

The New Breed of B2B Buyer

New Rules of Engagement

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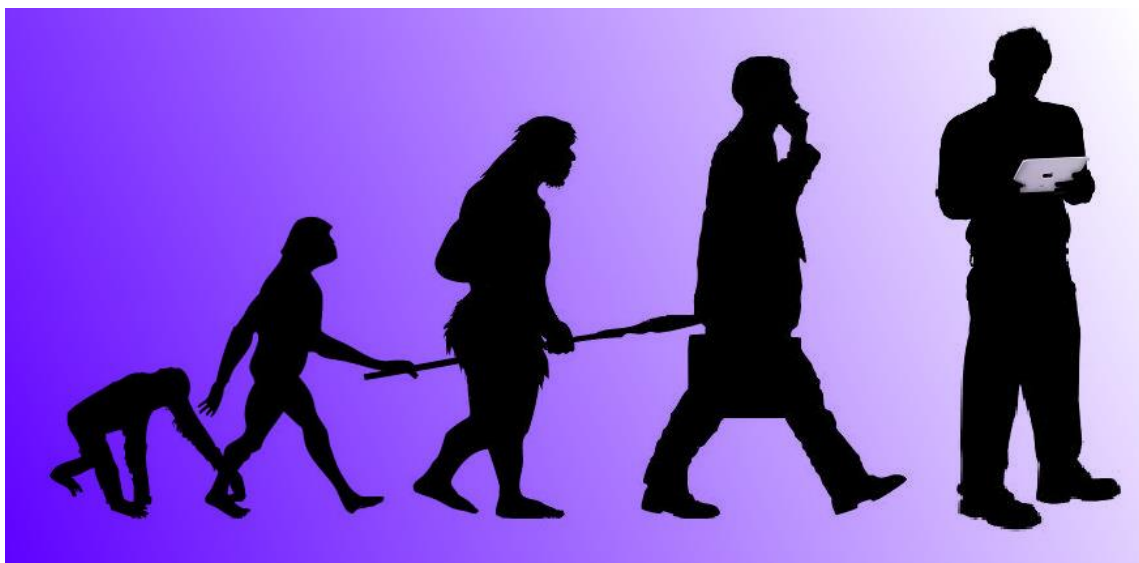
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The New Breed of B2B Buyer New Rules of Engagement

The New Breed of B2B Buyer

Today's business buyers are awash in a deluge of online information. Virtually every business problem, process, product, and service, no matter how obscure, seems to have garnered at least one blog post or forum comment. One could debate the quality of this information, but not the quantity. Most business searches turn up thousands if not millions of results that include product descriptions, news articles, videos, podcasts, images, books, white papers, free trials, presentations, Wikipedia entries, rankings, blog posts, comments, tweets, and so forth. Whatever your question, chances are someone online already has an answer.



*B2B buyer behavior has evolved in adaptation to the Internet.
A new species of B2B buyer has arisen that is more connected, more impatient,
more elusive, more impulsive, and more informed than its pre-millennium ancestors.*

The instant gratification of the Internet is so engrossing that it overshadows the long term changes it has fostered in the people that use it. People have not sat idly by as the Internet has evolved; their online knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors have evolved alongside it. As one of the most serious of Internet users, the B2B buyer has been transformed through adaptation to the new online environment. A new breed of B2B buyer has arisen, a species that is more connected, more impatient, more elusive, more impulsive, and more informed than its pre-millennium ancestors.

B2B Buying Process in the Pre-Millennium Era

The Internet has changed the B2B buying process so radically that it's difficult to recollect exactly how the pre-Internet B2B buyer used to go about the business of making a purchase: paper, phone and people mostly. The process went something like this: ask the analysts about the next big thing, collect requirements into and RFP, get a list of vendors from a roundup in an industry magazine, go to a trade show and collect collateral, solicit and evaluate RFP responses by mail or fax, call in a short list of vendors to do a dog and pony show, follow up with a technical drill down meeting, maybe do a bake-off or a pilot, select a vendor, call a reference account, negotiate final pricing and contract terms, and wrap it all up by planning out phase 2 of the project: a complex and expensive implementation. It was a slow, arduous and expensive process for which consultants charged exorbitant fees that B2B buyers were happy to pay, because it wasn't easy.

The New B2B Buyer Rules of Engagement

Just as the new B2B buyer has evolved in adaptation to the Internet, B2B sales and marketing professionals must adapt their strategies and tactics to the new B2B buyer's expectations of online independence and instant gratification. For each new [behavioral trait](#) that differentiates the new species of B2B buyer from its pre-millennium ancestors, there is a new rule of engagement that complements that behavior to maximize B2B sales and marketing effectiveness.

