

# ICXI -POST newsbriefing

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## Introduction From The President



Is the B2B world the elephant in the room when it comes to the customer and the employee experience?

The size of the global market for B2B business is variously estimated to be around \$20 trillion growing to around \$32 trillion by 2032. The B2B market is estimated to be five times larger than the B2C market yet much of the media activity seems to focus on B2C.

So, is B2B customer experience better or worse than B2C? Are there lessons that one sector can learn from the other? As most people who are responsible for buying and selling in the B2B world are also ordinary customers in the B2C side of their lives how do the experiences compare?

According to Qualtrics in **The Complete Guide to B2B Customer Experience**

*According to our research, 65% of B2B customers say their B2B experiences don't match their customer experiences – and with 96% of customers saying their experience affects whether they'll repurchase, it's key to get your strategy right.*

*Creating a CX strategy that works is a multifaceted process. Your B2B customers are discrete, making your understanding of them essential for a CX strategy that will pay dividends. In-depth research – and bespoke action – will help to flesh out a CX strategy that can adapt to challenges and new requirements.*

The key factors that define the B2B market may provide some clues about how CX and EX strategies should be developed. The B2B (Business-to-Business) market is characterised by several key factors that differentiate it from the B2C (Business-to-Consumer) market.

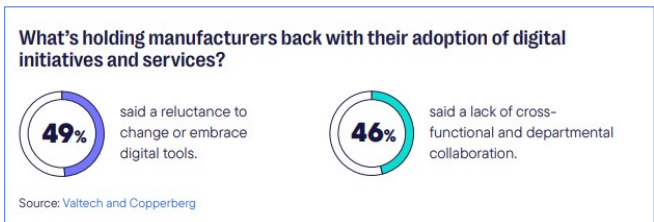
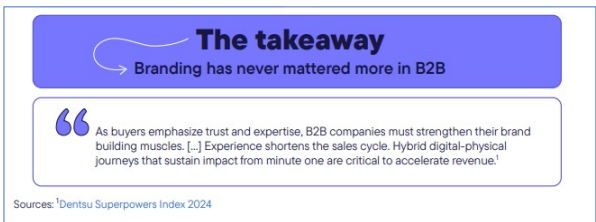
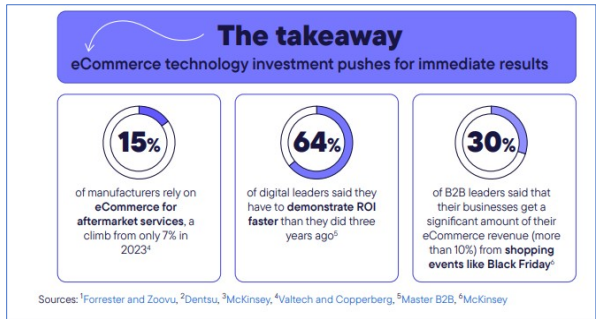
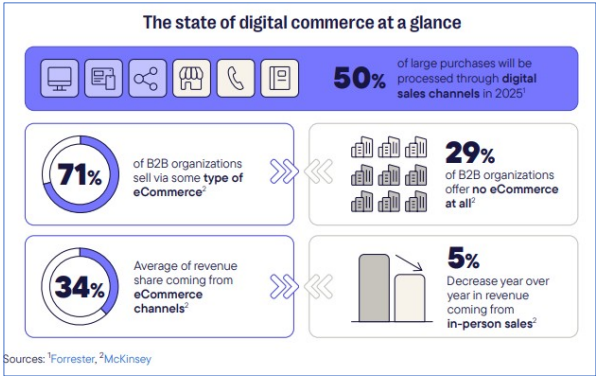
1. **Complex Decision-Making Process** Purchases involve multiple decision-makers (e.g., procurement, finance, technical teams). Longer sales cycles due to extensive evaluation and approval processes.
2. **Relationship-Driven Transactions.** Strong emphasis on long-term relationships and trust. Personalised service and account management are critical.
3. **Rational and Logical Buying Behaviour** Purchases are driven by business needs, ROI (Return on Investment), and efficiency rather than emotions. Buyers focus on product quality, reliability, and long-term benefits.
4. **Bulk Purchases and High-Value Transactions.** B2B buyers often purchase in bulk, leading to larger transaction sizes. Pricing structures may include volume discounts, contracts, and negotiations.
5. **Customization and Personalisation.** Products and services are often tailored to specific business needs. Flexible pricing and service agreements are common.
6. **Limited and Niche Target Audience** B2B markets are smaller but more specialized compared to B2C. Marketing efforts target a well-defined audience rather than mass consumers.
7. **Longer Sales Cycles.** Sales processes involve multiple stages, including research, proposals, negotiations, and approvals. Relationship-building and trust are crucial for closing deals.
8. **Use of Professional and Direct Marketing Channels.** Common marketing strategies include trade shows, industry conferences, LinkedIn marketing, email campaigns, and direct sales. Content marketing (whitepapers, case studies, webinars) plays a significant role in lead generation.
9. **Higher Switching Costs and Brand Loyalty.** Businesses are less likely to change suppliers frequently due to integration, training, and contractual obligations. Strong relationships and reliability create high customer retention.
10. **Compliance and Legal Considerations.** Many B2B transactions must adhere to industry regulations, contracts, and compliance requirements. Procurement processes often involve legal departments and formal bidding.

