

3 Ways To Rethink Your B2B Loyalty Marketing Approach

How to meet customer expectations by leveraging digitally enabled, B2C-inspired experiences



The B2B landscape is quickly evolving, and typical sales funnel and ABM approaches won't give brands the competitive advantage they need to engage, convert, and retain customers.

Digitally enabled B2B solutions can meet the needs of B2B customers across the customer experience. These solutions can also drive identity efforts to deliver on the same B2B personalization expectations that have been set by brands in the B2C space.

IN THIS EBOOK, YOU'LL LEARN

How the B2B landscape is shifting and why a customer-centric experience approach will better meet customer expectations

How B2B audience dynamics are changing

Three ways B2C approaches can help you rethink customer engagement for B2B



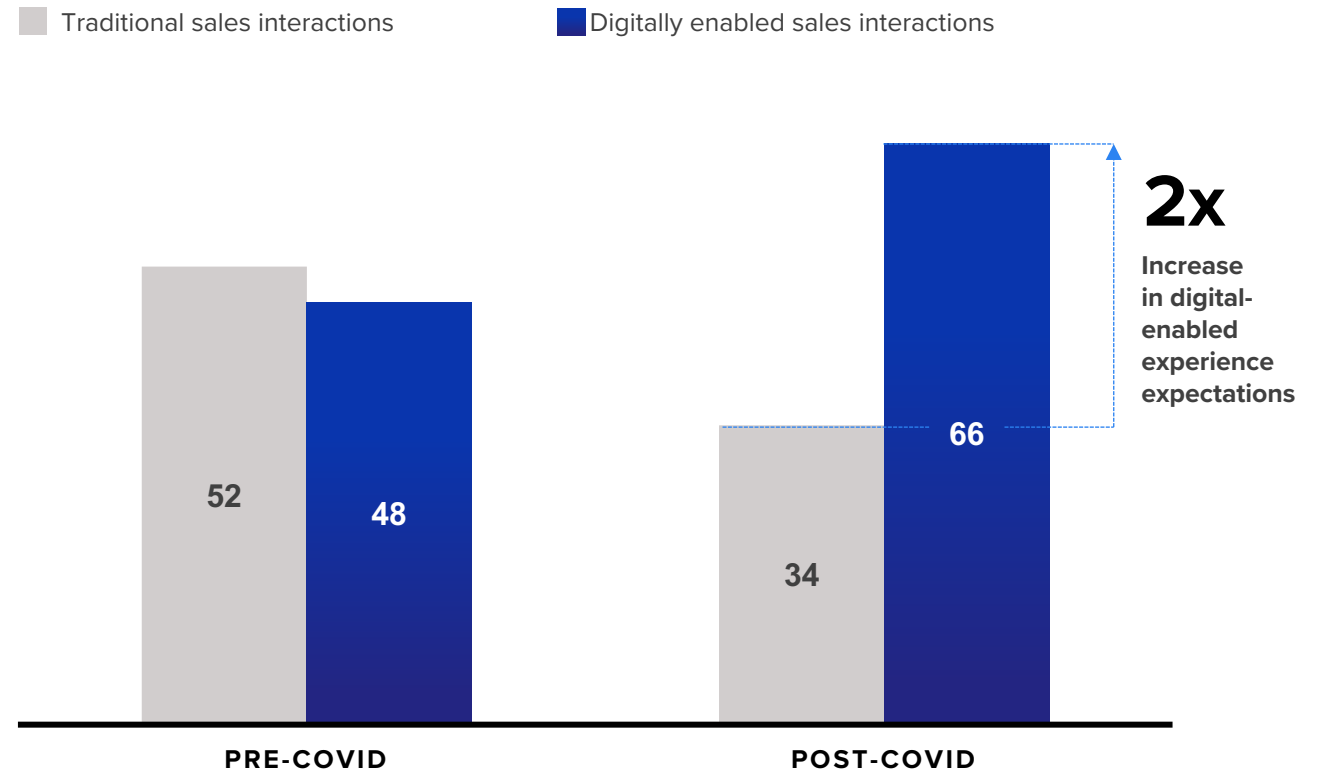
B2B marketing is shifting in the new landscape.

In a post-COVID landscape, digitally enabled sales interactions are critical to maintain customer engagement and create a competitive advantage.

