

4 DEMAND GENERATION STRATEGIES

You Need to Implement to Keep Pace
with Content Consumption



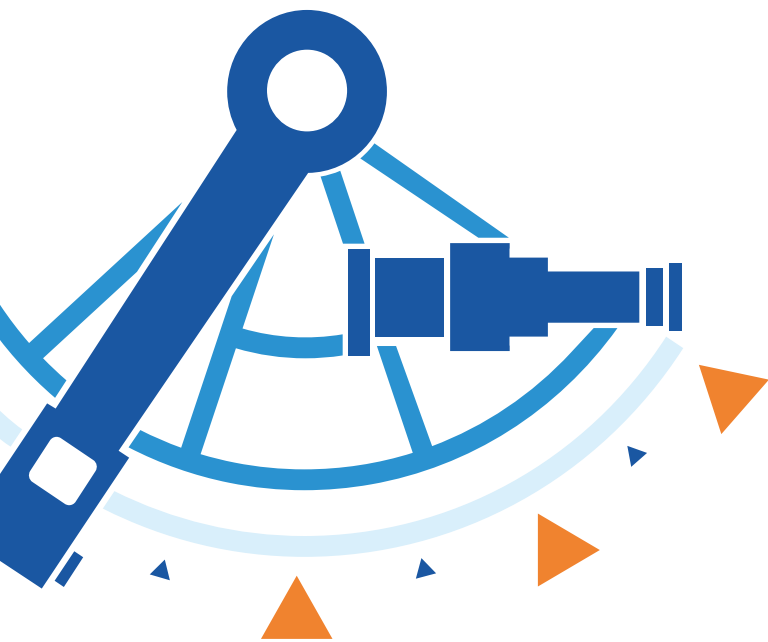
It is clear that B2B buying changed in 2020.

When working norms undergo such massive transformation as they did during a pandemic year, so do the ways that individuals consume information, communicate with their peers, and make decisions.

Change has been rapid, and it may also be permanent. Only **one in five B2B buyers are hoping for a return to direct in-person sales** according to McKinsey, and despite forecasts as far ahead as 2025, the Pew Research Center assures us that **nobody wants to return to business as usual**.

As buyers embrace new ways of doing business, now is the time to re-examine lead generation based on a few crystal-clear modern trends that have emerged.

VIRTUAL IS THE FUTURE



In-person events and conferences have long been the nucleus of B2B business. Bizzabo has found that more than **85% of leaders believe in-person events are essential to sales success** and that 61% of marketers feel that events are their most important marketing channel.

The pandemic eliminated many opportunities to speak with leads directly to better understand the pain points driving purchasing decisions. There is every chance that the years following 2020, perhaps even the entire decade, will also be delayed.

B2B marketers have had to find new ways to fill the top of their sales funnels without events and conferences. A natural first step is to go digital, transforming an in-person event into a virtual one.

Marketers turning to virtual events and other forms of remote selling are seeing positive results, and revenue from video-related interactions, for instance, has **increased by 69% since April 2020**. With this increase, videoconferencing is now responsible for 43% of all B2B revenue.

Research from Bain found that **35% of B2B buyers have bought virtual solutions costing more than \$500,000**.

And McKinsey reports that **70% to 80% of B2B decision-makers now prefer remote and digital self-service transactions**.

CONTENT IS STILL KING

The changes brought about by the pandemic have led to many businesses finding themselves in unfamiliar territory and in need of new content to guide both them and their clients forward, and a report from PathFactory has shown that **B2B customers and prospects are now engaging with marketing content at a much higher level.**

