

# B2B Marketing Reflections & Predictions for 2023



# B2B Marketing 2023: Redefining customer engagement once again



Looking at customer engagement, digital transformation and the ROI of marketing

Customers have been and will continue to be the most important asset for any business. Yet, the way we interact with our customers and buyers in B2B has changed tremendously over the years. From bombarding and targeting them with our information in the past to engaging and building relationships with them today.

It is time to redefine what we mean when we talk about customers and customer engagement. Some would say it's about customer experience, others talk about buyer or customer-centric marketing or sales approaches. Whichever words you use, it is time to redefine customer engagement when planning for the future, whether for awareness, revenues and/or brand loyalty.

Business planning in general will shift in 2023. An economic downturn and slower spending will make planning more difficult and yet there seems to be optimism. How can we translate this to marketing and sales? And in which baskets should we place our eggs? That's what this article is about. By exploring predicted trends for 2023 we see the future of B2B marketing and sales revolve around three main areas: customer engagement, digital transformation and proving marketing ROI.

Our prediction and advice for marketing and sales planning is based on our daily conversations with B2B marketing and sales leaders, as well as insights from research leaders such as Gartner, Forrester, Salesforce and the Content Marketing Institute.

**The top investments to defend  
and ideally increase in 2023 are:**

“Customer insights and  
engagement, and technologies that  
improve customer experience and  
reduce costs.”

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**2023 Planning Isn't Business As Usual,  
Forrester 2022**

# What's in this report?

Click one of the items below to jump to your chapter of interest directly.



<b>1</b>	<b>3x3 takeaways</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Customer engagement as our starting point</b> Customer engagement & customer experience Personalisation as a game changer in B2B	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Digital transformation</b> The evolution of B2B buying and digital commerce Digital channels Digital content	<b>18</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>ROI of marketing and ROI of customer experience</b> ROI of marketing ROI of customer experience	<b>24</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>To conclude</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>About SPOTONVISION</b>	<b>30</b>

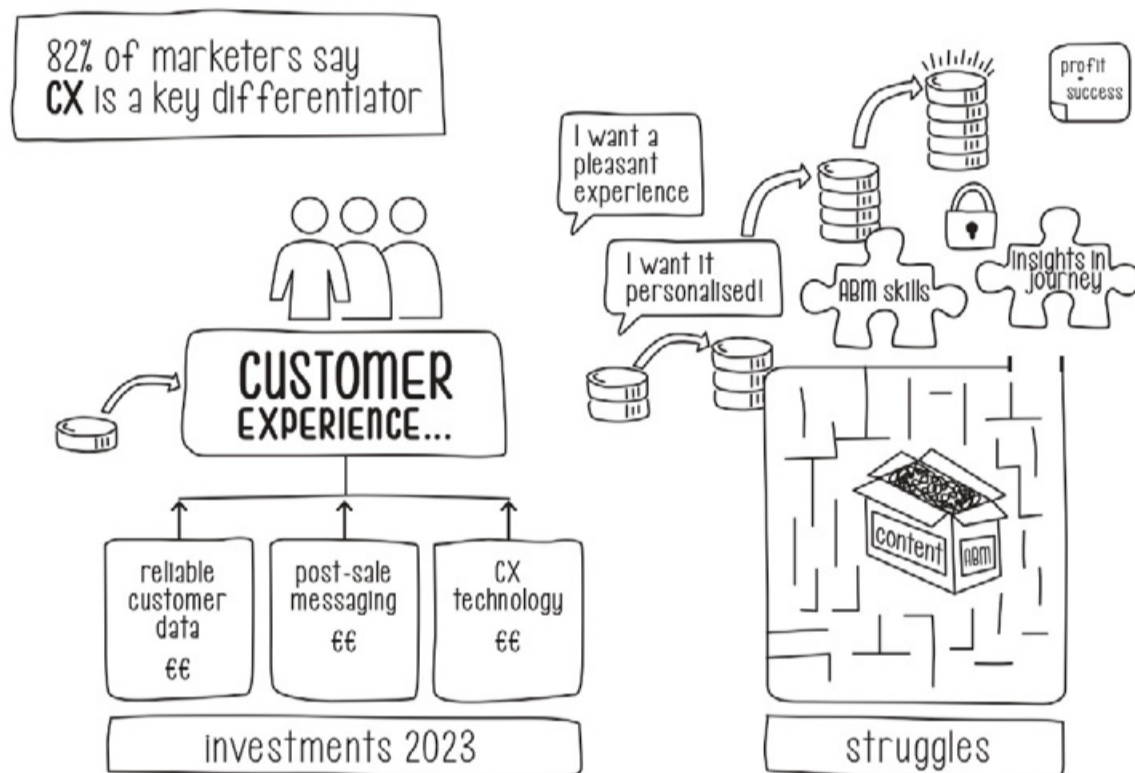
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# 3x3 takeaways

## 3x3 takeaways

Looking at successful marketing and sales in 2023, we need to embrace anything that helps redefine customer engagement. In the end it is your buyer or customer that will choose you to be their preferred supplier or partner. Bearing this in mind, look closely at these takeaways when planning for the next year:

