



THE GROWING
POWER

OF

**MILLENNIAL
B2B INFLUENCERS**

How Millennials are Reshaping
the B2B Purchasing Ecosystem

URBANEER
CREATIVE

THE BRIEF

Table of Contents

03

Introduction

07

Millennial Consumers

Connected, Communal,
and Clever

12

Connected Millennial Influencers

15

A Communal Generation Communicating Differently

19

Clever B2B Shoppers

22

Millennial B2B Influencers

Here to Stay

25

Case Studies

B2B Companies
Getting it Right

25 **Maersk Line**

28 **Cisco**

30 **Kinaxis**

32

A Growing Opportunity for B2B Sellers

Introduction

THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION IS GROWING UP. MILLENNIALS, THOSE BORN BETWEEN 1980 AND 2000, ARE NOW THE LARGEST GENERATION IN THE WORKFORCE AT 53.5 MILLION STRONG,¹ OUTNUMBERING BOTH GEN-XERS¹ AND BABY BOOMERS. THIS SHIFT IN THE CORPORATE LANDSCAPE HAS ALREADY BEGUN TO IMPACT THE B2B MARKETPLACE.

While Millennials are not yet C-Level buyers, they are already influencing decisions made at that level through their involvement in the B2B research process. According to a report from Google, 46% of all B2B researchers are Millennials,² up 27% from 2012 and more than double the influence of any other generation.

¹ | Millennials Become the Biggest Generation in the U.S. Workforce. The Wall Street Journal. 2015 <http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2015/05/11/millennials-become-the-biggest-generation-in-the-u-s-workforce/>

² | The Changing Face of B2B Marketing. Think with Google. 2015 <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing.html>

At the same time, the role of vendors in the purchasing process is shrinking—buyers of all generations are generally 57% through the buying process³ before they contact a salesperson. Engaging this new generation of buyers will only grow in importance as Millennials age, grow their careers, and advance in the workforce.

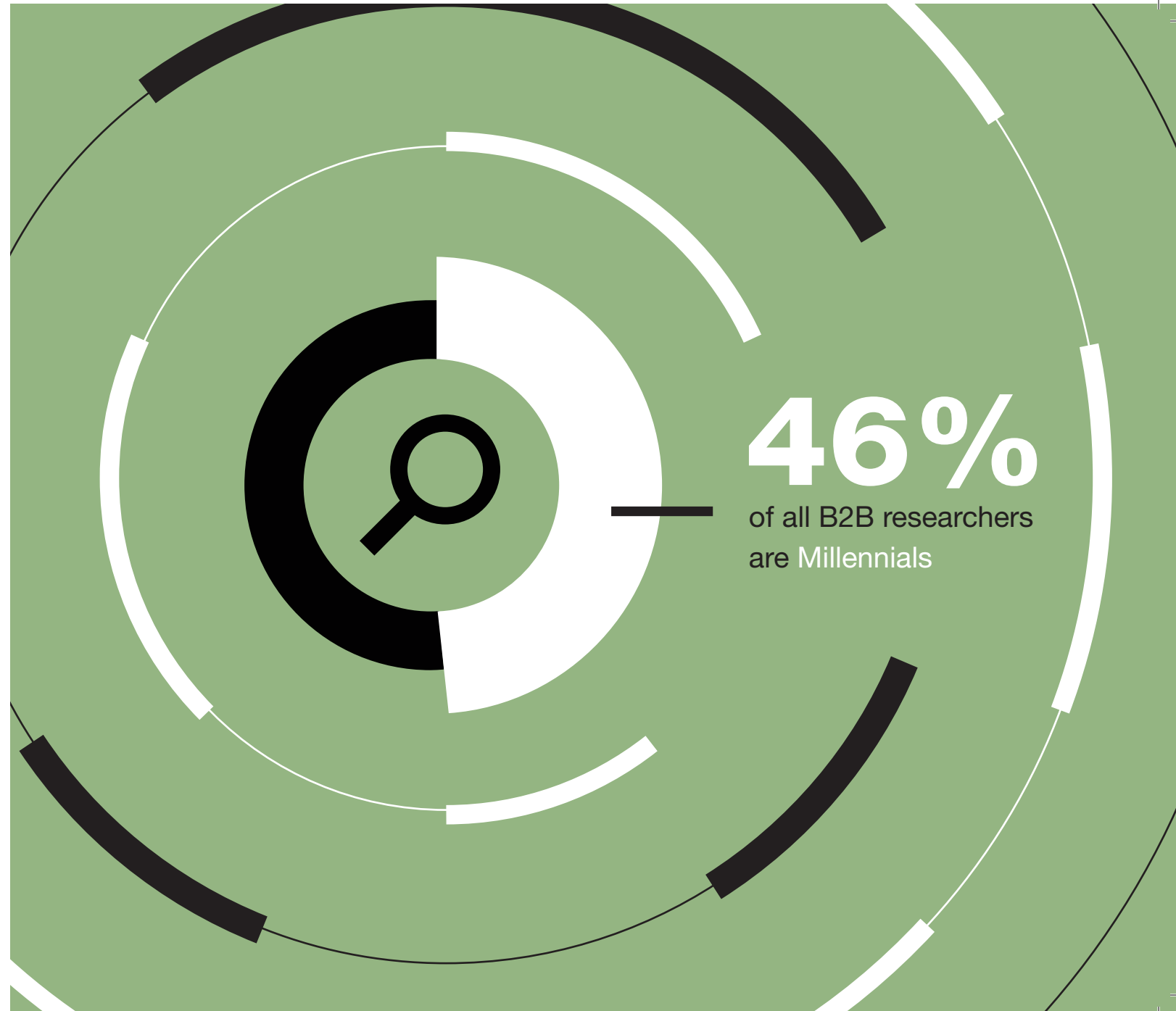
Millennials are now the largest generation in the workforce at 53.5 million strong outnumbering both Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers.

Blog posts and email blasts alone do not make a Millennial-friendly marketing strategy.

Millennials are not the same breed of buyers as older generations (as recent research from IBM⁴ underscores). The marketing techniques of yesteryear are likely to leave them cold.

³ | The Digital Evolution in B2B Marketing. CEB. 2012 <http://www.executiveboard.com/exbd-resources/content/digital-evolution/index.html>

⁴ | To buy or not to buy: How Millennials are changing B2B marketing. IBM. 2015 <http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/gbs/thoughtleadership/millennialb2b/>





We've already seen Millennials' needs as Connected, Communal and Clever consumers reshape the retail-buying world (RIP, suburban shopping mall⁵). Millennials do not leave these influences at home as they enter the professional world and begin to impact—and eventually make—high-level B2B buying decisions. They bring these expectations to the professional world and their B2B purchasing experiences.

Companies with Millennial-friendly marketing strategies have already created inroads with a generation of potential clients. We've seen B2B businesses in the container shipping, information technology, and supply chain solutions management industries outdistance their competitors by implementing campaigns that appeal to Millennials.



⁵ | The death of the American Mall. The Guardian. 2014
<http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2014/jun/19/-sp-death-of-the-american-shopping-mall>



We will explore the factors that shape Millennials as buyers, study how those influences extend to the B2B buying world, and examine the strategies companies have employed early on to reap significant rewards.

We can't guarantee reading this will make your company instantly Millennial-friendly, of course, but we can point you in the right direction.

■ The rest is up to **you.**

A black and white photograph of a man with a beard, wearing a light-colored sweater, looking down at a tablet device he is holding with both hands. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS:

