The Case for B2B Personalisation

Contents

Executive summary

Personalisation has rightly emerged at the forefront of sales and marketing activities as B2B companies prioritise the customer experience as a way of maximising revenues and profitability.

This London Research report, in partnership with Adobe, explores how companies are focusing on personalisation, and the content, data and technology foundations required to support this. The research is based on interviews with a range of organisations across different sectors, and a survey of more than 350 B2B senior business professionals. Overall, more than half of B2B companies (52%) now claim to be 'very much focused on personalisation', a significant jump from 38% in 2022.

The report looks at how integrated technology and unified data are essential for companies seeking to employ more sophisticated and AI-driven approaches to personalisation based on dynamic targeting and a 360-degree view of the customer. There is widespread acknowledgment of the growing expectation for B2B digital interactions to match the best B2C experiences.

The research also finds that successful B2B organisations are increasingly looking to identify and target buying groups within prospect organisations, as they embrace a more focused approach to integrated sales and marketing activities.

We have identified a group of B2B sales and marketing 'leaders' to establish what they are doing differently to those companies that are already behind the curve and in danger of slipping even further behind. A key finding is that leaders are 69% (83% vs. 49%) more likely than laggards to be focusing heavily on personalisation.

The research has also found that:

- Leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to be employing a full range of personalisation tactics and initiatives. The gap is widest for permission-based first-party data (+89%), real-time targeting of information based on on-site behaviour (+88%), and use of machine learning to serve the next best offer, content or experience (+105%).

- Leaders are 79% more likely than laggards to be focusing their overall sales and marketing activities on multi-person buying groups within an organisation. They are 43% (83% vs. 58%) more likely to rate their B2B marketing automation platform as 'good' for its ability to identify and target at a buying-group level.

- Legacy software technology is seen as the most significant obstacle to more seamless and personalised customer experiences, described as a 'major' barrier to success by 36% of B2B companies.

- Leaders are found to be more committed to investment in marketing technology. They are 40% more likely than laggards to be significantly increasing their investment in this area over the next 12 months.

- Leaders are more than three times as likely as laggards to say that AI has been operationalised into their day-to-day marketing activities. Companies are increasingly using AI for a range of marketing and sales-related activities, including content creation, conversational chatbots and customer journey optimisation.

Methodology

This report is based on a survey of more than 350 senior B2B professionals carried out by London Research in February and March 2024. All respondents have responsibility for their companies' B2B customer journeys and experiences, and work for companies across a range of industries with at least £50 million (or €50 million) in annual revenues. The vast majority of respondents are based in European countries, including the UK (32%), France (17%), Italy (17%), Spain (16%) and Germany (16%).

Please see the appendix of the report for more information about the profile of survey respondents. The report also contains insights from a series of in-depth interviews with a range of marketing leaders within B2B-focused organisations.

Leaders vs. laggards

As part of our research methodology, we identified three distinct groups of companies – 'leaders', 'followers' and 'laggards' – based on their perceived maturity across a range of marketing-related capabilities (*Figure 1*). These included campaign and customer journey orchestration, automation, optimisation, use of data and AI, and ability to measure ROI.

FIGURE 1

Maturity Index Distribution

Laggards (15%) · Followers (60%) · Leaders (25%)
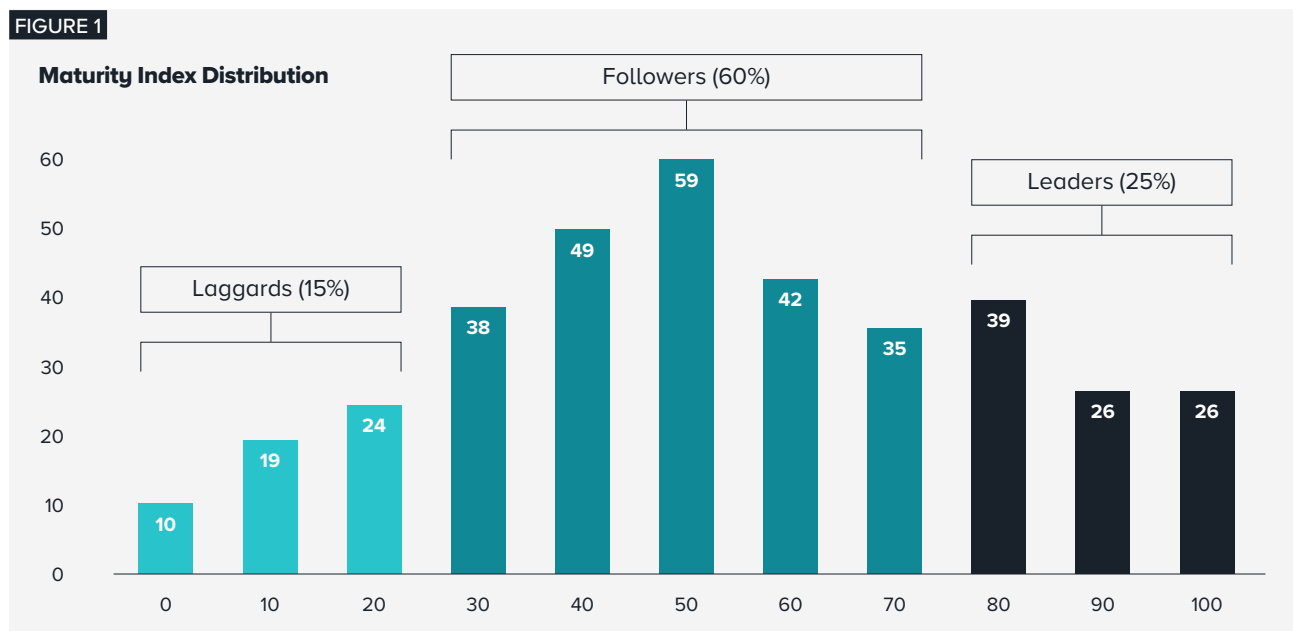
Acknowledgements

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- **Alberto Abate**, Global Marketing Director, bioMérieux
- **Stephen Allen**, Commercial Director, Merlyn
- **Courtny Edwards-Jones**, Senior Marketing Operations Manager, Zuora
- **Pauliina Panaite**, Global Senior Digital Strategist, Siemens
- **Robert Nicholson**, Director of Digital Marketing, Data and Analytics, Robert Walters
- **Harpreet Singh Sethi**, Global Head of Technology, Unilever Food Solutions
- **Dunja Zivanovic**, Global Marketing Procurement Manager, Delivery Hero

Section 1

The trends driving B2B personalisation

There are good reasons why B2B sales and marketing activities are generally viewed differently than their B2C equivalent, and why a report such as this is dedicated to B2B. Simplistically, and with the notable exception of high-consideration B2C purchases, the B2B buying cycle is typically longer, with a focus on nurturing prospects and leads before a handover to a sales team for conversion. Marketing automation technology has evolved accordingly, and so have the internal processes and data integrations required for success.

But the trends shaping both B2B and B2c businesses are very much similar. As marketing commentator Mark Ritson urged recently, it's time to stop asking 'Is this applicable to B2B marketing?[1]'. All marketing and sales activities are about 'business-to-human' (B2H) interactions. And this is why personalisation is as important for B2B as B2C.

Figure 2 shows the extent to which different trends have had a 'major impact' on the way B2B prospects and customers engage with their organisations, with trend data from a similar 2022 survey about the B2B customer journey, also carried out by London Research in partnership with Adobe[2].

There has been a 10% increase in the percentage of respondents who point to a growing expectation for B2B digital interactions to match the best B2C experiences. The chart also shows a 14% rise in the proportion of B2B respondents saying the customer now has significantly more control of the buyer journey. Similarly, there has been a 13% jump in the percentage highlighting the major impact of digital self-service and other online interactions post-sale. And as was the case two years ago, more than half of companies note a significant impact from increased consumption of digital content before human interaction (56%, compared to 55% in 2022).

FIGURE 2

Proportion of respondents saying trends have had a 'major impact' on the way B2B prospects and customers engage with their organisations

■ 2022
■ 2024

52%
59%
Greater use of digital self-service and increased digital interactions post-sale

51%
58%
The customer now has more control of the buyer journey

55%
56%
Increased consumption of digital content before human interaction

50%
55%
Growing expectation that B2B digital interactions match the best B2C experiences

10%

Increase in the percentage of respondents who point to a growing expectation for B2B digital interactions to match the best B2C experiences

In summary, there has been a continuation of the trends which were turbocharged during the Covid pandemic when face-to-face interactions nose-dived, and companies were forced to raise the digital stakes to make sure they were engaging with prospects and customers online as effectively as possible both pre- and post-sale.

