



THE B2B TECH AI PLAYBOOK

Crafting buyer-centric messaging in a crowded market

February 2025

INTRODUCTION

With artificial intelligence (AI) now baked into countless solutions and services — from supply-chain management software to enterprise resource planning systems and data analytics platforms — differentiating your company's AI offerings can be challenging.

More than 70% of companies are now using AI and over 80% consider it a top priority for their business. The rapid acceleration of the technology and the buzz surrounding it frequently contribute to a sense of AI fatigue, leaving some tech buyers skeptical. AI is now table stakes for most industries, so simply touting the use of it no longer gives brands a competitive advantage, and can even backfire if savvy buyers detect “AI-washing” — that is, superficially applying the technology or overstating it for marketing purposes.

Technology has never been more integral to business success than it is now, yet it's not a sure-fire play in marketing. Despite the prevalence of AI-powered tools and the prominence of AI-centric brand messaging, conversions aren't driven by showcasing AI integration. What matters to buyers are the positive outcomes the technology delivers and how those outcomes align with their needs and goals. Rather than leading with AI, brands should refocus on their core value proposition and give AI a supporting role that aligns with it — creating a more authentic, meaningful message for customers.

This playbook shares how to position AI in a way that resonates with your audience to drive trust, engagement and ultimately, conversions.

STEP 1 Revisit your buyers

STEP 2 Map messaging to customer needs

STEP 3 Show vs. tell

Revisit your buyers

Crafting effective positioning starts with a deep understanding of your buyers. While AI can play a transformative role in improving company solutions, operations and processes, it may not always be the most important factor to your customers. It's crucial to recognize that AI adoption is not universal and, in some cases, may even be a barrier to purchase.

To illustrate, many enterprises have struggled to realize the promises of AI and data shows that only a quarter of executives currently see significant value from their AI initiatives. A recent study also found that consumers are less likely to purchase products labeled as "AI-powered" compared to those described as "high-tech." The data showed a consistent drop in purchase intention every time "AI" was mentioned across various products and services, indicating many buyers have reservations or even a reluctance to engage with AI.

At the very least, it's important to understand whether your buyers may be feeling oversaturated with AI-focused content. Take a look at any tech community and you'll find hundreds of executives lamenting how sick they are of hearing about AI.

The bottom line is that nomenclature matters. While AI is undeniably powerful and here to stay, it's not always the decisive factor in a customer's journey.

Back to basics:

Understanding shifting buyer priorities

To ensure your AI messaging is compelling, take a step back and revisit your organization's buyer personas. What do they really care about? What was true of your personas a year or two ago may no longer fully reflect their current priorities or concerns. As the AI landscape rapidly evolves, so should your understanding of your buyer.

Customer surveys and focus groups are an ideal way to uncover this information. Testing brand and product messaging directly with them can often lead to surprising results. Partnering with sales and customer success teams to dive deep on what they're hearing on the front lines is also an important step. The goal is to discern your audience's most pressing needs, priorities and preferences, and determine how AI messaging can align with or detract from them. Consider:

What are the primary challenges or pain points your buyers face right now?

How have buyer preferences changed in the past year, if at all?

How has purchasing behavior shifted recently?
Are you seeing any new objections or hesitations?

What do buyers truly value in your offering?

How do your buyers perceive AI — are they apathetic, excited or do they have reservations or misconceptions?

What do your buyers need throughout the buying journey in terms of education, value proposition and assurances?

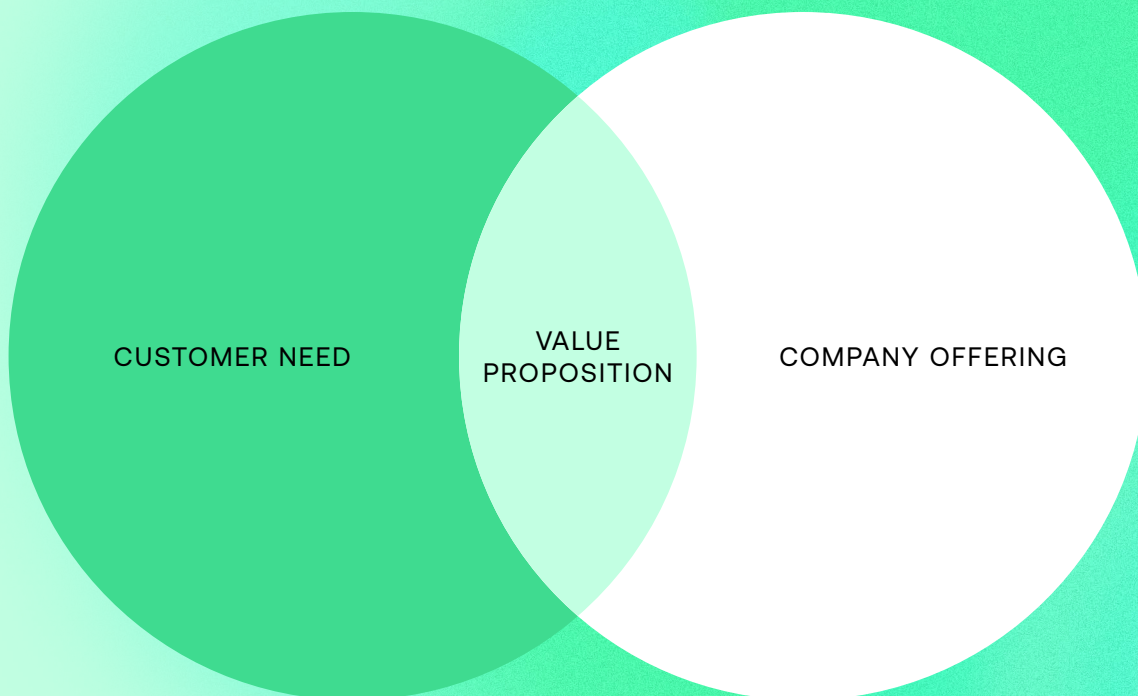
What future trends could influence persona needs and buying decisions?

