

B2B MARKETING TRENDS

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Insights from the Frontlines of B2B Marketing



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Introduction

B2B marketers now face challenges that simply didn't exist a few years ago. Business buyers are savvier and more connected than ever, and they expect always-on, highly personalized buying experiences.

These days, we can't just *meet* the needs of our B2B customers. These customers – regardless of whether they're buying for themselves or their companies – expect their needs to be *anticipated*. B2B marketers are increasingly using a mix of account-based marketing (ABM), artificial intelligence (AI), and analytics to connect the right customers with the right content at the right moments.

To get a full understanding of the challenges and transformations affecting today's B2B marketers, we collected B2B-specific data and insights from the following sources:

- [State of Marketing](#), Salesforce Research
- [State of Sales](#), Salesforce Research
- [State of the Connected Customer](#), Salesforce Research
- [2018 ABM Benchmark Study](#), Information Technology Services Marketing Association (ITSMA)
- [Predictions 2019: B2B Marketing And Sales](#), Forrester Research
- [Virtual And Augmented Reality For B2B Marketers](#), Forrester Research

These findings will give B2B marketers a set of clear benchmarks for how to succeed today, as well as new ideas about how to prepare for future changes coming to their industries.

Data Sources

- State of Marketing
- Connected Customer
- Forrester
- State of Sales
- ITSMA



CHAPTER 1

Business Buyers Expect Increased Personalization

The majority of business buyers now expect brands to anticipate their needs and deliver personalized experiences on par with what they've received as consumers. Fortunately for B2B brands, business buyers are willing to help brands personalize their customer experiences by providing relevant data and information for use in future marketing initiatives. This data can help brands develop a more unified view of their customers.



Data Sources

■ Connected Customer ■ State of Marketing



Customer Data is Key to Personalization

A unified view of customer data is great for business. High-performing B2B marketers are more capable of using customer data to create relevant, personalized experiences for their buyers. For many B2B brands, personalization has been a major catalyst for both customer advocacy and brand building.

Percentage of B2B marketers who say personalization improves:

Brand building*



Customer advocacy*

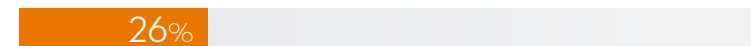


High-performing B2B marketers are **9.4x** more likely than underperformers to be completely satisfied with their ability to use data to create more relevant experiences.

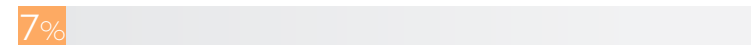
High performers



Moderate performers



Underperformers



**Includes answers of major or moderate improvement*



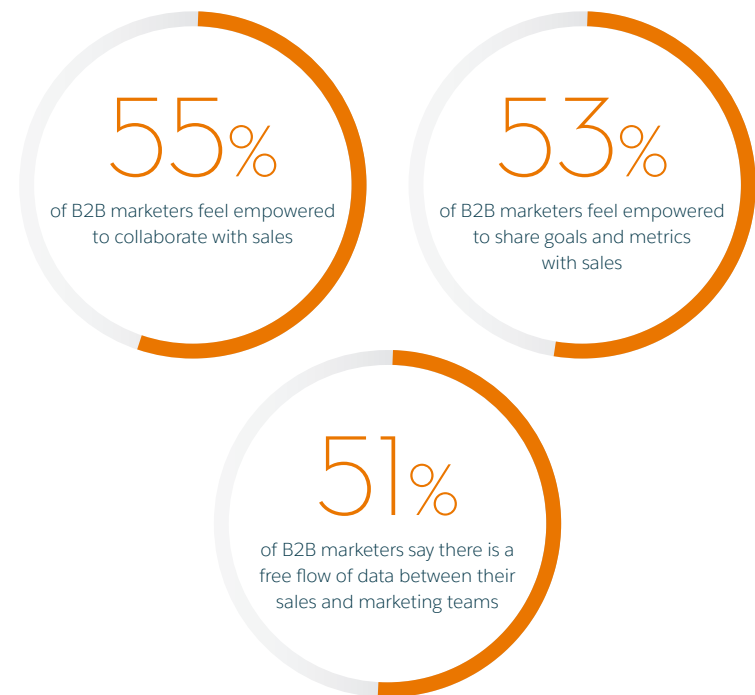
CHAPTER 2

Marketing and Sales Alignment Engages B2B Buyers

Data shows that more than half of B2B marketing teams feel empowered to collaborate on projects, meet common goals and metrics, and share customer data with their sales teams. This is great news, as sales and marketing alignment is key to successfully engaging customers in real time – a top priority *and* a top challenge for B2B marketers.

