



Buyer Journey Personalisation Guide | 2022

Creating highly personalised buyer journeys at scale

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Introduction.

As consumers, we've come to expect highly personalised experiences — whether we're shopping, streaming or simply browsing — think about the way we interact with Netflix, Amazon or Spotify. It's customised to our needs, preferences and even learns our behaviours over time. By contrast, the B2B experience is less 'made to measure' and more 'one size fits all'.

Account Based Marketing (ABM) strategies are aiming to change this perception. Our challenge as B2B marketers is to create those important personalised buying experiences for our prospects and customers — and do it efficiently, at scale.

On top of this, B2B marketers have the added complexity of delivering these experiences in a channel or alliances environment, as well as bringing together the value that both parties offer in a coherent, consistent and manageable way.

The process of making a business purchase is inherently different from a consumer one. They are higher ticket, with longer timeframes, involving several buying jobs. Not putting too fine a point on it — it's not our money.

Decisions must be justified to the business and potentially shareholders. Perhaps most significantly, they involve a buying group made up of at least three people, often as many as 10.

Buyers report that decisions to purchase a solution over **\$5,000** involve a group of three or more **84%** of the time.¹

1. Forrester 2021 B2B Buying Study

2. Gartner — The New B2B Buying Journey & its Implication on Sales

77%
of B2B buyers
stated that their
latest purchase
was difficult
or complex.²

44%

of millennials prefer no sales rep interaction in a B2B purchase setting.³

In many ways, we've not made it easy for B2B buyers to access the resources and information they need to make good decisions.

Buyers often come across content and messaging that isn't optimised, or that forces them to work hard to discover the information they need. Coupled with that are the long, gated forms of content that can be massively off-putting by bringing with them the promise of the inevitable — a sales call. And buyers clearly demonstrate they want to be in the driving seat. According to Gartner, only 17% of buying time is spent engaging with sales reps — a trend that is only increasing.

So what happens if we don't make the journey more streamlined and personalised?

Buyers get frustrated, which then leads to creating their own crafted journeys, shopping around widely for the information they need to make good decisions and potentially slowing the process and delaying decisions.

Here's our nine step success plan for building highly personalised B2B buyer journeys...

3. 5 Ways the Future of B2B Buying Will Rewrite the Rules of Effective Selling

01: Identify your priority segment or set of accounts

Selecting your initial target is probably one of the most significant decisions you will make. Take time to do your research and weigh up the potential size, scope and fit.

In ABM terms you'll be looking to identify a set of target accounts that match your ideal customer profile (ICP), and determine whether you want to target a single account (1:1), a small segment (1:few) or a larger group (1:many).

These days, there are plenty of tools available to help you research your ideal target accounts/segment. [Zoominfo](#), [Lusha](#) and others can help you size and segment a market. In EMEA, [i-4business](#) offers a well-researched GDPR compliant service that delivers excellent quality.

[6sense](#), [Bombora](#), [Terminus](#) and others provide intent data that will help identify accounts that are in the market for the type of solution you offer, enabling further refinement.

There are some strong arguments in favour of selecting a micro-niche or sub segment with common characteristics and pain points.

From a Geoffrey Moore⁴ perspective, this is your lead bowling pin. Success in that segment provides credibility to address other markets.

What's more, the content and messaging you build can be used to engage multiple accounts, bringing some efficiency gains.

4. Moore, Geoffrey A. (1991). *Crossing the chasm: Marketing and selling technology products to mainstream customers*. New York, N.Y.: HarperBusiness.

Purpose and value fit

Determining your target audience is a complex process. It's important to avoid any obvious roadblocks down track, so targeting organisations with a similar culture and values is important for the longer-term value and overall success of the relationship.

02: Research your buying personas

With **3 to 10 people** involved in a typical buying decision, it's essential to address the needs of all individuals within the team.

