

Unveiling the Hidden Selection Phase:

# THE IMPACT OF B2B MEDIA ON BUYING DECISIONS

Explore how B2B media  
shapes early-stage  
purchasing decisions and  
influences buyer behavior.



LEVERAGE LAB®  
TRANSFORMING DATA INTO PROFIT

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# 70% of Decisions: *The* *Selection* *Phase*



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Buyers chose *before* vendor contact.

B2B media companies are sitting on a gold mine they have barely begun to tap. While vendors try to influence purchasing decisions, an important truth has emerged: **70% of B2B buying decisions occur before vendors are even contacted**, and it's B2B publishers who dominate this critical "Selection Phase" where preferences form and consensus builds.

This positioning isn't just advantageous, it's transformative. During this crucial decision-making period, B2B publishers' content platforms and events serve as a primary information source for buying committees. The first-party data collected from these interactions reveals invaluable insights about active buying committees forming around specific solutions, intelligence that vendor partners need but cannot access independently.

Research confirms this advantage: B2B buyers value third-party media sources 1.5 times more than vendor content, and **two-thirds of today's decision-makers**, predominantly Millennials and Gen-Z professionals, **prefer self-guided research** through trusted industry resources before engaging salespeople.

## FORWARD-THINKING B2B MEDIA COMPANIES ARE TRANSFORMING THIS UNIQUE POSITION INTO SIGNIFICANT NEW REVENUE STREAMS BY:

Creating premium audience segments  
based on buying committee intelligence

Developing Account-Based Marketing  
(ABM) solutions that target entire  
decision teams

Offering intent data products that alert  
vendors to early-stage buying activity

Designing role-specific content  
programs that address each  
stakeholder's unique needs

Building integrated experiences that  
engage committees across digital and  
event channels



## IN THIS REPORT

**T**hrough strategic investments in robust data infrastructure and thoughtful, innovative monetization approaches, forward-thinking B2B media companies are achieving extraordinary results. This involves transforming fragmented audience interactions into unified intelligence, enabling publishers to precisely identify active buying committees and their evolving needs.

This report explores how B2B media companies can leverage their unique position in the Selection Phase to create powerful new revenue opportunities while strengthening their essential role in the industries they serve.

# The B2B Buying Journey Has Fundamentally Changed

Let's say the CTO of a midsize software company needs a new marketing automation platform. Ten years ago, she might have made this decision largely on her own, perhaps consulting a few team members before choosing a vendor.

Today, the process looks dramatically different. She assembles a buying committee that includes marketing leaders, IT specialists, finance representatives, and end users. Together, they'll spend months researching options, reading analyst reports, attending webinars and engaging with industry content – all before contacting a single vendor.

This scenario plays out daily across industries, and research confirms its prevalence. According to 6Sense's comprehensive 2024 Buyer Experience Study, B2B buyers are nearly 70% through their purchasing process before engaging with sellers. Even more telling, buyers already have a preferred vendor at the time of first contact more than 80% of the time, and 85% have established their purchase requirements before vendor interactions begin.

The buying process now unfolds in two distinct phases:

## **The Selection Phase** (First 70%)

During this period, buying committees form, gather information, evaluate options, and build consensus– often identifying a preferred vendor– all without direct vendor involvement.

## **The Validation Phase** (Final 30%)

Only after the committee has largely made its decision do they contact vendors, primarily to validate their choice, clear up remaining questions, and execute the purchase.





Buyers spend

27%

of their time on  
independent research

Buyers value

third-party sources  
more more than vendor content

1.5x



THIS SCENARIO  
ILLUSTRATES A  
TREMENDOUS  
**COMPETITIVE**  
ADVANTAGE FOR  
B2B PUBLISHERS”

## THE B2B MEDIA PRIMACY:

### Where Buying Decisions Really Happen

Remember our CTO searching for a marketing automation platform? While vendors anxiously wait for her call, she and her committee are already deep into their evaluation process, but they're not in a vacuum. **They're immersed in the digital ecosystem of B2B media.**

By the time they finally reach out to vendors, they've consumed dozens of content pieces across multiple B2B media channels. Their preferences are largely formed, their requirements list nearly complete, their frontrunner already identified. All influenced by trusted industry publications rather than vendor outreach.

