

Younger Buyers Have Changed The Business Buying Landscape

Our Data Shows Millennial And Generation Z Buyers Are More Demanding And Engage In More And Different Types Of Buying Activities

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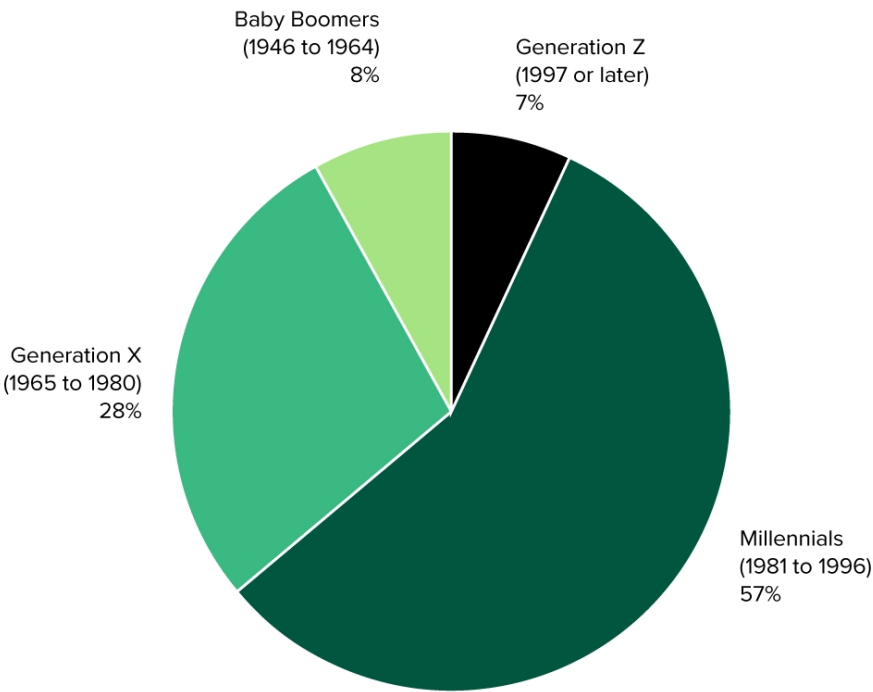
Summary

With Millennial and Generation Z buyers now dominating the buying landscape, marketers and sellers can no longer rely on “what has always worked” when creating experiences these buyers have come to expect. Younger buyers are more demanding, engage in more buying activities, and are more willing to express their dissatisfaction with the buying process. Understanding this important cohort can help the organization’s buyer-facing roles refine their insights to optimize the buying experience and build stronger relationships with buyers.

Younger Buyers Carry New Demands And Expectations For B2B Buying

In [the Forrester Marketing Survey, 2022](#), B2B marketing decision-makers most frequently cited “addressing changing buyer behaviors” (36%) and “understanding buyer preferences” (32%) as priorities most important to their organization’s marketing strategy for the coming year. Younger buyers now hold the keys to decision-making for the majority of purchases. For the purposes of this report, we are defining younger buyers as those commonly known as Millennials and Generation Z, specifically born in 1981 or later. We define older buyers as those commonly known as Generation X or Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1980. In [Forrester’s Buyers’ Journey Survey, 2022](#), 64% of purchase influencers were born after 1981 — with Millennials as the largest cohort, making up more than half of the sample at 57% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Generational Breakdown Of Respondents



Base: 21,049 global purchase influencers
Source: Forrester’s Buyers’ Journey Survey, 2022

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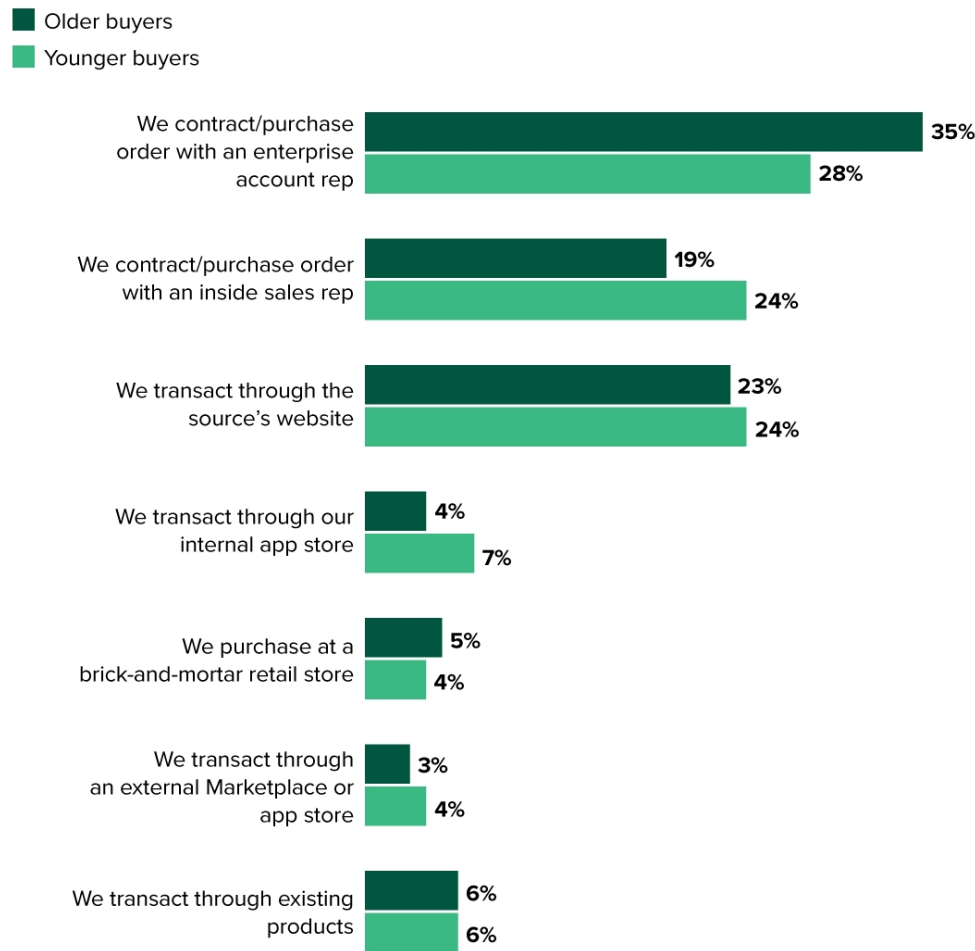
Digital Natives Push Providers To Consider New Routes To Market

