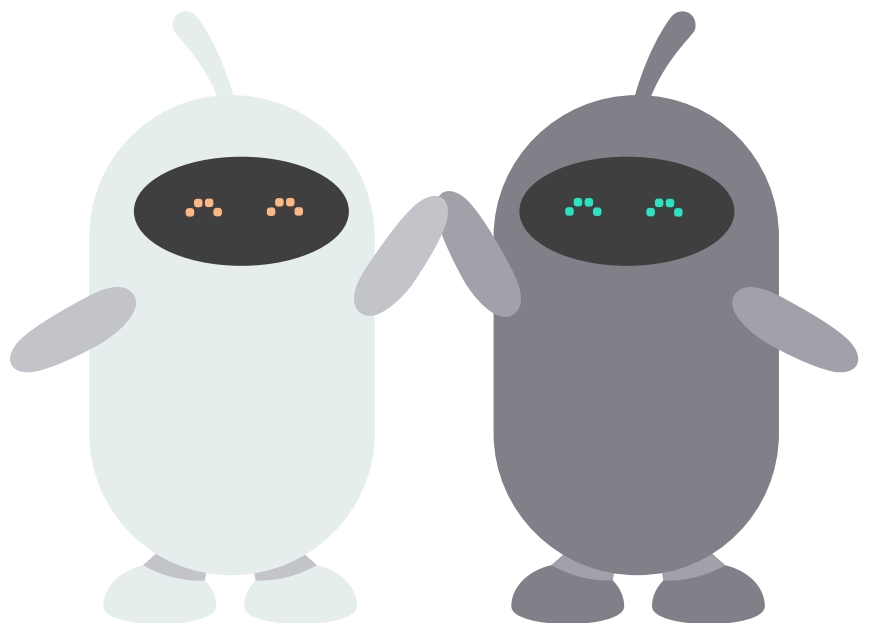


The Importance of Reviews to Enterprise Technology Buyers



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About This Report

This study examines enterprise buyer responses from our annual industry research around the *B2B Buying Disconnect*. **Enterprise buyers are defined as business technology buyers employed by companies with over 1,001 employees.** These 156 enterprise technology buyers include Analysts, Managers, Directors, System Administrators, and Executives. Respondents were involved in a major technology purchase for their company within the last year across a range of product categories, including IT, Marketing, HR, Finance, Sales, Customer Support, and more. Respondents were surveyed about what they bought, who was involved, how they did their due diligence, and why they purchased their software of choice.

Introduction

Worldwide IT spending is expected to total \$3.8 trillion this year, and enterprise companies—large, Fortune-listed companies like Walmart, Cardinal Health, IBM, and Goldman Sachs—are some of the biggest consumers of B2B technology. But how enterprises make software buying decisions has changed. Reviews are now the #1 most-used resource buyers can access without contacting a vendor representative. Historically, business technology enterprise buyers at enterprise companies relied on analyst firms like Gartner. Now, fewer than 25% of enterprise buyers rely on analysts, while over half use reviews.

Industry perception has lagged, though. Reviews are becoming a powerful part of the enterprise technology buyer's journey, but many people aren't aware that enterprise buyers have turned from relying on analysts to relying on high-quality reviews. Needless to say, an enterprise buyer will look for enterprise-grade reviews rather than short, anonymous snippets. In this report, you'll learn what today's enterprise buyers look like, what information they need on their path to purchase, how high-quality reviews play a critical role in driving decisions, and how technology vendors can take advantage.