Connected Communal Clever

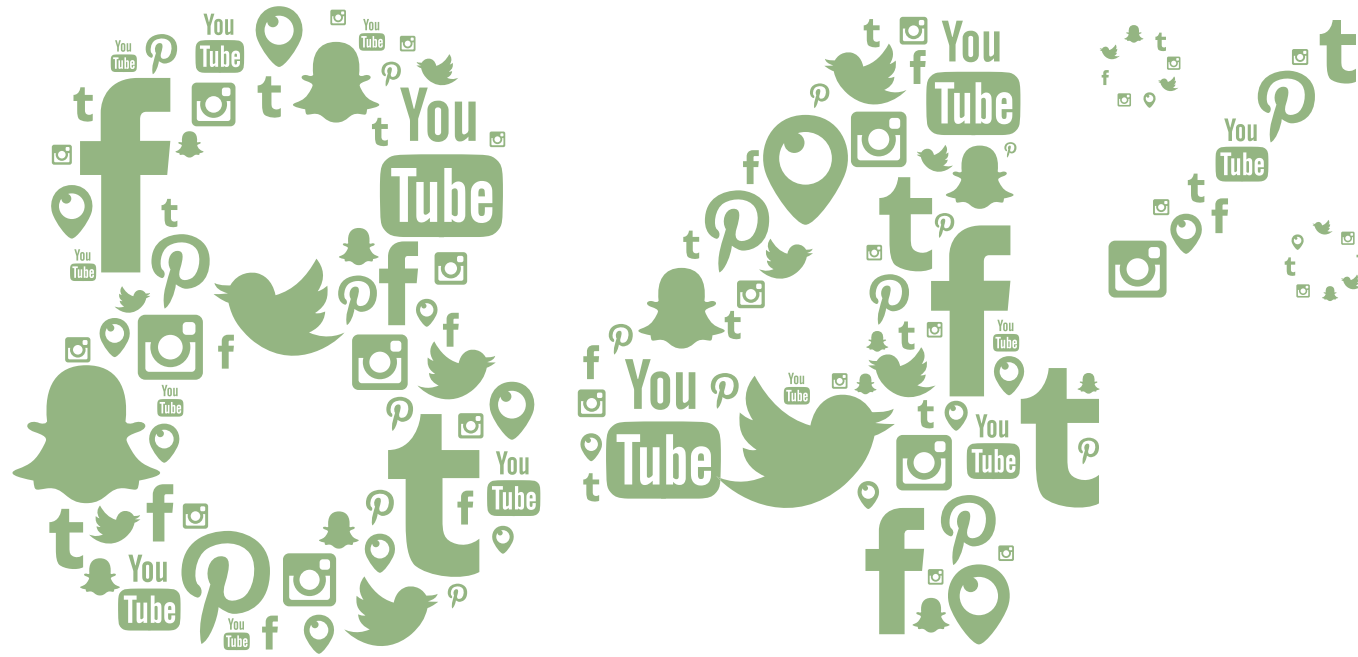
MILLENNIALS NEED TO BE CONNECTED AT ALL TIMES BECAUSE IT'S THE WORLD THEY GREW UP IN. BUT THEY AREN'T ONLY USING THEIR PHONES, TABLETS, AND COMPUTERS TO LIKE THEIR FRIENDS' INSTAGRAM POST AND TAKE #SELFIES. THEY ARE SHOPPING, TOO.

A recent study found 45% of Millennials⁶ spend at least one hour a day looking at retail-oriented websites. As many as 63% report actively “staying updated on brands” through social networks, while 60% say social media is the most important advertising medium.

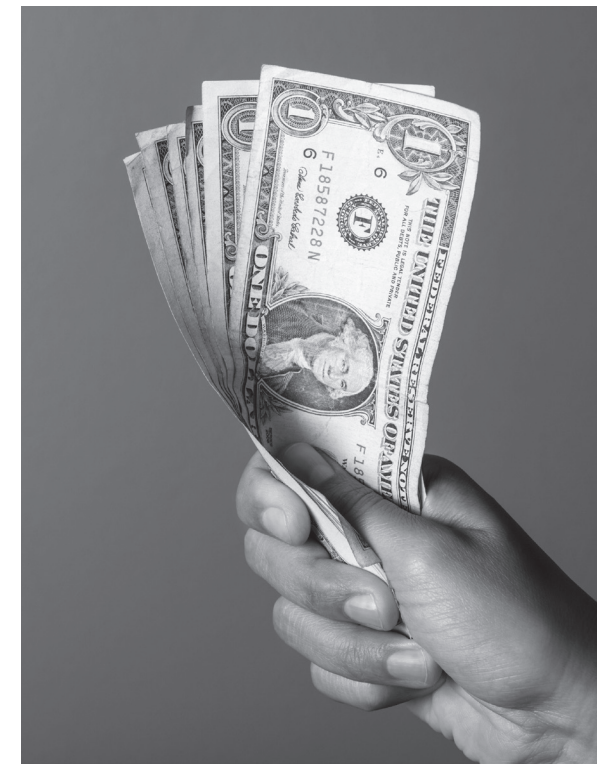
They don't simply want to be connected, Millennials need to be engaged throughout the buying process, across all their devices. Nearly two-thirds (68%⁷) of Millennials expect an integrated, seamless experience across smartphones, laptops, and tablets, during the shopping process and that includes B2B planning.

⁶ | Understanding How Millennials Shop Online. Nanigans. 2015 <http://www.nanigans.com/2015/01/14/understanding-how-millennials-shop-online/>

⁷ | Who are the Millennial shoppers? And what do they really want? Accenture. 2013 <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-outlook-who-are-millennial-shoppers-what-do-they-really-want-retail>



of Millennials claim that user-generated content influences their purchasing decisions more than any advertisements



Millennials are a Clever, thrifty,⁸ and risk-averse generation of shoppers. To put it bluntly, Millennials are cheap. This may have something to do with living through the Great Recessions, seeing their student loans rise to over \$35K on average,⁹ and facing unemployment rates that remain higher¹⁰ than any other generation despite the recent recovery.

They have access to more information at the swipe of a thumb than older generations had in entire libraries, and they are using these online resources to make informed shopping decisions. Before making major travel purchases, for example, Millennials generally check 10 sources online.¹¹

⁸ | Millennials are conservative, cheap, and could be the wisest generation. The Guardian. 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/money/us-money-blog/2014/feb/06/millennials-conservative-cheap-wisest-generation>

⁹ | It's Official: The Class of 2015 Has the Most Student Loan Debt in History. Mic. 2015 <http://mic.com/articles/117644/it-s-official-the-class-of-2015-has-the-most-student-loan-debt-in-history>

¹⁰ | In new millennium, no jobs open for millennials. Newsday. 2015 <http://www.newsday.com/opinion/oped/in-new-millennium-no-jobs-open-for-millennials-1.10305302>

¹¹ | For Millennial Travelers, it's the Experience That Counts. Hospitalitynet (via Deloitte). 2014 <http://www.hospitalitynet.org/news/4066395.html>

They don't want to pay full price for anything, ever, and expect rewards, discounts, and loyalty programs to lower product costs.

But although this generation has often been branded as impulsive and disloyal shoppers, the opposite is true:

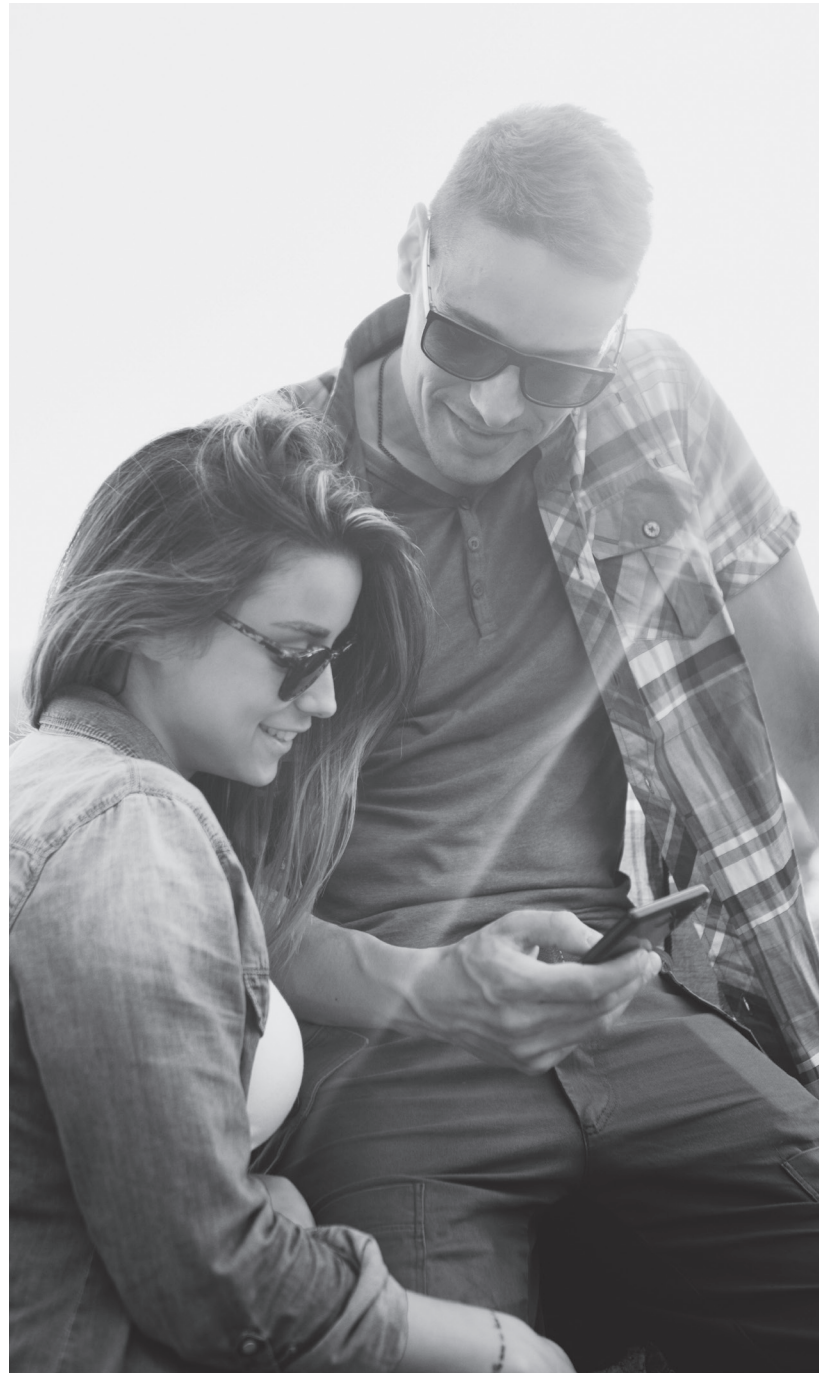
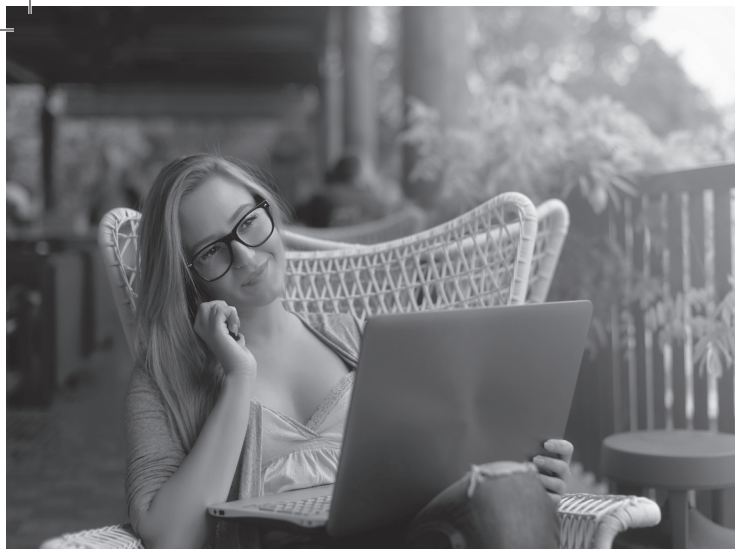
Millennials are very likely to remain with brands⁷ once they trust them.

