

 TrustRadius | 2021

B2B Buying Disconnect

Forecasting Radical Changes in
Tech Buying Behavior

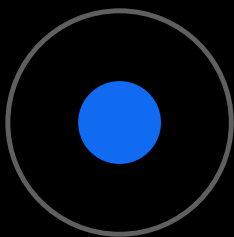
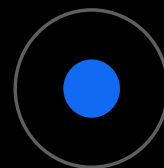


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2020 IS CHANGING HOW PEOPLE BUY SOFTWARE

The coronavirus pandemic has sparked severe changes in the B2B tech world. Marketers at software companies were already confronting a gap between the way they market technology and the way buyers want to engage with them. COVID-19 has intensified that disconnect.

Buyers are now demanding self-service options that not all vendors offer. In a market where most interactions are online, buyers are increasingly concerned about data privacy and security—enough to ruthlessly cut products from their shortlists. They're also frustrated by the marketing tactics that vendors love to use.

This report contains insights into the following topics:

Top 5 Information Sources Buyers Use

How Review Sites Influence Buying

Less Than Half of Vendors Use Intent Data

Marketing Tactics That Buyers Hate

How Data Security Concerns Delay Buying

How to Win More Buyers in 2021

About This Research

The TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect is an annual research report that reveals year-over-year changes in business technology buying and selling. The data in this study comes from a survey of 1,134 technology buyers and vendors conducted in September 2020. [Click here](#) for more information on report methodology and demographics.

If you're interested in looking at how the industry has changed over time, and some of the trends and special topics from years past, check out these previous B2B Buying Disconnect Reports published by TrustRadius:

- [2020 B2B Buying Disconnect Report](#)
- [2019 B2B Buying Disconnect Report](#)
- [2018 B2B Buying Disconnect Report](#)

10 CRUCIAL TAKEAWAYS FROM THE REPORT

1. Buyers consistently use these **top 5 information sources** to make purchasing decisions: Product demos, Vendor/product websites, User reviews, Vendor reps, and Free trials/accounts. Vendors only named two of these resources on their list of most-used marketing tactics.
2. **45% of buyers use reviews** during their purchase process. Less than half that number (20%) use analyst rankings and reports.
3. **60% of all B2B technology buyers are millennials** (age 25 - 39), and 2% are from Generation Z (24 and younger).
4. **87% of buyers want to self-serve** part or all of their buying journey. 57% of buyers already make purchase decisions without ever talking with a vendor representative.
5. **Gen Z and Millennial buyers** are almost twice as likely as older generations to discover a product by searching online. Older generations typically first find out about products from their own prior experience.
6. The average buyer uses **6.9 information sources** to make a purchase decision, a 35% increase from last year.
7. Due to the pandemic and data security concerns, buyers now spend more time researching products. **33% of buyers spent more time** researching products in 2020 than they did before the pandemic. 49% said they spent time doing extra research to ensure products meet their data security requirements.
8. **92% of buyers** who use reviews share them with at least one other person. 2 out of 5 buyers who use B2B tech reviews share them with four or more other buying committee members.
9. According to buyers, the number one thing they care about when using B2B review websites is **review content**. However, vendors believe the number one thing buyers care about on a review website is a product's score.
10. **Nearly half of buyers (49%)** report decreased tech spending due to the global coronavirus pandemic. However, **about 1 out of 4** report increased tech spending in 2020. Most of those buyers plan to spend more on video conferencing solutions (64%) and online collaboration software (53%) in 2021.

Build Your B2B Technology Review Program - Learn How:

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TOP FIVE INFORMATION SOURCES BUYERS USE

BUYERS CONSISTENTLY RELY ON THE SAME TOP FIVE INFORMATION SOURCES

For five years in a row, B2B technology buyers have relied on the same top five resources to help them make purchasing decisions. Though their rank order has shifted slightly over the years, these five information sources are where buyers regularly turn to find accurate and essential information about the products they are considering.

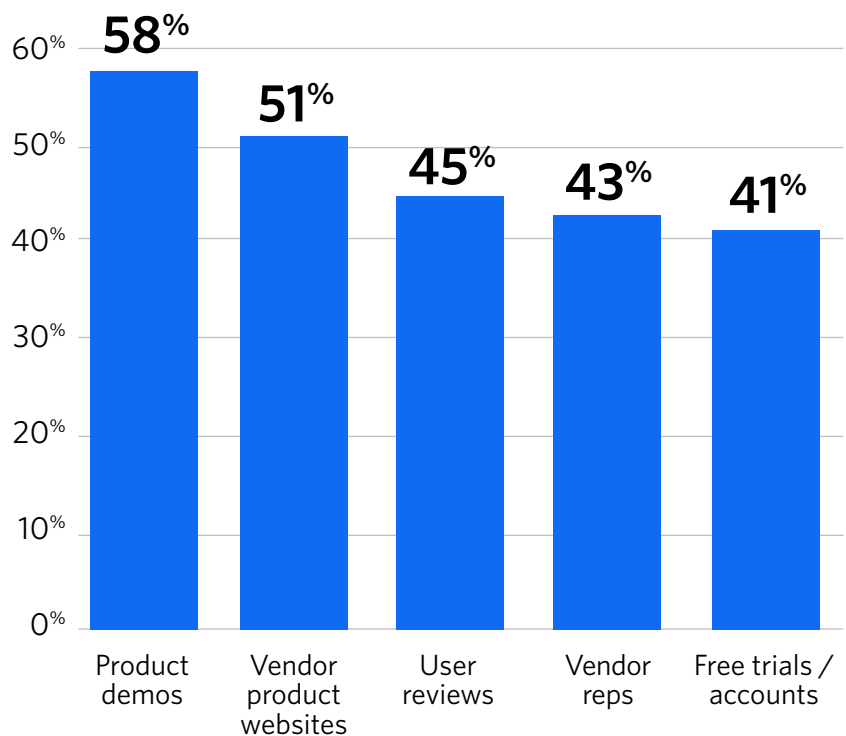
The top five information sources are:

- Product demos
- User reviews
- Free trial/account
- Vendor/product website
- Vendor reps

Notably, user reviews are used by 45% of buyers—a slight decrease from last year when 52% of buyers used reviews. Buyer usage of third-party publications also decreased by 8% from last year, while usage of the vendor's website decreased 5% and usage of vendor reps decreased 4%. However, this has been accompanied by a sizable increase (35%) in the average number of information sources buyers use to help them make a purchase decision.

Last year, buyers consulted an average of 5.1 information sources, while this year they report using 6.9 information sources. Considering that the average buyer uses close to seven different information sources, it's not surprising that the top seven resources have a few key commonalities; they're all based on first-hand experience, feedback from peers, or direct information from the vendor.

Top 5 Information Sources Used by B2B Tech Buyers



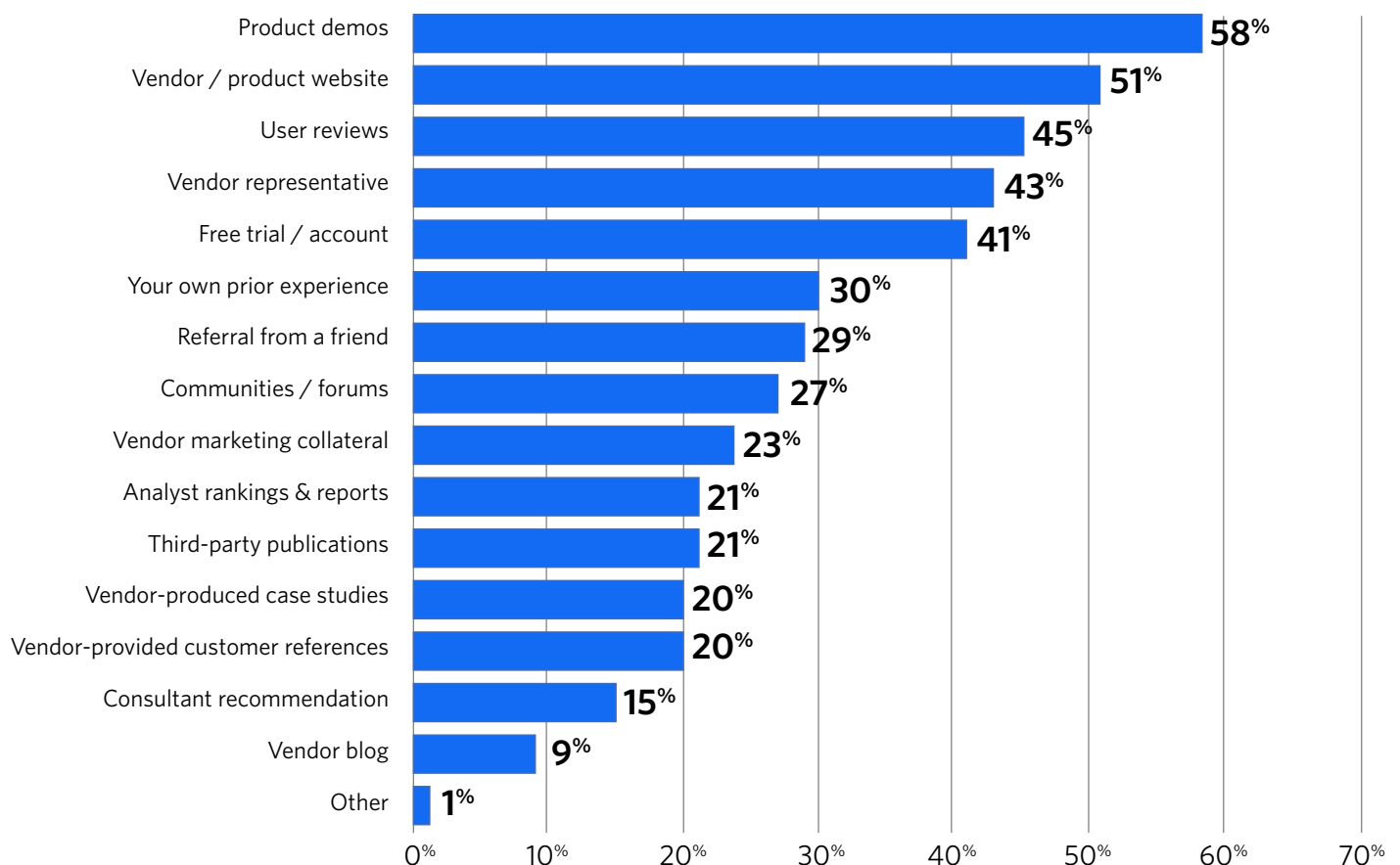
TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

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Nothing beats hands-on experience with the product itself, but reviews come close! Here's why buyers love reviews:

- ✓ They show the pros and cons of the product
- ✓ They're easy to read
- ✓ They're quick to share with other stakeholders

Information Sources Used by B2B Tech Buyers in 2021



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The increase in the total number of information sources buyers consult is in part due to the changes in buyer behavior listed below, caused by the pandemic. Economic uncertainty and remote work environments mean buyers need to be more confident in their purchase decisions than ever before. The top five information sources buyers consult help them accomplish these early-stage buying activities.

Our research revealed that buyers are spending substantially more time researching and comparing products online in the earlier stages of their buying journey this year. About a third of all buyers report spending more time on critical early-stage buying activities now than they did before the pandemic. For example:

- 33% spend more time researching products
- 31% spend more time prioritizing selection criteria
- 33% spend more time comparing products
- 34% spend more time clearly defining expected return on investment (ROI)

Some of these buyers also spend more time on activities later on in their buying journey, such as trialing different solutions and negotiating with vendors.

We see extremely high levels of buyer engagement with product comparisons on TrustRadius. Since the beginning of 2020, the average time on page for our product comparisons page has been 11 minutes and 5 seconds.

Even though we have seen a small decline in buyers' self-reported review usage since last year, TrustRadius has experienced the opposite trend. According to website traffic data, usage of TrustRadius has been growing steadily over the past year. Additionally, TrustRadius saw a sharp spike in traffic during the months of March and April. This was primarily due to companies adjusting to the new remote working environment at the beginning of the pandemic, including purchasing new software tools to help with this transition.



**TrustRadius
saw a 2.5X
increase in
monthly unique
sessions over the
past year.**

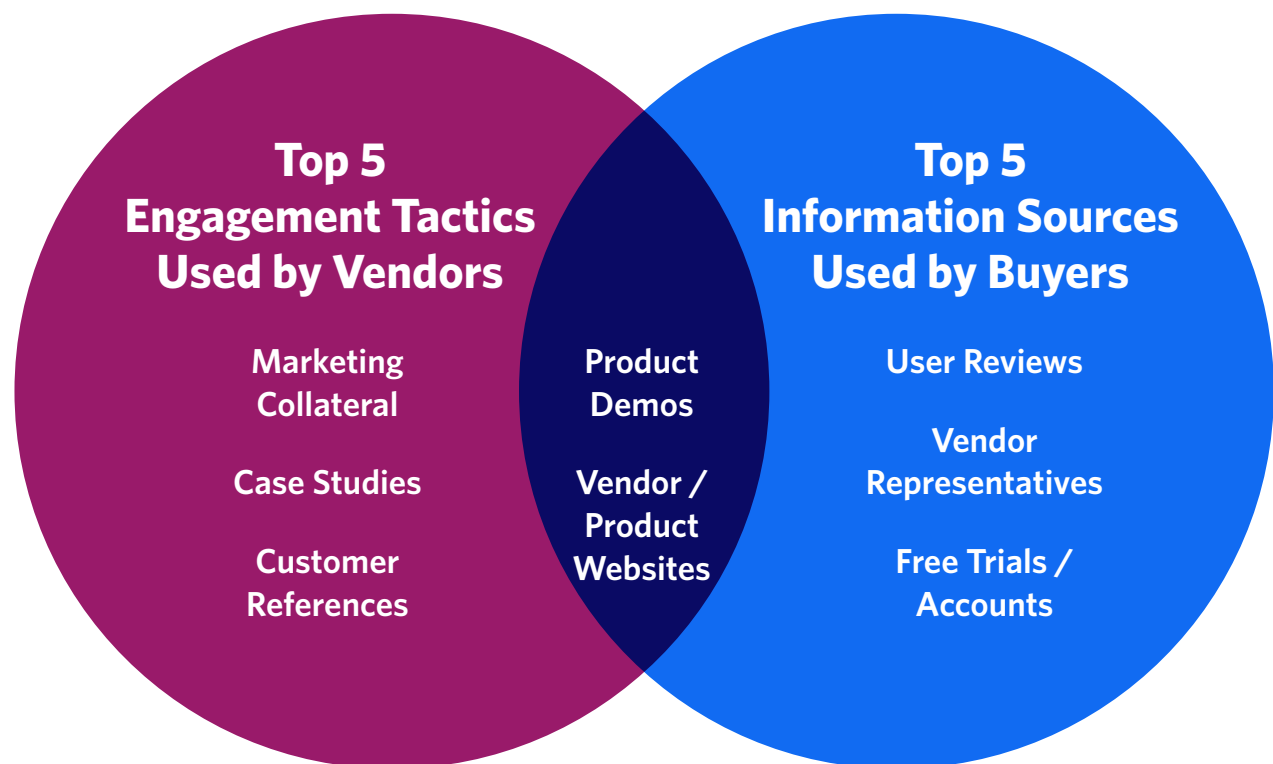
Over the past year, we've seen more and more review websites expanding what they offer to buyers. This includes tools like product guides and other reports, analyst comparisons, video tutorials, Q&A sections, 2x2 quadrants, and product shortlists. As a result, the different ways buyers can leverage review websites have expanded beyond reviews alone. As the number of buyers reporting that they use reviews begins to plateau and review sites begin offering even more value, we expect these numbers to continue to change.

VENDORS DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT BUYERS WANT

The top five tactics vendors use to engage buyers are different from buyers' top five information sources. Both vendors and buyers use demos and vendor/product websites. But beyond that, there's a big disconnect between the resources buyers rely on and tactics vendors use.

User reviews, vendor representatives, and free trials/accounts are the next most critical sources of information for buyers. Comparatively, vendors are more focused on marketing collateral, case studies, and customer references.

In short, vendors spend more time and marketing dollars on content that buyers don't consume as much. To make the most out of their marketing budgets and remove friction for buyers, vendors should invest more in user reviews, rep enablement, and product-led growth.



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This year, about 48% of buyers used vendor-provided sales and marketing resources, including reviews shared by vendors. Of these resources, customer stories/case studies and customer reviews are the most popular among buyers. They're used 34% more than webinars, 47% more than whitepapers and ebooks, and almost 2X as much as blog posts.

For buyers who report using the information sources below, here are the resources buyers would miss the most if they no longer had access to them:

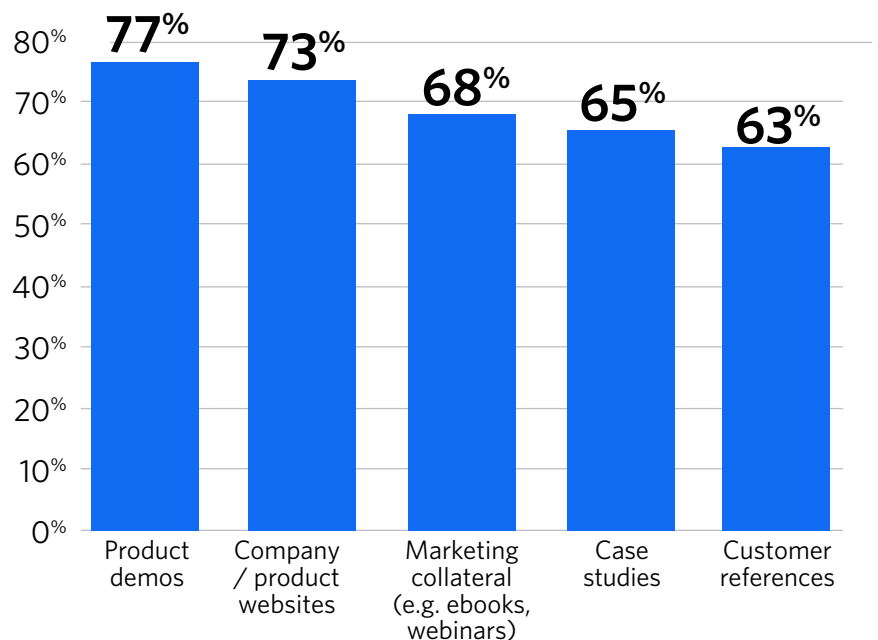
Buyers would be more disappointed if they did not have access to product demos than they would if they could no longer access referrals from a friend, colleague, or peer.

Reviews are one of the top five information sources that buyers would be most disappointed to lose if it were taken away.

Buyers would be less upset if the following resources were taken away: analyst rankings & reports, vendor representatives, communities and forums, and a vendor/product website.

Buyers would be least disappointed if they no longer had access to 3 out of 5 of vendors' most crucial engagement tactics: vendor-provided customer references, marketing collateral, and case studies.

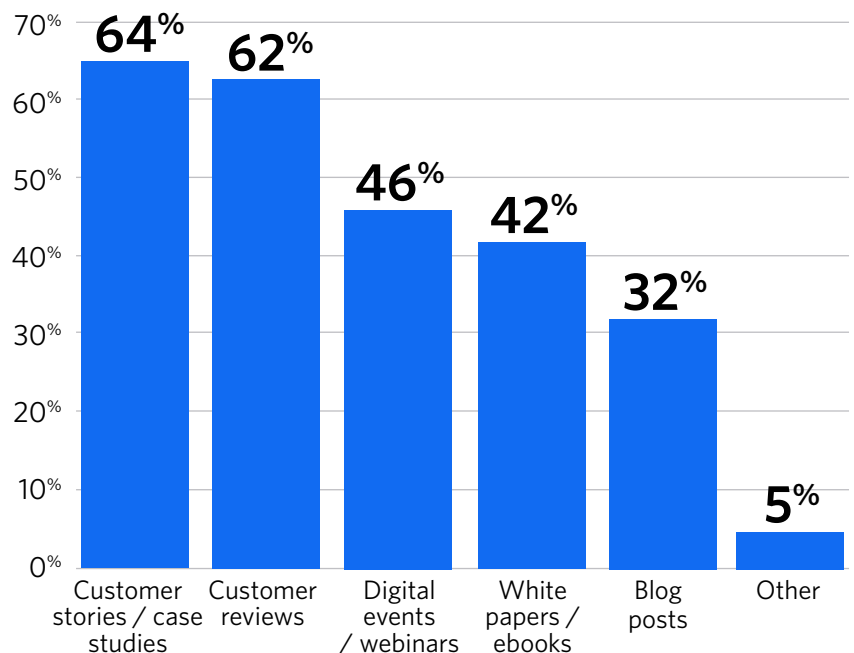
Top 5 Marketing Tactics Used by Tech Vendors in 2021



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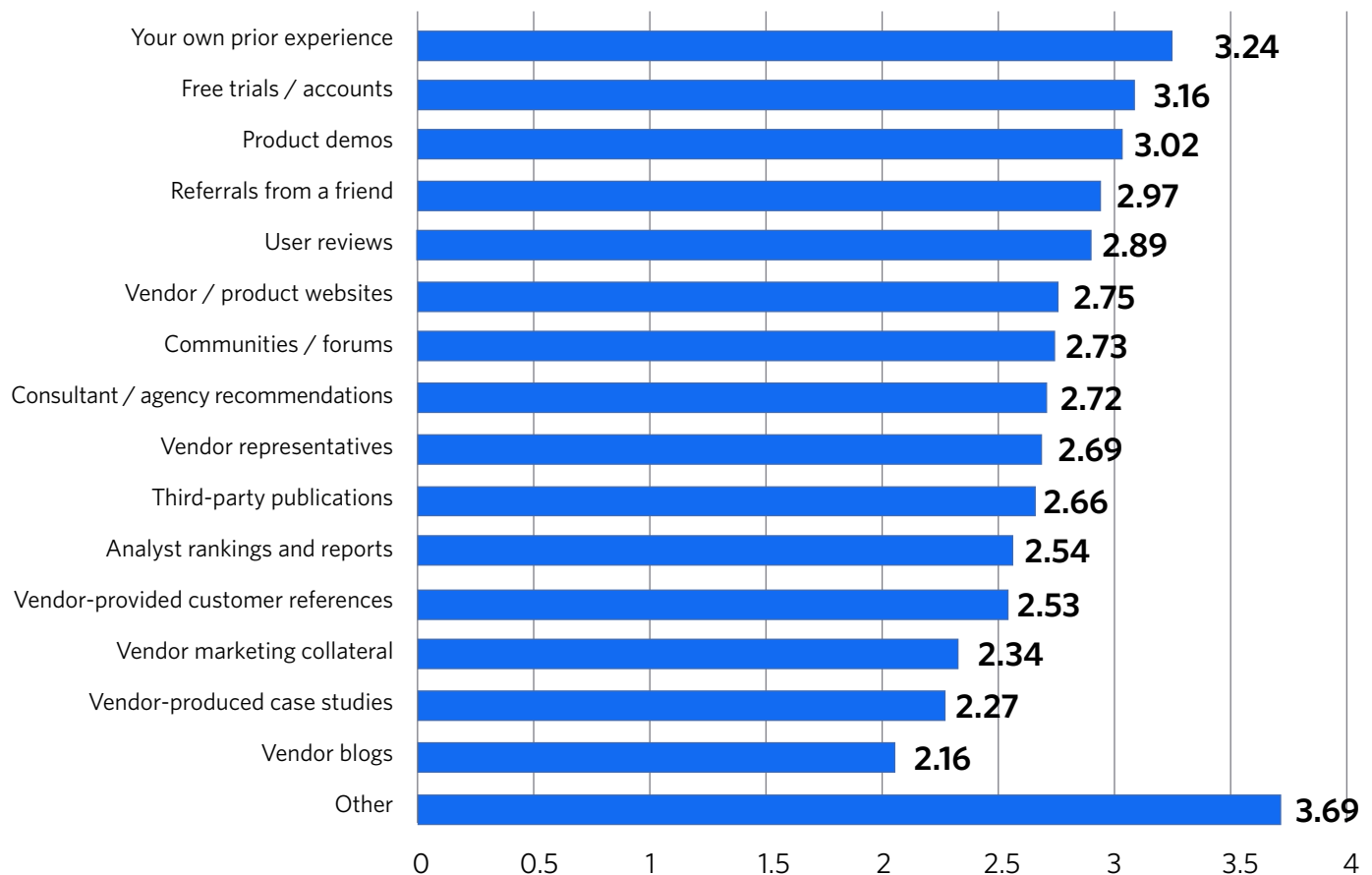
B2B Tech Buyers Rely on These Vendor-Provided Resources the Most



