

DO MORE WITH LESS

B2B Buyer Report

Discover the top customer experience priorities of today's B2B buyers to meet complex demands, high digital expectations, and strict budgets.

SUMMARY

In today's volatile economy,

B2B buyers need to **do more with less**. They're reevaluating their external partnerships to ensure investments deliver the expected value. And they will only work with organizations that provide a seamless digital customer experience.

Building on years of research, **Hero Digital's annual B2B Buyer Report** highlights the key priorities of today's business buyers and how these priorities have changed over time. We invite you to use these insights and key takeaways to drive business efficiency and create value at every touchpoint.

Do More with Less

Drive business efficiency and create value at every touchpoint.

Simply going digital won't cut it anymore. Faced with economic uncertainty, inflation, and increased interest rates, today's B2B buyers have complex demands, high digital expectations, and strict budgets. A deep understanding of your prospects', customers', and clients' unique needs is critical to success.

94%

of B2B buyers agree their company prefers to work with companies that continuously evolve their digital capabilities and experiment with offerings.

Decision-makers are rethinking their external partnerships as well as their own internal operations.

While many B2B companies have evolved their digital capabilities to match rising expectations, they can't stop there. Organizations must continue to optimize their technology to attract and retain buyers.

Here are a few key insights:

No.1 B2B buyers' top priority for the next 12 months is increasing efficiency in their processes.

92% B2B buyers agree economic uncertainty has placed additional pressure on their organization to make more cost-effective purchases.

88% B2B buyers would turn to a competitor if their company's digital channel could not keep up with their desires as a buyer, up slightly from 85% in 2022.

92% B2B buyers experience at least one pain point with their companies' use of current technology.

94% B2B buyers agree their company prefers to work with companies that continuously evolve their digital capabilities and experiment with offerings, holding steady from 2022.



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Achieve better results with fewer resources

100% of buyers are prioritizing digital transformation in response to economic challenges.

To navigate budget and headcount hurdles, B2B buyers are turning to technology to boost efficiency.

B2B organizations must revisit current practices and find new ways to achieve better results with fewer resources. So it's not surprising that 100% of B2B buyers say it's important to prioritize digital transformation moving forward.

The top two factors driving this belief are reduced budget (**45%**) and reduced headcount (**41%**), both of which have challenged operations and limited efficiency improvements over the past year.

92%

of B2B buyers agree economic uncertainty has placed additional pressure on their organizations to make more cost-effective purchases.

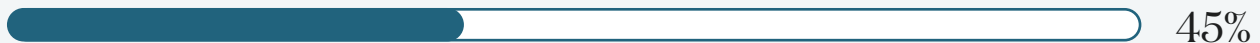
For B2B decision-makers,

this demand often translates into the need for more effective purchasing via existing digital platforms (**92%**).

B2B buyers' top reasons for prioritizing digital transformation moving forward.

NO.1

Increasing efficiency because reduced budget is making operations more challenging.



45%

NO.2

Increasing efficiency because reduced headcount is making operations more challenging.



41%

NO.3

Increasing sales.



38%

Digital experiences and purchasing processes are major operational drivers—and they're under increased scrutiny right now.

However, B2B buyers also view digital transformation as the solution to economic uncertainty and fiscal storms. Case in point: If B2B buyers can secure additional resources to advance their digital capabilities this year, nearly a quarter (**23%**) are most likely to invest in optimizing their existing technologies and integrating new technologies into their current tech stack—priorities that underscore the importance of more efficient and effective use of technology, inside and outside their companies.



TAKEAWAY

Navigating a challenging and changing economy is top of mind for all B2B leaders.

When asked what their highest priority is for the next 12 months, the largest group of B2B buyers (**25%**) pointed to increasing efficiency in their processes.

As the pressure to boost efficiency increases alongside the use of AI in the workplace, buyers can leverage AI-powered automation to support functions like personalization, data analysis, research, and subject line writing. These improvements not only steady operations during challenging times by supporting a more limited workforce and driving stronger customer relationships, but they're worthwhile investments to gain a competitive advantage during periods of stability, too.

Digital innovation positions organizations for short and long-term success.

As more B2B decision-makers make this connection, attention turns toward where companies can provide support. Increasing efficiency is one of the highest priorities for B2B buyers.



Utilize tech solutions to their full potential

Ineffective use of technology conflicts with buyers' top priorities.

