

The innovation imperative for manufacturing marketers

LinkedIn B2B Manufacturing Buyer Research 2025



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Manufacturing marketers stand at the edge of a transformative moment.

The rules of the manufacturing game are changing rapidly, driven by ever-evolving buyer expectations, increasing ESG obligations and intensifying competition. Add to this the looming threats of trade wars, tariffs and other macroeconomic pressures, and it's clear: success in 2025 and beyond demands more than just business as usual.

In this shifting landscape, buyers seek brands who can act as transformation partners while delivering on immediate goals such as operational efficiency. For B2B manufacturing marketers, the opportunity is immense — but only if they can adapt and meet buyers where they are.

What challenges do manufacturing buyers face, and how can vendors help solve them? Where do buyers research new vendors or solutions? And most importantly, how can a brand stand out from competitors? These questions are at the heart of our research.

Through an extensive survey of 1,767 manufacturing buyers worldwide, this report answers those questions. The findings provide a clear roadmap for marketers to position their brands as indispensable partners in an era of uncertainty and opportunity.

The stakes couldn't be higher. Buyer expectations are expanding, and as budgets grow, scrutiny around vendor selection intensifies.

To succeed, marketers operating in the manufacturing industry need to craft strategies that resonate deeply, deliver measurable value and rise above the noise. This report equips them to do just that.

Audience definitions

All survey respondents had a decision-making role in selecting manufacturing vendors at their organizations within the past six months.

The most common manufacturing purchases chosen by respondents include procurement services, industrial machinery, automation and robotics solutions, fabrication and assembly, process optimization services, mechanical parts, raw materials, product design and development and machinery maintenance and servicing.

Throughout the paper, we report on different company sizes. Definitions include:

SMB:
\$5 m – \$10 m
in revenue



Mid-market
\$10 m – \$1 bn
in revenue



Enterprise
>\$1 bn
in revenue



Our approach

This paper includes insights from a survey fielded in association with GWI which reached:

1,767

**B2B manufacturing
buyers worldwide.**

More information on methodology can be found on page 27.

Manufacturing buyers navigate a world defined by rapid technological advancements and increasing complexity

They must balance short-term operational efficiencies with the need for long-term digital transformation. Amid these challenges, one truth stands out: buyers seek partners, not just vendors.

It's a cliché, but it bears repeating: all companies are tech companies now.

Technology underpins everything — from the latest manufacturing innovations to how executives and stakeholders engage with peers. It has upended the manufacturing buying process, shifting not only how brands differentiate from their competitors, but also how buyers

position themselves in their own industries; their goals when working with a vendor; and how they interact with vendors at each stage of the purchase process.

This report explores this new reality and reveals **five key trends that exemplify these shifts alongside commentary from marketing executives in the manufacturing industry.**



Trends uncovered

TREND 1

Future-proofing through innovation



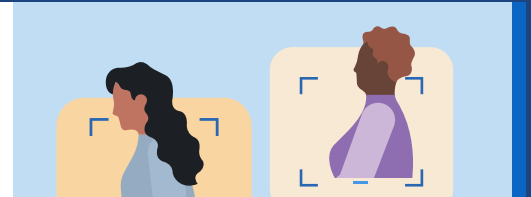
TREND 2

Building trust through expertise to win in a crowded market



TREND 3

Complex buying demands a message for every stakeholder



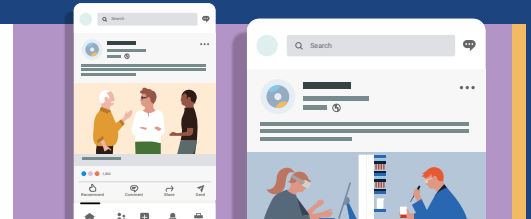
TREND 4

Creative impact, market presence and transparency get buyers talking



TREND 5

Social media spark action and drive results



From building trust to leveraging social platforms, this report empowers manufacturing marketers to position their brands as trusted, innovative partners who can lead buyers through today's challenges and into tomorrow's opportunities.

It's time to embrace the age of transformative marketing.



Tech leadership is the aspiration — and the challenge — for buyers

The results are overwhelming: nearly all (86%) buyers in our survey say they want to be seen as technology leaders.

However, many buyers confront a gap between aspiration and reality: more than half say they struggle to keep up with the pace of technology change in their industry.

This creates an opportunity for manufacturing brands that can help embed tech innovation within their buyers' organizations. Brands that prove their expertise in technology — as well as their ability to help buyers keep up with rapid changes — have an advantage.

Figure 1 - The goal and the challenge



86%

Want to be seen as technology leaders



53%

Struggle to keep up with the pace of technology change in their industry



Defining a technology leader

The definition of a technology leader can vary widely between industries, company sizes and even regions. Manufacturing marketers must be able to speak effectively to these differences — there are no one-size-fits-all solutions.

That's not to say there aren't major overlaps, specifically, around AI. Lukas Zurmuehle, Head of Digital Strategy and Engagements at Roche, singles out AI as the major differentiator: "It's a part of our main strategy, and it will drive us further," he says.

“ In the end, AI is everywhere, but it's really important that you're creating the right business cases and building matching capabilities to use it to its full potential.”



Lukas Zurmuehle
Head of Digital Strategy
and Engagements, Roche

Using AI to transform manufacturing provides buyers with a use case that could deliver meaningful returns.

But although AI occupies a large mindshare, it is not the only technology needed to become a leader. Other buyers may be looking for advanced data analytics in search of efficiency; digital twinning to optimize operations; or the latest robotics.

Regardless of how a brand defines leadership in technology, the challenge for marketers is identifying the right use cases and reaching the right stakeholders in a way that clearly differentiates the value they can create.

Differentiate or disappear

So far, so good: the manufacturing marketer reading this may already have a unique value proposition or a technological advantage.

Figure 2 - Marketers must set themselves apart

55%



of manufacturing buyers agree they have trouble differentiating vendors

However, communicating those advantages to customers in a compelling way is challenging: a clear majority of buyers agree they have trouble differentiating brands. This varies by company size: 64% of mid-market (companies with \$10 m – \$999 m revenue) and a staggering 80% of SMBs (companies with \$5 m – \$9.9 m revenue) agree with this point.

