State of B2B Marketing

1ST EDITION

Future-ready B2B marketing has a new growth equation. It's time to rethink and explore what's coming next.

DEMANDBASE | The Harris Poll
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The new growth paradigm: getting real about insight

B2B marketing is at a breaking point. The tools are there—and 96% of marketers already run emerging or advanced go-to-market strategies—yet fewer than half feel equipped for the demands they face. The problem isn't technology. It's activation. It's measurement. It's connection. Marketers are swimming in data they can't use, chasing metrics that don't prove impact, and running workflows that don't scale.

Our research with over 500 U.S. B2B decision makers reveals a new reality: growth in 2026 won't come from adding more tools to the tech stack. It will come from integrating the _right_ tools that will eliminate friction, activate insights, automate what slows you down, and orchestrate AI in a way that feels more human than ever.

Key Takeaways

1. Disconnected Data Kills Momentum

Teams need unified data to scale. Only 45% of B2B marketers feel very confident in their ability to connect data across their teams. Even fewer are very confident in the accuracy and reliability of their data. Getting accurate and reliable data is really about making sure the information in your stack is clean, but also connected.

Next Best Action: Consistency starts with clarity. Marketers need to decide who owns each type of data, standardize entry and formatting, and set the stage for cleaning and enriching that data over time. They also need to make sure their tools are connected so data streams easily between systems. The result? Smarter, stronger insights that scale.

2. Measuring What Matters

Teams need better ways to measure success. 65% run hybrid GTM targeting, leveraging both lead and account-based plays. But, less than 40% frequently track qualified accounts or individual leads. Without consistent measurement, success becomes guesswork, and guesswork doesn't drive revenue.

Next Best Action: To get more accurate results, you need a measurement approach that aligns marketing, sales, and customer success data. This means first defining success metrics on both a lead level (e.g., conversion rate, email engagement, time to qualification) as well as an account level (e.g., attributed pipeline, close rate, renewal rates). Then, implement a system that connect leads with their accounts, so every activity rolls into a single, unified account view. When you can see the full picture, you can prove impact.

3. Activating Insights

Teams want insights, not more tools. 96% of B2B marketers have some type of emerging or advanced GTM strategy, yet fewer than half feel equipped for the demands they face. The disconnect? Tools aren't the problem. The real challenge is extracting usable insights from them and acting before the moment passes.

Next Best Action: B2B marketers can get more insights out of their tech stack by moving from "collecting " to actually "activating" data. This means unifying data, using predictive AI, and automating reports and processes to be more insightful. When your stack doesn't just measure performance, but actively points you toward the next best move, every decision gets faster, sharper, and more impactful.

Key Takeaways (continued)

4. Craving Automated Workflows

Automation is the ultimate unlock. Teams struggle with automating several aspects of their campaign workflow. About half struggle specifically with optimizing the performance of their campaigns. Smart workflows and optimizations are the key to driving better go-to-market (GTM) performance.

Next Best Action: Setting up the right automated workflows means choosing the right automation tools. Focusing on the highest-impact, lowest complexity automation first will result in quick wins that will build excitement and momentum internally. Once the basics work, adding in advanced logic and smarter automation will take things to the next level. And, test small before you go big. Run automation on a tight test segment to catch misfires early, then roll it out confidently.

5. Transforming Through Orchestrated And Authentic AI

AI isn't just the next big thing, it's reshaping the very core of B2B marketing. 95% of marketers in our study say their company is already comfortable with AI-driven tools. While today's top priorities are boosting efficiency and reducing manual tasks, the real promise lies in AI's ability to power greater personalization, sharper targeting, and more authentic human connections.

Next Best Action: Right now, AI is mostly being used as an accelerator in existing workflows (write faster, score faster, segment faster). The next wave is more orchestrated and personalized, using AI tools to manage entire campaigns end-to-end, but also to personalize outreach at scale. This means making data-driven adjustments without waiting for a marketer to step in. It's smarter and transformative, now with a more "human" touch.

Data integration, tracking frequency and quality are the most persistent barriers to progress

There's no shortage of bold strategies in B2B marketing, from personalization to in-market activation. Even the sharpest strategy falls flat when it's built on a shaky foundation. Fragmented platforms, stale data, and shaky team confidence undermine your ability to thrive. Not because your strategy is wrong, but because it's unsupported.

Crisis Of Confidence

Less than half of B2B marketers feel fully in command when it comes to connecting data across teams, tools, and touch points. Confidence is just as low when trying to get a 360 degree view of key accounts. This confidence is a critical component for driving success.