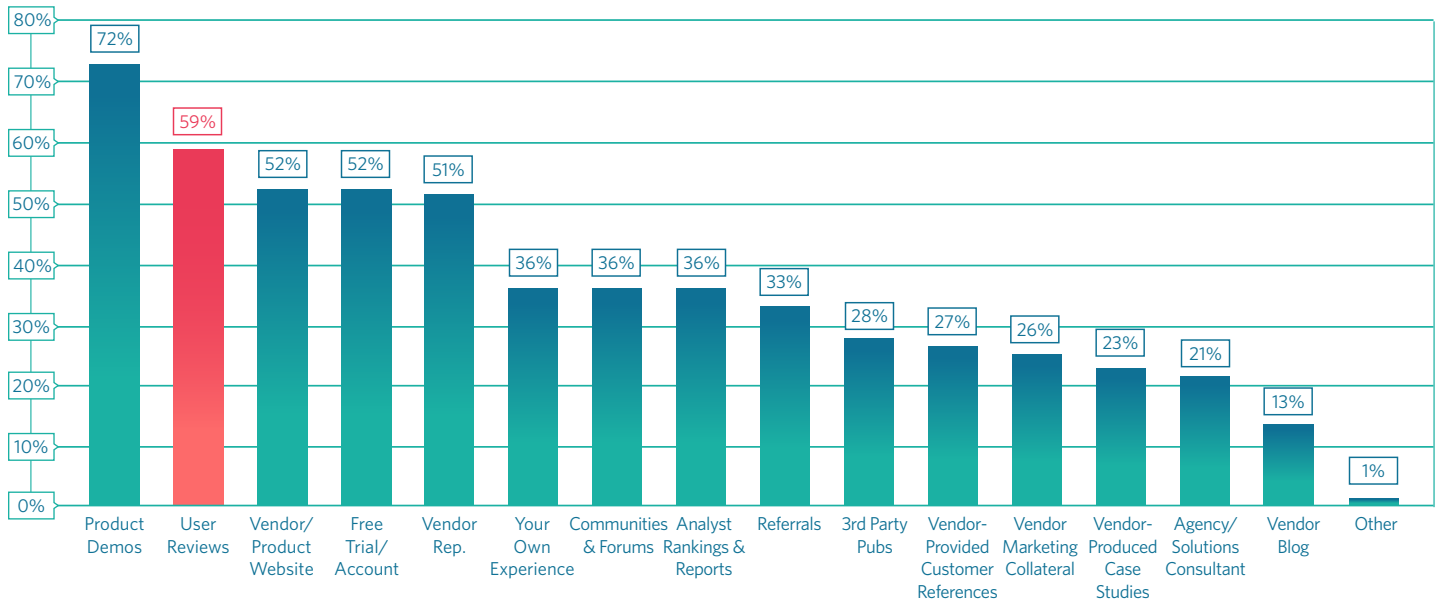


Reviews and the buyer's journey

Reviews are a significant part of the enterprise software buyer's journey. In fact, **reviews are the #1 most-used resource** that an enterprise technology buyer can access without getting directly in touch with the vendor!

Does this surprise you? The buyer's journey is changing, and enterprise software and hardware is no exception. Buyers want and have access to more information than ever before, and they are choosing to use reviews to help make decisions from the earliest stages of research through their final purchase decision.

Which information sources did enterprise business technology buyers use during their selection process?



Reviews vs. other resources

Despite what some may believe, reviews are used prominently by enterprise buyers. **59% of enterprise technology buyers used reviews as an information source when purchasing a new product.**

The only resource that software buyers at enterprise companies use more often is product demos. This means that user reviews are the most frequently-used resource that enterprise buyers can access without contacting your company directly. Even more than your own website (53%), analyst rankings and reports (36%), your marketing collateral (26%), and case studies (23%), enterprise buyers look to reviews of your products.

What about executives' usage of reviews? When looking at information sources used by **VPs, C-levels, and company leaders, 56% used reviews** in their selection process. Even for executives, reviews are an important part of buying business technology.

Interestingly, **enterprise buyers are 7% more likely to seek out reviews than SMB software buyers** (software buyers from companies with 1,000 or fewer people). While the usage of reviews has increased throughout B2B technology buying (growing 13% over last year), members of enterprise organizations who buy technology lead the pack.

Why are reviews more influential than other collateral?

We asked survey respondents directly why certain resources had a more significant impact on their decision. Here is a sample of responses:

[We found some resources more valuable because] They seemed independent, we studied how current users fared and how they reported their complaints and needs were handled.

Senior Vice President | IT Department
10,001+ employees

I tend to trust 3rd party reviews more because they are the least biased. We also relied heavily on usability sessions for each [industry redacted] solution we were considering, and those sessions were very telling.

Analyst | Research & Development Department
10,001+ employees

Can't trust the vendor, ever.

Director | Marketing Department
10,001+ employees

[Industry redacted] providers are known for their platitudes, and less known for the substance of their claims, so I took their marketing materials with a grain of salt. I much prefer hearing from people who have used the product, and other friends and colleagues who I trust.

Manager | Human Resources Department
1,000-5,000 employees

From the vendor side there are ways to make a product look great. When you're actually getting to use them yourself and can see exactly what you want or how you can make customizations you really start to be able to pull the pieces together. Plus personally knowing referrals were important and huge for us.

Consultant | Human Resources Department
5,001-10,000 employees

Directly working with the product along with dedicated user reviews provided a platform to evaluate all the uses of an application in detail and simulate a regular work environment in which the application can be validated.