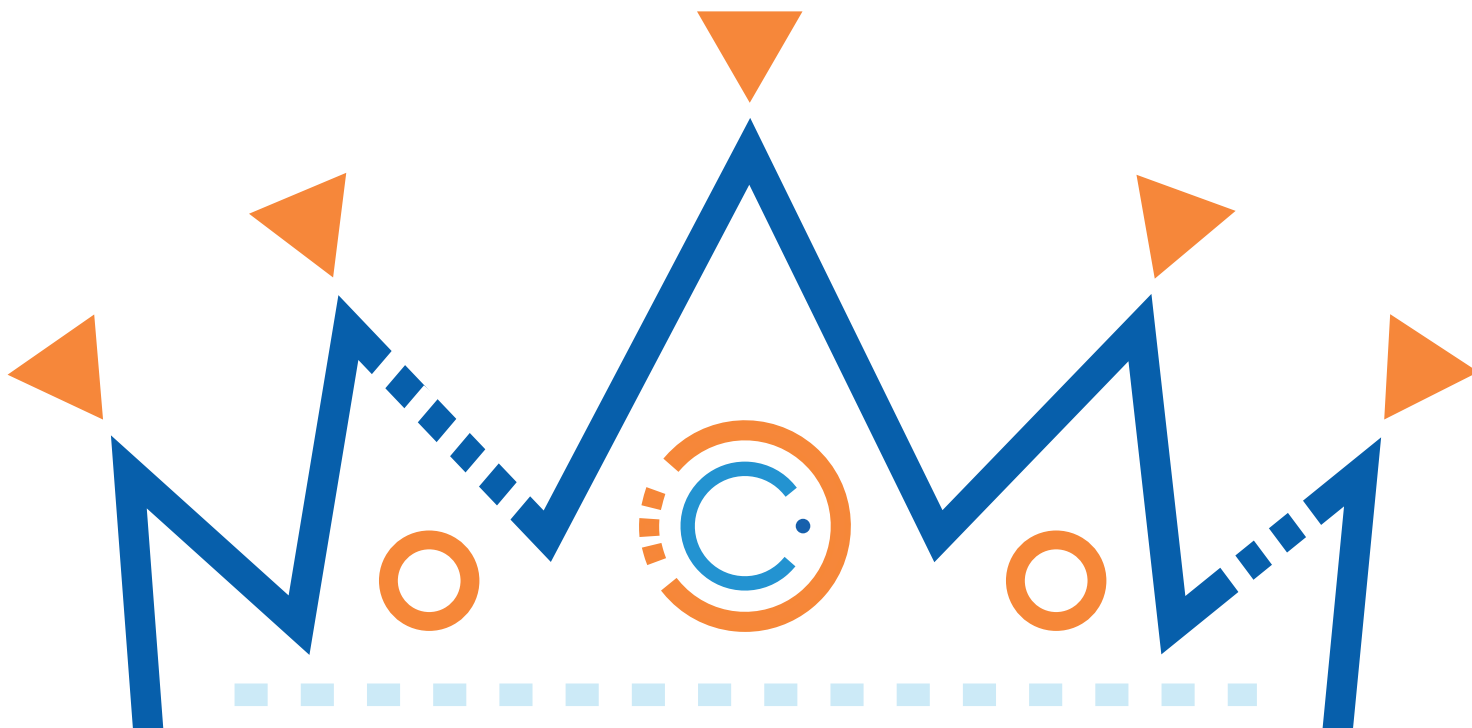
The biggest increase is among “bingers”, or people who already frequently engage with content. This demographic is now spending an average of almost 20 minutes per day reading and watching marketing content that informs their buying experience; an increase of more than seven times the previous average.

This interest in fresh content is being seen as more than just a passing curiosity and businesses are looking to turn insights into action. Decision-makers are feeling positive about the future, and McKinsey finds that **most are planning to increase or maintain operating expenses in the coming years.** This will lead to more companies in the market for a range of products and services.

To make the most of this opportunity, sales and marketing teams must adapt their strategies to the current environment.

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HERE ARE **FOUR KEY AREAS** B2B SELLERS SHOULD FOCUS ON WHEN DEVELOPING LEAD GENERATION STRATEGIES FOR 2021:



#1 Prioritize Intent

Lead nurture has never been so hard. When buyers want to make purchase decisions in isolation, marketing has a responsibility to deliver sales-ready leads. Any demand generation strategy needs to start with:

a) defining intent for your business, and **b)** understanding how to deliver prospects that meet that definition of intent.

Get creative again! If SDRs are being sent to voicemail and sales pros cannot get in the room to work their magic, lead generation needs to start with the goal of delivering high-intent audiences.

This means taking advantage of all intent data at your fingertips. It is important to consider data regarding the topics leads are researching, as well as the context. How often are they searching for a topic? When was the last time they sought information?

This contextual data will make it clear who is actively researching a problem area that needs to be resolved, versus who is reading about the topic with no intention of buying anything.

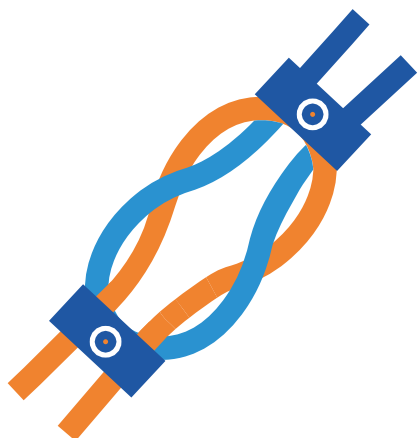
When you focus on this data, you are better able to reach high intent leads earlier in the buying process. This comes with obvious advantages, at the very least getting the jump on other salespeople makes it easier to convert leads into clients.

