INFUSE

INFUSE.com

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA DRIVES B2B DEMAND GENERATION

Executive Summary

B2B marketers often view social media as a brand awareness channel, measured by impressions and followers. Despite this perception, social media is quickly cementing its position as the channel where buyers research, compare, and form shortlists.

The majority of the buying journey happens anonymously before vendors detect any **intent**. As a result, traditional attribution models systematically undercount social media's pipeline contribution, creating a strategic gap where organizations underinvest in a major source of early-funnel influence.

This article examines social media's true role in B2B **demand generation** and how to measure and apply it, including:

- **Use social media to influence buyer decisions** during the anonymous research and shortlist formation phases
- **Reach multiple stakeholders simultaneously** within buying groups through strategic platform presence and role-specific content
- **Build trust through individual thought leadership** rather than corporate messaging to improve conversion quality
- **Measure social media's demand generation impact** using branded search trends, account-level engagement, and self-reported attribution

By aligning social media strategy with the full buying journey, B2B organizations can build the brand familiarity and trust that determines shortlist inclusion, compress evaluation cycles, and **turn invisible demand signals into visible pipeline growth**.

Read on to discover how to turn social media from a brand awareness channel into a measurable driver of trust, preference, and pipeline growth.

Social media marketing is used primarily for visibility, follower counts, and brand reach. However, the right strategic approach can transform social media channels into powerful tools for establishing demand.

Buyers use social media to research vendors, form opinions, and build shortlists long before they identify themselves to a sales team. In fact, 61% of the B2B buying journey now happens anonymously before a prospect ever contacts a vendor (**6sense Buyer Experience Report, 2025**), making brand visibility and influence during the research phase more important than ever. At the same time, 70% of organizations report website-to-form conversion rates of 20% or lower, averaging just 18%, which means the vast majority of potential buyers never identify themselves directly. As a result, building brand preference before buyers enter the funnel has become marketing's top responsibility (**INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026**).

How does social media marketing support demand generation?

Social media marketing supports demand generation by building brand familiarity and trust during the anonymous phase of the buying journey, before buyers identify themselves to vendors. It supports the conditions for pipeline by ensuring target accounts recognize and build a preference for brands during research and shortlist formation.

Marketers who have recognized this shift are investing accordingly. The **INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026** shows that 38% of B2B marketers now cite organic social media as a top discoverability initiative, ranking it ahead of public relations, partner marketing, and analyst engagement. Additionally, social media technology investment has become a priority for 50% of them in their 2026 planning (**INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026**).

Buyers consume an average of nine unique content pieces per buying journey, with enterprise organizations generating approximately 83 total known touchpoints per purchase across an average buying group of nine stakeholders (**INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026**). The majority of those touchpoints occur before vendors detect any engagement, with social media being where they accumulate.

Discover the difference between demand generation and lead generation →

"The organizations seeing the greatest demand generation impact from social media understand that its value is in shaping buyer perception during the anonymous research phase, when shortlists are formed, and preferences are established. Social media gives brands a unique opportunity to build familiarity, credibility, and trust at scale through authentic thought leadership and consistent engagement. When buyers are ready to engage, the brands they've already encountered, trusted, and remembered through social media are the ones most likely to make the shortlist."

Victoria Albert
CMO, INFUSE

What is the relationship between social media marketing and the dark funnel?

The majority of the **B2B buying journey** takes place in the **dark funnel**, where buyer activity is invisible to vendors.

B2B buyers follow thought leaders in their category, engage with company content, and read commentary from peers and practitioners. The preferences formed during this phase carry real commercial weight, with 95% of B2B buyers forming a shortlist before any seller contact, and the pre-contact favorite winning 80% of deals (**6sense Buyer Experience Report 2025**).

Brand familiarity is "very influential" for 33% of buyers and "extremely influential" for 12% during the shortlisting process (**INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026**). For a vendor to reach that shortlist, its brand has to be recognizable during the period when buyers still have not revealed their intent.

Discover day zero: the pre-engagement phase of the buying journey

What is the trust gap?

A defining condition of B2B buying in its current state is the trust gap. Buyers have access to more vendor information than at any previous point, but confidence in vendor claims is declining.

3 ways social media contributes as a B2B trust-building channel

As the trust gap continues to widen, social media has become a critical channel for establishing credibility, building familiarity, and influencing buyer perceptions during the anonymous stages of the buying journey.

1 Demonstrating expertise through consistent, human engagement

Social media is one of the few pre-sales channels where vendors can address this gap by demonstrating consistent, human, and verifiable behavior over time. Buyers extend trust not to brands, but to people who demonstrate domain expertise, share specific evidence, and engage with their audiences as practitioners rather than as marketers.