Consultant | IT Department
10,001+ employees

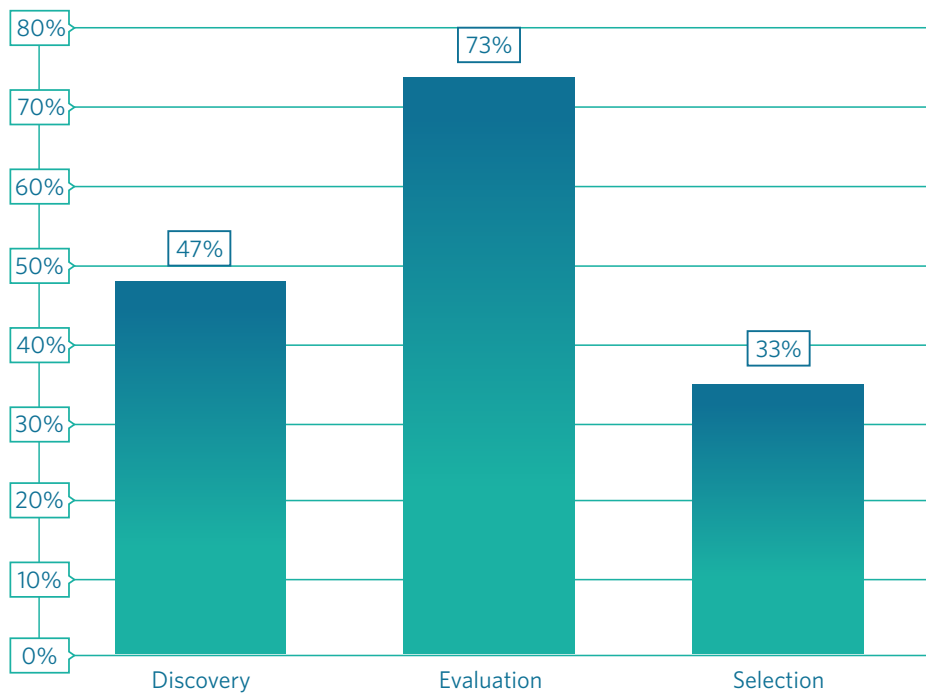


Enterprise buyers use reviews throughout the purchase process

Another common misconception about review usage is that enterprise buyers only use reviews early in their journey. But buyers aren't just using social proof to do preliminary research.

Among respondents who sought input from peers or existing users, nearly half use this type of content to discover options and build a shortlist. But nearly **3 out of 4 technology buyers at enterprise companies** use social proof during the evaluation stage. And **1 in 3 buyers** look to their compatriots for confirmation when they are ready to make a selection. The opinions and experiences of like-minded peers, which are easily accessible within third-party reviews, are useful to many enterprise buyers throughout their entire journey.

When did enterprise buyers seek input from peers or feedback from existing users in the community in their buying process?



Key takeaways

Throw away your perceptions: **software buyers from enterprise businesses use reviews**. And from the intern to the CEO, they use reviews a lot. 3rd party reviews are easy to access, show up high in search results, and provide relevant and valuable information for enterprise buyers. Do you know what reviews of your products are telling these buyers?

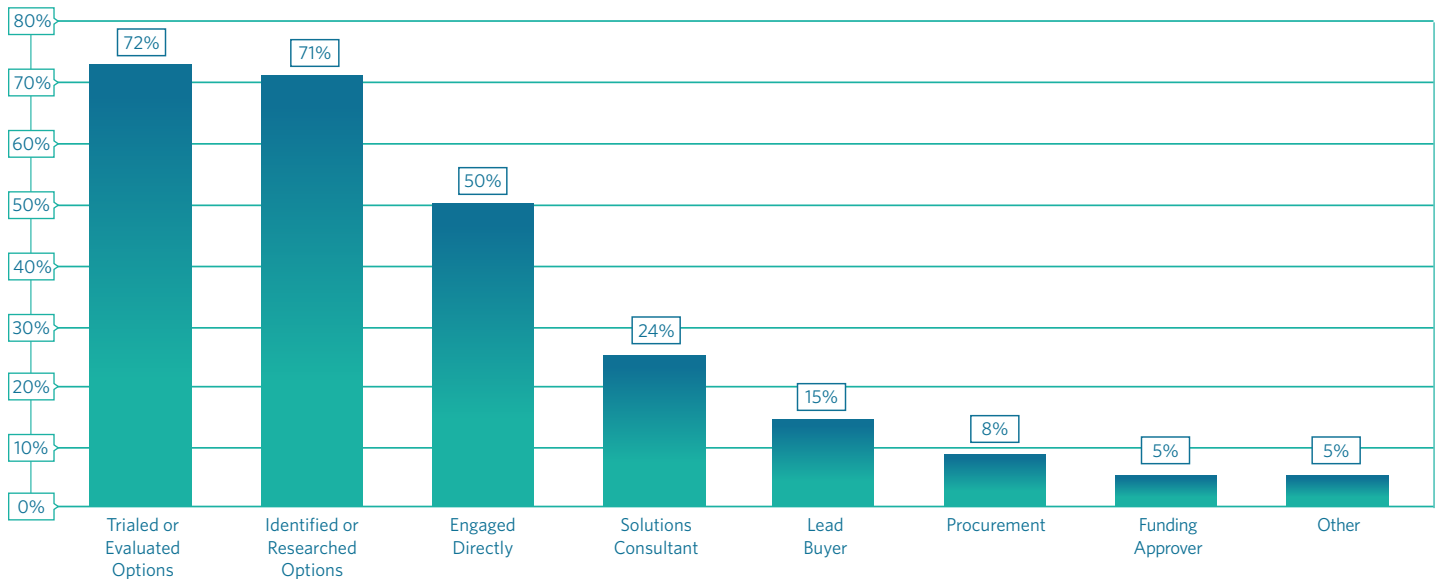
3rd party reviews have ballooned in popularity because business technology buyers crave authenticity. They want an accurate picture of your software—the good and the bad—so they can make the best decision for their business.

Make sure you are part of the conversation when it comes to reviews. We'll explain this in more detail in the [What Vendors Selling to Enterprise Buyers Can Do](#) section of this report.

The state of enterprise software buying

An important step to understanding buyers at enterprise companies is to know what buying business software and hardware looks like today. Ultimately, the pain of buying for enterprise organizations comes from one source—purchasing business technology is difficult! Here's what is involved:

What was your role in purchasing for your company?