In 2006, the [Pew Research Center](#) began to publish insights on the effect of digital natives entering the workforce: “Young workers who have grown up with the internet, cell phones, video games, iPods, and digital cameras are different from their elders ... their new world has shaped their behavior and attitudes.” Forrester’s research shows that younger buyers bring those behaviors and attitudes to B2B buying, and are more likely to use digital and self-serve transaction channels than their older counterparts (see Figure 2). Routes to market are diversifying. While buying directly from the vendor is the most common channel, younger buyers are pushing vendors to a variety of self-serve transaction channels, including external marketplaces, app stores, vendor websites, and even through existing products (often referred to as product-led growth).

We predict that in the next two years, more than one third of Millennial and Generation Z business buyers will purchase through self-guided digital channels, such as vendor websites, marketplaces, app stores, or directly from an existing product. As self-service transactions become more popular, providers must create a seamless experience for buyers. Self-service options need to be robust and easy to find and use.

Figure 2
Purchase Transactions By Generation

“What is the primary method for how your organization transacted for your initial purchase?”
(Select one)



Note: “Other” responses not shown.
Base: 5,161 Baby Boomer and Generation X respondents (older buyers) and 8,772 Millennial and Generation Z respondents (younger buyers) who are global purchase influencers
Source: Forrester’s Buyers’ Journey Survey, 2022

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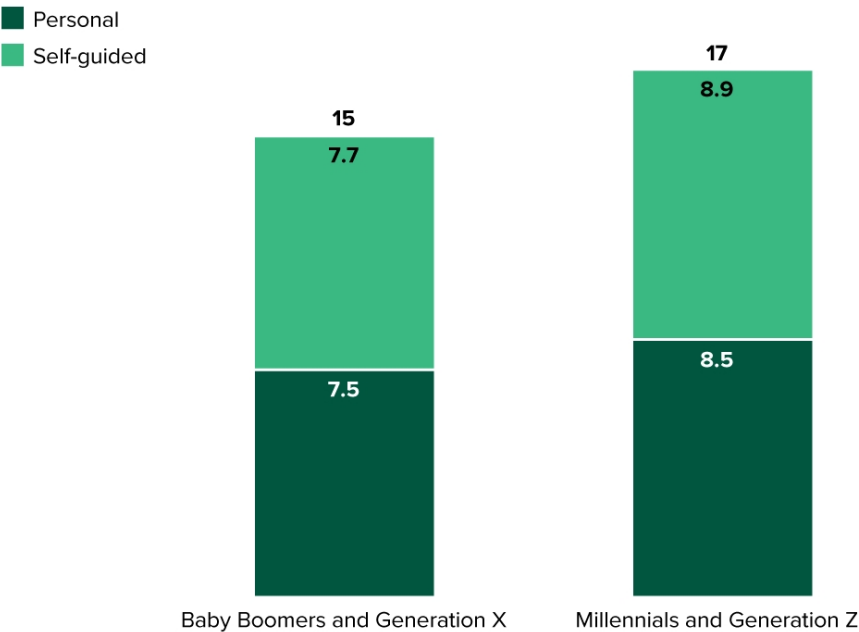
Millennial And Generation Z Buyers Actively Seek Information

The [Forrester Buying Interactions Model](#) sorts the myriad ways that buyers gather information, considering interactions types by the level of personal involvement (e.g., self-guided internet research vs. conversations with a vendor representative or other trusted source) and by the level of vendor control (e.g., what a vendor puts on its website vs. information gathered from a reseller or peer review site). While there are many similarities in the way B2B buyers gather information across all age cohorts, younger buyers use a wider variety of sources and find third-party resources more impactful than vendor resources.