Millennials are highly Communal shoppers, and communicate with their peers before, during, and often even after the purchasing process. As many as 84% of Millennials¹³ claim User Generated Content (product reviews, blog posts, or status updates written by consumers instead of companies) influences their purchasing decisions more than any advertisements.



7 | Who are the Millennial shoppers? And what do they really want? Accenture. 2013 <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insight-outlook-who-are-millennial-shoppers-what-do-they-really-want-retail>

13 | Talking to Strangers: Millennials Trust People over Brands. Bazaar Voice. 2012



After they have made a purchase, **71% of Millennials typically share their opinion of a product** because they think other consumers will value the input.

Because of this need to communicate, Millennials can become advocates for positive brand purchases, often by chronicling their experiences across the same mediums their peers will turn to during the next research process.

Now that you understand the needs of these Connected, Communal and Clever shoppers, we will look at how these expectations map to the B2B purchasing world. Whether they are shopping for songs on iTunes or researching their company's next data management platform, Millennials bring these purchasing attributes with them.

Connected Millennial Influencers

A grayscale photograph of a woman lying in bed, propped up on pillows, looking at her smartphone. The room is dimly lit, with the light from the phone illuminating her face and hands. The background shows a patterned headboard and white bedding.

IT'S NO SECRET THAT MILLENNIALS ARE DEPENDENT ON TECHNOLOGY. THE MAJORITY OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION IS NOW YOUNGER THAN THE INTERNET.¹⁴ THESE DIGITAL NATIVES CANNOT REMEMBER A TIME BEFORE EMAIL, SOCIAL MEDIA, HIGH-SPEED INTERNET CONNECTIONS AND, OF COURSE, IPHONES.

They need to be connected through their technology at all times (this is a generation with perpetual FOMO). They check their smartphones an average of 43 times per day.¹⁵ According to a recent study, as many as 83% of Millennials¹⁶ sleep with their cell phones within reach. Maybe dependent is an understatement. Millennials are addicted to the technology that connects them.

¹⁴ | The Many Reasons Why Tech-Savvy Millennials Need to Get Reality Savvy. Entrepreneur. 2014 <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/238377>

¹⁵ | Millennials Check Their Phones 43 Times a Day. This Is What They're Looking For. Entrepreneur. 2014 <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/234531>

¹⁶ | Millennials Study Captures Snapshot of Young America. PBS. 2010 http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues-jan-june10-millennials_02-24/



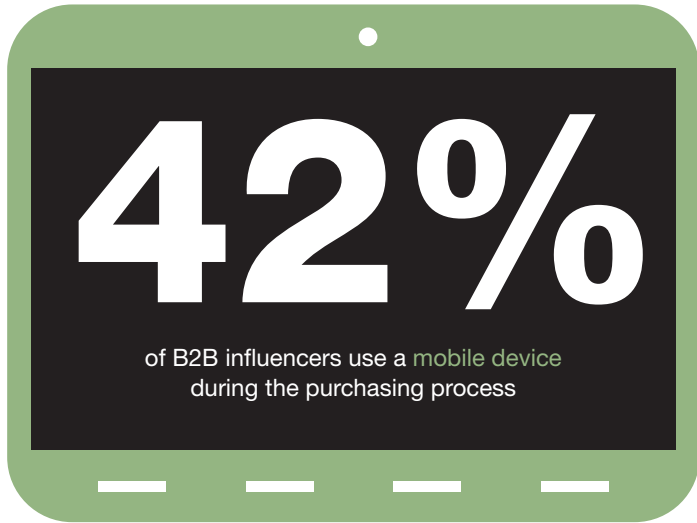
Millennials are famous for needing to be connected at all times, in locations as remote and strange as cemeteries, beaches, national parks, Mount Everest, and even outer space.¹⁷ This need to be connected does not take a break during business hours, as anyone with Millennial employees knows. Millennials use the technology that connects them to discover B2B purchases, too.

70% of B2B buyers and researchers watch video on their path to purchase.

A 2015 study by Google found that 42% of B2B influencers use a mobile device² during the purchasing process, and purchase rates on mobile devices have increased 22% in the past two years alone.² It's no coincidence that the percentage of B2B research being done by Millennials jumped from 27% to 46% during the same time frame.

² | The Changing Face of B2B Marketing. Think with Google. 2015 <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing.html>

¹⁷ | The world's weirdest Wi-Fi hotspots. Telegraph. 2014 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/northamerica/canada/10795532/The-worlds-weirdest-Wi-Fi-hotspots.html>