Enterprise buyers make decisions by committee

At enterprise organizations, **99% of all business technology buying decisions** are made by groups of two or more people. The median group size is **6-10 people**.

As part of a buying committee, enterprise buyers wear many different hats. **Over 70%** of buying committee members are involved in researching or evaluating options. **Over half** are looped in to conversation with the vendor. Though a lead buyer or funding approver is a great place for a vendor to focus, providing value to all members of buying committees at enterprise companies is critical in bringing your solution to the forefront.

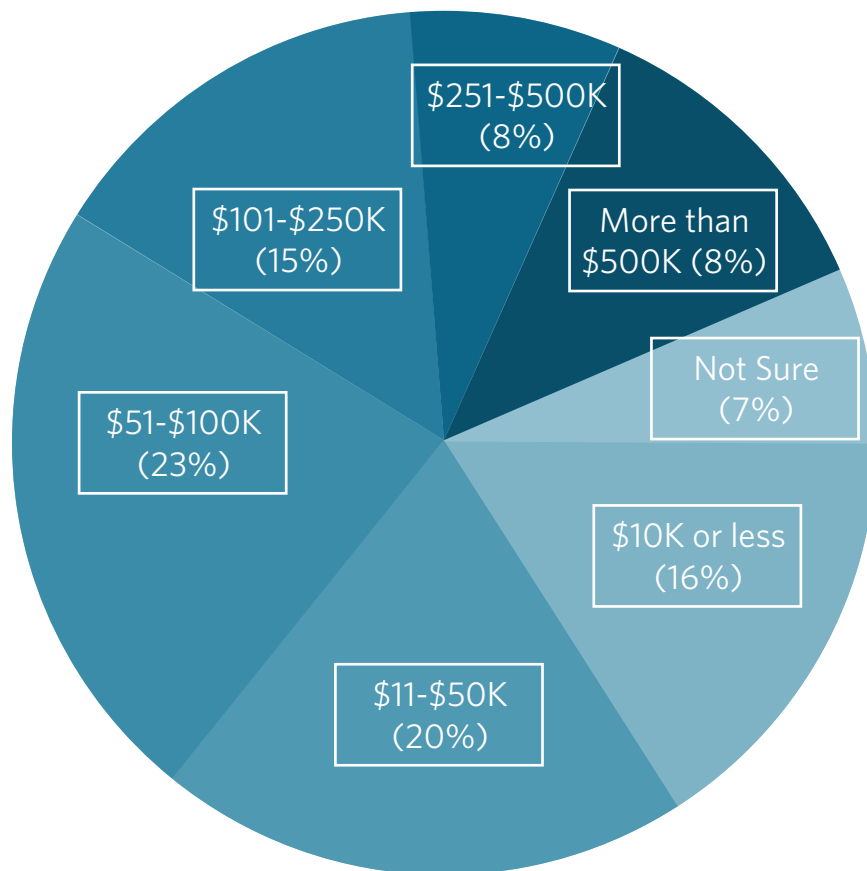
It's also important to think about who is on these committees. Would you be surprised to hear that **3 out of 5 (61%) enterprise software buyers are millennials**? On a committee of 10 people, that would be 6 millennials taking part in driving decisions!

Over half of purchases cost more than \$50,000

No surprises here—enterprise organizations make large business technology investments. **57% of purchases are over \$50,000.** And more than 1 in 10 purchases cost upwards of \$500,000!

Note, however, that enterprise organizations make business technology purchases across the full spectrum of costs. 16% of purchases cost under \$10,000. Enterprise organizations supplement their tech stack with tools of many types—how does your organization message benefits in this unique scenario?

What is the approximate annual cost of this product (excluding services, etc.)?



Vendor takeaways

Enterprise buyers need vendors to do better. When asked what vendors could have done to make the buying process easier, the #1 answer was being **more transparent about product capabilities and limitations**. But how can vendors do that?

The research reveals that buyers need help from you in two specific areas: be more transparent about ROI, and be more transparent with customer evidence, including reviews. Purchases today aren't just made by a decision maker, but a whole team of stakeholders who participate in research and evaluation. Consider the following:

- > Over 70% of enterprise buying stakeholders are part of researching and evaluating options. What information sources are they using to collect customer evidence, especially before speaking with vendor representatives?
- > 60% of millennials at enterprise companies use reviews. Remember how they make up 61% of buying committees? You need to cater to this group now, but consider this. As millennials (who, on average, are now over 30!) continue to advance in their careers, they will advance into even more leadership roles.

Top 5 things vendors can do to make the buying process easier



**More transparency
around product
capabilities and
limitations**



**Tools to show
ROI/justify
the purchase**



**Sharing customer
evidence, including
reviews, case studies,
use cases, etc.**



**Make resources
on the website
easier to access**



**Make information
on the website more
straightforward**

The power of reviews for enterprise

Want to influence business technology decision-makers and committee members at enterprise companies? Incorporate 3rd party reviews into your sales and marketing. It's clear that buyers are using reviews to make real buying decisions. But what is it that makes reviews so powerful?