B2B buyers'

pain points with companies' existing use of technology have persisted—and in some cases, worsened—over the last year.

Companies have heard buyers' calls to action, with many vendors recently adopting new technologies to enhance their customer experiences and purchasing processes.

However, due to the "set and forget" trap many organizations fall into, few companies have fully optimized their use of current technologies—and **92%** of buyers still experience at least one pain point when working with companies as a result.

More specifically,

B2B buyers encounter challenges integrating companies' tech solutions with their own solutions and processes (**39%**), as well as difficulties connecting with support teams knowledgeable about their issues (38%). B2B buyers also expressed frustrations about their companies' inability to evolve alongside their needs (**35%**)—a key indicator of technology lagging behind operations.

B2B buyers' biggest pain points with companies' use of tech solutions.



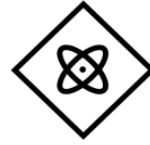
No.1

Difficult to integrate with our own solutions or processes.



No.2

Difficult to connect with support teams knowledgeable about my issues



No.3

Not evolving as fast as my industry and customer needs (e.g., new capabilities and applications that make doing business with them easier/more convenient)

Financial Services Challenges:

PAIN POINT

60%

of financial services buyers say it's difficult to integrate their companies' tech solutions into their own solutions or processes.

SOLUTIONS

Due to the stringent regulatory compliance required in the sector, it's critical for financial services decision-makers to select a technology solution that's tailored to their industry's use cases and a partner with a proven track record of implementation success and expertise.

CPG Challenges:

PAIN POINT

37%

of CPG buyers say their companies' tech solutions are not evolving as fast as their industry and customer needs.

SOLUTIONS

When vetting a new supplier, CPG decision-makers should ask questions that shed light on their propensity to innovate, including plans for technology advancements—especially those tied to CX.



Manufacturing Challenges:

PAIN POINT

35%

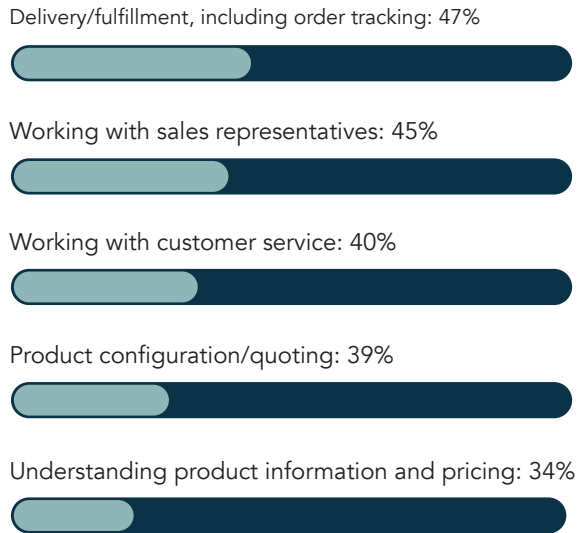
of manufacturing buyers say their companies' tech solutions make it difficult to connect with support teams knowledgeable about their issues.

SOLUTIONS

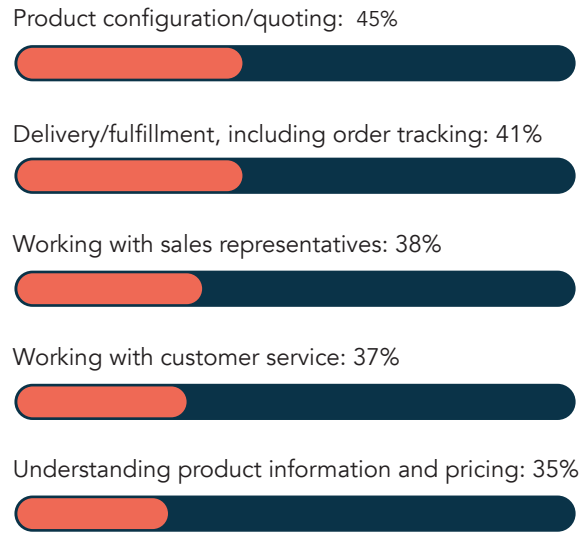
Manufacturers require companies that offer end-to-end buying processes focused on providing an excellent CX at all touch points. Knowledgeable customer service and sales representatives are crucial to meeting sophisticated buying requirements.

