

HEADLEY
MEDIA

NAVIGATING THE
NEW TECH LANDSCAPE:

Who Are the AI Decision-Makers in B2B Technology?



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The buying process for B2B technology has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last few years, but even more so recently with the rise of artificial intelligence (AI).

Incorporating AI to increase efficiency and decrease costs is at the forefront of B2B decision-makers' minds, with AI-enhancing opportunities available across every department.

There is growing pressure amongst senior technology leaders to invest in AI across their businesses. Whether it's a completely new and revolutionary AI tool, or a well-ingrained technology that's been enhanced by AI for the benefit of the end-user, it's clear that all eyes are on AI implementation.

As AI is still very much in its infancy in many industries, it often isn't fully understood. As a result, B2B buyers are searching for the right solutions for their businesses, and the right information to aid their decision-making process.

As a B2B marketer looking to reach AI decision-makers, your task extends beyond reaching traditional IT job titles. You now need to engage a broader buying committee, with each member bringing different priorities, interests, and agendas to the table.

This guide explores what's important for B2B marketers: understanding who the right AI decision-makers are for your solutions, and the practical ways you can reach them, with thoughts and predictions for the future of AI and technology buying shared throughout.

Chapter One: The Changing AI Landscape

The advancements in artificial intelligence for business applications are changing the way that organizations are run. All departments are feeling the pressure to explore AI for internal benefit; from streamlining processes and improving team efficiency, to enhanced creativity and innovation.

All with one key objective in common: **reducing costs.**



According to **Bank of America Global Research and IDC**, “global revenue associated with AI software, hardware, service, and sales will likely grow at 19% each year, reaching a staggering \$900 billion by 2026, compared with \$318 billion in 2020”.

Businesses are taking AI seriously, and their commitment to investing is clear evidence of that. For example, earlier this year both Publicis and WPP pledged to increase their investments in the technology, with Publicis saying it would spend \$326 million over three years and WPP promising to spend \$318 million annually (**Marketing Brew**).

These investments and developments in AI are opening up new business streams and potential buyers for technology companies.

Departments that are used to purchasing tech based on instruction, or recommendations from their IT counterparts, are now experiencing AI solutions firsthand. They are evaluating the tools themselves and then recommending them to IT for integration with legacy software. In some instances, depending on the AI solutions, IT might not need to be involved at all.

AI is the field of computing concerned with replicating human intelligence - such as reasoning, analyzing, learning and creating. With so much noise in the industry, AI is being interpreted and promoted in many ways within the B2B space, which has created some confusion as to where AI can truly make the biggest impact.

In the last couple of years, however, **generative AI** has had a significant impact on businesses, allowing non-technical users to do more than ever before.



AI is defined as a general-purpose technology (GPT), which means it can be applied to many different application areas across different industries and sectors.

Generative AI has fast-tracked the rate of AI use within businesses exponentially, due to its ability to respond to human conversation and language, serving as a tool for things such as:

- **Personalization**
- **Workflow optimization**
- **Content development**
- **Data summaries**

Key and well-known examples of the **use of GenAI in B2B Marketing** are platforms like OpenAI's ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini, which employ a type of machine learning known as a Large Language Model (LLM).

The beauty of tools like ChatGPT is that you don't need an engineering degree to program it, you simply provide a prompt, and the AI tool will produce an output - be that text, image or code.

However, ChatGPT's primary strength is in producing natural language text.

Although AI has been around for much longer than it's been front-page news in the media, the rapid growth has meant that a lot of technology decision-makers and leaders are trying to fast-track their education to fully understand how and why they should be implementing AI solutions within their businesses.

Business leaders have been continually quoted on the topic of AI, and it's safe to say the noise isn't going away, as everyone tries to navigate the technology's potential weighed against the associated risks.



"Everybody agrees that this is transformational, with a lot of promise, but also risks associated with it. We have a new study that shows that 40% of the global workforce is exposed to AI – that doesn't mean it's a bad thing,"

Gita, Gopinath, Deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund



Microsoft's CEO, Satya Nadella, also shared his thoughts of the emerging technology, stating:

"The biggest lesson learned is we have to take the unintended consequences of any new technology along with all the benefits, and think about them simultaneously – as opposed to waiting for the unintended consequences to show up and then address them."

With that in mind, it's no surprise that technology professionals tasked with buying and implementing new AI technology are researching and seeking new information at a rapid pace.

As the world of AI is moving so quickly, reaching AI decision-makers for your technology solutions can be challenging. If your target audience is evolving and seeking out content to educate themselves on how AI can support their department, how can you stay front of mind? Who are the right people to reach? And how can you target them?