Identifying the roles and persona profiles involved will take some research within account teams and customer organisations. Chances are, some of your generic persona profiles may fit the specific roles in your target niche, but it's worth doing a deeper dive into the behaviours and pain points specific to your chosen segment to tease out the unique needs of that audience.

If you can demonstrate a deep understanding of their issues and needs, especially any that are urgent for the segment, it will set you apart from the competition.



03: Develop your messaging framework

For the focused segment you are targeting, it's highly beneficial to understand and document their pain points and build a messaging framework. Again, this can be based on a generic messaging framework but should be customised to *a)* the target audience and *b)* the value proposition offered by the partnership, whether it be a technology alliance between vendors or between vendor and partners.

Message framework elements typically include:

Single compelling thought – what do we want the user to be left feeling/thinking?

Key message

Supporting message 1

Supporting message 2

Supporting message 3

What action do we want them to take as a result of this campaign?

Supporting evidence

04: Audit your content

Once you've identified your target segment and persona profiles, it's essential to audit the content you already have before you start the process of creating new content. This will include, but should not be limited to; sales collateral, emails, any presentation decks and proposals, which can also be mined for relevant content.

Once you have pulled together all the relevant content, tag which persona it's relevant to and where it fits in the buyer journey. At this point, it's worth clarifying whether the content is fit for purpose 'as is' or if it has potential for further personalisation.

In the B2B space, personalisation is more about matching to specific identified buyer needs, rather than a simple logo or name drop in.



05: Map buyer journeys

Next up is creating a buyer journey map for key persona types. Back in 2019 we **re-defined the B2B buyer journey**, recognising that the supposedly clear path from suspect to happy satisfied customer was a twisting and turning one, with many opportunities to slide backwards or even jump ahead.

Since then buyers are becoming even more inclined to want to research for themselves and other models have been published talking to the unique content needs buyers have. Gartner has even identified a number of buying jobs that can happen at any time.

Personalised B2B content must address the key questions that buyers have at different points in the journey.



Who understands my problem?

Offer content to demonstrate your understanding of the prospect's specific issues and to position your expertise.

This will shape their understanding of the challenge or opportunity.

2

1

I have a problem I need help fixing.

At the start of the journey, your audience is looking for answers, insights and best practice that they can apply to help them solve their problems or improve their world.

What are my options?

Once the buyer starts to recognise the value of the content you're sharing, it's time to help them learn about the solutions available to help them, and position yours as the right one.

How can I be sure I'm making the right decision?

Content here needs to build trust and re-enforce the message that you're the right partner to work with and help your buyer/sponsor gain consensus with others in the buying group.



3

4

5

Where do I start?

Making yourself easy to buy from is one of the key mantras for successful technology providers, so it's essential to provide content that helps explain the procurement process; a must-have when guiding them on the journey from prospect to customer.



Buying jobs

When mapping content it's useful to look at the idea of Buying Jobs. "Buying jobs" are distinct sets of discrete tasks that customers must satisfactorily complete in order to make a purchase. Through interviews with hundreds of B2B buyers, Gartner identified six buying jobs:⁵

Problem identification. "We need to do something."

Solution exploration. "What's out there to solve our problem?"

Requirements building. "What exactly do we need the purchase to do?"

Supplier selection. "Does this do what we want it to do?"

Validation. "We think we know the right answer, but we need to be sure."

Consensus creation. "We need to get everyone on board."

Content that helps buyers to accomplish these buying tasks can gain a unique advantage.

5. Gartner Insights: B2B Buying Journey

06: Prioritise content gaps to fill

The content audit is likely to identify gaps, especially if there are a number of people in the buying group. However, filling in all the gaps with new and original content is probably unrealistic. In reality, it's likely to be an evolving landscape.

By being hyper focused on your target audience you can prioritise the new content you need to create, and also identify opportunities to adapt existing content. A modular approach to building new content will simplify this process.

A great option to deepen the personalisation and relevance of your content is to offer a customised assessment that produces a tailored report on a theme aligned to your buyers' needs, as well as your solution.

