



HOW TO GET YOUR BUYERS TO CONTACT YOU FIRST

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Synopsis:

- Buyers approach organisations when they are ready to buy, informed by their buying groups
- Why demand generation is crucial for engaging key buying group stakeholders early in their buying journey
- How to craft demand generation strategies tailored to each buyer persona in your buying groups



As uncertainty and [buyer scrutiny](#) continue to shape the B2B buying process, organisations must innovate their approach to engage the entirety of [buying groups](#) and motivate them to take action.

Buyers contact vendors 70% into the B2B buying journey, with 84% conducting the sale with their first choice ([6sense, 2023](#)). These leads make contact without prior warning—from what is known as the [dark funnel](#), with their decision likely already made.

This prospect is often the primary stakeholder, informed by a wealth of research from both their buying group and their own efforts. Influencing the buying process at this point is incredibly challenging, given the many individuals involved in making the final decision—and the length of the B2B buying process.

This highlights the importance of engaging influential buyers in your buying groups early, to ensure your messaging reaches relevant stakeholders in the buying process, and encourages them to prioritise your solution.

This article explores how to engage each decision maker in the dark funnel and provide them with the resources and support needed to enable them to make a buying decision in your favour.

WHAT IS THE DARK FUNNEL?

The dark funnel is the part of the sales funnel that is not tracked by analytics platforms. In other words, it is the unseen buyer's journey, in which prospects become leads seemingly out of nowhere—and lead behaviour can not be identified by your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform.

It is very common for many B2B companies to have a mysterious source of “direct traffic” to specific web pages (such as blog posts), which were most likely not typed in by a prospect. This unattributed direct traffic is a significant part of the dark funnel.

Why demand generation is integral to buyer enablement



WHAT IS BUYER ENABLEMENT?

Buyer enablement is a strategic approach in which organisations provide potential clients with the necessary tools, information, and support to facilitate their purchasing decision process. This method centres on empowering buyers by addressing their needs and reducing friction throughout their buyer's journey.

In a survey among B2B clients, 77% of respondents rated recent purchasing experiences as extremely complex or difficult ([Gartner, 2024](#)).

Part of the reason for this complexity is the increase in the size of buying groups whose role is to consider the risk associated with purchasing decisions (often against economic instability and diminished budgets). **As a result, the B2B buying process can take up to twelve months.**

This is further complicated by its nonlinear nature—the more vendors being considered, the more information is required, increasing the amount of back and forth to reach a decision.

Organisations that help to break this vicious cycle through exceptional experiences, empowering B2B buyers to make decisions, and de-risking their solutions, are likely to secure competitive ground.

Providing a frictionless buying experience requires enabling all buying group members with the information they need. As a full funnel approach, demand generation strategies play a vital role in engaging and nurturing buyers in the dark funnel early, by making the right content and resources accessible to buyers.

These materials are relevant to specific needs, goals, and preferences, allowing buyers to confidently advocate for your solution within their buying groups.

The DNA of an average buying group



Each buying group is composed of different members with [distinct priorities and needs](#).

Understanding this and how information filters through to the relevant stakeholders involved throughout the B2B buying journey, allows you to design a data-driven demand strategy that engages the entirety of the buying group.

Depending on the size of the organisation and the type of purchase, a buying group could include a combination of these members:



**IT
professionals**



**Marketing
professionals**



**Security
professionals**



**Operations
professionals**



**Finance
professionals**



**Legal
professionals**



**Data
professionals**



**Internal or external
subject matter experts
(SMEs)**

Source: *INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2024*

The role of personalised content in driving buyer engagement



To encourage priority stakeholders to make the first point of contact, you must prepare strategies that engage prospective buyers early in the buying process.

Content is at the core of this approach. This should be tailored to each member to facilitate the sharing of information with other buying group members as their needs and requirements change.

This content serves two purposes:

- Value framing:** Contextualising the value of your product or solution in terms of how it addresses their goals (for example, solving a problem or increasing performance)
- Affirmation:** Validating that the solution is the right fit for their needs versus that of a competitor

Below is an example of a content matrix designed to drive engagement throughout the funnel in these two areas:

	Problem identification	Solution exploration	Requirements building	Supplier selection
Value framing	Article	Product page	Product demo video	Competitor comparisons
Affirmation	Report	Product reviews	Technical product demo	Case studies and testimonials






Source: [Gartner B2B Buying Report](#)

The next element is ensuring your content aligns with the needs of multiple members as they progress through their buyer’s journey.

