

Insights from "Beyond the Room:
The Four Phases of Community"

 **Lite Paper:** Snackable Whitepaper

How You Can Overcome the B2B Engagement Challenge

Reaping the value of ongoing participation
& brand loyalty with experiences that
strengthen the brand/customer connection

Shifting stakeholder expectations & increased personalization have changed the standards for impactful B2B audience attraction & retention. Demonstrating your value as a B2B brand isn't reserved to only solving business challenges; you must also create meaningful, fulfilling customer experiences.

To reap the value of brand loyalty & ongoing B2B business, brands must earn stakeholder engagement through personalized content & experiences that not only demonstrate an understanding of business needs, but also cater to personal preferences & participation drivers.

By leaning into a B2C-style customer journey, you can position your next brand experience, activation or event as catalyst to strengthening your brand & stakeholder relationships and cultivating your brand community.



Use Brand Experiences & Activations to Drive the B2B Customer Journey

The B2B customer journey has always involved thorough review & input from multiple stakeholders. Yet, today's B2B customer journeys are becoming more complex—and more difficult to increase impactful, long-term stakeholder engagement.

Market innovations, accelerating organizational change, and an increase of next-gen digital natives moving into B2B decision-maker roles have impacted the B2B customer journey, with many stakeholders increasingly wary of traditional, agent-led sales. Now, most B2B prospects are 57% of the way to a purchase decision before they even speak to a representative of your brand, and 75% prefer not involving a sales rep anywhere in the process.

What *do* your B2B audiences care about? Input from fellow stakeholders. Referrals kick off the purchasing process for 84% of B2B customers, vs. advertising or sales outreach, and 33% of B2B sellers say their high-quality leads come from customer referrals.

This represents a huge opportunity for your brand's events & experiences, as customer preference—the single-most fickle element in predictive brand performance today—is mainly affected by the experience your audiences derive from your brand after they interact with it.

Merely fulfilling business needs isn't enough to sway B2B audiences—92% of B2B audiences say they expect a B2C-style customer experience using the same platforms & channels they use for personal purchases. And when given a self-reflective learning path instead of purely brand-led, B2B buyers are 147% more likely to complete their purchase.

Your B2B audiences want experiences that recognize their individual emotional motivators, goals & values as well as business imperatives & stakeholder group considerations. They flock to brands that provide understanding, community & emotional satisfaction through experiences & touchpoints tailored to their business imperatives, inviting engagement on their own terms.

And your next event or brand activation can be the catalyst for this brand/customer relationship.



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Drive Engagement Through the Power of Personalization

Personalization isn't just a B2B market demand—it's a requirement at every stage of your customer's journey & directly correlates to market gains. More than half (52%) of companies saw increased market share from moderately personalized marketing. For brands using "very" personalized marketing, the number jumps to 66%, and 75% of brands harnessing one-on-one personalization reap increased market share.

Personalized content & storytelling along your stakeholder touchpoints is crucial—and that includes creating brand events & experiences tailored to your B2B audiences. **Nearly three-fourths (74%) of event decision-makers say events are the best way to deepen customer relationships**—and by personalizing experiences to your stakeholders' needs & preferences, you can make each event in your portfolio more impactful.

Why? Personalizing events, experiences & activations helps your brand to strengthen its customer relationships & foster deeper connections between your audiences that develop into brand communities. In any market, a demand for personalization stems from our fundamental human drives to be recognized & to belong. Consider that 66% of B2B buyers appreciate being part of a community because it connects them to others with similar interests—and 44% of event audiences cite networking as their top reason for attending.

You can maximize the impact of your next event by ensuring those connections continue after your experience is over. That requires your audiences to go beyond simple one-sided networking opportunities. Instead, encourage active participation via tailored experiences that strengthen relationships between attendees *and* build the brand/customer bond.



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Transform Engagement to Participation Through Brand Community Touchpoints

Ultimately, activating audience participation helps you facilitate your brand community. When audiences find people they love, they make an effort to stick with them. And when they find that kind of relationship through your brand event or experience, it's translated into brand love. **The more you strengthen the brand & customer connection—and facilitate connections between your stakeholders—the more brand loyalty & value you'll generate.** And it'll be sustained by a community bound together by their shared love for your brand & what you do.

Stakeholder engagement & active participation shouldn't end once the event does. Use the momentum from your successful brand activation or event to create additional experiences that drive continued participation with your brand & deeper involvement from B2B audiences.

Several brands use this retention strategy throughout the B2B space. Salesforce cultivates its brand community with regular meetups, customer success events & gamified training sessions. Fortune Magazine launched Fortune Connect, a premium business networking & reporting community for insiders to meet over financial news & career development. Shopify fosters its brand community among customers with extensive online forums, webinars & learning groups.

By giving their audiences ways to continually connect over their brand, these companies strengthen their stakeholder relationships through the communal spaces & experiences they create.

You can use this focus on brand & customer connection as a blueprint to translate that enthusiasm to your brand, generating engagement & interest constantly from a base of passionate, enthusiastic B2B customers.



Curated insights for the brand marketer who is short on time.

Welcome to a community of like-minded innovators. Here, we offer insights & ideas to transform your brand experiences. Put innovation & technology to use—across industries—with pragmatic applications you can adopt.

There's a lot of noise out there. We cut through the faff, sharing our POV on the most important insights you can apply to your portfolio, to propel results & ultimately bond your brand to your customer.

Sound like you?

CITATIONS:

Forrester: Focus on Content Quality and Remote Engagement to Prepare for B2B Hybrid Events

Gartner: Marketing Leaders Must Reconceive Their Digital Experience and Sales Enablement to Help Virtual Buying Groups Reach Better Outcomes

Gartner: How to Adapt Sales Strategies to the Current State of B2B Buying

GWJ: The Era of We: Online Community Users

Harvard Business Review: How B2B Sales Can Benefit from Social Selling

Hubspot: 2024 State of Sales Report

Kaltura: The State of Events 2023

McKinsey & Co.: The New B2B Growth Equation

Wunderman Thompson: The Future Shopper Report 2021

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