Vendors must enter the marketplace with a strong brand presence both online and in person, and they must be able to reach the right stakeholders with the right kind of information. But it doesn't stop there: marketers must be consistent and intentional in their branding efforts. When buyers struggle to tell solutions apart, differentiation and awareness need to go together. Standing out involves more than just ad spend, and keeping the lights on isn't enough to differentiate a brand in a noisy environment.

This is especially true for new entrants.

52%



A majority of buyers say **they struggle to find new manufacturing vendors.**

29%



This is less of an issue for enterprises.

78%



but a major issue for SMBs.

The opportunity

What are the stakes? As Fig. 3 shows, most buyers report growing revenues — and a nearly equal percentage report growth in their manufacturing product budgets. Manufacturing buyers are clearly prioritizing innovation and technology leadership and are making investments to reach those goals.

Manufacturing brands that can establish their reputations as technology leaders and partners in innovation stand to reap the benefits. As buyers' executives prioritize tech leadership, brands will need to reach, engage and convince larger and more senior buying groups.

“ We’re at an inflection point in manufacturing where emerging technologies are creating the opportunity for transformative innovation. Strong manufacturing brands are the crucial enablers of that innovation. They enable vendors and partners to communicate transformative ideas, build trust, overcome challenges and come together to move industries forward.”

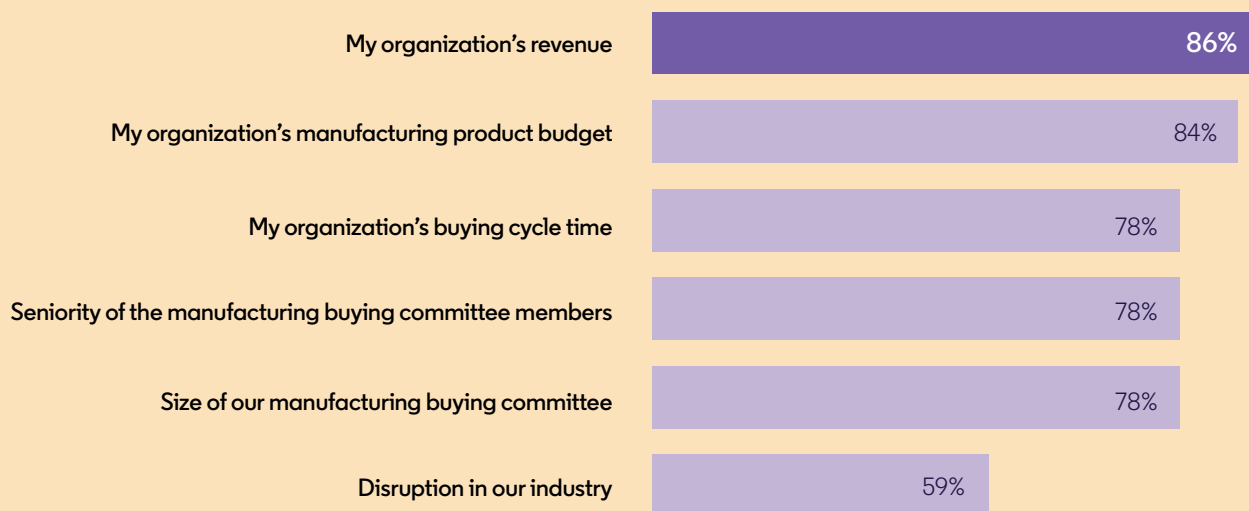


Göran Sällvin

Senior Manager, Head of Marketing Solutions, Nordics, LinkedIn

Figure 3 - Change is in the air

To what extent have the following changed over the past year? (percentage responding ‘increased somewhat’ or ‘increased significantly’)



How can vendors take advantage of the opportunities presented by these growing budgets and industry disruption?

The top trends emerging from our survey can give marketers a clear roadmap to differentiation and winning business.

TREND 1

Future-proofing through innovation



Finding the right innovative manufacturing partner matters because these partners can help to address the major challenges that buyers face.

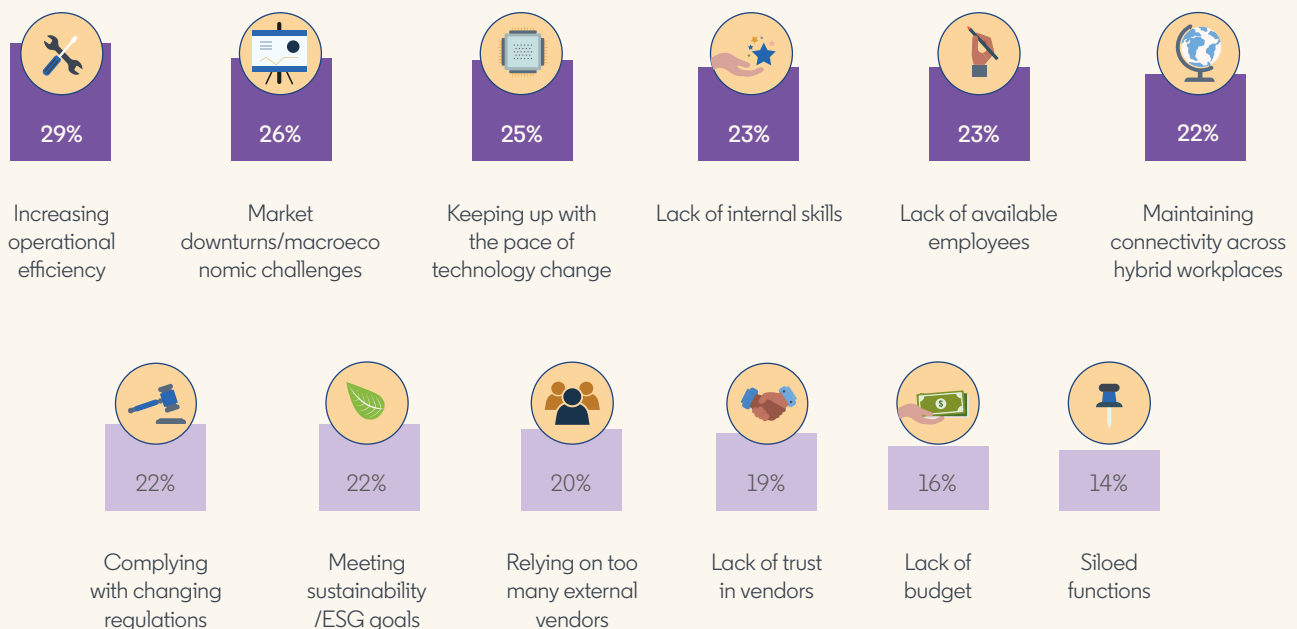
Those challenges include top concerns around increasing operational efficiency, mitigating the threat of macroeconomic challenges, keeping up with the pace of technological change and addressing sustainability/ESG goals.

