



B2B Marketing Trends Report:

Innovative Ways to Attract New Audiences

Real-world insights from B2B
marketing leaders



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Executive summary

This year, digital-first marketing initiatives moved from an intention to a necessity. Almost every B2B marketer has had to revisit and revise their digital efforts to connect with buyers.

In this new environment, winning customers' attention and maximizing audience reach has reached a new level of importance — especially as the competition to connect increases. To cut through the noise and attract new audiences, ON24 and NetLine sat down with marketing experts Mike Genstil, Co-founder and CEO at VisualizeROI, and Jeff Coyle, Co-founder and CPO at MarketMuse.

Here are a few highlights from the discussion:

Marketers need to combat digital fatigue

B2B marketers need to change their digital approach. According to an ON24 poll of B2B professionals, more than seven in 10 marketers feel they reach less than half of the total addressable audience.

Digital experiences can revitalize inbound marketing efforts, but to truly scale their impact, differentiation is key. They must offer something truly worthwhile to successfully attract new audiences.

Challenges can be overcome

Developing new ways to attract audiences is easier said than done. When asked to list their challenges, marketers experience a range, including a lack of people or time (48%) and budget restrictions (42%).

However, our experts reassure that if marketers understand their ideal audience, and are open to potential new client profiles, digital experiences should be seen as nothing but an opportunity. They should also feel confident that attempts to attract new audiences don't have to be sophisticated — starting with the basics is worthwhile.

External data and alignment with sales are key

There are a multitude of powerful methods to attract new audiences. Marketers report most success with interactive tools and experiences (61%) and the use of unique data and insights (39%) — a perspective unanimously shared among our experts.

Beyond the need to differentiate and personalize, marketers have a host of external data and intent signals at their disposal to take their digital experiences to the next level. Finally, committed alignment with sales teams will ensure that your marketing efforts aren't wasted further down the funnel.

Executive summary

With thanks to

ON24 would like to thank the following experts and partners for sharing their insights:



Tessa Barron
VP, Marketing
ON24



Mike Genstil
Co-Founder and CEO
Valuecore



David Fortino
Chief Strategy Officer
Netline



Jeff Coyle
Co-founder, CSO
MarketMuse

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The context:

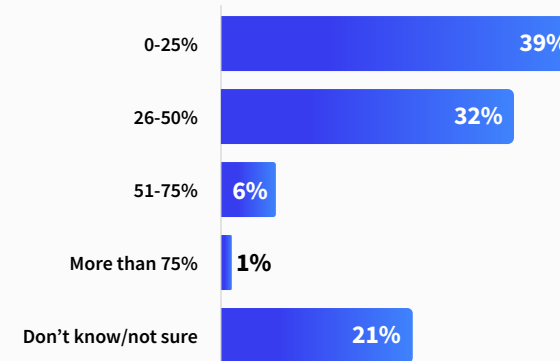
Why B2B marketers need a different approach

These days, it's easy to feel like everyone is marketing on the same digital channels. It can be particularly hard to cut through the noise and connect with the buyers who matter.

Right now, B2B marketers are struggling to stand out, grab the attention of audiences and reach an ever-rising bar of buyer expectations. That said, there has never been a better time to face that challenge head-on, and to direct energy into attracting the largest possible share of your target audience. This is where an innovative digital experience strategy comes in.

According to insights from an ON24 poll, marketers are ready for this kind of revitalized approach:

How much of your total addressable audience do you feel you are currently reaching?



As it stands, most (71%) marketers feel they reach half or less than half of their total addressable market, with some four in ten (39%) who believe they are reaching 0-25%. Just 7% feel they are reaching half to all of their total audience. Notably, around one-fifth (21%) do not know how much of their addressable audience is being reached.

Wake up from digital fatigue

Marketers feel their reach may be limited on digital channels. Why? Tessa believes it's a case of digital fatigue — up to now, digital channels were innovative enough to find new audiences, but this has come to a natural saturation point. Digital experiences should break through that ceiling. Tessa says:

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If you're only dealing in the world you know, how can you ever break into the whitespace, reaching those that you may not even realize had a pain point that your solution could solve?



Tessa Barron
VP, Marketing, **ON24**

NetLine experienced this need for a new approach first-hand. David shares the change in perspective that led NetLine to understand where they wanted to go. That is, looking beyond the obvious end goal of a purchase decision.

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As we forge forward with any of our marketing executions, we've elevated our perception beyond people making purchase decisions to those that are looking to learn more about how to be a better B2B marketer.