Overall, this is a market where specialists buy and sell from specialists so the key factor for a successful customer experience would appear to be knowledge of the organisation's products or services and knowledge of the customers' needs for, and application of them.

# So how are things looking on B2B world?

In their white paper *Pivotal Trends and Predictions in B2B Digital Commerce in 2025*

OK commerce tools from Germany give some insights to the current situation regarding digital ecommerce that perhaps reflects the issues facing all of The B2B sector.



## Looking forward what are the key factors

McKinsey in their report : *B2B Sales and Customer Experience Future* are quoted by Linkedhelper as stating.



*If you're working in B2B sales or an online business, it's understandable to feel overwhelmed with the amount of information available and the time constraints. That's why we've got your back and have prepared a summary of McKinsey's report, "Future of B2B Sales: The Big Reframe," highlighting the key points for you to take on board.*

*5 main B2B trends influencing customer experience according to McKinsey:*

### *#1 Focus on Client Satisfaction*

*Ensure that you provide unique value propositions and tailored experiences that meet the specific needs of your clients. For instance, a cosmetic brand could offer a skincare questionnaire that recommends products based on the client's skin type.*

### *#2 Use Multiple Approaches*

*Engage with your clients through different channels, including email, social media, and in-person events. For example, a clothing boutique might use social media to showcase its latest collection and then provide clients with the choice of buying online or in-store.*

### *#3 Replicate Successful Strategies*

*Create a sales plan that can be scaled and duplicated. Use technology, data, and adaptable models to optimize your trading process. For instance, a software firm could employ a sales pipeline to track leads and enhance the conversion process.*

### *#4 Evaluate Skills*

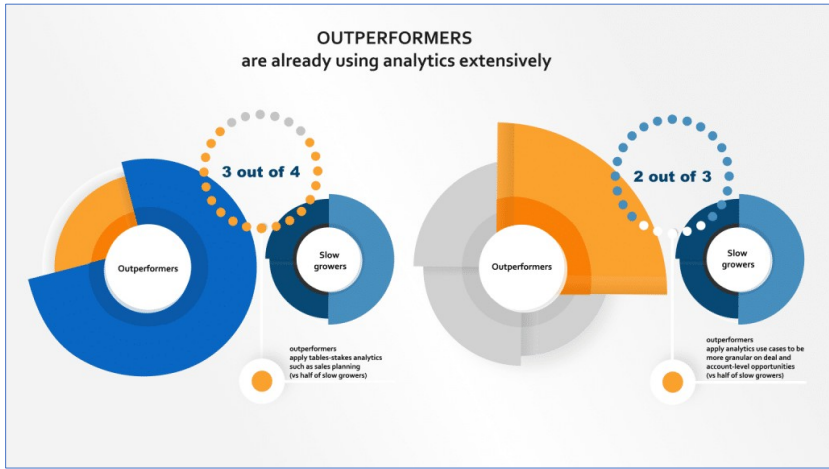
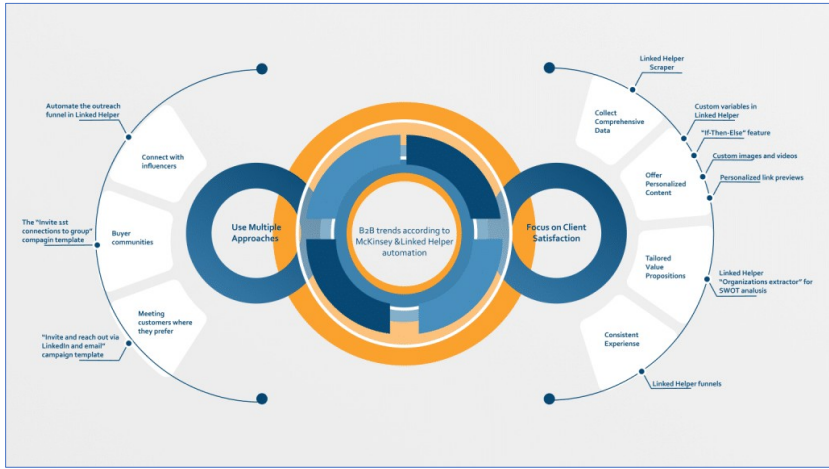
*As the sales landscape changes, it's important to evaluate the abilities and expertise of your sales team to ensure they have the necessary competencies to meet the needs of your clients. For example, a tech corporation might offer continuous training to keep its sales team up-to-date with the latest products and technologies.*



