Boost profitable revenue with SAP CX personalized B2B experiences

How to orchestrate the ideal customer experience using comprehensive, industry-tailored insights
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Introduction

The B2B experience has always been complex. Over the past few years however, it has grown even more complicated. For instance,

65% of B2B buyers in the US are under 40 years of age and digitally oriented.¹

83% of B2B buyers say they now prefer ordering or paying through digital commerce, when just a few years ago, they thought it was too risky. They now use social media to research suppliers five times more than they did in 2019.¹

B2B buyers are put off by disjointed experiences, with

28% of respondents saying lack of personalization would cause them to abandon a conversation with a chatbot.³

Finally, they expect real-time interactions, with

77% of B2B marketing decision-makers agreeing that buyers and customers expect an immediate response to their questions.⁴

As if that weren’t enough, the buying process itself has become much harder to navigate. Channels continue to explode, buying now has to be justified to committees, B2B business models are evolving, partner ecosystems must be connected, and generative AI is here to stay. Given the intense disruption in B2B buying, how are companies supposed to increase revenue, retention and wallet share to drive growth?

Personalization.

Seventy-four percent of B2B marketing decision-makers agree that buyers expect an experience personalized to their needs and preferences across sales and marketing interactions.⁴ If personalization is done properly, it can deliver a more smooth and simplified experience for B2B buyers. The degree of personalization needed differs throughout the customer lifecycle, with the most critical touchpoints generally being closer to purchase and post-sale. Understanding where B2B buyers most value personalized interactions requires data-driven insights and the ability to ingest and expose data at scale.

For the past 50 years, IBM has been partnering with SAP to deliver greater insights and capabilities. The consulting services and technical expertise of IBM, coupled with SAP’s enterprise-grade solutions, result in best-in-class B2B experiences. They enable industry-specific B2B offerings for complex ecosystems that activate data throughout the enterprise. This enables companies to provide B2B buyers with the personalization required to de-risk purchases, manage contractual compliance and increase buyer confidence in expedited buying sessions.
Value of IBM and SAP offerings

According to Forrester, the “average buying cycle involves three considered vendors, four separate departments and eight people in the buying group—four of whom are outside the buyer’s company.” The research discovered that “most buyers completed their organization’s purchase in less than six months, and only 14% of buyers conducting purchases of $1 million or more reported their purchase took more than a year.” With this level of complexity and speed, it’s clear why personalized B2B interactions must focus on advocating for buyers, helping them make better decisions.

The 5 pillars of personalization at scale describes personalization at scale as being both essential and achievable, seamlessly and across the buyer journey. That includes all journey touchpoints: marketing, sales, commerce and service. At a high level, it includes:

**Marketing personalization:** Attract the right B2B buyers with the right message in the right context.

**Commerce personalization:** Convert with curated content, offers and recommendations across channels while providing real-time insights into B2B contractual terms.

**Service personalization:** Retain B2B buyers by reducing effort and increasing buyer satisfaction.
B2B personalization brings these threads together for one omnichannel experience. Data, AI, analytics and automation all contribute to understanding the unique characteristics of each B2B customer to provide their ideal buying experience.

SAP is a leader in enterprise solutions that embed personalization everywhere across its portfolio of products. By enabling native integration of the customer experience (CX) suite, procurement, supply chain and ERP, and expanding it further to address industry-specific pain points, SAP sets itself apart as it offers personalized “one-office” experiences in the B2B space.

IBM offerings use the power of SAP B2B solutions to create a single experience for B2B buyers. By orchestrating SAP platforms across the enterprise with modern, composable and extensible architecture and experience-led design, IBM offers three B2B services:

1. **360° customer and account identity**: Create trusted, personalized B2B customer interactions based on transparency and permissioned data control with SAP Customer Data Cloud Solutions.

2. **Personalization in action**: IBM activates SAP’s leading personalization engine, SAP Emarsys Customer Engagement platform, to combine sales, marketing and commerce data to deliver personalized B2B journeys.

3. **Building intelligent CX**: The IBM iX® Experience Orchestrator, SAP one office industry solutions and AI allow your organization to reduce time to market while enabling personalization at scale.
B2B businesses need a living, breathing customer profile to improve ROI and monitor the effectiveness of their customer relationships. The foundation of a truly unified, comprehensive customer and account profile is their digital identity and the first-party data preferences of the account contacts. Getting real-time insights for detailed customer data across all touchpoints requires a true understanding of your B2B buyers. So where do you start?

SAP Customer Data Cloud solutions help you understand every piece of data and how, when and where you can use it to build trusted customer relationships.

