



Gartner[®]

Gartner for Marketers

Marketing-Fueled Buyer Enablement

**How marketing can accelerate the B2B
buyer journey**

Edited by
Martha Mathers, Managing VP, Gartner

© 2019 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. GML_631937

Contents

CHAPTER 1



The New B2B Buying Journey

CHAPTER 2



The Role of Information in the Purchase Process

CHAPTER 3



Create and Deploy Buyer Enablement to Win Deals

Introduction

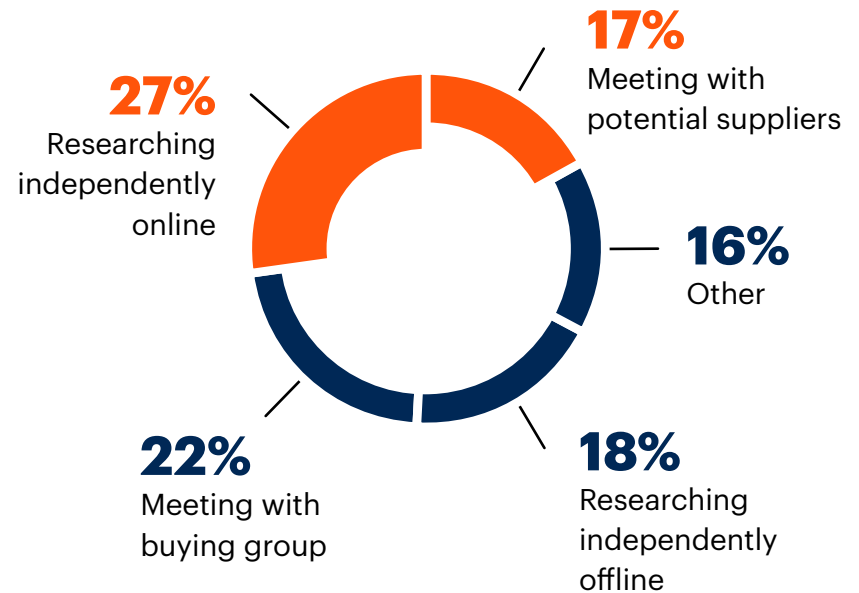
B2B sales have rarely been simple, and the demands of the modern B2B buyer have made it even more difficult to access buyers. Our digital world has made customers more empowered than ever, with seemingly unlimited access to information. This new customer reality has turned the typical demand generation approach on its head and created new opportunities for customer access through marketing.

Gartner research finds that when B2B buyers are considering a purchase, they spend more time learning independently online than anywhere else. Only 17% of buying time involves supplier meetings, and in instances where buyers are comparing multiple suppliers, the amount of time spent with any one sales rep may be only 5% to 6% of total buying time spent.

Commercial leaders often attribute this lack of customer access to marketers' failure to create a clear and compelling value proposition. However, in studying ways to address this access challenge, Gartner research found a different reality. The problem is rooted far less in reps' struggles to sell and far more in customers' struggles to buy.

To provide customers with more valuable information, through both digital content and sales support material, marketing leaders first need to recognize just how different buying has become. Within that new reality, they must address what customers actually need to complete a purchase to their satisfaction and, as a result, how to direct content marketers and arm sellers differently to succeed.

Distribution of Buying Groups' Time by Key Buying Activities



n = 750 B2B buyers
Source: Gartner

CHAPTER 1

The New B2B Buying Journey



Buyers need help buying

Today's B2B buying involves more stakeholders than ever before. The median B2B buying group involves six to 10 decision makers, each armed with four or five pieces of information they have gathered for themselves. The purchase process grinds to a slow crawl as buyers struggle to wade through their individual research and sufficiently deconflict the results to reach collective agreement on a concrete course of action.

"The hardest part of B2B solutions isn't selling them, but buying them," says Brent Adamson, Distinguished VP, Advisory, Gartner. "Today's buying journey has effectively reached a tipping point where it's become nearly unnavigable without a significant amount of help."



77% of buyers agree that purchasing has become very complex and difficult.

The buying journey explained

For the past five years, Gartner researchers have worked with marketing leaders to make significant progress in mapping their respective customer journeys through a typical purchase. As helpful as those buyer journey maps are, most still lack the tactical detail to reduce buyer pain points. The linear representation of buying just doesn't cut it anymore, from either the seller or buyer perspective.

In an effort to develop a more detailed picture of where buying becomes hard, Gartner researchers interviewed senior leaders directly involved in buying a complex B2B solution in their own organization and applied a jobs-to-be-done framework to understand their buying journey.

