

B2B DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN 2019

**Meeting Buyer Wants and
Needs Across Channels**

JANUARY 2019

Jillian Ryan



Accenture Interactive

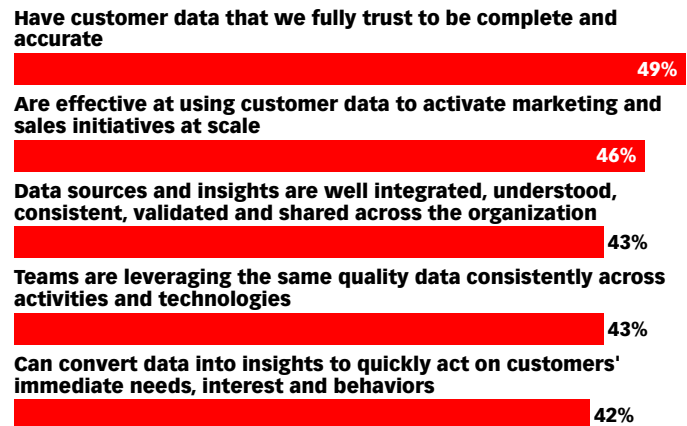
B2B DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN 2019: MEETING BUYER WANTS AND NEEDS ACROSS CHANNELS

Digital channels have changed the path to purchase for business-to-business (B2B) buyers, meaning B2Bs should be investing in more omnichannel experiences.

- **What's changed for B2B buyers in the past few years?** The purchase journey is more complex: More stakeholders are involved, and it takes longer to make a decision. Buyers engage with vendors across a variety of offline and online touchpoints, consuming information when it's convenient for them.
- **Given these changes, how can B2Bs adapt their marketing to meet these heightened expectations?** The answer is data. By harnessing the right data, B2Bs can craft savvier and more relevant omnichannel marketing messages and commerce experiences. Whereas before, engagements would have been based on a single campaign, this requires B2Bs to significantly shift their strategies.
- **What omnichannel commerce solutions should B2Bs set up?** The aim should be to deliver a hybrid commerce model that offers buyers the flexibility to transact through their preferred channel. The direct sales force will still exist, but there should also be a direct ecommerce portal and the ability to offer a self-service option as needed, in addition to partner channel options.

WHAT'S IN THIS REPORT? This report looks at changes to the customer journey of B2B buyers, and how B2B firms can adapt their marketing and sales strategy to create an omnichannel solution.

Data Areas in Which Their Company Is Performing Well According to B2B Professionals in Ireland, North America and the UK, March 2018 % of respondents



Note: n=500; "very" and "extremely well"
Source: Forrester Consulting, "The B2B Data Activation Priority: Mature Firms Reap Benefits Of Data Activation" commissioned by Dun & Bradstreet, May 3, 2018

237927

www.eMarketer.com

KEY STAT: Fewer than half of B2B professionals in Ireland, North America and the UK said their company has customer data they fully trust to be complete and accurate. Another 46% said their company is effective at using customer data for marketing and sales, and 43% of respondents said their data sources and insights are well integrated across the organization.

CONTENTS

- 2 B2B Digital Transformation in 2019: Meeting Buyer Wants and Needs Across Channels
- 3 Introduction
- 4 Marketing to Niche Audiences: The Road to Omnichannel Personalization
- 5 Expanding Commerce Channels
- 6 eMarketer Interviews
- 6 Sources

INTRODUCTION

Digital touchpoints have upended the path to purchase for business-to-business (B2B) buyers. B2B firms must adjust their marketing and sales efforts to fully take advantage of today's digital landscape. Research indicates that B2Bs see omnichannel experiences and digital transformation as critically important for growth.

A September 2018 report from Accenture Interactive titled "On the Verge: B2B Digital Commerce is at an Inflection Point" found that half of B2B companies worldwide have set providing an omnichannel experience as a leading priority over the next two years.

Further, roughly two in three B2B companies in North America and Western Europe have a digital transformation strategy in place, according to a Q2 2018 report from Sana Commerce and Sapio Research.

