

2026

# PREDICTIONS

B2B Marketing, Sales, & Product

# THE RACE TO TRUST AND VALUE

B2B leaders raced to adopt generative AI in 2025 — often without the guardrails or readiness to realize its full potential. The result? A surge in experimentation, but also rising risk, buyer skepticism, and mounting pressure to prove real business impact. The year ahead will demand a more disciplined, evidence-driven approach.

In 2026, B2B marketing, sales, and product leaders will navigate a landscape defined by buyer empowerment, cost pressure, and a renewed focus on validation. Influencer networks will become strategic growth levers, and human expertise will reassert its value. AI will also play a transformative role, as AI agents begin reshaping payment workflows and pricing negotiations. Expect the coming year to bring new efficiencies, along with new challenges.

This guide reveals five predictions that will shape the 2026 operating environment for B2B leaders and teams. The underlying message is this: With change unfolding so quickly, prioritize building trust and helping buyers realize value. Invest in AI governance, elevate expert insight, and prepare your teams to compete in a market where buyers demand hard proof. In a year defined by volatility, clarity and accountability will be your greatest assets.

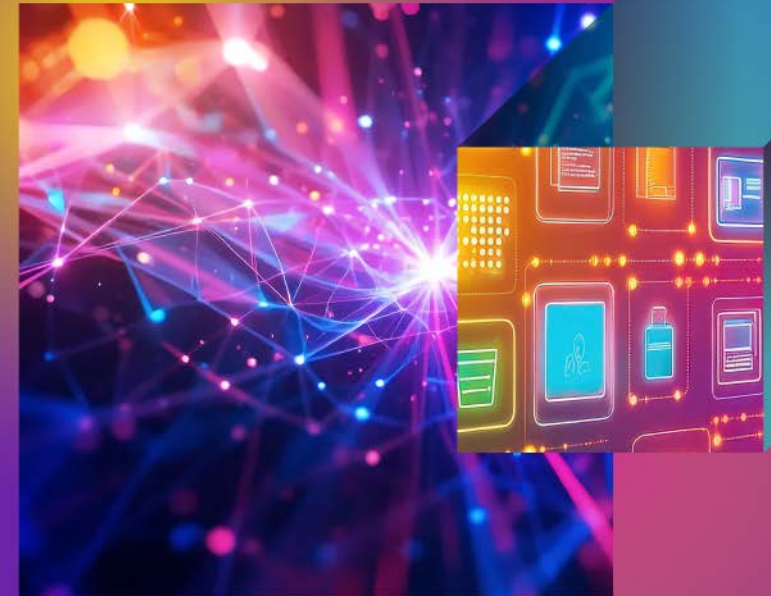


## PREDICTION

# Ungoverned genAI in commercial apps will cost B2B companies more than \$10 billion.

GenAI is already pervasive across B2B teams. Seventy-five percent of sales reps report using AI-enabled sales tools at work, 50% of B2B marketing decision-makers report their organization is experimenting with or currently using genAI, and 53% of product management decision-makers report using genAI technology in their product development process. This explosion of new and untested functionality, combined with lagging AI user skills, will result in incidents that lead to the loss of more than \$10 billion in enterprise value from declining stock prices, legal settlements, and fines. Some companies are trying to minimize risk by applying governance practices used for internally developed applications. But these top-down approaches are inadequate to control the adoption of genAI in the commercial applications that go-to-market (GTM) teams use.

Organizations must improve employees' "AI intelligence quotient" and democratize their governance efforts. Empower employees to understand how genAI works and identify bad results before they are acted upon.



## PREDICTION

# Human expertise will rival genAI in appeal as buyers seek deeper validation.

In 2025, 30% of all buyers viewed genAI tools as a meaningful interaction type during the final commit stage of their purchase, compared to just 17% who said the same about interacting with product experts. But as genAI gives buyers more information (or misinformation), Forrester expects that they'll turn to experts to validate insights and answer complex questions. When looking deeper into the data, we see that, when asked about personal interaction types, business buyers most often cite interactions with product experts as meaningful. Buyers leverage these experts to get deeper insight into the offering and ensure that it will meet their requirements — tasks that genAI is unable to take on. In postsale interactions, product experts are among the most often trusted people for customers because they offer real insight to ensure that products work as expected. These interactions will continue to become prominent earlier in the buying process, and providers must upskill their own human resources (such as product experts and customer success teams) to deliver deeper insights to buyers.





## PREDICTION

# Seventy-five percent of B2B enterprises will increase budgets for influencer relations.

As buying networks expand and buying groups increasingly rely on external influencers — analysts, subject matter experts, and luminaries — for fact-based insights, marketing leaders will elevate influencer relations from a tactical PR extension to a strategic growth lever. Forrester's Buyers' Journey Survey, 2025, shows analyst reports and social media among the most commonly cited content assets and interactions that business buyers find meaningful, while proof of success is predicted to overtake brand reputation as the leading nontechnical driver in purchase decisions. Marketers must invest in influencer engagement that builds trust when AI-powered search and AI agents bolster discovery. As part of this strategic shift, organizations will expand their buying signal universe to include external conditions and influencer activity — surfacing cues such as commentary, social amplification, and third-party endorsements. Align influencer strategy with GTM planning and performance to see measurable impact.



## PREDICTION

**In B2B, AI agents will be present in about one-third of payments.**

Unlike B2C, B2B payments are ideal for agentic AI today — and we foresee that AI agents will be used in about one-third of B2B payment workflows by the end of 2026. Here's why: The complexity in B2B transactions lies in adjacent processes — e.g., invoicing, accounts payable/receivable, and trade credit — more than in payment execution itself. Plus, these processes don't involve consumer trust or multilayered authentication across networks. Robotic process automation has streamlined processes, but agentic AI promises a much higher level of automation. Vendors including Basware, Coupa, HighRadius, and Ramp have already launched AI agents to tackle use cases in corporate spend and B2B payment processing.



## PREDICTION

# Twenty percent of B2B sellers will be forced to engage in agent-led quote negotiations.

Welcome to “Let’s Make a Deal — AI Edition.” In Forrester’s B2B Sales Survey, 2024, 37% of sales professionals said that a top revenue growth challenge was being slow to recognize and adapt to buying behaviors. This year, 61% of purchase influencers say their organization has or will use a private genAI engine to support purchasing. In 2026, we predict that at least one in five B2B sellers will be compelled to respond to AI-powered buyer agents with dynamically delivered counteroffers via seller-controlled agents. Buyers’ procurement teams are developing agents to aggressively negotiate discounts, payment terms, and service levels. These agents are tireless, data-driven, and capable of scaling negotiation across hundreds of suppliers simultaneously — and ensuring compliance with regulations and entitlements. Static pricing pages and rigid checkout flows will give way to agent-compatible negotiation interfaces.

To compete, suppliers must deploy agents to field quotes and counteroffers, prioritizing margin, compliance, and positioning. In-house AI engineers and strong partners will rule.





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Take the next step to explore the full impact of these predictions and uncover strategies to build trust, deliver value, and drive measurable growth.

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On **January 27, 2026**, we'll unpack the trends shaping B2B dynamics and share actionable guidance to help you lead with confidence. Learn how to succeed with AI, break through to buying networks, and build a resilient growth strategy for the coming year. If you can't attend live, catch the on-demand version anytime.

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