AI job titles are continually evolving. In a few instances we are seeing some examples of dedicated AI roles, such as AI Solutions Architect and Deep Learning Specialists, evolving from traditional IT Manager roles.

In addition, we're also seeing extensions of existing job titles, such as AI Compliance Specialist and AI Solutions Architect for Marketing.

However, the current responsibility of AI decision-making still often sits with traditional tech buyers, who are adding AI implementation to their list of responsibilities. For example, decision-making roles like Managers, Heads of departments and C-Suite job titles, such as Chief Experience Officer (CXO).

Therefore, building your credibility and brand recognition in an AI specific environment, whilst also communicating with a broader target audience is key.

Headley Media's latest brand, **AI Corporate**, connects technology marketers with AI decision-makers across a wide range of industries, as they seek out the latest educational content to aid their AI buying process.

As AI solutions continue to develop, B2B technology purchasing decisions involving AI often have complex buying cycles.

In general, the tech buying process is now longer, typically taking between 9-18 months according to **Gartner**, and split between "exploring, evaluating and engaging".

There are many factors at play contributing to the expansion of the technology decision-making committee, and the increased length of the buying cycle. Technology is more established within businesses and therefore harder to change so the process can take longer, due to the impact on the wider organization.

In **Chapter Two** we examine how to identify the key AI decision-makers for your solutions in more depth; exploring the concept of technology buying committees and the different roles individuals hold.

Chapter Two: Identifying the Key AI Decision Makers



As the technology decision-making committee evolves, so should your target audience.

Data from **Headley Media's own readership** of senior technology and business professionals, which surveyed over 37,000 subscribed tech experts, found that whether a business had 0-50 employees or 10,000+ employees, technology buying roles varied greatly.

Individuals across all levels (from C-Suite to Manager) identified themselves as one of the following:

- **Researchers**
- **Advisors**
- **Influencers**
- **Evaluators**
- **Budget Holders**
- **Decision-Makers**

The research suggests that there isn't a clear pattern between company size and identified buying roles for specific job titles, meaning that technology buying committees are clearly prevalent across all company sizes, and job titles targeted should be broad, whatever the target company types and sizes you need to reach.

As a result, technology influencers and AI decision-makers from different teams span far wider than IT departments.

Chapter Two: Identifying the Key AI Decision Makers

Finance, Operations, Legal and depending on your solutions, wider teams like HR, Sales and Marketing are typically now involved in the decision-making process to ensure the technology aligns with their respective needs.



We asked Thomas Van der Staaij, Senior Marketing Manager at AWS, if he'd seen a change, he said:

"Now, it's not just IT calling the shots. Teams like Marketing, Finance, and Operations are playing a bigger role, armed with their own budgets and decision-making authority".

As a result, B2B buyers are now forced to focus more heavily on proving and reporting on the ROI delivered by the solutions they want to implement, if they are to have any chance of the new technology being signed off by senior stakeholders.

When it comes to AI, proving the technology's value is just one piece of the puzzle. Trust plays a major role in the decision-making process and people need to understand how AI tools work, what the benefits are and crucially, what the risks are. This shift requires the involvement of decision-makers who can evaluate the potential

impact of the technology on the organization's bottom line, namely senior management and crucially, the Finance department.

When you combine how many people are now involved with the amount of information and research available at each potential buyer's fingertips, it's not surprising we are in an era of self-service.

When buying technology, "100% of buyers want to self-serve all or part of the buying journey" according to **TrustRadius'** research of over 1600 technology buyers.

As reported by **G2**, in today's technology market 'everyone has the power to purchase the tools they want for their business' and 80% of B2B companies now have buying committees that influence software purchasing decisions.

However, identifying who the buying committee is for your AI solutions is only the first step, you also need to understand what they care about, how to reach them and importantly, when to target them within the buying cycle.

Steps in the AI decision-making process are similar to that of any technology solution. The same cross-functional collaboration applies, as does the need to identify the different stakeholders within the buying committee and what their individual roles are. The factors affecting the implementation of AI are varied. When we look at the cost of implementing an AI solution over an existing system, there are many factors to consider.

Factors affecting the implementation of AI include:

- **Type of data**
- **Complexity of the solution**
- **Time to deploy**
- **Number of apps & devices involved**
- **Size of the organization**
- **Number of affected departments and individuals**

Many of these components are relevant across any technology but with AI, the type of data and time to deploy are likely to be more thoroughly examined.

Currently, there are less specialist AI roles within organizations and a greater emphasis on the risks associated with replacing existing processes, systems and technology with artificial intelligence, which are key contributing factors to the decision-making process.

