

Why are B2B buyers
so disappointed in their
digital experiences?

How are “tried and true”
legacy methods getting
in marketers’ way?

Why is it so hard to
attribute content with
revenue and pipeline?

Part 2

The broken process
behind B2B content



B2B marketers and their colleagues in departments across every organization create vast amounts of content, but the majority is wasted. Forrester reports: "77% of B2B organizations have significant content waste issues."

77%

of B2B organizations struggle with content waste and poor utilization due to challenges with findability, quality, relevance and customization

Content chaos and confusion for marketers

Multiple sources of content across silos

Taxonomy, tagging, and meta data inconsistency

Content waste due to low use and poor discoverability

Limited content performance data, mostly binary metrics

Poor digital experiences for buyers and customers who expect easy access to useful, relevant content

Marketing-centric decisions that introduce friction (e.g., forms and dead ends)

Rules-based personalization failing to deliver right content, right time

Poor scalability = destinations that don't adapt for known vs. unknown, ABM, etc.

Broken Process

So why is this happening?

B2B marketers know they need to deliver a high volume of quality, relevant content to enable prospects to self-educate and progress through the buyer's journey. But they're using outdated approaches, broken systems, and clunky content engines to get the job done. Here are just a few reasons why "tried and true" legacy methods are standing in the way:

Traditional martech stacks emphasize channel performance and visitor volume over content engagement.

Think about a typical martech stack, composed of a CMS, CRM, MAP, and maybe an ABM tool. Content is usually created and deployed through one-and-done, batch-and-blast experiences: chronological blog posts, segmented email blasts, regularly scheduled newsletters, and ads pointing to squeeze pages. The emphasis is always on measuring the channel performance and volume of visitors. For some marketing pioneers with advanced ABM programs, measuring which accounts land on a particular asset may also be a priority.

Generally speaking, however, the content itself, and how people are engaging with it, is an afterthought. Further, the quality of that engagement as a signal of buying intent or an indication of content effectiveness isn't even a factor, which is shocking considering how much marketing budget is spent on developing new content each year. According to [Forrester](#), just 41% of B2B organizations can view content performance metrics by audience, and only 34% can view by theme or topic.



B2B organizations view content performance by audience



B2B organizations view content performance by topic

Marketers have already cracked the code on channel attribution. Multi-touch attribution models (MTA) and marketing mix modeling (MMM) make it easier to understand different channels and their impact across the buyer's journey. Most, however, don't have the same insight into the actual content being delivered across those channels and are subsequently unable to attribute revenue or pipeline to content.

Data deprivation causes knowledge gaps around content and customers.

Most marketers can't effectively measure or determine whether the content assets they create are actually useful or have any real impact on pipeline or revenue. While standard martech stacks provide a high-level overview of content performance — based on factors like number of visitors, time on page, or form fills — this only captures individual assets at a particular moment in time. Few are equipped with the native capabilities to collect the deep-level data marketers need to really understand the complexity of the content itself, including sentiment and tone, or how different asset combinations progress buyers through the journey.

Instead, marketers typically rely on broader KPIs. The [Content Marketing Institute](#) reports that 90% of B2B marketers consider email engagement (including opens, clicks and click-through rates) as the most important metric to measure content performance. But without post-click engagement data, there's no way to distinguish between a visitor who clicked through to your ebook and abandoned it after 15 seconds, and someone who spent several minutes reading the entire thing. This is a common knowledge gap that causes marketers to frequently miscalculate the effectiveness of their content.

48%

**B2B organizations
don't keep their
data up to date**

51%

**B2B organizations
don't trust the
data they have**

— B2B International's 2021 report,
“[Digital Transformation in the B2B World](#)”

Another problem is that data is often disjointed, captured from multiple channels and touchpoints throughout the buyer's journey, with no overarching data strategy to tie it all together. This makes it even harder for marketers to accurately measure the impact of content on lead and demand generation, pipeline, and revenue. It's time to recognize that the biggest barrier to entry around data analysis for B2B marketers is the data itself.

Attribution models commonly fail to measure content ROI.

As B2B buyers' journeys become more complex, "tried and true" attribution models are limited in their ability to tie content assets to actual revenue. According to [Marketo](#), buyers engage 36 times on average before deciding to make a purchase. This engagement spans multiple channels, touchpoints, and assets: the [average B2B buyer](#) now consumes 13 pieces of content on the path to purchase, but last-touch attribution only captures the final touchpoint. This makes it extremely difficult for organizations to measure the impact of different assets their

prospects engage with along the way. Even multi-touch attribution models fail to effectively capture and integrate deep-level content engagement data across an increasingly non-linear buyer's journey and determine content ROI.