David Fortino
Chief Strategy Officer, **Netline**

Outbound can't be everything

For our experts, neglecting your digital engagement strategy could be a missed opportunity. Mike sees relying on outbound only as a missed chance to engage with buyers that have a committed desire to investigate your solutions. He cites an Ironpaper statistic revealing that 59% of marketers receive higher quality leads from inbound tactics vs. 16% from outbound.

Mike explains that digital experiences can act as magnets to help build up a portfolio of leads, including those who have visited your website looking for a solution and who potentially represent a short sales cycle.

Jeff agrees, reminding marketers that a diversified combination of inbound and outbound approaches will ready your organization for changing demand in a changing world. If marketers aren't effectively understanding the demand for their solution, and tweaking their approach to the funnel accordingly, they are missing an opportunity.

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It's not that outbound is the enemy, but that any one-source investment portfolio is the definition of risk where sometimes people think outbound is predictable.



Jeff Coyle
Co-founder, CSO, **MarketMuse**

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The anatomy of a digital experience

So, the need for a new approach to inbound might be clear, but what exactly does the ideal digital experience look like?

Change someone's day

For Jeff, the key thing to remember is that in the wake of digital-first developments, the bar has been raised — and will likely continue to rise. As such, any novel approach to lead generation or attracting new audiences has to be differentiated. Jeff defines this as providing value to the extent you influence your audience's day, likely through advisory or educational content that can be absorbed, circulated internally and that makes them better at their job:



It's not as simple as a form for a whitepaper. It's thinking critically about ways that you can separate yourself from your competitors.



Jeff Coyle
Co-founder, CSO, **MarketMuse**

According to David, this was NetLine's mantra when building its Audience Explorer tool. It was created with the simple idea that most marketers are not ready to make a purchase, but still deserve to be educated throughout their journey. In the case of Audience

Explorer, this meant leveraging and obfuscating the information processed on NetLine's platform in a way that was anonymized but still highly valuable to other marketers:



A great genesis for a digital experience is asking yourself that uncomfortable question: what are the questions our clients always want to get to the bottom of, but that we don't necessarily feel comfortable answering.



David Fortino
Chief Strategy Officer, **Netline**

The numbers speak for themselves when it comes to Audience Explorer. The tool now represents close to 37% of pageviews on NetLine's corporate site just a year after launching, and has been used by 7,000 B2B marketers. Crucially, it has generated over 400 SQLs, directly influencing hundreds of thousands of dollars of closed sales.

Personalization is key

Mike has a clear idea of what makes the ideal digital experience. First, it educates the persona, be it a marketer, seller, IT leader or otherwise, speaking a language that resonates with them.

Second, it is personalized to that particular organization and professional. That is, the head of IT with a small team of 10 people will require a different message to the head of IT at a global organization with a 500-person-strong team. Mike says:



These personas are related, but they experience a different set of problems. The order of magnitude is different, the scale is different, the cost of failure is different. The digital experience needs to be quantified and personalized.



Mike Genstil
Co-Founder and CEO, **Valuecore**

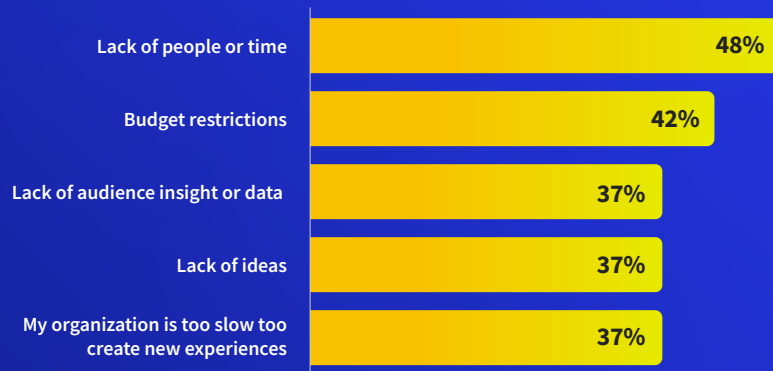
Marketers should create experiences that are clearly relevant and targeted, demonstrating value as soon as a buyer interacts with them.



What challenges marketers need to tackle

Like all worthy pursuits, creating a digital experience strategy is bound to present challenges. For the marketers that responded to a recent ON24 poll, these problems take several forms:

What challenges have you faced in trying to develop new ways to attract your audience?



For the largest share (48%) of marketers, a lack of people or time is a key challenge to developing a digital experience. Other challenges include lack of audience insight or data (37%), a lack of ideas (37%) and that organizations are too slow to create new experiences (37%).