Seismic shifts in how buyers and sellers interact were already accelerating before the global pandemic altered the paradigm for everyone. Changes in the sales landscape, such as limits on in-person interactions and the resulting risk to brand engagement, forced many B2B marketers to adapt and find a different way to connect with customers. On top of this, consumer buying behaviors and expectations are now shaping sales partner engagement. The humanization of B2B and expectations around personalization amplify the need to transform the customer journey and increase the demand for first- and zero-party data collection.

Thinking traditionally about the sales funnel and tools won't meet today's customer expectations. B2B marketers must rethink their demand generation methods and transform their organizations by bringing in customer-centric engagement approaches that reach customers across the entire experience.

Which sales method is more important?



SOURCE: McKinsey B2B Decision Maker Pulse Survey, April 7, 2020.

“B2B marketers are not competing with competitors. They are competing with the last best experience their customer had.”

**Harvard
Business
Review**

10 Truths About Marketing After the Pandemic, March 2021

“B2B marketing leaders must transform their organizations – and quickly – from their traditional role of brand steward, lead-generation machine, and sales supporter to become the architect of engagement across the entire customer lifecycle.”

FORRESTER®

A Guide to Surviving and Thriving in the B2B Marketing Renaissance, March 2020

The Changing Audience Dynamic



B2B audiences and decision makers look and act differently than before.

Audience dynamics are changing; customers are increasingly millennial, tech savvy, and digital first. Marketing, sales, and service stakeholders need digital engagement solutions throughout the customer journey. A funnel approach won't address this range of audience needs.

Sales enablement activations that nurture knowledge, appreciation, and delight will provide B2B stakeholders the tools to deliver business outcomes and build deeper loyalty among customers by:

Inspiring customers onward to the next stage in the journey



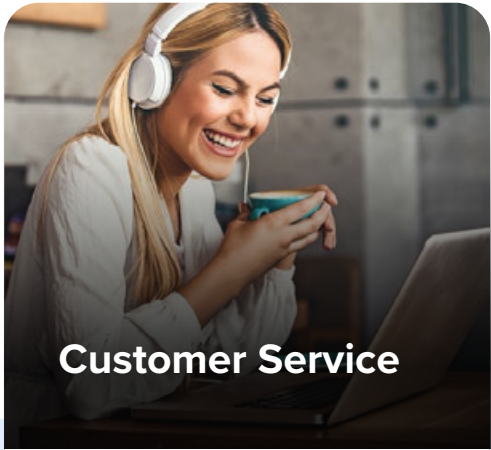

Applying intangible and tangible incentives discretionally to align with customer needs

Using data to drive content and communications to nurture customers from one moment to the next



B2B Stakeholder Snapshot

Engagement solutions both support enterprise outcomes and focus on customer needs.

AUDIENCE	 <p>Marketing</p>	 <p>Sales</p>	 <p>Customer Service</p>	 <p>Customer</p>
NEEDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Journey personalization• Data to inform next action• Content engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sales cycle acceleration• Customer retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipate customer needs• Proactively address issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product knowledge and support• Self-serve interactions• Digestible content• Recognition and rewards
ENGAGEMENT FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building customer engagement profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product onboarding and adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer feedback• Lifecycle management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product education• User community• Scaled incentives• Data collection
DESIRED OUTCOMES	Engagement and behavioral tracking; data to fuel CRM personalization	Improved win rates and retention through ongoing engagement and support	Enhanced view of product interactions and support	Engaged customers who advocate for your product