For B2B organisations, a focus on better digital experiences and personalisation is ultimately about improving business performance. *Figure 3* shows the overarching business objectives driving B2B sales and marketing teams, and it is noteworthy that improving buyer and customer experience trumps more overtly commercial objectives such as revenue growth and marketing ROI.

Like their B2C counterparts, B2B organisations increasingly realise that strong customer relationships underpin their commercial growth. Better experiences result in improved marketing ROI, and this helps drive greater investment in the technology, processes and people required to drive revenue growth.

"We're focusing on how we can provide buyers with the ability to self serve and gather information before they get to the point that they're ready to enter sales discussions or a sales cycle. Depending on the complexity of a product, frequently buyers are not ready to enter discussions until they've done at least six months of their own research. Being able to use a tool on their own through free trials, self-service, demo on demand ... all of that is becoming more popular."
Courtny Edwards-Jones
Senior Marketing Operations Manager
Zuora

"Most of the research is done before the salesperson speaks with the client. The person who's a buyer for B2B is a human too, so their behaviour is the same in B2C and B2B. They will pick up their phone and Google and look for information just like you would for B2C products. People also go to LinkedIn, social media, and so on, to see recommendations and that's why thought leadership is important because maybe you create a piece of content and one of their connections is commenting on it or recommends you, and recommendations from their connections increase your credibility as a potential partner."
Pauliina Panaite
Global Senior Digital Strategist
Siemens

"There's a significant emphasis on enhancing marketing ROI and facilitating hyper-targeted personalised communication through modern channels. For instance, while we've heavily relied on emails to engage with our customers, we're now transitioning to more contemporary platforms like WhatsApp for Business and Line Chat. WhatsApp for Business has shown promising results, particularly in countries like South Africa, Malaysia, and Indonesia, boasting five times higher average open and click-through rates compared to email campaigns."
Harpreet Singh Sethi
Global Head of Technology
Unilever Food Solutions

FIGURE 3

How important are the following objectives for your 2024 B2B sales and marketing activities?

█ Very important █ Important █ Not important

68%	30%	2%

Improving buyer and customer experience

64%	34%	2%

Growing pipeline and revenue

59%	37%	4%

Improving our marketing ROI
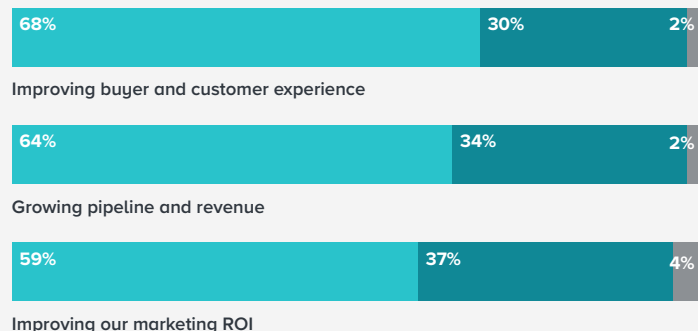
68%
Companies saying that 'improving buyer and customer experience' is a very important sales and marketing objective, compared to 64% for growing pipeline and revenue, and 59% for improving marketing ROI

Section 2

Focus on personalisation increasingly defines B2B marketing leadership

For this research we identified a segment of marketing 'leaders' defined by their overall level of maturity across a range of capabilities that are the essence of effective B2B marketing.

These disciplines include campaign orchestration, automation, optimisation of customer journeys in real time, and the ability to measure the impact of marketing activities in terms of both ROI and revenue (*Figure 4*). Companies are most likely to describe their maturity as 'advanced' for orchestration and engagement (both 35%), and least likely to say the same for AI deployment to enhance customer journeys (23%).

The purpose of this research is to understand what marketing leaders are doing differently to help derive insights and recommendations. The research shows that a focus on personalisation is strongly correlated with marketing leadership, with leaders 69% (83% vs. 49%) more likely than laggards to be very much focused on personalisation (*Figure 5*).

A greater focus on personalisation is the cornerstone of many B2B organisations' attempts to improve their digital experiences. Overall, more than half of B2B companies (52%) now say they are very much focused on personalisation, a significant uplift from 38% (or 14 percentage points) in 2022 (*Figure 6*).

According to Robert Nicholson, Director of Digital Marketing, Data and Analytics at recruitment company Robert Walters: *"There is a greater emphasis on personalisation, segmentation and really understanding the client database, and moving from a very traditional results-focused marketing model and immediate campaign and revenue lifecycles to longer-term views of that life of a customer."*

FIGURE 4

How organisations rate their overall marketing capabilities

■ Basic ■ Intermediate ■ Advanced

| 33% | 44% | 23% |

We deploy AI to speed up how customer journeys are built, launched and measured

| 21% | 44% | 35% |

We effectively orchestrate and automate marketing activities across multiple channels

| 21% | 44% | 35% |

We engage prospects and customers with personalised content at scale

| 21% | 47% | 32% |

We can measure the revenue and ROI impact of marketing activities

| 20% | 52% | 28% |

We surface insights and activate data in real time to optimise and personalise B2B customer journeys

52%

Overall, more than half of B2B companies now say they are very much focused on personalisation, a significant uplift from 38% (or 14 percentage points) in 2022

With AI being the new kid on the block in the context of better customer experiences, it's not surprising that this is the area where B2B companies are most likely to describe their capabilities as 'basic' (*Figure 4*).

Nicholson describes how AI can help address the challenges of personalisation at scale when harnessed effectively by businesses: *"Industry-wide, a lot of things are evolving around AI because, whilst it's historically been technically possible to personalise and segment and everything else, it's very difficult to do at scale. When you realise you've got to write five hundred intro paragraphs, source thousands of different images for just one email, then you've got to do that every week, you just don't do it. You just go and send a batch email. We're seeing that AI changes this approach, whether it's the imagery, whether it's the content, actually it's now much more feasible to create that personalised approach. There's going to be increased customer expectations, that if you don't know who I am, my challenges, my expectations, why are you bothering contacting me?"*

Robert Nicholson
Director of Digital Marketing, Data and Analytics
Robert Walters

"It's essential to focus on lead generation and thought leadership. AI means everybody can create a huge amount of content, so you need to stand out. Ask yourself: 'how can we solve issues for the customers, how can we solve their problem before they know it's a problem?' So, it's about being an innovator in the space instead of a boring B2B company talking just about their products."

Pauliina Panaite
Global Senior Digital Strategist
Siemens

FIGURE 5

How would you describe your attempts to personalise the customer journey for B2B customers and prospects?
(Leaders vs. laggards)

- Leaders
- Laggards

83% — Leaders
49% — Laggards
We are very much focused on personalisation

15% — Leaders
42% — Laggards
We try to personalise the customer journey, but in quite a limited way

2% — Leaders
9% — Laggards
We don't personalise the customer journey

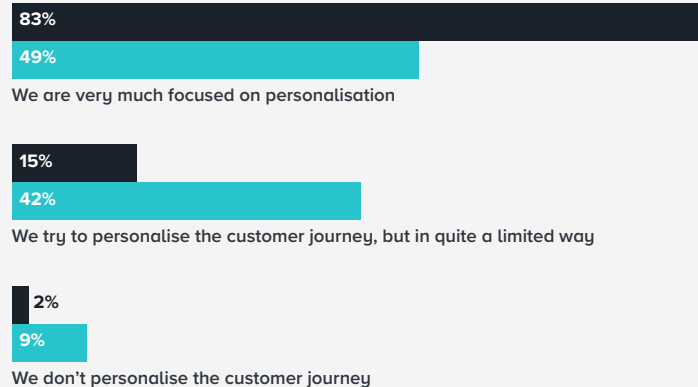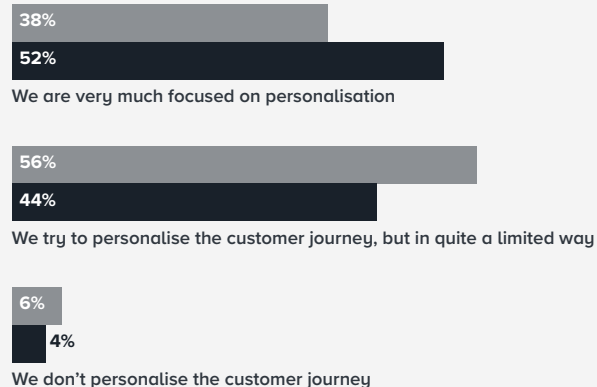**FIGURE 6**

How would you describe your attempts to personalise the customer journey for B2B customers and prospects?

- 2022
- 2024

38% — 2022
52% — 2024
We are very much focused on personalisation

56% — 2022
44% — 2024
We try to personalise the customer journey, but in quite a limited way

6% — 2022
4% — 2024
We don't personalise the customer journey

Section 3

What does personalisation look like?