For more than four in 10 (42%) respondents, budget restrictions are standing in the way of attracting new audiences. In fact, budget related issues resonate with our experts, too. Jeff sees a lack of understanding about the level of investment needed to build digital experiences, their maintenance costs, as well as their overall value, as a fundamental problem.

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If I'm going to spend money on anything, I need to truly understand the cost of my existing environment, and the value of change. Very few people understand that.



Mike Genstil

Co-Founder and CEO, **Valuecore**

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Sophisticated tools are the goal, but not essential

Siloed digital channels can act as a barrier to a range of aspects of digital marketing. Tessa acknowledges that many marketers might feel these siloes are preventing them from developing their strategy to attract new audiences.

However, she doesn't see these barriers as a reason to be discouraged from trying at all.



It's true that more developed, interactive tools are a great goal to have — but every marketer can have a conversation identifying the content they have available to leverage today. Tessa suggests looking internally to do this:

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Your customers are an amazing source of information for how to attack a pain point that your buyers likely also have. For us, when we see how customers report their own metrics, we'll take that and create a template that can be shared to our other audiences too.



Tessa Barron
VP, Marketing, ON24

Understand your audience

As a marketer, understanding your ideal client profile is paramount. But Mike raises the potentially controversial question of whether most marketers are truly able to do this — or, rather, whether they are able to walk away from non-ideal clients.

Mike offers the example of VisualizeROI's customers in the invoice and procurement automation space. A company with an average deal size of \$25,000 for their invoice automation platform, for example, is likely not the right fit for a website visitor processing 10 invoices a month for a small organization. In this scenario, both sides should be able to gracefully acknowledge that the solution is perhaps not the best fit.

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If we truly understand the ideal client profile, and we speak to that and quantify the pain of that persona, it becomes more interactive, engaging, and the chance of getting to a win-win is much higher.



Mike Genstil
Co-Founder and CEO, Valuecore

Tessa links this personalization priority to account-based marketing (ABM). She notes that companies can feel pressured to invest in strategy supplements like predictive engines and data enrichment tools to enhance ABM — which ultimately still lead to guesswork — when that energy could be directed toward creating opportunities for customers to tell you what they want. David agrees. He says:

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If your goal through developing these tools is to engage with your buyer, but you're starting off with assumptions versus capturing first-party reactions, you're probably starting off from the wrong perspective.



David Fortino
Chief Strategy Officer, Netline

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Don't disqualify new opportunities

Having established that qualifying, and disqualifying, certain customer profiles is key to developing a great digital experience, David offers an alternative approach to the challenge of non-ideal client personas. He suggests marketers entertain the idea of drawing in non-ideal customers as an opportunity for net-new customer profiles.

For David, the share of people going through your tool giving the same feedback, however small, might represent an opportunity to explore valuable new directions for your solution:

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If it only took a minor tweak of your product or service to address that 10%, that's a whole net new revenue growth opportunity — whether that's expanding into a different line of business or perhaps just repackaging an existing solution.



David Fortino
Chief Strategy Officer, **Netline**

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Rather than immediately disqualifying due to poor fit, marketers can consider how certain outlying personas could act as first party validation to address a new market. In Jeff's words:

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You can turn a huge pool of individual contributors, who may never be major influencers on buying teams, into champions.



Jeff Coyle
Co-founder, CSO, **MarketMuse**

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How to create an innovative digital experience

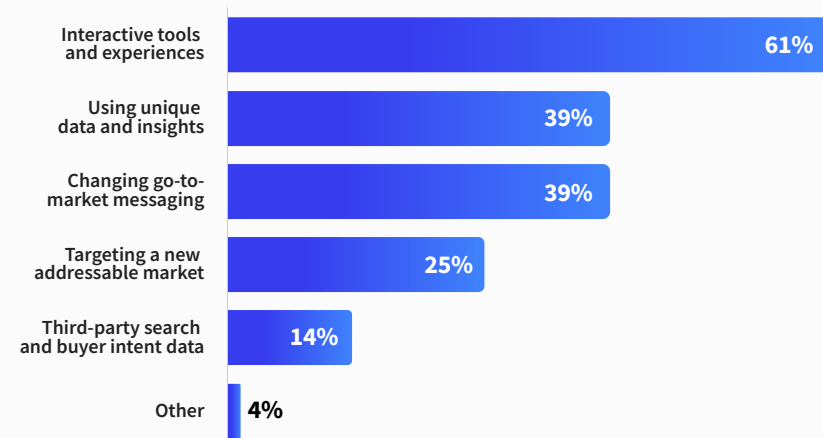
The reasons why a digital experience strategy could help you reach a wider audience are clear. But how should marketers go about it?