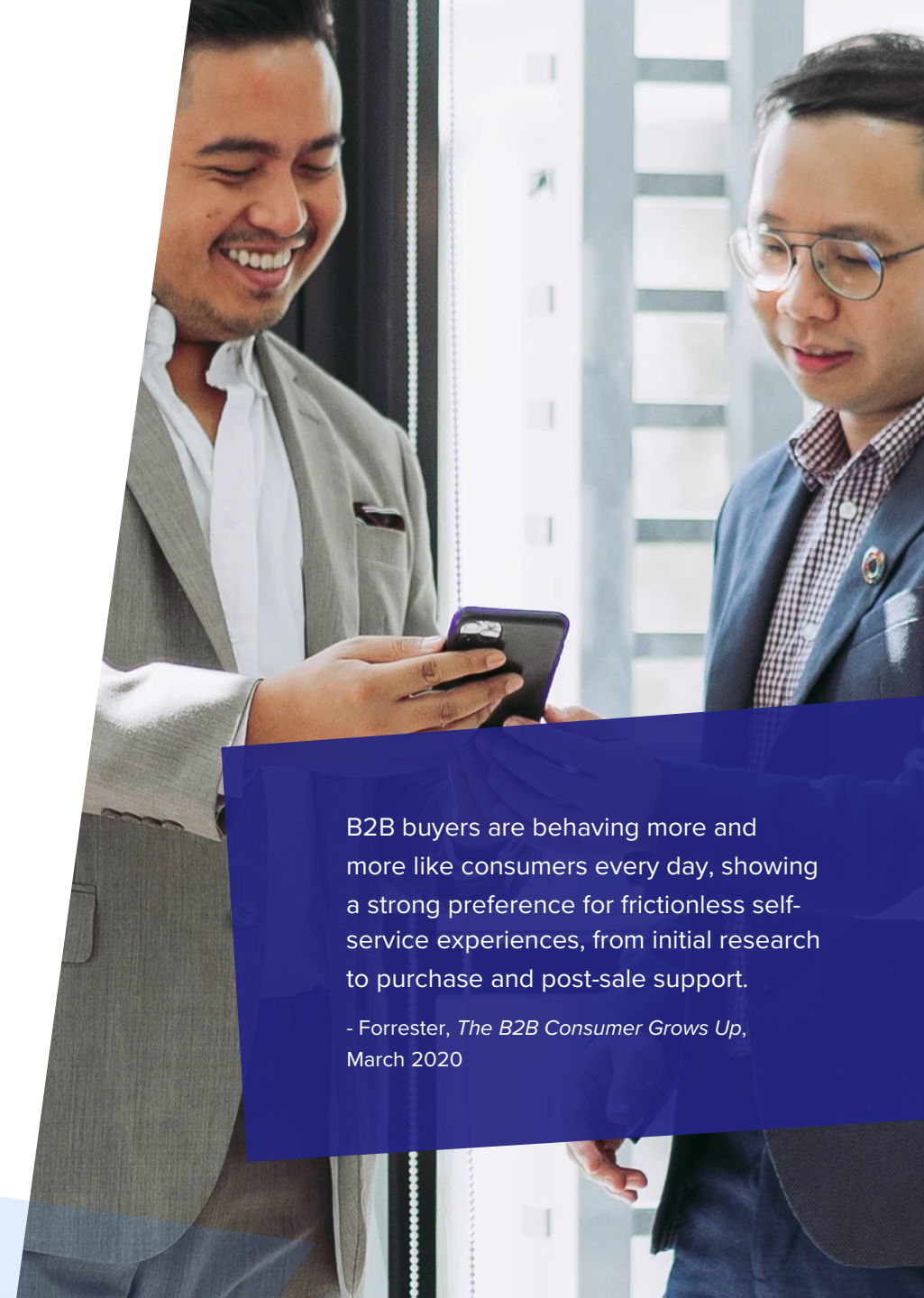
B2C engagement and personalization approaches are becoming B2B expectations.

Consumer buying behaviors and expectations are shaping B2B sales, and B2B marketers aren't keeping up.

B2B customers and influencers are shopping like consumers.

And just like consumers, B2B customers engage in online activities to inform their buying decisions.

As consumers, B2B customers come across sophisticated marketing techniques in their day-to-day B2C shopping experiences and expect similar levels of personalization and immediacy in their B2B relationships.

A photograph of two men in business attire. The man on the left is smiling and looking at a smartphone held by the man on the right. The man on the right is wearing glasses and looking at the phone. They are standing in front of a window with blinds.

B2B buyers are behaving more and more like consumers every day, showing a strong preference for frictionless self-service experiences, from initial research to purchase and post-sale support.

- Forrester, *The B2B Consumer Grows Up*, March 2020

B2B customers want to create relationships with brand partners.

Just like in B2C marketing, the role of emotion and connection in B2B marketing is critical to spark interest and engage customers. B2B customers are motivated by the same emotional drivers as consumers – trust, relevance, and value exchange. They want support and service as much or more than incentives. Digitally enabled solutions give sellers the ability to connect with customers when face-to-face, relationship-building interactions aren't possible. These solutions show the brand is interested in customer needs, not just transactions.

