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BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

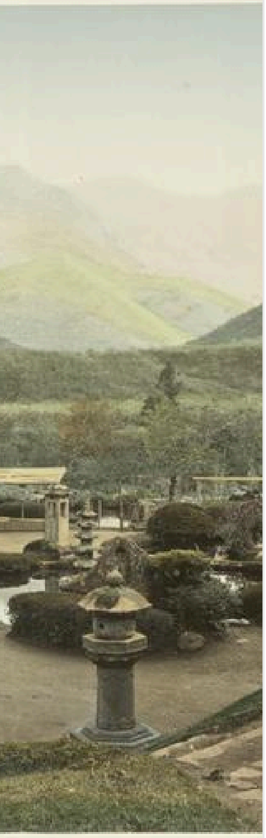
The B2B Playbook.

How businesses choose suppliers now, and what a founder should do about it. Ten chapters and one worksheet.

mojo dojo

14 pages

18 min read



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CONTENTS

What's inside

Most of the deal is decided before anyone calls you.

This book is about being the company buyers have already chosen when they finally get in touch. The SEO and AEO Playbooks cover how to be found; this one covers what they find.

How B2B buying works now

Nobody buys alone. A typical business purchase now involves 13 people inside the company and nine outside it: peers, consultants, review sites, communities. That group does most of its work before contacting any supplier, and it usually has a favourite before it does.

60%
of the buying journey is complete before the first conversation with a seller. It was 70% a year earlier; AI uncertainty pulled the call forward.

94%
of buying groups had ranked their preferred suppliers before making contact with any of them.

77%
bought from that pre-contact favourite. Sales rarely overturns a preference that marketing failed to shape.

10.1
months, the average buying cycle in 2025, down from 11.3. Faster research, not less of it.

What this means for a founder

- The first sales call is a validation call. The buyer already has an opinion of you.
- Every member of the group needs something they can forward: a page, a number, a case study.
- Marketing's job is to be on the day-one shortlist, not to generate a form fill.
- Buyers still initiate 80% of first contacts. Make the route to you obvious and low-friction.

IN SHORT You are being evaluated for months by people you have never met, using material you did not send them. The rest of this book is about making that material work in your favour.

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The 95:5 rule

Companies change suppliers of things like banking, software, legal advice or telecoms roughly every five years. So in any given quarter, about 5% of your potential customers are in the market. The other 95% are not, and will not respond to an offer however good it is.

DEMAND CAPTURE · THE 5%

Be easy to find when they look

Search, AI answers, review sites, comparison pages, a clear pricing page, retargeting. Fast to measure, quickly saturated. Every competitor is bidding for the same small group.

DEMAND CREATION · THE 95%

Be remembered before they look

Founder content, original research, a point of view, consistent visual identity, being useful in the communities your buyers read. Slow to measure. This is what puts you on the day-one shortlist.

Why most budgets are backwards

In a LinkedIn study, 96% of B2B marketers expected to see the main effect of an ad campaign within two weeks. That is only possible if you are talking to the 5%. Budget follows what can be measured this quarter, so it piles into capture, costs rise, and the 95% never hear from you until a competitor has already become the default.

The fix is not to stop capturing demand. It is to fund creation as a standing cost of doing business, judge it over quarters rather than weeks, and keep the brand consistent so the memory you build is the one they retrieve.

FIG. 1 · WHO IS IN MARKET THIS QUARTER

95% not buying yet

5% buying

A heuristic, not a law. Categories bought every year sit nearer 80:20; capital purchases nearer 98:2.

RULE OF THUMB

If every dollar you spend has to produce a lead this month, you have no brand budget, and you will pay for it in acquisition cost for years. Set a floor for demand creation and protect it.

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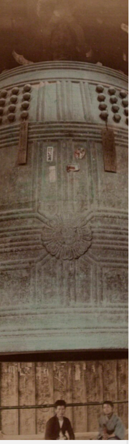


Your value proposition

Most homepages describe services. Few state why a buyer should choose this company over the two others on the shortlist. A value proposition is that reason, written down. The quickest way to find it is to work backwards from the customer, a method the mathematician Carl Jacobi summarised as “invert, always invert.”