This scenario illustrates a tremendous competitive advantage for B2B publishers. Gartner's research confirms: buyers spend 27% of their time conducting independent research, and they value third-party sources 1.5x more than vendor content. The implications are clear, **B2B media dominates the critical Selection Phase where preferences form and consensus builds.**

While vendors are desperately trying to identify and reach buying committees early in their journey, media companies enjoy direct visibility into their content consumption through their first-party data. Every article read, webinar attended, and research paper downloaded creates digital footprints that, when properly analyzed, reveal active buying committees and their evolving priorities.

A marketing automation vendor would pay premium rates to know that our CTO's company has formed a buying committee actively researching solutions. The vendor would value even more knowing which specific features and concerns each committee member prioritizes.

**Only B2B media companies possess this intelligence.** This positioning creates extraordinary value for advertisers.

Forward-thinking media companies now recognize that their platforms aren't just information sources, they're decision engines where preferences form, options narrow, and consensus builds.

**The first-party data generated from these interactions represents their most valuable asset and a significant opportunity for revenue growth.**



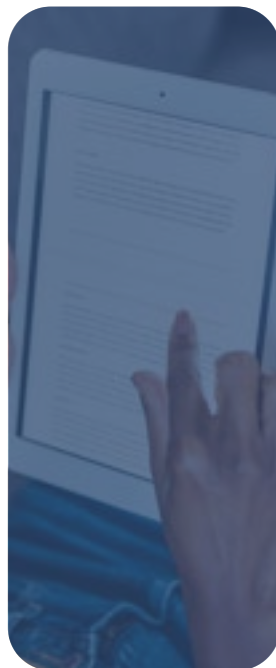
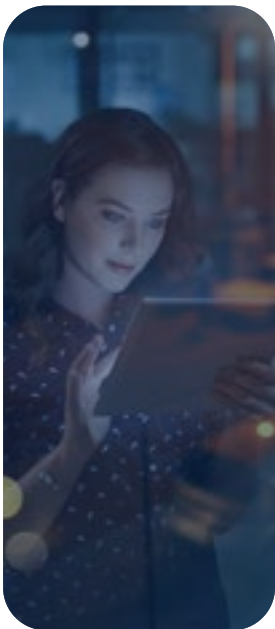
# THE GENERATIONAL SHIFT:

## Reshaping B2B Buying

This transformation in buying behavior coincides with a demographic revolution in B2B purchasing. According to Gartner research, **two-thirds of today's B2B buyers are Millennials and Gen-Z professionals** who approach buying decisions fundamentally differently than previous generations.

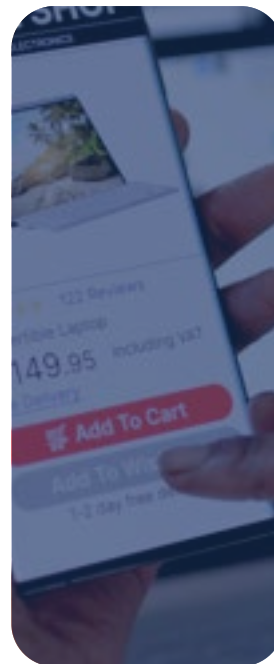
These digital-native buyers:

Prefer self-guided purchasing journeys with minimal sales interaction



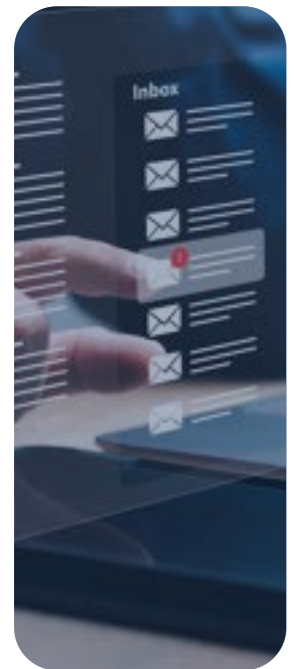
Consult 3x more information sources than older buyers

Value third-party resources 1.5x more than vendor content



Expect personalized, relevant experiences across channels

Are quick to dismiss content that doesn't address their specific needs



For these buyers, B2B media platforms aren't just information sources– they're **critical decision-making tools**.



They rely on independent media content to understand industry trends, evaluate options, and build internal cases for particular solutions. This behavior creates digital footprints that, when properly collected and analyzed, reveal **invaluable insights about active buying committees**.



