

# ***When Cold, Hard Facts Just Won't Cut It***

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF EMOTIONS  
IN B2B MARKETING

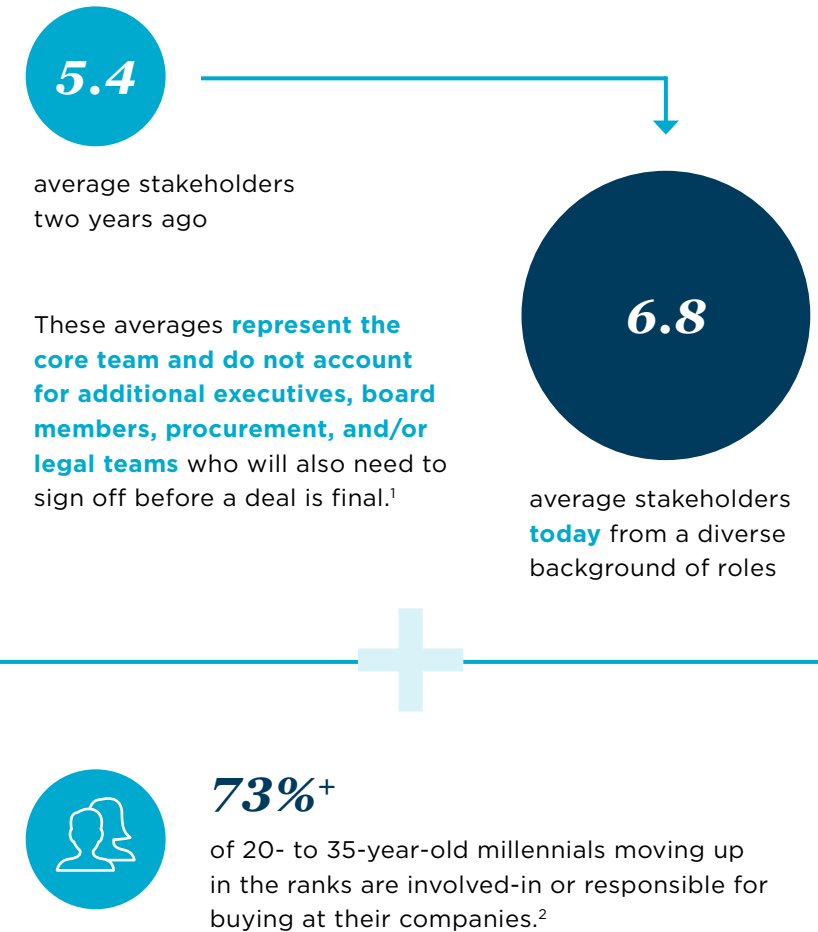
2020

# B2B Marketing Traditionally Focuses on the Cold, Hard Facts

As marketers, we all know that B2B marketing has historically been drier and more data driven, because that's what we've believed our customers care about. But why do we believe that? And why is dry B2B marketing the norm? Here are a few reasons:

- B2B products and services are often complex and **address equally complex customer needs**.
- B2B purchases **entail higher risks for buyers**, as they are often associated with significant business investments—and are thereby accompanied with longer buying cycles.
- Direct customers are often not the only ones to convince—**they need to get buy-in from many internal stakeholders with different needs and priorities**, and thus must be highly confident in their recommendation and reasoning behind choosing your product or service.
- Finally, the dry, data-driven approach is simply **the way B2B marketing has always been done** and many marketers continue with the status quo. If it's not broken, why fix it?

## GROWTH OF DECISION-MAKING UNITS



# However, We Know B2B Customers Are Human Too

B2B customers will always need data and facts to back up their decisions and help them get stakeholder buy-in. However, based on consumer psychology and Fusion Hill's own experience with buyers, we know that no matter the context and no matter the person, human decisions are highly impacted by emotion. The opportunity for B2B marketers lies in balancing the facts with the power of emotional storytelling. This combination makes for a more compelling case by better communicating the value your product or service brings customers, and ultimately motivates a purchase. For this reason, it is essential to understand the needs of your audience, to uncover which emotions most directly impact purchasing decisions, and then to align your marketing to address these emotions.

**95%**

of purchasing decisions are **subconscious**<sup>3</sup>

**“Feel”**

or an emotional connection to a brand, has a **1.5x greater impact on business outcomes** than “think,” or a rational comparison of brands and products<sup>4</sup>



## TAKE ACTION:

Capitalize on the many emotions that arise during the decision-making journey. Ask yourself:

- What do my customers feel when they consider purchasing my product/service?
- What do I want them to feel when they think of my brand?
- Can I easily point to examples where my brand has used emotion in marketing?

## RECOMMENDED READS:

- Inc.: [Harvard Professor Says 95% of Purchasing Decisions Are Subconscious](#)
- AdAge: [How Your Customers' Feelings Influence What They Buy](#)
- LinkedIn: [Why B2B Shouldn't Fear Emotions in Marketing](#)

# How Can I Delight My Prospective Customers?

Delight is a helpful emotion to employ in B2B marketing on multiple levels. It can be used when you are trying to **break through the noise to reach an audience already inundated with marketing** or too busy to thoughtfully consider new vendors. Delight is also a helpful angle to address a pain point that customers have simply learned to live with for so long that they cannot imagine how good it would feel to banish it.