New B2B Buyer Behavioral Trait	New Rule of Engagement
Connected	Publish Deep and Wide
Impatient	Efficient Self-Service
Elusive	Measure, Model & Move
Impulsive	Lifecycle Marketing
Informed	Consultative Selling
Only Human	Trust

Just as the new B2B buyer has evolved in adaptation to the Internet, B2B sales and marketing professionals must adapt to the new B2B buyer by mastering new rules of engagement.

These new B2B buyer behaviors cannot be abated, they can only be addressed. Companies that insist on engaging the new B2B buyer with outdated sales and marketing tactics will simply drive business to competitors who are ready and willing to engage on these new terms. Success lies in mastering the new rules of engagement through respect and understanding of the B2B buyer's new motivations and behaviors.

Reaching Out to the New B2B Buyer

The New Connected B2B Buyer

With such a treasure trove of information available online, the Internet is the 21st century B2B buyer's first stop for researching products and services. It won't be the only source of information for the savvy prospect, but the Internet now is a significant and recurring influence throughout the B2B buying process. The new species of B2B buyer is connected to the Internet physically, functionally, socially and frequently.

Moreover, the B2B buying process neither starts nor stops at your website. It is more likely to start at a major search engine, industry portal or social network. *If you want your product or service to be considered, it's critical that your content appear wherever the new B2B buyer goes online at every point in the decision making process.* It isn't enough to just write a blog or make a white paper available for download on your website, because your prospects may never find your website if you don't show up in search and social media.

Rule of Engagement #1 – Publish Deep and Wide

To connect with the connected B2B buyer, you must publish deep and wide about the problems your prospect faces and the solutions your product offers. Your content must be relevant to your prospect at every stage of the buying process and be available whenever and wherever your prospect goes online. That means creating content for every depth of prospect interest and attention span from short tweets, comments and ads to detailed white papers and videos, and then redistributing that content across a wide array of online channels: websites, social networks, blogs, forums, directories, websites, ads, media sharing sites, etc.

It is important to remember that the basic needs of the B2B buyer remain unchanged, only the behavior for satisfying those needs have changed. The buyer will still need to recognize that there is a problem. The buyer will still need to investigate potential solutions to that problem. The solution will still need to fit within the business requirements and financial constraints of the buyer. And, the buyer will still look to reduce risk by getting a good price and validating both your company and your solution with independent third parties. The only difference is that much of this information now comes from the Internet. Your content should still address these basic buying needs, but it should be served up in the right location and in the right media so it is easily found and digested online. For example, online demos and free trials replace the old-school dog-and-pony show for evaluating solution fit for SaaS and cloud providers. And, references may be solicited not just from your customers and analysts as before, but also from blogs, support forums, professional social networks, and pretty much anything anyone else has said online about your company or product.

The Impatient B2B Buyer's Got No Time for You

The Internet has instilled the new breed of B2B buyer with far less patience than its pre-millennium ancestor. Sooner or later all that instant gratification turns into habits and expectations. If a prospect can't find the right information on your website or figure out how to use your free trial, it's usually

goodbye. Today's B2B buyer has to be pretty committed already to evaluating your product or service before picking up the telephone or sending in a support email. Recent research indicates that the new B2B buyer is on average [60% through the sales cycle](#) before engaging with a salesperson. Oh, you'll still get the early stage sales inquiry from the few remaining Internet laggards, but let's face it, the phones just don't ring like they used to. It's our own fault; this is what we wanted, more self-service, lower acquisition costs, lower support costs, etc. The new impatient B2B buyer has simply adapted to the environment presented online.

Rule of Engagement #2 – Efficient Self-Service

What the new B2B buyer wants most from the Internet is independence and efficiency. When a prospect must rely on a salesperson as the primary source of information, both are lost. The Internet puts the new B2B buyer firmly in control of the buying process by allowing the prospect to regulate the flow of information. Fight this basic principle, and you're back to goodbye. Your strongest strategy is to give the prospect efficient self-service access to your content.

Search and Speed Still Rule

Despite the rising importance of social media, search is still the mainstay of online self-service efficiency. The impatient B2B buyer expects the instant gratification of search everywhere online: major search engines, social networks, discussion forums, your website, your blog, your knowledgebase, etc. Wherever you place your content, make sure that it can be easily searched. And when it's found, make sure it can be quickly digested.

Second only to search is speed. Especially speed in combination with search. Google believes speed is so important to search that it spent untold millions developing [Google Instant](#) just to save 2-5 seconds per search. Pay constant attention to the speed at which your Web pages load and your heavy content downloads. The last thing you want is for the impatient B2B buyer to bail on you at the last minute after you've done all the work to create, produce and deliver your content, simply because the response time is too slow.

The self-service directive applies throughout the entire buying process from early education to stimulate latent demand to detailed product information to customer references to technical support to potential add-on purchases. Provided it is not confidential, information the new B2B buyer seeks should not be blindly hidden behind a main phone number or contact us form.