01 **Describe the customer you want in five years**

Not the one you have. Size, sector, how they buy, how long they stay, what they are willing to pay, how much of your attention they consume. Be specific enough that you could name three of them.

02 **List everything they could use instead of you**

Direct competitors, but also doing nothing, hiring in-house, a spreadsheet, a bigger firm. For each, write the single biggest weakness from the customer’s point of view, not yours.

03 **Against each weakness, write what you do about it**

Only claims you can prove with a number, a name or a demonstration. Where you have nothing, say so. That gap is either a product decision or a customer you should not chase.

04 **Compress it to one sentence**

For [who], we [what], unlike [the usual alternative], because [proof]. If it could sit on a competitor’s homepage without edits, it is not finished.

BEFORE

“We are a full-service accounting firm offering bookkeeping, tax, payroll and advisory to businesses of all sizes.”

AFTER

“For trades businesses with 5 to 30 staff, we close the books by the 10th of every month. Unlike a generalist firm, we do nothing else, and 94% of our clients have been with us more than three years.”

The worksheet on page 13 walks through the four steps. Do it with the person who talks to lost deals, not only the one who talks to won ones.

Where buyers look

Buyers consult about seven sources during a purchase, and they would rather not talk to you while doing it: 67% prefer a rep-free experience and 70% prefer a fully digital one. Two sources now outrank your own website in shaping the shortlist.

Sources that most influence the shortlist

SOFTWARE BUYERS, 2025

Share of buyers naming each as a top influence on the shortlist. Software buyers lead the trend; services and industrial buyers follow a year or two behind.

AI ANSWERS

94% of buyers used AI in their last purchase, and 85% think more highly of a supplier an AI names. The AEO Playbook covers how to be that supplier.

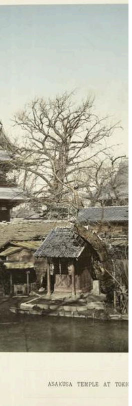
REVIEW SITES

Third-party reviews read as less biased than anything on your site, and AI engines now weight recent, detailed reviews when they answer. Ask every happy customer, every quarter.

HUMAN VALIDATION

69% of buyers check what the AI told them with a salesperson. Sales is no longer the source of information. It is the source of confidence.

TIP Once a month, ask ChatGPT, Gemini and Perplexity the five questions a buyer asks before choosing you. Note who is named. That list is your real competitive set, and your content plan.



The website

If buyers want to evaluate you without talking to you, the website is the salesperson. 84% of buyers say self-service tools are critical when choosing a supplier. Four things make the difference.

One page per service, not one page for all of them

A clinic with separate pages for tennis elbow, golfer's elbow and skier's thumb will outrank a clinic with one "sports injuries" page for every one of those searches, and the visitor lands on a page about exactly their problem. Each page needs its own answer, proof and call to action.

Pricing, or at least the shape of it

74% of buyers want clear pricing up front and 69% name its absence as a leading frustration. "Contact us" moves the work onto the buyer, who is often building a budget for colleagues who will never visit your site. If you cannot publish a price, publish a range, a starting point, or what drives it.

Proof on every page

A named customer, a number, a logo, a link to a third-party review. The buying group forwards pages to each other; each one must be able to stand alone as an argument for you.

Speed

More than half of mobile visits are abandoned when a page takes over three seconds to load. Test in PageSpeed Insights, aim for a largest-contentful-paint under 2.5 seconds, remove plugins and scripts nobody uses, and serve images in modern formats at the size they are displayed.

ALSO WORTH DOING

A calculator, configurator or self-assessment. 58% of buyers want more of these, and an AI summary cannot replace a tool the buyer has to use.

TEST

Give a stranger your homepage for 30 seconds, then ask them who you are for, what you do and why you rather than the alternative. If they cannot answer all three, the page is not finished.

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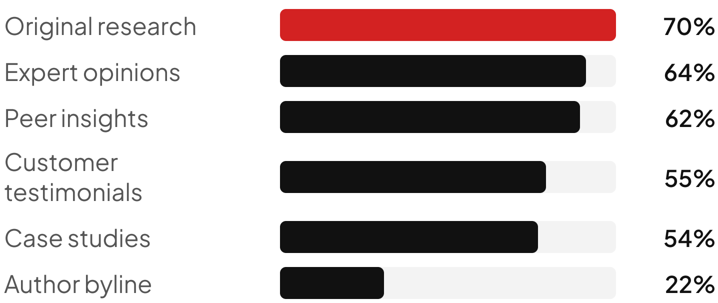
Content and proof

Most companies publish opinion. Buyers trust evidence. Asked what makes a piece of content credible, they rank original research first, then expert and peer views, then customers speaking for themselves. A byline on its own barely registers.