WHAT BUYERS WANT

In 2019, buyers should be top of mind as B2B brands devise digital transformation and omnichannel strategies. Tried-and-true B2B marketing and sales techniques that have worked well for decades are becoming outdated as buyer behaviors evolve.

So, what's changed?

- The purchase journey is more complex: More stakeholders are involved, and it takes longer to make a decision.
- When making purchase decisions, buyers are doing their own research and reading online content (branded and nonbranded) to self-educate.
- Buyers engage with vendors across a variety of offline and online touchpoints, consuming information when it's convenient for them. They can sometimes be overwhelmed by the amount of content out there, and while they will talk to a salesperson eventually, that interaction is occurring much later in the sales cycle than it did five years ago.
- As the demographics of the buying committee shift to the millennial cohort, expectations around personalized experiences are increasing.

- Buyers want greater availability, transparent pricing options and seamless procurement processes.
- Buyers have an expanding number of options for products and services and are becoming savvier when finding alternative solutions.

If vendors don't shift their marketing and commerce strategies to fulfill their buyers' evolving expectations, they will have trouble cultivating lasting relationships.

MEETING BUYER EXPECTATIONS

Given that B2B buyers' needs have changed, how can B2B companies adapt their marketing to meet these heightened expectations? The answer is data. By harnessing the right data, B2Bs can craft savvier and more relevant omnichannel marketing messages and commerce experiences. Whereas before engagements would have been based on single campaign, omnichannel messages and experiences require B2Bs to make a significant shift in their strategies.

Four in 10 B2B companies worldwide believe capturing a 360-degree view of the customer should be a leading priority in the next two years, according to Accenture Interactive's September 2018 research "On the Verge: B2B Digital Commerce is at an Inflection Point." A third of respondents also said they aim to make better use of data to sell to and serve their customers.

"Data is the linchpin for B2Bs that want to deliver an effective omnichannel strategy and enable customer experiences across a variety of touchpoints," said Kevin Doohan, a managing director at Accenture Interactive.

The first step is to create a data management strategy that accounts for all data sources and ensures that the data is centralized, clean, accurate and analyzed for proper audience insights. Data silos and misaligned data systems can be a big challenge.

Most B2B marketers worldwide have a customer relationship management (CRM) system up and running, according to September 2018 research from Dun & Bradstreet and Adweek Branded. Some 36% have a CRM with advanced functions and 48% with basic functions. Fewer are using more advanced marketing and ad technology systems that can provide a more unified view of the customer like a data-management platform (DMP), a customer-data platform (CDP), and a demand-side platform (DSP) (52%, 45% and 41% respectively).

Just under half of B2B professionals in Ireland, North America and the UK said their company has customer data they fully trust to be complete and accurate, according to March 2018 research from Forrester Consulting. Another 46% said their company effectively uses customer data for marketing and sales, and 43% said their data sources and insights are well integrated across the organization.

Data Areas in Which Their Company Is Performing Well According to B2B Professionals in Ireland, North America and the UK, March 2018
 % of respondents



Note: n=500; "very" and "extremely well"
 Source: Forrester Consulting, "The B2B Data Activation Priority: Mature Firms Reap Benefits Of Data Activation" commissioned by Dun & Bradstreet, May 3, 2018

237927 www.eMarketer.com

MARKETING TO NICHE AUDIENCES: THE ROAD TO OMNICHANNEL PERSONALIZATION

With a strong data practice in place, B2Bs can develop an appropriate audience-focused omnichannel marketing and sales strategy.

B2Bs typically start their digital transformation in an effort to understand the customer and the buyer's journey, said Jason Michaels, a managing director for the consulting firm. This begins with capturing the right data and enables more accurate retargeting and content personalization. "We find that clients who make investments in these capabilities have a better view into their customer and how marketing is performing and impacting sales," he said.

For memory and storage solutions company Micron, audience research has led to a buyer-centric approach to

marketing, according to Dan Bingham, director of content. "We better understand who our audience is—and not just our buyers, but also other prospective groups we want to influence. We use data to glean what they care about, what their pain points are, and that has directed our marketing efforts to be more personalized," he said.