Important note: This engagement should be consistent for all members of the buying group. According to Dentsu’s [The Superpowers Index](#), only 39% of organizations are satisfied with how brands meet their needs during the buying journey—a statistic that directly correlates with how brands engage with individuals within buying groups.

In addition, satisfaction levels were found to differ substantially, with more junior members of buying groups displeased with the experience they received than initiators and C-level executives. This highlights the need to implement strategies that engage the entirety of the buying group to ensure that key members are not neglected.

Below is an example of how needs can change across buying groups:

Stakeholder	Need
 Influencer /Initiator	Pain point and solution identification
 Manager	Assessing cost, quality, implementation, and ROI
 Operations and IT professionals	Usability, risk, ease of integration
 C-level executive	Risk, ROI, tech stack integration, and contribution to strategic needs
 Financial manager	Cost, ROI, efficiency



5 targeted strategies for engaging each buying group member



Navigating and engaging the entirety of the B2B buying group is complex. Reaching different stakeholders simultaneously, also known as multi-threading, is one tactic to yield higher rates of buy-in.

This resource-intensive strategy targets as many as four to ten members simultaneously. However, the benefits far outweigh the effort, as focusing on only one or two buying group members can risk up to [80% of your buyers being left unengaged or nurtured](#).

There will be similarities across buying groups that you can leverage based on your existing [buying personas](#) and data records. Enrich these insights with your buyer personas, [surveys](#), and feedback from your sales team to help you understand your buyers and identify patterns for specific buyer roles and organisations.

This will serve as the basis for creating an ideal [buyer's journey](#) from which to shape your buyer engagement strategies, such as tailored content.

Below are examples of the stakeholders that comprise the buying group, including:

The funnel stages they are involved in

Their specific focus and needs

Detailed strategies for engaging them



#1 The influencer or initiator

Overview

Funnel stages: TOFU to MOFU

As the first point of contact with your brand, this stakeholder is actively researching solutions that they will present to their superiors for approval. This may be based on a need they have identified or have been tasked with solving.

Establishing brand awareness, expertise, and your unique value proposition is key as this buying group member will be responsible for framing the first impression of your brand—which will be crucial for influencing subsequent members.

Important note: This stakeholder is not the final decision maker but the conduit to the rest of the buying group that you will need to engage and nurture. Strategies should be adjusted depending on the identity of influencers, as these actors are not limited to the lower seniority buying group members. Therefore, adapt your approach according to the member initiating.

Support this process by considering what this buyer will require to make their case in your favour to the next level within the buying group. For example, prepare and provide the information they will likely need when questions arise from other members.

Strategy



Need

- Identifying solutions that meet their organisation's needs



Strategy

- Establishing brand awareness and expertise
- Nurturing interest
- Motivating action (including other buyer members)



Channels

- Website
- Social media
- Paid search
- Email marketing (including nurture emails)



Content recommendations

- Industry research
- Educational content optimised to meet informational intent (SEO)
- Social proof (case studies and testimonials)
- CPC paid ad campaign targeting relevant keywords (fuelled by [intent data](#))



#2 Managers

Overview



Funnel stages: MOFU

As they are brought into the buying process, managers and department heads will likely review the research presented to them and expand on these findings with their own efforts.

This helps these stakeholders validate what the initiator has shared with them, and assess how each option addresses their needs. Responsible for setting tactical approaches to allow team members to meet operational goals, managers will be looking at available options regarding their ability to support this requirement.

Important note: This stakeholder plays a key role in assessing solutions, often acting as a gatekeeper. Only once they are satisfied, can information travel further up the chain.

Given their intermediary position in the buying group, successfully nurturing this individual will help to support securing buy-in from key stakeholders further along in the process.

Nurture this stakeholder with additional information to counter objections from within the organisation. Lead nurturing content that builds your brand authority such as thought leadership relevant to specific goals or pain points for this individual is particularly effective when combined with social proof.

Managers should continue to receive nurturing throughout the process to encourage them to act as brand advocates (or internal champions). This, of course, relies on the accuracy of lead nurturing strategies.



Strategy

Need

Strategy

Channels

Content recommendations

- Value versus Cost
- Performance benefits
- Business needs
- Productivity

- Addressing concerns
- Nurturing interest
- Establishing brand expertise
- Increasing advocacy

- Email
- Targeted display
- Social media
- Paid ads

- Case studies
- Product reviews
- Unique third-party and proprietary research
- Thought leadership articles
- Comparison charts

The more resources and information you can provide that build on brand expertise and value will help to secure better advocacy from this stakeholder. This, in turn, will reduce the number of competitors considered, as the field of options under evaluation narrows in your favour.

