DEMAND GEN® REPORT

2025

CMO
OUTLOOK GUIDE

How To Embrace AI & Automation
While Still Forging Authentic
Buyer Relationships

INTRODUCTION

As we gear up for 2025, the pace of innovation in B2B marketing is showing no signs of slowing down. To help marketers prepare for the road ahead, we turned to industry leaders who are shaping the future of B2B marketing. They've shared their predictions, priorities and plans for tackling the challenges and seizing the opportunities that lie ahead.

In this collection of Q&As, we've spoken to B2B marketing trailblazers to get their perspective on what's next, whether it's redefining demand gen strategies or fostering deeper customer connections. Throughout this guide, we'll uncover:

- The top challenges and opportunities that B2B marketers can expect throughout 2025;

- The emerging trends that are poised to have the biggest impact on strategies;

- How to address the rising demand for authenticity and transparency in B2B communications;

- How the buyer's journey will evolve and what practitioners can do to keep up;

- The steps leaders are taking to build and promote diverse and inclusive workforces; and

- So much more.

LEARN MORE FROM:

Nadia Davis
Sr. Director, Revenue
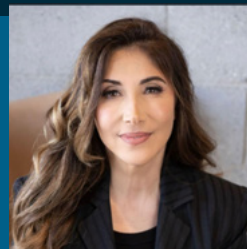Marketing and MarOps at PayIt

Kelly Hopping
Chief Marketing Officer
at Demandbase

Jon Russo
Chief Marketing Officer
at B2B Fusion

Lisa Farris
Chief Marketing Officer
at Soundtrack

Sarah Sehgal
Director of Growth
Marketing at OpenSesame

Nadia Davis

Sr. Director, Revenue Marketing
and MarOps at **PayIt**

Nadia Davis is a seasoned performance marketer in the B2B and B2G data and technology space passionate about designing and instrumenting holistic, non-conventional omnichannel ABX strategies built on MarOps and data excellence that meaningfully contribute to the sales pipeline. Having built scalable ABM frameworks from scratch in several SMB organizations in a scale-up mode, Davis has first-hand experience with how to get an organization started on a powerful ABM journey that disrupts and transforms GTM across multiple teams within an organization.

She is an avid advocate and a daily practitioner of creating effective, technology-centric marketing teams united with a vision to succeed through personal and professional growth, empowerment and enablement.

DGR: *How do you see the overall B2B market evolving in 2025?*

Davis: Globalization and digitalization will make the B2B market more competitive in 2025. Customers will have more options than ever, leading to longer purchase cycles and a demand for personalized experiences.

Many CMOs of B2B companies will increasingly scrutinize their technology expenditures, aiming to consolidate their tech stacks to enhance efficiency and reduce costs. This shift is driven by the realization that fragmented systems can lead to operational inefficiencies and increased expenses. By unifying platforms and tools, businesses seek to streamline operations and improve productivity. For instance, focusing on channel-agnostic strategies can help dismantle silos, thereby enhancing efficiency and productivity.

However, this trend toward consolidation is juxtaposed with continued investment in technology. Despite economic challenges, many B2B firms are not significantly reducing their tech investments. This indicates a strategic approach where companies selectively invest in technologies that offer substantial returns while phasing out redundant or less effective tools.

The overarching goal is to create a more cohesive and efficient technological infrastructure that aligns with business objectives and customer expectations. By consolidating tech stacks, B2B companies aim to eliminate redundancies, reduce costs and enhance their ability to respond to market demands effectively. Marketing leaders will balance consolidation with strategic investments in technologies that drive growth and innovation, ensuring a competitive edge in an evolving market.

DGR: *What steps are you taking to build a diverse and inclusive workforce and demonstrate those values to your prospects and buyers?*

Davis: Building a diverse and inclusive workforce starts with intentionally bringing together people from varied backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. We emphasize cultivating trust and psychological safety by celebrating different hobbies, interests and worldviews. Constructive conflict is encouraged, where

team members can challenge each other's opinions in a way that sparks creativity and innovation without fear of judgment or hurt feelings. By promoting respectful conversations, we aim to foster a culture where every voice is valued.

