

40

Tips for Selling to Younger Buyers



The New Era of Gen Z and Millennial Decision-Makers

A SPECIAL REPORT POWERED BY

SalesFuel[®]

SECOND EDITION

“Gen Z is more diverse, entrepreneurially driven and technologically savvy than any other generation. Companies must adapt or risk becoming extinct in the next 15 years.”

Hannah Grady Williams, The Gen Z CEO Advisor

Table of Contents

4	Young Buyers vs Seasoned Buyers
4	Voice of the Buyer Survey
6	40 Tips for Selling to Younger Buyers
15	Conclusion

Methodology

In July 2023, SalesFuel conducted its Voice of the Buyer study. Our research team used an online survey to ask 1,021 respondents the questions salespeople and sales managers want answers to in order to understand how to be effective in their part of the buying process. The sample consisted of self-reported CEOs, other C-level executives, or purchasing agents of B2B companies with over 20 employees in the United States.

The purpose of this study was to understand the products and services these decision-makers intend to purchase in the next year. We also sought to understand how purchase decisions are made in these organizations. The insights our analysts gained will allow us to help sales professionals hone their methodology and tactics for optimal outcomes when they sell to small businesses.



- 1,021 C-level executives and purchasing agents in North America
- B2B companies with at least 20 employees
- Conducted by SalesFuel in March 2023

Young Buyers VS Seasoned Buyers

If you're trying to sell to Generation Z buyers, new data shows they have a radically different mindset even from millennials and buyers overall, requiring businesses and sales professionals to adjust tactics to close the deal.

Gen Z are those born between 1997 and 2015, which puts them at 8-26 years of age, making them the latest wave of consumers in the marketplace. Millennials have birth years from 1981 to 1996, with their oldest buyers in their early 40's.

Put together, Gen Z and millennials represent "younger buyers" versus "seasoned buyers" comprised of Gen X and boomers.

Young Buyers



Millennials + Gen Z

Seasoned Buyers



Gen X + Boomers

SalesFuel's "Voice of the Buyer" Study reveals that new sales and marketing approaches are needed to make the sale for younger buyers versus seasoned buyers.

“Understanding generational differences can impact how you reach younger groups, communicate with them, and, ultimately, win them over as customers. As millennials rise through the ranks and Gen Z continues to enter the workforce and demand a voice, their power and influence will only continue to grow.”

Paula Chiochi, CEO + Founder, Outward Media, Inc

Here are **40** quick insights for selling to younger buyers – Gen Z and millennials – according to their reported preferences.

- 1. Always be credible.** 45% of younger buyers have not encountered salespeople who go beyond selling their product and actually try to help solve a problem or achieve a business goal. 29% of them also believe citing research that is misleading or from questionable sources is a deal-breaker.
- 2. Be human.** Younger buyers want to know who you are, not just what you can do for them. They want you to care about who they are as well.
- 3. Be empathic.** In the past 12 months, 38% of younger buyers have felt stressed, and 45% have worked longer hours. Go beyond benefits to the company and talk about the personal benefits to the buyer.
- 4. Always be available and responsive to them.** It's good advice in general, but 53% of younger buyers rank responsiveness in the top five for most desired salesperson attributes.
- 5. Be frank, open and transparent.** Have a conversation, not a presentation. Younger buyers care about how things look, but they also have a healthy skepticism that can sniff out inauthenticity with relative ease.



- 6. Never ask “tell me about your business.”** Younger buyers are 12% more likely than older buyers to rank “Creative, out-of-the-box thinking” in their top 5 salesperson attributes. SalesFuel provides this kind of intelligence through its SalesCred PRO platform for B2B sales teams.
- 7. Don’t just know their business, know their customers.** Younger buyers are nearly 20% more likely to rank “knows my customers” in their top 5 desired attributes of a salesperson that calls on them.
- 8. Understand your position in their buying process.**
 - First, 51% attempt to solve the problem/meet the goal with their current resources.
 - Next, 43% will discuss the issue with their current supplier.
 - Then they’ll turn to someone they trust for advice. 38% will discuss the problem/goal with peers, an outside consultant or industry expert. 34% will hold discussions with internal stakeholders affected by the problem or goal.
 - 35% will conduct online research of all the various suppliers/vendor options.
- 9. Use case studies and how-to content to fill the top of your funnel.** Younger buyers are 35% more likely to share their contact info with a seller to get insights on how your product can solve their business problems. This is also a great way to get insights on emerging market trends. For 37% of older buyers this argument doesn’t work.
- 10. Don’t count on them checking your website before speaking with you.** 42% of younger buyers will visit your company’s website initially. They opt for the opinions of peers and sites they consider to be more objective sources. Seasoned buyers, by contrast, are much more likely to check your website first.