The result: Virtually every B2B purchase spans six distinct "jobs" that buyers must complete to their satisfaction to successfully complete a complex purchase:

- Problem identification
- Solution exploration
- Requirements building
- Supplier selection
- Validation
- Consensus creation

The Set of Jobs

B2B buying jobs

1 Buyers think about a purchase more in terms of discrete tasks than as a step-by-step journey.



2 While completion of some jobs may ultimately depend on completion of others, buyers often work on several at a time.



3 Buying jobs are broadly shared across buyers regardless of the specific paths they take to purchase.

Source: Gartner

A long, hard slog

The first four jobs may look familiar — it's hard to imagine any successful B2B buying purchase without them. It's the last two jobs that span buyers who consistently validate new content and seek to build consensus. These two jobs become increasingly hard for buyers, as groups involve more diverse stakeholders and various information sources.

Although these six jobs occur in each interaction, the way in which customers progress from the starting point to a purchase is unpredictable, inconsistent and sometimes repetitive. A better depiction of a B2B buying journey is likely to look like a disordered web rather than linear chevrons.

Purchase ease matters

All of this looping around and bouncing from one job to another means that buyers value suppliers that make it easier for them to navigate the purchase process. Additionally, purchase ease has a significant impact on the value customers perceive from their purchases — and the level of regret they might experience. High levels of regret dramatically reduce customer loyalty and sharply cut the chances a customer will advocate for that supplier.



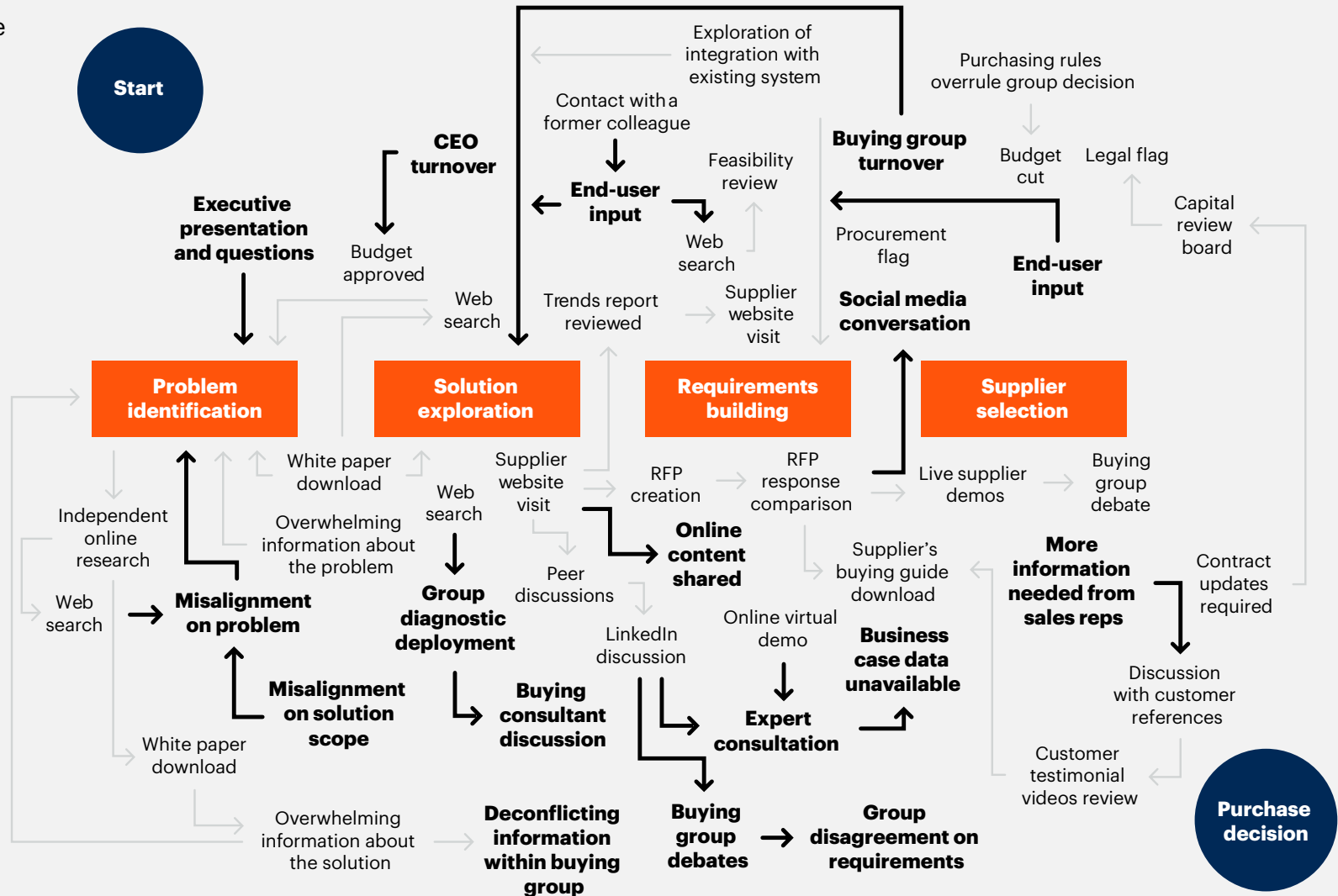
90% of all buyers reported revisiting, or looping back, to at least one job as part of their overall purchasing process.