The [Fusion Accelerator Toolkit](#) is a personalised report generator that offers deep insight to the buyers needs and delivers enormous value to the buyer. This will help you to identify content needs and customise your offer accordingly.

Third-party content like analyst reports and industry specific articles can also form part of your content offering, adding credibility to your message and supporting the content-bingeing approach.



Don't forget creativity

With all the focus on the scientific aspect of identifying, researching, analysing and mapping, it can be easy to lose sight of creativity. However, the way you communicate your message can be just as important as the message itself. After all, if personalised and relevant messaging is becoming a minimum requirement, creativity and clarity of your message is what will set you apart.

07: Create personalised content tracks or hubs

The concept of creating a dedicated content hub or landing page for an account or sub segment is one of the tactics in ABM that has been tested in recent years, but it can be quite costly and complex to create and do at scale for some organisations.

Technologies like [Pathfactory](#), [Uberflip](#) and [Paperflite](#) offer excellent options for building customised content tracks or hubs, and they're making it more accessible for marketing teams of all sizes.

They aim to deliver the Netflix-style experience, encouraging buyers to follow the path and binge on your content, while utilising AI to recommend next steps and offerings.

The point of capture of opt-in data can be configured to happen once the buyer is engaged, reducing the volume of poor quality leads and capturing those that are truly engaged.

Output from a personalised report generator, such as the [Fusion Accelerator Toolkit](#), provides useful input to a content track. This will then help to drive relevant content based on maturity and requirements of the buyer.

Additionally, a key benefit of the content track is that it enables support for an alliance or channel approach. It offers potential neutral territory for a partnership to promote its message, supporting logos, content and contacts from both parties, with a custom call to action.

08: Test outreach methods

Similar to the content track, the most effective outreach will be personalised, relevant and specific. Testing what messaging and tools are most effective is key and can include, amongst other channels; events, personalised ads, telemarketing, retargeting, email sequences and direct mail outreach.

Personalisation can take many forms and finding the best approach can take some testing. Simply sticking a company name or logo on an ad can feel a bit off-putting to some buyers, whereas an ad that really talks to their specific pain point may get better traction. Tracking is critical to understanding the effectiveness of which channels are working and which are not.



The difference here is that instead of directing or engaging around a single piece of content, you'll be directing prospects to their own customised content track, which offers them a fully branded and personalised experience, feeding them the best and most relevant content for their needs.

09: Review and refine

The easiest place to start to measure effectiveness of your ABM or personalised buyer journey programme is activity — looking at response rates, engagement, pages accessed etc.

Low performing content or channels can be swapped out to improve effectiveness. Newer platforms will also enable you to measure time spent consuming specific content assets which is a great indicator. In addition, the impact of the initial engagement is key — and that can include call acceptance, assessment completions and report requests, content sharing, and so on.

The true benefit of highly optimised and targeted buyer journeys is the relative simplicity of measuring influenced pipeline within your target segment/accounts. But it won't be a quick fix — and there will be a lead time between activity and pipeline build that depends on the nature and price point of your offering.

What can be alarming however is when the volume of leads drops, for the logical reason that you're taking a more focused approach with a targeted set of accounts and pushing back opt-in to capture more engaged prospects. And for that reason, testing the approach with a small number of accounts to prove value and build from there is an ideal approach.

Conclusion.

B2B marketing and sales is evolving.

Our research and anecdotal evidence tells us that while ABM and building personalised buyer journeys are a priority for B2B marketers, many are at the start of that journey.

And with the increasing focus on buyer digital engagement, the availability of SaaS platforms, and insights from those who have gone down this route, the opportunity to make an impact is enormous.

With buyer expectations evolving by the day, and the technologies, insights and platforms becoming more accessible than ever — there's never been a better time to start the journey.

Curious to find out more? If you want to delve deeper into creating personalised buyer journeys, let's talk!

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