2 Qualifying buyers before the sales conversation begins

Thought leadership on social media helps buyers evaluate vendors long before they engage with sales. Buyers who follow a subject matter expert over time become familiar with that vendor's perspective and expertise, allowing trust and credibility to develop before a formal conversation takes place.

The evaluation cycle effectively begins before the sales process does, and this compression of the credibility phase shortens evaluation timelines and improves conversion quality.

3 Building the familiarity that drives shortlist inclusion

Consistent social presence helps vendors remain visible, credible, and familiar throughout the buying journey, increasing the likelihood that they are included when buyers begin forming a shortlist.

Explore how to build trust architecture in B2B

How to build trust through B2B social media marketing

To build trust during the anonymous buying journey, B2B social media strategies should focus on three key priorities.

Prioritize expertise over promotional content

The trust gap has a direct practical implication for B2B social media marketing. Polished announcements, product feature posts, and brand campaign content do not build the kind of credibility buyers look for during anonymous research. What builds credibility is specific, observable evidence published consistently over time by people with genuine expertise in the problem.

Build brand recognition through credible voices

Buyers prioritize vendors with strong brand recognition during the shortlisting process. The vendors that meet this standard are those whose people are visible and credible on social media, contributing to brand reputation rather than just making their logos appear in the feed.

Differentiate through authenticity and original perspectives

AI-generated content is accelerating the trust gap, as social platforms get filled with generic, synthetic content. Authenticity and original perspectives become structural differentiators for B2B social media marketing, which should prioritize specificity and human voice to remain credible.

Turn social media engagement into measurable pipeline impact through account orchestration and intent data integration

How to reach the full buying group through social media marketing

The average B2B buying group involves nine stakeholders, and 21% of enterprise buying groups now include more than 15 stakeholders (INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026). Demand generation that reaches only one contact within a buying group leaves the majority of the decision uninfluenced.

Social media is uniquely capable of reaching multiple buying group members simultaneously. Economic buyers, technical evaluators, and functional owners are all present on the same platforms, but they follow different voices, engage with different content types, and respond to different validation formats. A well-structured social media presence, combining company content, executive thought leadership, and subject matter expert voices, increases the likelihood that different stakeholders encounter relevant perspectives throughout their research process, regardless of whether that activity is visible to the vendor.

35% of buyers cite aligning internal stakeholders with different priorities as the largest source of buying complexity (INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026). Vendors that deliver content that appeals to multiple stakeholders on social media reduce this friction before it becomes a purchase stall.

The importance of a social media plan aligned with B2B personas

Different buying group roles require different content:

- Economic buyers respond to ROI framing, business case evidence, and executive perspective
- Technical evaluators look for evidence of integration, security specifics, and use-case detail
- Functional owners engage with case studies, peer voices, and outcome-focused proof

Case studies rank as the most valuable content type at the awareness stage (38%) and remain dominant at the consideration stage (36%), according to INFUSE Voice of the Buyer 2026. Social media is an excellent distribution mechanism for case studies in B2B.

40% of B2B marketers report case studies as the highest-impact format currently in use (INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026). Distributing case studies through individual advocate profiles, targeted company posts, and paid social placement ensures that the most persuasive validation content reaches the most relevant roles across the buying group.

IS YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY REACHING MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN BUYING GROUPS?

Speak to a demand expert on building influence across the buying group

How social media engagement drives demand generation pipeline

Much of social media's contribution to demand generation occurs outside the visibility of traditional attribution models. Content shared through Slack channels, email threads, and messaging apps does not carry tracking parameters and leaves no fingerprint in analytics dashboards. A significant amount of B2B content travels this way, passed between stakeholders as buying groups evaluate potential vendors.

Social media is often where this content originates. Posts, insights, and customer stories that gain visibility publicly can continue to circulate privately, extending their reach beyond what platform analytics can report. As a result, social media's influence is frequently underrepresented when organizations rely solely on direct engagement metrics or last-click attribution.

While individual interactions may be difficult to observe, marketers can still measure social media's broader contribution to demand generation through a combination of leading and lagging indicators.

Discover the demand marketer's guide to intent activation

Which metrics connect social media to demand generation?

With pipeline-to-revenue conversion averaging 15% (INFUSE Voice of the Marketer 2026), measuring marketing ROI with confidence can be challenging. Social media suffers from this measurement gap disproportionately because its contribution is weighted toward the earliest, least-tracked stages of the buying journey.