Connecting Data:
% Very Confident

45% Connect data across products, teams, and platforms to inform strategy

44% Connect inbound signals (e.g., web traffic, support calls) with outbound sales activity

44% Gain a holistic view of your top-tier account

44% Leverage 1st party and 3rd party data to identify in-market accounts

Top 3 Barriers

1 **Platform + team integration:** *disconnected systems and teams create silos.* | **49%**

2 **Overall data quality:** *inaccurate or incomplete data undermines decision-making.* | **48%**

3 **Data freshness:** *infrequent updates lead to outdated insights.* | **46%**

Data confidence remains a significant challenge, with many marketers concerned about the accuracy of their first- and third-party data. This underscores a critical gap in data reliability.

44%

very confident in the accuracy of first-party data

40%

very confident in the reliability of third-party data sources

Making The Connection: Turning Data Into Decisions

Data is only as powerful as its ability to connect. Without seamless integration, activating valuable insights becomes impossible. Here's how marketers can fully connect their data for maximum impact:

1 **Map the data flow:** diagram every system in your stack (CRM, MAP, BI, etc.) and how you want data to ideally flow, identifying where it breaks down.

2 **Use integration tools:** explore plug-and-play connectors on current systems, iPaaS (Integration Platforms as a Service) tools that can connect between different systems, or data warehouses that can store all your data in one place to feed into a dashboard.

3 **Standardize data across systems:** use consistent field names and create rules around formatting and tagging so you can easily track from one system to another.

4 **Keep data clean and synced:** deduplicate consistently and merge conflicting records that may clog up your system.

5 **Add analytics and monitoring:** consider feeding the data into a unified dashboard so you can easily view and monitor progress.

Are your measurement tools ready for the new GTM reality?

Most teams now run a hybrid go-to-market strategy, mixing lead-based and account-based plays in one motion. It works... until you try to measure success with scorecards built for just one of those models. If your metrics cannot track both motions at once, you will never see the full impact of your strategy.

One approach is no longer enough. You may have great leads, but what if they aren't the best accounts for the long haul? Great marketing balances lead generation and account prioritization to drive smarter, scalable growth.

Kelly Hopping

Demandbase Chief
Marketing Officer

Most Teams Use A Mixed Approach

20%
Primarily account-based
(e.g., tiered or targeted
account-based
marketing (ABM)
programs)

15%
Primarily lead-based
(e.g., focus on MQLs)

65%
A mix of lead and
account-based
strategies

Lead Plus Account, But Still One-Sided Metrics?

If you're executing a dual-targeting strategy and only tracking one side of the equation, you're not seeing the full picture. Limited visibility hampers your ability to prove impact and optimize performance effectively. With less than 4 in 10 B2B marketers always tracking qualified accounts or individual leads, this is a clear problem in the industry.

The first step to solving this? Nail down the right success metrics at both levels:

1 **Lead-Level KPIs**

measure **people-based engagement** (conversion rate, email engagement, content consumption, time to qualification)

2 **Account-Level KPIs**

measure **company-based progress** (pipeline attribution by account, opportunity to close rate, renewal rates)

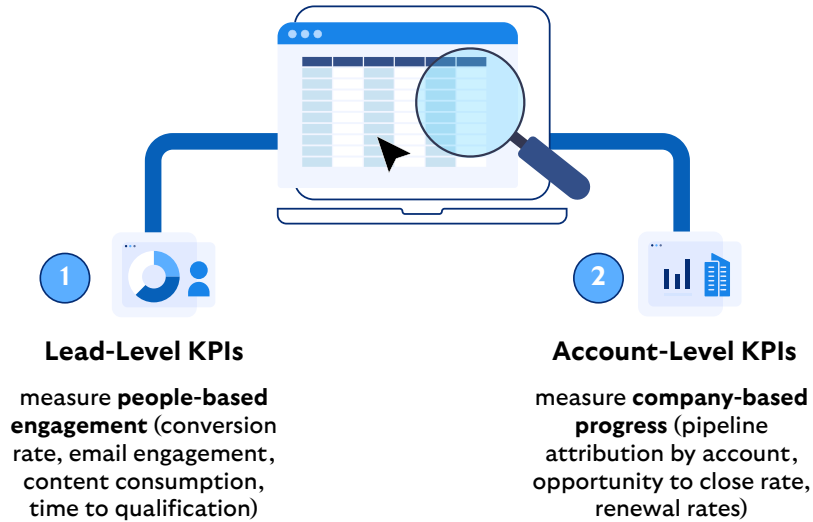A lead-level focus pinpoints the buyers who are ready to engage. An account-level strategy zeroes in on the ones that matter most. Combine the two, and you've got a dual approach that not only builds broad brand awareness, but also keeps your funnel full of the right opportunities.

