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Tech CEOs Can Improve Demand Generation With a Targeted Mix of Marketing CTAs and Marketing Channels

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Initiatives: Marketing and Sales Execution for Tech CEOs; Establishing Product-Market Fit (PMF)

The information buyers look for to inform their decisions varies across roles on the buying team and stage in the buying journey. Tech CEOs can improve their lead conversion rates by aligning their mix of calls to action and channels to both of these dynamics.
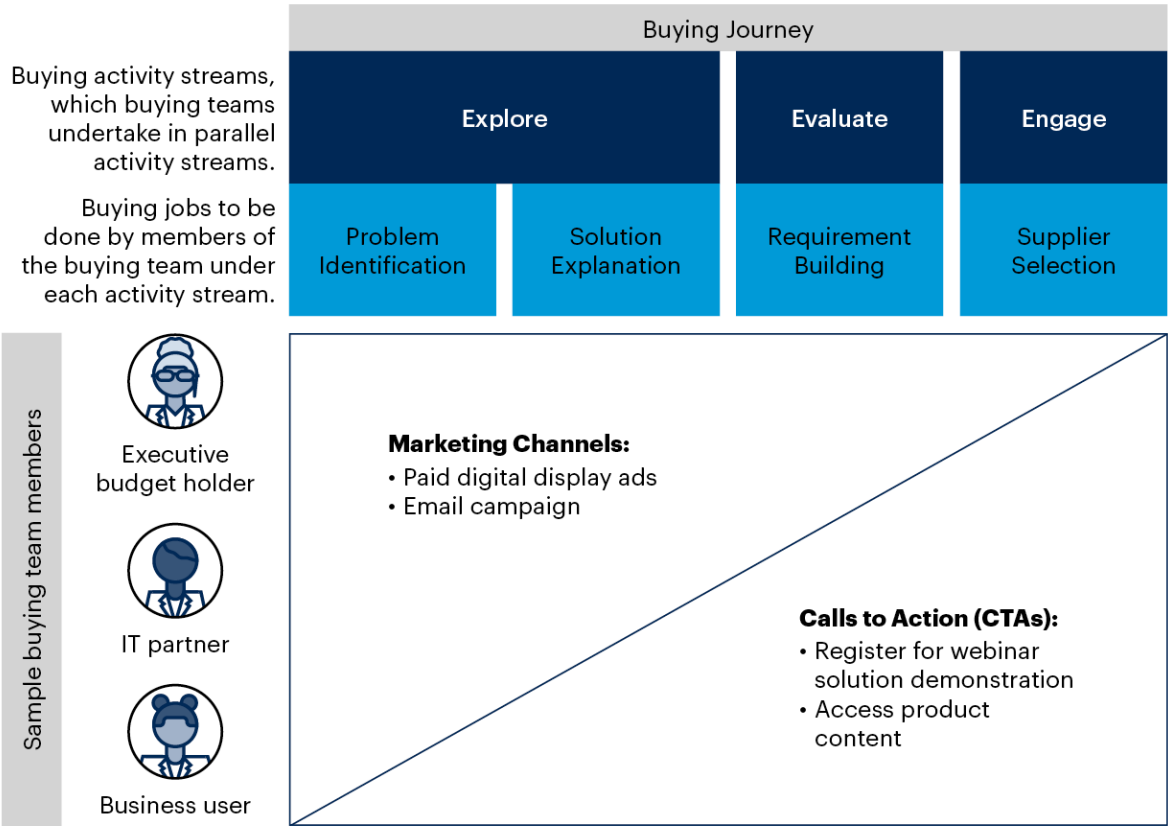
Overview

Key Findings

- Technology purchases typically involve teams of buyers representing varying roles in both their organization and the buying process.

- Many tech CEOs assume that the *same* mix of marketing channels, as long as it includes multiple channels, will be successful across all target buyer roles at all stages in the buying journey.