This is not to say that you shouldn't require registration, login or some level of qualification and commitment on the part of the prospect before providing access to high value content. Creating touch points that measure buyer intent and open new channels of communication throughout the entire customer lifecycle are essential to B2B sales and marketing effectiveness. In fact, they are so important that they are deserving of much greater discussion and are the topics of the next two new B2B Buyer Rules of Engagement.

The Blurry B2B Buying Process of the New B2B Buyer

The New Elusive B2B Buyer

In the pre-millennium B2B buying process, the salesperson was the gatekeeper of information. That meant that the pre-millennium B2B buyer had to engage with the salesperson early on and stay engaged throughout every stage of the B2B buying process. A prospect might go dark or a sale might be lost, but a purchase could not move forward without engaging with the salesperson. Not so today. Unfortunately for the B2B salesperson, the new B2B buying process tips the information imbalance in the prospect's favor. The new breed of B2B buyer can find your product or service, learn about it, evaluate it, see what others think about it, and in many cases try it and buy it, all without engaging with a salesperson.



*The new breed of B2B buyer is independent and elusive,
blurring in and out of focus and engaging directly with sales
only when there is clear value to be gained, not just to get information.*

The new elusive B2B buyer spends more time going solo throughout the B2B buying process, blurring in and out of focus and engaging directly with sales only when there is clear value to be gained, not just to get information. This is made doubly complex by the fact that the “B2B buyer” is usually more than one person. Where before the salesperson could corral all the influencers and decision makers into a meeting and orchestrate a linear sales cycle from beginning to end, today's B2B buying process is organic and diffuse with different stakeholders visiting your website ad hoc, checking your knowledgebase and support forums, calling your sales team for a quick question and then going dark, filing a support ticket on a trial account, discussing your product and company in social forums, and making internal decisions by email with no need to call a face-to-face meeting.

Rule of Engagement #3 – Measure, Model and Move

The bad news is that the Internet has made the new B2B buyer more elusive and the new B2B buying process harder to define and control. But, the good news is that the Internet has made the new B2B buying process more transparent. What? Wait a minute. Say that again.

While the new breed of B2B buyer appears more elusive to the B2B salesperson, this is not the case for the B2B marketer. Web browsers have cookies, hyperlinks have tracking codes, and every online interaction is overlaid with [meta-data that indicates buyer intent](#). It's a trade-off for everyone involved. *The new B2B marketer must adapt to the new B2B buyer by developing better measures and models that move the new B2B buyer through the B2B buying process and compensate for the B2B salesperson's loss of control over the flow of information.*

The Marketing Automation Mandate

Marketing automation is one of the fastest growing SaaS categories. However, it isn't because this technology is somehow cutting-edge (no offense to my SaaS colleagues in marketing automation). It's core function is to measure, model and move the B2B buyer through the B2B buying process by tracking online activities and transforming that data into knowledge that is acted upon through automation. The underlying technology is not new and the applications could have been built ten years ago. But, they wouldn't have been as valuable ten years ago.

Marketing automation is taking off because the behavioral traits of the new species of B2B buyer have created both the ability and the need to measure, model and move the B2B buying process through automation. And, the winners in the marketing automation category will be those SaaS companies that leverage [SaaS Do #6 Reach Across the Firewall](#) to create a seamless B2B buying process that fully integrates the elusive, external behavior of the new breed of B2B buyer with the internal processes of the new breed of B2B sales and marketing organizations. Marketing automation has gone from nice-to-have to must-have, because it creates real competitive advantage.