13 pieces of content on average are consumed during a path to purchase



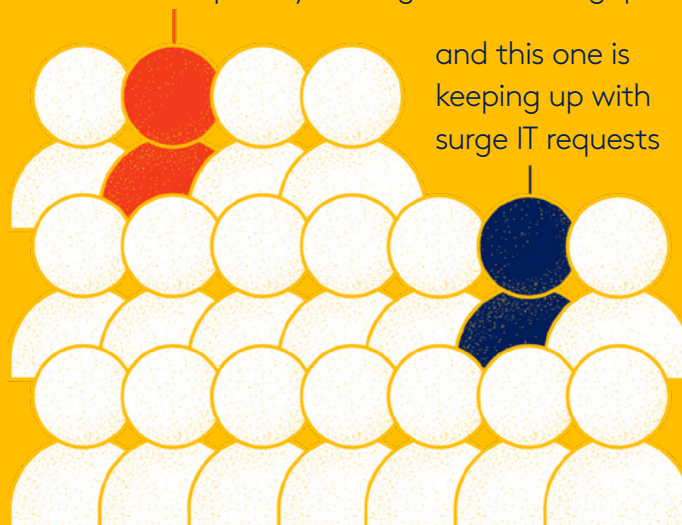
Content experiences are based on broad rules and assumptions, rather than buyers' actual behavior on the path to purchase.

Businesses routinely fail to deliver the relevant, highly personalized content experiences that B2B buyers now expect. With limited information available, most marketers have responded to increasing demands for personalized content with broad, rules-based segmentation — account, industry, vertical, company size, geography, product lines, or job title — rather than contextual factors like behavior surrounding content consumption and engagement.

According to the 2021 State of B2B Buyer Enablement Report, 59% of B2B marketers say they do not use buyers' past behavior, content history, or CRM engagement to serve content that is relevant to their particular needs or stage in their journey. Similarly, Merkle B2B's 2021 survey of enterprise decision makers found that only 29% rated their performance on segmenting customers beyond demographics or firmographics with a high score. But not all VPs of Finance or CIOs are the same; they may face incredibly different challenges and opportunities depending on their company's size, maturity, budget, or headcount.

All of these potential buyers are CIOs and appear the same.

But this one's priority is filling internal skill gaps



There is hope:

According to the [2021 State of Marketing AI report](#), marketers said the top use case for AI in marketing was

“Recommend highly targeted content to users in real time.”

The problem with this marketer-centric approach is it infers content is being consumed by the same obliging B2B audience as before, rather than buyers who now behave like consumers, with similar demands for content that speaks to their highly specific needs on the path to purchase. While marketers are happy to plan, create, and deploy their content around campaigns, the reality is that buyers don't actually care which campaign they're viewing. This disconnect has been noticed: according to a [Forrester](#), 65% felt that vendors gave them too much content, 70% felt the content was more focused on style than substance, and 59% felt that much of the content was useless.

“Thinking traditionally about the sales funnel and tools won't meet today's customer expectations. B2B marketers must rethink their demand generation methods and transform their organizations by bringing in customer-centric engagement approaches that reach customers across the entire experience.”

— [Merkle B2B](#)

Content is a value exchange. Prospects aren't in your funnel — your content is part of their journey.

Content engines are hindered by manual processes and silos that cause wasteful spend.

Traditional B2B martech stacks also suffer from logistical challenges which disrupt the content supply chain, restrict information, and exacerbate wasteful spend. With little to no artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities, most content engines are forced to rely on manual tagging to label and organize content. The problem is that manual tags are broad, sorting content by general topic or format, rather than creating rich metadata to fully capture and contextualize different assets and how they relate to one another. Manual tagging is also an arduous and time-consuming process, which often results in redundant or disjointed taxonomy, rather than a streamlined and centralized

schema or blueprint for universal tagging to keep everyone on the same page across business units, departments, or geographies.

For example, one enterprise IT and networking company has over 25,000 content assets for campaigns alone, but without a globalized taxonomy, their marketers struggle to determine what to leverage to best engage buyers, customers, and partners. They aren't alone. According to [Forrester](#), only 40% of B2B marketing organizations have adopted a universal taxonomy, while just 14% of B2B organizations consider themselves advanced at content operations.

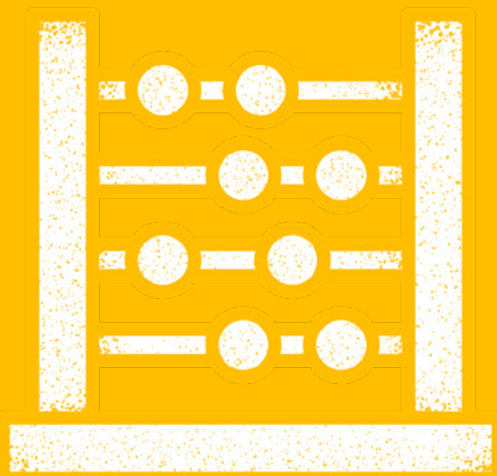
However, disjointed content operations and silos can have more serious repercussions than logistical headaches: in its report [5 Ways the Future of B2B Buying Will Rewrite the Rules of Effective Selling](#), Gartner found that inconsistent or contradictory information causes buyer confusion, decreases confidence, and can reduce the likelihood of a significant purchase by nearly 160%.

"Traditional B2B organizations face years of necessary rewiring of legacy structures, processes, functional silos, and leadership mindsets... that work needs to start now."

— [Gartner](#)

None of this is working anymore.

As content is created and deployed at an ever-accelerating speed and scale, it's time to switch gears. The processes and mindsets surrounding B2B content over the past decade are holding too many marketers back. To succeed in the new world, marketers need to incorporate better systems which can effectively track, measure, and analyze the buyers' progress through increasingly complex content maps — and rapidly adapt to their informational needs in real time by providing recommended next steps personalized to their unique journey with each brand.



It's time to move on.