Few B2B Marketers Consistently Track The Metrics That Matter

40%
always track qualified accounts (e.g. in-market or tiered)

39%
always track incremental lift in account engagement or spend

39%
always track buyer groups within qualified accounts

37%
always track performance by tier (e.g., Tier 1 vs. Tier 2 accounts)

37%
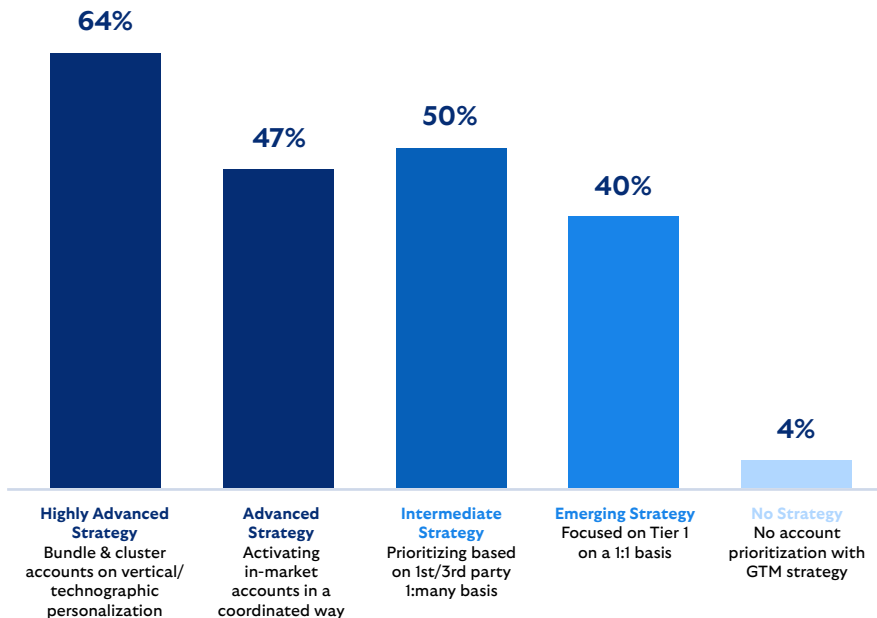always track individual leads or contacts

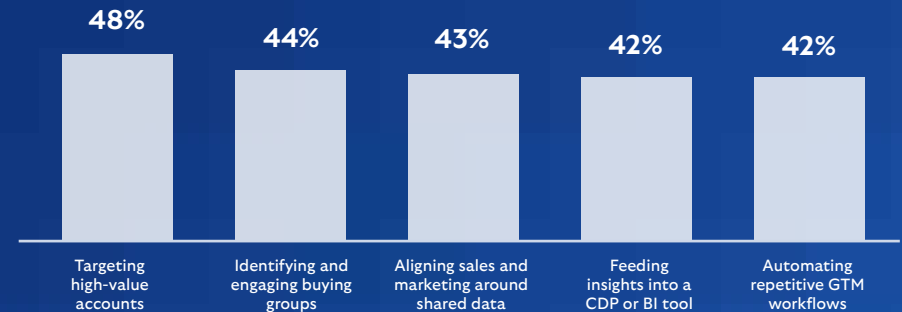# B2B marketers have the tech, but are they executing?

Modern marketing teams are getting ever more sophisticated. They're using vertical-specific messaging, activating in-market accounts, and coordinating across functions. But when it comes to execution, there's a real readiness gap.

GTM Strategy Approach

Highly Advanced Strategy	Advanced Strategy	Intermediate Strategy	Emerging Strategy	No Strategy
64%	47%	50%	40%	4%
Bundle & cluster accounts on vertical/ technographic personalization	Activating in-market accounts in a coordinated way	Prioritizing based on 1st/3rd party 1:many basis	Focused on Tier 1 on a 1:1 basis	No account prioritization with GTM strategy

Fewer than half of marketers consider their tool stack **fully equipped** for go-to-market demands. While most have the technology in place, many still struggle to channel meaningful insights into their customer data platforms, connect seamlessly with BI tools, or automate routine workflows. **The opportunity now is to turn existing capability into real, actionable value.**

Readiness Of The Tool Stack To Power GTM Needs

Targeting high-value accounts	Identifying and engaging buying groups	Aligning sales and marketing around shared data	Feeding insights into a CDP or BI tool	Automating repetitive GTM workflows
48%	44%	43%	42%	42%

If Your Data Can't Talk, Your Strategy Walks.