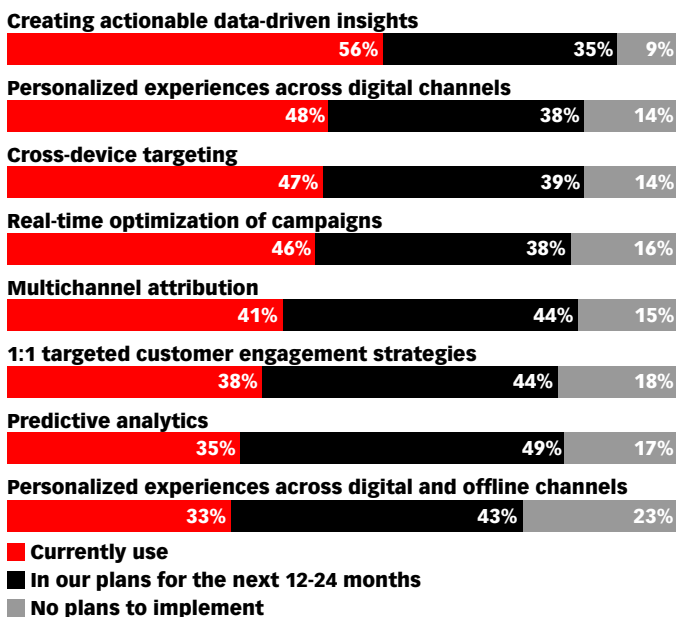
The most advanced B2B firms are more deliberate and selective in how they reach their audience. They focus their marketing efforts on specific buyers or accounts with carefully crafted messages and targeted strategies that are designed for very specific stages across the buyers' journey.

A targeted account-based marketing strategy is a central part of digital transformation for online backup service provider Carbonite, according to Luis Fleitas, senior marketing manager. "It is very different to select targeted companies to market to vs. marketing broadly to all audiences," he said. "It makes us more efficient than we have been historically and will help drive our bigger transformation as we will need better tools and skills to perfect our account-based approach."

This type of targeted omnichannel marketing is still a work in progress for most B2Bs. September 2018 research from Dun & Bradstreet and AdWeek Branded found that 48% of B2B marketers worldwide are executing personalized experiences across digital channels. Another 38% said they plan to do so within the next 12 to 24 months. Fewer—just 33%—are utilizing omnichannel personalization across digital and offline. But within the next two years, roughly three-fourths plan to have those capabilities in place.

Which Data-Driven Ad and Marketing Tactics Are B2B Marketers Worldwide Using?

% of respondents, Sep 2018



Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding
 Source: Dun & Bradstreet, "Mind the Data Gap: 2019 Data-Driven Marketing and Advertising Outlook" conducted by Adweek Branded, Oct 23, 2018

242878

www.eMarketer.com

Being able to track how each touchpoint affects buyer behavior and decision-making is important to understand whether the omnichannel experience is optimally designed, according to Mike Baxter, product and content leader at Goal Atlas Ltd. B2Bs cannot get stuck tracking vanity measures like website clicks or whitepaper downloads. Key performance indicators (KPIs) must become more revenue-focused with insight into pipeline velocity.

Baxter also noted that the most effective content isn't one particular asset type over another. It is no longer good enough for B2Bs to think a whitepaper is more important to a buyer over a blog post or vice versa. Rather, "buyer-centric communication," is what Baxter said brands should be focused on. This means creating content and experiences that are designed for a specific buyer and place in the journey.

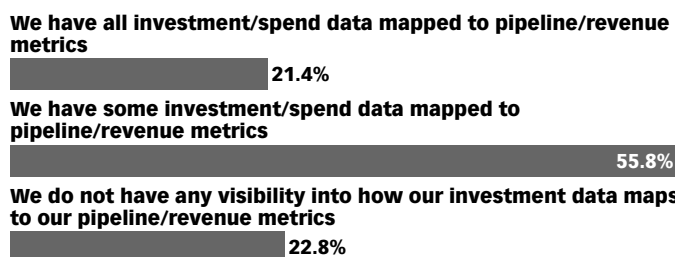
For example, Carbonite prioritizes understanding how marketing and advertising influence buyer behavior across channels. Fleitas said his marketing team tracks how buyers navigate its website, what content they consume and how touchpoints influence behavior. But it also collects other data points that give insight into the pipeline, and this requires the adoption of tools beyond traditional CRM and marketing automation. Carbonite's marketing stack includes an account-based marketing

platform and predictive analytics capabilities that enable marketing and sales to prioritize leads and predict intent and propensity to buy.

