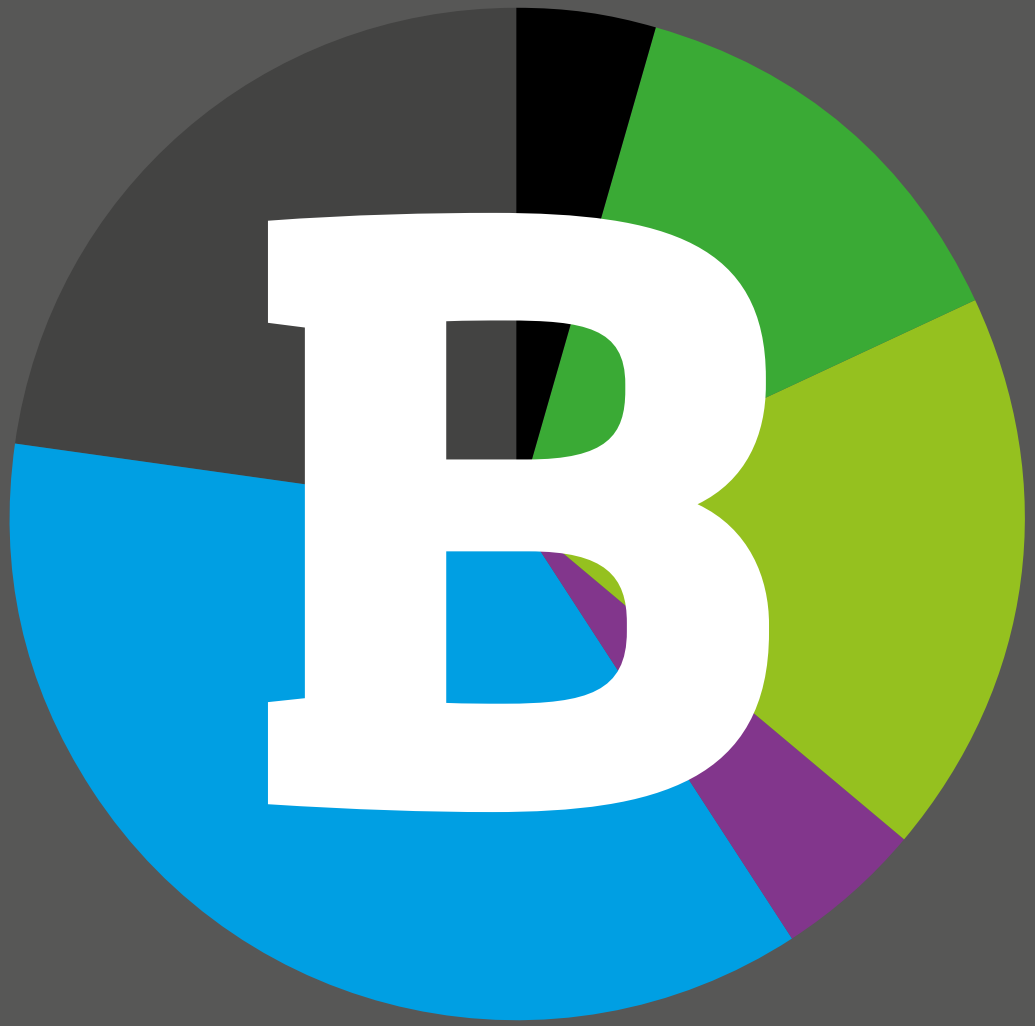


BUYERSPHERE

THE WINNING HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL B2B BRANDS

A Buyersphere mini-report by Base One and B2B Marketing

Produced in association with McCallum Layton and Research Now

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The Winning Habits of Successful B2B Brands

In the 1980s Stephen Covey wrote about The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The Buyersphere Report is a great opportunity to reinterpret this approach for marketers - so we aim to uncover the habits that distinguish the successful B2B suppliers from the also-rans who invested the time and effort in the prospect but were ultimately discarded before the end of the buying process.

In particular, the research investigates:

- Familiarity with the brand before the buying process
- Methods and frequency of communication
- Personality and direct, human engagement
- Differentiation by product, price and location

Do you have the habits of a highly successful brand? Are you doing the things that the winning suppliers did? In B2B, the buying process is a long one, and insight into how brands can be the "last man standing" is invaluable.

Survey Highlights

Better the devil you know

The strongest attribute of a winning supplier
was brand awareness,
ie that they were known to the buyer
before they started.
Two thirds of buyers had previous
knowledge of the winning brand.

B2B on your doorstep

Almost half of B2B buyers
said location was immaterial to their ultimate decision.
Clearly some B2B products and services **(eg hosting)** are less location-dependent,
but it is interesting to note that
17% of buyers
ended up choosing a supplier within a distance of 50km.

