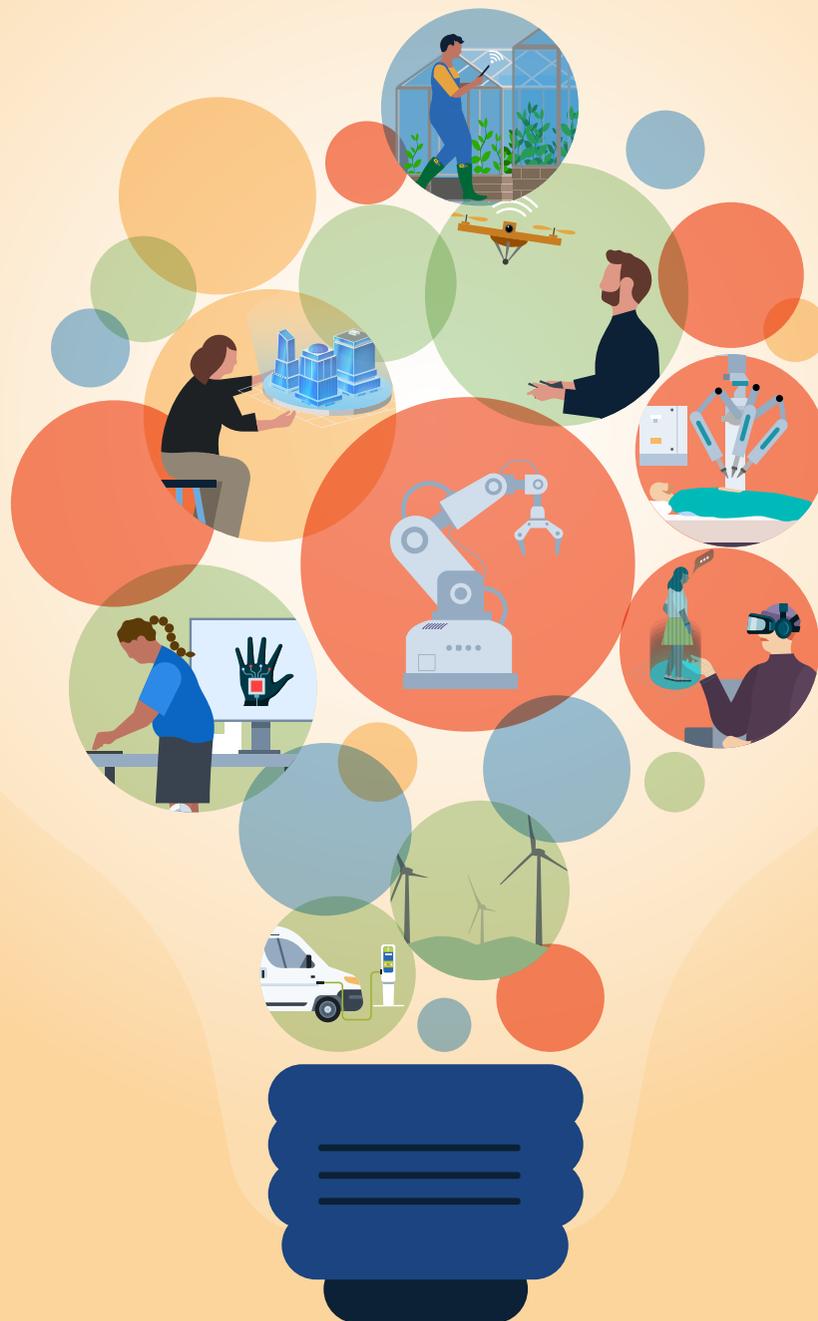


Brand to Buyer

Building B2B technology brands that shine

A LinkedIn B2B Technology Buyer and Marketer Survey – 22/23



Contents

Introduction	3
01 Executive summary	4
02 Trends uncovered	5
03 Seeing inside today's technology buyer world.....	6
04 Technology marketing is adapting to change	10
05 Building a brilliant B2B technology brand	15
Trend 1: Get creative with your content strategy	16
Trend 2: Cheer on branding in its long-term race	20
Trend 3: Know that a good employer signals a great brand	24
Trend 4: Be where your customers are	26
Trend 5: Influence the external influencers	28
06 Conclusion	29
07 Survey respondents and methodology.....	30

B2B marketing. It's got a job to do. It's functional. It's got no business getting creative. Really?

Received wisdom is yesterday's thinking. Just ask B2B buyers. Which is exactly what we've done. We wanted to find out more about whether current B2B technology marketing is hitting the mark with buyers. Does a focus on features and benefits motivate their purchase decisions, or are they looking for something different?

This extensive survey of technology decision makers and marketers certainly revealed a number of surprises. While some leading technology companies have captured the imagination of buyers, many are yet to push the creativity button. Marketers have the green light to up their game, build a more engaging brand and take advantage of positive growth trends in the industry.

That means being more distinctive, more memorable and better understood. Technology marketers need to build brands that are relatable to the ever-broadening spectrum of technology buyers – from the IT department to line-of-business users. Brands that show clearly why investing in their technology can help buyers achieve their strategic goals. Brands that are visible in the places where buyers look for information.

Digital is now mandatory, but the broader mass market vehicles should not be forgotten. This is particularly

relevant when communicating the bigger brand picture and broadening brand appeal.

And marketers shouldn't talk only to prospective customers. It's now just as important to seek out external advocates and ensure that they're kept informed. They've become an increasingly powerful influence in the decision-making process.

A B2B brand can be so much more than the sum of its products. We found that what technology buyers value includes the whole vendor story. This ranges from their capabilities and their people, to their wider corporate values and reputation as an employer. Marketers who demonstrate aligned values can have a positive impact on purchase decisions.

So, we say, why be bound by the traditional, functional view of how B2B marketing should be done? Now's the time to elevate B2B technology brands and their marketing to increase engagement and drive sales.

Welcome to the age of brilliant B2B technology brands.



Jim Habig
VP of Marketing,
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

Our approach

The LinkedIn B2B Technology Buyer and Marketer survey, in association with B2B International, includes insights from

2,095

technology decision makers (technology buyers) and

2,124

senior marketing professionals in North America, Latin America, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific.

For more details, please see the **Survey respondents and methodology** section on page 30.

01



As business' dependence on technology continues to increase exponentially, today's technology buyers find themselves at the center of the corporate stage.

IT is no longer simply a support function. It now underpins the entire business, from digital sales channels to digital supply chains – and all the systems and processes in between.

The fact that IT departments' profile and visibility have been increasing means that they've been under enormous pressure to make the right investment choices. And despite recent economic shifts and the prospect of a budget squeeze, technology buyers remain central to many projects that are shaping the enterprise of the future, spanning digital transformation, automation, big data, artificial intelligence and beyond.

This report explores the world of today's technology buyers, the challenges they face and the opportunities that this presents for technology vendors. It also looks at how technology marketing is evolving to better meet buyers' needs.

The insights we've uncovered will help marketers to build stronger B2B brands through a better understanding of the buyers they are marketing to. We also shed light on what makes a great B2B technology brand and what tactics marketers can use to drive their brand to greater success.

Most importantly, it provides **five key trends that will help marketers create a stronger B2B technology brand.**



02

Trends uncovered

TREND 1

Get creative with your content strategy

Cutting through means adding imagination.



TREND 2

Cheer on branding in its long-term race

Building a brilliant brand means seeing beyond immediate returns.



TREND 3

Know that a good employer signals a great brand

Getting buyers to buy means demonstrating shared values.



TREND 4

Be where your customers are

Being listened to by buyers means sharing the same destinations.



TREND 5

Influence the external influencers

Having buyers pay attention means having the ear of advocates.