Still, most B2Bs do not have all their marketing investment data mapped to pipeline and revenue metrics, according to July 2018 research from Bizible, Allocadia, Madison Logic, Sendoso, Radius and Uberflip. Just more than half say they have a partial view into these measures, while more than 20% said they have zero visibility.

How Do B2B Marketers in North America Map Their Investment/Spend Data to Their Pipeline and Revenue Metrics?

% of respondents, July 2018



Source: Bizible, Allocadia, Madison Logic, Sendoso, Radius and Uberflip, "2018 State of Pipeline Marketing," Aug 22, 2018

242059

www.eMarketer.com

EXPANDING COMMERCE CHANNELS

B2Bs need to assess the options they offer buyers to transact, across all channels. Again, customer data can reveal how buyers want to buy and the most relevant channels. The main point is that buyers don't look at the buying process by channel, but by need in the moment. Expanding commerce channels is therefore crucial to allowing buyers to choose which options are most convenient and relevant.

Accenture Interactive's September 2018 research "On the Verge: B2B Digital Commerce is at an Inflection Point" found that 61% of all B2B purchases start online, and as more of the market shifts to digital transactions, it's no surprise that the B2B ecommerce market continues to grow. In fact, December 2018 estimates from Forrester Research forecast that US B2B ecommerce sales would surpass \$1 trillion in 2018. By 2023, online sales will account for 17% of all B2B purchases.

The vast majority—94%—of global B2B executives said ecommerce is critical, and another 84% believe accelerating their adoption of ecommerce channels is a priority, according to September 2017 research from IFC Olson. Still, ecommerce will never replace traditional sales mechanisms completely. Rather, digital channels should be considered an extension of current models and part of an omnichannel commerce strategy. Digital channels must be an extension because self-service options and the experience of working with salespeople must align for a consistent buying journey. But if firms don't build an omnichannel approach, that experience will be disjointed, frustrating and possibly deterring for the buyer.

The aim should be to deliver a hybrid commerce model that offers buyers the flexibility to transact through their preferred channel. The direct sales force will still exist, but there should also be a direct ecommerce portal and the ability to offer a self-service option as needed, in addition to partner channel options.

And these must all be aligned to the same ordering system to provide a single view of the account's transactions. For example, the sales team needs to get aligned with these systems to make sure it can still serve customers who have started their transactions online and want to complete their purchase with a seller.

B2Bs are aware that omnichannel is the way of the future; more than half of US senior decision-makers said omnichannel integration would be a B2B ecommerce trend in 2018, according to February 2018 research from Verndale.

This type of omnichannel commerce experience is an empathetic one that, by design, addresses many of the evolutions in buyer behavior and preferences that have shifted with digital channels' increased prevalence. B2Bs must embrace digital transformation to bring data-driven, personalized experiences to fruition because when buyers feel their needs are met at every instance, the purchase process is no longer just a transaction, but the beginning of a lasting, loyal relationship.

EMARKETER INTERVIEWS



Mike Baxter
Product and Content Lead
Goal Atlas, Ltd
Interviewed December 10, 2018



Dan Bingham
Head of Content Marketing
Micron Technology
Interviewed December 10, 2018



Kevin Doohan
Managing Director
Accenture
Interviewed December 12, 2018



Luis Fleitas
Senior Marketing Manager, Demand Generation
Carbonite
Interviewed December 11, 2018



Jason Michaels
Managing Director
Accenture Interactive
Interviewed December 11, 2018

SOURCES

[Accenture Interactive](#)
[Allocadia](#)
[Dun & Bradstreet](#)
[Forrester Consulting](#)
[Madison Logic](#)
[Radius](#)
[Sana Commerce](#)
[Sapio Research](#)
[Sendoso](#)
[Uberflip](#)
[Verndale](#)