SOURCE: *The Merkle B2B Loyalty Report* (Rep.). (2018). Merkle.





Three Ways to Rethink Your B2B Engagement Approach

01

Activate key
moments in the
customer journey

02

Use gamification to
drive engagement

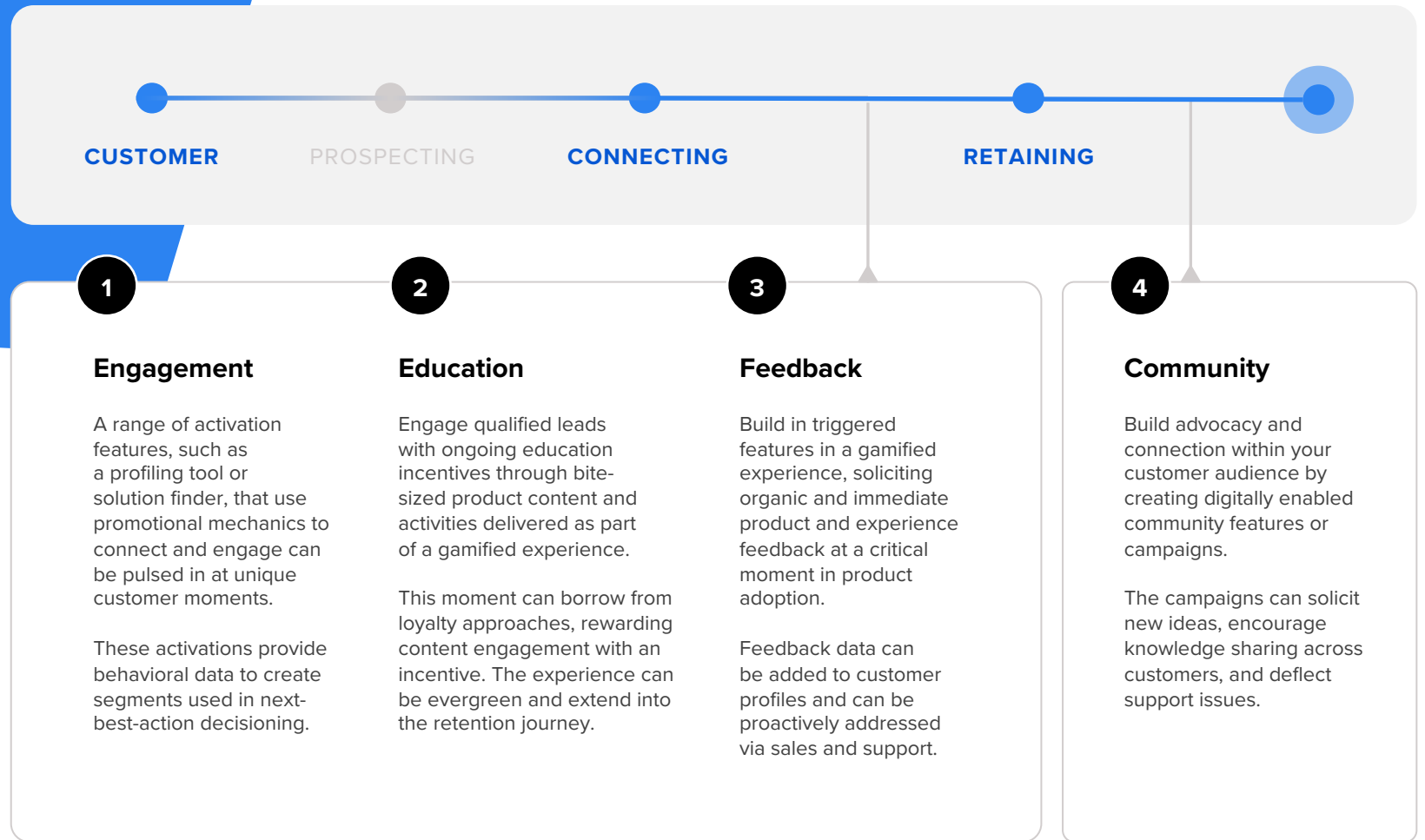
03

Collect zero-party
data to inform the
next best action

01

Activate key moments in the customer journey

Four moments in the customer journey can drive sales growth by engaging, educating, and rewarding B2B customers for their product exploration, adoption, and engagement.