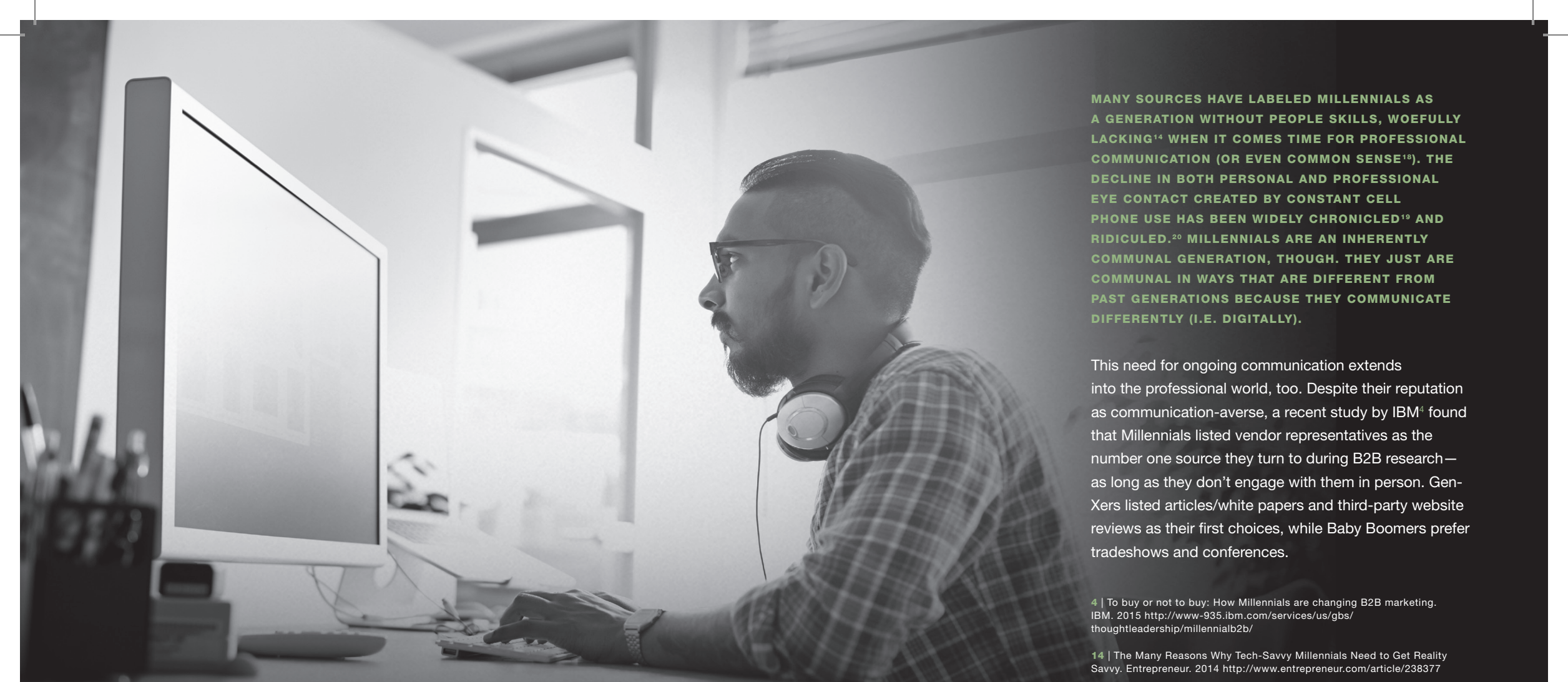


This new wave of B2B researchers isn't just reading company websites, catalogs, and white papers, though. 70% of B2B buyers² and researchers watch videos on their path to purchase (a 52% jump in only two years). In all, B2B researchers watched over 895,000 hours of video content from the top brands 2014.

As many as 64% of recent purchasers² were influenced by YouTube. In fact, YouTube has the highest influence on purchase decisions of any media. It's not time to jettison the written word, of course, but to actively create original digital content for YouTube, Vimeo, Vine, Snapchat, and other places Millennials are already using to communicate with each other. More often, they are using the new media they have grown up with to research B2B products as well.



² | The Changing Face of B2B Marketing. Think with Google. 2015
<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/the-changing-face-of-b2b-marketing.html>



MANY SOURCES HAVE LABELED MILLENNIALS AS A GENERATION WITHOUT PEOPLE SKILLS, WOEFULLY LACKING¹⁴ WHEN IT COMES TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION (OR EVEN COMMON SENSE¹⁸). THE DECLINE IN BOTH PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL EYE CONTACT CREATED BY CONSTANT CELL PHONE USE HAS BEEN WIDELY CHRONICLED¹⁹ AND RIDICULED.²⁰ MILLENNIALS ARE AN INHERENTLY COMMUNAL GENERATION, THOUGH. THEY JUST ARE COMMUNAL IN WAYS THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM PAST GENERATIONS BECAUSE THEY COMMUNICATE DIFFERENTLY (I.E. DIGITALLY).

This need for ongoing communication extends into the professional world, too. Despite their reputation as communication-averse, a recent study by IBM⁴ found that Millennials listed vendor representatives as the number one source they turn to during B2B research— as long as they don't engage with them in person. Gen-Xers listed articles/white papers and third-party website reviews as their first choices, while Baby Boomers prefer tradeshows and conferences.

⁴ | To buy or not to buy: How Millennials are changing B2B marketing. IBM. 2015 <http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/gbs/thoughtleadership/millennialb2b/>

¹⁴ | The Many Reasons Why Tech-Savvy Millennials Need to Get Reality Savvy. Entrepreneur. 2014 <http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/238377>

¹⁸ | What millennials don't know about the job market. CNBC. 2014 <http://www.cnbc.com/id/101628973>

¹⁹ | Just Look Me in the Eye Already. The Wall Street Journal. 2013 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324809804578511290822228174>

²⁰ | "Texting Hat" Lets You Keep Eye Contact (Kinda) While Texting And Talking. Bustle. 2015 <http://www.bustle.com/articles/76785-texting-hat-lets-you-keep-eye-contact-kinda-while-texting-and-talking-because-manners-are-for>

A Communal Generation, Communicating Differently

Millennials are also communicating with each other about their B2B purchases.

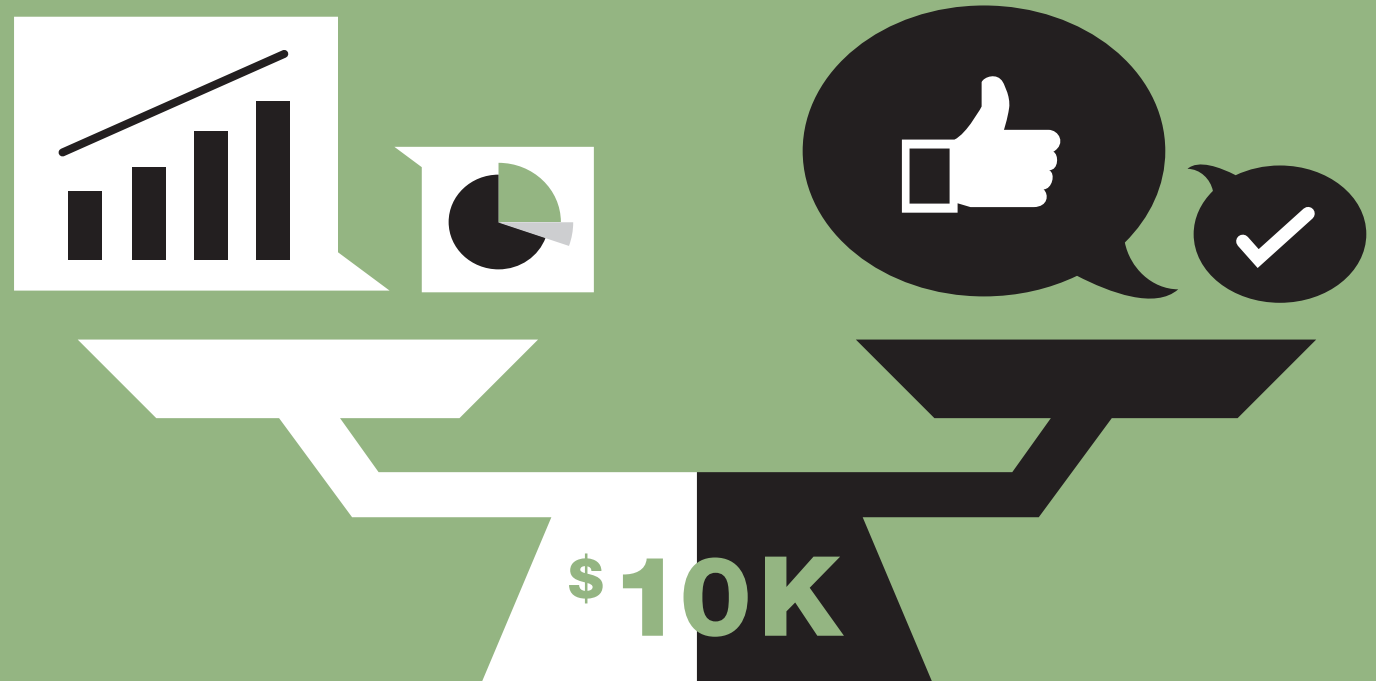
When considering B2B purchases of \$10K or more, Millennials put equal weight in their company's data analysis of products and recommendations from family and/or friends outside their organization. These considerations tie for their top sources⁴ for influencing B2B decisions. Gen-Xers and Baby Boomers both rate "personal experience/impression of the product or service" as their number one influence.

Millennials want to communicate with vendors, but favor the methods of communication they grew up with.

It's no surprise these digital natives prefer electronic communication.²¹ Although Millennial B2B professionals are using traditional communication methods, IBM's study found they are strongly leaning toward digital options. For example, although 69% are engaged in face-to-face meetings with vendors during the sales cycle now, only 24% reported⁴ they would like to continue to do so moving forward. The numbers for phone calls and emails are similarly inverse: 37% use email now, 69% prefer to use it moving forward; 22% communicate by phone, 62% want to do so in the future.