### 1 B2B Prediction 2023: The Customer



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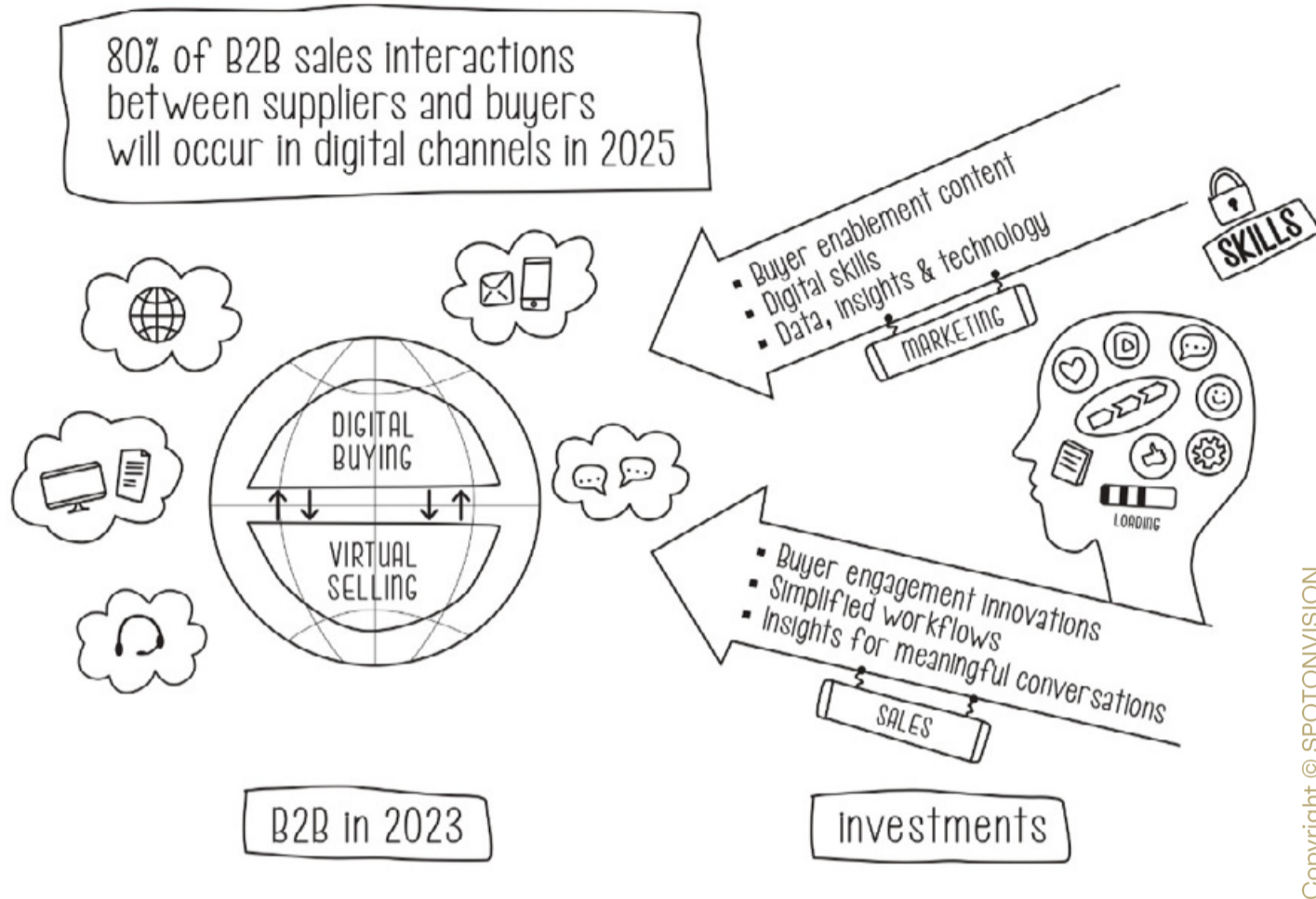
#### The Customer: Invest in CX, Customer engagement and Personalisation

##### How?

1. **By initiating customer programmes**, including customer data, post-sale messaging and customer technology.
2. **Start or continue to collect customer insights**, including customer journey insights, what touchpoints matter most? Understand your customer and buyer personas.
3. **Implement personalisation** in your content and all your ABM programmes as much as possible.

## 2

## B2B Prediction 2023: Digital transformation



**Digital transformation: Invest in digital commerce, digital channels, digital content**

### How?

1. Allow **technology** to help and data to inform or change decisions.
2. Add **marketers with digital skills** to your team as you will need them more than ever.
3. **Create and optimise your digital content**, and make sure you help Sales use it. Sales enablement, playbooks, process improvement are needed. Evaluate what works best for you, don't rule out in-person events as they seem to deliver good results.