02

Use gamification to drive engagement

Leverage challenging and achievable tasks.

Use short-term, achievable tasks to maintain engagement.

Spark intrinsic motivation.

Base activations on emotional drivers that motivate behaviors, reducing the need for tangible incentives.

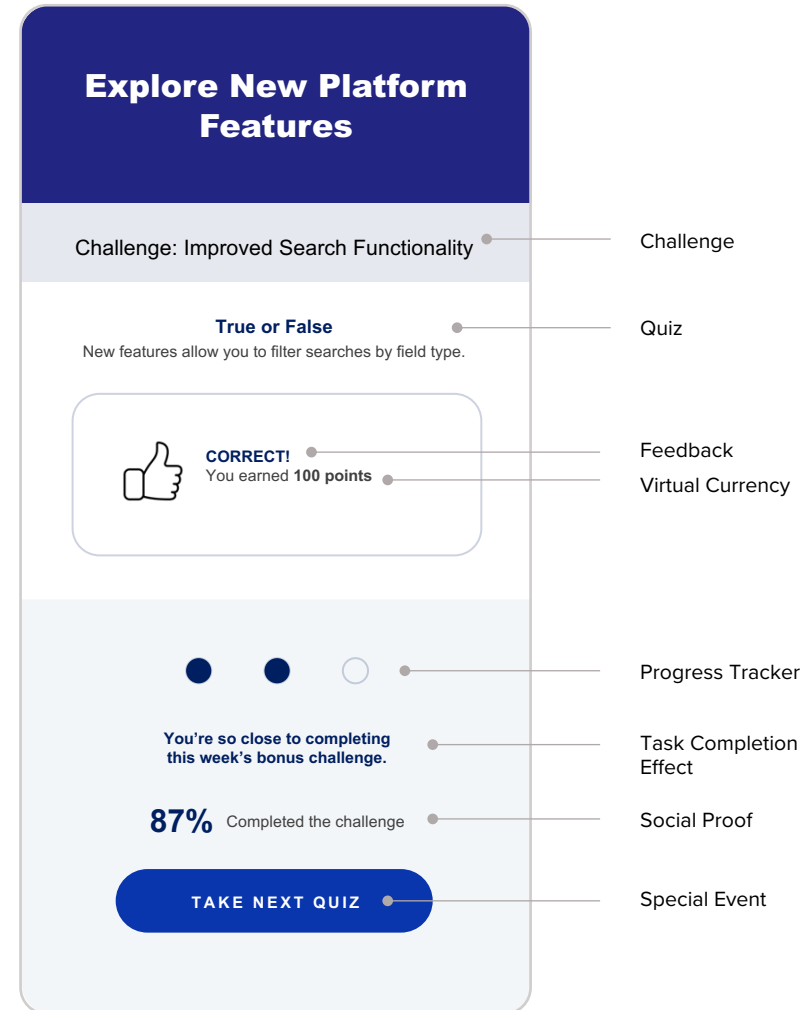
Create a compelling narrative.

Engage and empower customers to participate and complete the gamified activity.

Factor in human behavior.

The user experience factors in human biases and removes barriers to completing the activity.

Gamification Mechanics



WHAT WE BELIEVE

Gamification is a way to motivate brand engagement by applying techniques found in behavioral science to spark emotion, short-cut human biases, build habits, and design experiences.