*THESE SHIFTS IN BUYER  
BEHAVIOR RESHAPE THE  
SELECTION PHASE—  
MAKING IT CRITICAL TO  
ENGAGE EARLY, WITH  
RELEVANCE AND TRUST.*

# Anatomy of the MODERN BUYING COMMITTEE

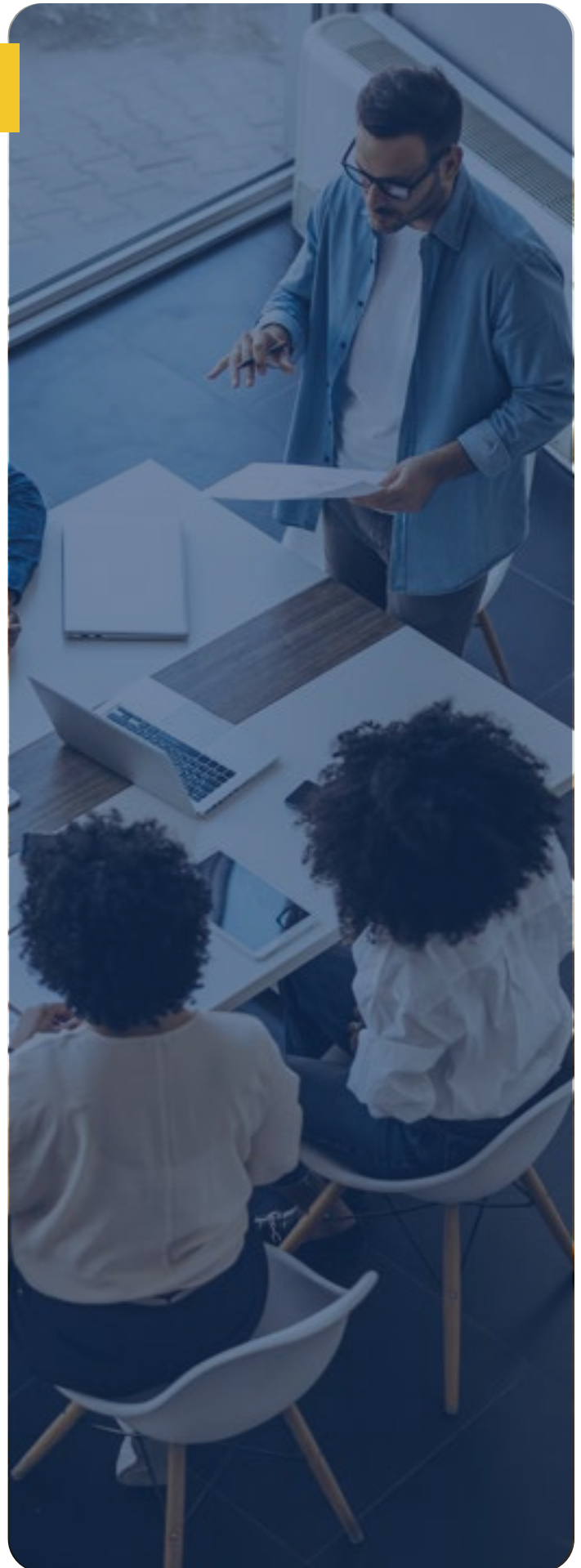


# Anatomy of the MODERN BUYING COMMITTEE

**Each role engages with content differently, has distinct concerns, and requires different information to support their part in the decision process.**

The Economic Buyer may focus on case studies showing ROI, while Technical Buyers dive into integration guides and specifications. User Buyers prioritize detailed product demonstrations and usability features.

B2B publishers who can **identify these roles** through their first-party data and deliver role-specific content create immense value for their advertising partners – enabling precisely targeted messaging to each stakeholder type at the right moment in their journey.



# First-Party Data Infrastructure Requirements

Creating value from first-party data requires robust infrastructure with **five key** capabilities:

## 1 Unified Customer Profiles



**What it is:** A centralized record for each individual that connects behavior across all touchpoints—websites, events, webinars, downloads, and emails.

**Why it matters:** Without unified profiles, audience behavior remains fragmented, making it impossible to see complete buyer journeys. Unified profiles reveal the full picture of interests and engagement.

**How it works:** Identity resolution technology matches behaviors across interactions, building comprehensive profiles that update in real-time as new engagements occur.