Whether you're conducting customer surveys or sales interviews, opt for open-ended questions that will help you obtain qualitative insights and enhance your understanding of buyer perceptions and their decision-making process. The knowledge gained can help you craft messaging that resonates at every stage of the buying journey.

Map messaging to customer needs

Effective messaging lies in the sweet spot between what your customers want and what your company offers

(not what you want to say)



Effective messaging and value propositions go beyond highlighting the use of AI to demonstrating how AI uniquely solves customers' problems in ways that competitors cannot.

Taking an honest look at your offering is critical to identifying the nuggets that set you apart without falling into the AI-washing trap. Start by asking some tough questions of the brand — primarily, how do your offerings, supported by AI, uniquely meet your buyers' needs?

That's the sweet spot to highlight.

How is your company using AI?	How is AI baked into your products?	Is AI a critical part of the value proposition you provide, or is it a nice feature?
Is your company building proprietary or leveraging industry AI models?	What kind of AI are you using?	How does your use of AI differ from competitors?
Does your use of AI go beyond what buyers expect — ie, will it surprise & delight them?	What proof points illustrate the value?	What outcomes does your solution, leveraging AI, drive for customers?

Speak their language

With a solid understanding of buyer needs and how you uniquely meet them, you can anchor your positioning in what matters most. Now is the time to revisit your value proposition and transition from ubiquitous AI buzzwords to specific, buyer-centric messaging that communicates the real benefits of your offering, and how AI fits into it.

Ultimately, a brand or product narrative should focus on the outcomes buyers can expect when your AI-based solution is applied to their challenges. Framing your messaging in outcomes-based language and tangible results, such as time saved, revenue increased or enhanced customer satisfaction, makes the value more relatable, compelling and actionable for target audiences. Being clear and avoiding hyperbole on the company's use of AI is key to building customer rapport and trust. For instance, brands offering proprietary AI solutions can emphasize the technology more heavily while those offering AI-powered products should focus on how the technology enhances the overall value.

Regardless of how your company leverages AI, it's important to recognize that many buyers may not fully understand the technology or its diverse applications. For instance, over 46% of Americans mistakenly believe that AI and machine learning are synonymous and can be used interchangeably. Additionally, only 30% of U.S. adults are able to identify examples of different AI varieties in their everyday lives. Even more surprising, one-third of consumers report using AI platforms, but the actual usage, 77%, is much higher.

Again, it's important to focus on what your customers need to hear, not what you want to say — and often, less is more when promoting technology. Take a close look at your messaging and eliminate unnecessary technical jargon, educating where needed and communicating instead in simple, straightforward terms that everyone can understand.

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ONLY **30%**

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77%

of consumers are using AI platforms

Show vs. tell

Words on the page can only go so far in bringing your messaging to life. When showcasing your company's use of AI, stories are far more effective in compelling customers to action than simply stating facts and stats. In fact, a recent study revealed that ads with story arcs were among the top performers in terms of generating a positive emotional response; however, only 55% of ads include a story arc, indicating a significant whitespace opportunity.

Tech buyers also have distinct preferences for the types of content and visuals that capture their attention. Research shows that when text is paired with relevant imagery, recall improves by as much as 65%. Notably, 72% of B2B buyers prefer infographics early in their buying journey. Since tech buying decisions are often based on data, charts, graphs and other data visualizations are also a good tool for providing engaging and easily digestible overviews and key points.

In addition to creative visuals, a steady cadence of compelling content that helps your buyers see themselves in the narrative is key to building credibility and ongoing engagement. This includes thought leadership (e.g., blogs, contributed articles); customer testimonials (e.g., case studies, quote cards on social, video interviews); and data (e.g., customer results, surveys).

Creating a content calendar that flows from your brand or product narrative will ensure a steady drumbeat of pieces that map back to your AI messaging is consistently meeting buyers where they are in the funnel.

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of ads include a story arc

UP TO **65%**

recall improvement
when text is paired with
relevant imagery

72%

of B2B consumers
prefer infographics early
in their buying journey

AI marketing communications is most effective when focused on the value and results your customers need and that you provide.

By focusing on customer outcomes, simplifying AI language and using visuals to communicate your value proposition, you can build trust, reduce buyer skepticism and differentiate your brand in a crowded market.

Need to refresh your messaging? Alloy can help.
Get in touch with us or learn more about how we develop compelling brands, stories and communications programs for leading AI-powered companies.

ABOUT ALLOY

Alloy is an integrated marketing agency full of creative thinkers and problem solvers whose results-oriented work extends throughout the Americas, Europe and the Middle East. The firm's deep expertise in creating marketing strategies, platforms, ecosystems, multichannel campaigns and much more help imaginative brands engage with buyers, shape public opinion, build lasting influence and grow market share. Since 2012, Alloy has been named a 10-time Best Place to Work, Technology Agency of the Year and Fastest Growing Agency, and has been celebrated for Best Use of Measurement and Data. To learn more, visit alloycrew.com and follow @alloy_crew on LinkedIn and Instagram.

The logo for Alloy, featuring the word "alloy" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters are black and have a slightly irregular, hand-drawn feel.