What makes content trustworthy



Share of 250 US software and services buyers naming each element as important to trust, July 2025.

WHY INVESTIGATIVE CONTENT TRAVELS

Interview five experts or survey a hundred customers and three things happen: the people you feature share it, some link to it, and others cite it because it contains a fact nobody else has. An opinion piece does none of those.

A case study that closes

01

Named customer

Company, person, role. Anonymous case studies read as fiction.

02

The situation before

What it cost them, in their words. Include what went wrong on the way.

03

One number that moved

With a time frame. “Enquiries up 41% in six months” beats “transformed their pipeline.”

04

A way to check

Offer a reference call. Few buyers take it; all of them notice the offer.

TIP Write one case study per service page, not one library nobody visits. 42% of buyers call case studies the single most influential content type; they should be where the decision is made.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is where the 95% can be reached while they are not buying. But the company page is the wrong instrument. Its organic reach fell to 1.6% of followers in 2025, from 7% in 2021. People follow people.

2.75×

the impressions and 5× the engagement for employee posts against the company page, with 46% fewer followers.

5.2×

reach amplification for posts that attract three or more commenters in the first hour, across 1.8 million posts analysed.

Founder-led, in practice

- Two or three posts a week from the founder or the most senior expert, in their own voice.
- One idea per post: a lesson from a client situation, a number, a disagreement with common practice.
- Team comments within the first hour, with something to say rather than “great post.”
- The company page reposts, carries announcements and runs the ads. It does not lead.

PAID · SEEDING SOCIAL PROOF

People click ads that other people have already clicked. A common tactic is to run a new ad first in low-cost markets to accumulate cheap reactions, then switch targeting to the audience you actually want, carrying the proof with it. It lowers the cost of the first thousand impressions that matter. It does not lower the cost of a lead, and the reactions say nothing about intent. Use it for the look of the ad, and judge the ad on pipeline.

PAID · WHAT TO RUN

Retarget people who read the founder’s posts or visited a service page; that is the warmest audience you have. Offer the calculator, the research, or the case study, not a call. Ask for interest before asking for time: “Is this you?” outperforms “Book a demo” on a first contact.

TIP Keep a running note of every question a client asks you. Each one is a post, and later a page. The founder never runs out of material; they run out of the habit of writing it down.

Email and account-based marketing

Every other channel rents you an audience. Email is the one you own, and it still returns about $36 for every dollar spent. Collect addresses even if you have nothing to send yet.

Email that gets read

- **Send when you have something,** not on a schedule. A weekly cadence forces thin content; a monthly note with one real insight gets opened.
- **One message, one call to action.** On a first email ask for interest, not time. “Do you think we’re a fit?” outperforms “Let’s book a call.”
- **Write from a person** to a person. Plain text, a real reply-to address, a name at the bottom.
- **Segment by what they did,** not who they are. Someone who read the pricing page twice gets a different note from someone who downloaded the research.

Account-based marketing, for a small team

- **Pick 50 to 200 named companies** that match the customer from chapter three. Not a market, a list.
- **Map the buying group** in each: the champion, the budget holder, the person who can block it. Four or five names per account.
- **Reach all of them** with the same story: LinkedIn ads to the group, a founder connection, one useful email per quarter, a piece of research written for their sector.
- **Measure coverage,** not leads. How many of the 200 have heard of you? How many have engaged? How many are in pipeline?

SIGNAL

Watch for the moment an account moves: a job ad, a new hire, a funding round, three visits to the pricing page. That is the 5% announcing itself.

SEQUENCE

Founder connects and comments first. Ads follow. Email comes third. The call comes when they ask for it, or when a clear signal appears.

PATIENCE

The average cycle is ten months. An account that ignores you for a year is normal, not lost. Stay useful and stay visible.

