

6 STEPS TO ENGAGING YOUR DEFENSIVE BUYING GROUPS



Executive Summary

Modern B2B purchases are no longer made by individuals but by complex, risk-averse buying groups. To help marketing and sales leaders effectively engage these multi-stakeholder teams across every stage of the buyer's journey, this article outlines a practical, proven approach to influence decision making and accelerate conversions.

It offers guidance on how to tailor outreach, content, and enablement to drive alignment, build consensus, and move buying groups forward—even amid lengthening sales cycles and fragmented engagement paths.

This article provides:

- **A 6-step framework to engage buying groups from awareness to post-purchase**
- **Best practices in buyer persona development, journey mapping, and GTM alignment**
- **Role-specific tactics for both marketing and sales to accelerate buyer group progression**
- **Content formats and messaging matched to funnel stages and stakeholder needs**



Today's purchasing decisions are made by interconnected **buying groups** composed of multiple stakeholders across departments. These groups are built to align on priorities well in advance of engaging directly with a sales representative.

In fact, according to the [6sense 2024 Buyer Experience Report](#), the average B2B buying journey now spans 6 to 13 months, and buyers are often 70% through their decision making process before ever speaking with a vendor.

This prolonged timeline reflects a broader trend of buyers becoming increasingly defensive, choosing validated, low-risk solutions that integrate seamlessly with existing investments.

To meet this change, leading go-to-market (GTM) teams have shifted from legacy **intent signals** from form fills or content downloads to aggregated behavioural and intent-based indicators that span the full activity of an account.

This article outlines six key steps for identifying, engaging, and nurturing defensive buying groups, along with a strategic framework to guide the preparation and execution of your approach.

'In B2B marketing, the buying decision is often made before a salesperson ever enters the conversation, with buying groups reaching internal consensus early in their journey. The key is enabling brand champions within those groups to influence peers—something we have observed by analysing how buyer behaviour unfolds across stakeholders before outreach even launches.'



— **Victoria Albert**
CMO, INFUSE

How have B2B buying groups changed?



There has been a significant shift in B2B buyer behaviour, marked by caution, complexity, and a demand for efficiency, which, according to the [INFUSE 2025 Voice of the Buyer report](#), is now the top investment driver for 56% of organisations.

These trends underscore a decision making process that is complex, non-linear, and reliant on overall group consensus, with purchases involving up to 12 stakeholders.

The complexity of buying groups is further compounded by the different needs and pain points of buyers at separate points in the B2B sales funnel—with many operating outside of reach in [the dark funnel](#).

In addition, as new buying group members are added to the process, these decision makers enter at the top of the funnel. In this way, a large account is always in the discovery stage, especially as members with unique roles have specific needs.

[Explore strategies to overcome common buying group challenges](#) →

How B2B buyers have evolved and transitioned to buying groups:

Individual buyers	Buying groups
Engagement of specific individuals	Engagement of all individuals involved in the purchase decision
Decision making autonomy	Consensus
Linear journey	Non-linear journey
One buyer and funnel stage	Many buyers at different stages of the funnel
One signal	Account-level intent
Single point of contact	Multiple stakeholders
Short sales cycle	Long sales cycle

Inside the new B2B purchasing journey, buyers move together, but not in sync:



Get started with proven strategies for nurturing buying groups and advancing pipeline momentum →

6-step strategy for engaging the entirety of buying groups during their purchasing journey



1. Becoming aware of a need

This stage represents the buyer's (or collective buying group's) realisation of a problem and their evaluation of whether this problem warrants action and, if so, what solutions are available. It is also the stage where buyers have the first contact with your brand.

Therefore, it is critical to spark early engagement by showcasing authority and insights that align with your buyer's initial research.

To do this, marketers need to build a compelling brand presence that connects to the [organisation's UVP](#), which sets the stage for earning consideration and motivates buyers to continue.

Due to the increasingly independent and risk-averse nature of buyers, it is important to begin nurturing early to increase your organisation's discoverability and establish your brand authority, expertise, and value. Providing the necessary tools and information to enable self-led research is an essential element of this strategy.