03

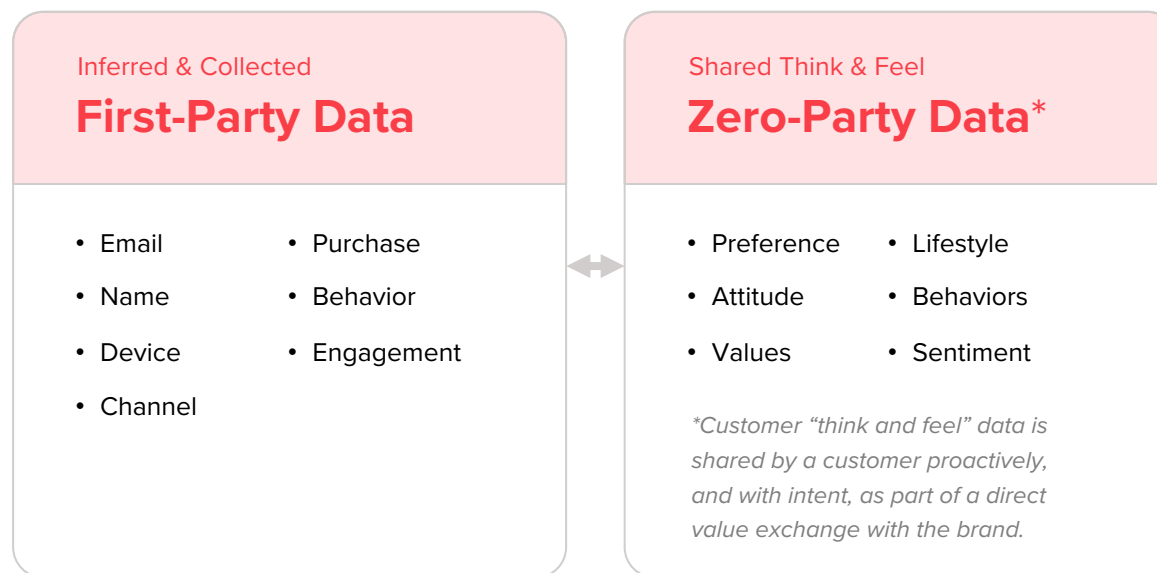
Collect zero-party data to inform the next best action

Transforming the customer experience requires getting to know buyers, meeting them in their need states, and exceeding their expectations.

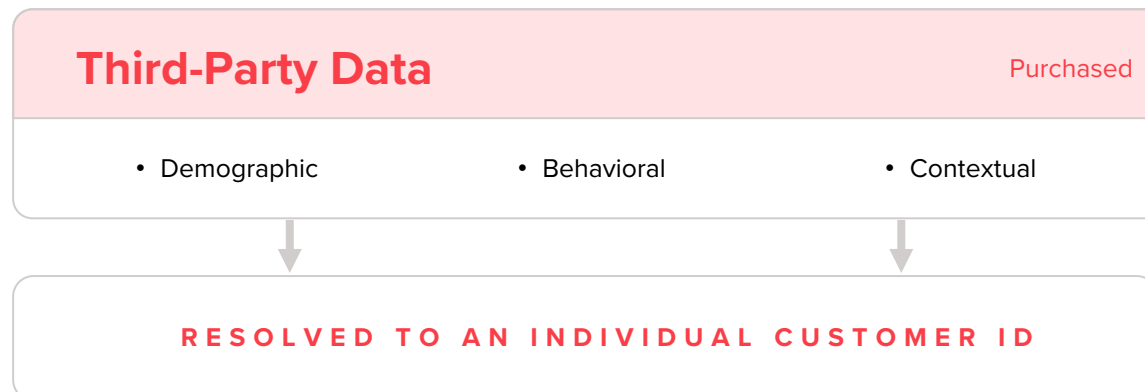
This is achieved by collecting and activating first- and zero-party data through permission-based marketing.

First-party data collected through lead generation is just the starting point. Zero-party data collected through digital experiences provides the preference, attitude, and sentiment data needed to deliver higher levels of satisfaction through more personalized “next best moments” in the buyer journey. Customer data can also be used to optimize audience targeting and media planning and buying.