Many of the other internal challenges facing respondents could be helped through efficiency gains. A lack of available employees, for instance, could be offset by more efficient business practices.

Meeting sustainability goals often requires more efficient operations. And for the fifth of respondents who cited relying on too many external vendors, vendor consolidation may be the name of the game.

Figure 4 - Increasing efficiency is key to tackling other challenges

What are the biggest challenges currently facing our company? Select three:





All these challenges help explain why a startling

87% of respondents agree their organizations are increasingly focused on operational efficiency.

It's worth noting that our survey was fielded before the US presidential election. Ongoing threats, such as across-the-board tariffs may increase macroeconomic challenges globally into 2025 and beyond.

Expertise and innovation are key to winning business

Manufacturing vendors can help buyers address their two main goals of becoming technology leaders and increasing efficiency. We asked respondents to identify which qualities in a vendor are most important. Unsurprisingly, more than three-quarters said almost every quality we included was “important” or “extremely important,” from presence at industry events and conferences (80%), to brand reputation (85%) and industry expertise (87%). But just looking at the “extremely important” ratings, three qualities stand out: technology expertise, innovation and pricing. Notably, pricing is not the overall most important aspect, underlining the need for vendors to be recognized for their innovation and technology, before pricing enters the equation.

Figure 5 -
Brands stand out most by proving innovation and expertise

Extremely important aspects in a vendor:

43%

Say technology expertise



42%

Say innovative product/services



42%

Say competitive pricing



Beyond the buzzword: defining innovation

Thought leadership reports stressing the importance of innovation are legion. But what does innovation mean to B2B manufacturers?

For Lukas Zurmuehle at Roche, innovation within manufacturing is centered on data-driven decisions, which “uncover inefficiencies and discover trends, strategically targeting technology deployments to maximize their impact.” But manufacturing innovation goes beyond technological advancements. It also encompasses diversity and inclusion.

“Embracing diversity and inclusion. Different backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences foster innovative solutions for the benefit of patients.”



Lukas Zurmuehle
Head of Digital Strategy
and Engagements, Roche

Our survey asked respondents to identify which attributes they most associate with innovation in a vendor. No singular answer dominated, though **process optimization and efficiency** emerged as a slight leader, closely followed by the **use of new technologies and digital transformation**. This variety reflects the multi-faceted nature of innovative in manufacturing, where priorities differ based on industry needs and organizational goals.

Brian Fretschel, Vice President, Digital Sales Excellence at Emerson, emphasizes the importance of creating psychological safety around innovation.

“ The ability to create the systems and organizational structure needed to best foster collaboration, that’s where you’re able to truly unlock innovation and create value. Such a process requires that the onus is on the management process to truly enable that experience versus relying solely on the tech itself.”



Brian Fretschel

Vice President, Digital Sales
Excellence, Emerson

Innovation’s definition is slippery, varying from buyer to buyer. Ron McMurtrie, Chief Marketing Officer at Honeywell, observes that innovation is critical for growth and differentiation, a sentiment echoed by the buyers in our survey.

“ We innovate not to create efficiency. It’s not about productivity. We innovate to solve customers’ very complex needs, to advance the needs of society and to obviously keep our customers for life.”



Ron McMurtrie

Chief Marketing Officer,
Honeywell

That drive to keep customers for life requires a relationship built on trust — directly leading to our next trend.

Recommendations for marketers

#1

Position efficiency as a cornerstone of innovation.

Showcase how your solutions streamline operations and create tangible ROI.

#2

Highlight future-proofing.

Emphasize how your solutions not only solve today’s challenges but also prepare for tomorrow’s technological and market shifts.

#3

Tell a transformation story.

Use case studies and narratives to illustrate how your solutions drive long-term business transformation, not just incremental improvements.

#4

Bridge expertise with outcomes.

Offer tailored insights that align your technological expertise with specific buyer needs, creating trust and demonstrating value.

TREND 2

Building trust through expertise to win in a crowded market



At this moment, the manufacturing market is dynamic as buyers seek innovative vendors to help them stand out as technology leaders. While most buyers agree they have trouble differentiating manufacturing vendors, marketers who can build brands that successfully stand out from the crowd have a huge opportunity, whether they are incumbents or new entrants.

The key is to meet buyers where they are and to build an established, trusted brand, even before the buying process begins.

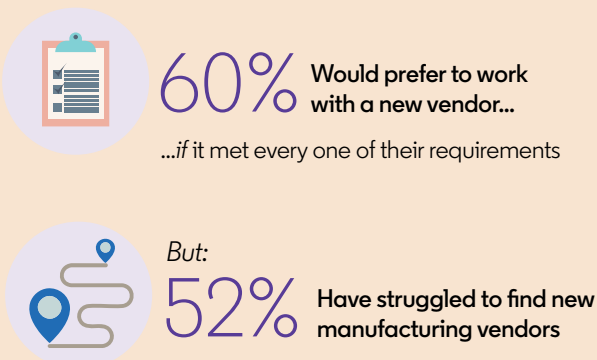
In today's innovation-focused climate, there is an openness to new vendors. However, marketers need to demonstrate the relevance of their offerings, which many are struggling with.

New entrants must build trust; incumbents must work to keep it

In their drive for innovation and efficiency, buyers are searching far and wide for vendors. However, more than half of buyers report difficulty differentiating vendors or finding new ones, even as 60% say they would prefer to work with a new vendor — but only if they met every one of their requirements. (Three-quarters of Enterprise respondents agreed with this, suggesting a larger appetite for new vendors among larger businesses).