03



Seeing inside today's technology buyer world

The success of any business today depends on its technology. With the technology marketplace getting even more crowded and competitive, the role of the technology buyer is becoming ever more complicated.

For technology marketers, stepping into the shoes of technology buyers can be extremely helpful. By meeting buyers at the right place, at the right time, with the right message that resonates with their priorities, marketers can build a strong foundation between technology buyers and technology vendors.



Over the course of my career, marketing has always had one reason to exist – and that is to bring the customer inside the business. None of that's changed – but what has changed is the technology we have available to understand our customers and the acceleration in the pace of change. As marketing leaders, we have to understand that acceleration. It involves the way humans are, the way that society evolves and the way that technology is driving that evolution.”



Alexis Oger
Vice President – EMEA
Marketing, Dell Technologies

Organizations view technology as a source of growth

Our research comes off a 12-month period that's seen technology businesses continue to invest in digital transformation and reshape working practices. Technology buyer budgets and headcounts have grown significantly.

The greatest growth in budget was found in APAC with a 35% average increase, while EMEA budgets grew the least at 24%. Buying budgets also increased across nearly all product categories with the most significant increases occurring in enterprise software for data centers, where 77% of buyers report an increase.

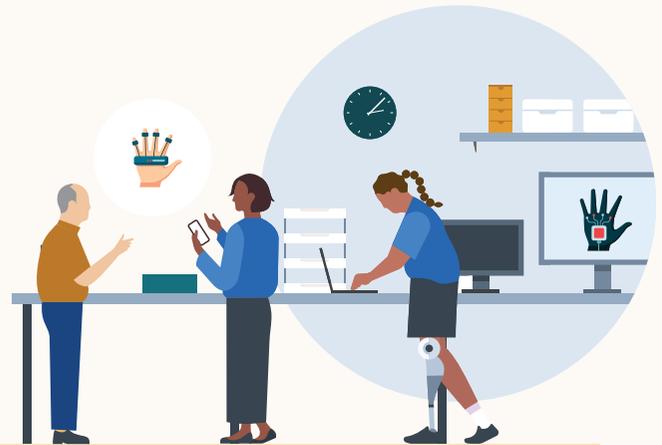
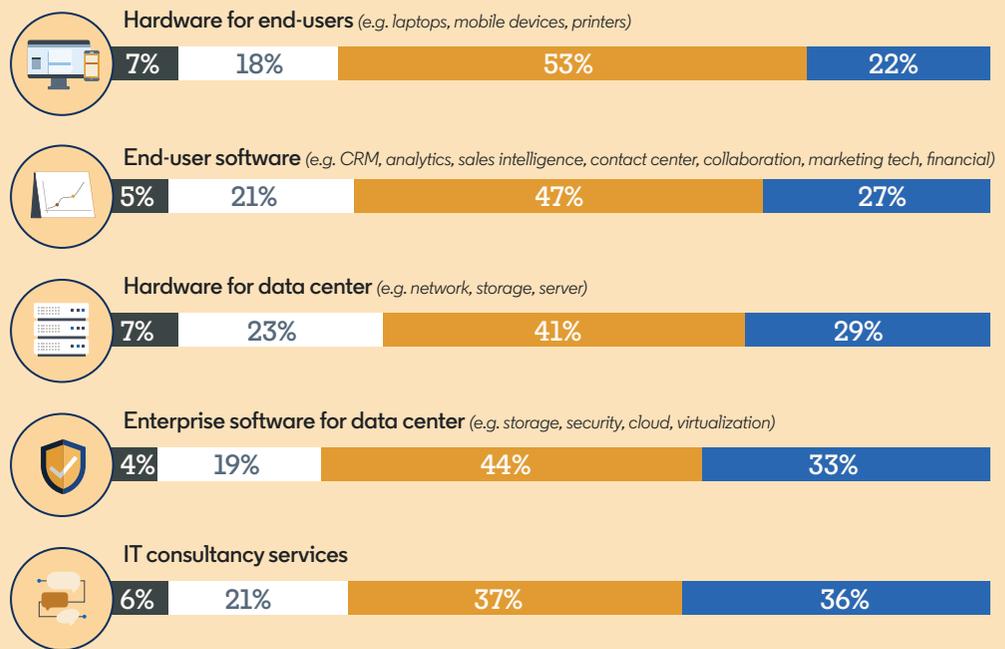


Figure 1.
Technology buying budget

How has your team's technology buying budget changed in the past 12 months for each of the following categories?

- Significantly increased
- Slightly increased
- No change
- Slightly decreased



At the same time, over half of technology buyers saw their team headcount increase over the last 12 months, particularly within the Enterprise segment. And IT is the function that's most likely to have seen rapid headcount increases, reinforcing the view that technology has become a critical foundation for all areas of the modern business.

Organizations now overwhelmingly see technology as a source of growth (71% of technology buyers),

rather than merely as an operating cost, and are more focused on finding ways to improve their performance (56%) than on keeping costs low.

And while the year ahead is likely to be significantly more challenging, the fact that organizations see technology as a way to get ahead provides grounds for being optimistic that technology spending will prove more resilient than other cost lines.

71% 

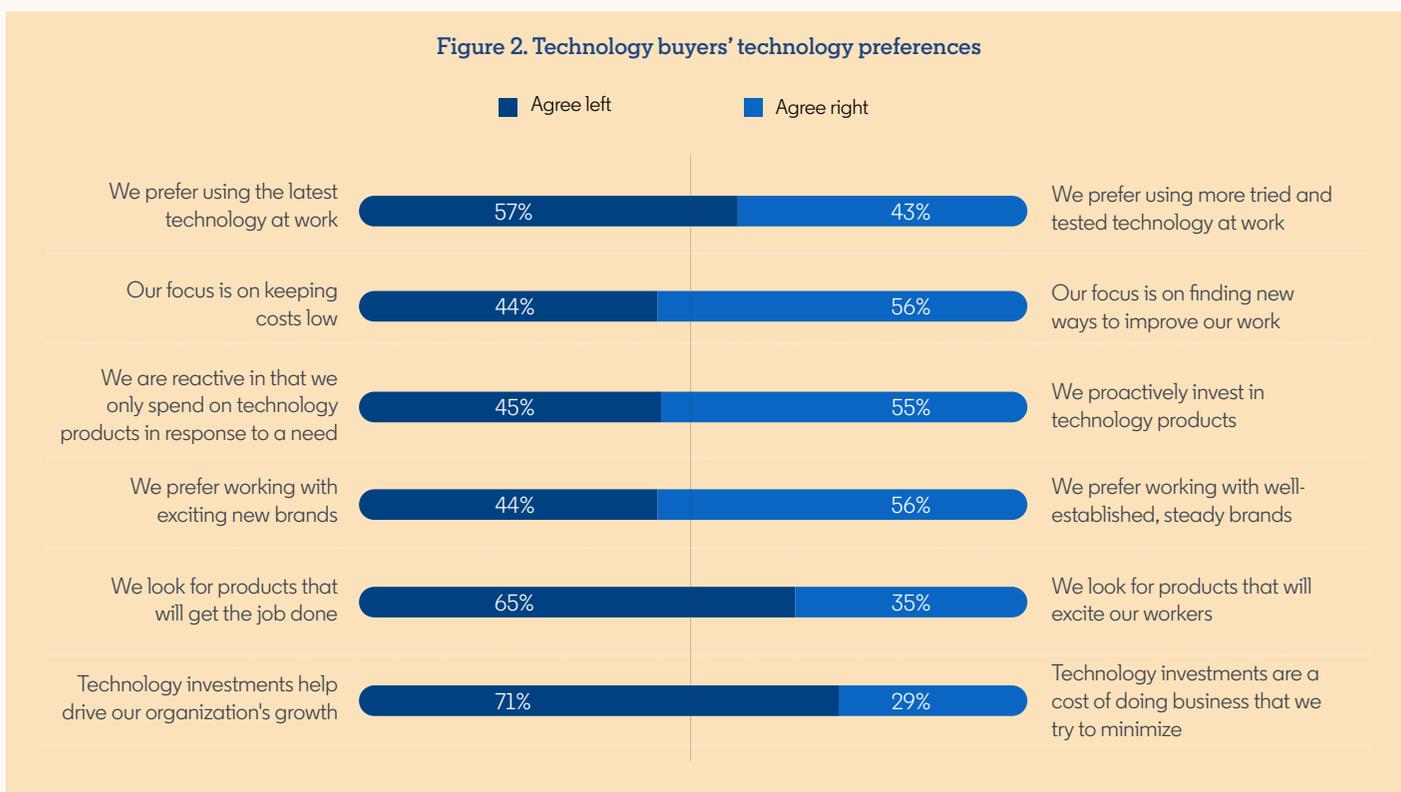
of buyers agree that technology investments help drive their organization's growth rather than simply being a cost of doing business.