⁴ | To buy or not to buy: How Millennials are changing B2B marketing. IBM. 2015 <http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/gbs/thoughtleadership/millennialb2b/>

²¹ | The crucial skill new hires lack. BBC. 2013 <http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20130828-the-crucial-skill-new-hires-lack>



When considering B2B purchases of \$10K or more, Millennials put equal weight in their company's data analysis of products and recommendations from family and/or friends outside of their organization

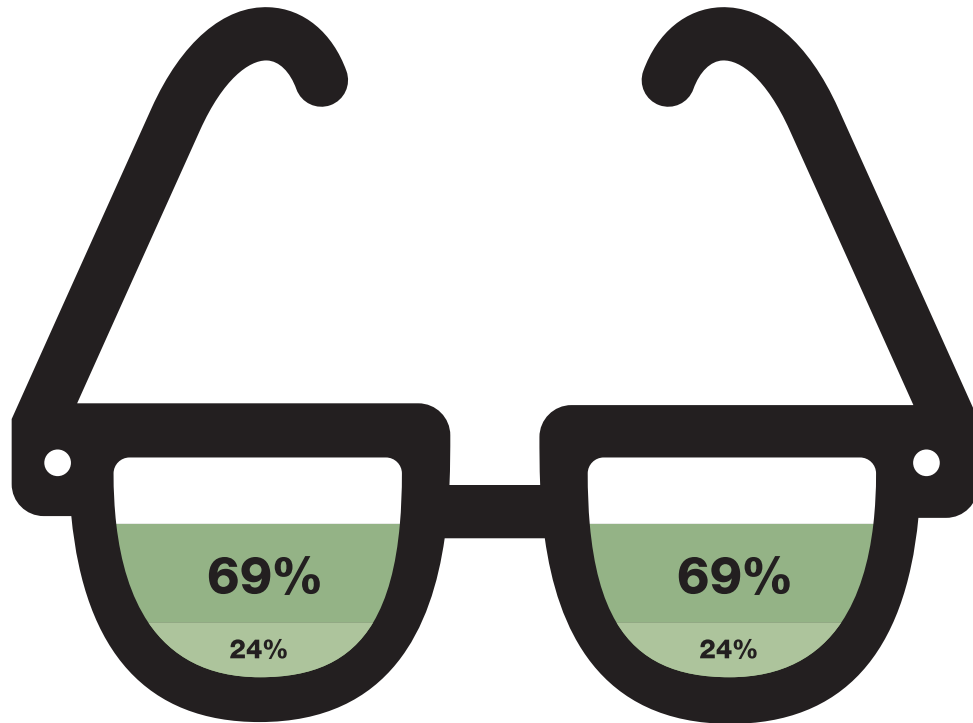


It's no surprise that the generation that grew up creating Yelp reviews, logging Rotten Tomato percentages, and even giving grades right back to their teachers by rating their professors online does not stop communicating after the sale. Millennials show their support with daily likes, shares, retweets, and favorites. **This habit of post-purchase communication maps over to the business world as well.**

Millennials are not just posting complaints and take-downs. **In fact Millennial post-purchase communication about B2B products trends strongly toward the positive.** According to IBM's study,⁴ Millennials are more likely to post a positive comment on vendor websites and through social media than other generations (followed by Baby Boomers and the cynical Gen-Xers). The study found that 70% of Millennial respondents were likely to post these positive comments compared to about 60% of Baby Boomers and around 55% of Gen-Xers.



⁴ | To buy or not to buy: How Millennials are changing B2B marketing. IBM. 2015 <http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/gbs/thoughtleadership/millennialb2b/>



69% of Millennials are engaged in face-to-face meetings with vendors today, but only 24% say they would like to continue to do so moving forward

Positive experiences are much more likely to be recounted online by Millennials.

It would be easy to suggest this likelihood to post positive post-purchase comments is due to a greater need to communicate in general, but that is not the case. Millennials are much less likely to post negative reviews on vendor websites or social media. Only 10% of IBM's Millennial respondents said they were likely to posts negative comments or complaints, compared to roughly 25% of the older generations. This bodes well for B2B sellers. Positive experiences are much more likely to be recounted online by Millennials, turning them into social media engaged advocates. And where are they sharing these glowing reviews? The same digital venues they are using to discover and evaluate their potential purchases.



MILLENNIALS DO NOT TAKE A BREAK FROM THEIR NEED TO OBSESSIVELY RESEARCH EVERY PURCHASE WHEN THEY GO TO WORK, EITHER. THE NUMBER OF KEY SEARCHES B2B BUYERS MADE DURING RESEARCH BEFORE CONTACTING SELLERS DOUBLED FROM 6 TO 12²³ IN THE LAST TWO YEARS AS MILLENNIALS GREW TO ALMOST HALF OF RESEARCHERS. MILLENNIALS AREN'T ONLY USING THEIR TECHNOLOGY TO DISCOVER BRANDS, THEY ARE ALSO USING IT TO GET SMART ABOUT POTENTIAL PURCHASES. THEY RESEARCH DEEPER, NOT BROADER, THOUGH: ACCORDING TO JIM LECINSKI, VP OF U.S. SALES AND SERVICE AT GOOGLE, "THE NUMBER OF BRANDS B2B BUYERS WERE CONSIDERING DROPPED FROM MORE THAN THREE IN 2012 TO JUST ONE OR TWO IN 2014."²³

As a result of all this increased research, Millennials are getting educated about their potential purchases well before contacting suppliers. This is creating a large downward trend in B2B seller engagement and influence. B2B salespersons are being marginalized throughout the process.

Clever B2B Shoppers

²³ | BMA15: Google Exec Says B-to-B Marketers Need to 'Change Our Game.' AdAge. 2015 <http://adage.com/article/btob/google-exec-b-b-marketers-change-game/298787/>

Although Millennials are leading this trend it is not restricted to Millennial B2B researchers along. Most buyers are usually 57% through the buying process²—nearly two-thirds finished—before they first contact a salesperson. It is estimated that brands have about 12% of a customer’s total mindshare³ over the entire process.

Millennials are getting educated about their potential purchases well before contacting suppliers.

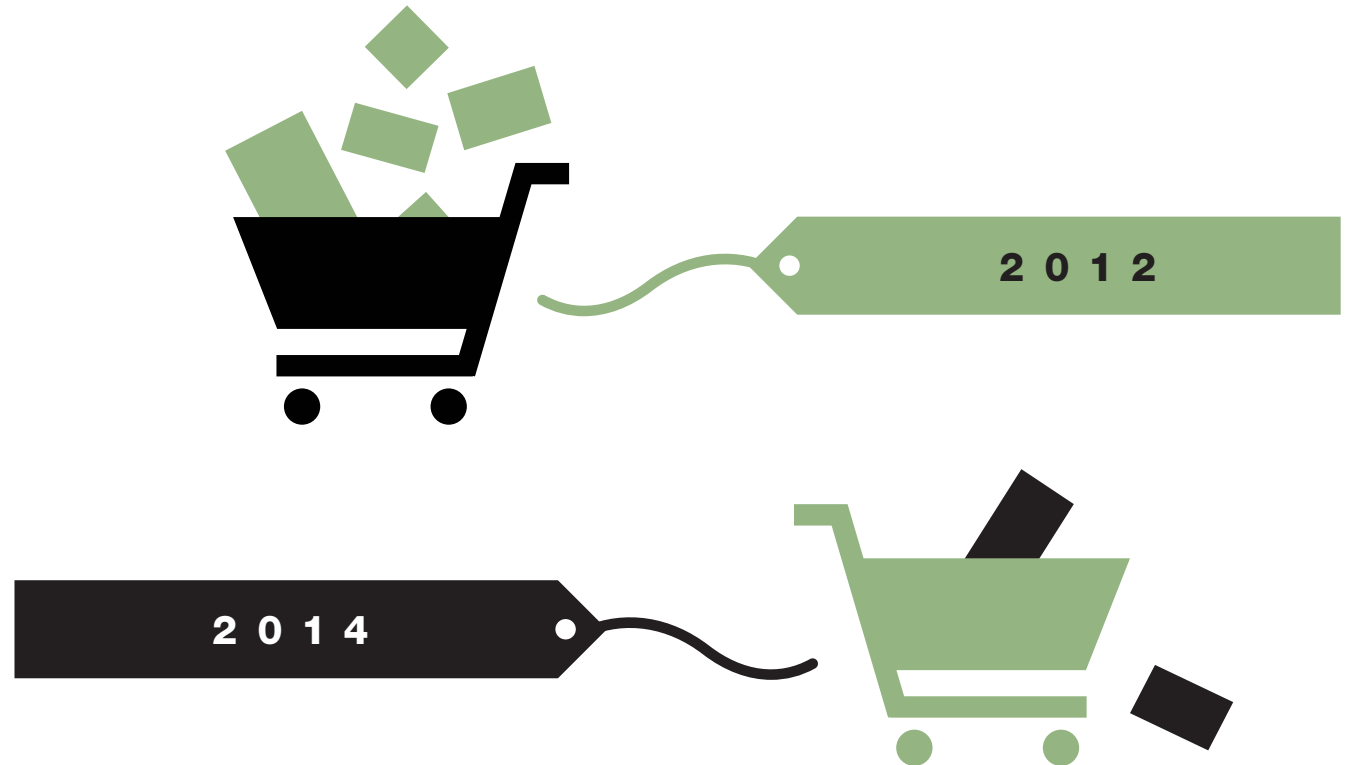
Do those numbers scare you? They should.

A generation of clients is comfortable making the majority of their purchasing decision before contacting any outside sources, salespeople, or vendors. As the research firm CEB noted,²² by the time B2B customers first contact suppliers they “have largely decided on their needs, leaving suppliers to compete on price.” Not exactly an enviable position to be in for a generation of clients.