DRIVE LEAD NURTURING RESULTS WITH TARGETED ENGAGEMENT BEYOND THE INBOX →



#3 Operational and IT professionals

Overview



Funnel stages: MOFU

Operational members of the buying group can range from department heads, solution architects, IT professionals, security teams, and even procurement officers.

These stakeholders are most concerned with a solution’s practical and security aspects. As a result, their questions and pain points are most likely unique to their sphere of influence.

Important note: These stakeholders are brought into the buying process to lend their unique expertise, often verifying the viability of the solutions being considered. This, along with including external consultants, has a lasting effect on the impact of FOMU and aversion to risk. Facilitating the process for these buying group members will, therefore, aid in de-risking and securing valuable buy-in for your solution.

Your strategy should cover how your solution benefits end users and the organisation as a whole, and address any practical questions they might have. Include illustrative examples of your solution in action.

Strategy



Need

- Functionality
- Implementation
- Integration
- Impact on end users
- Security



Strategy

- Address implementation concerns
- De-risk your solution
- Demonstrate solution value through a technical lens



Channels

- Email
- Video
- Technical resource centre



Content recommendations

- Consultations with in-house technical experts
- Technical one-pagers
- Demos
- Industry case studies (that emphasise how needs are met)
- Visualisation tools
- Feature sets
- Compliance certification



#4 C-level

Overview



Funnel stages: BOFU

C-level stakeholders have limited time to conduct their own research and rely on information gathered in internal proposals from others. Once this is complete, this stakeholder is able to initiate their own process.

At this point, this stakeholder will familiarise themselves with your brand, expertise, and the value of the solutions you offer, as well as their suitability for their organisation—thereby validating the recommendation received by other buying group members you have likely already engaged.

Important note: This is based on the most typical buyer's journey, however, this can be challenged to encourage C-level stakeholders to be involved earlier by preparing the correct strategies, materials, and promotional strategies.

Focus your messaging on your solution's impact on how it empowers innovation and business outcomes, as well as how it supports generating revenue. Avoid ambiguity, dense jargon that impacts the authenticity of your message, and false promises.



Strategy



Need

- Risk
- ROI
- Data privacy
- Organisational alignment
- Strategic business goals and needs
- Impact on organizational success



Strategy

- Resolving objections
- Establishing robust business cases
- Competitive displacement campaigns



Channels

- Email
- Website
- Review platforms
- Targeted display
- Paid ads



Content recommendations

- Testimonials
- Client reviews
- Case studies (relevant industries and goals)

[LEARN HOW TO OPTIMIZE YOUR CONTENT STRATEGY FOR BUYING GROUPS](#) →





#5 CFO or financial manager

Overview

Funnel stages: BOFU

CFOs play an important role in the buying journey as their decision is often the deciding factor in implementing new solutions and strategies. They tend to take a critical, disciplined approach, taking their time to review information and measure options against the organisation’s strategic needs

Important note: While this stakeholder is at the C-suite level, driving engagement requires framing your solution’s value in regard to its financial impact carefully.

Personalised content for this stakeholder should include detailed proposals and an overview of costs in comparison with competitors’ pricing.

Strategy



Need

- Budget
- ROI
- Organisational efficiency
- Strategic priorities



Strategy

- Build a business case
- Frame business value



Channels

- Email
- Conference call



Content recommendations

- Pricing calculator
- Competitor comparison charts
- Quotation
- Discounts

ENGAGE BUYERS WITH B2B CLIENT JOURNEYS THAT DRIVE CONVERSIONS →

Tactics to reinforce your demand strategy



Before developing initiatives specific to your buyer personas, enhance the effectiveness of your demand generation strategy by adopting buyer engagement best practices.

This will ensure that you meet the specific needs of B2B buyers and position your brand as a reliable and trusted partner.

Below are four key approaches to support the best outcomes of your demand gen strategy:



Foster client relationships and experiences

Prioritising clients above all else is a strategy that involves focusing on the client's needs and experience for the entirety of the buyer's journey. This [client-centric](#) approach focuses on [building relationships](#) rather than pushing them toward making a decision.

Establishing a relationship with your client communicates the value you place on them, fosters trust, and contributes towards a positive brand experience—which according to [Forrester's US Customer Experience \(CX\) Index](#), is showing a sharp decline.

A seamless client experience supports a robust client relationship, and when combined with omnichannel nurturing efforts, can result in a higher [CLTV](#), increased word-of-mouth, improved brand reputation, and ultimately a higher ROI.

