

Digital buying trends in B2B

By  Chiedza Gonyora

20 Dec 2019

In the pre-digital era, customers relied heavily on service providers and partner agencies to guide them into the brave new digital world. The rise of technology and ease of access to information has turned the tables almost completely, with customers no longer feeling fearful about embracing technology and some even leading the change by actively researching and seeking out information on their own.



Image source: Gallo/Getty Images.

Because customers are now better informed about their choices, they expect their suppliers and partner agencies to be collaborators, not pathfinders. Gone are the days where it was acceptable for service providers and agencies to not be right on the cutting edge of relevant industry technology and trends, alongside the customer.

Better, smarter, faster

It is also evident that customers are taking inspiration from global leaders in their fields – particularly in the telco and IT space – and are incredibly up-to-date on how the bigger, more established companies are embracing technology.

For example, customers will not only know what the likes of an Amazon is doing, but also what systems they're using to work better, smarter and faster - and they want to replicate that. This means that they're already looking at how to implement the tech, rather than simply trying to understand it, so service providers and agencies need to be smarter, too.



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In the past, customers used to do research only at the start of the purchase journey, as a way of finding the right partners who could help them plot a path of digital disruption. Now, this research underpins every stage of the digital purchase journey. The volume of content they consume sees them much better-equipped at the point of making the digital decision.

What this means for agencies is that they can no longer just join the conversation when it comes to pitch time. Agencies

need to ensure that they're always sharing the latest information with customers and becoming their partners, not suppliers. The agencies who are leading the charge are those who are able to impact the decision-makers at every point in the purchase journey.

Current and credible

It's now up to the agencies to make sure that they're always working hard to ensure that their information is current and credible. The information that agencies supply needs to not only mirror, but supplement the information that customers have unearthed on their own.

If there's a conference, go together. Learn together. Drive the process as partners. The upshot of this collaborative style is that the industry is moving forward – and faster than ever before.

In terms of ensuring that relevant content is shared with clients, LinkedIn is an invaluable tool. It's about sharing and creating meaningful engagement in the right environment. If the customer is constantly in 'research mode', the agencies which are constantly sharing relevant information will be on their radar.



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If you're not one of them, you won't be considered because you're effectively not part of the purchase journey. Lastly, there's a balance to be found in terms of managing your intellectual property – positioning your agency as an expert vs giving away information for free.

The key is showing value and welcoming customers and potential customers in as partners. Show, don't tell – or you may just 'help' your way out of an account.

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