- Calls to action (CTAs) that push provider content are less likely to be acted on.

Recommendations

- Map relevant marketing channels and CTAs to key buyer personas across the known buying team (both active and occasional participants) and buying journey.

- Invest in a targeted mix of marketing channels to ensure the right content (answers to buyer questions) reaches the right buying team members (in active pursuit of those answers) at the right time.

- Infuse situational awareness into CTA decisions by indicating how they support buying team responsibilities (job/tasks to be done and questions to be answered).

Figure 1. The Common, and Ill-Fated, One-Size-Fits-All Demand Generation Approach

Sample of Using One-Size-Fits-All Marketing Channel Mix and CTAs

Buying activity streams, which buying teams undertake in parallel activity streams.

Buying jobs to be done by members of the buying team under each activity stream.

Buying Journey

Explore | Evaluate | Engage

Problem Identification | Solution Explanation | Requirement Building | Supplier Selection

Sample buying team members

Executive budget holder

IT partner

Business user

Marketing Channels:
• Paid digital display ads
• Email campaign

Calls to Action (CTAs):
• Register for webinar solution demonstration
• Access product content

Source: Gartner
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Gartner (September 2022)

Tech CEOs who want to improve their demand generation conversion rates must take steps to employ different marketing channels and different calls to action (CTAs) based on buying team roles and jobs to be done throughout the buying journey.

Especially among larger provider organizations, a broad multichannel marketing mix is more effective at increasing awareness, particularly at the top of the funnel. An important distinction that tech CEOs can use to their advantage, though, is that simply increasing the number of CTAs and marketing channels isn't effective. In fact, increasing marketing channels and CTAs just for diversity wastes precious resources and is counterproductive, creating "noise" that customers become desensitized to. Therefore, tech CEOs intent on improving demand generation results must have a clear understanding of who they're targeting and align demand-generation efforts accordingly (see Ignition Guide to Conducting Customer Segmentation as a Tech CEO).

Once clear audience targeting is established, a tech CEO's team can match effective channels and situationally aware CTAs that will drive buyers forward in their buying journey.

Introduction

Technology purchase decisions are typically spread across multifunctional buying teams. To reach the team of contributors with deftness, satisfying their varying expectations and priorities, tech CEOs must anticipate answering a wide variety of buying questions (see Focus on Buying Jobs Rather Than the Chaos of Buying Journeys). But the mistake that many tech CEOs make is using the same marketing channels to reach — and the same CTAs to resonate with — all buyers at all stages in the buying journey (see Figure 1).

Map Buying Team Members to Buying Jobs to Be Done

The first step for tech CEOs in finding the right marketing channel mix and CTAs to improve demand generation is to closely examine their target customer segments' typical buying team makeup:

- Who is involved and what is their responsibility at different stages in the buying journey?

- Are they decision makers?

- Do they hold the budget?

- Will they be end users?

- Are they being consulted as stakeholders?

As illustrated in Figure 2, tech CEOs and their teams can create simple matrices of who is involved at what stage in the buying journey to represent buying team member distinctions.

Figure 2. Map Out Buying Team Member Responsibility Across the Buying Journey

Sample Map of Buying Team Member Jobs Across the Buying Journey

Source: Gartner
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Note, of course, that Figure 2 is an example. Every tech CEO will identify unique buying team makeups and attribute buying job responsibilities differently based on their solution, market, target segment and so on. It is also important to know that not every cell in this matrix must be filled (many buying team members may be entirely absent from much of the buying journey). Furthermore, not all roles and buying jobs will end up requiring the same amount of marketing attention.

Select Marketing Channels Buyers Are Most Likely to Use

Although a multichannel marketing mix can increase reach, build awareness, and influence buyer engagement, tech CEOs must resist the temptation to look at benchmarks and channels that have performed well for other providers as fail-proof recipes for their own lead generation success. Channel performance should be expected to vary across target customer segments, buying team roles and stages of the buying journey.

