

6 expert insights to grow B2B business in a difficult market

Article

Key stat: US B2B product sales growth is slow this year, at 3.4%, according to our forecast. But ad spend is still increasing, with a growth rate of 9.3% this year.

B2B companies are fighting over limited spend. In a flat economy, “you’re going to have to take share,” said Bruce Biegel, senior managing partner at Winterberry Group, during our [“Understanding the New Buyer Journey”](#) Tech-Talk Webinar. That means focusing on retention,

upselling, and cross-selling before pushing back toward acquisition in the long term. Here are six things to keep in mind during that process.

1. Differentiate your offerings

A lot of B2B tools offer similar functionality and use the same data, so find a way to stand out. B2B marketers need to ask themselves, “How do we know our customers better today and where they’re going than anyone else in our space so that we can win?” said Lynn Tornabene, CMO of Anteriad.

2. Solve the right problems

Difficulty in identifying and targeting the right audience is a bigger challenge for B2B consumers than competition, data regulations, the economy, and AI implementation, said Tornabene. In order to fill that need, consumers need tech that simplifies and integrates, rather than cluttering an already-heavy tech stack.

3. Don’t overindex on performance. Branding in B2B still matters

The executive suite should be familiar with your brand. “I worry those marketers [focusing solely on performance] are setting up their companies for irrelevance in the future by focusing on that short-term performance hit but not creating that long-term brand awareness and relevance,” said Tornabene.

4. But your client isn’t just the executive

“I get a lot of outreach from vendors that want to engage directly with me too early in the buying process, when they should be engaging with my team,” said Tornabene. B2B marketers should be working with employees outside of leadership on outreach, details, and demos. Executives come later in the buying process.

5. B2B buyers expect a B2C experience

Buyers are used to an easy and fast ecommerce experience. They don’t check that at the door when it comes to B2B. “We’re being retrained by the Amazons of the world on what we expect, and we have taken that to work,” said Biegel.

Keep this in mind when it comes to marketing channels and tactics. Email still works, but take advantage of streaming, paid social, podcasts, and even organic TikTok content.

6. Be curious—but cautious—about generative AI

“Protect your IP,” said Biegel, with companies using paid models rather than consumer versions. Focus on generative AI use for content and creative right now, as opposed media buying and customer service.

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