Externally, we demonstrate these values through our brand messaging and customer interactions, showing that our commitment to inclusion isn't just internal — it's a part of who we are and how we engage with our buyers. Sharing authentic stories about how diversity drives innovation within our teams helps prospects see us as a company that values human connection and collaboration. This approach not only strengthens our team internally but also resonates with customers who share these values, reinforcing trust and loyalty.

DGR: *What emerging trends in 2025 do you think will have the biggest impact on B2B sales and marketing?*

Davis: Key trends include the rise of AI and its broader use for internal efficiencies and productivity improvements within marketing teams, the growing importance of data privacy, and the need for authentic, humanized customer engagement. Additionally, the increasing use of video content and the growing role and visibility of micro-influencers are shaping B2B marketing strategies.

"Sharing authentic stories about how diversity drives innovation within our teams helps prospects see us as a company that values human connection and collaboration."

Jon Russo

CMO at **B2B Fusion**

Jon Russo is a three-time global Chief Marketing Officer in successful public and private SaaS companies in Silicon Valley, New York City and Luxembourg. Russo has led and experienced four successful exits of private companies through over $3B in market capitalization before starting his own agency twelve years ago. A former Active Duty Army Officer, Russo earned his Bachelors in Finance from the University of Connecticut and Masters in Business Administration from the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley.

Today, he leads B2B Fusion, an agency designed to optimize go-to-market business processes, enablement and technologies to drive pipeline growth and visibility across technology, healthcare and financial service companies. He and his firm have a particular expertise in account-based marketing (ABM), specifically around sales enablement of ABM and the optimizing of technology to support business level reporting for multiple GTM motions. His clients have won multiple account-based industry awards.

DGR: *How do you see the overall evolution of the B2B market in 2025?*

Russo: The B2B market is evolving toward increased digitalization and buyer empowerment so hyper relevant targeting becomes more important, and AI will enhance this experience.

AI agents are becoming increasingly important in enterprise software, potentially reshaping user experiences and workflows. An example of this is Salesforce.com, which is heavily investing in and pushing its "Agent Force" AI-powered chatbot and virtual agent capabilities, particularly targeting the SMB and mid-market segments.

For content creators, the rise of the "answer economy" is another significant trend. B2B buyers are seeking specific answers rather than keyword matches, with AI search providing more relevant and accurate results. Content marketers could learn from this trend by developing use case content specific to their buyer questions and needs.

DGR: *What upcoming or new trends do you see having the biggest impact in 2025?*

Russo: The "do more with less" GTM mantra continues with an emerging emphasis towards more growth in 2025. Areas where we see the most growth opportunities include:

- Leveraging agentic AI, which is the rise of AI systems that can autonomously reason, create action plans and execute on them;

- Using multiple sets of intent data to create dynamic segments, personalize web experiences and target competitive campaigns more effectively, as well as enable sales teams to start feeding these signals and journey information into a GPT to distill what is most important; and

- Using AI to assist in developing more targeted content for all the members of buying committees, which is expected to grow as enterprise buyers involve more folks in their decision-making process.

DGR: How do you recommend marketers address the demand for authenticity and transparency?

Russo: Disclosure is a *must* do when using AI in content development. Are these ideas your ideas, ideas you developed that AI enhanced or are they purely AI developed ideas and AI execution?

While AI can enhance ABM efforts, it's important to maintain the human element, especially for high-value accounts. AI doesn't have emotions or take holidays, and these human aspects are crucial for building relationships with key decision-makers. We'll also see more marketers leverage user-generated content and case studies to provide authentic, third-party validation of their solutions, which will blow past any AI query.

Additionally, as AI becomes more prevalent, data privacy and security are going to be top of mind. Disclosing those areas will help enhance authenticity and trust.

"While AI can enhance ABM efforts, it's important to maintain the human element, especially for high-value accounts."

