



*Over the past two years, we witnessed some interesting shifts in B2B marketing. So what changed? To find the answer, Think with Google conducted a survey involving B2B decision makers, asking them about their researching and purchasing habits. The results unveil the truth and debunk some widely believed assumptions that have significant implications for B2B marketers.*

## B2B marketplace changes

It is not a surprise that B2B marketplace is constantly changing. What might surprise you, however, is that this evolution can serve as a wake-up call for many brands. Over the last two years, there were quite a few interesting shifts, not only in how buying decisions in B2B are happening, but also in people who are responsible for them.

People at Caterpillar certainly recognized this trend when they launched several new videos last year, for their "Built For It" campaign. Renee Richardson, Global Marketing Services Manager at Caterpillar, pointed out that they understood that young people who are mostly online comprise the new B2B audience. Hence, they decided to make the Cat® brand more approachable, relevant and more human.

It is common knowledge that B2B audience is online. 89% of business-to-business researchers use the web to conduct B2B research process. If you think of it, it is not a big change from 2012. However, if we were to dig deeper, we can find out that even though the percentage of audience using digital remained the same, what they are doing behind the scenes changed.

So what is it that changed? In partnership with Millward Brown Digital, Google found out. In their research they surveyed approximately 3000 B2B researchers about their purchasing habits, research and use of digital (particularly, mobile, video and search). Moreover, they analyzed over a year's worth of clickstream data from desktop panel of Millward Brown Digital. The study, which took place in 2014, is a mirror image of another study conducted in 2012, which allows us to see the changes and

fluctuations over the past two years. The results expose some beliefs, that are widely held and have significant implications for marketing strategies in B2B.

- HYPOTHESIS #1: Millennials don't make business decisions in B2B
- FINDING #1: Millennials comprise almost half of all business-to-business researchers

There was a dramatic shift in researcher demographic in the B2B, over the past two years. In 2012, there was a more or less even mix across all age groups. However, in 2014, almost half of all researchers were 18- to 34-year-olds, a 70% increase.

This generation, also known as the millennials, are unlike any other generations that came before it. They don't know a world without internet, since the oldest representatives of this group were born in 1980. When millennials entered the workforce, [email was regularly used by over half of all Americans](#). Search engines were already a major part of daily life, and BlackBerrys have already been around for several years. This means that the millennial generation is digital natives.

If you haven't done so already, you need to reevaluate your marketing strategy to factor in millennials' experience with digital and how it shapes the content they are using and media channels that are popular with them.

In 2015, over 34% of B2B marketers are planning on shifting their marketing expenditure from mass advertising to digital channels. It is no longer enough just to target millennials, new technology allows for individual targeting where marketers buy individual ads for each person, and if you haven't started doing this yet, this is the right time to start implementing personalized approach to millennials in your marketing strategy.

- HYPOTHESIS #2: The main target of B2B marketing should be the highest-level executives
- FINDING #2: B2B researchers are more influenced by purchase decisions of those, who are not in the c-suite

Typically, many B2B marketing strategies focus solely on the C-suite or another equivalent of senior-level executives. Strategies like these won't nearly be as effective now as they used to be only two years ago. Why is that? The answer is simple. The ecosystem of influencers involved in the B2B research practice has dramatically changed.

Even though 64% of the C-suite possess the final word, about a quarter (or 24%) of the non-C-suite have the same power. What is more interesting, is that the latter has the most influence; over 80% of non-C-suiters have a vote in purchase decisions. It is clear that if you are only marketing to the top level, you're overlooking the important people who also need to notice you. Caterpillar saw this lapse in judgment and realized that change was needed. Renee Richardson said that everything was done at the C-suite level, but after a while they found out that new engineers getting on board were simply going online and placing orders.

- HYPOTHESIS #3: The main focus of your search strategy should be branded searches

- FINDING #3: Over 70% of B2B researchers start their research with a generic search

Most people involved in the business-to-business buying process do not contact suppliers directly until 57% of the entire purchase process is completed before they'll actually perform any action on your website. It is more and more important to understand what is happening at this stage to help B2B brands acquire new customers.