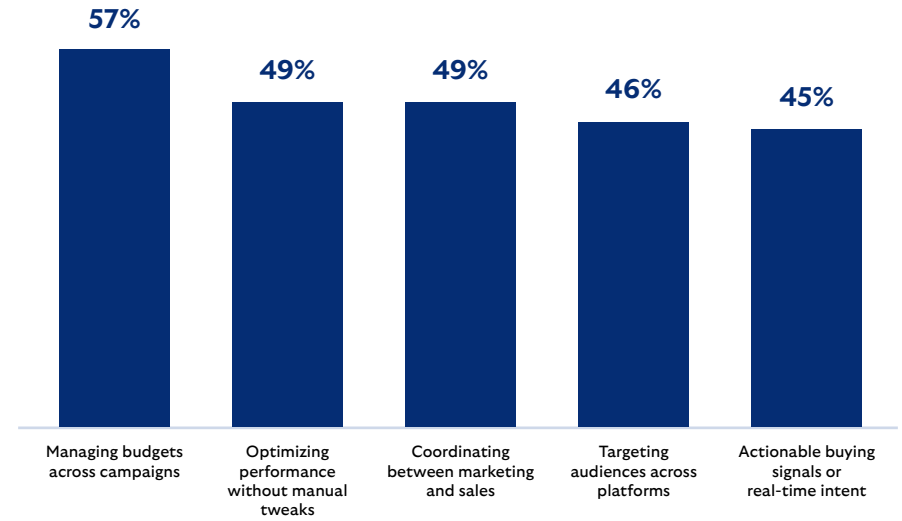Unlock the insights hiding in your stack, or watch campaigns crawl, decisions drag, and growth stall.

Smart marketers are unifying data to uncover deeper insights, weaving in predictive AI to anticipate customer needs, and automating tedious processes to be more efficient. The result is more insightful marketing decisions and quicker action at scale.

B2B Marketers crave smarter campaign workflows

Though technology and strategy have made undeniable leaps forward, many B2B marketing teams are still tethered to clunky, manual processes that grind progress to a halt. It's no wonder they crave a more streamlined way to manage budgets across campaigns, reduce manual tasks, and improve coordination between teams.

Aspects Of Campaign Workflow Most Desired To Be Consolidated Or Automated

Managing budgets across campaigns	Optimizing performance without manual tweaks	Coordinating between marketing and sales	Targeting audiences across platforms	Actionable buying signals or real-time intent
57%	49%	49%	46%	45%

THE POWER OF ORCHESTRATED CAMPAIGNS

Google Search is B2B's top-performing channel since it is very precise and captures high-intent buyers. Layer in coordinated workflows that connect search with display and other channels, and the real advantage is omnichannel lift with a smarter spend.

Although advertisers are rushing to master Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)—which many predict will soon overtake traditional SEO—classic search is still delivering surprisingly strong results. Meanwhile, community-driven platforms such as Reddit and social networks are surging because users trust the social proof and authenticity they find there, especially in an online landscape increasingly flooded with AI-generated content.

B2B Advertising Channels: Use And Performance

	B2B advertising channels current using	Strongest performance for campaign (among those currently using channel)
YouTube	84%	75%
Google search	81%	86%
LinkedIn	70%	66%
Meta/Instagram	62%	63%
Reddit	27%	50%

There's No Single Switch for Success

What's the single biggest unlock that would improve GTM performance? There isn't one. When it comes to their wishlist, marketers are focusing on all the key areas: campaign optimization, customer insights, content strategy, analytics, and messaging. Their top priority is having the full set of building blocks in place for effective, data-driven marketing.

1 Campaign Optimization	2 Customer Insights	3 Content Strategy	4 Analytics	5 Messaging
Real-time results that lead to higher quality leads, better account engagement and ultimately a stronger pipeline.	**More centralized customer insights that better understand the buyer journey in order to inform measurable strategy.**	**Personalized content that is truly in touch with actual needs, delivered at just the right time in the customer journey.**	**Predictive and real-time analytics that unlock the ability to anticipate the needs of customers.**	**Unified and integrated messaging that allows teams to work together to generate interest that leads to sustained revenue.**
"The single biggest unlock would be access to real time data analysis to track and optimize campaign performance instantly." **C-Level, Brand/Corporate Communications**	"Creating a centralized customer data platform to effectively gather and utilize customer insights." **C-Level, Product Marketing**	"We will provide more personalized content and messaging that truly speaks to our customer's needs and challenges." **Director, Growth/Demand Generation**	"The unlock is predictive analytics for new market entry strategies which can drive better performance from our go to market programs." **Vice President, Growth/ Demand Generation**	"We plan to deliver even stronger messaging next year that really connects with our target audience." **Director, Product Marketing**
"The unlock would be stronger sales and marketing alignment for clearer feedback loops to tailor campaigns to what truly drives pipelines." **Director, Growth/Demand Generation**	"Targeting, messaging, and conversion performance would all be significantly enhanced by having complete insight into the buyer journey." **Director, Growth/Demand Generation**	"Improving content marketing efforts by aligning topics with the customer's stage in the buying process." **Vice President, Revenue Marketing**	"Having real time analytics lets us identify trends instantly and adapt strategies faster for improved marketing outcomes." **Vice President, Marketing Communications**	"Greater integration and real time alignment between marketing and sales team to ensure consistent messages, faster lead follow ups, and more effective targeting." **Vice President, Product Marketing**