56% 

say they are more focused on finding new ways to improve their work than on keeping costs low.

55% 

of buyers proactively invest in technology products, showcasing that they genuinely view and treat technology as an investment into their organization's growth.



Today's technology buyers anticipate that adoption of new technologies will continue to be a strategic priority, reflecting current views of technology as a potential source of competitive advantage. This advantage can be achieved through increased operational efficiency, or the delivery of more differentiated customer experiences.

Cloud-native platforms and AI are two areas that feature high on the list of strategic priorities, highlighted by 31% and 29% of buyers respectively.



But the standout, primary driver of technology spending for the year ahead will be risk mitigation. **Cybersecurity** is the #1 priority for technology buyers over the next one to two years, highlighted as a strategic priority by 35% of respondents, with enhancing data privacy not far behind.



Identifying issues: competition, cost, and workforce

Competitive pressures and cost concerns rate high on the list of challenges faced by buyers of new technology.

36%



say 'Having the right technology to stay ahead of the market' is a challenge.

35%



say 'Getting the right products and services while keeping our costs low' is a challenge.

Workforce-related issues also featured strongly. Following the switch to hybrid working, the need to support employees with the right technology remains front-of-mind.

61%



say that a shift to remote/hybrid work has had a noticeable impact on how they purchase technology.

31%



say 'Equipping and supporting employees both in the office and working remotely' is a significant challenge.

Figure 3. Technology buyer top 4 challenges

#1

Having the right technology to stay ahead of the market.

#2

Getting the right products and services while keeping costs low.

#3

Providing the workforce with the most up-to-date technology products and services.

#4

Equipping and supporting employees both in the office and working remotely.

Coping with increased levels of employee churn is another major issue. 75% of technology buyers say they are concerned by their organization's ability to meet existing and emerging internal challenges resulting from staff turnover and changing employee expectations.

Buyers also face their own departmental issues. When asked which challenges had the biggest impact on their team's ability to meet its goals and objectives, buyers highlighted two in particular: 'Needing to do more with fewer resources' and 'Employees taking on dramatically new roles and responsibilities'.

There's a clear and positive take away for B2B vendor marketers here. The more they can demonstrate to buyers how technology increases competitive edge without breaking the bank – as well as relieving cost concerns and employee churn while enabling more workforce productivity – the more they can drive sales.

04



Technology marketing is adapting to change

The B2B technology market has already been impacted by changes in the buyer landscape, but the marketer landscape is also evolving. Shifts in spending priorities and operating models, in particular, reflect marketers' moves to better meet buyers' needs.

Big budgets could be shrinking

The need for technology grew during the pandemic, as it offered the resiliency and competitive edge businesses needed. This led to increased marketing budgets and a growing need for skilled marketing teams, which continued as the industry emerged from the pandemic, with tech marketers reporting significant increases in budgets and headcount in the 12 months to June 2022. This growth was consistent across all geographies, with the biggest YoY increase seen among vendors of software for data centers.

However, the landscape has now shifted and the trend towards increased budgets looks to be in reverse. This new economic landscape will exacerbate the challenges marketers shared about securing budget in the future, particularly for brand marketing.

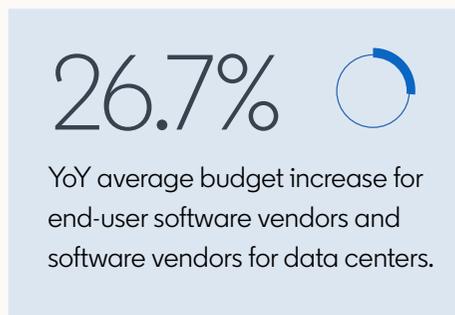


Even though marketing has been embarking on a digital transition for a decade, the COVID crisis has accelerated not only the digitization of marketing, but also its 'premiumization'. We did in 18 months what would have been done in 10 years. Marketing has evolved from the status of 'adjustment variable' – in reference to the famous advertising cuts in the event of a company's financial loss – to the status of being a 'strategic function' of the company's business. Marketing has become a real lever for growth. Proof of this is the impact of marketing investments on the growth of eCommerce during the pandemic."



Jeremy Chapuis

Director, EMEA Marketing Media Center of Excellence, Lenovo



The biggest jumps in buyer technology budgets were seen in APAC (30%) and North America (29%). While still quite significant, increases were less in EMEA at 18% and in Latin America at 17%.

Looking ahead at a potential reversal of the trend towards increased budgets, we asked marketers why they may face challenges in securing budget in the future, particularly for brand marketing. A number of reasons were cited. At 34%, the most common issue reported by marketers was a lack of experience/talent in the marketing department, followed by 33% who cited budget holders' skepticism of the ability of brand marketing to drive growth.

This is clearly a concern for marketers focused on building long-term brand value, particularly as 78% agreed that marketing budgets are the first to get cut during a downturn.

Figure 4. Primary challenges to securing budget for brand marketing investments



So much more of the selling process is now being driven without the traditional engagement of salespeople. It's driven by self-education and research. Buyers are interacting through technology such as AI chatbots rather than people – and marketing is at the heart of that.”



James Whitmore
EVP & CMO, NetApp



Spend priorities are shifting

Over the last 12 months, as B2B technology marketers adapted to changing buyer behaviors, clear shifts in areas of investment have emerged.

Digital advertising, in particular on social media, is becoming the dominant area of spend, consuming an increasing proportion of marketing budget from both vendors and agency marketers. This aligns with technology buyers saying that social media and search engine advertising are now their primary sources for getting information to support their purchases.

26%



of vendor marketers said they've substantially increased spend on social media over the last 12 months – the most of any category.

24%



of vendor marketers said they substantially increased spend on search engine advertising.

31%



of technology marketers **ranked social media advertising top of all categories** for where they were mainly investing their marketing activities.



Here at LinkedIn, we've seen these patterns play out first-hand. It's encouraging to see our technology customers increase their spend on digital marketing and advertising services – a testament to how crucial it is for B2B brands to continue to invest in strengthening their presence, despite uncertainty. Many tech customers are in the market to reposition their brand and get in front of the conversation on digital transformation."

Tom Pepper

Senior Director, EMEA and LATAM,
LinkedIn Marketing Solutions



Technology marketers are supporting their increasingly digital activities by upping their use of marketing automation tools, which now account for a growing proportion of marketing budgets. When asked to identify the marketing activities that account for the largest proportion of their budgets, 28% ranked automation tools second out of twenty activities, behind only social media advertising.

And it's no surprise that, while some marketing activities are attracting increased investment, others are inevitably declining. Some areas where more marketers reported declining spend than those reporting increases include white papers (-2%), attending trade shows and events (-1%), and ROI calculators (-1%).