Data Source

■ State of Marketing



Real-time lead engagement capabilities help sales and marketing teams work more efficiently and win more business. The majority of B2B sales teams who receive real-time, automated opportunity alerts say those notifications make them more efficient. However, only 34% of sales teams currently receive such alerts – so there's room to improve. Most business buyers also say that sales teams' awareness of marketing initiatives is a factor in winning their business.

High-performing B2B sales teams are 2.1x more likely than underperformers to collaborate with marketing to understand leads:

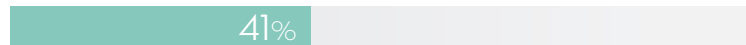
High performers



Moderate performers



Underperformers



*Includes answers of **critically** or **very** important

Data Sources

■ Connected Customer ■ State of Sales

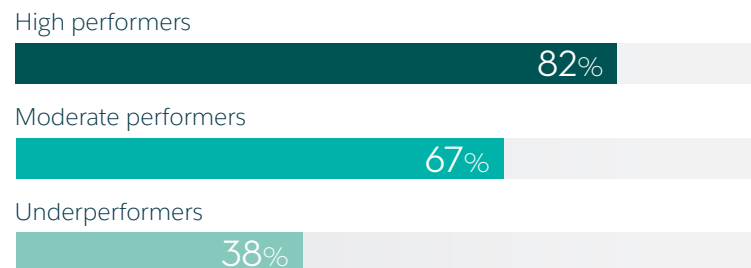


CHAPTER 3

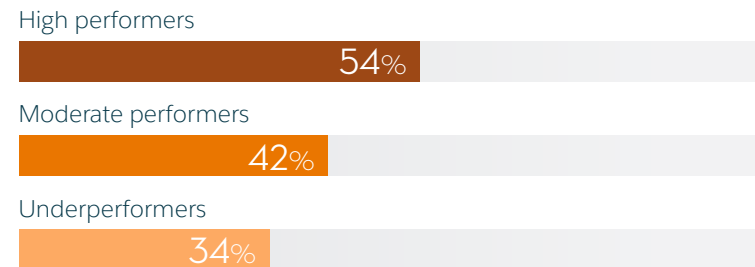
High-Performing Teams Leverage Account-Based Marketing

Designed to focus attention on high-value customer accounts, account-based marketing (ABM) programs are inherently collaborative efforts shared between marketing and sales teams. Compared to their underperforming competition, high-performing B2B marketing teams are more likely to collaborate effectively with sales teams on ABM programs. The same is true of sales teams – high performers are more likely to execute jointly with marketing on ABM programs. Citing the value of ABM programs, one-third of B2B marketers are currently planning to build them on their existing marketing automation platforms.

High-performing B2B sales teams are 2.2x more likely than underperformers to execute ABM programs jointly with marketing teams:



Top B2B marketing teams are 1.6x more likely than underperformers to collaborate with sales teams on ABM programs:



One-third of marketers will build ABM programs on their existing MAPs.