Once CEOs choose an initial marketing channel mix, they should progressively adapt their investments based on continuous evaluation and observed ROI for each buying team member persona and corresponding buying journey stage. Over time, build a new version of the above sample matrix to plan for targeted channels and CTAs to create a go-to-market plan, as illustrated in Figure 3. Note that the sample provided in Figure 3 also includes a handful of sales-owned channels, too, making it a holistic representation of a tech CEO's entire go-to-market plan, including lead generation and account-focused outreach.

Figure 3. Mapping Marketing Channels to Buying Team Member Targets

Sample Go-To-Market Plan Based on Buying Team Members and Roles

	Buying Journey			
Buying activity streams, which buying teams undertake in parallel activity streams.	Explore		Evaluate	Engage
Buying jobs to be done by members of the buying team under each activity stream.	Problem Identification	Solution Explanation	Requirement Building	Supplier Selection
Executive budget holder	**Paid Digital:** Display ads to spark problem exploration	**Paid Direct:** Direct mail sharing case studies from look-alike accounts	**Individualized Follow-Up:** Personalized LinkedIn messages from sales development representatives	**Direct Contact:** Networking dinner for C-level stakeholders
IT partner		Email campaign for buying stakeholders	Invitation to webinar solution demonstration	System-of-record calls promoting late-stage content
Business user	**Owned Social:** LinkedIn posts promoting benchmarking content	**Owned Digital:** Segment-specific web content	Retargeted display ads for web visitors	Creative direct gifting for unengaged stakeholders

Sample buying team members

Source: Gartner
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Note that the sample provided in Figure 3 is not a precise 1:1 map of unique marketing channels to every buying team member at every stage in the buying journey. Instead, it represents a selective approach based on where those buying team members participate in the buying cycle. This doesn't mean tech CEOs should disengage from buyers at times where a specific marketing or sales channel isn't identified. However, the focus may shift more toward establishing and maintaining brand recall (using, for example, programmatic advertising) for those buyers and at those times.

In addition to using top-performing marketing channel benchmarks as a starting point for marketing channel selection, tech CEOs can also use buyer data collected by sales and marketing teams. In the early stages of the buying journey, tech CEOs and their teams may want to use the following questions to help evaluate channel effectiveness:

- Where do your buyers already turn to find information today, and are you placing the right calls to action in those channels? Or are you placing CTAs across *all* channels regardless of whether a buyer would go there for that specific information (not advised)?

- How do buyers define their problems?

- Who are the influencers in your market?

- Which digital/online communities do they participate in?

- Are they in need of a replacement or new solution?

For buyers whose attention you already have, the goal is to stay top-of-mind as they begin to evaluate providers. For this group of buyers, you may shift your investment more toward your owned channels (e.g., website, social media pages), as well as continuing to advertise through paid social or ad retargeting based on buyer behavior.

When buyers have expressed readiness to engage, the goal shifts again to understanding the level of participation they are seeking. For this set of buyers, effective channel examples include outbound calling, industry events, and direct sales or partner channels.

Select CTAs That Promote the Progression of Buying Tasks

Marketing channels are the vehicle for getting marketing messages to buyers, but the ultimate goal is that those buyers will then take an action which furthers their buying journey with the tech CEO's business.

Take a moment to consider common examples of CTAs:

- "Download our ebook"

- "Schedule a demo"

- "Watch video featuring Acme Co.'s CEO"

CTAs that push provider content are less likely to be acted on. They leave buyers guessing whether that content contains the solution or sales information they need to complete a buying task or answer their buying questions.

Instead, CTAs should promise resources that make it easier for buyers to navigate their current buying situation and relay valuable messaging to the rest of the buying team. Use Table 1 to assess how CTAs might clearly direct buyers to answers to key questions or information to help them complete tasks.