Shifts in B2B Buyer Behavior:

ECOMMERCE BUYING PROCESS: 2022



ECOMMERCE BUYING PROCESS: 2023



TAKEAWAY

The purchase of large-scale solutions is just the beginning of digital innovation.

For long-term success with technology investments, organizations must gain a deeper understanding of their customers’—and just as importantly, their employees’—experiences so they can continually optimize processes with those unique needs in mind.

Decision-makers must also think critically about their existing supplier relations to ensure all external partnerships reinforce intended customer experiences.

There’s little time to course correct when issues do exist. Companies’ less-than-ideal technology applications directly impact B2B buyers’ ability to achieve their business goals, leading to common pain points like:

38%

of buyers experience

For a business that prioritizes innovation, there’s nothing worse than wasted time, especially with operational drivers like digital experiences and purchasing processes under greater scrutiny.

So, B2B companies must push hard to improve these outcomes.

30%

experience damage to customer relationships.



Engage with an excellent digital experience

Buyers are clear about what works when interacting with B2B companies—and what doesn't.

B2B buyers

remain unwavering in their expectations for the experiences companies provide, both online and offline.

B2B buyers have made their demands clear in terms of how companies can enhance online experiences. First and foremost, buyers want up-to-date and accurate product information, user-friendly websites and apps, and an easy way to contact a human for technical support.

Buyers also expect a modern, intuitive digital UX from their companies. And companies, take note—**79%** of buyers would pay a higher price for a product or service if the supplier provided an excellent digital UX.

Factors that contribute to an excellent digital UX, according to B2B buyers:



No.1

Good website functionality (e.g., the website has an effective search engine or provides an option to sort products by category)