Support these experiences by investing in omnichannel strategies, including:

- Identifying the channels most suited to your client's journey
- Creating quality content personalised to their interests and journey
- Ensuring consistent brand value and messaging across all channels
- Including clear call-to-actions (CTAs) to guide next steps
- Presenting content effectively on the channels aligned with your buyer's journey

DISCOVER HOW TO DRIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH AN OMNICHANNEL PRESENCE →

2 Focus on your brand value

A strong brand presence where your unique value proposition (UVP) is clear at every touchpoint is the best tool for distinguishing your business from the competition. This full-funnel strategy involves establishing your UVP at every stage of the buying journey—and across all of your channels.

Below are examples of effective measures for supporting your brand value strategy:

Branding strategy



Demand generation effort



Clear, authentic messaging

- Targeted content focused on buyer pain points



Thought leadership articles

- Develop a content calendar for your organisation's leaders to establish themselves as industry thought leaders



Optimising your website

- Optimise your website for Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- Create campaign landing pages targeted at unique buyers
- Utilise engagement metrics to track interest and performance of content



Webinars

- Collaborate with industry guest speakers
- Focus on educational or trending topics



Industry advocacy

- Encourage members of the organisation to advocate for key industry challenges, trends, and benchmarks on social media
- Have a presence at key industry events, and hosting presentations



Competitive positioning

- Sponsorship of key industry events or influencers



Review sites

- Campaigns that incentivise and leverage client reviews
- Automatic flow emails with links to review sites



Unique research that contributes to brand expertise

- Published reports or white papers based on industry surveys featuring statistics that address key market challenges

BOOST YOUR COMPETITIVE DISPLACEMENT STRATEGIES WITH A COMPELLING UVP →

3 Leverage account intelligence to inform strategies

A successful [ABM strategy](#) involves creating personalised outreach to specific organisations and key individuals.

However, to engage each member of the buying group, you first need to understand the stakeholders that exist within it and their role in the process.

In the case that there is little information available about the dark funnel buyers in key account buying groups, there will still be commonalities you can utilise to inform your strategy's next steps.

Leverage account intelligence from existing high-value accounts supported by [lead intelligence](#) and [psychographics](#) gathered from previous campaigns to inform your strategy. This can help you to theorise approaches and personalise content based on the unique priorities of each individual buyer.

Once you achieve initial engagement, strategies can then be refined and further tailored as necessary.

Examples of account intelligence that will be useful here are:



Intent data

Behavioral information on prospect activity that indicates a propensity to buy a solution



Demographics

Job title, industry, location, business size, organisation structure, buying power



Firmographics

Company information and verticals



Technographics

Technology stack, software, digital tools



CRM data

Contact information and historical data

[How to Drive ROI with Lead Intelligence](#)

[Definitive Guide to Account Based Marketing](#)

[Demand Marketer's Guide to Intent Activation](#)

4 Utilise competitor displacement to outperform the competition

During the consideration phase of their journey, prospects are actively researching other providers and comparing solutions. [Competitor displacement](#) is a key strategy to motivate prospects to favour your solution, including those who are currently competitor clients.

Competitive displacement requires taking a client-centric view of your competitors and how they meet their clients' needs. In doing so, you can identify what prospects are looking for and communicate how you can offer even better value.

Apply a client-centric lens to your competitor analysis to establish:

- What your competition does well
- What attracts clients to them
- Whether your competitors are doing anything that presents an opportunity for your organisation
- If they have changed any of their service models
- If they have lowered their prices recently
- Whether they are offering new products or services, or entering new markets
- What pain points clients have when working with them

Review sites and social media platforms provide valuable insights into what your competitors' clients are saying. By identifying and leveraging these pain points, you can formulate a displacement strategy that motivates stakeholders to reach out to you first.



**NURTURE BUYERS THROUGHOUT THEIR
JOURNEY WITH B2B CONTENT** →

Key takeaways



- B2B buyers contact vendors 70% into the buying journey, with 84% contacting their final vendor of choice with whom the sale is done. Engaging buyers early is crucial to securing opportunities
- Buying groups are large with each stakeholder having their own needs and objections to overcome. Personalise your demand content for multiple personas based on your account intelligence
- Invest in your brand value, building relationships, a seamless experience and competitor displacement to take your buyer enablement to the next level

ATTRACT AND ENGAGE BUYING GROUPS WITH DEMAND STRATEGIES THAT SET YOU APART FROM THE COMPETITION.

INFUSE demand experts are here to tailor high-performance demand programs that deliver unmatched engagement and ROI to empower your growth.

[Speak with the team to launch your buyer engagement strategy](#) →





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