"Personalisation is absolutely essential. Without it, it's like shooting in the dark, lacking any aim or precision. Personalisation provides the accuracy needed to target customers effectively, ensuring that we deliver the right content to the right customers at the right time. This approach leads to optimal results for our organisation."

Harpreet Singh Sethi
Global Head of Technology
Unilever Food Solutions

The aim of personalisation is to make marketing as targeted and efficient as possible, with benefits for both the business and the individual receiving information.
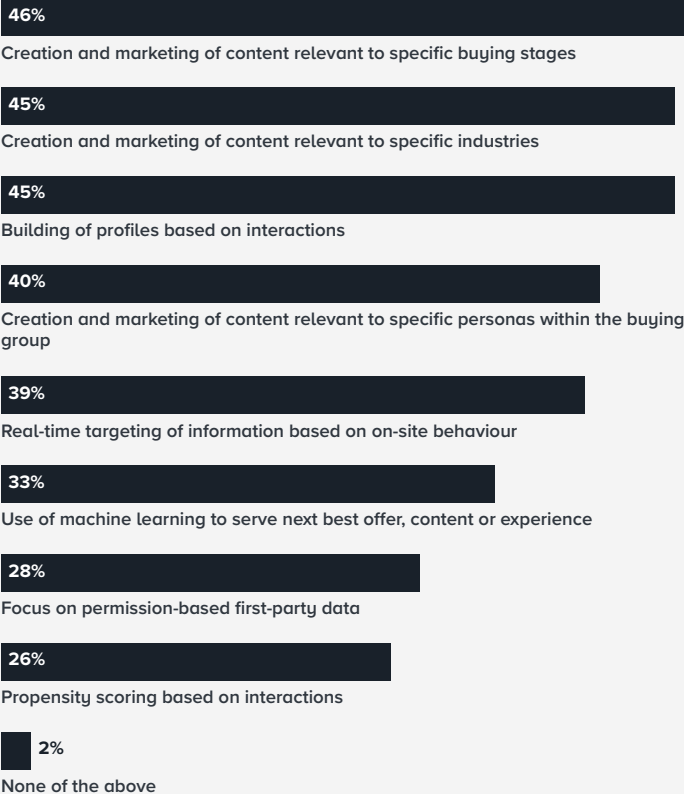
Getting someone's name right in an email or mentioning their company in the subject line is no longer likely to win you much credit. So, moving beyond the table stakes, what does personalisation look like in practice for B2B organisations?

Figure 7 delves into the specifics of what companies are doing to make their marketing activities and content resonate as strongly as possible for the individuals they are targeting. Companies are focused on targeting individuals based on their industry sector (45%), role within the buying group (40%) and stage in the buying journey (46%).

Leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to be employing the full range of personalisation tactics (*Figure 8*). They are furthest ahead in three areas: the focus on permission-based first-party data (+89%), real-time targeting of information based on on-site behaviour (+88%), and use of machine learning to serve the next best offer, content or experience (+105%).

FIGURE 7

What are you doing to personalise the customer journey or to make content and messaging as relevant and timely as possible?

46%
Creation and marketing of content relevant to specific buying stages

45%
Creation and marketing of content relevant to specific industries

45%
Building of profiles based on interactions

40%
Creation and marketing of content relevant to specific personas within the buying group

39%
Real-time targeting of information based on on-site behaviour

33%
Use of machine learning to serve next best offer, content or experience

28%
Focus on permission-based first-party data

26%
Propensity scoring based on interactions

2%
None of the above

+89%

Leaders are furthest ahead with the focus on permission-based first-party data

According to Courtny Edwards-Jones, Senior Marketing Operations Manager at Zuora: *"Personalisation within email marketing is a minimal expectation now and if you're not already doing that well, then you're way behind competitors. The focus is now shifting to wider personalisation within content journeys, and how you are surfacing your content for people. The journey you're taking them on within the full buyer's journey is becoming more and more important."*

A lot of these personalisation activities are data- and technology-related, themes which will be explored later in the report. Content is also fundamental to personalisation success. Organisations increasingly need a well-thought-out content strategy to ensure they are addressing the individual needs of prospects and customers, whether based on their vertical, job role or stage in the buying cycle. Technology can help companies scale and automate their personalisation activities, but a content supply chain cannot operate effectively without a clear framework of the related tasks to be performed (for example for content creation and execution of marketing activities), how they need to be integrated, and how they should be monitored[3].

"What I've seen in the last two years since we are really into personalisation is a decrease of unsubscribes, because the content is definitely more relevant. And we've also seen our pipeline from marketing is growing. For my region, it's up to 35% at the moment."
Head of Marketing
Global technology company

"There is a continued trend toward providing interactive experiences which can vary based on your ABM [account-based marketing] strategy. In cases where we have really nailed it down and we've had a set strategy from an ABM point of view, we've been able to quantify some of that success, while highlighting value and impact to the business."
Courtny Edwards-Jones
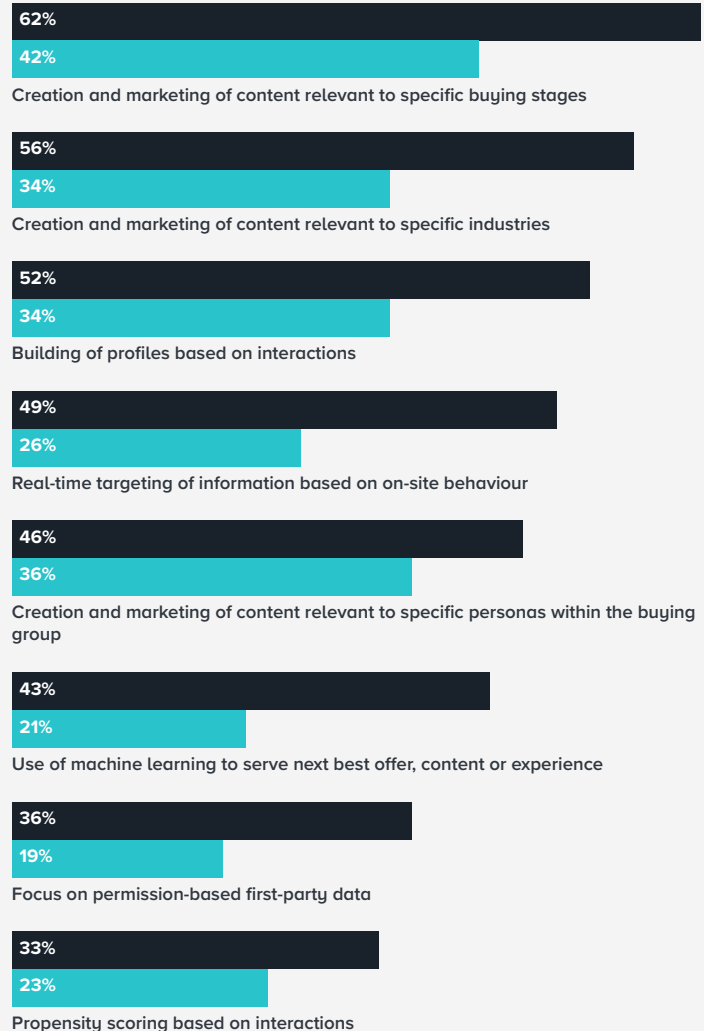Senior Marketing Operations Manager
Zuora

"And that's what I mean by saving a lot of budget and time. Usually [creating personalised content] would take a lot of time, effort, budget to do, but that's not the case anymore. It can be replicated and scaled really quickly. But the main thing is knowing what customers are actually interested in because otherwise it's not relevant. Because personalisation is not that it's your name there. Personalisation is actually about speaking to you and your challenges, and how that's relevant."
Pauliina Panaite
Global Senior Digital Strategist
Siemens

FIGURE 8

What are you doing to personalise the customer journey or to make content and messaging as relevant and timely as possible? (Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

62% / 42%
Creation and marketing of content relevant to specific buying stages

56% / 34%
Creation and marketing of content relevant to specific industries

52% / 34%
Building of profiles based on interactions

49% / 26%
Real-time targeting of information based on on-site behaviour

46% / 36%
Creation and marketing of content relevant to specific personas within the buying group

43% / 21%
Use of machine learning to serve next best offer, content or experience

36% / 19%
Focus on permission-based first-party data

33% / 23%
Propensity scoring based on interactions

Section 4

The buying group imperative

Historically, B2B companies have been focused on marketing either to individuals, or at an organisational level through account-based marketing (ABM) activities.

For high-consideration purchases which can run into hundreds of thousands of pounds or euros, or even millions, B2B purchase decisions are often made by groups of individuals, either a formal or informal committee of senior employees across different functions of the business, such as procurement, finance and IT.