## #5 Encourage Progress

Promote a transformative culture and lead the way through effective leadership. For example, a company could introduce a company-wide training program to shift employees' mindsets toward a client-focused approach.

In B2B commerce, building strong relationships with clients is essential for success.



## #1 LinkedIn automation & customer loyalty in B2B companies

In today's market, customers expect vendors to communicate with them in a personalized and convenient manner that addresses their specific needs. They demand that vendors engage in knowledgeable conversations about their industry, products, and challenges. Failure to meet these expectations may lead customers to switch to competitors. However, many B2B companies struggle to focus on their customers and instead prioritize their internal sales processes.

It's imperative for companies to prioritize customers and focus on providing them with a seamless experience throughout the buying process. To achieve this, businesses can make use of sales analytics to gain insights into customer experience and create personalized B2B content and value propositions. B2B firms can take advantage of LinkedIn automation to implement customer-centric strategies and improve customer loyalty.

<https://www.linkedinhelper.com/blog/mckinsey-report-b2b-sales/>

Perhaps looking at it the buyer's journey from the B2B customer point of view helps to understand the importance of developing firstly a deep understanding of their needs in the sector in which they operate and building a strong relationship that helps to secure the investment in that knowledge for the mutual benefit of both parties.

In B2C understanding a customer's needs is vital, in B2B it is critical. A B2B buyer may expect the seller to not only understand the benefits of their product or service but also understand the dynamics of the buyer's sector and how the proposed purchase will deliver in that environment. That is likely to mean that every B2B buyer travels a unique journey that often starts well before the seller is aware.

In their report **Build a Better Buying Journey** 6sense.com observe

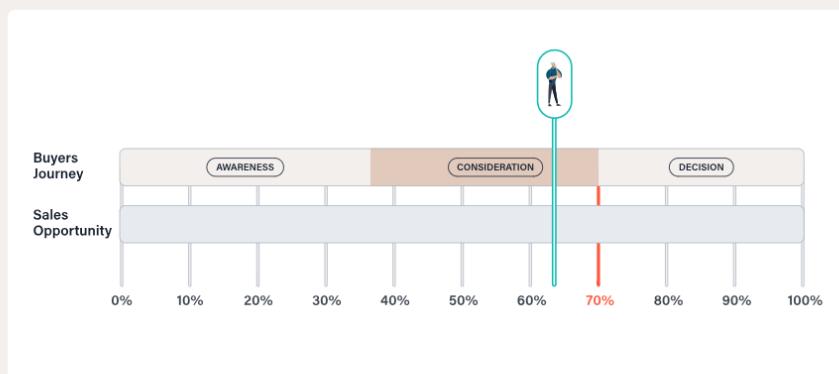
*Here's a hot take: buyers don't care about the buying journey – each buyer is their own road to purchasing something*

*The B2B buying journey is often described as being made up of up three stages:*

- Awareness: The buyer realizes they have a problem.*
- Consideration: The buyer looks for ways to solve the problem.*
- Decision: The buyer chooses a solution.*

### First, Let's Level-Set:

By the time B2B buyers engage sellers directly, they're 70% through their buying process. In a typical B2B deal cycle, that's eight months in.