Marketing team:

- Develop and promote [demand generation content](#) that addresses pain points, challenges, and trends, and provide data insights on how to solve them
- Create content that can assist buyers with independent research through enablement

Sales team:

- Adapt outbound materials to match the common pain points of your prospects and support this knowledge with relevant industry trends
- Focus on light, value-driven engagement—acting as helpful advisors ready to discuss challenges, not make a sales pitch

Content recommendations to help buyers identify their needs:

Content type	Purpose
Trend and industry insight reports	Educate buyers on market shifts, risks, and future-state thinking
Subject matter expert (SME) content	Share big-picture views that challenge assumptions or spark curiosity. Focuses on industry pain points, buyer trends, or misunderstood risks
Webinars/explainer videos	Simple, low-commitment formats to introduce new ideas or solutions. Provides value without requiring commitment
Educational blog posts	Answer common questions or explore early-stage problems. Non-promotional and insight-led
Infographics	Easy-to-scan overviews that highlight key stats, frameworks, or processes
Self-assessment tools	Content that evaluates current performance



2. Making a commitment to change

By this stage, buyers have defined the specifics of their needs and have identified clear challenges they need to solve. This is a critical turning point when stakeholders or decision makers actively enter the B2B buying process. Most importantly, it is at this point that the buying group is formed.

Help buyers commit with targeted content that builds credibility and trust, which will guide them toward ultimately shortlisting your brand for consideration later on.

Marketing team:

- Prospect **scoring** and **buyer intent data** should be leveraged to keep track of the buying group's brand interactions and inform the nurture streams that go out to stakeholders
- Create content that builds awareness of your products, services, and brand

Sales team:

- Leverage credibility in the form of client reviews or feedback, as well as any relevant accolades, to build trust and communicate product value
- Messaging should align with buyer pain points and needs

Content recommendations to help buyers commit to change:

Content type	Purpose
Product demo videos/live demos	Showcase how the solution works and solves specific challenges
Client case studies	Highlight measurable outcomes for similar organisations, ideally with metrics (ROI, conversion lifts, time saved)
Technical one-pagers	Show how your solution fits into their existing tech stack with minimal disruption
Implementation guides	Help buyers visualise a smooth transition and set expectations around support
Security and compliance documentation	Especially important for enterprise and regulated industries
Executive endorsements/peer testimonials	Help close senior stakeholders with social proof from trusted voices

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3. Investigating options

During this evaluation stage, buyers will begin actively researching solutions and comparing vendors to see which is the best fit. Buyers will likely revisit research and identify the organisation best suited to meeting their needs from a curated list. Therefore, the priority should be earning a spot, particularly as 38% of B2B buyers will go on to purchase from the first vendor they consider ([Voice of the Buyer 2025](#)).

59% of buyers trust consultants and SMEs the most during evaluation ([Voice of the Buyer 2025](#)).

Position your solution as the best-fit choice through educational tools and omnichannel presence.

Marketing team:

- Prioritise educational, [buyer enablement](#) content to support the buying group's research, such as whitepapers, case studies, and how-to guides
- Consider your buyer personas' different content preferences and focus on [fueling omnichannel nurturing](#) throughout the journey

Sales team:

- Use this time to form an accurate understanding of the buying group's needs, considering each individual member so as to best position yourself to provide expertise and guidance
- Align with marketing to ensure engagement occurs when buyers express intent

Content recommendations to help buyers with competitor comparison:

Content type	Purpose
Solution comparison guides	Help buyers evaluate different approaches, tools, or vendors
How-to guides and playbooks	Tactical, step-by-step guidance that positions your approach as the best path forward, validated by data insights
Case studies and success stories	Show real-world outcomes from organisations with similar pain points
Expert webinars	Topic-specific sessions with experts or client participation to build trust
Whitepapers and eBooks	Authoritative content that educates on frameworks, methodologies, or outcomes
Product overviews	Still educational, but starting to tie your solution to the buyer's problem
Client testimonials	Build social proof and trust in your expertise

Get started with best practices for enabling buying groups through strategic, content-led engagement →

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- — — **4. Creating a vendor shortlist**
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Buyers at this stage of the B2B buying process have shortlisted their options and are seeking to secure buy-in from other stakeholders within the buying group. Consensus is required before a purchasing decision can be made.