Reviews help business technology buyers understand the cons

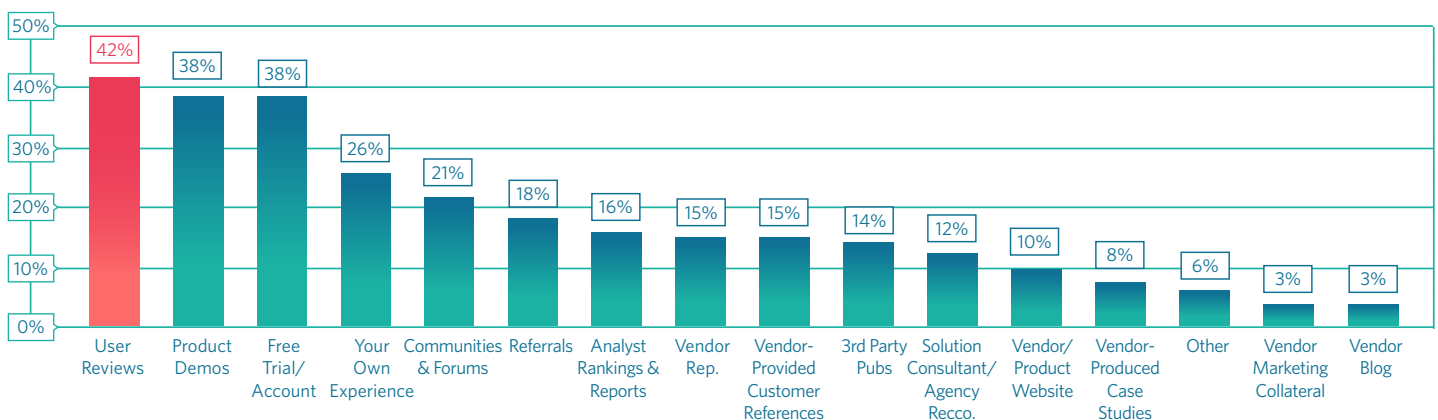
73% of business technology buyers at enterprise companies believe **understanding the cons is critical** before making a purchase. Cons help enterprise buyers understand the full picture before they buy, so they can feel confident in their decision.

And how do they investigate the cons? Reviews. The #1 way by which enterprise buyers investigate the cons is through user reviews. Even more than product demos and analyst rankings, enterprise buyers turn to the knowledge of their peers to find out the latest and most accurate information about issues with the product. For **3 out of 4 buyers**, this is a necessary step on the path towards purchase.

Why are reviews the resource of choice to investigate cons? There are three key reasons:

1. More reviews are available than ever before.
2. Buyers know that vendors can't control the message or put marketing spin into reviews.
3. Cons are easy to spot within a review, as TrustRadius reviews are clear if they're pros or cons.

Which resources were used to investigate the cons?



Reviews reveal advocates

It can be challenging to find customers willing to go on the record for your company or product, right? In reality, **71% of enterprise buyers** are willing to advocate and share feedback on the record for the products they've purchased.

Think of this in the vein of the commonly-used net promoter score. Your net promoter advocates (who rank you with nines and tens) will paint a rosy picture of how great a product or service is, and are often tapped into for case studies and references. But remember how buyers want to understand the cons?

Your customers who may not come in at the very top of NPS rankings, as well as those who not be able or willing to participate in case studies or references, are still willing to advocate for you. And they do so in such a way that may well be **more valuable to your potential enterprise buyers**. This is a big part of why reviews are such a commonly used asset!

Vendor takeaways

Reviews are a powerful and necessary step towards purchase. Enterprise technology buyers want as much information about the product they're about invest (often heavily) in as they can get. And many of your existing customers are willing to participate in the feedback loop.

How can you take advantage of the 71% of your enterprise customers who are willing to advocate for you? Just ask! In email campaigns, in your product, at events, or anywhere else your customers are. Your 3rd party review partner can help with execution. And don't limit yourself to your happiest customers—the feedback that is most likely to earn you more customers is the type that shares positive and negative feedback.