No.2

Easy and reliable customer service support



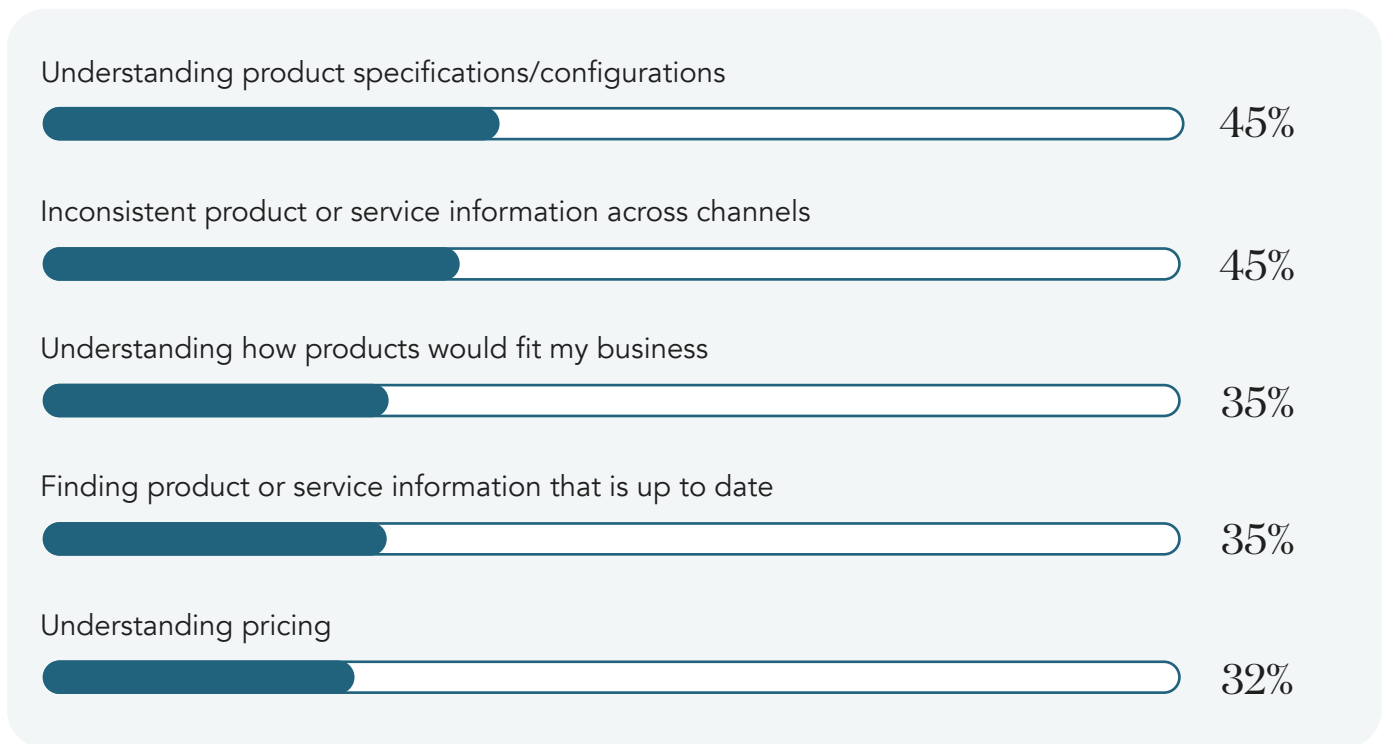
No.3

Consistent experience across channels (e.g., consistent communications)

Sidebar: Business leaders, get the basics right: Comprehensive and accurate product information.

B2B buyers' pain points with current supplier operations and digital solutions take a heavy toll on their ability to effectively research products: 99% of buyers faced at least one challenge when researching products for their business.

Top challenges B2B buyers face when researching purchases for their business:



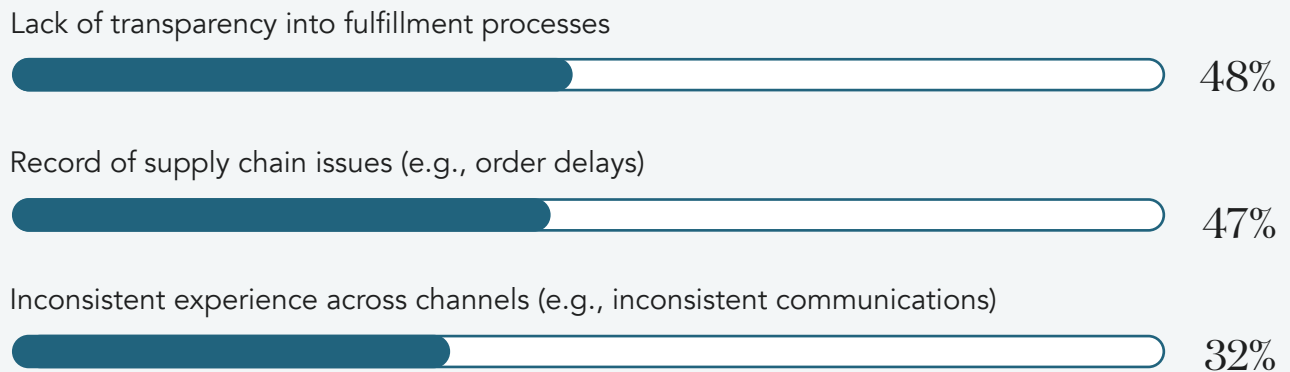
These pain points are consistent with concerns buyers expressed in 2022, underscoring the need for better product and pricing information — and the lack of progress made in this area thus far. B2B buyers' top research challenges also exacerbate the time and money spent throughout the buying process, before a purchase is even made. To make informed, financially responsible purchasing decisions, buyers must be able to easily find comprehensive, accurate product data.

Fortunately for B2B business leaders, improving product data is low-hanging fruit. By investing in a solution like product information management (PIM), companies can leverage AI to automate (and optimize) pricing and content updates across channels to ensure accuracy and consistency. They can also use AI to optimize SEO for meta description writing so buyers can more easily find the right products.

The result? Reduced friction, boosted research efficiency, and happy buyers.

Buyers' opinions are just as clear when it comes to what they don't want when working with B2B companies. Nearly half of B2B buyers noted that a lack of transparency in fulfillment processes is the biggest deal-breaker when vetting a potential supplier. Possibly due to supply chain disruptions that riddled operations the past few years, B2B buyers still harbor concerns about companies' core logistical capabilities.

Buyers' top deal-breakers when vetting a potential supplier:



Sidebar: Global B2B buyers

Global business leaders face an added layer of complexity in everything they do. So naturally, they require unique capabilities from B2B companies.

Top 3 most important capabilities companies can provide to global businesses:



TAKEAWAY

Buyers' expectations for first-rate digital experiences aren't going away—if anything, standards will only continue to grow.

B2B business leaders must embrace continuous improvements when it comes to the UX they provide across touchpoints, from adopting new capabilities to iterating UX via increased testing and personalization efforts.