## 2 Cross-Device Identity Resolution

**What it is:** Technology that recognizes the same user across different devices and sessions, even when not logged in.

**Why it matters:** B2B professionals research solutions on multiple devices—mobile during commute, laptop for webinars, desktop for downloads. Without connecting these touchpoints, critical buying signals are missed.

**How it works:** Combines deterministic matches (email, login) with probabilistic signals (IP address, behavior patterns) to create a continuous view of each person's journey.



## 3 Topic Classification and Content Intelligence



**What it is:** AI-powered analysis that automatically categorizes content by topic, solution relevance, and buying stage.

**Why it matters:** Understanding what content users engage with provides crucial context. Interest in "cloud migration security" signals different intent than "employee security training."

**How it works:** Natural language processing analyzes media content, creating taxonomies that transform simple engagement metrics into meaningful intent signals.

## 4 Behavior Pattern Analysis

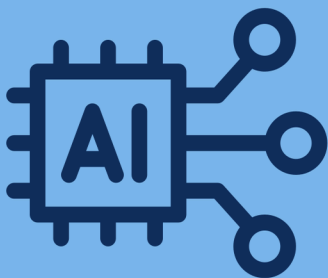
**What it is:** AI systems that identify meaningful patterns indicating buying committee formation and purchase intent.

**Why it matters:** Raw data (pageviews, downloads) lacks context. Pattern analysis transforms this into actionable intelligence by recognizing behaviors that correlate with active buying journeys.

**How it works:** AI and Machine Learning models identify telltale sequences– like multiple users from one organization researching similar topics, or engagement patterns matching previous purchase journeys.



## 5 AI-Powered Segmentation



**What it is:** Dynamic audience grouping based on signals that indicate a role in the buying process and stage in the decision journey.

**Why it matters:** Different committee members have distinct information needs. Identifying their likely role enables targeted engagement with the right content at the right time.

**How it works:** Algorithms analyze engagement patterns to categorize users by likely committee role and decision stage, with segments continuously updating as new behaviors emerge.

Leverage Lab's Enterprise Customer Data Infrastructure (ECDI+) provides all these capabilities in a platform specifically designed for media companies, with specialized tools for monetizing first-party data through buying committee intelligence.

## CONVERTING DATA INSIGHTS TO REVENUE:

### The Leverage Lab Approach

For B2B media executives, the ultimate question is **how to transform buying committee insights into tangible revenue**. Our work with leading publishers has identified five powerful monetization strategies that create significant new revenue streams while delivering superior value to advertising partners:



# 1 High-Value Audience Segments as Premium Ad Products

## The opportunity:

Traditional demographic targeting delivers basic reach but lacks precision in identifying active buying committees. Publishers can now package high-intent audience segments as premium advertising products that command significant CPM premiums, often several times higher than standard display advertising.

By leveraging first-party data collected during the Selection Phase, publishers can **identify and segment audiences based on their role in buying committees and their stage in the decision journey.**

## How it works in practice:

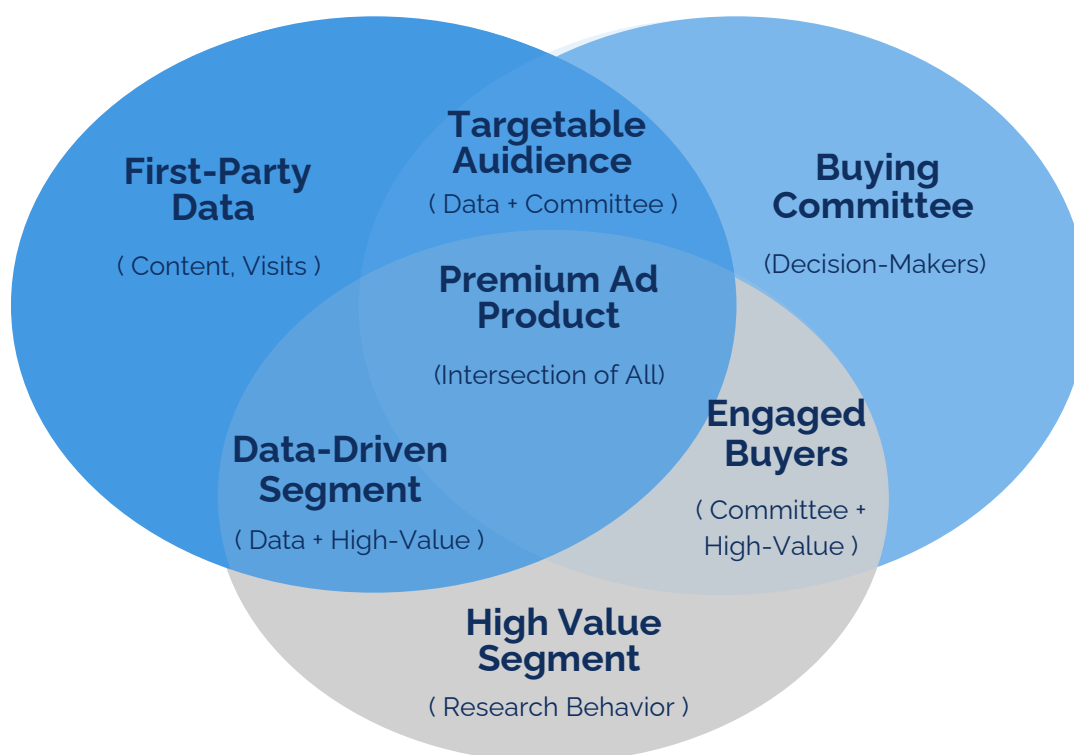
A B2B technology publisher analyzes content consumption patterns across their digital properties to identify users actively researching cybersecurity solutions. Their data reveals distinct patterns indicating users serving on buying committees.