We have already seen that leaders are 28% more likely than laggards to create and market content relevant to specific personas within a buying group (*Figure 8*). And *Figure 9* shows that leaders are 79% more likely than laggards to be focusing their overall sales and marketing activities on multi-person buying groups within an organisation.

Only around a quarter (28%) of companies overall are focusing exclusively on buying group personas, though a further third (35%) of companies are doing this in conjunction with a focus on both industry and buying group (*Figure 10*).

Notably, leaders are also significantly more likely than laggards to strongly agree that they are focusing the customer journey around the multi-person buying group (+34%, *Figure 11*).

The head of marketing at a well-known global technology company told us that holistic marketing to a buying group was becoming increasingly important: *"We need to have consistent messaging across the different personas we're talking with inside a company, but customised to the needs of each persona. We have various personas as customers and as buyers. They can be from marketing, they can be from HR, obviously they can be from IT, even from sales."*

FIGURE 9

Where does your organisation focus its sales and marketing activities?
(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

34%
19%
Multi-person buying groups within an organisation
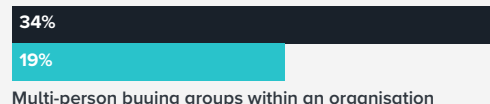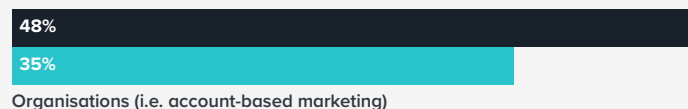
48%
35%
Organisations (i.e. account-based marketing)
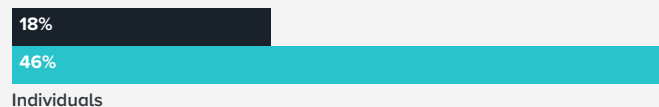
18%
46%
Individuals

+34%

Leaders are significantly more likely than laggards to strongly agree that they are focusing the customer journey around the multi-person buying group

The buying group can be even more diverse in an industry such as biotech, as explained by Alberto Abate, Global Marketing Director at bioMérieux.

Talking about the sophisticated laboratory equipment and large machines they supply to hospitals and the importance of different types of information for different job roles, he said: *"We have physicians prescribing, and we have experts we need to discuss scientific aspects with. We have the purchasers, and we have the users, who are lab technologists. We have lab managers and supervisors. So, we need different content that will address different people. A prescriber wants to know what to prescribe to whom, how to interpret their result. What are the consequences? What are the legal consequences? Purchasers want to know the total cost of ownership. What happens if the system is out of service? What are the contract renewal conditions? A lab manager may want to know about maintenance, inventories and shelf lives."*

FIGURE 10

What best describes how you personalise the customer journey?

34%
We personalise by industry

28%
We personalise by buying group persona

35%
We personalise by a mix of industry AND buying group persona

3%
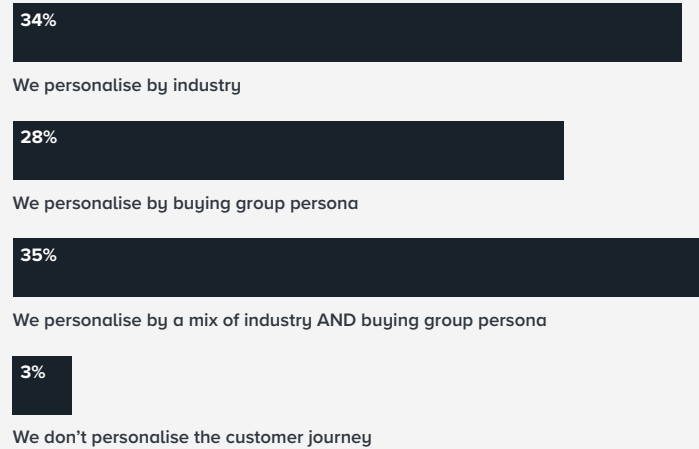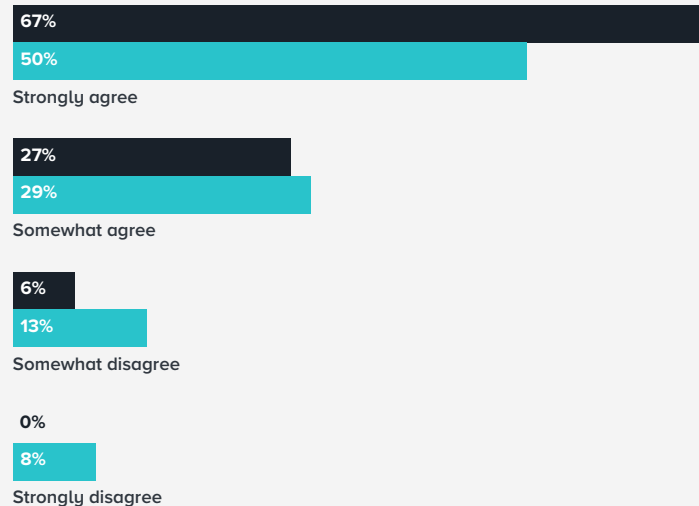We don't personalise the customer journey

FIGURE 11

Do you agree that your organisation personalises the customer journey around the multi-person buying group?
(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

67%
50%
Strongly agree

27%
29%
Somewhat agree

6%
13%
Somewhat disagree

0%
8%
Strongly disagree

Section 5

Data and AI: a future built on solid foundations

"To leverage AI, the data must be good, because otherwise the conclusions coming from AI or targeted from AI are not right. Sorting out the data, the data quality, and how to analyse the data, and how to analyse the conversations [is essential]."

Pauliina Panaite
Global Senior Digital Strategist
Siemens

A solid data foundation is crucial for companies aspiring to real-time personalisation and effective use of AI to enhance their sales and marketing performance. The deprecation of third-party cookies has put the onus on advertisers to focus on their own proprietary data.
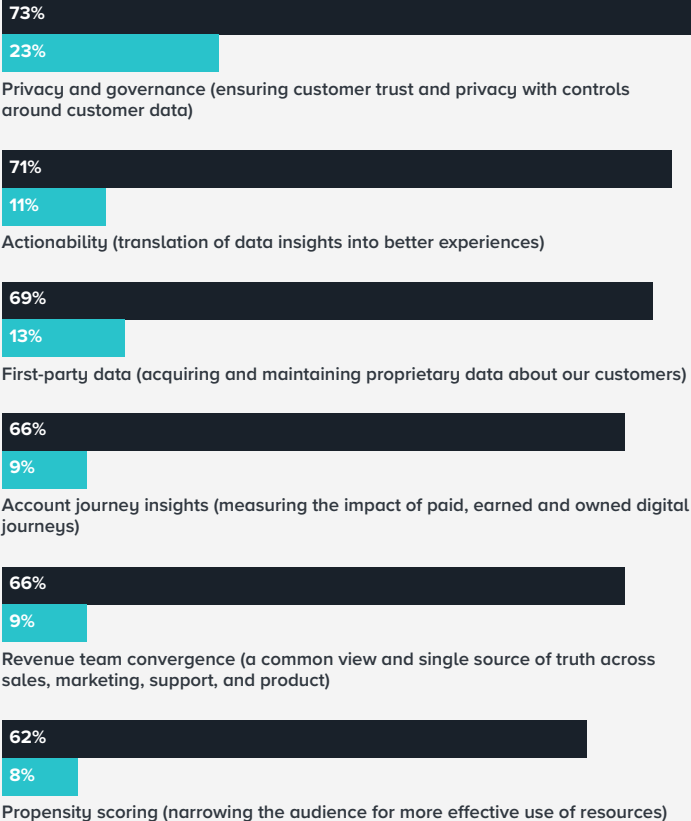
And as marketers look to maximise the potential of their own data, integration between marketing automation platforms and B2B-friendly customer data platforms (CDPs) has become even more crucial for marketing success. *Figure 12* shows that leaders are more than five times more likely than laggards to rate their first-party data capabilities as advanced (69% vs. 13%).

Leaders are also much better at translating data insights into better experiences, an area described in the chart as 'actionability' (71% vs. 11%). Propensity scoring is a related capability which can save resources and maximise the chances of desirable outcomes. Leaders are far more likely than laggards to employ this tactic to narrow their focus towards the right people at the right time (62% vs. 8%).