Manufacturers need to build compelling brands around innovation and a differentiated proposition — but they also need a strategy that can communicate more detailed information when required. In short, they need a full-funnel approach.

Figure 6 - Incumbents have an opportunity if they can get noticed



To get noticed, vendors will need to meet buyers where they are and be top-of-mind even before they are in-market.

Incumbents must work to constantly prove their innovation, while new entrants must work to build a trusted, innovative brand to prove their relevance.

Buyer attention is focused on websites and events

When they seek information about manufacturing brands, buyers use a wide range of different touchpoints. This compounds the challenge for marketers, who must ensure their brands are present across all of them.

Vendor websites topped the list of the top information sources where buyers learn about vendors (34%), slightly ahead of digital advertising (27%), industry shows/events (27%) and peer recommendations (27%).

The importance of vendor websites underscores the need for a strong brand presence and recognition.

If your brand is top-of-mind, buyers will skip the middlemen and go directly to the source.

Emerson makes it easy for potential buyers to find the information they need on its website, and fosters conversation through automated chats and engagement.

“Highly technical offerings with a multitude of configuration parameters aren’t always best aligned or conducive to a direct navigational experience, and for that reason, the ability to off-ramp high-intent users and connect them with our experts is critical to our business strategy.”

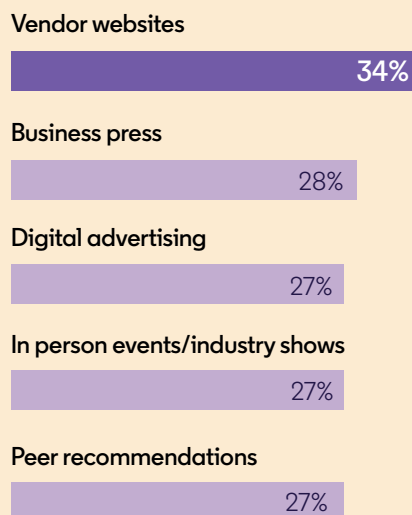


Brian Fretschel

Vice President, Digital Sales Excellence, Emerson

Figure 7 -
Buyers learn about vendors across media types

Top sources of information about manufacturing vendors



There are notable differences in preferred information sources. For instance:

SMBs



Buyers at SMBs are 11% more likely than the total to use sales collateral to learn about manufacturing brands.

Enterprises



Buyers at Enterprises are 24% more likely to turn to the business press.

In the US

In the US, buyers are 25% more likely than the overall total to turn to vendor websites and testimonials, emphasizing the importance of strong brands and support for self-directed buyer journeys.

While it is important to establish expertise across the board, keeping these regional and buyer variations in mind can help marketers engage audiences through the most effective touchpoints.

Earn loyalty by leading with transparency

The qualities that matter most to buyers during the research process reinforce the need for a strong brand. As Fig. 8 shows, there is a near four-way tie for the most resonant qualities in brand collateral. This shows the need to back up overarching reputation and brand perceptions with detailed information and thought leadership.

Executives agree the best content is driven by empathy and credibility. It acknowledges the specific challenges an audience faces and positions vendors as a partner. They also emphasize the need to create communities around specific topics with the right thought leaders to establish and build a brand's credibility in the space.

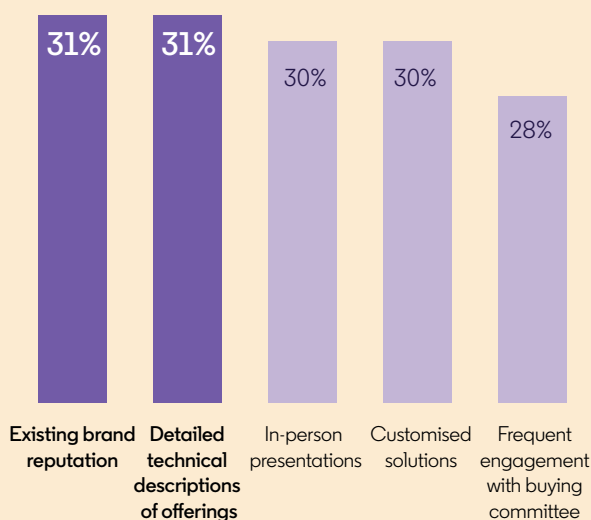
All these points are vitally important as shortlists shrink. Brands must be top-of-mind before the buying process even begins, and especially before the creation of shortlists.

Our survey indicates that 56% of buyers initially researched fewer than eight vendors for their most recent purchases — and fewer than four vendors ended up on the shortlist for 45%.



Figure 8 -
Detailed, personalized content resonates most

Qualities that resonate most when researching vendors



“Manufacturing powerfully demonstrates the value of full-funnel marketing on LinkedIn: brand-building that drives awareness and differentiates, thought leadership that can guide and inspire, transparent detail and product information to build trust, and tailored messaging that speaks to different stakeholder priorities. When marketers engage audiences creatively across all of these different touchpoints, they establish their brands as trusted partners for innovation strategies.”

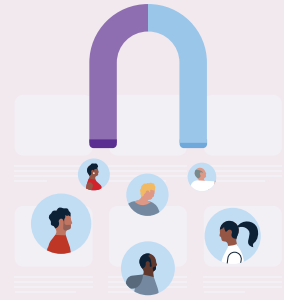


Matthew Marron
Director, LinkedIn Marketing Solutions

“ You have to be in the market before buyers are searching for a vendor. If you’re not visible and credible early on, you’re not even part of the consideration set.”



Ron McMurtrie
Chief Marketing Officer,
Honeywell



Trust rivals price at the point of purchase

We’ve seen how, at the beginning of the research process, a strong brand is crucial for earning a place in buyers’ consideration sets. But what matters at the bottom of the funnel? We asked our respondents the top reason they chose their most recent manufacturing vendor. Price and trust in the brand (10% each) emerged as the top-selected choices overall, followed closely by industry expertise.