They package this audience as “**Active Cybersecurity Evaluation Committee Members**” and offer it to cybersecurity vendors as a premium segment, enabling targeted display, native, and email campaigns specifically reaching these high-value decision-makers during the Selection Phase and before they’ve contacted any vendors.

## Implementation example:

We’ve seen clients generate substantial new revenue within months of implementing a data-driven segmentation strategy. By implementing our dimensional scoring system to identify committee members by likely role and decision stage, they’re able to create entirely new product for existing advertisers eager to reach these precisely targeted committees during the Selection Phase.

## HIGH-VALUE AUDIENCE SEGMENTS: THE INTERSECTION OF DATA, BUYERS, AND BEHAVIOR



## 2 Account-Based Marketing Solutions

### The opportunity:

Enterprise B2B purchases involve multiple stakeholders across departments. Account-Based Marketing (ABM) solutions that identify and target entire buying committees at specific organizations represent a high-margin opportunity for publishers with the right data infrastructure.

### How it works in practice:

A B2B healthcare publisher analyzes their first-party data to identify hospitals actively researching electronic health record systems. Their analysis reveals specific buying committee formation at numerous health systems, with identifiable Economic, Technical, and User Buyers engaged across their platforms. They package this intelligence as an ABM solution for healthcare technology vendors, enabling coordinated messaging to all committee members. Advertisers pay premium rates for this targeting precision, generating substantially more revenue than traditional advertising.

### Implementation example:

One media client implemented our ECDI+ platform and discovered they could see buying committees forming months before vendors were aware of the opportunity. That visibility became an extremely valuable product for their advertisers.



**The magic happens when you can connect users to accounts and identify buying committees forming around specific topics.**

## 3 Intent Data Products and Intelligence Services

### The opportunity:

B2B publishers have unique visibility into buying intent through their content platforms and events. Packaging this intelligence as standalone subscription products creates entirely new revenue streams beyond traditional advertising. These products alert vendors to early-stage buying activity, providing competitive advantage through earlier awareness of opportunities.