When we look at the types of buyers involved in AI purchasing, the Harvard Business Review's model is a great place to start:

- 1 Initiator:** Those who identify there's a problem in the business that can be solved with a purchase.
- 2 Gatekeeper:** Product experts, often with a 'buyer' or 'purchase manager' job title, who research vendor solutions and control approved vendors.
- 3 Influencer:** These can be a range of people, from high-level stakeholders and board members, to staff 'on the ground'.

- 4 Decider:** This person says yes or no, often as the representative of the collective buying committee, but is not necessarily the same person as the purchaser.
- 5 Purchaser:** The one who negotiates the final sale with the vendor.
- 6 User:** The employees who will use the solution purchased.



It can be challenging to identify all the types of buyers for your technology solutions, because there are often no set roles in a business that correspond to the buying committee. In addition, modern job titles are now a lot more varied amongst professionals across all industries, just take marketing professionals as an example. You might be called a Marketing Manager in one company, and a Demand Generation or Growth Marketing Manager in another.

Although you need to examine your technology solutions and find out who has the buying power, and who has the influence, a solution to this problem is often to include more flexible targeting. By expanding the job titles you want to reach you can mitigate the risk of missing potential buyers. Different buying roles require contrasting experiences with your brand. The marketing strategies, messaging and content you choose will depend on not only their needs but what they care about.

Therefore, you need identify all of the different stakeholders you need to target. Understanding why you need to target them is equally as important to get right as the how.

At Headley Media, one of the major changes we've seen within the expanding B2B tech buying committee is the broader selection of job titles and departments now involved, and the increased input from Finance and Cybersecurity teams.

Chapter Three: How to Engage & Influence AI Decision Makers

Now that we've examined technology buying committees and the types of buyers involved within AI solutions, we're going to discuss the 'how'. How can you engage and influence the right AI decision-makers for your solutions?



"As we know B2B marketers spend roughly 92% of their budgets chasing 5% of their customers.*

Marketers tend to ignore the enormously-more-valuable segment of future buyers. Many marketers typically over-invest in short-term sales activation and under-invest in brand building. With this in mind, we have implemented a range of effective strategies to reach our target audience at the right time in their buying journey.

Firstly, we have redefined our ideal customer profiles (ICP) to align within the evolving technology buying group. This includes both primary and hidden buyers, aiming to achieve consensus and influence a decision from the buying group."

Helen Gillbe, EMEA Demand Generation Director, Proofpoint

**Marketing Week*

Within AI buying specifically it is even more important to engage with technology decision-makers early on in their research phases. With so much noise around AI, and still a lack of understanding for the core components of AI solutions, educational content and opportunities for research and learning have never been so important.

At Headley Media, we've seen a significant shift in our readers seeking out AI specific content, with **AI Corporate** now providing a dedicated resource destination for our audiences.



This shift led us to develop and launch AI Corporate to host informative content from technology companies globally, to aid our audience of AI decision-makers during their research process.

AI Corporate serves our readership with AI specific content in a noise-free environment from a brand they trust, focused on educating AI decision-makers.

We've been working with B2B technology marketers and media agencies globally for over 35 years. With AI Corporate we can now connect our clients with the right AI decision-makers across a wide variety of industries at the right time in their research and buying process.



Job Title Diversity & Expanding Your Targeting

As we've explored on a departmental level, targeting multiple stakeholders within a business across a variety of departments is essential.

When we look at job title diversity within AI specifically, the job titles of decision-makers and influencers varies greatly.

While there will likely be an evolution of AI specific job titles over time, there is still a reliance on other titles to share the responsibility for AI.

As we explored earlier there are now some examples of dedicated AI roles appearing within businesses, such as AI Solutions Architects and Deep Learning Specialists. However, in a lot instances, we are seeing an extension of existing job titles, for example, AI Compliance Specialist and Manager of AI & IT developing from a traditional IT Manager.



"The introduction of AI has changed the technology decision making committee already and is forecast to transform the way that businesses are run. Our experience of working with companies at the forefront of IT and AI development, who are still identifying exactly who their ICP is, has positioned us as experts in identifying the technology committee, their consumption habits, and their needs.

Our subscribed technology readership is desperate to engage with content that provides them with informative AI guidance.

Tech professionals want to stay ahead of the curve, and gain practical knowledge from leaders, which is why we're excited about the impact our seventh brand, AI Corporate, is already having on our clients' marketing campaigns."

Freya Ward, Global Sales Director, Headley Media

Moving Away From IT-Only Job Titles



[Gartner](#) found that 67% of people involved in technology buying decisions are not in IT, highlighting the need to expand your targeting even further.