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B2B Tech Buyers Would Be Most Disappointed to Lose These Information Sources



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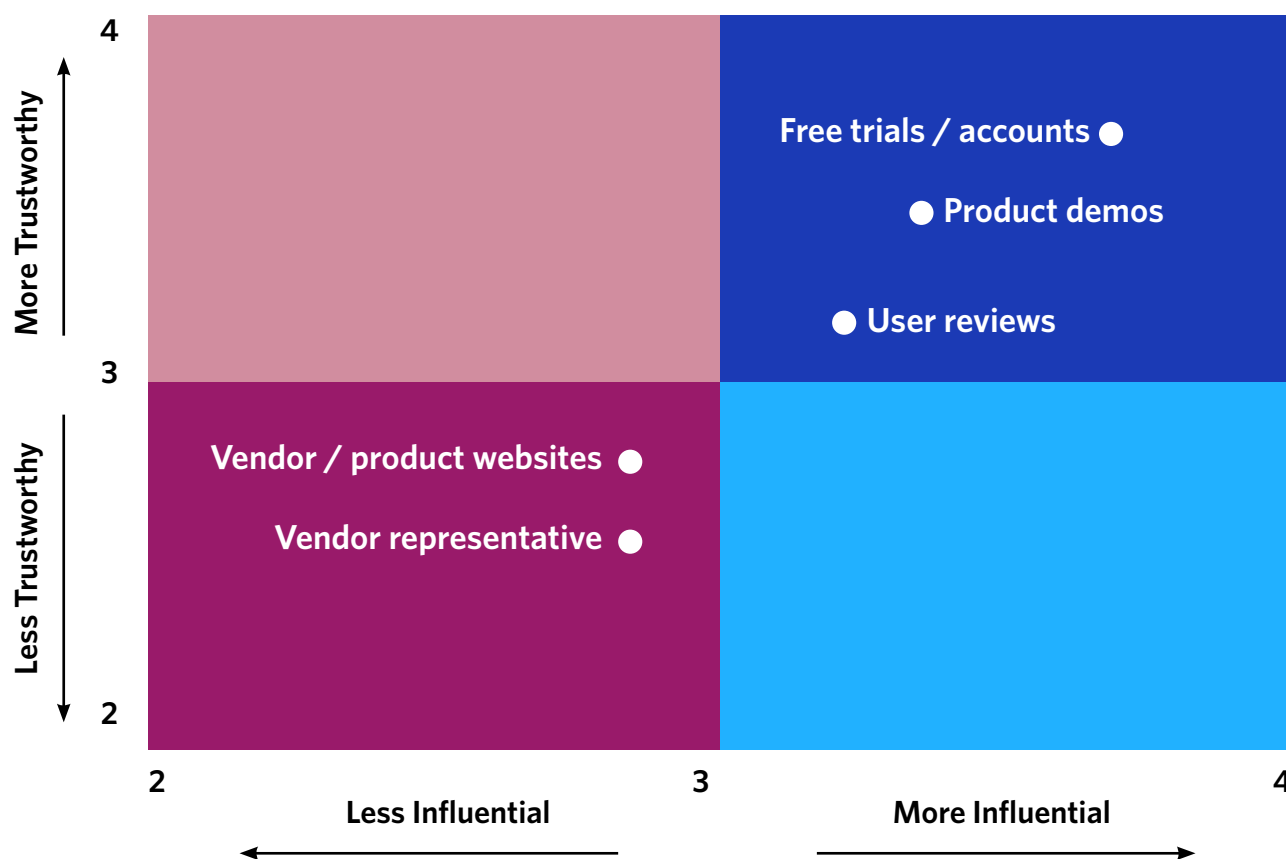
These are important trends for marketers to keep in mind as they budget for 2021. Marketers are always optimizing budgets, and some companies are trimming budgets based on expected financial performance. However, it's important to continue investment in the information sources buyers rely on most.

WHAT INFORMATION SOURCES DO BUYERS ACTUALLY TRUST?

When it comes to trustworthiness and influence, not all information sources or engagement tactics are created equal.

The grid below shows that three out of the top five information sources used by buyers—free trials/accounts, product demos, and user reviews—lead in terms of their level of trustworthiness and influence over purchasing decisions. Only one of these, product demos, is on the list of the top five engagement tactics used by vendors.

How Trustworthy and Influential Are the Information Sources B2B Tech Buyers Use Most?



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

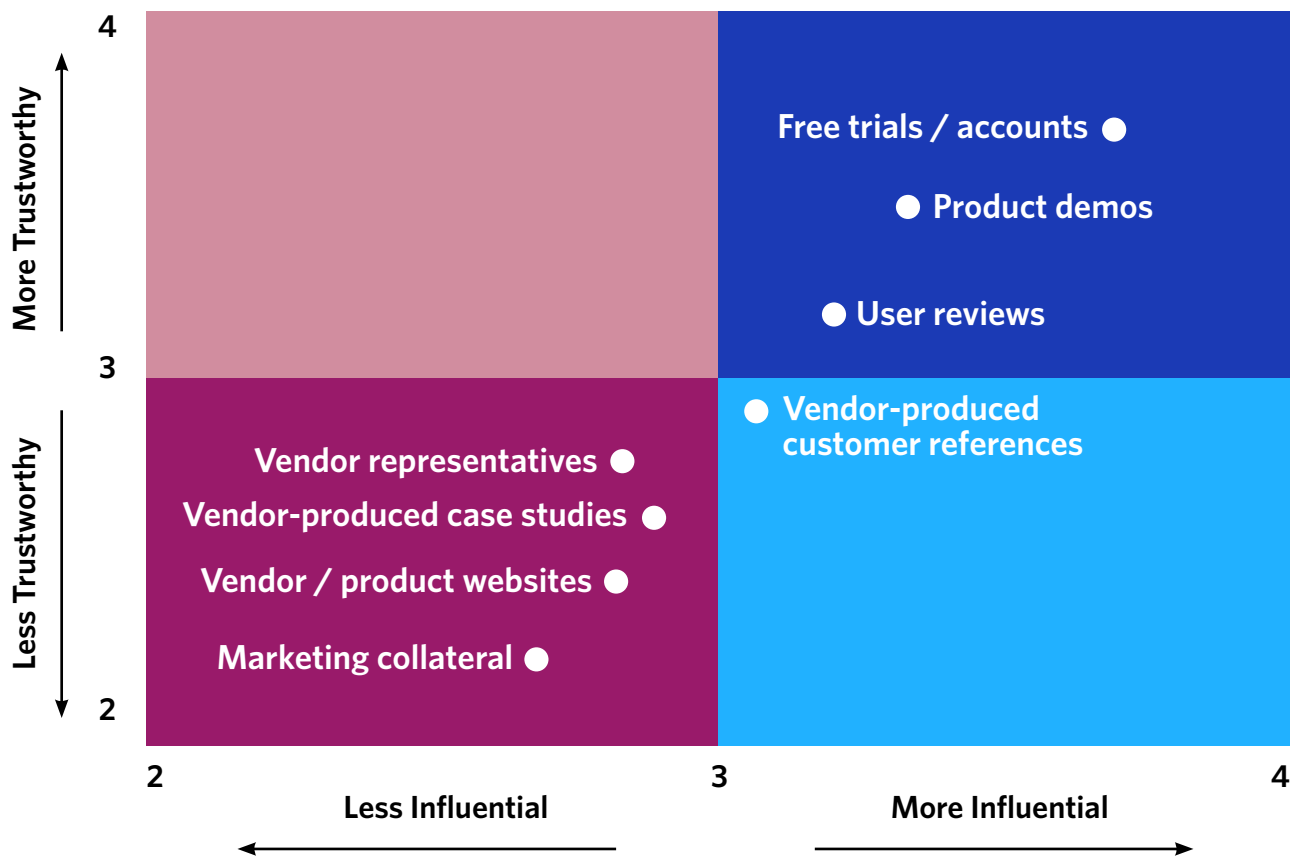


This highlights a clear gap between how vendors engage their buyers and which resources buyers use to purchase technology. Three of the sources that vendors consider most important—marketing collateral, case studies, and customer references—require significant marketing resources to produce. But they all score lower in terms of trustworthiness and influence than free trial/accounts, product demos, and user reviews.

Create Social Proof Your Buyers Will Trust With a Review Program—Learn How:

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The Information Sources B2B Tech Buyers Use Most Are More Trustworthy Than Vendor-Provided Resources



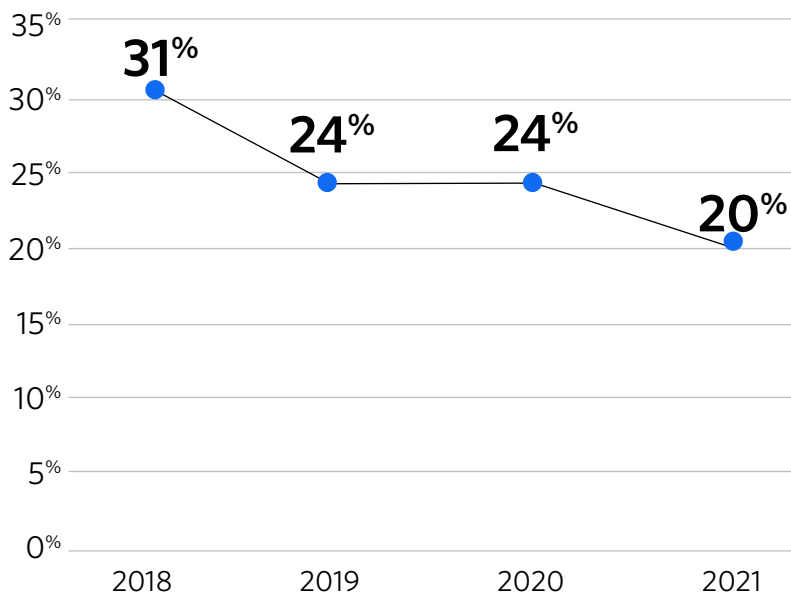
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BUYERS USAGE OF ANALYST REPORTS & RANKINGS CONTINUES TO DECLINE

Over the past few years, buyer usage of analyst rankings and reports has steadily decreased. This year only 20% of buyers say they're using analyst rankings and reports, which represents a 15% decrease from last year.

Use of Analyst Reports and Rankings is Declining Among B2B Tech Buyers



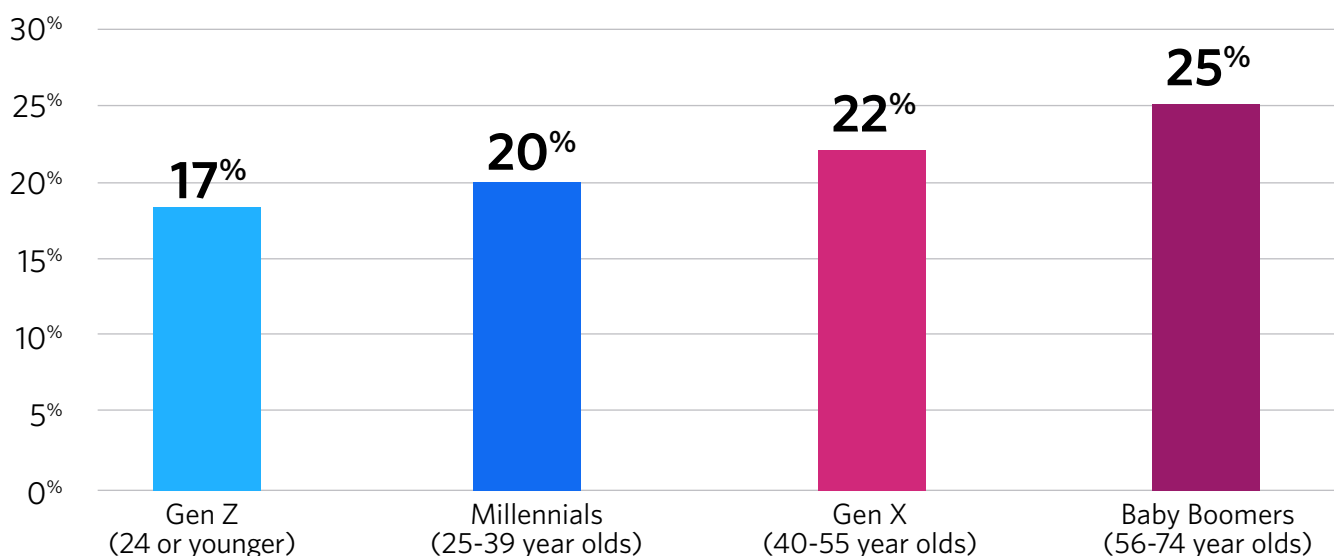
TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



One likely explanation is the shifting landscape of the U.S. and global workforce. Millennials now make up the biggest demographic, representing 60% of technology buyers. Year over year, the percentage of the workforce that is composed of millennials has been increasing while the presence of older generations has been decreasing. Generation X currently represents 32% and Baby Boomers represent only 6% of technology buyers. Gen Z is arriving as well—though they only make up 2% of buyers right now, that number will increase rapidly.

Our data shows that millennials and Gen Z buyers are less likely than older generations to use analyst rankings and reports while purchasing business technology. Given that the percentage of buyers is trending younger, the fact that they rely less on analyst reports & rankings is a serious concern for traditional analyst firms.

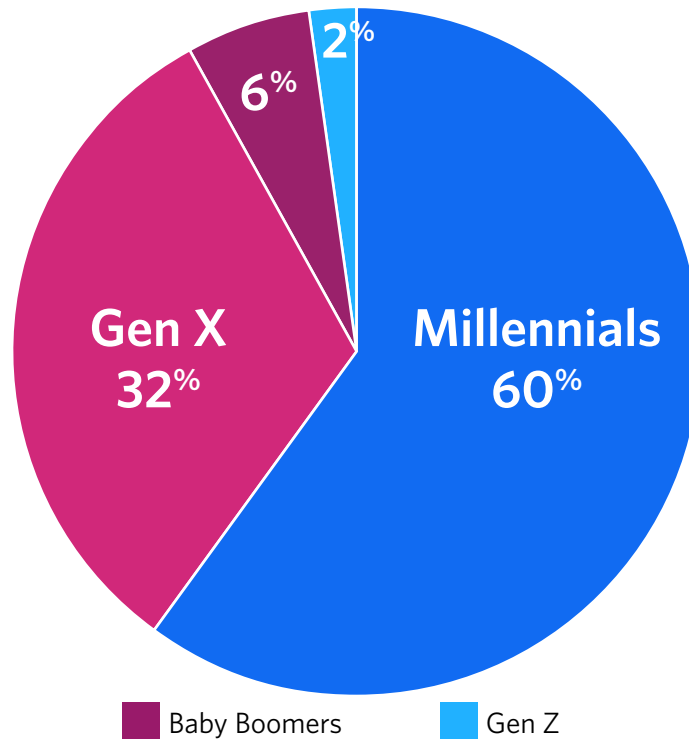
Millennial and Gen Z Tech Buyers Are Least Likely to Use Analyst Rankings & Reports



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60% of B2B Tech Buyers in 2021 Are Millennials



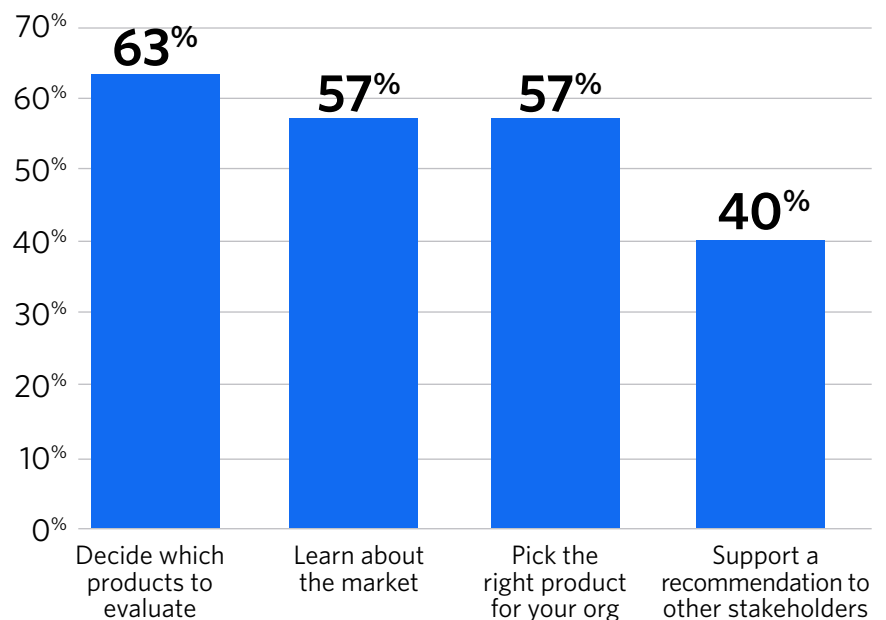
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Of the 20% of buyers who use analyst reports and rankings, a majority use them to help decide which products to evaluate (63%), learn about the market (57%), or pick the right product (57%).

Analyst firms have traditionally relied on market analysts themselves to provide technology buyers with expert information and product recommendations. However, the amount of influence individual analysts have on purchasing decisions has been decreasing as technology buying has become more digitized and democratized. Modern technology buyers conduct much of their own research first, resulting in less of a need for traditional analyst reports and rankings.

B2B Tech Buyers Who Use Analyst Reports Use Them to Find Products to Evaluate



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Some analyst firms have sought to protect themselves against the waning influence of analysts by providing buyers with free online resources like review websites. For example, the analyst firm Gartner has hedged their bets by acquiring three review websites focused on lead generation for different audiences (Capterra, GetApp, and Software Advice). They also launched a destination review website, Gartner Peer Insights, which is marketed as a way to influence the Magic Quadrant.

A leading tech industry analyst firm, Omdia, has recognized these demographic and buyer behavior shifts and is working to serve these new buyers and information preferences. For that reason, they are incorporating TrustRadius customer experience feedback into their new Universe reports. For example, TrustRadius review data went into the creation of the quadrant in Omdia's [Digital Experience Management Solutions Universe Report](#) for 2020-21. This provides a more holistic perspective, blending the high-level insight from analysts with the perspective of users to create a more balanced picture.

HOW REVIEW SITES INFLUENCE BUYING

WHAT DO BUYERS LOOK FOR WHEN EVALUATING PRODUCTS?

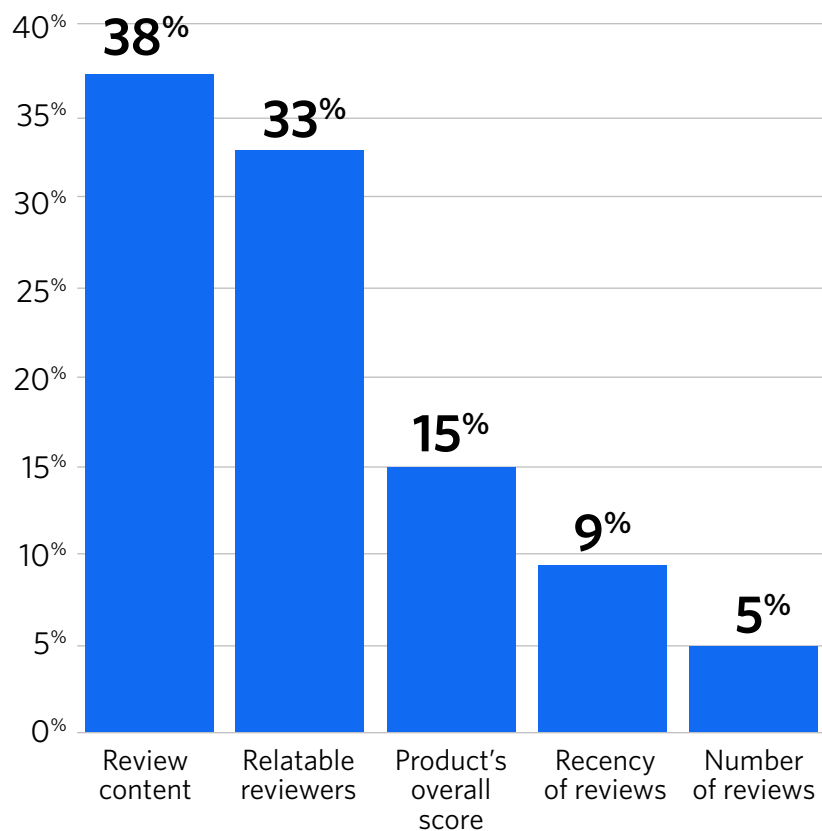
45% of buyers rely on user reviews when making a technology purchase. User reviews have been one of the top 5 critical information sources used by buyers for the past 5 years in a row.

For these buyers, the most important factor when evaluating products on a review website is the review content (i.e. the qualitative feedback). They also care about finding reviewers they can relate to, such as individuals from the same industry, company size, role, etc.

TrustRadius has filters (e.g. company size, industry, job role) that allow buyers to narrow down the list of reviews they see to find ones from individuals relatable to them. Here are the review filters they use the most:

- ✓ Product rating
- ✓ Company size
- ✓ Product pros and cons

What Do Tech Buyers Care About Most on B2B Review Sites?



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



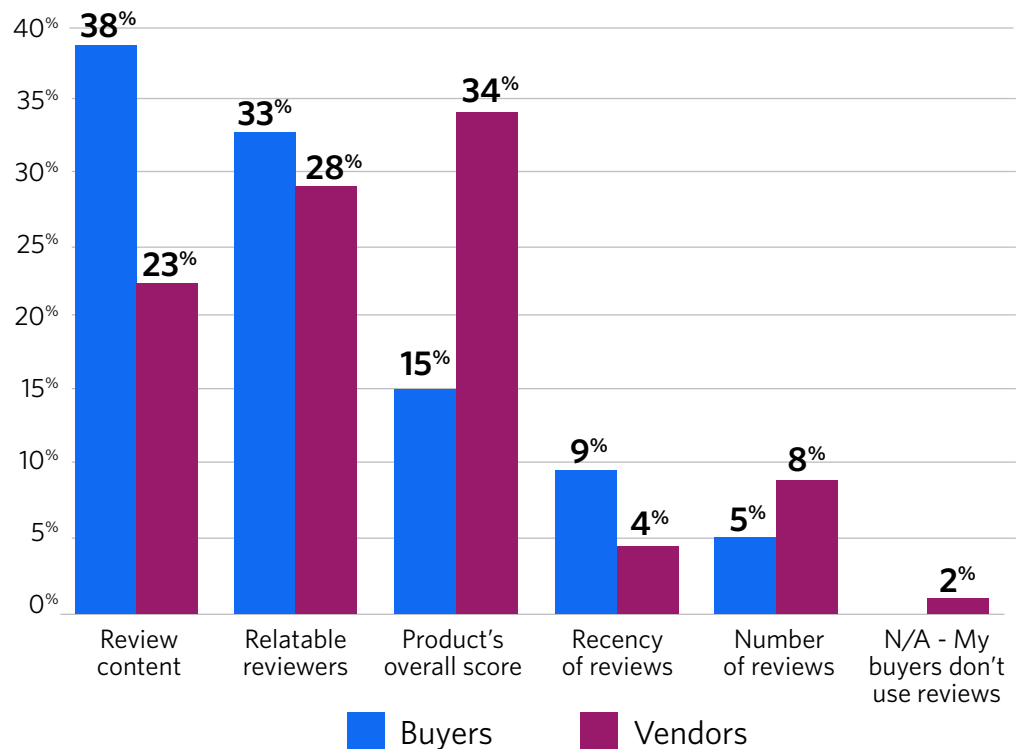
On the other hand, vendors are often wrong about what matters most to buyers on review sites. While buyers care most about the review content itself, vendors think the most important factor is a product's overall score or star rating.