### How it works in practice:

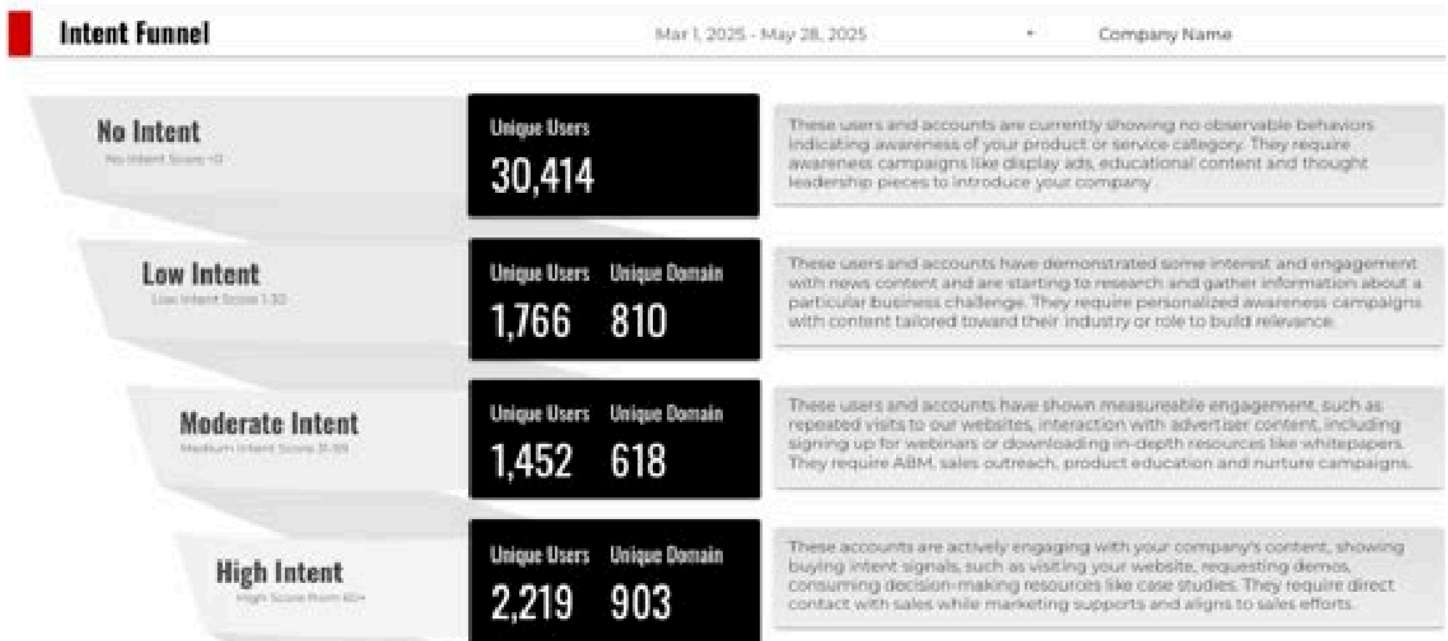
A manufacturing industry publisher analyzes content engagement across their digital properties to identify emerging purchase interest. They create a subscription intelligence service that alerts equipment manufacturers to early-stage buying activity in their category, providing regular reports on active accounts, apparent committee composition, and content interests.

## Implementation example:

Intent data isn't just for targeting ads, it can be standalone product that helps vendors identify opportunities earlier, understand buyer concerns better, and engage more effectively. We're seeing publishers create substantial revenue streams by productizing the buying committee intelligence they can uniquely provide.

**A B2B technology publisher created a \$750,000 annual revenue stream within six months by packaging their Selection Phase intelligence.**

They offered tiered subscriptions to their 'Buyer Intent Intelligence' service, with premium tiers including weekly alerts on organizations showing increased research activity around specific technologies. Subscribers could see which accounts were actively in-market for their solutions months before those accounts began vendor outreach, giving them a significant competitive advantage in deal positioning.



Example Intent Funnel

## 4 Content Sponsorship Targeted by Buying Role

### The opportunity:

Different buying committee members have distinct information needs and content preferences. Publishers can create role-specific content programs that target each buyer type with customized information, sponsored by relevant advertisers.

### How it works in practice:

A B2B technology publisher uses their first-party data to analyze how different buying committee roles engage with their content. They discover clear patterns: Technical Buyers consume detailed product comparisons and implementation guides; Economic Buyers engage with ROI calculators and business case builders; User Buyers gravitate toward usability features and workflow impact assessments.

The publisher creates dedicated content tracks for each role, with sponsored articles, tools, and resources aligned to role-specific concerns. Advertisers pay premium rates to sponsor content tailored to specific buying roles, resulting in higher engagement and better lead quality than traditional sponsored content.



**TIP:**  
**Dedicated content aligned to  
each role-specific concern =  
higher engagement and better  
lead quality**

### Implementation example:

When you match content to buying role, engagement skyrockets. We're seeing substantially higher conversion rates when publishers target specific committee members with role-appropriate content. That performance justifies significant premiums for advertisers.

## 5 Integrated Event & Digital Experiences

### The opportunity:

B2B events bring buying committees together physically, creating extraordinary opportunities to capture intent data and extend engagement across digital channels before, during, and after the event. By connecting event interactions with digital behavior, publishers can create high-value integrated packages that engage committees throughout their entire decision journey.