Effective measurement for social media demand generation combines several signal types:

- **Branded search volume trends as a proxy for social-built familiarity:** Track month-over-month changes in branded keyword search volume using Google Search Console or SEMrush
- **Account-level engagement scoring against target account lists:** Assign engagement points to actions (follows, comments, content saves, shares) from accounts on your target account list and track cumulative scores in your CRM to identify accounts moving through the buying journey
- **Self-reported attribution from inbound leads:** Survey inbound leads and prospects on their discovery source; the percentage citing social media or thought leader names indicates social's influence on early-stage awareness
- **Dark social proxies such as direct traffic from non-branded URLs:** Measure direct traffic from non-branded URLs as a proxy for content shared in private channels (Slack, email, messaging apps) without tracking parameters

Used together, these metrics provide a more accurate picture of social media's pipeline influence than any single attribution model.

How to structure a social media marketing strategy for B2B demand generation

A social media marketing strategy for B2B demand generation begins with the ICP and the buying group, not the content calendar. Social media that reaches the wrong accounts does not generate demand regardless of engagement volume. Target account lists and buying group role definitions should precede all platform and content decisions.

According to a **LinkedIn B2B marketing report**, LinkedIn accounts for 80% of B2B social media leads. For most B2B demand generation programs, LinkedIn is the non-negotiable foundation.

Content mix should balance:

- Thought leadership, which builds trust and demand during the anonymous phase
- Proof content such as case studies and customer outcomes, which support shortlist formation
- Commercial content, which drives action at the decision stage.

A roughly 60/30/10 ratio is a practical starting point, but consistency matters more than intensity. Demand generation through social media is cumulative, making irregular campaign bursts ineffective when building the familiarity that earns shortlist inclusion across buying groups.

Social media content distribution without targeting and personalization can also generate impressions but not demand. Reaching the right accounts with role-specific content, informed by intent data and account-level engagement signals, is what converts social activity into pipeline.

Broad content activation without this targeting layer typically underperforms because it treats the buying group as a monolith rather than as individuals with distinct needs.

Key takeaways

01

Social media marketing's primary demand generation function is building brand familiarity and trust during the anonymous buying journey, with social media presence determining who reaches the evaluation stage before any conversation begins

02

Traditional attribution models systematically undercount social media's demand generation contribution; its influence on awareness, shortlist formation, and buying group alignment occurs before standard tracking captures any engagement

03

Buying group reach is one of social media marketing's most underutilized demand generation capabilities, with the ability to reach economic buyers, technical evaluators, and functional owners simultaneously through content and employee advocates

04

Trust is the central output of a B2B social media marketing strategy, and it cannot be manufactured through company page posts alone: individual voices, specific validation points, and consistent human engagement build the credibility that converts anonymous social followers into warm pipeline

05

The connection between social media activity and demand generation pipeline is measurable when the right signals are tracked. Branded search volume, account-level engagement scoring, self-reported attribution, and dark social proxies provide visibility into social's pipeline contribution that last-click models miss entirely.

Frequently asked questions

What is the role of social media marketing in B2B demand generation?

Social media marketing builds the brand familiarity and buyer trust that determine which vendors reach the shortlist during the anonymous phase of the B2B buying journey. It functions as demand generation infrastructure, creating the conditions for pipeline before buyers ever identify themselves to a vendor or submit a form.

How does social media marketing support the B2B buying journey?

Social media operates primarily during the anonymous, pre-engagement phase of the buying journey, where the majority of vendor research and preference formation takes place. Consistent social presence, thought leadership content, and peer validation ensure buyers recognize and trust a vendor before any sales interaction begins, which directly influences shortlist formation.

Which social media platform is most effective for B2B demand generation?

LinkedIn is the dominant B2B demand generation platform, accounting for the majority of B2B social media leads. It is the primary environment where B2B decision-makers consume thought leadership, validate vendors, and form shortlists during the anonymous buying journey.

How do you measure social media marketing ROI in B2B demand generation?

Effective measurement combines branded search volume trends, account-level engagement scoring against target account lists, self-reported attribution from inbound leads, and pipeline influence tracking in CRM. Together, these signals reveal social media's contribution across the buying journey stages that last-click attribution cannot capture, including shortlist formation and buying group alignment.

How does social media help reach B2B buying groups?

Social media reaches multiple buying group stakeholders simultaneously. Economic buyers engage with ROI-focused thought leadership, technical evaluators respond to integration and proof content, and functional owners follow case studies and peer voices. With buying groups averaging nine stakeholders, social media's multi-role reach makes it uniquely efficient for generating demand across the full buying group.

How can a demand generation program help maximize social media marketing outcomes?

A structured demand generation program connects social media activity to pipeline by combining intent data, content activation across channels, and multi-stakeholder orchestration. **INFUSE programs** are built to turn social engagement into measurable demand generation outcomes across the full buying journey.

2385 NW Executive Center Drive,
Suite 100
Boca Raton, FL 33431

INFUSE.com
info@infuse.com