B2B Marketers see a future powered by AI and it's way more human

When asked what will shape the future of B2B marketing, the answers were clear. AI topped the list, with a focus on personalization, automation, and targeting. Not just as a matter of hype, but as high-priority building blocks of what's next–deepening the customer experience.

What's The Future Of B2B Marketing?

AI **1**

B2B marketers want AI that sharpens targeting, streamlines automation, and delivers predictive insights so they can focus on the right buyers, at the right time, with the right message. These capabilities boost efficiency while reducing wasted spend.

"The emergence of AI driven agents is **revolutionizing** buyer-seller relationships by automating initial interaction."

Director, Marketing Communications

"AI solutions that improve **targeting**, **automation**, and **predictive customer insights** will influence B2B marketing in the future."

Vice President, Product Marketing

"Use of AI to monitor **buyer sentiment** and **adjust marketing messaging** in near real time."

Director, Revenue Marketing

"Increasing use of AI-powered intent data to **identify** and **prioritize accounts** ready to buy."

Director, Account-Based Marketing

"The strategic use of first party data for deeper customer insight and the advanced integration of AI and machine learning for **hyper-personalization** at scale will dictate the direction of B2B marketing in the future."

Director, Product Marketing

What's The Future Of B2B Marketing? (continued)

Data Analytics   2

Better analytics deepens customer understanding, eliminating guesswork and helping marketers anticipate the needs of customers before they happen.

"Better automation and a greater understanding of customers through analytics will define the future of B2B marketing."

Director, Growth/Demand Generation

"The future of B2B marketing will be shaped by predictive analytics and automation that eliminate guesswork and maximize ROI at every touchpoint."

Director, Growth/Demand Generation

Personalization   3

Personalized experiences allow marketers to cut through the noise and improve engagement and ultimate conversion.

"Data driven strategies that enable personalized experiences and targeted account-based marketing at scale."

Director, Marketing Operations/ Technology

"The future of B2B marketing will be shaped by data driven personalization, AI automation and seamless sales marketing alignment."

Director, Marketing Operations/ Technology

Customer Experience   4 Tied

Marketers crave relationships that grow deeper along the customer journey.

"The future of B2B marketing will be shaped by deeper customer relationships, not just transactions."

Vice President, Brand/Corporate Communications

"Powered by AI personalization, real-time data analytics, and a consistent consumer experience at all points of contact."

Director, Marketing Operations/ Technology

Content Marketing   4 Tied

Real search intent and first-party data make AI-driven content marketing far more precise and effective because they provide clear signals of what the audience actually wants and reliable data to act on.

"AI systems capable of delivering highly personalized content experiences based on real time customer data."

Director, Marketing Operations/ Technology

"The future of B2B marketing will be shaped by useful, personalized content driven by real search intent and first-party data."

Director, Digital Marketing

What B2B Marketers want from AI: less flash, more function

When B2B Marketers talk about AI, it's less about chasing shiny objects and more about getting more done, faster.

Marketers want to use AI to drive better campaign performance, cut down on manual tasks, and streamline complex workflows. Personalization is front and center too, using AI to craft tailored outreach that scales seamlessly. And to tie it all together, consolidating insights across tools and channels is key. These capabilities don't just make marketing easier—they make it more effective.

Marketers' Top 5 Must-Have AI Capabilities

1 Improving campaign efficiency and performance

2 Reducing manual tasks

3 (T) Automating complex or multi-step workflows

3 (T) Personalizing messaging and outreach at scale

5 Consolidating insights across tools and channels

WAYS DEMAND GENERATION MAY USE AI:

1 **Predictive lead/account scoring:** identify the highest-probability opportunities from CRM and intent data

2 **Account-based targeting:** pinpoint who should get more marketing and sales attention