Understanding what parts of your product are likely to appeal to different departments, and creating content and messaging around those elements, is a good place to start. Another clear trend is the important role of cybersecurity and data security specialists.



One estimate is that 97% of companies now include a security expert on their buying committee ([G2](#)). With so much technology within modern businesses, across potentially thousands of locations thanks to home working, plus fast-moving ways for cybercriminals to target businesses, cybersecurity needs to be airtight.

Highlighting your product's security credentials in your marketing and specifically targeting the cybersecurity department will go a long way, particularly as buyers are still learning about the potential risks of AI.

Reaching Decision-Makers in the Right Place

Varying Your Content & Channels

Varying both your content and your marketing channels is essential for effectively reaching the right AI and technology decision-makers, at the right time.

Professionals consume information from a wide range of sources and in different formats, depending on their needs and preferences. By diversifying your content—such as using whitepapers, eBooks, case studies, webinars and videos—you can cater to their varied and preferred consumption habits and ensure your messaging resonates across different stages of their buyer journey.

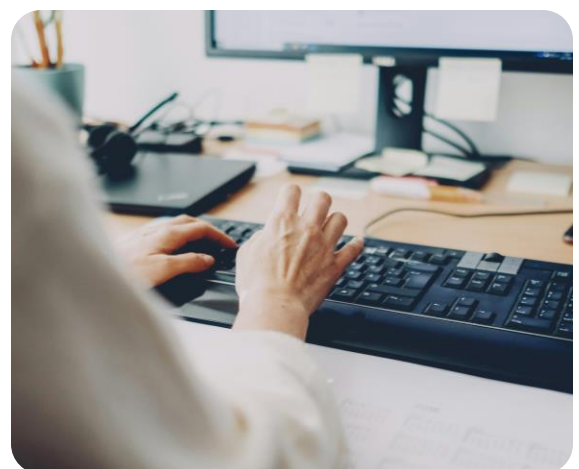
Similarly, leveraging multiple channels, from content syndication platforms to social media and email marketing, allows you to extend your reach and engage decision-makers where they are most active, increasing the chances of capturing their attention and driving meaningful interactions.

At **Headley Media** our team of content syndication and lead generation experts advise our technology clients on the best content formats to choose on a campaign level.



"We find that our technology audiences respond differently to content topics, types and formats depending on several factors, including their industry, job titles, levels of seniority and departments. By sharing these valuable audience insights with our technology clients, we ensure they are set up for success by using the most effective content for their campaigns, depending on the technology decision makers they need to reach."

**Rachel Di Santo, Media
Operations Director, Headley
Media**



Promote Your Content Via Industry-Specific Brands

TrustRadius found that half of all buyers won't even talk to a sales rep. So, it's essential to ensure you have resources available across the web for these buyers to get to know your brand.

Your content should cover the entire marketing funnel, with the potential to meet every stage of the buying process. That means hitting all the different departments involved too.

Both pricing and product experience are also important in the self-serve method, such as reviews from other customers, and transparent pricing models. Product demos are also a top resource.



Whitepapers, eBooks, research reports and videos are other examples of valuable types of content that can help you build your audience across many departments.

We've seen a lot of the technology marketers we work with now running their content syndication campaigns across several of our brands simultaneously, depending on the buying committees they are trying to reach.

For example, our clients are promoting their content to **IT Corporate's** audience of senior IT professionals alongside a combination of our other brands, depending on their technology solutions:

- **AI Corporate**
- **Cybersecurity Corporate**
- **FinTech Corporate**
- **MarTech Corporate**
- **HRTech Corporate**
- **Electronic Pro**

This approach has enabled many of our clients to reach their wider buying committees in the right place for their ICP, via content syndication campaigns across several of our brands.

As we've explored throughout this report, it's not always easy to identify exactly who sits on the buying committee. This is often an area of a campaign's set up that our expert team provides insight into, based on our experience of what's worked well previously for similar cases.

Throughout this guide we've delved into the new technology landscape of AI, and how B2B marketers can identify this new audience of stakeholders whilst exploring the steps you should take as a B2B marketer to reach the right decision-makers for your technology solutions.

As we discussed, it's important to identify all your potential buyers and work out the best ways to expand your targeting before creating your campaigns. By putting in the groundwork and revisiting your existing ICP, you'll be better placed to meet your buyers at the right time on their buyer's journey, utilizing highly targeted techniques such as ABM and intent data targeting more effectively.

If you'd like to find out more about how Headley Media can help you reach the right AI and technology decision-makers for your solutions, through highly targeted content syndication and lead generation campaigns, [please get in touch with our team of B2B marketing experts.](#)