Operating models are evolving

Marketing operating models and resourcing strategies are also evolving, as evidenced by an increasing reliance on external resources and a re-evaluation of existing agency relationships.

78% of marketers have increased reliance on outsourced services and manpower – including external consultants, outsources and freelancers – perhaps due in some part to the talent gap mentioned above that was identified by technology buyers.

This trend is particularly prevalent in APAC, where 42% reported using external consultants to advise on strategy – a significantly higher percentage than in other regions.

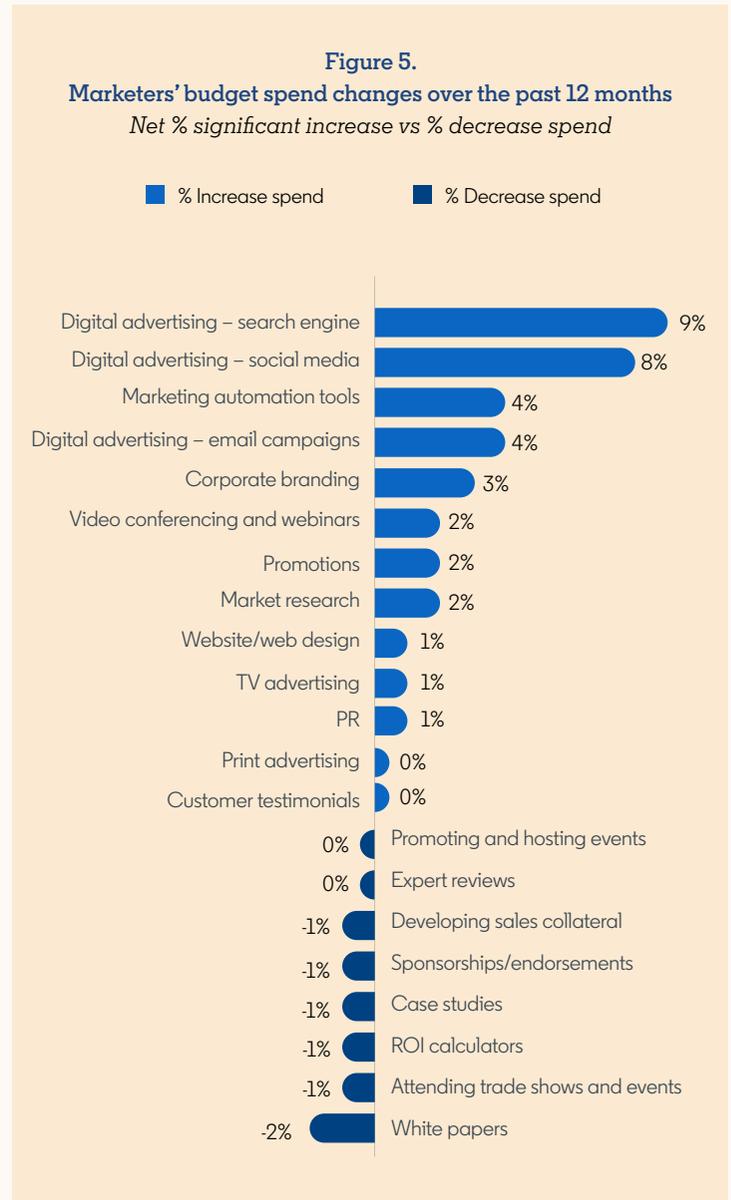
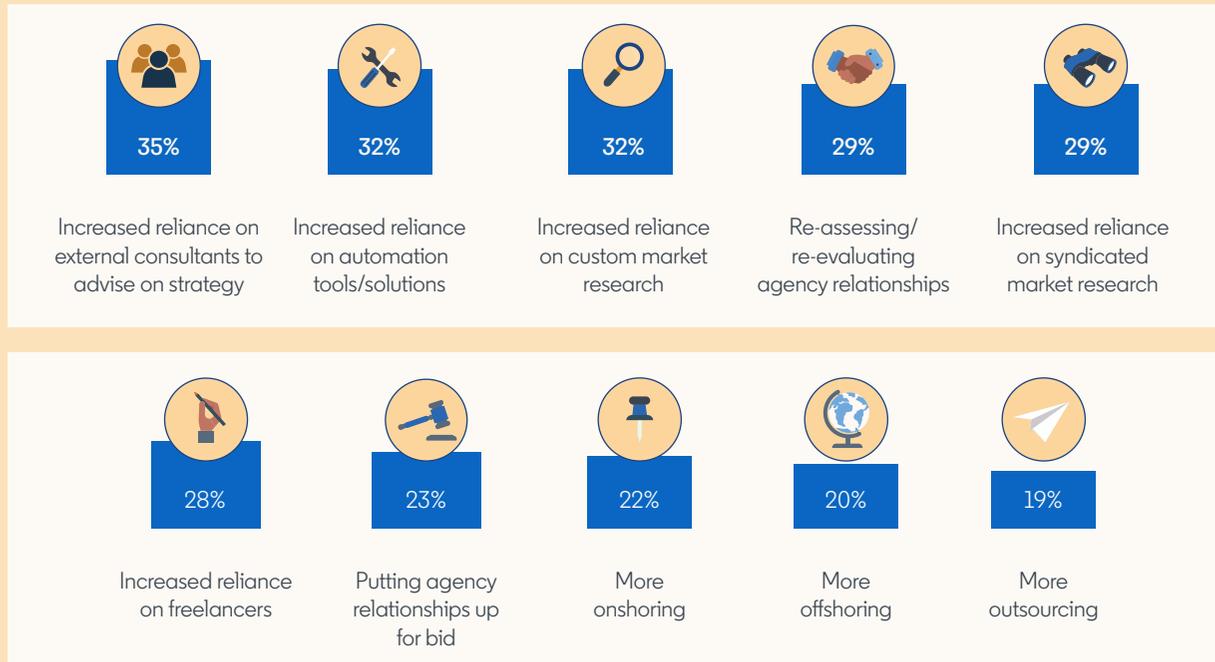


Figure 6. Marketing activity shifts over the past 12 months



Given the re-adjustments in preferred marketing mix covered in the previous section, it seems likely that some of this evolution in operating models reflects the changing skillsets that marketers need to execute their strategies. But it could also reflect the challenges they face given the high rates of staff turnover over the last couple of years.

A massive

95%

of marketers say they are concerned about their organization's ability to meet the internal challenges arising from employee churn and changing employee expectations.



Also, the criterion of 'Employees taking on dramatically new roles and responsibilities' was identified as the issue which has the biggest impact on their team's ability to meet its goals and objectives.

With so much uncertainty surrounding employee numbers and duties, and the need to quickly adapt skill sets as marketing technology develops, marketing departments need to keep an open mind towards the way they operate in order to continue to hit their goals. As employees seek newer challenges, further investment in upskilling can help retain valuable talent.

In fact, we can already see technology vendors starting to take action. The most popular ways they have been improving employee workplaces are through addressing work-life balance issues, making commitments to diversity, equality and inclusion, and increasing their positive impact on the community and society.