To do this, the solutions include a full suite of identity management solutions, including SAP Customer Identity and Access Management (CIAM) for B2B; SAP Enterprise Consent and Preference Management (ECPM) with data privacy governance; and SAP customer data platform (CDP), offering data unification and differentiated intelligence and insights. Taken together, these solutions help you collect, aggregate, act on and manage customer and account data across multiple touchpoints and applications. Furthermore, IBM helps maximize the value of these solutions by applying experience-led design and accelerated deployment.

By connecting your front-end and back-end data, you can better understand your customers at an account and contact level to deliver trusted, relevant and convenient personalization at any step in their journey.
Let’s see how this all works:

1. **Capture all interactions from the B2B buyer.**
   Bring in data about the customer: who they are, what they’re doing, where they’re doing it, who they’re doing it with and what they want. This data could be from anywhere—online or offline.

2. **Unify.**
   With identity resolution and data unification, unify data into a single B2B customer profile, providing a view of the customer at the account and contact level. This can be at any level of understanding of the customer, from intent to known.

3. **Enrich.**
   SAP CDP ingests activities and events that, combined with enrichment data from 2nd and 3rd party sources, drive the qualification, validation and scoring of leads. This way, you can focus on nurturing the right accounts and opportunities.

4. **Analyze.**
   Use AI, machine learning and IBM industry accelerators to build finely tuned propensity models and dynamic scores for actionable insights, and increase reach through lookalike modeling.

5. **Finally, activate.**
   These powerful insights and real-time interactions can now be activated into your execution channels to power your business strategies, operations and processes.
SAP CDP elevates the entire B2B buying experience, blurring the line between physical and digital spaces. The solution gives B2B businesses the functionality to better serve customers by connecting different types of customer data across various touchpoints. This generates the rich insights that allow you to orchestrate seamless omnichannel experiences. With SAP CDP anchoring IBM solutions, you can:

- Understand the needs, intentions and buying requirements of your B2B customers
- Identify and initiate contact with your permission-based contactable B2B customers
- Use in-moment insights to drive relevant sales communications, sending the right message based on roles and responsibilities
- Improve your B2B customer relationships by understanding sentiment and customer value to determine when and how it’s best to engage
- Use customer lifetime value (CLV), lookalike audiences and propensity scores to grow your market

Unification of B2B data with enterprise-grade platforms, ecosystems designed to harness the power of data, and experience-led design allows organizations to consistently deliver B2B personalization techniques across channels and interaction types.
SAP Emarsys empowers brands to build, launch and scale real-time personalized B2B marketing campaigns that grow CLV with intelligent omnichannel interactions. Its major strength is that it can capitalize on revenue opportunities by deploying integrated, personalized, cross-channel campaigns quickly at scale.

SAP Emarsys can increase conversion rates by using AI-powered insights, providing the functions to help your B2B customers get the job done faster and more effectively.

Out-of-the-box integration with the rest of the SAP CX portfolio—SAP Commerce Cloud, SAP Sales Cloud and SAP Service Cloud—helps map customer touchpoints to personalized recommendations, offerings and content in real time to deliver profitable outcomes. B2B companies are taking increasingly sophisticated actions in communicating with business buyers, with content specific to roles and individuals based on interactions, behavior, purchases and searches to date.

In the commerce stage of the end-to-end customer journey, meaningful personalization can be activated in the product catalog and lists, custom pricing, ordering, payment, shipping, corporate account management and workflows. These are just some of the touchpoints that should be contextually personalized in a B2B journey.

SAP Commerce supports relevant and personalized B2B experiences by facilitating search and recommendations while helping manage terms and compliance. The solution is perfectly complemented by SAP Sales & Service Cloud, an on-demand, cloud-based unified customer relationship management (CRM) solution that helps organizations interact with B2B customers through a single source of truth.
IBM recently led the digital transformation of a global leader in paper and packaging. A growing number of the company’s smaller customers needed to use an intuitive, easy-to-navigate digital commerce portal.

IBM collaborated with the organization to design and deploy a vibrant digital roadmap for its business units. The resulting portal was built across three countries, allowing smaller customers the resources to manage ordering, inquiries, claims and cash management.