For Brian Fretschel at Emerson, building and keeping trust comes back to the concept of psychological safety — making sure buyers know that systems are in place to support the latest innovations or technology. “What makes

Emerson a leader in this arena is our tenured history of expertise. Our employees — who have been around these technologies, this material and our customers for decades — offer application-based insight that can’t be replicated through an AI-generated response. We tout that experience widely and help ensure it’s accessible to our customers,” he says.

The bottom line? **Throughout the entire buying process, brands must work to build trust and expertise.** But that buying process is growing increasingly complex.

Recommendations for marketers

#1

Build trust through consistency.

Ensure all marketing touchpoints — from digital to in-person — convey a consistent, reliable brand image. Remember, though, that different personas respond to different tactics.

#2

Make credibility visible.

Use testimonials, third-party endorsements and transparent product performance data to reinforce your brand’s trustworthiness for each stakeholder.

#3

Leverage familiarity.

For incumbents, invest in maintaining strong relationships with current clients by continuously showcasing innovation and value.

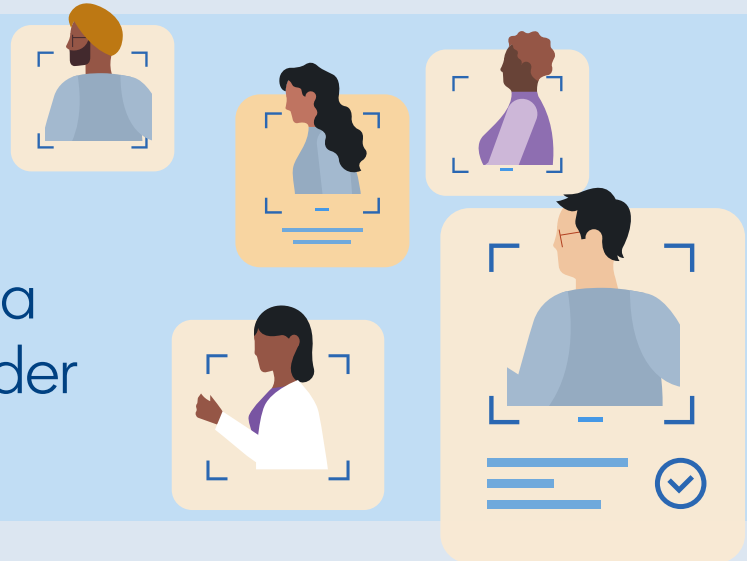
#4

Create opportunities for discovery.

For new entrants, focus on visibility through targeted content and thought leadership to establish credibility and spark buyer interest.

TREND 3

Complex buying demands a message for every stakeholder



As the size and seniority of buying groups increases, marketers must speak to **every** member of the buying group throughout a process that usually takes months.

This requires frequent, customized communication with different stakeholders, and the ability to address their individual concerns and interests.

And with most respondents saying their most recent manufacturing purchase took five months or longer, brands must work to stay engaged and top-of-mind throughout the process.

Most respondents say their most recent manufacturing purchase process took five months or longer




Figure 9 -
Most take more than five months to choose a manufacturing vendor

Percentage of respondents who say this stage of the buying process took more than one month

52% 
Problem identification

61% 
Evaluation/research

63% 
Specification

67% 
Supplier selection

64% 
Approval



Bigger buying groups require broader and personalized messaging

Two years ago, 64% of respondents had fewer than eight members in their buying group. Today, fewer than 49% do, suggesting a big increase in the number and type of stakeholders involved. Marketers must be prepared for this, and engage all stakeholders during a lengthy buying cycle.

Fig. 10 shows the many different stakeholders involved, including senior C-suite executives and finance. The presence of these executives in the buying group shows how the choice of manufacturing vendor ties directly into broader business goals like increasing efficiency and digital transformation.

Our research also shows the breadth of titles that are influential at the highest levels of the business: 29% say the President or CEO is influential in manufacturing buying decisions; 39% say C-level executives are; 38% say VPs are; and 38% say Director-level titles are involved.

Honeywell's approach to reaching a diverse buying group relies on building relationships. "It's about taking the time to learn their business — where they're headed, why they're doing it and what their purpose is — so we can align our capabilities to help them achieve their goals," says Ron McMurtrie. He explains that it's only then that a marketing

team can build stakeholder matrices to, "understand who's who in the decision process, what role they play and how we can provide value to each role."

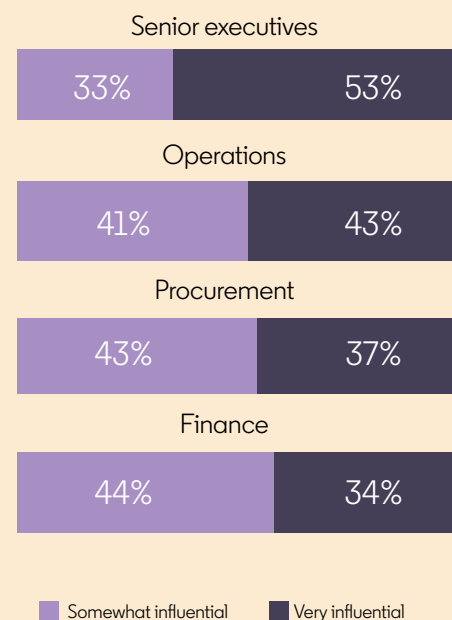
Marketers must keep these seniority levels in mind with their outreach, as they may be very far removed from the granular, operational level where the actual product or service may be used.

Lukas Zurmuehle at Roche agrees: "In my experience, in addition to understanding your audience, you and your team must be flexible to adapt strategies and tactics quickly to achieve the best results in a short amount of time."

The diversity of the buying group is exemplified by the traits most important for various stakeholders, as detailed in Fig. 11. Notably, pricing is low on the list of importance (except, of course, for Finance).

Figure 11 -
A wide variety of stakeholders are influential in buying groups

Influence of functions on manufacturing buying groups



Marketers must keep these differences in mind depending on who they are trying to reach, and tailor messaging approaches accordingly.



Figure 11 - Key stakeholders require unique marketing approaches



When speaking to **senior executives**, emphasize brand awareness and meet them at events



When speaking to **Operations**, rely on case studies and stress your industry expertise



When speaking to **Procurement**, take a full-funnel approach, emphasizing technical offerings and brand recognition



When speaking to **Finance**, emphasizing competitive pricing and stressing reputation and expertise are equally important



Recommendations for marketers

#1

Map stakeholder priorities.