3 **Nurture path optimization:** identify the right follow-up sequences and content offers based on behavior and engagement signals
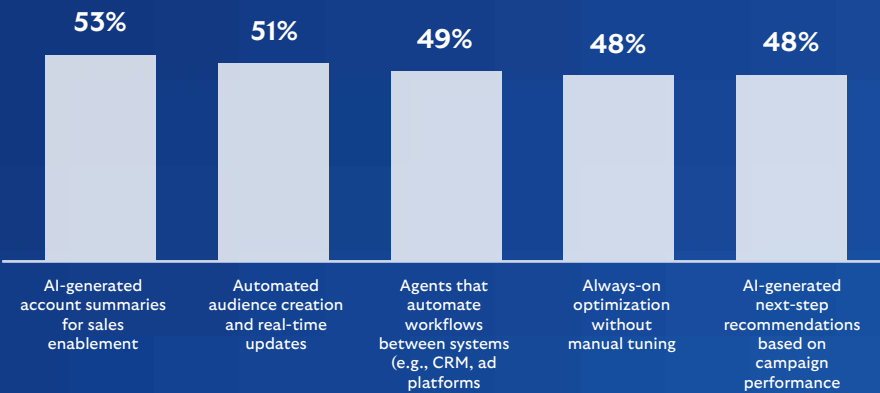
WAYS A DIGITAL MARKETER MAY USE AI:

1 **Creative development and testing:** produce ad copy, headlines, and creative variations

2 **Audience targeting refinement:** optimize bids, audience segments, and placements

3 **SEO and content optimization:** suggest keywords, structure, and competitive gaps for content

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The AI Essentials Powering Modern Marketing

Topping the list are AI sales enablement summaries, automated audience creation, and AI agents that work smarter and faster than humanly possible. These tools are game-changers, cutting through the chaos to streamline workflows and drive impactful results.

From Hype to Results: Unlocking AI's Power

While AI offers immense value, unlocking its full potential requires addressing key challenges: data quality, effective training, seamless integration, and building trust. Overcoming these blockers is essential for maximizing AI's impact.

Value Of AI Capabilities Or Platform Features

53%	51%	49%	48%	48%
AI-generated account summaries for sales enablement	Automated audience creation and real-time updates	Agents that automate workflows between systems (e.g., CRM, ad platforms	Always-on optimization without manual tuning	AI-generated next-step recommendations based on campaign performance

Top Concerns About AI

1 Concerns about data accuracy or reliability

2 Lack of internal expertise or training

3 Difficulty integrating with other tools or systems

4 (T) Privacy or compliance concerns (e.g., GDPR, CCPA)

4 (T) Budget

The Pursuit Of Multi-Step, Multi-Channel Sequences

AI can be much more than just an accelerator for existing workflows. Success with AI depends on robust systems, including reliable data, integration processes, and strategic frameworks that empower these tools to perform at their best. Tomorrow's best marketers need to think about multi-step, multi-channel sequences that AI can run, not just single actions it can perform.

Example:

Imagine AI detecting a buying signal from a targeted account and automatically launching a personalized ad with a tailored email sequence that results in a sales call with specific talking points based on actual and predicted needs of the customer. The future is now and AI is powering it.
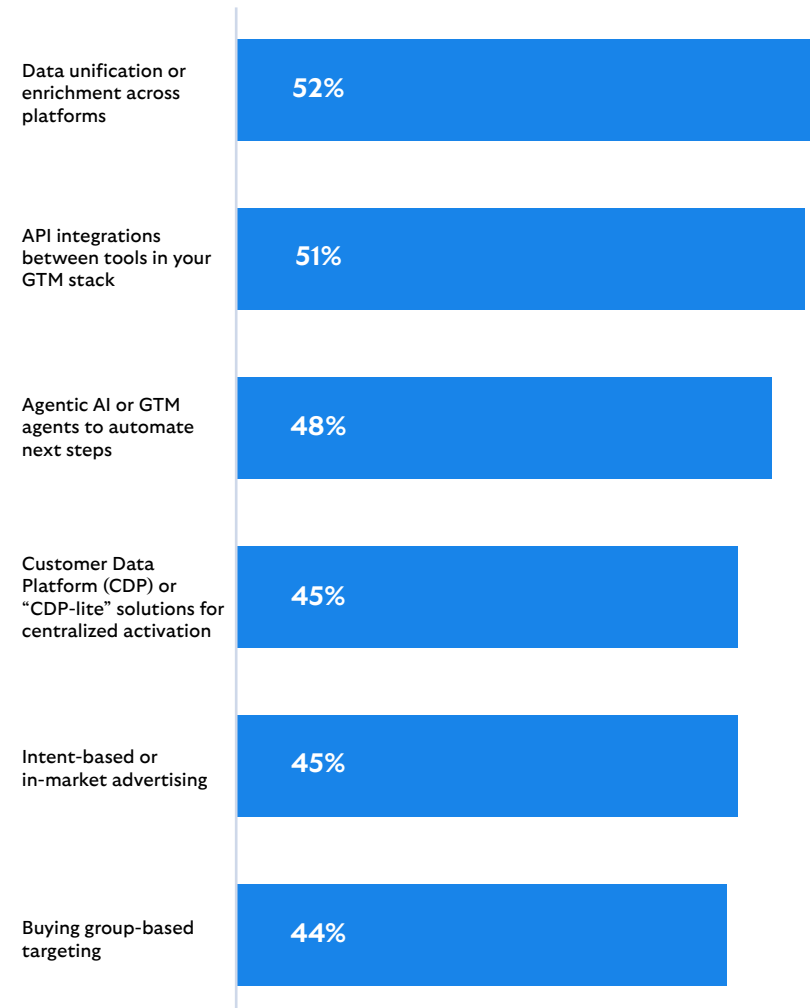
It's time for future-ready marketing that connects the dots, and the data