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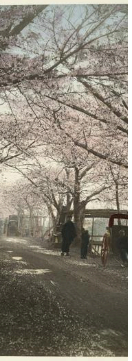

Pipeline, not leads

A marketing-qualified lead is a form fill with a score attached. It measures who was willing to give you an email address, which is not the same as who is buying. If deals are decided before contact, the useful question is whether you were on the shortlist, and whether the people who did contact you became revenue.

STOP REPORTING	START REPORTING	WHY
Leads and MQLs	**Pipeline created, by source**	Dollars in qualified opportunities is a number sales and finance both accept.
Website traffic	**Shortlist inclusion**	Monthly AI prompt tests, review-site rank, and asking every new deal “who else did you consider?”
Cost per lead	**Win rate and cycle length**	Good marketing shows up as buyers who arrive already convinced and close faster.
Impressions and followers	**Target-account coverage**	Of the 200 accounts that matter, how many have engaged with you this quarter?

The handoff

Most friction between marketing and sales is a definitions problem. Agree three things in writing: what a qualified account looks like, how fast sales will respond once one raises a hand, and how sales will report back on what happened. Then review lost deals together every month. Buying groups that experienced least internal friction were 13 times more likely to report a high-quality deal; a supplier who reduces that friction wins it.

ONE QUESTION TO ADD TO EVERY WON DEAL

“When did you first hear of us, and from where?”

Self-reported attribution is imperfect. It is also the only way to see the 95% work that software cannot track.

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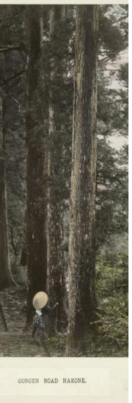

The next 30 days

None of this needs a new team. Sequence by impact and effort, and put a name against every line.

This week
High impact, low effort

- Run the value-proposition canvas on page 13
- Ask the AI engines your five buying questions; note who is named
- Add “who else did you consider?” to the sales process
- Claim and complete your profiles on the review sites that matter

This month
High impact, medium effort

- Split the services page into one page per service
- Publish pricing, or the shape of it
- Founder starts posting twice a week; team comments in the first hour
- Write the 200-account list and map four names per account

This quarter
Long-term payoff

- Publish one piece of original research or an expert roundup
- One named case study per service page
- Replace the MQL report with pipeline by source
- Set and protect a demand-creation budget floor

Know what the competition is running

THEIR ADS

Meta’s Ad Library, Google’s Ads Transparency Center and the Ads tab on any LinkedIn company page show every ad a competitor is running, and where it sends people. Free, public, ten minutes a month.

THEIR HIDDEN PAGES

Campaign landing pages and lead magnets often sit on subdomains that are not linked from the main site. Every subdomain needs an SSL certificate, and certificates are public. Search a competitor’s domain in a certificate-transparency log such as crt.sh and you get the full list.

The value-proposition canvas

Work left to right, one row per alternative. Do it with someone who speaks to lost deals. Forty minutes.

01 · THE CUSTOMER WE WANT IN FIVE YEARS

Size and sector	How they buy, how long they stay	What they pay, what they need from us

02 · WHAT THEY COULD USE INSTEAD	ITS BIGGEST WEAKNESS, IN THE CUSTOMER'S WORDS	03 · WHAT WE DO ABOUT IT, WITH PROOF
Doing nothing		
Doing it in-house		
Competitor A		
Competitor B		
The bigger, safer firm		

04 · ONE SENTENCE

For ______________________

we ______________________

Unlike ______________________

because ______________________

CHECK

Could a competitor paste this onto their homepage unchanged? If yes, go back to column three.

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FINAL WORD

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Be the one they already chose.

Buyers decide slowly, in groups, mostly without you, and mostly before they call. The companies that win are not the ones with the best pitch. They are the ones the group had already agreed on. That is built over quarters, in public, with proof.

START HERE THIS WEEK

01

Fill in the canvas on page 13 with whoever hears from lost deals.

02

Ask three AI engines your five buying questions and write down who is named. Then read the AEO Playbook.

03

Do the four this-week items on page 12. None takes longer than an afternoon.

Ready to see where you stand?

Get your free B2B growth audit →

mojodojo.io/au/strategy-form

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