The New Marketing Math

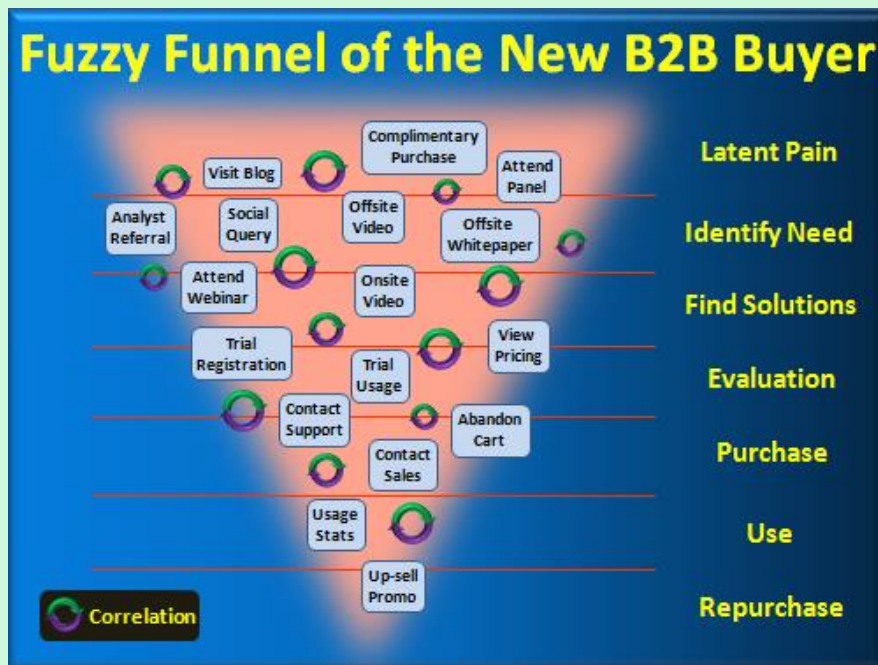
The pre-millennium B2B buying process was a structured sequence of activities jointly managed and negotiated by the B2B buyer and B2B salesperson. And, [pre-millennium measures and models](#) reflected that structure. Most every B2B sales and marketing professional is familiar with the sales funnel where the B2B buyer is envisioned as being qualified and converted by the B2B salesperson at each successive stage of the B2B buying process. It is a very deterministic model that assumes a source of the incoming lead and a linear progression from one stage of the B2B buying process to the next until the deal is won or lost. Virtually every salesforce automation package now supports this model.

In the pre-millennium sales funnel model, marketing campaign success or failure is determined by lead volume, cost, conversion and ROI metrics attributed to each lead source. For example, if a successful trade show that cost \$20,000 to attend generated 100 leads of which 5 closed for a total of \$100,000 in new revenue, then the metrics for the show would be as follows: \$200 cost per lead, 5% conversion, and an ROI of 5:1. However, *this model assumes that the trade show was the ultimate source of the lead and the post-show B2B buying process consisted of the B2B salesperson skillfully escorting the B2B buyer through the sales funnel to close.*

Pre-millennium B2B marketing professionals would create detailed spreadsheets of all their campaigns and rate them according to these metrics. Marketing budgets and allocations would be determined by this analysis. Well, you can throw all that out the window if your prospect is the new breed of B2B buyer, because this prospect's B2B buying process is anything but linear, deterministic and under the B2B salesperson's control. And, I defy you to identify anything resembling a lead source or a clean hand-off from marketing to sales.

The Fuzzy Funnel

What you can measure in the new B2B buying process, particularly if you have a strong marketing automation system in place, is a long string of buyer attributes, activities and metrics that characterize the new B2B buyer's random walk to purchase. You will find concentrated bursts of buyer activity, such as quickly browsing half your website, combined with unknown gaps and unexplainable delays. And, you will have a gut feeling that some sequences of buyer activities are more important than others, e.g., making a detailed review of pricing and registering for a free trial vs. checking out the most recent press release and bouncing.



The new marketing math reflects the diffuse and random nature of the new B2B buying process. Movement through the fuzzy funnel comes in fits and starts, forward and backward with different B2B buyer decision makers moving fluidly in and out. *True forward progress through the fuzzy funnel is indicated by positive metrics that are [highly correlated](#) to winning a deal, e.g., qualified buyer attributes, trial registration, trial usage, lead score, price estimation, formal sales proposal, etc.*

The first goal of the new marketing math is to create a statistical model of the fuzzy funnel comprised of metrics that indicate progress through the fuzzy funnel at each stage of the B2B buying process. The second goal then is to use that model to focus marketing creativity and spend on those campaigns that drive activity that correlates strongly to them. *Marketing campaigns like a trade show are not modeled as a lead source causing entry into a structured sales funnel managed by a B2B salesperson, but as a driver of buyer activity that correlates to progress through the fuzzy funnel.* For example, if free trial is a critical step in the new B2B buyer's evaluation of your product that correlates strongly to won deals, and 80% of the people who view your weekly webinar sign up for a free trial, then you darn sure want to get more people to watch that webinar. Instead of a deterministic, marketing campaign ROI predicated on the old lead source model, *the relevant measure of marketing campaign success in the new marketing math is the [correlation](#) between campaign-specific buyer activity and progress through the fuzzy funnel.*

The New Impulsive B2B Buyer

The new breed of B2B buyer is more agile than its pre-millennium ancestor. Cheap and easy access to online information about products and services enables flexibility in the new B2B buying process the same way the elimination of setup costs enable flexibility in manufacturing. When the up-front cost of purchase-related information was high, the pre-millennium B2B buyer was forced to orchestrate a rigid, deterministic B2B buying process that ensured the investment required to execute the process itself was not wasted and produced a positive result, i.e., a considered purchase with high ROI. Purchase decisions were made up front—only the vendor was unknown, budgets were established before the buying process began, requirements were collected and communicated, vendors were evaluated in tandem, and a clean vendor selection was made.