Sarah Sehgal
Director of Growth Marketing
at **OpenSesame**

Sarah Sehgal is a joyful and resilient leader of demand gen teams that GSD. She currently serves as the Director of Growth Marketing for OpenSesame. With a decade of experience in the SaaS space, Sehgal has worn a number of hats across marketing, sales and customer success at companies like Integrate, Axway, Choice Hotels, Hearst Media and FullStory. When she's not geeking out over data, she's trying to keep up with her teenage son.

"We're going to see a rise in industry and functional B2B 'influencers.'"

DGR: *How do you see the landscape of B2B sales and marketing evolving in 2025, and what trends might drive those changes?*

Sehgal: While AI has most of the spotlight, I think we're going to see a rise in industry and functional B2B "influencers." If you're in the B2B marketing space, you're already seeing this on LinkedIn, but I think this will expand across roles. People trust people, not companies — something that's been true for years but even more with the influx of AI generated content.

Whether it's partnership with known industry experts/influencers, or building company evangelists, I think it's people (and the relationships and trust they can build), not AI, that will be the big differentiator of 2025.

DGR: *What are the most significant challenges and opportunities that B2B organizations will face in 2025?*

Sehgal: In the past few years, I haven't heard one marketer say they don't have enough data, and I don't see that changing next year. It's expected that U.S. B2B marketing data spend will grow to almost **$4 billion in 2025**. Marketers and GTM teams are swimming in data, and the biggest challenges continue to be around making it both insightful and actionable. There's an opportunity for CMOs and CROs to drive clear, strategic guidance of what matters most to measure and empower their teams to "let go" of measuring what doesn't matter.

Tapping into cross-functional groups like business intelligence (BI) and data governance teams can allow marketing teams to get a stronger grasp on data accuracy and consistency across the organization. Clear data governanceteam members can challenge each other's opinions in a way that sparks creativity and innovation without fear of judgment or hurt feelings. By promoting respectful conversations, we aim to foster a culture where every voice is valued.

Kelly Hopping

Chief Marketing Officer
at **Demandbase**

Kelly Hopping is a seasoned marketing and business executive, speaker and author. As Demandbase's CMO, she is responsible for differentiating the company's go-to-market (GTM) platform, increasing brand presence and accelerating acquisition and conversion of potential customers. Prior to joining Demandbase, Hopping served as the first CMO at HYCU and CMO for the Digital Markets division of Gartner, where she managed a portfolio of brands — Capterra, GetApp and Software Advice.

DGR: *How do you see the overall B2B market evolving in 2025?*

Hopping: The traditional sales funnel is gone. Instead, we'll see dynamic, account-specific paths that shift in real-time based on buyer behavior, intent signals and market conditions. At Demandbase, we're all about adaptive account-based frameworks that allow businesses to pivot quickly and respond to changes, instead of clinging to old playbooks. B2B companies need to focus on the right accounts with the right message at the right time, and account-based GTM will be the cornerstone of all demand generation efforts.

Communities are also going to be a huge revenue driver. As businesses, we need to build exclusive communities for decision-makers to network, share ideas and explore account-based frameworks that work and co-create. Think customer-centric events, live forums and dynamic spaces where thought leadership isn't just shared but exchanged. If you're not building these relationships, you're leaving money on the table.

DGR: *What emerging technologies will have the most significant impact on B2B sales and marketing in 2025?*

Hopping: As data privacy concerns rise, privacy-first technologies will become a must. Businesses will need to prioritize user consent and data protection or risk losing trust. These strategies won't just ensure compliance — they'll also maintain strong engagement without compromising privacy.

Another big shift is the rise of AI agents. These tools will augment top sellers and potentially replace repetitive, burdensome tasks, forcing businesses to rethink their GTM structures. Account-based GTM will also evolve into a frictionless, invisible experience, with every interaction feeling native and natural, like a conversation, not a campaign.

We'll also see multi-model AI assistants that don't just give ideas but manage campaigns end-to-end — running A/B tests, adjusting creative and automating outreach.

DGR: *How will customer expectations continue to evolve in 2025, and what will it take to meet these expectations?*

Hopping: By 2025, buyers will expect you to predict their needs, not just respond quickly. Predictive analytics and intent modeling will help businesses act before a customer even asks. AI-driven insights will power tailored, almost 'psychic' interactions that feel spot-on for every buyer. It's about the next best action.