Quality v price

Quality matters. Almost one in three B2B buyers *(65%) agreed* that their chosen supplier simply offered the best product/service.

However, pricing is less of an issue within B2B, with only 49% agreeing ***that the preferred supplier offered the lowest price.***

Show some empathy

Of the 13 different characteristics that respondents were asked to consider, ***the fourth most cited*** was that the winning supplier **"understood their needs better than others". *For 58% of buyers surveyed,*** this was true of their final selection.

What are the most successful communications tools?

Email apparently.

If there is one thing that successful suppliers did more than the also-rans, ***it was that they used email more*** **(41% of buyers agreed with this).** Of course, this could be cause or correlation – but the research suggests that regular email comms **can only help your chances of winning.**

The social media difference

Or the lack of difference –

9% of buyers **said their chosen supplier did more in the area of social media,**

yet exactly the same number said their chosen ones offered less social media.

Of the ten communications tools listed,

social media was the only one to show such perfect ambivalence.

The value of creativity

Do the most creative brands tend to win?

The research suggests not always.

In fact, of the 13 'habits' listed, creativity had the weakest correlation with winning.

Almost one in four ***(23%)*** of respondents disagreed that the winning supplier was the most creative. **However, in the same way that most people will declare that *'advertising doesn't work on me',*** the effect of creativity may be consciously scorned, but subliminally absorbed.

The human touch

Respondents were asked about the single ***most memorable communication*** **they received or experienced during the buying process.**

For 88%, it came from the winning supplier – **and in most cases, they mentioned personal contact, *whether face-to-face* or on the phone.**

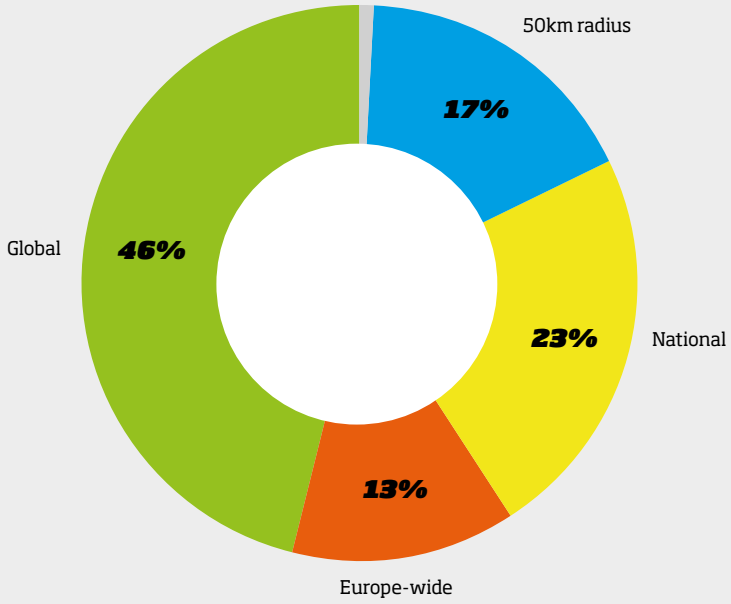
Full Survey Details

The Successful Supplier

Respondents were asked to what extent they took distance into account in their search for a potential supplier. Excluding 1% who said they had been obliged to use a particular supplier.