Data Sources

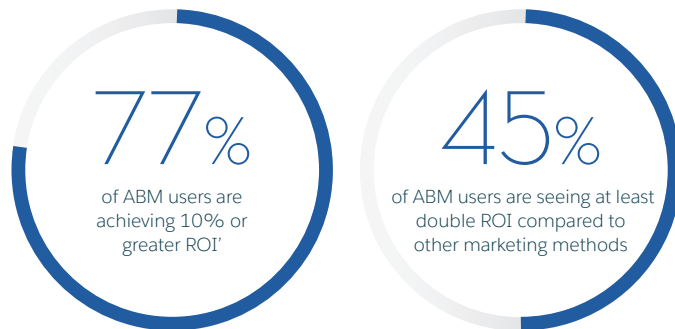
■ State of Sales ■ State of Marketing

■ Forrester
Predictions 2019: B2B Marketing And Sales, October 2018

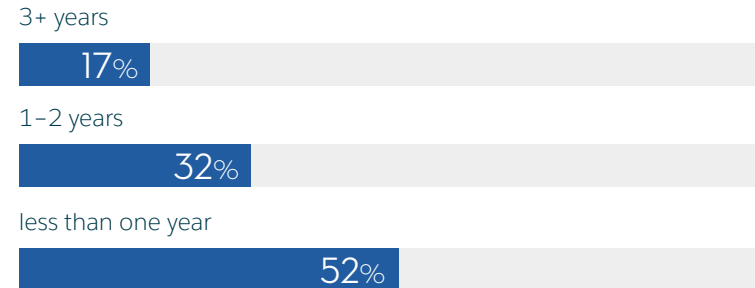
Among B2B marketers using ABM, the programs now account for more than a quarter of their total marketing budgets. This expense is worth it, as nearly half of ABM users say the programs deliver higher ROI than comparable marketing methods. Plus, the best may be yet to come, as the majority of marketers using ABM have only had their programs in place for less than a year.

ABM now accounts for **28%** of total user marketing budgets.

Percentage of ABM users who are experiencing the following:

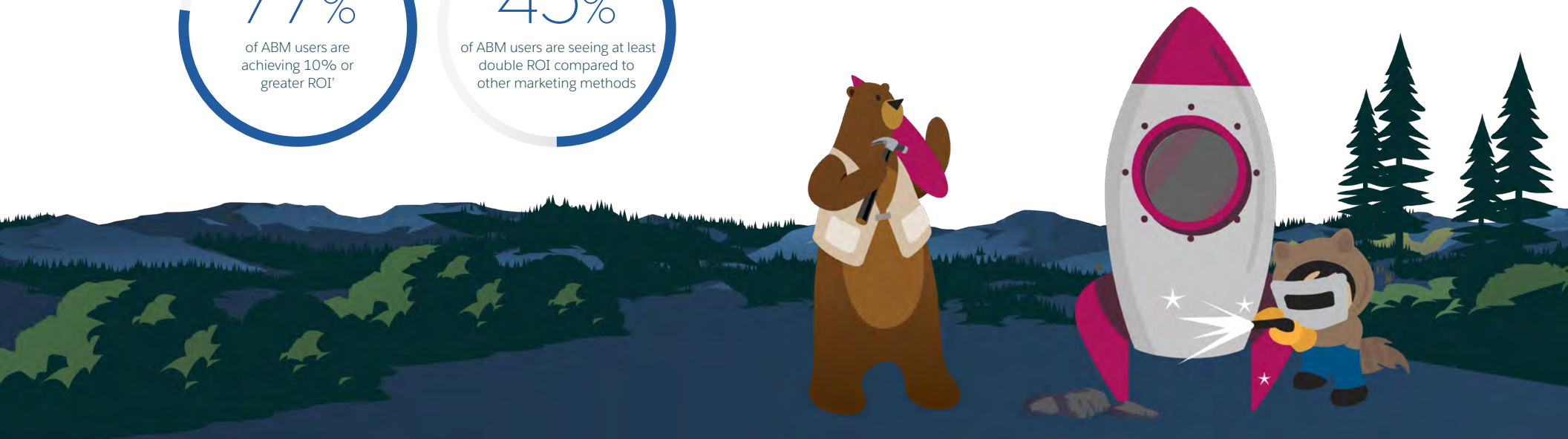


Percentage of ABM users who have had their program for:



Data Source

ITSMA



As it's still early days for many ABM programs, some users report certain challenges – most of which have to do with properly using data to deliver personalized experiences.