The new breed of B2B buyer does not face this constraint. Today, window shopping is cheap. In the case of most SaaS and cloud applications, the entire B2B buying process is cheap: trial is free and purchase amounts to a monthly subscription that can be canceled at any time. Instead of orchestrating a structured B2B buying process with a certain outcome, the new B2B buyer can start, stop, start again, turn around, go slow, go fast, whatever. The new B2B buying process carries no internal momentum. Purchases are motivated by near term organizational priorities and the relative urgency to solve a pressing business problem, which can turn on a dime.

Online marketers lament the waning effectiveness of email. Some even claim that email marketing is dead and spam killed it. *Email may be waning for marketing communications, but it is central to the internal communications of the new impulsive B2B buyer and acts as a powerful catalyst in the new B2B buying process.* The new impulsive B2B buyer can research your product online, coordinate an email conversation among all decision makers, get a basic consensus without a single meeting, and then stop dead because something else came up. Then, six months later the VP of Such-and-Such decides: “This needs to get done yesterday!” And shoots off an email that reignites the urgency around the purchase. Next thing you know, a previously dead or unknown deal is suddenly very hot, and a purchase is made almost on first contact. Or, at least first contact to the unprepared who are not measuring, modeling and moving the new B2B buying process throughout its lifecycle.

Rule of Engagement #4 – Lifecycle Marketing

This new rule of engagement is a natural consequence of the three earlier rules. If you are publishing valuable online content deep and wide according to Rule of Engagement #1 and measuring, modeling and moving the prospect through the new B2B buying process with that content according to Rule of Engagement #3, then you should use your measures and models to align your valuable content with the B2B buying process to optimize its impact and encourage the new B2B buyer’s natural impulses. Map your content to the buyer’s needs at each stage of the B2B buying process and stay engaged throughout the entire customer lifecycle. Hit-and-run marketing cannot recover the control over the B2B buying process that was consciously surrendered to the new B2B buyer by enabling efficient self-service, Rule of Engagement #2.

If your prospect is actively engaged in a B2B buying process, then lifecycle marketing simply amounts to serving up the right information at the right time to keep things moving along quickly and efficiently,

e.g., how to get up and running on a free trial after sign-up or where to see a video case study for a similar customer. But, if your prospect gets distracted by other priorities and stuck in the middle of the B2B buying process or worse isn't even aware there is a need or a solution in the first place, then lifecycle marketing is about breaking the status quo and creating a sense of urgency. Unlike its rigid pre-millennium ancestor, the new impulsive B2B buyer is open, flexible and in a hurry. A compelling new idea can shift priorities and drive reallocation of budget away from lesser concerns and toward your solution.

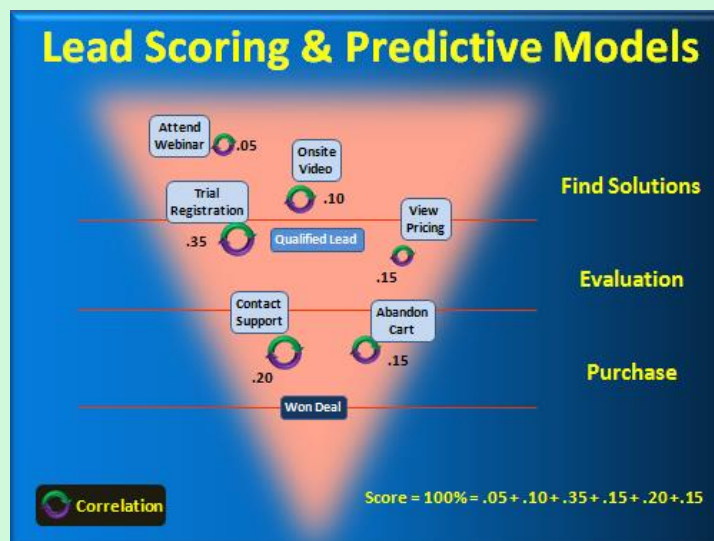
At a minimum, marketing engagement throughout the entire customer lifecycle from latent pain to repurchase ensures you are there to capitalize on it when the new impulsive B2B buyer switches gears. At a maximum, you have the potential to nurture that impulsiveness to accelerate purchase. [*Inbound marketing*](#) or *simply getting found by a prospect is not enough*. Once you are found, you must engage with that prospect frequently and consistently throughout the entire customer lifecycle, because if you don't, your competitors will, and what is easily found can be just as easily lost.

Lead Scoring and Beyond

Most B2B marketing automation tools today offer some version of lead scoring. The basic idea behind most lead scoring methodologies is to measure B2B buyer attributes and activities, such as prospect industry, free trial registration, visited the pricing page, watched a video, downloaded a white paper, etc. Then, you assign some value to each one of these things to tally up a lead score, e.g., 35 for the free trial, 5 for the right industry, etc and you set a threshold at which a lead becomes qualified.