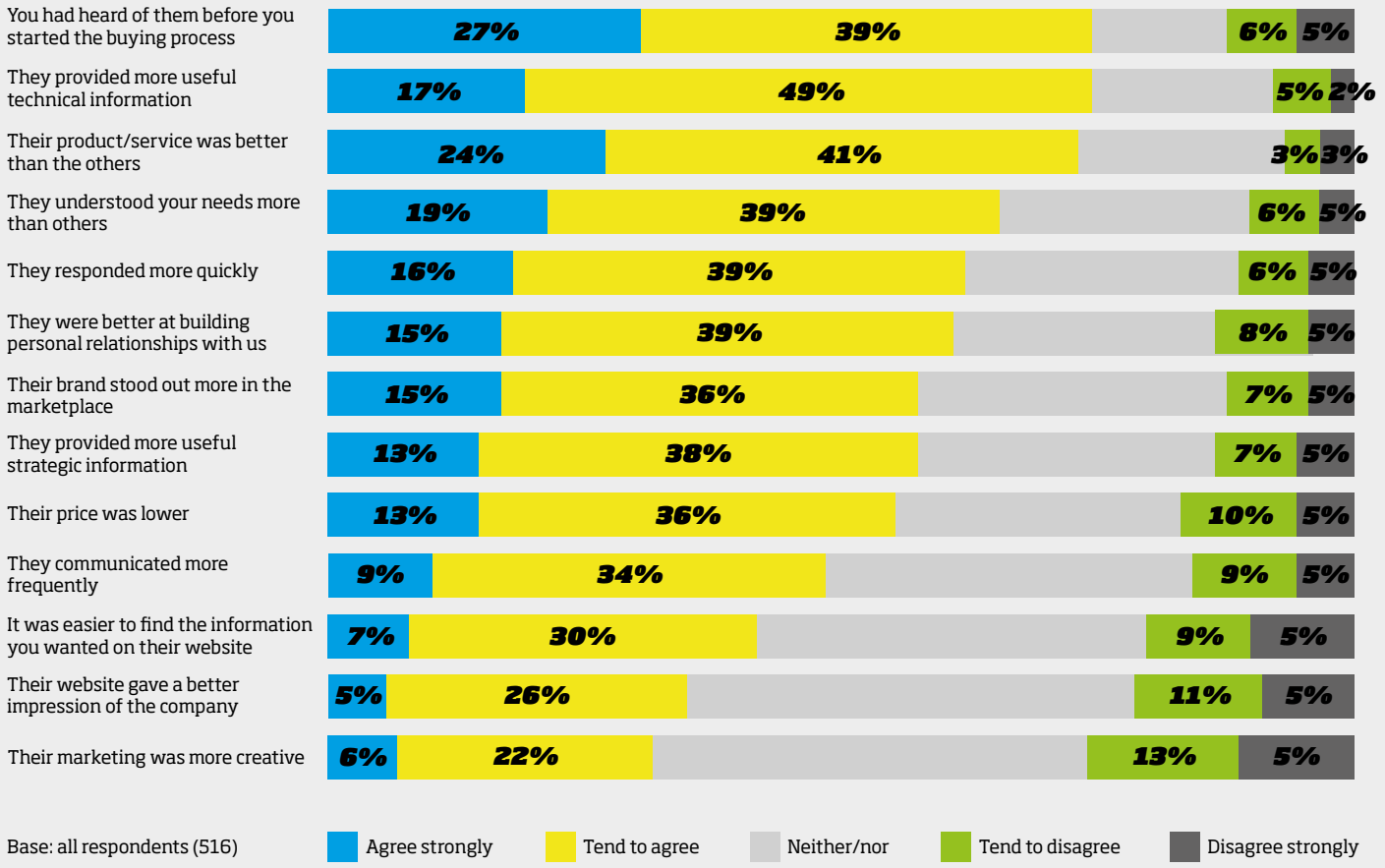
- 17% only looked at suppliers in a relatively small radius (50km) - more likely in Germany than elsewhere
- 23% looked more widely, but only within their own country - more likely in the UK
- 13% looked within Europe
- And 46% said that distance was not a factor in the decision, and may have looked worldwide

Distance was less likely to be a factor at all for those whose knowledge level at the start was high.



Attributes of a chosen supplier

All respondents were asked to say to what extent they agreed or disagreed that a number of statements applied to the supplier they eventually chose.



Familiarity with the company or at least of the brand name, was clearly an important element here, together with the proven quality of their offering plus how they built a relationship with this potential customer.

The Buyersphere Report 2013

Now in its 4th year, the Buyersphere Report has become established as one of the most eagerly awaited and enlightening annual research projects in the B2B space. The reason is simple. It doesn't tell you what marketers think: it tells you what buyers do.

Since 2010, we have been aiming to find the motivations behind supplier choices and the behaviours that characterise the B2B buying process. We all know it can be a long and complex process affair: even smaller B2B purchases are subject to procedures and considerations that are alien to the world of consumer marketing. B2B buyers need more; whether it involves procuring consultancy services, telecoms contracts or manufacturing equipment, they demand higher levels of information, reassurance, social proof and support from their suppliers. But this is to be expected: each buyer featured in this report is accountable to many others and needs to justify purchase decisions to superiors, shareholders and fellow staff. It is not their money, after all.

This is why the Buyersphere Report you are holding in your hand (or viewing on your device) is unique. We asked direct questions of 500 seasoned B2B buyers in the UK, France and Germany and got some fascinating answers, all detailing what they actually did in preparing for a recent large business purchase (qualified as over £20,000). Why did they start the process? What information did they seek? From whom? And in what format? Did they use social media? And - revealingly - what were the marketing traits of the successful suppliers that made them ultimately preferable to the also-rans? To answer these questions, the Buyersphere research is divided into four sections, to be published in stages, and then consolidated into a final report:

1. 

The Touchpaper Question: How (and Why) B2B Buyers Start The Buying Process

2. 

Filling The Knowledge Gap: How B2B Buyers Seek Information To Make A Purchase

3. 

Social Media: Are B2B Buyers Really Using It?

4. 

The Winning Habits of Successful B2B Brands

The Buyersphere is not only essential reading for B2B marketers, it is a unique and fascinating journey into the minds of the people who hold the budgets. Whether it challenges your thinking, opens your eyes to new possibilities for customer engagement, or simply confirms what you thought (and gives you valuable ammunition for your budget planning), we hope you find it useful.

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