Develop detailed personas and craft messages that address the unique goals of each stakeholder.

#2

Provide targeted content.

Offer tailored collateral, such as ROI calculators for executives, case studies for operations and detailed specs for procurement.

#3

Engage broadly and frequently.

Use diverse channels to connect with all members of the buying group throughout the longer buying cycle.

#4

Address stakeholder priorities.

Develop resources that demonstrate empathy and understanding of each stakeholder's key concerns.

TREND 4

Creative impact, market presence and transparency get buyers talking



The importance of innovation in a brand and its marketing cannot be overstated, especially as two-thirds of buyers in our survey prefer to purchase directly through vendors rather than networks. Marketers must present themselves as **innovation partners** that can help buyers reach their goals.

Rather than problem-focused, low-cost vendors, most buyers are looking for solutions-oriented vendors who can provide the best ROI. This suggests that buyers are seeking longer-term partnerships to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. It aligns with the strategy of businesses like Honeywell.

“We support customers for life by continuously adding capabilities and addressing their evolving challenges. It’s about delivering not just on today’s needs but also preparing for tomorrow — ensuring we remain a trusted partner across the customer’s entire journey,” says Ron McMurtrie.

Figure 12 - Buyers are seeking solutions-based vendors who can win on ROI



58%

Prefer vendors that take a **solutions-based approach**



60%

Are more focused on **ROI vs. cost** when choosing vendors

Notably, only

29%



of buyers strongly agree they have a good handle on new vendors in their industry. This creates a significant white-space opportunity for new entrants to grow their share of voice through impactful brand-building.



Transparency and presence are keys to engagement

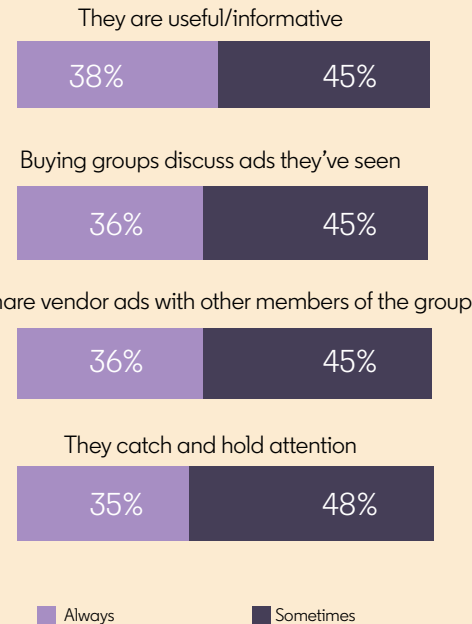
[We saw earlier](#) how transparency resonates most when buyers are researching vendors. That trend also shapes responses to marketing content: 35% of buyers said providing transparency around costs would create a positive impression of a vendor during research.

Nearly a third (32%) said clear implementation roadmaps and face-to-face meetings (30%) create a positive impression. To get on buyers' radars (and to create strong brand recognition), marketers must be transparent about their offerings and available to meet buyers where they are.

That could be through advertising, which is valued as useful and informative by a majority of buyers. As Fig. 13 shows, buyers take actions based on vendor ads.

Figure 13 - Brand ads spur action

% of buyers who say the following about vendor ads...



85%

of Millennial and Gen Z buyers say event presence is important for vendors

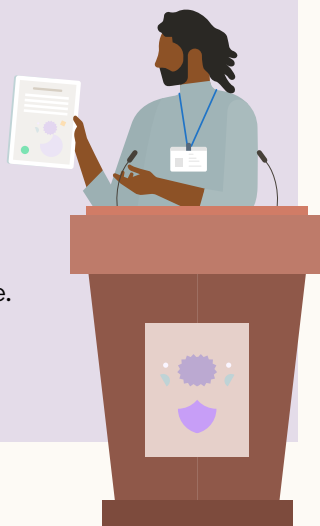
similar to

89%

enterprise buyers say the same and

83%

of European buyers agree.



In addition to ads, the importance of events cannot be overstated, especially in an industry that is built on long-term, personal connections.

A holistic marketing approach is clearly needed, spurring action through advertising outreach while also cultivating all-important face-to-face connections.

Honeywell has a presence at a variety of events to meet different strategic goals: "We use a mix of large trade show events and custom curated events to balance broad exposure with personalized interaction," says Ron McMurtrie.

The importance of events further reinforces Roche's emphasis on empathy in marketing. Lukas Zurmuehle acknowledges the importance of having a booth at conferences, but it is the omnichannel activities that make a difference. "In the end, what makes a tangible impact are small things: a welcoming message at the airport or creating a post-event campaign for the target group on social media and other channels."

“ It's surrounding the face-to-face event with digital pieces that make people feel part of a community.”



Lukas Zurmuehle
Head of Digital Strategy
and Engagements, Roche



Recommendations for marketers

#1

Prioritize transparency.

Share clear implementation roadmaps, cost breakdowns and expected outcomes to build credibility and reduce buyer hesitation.

#2

Mix digital and face-to-face engagement.

Leverage events for personal connection while amplifying your presence through consistent and impactful digital campaigns.

#3

Create tailored, solutions-driven content.

Focus on how your offerings address specific buyer challenges, positioning your brand as a trusted advisor.

