

B2B startups' lack of buyer empathy can hinder their growth: but it's not that hard to find

B2B startups are facing a stark reality, as competition increases and funding decreases, the traditional blend of technical and business jargon to promote the latest AI solution isn't cutting it anymore. Nearly half of the metrics that investors consider before investing are customer-centric, placing marketing and sales under the microscope first. On top of that, an overwhelming 60%+ of all raised investment often gets funnelled into marketing support – a huge gamble if it fails to hit the mark.

In this context, having marketing copy that's generic, uninspiring, boring and lacks any sort of humanity leaves investors wading through the BS to get to the truth of a product or service. And I see this happening all the time in the B2B world.

The core issue? A blatant lack of human empathy and deep understanding of the product's value from the buyer's perspective. This disconnect is particularly

crippling for startups, who sometimes have very technically-minded teams (read: not the most skilled communicators) and don't have the time or the money to invest in a good marketing engine.

Don't get me wrong, developing empathy for a buyer's problems is hard. Unless you've been the buyer and worked to solve their problems personally, then placing yourself in their shoes can be difficult. The solution is to 1) understand the buying journey and 2) give buyers what they are looking for at each stage of that journey. The former is easily understood. The latter requires that you uncover the company's four foundational insights. I'll explain them here:

Go deep on how you solve the real problem

This is about defining what you are selling (value proposition, features, benefits) and why it's needed to solve a challenge your customers have.

To stand out here, you'll need to capture your first of four foundational insights: your user's *actual* challenge – or the 'Real User Problem', as I call it. Very often the Real User Problem is not the headline 'category' problem everyone talks about. It's most often a nuanced issue that is stopping the buyer creating the change they seek and the problem of buying a solution. That's the first insight.

The second insight is their 'Alternatives': how they are trying to solve the problem. These may be solutions offered by your competitors, but may also be the workarounds and hacks your buyers are adopting. Find these two insights and you have an accurate picture of the needs and behaviours of buyers in the market. Most businesses spend all their marketing budget on uncovering their brand vision and mission. This is a mistake, because 80-90% of buying effort is actually focused on comparing how competitors in the market solve the Real User Problem.

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[Elysian Fields, helping founders secure an unfair advantage in the pursuit of growth](#)

Articulate what's unique and inspiring about you

Buyers want to know how you solve the Real User Problem: how you save customers from unsatisfactory Alternatives and how your product takes them to previously impossible new heights.

You need a vision that they want to come part of. So 'Your Vision' is the third insight you need to capture. Your company vision combines a view of the world you're building with a view of the world your customers would (given the vision and tools) like to create. Your vision should reflect a problem that exists and suggest a bold but achievable future. Your task is to find a vision that stretches your customer so they can imagine the gains possible when working with you. 'Going to Mars' is an inspiring vision for all involved. 'Making customer service easy', is not. You don't have to go to space to find big visions, you just have to know what your customers want to achieve.

Your last of the four insights is the 'new thing' your product or service brings to the market. Your buyers want to know how your approach differs and why it delivers a risk-free result. Your USP, basically. Look for the insights behind your IP or technical innovation. Or from the unique way you've *designed* your solution (people, processes, tech, UX etc) and the resulting *experience* you create (how the customer will interact with your solution). You will communicate how your new approach is informed by a deep understanding of their problem and how it has been designed to deliver a perfect solution for them.

The only way to truly stand out is to realise that the heart of your business isn't your product or technology – it's the people you're solving problems for. Empathetic, impactful marketing that drives sales and investment is about forging a deep, genuine connection with your buyers; understanding their needs, their challenges, and how they think about solving them to share with them a vision that resonates with their own aspirations. This approach will make them truly understand how much they can gain by working with you.

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