One thing we know for sure is that they are using search. In fact, it is their first resource to do so. Around 90 percent of online B2B researchers use search explicitly to search for business purchases. Even though this number was consistent with the findings in 2012 study, it is clear that the change is in the way they are searching. More time is spent on search, even though the percentage of people using it didn't change. Before engaging with a content on specific brand's site, B2B researchers make on average 12 searches.

So how do they get to you? Through an interesting mix of branded and category searches. Over 71% start by looking for a product or making a generic query, before they start looking for you. For medium and large companies, generic paid search makes a strong impact in the beginning of the business path to purchase, based on the data from Customer Journey tool.

Richardson said that what they assumed to be a traditional relationship-based purchasing methodology, was actually happening online. It is important to be prepared and present the value story to your potential customers and customers very early and in a simple fashion, so that it can be better understood, since the point of contact with a sales representative comes a lot later.

It is no longer enough to just bid on your brand keywords and terms. decision making Influence and Influence are happening much earlier on in the purchasing path now, even before brand awareness. Identify the areas where you can communicate with your customers early on and throughout their search.

- HYPOTHESIS #4: Mobile use is not that popular among B2B researchers
- FINDING #4: Mobile usage is actually intensifying: it is now being used throughout their entire path by B2B researchers

Study shows that 42% of researchers go through the B2B purchasing process on a mobile device. Of those, an impressive 91% growth in use occurred throughout the whole path over the past two years (compared to only initial research stages). Since 2012 there was only a six percent increase in usage, but it is worth noting that those who do use a smartphone use them more actively. As a result, growth in mobile queries tripled.

B2B researchers are now using mobile wherever they are, and not just when they are out and about. Almost 50% of B2B researchers do their product research on their mobile devices, while at work. They are comparing prices and features, reading product reviews, and contacting retailers. They are also purchasing. Over the past two years, we can see a 22% growth in purchase rates from mobile devices. Taking into account the time they spend on their mobile devices, it is important that you can provide them with great mobile experiences.



In fact, 2015 State of B2B Marketing research shows that over 53% of business to business marketers have already integrated and are using mobile as part of their overall marketing strategy today and 92% of B2B marketers rate their mobile integration in a range from somewhat to very effective, with a staggering 61% stating that it was effective or very effective.

- **HYPOTHESIS #5:** The only purpose of watching video is to gain awareness
- **FINDING #5:** B2B researchers actually watch video along the entire path to purchase

The highest growth can be seen in online video. Around 70% of B2B researchers and buyers watch videos throughout their path to final purchase. That comes to a 52% increase in only two years, and we are not just talking about light viewing. According to the YouTube data in the U.S, almost 900K hours were spent in 2014 on watching top B2B videos. Nearly 50% of those were spent on viewing B2B-related videos during their research process for 30 minutes or longer with every fifth researcher watching videos with over an hour of content.

What grabs their attention? Product features videos are at the top of the list, closely followed by professional reviews and how-to videos. They find the videos on YouTube very useful, that's why they are watching them. Watching these types of videos also helps to extend communication: when asked what B2B researchers did after watching the videos, they said that they search for more information, visited a brand's website or store, talked to their colleagues or shared that video. From start to finish, videos play a significant role for these researchers, which means that you also need to be producing the kind of content that will help them learn about, research and compare their B2B purchases.

39% of B2B marketers are currently using videos and 58% of them rate them as effective or even very effective with 62% of B2B marketers increasing their video budgets in 2015. Additionally, 72% those who integrated videos on mobile also report their efforts effective or very effective.

## Setting yourself up for a successful path

The crucial thing you need to be thinking about is whether you are marketing to the changing audience or not. B2B influencers are most likely younger than you would expect, and you need be reaching them wherever they are and making sure you provide them with the content they are looking for. This means improving your mobile, search and video efforts. Delivering top notch video and content-rich mobile experiences are now crucial to your success in reaching B2B customers and helping them move along the path to purchase.