### Why It Matters:

Throughout the sales cycle, buyers are in the driver's seat. When buyers and sellers finally connect, buyers initiate first contact 83% of the time. They consider an average of four suppliers, but they have largely made their decisions by the time they get in touch. Eighty-four percent of the time, the first vendor contacted ultimately wins the business. Even if a vendor is first on that list, 78% of B2B buyers have completely or largely established their requirements before making first contact. Those requirements don't change in the home stretch of the buying process.

## **Timing Is Everything:**

*This means if vendors haven't won over buyers who are conducting research on the anonymous B2B web — aka the Dark Funnel™ — during the first two-thirds of the buying process, they have a mere 16% chance of winning the deal.*

*That's if they find out about the deal at all.*

## **The Dark Funnel™**

*The Dark Funnel is a part of the B2B web that most marketing platforms can't detect. The Dark Funnel comprises online trade publications, social networks and other digital resources. It also includes the anonymous traffic on B2B vendor websites, and even the leads that B2B vendors never follow-up on. Nearly all of the B2B buying journey occurs in this Dark Funnel. Without all of these signals, marketers are left flying blind...*

## **Bottom Line:**

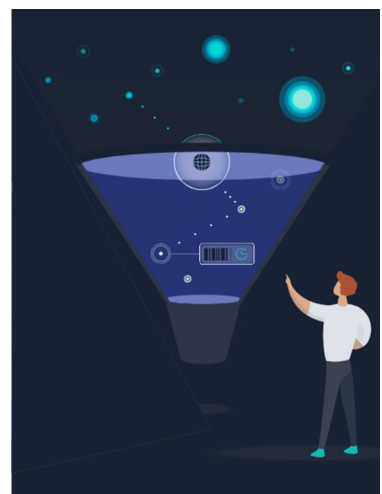
*84% of deals are won or lost before providers know they even exist. To achieve a meaningful advantage during the sales process, revenue teams should identify these hidden opportunities long before the "70% Constant," when buyers initiate contact. This empowers vendors to become the providers of choice, which places them well ahead of competitors.*

## *The Dark-Funnel Data Hiding Within Your Own Systems*

*By now, it's clear that most intent data within the Dark Funnel hails from publicly available third-party digital sources. We call this external Dark Funnel data. However, some Dark Funnel data hides in plain sight within your own website traffic and even your marketing automation platforms. We call this internal Dark Funnel data. Here's more information on what that data might be, and how your revenue team might access it.*

## *Your Anonymous Website Traffic*

*Since anonymous website traffic has historically been challenging to de-anonymize, most revenue teams ignore it. This is why revenue teams rely so heavily on website forms to generate MQLs (Marketing Qualified Lead)*



*When you think about who might come to your B2B website, it stands to reason that it would be relatively rare for visitors to reach your site accidentally. And while some visitors may be competitors, or folks who just have a professional interest, many buying team members will also be lurking in that anonymous traffic.*

*In fact, we lean on them so much, many pros have convinced themselves that mostly (or only) serious prospects fill out forms. But that’s not always true—and in fact, might be nowhere as common as we’ve been led to believe.*

*When you’re able to trace most—or even just some—of that 95% of anonymous traffic back to its appropriate companies and buying teams, you can dramatically increase your understanding of which accounts represent near-term revenue opportunities. Depending exclusively on form fills is a missed opportunity. B2B website form-fill conversion rates represent only 2% to 5% of all website visits. But we know that there are far more legitimately interested buyers surfing your site than that .*

**Dark Funnel Examples and Use Cases** *We’ve covered a lot of ground in this document. We talked about how there’s a Dark Funnel “out there” but also one within your own revenue team data and process. (External versus internal Dark Funnel data.) We’ve also detailed the different categories of data hidden in the Dark Funnel, from behavioral data and psychographic data to company readiness signals.*

These tables offer a quick reference to see the kinds of data that exist in each part of the Dark Funnel and within each category:

	Behavior	Readiness	Psychographics
<b>External Dark Funnel Data</b>	Relevant third-party publisher content consumption Researching competitors Visits to product review websites	Technographic insights Market intelligence signals such as growth, funding, events, expansions, and other changes	Account psychographics, such as sponsorships and organizational priorities People psychographics, such as personal attitudes and interests
<b>Internal Dark Funnel Data</b>	Anonymous website traffic Pre-MQL leads	Product usage data Sales conversation content	Net Promoter Scores Account health scores

