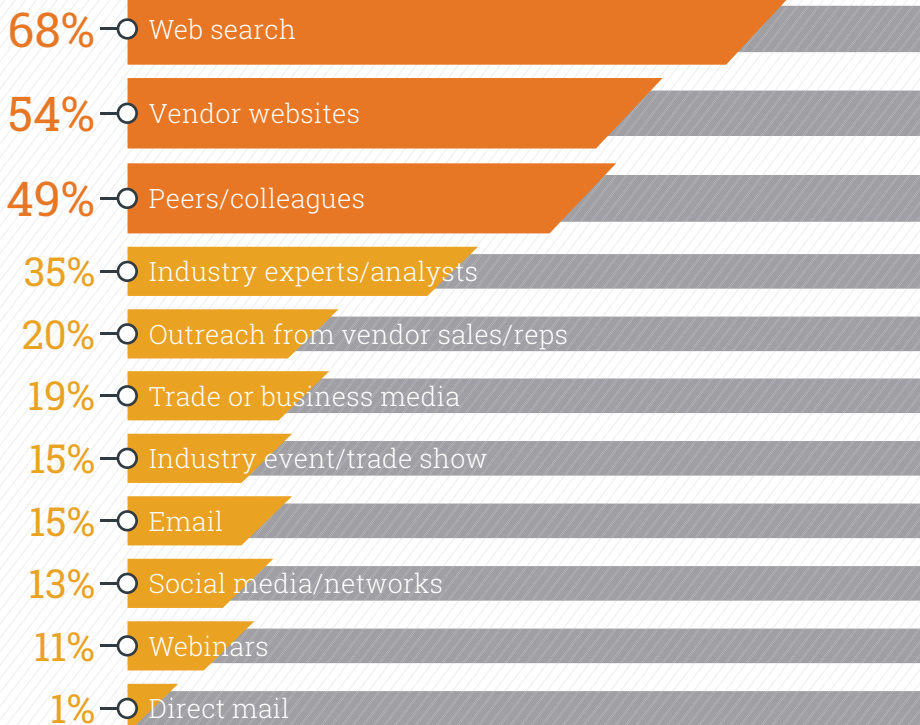
From review sites to social media, today's B2B buyers have more options than ever when it comes to finding feedback from peers. Review sites – long a staple of consumer marketing – continue to gain influence in the B2B realm. Once buyers were at the point of evaluating a set list of solution providers, **55% said reviews were a “very important” consideration.**



ROI AS INFLUENCE

“STRINGENT EVALUATION PROCESS AND EXECUTIVE APPROVALS, PLUS QUALITATIVE ROI.”

What were the first three resources that informed you about the solution in question?



However, social media played a much less important role in the buying process this year. Last year, three-quarters (75%) said they used social media in their research process. This year, it dropped to just more than half (53%) who used social media. For those that did rely on social media, most used it to browse existing discussions to learn more about the topic.

One social media resource stood far above the rest: [LinkedIn](#). The professional networking site had the biggest impact on the research process — by far — with 40% describing it as “very important” and another 41% describing it as “somewhat important.” Blogs came in second, with 37% describing them as “very important.”

In a development that demonstrates the growing power of video in the B2B buying process, YouTube/Vimeo ranked third among social media sources, with 13% describing the sites as “very important” and another 47% describing it as “somewhat important.”



“MORE
EXECUTIVE
INVOLVEMENT
IN THE
DECISION-
MAKING
PROCESS.”

“QUICK TO
CHANGE
VENDORS
IF NOT SEEING
VALUE/ROI.”

CONCLUSION

Throughout the six years that *Demand Gen Report* has conducted the *B2B Buyer's Survey*, respondents have always valued factors such as personalization, timely service, seamless deployment and proven ROI when deciding where to spend company dollars. This year, however, those factors ranked as especially crucial for B2B buyers.

The good news is the vast majority of vendors are living up to those increased demands: 34% of respondents described their last major B2B purchase as "very positive" and another 52% described it as "somewhat positive." (In contrast, a mere 2% said they had a negative experience.)

The survey also shows the buying journey continues to get longer and more complex, particularly as the number of people – especially executives – who participate in the B2B process has increased.

Accordingly, it is likely no coincidence that account-based marketing and selling methods have increased in recent years. Strategies that engage key members of an account – rather than simply targeting leads – should continue to yield results for B2B-focused organizations, as buying teams become larger and larger.

In today's crowded B2B marketplace, personalization is imperative for marketers: Buyers expect vendors to understand the wider business landscape as well as the specific needs of their company. When it comes to purchasing a new technology, for example, they want to know how it will integrate with their increasingly complex tech stack. No matter the product, B2B buyers expect vendors to communicate how a purchase will boost revenue and improve outcomes across the organization.

ROI AS INFLUENCE

"MORE
FOCUS ON
BUDGET
& ROI."

"ADDED
SCRUTINY ON
SPENDING
BUDGET."

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

DEMANDBASE

Demandbase, the leader in Account-Based Marketing, enables B2B companies to identify and target the accounts they value most, and then market to them across the entire funnel. **The Demandbase B2B Data Cloud** is the definitive B2B database and technology for targeting accounts and specific segments within those accounts. The B2B Data Cloud supports customers across their existing, full marketing technology stack and powers. **The Demandbase B2B Marketing Cloud** is one of the only subscription-based ad targeting and web personalization solutions that lets marketers connect campaigns directly to revenue. The B2B Marketing Cloud is powered by patented technology, which allows companies to identify the accounts they value most and personalize their digital marketing efforts to them. With Demandbase, businesses can target, engage, convert and retain the customers that matter most to their bottom line. Enterprise leaders and high-growth companies such as Adobe, Salesforce.com, Box, CSC, DocuSign, Dell and others use Demandbase to drive Account-Based Marketing and maximize their marketing performance. More information can be found at www.demandbase.com or by following the company on Twitter [@Demandbase](https://twitter.com/Demandbase).

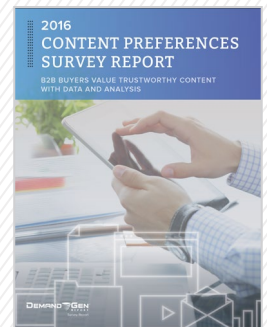


DEMAND GEN[®] REPORT

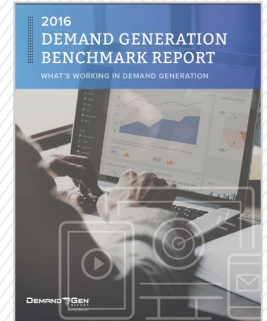
Demand Gen Report is a targeted e-media publication spotlighting the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.



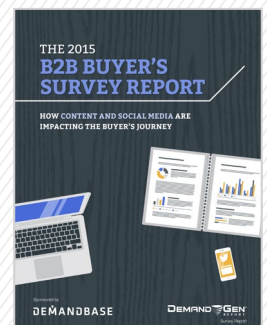
YOU MAY ALSO LIKE...



2016 Content Preferences Survey Report



2016 Demand Generation Benchmark Report



2015 B2B Buyer's Survey Report