

Win More B2B Sales Deals

**How sales delivers more value
to today's buyers**

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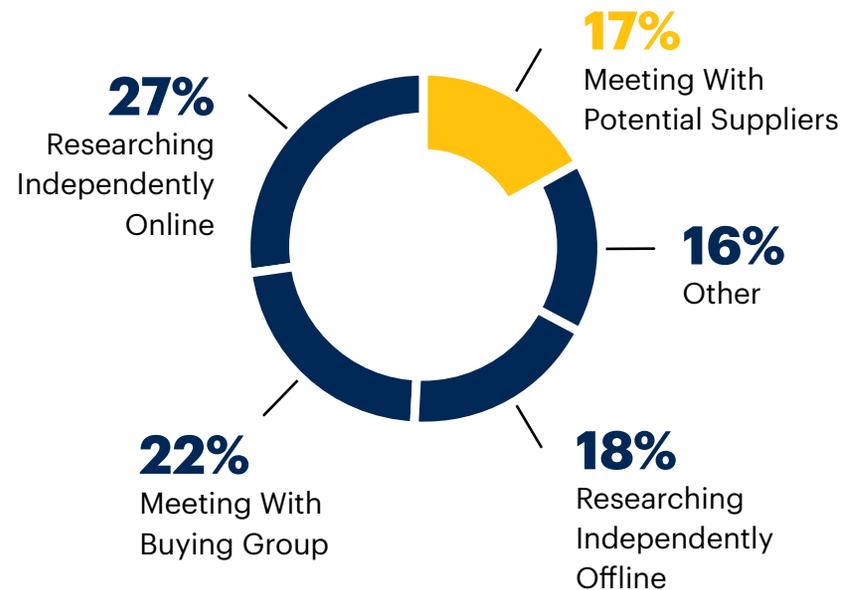
Remember when the hardest part of the B2B sale was cold-calling? Or waiting for your contact to meet with procurement? Those were the days. B2B sales have rarely been simple, but the demands of the modern B2B buyer have made getting access to buyers increasingly hard. In fact, it's turned sales on its head.

In the digital world, buyers seemingly have unlimited access to information and typically compare vendors and offerings — without ever interacting with the actual sellers. In fact, Gartner research finds that when B2B buyers are considering a purchase, they spend only 17% of that time meeting with potential suppliers. When buyers are comparing multiple suppliers, the amount of time spent with any one sales rep may be only 5% to 6%.

Sales leaders often attribute this lack of customer access to a failure on the part of sellers to deliver sufficient value as part of a typical sales interaction. However, in studying ways to address this access challenge, Gartner research found a different reality altogether. The problem is rooted far less in reps' struggles to sell and far more in customers' struggles to buy.

To provide customers with greater value across the purchase process, sales 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 equip reps differently to succeed.

Distribution of Buying Groups' Time by Key Buying Activities



n = 750 B2B buyers.
Source: Gartner 2017 Digital B2B Buyer Survey.



CHAPTER 1

The New B2B Buying Journey

Buying today

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 all of 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, principal executive advisor at Gartner. "Today's buying journey has effectively reached a tipping point where it's become nearly un navigable without a significant amount of help."



77% of buyers agree that purchases have become very complex and difficult.

The buying journey explained

For the past five years, Gartner researchers, working with sales leaders, have made significant progress in mapping their respective customer journeys through a typical purchase. As helpful as those buying journey maps are, most still lack the requisite tactical detail to provide the kind of valuable help customers need to significantly reduce individual points of buying difficulty. The linear representation of buying just doesn't cut it anymore, from both the seller and 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 B2B Structured Buyer Interviews and analysis.

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 information 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.