5 ways to ask your enterprise customers for reviews



Email
campaigns



At live
events



At web
events



In product



On support
tickets

What vendors selling to enterprises should do

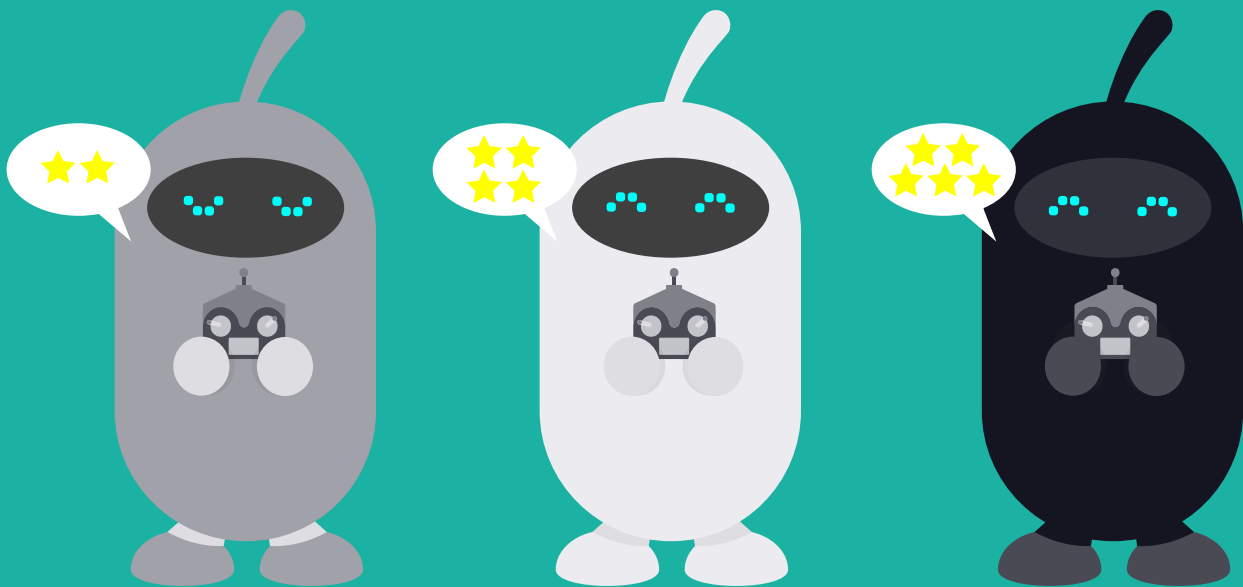
These survey results show that reviews are an unequivocally important part of the modern enterprise software buyer's journey. Here's what you, as a vendor, need to do:

1. Be part of the conversation

Buyers crave social proof, and the primary method by which they get it is reviews. So be part of the conversation—claim your TrustRadius profile. Know what your customers are saying about you, and, therefore, what your potential customers are seeing. Beyond marketing and brand, there's value in this for sales and product too. Note that being part of the conversation does not mean controlling review content, but to listen, adjust your own product and services where necessary, and be aware of the chatter around your product.

2. Focus on high-quality review content

Enterprise buyers aren't just looking at star ratings - the value of reviews from these large-company software buyers comes from the ability to understand what their experience with the product will be like, from similar peers. A few sentences simply won't do. Partner with a 3rd-party review source that focuses on enterprise software buyers as well as high-quality, highly-vetted, and substantial review content.



3. Bring reviews to your enterprise buyers

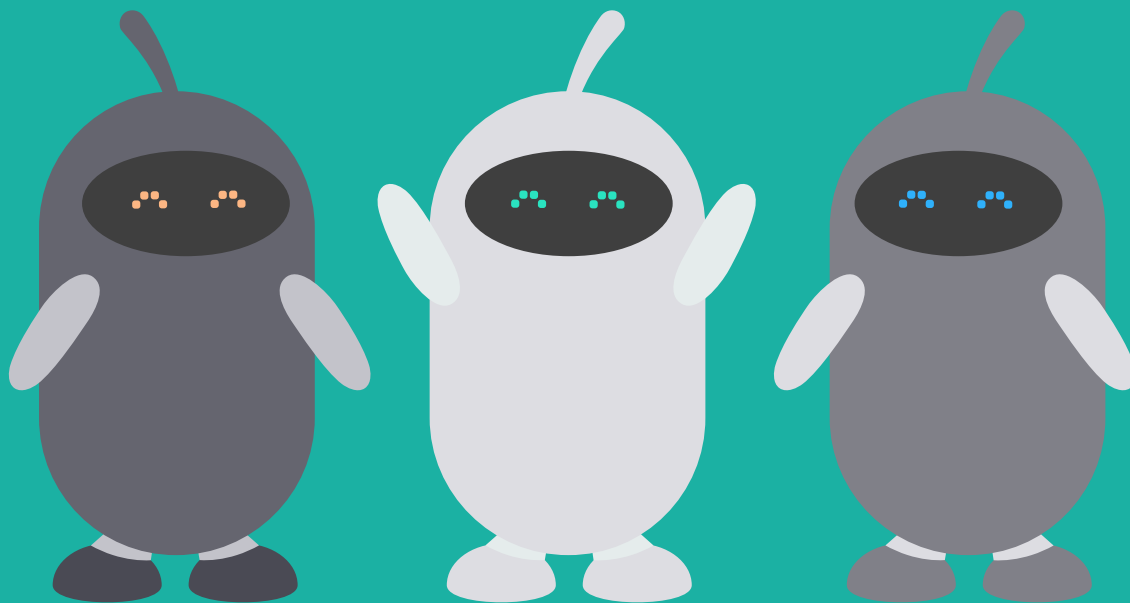
Enterprise software buyers will seek out reviews whether you want them to or not. So why not bring 3rd party reviews to the table in the first place? Incorporating reviews into your marketing campaigns has the added benefit of increased engagement, higher conversions, and accelerated sales cycles.

4. Enable your sales team with relevant reviews

Reviews can also accelerate sales cycles. Remember, in the buyer's journey, 73% of enterprise buyers use reviews in the evaluation phase, and 33% use reviews in the selection phase. Enable your team with reviews from all your key enterprise personas to provide potential enterprise customers with the social proof they're looking for to make a buying decision.