The goal of marketing and sales teams is to create a [**seamless buying journey**](#) that enables buyers to reach a consensus independently. **Make your brand the top choice by enabling internal champions and simplifying the decision making process.**

Marketing team:

- [**Content should speak directly to the buying group**](#) and focus primarily on tangible, revenue-focused results
- Leverage content to aid the evaluation process by making information easily accessible, such as providing product comparisons and one-pagers with product features

Sales team:

- Answer all queries, address objections, and prove the value of your solution above that of your competitors
- Leverage up-to-date competitor comparisons and [**market surveys**](#) to ease this process



Content recommendations to help buyers shortlist vendors:

Content type	Purpose
Stakeholder-facing business case decks	Pre-built presentations or slides to help internal champions articulate value, ROI, and implementation readiness
Executive summaries	Concise overviews focused on business impact and alignment with strategic goals
Case studies featuring cross-functional success	Examples where marketing, sales, IT, and operations benefited—showing the solution solves more than one department's pain point
Security, compliance, and IT integration documentation	Tailored technical assets to remove objections from legal and IT
Client advocacy content (testimonials, videos, peer connects)	Human stories from credible buyers in similar roles/industries to reinforce trust and relatability
Implementation timeline or change management guide	Clear visibility into “what happens next” helps reduce inertia and reassure executives
Pricing breakdown and option matrix	Show flexible tiers, use-case packages, or phased rollout options to support stakeholder negotiation

Explore enablement strategies that encourage buyers to make the first move →



5. Validating choice

With the support of all members, the buying group will be finalising the last details of deciding on a purchase. They will be prioritising low-risk solutions that meet their performance goals, are easy to implement and integrate, and hold tangible business value.

Reinforce trust and remove final objections with proof points that match stakeholder priorities.

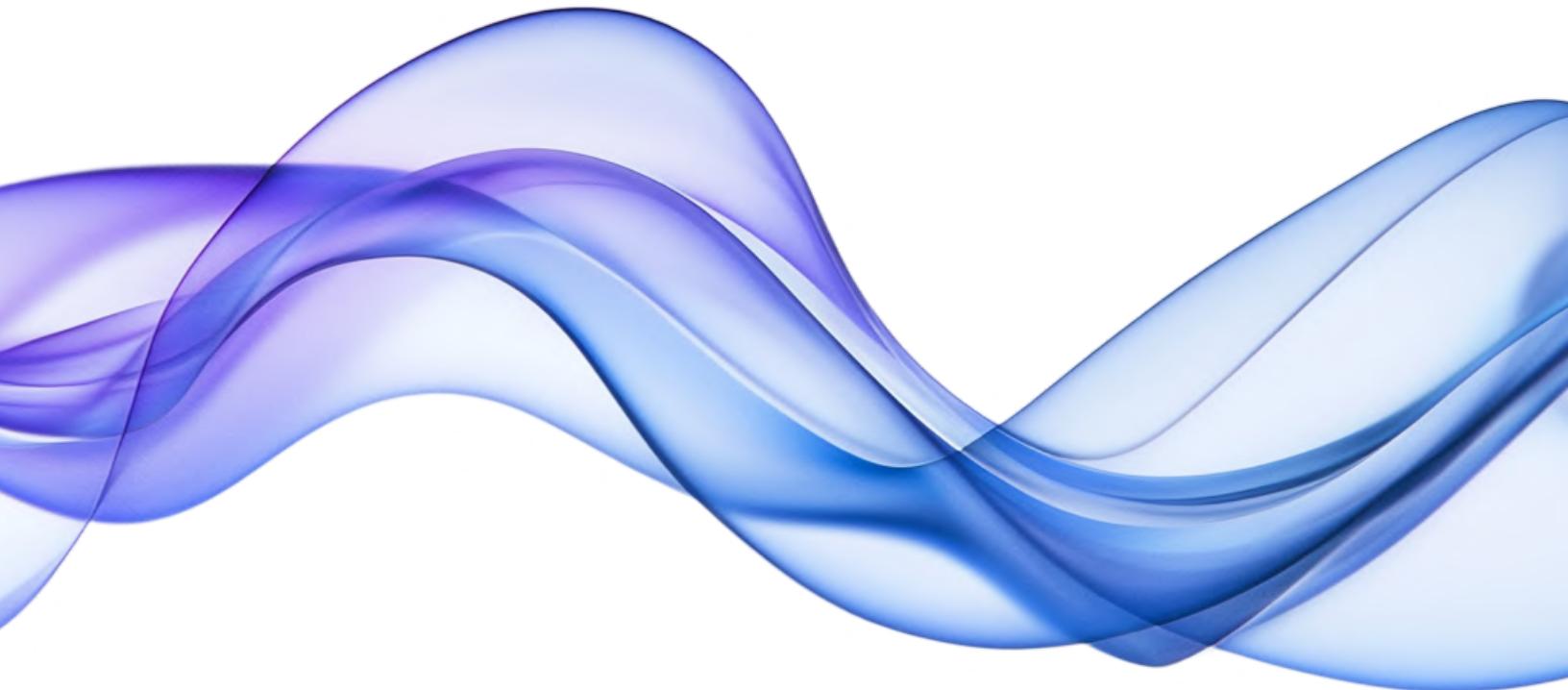
Small details hold greater importance and may be the deciding factor between one solution and another.