In reality, vendors underestimate the importance of review content by about 61%. Vendors also inflate the significance of a product's overall score by about 2X. Vendors have a few other misconceptions about what matters to buyers on review websites as well. For example, they undervalue the need for reviews from different personas, which is very important to buyers. Vendors also mistakenly value their total number of reviews over having recently published reviews. Buyers care more about timely feedback.

About 2 out of 5 buyers say review content is the most important factor when evaluating a product on a review website.

Though product scores aren't the deciding factor for buyers on review sites, they are a useful way to compare sets of products and build shortlists. Buyers tend to like to sample the full spectrum of reviewer sentiment. Scores help them find reviews to read from unhappy customers in addition to happy customers. Buyers are especially interested in 1-star reviews, to make sure they can avoid pitfalls other customers have experienced. Overall, balanced feedback is at the heart of any trustworthy review.

The Most Important Factor When Using Review Websites According to Buyers & Vendors



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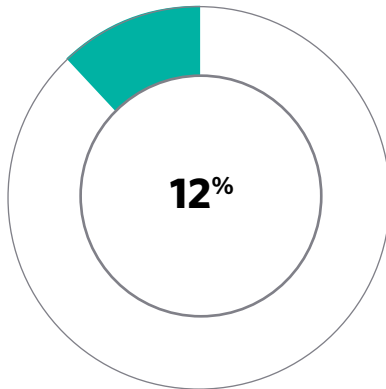
HOW MUCH INFLUENCE DOES ONE REVIEW HAVE?

B2B reviews have a certain "sphere of influence" based on how widely they're shared. Of the buyers who said they used reviews during product selection:

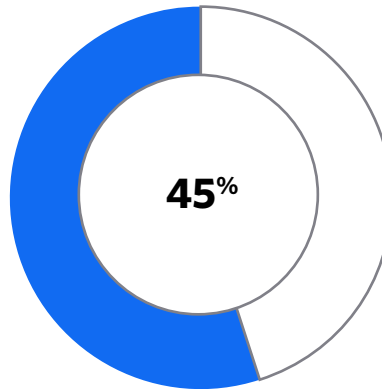
- 92% share reviews with other collaborators.
- 45% share reviews or learnings from reviews with 4 or more other stakeholders.
- About 12% of buyers share reviews with more than 10 other people.

The Sphere of Influence of a B2B Tech Review

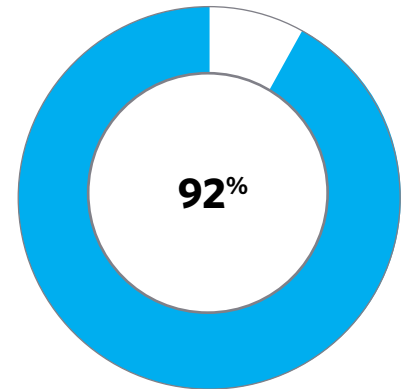
12% of buyers who use reviews share them with more than 10 people



45% of buyers who use reviews share them with more than 4 people



92% of buyers who use reviews share them with collaborators



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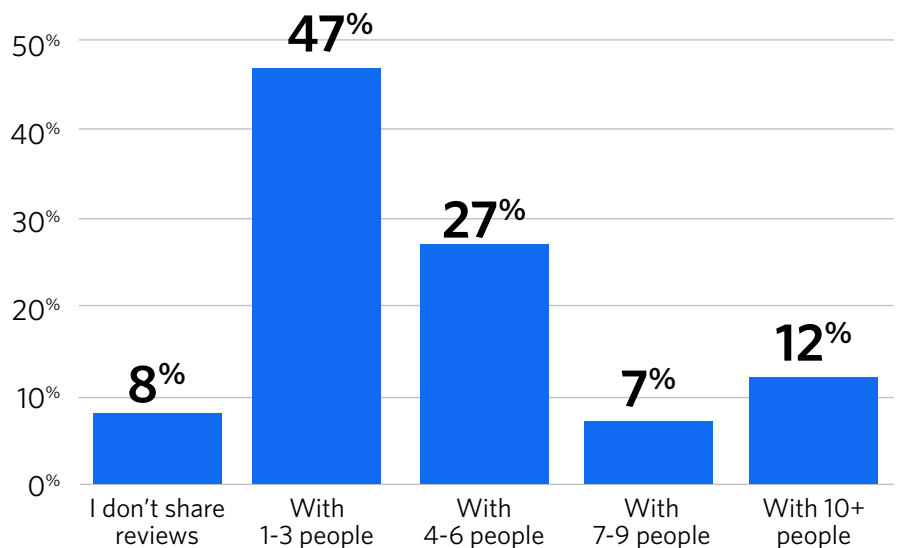
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This past year, a majority (67%) of buying committees were made up of between 2-5 people. Only 4% of purchases were made by a single buyer. In collaborative settings, the influence a single review can have on a purchasing decision becomes even greater. Rather than one or two people reading through reviews on their own, an individual buying committee member is likely to share reviews with their whole buying committee.

Vendors are well aware that reviews have a large influence within buying committees and are widely shared. Their assumptions generally line up closely with reported buyer behavior. However, buyers are 2X as likely (12%) to share reviews with more than 10 people than vendors think they are (6%).

The most common way that buyers share reviews with other stakeholders is by sharing a summary of review information or their own notes. Directly sharing a review URL and having a group discussion about review content are also common ways buyers share reviews.

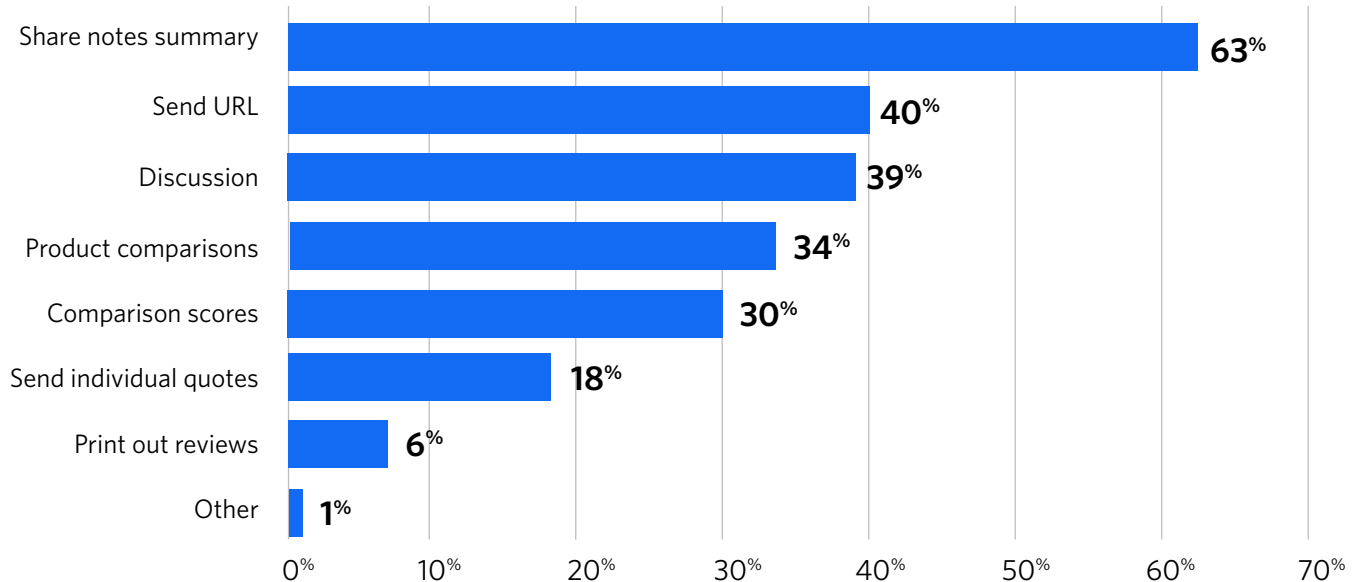
Most B2B Tech Buyers Share Reviews With at Least One Other Person



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How B2B Tech Buyers Share Reviews With Other Stakeholders



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The fact that a majority of buyers who use reviews prefer to share reviews via their own notes shows how highly engaged these buyers are, and how crucial review insights are to their decision. Sharing a review link is arguably the easiest way to share a review, but these buyers have taken the extra step of synthesizing review information in their own words.

This may be due to the format of their internal buying process requiring detailed product-specific information, which may encourage buyers to synthesize the information they find across reviews. Presenting a summarized version of review information can also be a more streamlined way for buyers to share important information with busy executives that are overseeing their buying project.

Ultimately, a review's sphere of influence expands far beyond the first person who reads the review, both in terms of the number of buyers it reaches and the depth of consideration in the buying committee's decision.

MOST VENDORS WHO USE REVIEWS PARTNER DIRECTLY WITH REVIEW SITES

Nearly half of vendors (46%) use reviews as a way to engage their buyers by using them as social proof on their websites, in sales enablement materials, email outreach, etc. With 2 out of 5 buyers already seeking out honest feedback from their peers, leveraging reviews is a smart way for vendors to use customer voice to support their marketing messaging.

Along with generating leads and using reviews as social proof on their websites and landing pages, some of the most popular use cases for review websites are:

- Access to customer references
- Competitive intelligence
- Reputation management
- Sales enablement

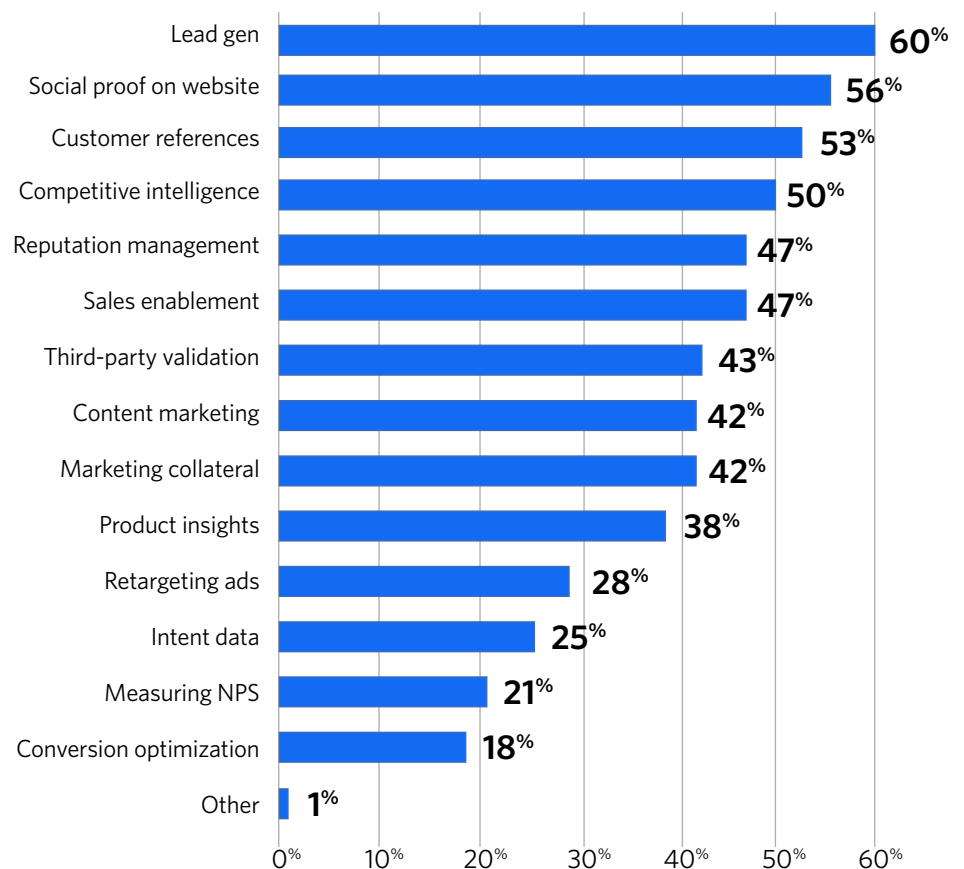
The 86% of vendors who use reviews and work with review websites in a paid capacity make sure they get their money's worth. The average vendor using review websites leverages review websites for seven different use cases. For these vendors, review websites are deeply embedded in their go-to-market strategies.

The reviews themselves are a way for buyers to gain familiarity with a product and hear honest customer feedback, from a source they trust. Vendors also have the option of directing buyers to their product listings on review websites or dynamically embedding review content from third-party websites on their landing pages.

50% or more of these vendors are already leveraging review websites for activities like lead generation, collecting customer references, and for social proof. However, as vendor usage of review websites grows and deepens, more strategic use cases have emerged. Between 20%-25% of these vendors have expanded their use of review websites to include activities like:

- Collecting product insights
- Retargeting review site visitors
- Using intent data
- Measuring net promoter score (NPS)
- Conversion optimization

The Average Tech Vendor Uses B2B Review Sites For 7 Different Use Cases



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Of vendors who use reviews, a typical vendor uses review websites for seven different use cases. Review websites are deeply embedded in their marketing strategies.

HOW MUCH DO VENDORS INVEST IN REVIEW WEBSITES?

Of the 46% of vendors who use reviews as an engagement tactic, a large majority (86%) work with one or more review websites in a paid capacity. Only 14% report not investing in review websites.

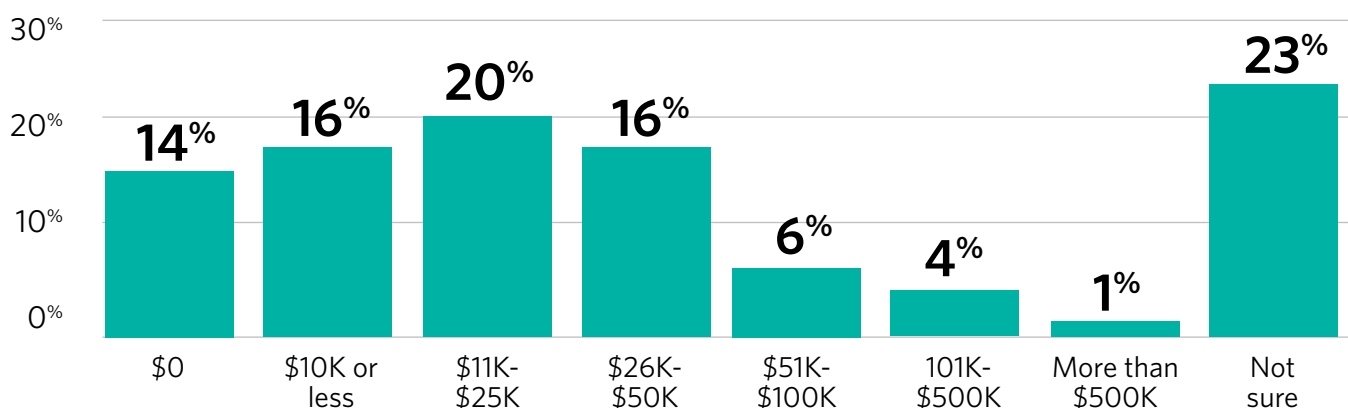
Once a vendor starts using reviews to engage buyers, working with one or more review websites appears to be well worth the investment. Compared to other marketing initiatives, review sites carry a seriously affordable price point and therefore a higher chance for positive ROI.

Looking at the 86% of technology vendors who pay to use review websites, about 1 out of 5 spend between \$11K-\$25K per year with review websites. To put that in context, \$25K is less than the typical cost for a booth at a trade show or industry conference, both of which are not happening right now. For many marketers, review websites are an affordable investment that can check multiple boxes at once.

Another 26% of B2B tech vendors who use reviews spend more than \$25K per year on review websites. Looking at how much enterprise organizations (with 1,000+ employees) spend with review websites:

- About 1 out of 3 enterprise organizations spend upwards of \$25K on their review strategy.
- Another 1 out of 5 enterprise organizations spend over \$50K on their review strategy.

How Much do Tech Vendors Spend on B2B Review Sites Per Year?



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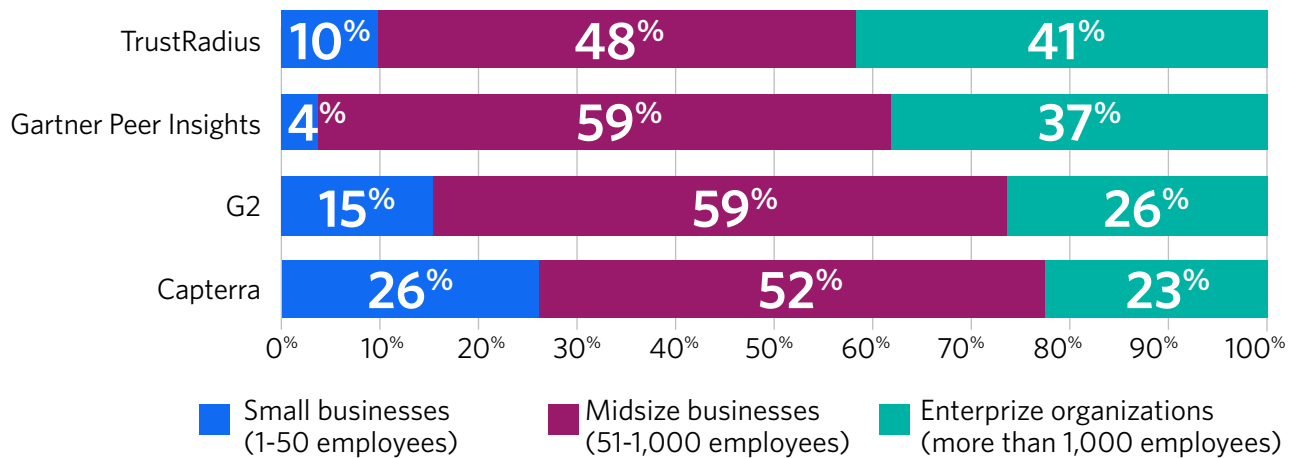
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WHICH REVIEW WEBSITES DO VENDORS WORK WITH?

The four most commonly used review platforms by vendors are TrustRadius, G2, Capterra and Gartner Peer Insights. All four of these platforms are used by at least 25% of vendors."

However, not all review websites attract the same mix of small businesses, midsize companies, and enterprise organizations. For example, TrustRadius is the most popular among enterprise organizations (40%-60% of our audience comes from enterprise organizations) while Capterra is the most popular among small businesses.

Which B2B Review Sites Do Enterprise Tech Companies Partner With?



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One likely reason why review sites differ between certain company size segments has to do with the composition of the review website community. For example, at TrustRadius, between 40%-60% of our 1 million monthly users come from enterprise organizations. ([Learn how TrustRadius' paid offerings can help you reach them.](#)) Because tech buyers prioritize reading reviews from people in similar positions, company sizes, industries, etc.—it's important for enterprise software companies to consider this. In short, look for sites where your audience—not just an audience—is assembled and sharing knowledge.

If you're interested to see what current customers think of working with TrustRadius, [read user reviews here.](#)

LESS THAN HALF OF VENDORS USE INTENT DATA

CURRENTLY, 2 OUT OF 5 SOFTWARE COMPANIES USE BUYER INTENT DATA

In a world where 100% of buying decisions are made online, it's incredibly important for technology vendors to understand what buyers want based on their online activity. Vendors no longer have the opportunity to have in-person meetings with their buyers. That once-vital source of information has been cut off.

Buyer intent data can offer vendors a window into the minds and actions of their buyers, replacing some of the lost intent signals that were previously gained from in-person meetings, field marketing, sales events, and industry conferences.

The intent data market is experiencing incredible growth, but intent signals and data from different sources deliver different insights. For example, vendors that offer more top-of-the-funnel intent rely on signals from search queries or ad clicks, while more bottom-of-the-funnel providers show more granular purchase intent. This can include product evaluation behavior such as comparing products, watching a demo, or requesting pricing.

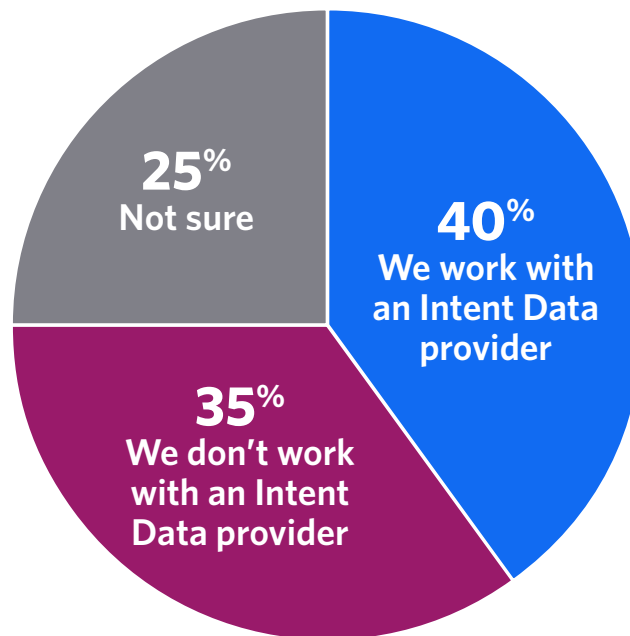
While many vendors (40%) have already started leveraging intent data to help achieve their sales and marketing goals, about a third of vendors still do not use intent data. About a quarter of vendor respondents are not sure if their organization works with an intent data provider.

Here are the intent data providers whom vendors in our study work with today:

- Aberdeen
- Bombora
- Clearbit
- Demandbase
- G2
- KickFire
- TechTarget
- TrustRadius
- ZoomInfo
- 6sense

There is also a sizable percentage of vendors who work with one or more review websites but have not yet taken advantage of the intent data that review websites generate. Only 26% of vendors who use review websites leverage them to obtain intent data.