FIGURE 12

Proportion of companies rating their data strategy capabilities as 'advanced'
(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

73%
23%
Privacy and governance (ensuring customer trust and privacy with controls around customer data)

71%
11%
Actionability (translation of data insights into better experiences)

69%
13%
First-party data (acquiring and maintaining proprietary data about our customers)

66%
9%
Account journey insights (measuring the impact of paid, earned and owned digital journeys)

66%
9%
Revenue team convergence (a common view and single source of truth across sales, marketing, support, and product)

62%
8%
Propensity scoring (narrowing the audience for more effective use of resources)

5x

Leaders are more than five times more likely than laggards to rate their first-party data capabilities as advanced

While excellence in data governance and privacy should be regarded as a hygiene factor, it's clear that many laggard organisations may be neglecting their legal obligations. No company should be taking any shortcuts in this area. Where a gap between leaders and other companies is more understandable is in the realms of generative AI. Leaders are more than three times as likely as laggards to say that AI has been operationalised into their day-to-day marketing activities (*Figure 13*).

Zuora's Edwards-Jones explains why a solid data foundation is essential for more sophisticated personalisation activities: *"From a marketing operations and martech perspective, data quality is critical. Before we even get into using AI in our processes, while curating automated journeys, if you have incorrect data or data inconsistencies, you will not be able to implement personalisation in a way that's going to have impact and drive growth."*

The opportunities for using AI to optimise the content supply chain are highly significant, whether for creating copy and images content and messaging, summarising information and querying reports, or conversational experiences to enhance and accelerate the customer journey. Companies surveyed are most likely to be using generative AI for creating text and images for content, but other areas such as report querying, conversational chatbots, sales conversation summaries and tagging are not far behind (*Figure 14*).

FIGURE 13

How would you describe your organisation's approach to the use of AI in the context of your marketing activities?
(Leaders vs. laggards)

- ■ Leaders
- ■ Laggards

19% (Leaders)
0% (Laggards)
AI is very much business as usual in the context of our marketing activities

43% (Leaders)
13% (Laggards)
AI has been operationalised into our day-to-day marketing activities

25% (Leaders)
32% (Laggards)
We are experimenting but haven't developed many proofs of concept

13% (Leaders)
55% (Laggards)
We are aware of the potential but have not used AI capabilities

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FIGURE 14

Proportion of respondents currently using generative AI for any of the following use cases

- ■ Currently using
- ■ Would like to use
- ■ No plans to use

Use case	Currently using	Would like to use	No plans to use
Creating text for content / communications	50%	39%	11%
Creating images for content / communications	47%	38%	15%
Report queries	46%	41%	13%
Conversational experiences (chatbots)	44%	38%	18%
Business development representative (BDR) / Sales chat co-pilot	41%	41%	18%
Content or conversation summaries or tagging	40%	45%	15%
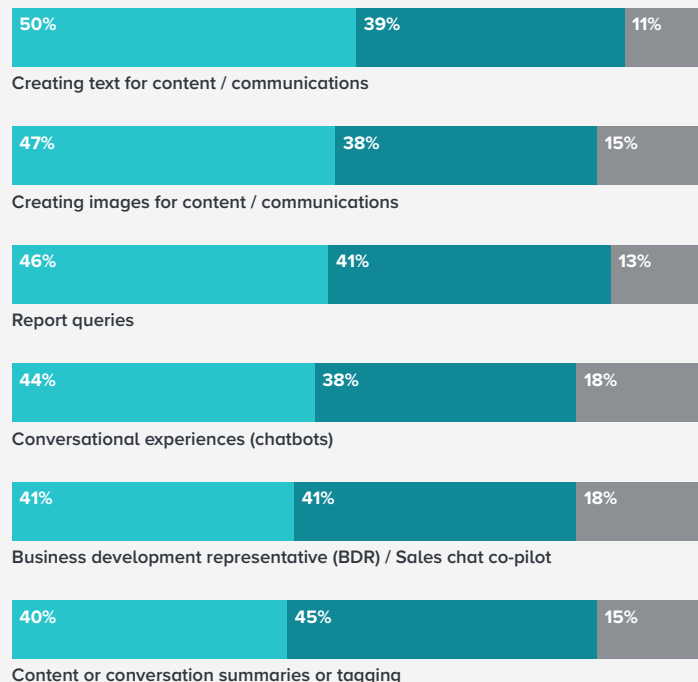
Section 6

Technology investment holds key to unlocking sales and marketing potential

Organisations need to overcome a range of challenges to excel at B2B personalisation. *Figure 15* shows the extent to which different issues hinder companies in their attempts to provide more seamless and personalised customer experiences. Fragmented data and insights, difficulty proving the business case, and lack of marketing and sales alignment are all major barriers for around a third of organisations.

But the most significant problem is legacy software technology which is described as a major barrier to success by 36% of B2B companies.

Without integrated technology and software that is fit for purpose, organisations will struggle to unleash more dynamic and real-time marketing, with data and insights trapped within their own silos.
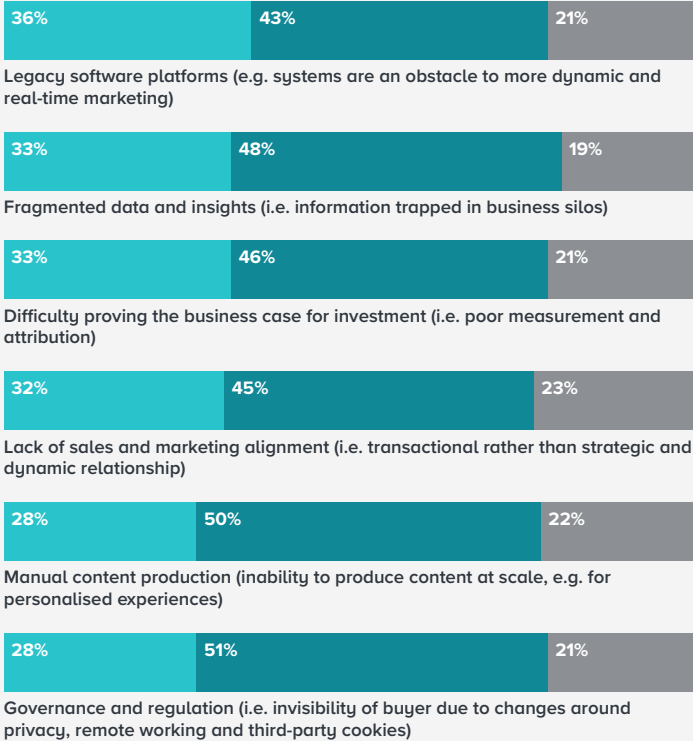
36%

of B2B companies describe legacy software technology as a major barrier to success

FIGURE 15

To what extent do you regard the following as barriers to providing more seamless and personalised B2B customer experiences?

■ Major barrier ■ Minor barrier ■ Not a barrier

| 36% | 43% | 21% |
Legacy software platforms (e.g. systems are an obstacle to more dynamic and real-time marketing)

| 33% | 48% | 19% |
Fragmented data and insights (i.e. information trapped in business silos)

| 33% | 46% | 21% |
Difficulty proving the business case for investment (i.e. poor measurement and attribution)

| 32% | 45% | 23% |
Lack of sales and marketing alignment (i.e. transactional rather than strategic and dynamic relationship)

| 28% | 50% | 22% |
Manual content production (inability to produce content at scale, e.g. for personalised experiences)

| 28% | 51% | 21% |
Governance and regulation (i.e. invisibility of buyer due to changes around privacy, remote working and third-party cookies)

This research shows that companies leading the way in B2B marketing are more committed to investment in marketing technology, with leaders 40% more likely than laggards to be significantly increasing their investment in this area over the next 12 months (*Figure 16*). It is also worth noting that leaders are less likely than laggards to be increasing investment in both internal and external staff.