A Long, Hard Slog

Illustrative B2B buying journey

Bold is indicative of always-on “validation” and “consensus creation” activities.



Source: Gartner

CHAPTER 2

The Role of Information in the Purchase Process

Information, not individuals, makes the purchase process easier

Given that customers spend roughly two-thirds of any B2B buying journey learning from whatever information they can find, the type of information they encounter matters. It actually matters more than a specific supplier capability or individual sales conversation. Quite frankly, customers don't have a preference between seller and digital channels — they simply want to access the right information for their job at hand.

In other words, information, not individuals, makes the purchase process easier.



Buyers reward companies that help them navigate the complex world of B2B digital buying.

The shift to buyer enablement

Gartner coined the term “buyer enablement” to describe a very specific type of content marketing: Information that enables customers to complete critical buying jobs.

“Instead of focusing content marketers’ efforts on constant generation of thought leadership, white papers, infographics and videos, marketing leaders should rebalance their content efforts, capitalizing on their deep industry knowledge and customer empathy to develop and deploy information to help buyers buy,” says Martha Mathers, Managing VP, Gartner.

Buyer enablement falls into two categories

- 1** Prescriptive advice largely takes the form of “do this” or “don’t do this” recommendations specifically designed to ease customers’ buying burdens across the six jobs.
- 2** Practical support represents the actual tools customers use to follow through on prescriptive advice.

When buyer enablement combines prescriptive advice and practical support at multiple points across jobs, it becomes a powerful tool that commercial teams can use to drive customers to buy their solutions. Not only does information help customers perceive a job as easier, but it also helps customers successfully buy a solution, reducing later regret. Customers who encounter this type of information are three times more likely to make a high-quality purchase (a solution more ambitious than they’d planned, at a premium price).

One marketing technology company designed a tool that helped customers easily build and customize a compelling business case for its product. The tool helped the customer articulate and share the case for the solution with other stakeholders in the organization and gave them a big head start on the “consensus creation” job.

How to Enable Purchase Ease

Overview of buyer enablement



“[Customers] often use both sales reps and online information for each job, making sales and information critically interdependent.”

The content that most marketers produce does not focus on buyer enablement. Gartner reviewed over 500 supplier content assets, and found that only 20% of content could be categorized as buyer enablement, while 42% was devoted to lead capture and nurturing. With so much online buying activity, there is an urgent need for most marketers to move their content marketing portfolio toward buyer enablement.



With so much online buying activity, there is an urgent need for most marketers to move their content marketing portfolio toward buyer enablement.

Proposed Balance of Content Marketing Portfolio





CHAPTER 3

Create and Deploy Buyer Enablement to Win Deals

Marketing has a unique opportunity to build momentum toward a purchase by using digital content that helps buyers complete their critical jobs. To take advantage of that opportunity, marketers must be more disciplined about building buyer enablement.

The building blocks of buyer enablement

To create buyer enablement content, marketers should think about a buyer's job to be done, what the buyer's specific intent is when consuming content and which form factor is best for that purpose, all while adhering to sound design principles.

1

Step 1: Jobs

Identify the specific activities buyers need to complete throughout a purchase journey. These are the jobs to be done, such as solution exploration, where buyers seek to understand what options are available to solve their problem.

2

Step 2: Intent

Document the specific ways a supplier can support the buyer's job to be done. For solution exploration, a buyer needs to evaluate alternatives, prioritize possible trade-offs or quantify cost benefit.

3

Step 3: Form

Identify the content form factors available to build buyer enablement content. Examples include calculators, simulators, recommenders and diagnostic tools. To help buyers quantify the cost benefit of various solutions, a supplier can create a calculator that takes various inputs and calculates a measurable output of the benefit of changing from the status quo.

4

Step 4: Design

Ensure that enablement content meets a minimum design standard of being relevant, easy, useful and credible. It's even better if the content meets additional criteria such as being shareable and aligning to buyers' emotional needs.

McCain Foodservice's Profit Calculator

Create and Deploy Buyer Enablement to Win Deals

Step 1 ?	Number of locations <input type="text" value="5"/>
Step 2 ?	Number of lunch & dinner guests per day <input type="text" value="370"/>
Step 3 ?	Percentage of guests who order fries/sides <input type="text" value="47%"/>
Step 4 ?	What percentage of total orders could you expect to add a more premium fry/side? <input type="text" value="5%"/>
Step 4 ?	How much would you charge for your premium fry/side? <input type="text" value="\$1.50"/>

Results ?