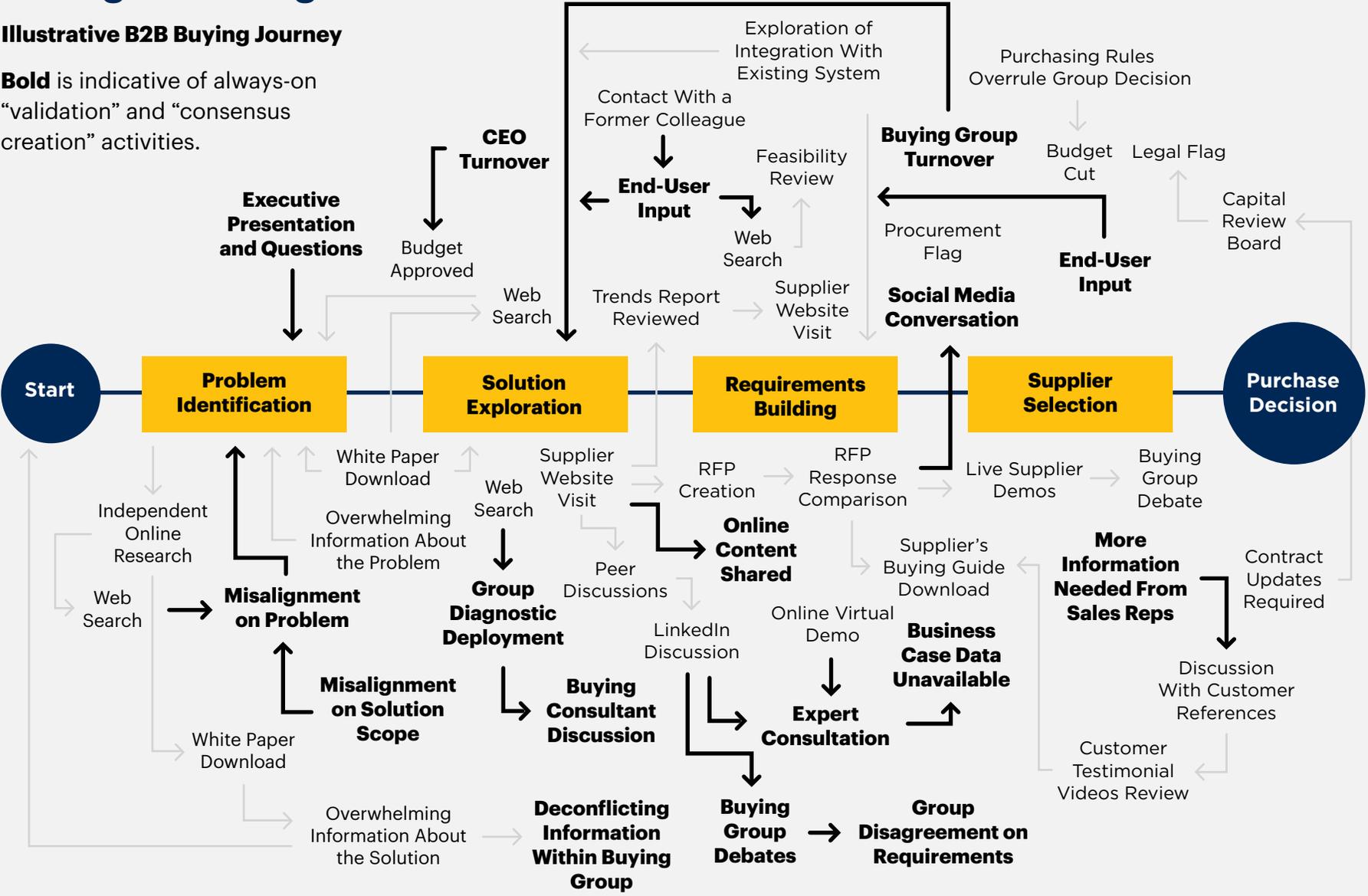
90% of all buyers reported revisiting, or looping back, to at least one job as part of their overall purchasing process.



A Long, Hard Slog

Illustrative B2B Buying Journey

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



Source: Gartner analysis.

CHAPTER 2

The Role of Information in the Purchase Process



Information matters

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 just want simplicity to access the right information for their job at hand.

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

“When we think of the unique attributes of information relative to an individual, we find information can do things that individuals cannot.”