- **Younger buyers engage in a wider variety of interaction types.** Although the split in preferences between self-guided vs. personal interactions is not significant, younger buyers may engage in more self-guided interactions but not at the expense of personal interactions (see Figure 3).
- **Age cohorts differ in the types of interactions they find most impactful.** Across all phases of the buyer's journey, older buyers most frequently identified in-person vendor sales interactions, peer conversations, and visiting vendor websites as the most meaningful or impactful sources of information. Two of these three information sources represent [vendor-owned interaction types](#). But no vendor-owned interactions were selected at the same frequency by younger buyers. Younger buyers most frequently selected technology information websites, forums/message boards, and industry websites the most meaningful or impactful sources of information (see Figure 4). However, younger buyers still find value in virtual interactions with vendor sales reps and conducting research on a vendor website, with both interaction types being among the 10 most frequently selected options. Vendors must anticipate that younger buyers will preliminarily seek sources not controlled by the vendor (e.g., technology information websites) to gather information before engaging directly with a vendor. Therefore, inbound and influencer marketing tactics are critical to reaching these buyers.

Figure 3
Interaction Intensity By Generation

Types of self-guided and personal interactions across each phase of the buyer's journey



Base: 7,607 Baby Boomer and Generation X respondents and 13,456 Millennial and Generation Z respondents who are global purchase influencers
Source: Forrester's Buyers' Journey Survey, 2022

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Figure 4

Most Impactful Interaction Types by Generation

“Please select the personal and self-guided sources of information that were, or that you think will be, most meaningful or impactful in helping during the discover/evaluate/commit stages of your purchase.”

(Select up to four)

Older buyers



Younger buyers



Note: Selected responses shown.
Base: 7,607 Baby Boomer and Generation X respondents (older buyers) and 13,456 Millennial and Generation Z respondents (younger buyers) who are global purchase influencers
Source: Forrester’s Buyers’ Journey Survey, 2022

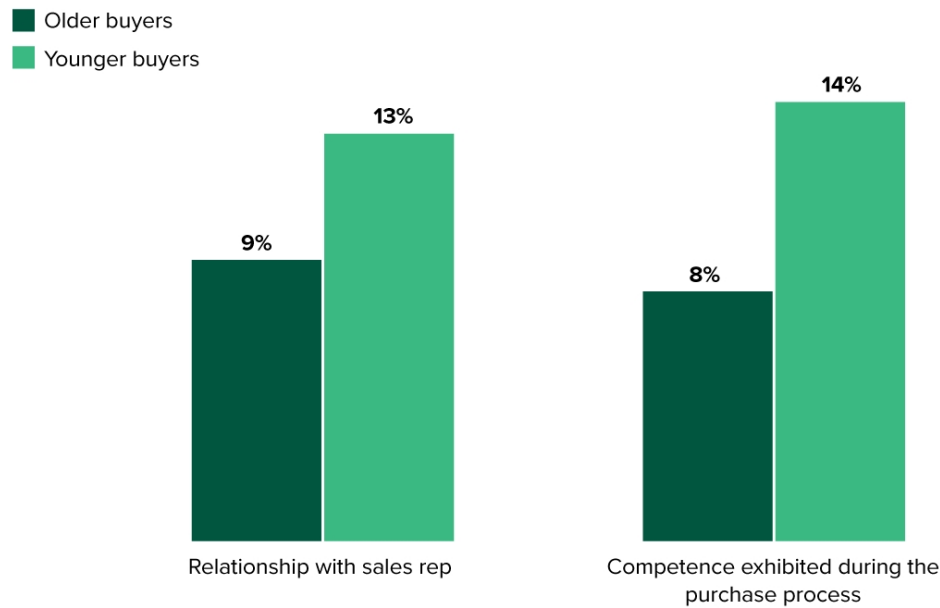
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Younger Buyers Are Quicker To Express Dissatisfaction With The Buying Experience

When asked about dissatisfaction with their chosen vendor, younger buyers appear to be more demanding and forthcoming, with 90% citing dissatisfaction with the vendor in at least one area compared to 71% of older buyers. There are many reasons a buyer may express dissatisfaction, with price being the most frequently cited by both younger and older buyers (see Figure 5). Vendors should pay close attention to the experience-related factors they can affect through sales and marketing. These factors include competence exhibited during the purchase process (selected by 14% of younger buyers and 8% of older buyers) and relationship with the sales rep (selected by 13% of younger buyers and 9% of older buyers). Additionally, buyers experience value in the decision-making process through factors like finding the information they need quickly and easily, along with pleasant and productive interactions with sales representatives. Therefore, buyer-facing roles must understand the [holistic experience from the buyer's perspective](#).

Figure 5
Vendor Dissatisfaction

“In which of the following areas were you most dissatisfied with the winning provider for your purchase?”
(Select up to five)



Note: Selected responses shown.
Base: 4,733 Baby Boomer and Generation X respondents (older buyers) and 8,497 Millennial and Generation Z respondents (younger buyers) who are global purchase influencers
Source: Forrester’s Buyers’ Journey Survey, 2022

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