### 3

## B2B Prediction 2023: ROI of Marketing & CX

80% of organisations for which great CX is not part of brand identity will demand proof that spending on CX improvement is necessary

### ROI of WHAT?



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### ROI of marketing and ROI of Customer experience: Define the right metrics

#### How?

1. **Collaborate with Sales** and review your KPIs to metrics around marketing efficiency, influenced deals and deal sizes, account goals and meaningful interactions. Before defining your KPIs start by asking the right question on what you need to prove.
2. **Use customer journey insights** and customer personas to get the basics right.
3. **Make your CX programme measurable**, e.g. by using transactional data to demonstrate customer satisfaction.



2

**Customer  
engagement  
as our  
starting point**

## Customer engagement as our starting point

Let's start with an outside-in approach by focusing on the viewpoint of the customer. As a result of economic uncertainty, inflation and expected recession, B2B growth strategies will be forced to focus on retention, cross-sell, and upsell revenues. Growing revenues within the existing customer base requires not only great products and services, but also strong customer relationships that bring value to both parties.

Customers should always be our starting point. Customer centricity is not new, we have seen a rise of a customer-centric ecosystem for years. This trend was accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic when especially retail was forced to rethink their approach. They had to turn to an omnichannel strategy, personalised, digital and in-store.

In B2B we saw a similar change, from generic marketing, communications and sales to a **more focused and more omnichannel, personalised and customer-centric approach**. In 2023 this shift will continue.

Let's have a closer look at the 'how':

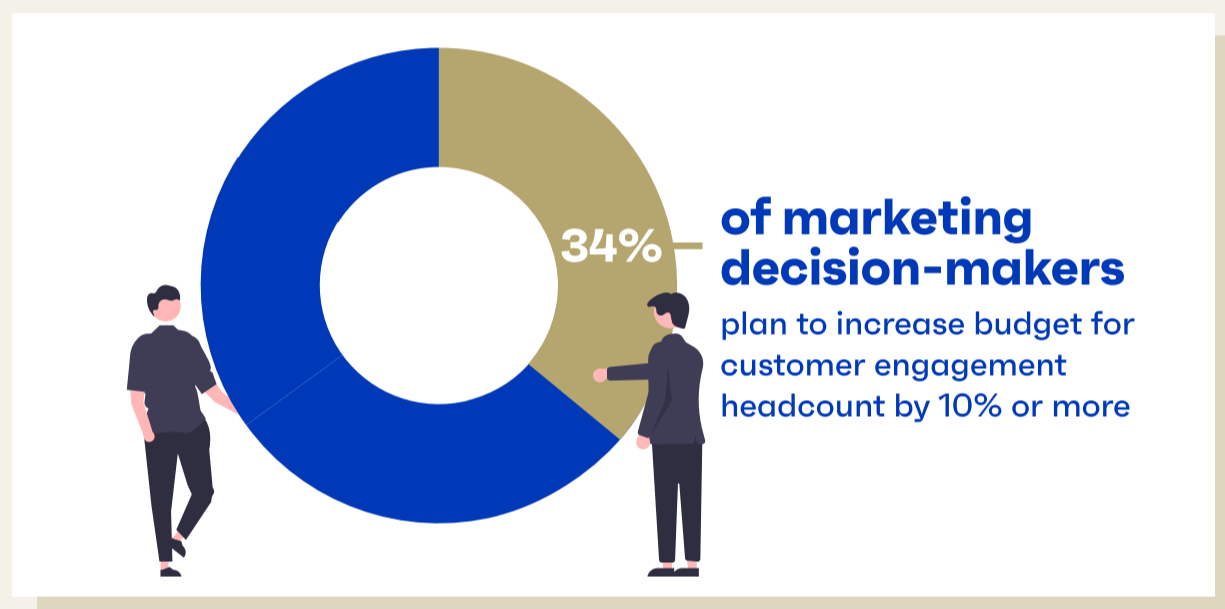
- We need to **prioritise our customer**.
- And, in order to improve customer experience and engagement, we need to **start personalising**.



## Customer engagement & customer experience

Customer engagement refers to all communications between a customer and a company. It is about communications, being proactive, building relationships. Focusing on customer engagement is many times leading to growth at existing accounts as well as more loyal customers.

Looking ahead, B2B organisations must invest in and support pre- and post-sale customer engagement systematically to retain customers, grow existing accounts, and create advocates and brand loyalty.



"3 Trends That Will Shape B2B CMOs' 2023 Planning", Forrester 2022.

The term customer experience refers to more than just communications, it is the sum of all touchpoints a customer has with a company. Customer service, sales conversations, brand and design greatly influence customer experience.

### Customer experience is a key differentiator in B2B

and according to most sources we expect to see customer experience investments in 3 areas:

1. Reliable customer data
2. Post-sale messaging
3. Technology that relates to improving the customer experience

## 1. Reliable customer data

Customers have more choices than ever; for businesses reaching the right accounts and providing the right experience will therefore become more difficult. Relevant and reliable customer data are needed to sharpen marketing and sales campaigning in a more targeted way.