81% of B2B buyers would pay a higher price for a product or service if the supplier had excellent eCommerce and customer portal capabilities.

There's a payoff for companies that prioritize innovation on behalf of their customers. When it comes to areas as vital to long-term business success as UX and CX, organizations are willing to switch companies, even if that means paying a higher price.



Use technology to take control

Buyers are taking technology improvements into their own hands.

While buyers hold their companies to high standards, they're also ready to increase internal efficiencies—starting with their own tech stacks.

B2B buyers

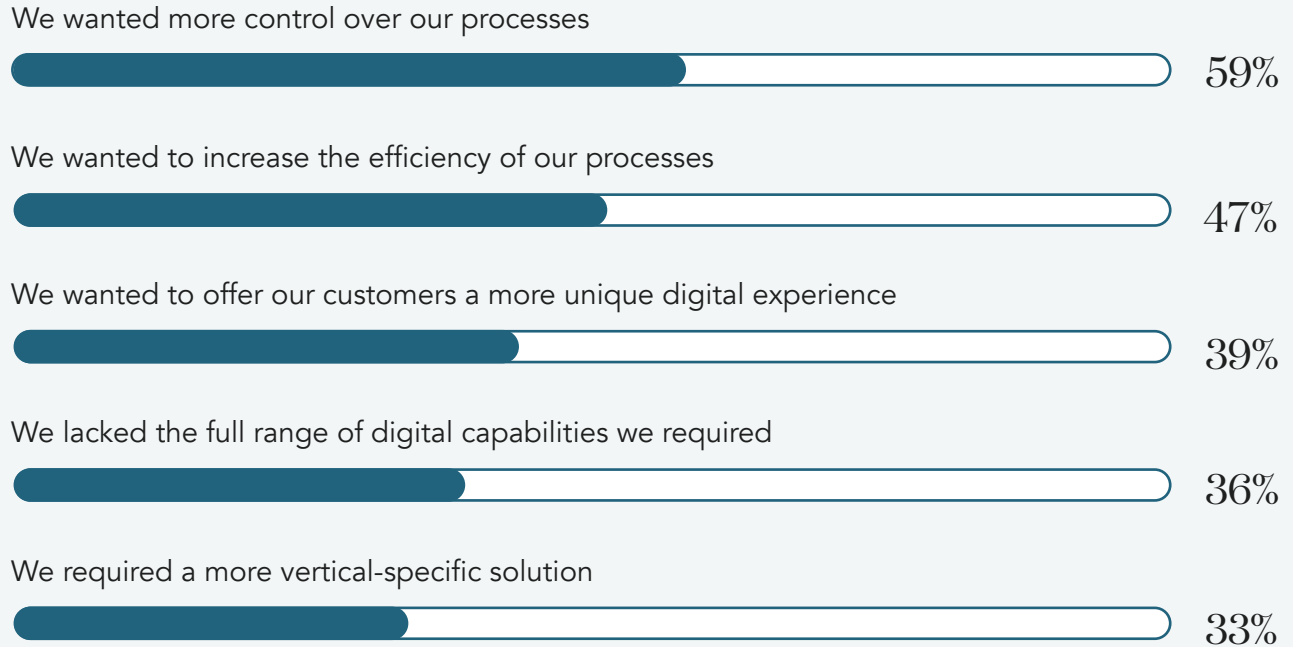
are revisiting their internal capabilities to increase efficiency and optimize existing technology investments.

Many organizations have already pursued customized capabilities and/or built their digital platforms in-house, as a way to increase control and efficiency throughout their processes. The majority of B2B buyers (**81%**) shared that their organization currently uses a combination of the default capabilities provided by their digital platform(s) as well as some customized capabilities.

The majority of B2B buyers (**60%**) also reported that their organization uses a combination of digital platform(s) they've purchased and built in-house.

33% of B2B buyers expressed that they've pursued customized digital capabilities to address the need for a more vertical-specific solution, reiterating the growing importance of industry expertise and refinements when it's time to make a technology investment.

Top reasons why organizations pursued customized capabilities and/or built their digital platform(s) in-house:



In addition to optimizing their current technologies and processes, **90%** of B2B buyers' organizations plan to leverage AI as part of their digital strategy in some way over the next 12 months—primarily to forecast sales and provide a better CX. By using AI to accelerate tedious but important processes, B2B buyers can pivot resources toward increased focus on strategic initiatives and other time- and cost-saving measures.