05

Building a brilliant B2B technology brand



TREND 1

Get creative with your content strategy

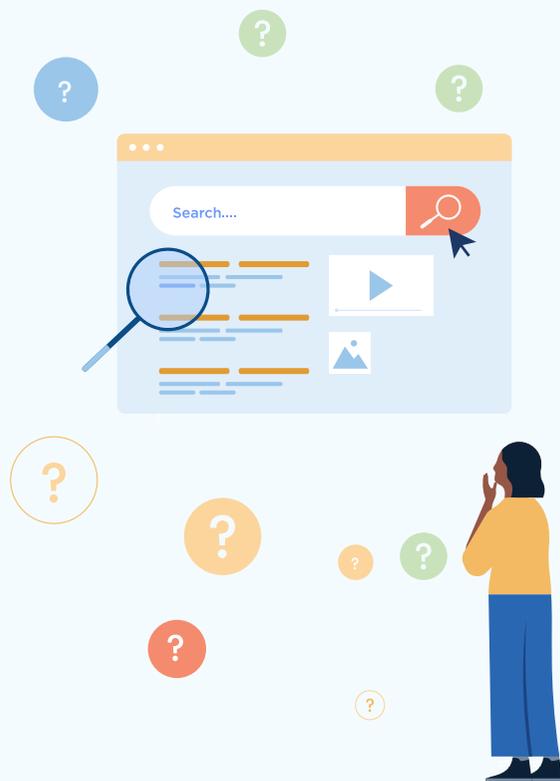


Buyers want justifiable reasons to buy

Many buyers feel that technology vendors are not adapting to their changing needs and are struggling to provide the support that buyers want.

When asked which buyer needs vendors were having the most trouble addressing, ‘Demonstrating the ROI’ and ‘Helping fill the gaps left by employee churn’ came top of the list. Clearly, buyers want help from technology marketers in demonstrating the business case for technology investment.

Buyers also don’t seem hugely impressed with vendors’ marketing efforts. When questioned about whether vendor marketing was answering their questions or providing compelling messages, technology buyers are generally underwhelmed.



62%

of buyers feel that B2B advertising is too vague to be relevant to their business.

67%

of buyers feel that ads are not always appropriately targeting them.

64%

of buyers feel that ads don’t always demonstrate a good understanding of their organization’s problems.



Like many B2B technology brands, this year we had huge growth targets and limited budget. We knew we couldn't just rely on paid media to hit these targets, we had to get creative. So we partnered with Hardhat and produced our award-winning campaign: [Next Time, DocuSign](#). We saw results almost immediately, and the campaign impacted both top- and bottom-of-funnel metrics. We saw 3.7m views (and counting), a 44% increase in web traffic quarter on quarter, and 21,000 new DocuSign accounts. On LinkedIn, we saw 2.79x higher CTR than the industry benchmark and a 27% video completion rate, which is over 3.5x greater than the LinkedIn industry benchmark. We truly believe investment in brand today is an investment in sales tomorrow."



Andrea Dixon
Head of Marketing – Asia-Pacific, DocuSign

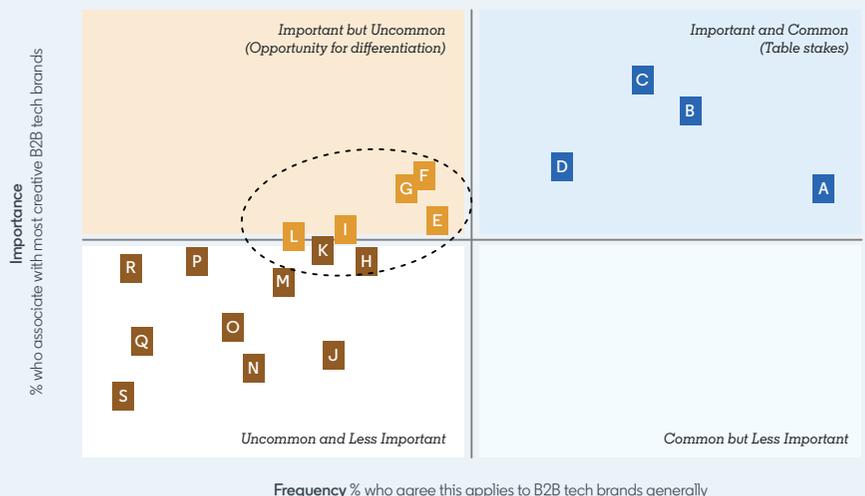
Buyers value clarity and useful information

Technology buyers told us in no uncertain terms that content needs to be useful, clear, and easy to understand – and this is where B2B marketers are mostly getting it right. But our research also shows the importance of content being relevant and credible – and here there is some room for improvement. It's also significant to note that, while factual and clear information is undoubtedly important, it will not make brands stand out. B2B marketers need to elevate their brand by offering something more attention-grabbing and memorable.

Figure 7.
Importance vs. prevalence of attributes for unlocking marketing creativity

Attributes in order of importance

A	Understand what ads are trying to sell	K	Can remember the brand name of the advertiser after
B	Ads are useful/informative	L	Ads demonstrate how their solutions will solve my organization's problems
C	Ads have a clear message	M	Ads set up the right expectations for how organization experiences the product
D	Ads are relevant to me	N	Share ads with other people on the buying committee
E	Can recognize the brand running the ad	O	Ads are appropriately targeted towards me
F	Ads deliver a credible message	P	Ads are memorable
G	Ads catch and hold my attention	Q	Can identify the protagonists in ads
H	Ads demonstrate a good understanding of my organization's problems	R	Ads are entertaining
I	Ads are inspiring	S	Other people on the buying committee have shared ads with me
J	The buying committee talks about ads seen when making purchase decisions		



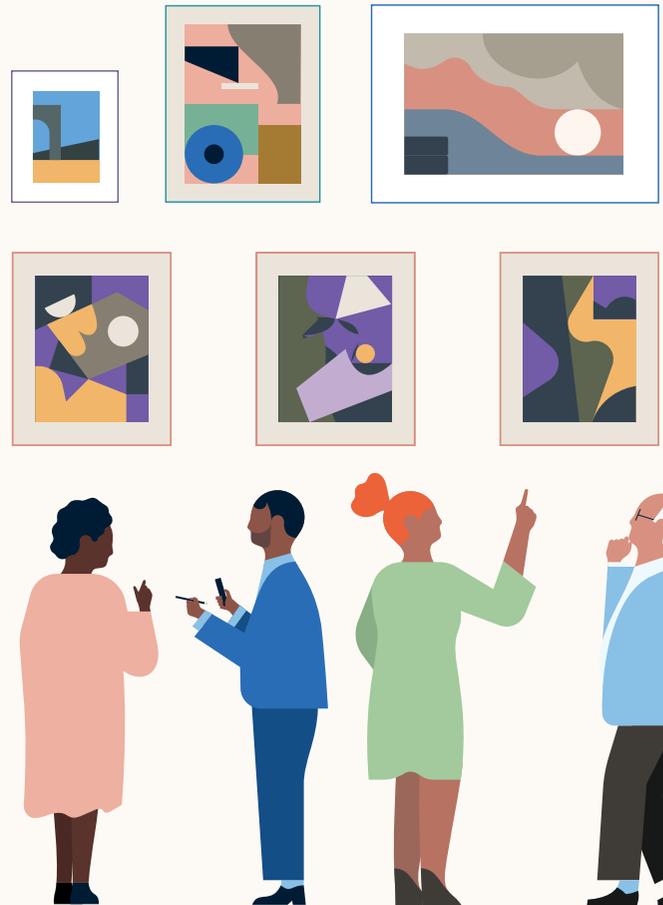
Who tops the creative B2B charts?

If technology buyers are not enamored with vendors' marketing efforts, what does it take to impress them?

When we asked buyers the open-ended question of which B2B technology brands have the most creative approach to marketing, they selected a top four of Microsoft, Google, IBM, and Amazon/AWS.

Buyers cited 'attention-grabbing/different/unique' as a stand-out value for Microsoft, IBM, and Amazon.

Overall, this was the attribute mentioned most by buyers as their reason for giving a brand a high ranking. 'New/innovative advertising methods' was also a value highlighted by buyers in relation to Microsoft, Google, IBM, and Amazon.



We shouldn't forget that B2B buyers are only humans at the end of the day. They don't want to be bored with dry content, they want to be entertained. From our experience, we can stick out with more creative promotional material, but overall, there are great B2B companies to get inspired by. We have a dedicated channel in our team in which everybody posts their findings."