40% of Tech Vendors Currently Work With an Intent Data Provider

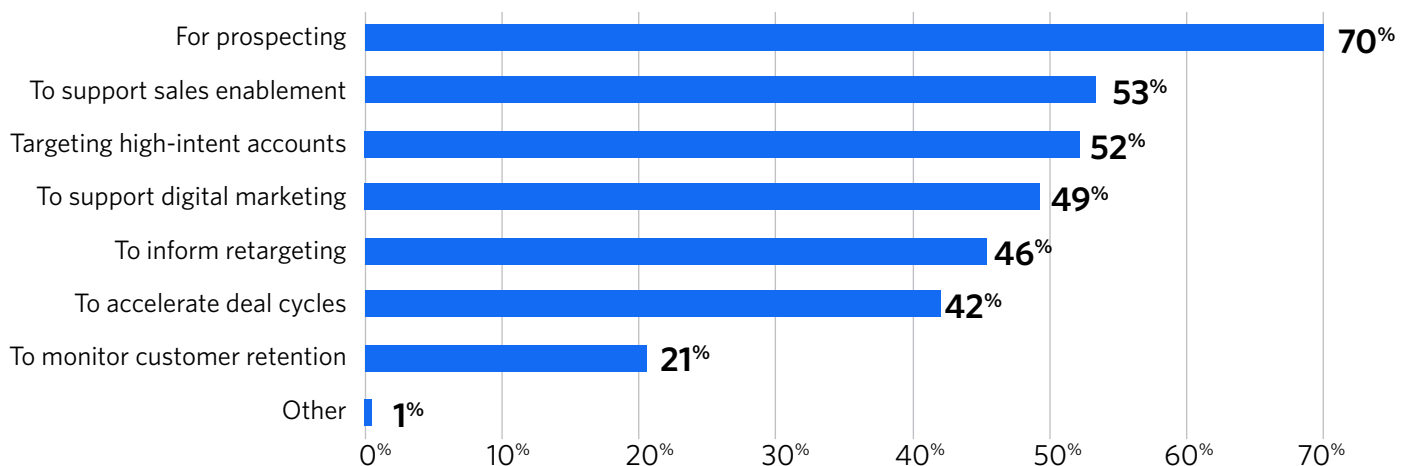


TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



Prospecting stands out as a top use case for intent data. 71% of vendors who use intent data utilize it for prospecting. Other popular use cases for intent data include supporting sales enablement and targeting known high-intent accounts to help vendors optimize their ABM spend.

How B2B Tech Vendors Use Intent Data



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



Of the vendors who are already working with an intent data provider, a majority (61%) have increased their investment this past year. During a time when marketers have had to pivot and find new sources of pipeline, intent data is a critical pipeline generation tool that marketers should be taking advantage of. But about a third of marketers have not taken this action yet.

Learn How You Can Take Advantage of Intent Data

[*Watch the Webinar*](#)

MARKETING TACTICS THAT BUYERS HATE

VENDORS NEED TO START MARKETING AND SELLING BETTER DURING THE PANDEMIC

Since the beginning of the pandemic, tech marketers have had to take a hard look at their tried-and-true marketing strategies. The buyer's journey is now 100% online, due to in-person meetings and events no longer happening. Our data shows that, as a result, buyers are spending more time doing early buying stage activities such as researching their options, comparing products, and clearly defining ROI. Along with these changes in buyer behavior, close to 50% of buyers reported decreased tech spending since mid-March.

When asked what their marketing pet peeves were, buyers' number one and two responses were classic forms of vendor outreach: marketing emails and sales cold calls. While this is not exactly surprising (who loves cold calls?), it highlights the level of frustration buyers are feeling towards standard outreach strategies.

Top 5 Marketing Tactics Tech Buyers Hate:



Receiving too many emails



Cold calling



Aggressive sales representatives



Uninformed sales pitches



Non-personalized communications

This data shows that buyers are frustrated that the marketing content, email outreach, social media messages, and sales reps they talked with did not convey relevant or useful information for their business.

Here's what buyers are looking for, in their own words:

1. **Personalized guidance:** Buyers want to know you've done your homework and can provide them with personalized guidance throughout their product evaluation and selection processes.

"Know my business. The basics are available on our website through a simple Google search, so it's easy to see the industry, our owner info, etc."

2. **Immediate differentiation:** Buyers are tired of hearing the same old sales pitch from every rep they meet with. They want to get to the heart of what sets your products apart from the rest—fast. Think about how you can achieve immediate differentiation in the eyes of your buyers.

"I wish they would explain what sets them apart in their initial phone or email pitch. Too often my emails or calls say "hey I'm Joe from (Company I've Never Heard Of)" without any further explanation."

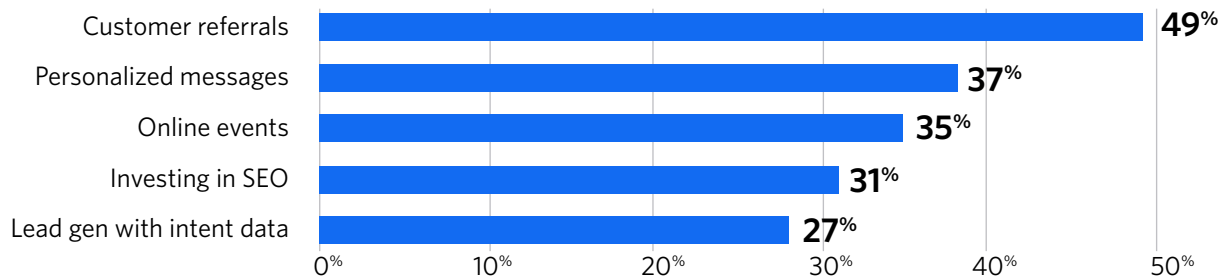
3. **Balanced feedback:** Buyers want honest, transparent conversations with vendors about the pros and cons of their product or service. While giving buyers a rose-tinted-glasses view of your product is tempting, balanced feedback is a much more effective way to gain their trust.

"I would like them to stop telling only the good points and strengths [of their product] and start telling also the constraints and frame or scope of the hardware/software. We are getting this kind of information from references anyway."

THE MOST EFFECTIVE MARKETING STRATEGIES DURING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC

This begs the question: Which marketing tactics have vendors been using (successfully) during the COVID-19 pandemic? According to our survey results, vendors identify customer referrals, personalized messages, online events, investing in SEO, and lead generation with intent data as the top five most effective marketing strategies they have used during the pandemic.

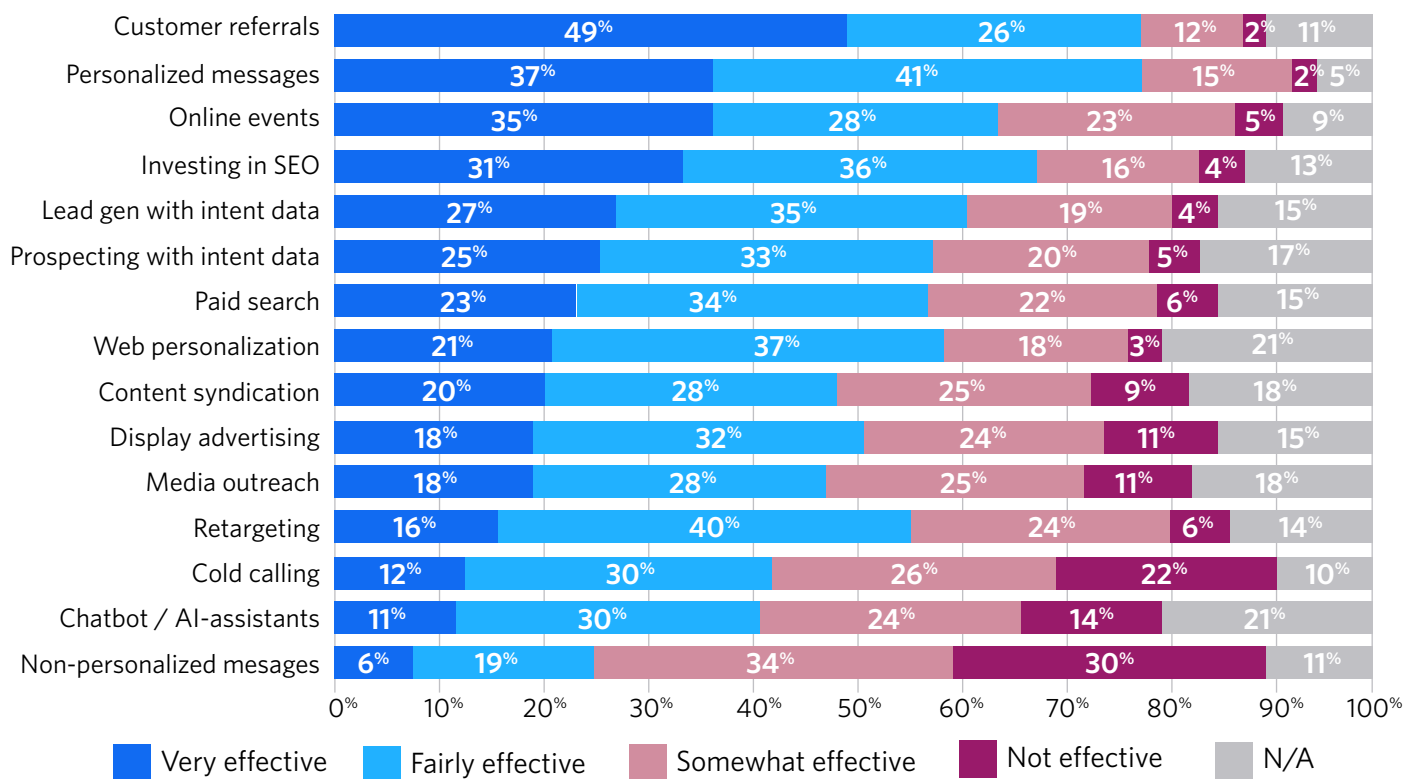
The Most Effective Marketing Tactics According to Tech Vendors



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Which Marketing Tactics Do Tech Vendors Think Are the Most Effective?

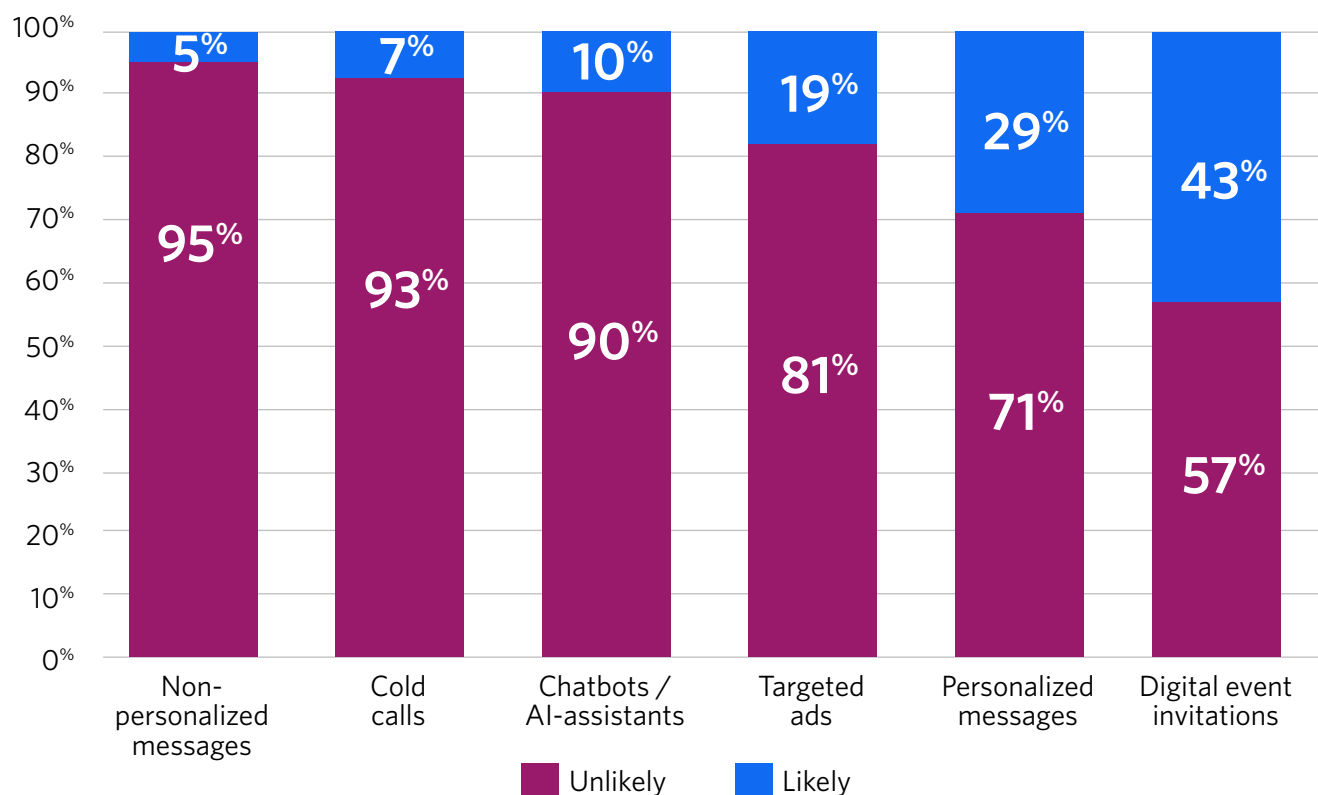


TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



We also asked buyers how likely they would be to respond to some of these critical marketing tactics. Unsurprisingly, over 70% of buyers say they are “not likely at all” to respond to non-personalized messages and cold calls.

B2B Tech Buyers Are Unlikely to Respond to These Marketing Tactics



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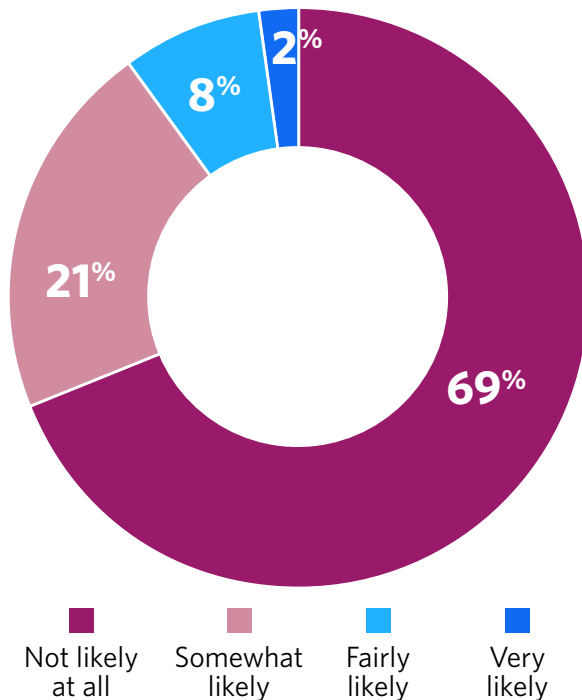
Together, these findings highlight another potential gap between vendor perception and actual buyer behavior. According to our survey results, vendors generally perceive these tactics to be more effective than they are. Although, this gap could also represent the difference between the level of buyer engagement that vendors see as ‘effective’ and how likely buyers actually are to respond to the tactics above. For example, a 10% conversion rate may be seen as wildly successful from a vendor marketing perspective. But a business technology buyer who only responds to a chatbot or targeted ad 10% of the time may say they are ‘not likely at all’ to respond to these tactics.

Take chatbots for example. Only 10% of buyers are fairly or very likely to respond to a chatbot (when the message is relevant). But 42% of vendors believe they are an effective marketing strategy. This data is shocking, especially in light of the increasing popularity of chatbot and virtual assistant software platforms. [Business Insider](#) reports that the chatbot market size is predicted to have a compound annual growth rate of close to 30% between 2019 and 2024.

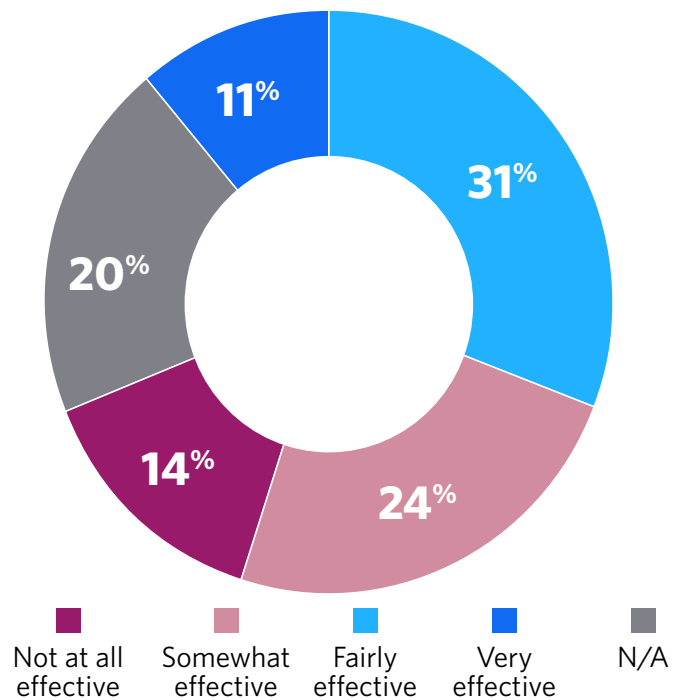
However, this data highlights that buyers may still be getting used to interacting with chatbot and virtual assistant technology. On the other hand, it's possible that the 10% of buyers that are likely to respond to a chatbot end up being very highly engaged buyers.

How Effective Are Chatbots?

Most buyers aren't likely to respond to chatbots.



Most vendors think chatbots are effective.



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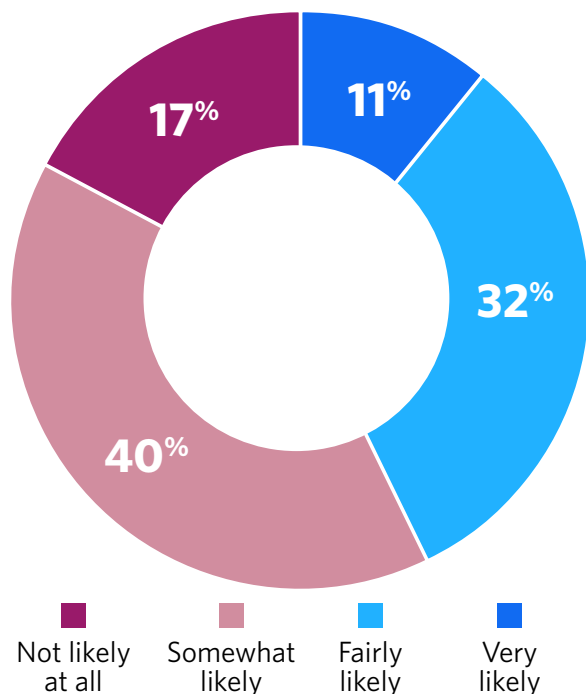
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There is also a smaller, but still visible gap between vendors' perception of how effective hosting digital events is and how likely buyers are to respond to digital event invitations. While 43% of buyers are either fairly or very likely to respond to online event invitations, 63% of vendors believe hosting digital events is either fairly or very effective.

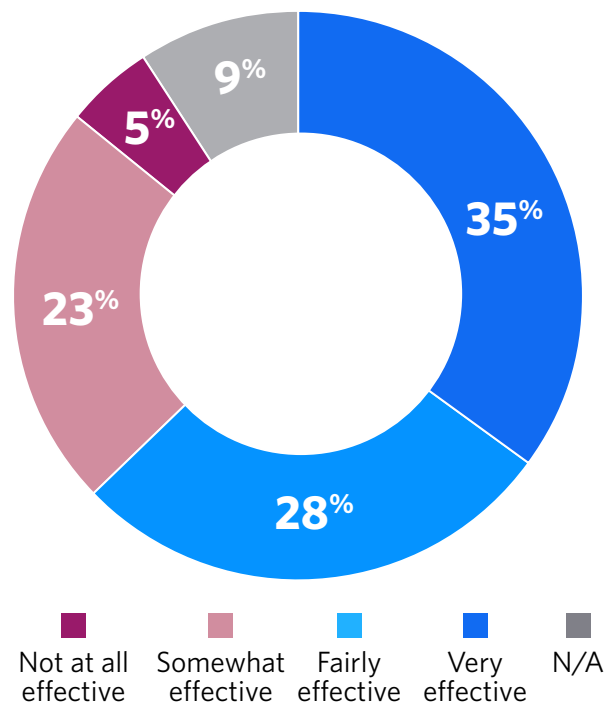
One likely explanation for this gap is the fact that ever since mid-March of 2020, buyers have been inundated with virtual event invitations. In July 2020, TrustRadius conducted a study on the [impact of COVID-19 on digital events](#) and found that 53% of people felt there were too many virtual events. Our research also found that close to 50% were receiving more than four digital event invitations per week. The market is evolving quickly, and it may well be that what worked well in April and May is already causing fatigue for buyers as we enter Q4.

How Effective Are Digital Events?

Most buyers aren't likely to respond to event invitations.



Most vendors think digital events are very effective.



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Learn to Win at SEO as a B2B Software Company

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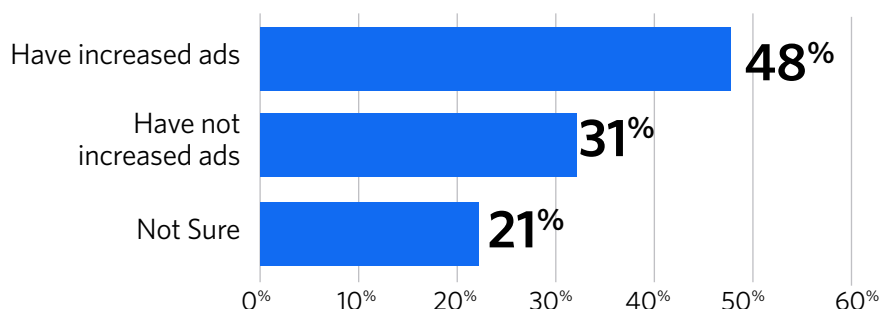
HOW EFFECTIVE ARE RETARGETING ADS DURING A PANDEMIC?

A majority (55%) of vendors think retargeting ads are either a fairly or very effective marketing strategy. However, social advertising is creating another disconnect between buyers and vendors. Vendors continue to increase targeted advertising, but buyers' feeds are already saturated.

48% of tech vendors have increased targeted advertising on social platforms since the start of the pandemic, while about 30% have not.

This approximately matches the percentage of buyers that report seeing more advertisements this year on social platforms for products they've recently researched. 54% of buyers say they have received more ads through social channels during the pandemic.

48% of Tech Vendors Have Increased Targeted Advertising on Social Media Since The Pandemic Began

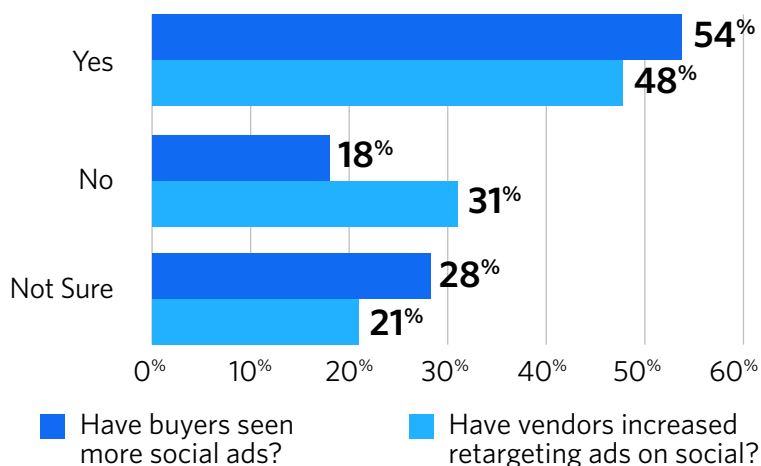


TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



This may not be surprising, given that virtually all buying activities are now conducted online. When asked how well their retargeting ads have been performing, about 35% of vendors said either fairly well or very well. 12% of tech vendors feel these ads are not performing well. But buyer sentiment about the increased number of retargeting ads they've received is still highly important and shows a less rosy outlook.

