

The Future of AI in B2B Demand Generation

What AI actually changes, and what
stays irreducibly human.

Karl Van Buren
CEO and Co-Founder, Audyence



Everyone has a take on AI. Most miss the point for marketers.

Ask ten people what AI means for their business and you get every answer on the spectrum. Some think it ends badly. Some believe judgment, taste, and trust stay ours forever. Some want to floor it. Most land somewhere in the middle. For those of us who

generate demand for a living, the good-or-bad debate is the wrong argument. The useful question is narrower: what does AI actually change about how buyers become customers, and what does it leave exactly as it was?



The Doomer

AI is an existential threat.



The Accelerationist

Hit the gas on a new age of creativity.



The Human Exceptionalist

Some things stay irreducibly human.



The Centrist

It changes everything and nothing, depending where you point it.

“AI commoditizes execution. It does not commoditize human awareness, engagement, trust, or relationships.”

– Karl Van Buren, CEO and Co-Founder, Audyence

You can use AI to accelerate the work that earns those outcomes. You cannot automate the outcomes themselves.

That single distinction decides where a marketing team should spend the time AI is about to hand back.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR DEMAND GEN

A lead isn't just contact info, and one lead isn't revenue.

The definition problem. Too many people believe a lead is contact information. A lead is someone who engaged with your content and opted in to hear from you. Anything less is contact data. And leads do not equal revenue: B2B buyers do not decide on one or two engagements.

The unit of revenue. Revenue comes from a buying group, not an individual. A single engaged person is a great signal. It is not the sale. The job of demand generation is to create movement, carrying a buying group forward, stage by stage.

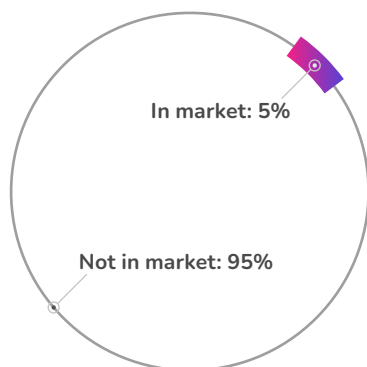
The job of demand generation is not generating contacts. It is generating movement.



When a demand engine scales too fast, it does not break at the top of the funnel. It breaks in the system underneath, when one-touch leads get pushed to

sales too early. The best sellers do not swing at every pitch. Marketing's job is to hand them warmer opportunities, not more of them.

95% of your buyers are NOT in the market right now.



Search and retargeting harvest the 5% who already decided. Demand creation is the work of moving the other 95%, long before they are ready to buy.

Source: Ehrenberg-Bass Institute/ LinkedIn 828 Institute (the 95:5 rule)



13+ pieces of content a buyer consumes before choosing a vendor

Source: FocusVision / MarTech



6 to 10 decision makers in a typical B2B buying group

Source: Gartner



17% of the buying journey is spent interacting with all suppliers combined

Source: Gartner

WHY CONTENT AND DISTRIBUTION STILL WIN

Content is still king. And now more than ever, distribution is queen.

AI can generate infinite content. That does not make content less valuable. It makes genuine engagement the scarce thing, because engagement is what earns attention, credibility, and trust. And great content earns nothing if no one engages with it.

There is now a second reader that is not human: AI answer engines have become the front door to discovery, and they learn about you from everywhere except your own site first.

The buyers are telling you plainly. Most vendors are not listening.



B2B buyers more likely to invite a consistent thought-leadership vendor into an RFP.



Vendors who expect their content to have that effect.

Source: 2024 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Report.

82%

of the links cited by AI answer engines come from earned, third-party media, not brands' own sites. **94% come from non-paid media overall.**

Source: Muck Rack, "What Is AI Reading?" (December 2025)

ChatGPT

Claude

Gemini

Perplexity

Google AI Overview

The old instinct was to pull everything behind your own gate and your own domain. The new reality rewards the opposite. Content earns trust out in the

open, with humans and with the systems humans now ask for answers. (For example, that is why this point of view is ungated.)

AI optimizes execution. Marketing shapes behavior.

Losing the execution layer to automation should not frighten anyone. It is the drag. As AI compresses the gap between signal and action, execution becomes commoditized and available to everyone, so the

differentiator moves upstream: strategy, positioning, and the quality of your data. And brand and demand are not a trade-off. Paid demand only works at scale because of brand trust. They are the yin and the yang.

AI Owns or Accelerates:

-  Creative development
-  Audience building
-  Campaign creation
-  Tactic and channel selection
-  Media buying
-  Reporting and optimization
-  Data governance
-  Content distribution at scale

Human-Led Demand Generation Strategies Create:

-  Attention
-  Awareness
-  Credibility
-  Education
-  Interest
-  Trust
-  Advocacy

Software is crossing from storing what happened, and advising you on it, to executing on it. The marketer sets the objective, the audience, the guardrails, and

the budget, and stays accountable for the outcome. The judgment about what outcome is worth pursuing stays human. That is the part that stays.