To prioritize intent:

- **Define your intent data sources:** Gather the data first. Buyer intent data can be obtained from social media analytics, third-party websites that are relevant to your niche, your website, and content downloads such as whitepapers and eBooks.
- **Score your potential buyers (leads):** Aggregate the buyer intent data from multiple sources and create a scoring system to evaluate the buyers with the highest intent. This score can be defined based on previous experience with successful leads and a ranking for each action they take. For example, attending a webinar should provide a higher score than reading a blog post.
- **Create a marketing strategy for buyers with intent:** Once you have identified the buyers with most intent, target them with a tailored strategy. Consider the actions they took and act accordingly. For example, if your lead attended a webinar, send an email with a solution to a problem that was discussed in it. This can also be the time to book a demo with your sales team.



#2 Create a Seamless Buyer Experience



This aspect of the consumer journey will continue to grow in importance as it is in direct alignment with the new normal for B2B purchases. As buyers become accustomed to the convenience of digital engagement, companies that provide more complex buying experiences will miss out on prospects.

Buyer enablement shifts the focus from making things easier for salespeople and marketers to making the purchasing process easier for buyers. With this approach, B2B sellers can focus on how to simplify to allow customers to meet and engage more on their own terms.

Buyer enablement is also a great opportunity to foster greater alignment between sales and marketing. By working together, these teams can address buying decisions and potential obstacles more efficiently.

Start by refining your marketing strategy to align with the objective of putting more power in clients' hands. Consider the different objectives leads have during the different stages of the purchasing journey. What is their exact intent when searching for content at each stage? Which types of content are the easiest to consume and provide the most value?

Content should be geared towards helping leads through the consumer journey by removing the need to interact with sales teams to get vital information.

This could be tools that enable leads to evaluate different options on their own, such as a comparison of relevant products or services. You can also create easy to consume, on-demand content that lays out the entire buyer's process like a checklist, or a thorough how-to guide detailing how to move from problem to solution.

To create a seamless buyer experience:

- **Focus more on nurturing than converting:** Many companies bombard their leads with emails and offers as soon as they fill a form. This can put off a potential buyer by making the sales pitch too soon, instead of convincing them over time with relevant content. Nurture leads first and when the time is right then focus on converting.
- **Use many marketing channels:** Nowadays, prospects are likely to be on non-traditional channels such as Reddit or LinkedIn groups, so it is important to keep an open mind to new avenues of contact. And offline media has its merits too, with some industry magazines being a key source for B2B buyers.
- **Maintain close ties after the sale:** Satisfied clients are more likely to become loyal customers that recommend your brand to others. It is essential therefore to provide a post-sales buyer experience to keep customers informed on updates to goods and services, industry news, or send even a virtual card on their birthdays. A happy, long-term client is also cheaper to maintain than finding and converting new leads.

#3 Syndicate Content to Meet Increased Consumption



With the increase in content consumption among B2B decision-makers, marketers that can create and distribute valuable insights stand to maximize their lead generation efforts.

Content syndication allows businesses to reach a large audience in a short time frame and can facilitate engagement with leads who might not otherwise have come into contact. Businesses can even make up for missed events by gating content to capture prospect information. This will help fill your pipeline with highly targeted leads that are most likely to convert to sales.

Making use of various forms of content gives marketers more options for syndication while helping to appeal to different target audiences. A good place to start is by repurposing your previous content that has performed well in the past.

Whitepapers, webinars, virtual events, and eBooks all work well for creating blog posts packed with valuable insights. Given the depth provided by these forms of content, businesses can easily turn one asset into several blog posts to use in syndication efforts.

Syndicating a greater level of content will lead to higher lead volume, allowing marketers to reach lead generation goals faster. Test different types of content to see which perform the best and generate the most leads.

To better syndicate content to meet increased levels of consumption:

- **Select the outlets you want to publish your content on:** Publish your most successful articles on outlets that have a bigger audience than your website. It is important to research where your content will end up, and don't be afraid to ask for a media kit to see if the outlet is worth your time and money. A PR professional can help you with identifying the best news outlets for your audience.
- **Do a test and adjust accordingly:** Resist blowing the whole budget on a single piece. Instead, publish a test piece on a specific outlet and evaluate the results. Check how many views it gets and how many leads it generates. Reputable outlets will provide you with a complete list of leads generated by the syndicated content.
- **Establish an employee as a thought leader:** Publish all your articles under one pen name with a link to your website and their LinkedIn portfolio. This is often a C-suite or a manager, but regular employees can also be used to promote strength, insight, and competence across all levels of the company. This approach can help establish more credibility and a stronger identity compared to those businesses publishing as faceless brands.