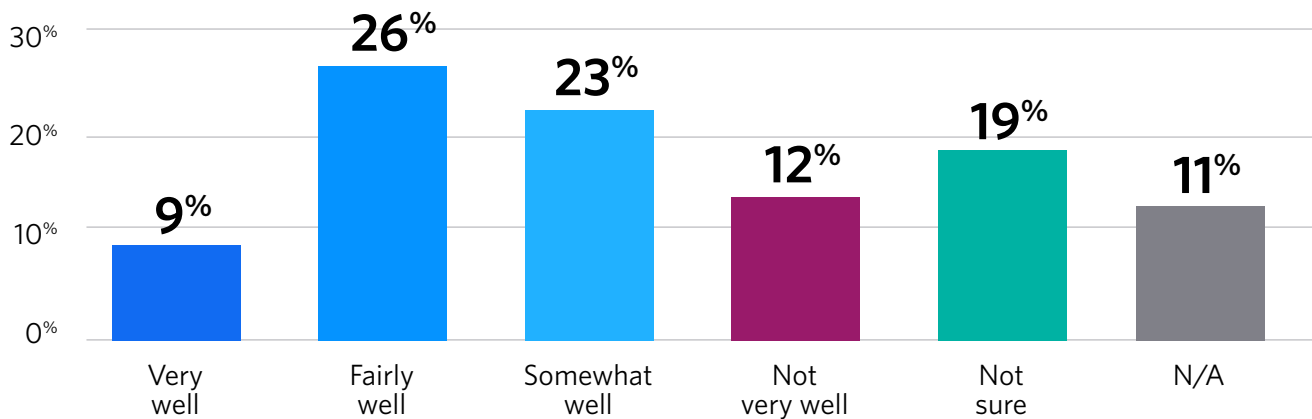
B2B Tech Buyers Have Noticed Vendors Pushing More Social Ads During the Pandemic



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How Do Vendors Feel Their Retargeting Ads Are Performing During the Pandemic?



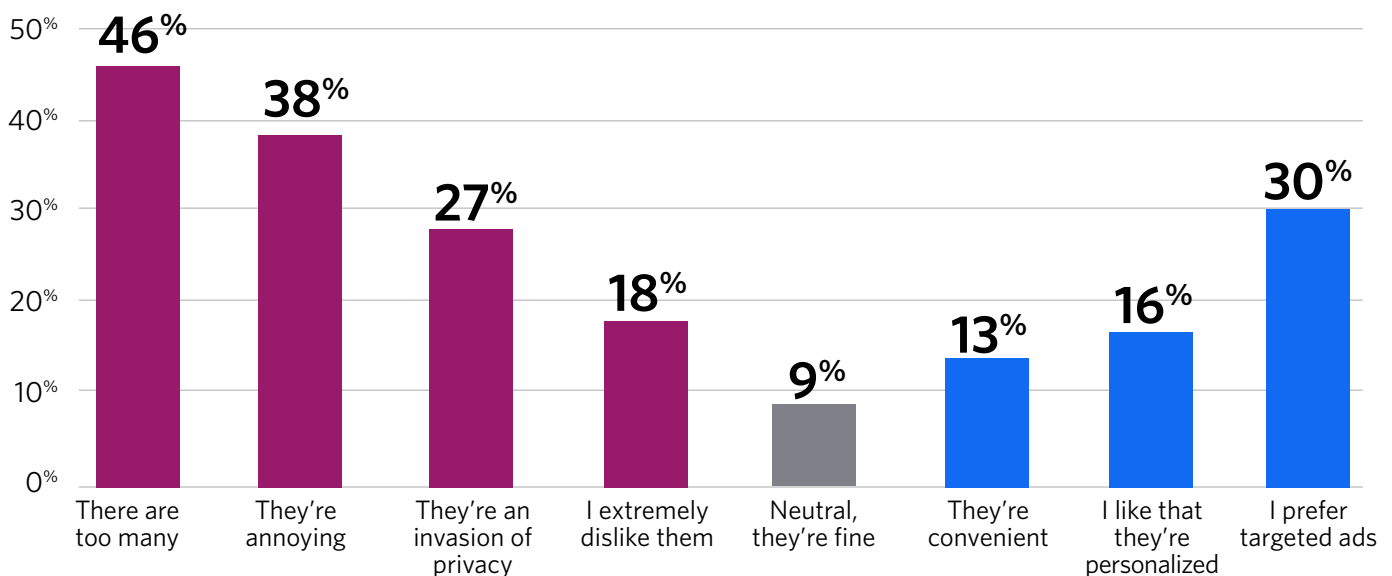
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The average buyer has mixed feelings about seeing more advertisements on social media.

- About 2 out of 5 buyers think there are too many online ads
- 38% find them annoying
- Over a quarter of buyers feel they are an invasion of privacy
- About 1 out of 3 would rather receive targeted than non-targeted advertisements
- 13% of buyers think online ads are convenient
- 16% like when ads are personalized

How B2B Tech Buyers Feel About Ads on Social Media



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



BUYERS WANT MORE SELF-SERVICE OPTIONS

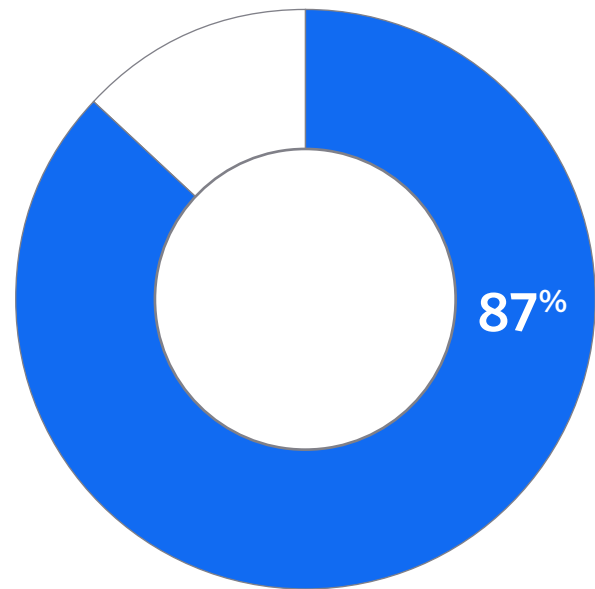
Self-service options are becoming an increasingly critical resource for buyers. These options include trying out a free version of the product, having a do-it-yourself (DIY) product tour or demo, and making a purchase online with just a credit card. Buyers spend more and more of their time online, and many wish they were able to evaluate and purchase technology products online by themselves.

Buyers absolutely want more self-service options in 2021. 87% of buyers want the ability to self-serve part or all of their buying journey. This is in line with recent research from [McKinsey](#), which found that “70%-80% of B2B decision makers prefer remote human interactions or digital self-service.”

A majority of buyers (59%) would like access to these types of self-service options at least some of the time, depending on the product. Yet close to a third of buyers (28%) want access to self-service options all the time. Only 10% of buyers say they would not want access to self-service options.

The percentage of buyers that would like to self-serve their buying journey does vary somewhat by company size. 9 out of 10 respondents from small businesses would like access to self-serve options, while 88% of respondents from midsize businesses would like them, and 8 out of 10 enterprise buyers want self-service options. It's notable that, even among large enterprise organizations (defined as 1,000 employees), an overwhelming majority of buyers want vendors to provide them with self-service options.

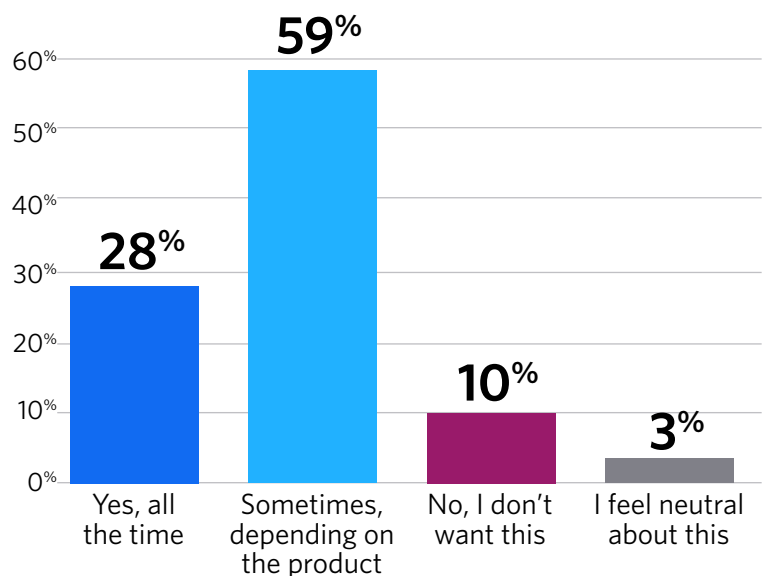
87% of B2B Tech Buyers Want Self-Service Options



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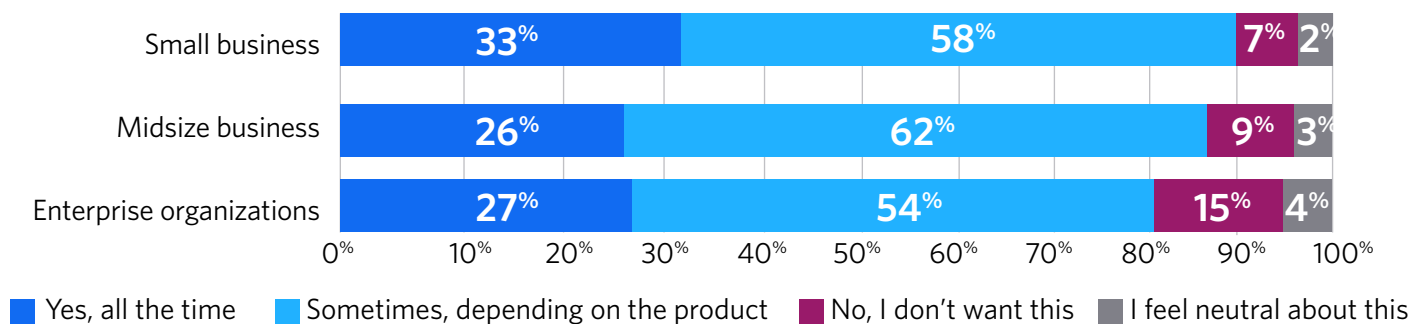
Most B2B Tech Buyers Want to Self-Serve at Least Some of the Time



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Regardless of Company Size, The Majority of B2B Tech Buyers Want Self-Service Options

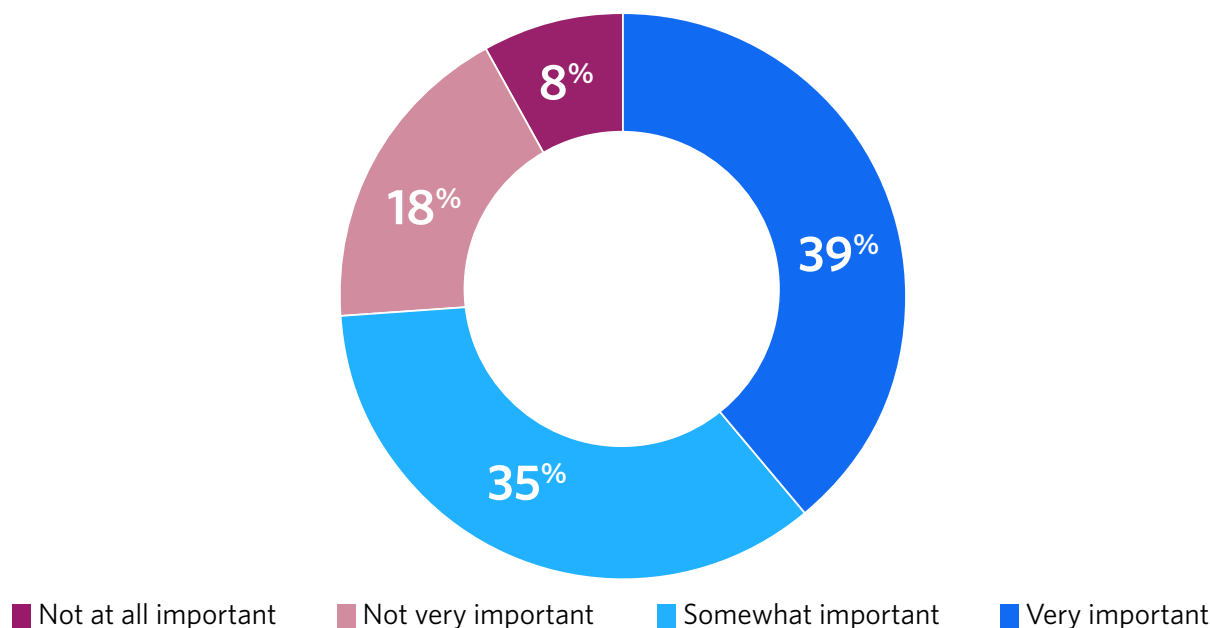


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When asked how important they think self-service options are for their buyers, a majority of vendors (74%) believe they are either somewhat or very important.

74% of B2B Tech Vendors Believe Self-Service Options Are Important



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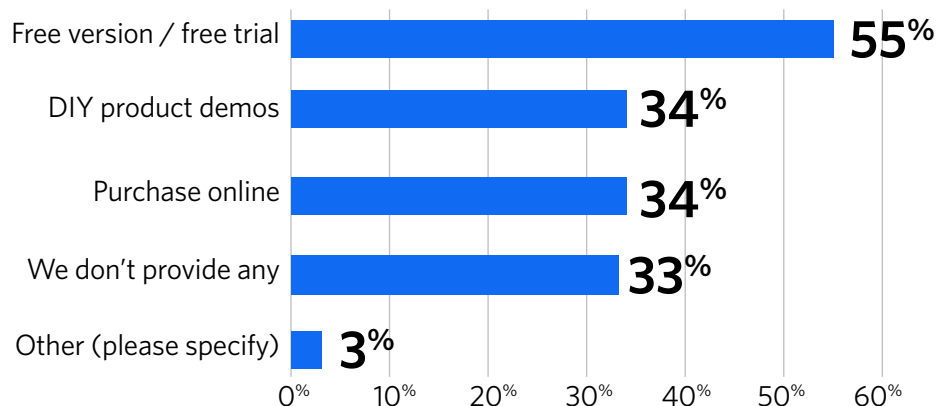
Given that such a large percentage of buyers want the ability to evaluate and purchase products by themselves at least some of the time, if not all of the time—how many vendors already offer their buyers self-service features?

The good news is that a majority of technology vendors (67%) offer their buyers some form of self-service option. Over 50% of vendors provide their buyers with a free version or free trial of their product. For example, large tech companies like IBM allow new users to sign up and create an account from which they can start using [IBM Cloud](#) for free. However, about one-third of vendors still do not provide buyers with any type of self-service features.

This highlights another gap uncovered by our data: 33% of vendors do not offer buyers any self-service options even though 87% of buyers want to self-serve their buying journey. It's tempting to view 'self-service options' as only applicable to individual users or small businesses.

However, we found that enterprise buyers care about self-service options just as much as SMB buyers do. For example, 77% of buyers from companies with 1,000-5,000 employees want to self-serve their buying journey, while 89% of buyers from companies with 5,001-10,000 want the same.

Which Self-Service Options Do B2B Tech Vendors Offer?



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HOW DATA SECURITY CONCERNS DELAY BUYING

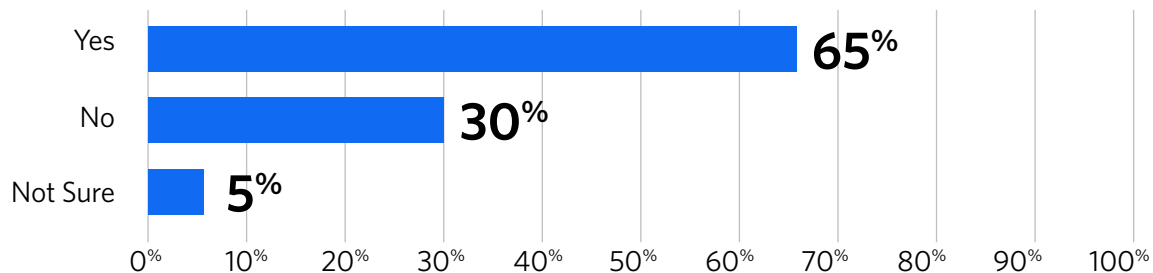
BUYERS CONCERNED ABOUT DATA SECURITY DO EXTRA PRODUCT RESEARCH

In recent years, data security and privacy requirements have become more standardized and more strict—especially for industries that handle large volumes of personal data. Places like the EU, where GDPR is already in place, and some U.S. states, including California, are putting increasingly strict and rigorous data security standards and regulations into effect.

For the tech industry, this has had a major impact on the way technology vendors do business. New data privacy and security standards are shaping everything from product roadmaps to go-to-market strategies. Especially for companies that sell to the global market, ensuring compliance with the latest data security standards can deeply impact their deal cycles.

A majority of buyers (65%) said concerns about data privacy and security factored into their purchase decisions. This percentage increases to 73% for enterprise organizations with 1,000+ employees.

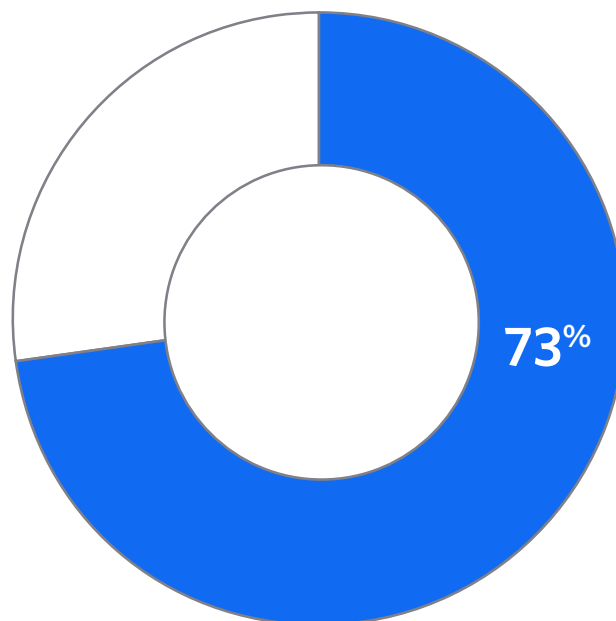
Most B2B Tech Buyers Consider Data Security When Making a Purchase Decision



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73% of Enterprise Buyers Consider Data Security When Purchasing B2B Tech



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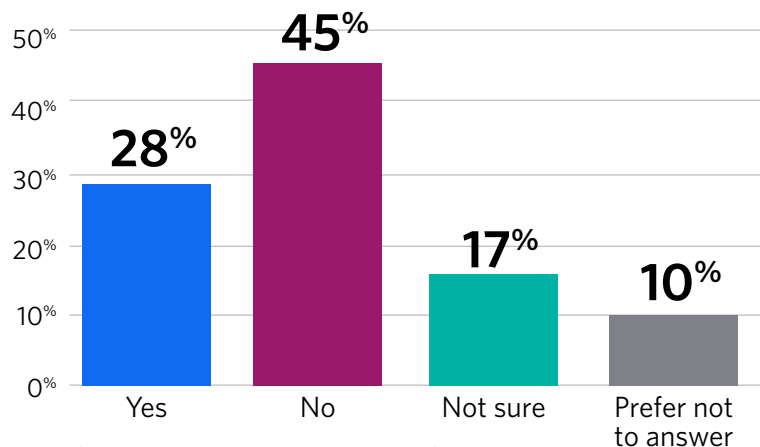
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Buyers are twice as likely to report being concerned about data privacy than vendors are to hear about them from buyers. Only 28% of vendors report hearing about data security concerns from buyers in recent deal cycles. 45% of vendors say buyers have not voiced these worries, while 17% are unsure and 10% prefer not to say.

One reason for the discrepancy between the 65% of buyers that have these concerns and the 28% of vendors that hear about them is that many buyers prefer to resolve these concerns on their own, rather than reaching out to the vendors whose products they are evaluating. Many buyers consider due diligence an important part of their independent product research, rather than completely trusting vendors to resolve their data security concerns.

Of those buyers that said data security was a concern, 3 out of 4 spent more time researching products during their purchasing process to account for their data security criteria. Notably, 1 out of 4 buyers eliminated more products from their shortlist due to concerns about the product's level of data security compliance. 18% of buyers reported having a longer procurement process because of these concerns.

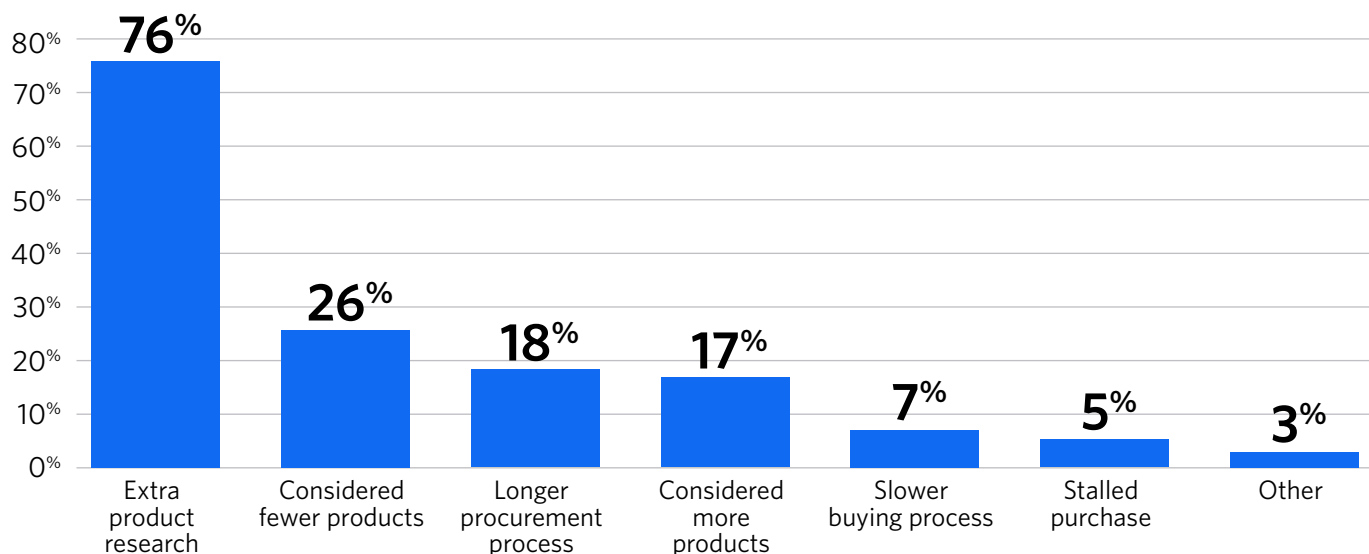
Many B2B Tech Vendors Don't Hear About Data Security Concerns From Their Buyers



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How Data Security Concerns Influence B2B Tech Buying Decisions



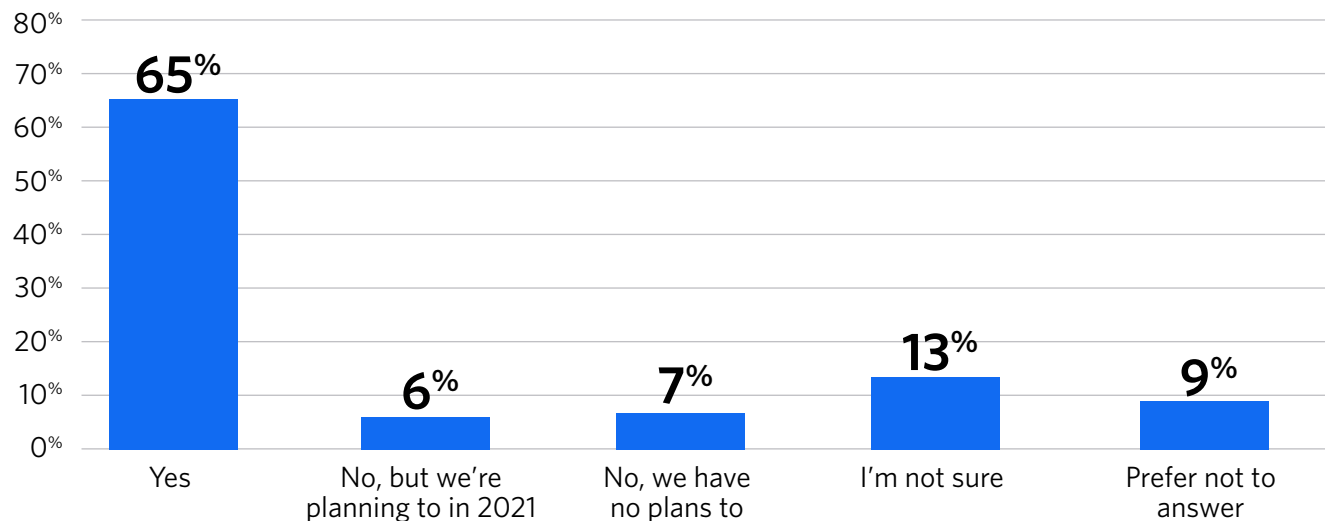
TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



On the other hand, some buyers (17%) are considering more products than they otherwise would have, to ensure they find a product that meets their data security requirements. Interestingly, very few buyers (5%) report data privacy concerns completely holding up purchasing decisions, despite their increased due diligence research when evaluating and selecting products.