While it is crucial to have the right people and agency support in place to get the most value out of any marketing and sales technology, the ability to realise tangible commercial benefits from increased automation and optimisation with less reliance on people will only increase as AI becomes more embedded within organisations.
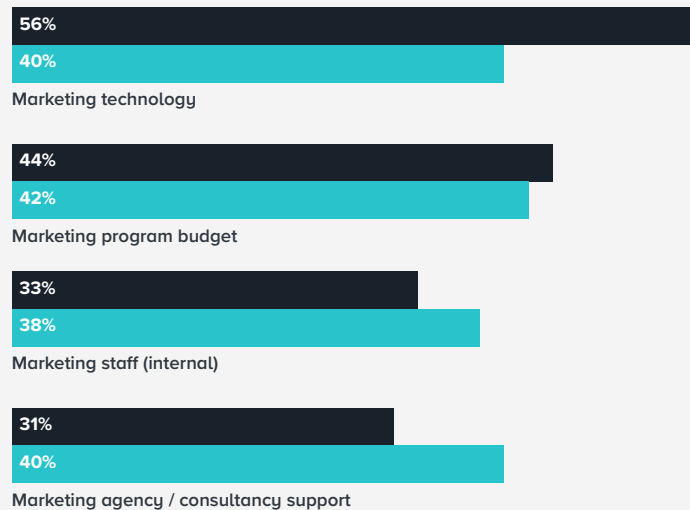
Delivery Hero is a business with a laser focus on improving the technology stack with a view on improving its commercial performance. According to Dunja Zivanovic, the company's Global Marketing Procurement Manager: *"Currently the company's biggest focus is to drive profitability for all its markets. Everything we do has to flow and contribute to our main target and ABCs [target goals]. One of the KPIs is to optimise and work on the tech ecosystem to make sure we improve on standardisation and personalisation to make sure that we get an increase in profitability, while also supporting growth in the majority of the markets."*

FIGURE 16

Proportion of companies planning to increase their investment in personalisation and engagement by more than 20% over the next 12 months
(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

56%
40%
Marketing technology

44%
42%
Marketing program budget

33%
38%
Marketing staff (internal)

31%
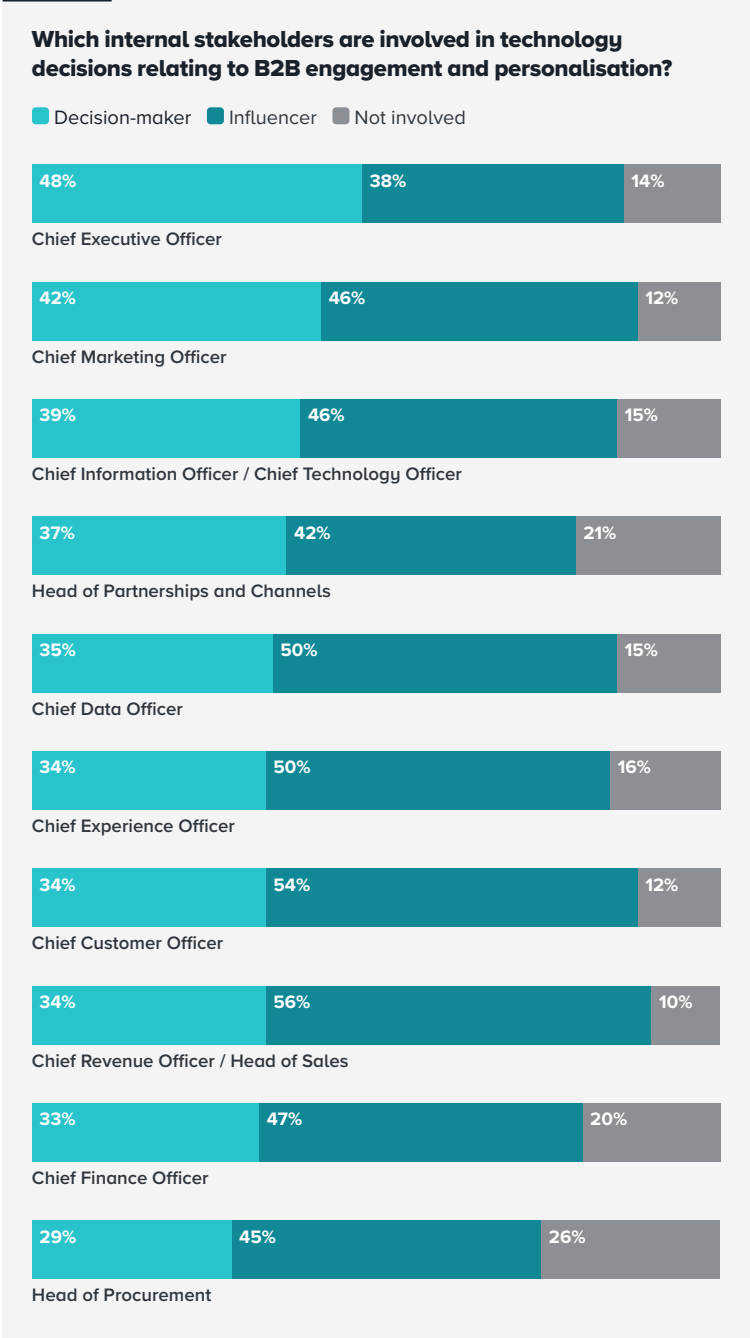**40%**
Marketing agency / consultancy support

+40%

Leaders are more likely than laggards to be significantly increasing their investment in marketing technology over the next 12 months

Figure 17 shows the degree to which different internal stakeholders are involved in technology decisions relating to B2B engagement and personalisation, reflecting the broad range of functions this technology impacts. It is evident that there is a large buying group involved in influencing and deciding which types of software to invest in. CEOs are the most likely to be decision-makers, followed by CMOs and then CIOs or CTOs.

C-suite executives at leading organisations are much more engaged in these technology decisions than their counterparts at laggard companies (*Figure 18*). For example, CMOs at leader organisations are 35% more likely to be decision-makers, and for Chief Data Officers this percentage increases to 56%.

A collective approach at boardroom level needs to be driven by a CEO who understands the importance of breaking down silos as far as possible. Key to the success of digitally driven marketing and sales activities is a strong alliance between the marketing and sales functions, led by the CMO and head of sales, or in some cases by a Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) with oversight of both functions to streamline operations.

FIGURE 17

Which internal stakeholders are involved in technology decisions relating to B2B engagement and personalisation?

■ Decision-maker ■ Influencer ■ Not involved

Role	Decision-maker	Influencer	Not involved
Chief Executive Officer	48%	38%	14%
Chief Marketing Officer	42%	46%	12%
Chief Information Officer / Chief Technology Officer	39%	46%	15%
Head of Partnerships and Channels	37%	42%	21%
Chief Data Officer	35%	50%	15%
Chief Experience Officer	34%	50%	16%
Chief Customer Officer	34%	54%	12%
Chief Revenue Officer / Head of Sales	34%	56%	10%
Chief Finance Officer	33%	47%	20%
Head of Procurement	29%	45%	26%

The main users or beneficiaries of best-in-class engagement and personalisation software will ultimately be marketing operations, revenue operations, demand generation, account-based marketing and sales. Customer service, customer marketing, and channel or partner teams will also be obvious beneficiaries of a more personalised approach to marketing.

The right attribution technology as part of the overall setup will help organisations measure the impact of their personalisation and engagement activities, giving an organisation the best possible understanding of its return on technology investment. In turn this will help create the business case for further investment in marketing technology infrastructure, demanding the attention of other interested parties such as CFOs and heads of procurement as the business world becomes more data-driven.
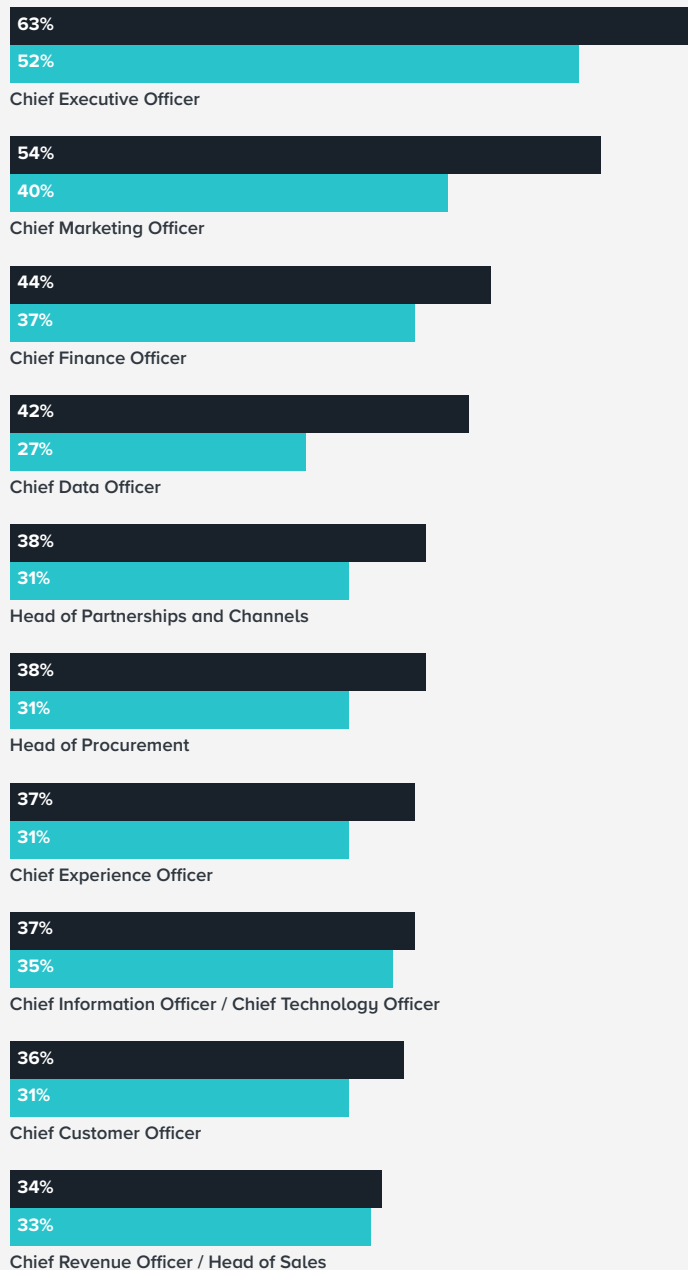
+35%