To elicit delight, B2B marketers who are taking their campaigns to the next level often use **humor, an element of surprise, or a clever “wink.”** This approach creates a powerful moment when the viewer stops for a closer look and is rewarded for their time, while the traditional dry, data-driven B2B campaigns get overlooked. And humorous B2B campaigns often poke fun at customers’ small day-to-day annoyances—and then show how their solution addresses these problems. **These delight-filled campaigns show that a brand understands the frustrations that its customers experience and demonstrate it is putting its customers’ needs first.**



## TAKE ACTION:

To explore how your brand might leverage the emotion of delight, consider the following questions:

- What pain points or needs does my product/service address?
- How would my customers’ day at work be different if my product/service did not exist?
- How do my customers’ processes and experiences change after starting to use my product/service?
- Is there a new, unexpected angle to take when talking about my product/service?

## THESE TYPES OF CAMPAIGNS CAN MAKE THE AUDIENCE FEEL:

- Delighted
- Joyful
- Surprised
- Understood
- Relieved

# Do My Customers Need a Confidence Boost?

Through our extensive qualitative research with B2B customers at Fusion Hill, we have found that whether they are doctors, lawyers, financial advisors, or administrators, **confidence—having it or lacking it—is a critical factor in decision-making**. It's an especially important focus when the purchase decision comes with high stakes—when there are unknown factors or the product/service is the first of its kind and thus lacks institutional familiarity. It might be that the person you engage with is the one who needs to feel assured and confident in order to win over a large group of stakeholders. They likely need to demonstrate the value of a significant financial investment when what they have today “works well enough.” It is also beneficial in cases in which the customer must feel extremely confident in their ability to actually use the product or service to perform their job well. For example, a surgeon must feel they completely understand the devices they are working with before performing surgery.

B2B marketers often **evoke confidence through a balance of evidence and affirmational messaging**. The evidence, usually in the form of data, is necessary to ensure the quality of the product/service itself, while the affirmational messaging goes beyond the cold, hard facts and connects with the audience by **positioning the brand as supportive and inspiring**. This lends customers the assurance that the brand will have their back, making them feel more confident in their purchase decision.



## TAKE ACTION:

Think through the following questions to uncover how you might boost your customers' confidence through your marketing:

- What are the biggest risks my customers face in purchasing my product/service?
- What are the biggest risks my customers face when actually using my product/service?
- What data or evidence do my customers need to see to feel that my product/service minimizes these risks?
- What does confidence look like for each of the stakeholders in the purchase decision?
- What supportive or inspiring language would connect with my audience?

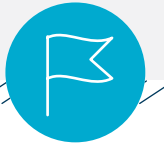
## THESE TYPES OF CAMPAIGNS CAN MAKE THE AUDIENCE FEEL:

- Confident
- Empowered
- Prepared
- Supported
- Inspired

# Could My Brand Help Mitigate My Customers' Fears?

Fear—arguably one of the most powerful emotions, if not the most powerful—can be **leveraged as a formidable driver in decision-making**. While it's important not to employ scare tactics or risk associating your brand with negative emotions, addressing fears can be a truly motivating marketing tool. We often see fear leveraged in campaigns for insurance policies or security systems. While these are important and necessary products, they may seem boring or insignificant to those who are tasked with selling or purchasing them. They are often out of sight and out of mind and do not get the attention they deserve. **Tapping into customers' emotional needs, however, can remind buyers why they need these products or services in the first place.**

When fear is leveraged in marketing, marketers often paint the picture of the worst-case scenario and then position the brand as the hero that saves the day—it can protect the customer, partner with them in unknown territory, or fix the problem. While less common, this strategy of directly addressing negative emotions with customers and then positioning the brand as a provider of positive emotions—in this case, a sense of security—**can be immensely effective in demonstrating the value of a product/service.**



## TAKE ACTION:

Ask the following questions to determine whether addressing fears might be a potential avenue for your marketing:

- What is the worst-case scenario if a company did not have my type of product or service in place?
- In what situations might my product or service “save the day”?
- What dramatic, thrilling, or frightening scenarios can I imagine in which my product or service might be used?

## THESE TYPES OF CAMPAIGNS CAN MAKE THE AUDIENCE FEEL:

- Relieved
- Prepared
- Supported
- Secure
- Smart

# Implications & Opportunities

Infusing and leveraging emotion in your B2B marketing, whether it is delight, frustration, confidence, or fear, can make your campaign stand out from the crowd and help you connect with your audience on a deeper, more human level. It can open the door to a conversation that is more quickly rooted in trust because you have demonstrated that not only do you have a product or service with all the facts to back it up, but also you “get” them and what they need from you.

## HOW CAN MY BRAND START EXPLORING NEW EMOTIONAL CREATIVE DIRECTIONS?

- In order to uncover what emotional needs can be met by your brand, product, or service, consider conducting qualitative research that focuses on the emotions and drivers that impact the customer’s decision-making journey.
- To understand customers’ perception of your brand and explore ideal creative directions that align with your brand strategy and values, consider conducting co-creation sessions with customers in target segments.
- Use competitive analysis to identify white space—which could mean anything from reframing a customer need to finding an unexpected use for your product or service.

## WHAT ARE SOME WAYS TO MITIGATE THE RISK OF LAUNCHING AN “UNEXPECTED” CAMPAIGN THAT NEWLY LEVERAGES EMOTIONS?

- Leverage brand guidelines to provide your customers with a feeling of consistency and familiarity while trying something new.
- Ensure your audience will give you permission to stretch beyond usual B2B norms using creative concept testing.



**Have an upcoming B2B campaign?  
Contact us to help ideate a new approach.**

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# Sources

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