TAKEAWAY

Organizations swiftly embraced digital transformation at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, prioritizing speed to market over efficiency.

Many companies customized solutions to fit within their existing operations, which often included workarounds for legacy manual processes.

But as the dust settles, decision-makers must shift their focus toward optimizing efficiency through streamlining and digitizing current processes once and for all—rather than relying on technology investments as a temporary solution.



A new wave of digital experiences

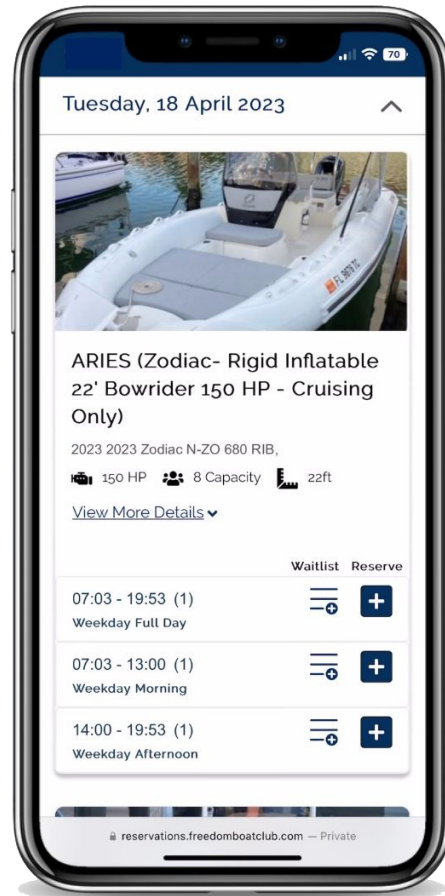
Brunswick Corporation—the world’s largest recreational marine manufacturer—is home to more than 50 industry-leading and award-winning brands across the marine industry, including Boston Whaler, Lund Boats, Mercury Marine, and Sea Ray.

Brunswick customers look for and expect quality, innovation, and advanced features when evaluating and purchasing products and services in the marketplace. Their ability to remain competitive and meet their growth objectives depended on evolving their digital experience and relationship with the end user.

SITUATION

Evolving consumer expectations, an increase in digital native marine brands entering the space, and industry consolidation created an urgency for Brunswick to elevate its digital marketing and experience capabilities. It needed to move from transaction to experience, dealer-driven to customer-driven, traditional to measured, and physical to digital across its marketing and commerce channels and for each of its brands.

Brunswick needed to address diverse needs in a personalized way, innovate rapidly, offer experiences that connect to the community, and combine physical and digital experiences.



SOLUTION

Brunswick redefined its digital strategy, placing the people squarely at the center of every digital and physical experience.

The CMO and CIO worked together to develop an approach that could be leveraged across its entire brand portfolio to support brand-customization and customer personalization, while also simplifying up-front planning, partner vetting and sped up time to launch.

Using Adobe Experience Cloud, Brunswick successfully developed meaningful experiences across all audiences: prospect, owner, member, or participant while also driving engaging digital experiences for third parties like dealers, distributors, and franchise owners of their Freedom Boat Club.



Conclusion

After years of rapid digital transformation, many B2B companies still have a ways to go in fully optimizing their use of new technologies—and in supporting buyers through difficult times and business environments.

Business leaders must find ways to reduce friction across their eCommerce solutions and digital experiences as B2B buyers seek greater efficiencies capable of enabling faster innovation and growth. When supplier relationships fall short, buyers aren't afraid to take matters into their own hands—with many companies already pursuing internal improvements as a mechanism to increase efficiency and bolster digital experiences and offerings.

There will always be uncertainties in business, but the ability to innovate shouldn't be one of them.

For B2B buyers and their organizations, effective technology implementation and usage ensures companies are primed to do more with less—taking businesses through today's economic turbulence and into the next chapter of success.

Methodology

Hero Digital's B2B Buyer Report surveyed 150 full-time U.S. employees at B2B organizations across the financial services (42), manufacturing (65), and CPG (43) industries. All respondents are involved with making purchases at their company and are employed at businesses with over \$250M in annual revenue.

42

financial services

65

manufacturing

43

CPG

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