Marketing team:

- Credibility should be the focus of marketing messaging at this stage
- Leverage content such as case studies and client testimonials to encourage purchases

Sales team:

- Consider the unique biases and agendas of the decision makers within the buying group and provide a detailed breakdown of costs associated with each solution (including competitors) to support negotiations
- Focus and relate the differentials of your product to the specific needs of each account to increase your likelihood of success



Content recommendations to help buyers validate vendors:

Content type	Purpose
Final pricing and packaging sheets	Clearly break down tiers, inclusions, optional services, and volume-based pricing to establish clear expectations
Contract walkthrough	Transparency here accelerates legal review and builds trust in the relationship
Implementation readiness checklist	Reinforces preparedness on both sides and reduces perceived onboarding friction
Client references	Live validation from a real client adds credibility and emotional assurance
IT and integration confirmations	Help IT feel confident that integration will be fast, secure, and compatible
Legal/compliance FAQ	Provides assurance of legal or regulatory compliance



6. Making a purchase

The buyers who will use your solution directly will typically research best practices to avoid losing time learning at the time of implementation, placing them at a different stage of the funnel than the rest of the buying group. **Support confident adoption and accelerate onboarding by anticipating user needs pre-sale.**

Marketing team:

- Support and encourage the curiosity of **bottom of funnel buyers** by moving them into a new, tailored nurturing cadence
- Attention to detail is essential even after a purchase has been made

Sales team:

- Focus on resolving any of the buying group's final objections as they seek to increase the value they stand to receive from making a deal
- Personalise your offering in a way that meets all buyers' needs, yet still meets ROI goals

Content recommendations to help buyers make a final decision:

Content type	Purpose
Onboarding guides	Help users feel prepared before kickoff. Include timelines, responsibilities, and setup checklists
Best practices content (videos, blog posts, guides)	Share how other teams have succeeded quickly with your solution
Client enablement hub/resource library access	Provide early visibility into training resources, documentation, and support contacts

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4 best practices for preparing your full-funnel buying group strategy



When engaging buying groups, it is important to build a thoughtful understanding of all its members. This should encompass their different needs and pain points, as well as the stages they enter into and influence the buying journey.

To help ensure your campaigns are effective and well-received, consider the following best practices for full-funnel engagement:



1. Research the buying group

Target buying group members precisely by understanding their preferences, authority, and current state.

Researching the buying group and organisation provides you with an understanding of the status quo and establishes what would make their day-to-day and GTM goals more achievable.

To establish a clear understanding of how to approach the buying group of each target account, it is beneficial to first identify and perform detailed research on its members. Gather as much information on each member's preferences, both in terms of the type of content they consume and the channels they typically frequent ([psychographics](#) can be particularly useful for gleaning this data).