And here’s another table that offers sample use cases for each combination of Dark Funnel source and category of data:

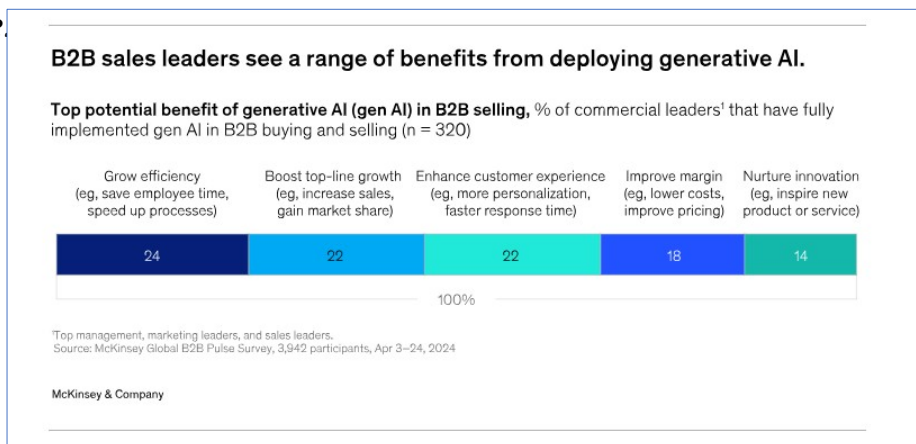
	Behavior	Readiness	Psychographics
<b>Use Cases for External Dark Funnel Data</b>	Uncover early-stage buyer journeys Identify customer churn risk	Identify prospects with a acute need Identify competitive take-out opportunities	Aligning campaigns or sales outreach to key organizational priorities Charitable donations supported by prospect account as incentive to take a meeting
<b>Use Cases for Internal Dark Funnel Data</b>	Prioritize leads with anonymous web traffic data Identify pre-MQL buying team members	Identify future prospecting triggers from Closed/Lost data Identify upsell opportunities from customer-success call attendees	Customer success rep notes provide context for executive outreach



## As TechAdvances Will AI impact the B2B world and What might B2B Customers Expect?

### The McKinsey Report **An unconstrained future: How generative AI could reshape B2B sales**

Which covers in some detail how AI will assist organisations who take the opportunities AI presents it also discusses the way it may influence customer expectations. Because of gen AI's great promise, companies at all stages of technological development have been exploring its implications for their businesses. Those in B2B sales are reporting strong business outcomes and real impact from their initial gen AI builds, and they have told us that they're eager to do more. At this point, it appears that the widescale adoption of gen AI isn't just probable but inevitable.



*In the field: A customer experience success story A large European telco on a mission to increase customer satisfaction and sales performance decided to see whether use of generative AI (gen AI) could identify new service-based opportunities that were personalized and adaptive. It developed a gen-AI-powered dashboard for call center managers and sellers that analyzed customer service call scripts, scored conversation performance, identified skill improvement opportunities, and created dedicated coaching programs for sellers. This use of gen AI has led the telco to a 20 to 30 percent improvement in customer satisfaction.*

*It will be critical to adapt to higher expectations. Productivity gains from gen AI mean that sellers can do more and do it faster. They will therefore need to adapt to compete by reanchoring on core competitive advantages: building trusted relationships, understanding clients as true thought partners, and focusing on problem solving. Sales organizations must adapt too. They will need to depart from a traditional approach in which they motivate sellers with short-term quotas or targets. Instead, they may increasingly want to reward and compensate for team collaboration and long-term customer impact. In such a collaborative environment, lines between sales, marketing, and customer service could be further blurred. Power will continue to shift further from sellers to customers. As customers get accustomed to the benefits that come from gen AI—such as instant responses, 24/7 availability, and self-serve features—they may gradually come to prefer gen-AI-equipped suppliers. Gen AI may also help sellers access the same customers at a lower cost, which would substantially increase customers' bargaining power.*

## As AI Opinion Develops it Was Asked **What Strategies Should B2B Organisations Adopt to Generate High Standards of Customer Experience ?**

Improving customer experience (CX) in a B2B business requires a mix of personalization, efficiency, and relationship-building. Here are specific strategies to elevate CX in your B2B operations:

Improving customer experience (CX) in a B2B business requires a mix of personalization, efficiency, and relationship-building. Here are specific strategies to elevate CX in your B2B operations:

### **1. Deeply Understand Your Customers**

- ✔ Use Data & Analytics – Gather insights on customer behavior, preferences, and pain points.
- ✔ Create Detailed Buyer Personas – Understand their industries, challenges, and goals.
- ✔ Regular Check-Ins – Don't just sell—build relationships through frequent engagement.