The new B2B platform included all relevant product information and innovative self-service functionalities, while the personalization features removed friction from the buying experience.
Building intelligent CX

The aim of B2B personalization is to simplify and accelerate processes throughout the B2B customer lifecycle. Because personalization is so crucial, IBM is committed to accelerating time to value for our B2B client personalization solutions. To do so, we use IBM iX Experience Orchestrator (EXO), a composable architecture asset, to accelerate and orchestrate the personalization capabilities from the SAP CX suite of products, SAP S/4HANA and IBM AI solutions. By deploying IBM iX EXO, you can quickly and successfully launch new experiences, products and business models with reduced development costs and risk. In fact, IBM iX EXO has helped clients achieve:

↓30%
reduction in cost

↑30%
uplift in revenue

And a minimum viable product (MVP) rollout in as little as 5 months. This is a game-changer for our B2B clients because these solutions provide the critical components of an intelligent enterprise.
Excellence in CX is inherently necessary for a personalized experience that meets B2B expectations. To optimize B2B experiences and drive meaningful business outcomes, companies need to simplify dynamic, cross-functional business processes. SAP offers overarching intelligent solutions to address these needs. Following are some of the solutions most relevant to B2B buying processes:

- **SAP Omnichannel Promotion Pricing**
  Facilitates consistent B2B pricing across channels while helping manage compliance with contractual terms

- **SAP Order Management**
  Enables a single, consistent order across the enterprise. Combined with cross-system orchestration, this increases customer satisfaction by providing transparency across B2B processes

- **SAP Consumer Sales Intelligence**
  Captures and analyzes transactions to build insights into the ongoing B2B relationship

- **SAP Customer Order Sourcing**
  Enhances B2B distributed order management processes with accurate product availability and intelligent sourcing

These solutions address challenges such as cost to serve, inventory carrying costs, order orchestration costs and pricing inefficiencies, which are typical in B2B organizations.

B2B customers demand real-time interactions, and some of these personalized needs can be fulfilled through self-service portals. Other capabilities that make purchasing easier include supporting subscriptions and using conversational platforms. IBM uses data science, AI and automation to fuel our portfolio of personalization-based solutions, including those incorporating conversational AI, virtual and voice assistants, call routing and predictive analytics to meet the needs of our B2B clients.
These capabilities can be applied to a range of use cases for personalization, including those in marketing, sales, commerce and contact centers. For example, IBM enabled a contact center transformation for a major EMEA-based consumer packaged goods company using these tools. In this engagement, sales and service agents were empowered with the solutions along with customer insights from Genesys CCaaS, an SAP partner, to improve customer experiences. This led to a:

↑10% increase in net promoter score (NPS)

↑25% increase in conversion

↑20% improvement in first contact resolution (FCR)

IBM also offers intelligent solutions that drive dynamic personalized interactions at scale to help you exceed your marketing goals using automated conversational solutions and virtual voice assistants. These solutions include IBM Watson® Assistant, IBM Watson Knowledge Catalog, IBM Watson Advertising Accelerator and IBM Watson Advertising Conversations. By adopting best-in-class SAP solutions in conjunction with AI solutions centered on IBM Watson capabilities along with data analytics and other technologies, IBM is uniquely positioned to extend your personalization capabilities to create a unique value proposition that fits every customer business strategy.

IBM is your partner for creating the new rules of modern B2B business. Together, we will reinvent your B2B buying experience by using personalization to drive growth.
Conclusion

At IBM Consulting™, we’ve proved that science, creativity and radical collaboration across ecosystems can accelerate business transformation. As catalysts for growth, we bring together diverse teams to help you reimagine every corner of your business—from strategy to experiences, technologies and operations—because we don’t just want you to anticipate the future, we want you to create it.

We put CX at the center of your business. With deep expertise in experience strategy and design, data and analytics, and platform consulting and implementation harnessing best-in-class solutions, we can help you drive transformation across the customer lifecycle.

Our IBM Garage™ methodology has demonstrated business impact across a range of industries and analyzes multiple approaches to determine the best way forward. The IBM Garage methodology ranges from market research and brainstorming solutions through product development, iterations and large-scale deployments. It uses design thinking principles to envision customer barriers and frustrations, thus humanizing the problem. It harnesses agile, lean, open source and DevOps methods to quickly stand up, test and revise MVPs.

Reach out. We'd love to partner with you to optimize the value of personalization at scale with SAP. Let's start with scheduling a discovery session to visualize what an ideal B2B personalized journey would look like in your organization and for your customers.

Products and solutions

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Next steps

Learn more about IBM and SAP CX.

Read The 5 pillars of personalization at scale.

Discover the IBM Garage methodology.

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Authors and contributors

Jayashree Nayar
Associate Partner,
Customer Transformation
IBM iX

Wadih Bargach
SAP CX Global
GTM Lead
IBM iX

Shantha Farris
Global Digital Commerce
Strategy and Offering Lead
IBM iX

Endnotes

1. 5 Predictions for B2B Marketing in 2023, Insider Intelligence, 16 December 2022.
6. Based on IBM client experiences. Individual results may vary.