- 11. Be prepared to talk about price on the first conversation.** If they do manage to visit your company's website, they're looking for price. 24% of younger buyers are reluctant to buy from companies whose websites don't clearly include the cost of their products.
- 12. Talk about how great they can become, not how great you are.** One-third of younger buyers consider "talking too much about how great your products are" instead of "what they can do for me" a deal-breaker.
- 13. Reach out to younger buyers later in the day.** Younger buyers are 26% more likely to prefer communicating with salespeople between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. (nearly 49% says this is a best time.). That said, 39% of younger buyers are always-on and will check their business email first thing in the morning.
- 14. Emotional Intelligence > Artificial Intelligence.** Don't fall into the trap of relying on your sales tools too heavily to pump out multiple emails. Make your email more personal, less templated. Personalization goes well beyond putting their name at the top.
- 15. Use video more often.** Even if you already are using video in your email and LinkedIn posts, it's likely not enough. Younger buyers are 19% more likely to look for video when researching your company or products. They also look for podcasts.

- 16. Start texting them occasionally.** They are more open to getting texts from salespeople, and your message won't get lost in their spam folder or in a sea of other email. This starts with asking for their mobile number or getting it from an online source.
- 17. Profile headshots matter to younger buyers.** They are 46% less likely to take a meeting from a salesperson if the headshot looks old or out-of-date.
- 18. Consider sending emails on Saturday.** 11% of younger buyers will email salespeople on Saturday.
- 19. Be helpful. Be interesting. Be gone.** You're talking to generations who tweet, instantly post photos on Instagram and watch TikTok and YouTube more than TV. Get to the point and never be boring.
- 20. Keep using testimonials and case studies.** Much like seasoned buyers, 46% of younger buyers report their buying decisions can be influenced by a testimonial from a satisfied customer if the testimonial seems legitimate.
- 21. Utilize artificial intelligence.** 31% of younger buyers believe AI can help them make purchasing decisions. Only 19% of older buyers say the same. What will the AI engines find out about you and your company?

22. Help your company respond quickly to negative reviews.

27% of younger buyers trust negative reviews of a business, and they influence the buyer's decision against the seller. However, 30% will respond positively when businesses respond to negative reviews. If you spot a negative review that has not been addressed, pass it to the proper channel ASAP.



“It’s time to start thinking about how you and your company show up to an AI engine. 31% of younger buyers who have used ChatGPT believe AI can help them make better purchasing decisions.”

Kathy Crosett, Vice President of Research, SalesFuel



- 23. Periodically research your company like a buyer.** Start with a simple Google or Youtube search and go down the rabbit hole. This is the first impression your company makes on a younger buyer.
- 24. Become known online.** 31% of younger buyers will also Google the salesperson's name before the first meeting. 23% of these buyers won't take a call or meeting with salesperson if they can't find you in a Google search.
- 25. Share your experience in the industry.** Younger buyers rely on more traditional criteria when researching a salesperson before meeting them, with years of experience (45%) and number of years in the industry (45%) being top factors of consideration. Logically however, younger buyers are less likely to consider a salesperson's lack of experience a deal-breaker. Share stories of other people you've helped in similar situations - while maintaining confidentiality, of course.
- 26. Spend as much time on your social media as your LinkedIn profile.** The importance of using LinkedIn profiles to vet sales professionals takes a huge drop from millennials to Gen Z, from 34% to 24%. Yet vetting a salesperson via social by Gen Z is 30% higher than for millennials.
- 27. Run a social media audit on yourself.** Younger buyers are 38% more likely to look for the salesperson's posts on social media. Don't let a sale get derailed by a joke or snarky remark you posted 5 years ago that can be taken out of context.