Britta Kristin Agel

Head of Global Demand Generation Marketing, Spryker Systems

Demonstrate the ‘why’ as well as the ‘how’

While clear, factual, product-based content is undoubtedly important to technology buyers, creating a strong B2B technology brand also requires something more distinctive. And there are ways that technology brands can deliver content strategies that are not only relevant and helpful, but also creative.



One way is through including data-driven thought leadership as part of a successful marketing strategy. It’s an approach that gives marketers the opportunity to offer distinctive points of view, setting vendors apart from their competitors, while offering useful insights to target buyers and building vendor credibility.



Making content more relevant and engaging can be achieved by moving on from simply talking about the amazing features of a vendor solution. Marketers need to tell stories that give buyers a reason to care, linking the vendor proposition to the issues – both organizational and individual – that keep buyers up at night. The ‘why’ matters as much as the ‘what’.



Talking about how vendors can help buyers to maintain competitive advantage, find new ways of working, drive growth, and fill the gaps created by higher levels of employee churn are all approaches that are likely to capture attention.

Investing in innovative data-driven thought leadership and more targeted sector- or persona-specific messaging are important opportunities for marketers to increase perceived relevance.



Yes, we’re B2B marketers, but as everyone says: it’s another person at the end of the line. How do you connect with that person on a level that makes them feel something? We can tell you that we make life better for billions of people, billions of times a day, but unless we can find a way to showcase how we’re doing that, I don’t think we can win.”



Amanda McDonald

Director, Global Digital Marketing, Akamai Technologies

TREND 2

Cheer on branding in its long-term race



Going digital for short-term success

When asked about the impact on short-term sales performance, marketers considered digital activity to deliver the best results overall.

That's no surprise, given the spend priorities and buyer preferences we've outlined above. It may also reflect the fact that digital marketing's impact on lead generation and sales metrics can often be easy to measure and demonstrate in the short term.

80%

of marketers ranked social media advertising, websites and email highly on impact.

81%

of marketers prioritize customer testimonials for having high short-term impact.

Different tactics, however, were favored in specific regions, reflecting significant differences in buyer behaviors and channel adoption across geographies. For example, while expert reviews and webinars were ranked the most impactful in the short-term in North America (with both favored by 92% of marketers), these activities were well down the list in LATAM (favored by 63% and 71% of marketers respectively).



As our business scales across key geographies, and as the needs of our customers across their digital, engineering, and cloud journeys grow, we're growing our investment in brand building. Our business has seen amazing recognition from industry analysts, and we want to proudly tell that story across digital channels. We see a huge business opportunity for a clear, focused message about the value, passion, and progress HCLTech brings to clients. An optimized brand and digital strategy will spark that opportunity."



Dan MacAvoy
VP Digital Marketing,
Product and Revenue Ops,
HCLTech

Branding is the key to long-term impact

When asked which activities have the biggest long-term impact, a slightly different picture emerges.

Globally, corporate branding and market research were ranked top, with 82% and 84% of marketers respectively citing these as having significant impact. And while high in all regions, marketers in EMEA have put corporate branding at the top of their list for long-term impact on growth.

Overall, brand marketing was ranked as one of the most impactful investments for achieving long-term growth. But it's only the tenth highest budget item, with the highest being social media advertising. This reflects the

current priority of allocating funds for short-term initiatives rather than long-term growth, as well as budget holders' skepticism of the ability of brand marketing to drive growth (as previously mentioned). **Investments in brand marketing could come under further pressure during a downturn if budgets decrease.**

28%



of technology marketers say there is a lack of brand metrics that are clearly tied to growth.



There's a real difference between the theory of brand building and then the practice of standing in front of the board and being asked to explain how you spent millions of dollars. In theory, there can be recognition that this is a longer-term investment and needs to be measured in a completely different way. In practice, once that campaign starts to run, you will still get questions about the contribution it's making to the pipeline. We've got to be aware of that and make sure that we can point to that contribution. The fact that a brand campaign can now be targeted and you can point to movement within those targeted customers, gives you something to leverage."



Paige O'Neill
CMO, Sitecore

Fly the brand flag

The fact that marketers are prioritizing spend on areas where they think they can maximize short-term success (such as digital activity), over areas that they believe will have greater long-term impact (like market research and corporate branding), suggests that they're being driven more by short-term KPIs than longer-term value.

Finances are likely to get tighter for many B2B technology companies over the next one to two years. Marketing budgets will inevitably come under pressure. There'll be a strong temptation to sacrifice activities such as brand-building – which marketers recognize as having

the greatest impact on long-term value – in pursuit of short-term lead generation metrics.

Yet history suggests this would be a mistake. In fact, our past research has shown that companies who continued to invest in their brand during recessions are the ones that win market share and are best placed to capitalize when the economy rebounded. It's a phenomenon we explored in LinkedIn's webinar: [All-Weather Marketing](#).

It's also important to note that brand building can have more of an impact on short-term sales metrics than many people appreciate.



Everyone understands that you can't just drive demand without upper funnel investments. But at the core of your strategy, you need a very data-driven, ROI-driven argument where you can show that investment X leads to output Z. Once you have that, you're in a better position to make the case for building out the brand infrastructure. But as a marketer, you have to have conviction in arguing for brand budget as well. The numbers won't do the job for you."



Kerstin Köder

Head of Marketing EMEA, SAP



We believe in a year-on-year increase in brand building investment across the organization. This is because Whatfix is creating a new category altogether. We are looking at this opportunity as a long-term strategy to create a category, own it, and lead it.”



Reetesh Pandey

Associate Director – Demand Generation, Whatfix

56%

of technology buyers prefer to work with established brands. This could be due to a variety of factors such as proven expertise, greater trust, or strong alignment with brand values.

Marketing leaders need to be evangelists during this period, educating other senior colleagues on the long-term value of brand investments. Marketers need to resist the pressure to slash spending on activities that don't have an immediate impact on pipeline.



We are increasing our investment in brand building. We realize the impact that brand building has on our demand-generation activities, and the more awareness there is around our brand, the more successful those activities will be. Since making a shift to investing more in brand building, we have seen more leads, a better conversion rate, and a slight decrease in cost per lead.”



Kim Roman

Senior Director Global Campaigns and Performance Marketing,
Talkdesk

TREND 3

Know that a good employer signals a great brand



The employer brand has never been so important

Being perceived as a good employer is becoming an important factor in technology purchasing decisions.

88%



of technology buyers say working with B2B technology brands that have a very positive perception as an employer is important to them.

We found that factors influencing a buyer's perception of a vendor as an employer include:



Work-life
balance
*(cited by 44%
of buyers)*



Career
advancement/
development
opportunities
(40%)



Positive
impact on
community/
society
(36%)

Marketers also believe that an 'employer brand' is a factor, with only 5% saying that being perceived as a great place to work would have no impact on a buyer.

This all suggests that buyers are looking beyond just features, pricing, and service when selecting vendors, and that they consider whether a vendor's values align with their own. It may also reflect buyers' desire for continuity of relationships with their suppliers, and concerns over staff churn impacting service levels. Which may in turn imply buyers' preference for working with companies who are more likely to also have similar brand values.

It's no secret that strong employer brands attract the best talent – people who can deliver on the promise of technical expertise and innovation.