### **2. Provide Seamless and Personalized Communication**

- ✔ Omnichannel Support – Offer multiple touchpoints (email, phone, chat, self-service).
- ✔ Dedicated Account Managers – Assign a personal contact for better relationship-building.
- ✔ Automate & Personalize Outreach – Use CRM tools like Salesforce or HubSpot for tailored interactions.

### **3. Simplify the Buying Process**

- ✔ Streamline Onboarding – Provide step-by-step guidance, training, and documentation.
- ✔ Self-Service Portals – Let customers track orders, access reports, and troubleshoot issues.
- ✔ Flexible Payment & Contract Terms – Make transactions smooth and customer-friendly.

### **4. Deliver Exceptional Customer Support**

- ✔ 24/7 or Rapid Response Time – Fast resolution of issues builds trust.
- ✔ Proactive Problem-Solving – Fix potential issues before they escalate.
- ✔ Well-Trained Support Teams – Ensure they understand customers' industries and needs.

## 5. Strengthen Post-Sale Engagement

- ✓ Follow-Up Regularly – Check in after purchase, not just before renewals.
- ✓ Exclusive Training & Webinars – Offer ongoing value to help them maximize your product.
- ✓ Customer Success Teams – Focus on long-term success, not just transactions.

## 6. Leverage Technology for a Better Experience

- ✓ AI & Chatbots – Provide instant responses to FAQs and direct users to human support.
- ✓ Customer Feedback Tools – Use NPS surveys, reviews, and polls to improve service.
- ✓ Data-Driven Personalization – Offer custom recommendations based on past interactions.

## 7. Foster Trust & Transparency

- ✓ Clear Pricing & Contracts – Avoid hidden fees and confusing terms.
- ✓ Honest Communication – Be upfront about challenges, timelines, and expectations.
- ✓ Showcase Case Studies & Testimonials – Build credibility with real-world success stories.

## 8. Create a Customer-First Culture

- ✓ Empower Employees – Ensure customer-facing teams have authority to solve issues.
- ✓ Encourage Internal Collaboration – Sales, marketing, and support teams should align.
- ✓ Continuous CX Training – Regularly train employees on best CX practices.

## 9. Measure and Optimize CX Continuously

- ✓ Track Key Metrics – Monitor Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT), Net Promoter Score (NPS), and Customer Effort Score (CES).
- ✓ Act on Feedback – Address complaints quickly and improve weak areas.
- ✓ A/B Testing – Experiment with different engagement approaches to see what works best.

By implementing these strategies, your B2B business can create a standout experience that drives loyalty, retention, and revenue growth. Would you like help with a specific area, like improving onboarding or streamlining support?

There is much data available about how to use new technology to sell to customers but how about the listening side of the relationship?

CMS Newswire puts forward some thoughts in their Nov 24 Editorial

*Changing Landscape of Customer Feedback in the AI Era*

*Will traditional surveys survive?*

*The Gist*

**AI-driven insights.** *AI-powered real-time feedback tools capture and analyze customer responses instantly and help businesses improve customer experience.*

**Sentiment tracking.** *Sentiment analysis tools help businesses decode customer emotions and reactions and allow for more nuanced feedback.*

**Multichannel feedback.** *With B2B customers interacting across multiple touchpoints, businesses must implement AI-driven, multichannel feedback systems to gather comprehensive, actionable insights.*

*Customer feedback has been a vital source of insight in the world of B2B. Traditionally, businesses have relied on surveys like the faulty NPS (net promoter score) and CSAT (customer satisfaction) to understand customer preferences, loyalty and satisfaction, as well as their expectations and needs. However, with the rapid rise of AI, the future of surveys seems uncertain. The core question is whether traditional surveys will continue to play a role or be replaced entirely by AI-driven, real-time systems that provide faster and more dynamic feedback. Gartner predicts that by 2025, over 75% of organizations will have invested in real-time feedback systems. **This signals a major shift in how businesses gather and act on customer data.***