2 | The Changing Face of B2B Marketing. Think with Google. 2015 <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing.html>

3 | The Digital Evolution in B2B Marketing. CEB. 2012 <http://www.executiveboard.com/exbd-resources/content/digital-evolution/index.html>

22 | Sell How Your Customers Want to Buy. CEB. 2012 <http://www.executiveboard.com/exbd/sales-service/challenger/new-decision-timeline/index.page>



“The number of brands B2B buyers were considering dropped from more than three in 2012 to just one or two in 2014”

JIM LECINSKI, VP OF U.S. SALES AND SERVICE AT GOOGLE



The Millennial generation is comfortable making the majority of their purchasing decisions before contacting any outside sources, salespeople, or vendors.

So how do B2B marketers influence potential buyers' decisions during that 57% of the process from which they are excluded?

Google's Lecinski cites Boeing, who "exported key elements of its website²³ to places where B2B buyers were likely to look. The idea of "exporting" company content is part of a comprehensive "Inbound Marketing" strategy, which involves publishing a diverse body of content for clients to discover during the search process to proactively shape their opinion. Companies like HubSpot have made an industry of helping clients accomplish just this.²⁴

²³ | BMA15: Google Exec Says B-to-B Marketers Need to 'Change Our Game.' AdAge. 2015 <http://adage.com/article/btob/google-exec-b-b-marketers-change-game/298787/>

²⁴ | The Inbound Methodology. Hubspot. 2015 <http://www.hubspot.com/inbound-marketing>



MILLENNIALS HAVE ALREADY DISRUPTED ESTABLISHED INDUSTRIES IN UNEXPECTED WAYS, AND THE B2B WORLD IS NO MORE IMMUNE TO THIS GENERATION'S GROWING INFLUENCE THAN THE FINANCE, RETAIL, AND TRAVEL INDUSTRIES, ALL WHICH HAVE BEEN RUDELY SURPRISED BY MILLENNIAL EXPECTATIONS RECENTLY. THE OLDER MILLENNIALS HAVE ENTERED THE WORKFORCE AND BEGUN TO MOVE UP THE B2B DECISION-MAKING LADDER. THEY ARE INFLUENCING THE BUYING PROCESS HEAVILY THROUGH RESEARCH, BUT NOT OVERTAKEN THE OLDER GENERATIONS THAT HAVE FINAL PURCHASING AUTHORITY. YET. THEY CERTAINLY WILL.

The research Google and IBM published draws on only a few years of observation, but the results are conclusive. This generation of digital, savvy, and highly social researchers will be major B2B buyers soon, and meeting their needs will require more than cold calls and email blasts.

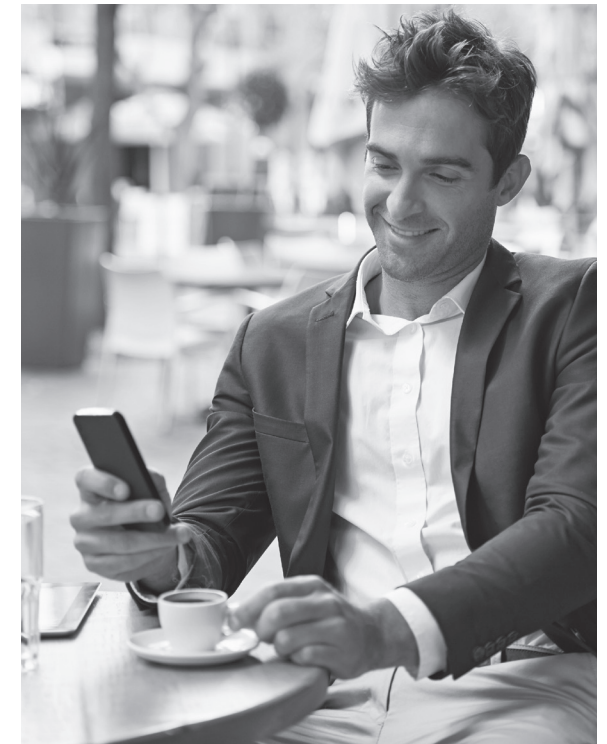
MILLENNIAL B2B INFLUENCERS:

Here to Stay



Connected buyers are relying less on B2B salespeople and more on digital resources they have grown up with. Increasingly, this means using mobile devices and turning to online video content to determine business purchases.

Millennials are thrifty, clever shoppers, and perform double the number of key searches than previous generations. They get smart well before contacting B2B sellers, and are nearly two-thirds of the way through the buying process before contacting a vendor (a percentage that will only be increasing).



The B2B world is not immune to the Millennial generation's **growing influence.**

Highly communal, Millennials want to engage with vendors, despite all the noise to the contrary. They just prefer digital communication. As IBM's research shows us, the way vendors communicate now will leave them cold.

Meeting Millennials' needs will **require more** than cold calls and email blasts.

Smart B2B businesses have already begun meeting the expectations of Millennial influencers, and enjoyed significant results.

In our next section, we examine the kinds of Millennial-friendly solutions all companies will need to adopt if they hope to stay relevant while this generation advances in the B2B buyer ecosystem. We'll examine winning strategies from leaders in the container shipping, information technology, and supply chain solutions management industries.





MAERSK LINE, A DANISH CONTAINER SHIPPING FIRM FOUNDED IN 1928, BEGAN TAKING SOCIAL MEDIA SERIOUSLY IN OCTOBER OF 2011. ALTHOUGH THIS MAY SEEM LATE TO COME TO THE GAME, IT FOLLOWED A TWO-TO-THREE-YEAR "LISTENING PHASE." "AT FIRST, WE DIDN'T EXPECT TO SELL SHIPPING CONTAINERS THROUGH SOCIAL," MAERSK LINE HEAD OF SOCIAL MEDIA JONATHAN WICHMANN ADMITTED IN A RECENT INTERVIEW.²⁸ A REASONABLE APPRAISAL, BUT THEY HAVE SINCE LEARNED BETTER.

Instead of marketing to their potential clients, Maersk focused on engaging with them by communicating directly. Maersk began sharing from their photo archive on Instagram, posting time-lapsed videos on Vimeo, creating sharable Facebook and Twitter posts/contests, and utilizing a wide range of social media.²⁵

CASE STUDIES: B2B COMPANIES GETTING IT RIGHT

Maersk Line

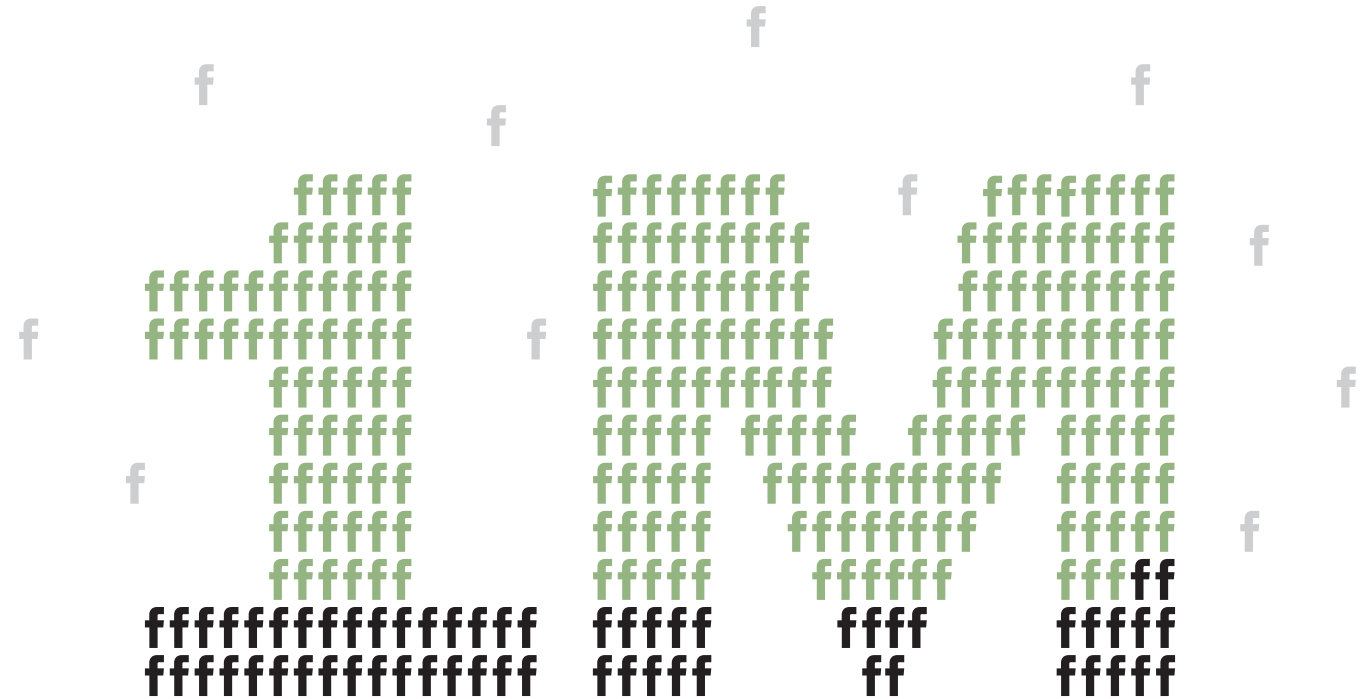
²⁵ | The media miracle in Maersk Line. Jonathanwichmann.com 2012 <http://jonathanwichmann.com/2012/12/30/maersk-media-miracle/>