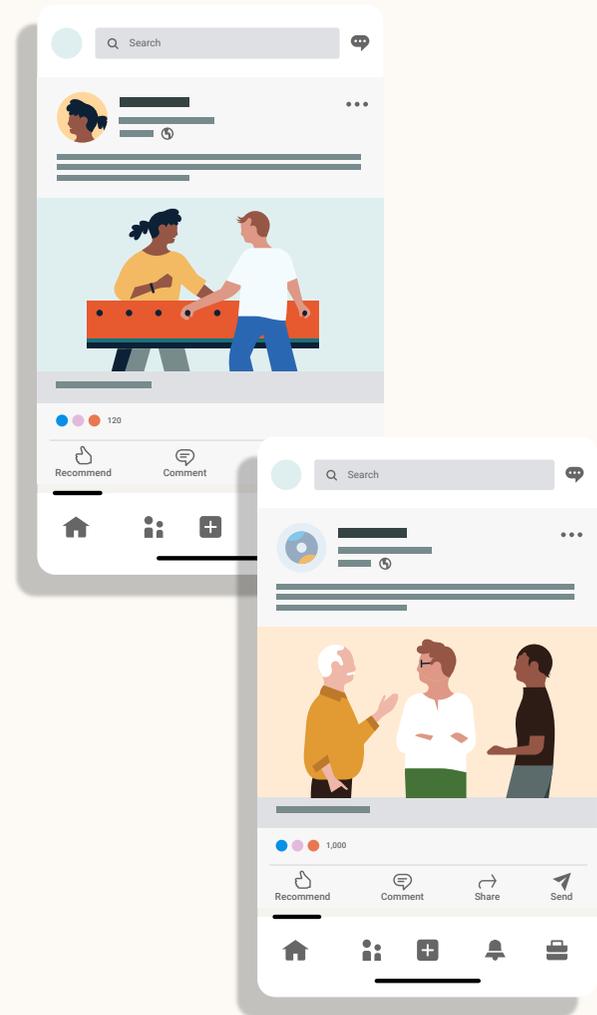
Engage in employer branding

Vendors who invest in their employer brand can not only attract top talent – a vital issue as firms cope with changing employee needs – but can also directly and positively influence buying decisions.

Marketers need to take an active role in shaping and promoting their employer brand, rather than seeing it as an issue for the HR department.

Creating a unified brand narrative, which encompasses employees as well as customers, is an important starting point.

When promoting their employer brand – whether by showcasing employee welfare programmes or highlighting innovative working practices – marketers should also think about the audience. It's not just prospective and current employees that need to be reached, **it's also prospects, customers and influencers.**



The role of the CMO isn't just about the brand or generating demand. It's about the broader identity behind them, an identity that needs to engage not just customers but the employees a business depends on. That CMO role is expanding, because your identity isn't just a product story – it's a company story."



Alexis Oger

Vice President – EMEA Marketing,
Dell Technologies

TREND 4

Be where your customers are

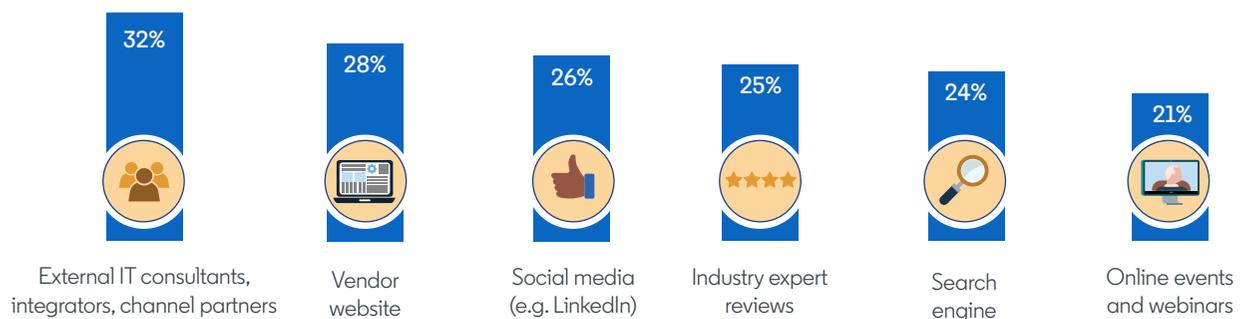


Social media and search at its strongest

One area where vendor marketers have an opportunity to up their game is in making sure their information is in the right place to be easily found by prospective customers. Unsurprisingly, online sources are most popular. Social media such as LinkedIn and search engines are now the mostly commonly used information source overall by technology buyers, although less so in North America where they turn to external consultants more often.

Social media and search engines were both used by 43% of buyers in the previous year to support their purchase decisions. Social media was felt to be one of most useful sources of information, only ranking behind external advisors and vendor websites.

Figure 8. Most useful source of information for technology buyers



It's also worth noting that some of the least popular sources of information for buyers include ROI calculators and TV ads. **Marketers may be well advised to pause for thought before devoting large chunks of their budget to the next high-profile TV campaign.**

Don't ignore paid search, websites, and webinars

When looking at where to spend their budgets, it's important that technology marketers align with technology buyer behaviors. If we compare where technology buyers say they go to for information, with where technology marketers are investing, we can see opportunities to optimize spend.

Continuing to prioritize social media advertising makes perfect sense based on the data, but there's a case for vendors to increase investment in paid search, their own websites, and online events such as webinars.



You've got to make sure that you're top of mind for your target audiences. If you were doing a brand campaign in the past, you used to think automatically of TV and airport billboards. But the technology available today means that we're able to be much more targeted. LinkedIn, for example, enables us to really filter down who we are trying to reach with our branding. That's made branding a more relevant option for smaller B2B companies than it ever has been."



Paige O'Neill
CMO, Sitecore

Figure 9. Where buyers go for information on technology brands

	 BUYERS Base: 2,095	 CLIENT-SIDE MARKETERS Base: 1,594	 AGENCY-SIDE MARKETERS Base: 530
Social media (e.g. LinkedIn)/ Digital advertising – social media	1 st	1 st	1 st
Search engine/ Digital advertising – search engine	2 nd	4 th	3 rd
Vendor website/Website/Web design	3 rd	6 th	8 th
External IT consultants, integrators, VARs/MSPs	4 th	N/A	N/A
Online events and webinars	5 th	7 th	5 th
Industry expert reviews/Expert reviews	6 th	3 rd	7 th
Emails from vendors' contacts	7 th	N/A	8 th
Vendor presentations/Pitches/ Developing sales collateral	8 th	8 th	N/A
Customer testimonials	9 th	10 th	6 th
In-person events and conferences/ Attending trade shows and events	10 th	5 th	12 th
New articles and press releases/PR	11 th	11 th	9 th
Automated emails from vendor/ Digital advertising – email campaigns	12 th	14 th	14 th
White papers	13 th	2 nd	11 th
Case studies	14 th	13 th	2 nd
TV advertising	15 th	9 th	4 th
ROI calculators	16 th	12 th	10 th

TREND 5

Influence the external influencers



External advisors are filling the marketing gap

For many technology buyers, external IT advisors are the most useful source of information. This is particularly the case for larger enterprises and IT roles, where they are used more extensively than online sources.

41%

of all buyers have used external IT consultants, integrators and channel partners in the last year.

Marketers should note that this increases to 48% for enterprise buyers and 45% for IT contacts.

These findings show how technology buyers can remain anonymous for much of their buying journey as they will often thoroughly research a company – using other third-party sources – before reaching out to a sales team.

Keep advocates in the know

Given the importance to buyers of external advisors (consultants, systems integrators, and channel partners) – particularly in categories such as end-user software and data center software – it's essential that marketers have the right channel and influencer programs in place. They can gain real traction by ensuring that the people who have the ear of buyers are well-informed about the vendor's proposition.

To engage these influencers, marketers also need to make sure that, as well as articulating the vendor's proposition to buyers, influencers can clearly communicate the value that the vendor can create for and with their partners.

And it's not just paid advisors who should be marketed to. Any existing user of a product or service can become an important advocate, exerting a big influence on the decision-making processes of their peers. To stay front-of-mind, it's vital that vendors find these advocates, encourage them and keep them informed about products. This can be achieved via advocacy programs or user forums, where top users get privileged access to new features before general release in return for their feedback and support.