Today's B2B Marketers know what's holding them back and what they need and want to move forward. And it's not about doing more. It's about doing what matters with smarter workflows, more automation and better data connection. Less manual effort, more forward momentum.

B2B Marketers Are Betting On Data And AI To Work Smarter

To streamline workflows and boost performance, B2B marketers are doubling down on data unification, API integration, and agentic AI. Together, these investments strengthen connectivity across systems and automate complex processes. Ultimately, enabling faster and more informed decisions.

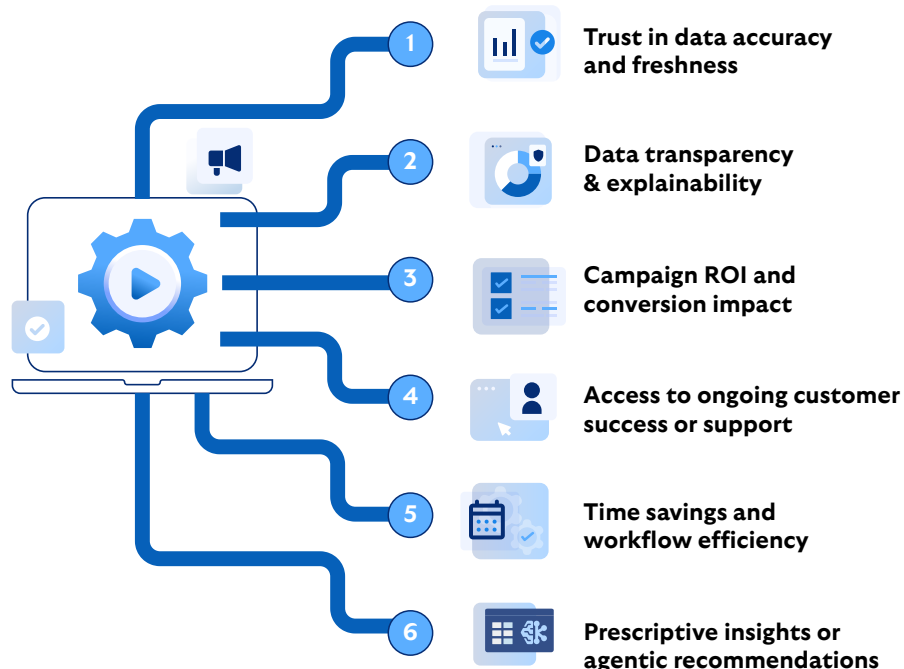**Invest In Or Expand Over The Next 12 Months**

Category	Percentage
Data unification or enrichment across platforms	52%
API integrations between tools in your GTM stack	51%
Agentic AI or GTM agents to automate next steps	48%
Customer Data Platform (CDP) or "CDP-lite" solutions for centralized activation	45%
Intent-based or in-market advertising	45%
Buying group-based targeting	44%

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When B2B marketers choose a Go-To-Market platform, they focus on the factors that truly drive results. Data quality, transparency, and campaign ROI lead the charge. Precision and impact are the name of the game, and the right platform delivers both.
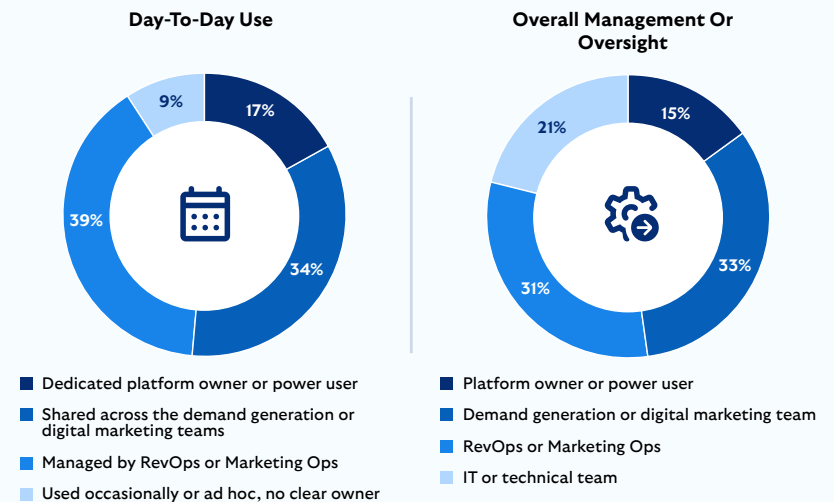
Top Criteria For Selecting A GTM Activation Platform