### How it works in practice:

A technology media company integrates their event registration data with their digital audience profiles, creating a unified view of buying committee engagement across channels. They discover that committees typically engage with their content platforms for 3-4 months before registering for events, and continue engagement for several months afterward.

This insight leads to integrated sponsorship packages that engage buying committees across the entire journey—from early digital research through in-person events and post-event follow-up. These packages include pre-event targeted content, customized event experiences for identified committee members, facilitated meetings at events, and post-event nurturing campaigns—all designed to influence committees throughout the Selection Phase.

### Implementation example:

The companies seeing the biggest revenue gains are those connecting the dots between digital engagement and events.

When you can show advertisers how committees engage across channels throughout their journey, you create compelling packages that command premium pricing while delivering better results.

By implementing these monetization strategies, B2B media companies transform their unique position in the Selection Phase into powerful new revenue streams while delivering unprecedented value to their advertising partners.





## IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP:

# Partnering with Leverage Lab

Transforming audience data into buying committee intelligence requires strategic infrastructure and expertise. Leverage Lab specializes in helping B2B media companies implement the necessary capabilities while minimizing disruption to existing operations.

Our implementation approach follows a **proven four-phase process**:

### Integrated Event and Digital Experiences

During this initial phase, Leverage Lab experts work with media teams to:

- Audit existing data collection across all platforms
- Identify data gaps and collection opportunities
- Assess current technology capabilities
- Document revenue opportunities based on the audience and market
- Develop a comprehensive implementation strategy

### Infrastructure Implementation

With a strategy in place, our technical team implements the core infrastructure:

- Deploy Enterprise Customer Data Infrastructure (ECDI+) platform
- Implement unified profile creation across all properties
- Set up identity resolution capabilities
- Configure AI-powered topic classification
- Establish behavior pattern analysis
- Create initial role-based segmentation models

## Revenue Product Development

Once the foundation is in place, our revenue strategists help develop marketable products:

- Define premium audience segments based on buying committee insights
- Create ABM solution packages for key advertisers
- Develop intent data products and reporting tools
- Help design role-specific content programs
- Build integrated cross-channel sponsorship packages
- Establish pricing strategies and sales materials



## Ongoing Sales Enablement and Optimization

Transforming the approach to sales is critical for monetizing buying committee intelligence:

- Train sales teams on new products and value propositions
- Develop case studies and ROI models for advertisers
- Create dashboard tools for campaign optimization
- Establish measurement frameworks
- Provide ongoing optimization consulting

**What sets Leverage Lab apart is our focus on driving revenue, not just implementing technology.**

We've helped dozens of B2B media companies transform their first-party data into significant new revenue streams. Our team brings both the technical expertise to implement the necessary infrastructure and the media experience to create compelling products advertisers will pay premium rates to access.



## CONCLUSION:

# Seizing the Selection Phase Advantage

B2B media companies stand at a pivotal moment of unprecedented opportunity. Their unique position at the center of the “**Selection Phase**” represents a strategic advantage that remains largely untapped across the industry.

While most publishers continue selling basic impressions and leads, industry leaders are transforming their business models by monetizing their privileged position in purchase decisions. They recognize that **B2B media** doesn't just report on industries, it **actively shapes buying decisions during the critical period** when preferences form and consensus builds.

This position cannot be replicated by vendors or technology platforms. The first-party data collected during these interactions serves as the foundation for high-margin products that deliver extraordinary value to advertisers desperate to influence decisions before vendor selection narrows.

Forward-thinking publishers are investing in data infrastructure that unifies audience interactions, implementing AI tools that identify committee formation patterns, and developing premium products that monetize their unique position in the Selection Phase.

The most successful B2B publishers of tomorrow will be those who recognize and act on a fundamental truth: they aren't merely content platforms—they're essential orchestrators of the **Selection Phase** where B2B decisions are made. By embracing this role, publishers will unlock significant revenue growth while strengthening their position as irreplaceable industry resources.

# About Leverage Lab

Leverage Lab is the unrivaled first-party data consultancy empowering media companies and publishers to unlock the full value of their audience data. Our Enterprise Customer Data Infrastructure (ECDI+) platform and expert services help B2B media organizations transform fragmented data into unified intelligence that drives incremental revenue.

Founded by media industry veterans who understand the unique challenges publishers face, Leverage Lab has helped clients generate over \$65 million in new revenue through data-driven audience solutions.

Contact us at

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to schedule a consultation.





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