06

Building successful B2B technology brands

The technology buyers' landscape is always changing, but one thing remains clear: buyers will always be looking for better technology to support their business.

How B2B vendor marketers appeal to technology buyers ahead of the competition – through standing out from the crowd and telling the right stories on the right channels – is key to becoming and remaining a winning B2B technology brand.

Five key trends for marketers to build B2B technology brands that shine

<p>TREND 1</p>  <p>Get creative with your content strategy</p> <p>Understanding the evolving challenges that buyers face has always mattered. But today, achieving impact means not just speaking to those challenges. It also means speaking to them creatively.</p>	<p>TREND 2</p>  <p>Cheer on branding in its long-term race</p> <p>A common misconception persists that branding cannot be easily measured, relegating its position in the pecking order for budget allocation. It's time for branding to rise up the ladder – marketers need to sing its praises as a driver of long-term success.</p>	<p>TREND 3</p>  <p>Know that a good employer signals a great brand</p> <p>A great brand is built from the inside out. Buyers know and value this. Marketers need to evaluate how technology buyers perceive their employer branding – it's now an important factor in their decision to buy.</p>
<p>TREND 4</p>  <p>Be where your customers are</p> <p>Alignment is essential. It's no good shouting about innovative solutions if buyers aren't there to listen. Ensuring marketing messages get heard means being where decision makers go for information.</p>	<p>TREND 5</p>  <p>Influence the external influencers</p> <p>One key destination that buyers head to is outside advisors. Marketers need to get their propositions in front of those who can help advocate on their behalf.</p>	

07

Survey respondents and methodology

The data for this report was collected through an online survey administered to 4,219 respondents globally. The survey fieldwork was conducted by B2B International during May and June of 2022.

The survey sample was distributed across two different groups, as indicated below:

Technology purchase decision makers
(technology buyers).

Technology buyers

2,095
surveys completed



Professionals engaged in marketing of technology brands and services on both the client- and agency-side (technology marketers).

Technology marketers

2,124
surveys completed

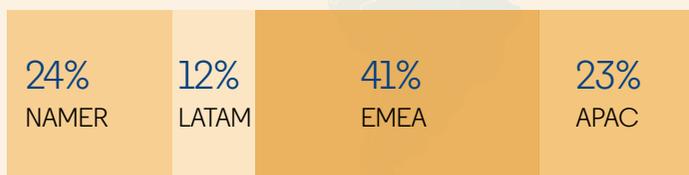


Geographic spread

Buyers:

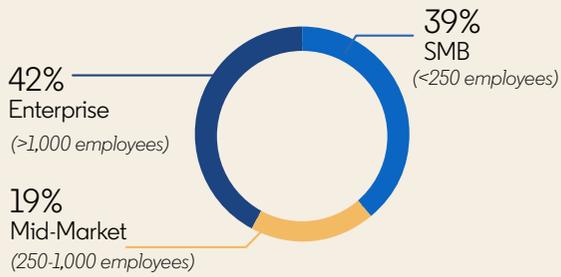


Marketers:

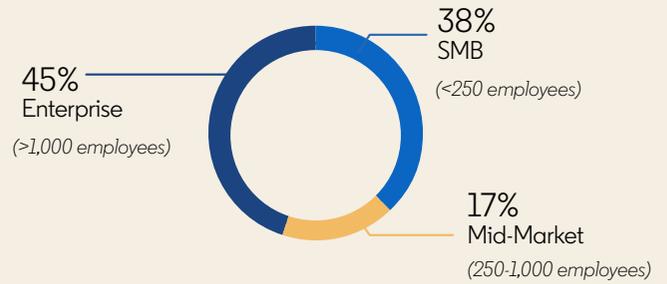


Business size

Buyers:

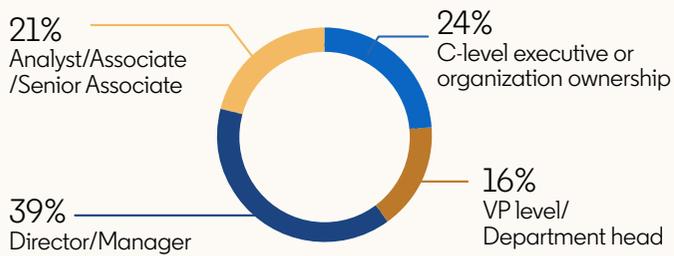


Marketers:

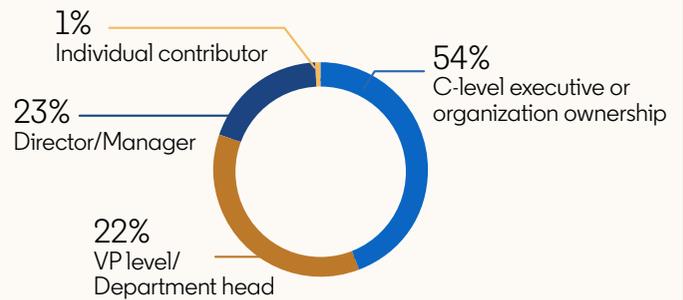


Level of seniority

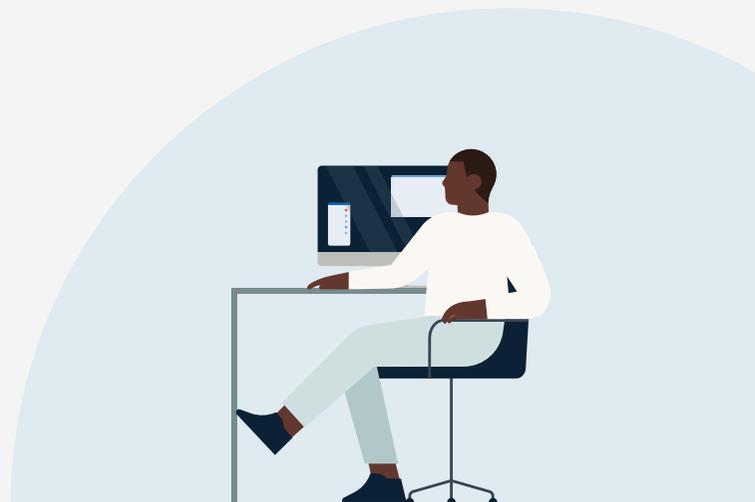
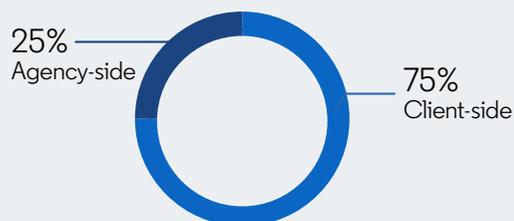
Buyers:



Marketers:



Technology marketer types



Brand to Buyer

Building B2B technology brands that shine

How LinkedIn can help technology marketers

There is a tremendous opportunity ahead for B2B marketers to leverage creativity, bold messaging, and customer empathy. B2B is evolving, rewiring the way we live, work, shop, and consume. B2B is growing. B2B is receiving massive investments. And more than ever now, B2B is showing up on LinkedIn, not because we have the world's largest professional audience, but because we have the data, tools and solutions allowing B2B brands to reach them in a meaningful way. At LinkedIn, we are committed to keeping pace with your needs. We understand and respect the B2B world you evolve in, and how could we not? We were built for B2B.

For additional technology marketing resources, visit lnkd.in/techhub

About B2B International

B2B International is a global, full-service market research firm dedicated to researching business-to-business markets. They help clients to make smarter decisions driven by exclusive insights, empowering them to grow. They are part of Merkle B2B; the world's leading, purpose-built end-to-end B2B agency, bringing together the best B2B capabilities and competencies to architect modern-day customer experiences.

For more information, contact B2B International at info@b2binternational.com or visit www.b2binternational.com.