Your research should also include their background within the organisation and the authority they hold in buying decisions. This can help determine the role of each buyer within the group to guide your messaging and targeting strategy.

Best practices for researching buying groups:

- Use LinkedIn, company websites, and buyer intent data to identify key stakeholders involved in the decision making process
- Look for roles across functions such as executives, influencers, champions and gatekeepers
- Map roles and responsibilities to understand each stakeholder's role in the buying decision and reporting structures
- Understand the account's strategic priorities by reviewing press releases, investor briefings, and blog posts
- Look for triggers like recent funding, leadership changes, technographics and install base data, or strategic initiatives

Recommended resources

DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO B2B MARKET SEGMENTATION →**2. Create buyer personas**

When reaching out to a buying group, it is important to first understand whether the individuals involved align with your Ideal Client Profile (ICP). Drive relevance and alignment with personas tailored to roles, pain points, and journey stages.

Developing multiple **buyer personas** for different roles and offerings can help you identify the most suitable content for outreach. This approach also guides your engagement strategy, helping to ensure your message remains relevant, well-received, and tailored to their individual needs.

Best practices for creating buyer personas:

- Use a mix of qualitative and quantitative insights such as CRM and marketing automation data, intent signals and engagement history, and sales feedback from the field
- For each persona, outline attributes such as job title and responsibilities, pain points and goals, influence in the purchase process, and preferred content channel
- Understand which stage in the journey each persona is in to align content and engagement strategies accordingly
- The needs of your buyer personas will shift over time. Revisit and refine regularly



3. Map your buyer's journey

Ensure content alignment and reduce friction with journey maps that reflect how groups buy today.

A seamless **buyer's journey** is a frictionless, personalised path that guides B2B buyers from awareness to decision and beyond—aligned with how modern buying groups research and engage.

The overall objective is to help buyers recognise a challenge or opportunity and introduce your brand as a trusted resource. It starts by attracting interest through thought leadership and intent-based targeting, then nurtures consideration with educational content, webinars, and **personalised ABM campaigns**. As buyers approach a decision, validation assets like case studies and product comparisons reduce risk and accelerate consensus.

Best practices for mapping the buyer's journey:

- Outline the core stages of the journey, buyer behaviours, and needs at each stage
- Use CRM data, engagement analytics, and intent platforms (e.g., 6sense) to understand how buyers move across stages
- Map your buyer's actions and needs at each stage by defining what information they need and what content or engagement fits best



4. Foster cross-organisational alignment

Maximise campaign impact through unified GTM strategies, real-time feedback loops, and multithreaded outreach.

Client success teams maintain relationships with existing accounts, while sales engages directly with active prospects—making both critical sources of insight. Their feedback can validate persona accuracy, refine messaging, and confirm whether campaigns are addressing real buyer pain points.

To reach the full buying group effectively, it is essential to establish clear, ongoing information flows between marketing, sales, and demand professionals. This enables true multithreading: nurturing every stakeholder involved in the decision—across roles, seniority levels, and geographic regions.

Since different personas enter the journey at different times and influence distinct stages, alignment across teams is key to ensuring a cohesive, responsive GTM approach.

Best practices for aligning teams to target B2B buying groups:

- Establish a unified engagement strategy to coordinate outreach across functions
- Develop a multithreading strategy that accounts for regional, role-based, and journey-stage engagement
- Build shared dashboards for real-time visibility into buying group interactions
- Define and align on success metrics across teams
- Use sales and client success feedback to continually refine targeting, messaging, and content delivery

Recommended resources

**10 SALES AND MARKETING
BEST PRACTICES →**

Key takeaways



- **The traditional linear funnel no longer applies.** B2B decisions now involve complex buying groups with multiple stakeholders, entering the process at different stages.
- **Engagement must be stage-specific and persona-driven.** Buyer personas must be clearly defined and aligned to their role in the process, pain points, and content preferences.
- **Modern GTM requires precision buyer enablement.** Sales and marketing must collaborate to identify account-level intent signals, personalise outreach, and nurture groups over time.

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