ABM challenges faced by B2B marketers:

Getting data and reports to track results

35%

Personalizing marketing to key account contacts

34%

Getting adequate budget to support programs and resources

30%

Developing customizable, scalable campaign assets

30%

Educating sales on the process and value of ABM

26%

Keeping up with demand from sales teams requesting ABM

22%

Getting buy-in from sales account teams

18%

Agreeing on the selection of ABM accounts

18%

Justifying the ABM costs and proving ROI

17%

Selecting marketing technology tools that best support ABM

12%

Integrating marketing technology tools to support ABM

12%

Hiring ABM marketers with the right experience, skills, and talent

10%

Differentiating themselves from competition at the account level

10%

Data Source

■ ITSMA



There are many opportunities for ABM users to adopt additional marketing technology platforms to bolster their ABM programs. Some, like lead management and digital advertising, are already popular. Others, like social listening and chatbots, are just beginning to gain traction.

ABM technology platforms used by B2B marketers:

Marketing automation for lead management and nurturing



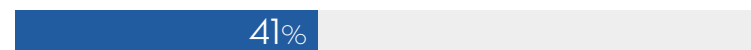
Digital advertising and retargeting



Insights to gather market, account, and stakeholder intelligence



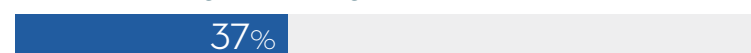
Website personalization to serve relevant content



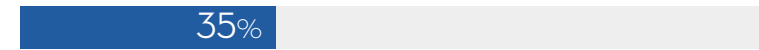
Lead to account matching



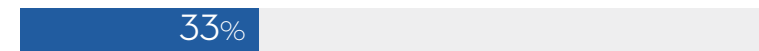
Dimensional mail to integrate personalized direct mail into digital marketing



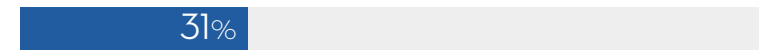
Contact data or predictive vendors to find relevant contacts at accounts



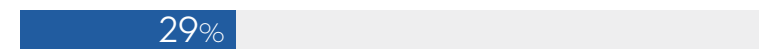
Predictive analytics tools for account selection



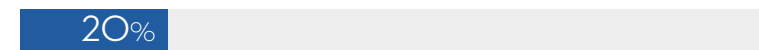
Content management



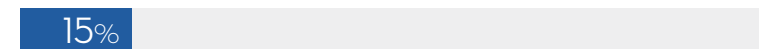
Business intelligence or ABM data aggregators to measure results by account



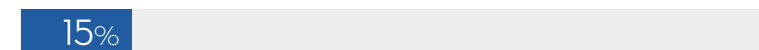
Social listening



Orchestration for intelligent account plans across teams and channels



Chatbots or conversational interfaces



Data Source

■ ITSMA



Many ABM users see opportunities to further integrate marketing technology tools. Predictive analytics for account selection, website personalization, and account-specific data aggregators currently rank among the favorite options.

ABM users plan to adopt the following applications in the next 12–18 months:

Predictive analytics tools for account selection

32%

Website personalization to serve relevant content

29%

Orchestration for intelligent account plans across teams and channels

26%

Business intelligence or ABM data aggregators to measure results by account

22%

Chat bots or conversational interfaces

17%

Insights to gather market, account, and stakeholder intelligence

13%

Contact data or predictive vendors to find relevant contacts at accounts

13%

Content management

12%

Social listening

12%

Marketing automation for lead management and nurturing

9%

Digital advertising and retargeting

9%

Lead to account matching

7%

Dimensional mail to integrate personalized direct mail into digital marketing

7%

Data Source

ITSMA



Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the shiniest new tools in the ABM toolbox. Today's marketers are already looking to invest in AI to boost the future impact of their ABM programs.

ABM will remain as much an art as a science, but AI has great potential to streamline the data-heavy elements of ABM strategy and program development.

"Artificial intelligence (AI) will give us the tools to make ABM faster, smarter, and more scalable. No, we can't deliver human-like conversation with bots—yet. But technology will help us manage and manipulate the avalanche of data we collect while giving us time to focus on the more strategic and creative aspects of our jobs. AI will also make us more efficient as budgets get squeezed and resources kept constant."