CMOs at leader organisations are more likely to be engaged in technology decisions

FIGURE 18

Proportion of companies where internal stakeholders are 'decision-makers' in technology decisions relating to B2B engagement and personalisation
(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

Chief Executive Officer
63%
52%

Chief Marketing Officer
54%
40%

Chief Finance Officer
44%
37%

Chief Data Officer
42%
27%

Head of Partnerships and Channels
38%
31%

Head of Procurement
38%
31%

Chief Experience Officer
37%
31%

Chief Information Officer / Chief Technology Officer
37%
35%

Chief Customer Officer
36%
31%

Chief Revenue Officer / Head of Sales
34%
33%

A focus of this report has been the notion of buying groups as companies realise that they have been too focused either on marketing to individuals or 'accounts' indiscriminately. Leaders are also more likely to have technology that supports a buying group focus. They are 43% (83% vs. 58%) more likely to rate their B2B marketing automation platform as 'good' for its ability to identify and target at a buying-group level (*Figure 19*).

And it is not just for buyer group identification and targeting that leaders have significantly better technology than laggards. *Figure 20* shows that leaders are also far more likely to rate their technology platform highly for other B2B use cases such as experience optimisation (+89%), every-touch attribution (+28%), contextual personalisation (+32%), generative AI (+33%), and contact acquisition (+28%).

"Adobe is one of the very, very few companies out there that understands B2B and B2C. Most companies are purely B2B or purely B2C. And so for us, I think that the magic piece is that Adobe recognises that there is a need to cross between these layers occasionally."

Robert Nicholson
Director of Digital Marketing, Data and Analytics
Robert Walters

"We're utilising Adobe solutions such as Adobe Firefly to streamline content creation, enabling faster, more cost-effective production for hyper-targeted communication and scalability in personalisation. Adobe Firefly allows marketers to break free from expensive agencies and their lengthy turnaround times for content production. While we're still in the early stages of this journey, initial results are promising. Adobe Firefly has demonstrated an impressive 18 times faster and 14 times cheaper production process so far."

Harpreet Singh Sethi
Global Head of Technology
Unilever Food Solutions

FIGURE 19

How would you rate your B2B marketing automation platform for its ability to identify and target at a buying-group level?
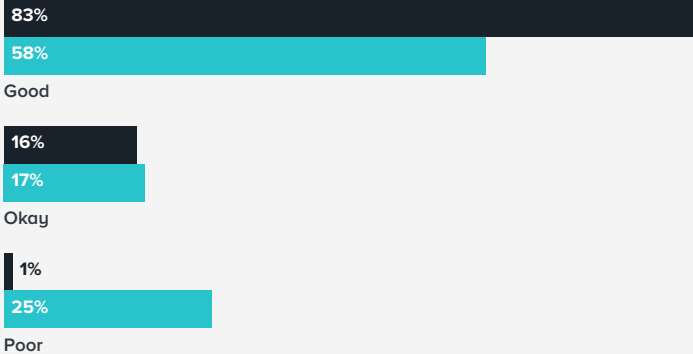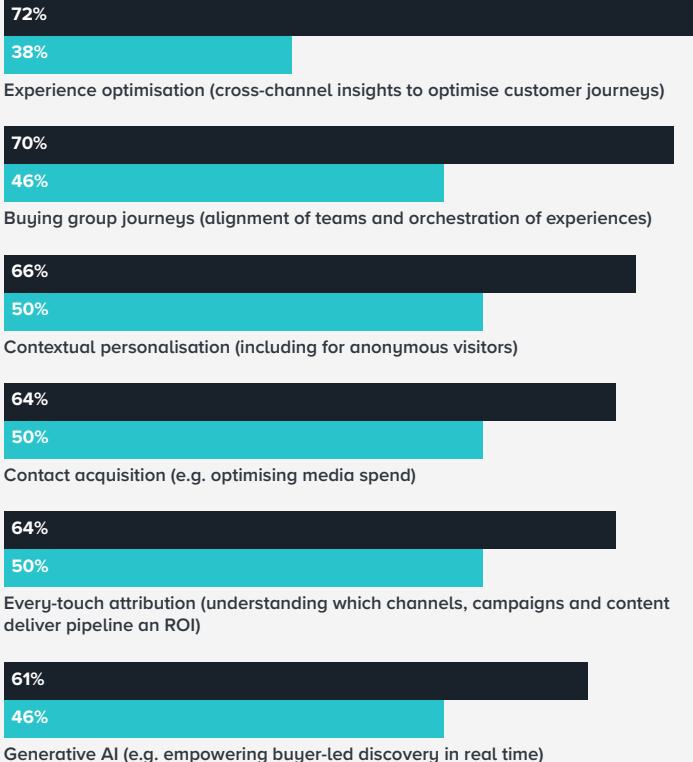(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

83%
58%
Good

16%
17%
Okay

1%
25%
Poor

FIGURE 20

Proportion of respondents rating their technology platform as good for facilitating B2B use cases
(Leaders vs. laggards)

■ Leaders
■ Laggards

72%
38%
Experience optimisation (cross-channel insights to optimise customer journeys)

70%
46%
Buying group journeys (alignment of teams and orchestration of experiences)

66%
50%
Contextual personalisation (including for anonymous visitors)

64%
50%
Contact acquisition (e.g. optimising media spend)

64%
50%
Every-touch attribution (understanding which channels, campaigns and content deliver pipeline an ROI)

61%
46%
Generative AI (e.g. empowering buyer-led discovery in real time)

Concluding recommendations

The importance of integrated technology

This research shows that B2B leaders are 67% more likely than laggards to be focusing heavily on personalisation. These leaders recognise that a truly personalised approach to B2B marketing requires a truly integrated technology set-up. Software tools relating to data, content, analytics and customer journey management, and even AI are needed to achieve modern personalisation. CIOs and CTOs must work with heads of both marketing and sales organizations to ensure that technology infrastructure is geared towards a unified approach to revenue growth. The more integrated the technology, the more unified and available the data, the better the customer experience, and the better the analytics and attribution to satisfy everyone from the Chief Customer Officer to the CFO and CEO.

Buying groups hold the key to growth marketing success

A buying group is typically a specific group of contacts in an account that will make the purchase decision on a specific product or service. B2B marketing leaders are 79% more likely than laggards to be focusing their sales and marketing activities on multi-person buying groups within an organisation. B2B organisations need to ensure they have software that facilitates this kind of approach. Buying groups represent both the contacts marketing can target and the opportunities sales teams are trying to close. Sales and marketing team members need to be able to assign contacts to the roles they have identified as part of the buying group within prospect organisations. Analytics on buying groups provide a more accurate view on a customer's intent to purchase, and customer journeys built for members of the buying group unlock true personalisation for B2B.

Unify and activate customer data and insights across channels

A 360-degree view of the customer is fundamental for B2B companies striving to automate next-best communications and sales activities at any given moment. A customer profile can be activated at all stages of the customer journey, whether for personalised messaging to identified and unidentified prospects, or for effective cross-selling and upselling of existing customers. Account journey insights then become clearer with a more complete view of customer data. Analysts and marketers are trying to understand the impact of paid, earned and owned digital channels as part of larger customer journey. Building these comprehensive customer profiles in B2B requires a best-of-breed customer data platform and effective integration with your sales tech infrastructure.

Strive for revenue team convergence

Sales and marketing teams need to be as closely aligned as possible for truly effective revenue generation activities. They need a common view of the ideal customer profile (ICP) and collaboration to identify and target the right buying group stakeholders in each opportunity. A united revenue team approach is essential to higher ROI because it wastes less resources on dead-end leads and uninterested customers, and helps ensure collaboration on key accounts and buying groups in real time. Traditional go-to-market strategies rely on static customer lists that are shared back and forth via email. Other functions such as product and customer success teams also need to be part of the revenue growth process. B2B companies need to harness all the data and insights across the customer journey.
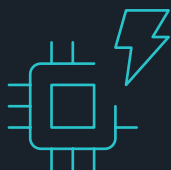
Don't delay your AI deployment

Generative AI is now playing a foundational role in helping B2B organisations deliver personalised digital experiences at scale, with large language models being deployed to speed up how customer journeys are built, launched and measured. Leaders are more than 3x as likely as laggards to say that AI has been operationalised into their day-to-day marketing activities. Deployment of AI and GenAI is now accelerating everything from content creation and tagging, to conversational chatbots and real-time digital sales. Assess how your organisation is using AI, and what might be holding you back.