Another potential explanation for this discrepancy is that a large percentage of vendors have made sure their products are already compliant with the latest data security standards. When we asked vendors whether or not they had made changes to their product to ensure compliance, 65% said they had.

Most B2B Tech Vendors Say Their Products Are Compliant With Data Security Standards



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



Even though only 28% of vendors say their buyers have voiced these concerns and 65% of vendors are already compliant with relevant data security standards, this is clearly an issue that all technology vendors should be paying attention to.

Especially since 1 out of 4 buyers are considering fewer products due to data security concerns, vendors should do everything in their power to make sure their products are not cut from buyers' shortlists. Beyond product changes, marketers can make sure their websites, content, and sales reps speak confidently to privacy and compliance concerns.

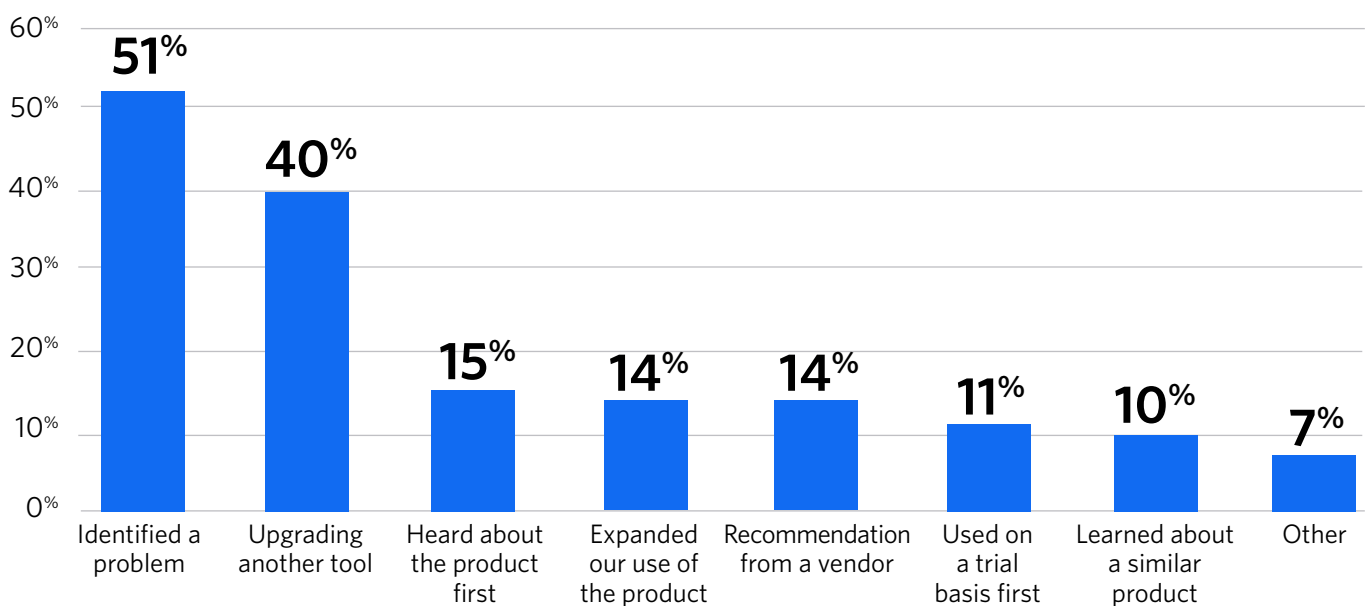
HOW TO WIN MORE BUYERS IN 2021

FIRST, LEARN WHAT THE MODERN BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY BUYER LOOKS LIKE

It's safe to say that buyers are no longer discovering products, mingling with sales reps, or rubbing elbows with their peers at conferences and industry events. Given that so much has changed in our world and within the tech industry since the beginning of 2020, how does a technology buyer start their buying journey today?

Over half (51%) of buyers purchased a new product because they identified a problem that could be solved with technology. Another 40% of buyers made a purchase because they needed to upgrade an existing tool.

How the Buyer's Journey Begins for B2B Tech Buyers



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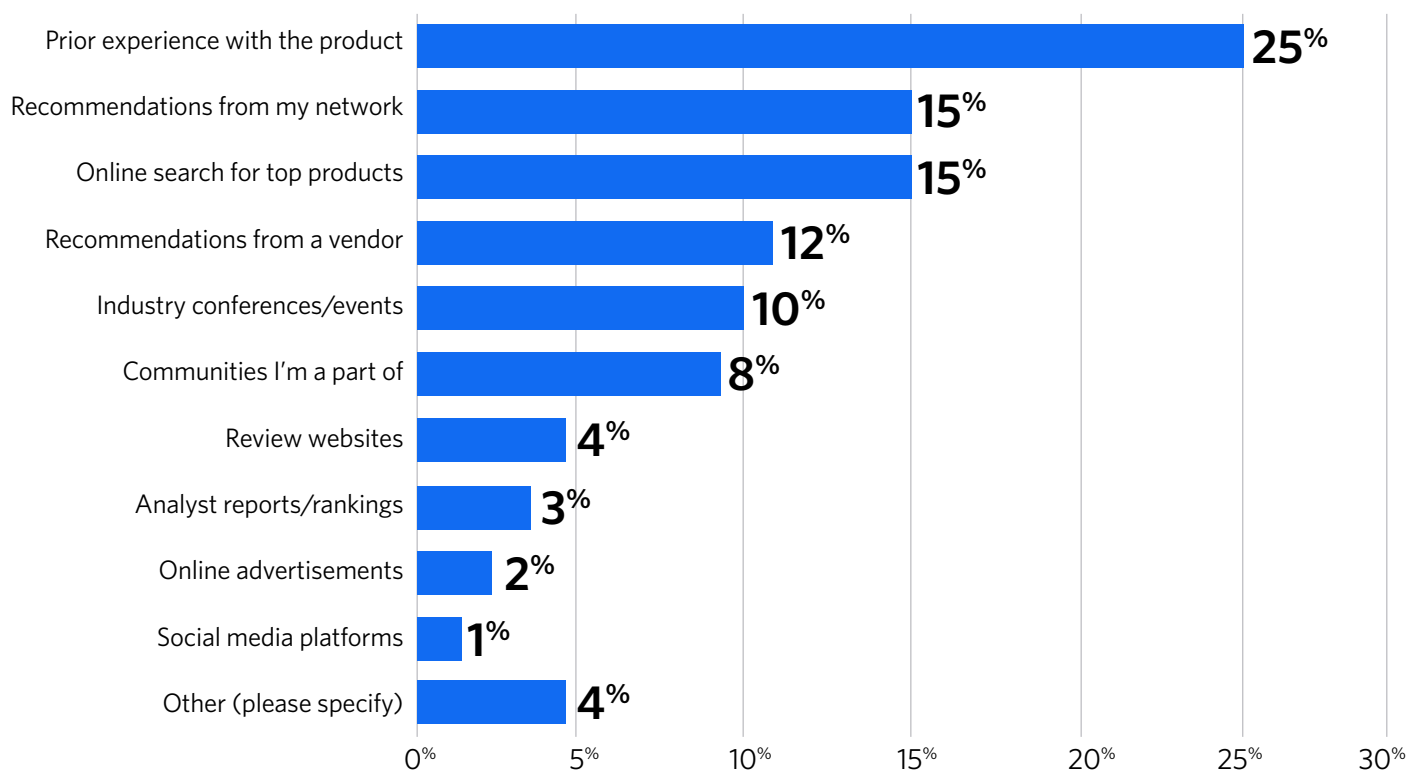
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In fact, the top three ways B2B buyers find out about a product are not directly related to vendor marketing or sales efforts:

1. Prior experience with the product
2. Recommendations from their network
3. Online searching for the product

1 out of 4 buyers first learn about the technology product they end up purchasing based on their own prior experience with the product.

Where B2B Tech Buyers First Discover Products



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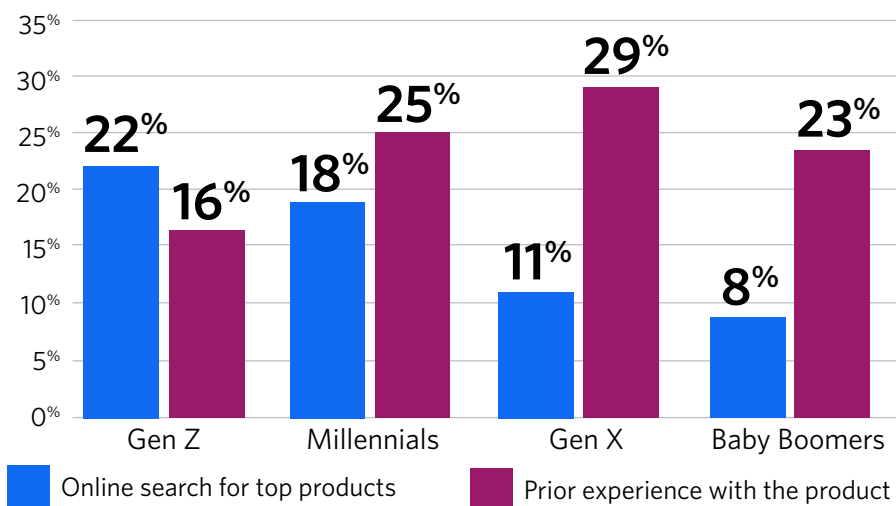
Buyers seldom hear about products for the first time from analyst reports and rankings, buyer communities, or social media platforms. Across all age groups, these three sources appear to be the least influential in terms of early preference for a new solution.

Learn to Rank Higher in Search - Here's How TrustRadius Did It

[*Watch the Video*](#)

Gen Z (24 and younger) and millennial buyers (age 25-39) are more likely than older generations to first find out about a product by searching online. Unsurprisingly, Gen Z buyers are least likely of all the generations to first learn about a product based on their own prior experience.

Gen Z and Millennial Buyers Discover Products Differently From Older Generations



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At least 50% of vendors understand that networking with peers, online searching, and prior experience with the product are influential resources when it comes to making a first impression with buyers. However, vendors overestimate the importance of information channels and resources that aren't that influential with buyers.

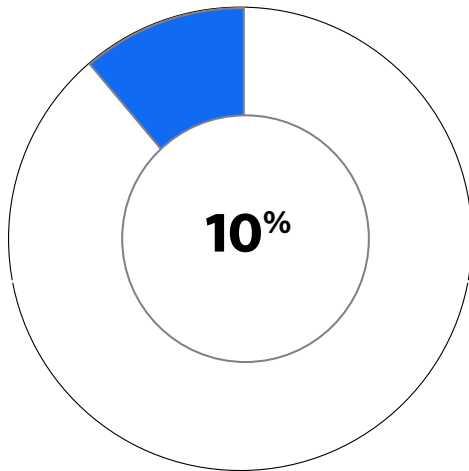
For example, vendors are 5X as likely to think that industry conferences are where buyers first learn about their products than buyers actually are. Vendors also believe that buyers are more likely to first learn about their products from online advertisements, analyst reports & rankings, and social media platforms than they are.

Not every buyer has the luxury of relying on first-hand expertise—especially if they are young, new to the field, or evaluating emerging technologies. Besides their own prior experience with the product, the top three ways buyers find out about new products are:

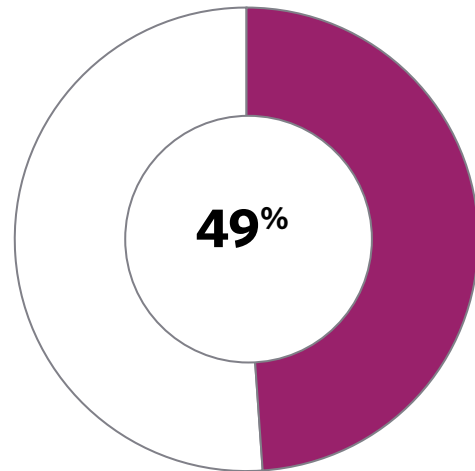
- ✓ Recommendations from their network
- ✓ Online searches for top products
- ✓ Recommendations from a vendor

Do Buyers Discover Tech Products at Industry Events?

10% of buyers say they do.



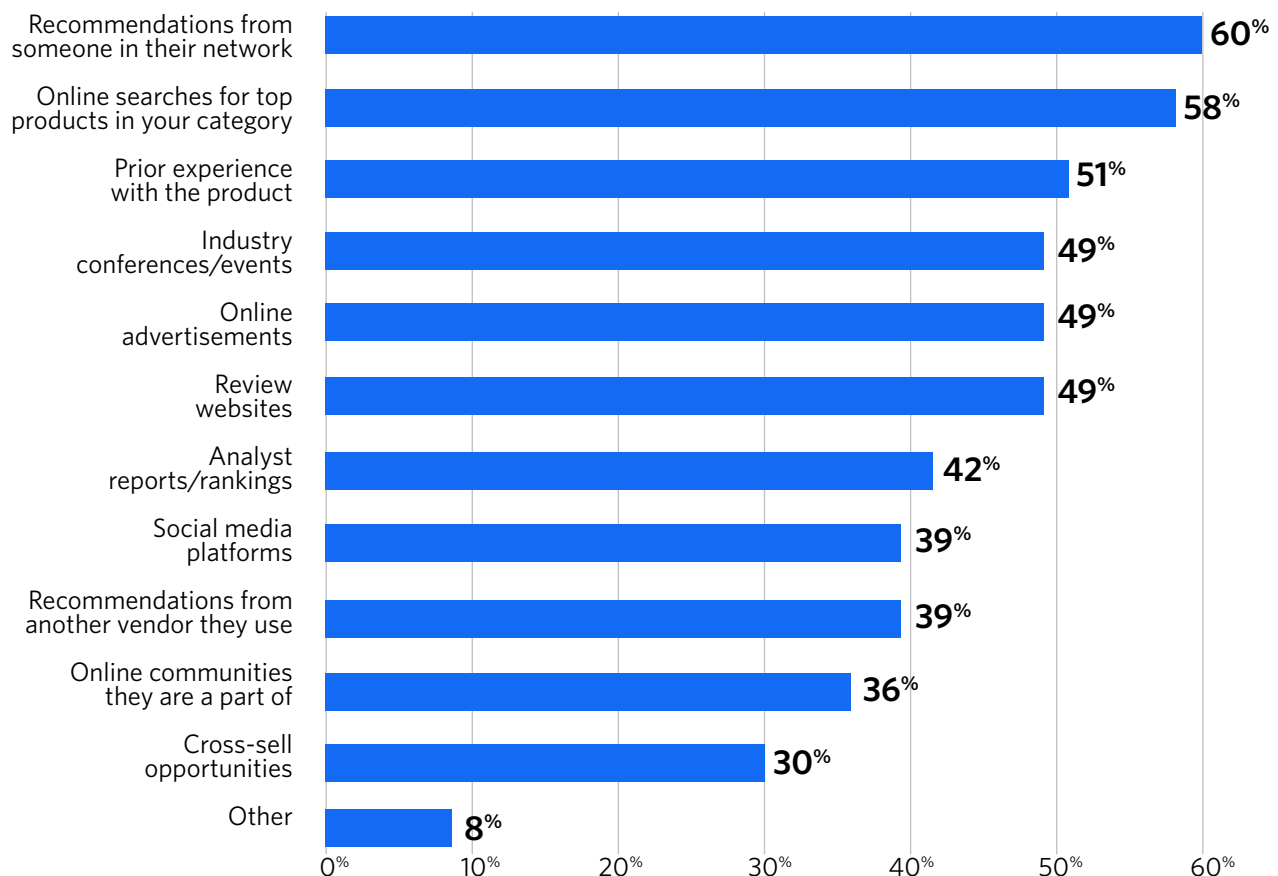
49% of vendors think they do.



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How B2B Tech Vendors Think Buyers Discover Their Products



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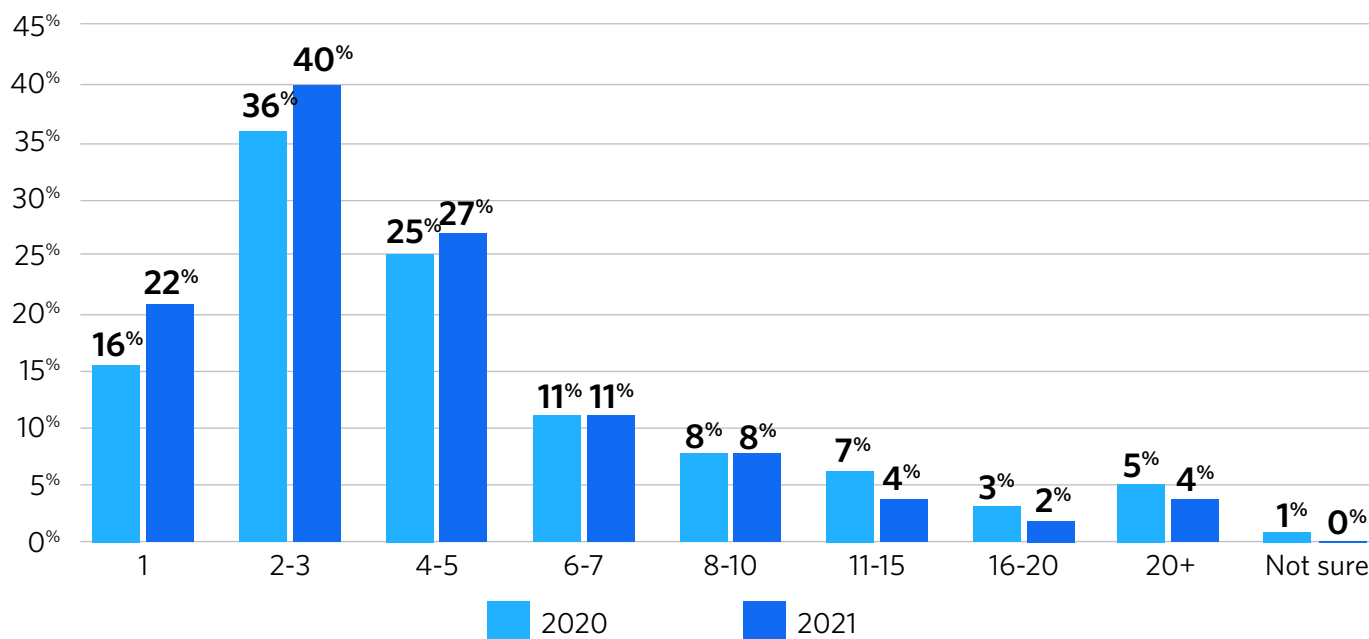
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BE PREPARED TO WORK DEALS ACROSS A COLLABORATIVE BUYING COMMITTEE

About 95% of buying decisions are made collaboratively, consistent with the trend towards committee purchases we've seen over the past 5+ years. This year, typical buying committee groups are made up of focused groups of between 2-5 people. 67% of buying decisions are made by groups of between 2-5 individuals, up from 61% last year. There has also been a slight decrease in the number of larger buying committees since last year. For example, 4% of buyers operate in committees of 11-15 people this year, while 7% did last year.

Given the context of the pandemic, when many organizations either had to fast track or halt [business technology purchasing](#), an increase in the level of focus and more agile buying committees makes sense. Another potential explanation has to do with how products are evaluated, selected, and purchased in a digital-only environment. As noted above, 87% of buyers now want to self-serve their buying journey. It's likely that more vendors have provided self-service options since the pandemic began (like free trials and self-serve demos) to help meet their buyers' shifting needs. With more self-service options readily available, it makes sense for buying committees to be smaller and more agile.

Tech Buying Committees Are Slightly More Focused and Agile in 2021



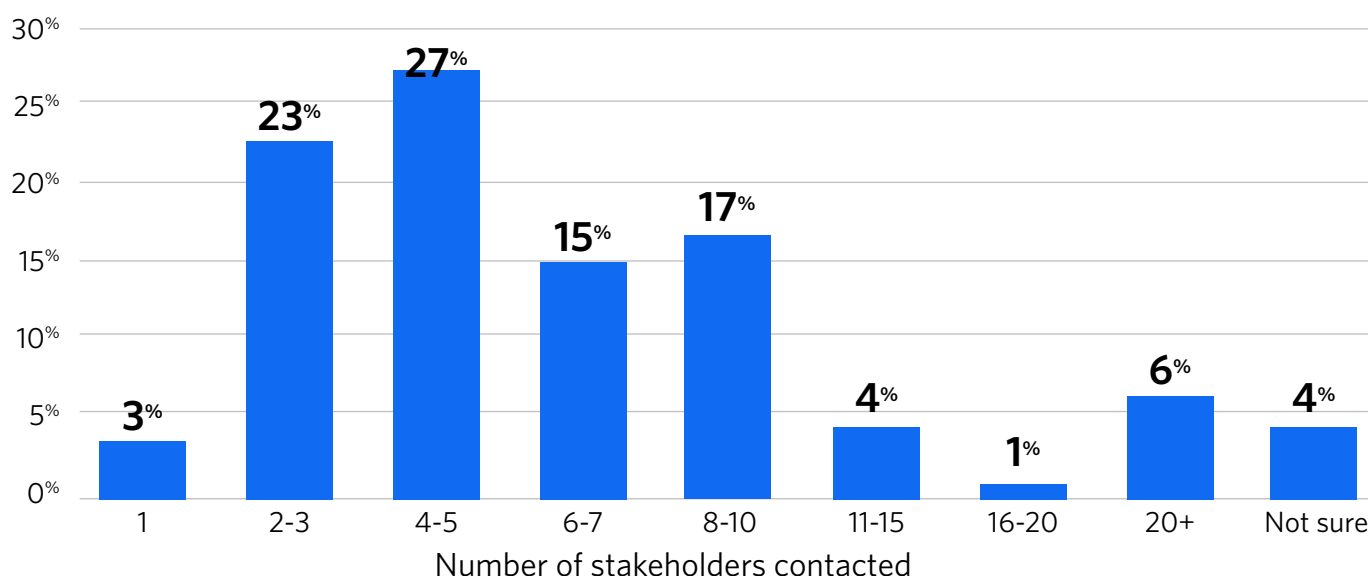
TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



Overall, vendors are doing a good job of making sure they reach out to a large number of people within an organization during a deal cycle. Although, vendors sometimes reach out to more contacts than they need to because they are unsure of which individuals are part of the buying committee. This can contribute to buyers feeling annoyed by marketing and sales outreach tactics, including aggressive sales reps. For example, 44% of vendor respondents reach out to 6 or more individuals within an organization, while only 29% of buyers report having 6 or more individuals involved in the buying process at their business.