In an ON24 poll, marketers shared what has been working for them when it comes to attracting new audiences.

For the majority (61%), interactive tools and experiences have been a powerful approach. For Tessa and ON24, most recently this has meant expanding beyond traditional form fills and website buttons by integrating pop-up content offers to attract a webinar audience.

Other effective approaches include changing go-to-market messaging (39%), targeting a new addressable market (25%) and using third-party search and buyer intent data (14%).

What have you found particularly powerful in attracting new audiences?



Using external data

For nearly four in 10 (39%) respondents to the poll, using unique data and insights has helped to attract new audiences. According to our experts, the leveraging of data is crucial in any approach to building up a digital experience.

For Jeff, the use of data has a key influence on messaging. He cites search data and intent data as two key insights that can mean many different things.



Intent signals, for example, can be thought about in the basic sense that they align an individual with certain topics or concepts, or they can be used in more nuanced ways: How have they interacted with a button? How have they made their request? Have they asked to configure a feature? These intent signals are far stronger indicators of motivation to buy.

When it comes to search data, Jeff's key advice is to look beyond antiquated indicators such as search volume, or using paid search data to influence content creation:



A quick check on that is if your processes haven't been updated in a few years, they're probably bad, because there's so many innovations on this.



Jeff Coyle
Co-founder, CSO, **MarketMuse**



Go the extra mile when personalizing

Mike makes the point that not only are B2C companies such as Amazon, Netflix and Google setting the bar for slick interfaces and experiences, but they also offer a particular level of personalization offering a useful or pertinent pathway through their service.

He encourages the use of external data to enhance B2B marketers' own opportunities to personalize. LinkedIn Sales Navigator, for example, can often highlight the number of employees in a certain team within an organization, which marketers can use in turn to ensure a digital experience speaks to the particular problems experienced by that customer. If data isn't 100% correct, marketers can give the customer the opportunity to correct it. Mike says:



Leveraging these data sources is a big opportunity. I think this is an element of the future of B2B marketing — using the data we have in an intelligent, compelling, provocative and educational way to be more personalized.



Mike Genstil
Co-Founder and CEO, **Valuecore**



Keep sales in mind

Agreeing with the need to go the extra mile, Tessa recommends thinking about a digital experience as a vehicle not only to give your customer an answer, but as a means to provide insightful information about that customer to your sales team to improve the next email they send:



Inbound to fuel outbound. I think it's a virtuous cycle.



Tessa Barron
VP, Marketing, **ON24**



Keeping your sales team in mind is an approach that resonates with each of our experts. For Dave, this might extend as far as the design features built into your tools and the ways in which sales can be enabled to 'hack' the insights provided. Ultimately, this will allow sales to fine-tune their output — from first touch — beyond the generic.

Not only that, but, in Jeff's eyes, constant alignment with sales will ensure valuable hooks or opportunities generated by personalized experiences are identified.



Final takeaways

Here are our experts top tips for reaching your total audience and building a digital experience:

Use the 90:10 rule

Tessa acknowledges that it can be a challenge to weave a digital experience into your existing marketing mix. Here's her recommendation: feedback, however small, might represent an opportunity to explore valuable new directions for your solution:



Put 90% of investment into what you know works, and 10% into innovating and trying new things, so that ultimately you're continuing to build and add new channels.



Tessa Barron
VP, Marketing,
ON24



Ask the tough questions

David recommends not only asking yourself and your team the fundamental questions around what customers want, but to involve your sales team in that process, inviting a critique of weak spots in your strategy:



Get a firm response, as transparent as possible, that offers the most amount of value to your prospects and customers. Those points typically can be translated into a worthwhile digital experience.



David Fortino
Chief Strategy Officer,
Netline



Quantify your client profile

For Mike, marketing to your ideal client profile is essential. Marketers should use the data and numbers at their disposal to understand this profile quantitatively:



Quantify their pain and their value so that they can walk away and say: 'Okay, I just learned something.'



Mike Genstil
Co-Founder and CEO,
Valuecore



Clarity is key

Jeff thinks that a valuable question to ask is whether the experts you have in-house and in your network can clearly quantify the value of your solution:



Can they quantify the value clearly? Can they get to that through your web experience? If you've got those things up to the standard of an expert or ideal buyer, you're there.



Jeff Coyle
Co-founder, CSO,
MarketMuse