This is all well and good, but how do you decide on the value of a specific buyer activity, especially if you have no history to work with? You first have to decide what you are trying to predict. For lead scoring you might choose to predict the probability that the deal will close. Or, you might choose to predict a more intermediate metric like the probability that a sales rep will deem the lead qualified. Either way, your lead score should measure some degree of progress through the fuzzy funnel.

Once you know what you want to predict, the output variable, you must then select the best predictors of that outcome, the input variables, and assign a higher value to inputs that you believe have the most influence, or the [highest correlation](#), to the outcome. You also want to avoid inputs that overlap and double count the same behavior, e.g., pricing page views and shopping cart additions on the same visit.



How you go about creating your lead scoring algorithm is as much art as science, particularly today because the tools do not give you much help. If you have no historical data, you just need to guess, watch and guess again. If you have lots of historical data, then you can go so far as to create a true statistical model of the fuzzy funnel. For example, a sound statistical approach to lead scoring would be to run a [logistic regression](#) to determine the most relevant buyer activities for predicting a qualified lead or won deal and the exact relative weights of each predictor. Frankly, with sufficient historical data to work with a decent marketing automation tool ought to be able to do this for you.

Qualified lead is just one B2B buying process metric you might want to predict. What about deal size? What about upsell potential? What about cancellation? While most marketing automation tools today lock into a rather lead-centric view of the B2B buying process, the general idea of the fuzzy funnel has no such limitations. With sufficient historical data, any relevant purchase cycle metric can be estimated.

Sales Engagement with the New B2B Buyer

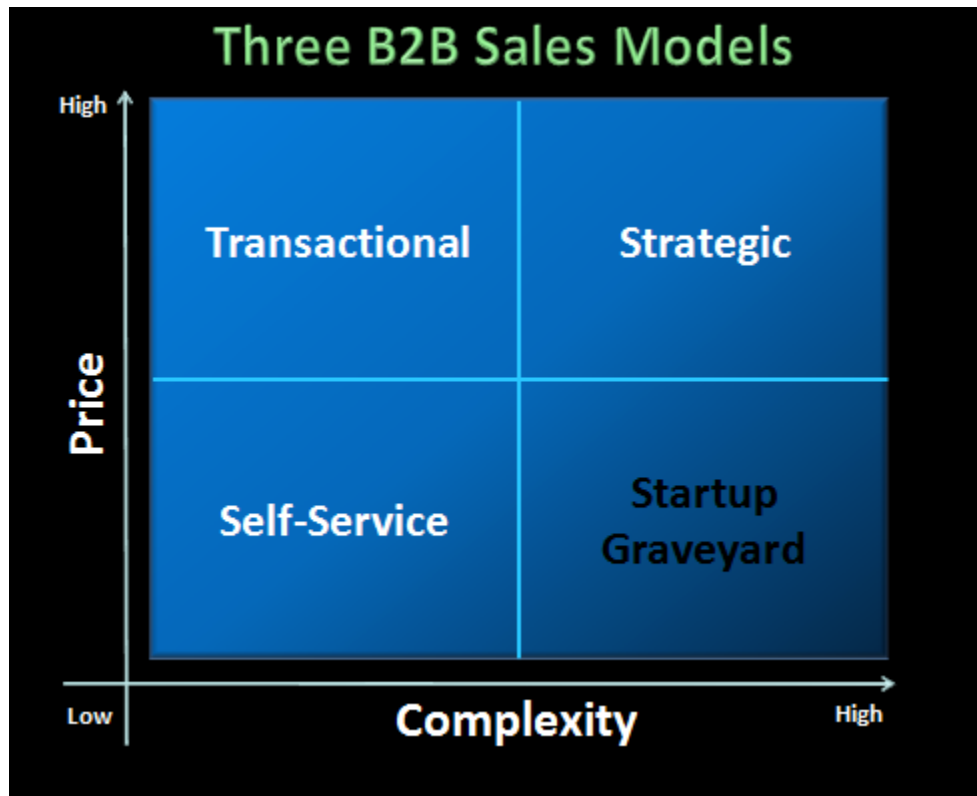
B2B sales has been transformed by the application of many B2C Internet marketing techniques, but there are limits to the Internet where B2C can learn something from B2B. For example, with so many cool, self-service real estate websites like [Zillow](#), [Trulia](#), and [Redfin](#) available online, why is it that the vast majority of people still prefer to use local real estate brokers to buy and sell their homes? Why not just do it yourself?

The new breed of B2B buyer is still an emotional creature that despite great attempts to cover it up in the form of ROI analyses, vendor comparison matrices, technical evaluations and the like is often driven by fear.