Brent Adamson

Principal Executive Advisor, Gartner

Information helps buyers complete each job because it is:

1

Shareable

Despite increasing numbers of stakeholders, information can easily be shared across time and geography. Information can move between stakeholders with little difficulty, zero delays and at almost no cost.

2

Channel-agnostic

Customers can access information across channels and consume it when, where and how they prefer. Information empowers customers to seek out information without having to engage a seller.

3

Consistent

Information remains consistent across delivery channels so it conveys the same story every time. In this respect, information is scalable at a consistently high quality.

4

Targeted

Information helps customers complete their specific critical buying jobs.

The shift to buyer enablement

Gartner coined the term “buyer enablement” to describe the provisioning of information to customers in a way that enables them to complete critical buying jobs.

“Instead of deploying information to enable sellers to sell more easily, apply those same skills — combined with empathy and a deep industry and customer knowledge — to develop and deploy information to help buyers buy,” says Adamson.

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.

How to Enable Purchase Ease

Overview of Buyer Enablement

Buyer Enablement
The provision of information that supports the completion of critical buying jobs



When buyer enablement combines prescriptive advice and practical support at multiple points across jobs, it becomes a powerful tool for sales to drive customers to buy their solutions. Not only does information help customers perceive a job as easier, but information also helps customers successfully buy a solution, reducing later regret.

One marketing technology company designed a tool to help customers easily build and customize a compelling business case for its product. The tool helps the buyer articulate and share the case for the solution with other stakeholders in the organization — giving them a big head start on the “consensus creation” job.

Another marketing technology company provides a customizable calculator that enables buyers to easily quantify their needs (addressing “problem identification”) and share the results with other stakeholders (“building consensus”).

The sales organization must assess and design the collection or ecosystem of the specific type of information, or buyer enablement, it provides to customers at any time during the buying process. This information must be available consistently and across channels, as customers use different channels to learn. They often use both sales reps and online information for each job, making sales and information critically interdependent.

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CHAPTER 3

How Sales Wins Through Information



Build connection versus authority

How do individual sales reps practice buyer enablement? Gartner discovered two different types of rep postures and compared their performance to understand which type delivers the most value.

Sales reps can be described as an:

1

Information authority: These reps are known as experts who provide their informed opinion based on individual experience, and deliver advice from a personal perspective to buyers. These reps likely have risen to the top of the sales organization as managers and subject matter experts because of their in-depth knowledge.

2

Information connector: These reps serve as curators or brokers of information rather than individual experts. They largely focus on finding and directing customers to the right information, tools and data rather than relying on individual experience.

Which one wins? The information connector.

Not only do connectors make it easier for customers to make a purchase, they also increase the likelihood — by 90% — of buyers making a larger, complex and low-regret sale.

“If the goal of the sales leader is to increase reps’ ability to drive high-value customer interactions, then equipping them with the right information is the recipe for success,” says Adamson.



The “information connector” increases the likelihood of purchase ease by 40%, while the “information authority” increases it by just 10%.

Win through information, not individuals

Sales reps must serve as guides to connect and make sense of information for buyers, who must navigate a long and difficult journey. By doing so, sales reps simplify the buying process to increase the chances that buyers will make a higher-value purchase and decrease the chances they'll regret the purchase.

“Despite buyers’ ability to access information on their own, sales reps remain the best opportunity to activate information,” says Adamson. “In fact, sellers ensure the right help gets in front of the right people at the right time in a way that resonates far more than through websites or marketing campaigns alone.”

As the buying process continues to increase in difficulty, the ability to connect customers to the right information will be more important. Connector reps will also be increasingly important. To position sales reps for success, sales leaders must assess and design buyer enablement to ensure customer progression through the buyer journey.

Sales leaders must:

- Identify what is hard for customers in their buying journeys.
- Create specific buyer enablement 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.

Buyer enablement will likely require implementation at the organizational level to deliver value. In a time of multichannel buying and no clear customer preference on channels for each job, suppliers must provide information consistently across all channels to enable buyers to buy.

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Brent Adamson

Principal Executive Advisor, Gartner

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