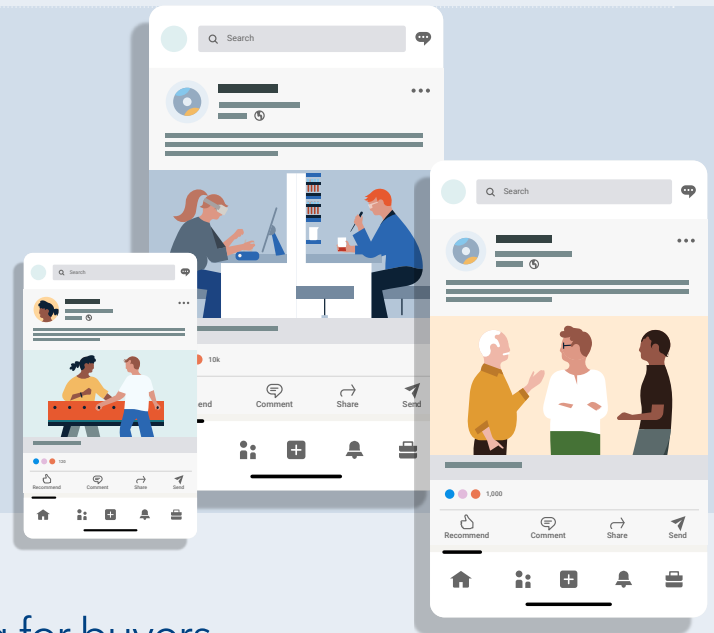
#4

Incorporate regional differences.

Customize your strategies to reflect local buyer preferences, using region-specific content and platform choices.

TREND 5

Social media spark action and drive results



The impact and reach of social media for buyers cannot be overstated

Digital advertisements are a top source of information about vendors, and a quarter of respondents say social media is a top source of research. Only a small percentage (6%) of respondents indicated they do not use any social media channel for work/professional purposes.

Figure 15 - Social media spurs action

Percentage of users who say vendor information they have seen on social media has...



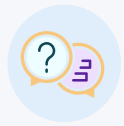
42%

Influenced a decision to choose a particular manufacturing vendor



42%

Prompted them to do further research on an industry issue or topic




41%

Led them to reach out to a vendor about their products/services

Figure 16 - Websites used for professional/work purposes

LinkedIn

 55%

YouTube

 42%

Instagram

 41%

X/Twitter

 40%

Business press

 38%

Facebook

 38%

Industry trade press

 32%

Industry-specific forums/message boards

 31%

Reddit

 14%

Discord

 13%

TikTok

 12%

Manufacturing marketers can reach vendors through a variety of social-media optimized strategies to build on their brand presence and website engagement. Buyers describe brands' social media marketing activities as representing some of their top information sources, including case studies (27%); peer recommendations (27%); executive presence on social media (25%); and influencers (19%).

Figure 17 - Vendors turn to a wide range of sources when researching vendors

Information sources turned to **first** when researching potential vendors (Top 5 ranked)



Buyers act after seeing content on social media

No matter what content they are engaging with, buyers are purposeful on social media:

More than four in 10

indicate that vendor information they've seen on social media has spurred action.

Lukas Zurmuehle at Roche sees social media as another way to build real connections with clients — and as a way to experiment with different channels and tactics.

At Emerson, LinkedIn is just as prominent an outreach strategy as phone calls and email.

“Part of the customer journey means meeting the customer where they're at, with a professional platform such as LinkedIn. A strong brand presence and interactions on that platform are woven into the fabric of how we connect.”



Brian Fretschel
Vice President, Digital Sales
Excellence, Emerson



Social media engagement can be as multi-dimensional as a vendor-buyer relationship. It can build brand recognition and trust; supply the detail and transparency buyers are looking for; and be a source of new connections and relationships.

Honeywell understands the multifaceted role that social media can play.

“ Social channels are not just about shouting into the ether — they have a key purpose in shaping and influencing brands. We leverage content, ideas and provocative thought through our social channels to share a point of view, which also builds our brand.”



Ron McMurtrie
Chief Marketing Officer,
Honeywell

Trust, transparency and connections: all vitally important to any marketer, but especially those in a dynamic manufacturing space.



Recommendations for marketers

#1

Own the conversation on social media.

Regularly publish thought leadership content and success stories to position your brand as an industry leader.

#2

Focus on action-oriented campaigns.

Use social media ads and posts to prompt buyers to download resources, attend webinars or schedule consultations.

#3

Leverage social proof.

Highlight testimonials and success stories from trusted voices within the industry to drive engagement.

#4

Analyze and adapt.

Continuously monitor social media analytics to refine your content and messaging for greater relevance and impact.

Building successful B2B manufacturing brands

Five key trends for marketers to accelerate growth

Efficiency and beyond: Future-proofing through innovation

#1

Key insights

Buyers demand solutions that address immediate operational pain points while laying the groundwork for future innovation. Efficiency is no longer the end goal — it's the gateway to transformation.

Action for marketers

Highlight how your solutions solve today's challenges while preparing buyers for future disruptions.

Building trust through expertise to win in a crowded market

#2

Key insights

With 55% of buyers struggling to distinguish vendors, trust has become a critical differentiator. Marketers must lead with transparency, credibility and consistency to win buyer confidence.

Action for marketers

Use testimonials, data-driven results and thought leadership to establish and maintain trust.

Complex buying demands a message for every stakeholder

#3

Key insights

Buying groups are growing in size and seniority, requiring marketers to tailor their messaging to diverse stakeholders. Success lies in aligning solutions with each stakeholder's unique priorities.

Action for marketers

Develop targeted content and campaigns that address the unique goals of each group.

#4

Creative impact, market presence and transparency get buyers talking

Key insights

Buyers want transparency and actionable insights delivered through innovative, personalized content. A blend of in-person engagement and digital storytelling creates lasting impressions.

Action for marketers

Combine in-person engagement with digital storytelling to create a holistic buyer experience.

#5

Social media spark action and drive results

Key insights

Social media platforms are essential tools for influencing buyer decisions. Social media is not just a channel for awareness but a driver of action and deeper engagement.

Action for marketers

Lead conversations on relevant social media platforms, leveraging data-driven insights and social proof to drive meaningful engagement.



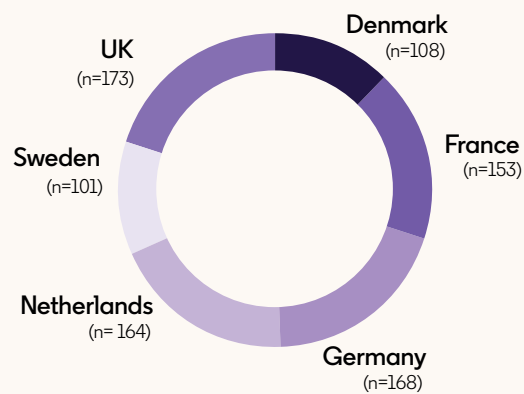
Methodology

The data for this report was collected through an online survey designed and conducted by GWI to 1,767 respondents globally. All respondents were managers or above, have some decision-making role in selecting manufacturing vendors at their organization, and all organizations have at least \$5 m in revenue in the last fiscal year. The survey was conducted between October 22 and November 5, 2024.