Buying a home is complicated. All real estate brokers are required to pass professional certifications, and good real estate brokers spend years honing their craft in the course of many transactions in their local markets. The Internet can serve up all the information you want, but it won't make you an expert. Plus, buying a home is an emotional roller coaster ride. For the first time home buyer, it can be downright scary. You can get all the disclosures, appraisals, comps and inspections you desire online, but the Internet will not hold your hand and tell you everything will turn out OK in the end.

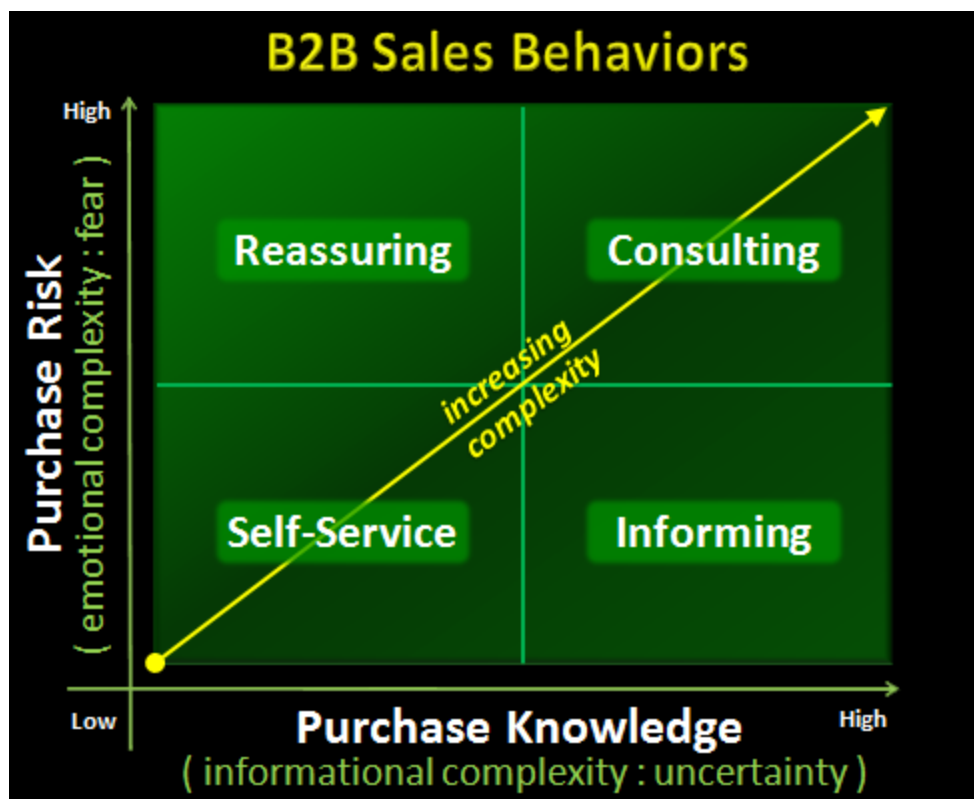
The Self-Service Limit in B2B Sales

A customer's desire for sales engagement increases in direct proportion to purchase complexity. Thus, purchase complexity is a key element in identifying the right B2B sales model for your business. Simple purchases can be consummated with 100% customer self service, whereas more complex purchases require greater sales engagement as depicted in the image below adapted from the article [Three SaaS Sales Models](#).



Price and complexity define a strategic spectrum of B2B sales approaches that gravitate strongly toward three distinct B2B sales models: self-service, transactional and strategic.

Purchase complexity comes in two flavors: informational and emotional, both of which are clearly present in our earlier home buying example. Informational complexity arises when the buyer requires education to consummate the purchase. Emotional complexity arises when the purchase entails a *personal risk* to the buyer. When either or both of these purchase barriers becomes high enough, the buyer simply will not make the purchase without the aid of a salesperson. In response, successful B2B sales reps adopt sales behaviors that complement the buyer's purchase behavior, offering expertise and trust in direct proportion to the respective amounts of uncertainty and fear felt by the buyer.



When a purchase requires extensive knowledge and risk, the B2B buyer will look to the B2B sales rep to reduce the complexity. Successful B2B sales reps adopt behaviors that complement the buyer's behavior, offering expertise and trust in direct proportion to the uncertainty and fear arising from the respective informational and emotional needs of the buyer.

The B2B Sales Arms Race – The New Informed B2B Buyer

The new breed of B2B buyer is online and impatient. When she engages with a B2B sales rep, she's done her research, but is stuck and doesn't want to waste the time figuring out how to get unstuck. She doesn't get something about your website, your product, your pricing or your company, so she sends an email or makes a call to sales. She is well informed, but the purchase complexity has worn out her patience. The worst thing a B2B sales rep can do at this point is wear her patience even thinner.