— **Bev Burgess, Senior VP, ITSMA**



CHAPTER 4

AI, VR, and AR Offer Innovative Engagement Opportunities

B2B marketers are increasingly adopting AI to power the personalized, “Amazon-like” customer experiences now expected by business buyers.

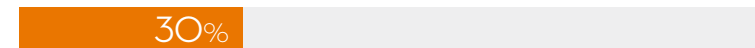
In the past year, AI usage amongst B2B marketers has grown 23%. The majority of these marketers are using AI within their marketing platforms to optimize mid-cycle engagement.

More than **20%** of marketing platforms will use AI to optimize mid-cycle engagement.

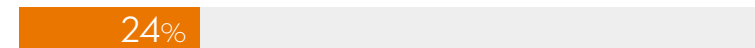
Business buyers who expect personalized, “Amazon-like” customer experiences



B2B marketers who are using AI in 2018



B2B marketers who were using AI in 2017*



**Note: 2017 data is based on responses of “currently use extensively” on a four-point scale, whereas 2018 data is based on responses of “currently use” on a three-point scale.*

Data Sources

■ Forrester
Predictions 2019: B2B Marketing And Sales, October 2018

■ Connected Customer ■ State of Marketing



B2B marketing leaders have been contemplating the implications of AI for the past several years.

Despite the growing popularity of AI, no dominant use case for the technology has emerged. This may simply be because use cases for AI are as dynamic and varied as the technology itself.

Data Source

■ State of Marketing

Ways in which B2B marketers use AI:

Facilitate online experiences with offline customer data

61%

Drive next best offers in real time

61%

Improve customer segmentation

60%

Create dynamic websites and landing pages

59%

Personalize overall customer journeys

58%

Facilitate offline experiences with online customer data

56%

Personalize channel experiences

56%

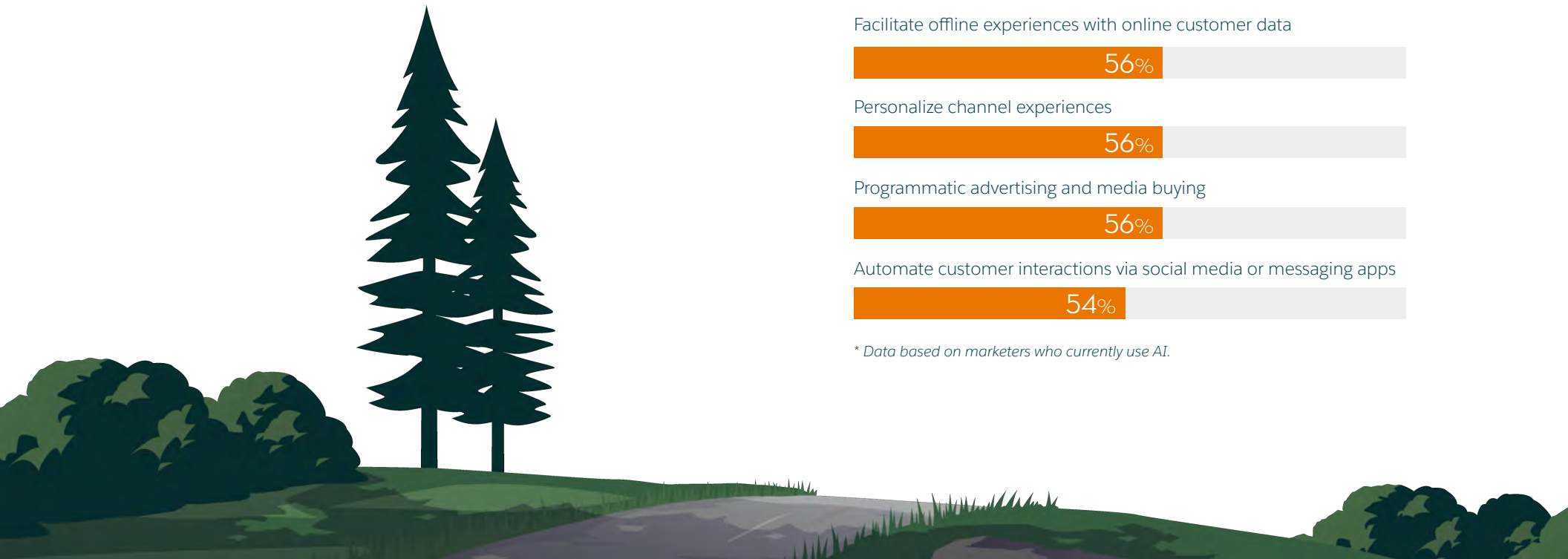
Programmatic advertising and media buying

