



As B2B customers now occupy a growing share of telco's revenue mix, companies continue to proactively look for ways to capture more of this increasingly-critical market segment. But to really thrive in the B2B telecom sector, vendors need to understand the unique factors that affect customers' buying decisions.

One such factor that plays a key role in the B2B purchase process is the involvement of multiple stakeholders in evaluating and acquiring business solutions. On average, it takes [6.8 decision makers](#) to formally greenlight a B2B purchase, with the number of stakeholders in some buying groups reaching double-digit figures.

In a buying team, each decision maker has her own objectives and priorities in the purchase. Winning a customer requires the ability to tailor your marketing message for each stakeholder in the group so that they'll have the information and insight needed to make an informed choice.

This blog article examines how recent marketing developments impact the way buying groups reach a consensus when purchasing B2B telecom solutions. The post then explains some concrete ideas for adapting your messaging strategy around these changes.

The Changing Rules of the Game

The evolution in both how telecom vendors sell and how customers buy contributes to the purchase process's growing complexity. This, in turn, drives the changes we're seeing in the size and makeup of B2B buying groups.

The boundary between telecom and IT gets narrower.

Bane & Co. estimates that the B2B telecom market will grow by [2.6% each year](#), which is 4.3 times faster than the consumer segment's 0.6% annual expansion. A great deal of this disparity largely boils down to the strong demand from SMBs and enterprise customers for end-to-end ICT solutions, while the market for consumer telecom remains highly saturated.

According to Deloitte, the [distinction between telco and ICT](#) continues to get thinner as shown by systems integrators getting the lion's share of B2B telecom growth. Inside client organizations, "CTO types" now make procurement choices alongside traditional decision makers such as CIOs and other IT executives.



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As product scope grows, so does the need for stakeholder

buy-in.

McKinsey points out that around [67% of B2B deals](#) never make it to an RFP process. Much of this stems from the “many gateways of influence” involved in reviewing an offer. More B2B buyers now prefer to evaluate solutions on a modular basis, bringing in cross-functional teams to assess specific areas of a potential purchase.

Again, traditional decision maker roles now closely collaborate with other stakeholders impacted by the purchase in order to take a careful look at offer details that concern them the most. As McKinsey notes, this has led to an increase in the number of customers sending out modular RFPs.

Buyers of complex solutions tend to be risk-averse.

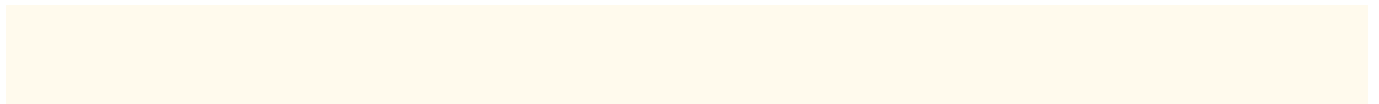
As a side effect of B2B telecom vendors’ shift toward providing more ICT solutions in their product mix, potential customers now increasingly rely on buying committees. While this indicates increased thoroughness in buyers’ due diligence activities, it’s also a sign that customers want to minimize risk by spreading accountability among different stakeholders.

[Research from Aberdeen](#) shows that buyers of complex business products and services tend to be the most risk-averse type of customer. This group recorded the lowest average risk tolerance in their study.

Flatter decision hierarchy means bigger buying groups.

The widely-cited 6.8-decision-maker buying group statistic actually originates from a [2017 CEB research publication](#). The study also mentions that, as a result of a flatter organizational structure, the size of B2B buying committees has equivalently expanded.

There’s a strong trend toward decentralization among potential B2B customers. More people toward the bottom of the organizational structure now play an increasing role in the buying process, significantly growing the pool of buyer roles involved in B2B purchases.





Check out some practical telecom campaign ideas and tips and see how you can work the consultative approach into your digital marketing playbook.

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Winning the B2B Buying Consensus

A buying team reaches consensus when each member agrees on the problem to be solved, the criteria for choosing a solution, and the specific objectives for implementing the solution.