Current total fries/sides sold per day **870**

Incremental premium fries/sides added per day **43**

Total incremental annual profit potential **\$23,803**

Source: McCain Foodservice

CASE STUDY

McCain Foodservice, a supplier of frozen potato and snack food products for foodservice markets, built a calculator to anchor on a specific customer need — to increase restaurant guest check size (i.e., the bill) — and help restaurant owners quantify the revenue potential of added menu items.

Buyers enter five simple inputs, such as the number of locations and guests per day, and can see the incremental profit potential change as they manipulate their assumptions to explore different scenarios in real time. The calculation results in a precise benefit from McCain's solution and provides a baseline against which to compare possible competitors.

McCain includes the calculator on its website, together with third-party consumer data that validates its proposed solution and the associated possible benefits.

Align selling channels to deploy buyer enablement

Sales reps and the website represent the top supplier-owned channels at every point in the purchase journey, and B2B buyers refer to both equally. Ultimately, prospects are not looking for an empathetic sales representative or a good website — they're searching for good information. B2B suppliers win by providing consistent information across both of these channels.

Suppliers that provide consistent information across both sales reps and their website see a 25% improvement in the number of high-value, low-regret deals. However, it requires a very different way of working than how most sales and marketing teams operate today. Both functions must work to provide customers with critical information and enablement throughout the entirety of their buying journeys and across multiple channels.



Buyer enablement guides customers through the critical buying tasks B2B buyers frequently struggle with and improves the chances of sales success, increases customer loyalty, and decreases buyer regret.

CASE STUDY

SMART Technologies' Self-Service Content Marketing

Educational technology company SMART Technologies struggled to get buyer enablement content into the hands of customers and customer-facing personnel, despite creating a full buying journey matrix complete with aligned buyer enablement content. Sales representatives found the matrix was too time-consuming and inconvenient, and customers could not readily access the content through digital channels.

In response, SMART Technologies built an interactive, web-based version of the buying journey matrix to help buyers self-diagnose their information needs and access enablement resources. After building the interactive customer-facing tool, SMART Technologies placed a slightly modified version in its sales portal for easy access by sales representatives.

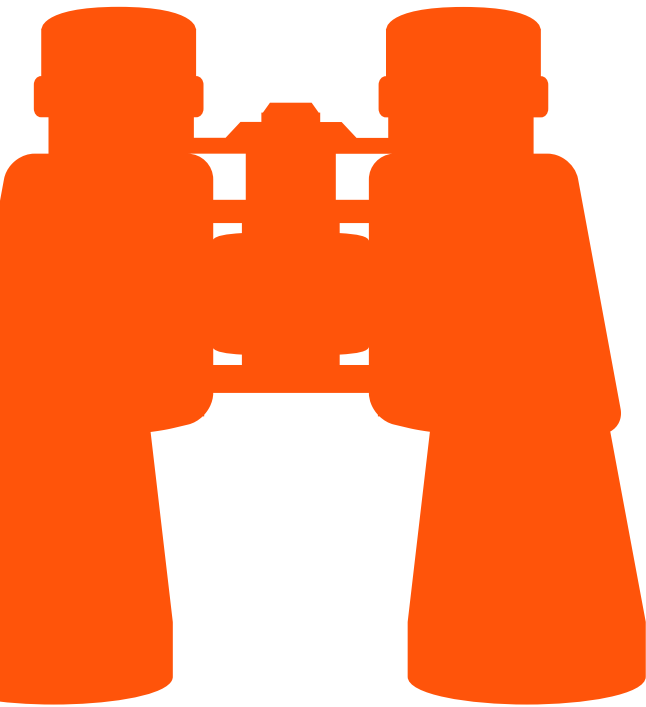
Placing the tool where sellers already go for customer information ensures minimal process disruption — and SMART Technologies boosts the tool's resonance by connecting the buyer journey to the sales process.

Looking ahead

As the buying process continues to increase in difficulty, connect customers to the right information consistently across key channels to win more high-value deals. Help buyers complete a specific set of buying “jobs” that must be accomplished prior to purchase.

To deliver on the promise of buyer enablement, marketing leaders must:

- Identify buyers’ most challenging activities as they complete their key buying jobs.
- Create specific buyer enablement assets to help customers anticipate and overcome challenges in their buying journeys.
- Ensure buyer enablement is available to all customers consistently across both digital and seller channels.



Bring your future forward.

Learn more at [Gartner for Marketers](#)