IDENTITY SIGNALS COLLECTED

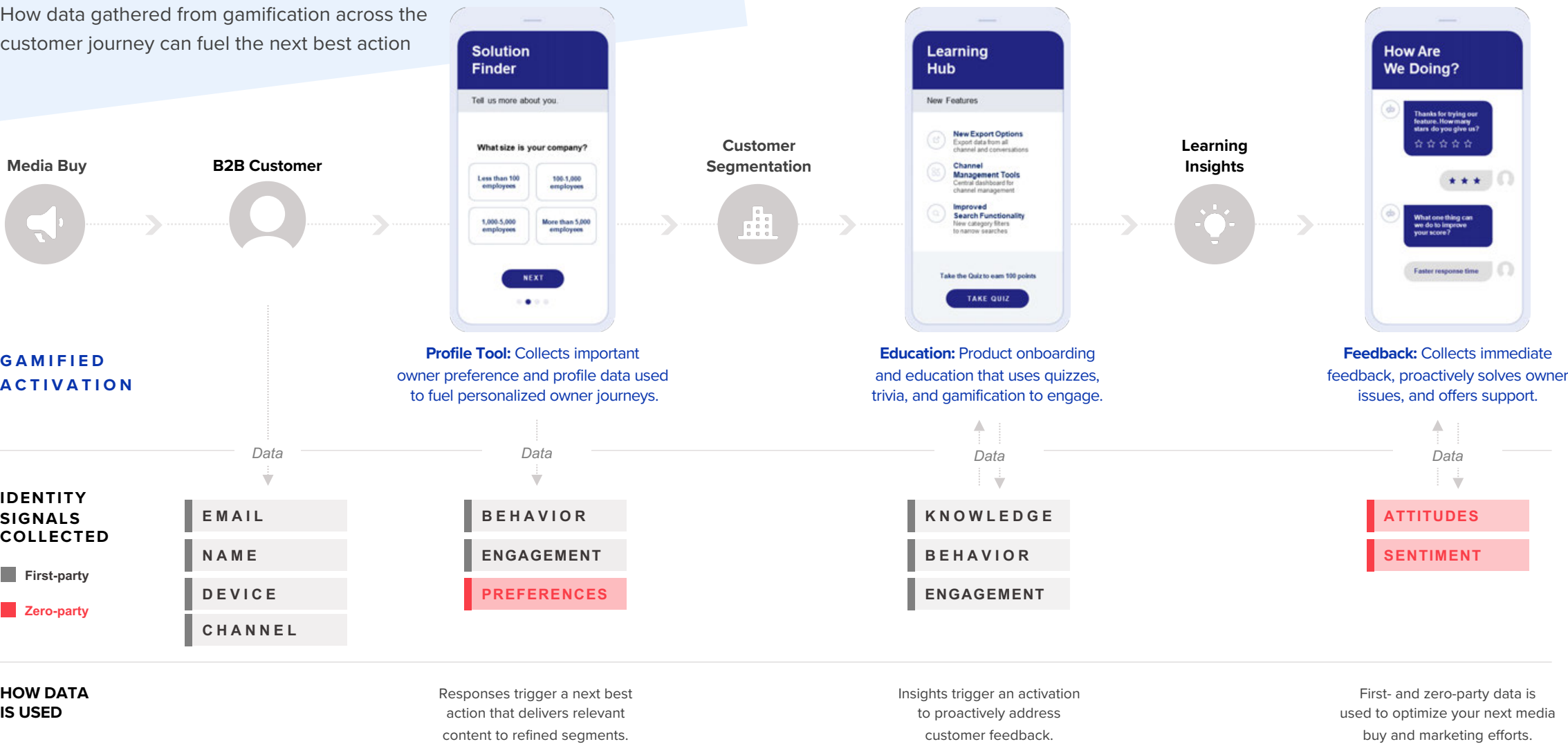


IDENTITY SIGNALS ENRICHED



Real-World Application of B2B Engagement Approaches

How data gathered from gamification across the customer journey can fuel the next best action



B2B is moving from ABM to dynamic customer journeys.

We are at the beginning of a transformational third wave of demand generation, moving away from linear, programmatic, account-based marketing (ABM) approaches to dynamic customer journeys that combine B2B and B2C thinking to deliver contextual engagement.

The future of B2B marketing will be increasingly personal, informed by data, enabled by technology, and powered by creativity. To meet B2B customer expectations for these updated experiences, modern B2B marketers must deliver a data-driven and tech-enabled customer journey. Funnel thinking won't keep up with brands that provide a motivating value exchange through omni-channel experiences, use data signals to fuel personal relevance, and deliver frictionless engagement in B2B buying models.



B2B marketing must become more human and keep pace with strategies, approaches, and techniques used by B2C marketers.

The next evolution of B2B marketing will make the buying experience more compelling, engaging, and approachable by using successful loyalty, engagement, and personalization strategies adopted by B2C marketers. Incorporating customer-centric thinking is critical to transforming how you interact with customers in this new B2B landscape. Evaluating the technology and solutions needed to meet B2B customer demands ensures new activation approaches can be seamlessly integrated across the tech stack into systems like Salesforce.

Ready to Chat? **Schedule a brainstorm session**

marketing@merkleinc.com

443.542.4000



**Merkle Ranked
#1 Global Agency Partner**