With buying decisions now requiring the approval of a larger group of stakeholders, getting everyone's buy-in remains a difficult challenge for telecom vendors. That's because each member of the buying committee has his or her own expectations and responsibilities which oftentimes misalign with others, leading to group conflicts.

CEB finds that customers are typically 37% into the buying journey when group conflict peaks, stalling the process or even killing the deal altogether.

So, how can telecom vendors gain a buying consensus? Experts at winning the consensus sale suggest taking the following things into account when crafting your plan:

- Identify all stakeholders and group them according to buyer roles
- Make sure to involve the right people at the right time
- Work closely with each buying team member on how the solution impacts a specific business area

Here's how to achieve each of these items:

Identify all stakeholders and group them according to buyer roles

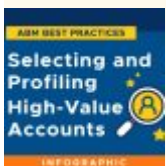
It's crucial to identify ALL stakeholders involved in the purchase and how each impacts the decision at hand. The first challenge is to list out who actually has a stake in the decision in question.

Bob Apollo at Inflection Point Strategy Partners outlines five key criteria that a prospect needs to meet in order to be a [valid stakeholder](#):

- Role in the decision-making process (more on this below)
- Perspective and point-of-view (strategic, financial, operational, technical, contractual)
- Level of influence (dominant, strong, weak, nonexistent, and uncertain)
- Attitude toward your company/brand (positive, neutral, and negative)
- Accessibility and availability (unrestricted, frequent, infrequent, and inaccessible)

Different marketers follow different buyer role categories when classifying stakeholders, but these mostly fall into three main types of stakeholders (as noted by Bob Apollo):

- Core Buying Decision Group (stakeholders who determine the need, define the ideal solution, and evaluate/select options)
- Negotiating Terms Group (their role is to protect the company and ensure the company gets the best possible terms)
- Final Approver Group (has the last word in a decision and can override decisions made by the two other groups)



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Make sure to involve the right people at the right time

When identifying stakeholders, it's critical to determine your primary contact in the target organization. The primary contact serves as your leading advocate (champion) in the buying group, helping you gain access to the other stakeholders.

Additionally, the primary contact (or champion) can help you acquire some useful insights on the other stakeholders to ensure relevant and personalized engagement.

Brent Adamson provides some very helpful pieces of advice on how and when to involve stakeholders in order to [make the consensus sale](#):

- **Find the personalization sweet spot.** While personalized and relevant content is the fuel that drives consensus sale, personalization can also drive a wedge between stakeholders, especially if it focuses exclusively on a stakeholder's business area and ignores the others.
- **Know that reaching consensus is difficult early in the buying process.** Most group conflicts arise when customers are somewhere in the awareness and consideration stages. This means that you should be convincing stakeholders to agree on a solution instead of persuading them to choose you already.
- **Choose champions that have both the willingness and ability to advocate.** Around half of the primary contacts who said they were willing to buy a solution also claimed they weren't ready to publicly advocate for it (50% feared reputational damage and 12% were afraid of job loss from a problematic purchase).



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Work closely with each stakeholder on how the solution impacts a specific business area

Buying committees consist of functional executives, managers, users, gatekeepers, and other decision-making roles. With a diverse group of people from different business areas and backgrounds, it can be very hard to collaborate to hammer out the right solution that everyone can agree on.

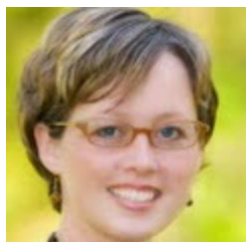
Reaching a consensus requires that you work with everyone involved and uncover what the pain points are, what an ideal solution looks like, and what a successful resolution of the problem means.

- Focus on clear and specific business outcomes
- Specify the metrics for measuring each outcome
- Set and review benchmarks and yardsticks
- Understand that your biggest competitor is always the status quo

Conclusion: Buying committees form just another fact of life for B2B marketers, especially for telecom vendors. With the right insights, it's easier to navigate around the different stakeholders and how they relate with each other.

Callbox can help you identify and connect with key stakeholders that [impact telecom solution purchases](#). Contact us today for a free strategy session.

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