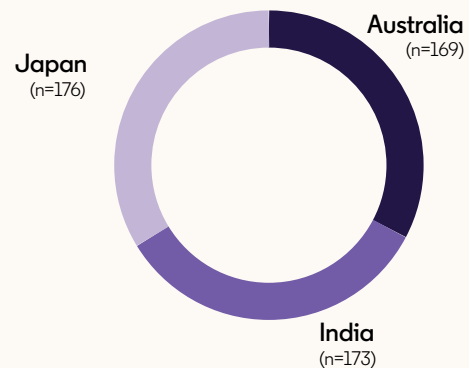
Geographic spread

EMEA	APAC	USA	Brazil
n=952	n=518	n=216	n=166
49%	29%	12%	10%

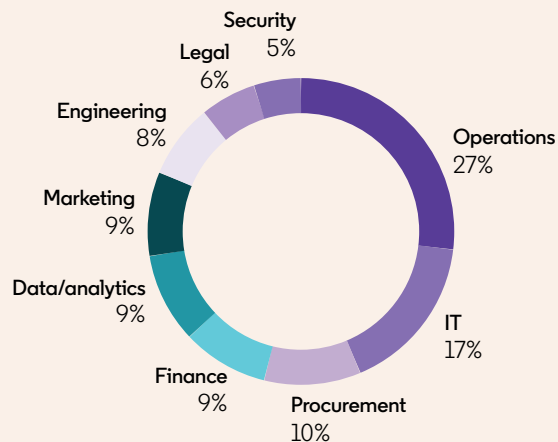
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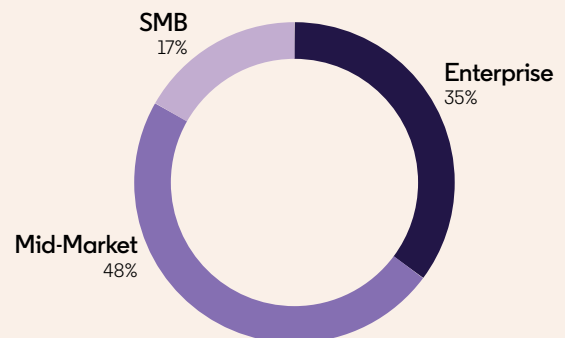
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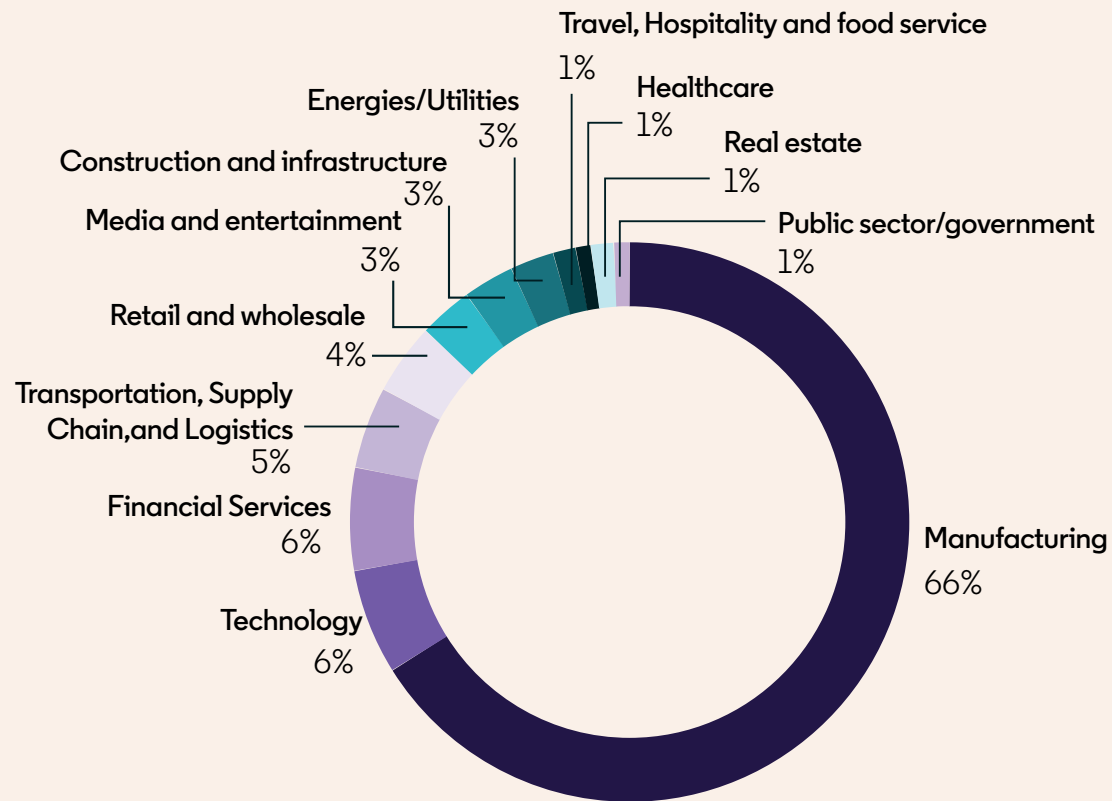
Function



Revenue



Industry



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How LinkedIn can help manufacturing marketers

LinkedIn connects the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful and transforms the way companies hire, learn, market, and sell.

Our vision is to create economic opportunity for every member of the global workforce through the ongoing development of the world's first Economic Graph.

LinkedIn has over 1 billion members and has offices around the globe.

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About GWI

GWI is the leading audience insights company. The company's flagship survey represents 2.7 billion people globally, by continually collecting data across 48 countries. It provides global data at an unrivaled scale to help businesses gain a deep understanding of their audiences at speed. Its SaaS platform and custom data products are trusted by the world's biggest brands, media organizations and agencies.