According to Forrester's Marketing Survey, 2022:

*"B2B marketing decision-makers regularly include metrics in their CMO dashboard that include: annualized customer value, customer profitability, customer wallet share, renewal/retention rates, and the number of engaged users. Doing so requires an investment in culling and analyzing customer data for a complete customer view."*



"Planning Guide 2023: B2B Marketing Executives", Forrester 2022.

Not all CMOs however plan to invest in customer data.

According to Gartner:

*"By 2023, 60% of CMOs will slash the size of their marketing analytics department in half because of failed promised improvements. However, with the disappearance of third-party cookies, owned and enriched customer data become more important than ever before."*

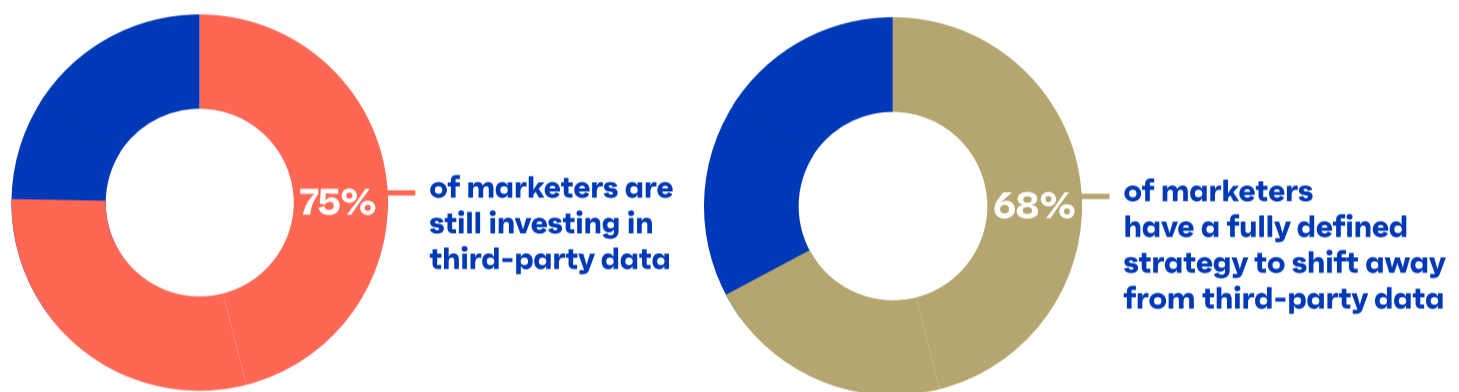


"Gartner Survey Reveals Marketing Analytics are Only Influencing 53% of Decisions", Gartner 2022.

And, recent research by Salesforce shows that 68% of marketers have a fully defined strategy to shift away from third-party data.

Investing in a customer data strategy seems to be the only way forward to fuel marketing and sales efficiency and achieve a new level of customer engagement and customer experience.

### Marketers continue shift from third-party data



The State of Salesforce 2022-23, IBM Expert View 2022.

## 2. Post-sale messaging

Our next investment should be in sharpening our messaging to address evolving customer needs. We need to look at post-sales experience messaging.

We have all heard Philip Kotler's:



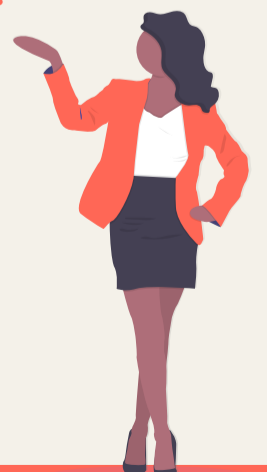
***“Maintaining customer loyalty is 5 to 7 times cheaper than acquiring new customers.”***

In practice, this means that a customer's buyer journey with your company does not end when the deal is closed.

Through post-sales actions, you can build loyalty that leads to recurring purchases. We see a great role for marketing to support account and sales managers with sales enablement, post sales messaging and content.

***“82% of high-performing marketers say customer experience is a key competitive differentiator and feel confident that they're getting closer to cracking the code.”***

“State of Marketing”, Salesforce 2022.



### 3. Technology that relates to improving the customer experience

And finally, we are more likely to invest in technologies in 2023 that will improve customer experience and reduce costs. A customer experience software platform example is a technology solution that allows you to measure, manage and improve digital customer experience.

These platforms are mostly used in B2C environments where businesses deal with millions of customers and where customer support is key to the business. B2B however has always been looking to learn from B2C practices when it comes to customer experience and will certainly follow.

Apart from improving CX, the same technologies can also be used to reduce costs directly. Investments in self-service portals or e-commerce platforms for example can offer **two advantages: improving customer experience** as well as **reducing costs**.



## Personalisation as a game changer in B2B

We have been adding names to email blasts for years, so personalisation is not new. But it is changing, and B2B companies need to pay attention. Our buyers are exposed to more information than ever before. They can look up anything online and don't have to take anything at face value. Coupled with the pandemic's impact on our social lives, this has given rise to the experience economy.

Personalisation is about offering memorable and tailored customer experiences rather than a generic, one-size-fits-all approach. Recent research shows that B2B marketing organisations are allocating an average of 15% of their budget to account-based marketing (ABM), emphasizing the value of personalised messaging and engagement that has spread from B2C to B2B strategies.