56%

Automate customer interactions via social media or messaging apps

54%

* Data based on marketers who currently use AI.



B2B marketers are also beginning to use AI technology beyond their marketing automation platforms. Almost half of B2B marketers use connected devices, and one-third have added voice-activated personal assistants (like Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa) to their toolkits.

More than one-quarter of B2B marketers also use virtual reality (VR); which allows users to interact with digital environments, or augmented reality (AR); which projects objects on physical environments. For a relatively minor initial expense, VR and AR solutions can help B2B companies in many industries win business and close deals.

B2B marketers using the following technologies in 2018:

Voice-activated personal assistants

33%

Virtual or augmented reality

28%

B2B marketers using connected devices:

2018

45%

2017*

30%

**Note: 2017 data is based on responses of "currently use extensively" on a four-point scale, whereas 2018 data is based on responses of "currently use" on a three-point scale*

"VR and AR offer the most help to B2B marketers whose offerings typically share one or more of the following characteristics: They are expensive to ship, difficult to visualize, or hard to comprehend."

"Siemens is using AR to expand the range of offerings the company can showcase at events. [...] Dell EMC is using VR to enable prospects to see how its equipment can dynamically reconfigure a data center based on changing demands — a benefit it could not demo with physical equipment because neither the data nor the hardware reconfiguration processes are visible."

Data Source

State of Marketing Forrester

Virtual And Augmented Reality For B2B Marketers, September 2017



CHAPTER 5

Data Drives Intelligent B2B Marketing Decisions

Data enables personalized customer experiences, informs creative messaging, and allows organizations to measure performance. Put simply, it's what drives intelligent decision-making in marketing, at every level.

Approximately half of B2B marketers currently measure their success with analytics – but there are many other exciting opportunities for B2B marketers to make use of data.

50% of B2B marketers measure success and ROI with marketing analytics.

Data Sources

■ State of Marketing



Most B2B marketers track revenue growth, which is the classic benchmark for business performance. However, data can also show B2B marketers other useful information about their campaigns, customers, channels, and spending.

Metrics tracked by B2B marketers:

Revenue growth



Sales effectiveness



Customer retention rates



Customer satisfaction metrics like NPS, CSAT, and SPS



Customer acquisition rates



Marketing ROI



Web traffic and analytics



Metrics and ratios for marketing and sales qualified leads



Marketing tactic ROI



Customer referral rates and volume



Cost per lead



Social media analytics



Customer acquisition cost



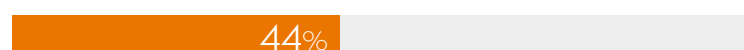
Digital engagement rates



Mobile analytics



Lifetime customer value



Data Source

■ State of Marketing

Conclusion

Through marketing and sales alignment, AI-powered ABM, and dynamic data usage, B2B marketers everywhere are finding creative and innovative ways to deliver the personalized buying experiences that their customers have come to expect. In turn, this newly personalized marketing approach has led to increased ROI, customer advocacy, and brand building for companies in a variety of industries.

To achieve true success in B2B marketing today, you've got to use a mix of digital technologies to anticipate the needs of your buyers, and exceed their expectations for every brand interaction and purchase experience. With sales and marketing teams in all industries moving swiftly to embrace digital transformation, the B2B space will only become more connected and personalized – well into the future.

If you're looking for ways to infuse your B2B marketing strategies with the latest trends, read our e-book showcasing [7 Inspiring B2B Marketing Campaigns](#).



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