In part, this may be due to how easy it has become for salespeople to reach out to multiple contacts within an organization and obtain information about the best people for them to speak with. Sales enablement and sales acceleration tools can help give sales reps a leg up when conducting outreach.

Tech Vendors May Reach Out to More Stakeholders at an Organization Than They Need To



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



Marketer at a company with 200+ employees and more than 100 customers?

ALMOST HALF OF BUYERS REPORT DECREASED TECH SPENDING DUE TO COVID-19

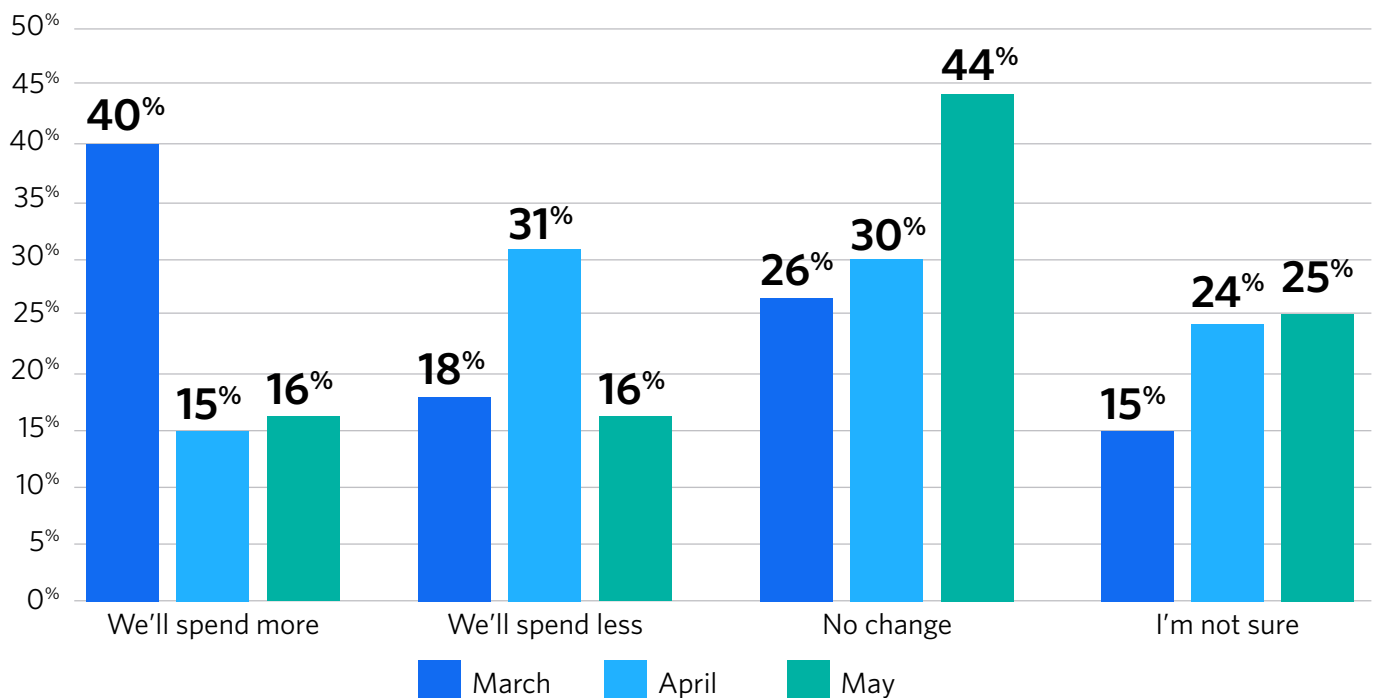
At the individual level, the pandemic has deeply affected many of our personal and professional lives. It has also impacted the global and U.S. economies, the [unemployment rate in the U.S.](#), and countless industries—including the tech industry.

Over the past seven to eight months, U.S. workers have received access to increased federal unemployment benefits—which dried up at the [end of July](#), while U.S. companies navigated the difficult process of applying for a [Payment Protection Program \(PPP\) loan](#) (which also is closed). Throughout this time, some industries have neared collapse, many struggled to adapt to their new normal, and a few thrived. The [hospitality](#) and [airline industries](#), for example, have both been struggling to survive during a time of record-low global travel.

On the other hand, many tech companies have been gearing up to strategically increase business investments, including unfreezing hiring.

TrustRadius has been monitoring how the pandemic has and will continue to [impact technology spend](#) for many months now. Based on earlier research conducted during March, April, and May of this year, it's clear that buyer expectations about tech spend fluctuated in the earlier months of the pandemic:

Buyers' Expected Change in Software Spend in Early 2020



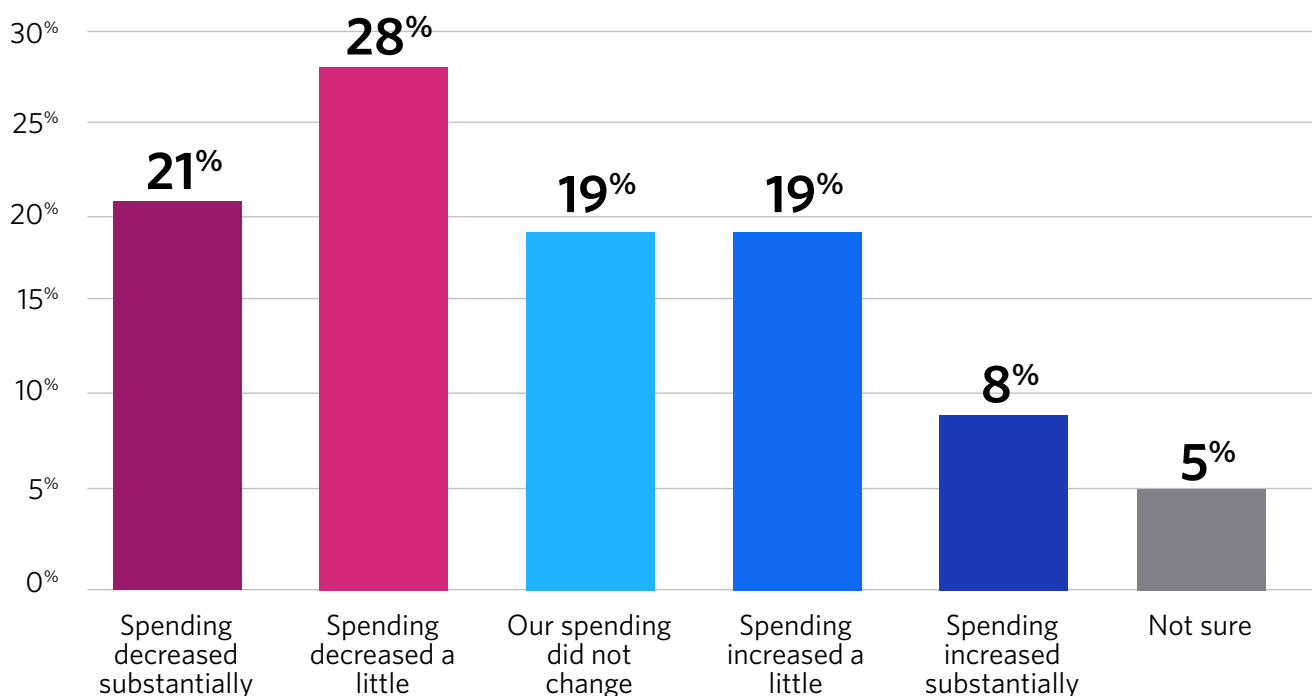
TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

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Most recently, when we asked our community of buyers how the global coronavirus pandemic had impacted their overall technology spending in 2020, close to half (49%) of buyers reported decreased spending. Notably, about 1 out of 5 said their spending had not changed, and 27% said spending had increased during 2020.

9% of buyers report decreased technology spending while 27% report increased spending over the course of 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19.

How COVID-19 Impacted Tech Spending in 2020



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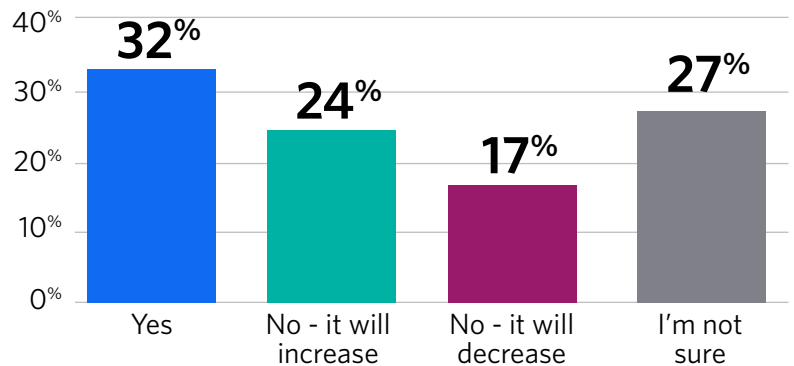
BUYERS ARE DIVIDED ABOUT WHETHER TECH SPENDING WILL RETURN TO PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS, BUT OPTIMISTS OUTNUMBER PESSIMISTS

Of those buyers who said their overall technology spending had changed due to the pandemic, 56% predict that spend will either return to previous levels or increase in 2021. However, 16% think spending will decrease in 2021. About 27% of buyer respondents were not sure what tech spending in 2021 would look like for their organization.

The technology spending outlook for 2021 is still quite uncertain, but over half of buyers are optimistic about seeing a return to previous spending levels—or beyond.

There is some variation in predicted tech spending for 2021 between buyers at different company sizes, but no discernible pattern. Optimism and pessimism about 2021 spending levels are roughly evenly distributed across company sizes. The highest levels of uncertainty are in companies with 500 or fewer employees, which makes sense as larger companies have more robust forecasting functions.

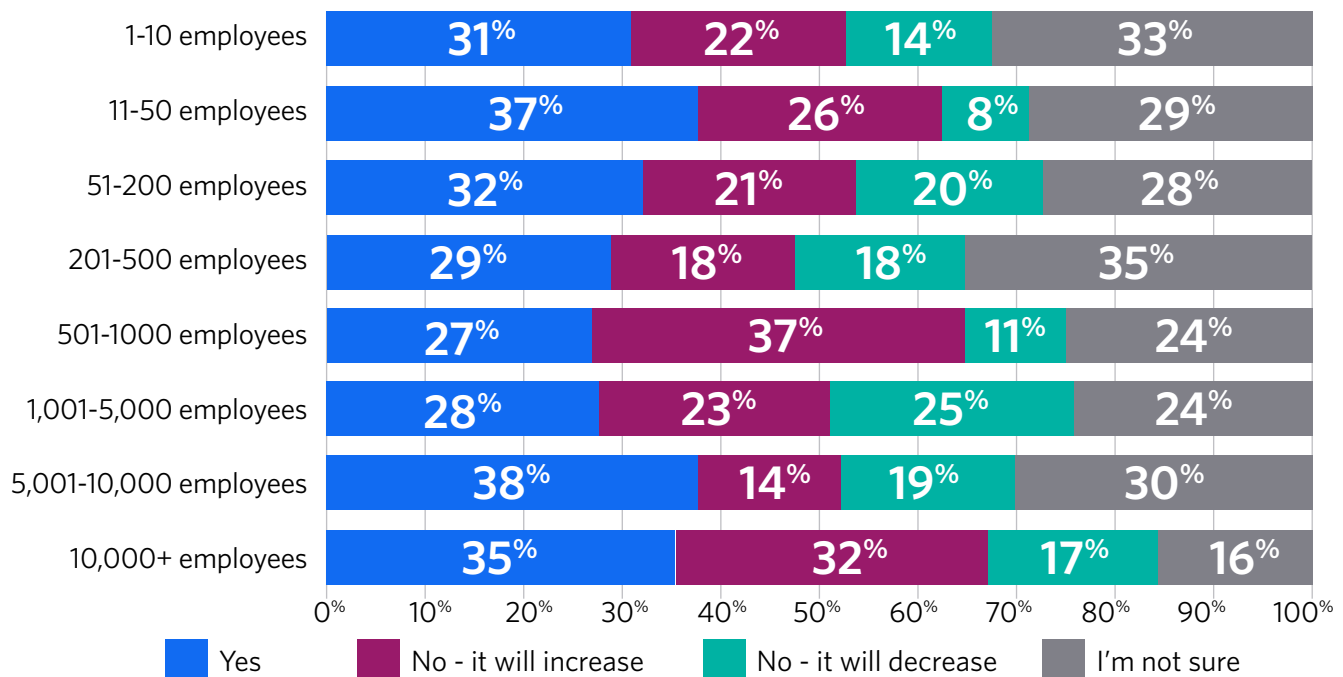
Do Buyers Predict B2B Tech Spending Will Return to Pre-Pandemic Levels in 2021?



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~30% of All Buyers Predict B2B Tech Spending Will Return to Pre-pandemic Levels in 2021



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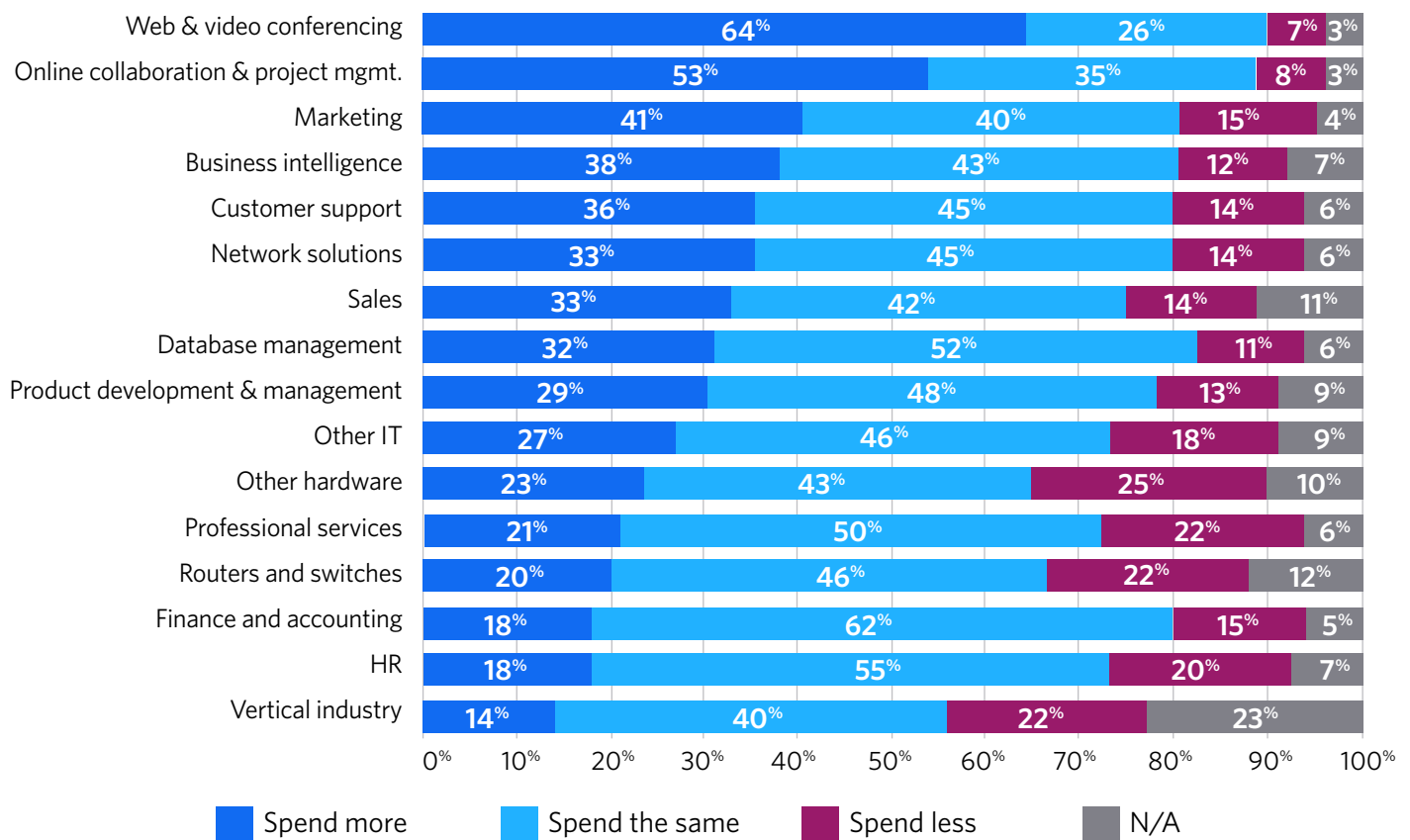
WHERE WILL TECHNOLOGY SPENDING INCREASE AND DECREASE IN 2021?

Besides overall technology spending, the pandemic has affected how and where we work. 100% of the buyer's journey is now completed online, since in-person conferences, summits, and one-on-one meetings have been suspended for the better part of 2020.

As much of the U.S. and global workforce has transitioned to remote working, certain pieces of technology have been either in higher or lower demand. One great example is the rapid expansion of web and video conferencing software usage.

But will these fluctuations in demand persist into 2021?

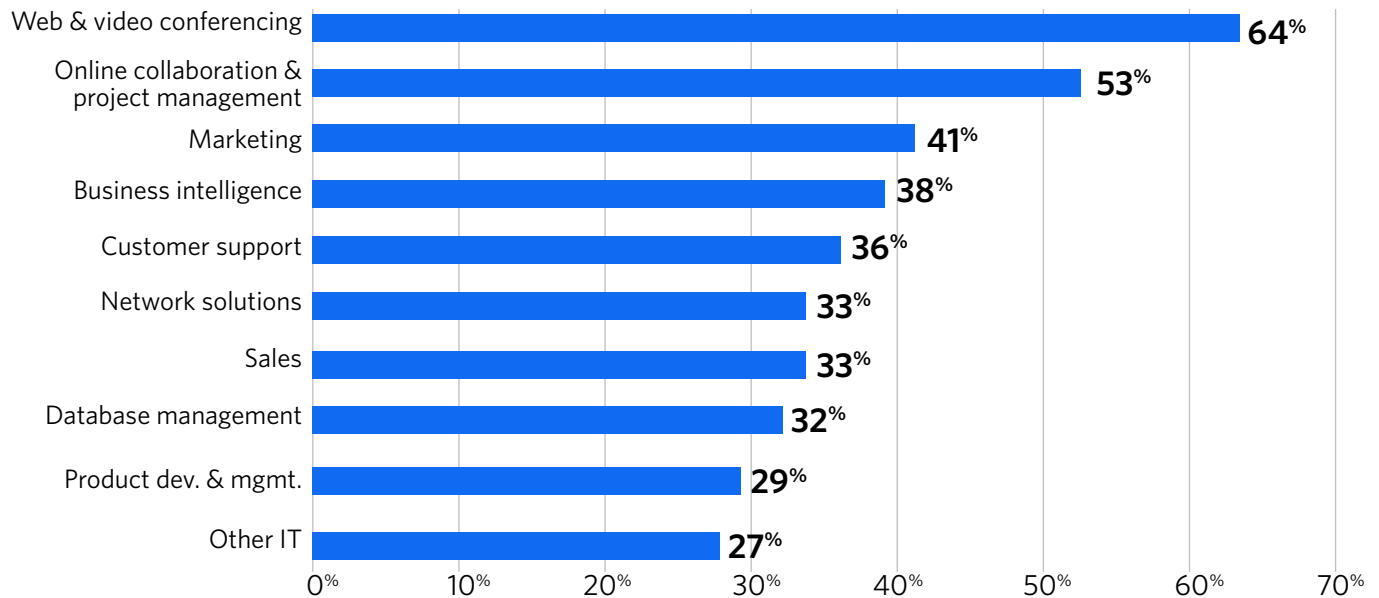
Where Will B2B Tech Buyers Increase and Decrease Spending in 2021?



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

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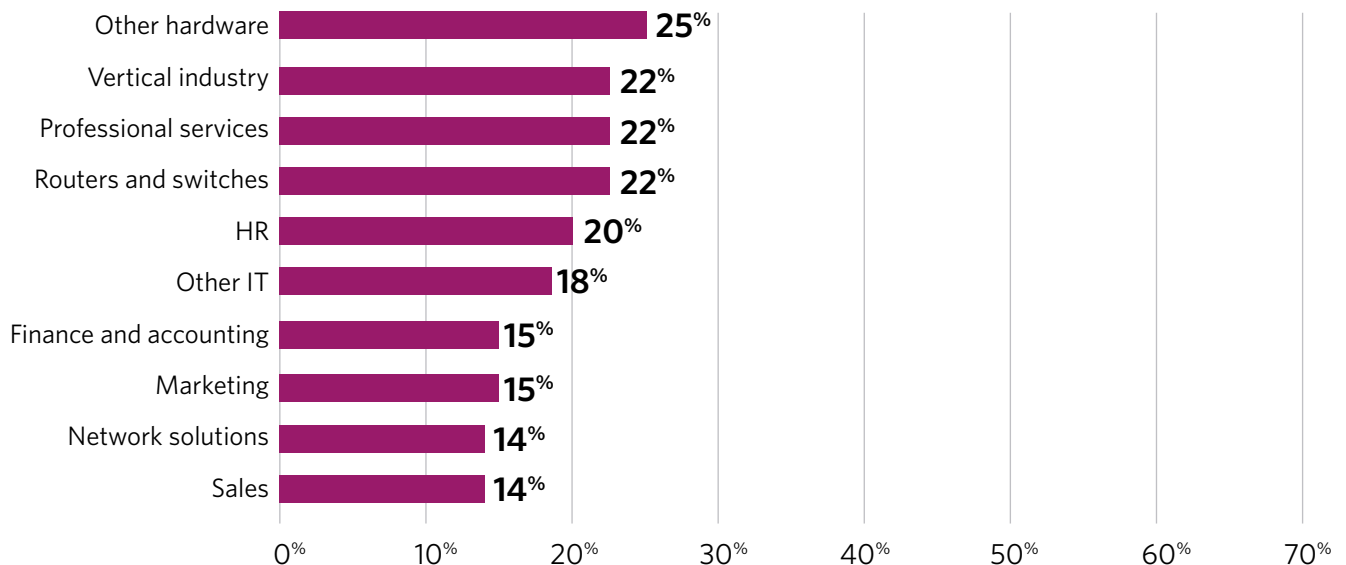
Top 10 Areas That Tech Buyers Plan to Increase Spending in 2021



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



Top 10 Areas That Tech Buyers Plan to Decrease Spending in 2021



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



In our most recent survey, over half of buyers expect to spend more on video and web conferencing software (64%) and online collaboration & project management software (53%) in 2021.