- 28. Never troll, ever.** If younger buyers find you insulting, trolling or disrespecting another person online, it will turn a potential meeting into a non-starter for 35% of them. And no, it doesn't matter if your sports team is better or who you thought should have won that big celebrity court case. Just be kind online.
- 29. Consider locking down your videos and photos to your friends and close acquaintances.** Younger buyers are 56% more likely to search for the salesperson's videos and photos.
- 30. Boost your follower and connection count.** The younger the buyer, the more important the number of likes and followers is. If you have a low number of LinkedIn connections, for example, it suggests not many people see the business value in being connected with you.
- 31. Don't be too aggressive after connecting on LinkedIn.** 19% of younger buyers have blocked a salesperson in the past year after they've "spammed me after connecting on LinkedIn." Start your new relationship by providing relevant value and helpful insight on your first 1-2 messages without "going in for the kill."
- 32. Remove disreputable companies from your employment history.** The companies you've chosen to work for indirectly tells the buyer something about you.
- 33. Don't be a jerk.** Confidence is still highly sought after with younger buyers but be careful not to cross the fine line into arrogance. 30% of younger buyers will not engage with salespeople who have poor manners, social skills or treat their support staff poorly.





- 34. Share news clippings.** Younger buyers are 17% more likely than seasoned buyers to be influenced by seeing a company featured in a news article.
- 35. Be ready to talk about sourcing and environmental impact.** Younger buyers are 18% more likely to buy from companies that have believable “green” credentials, minimize environmental harm and/or invest in sustainability.
- 36. Utilize social media.** Younger buyers are 43% more likely to increase consideration of a product or service if the seller has engaged directly with them on social media.
- 37. Understand the advantage now goes to the larger and online companies.** Younger buyers are 6% more likely to be concerned about the size of your company and firmographics, and they are 24% less likely to make locally owned businesses their first choice. If this is favorable to you, tout it. If not, be prepared to discuss your advantages how supporting local business benefits the community and your online offerings.
- 38. Your #1 cause is still solving problems and producing positive business outcomes for the buyer.** Younger buyers may want to talk about other causes, but this is still priority one to them – and to you.
- 39. Make buying from you a great experience.** 12% of younger buyers will pay a premium to buy from companies that provide a superior customer experience. That occasionally means going out of your way, and possibly outside of scope, to delight them.
- 40. It’s no longer about how you qualify the buyer.** It’s how the buyer qualifies you. This is why the sales process you use doesn’t matter if the buyer, especially a younger buyer, doesn’t perceive you as credible.
- 40+1. Be agile in your approach.** Use this report to be more effective in selling to younger buyers, but you still have to sell to seasoned buyers. More importantly, each buyer needs to be treated as an individual – with their own unique challenges, goals and emotions. Their attitudes may differ from their peers.

“Gen Z buyers want to get down to business and discuss price on the first contact with the salesperson. This is a challenge for today’s salesperson because most have been trained not to reveal price until they’ve proved value to the buyer or gone through their extensive discovery process.

Changes to existing selling processes must be made to benefit Gen Z buyers. Gen Z buyers need to see not only the value of the product, but also the value of the salesperson.”

C. Lee Smith, SalesFuel CEO
Global Sales Credibility Authority
Author of ***SalesCred: How Buyers Qualify Sellers***

Key Takeaways

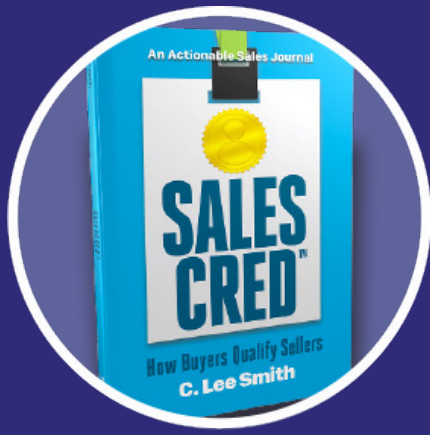
Younger buyers represent a market segment that continues to grow. Many traditional sales techniques won't work in this new era. Salespeople must adjust to this new reality and adapt their approach.

To truly be effective, today's salesperson must:

- ✓ Be human.
- ✓ Be credible.
- ✓ Be helpful.
- ✓ Be interesting.
- ✓ Be on point and to the point.
- ✓ Be digitally-savvy.
- ✓ Be driven by the cause of helping the buyer, not closing.

The challenge is yours to decide. Will you cling to what's "always worked" or embrace the mindset of the new buyer?





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40

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