²⁸ | Being B2B social: A conversation with Maersk Line's head of social media. McKinsey. 2013 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/marketing-sales/being_b2b_social_a_conversation_with_maersk_lines_head

When one of its ships hit and killed a whale, and arrived in harbor with the gruesome image of the dead animal still laying across its bow,²⁶ the company did not downplay the incident or try to avoid the controversial photo. **Instead, Maersk publicized the photo by sharing it on social media²⁷ accounts along with their heartfelt reaction.**

Maersk focused on engaging with their audience by communicating with them directly.

The company also **turned unavoidable container losses into a kind of scavenger hunt** by allowing Instagram and Facebook users to upload photos of stray containers that wash up on their beaches. These are not traditional marketing strategies by any means, but they achieved results all the same.



After rethinking their approach to social media, **Maersk has seen client engagement grow exponentially;** they currently have one million Facebook followers, an estimated 15-20% of whom are customers

²⁶ | One for the Textbooks. Rhodes Communications. 2013 http://rhodescomm.com/_blog/Observations/post/One_for_the_Textbooks/

²⁷ | Facing dead whale or lost cargo, shipper Maersk turns to social media. Reuters. 2013 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/03/maersk-shipping-social-media-idUSL6N0GY1WJ20130903>



After rethinking their approach to social media, the company has seen client engagement grow exponentially. Maersk Line now has 1M Facebook followers, an estimated 15-20% of whom are customers. A 2012 survey of their customers found 68% of those who responded²⁸ reported that Maersk's social media strategy improved their perception of the brand.

Maersk Line earned a Facebook user engagement score of 37.0 in June of 2012²⁹ behind Lego's score of 48.0 but above more well-known companies like Disney, GE, Shell, Ford, McDonald's, Dell, and Red Bull. This led to Maersk winning the 2012 "Social Media Campaign of the Year" and "Community Presence" awards at the European Digital Awards²⁵ in Berlin (not bad for a company whose social media presence was less than a year old at the time).



²⁵ | The media miracle in Maersk Line. Jonathanwichmann.com 2012 <http://jonathanwichmann.com/2012/12/30/maersk-media-miracle/>

²⁸ | Being B2B social: A conversation with Maersk Line's head of social media. McKinsey. 2013 http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/marketing_sales/being_b2b_social_a_conversation_with_maersk_lines_head_of_social_media

²⁹ | Maersk Line in Social Media. Slideshare.net. 2012 <http://www.slideshare.net/JonathanWich/maersk-line-in-social-media-presentation-from-shipping-analysis-institute-16-jan-2013-sai-20130116>

CASE STUDIES: B2B COMPANIES GETTING IT RIGHT

Cisco

IT GIANT CISCO LEARNED FROM CONSUMER-FOCUSED COMPANIES³³ THAT ENTERPRISE BUYERS INCREASINGLY “ACT SIGNIFICANTLY LIKE CONSUMERS WHEN PURCHASING SERVICES.”³⁰ CISCO IS CRANKING OUT YOUTUBE VIDEOS SEVERAL TIMES A DAY, INCLUDING INTERVIEWS, ANIMATED VIDEOS, A 5-MINUTE DRAMATIZED CYBER ATTACK AND A FAUX-VALENTINE’S DAY VIDEO POSITIONING THEIR NEW ROUTER AS THE PERFECT ROMANTIC GIFT.

As we write this, Cisco has over 112,000 YouTube subscribers and 20 million views across 28 channels. This has increased from 33K subscribers and just over five million views only two years ago. Much of the action takes place on the company’s main page, however; Cisco Luxembourg’s 71 subscribers have been waiting more than three years for a new video to drop.

Taking another cue from B2C companies, this time Dell and Gatorade,³¹ Cisco launched a “Social Media Listening Center” to monitor and engage their 5K daily mentions across 80 Facebook pages, 100 Twitter accounts, 28 YouTube Channels, various LinkedIn accounts, and blog/forum posts. This lets Cisco identify, respond to, and resolve client questions, concerns, or complaints in real time.

³⁰ | The Trillion-Dollar Market to Remake Business Applications. *Telecrunch*. 2015 <http://techcrunch.com/2015/06/10/show-me-the-trillion-dollar-market/>

³¹ | Cisco Transforms Social Media Monitoring with New Listening Center. *Exact Target*. 2012 <http://www.exacttarget.com/blog/cisco-transforms-social-media-monitoring-with-new-listening-center>

³³ | Networking for networking: how Cisco uses social media marketing. *The Guardian*. 2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/oct/09/networking-for-networking-how-cisco-uses-social-media-marketing>

The center identified an executive-level client's tweet³² about trouble using a video-conferencing service and routed the issue to a dedicated support line, addressing the problem in under an hour. But the benefits of social media engagement go beyond tech support and customer service.

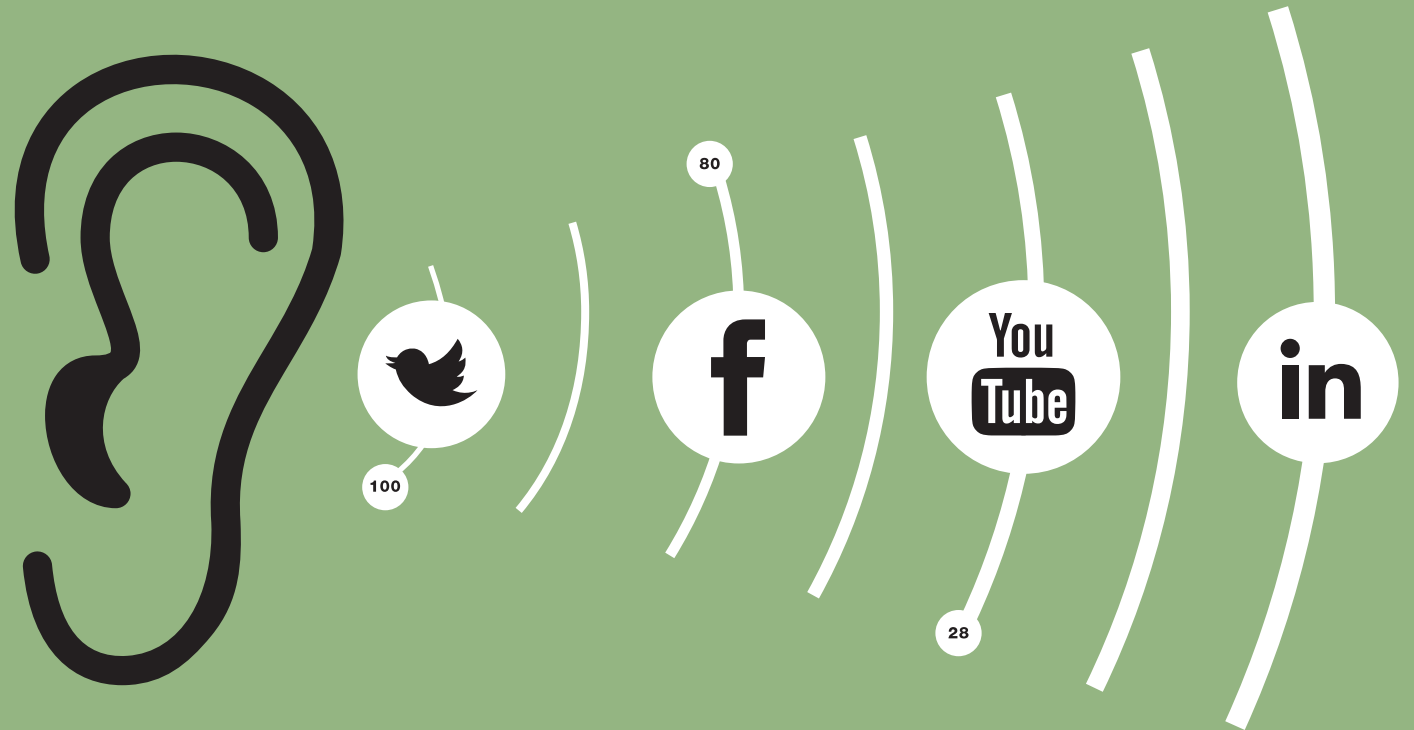
Cisco was able to use the center to determine their biggest influencers, gauge their reactions to a new ad campaign, and adjust their video and social content to have a greater impact.