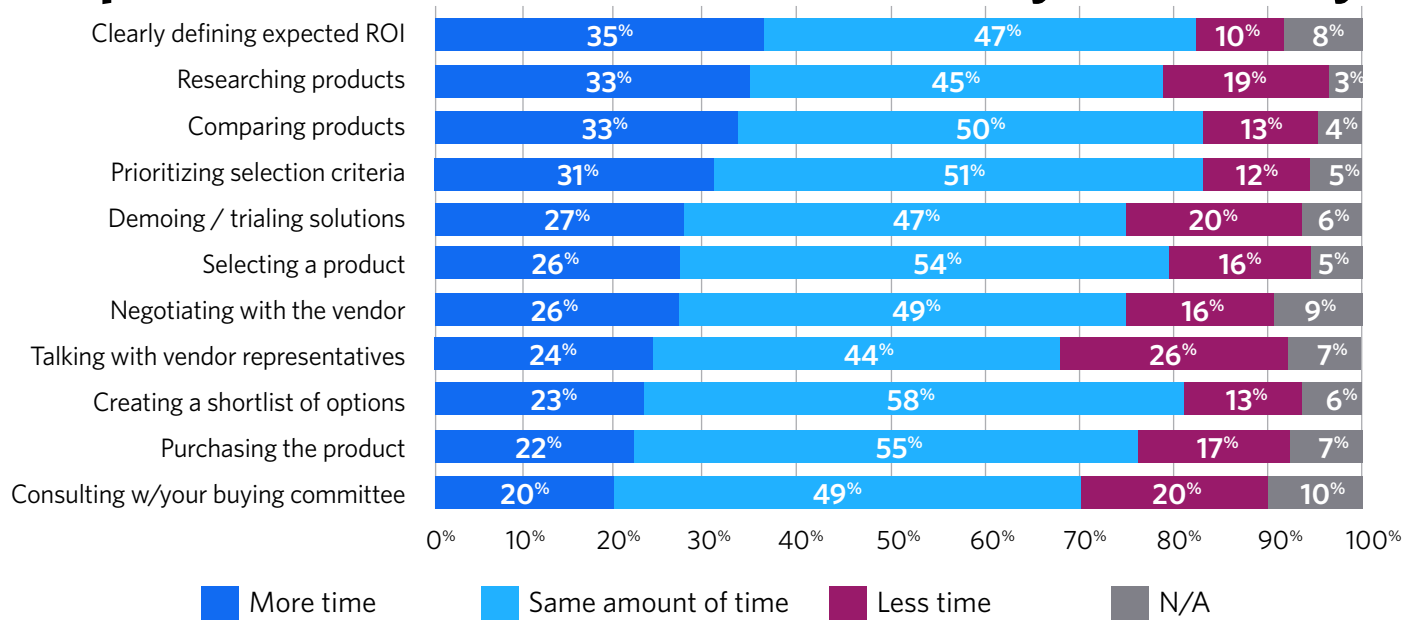
Conversely, buyers predict that hardware products, professional services, HR software, and vertical-specific technology will be areas of low investment for 2021. About 1 out of 5 buyers said they expected spending to decrease for each of these areas. It may be the case that these types of business technology, especially vertical-specific software, are more tied to 'in-person' businesses and services. For businesses that are currently strapped for cash, these investments are likely seen as 'nice-to-haves' compared with other essential 'must-have' business expenses.

CONNECT WITH BUYERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE BUYER'S JOURNEY

Along with shifts in spending, the pandemic has also changed how much time buyers devote to different parts of the buying journey, including specific activities. When asked how the pandemic has impacted their purchase process, we found that:

- 35% of buyers spend more time clearly defining ROI now than they did before the pandemic.
- 1 out of 3 buyers also now spends more time researching products and comparing products.
- Another 31% of buyers are now spending more time on prioritizing selection criteria.
- Conversely, 1 out of 4 buyers now spends less time talking with vendor representatives.
- 20% of buyers also spend less time demoing/trialing products & consulting with their buying committee.

How COVID-19 Impacts The Amount of Time Buyers Spend on Different Activities in the Buyer's Journey



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.



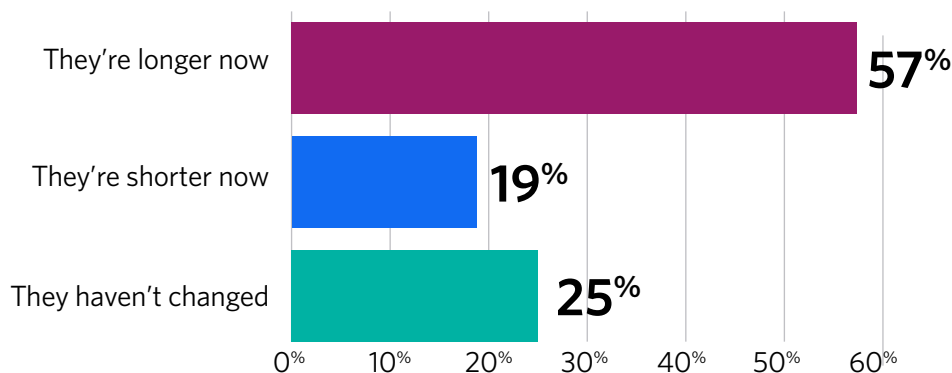
These changes constitute somewhat subtle but important shifts in buyer behavior. For example, buyers are doing much more of their research online now, including comparing products, before deeply engaging with vendors.

They're also thinking about their own critical needs more clearly and strategically (e.g. defining ROI & prioritizing selection criteria), meaning buyers have a better picture of what they need from a technology tool going into the purchasing process now. All of this amounts to buyers being more ruthless in making sure they mitigate financial risk as much as possible, and selecting the product with the highest ROI potential.

Buyers are making an effort to streamline the entire purchase process. Organizational politics seem to be taking up less time as well. Buyers are spending less time consulting with their buying committee than they were before the pandemic, as well as involving slightly fewer people in the decision.

This has turned the buying process into a more functional & logistical process. There's now less focus on the relationships buyers have with the vendor and less talk about the product's bells and whistles.

Most B2B Tech Vendors Say COVID-19 Has Led to Longer Deal Cycles



The pandemic has resulted in a material change for technology vendors too. For a majority of vendors (57%), deal cycles are now longer than they were before. About 1 out of 4 vendor respondents reported that the length of their deal cycle hadn't changed, and 19% report shorter deal cycles.

TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

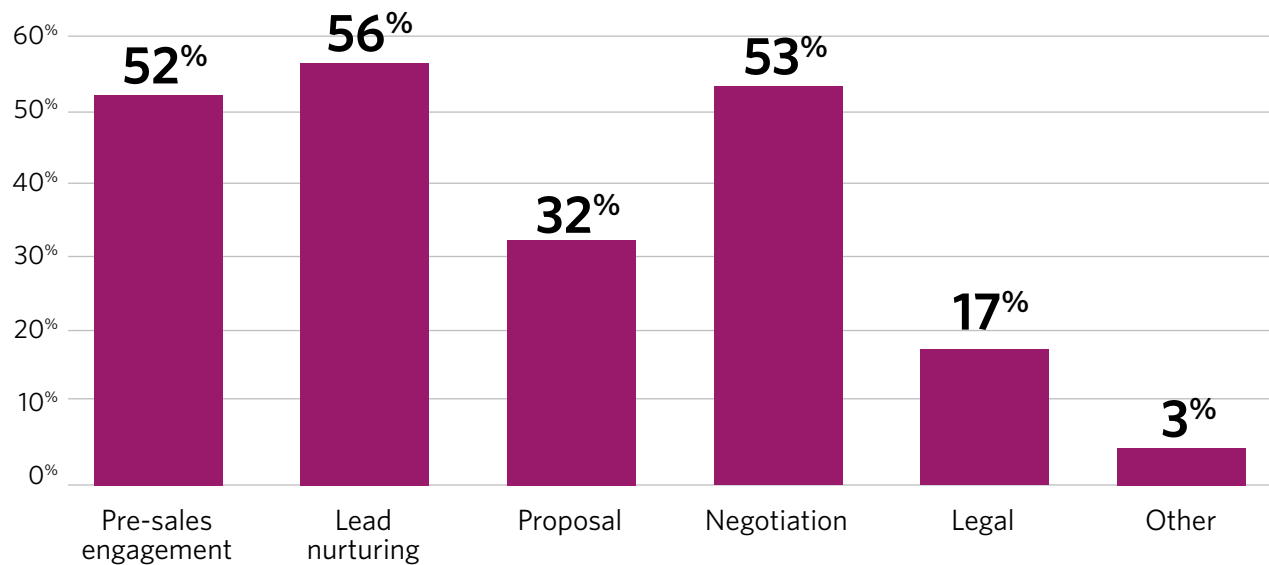


57% of vendors report that deal cycles are longer now than they were before the pandemic.

Of the vendors that have had longer deal cycles since the beginning of the pandemic, over half say that pre-sales engagement, lead nurturing, and negotiation take longer than they did before.

Overall, these results align with our findings around how the pandemic has impacted buyer behavior. Specifically, we've found that 35% of buyers are actively mitigating financial risk by spending more time clearly defining their ROI terms and 1 out of 3 buyers are now doing more independent research on products.

Which Parts of the B2B Tech Sales Process Take Longer Than They Did Before the Pandemic?



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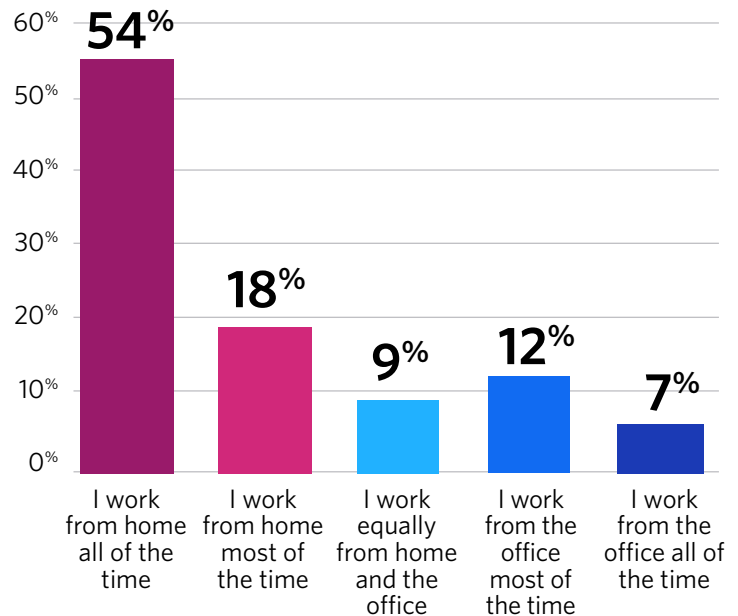


LEARN HOW TO SELL TO 100% REMOTE EMPLOYEES

Another manifestation of the pandemic's impact on the tech industry is the changing landscape of work itself. 54% of technology buyers are now working from home all of the time, with another 18% working from home most of the time. Only 7% of buyers work from the office all of the time, with another 12% working from the office most of the time.

Based on recent research from Gallup, which found that 1 out of 4 Americans are now working remotely 100% of the time, tech industry buyers are 2X as likely as the average U.S. worker to be working from home all of the time. While the pandemic is still raging in many countries, working from home trends look different depending on the country. For example, British white-collar workers have been more reluctant to return to the office than white-collar workers in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain.

More Than Half of B2B Tech Buyers Are Working Remotely Full-time



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

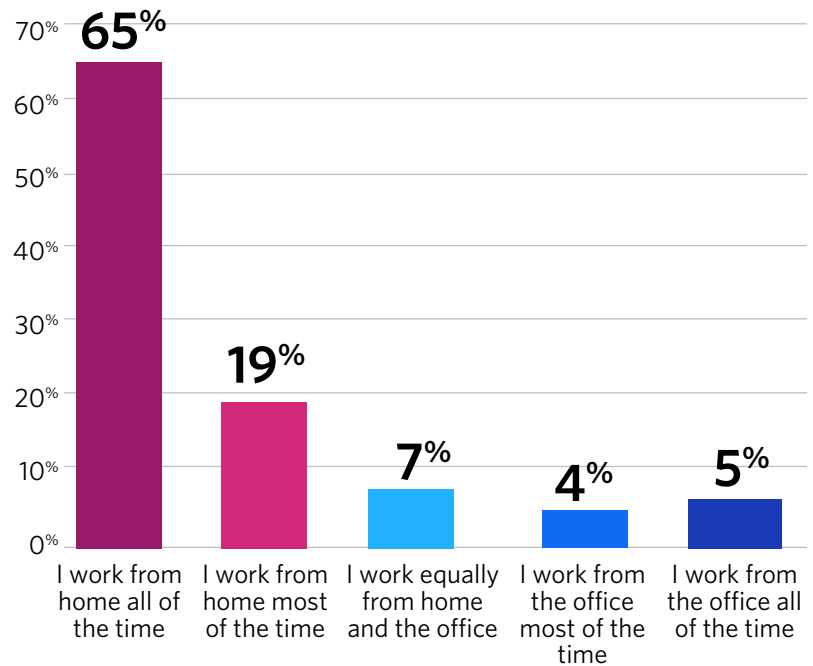


An even larger percentage of B2B tech vendors (65%) report working from home all of the time. Compared with the statistics from Gallup mentioned above, employees working for a technology vendor are 3X as likely to be fully remote than the average American worker. Unlike other industries that require employees to be physically present to do their jobs, the tech industry is well-positioned to have a majority of employees work remotely—potentially permanently for some companies.

Much like overall technology spending predictions for 2021, the forecast of when technology buyers and sellers will feel comfortable returning to office work full-time remains uncertain.

- A majority of both buyers (72%) and vendors (76%) would not want to return to full-time office work until Spring 2021 or later.
- Another 13% of buyers and 12% of vendors say they would never feel comfortable work from the office full-time again.
- Notably, about 1 out of 10 buyers and vendors have never worked from their office full-time.

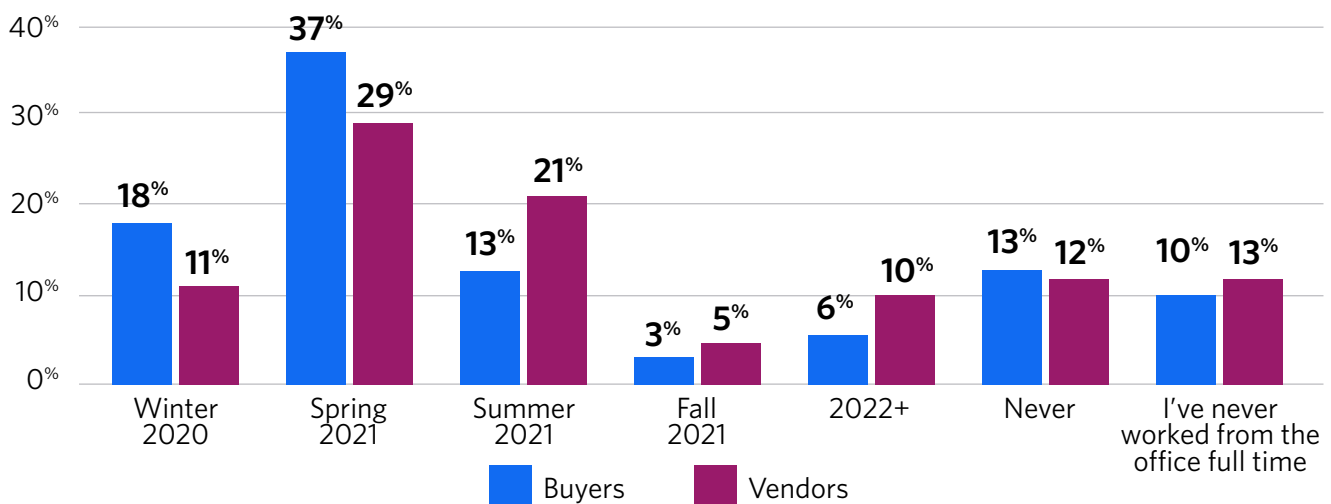
65% of B2B Tech Vendors Are Working Remotely Full-time



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

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When Will B2B Tech Professionals Feel Comfortable Returning to the Office Full-time?



TrustRadius B2B Buying Disconnect Survey data collected from 907 technology buyers and 227 technology vendors in September 2020.

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But what overall impact does this have on technology purchases?

Currently, the vast majority of B2B purchases are taking place completely online, with vendors connecting with buyers through video meetings, email, phone calls, texts, etc. Buyers are also connecting with buying project collaborators and stakeholders through digital channels. This means the human part of the relationship vendor representatives hope to cultivate with buyers may be harder to establish and maintain.

The fact that more vendors are currently working remotely than buyers indicates that some buyers will likely be returning to the office, or have already returned, before vendors. If this comes to pass, it will be an important factor for technology vendors and marketers to consider, and make sure they're prepared to empathize and connect with these buyers.

5 ACTION ITEMS FROM THE 2021 B2B BUYING DISCONNECT

As the world continues to grapple with the coronavirus pandemic, many are yearning for a return to normalcy, or at least a 'new normal'.

There is no widespread consensus about whether or not technology spending will return to pre-pandemic levels or when individuals will feel comfortable returning to the office. But other developments in 2020 are clearer. We know the buyer's journey has deeply changed this year, much more so than in years past.

These developments present technology vendors with opportunities to support and connect with their buyers. This report is full of actionable insights, but if you only do five new things in 2021, let them be these five:

- 1 Make sure your product or service has a strong online presence.**
Prioritize web presence, including on review websites, so that buyers come across your solution while doing their independent early-stage buying research.
- 2 Expect to see more millennials taking charge of buying decisions.**
Prepare for this by making sure information about your product is easily accessible across online channels, especially channels that younger buyers prefer—like Google search results, user reviews, and self-service offerings. .
- 3 Invest in the resources buyers continually rely on.**
That's product demos, your company/product website, user reviews, your reps, and free trials/accounts. These have been buyers' go-to information sources for five years straight, and will likely continue to be the most important resources they consult while making purchasing decisions.
- 4 Update your data privacy standards and documentation.**
A majority of buyers report being concerned about data security this year, and are making purchasing decisions based on compliance.
- 5 Provide your buyers with additional self-service options**
These include do-it-yourself product demos or the ability to purchase your product with only a credit card. Offering more self-service options can help reduce unnecessary friction during their purchase process.

Want to Influence Buyers in Credible Ways? Invest in Your Review Program.

[Get a Demo of TrustRadius for Vendors](#)

ABOUT TRUSTRADIUS

TrustRadius helps technology buyers make better decisions and helps vendors tell their unique story, improve conversion, engage high-intent buyers, and gain customer insights. Each month over 1 million B2B technology buyers, over 50% from large enterprises, use verified reviews and ratings on TrustRadius.com to make informed purchasing decisions. Headquartered in Austin, TX, TrustRadius was founded by successful entrepreneurs and is backed by Mayfield Fund, LiveOak Venture Partners and Next Coast Ventures.

METHODOLOGY

Data for the TrustRadius 2021 B2B Buying Disconnect was sourced from the TrustRadius global network of contacts via an online survey.

In September 2020, we sent aligning online surveys to professionals who helped buy new software or hardware for their organization in the last year (technology buyers) and professionals who work in marketing or sales at companies that provide software or hardware to other businesses (technology vendors).

We received responses from 907 buyers and 227 vendors, for a total of 1,134 survey respondents.

80% of buyer respondents work for organizations based in the U.S., while 20% work for businesses whose primary headquarters are outside the U.S. 75% of vendor respondents work for organizations based in the U.S.

All respondents were offered a nominal incentive (\$15 gift card) as a thank-you for their time. You can find respondent demographic details below. For a full list of questions and answer choices, email us at research@trustradius.com.

STUDY DEMOGRAPHICS

BUYER RESPONDENTS

Tech buyers, what is your company's size?

1-10 employees	11%
11-50 employees	19%
51-200 employees	21%
201-500 employees	12%
501-1,000 employees	10%
1,001-5,000 employees	13%
5,001-10,000 employees	5%
10,001+ employees	9%

Tech buyers, what is your job title?

Intern	0%
Entry Level	1%
Analyst / Associate	20%
Manager	28%
Senior Manager	11%
Director	16%
Vice President	3%
Senior Vice President	1%
C-level executive (except CEO)	4%
CEO	3%
Owner/Principal	5%
Founder / Co-Founder	2%
Consultant	5%

Tech buyers, what is your department?

Sales	6%
Marketing	14%
Operations	11%
Accounting / Finance	6%
Information Technology	35%
Engineering	7%
Customer Service	2%
Human Resources	4%
Research & Development	3%
Consultant	3%
Product	2%
Other (please specify)	7%

Tech buyers, where is your primary business headquarters?

U.S.	80%
India	5%
Canada	3%
U.K.	2%
Remote	2%
Israel	1%
Germany	1%
Sweden	1%

Tech buyers, what type of tech product did you purchase?

Business Intelligence	4%
HR	3%
Marketing	11%
Professional Services	3%
Finance and Accounting	5%
Sales	6%
Customer Support	3%
Other IT	11%
Other Vertical Industry	0%
Other Hardware	8%
Product Development and Management	4%
Database Management	5%
Network Solutions	5%
Routers and Switches	2%
Nonprofit	1%
Retail	1%
Legal Services	1%
Construction	1%
Security Software	5%
Other (please specify)	22%

Tech buyers, cost of product?

\$10k or less	34.18%
\$11k-50k	29.44%
\$51k-\$100k	12.24%
\$101k-\$250k	8.16%
\$251k-500k	4.52%
More than \$500k	3.97%
Not sure	7.50%

VENDOR RESPONDENTS

Tech vendors, what is the size of your company?

1-10 employees	8%
11-50 employees	15%
51-200 employees	21%
201-500 employees	16%
501-1,000 employees	8%
1,001-5,000 employees	16%
5,001-10,000 employees	4%
10,001+ employees	11%

Tech vendors, what is your job title?

C-Suite (CEO, COO)	10%
Marketing Leadership	25%
Sales Leadership	21%
Demand Generation	17%
Customer Marketing / Customer Advocacy	12%
Public Relations / Communications / Analyst Relations	8%
Product Marketing	20%
Sales Enablement	15%
Customer References	4%
Account Executive	19%
MDR / BDR / SDR	5%
Consultant	9%
None of these	0%
Digital Marketing	21%
Account Manager	12%
Content Marketing	12%
Marketing Operations	6%
Other Pre-sales	3%

Tech vendors, what is the primary company size segment you serve?

Small businesses (1-50 employees)	15%
Mid-Sized companies (51-1,000 employees)	33%
Enterprises (1,001-10,000 employees)	23%
Large enterprises (10,001 + employees)	16%
Evenly split across multiple segments	10%
Not sure	2%

Tech vendors, where is your primary business headquarters?

U.S.	75%
India	9%
Canada	3%
U.K.	2%
Remote	1%
Israel	1%
Germany	1%
Sweden	1%

Tech vendors, what is the primary type of technology product you sell?

Business Intelligence	6%
HR	7%
Marketing	12%
Professional Services	4%
Finance and Accounting	3%
Sales	6%
Customer Support	3%
Other IT	7%
Other Vertical Industry	3%
Other Hardware	1%
Product Development and Management	5%
Database Management	6%
Network Solutions	4%
Routers and Switches	1%
Nonprofit	1%
Retail	2%
Construction	0%
Security Software	7%
Legal Services	1%
Other (please specify)	22%

Tech vendors, what is the approximate annual cost of a typical deployment of your product?

\$10K or less	23%
\$11k-50K	23%
\$51K-\$100K	23%
\$101K-\$250K	15%
\$251K-500K	3%
More than \$500K	4%
Not sure	9%
Legal Services	1%
Other (please specify)	22%