Appendix
Respondent profiles

FIGURE 21

Are you responsible for your company's B2B customer journeys and experiences?

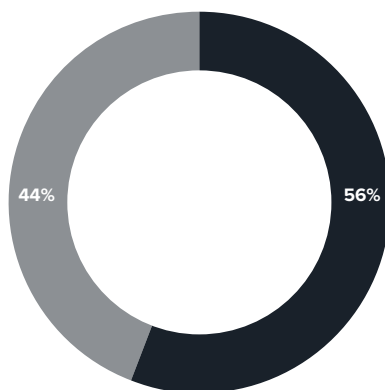- Yes, fully responsible
- Yes, partly responsible
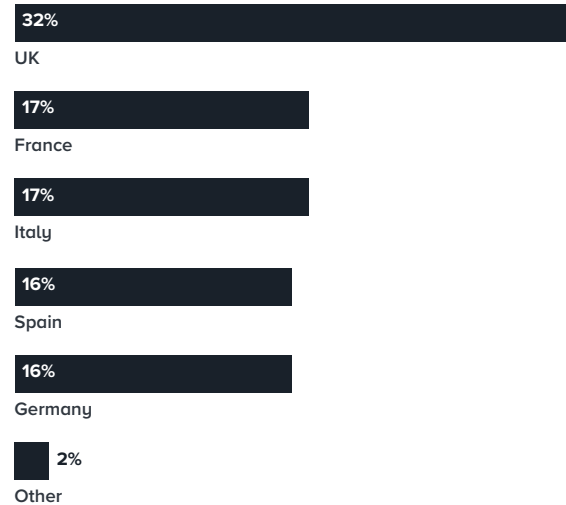
44% 56%

FIGURE 22

In which country are you based?

32%
UK

17%
France

17%
Italy

16%
Spain

16%
Germany

2%
Other

FIGURE 23

What is your annual company revenue? (UK)

17%
£50 Million - £99 Million

28%
£100 Million - £249 Million

20%
£250 Million - £499 Million

16%
£500 Million - £999 Million

19%
£1 Billion plus
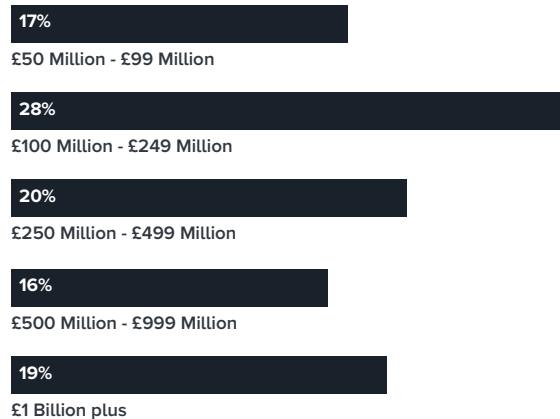
FIGURE 24

What is your annual company revenue? (EU)

9%
€50 Million - €99 Million

19%
€100 Million - €249 Million

19%
€250 Million - €499 Million

14%
€500 Million - €999 Million

39%
€1 Billion plus

FIGURE 25

In which business sector does your organisation operate?

19%	Financial services and insurance
16%	Business & professional services
13%	Manufacturing
13%	Retail
9%	Technology
6%	Travel, leisure and hospitality
6%	Healthcare / Medical / Pharmaceutical
3%	Utilities
2%	Telecommunications
2%	Media and entertainment
2%	Government and local authority
1%	Property
6%	Other
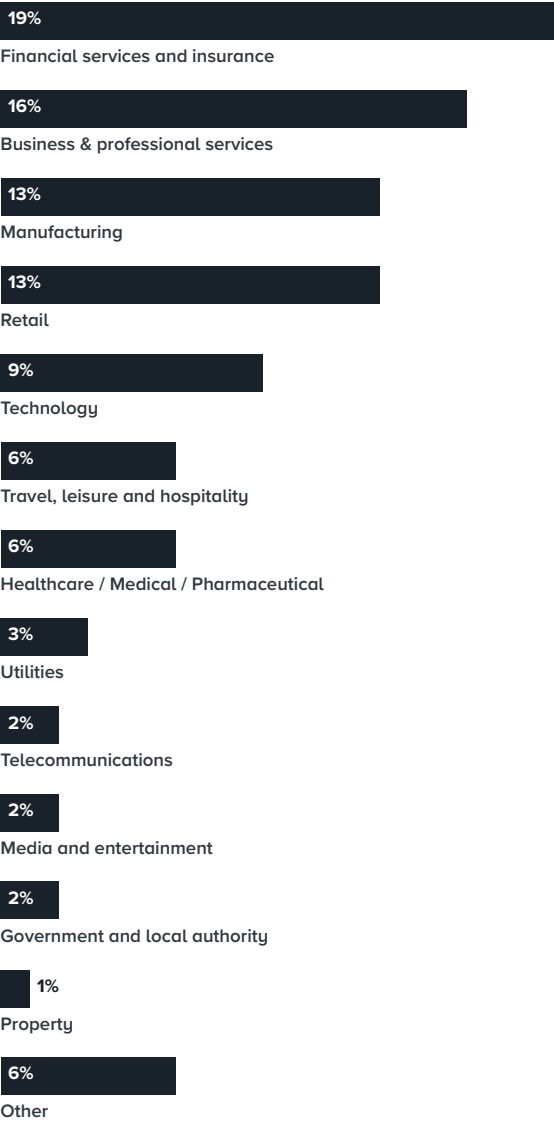
FIGURE 26

What is your level of seniority within the business?

30%	Senior manager
28%	Manager
22%	Director / Head of department
20%	C-level

FIGURE 27

What job function do you work in?

23%	Business development
19%	Marketing
15%	Revenue / sales
13%	Commerce / ecommerce
9%	Data analytics / data science
7%	Operations
7%	IT
6%	Business intelligence
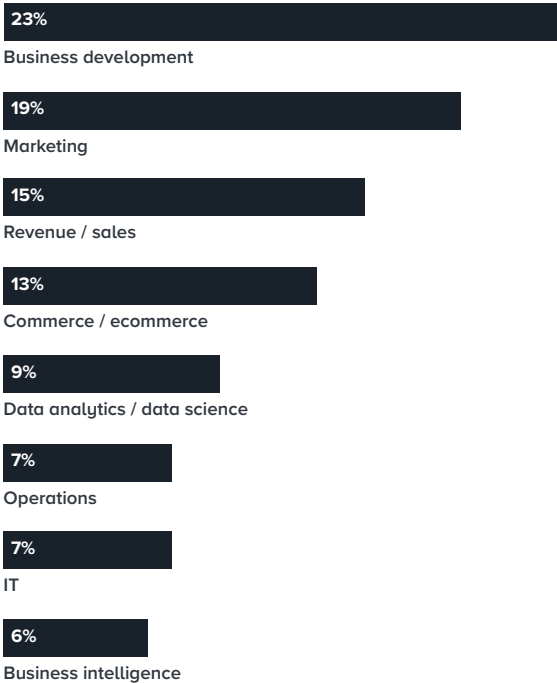
About the author

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Linus is Co-Founder of London Research and a renowned tech industry analyst who has spent more than 20 years producing content for industry giants such as Adobe, Microsoft, Oracle and Salesforce. He has overseen the publication of hundreds of research-based reports, and is a sought-after speaker for webinars and events internationally.

About us

London Research produces insight-driven content for B2B professionals, helping them make better, more informed decisions. Our clients are typically market-leading international technology businesses and global agencies. We help them tell compelling stories based on robust research and insightful data points. As part of Demand Exchange, not only do we create valuable content, we're able to syndicate it so that it informs buyers and aids their decision making at every stage of the customer journey.

B2B buyers today are digital-first, they expect their vendors to understand them and deliver digital experiences that are tailored to their industry, role and preferences. And they want to progress through the majority of their buyer's journey before engaging with Sales. This places a huge burden on B2B Marketers to help them do so. Marketers must understand their contacts and accounts deeply, create offers that are tailor-made for their target audience and ensure they meet their buyers in the channels that matter most — and do all this with tight budgets and tighter timelines.

To address the requirements of today's B2B Marketer Adobe has brought together data, content, web, commerce, customer journey and analytics technology to provide the most comprehensive B2B marketing solution available today.