5. Turn your customers into advocates

The buyer's journey doesn't end with a purchase. Remember to help your customers advocate for your product by asking for a review. You can run review generation campaigns on your own, or tap into the expertise of a 3rd party review site like TrustRadius to maximize the quality and quantity of reviews available for your future enterprise buyers. Keep the cycle going!



Conclusion

For business technology buyers at today's enterprise companies, **reviews are critical for making a buying decision**. Oftentimes, looking at reviews can be the first sign of buying intent for an enterprise organization. Want to derive as much value from reviews as possible?

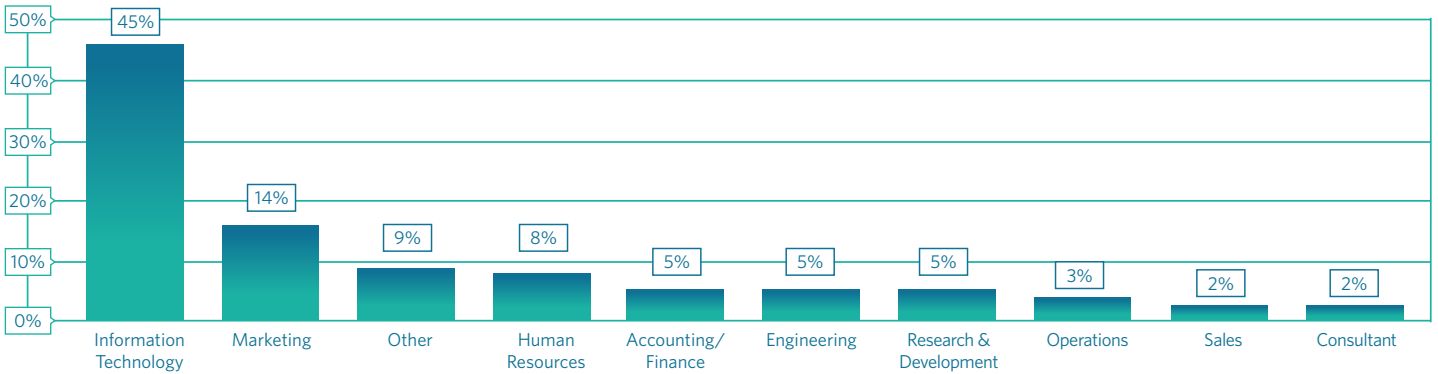
TrustRadius can help.

With TrustRadius, our high-quality, trustworthy review content is at your fingertips for use in your marketing and sales campaigns. We are experts in driving valuable reviews to ensure your content is always robust and meeting the needs of enterprise buyers. In addition, we provide strategic insight on how to run effective marketing campaigns with reviews. A partnership with TrustRadius helps you target new buyers, influence in-market enterprise buyers, and accelerate deals.

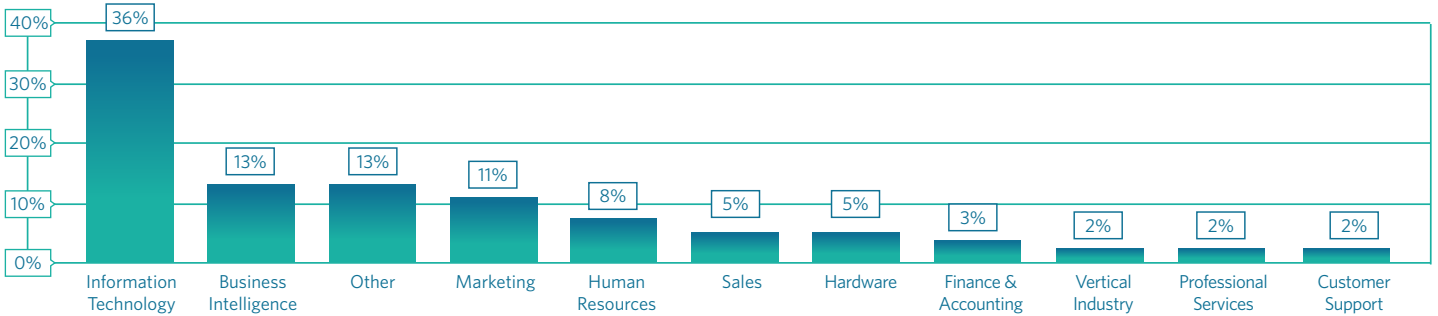


Survey demographics

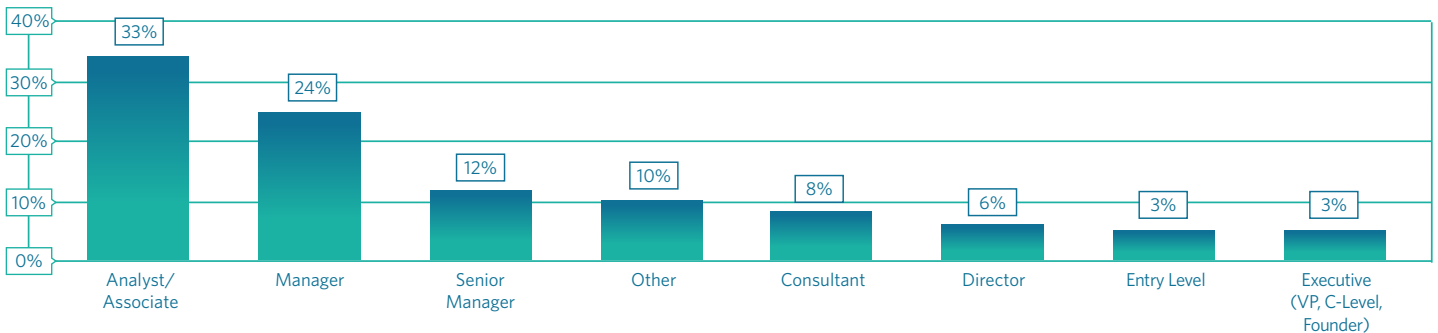
Department



What type of technology product was purchased?