"We're trustworthy" won't cut it anymore. Trust will be something you prove, not just claim. Expect public trust scores and transparency metrics that hold companies accountable for their ethical practices, data privacy and sustainability efforts. Buyers will be watching.

DGR: *How do you think the buyer's journey will evolve in 2025, and what changes are you making to adapt?*

Hopping: The buyer will be in full control. They'll drive the pace of their journey, relying on self-research, peer recommendations and influencer opinions to guide them. Vendors will need to switch from gatekeepers to navigators, providing resources like interactive content, personalized ROI calculators and data visualizations — without being pushy.

B2B buyers will also be relying heavily on external influencers for guidance before making a purchase. Whether it's social media, professional networks, industry experts or peer reviews, buyers are consulting at least 10 influencers during their decision-making process. If you're not actively engaging with these voices and building relationships within these networks, you're missing out on the conversations that shape buying decisions.

> "We need to build exclusive communities for decision-makers to network, share ideas and explore account based frameworks that work and co-create."

Lisa Farris

Chief Marketing Officer
at **Soundtrack**

Lisa Farris is a visionary marketing and digital media executive known for her innovative approach to leveraging music and technology to transform brand and consumer engagement for businesses, ranging from startups to nationally recognized $6B+ brands. Farris currently serves as the Chief Marketing Officer for Soundtrack Technologies, a music streaming service for businesses.

Prior to joining Soundtrack, Farris served as Chief Marketing and Innovation Officer for the Recording Academy | GRAMMYs.

DGR: *What trends do you think will grow in importance throughout the course of the new year?*

Farris: The evolution of video content in B2B marketing mirrors its adoption across consumer channels and will continue to emerge as an increasingly preferred format for B2B buyers. From explainer videos to short-form social media clips, video is becoming an expected and effective engagement strategy. Businesses can leverage video to simplify complex concepts and humanize their brands, as well as drive increased engagement across platforms.

DGR: *How can B2B marketers adapt their strategies to stay competitive as generative AI reshapes search engine dynamics, paid and organic search integrations, and multi-touch attribution challenges?*

Farris: B2B marketers will likely need to pivot in real time. The integration of generative AI into paid and organic search will evolve, often with little notice, as search experiments with engagement and monetization. Google's increasing reliance on AI insights may reduce transparency and control over granular data.

With AI-powered search results, businesses need to optimize for intent-driven queries and adapt to AI summaries that replace traditional snippets. Paid search may see the greatest shift as the year progresses and gen AI blurs the lines between organic and sponsored content. As always, content relevance, context and authority will enable a B2B marketer to stay competitive as they navigate new search strategies.

As many companies expand their full funnel marketing, multi-touch attribution will face challenges as cross-device and offline conversions grow harder to track. Staying agile with first-party data, including building trust to collect first-party data as third-party options dwindle, server-side tracking and predictive analytics will be key.

DGR: *Given the rapid surge and adoption of AI technologies, what sort of challenges do you anticipate B2B sales and marketing teams encountering with the tool?*

Farris: AI will continue to be one of the biggest trends in 2025. However, the challenge will be for companies who are using it for customer segmentation, automation and content to come off as "authentic" amongst all of the AI hype. Both B2B sales and marketing leaders need to be more technically proficient to harness the technology, but also know what still requires a human touch. AI tools are still developing and can result in bad outcomes if a human review process does not support them. There is also the risk of diminishing results over time as sales and marketing messages start to sound alike.

"Content relevance, context and authority will enable B2B marketers to stay competitive as they navigate new search strategies."

Demandbase.

Demandbase is all about AI-driven GTM. We help B2B companies hit their revenue goals using fewer resources. Want to know how?

We do it by aligning your sales and marketing teams around a combination of your data, our data, and artificial intelligence. It's what we call Account Intelligence and it helps you identify, engage, and focus your time and money on accounts that are most likely to buy. That's the power of AI.

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DEMAND GEN® REPORT

Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multichannel demand generation efforts.

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