#4 Understand the Customer Journey to Provide More Meaningful Engagement

Buying preferences can often be shaped by wider issues that affect both the seller and consumer alike.

For some, the turbulent events of 2020 have altered their preferences indefinitely. Others have only had to adapt their current approach, but have escaped needing any kind of fundamental change in how they engage across the B2B landscape.

Understanding the difference between temporary adjustments and permanent shifts in consumer preferences is necessary to approach each potential buyer in the right way.

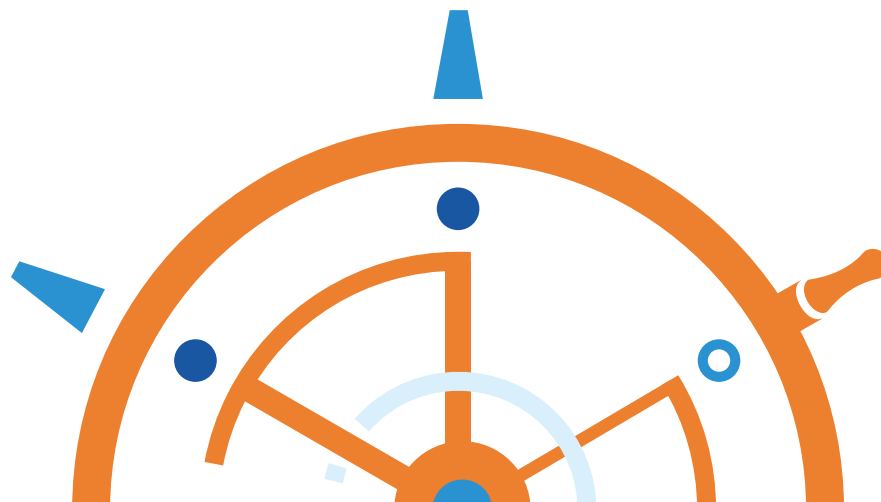
This requires solid research and insights. Businesses that make the effort here will find they can establish greater brand trust, which will help in getting new clients. This will have an even greater impact in industries where long-term client/company relationships are common.

Get to know your clients by reaching out with empathetic messaging that hits home. Customize each communication to show how your business is making a real effort to find value-driven solutions to their problems.

Cultivate sales approaches with a blend of direct communication, AI, and predictive analytics. With emerging predictive AI tools and new sources of customer data, businesses can optimize the way leads are selected and better understand shifts in the marketplace.

Take advantage of digital, virtual, and when possible, in-person interactions while providing consistency across both marketing and sales efforts. Digital engagements should focus not only on establishing a digital presence, but on forging strong virtual connections with customers.

For those businesses that have already established strong connections with clients, proactively seek their feedback and ask how you can better serve any changes to their preferences.



To understand the consumer journey and provide more meaningful engagement:

- **Outline content for each stage of the consumer journey:** Buyers typically move from awareness, to consideration, and finally to a decision. Each stage calls for different content and you should track the lead's progression from one stage to the next.
- **Be aware of buyer personas and create customized experiences:** Many businesses only provide a single, "blanket" consumer journey for all potential clients, whereas a more custom-tailored experience for each persona, while requiring more organization, would certainly yield better results. This can be done by supplying identified content for each persona in the awareness stage, and by responding to insights generated by the content leads choose to digest.
- **Re-market to leads effectively:** Many buyers are wary of display ads that suddenly pop up when they search for a specific product. Instead of pushing a sale so early on, when leads are still in the awareness stage, re-market later along the funnel with valuable, downloadable content to strengthen branding at the right time.

CONCLUSION

The new world of B2B sales is here to stay. Digital engagement and virtual selling favor the buyer and will only increase in popularity as these preferences begin to shape the standard. The key to success here will be in re-focusing efforts at all stages of the consumer journey to create truly client-first experiences.



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Alexander Kesler is a visionary B2B digital marketer with over 20 years of experience. Focusing on solutions for B2B demand generation, digital marketing, ABM, intent, and AI-driven lead generation, among others, Alexander embraces innovation and turns concepts and methodologies into products and marketing programs that drive ROI.

As Founder and CEO of INFUSEmedia, Alexander leads a global team that executes campaigns across all industries and company sizes. He leads all facets of global marketing, including go-to-market strategy, demand generation, vertical marketing, data management, field marketing, pricing, retention, analyst relations, product management, inside sales, and sales enablement.

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