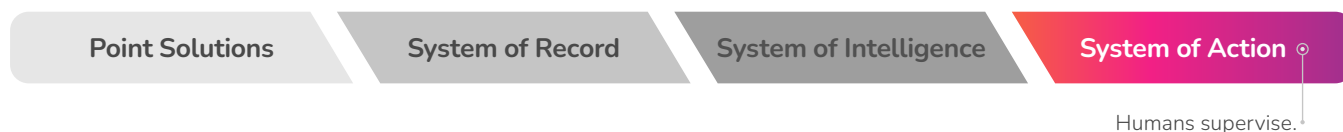
THE EVOLUTION

The movement to a system of action.

Today, B2B demand generation marketers start campaigns by defining the right ingredients. "Which accounts should we target?" "Which channels should we use?" "Which assets should we promote?" or "How much should we invest in each channel?" These are the right strategy and tactical questions to ensure campaigns are targeted and driving qualified leads back to internal nurture programs for further definition and refinement before passing to the sales organization.

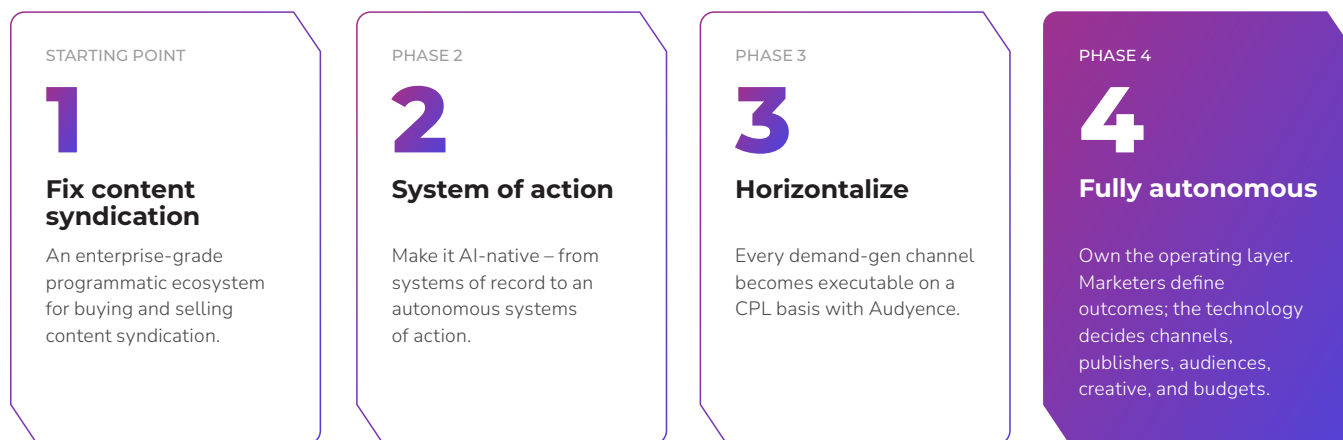
At Audyence, we are moving to a System of Action. Our vision is an autonomous engine for B2B demand. And we're actively building elements right now. We believe every enterprise B2B marketer should be able to describe the business outcome they want through whichever medium they want. Then a programmatic system of action built with AI-native technology will autonomously orchestrate everything needed to achieve it.

The Power of a System of Action



With this approach, the B2B marketer's starting point will be closer to "Hey Audyence, access my content portfolio and choose the best assets promoting my AI-powered automation suite to C-suite and VP-level operation, finance, and tech executives at accounts

within my TAL #3. Choose the top 30 best fit publications, pay no more than \$25 per lead, and cap my spend at \$10K per week. Continuously optimize for performance until I've generated \$5M in forecasted pipeline."



OUR BET

We have seen this movie before.

For twenty years, B2B demand generation looked a lot like display advertising did around the year 2000. Ad networks acted as brokers, reselling publisher inventory with no transparency, campaigns planned on spreadsheets and negotiated over email, everyone buying someone else's product through a middleman and paying for the privilege. Then programmatic

technology transformed that entire landscape.

Content syndication and B2B demand never got their version of that transformation. That is the bet behind Audyence: to bring programmatic speed, transparency, and control to how B2B demand is bought and sold.

The Audyence Value

15x

faster to launch a program.
Roughly 48 hours versus
about six weeks.

47%

Understand your Total Cost
of Demand to see why 47%
of CPL is waste.

1st

B2B's first and only
programmatic marketplace
for cost-per-lead inventory.

But the efficiency was never the whole point. The reason to pay attention now is the shift underneath all of it. AI is handing back the time we used to spend on execution. What we do with that time, the trust we build, the buyers we move, the relationships we

earn in the open, is still entirely, irreducibly human. That is the work. AI just lets us get to it faster. Please join us on this journey as we simply turn the process and pain of demand generation on its head for better business outcomes.

Follow Audyence on LinkedIn for a continued look at topics impacting marketing and demand generation teams. Hear how CMOs, demand generation leaders, and experts are shaping where B2B marketing is headed.



Audyence.com

Sources: Gartner, "The B2B Buying Journey"; Ehrenberg-Bass Institute/ LinkedIn B2B Institute (the 9S:5 rule); 2024 Edelman-LinkedIn B2B Thought Leadership Impact Report; Muck Rack, "What Is AI Reading?" (December 2025); FocusVision via MarTech (content consumption). Audyence figures reflect the Audyence marketplace, 2026.