"State of Marketing", Salesforce 2022.

Personalisation is directly connected to the challenges of content marketers and ABM marketers. CMI/Marketing Profs see a struggle of B2B organisations to create content that appeals to different stages of the buyer's journey.



### B2B Organizations' Current Content Marketing Challenges

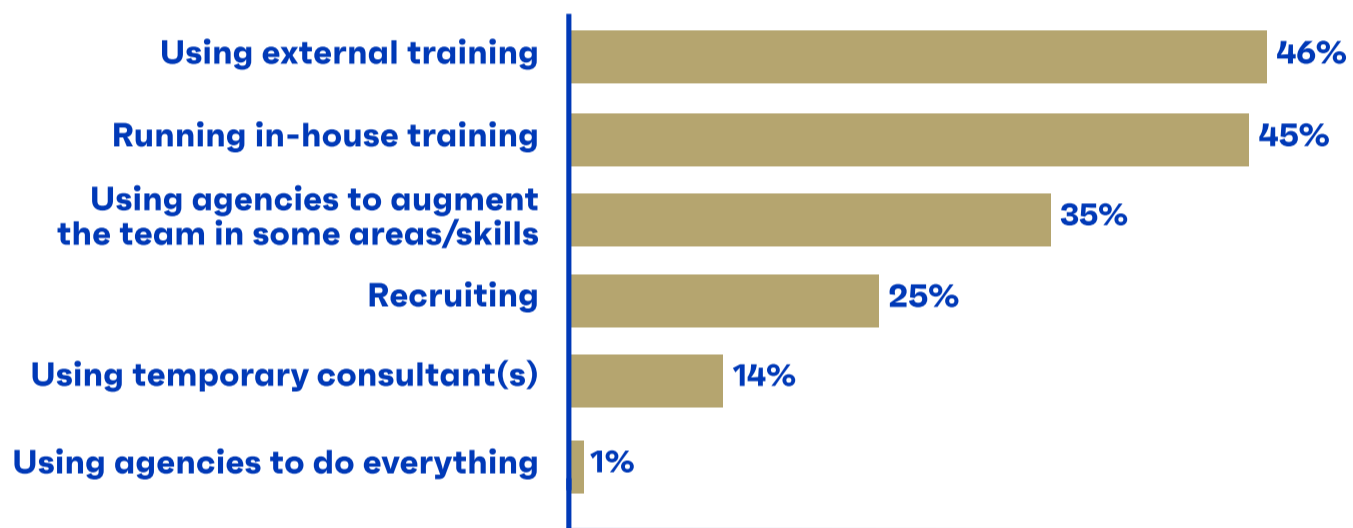


"13th Annual Content Marketing Survey", Content Marketing Institute/Marketing Profs 2022.



ABM Census 2022 research shows that just 20% of marketers believe that they have the relevant know-how in house to confidently operate ABM. Marketing teams use external expertise to plan and operate account-based marketing programmes: 46% use an agency for training and 45% organize in-house training. In general agencies and consultants are used a lot.

## How are you gaining the ABM skills you need?



“ABM Census 2022: Key stats and trends exploring the ongoing evolution of account-based marketing”, B2BMarketing.net 2022.

A shift to account-based marketing will force us to take personalisation efforts seriously. How else can we stand out from our competitors? In the meantime, deep research into buyer behaviour, buyer personas and buying groups and accounts is needed to devise a plan of approach for an effective personalised content strategy.

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# Digital trans- formation

# Digital transformation

Let's have a closer look at the digital transformation and the use of data and digital in our daily marketing and sales practice.

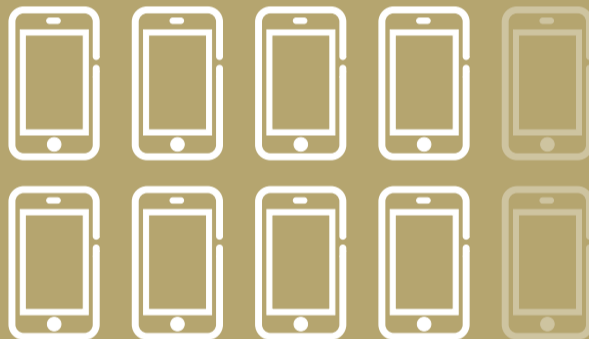
According to Gartner, the market is growing rapidly with the rush to virtual selling due to the continuing effects of the pandemic:



***“80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels in 2025.”***

## Gartner expects that by 2025 ...

80%



of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels

60%



of B2B sales organisations will transition from experience- and intuition-based selling to data-driven selling, merging their sales process, applications, data and analytics into a single operational practice

“Sales Transformation: The Future of Sales in 2025”, Gartner 2022.

## The evolution of B2B buying and digital commerce

More and more B2B buyers prefer a rep-free purchase experience, indicating they are embracing online research and digital commerce buying. However, B2B buyers struggle to make high-quality purchases. This struggle is caused by factors such as environmental uncertainty, organisational change, fractured group buying dynamics, and exposure to conflicting information.