1. **Trust in data accuracy and freshness**
2. **Data transparency & explainability**
3. **Campaign ROI and conversion impact**
4. **Access to ongoing customer success or support**
5. **Time savings and workflow efficiency**
6. **Prescriptive insights or agentic recommendations**

Driving Operational Harmony

RevOps and MOPs professionals are strategic conductors orchestrating revenue growth and operational harmony. They are essential in shaping sales, marketing and GTM strategies. They play a pivotal role in driving revenue growth and streamlining operations, ensuring alignment across teams and optimizing performance for scalable success.

Responsibility For Use And Management Of Platforms

Day-To-Day Use

17%
34%
39%
9%

- ■ Dedicated platform owner or power user
- ■ Shared across the demand generation or digital marketing teams
- ■ Managed by RevOps or Marketing Ops
- ■ Used occasionally or ad hoc, no clear owner

Overall Management Or Oversight

15%
33%
31%
21%

- ■ Platform owner or power user
- ■ Demand generation or digital marketing team
- ■ RevOps or Marketing Ops
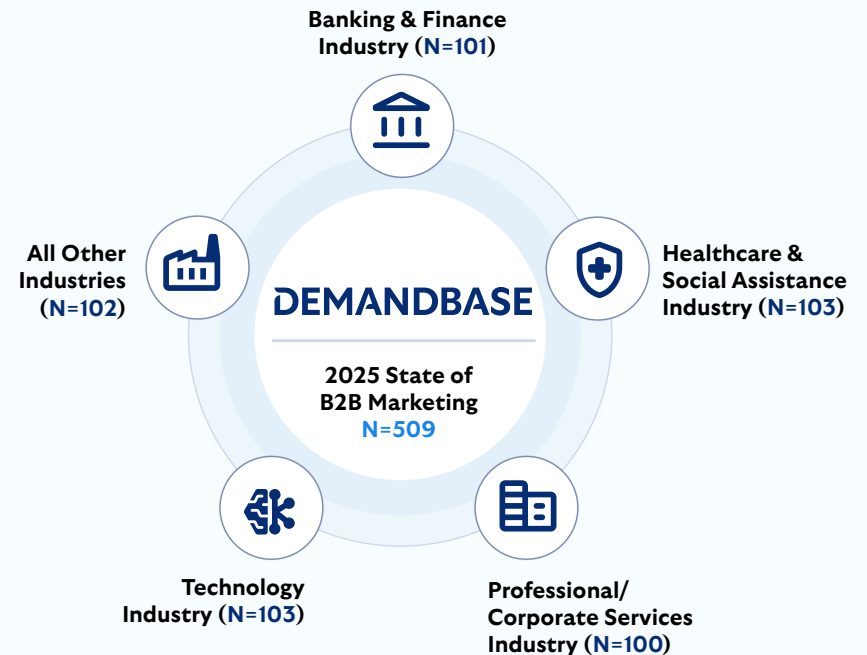- ■ IT or technical team

Overview

The research was conducted online in the U.S. by The Harris Poll on behalf of Demandbase among 509 U.S. B2B Marketing Decision Makers who are 25 years of age or older, work full time as a Manager or higher for a company with $100M+ in annual revenue or 500+ employees. The survey was conducted May 20–June 3, 2025.

Data are weighted where necessary by company size and industry to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the total sample data is accurate to within ±6.2 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. These credible intervals will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Industry Breakdown

Banking & Finance Industry (N=101)

Healthcare & Social Assistance Industry (N=103)

All Other Industries (N=102)

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2025 State of B2B Marketing N=509

Technology Industry (N=103)

Professional/ Corporate Services Industry (N=100)

DEMANDBASE

Demandbase is the leading account-based GTM platform for B2B enterprise sales and marketing teams, designed to make every moment and every dollar count. When the stakes are high, aligning revenue teams to act with precision and confidence is the difference between crushing the quarter or falling short. Since creating the category in 2013, Demandbase continues to revolutionize the way B2B companies go to market with AI-powered insights and industry-leading impact.

For more information about Demandbase,

visit www.demandbase.com.

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