*Real-time feedback, integrated with AI, allows companies to instantly capture and analyze customer responses, identify pain points and react swiftly. In B2B environments — where decisions often involve multiple stakeholders, long sales cycles and complex products — this shift is even more pronounced. According to McKinsey, B2B buyers interact with an average of 10 channels during their purchasing journey.*

*These changes in behavior demand new strategies for gathering and interpreting customer feedback.*



## *The Rising Need for Real-Time Feedback Tools in B2B*

*AI-powered real-time feedback tools, such as in-product surveys and chatbots, are becoming essential. These tools enable companies to capture feedback at critical moments, such as after key interactions with products or services.*

*For example, Siemens uses AI-driven feedback tools integrated within their product interfaces to provide real-time support and troubleshooting for customers.*

### **5 Practical Tips:**

- 1. Implement real-time feedback triggers at key customer journey touchpoints (i.e., after contract signing or product usage).*
- 2. Automate responses to feedback to show immediate engagement with customer concerns.*
- 3. Utilize machine learning to prioritize which feedback requires urgent action.*
- 4. Offer incentives for customers to provide feedback in real time.*
- 5. Integrate feedback directly into CRM systems for personalized follow-up actions.*

## *Using Sentiment Analysis to Capture Customer Emotions*

*AI-driven sentiment analysis tools are changing how B2B companies understand customer emotions. Traditional surveys can quantify customer satisfaction but often miss the nuanced emotions behind customer feedback. By analyzing language patterns, sentiment analysis tools provide insights into the customer's true feelings.*

*For instance, IBM employs sentiment analysis across multiple platforms, including social media and email interactions, to understand the broader sentiment around their products and services*

### **5 Practical Tips:**

- 1. Implement sentiment analysis across multiple channels, including customer service emails and social media*
- 2. Use real-time sentiment tracking to monitor changes in customer perceptions.*
- 3. Train teams to interpret and act on sentiment data quickly and efficiently.*
- 4. Incorporate sentiment data into product development cycles for continuous improvement.*
- 5. Prioritize negative sentiment alerts for immediate resolution.*

<https://www.cmswire.com/customer-experience/the-changing-landscape-of-customer-feedback-in-the-ai-era/>

## The Last Word

The Business to Business sector is forecast to grow substantially over the next seven years. There is clearly a major emphasis on the development of AI and other technological solutions to support organisations to enhance their marketing focus, improve their sales performance and increase profitability.

There appears to be less data available on the use of AI about the role of the customer in the equation although some work is being promoted to better develop real time AI for listening to customer feedback not just for sales but for improving the journey and enhancing the experience.

Without that balance AI in B2B world with a marketing/sales only focus has the potential to get misdirected away from real customer priorities. In the mean time AI is available to B2B buyers and developing rapidly too. Just as "AI Opinion" can influence a customer to buy a product or service from one supplier or another so it has the same potential in the B2B world – The only difference may be that in the B2B world the stakes for not being successful are likely to be much higher.

In the light of this it is perhaps a surprising observation that there appears to be far less work published on the importance of the employee experience in the B2B world.

Is that the real elephant in the room?

### Recommended Reading

Highly Recommended

<https://commercetools.com/resources/whitepaper/pivotal-trends-and-predictions-in-b2b-digital-commerce>

Recommended

<https://www.qualtrics.com/en-gb/experience-management/customer/b2b-customer-experience>

<https://www.statista.com/study/44442/in-depth-report-b2b-e-commerce/>

[https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business/The-B2B-customer-decision-journey\\_0.pdf](https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Business/The-B2B-customer-decision-journey_0.pdf)

<https://www.linkedhelper.com/blog/mckinsey-report-b2b-sales/>

<https://6sense.com/report/buyer-experience-2023/>

<https://6sense.com/a-deep-dive-into-the-dark-funnel/>

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/an-unconstrained-future-how-generative-ai-could-reshape-b2b-sales>

<https://www.cmswire.com/customer-experience/the-changing-landscape-of-customer-feedback-in-the-ai-era>