Table 1: Illustrative Example of Buying Team Jobs Across the Buying Journey

(Enlarged table in Appendix)

Buying Jobs Across the Buying Journey ↓	Tasks to Be Completed ↓	Key Buyer Questions ↓	Buyer Situation ↓
Problem Identification	▪ Check in with peers. ▪ Set internal priorities. ▪ Build a case for change.	▪ Should we change? ▪ Where should we prioritize? ▪ How can we improve? ▪ What are others doing?	Buyers are overloaded with information on existing problems and opportunities, seeking education on use cases and options.
Solution Exploration	▪ Conduct independent research. ▪ Meet industry analysts. ▪ Assess the marketplace and develop a vendor shortlist. ▪ Identify alternative options. ▪ Gather an internal buying group.	▪ What options exist? ▪ Which vendors and information sources are credible? ▪ What are the buying criteria? ▪ Who has been successful?	▪ Buyers must deconflict claims by suppliers. ▪ Exploration will change when making a replacement purchase.
Requirements Building	▪ Validate with an external network. ▪ Contrast alternative options. ▪ Prioritize requirements. ▪ Schedule demos. ▪ Send out RFPs and review responses.	▪ What are the desired outcomes? ▪ What are key requirements? ▪ What internal resources exist? ▪ What resources are needed?	Buyers must prioritize internal requirements and bifurcate must-have and nice-to-have features.
Supplier Selection	▪ Review business case. ▪ Calculate ROI/net benefits. ▪ Obtain procurement signoff. ▪ Obtain executive approval.	▪ What options are viable? ▪ Is this option affordable? ▪ Is there a good ROI? ▪ What are success metrics? ▪ How do we start preparing?	Buyers must be confident in seeing supplier differentiators and be comfortable navigating through change.

See Focus on Buying Jobs Rather Than the Chaos of Buying Journeys

Source: Gartner (October 2022)

As an example, for buyers responsible for identifying the problem and asking "Should we change?" and "What are other businesses doing?" the following CTAs clearly point buyers to where they can find answers:

▪ **Content:** Thought leadership both from the vendor and third parties on current and future trends in the buyer's industry or the buyer's role (think: white papers, videos, podcasts, webinars). **CTA:** "Watch: Digital accessibility is the next differentiation battleground for VARs (2 min.)"

▪ **Content:** Outcome-based case studies that describe customer success and value realization. **CTA:** "Download case study to see how ABC Co. achieved net zero carbon in its data centers"

For buyers who are further in their buyer journeys and responsible for prioritizing requirements, CTAs that connect solutions and customer use cases to delivery capabilities are powerful. These could include tools to support security reviews and risk assessments or provide value/financial metrics. Example CTAs include:

- **Content**: Online ROI calculator providing quantified financial value estimates. **CTA**: "Use our ROI calculator to estimate how much Miracle Solution can save your organization in the first year."

- **Content**: Implementation guide or reference story focused on onboarding ("the first 100 days as a customer"). **CTA**: "See how easy it is to integrate Acme Solution; Get your copy of [Implementation Guide]"

> **CTAs are most effective when they are relevant to buyers: the right buying team member, with the right buying team job/tasks, with the right questions, at the right time.**

Marketing teams must have a deep understanding of buyers and their buying process to create CTA alignment. They can create a similar matrix to Figure 3, but with CTAs added for the selected marketing channels. As tech CEO, you can enable your team to build target buyer profiles by investing in past buyer behavior and intent data (see Tech CEOs Should Use Target Audience Data to Improve Demand Generation).

Summary
To present more relevant calls to action through the channels where buyers go for answers along the journey, be sure you are placing the right calls to action into the right channels to reach buyers at the right time. You must employ a targeted approach that maps channels and CTAs to buying team profiles, including buying jobs, questions and the stage of the buying journey.

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See Focus on Buying Jobs Rather Than the Chaos of Buying Journeys			

Source: Gartner (October 2022)

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