“For sales, listening has been helpful for finding potential customers that are in research mode” one article about the center notes.³² Not a bad strategy considering that research mode now takes up 57% of the B2B buying process (a percentage that will likely go up in the future).

Cisco's social media strategy seems to be working. According to a recent independent evaluation of these listening activities Cisco achieved a 281%³³ ROI over a five-month period, an annual cost benefit of over \$1.5 billion. By monitoring and responding to social media, Cisco avoided marketing and customer service costs that would have achieved the same results but not proactively identified/resolved customer issues.

³² | How Cisco Listens in Social. Digiday. 2013 <http://digiday.com/brands/how-cisco-listens-in-social/>

³³ | Networking for networking: how Cisco uses social media marketing. The Guardian. 2013 <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2013/oct/09/networking-for-networking-how-cisco-uses-social-media-marketing>



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Kinaxis

KINAXIS, A CANADIAN SALES AND OPERATIONS PLANNING AND SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTION PROVIDER, WAS IN A SIMILAR POSITION AS MAERSK LINES. THE COMPANY LAUNCHED A BLOG IN 2004, BUT THREE YEARS OF SIGNIFICANT EFFORT³⁴ AND LITTLE RETURNS LED THEM TO RE-THINK THEIR SOCIAL STRATEGY. AFTER SOME RESEARCH, KINAXIS LAUNCHED A SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY FOCUSED ON “CONTENT, COMMUNITY, AND COMEDY.” THEY SET LOFTY GOALS FOR THE NEW STRATEGY BY RESOLVING TO DOUBLE THE TRAFFIC TO THEIR WEBSITE, DOUBLE THEIR LEAD FUNNEL, AND CREATE GREATER BRAND AWARENESS.

Kinaxis found that 70% of their B2B audience was searching for work-related information online, often using social media, so they recruited internal experts, executives, and supply chain professionals to create daily SEO-rich content to be shared across the company blog (which they opened to outside contributors in 2010).

³⁴ | B2B Case Study: How Kinaxis Uses Social Media. TellALL Marketing. 2010 <http://tellallmarketing.com/blog/?p=159>

By incorporating comedy³⁵ videos, such as their “Suitemates” and “New Kinexions” web series, **Kinaxis humanized their company and found a way to stand out in a very dry industry.** This also put their content in front of the 70% of B2B buyers² and researchers who watch videos on their path to making a purchase.

Kinaxis regularly updates a diverse range of video content.

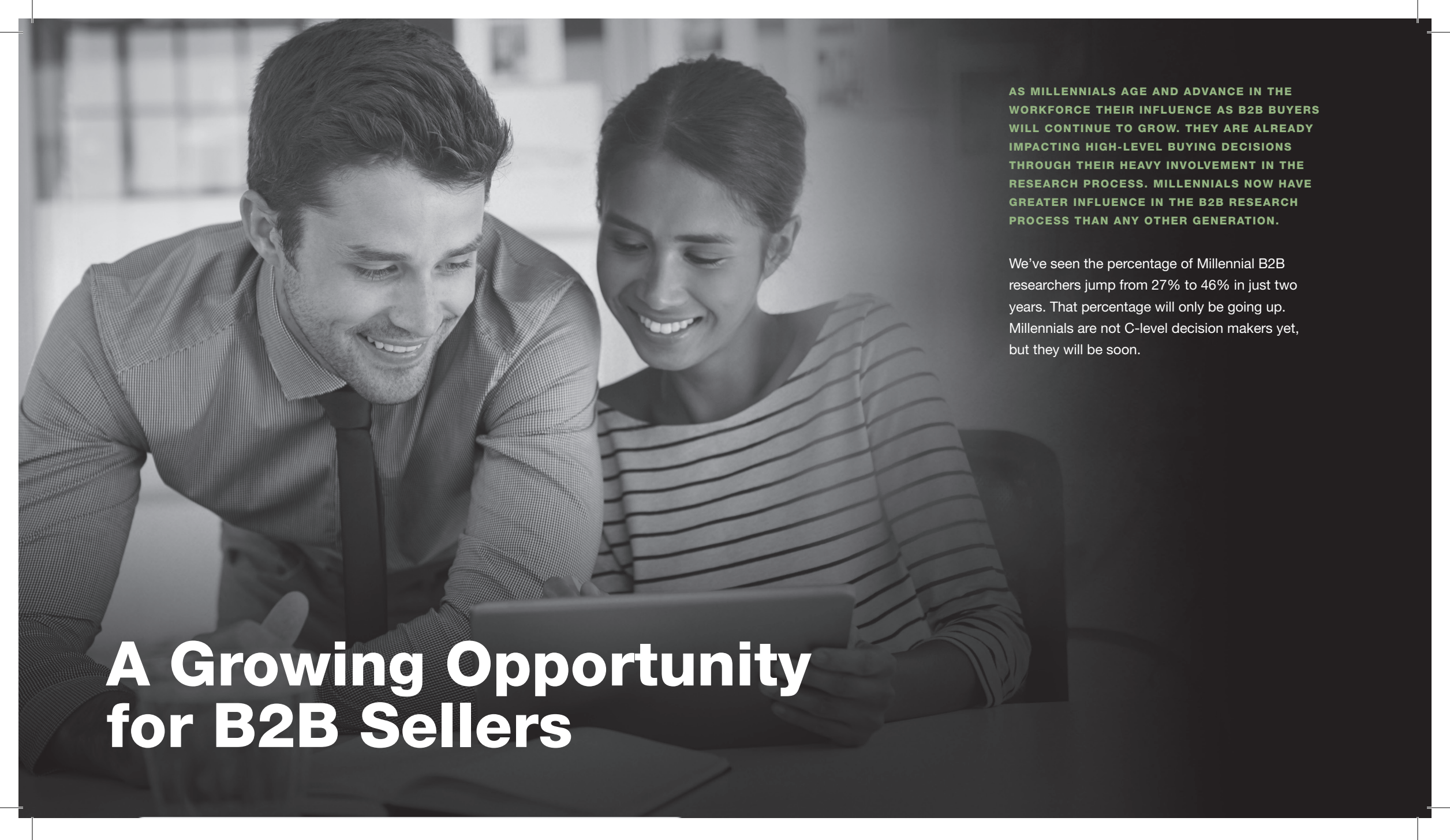
The strategy worked, and the benefits have gone far beyond humanizing Kinaxis and entertaining website visitors. According to a Fast Company³⁶ article, which labels Kinaxis as “The Definitive Case for B2B Social Media Marketing,” the company successfully **increased website traffic (2.7 times), conversions (3.2 times), blog traffic (5.3 times), and registration of community members (6.0 times)** between 2008 and 2009. Kinaxis continues to maintain their social media presence by regularly updating a diverse range of video content, including industry-specific interviews, a faux late-night talk show program, and music video covers (seriously).

² | The Changing Face of B2B Marketing. Think with Google. 2015 <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing.html>

³⁵ | Suitemates. <http://www.suitemates.com/watchepisodes.cfm>

³⁶ | The Definitive Case for B2B Social Media Marketing. Fast Company. <http://www.fastcompany.com/1665075/definitive-case-b2b-social-media-marketing>





AS MILLENNIALS AGE AND ADVANCE IN THE WORKFORCE THEIR INFLUENCE AS B2B BUYERS WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. THEY ARE ALREADY IMPACTING HIGH-LEVEL BUYING DECISIONS THROUGH THEIR HEAVY INVOLVEMENT IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS. MILLENNIALS NOW HAVE GREATER INFLUENCE IN THE B2B RESEARCH PROCESS THAN ANY OTHER GENERATION.

We've seen the percentage of Millennial B2B researchers jump from 27% to 46% in just two years. That percentage will only be going up. Millennials are not C-level decision makers yet, but they will be soon.

A Growing Opportunity for B2B Sellers



We've already seen the unique needs of Millennials as Connected, Communal, and Clever buyers upend the retail, finance, and travel industries. Research studies from tech giants Google and IBM have shown that these **buying habits do not stay at home** – Millennials expect these needs to be met in the workplace, too.

B2B companies that hope to remain relevant as the next generation of workers move up in their corporate hierarchies cannot afford to sit back and wait. Millennials are forming their life-long B2B buying habits now, well before they become C-level decision makers. B2B companies that get it, like Maersk, Cisco, and Kinaxis, have already established themselves as attractive to their future Millennial buyers. Those who wait will fall farther behind each day, and continue to play catch-up as this generation matures.



Millennials are forming their **life-long B2B buying habits now**, well before they become C-level decision makers.



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