

THE ANATOMY OF A B2B BUYING DECISION

The role of B2B marketing continues to evolve. Research from DemandGen showed that nine out of ten buyers say that when they're ready, they'll find you. Marketing has become about creating an environment where your customers can gain a better understanding of you. Defining that environment – the messages and channels you use – means understanding how your customers reach their buying decisions.

HEAD

We like to think of ourselves as rational beings. The truth is we're little more than seething cauldrons of emotion. Marketing orthodoxy says that logic is only 20% of any buying decision. However, logic is vital to your messaging. University of Texas researchers found: "We are ruled by our emotions first, and then we build justifications for our response." It's called post-hoc rationalisation. A good marketing campaign will supply these justifications.

EAR

On average, a happy customer will tell between four and six people about their positive experience. Yet, it takes 12 positive experiences to make up for just one unresolved negative experience. Why's this important? Forrester Research reports that 8 out of 10 IT decision makers say word of mouth recommendations are the most important source of information when making buying decisions. It's time to be really good to customers and find ways to help them tell others.

NETHER REGIONS

Are we brave risk takers or are we just not? Research by Nathan Novemsky, Professor of Marketing at Yale School of Management suggests we are risk averse by nature. He discovered that, for most of us, losing even a small amount of money feels twice as bad as gaining the same amount feels good. This suggests we're wired to place confidence and reassurance before the prospect of great benefits. How can you assure your customers they won't get fired for buying from you?

KNEE

The buying decision – whether B2C or B2B – can be a knee jerk. In his best-selling book *'Blink. The power of thinking without thinking'*, Malcolm Gladwell asserts that we reach conclusions in the first two seconds of seeing something. The technical term is 'thin slicing' - the ability to find patterns and positive associations based only on narrow windows of experience. The imagery, messaging and story surrounding a strong brand is essential to influence 'thin slice' decisions.

HEART

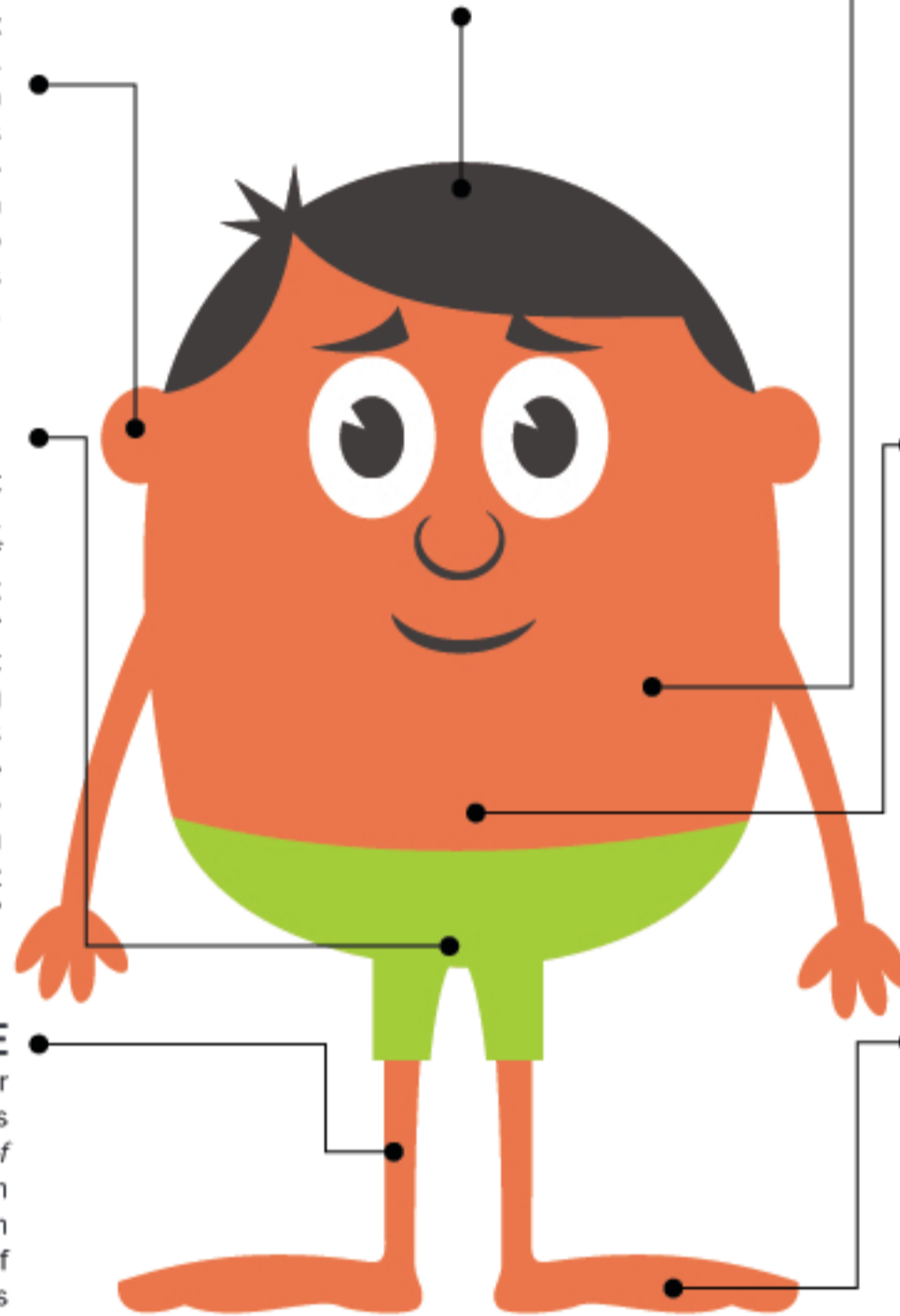
When it comes to decision making, emotion is four times as powerful as logic. The marketing industry has generally accepted that 80% of decisions are driven by emotion. This has been supported by neurological research. Recently, University College London used brain scans to show that people have emotional biases to every decision they make. We may post-rationalise but one fact is inescapable: Your B2B marketing campaign better press those emotional buttons.

GUT

We live in the world of big data. Those marketing analytics are a real boon, right? According to Information Management magazine, managers can be skeptical about Big Data and 'too often fall back on subjective, intuition-based methods to make business decisions'. Research has shown that 45% of corporate executives rely more on instinct than on facts when running their businesses. So, don't overlook softer factors such as shared values and cultural fit when planning a B2B campaign.

FOOT

The Chartered Institute of Marketing suggests that it can cost as much as 30 times more to acquire a customer than keep an existing one. Professor Steven Van Belleghem says that the famous 80/20 rule – where 20% of your customers account for 80% of your revenue – is rapidly approaching 50/50. Customers are voting with their feet. As loyalty declines, the influence of brand grows. Customers want a more rounded understanding of the companies they choose.



A report from CSO stated that the sales team is responsible for just over half of B2B leads while marketing delivers a quarter. In today's environment, marketing has to take more of the strain. Customers want to do their research and investigation before they talk to you. They want to understand what you offer them – on a functional and emotional level. B2B marketing has to understand the sources of information customers trust and be able to positively influence those conversations.

Sources

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