



Forrester's 2026 Buyer Insights: GenAI Is Upending B2B Buying As Leaders Face Mounting Pressure To Justify Every Dollar Spent

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Buying groups are growing larger, procurement is becoming more influential, and trials are now essential to reducing risk

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jan. 21, 2026-- According to [Forrester's](#) (Nasdaq: FORR) report, [The State Of Business Buying, 2026](#), generative AI is fundamentally reshaping how business buyers discover, evaluate, and purchase products and services. While genAI searches are the starting point for B2B buyers, leaders are increasingly relying on their internal and external buying networks — comprising colleagues and external influencers, respectively — to justify and de-risk purchasing decisions. The typical buying decision now includes 13 internal stakeholders and nine external influencers, with that number rising for more complex or strategic purchases.

Although large buying groups may seem challenging, 94% of buyers with groups of six or more report clear benefits, including broader perspectives, shared effort in validating solutions, better ability to secure budget, and greater likelihood of approval. Additional key takeaways from the report include:

- **Human interactions remain essential, even as genAI reshapes the buying process.** AI search tools, also known as answer engines, offer speed and efficiency, but they often deliver incomplete or unreliable information, creating mistrust. Buyers compensate for this by seeking validation from trusted sources, emphasizing the value of human contact in the buying process.
- **Procurement exerts influence early and often.** Procurement professionals are decision-makers in 53% of business buying cycles, engaging from the start of the process. These stakeholders look beyond price, scrutinizing features and functions to ensure efficiency and productivity, often interacting more frequently with sales representatives than other buyer personas.
- **Trials have become a critical risk-reduction strategy.** More than 60% of business buyers now make use of a trial — ranging from paid bespoke sandboxes to usage-based trial periods — to evaluate potential solutions. This trend is even more pronounced for larger investments, with 78% of buyers who make purchases of \$10 million or more engaging in a trial first.

"B2B buyers are under immense pressure to justify investments and minimize risk," said Barbara Winters, vice president and principal analyst at Forrester. "As buying groups expand and decision cycles grow, B2B marketers must develop dynamic, role-specific insights that capture how buyers evaluate risk, seek information, and define success for their business purchase. To win in this environment, providers must demonstrate deep understanding of buyer needs, ensure that their claims can be validated through trusted external voices, and design trial experiences that prove long-term business value."

At [B2B Summit North America](#), taking place in Phoenix from April 26–29, 2026, Forrester's analysts will share how AI-driven buyer autonomy is collapsing traditional go-to-market models, what this inflection point means for businesses, and how to thrive in a world where buyers control the journey.

Resources:

- [Read](#) more about The State Of Business Buying, 2026 report.
- [Learn](#) more about Forrester's Buyer Insights series.
- [Apply](#) for Forrester's B2B Return On Integration Honors and B2B Programs Of The Year Awards.
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