Gartner recommends the following to successfully evolve a sales strategy:



***“Bring together sales and marketing leaders to set a multi-channel strategy for customer learning paths, including account-based campaigns and digital sales playbooks.”***

“Sales Transformation: The Future of Sales in 2025”, Gartner 2022.

By using digital sales tools for real-time collaboration, Sales can improve customer engagement. Marketing can help sales reps with support tools and buyer enablement content to use in conversations with their buyers. This way Sales can help buyers learn more effectively and make confident decisions.

To support this shift to multi-experience buying, sales teams will need **additional skills and technology capabilities in 3 critical areas:**

- **Improving buyer engagement** to help sellers improve customer engagement with innovative methods for meetings.
- **Simplified workflows** for automating time-consuming tasks.
- **Data-driven seller actions** to help understand and activate data (e.g. insights for meaningful conversations).



As the image below shows, there are many possible technologies that support virtual selling, and as Gartner says:



***“By investing in technologies closely aligned with the speed and complexity of typical transactions, CSOs will improve the satisfaction, adoption and benefits of virtual selling technology.”***

## Virtual Selling Tech Stack

Essential Technologies

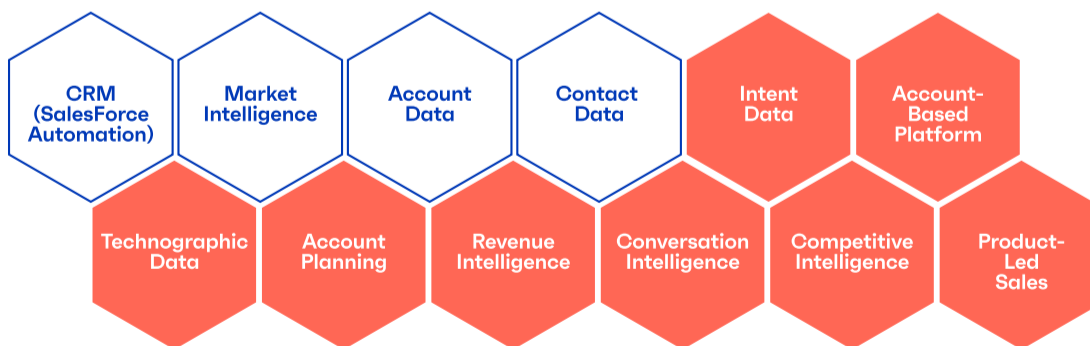
### Buyer Engagement



### Simplified Workflows



### Data to Action

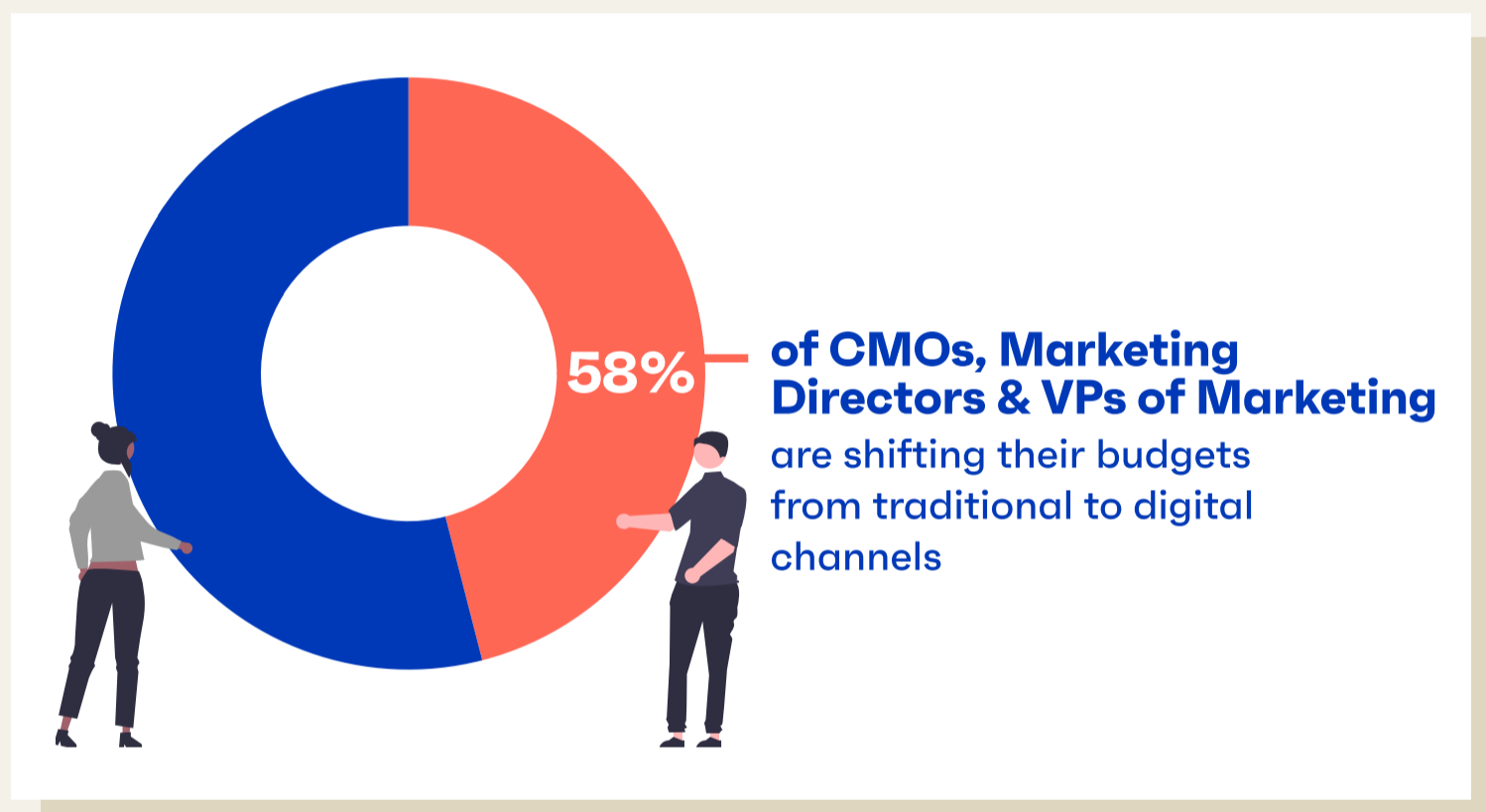


“Gartner Predicts 65% of B2B Sales Organizations Will Transition from Intuition-Based to Data-Driven Decision Making by 2026”, Gartner 2022.

## Digital channels

Today we can interact with our customers and buyers 24/7. Digital channels save us time and money, whether used by Marketing or by Sales.

According to 'The Marketing Evolution – Leadership, Transformation, Skills, Challenges & the Future' by the Digital Marketing Institute, 58% of CMOs, Marketing Directors and VPs of Marketing are shifting their budgets from traditional to digital channels in a rush to gain visibility online.



This shift to digital has created a greater demand for marketers with digital skills to make the most of those budgets. We see the same happening in Sales, they are also headed for a digital future. As mentioned before sales teams will likewise need additional skills and technology capabilities.

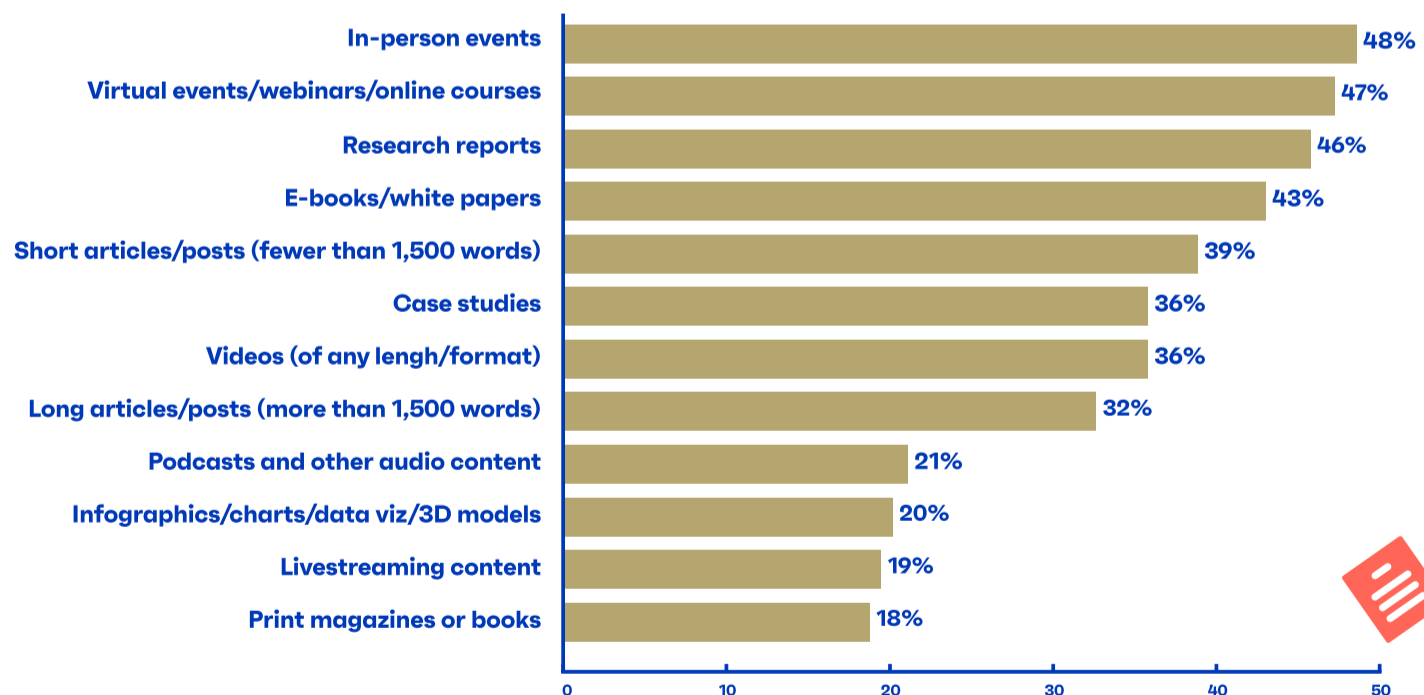
When moving to digital channels though, buyer and customer data play an important role and it is more important than ever to let data help you make informed decisions and choosing the right digital channels.