The new B2B buyer and B2B sales rep are engaged in an information arms race. Having followed the first two new rules engagement, you've published deep and wide and enabled efficient self-service. You've given in to the new breed of B2B buyer's hunger for knowledge and speed, and in the process you've exacerbated the B2B sales rep's challenge by eradicating the B2B sales rep's information advantage. In fact, when the truly savvy B2B buyer knows more than your newbie B2B sales rep, you have a recipe for disaster. Today's B2B sales rep must quickly assess the purchase knowledge and needs of the new B2B buyer and then lead, follow or get out of the way.

Rule of Engagement #5 – Consultative Selling

Consultative selling is hardly new. What is new is that the B2B sales rep that fails to step up to the information arms race runs the risk of becoming at best irritating and at worst irrelevant. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a sales rep to assess a buyer's knowledge and needs if the buyer knows more than the rep about the purchase. There are few things more irritating to the new B2B buyer than having to listen to a script explaining something she already knows, or worse having to explain the product itself to the newbie B2B sales rep with insufficient training and experience.

If there are inherent complexities to purchasing your product, then your B2B sales rep must master them. The B2B sales rep can't win the B2B sales information arms race simply by memorizing the website content, because the new breed of B2B buyer is already there. If all your B2B sales reps does is usher buyers around your website and take orders, then you are either leaving money on the table or your website isn't simple enough, because your business should be 100% self-service. The new breed of B2B buyer expects fast answers to questions she can't answer for herself. Therefore, today's B2B sales reps must be purchase experts that are skilled at consultative selling in order to adapt their expertise quickly and efficiently to the needs of the new B2B buyer.

B2B Buying is Risky Business – The New B2B Buyer is Only Human

While the Internet has wrought dramatic adaptations in the new breed of B2B buyer, its influence is minuscule compared to the millions of years of evolution that have preceded it. In the end, the new breed of B2B buyer is still an emotional creature that despite great attempts to cover it up in the form of ROI analyses, vendor comparison matrices, technical evaluations and the like is often driven by fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of public opinion. Fear of failure. What is portrayed as rational decision making and risk reduction is often better characterized as rationalization and CYA. There is no shame in this. This is who we are. We are not machines and *it is critically important to us to feel good about the decisions we make*. The savvy B2B sales rep understands this.

Rule of Engagement #6 – Trust

Why is it that throughout history salespeople have had to endure such bum raps? Because it's assumed that they know things buyers don't and the more they lie to the prospect, the more money they make. Things have changed. This is the era of the new breed of B2B buyer. The stereotypical slick salesman is truly dead and the Internet killed him. Today's B2B sales reps realize that open information and long term relationships require building trust, not breaking it. And while the marketing department can publish all the case studies, videotape all the customer testimonials, and get all the online recommendations it wants, *when the stakes are high and the fear is real, there is no substitute for the B2B sales rep's personal relationship with the buyer*.

Developing trust with the new breed of B2B buyer is not easy, because most communication is virtual and terse. Emails must be crafted with care and skill. While the pre-millennium B2B sales rep needed to be a smooth talker, today's B2B sales rep must be a smooth writer as well. Moreover, today's B2B sales rep must actively cultivate opportunities to expand and personalize the relationship with the new B2B buyer. Although the days of the traveling B2B sales rep are over for all but the most expensive purchases, it is essential not to fall into the trap of hiding behind email. When it comes to building

rapport and trust, chat is better than email, phone is better than chat, video is better than phone and face-to-face it better than video. When your business depends on trust, you must provide the technologies and opportunities for your B2B sales reps to engage with your new B2B buyers at a personal level. Because sometimes, they just need someone to talk to.

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About



This whitepaper is based in part on recent blog articles at [Chaotic Flow](#) by [Joel York](#). [Joel York](#) has 20 years of experience bringing software and software-as-a-service (SaaS) products to market and is a recognized leader in the cloud community. Joel has managed global sales and marketing organizations serving over 50 countries, including local operations in the US, UK, Germany, Israel and India. His experience ranges from freemium SaaS subscriptions to \$5M enterprise deals. Joel shares his expertise on SaaS and cloud business strategy at [Chaotic Flow](#) and [Cloud Ave](#).

Joel has held senior management positions leading the sales and marketing organizations from startups to public companies, including Meltwater, Xignite, Navis, eMind, Passlogix and SPSS. He also consults on SaaS strategy and operations as Principal at Affinitos, where he has worked with numerous rapidly growing SaaS startups such as Zendesk, Conduit and AppFirst. Joel began his career at Deloitte Consulting. He holds a B.S. in Physics from Caltech, an M.S. in Engineering Physics from Cornell University and an M.B.A. from the University of Chicago.

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