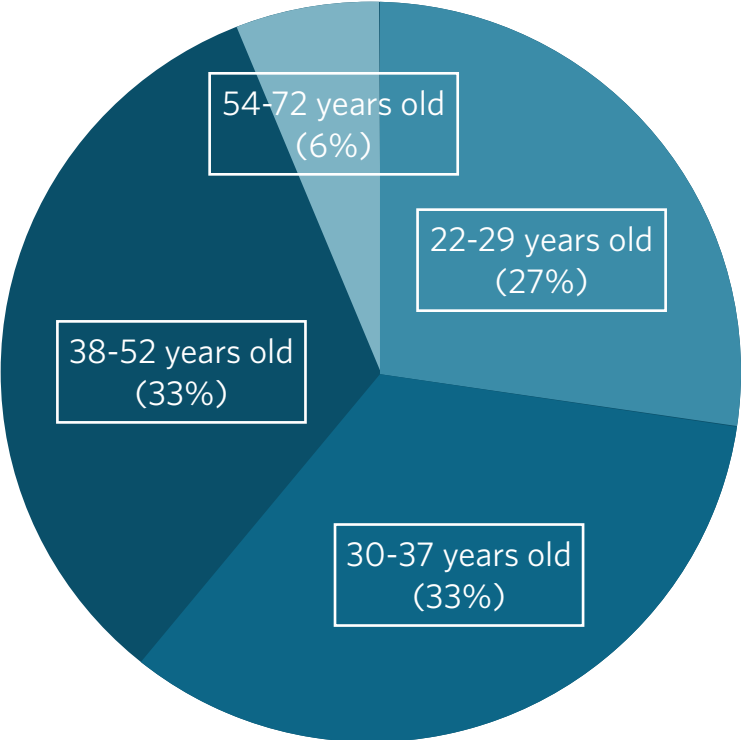


Job Title

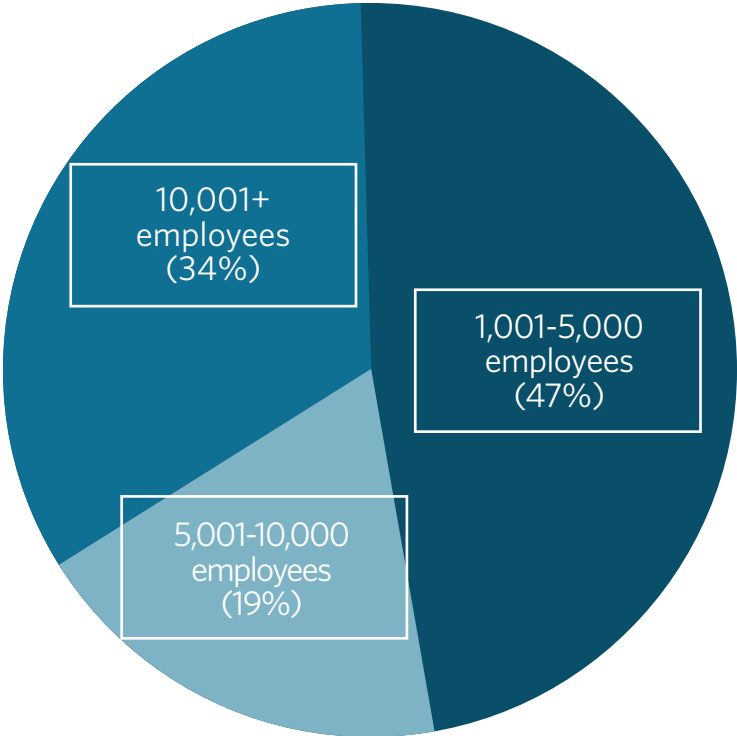


Survey demographics

Age



Company Size




About TrustRadius

We hope you enjoyed this report! If you have any questions or feedback, please contact us at marketing@trustradius.com.

TrustRadius is the most trusted platform for software and technology reviews. TrustRadius helps technology buyers make confident decisions with in-depth reviews and ratings from real users. TrustRadius also helps vendors influence the market conversation, target the right buyers, and accelerate sales and marketing by putting their customer's voice to work.

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-  <https://vendors.trustradius.com/blog/>
-  marketing@trustradius.com

Want to learn more about how your buyers use reviews? Check out these great resources:



[The 2019 B2B Buying Disconnect](#)



[Reviews 101: The Definitive Guide to B2B Reviews](#)