## Digital content

We see a growing trend of digital content becoming more popular. Short articles and video continue to be the most used content types by B2B marketers. The use of videos increased to 75% from 66% the previous year.

When looking however at what produces the best results, we see that in-person events are on the rise again, and they seem to deliver the best results over anything digital. In-person events can help reach multiple goals, whether to create deep connections, organic networking and showing your brand in a more intimate way. At the same time, and for different reasons, virtual events made a big leap in the last 2 years as well. Virtual events are usually cheaper to organise and have a better reach.

### B2B Content Assets That Produced the Best Result in Last 12 Months



“13th Annual Content Marketing Survey”, Content Marketing Institute/MarketingProfs 2022.

4

**ROI of  
marketing  
and ROI of  
customer  
experience**



# ROI of marketing and ROI of customer experience

How do we demonstrate marketing efficiency in 2023? With the complexity of B2B sales in mind, this has never been a question with a straightforward answer. And it is too simplistic to attribute deal success to only one or several marketing or customer experience activities.

## ROI of marketing

There are many ROI metrics possible, but it is vital to start with the right questions you want to see answered. There are several options for questions though. Answers to the ROI question can vary based on the actual question: Do you need to prove marketing contribution? Increase efficiency of spend? Identify the most efficient campaigns? Whichever question is asked you will most likely come up with different metrics. Food for thought!

With the rise of ABM we see new types of KPIs coming up. As account-based marketing and sales force us to look at metrics such as insights in stakeholders, buying groups, as well as influenced deals and deal sizes. Ideally marketing looks at how they contribute to efficient campaigning, meaningful interactions, and customer engagement.

Marketing ROI will be addressed in the years to come. And we must keep in mind that a growth mindset is all about integrating the domains of marketing and sales.

For 2023, we will see a shift to closer collaboration between Marketing and Sales. They must work together on driving positive outcomes around new KPIs. Programmes around buyer journey insights, account-based marketing and sales enablement will help to increase the marketing ROI.

## ROI of customer experience

What about the ROI of customer experience? Another hot topic on the agenda for 2023.

Forrester claims that the estimated 80% of organisations for which great CX is not part of their brand identity will finally demand proof that spending on CX improvement is necessary. And some of these organisations will dissolve CX teams that can't show the right numbers.



“Predictions 2022: CX Teams Thrive Or Wither Based On What They Do Now”, Forrester 2022.

That's bad news for the 54% of CX teams that are unable to prove the ROI of their projects. In contrast, the 20% of organisations that embrace great CX as part of their brand identity will reward CX teams that can indeed show a positive ROI.

Gartner surveyed hundreds of CX leaders and uncovered the practices most associated with CX success. They looked at tools, practices and metrics used by the CX programmes that most improve customer satisfaction, loyalty and advocacy. Whether related to marketing, sales or customer experience programmes, the main take-aways to achieve a better ROI are:

- **Use your Voice of the Customer** and transactional data to demonstrate how customer satisfaction drives more retention, growth, margin and referrals.
- **Evaluate your team** and employee rewards to ensure they are driving the desired customer-centric behaviour.
- **Map your customer journeys** from end to end and from the outside in, taking care to understand the expectations and perceptions of customers at each stage.
- **Develop customer personas** that supports customer-centric decision making.

“2022 Key Take-Aways: Harness Marketing's Power and Purpose”, Gartner 2022.

4

**To conclude**

## To conclude

I hope you read the deep dive and feel inspired to review your plans. Are you ready to embrace anything that helps redefine customer engagement?

Do you want to get started on planning for the future? Don't hesitate to reach out. SPOTONVISION has a great track record in supporting B2B companies with successful strategic and pragmatic marketing and sales services.

**Yes, I would like to contact  
a B2B-expert**



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6

# About SPOTONVISION

# About SPOTONVISION

From strategy to campaigns and marketing technology. Ever since 2006 we have helped leading companies in B2B. For customers such as DPG Media, Google, Salesforce, Schiphol, Signify and T-Mobile we develop meaningful conversations. Interactions leading to growth of people and businesses. By adding meaning to metrics, we build relationships that last, one interaction at a time.

This way we create seamless B2B experiences that are truly B2Me.

By initiating the B2B Marketing Forum and B2B Marketing Awards we have added an extra dimension to the B2B community.

Our passionate team of ambitious consultants use knowledge, creativity and engagement to achieve their goals. Together with our customers and partners we shape the future of B2B.

[www.spotonvision.com](http://www.spotonvision.com)

**Seamless B2B experiences.  
Truly B2Me.**

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