



DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH RECESSION



HOW B2B BRANDS CAN USE NURTURE TO THRIVE IN 2023

As prices balloon and recession looms, businesses are looking to cut costs in whatever way they can. From freezing ad budgets to consolidating sales teams, B2B brands are more focused on survival than growth. But history suggests this is exactly the wrong approach.

In the recession of 1981-82, some companies eliminated their marketing and sales budgets while others continued to invest. The result? Investors grew an average of 256%, benefitting from extra market share freed up by all those brands that didn't invest - and ended up going broke.

Similar patterns are found in the dot-com bubble, the 2008 recession and the early stages of the pandemic. Businesses that cut spending risk losing 15% of their customers, while those that invest saw an average 17% increase in incremental sales. Far from an extra expense, marketing and sales proved to be an invaluable lifeline that kept the customers coming.

Business as usual wasn't working anyway

This isn't to say brands should respond to the economic downturn with more of the same. The truth is, most B2B businesses' sales have been long overdue a rethink. And the current situation presents the perfect opportunity to do that.

In this eBook, we explore what a better approach will look like in 2023 - and why a solid nurture strategy is the foundation of a thriving B2B business during times of recession.

BRANDS THAT MAINTAINED MARKETING OUTPUT IN 2008 ACHIEVE 3.5X BETTER BRAND VISIBILITY.

FIVE KEY CHALLENGES OF AN EFFECTIVE RECESSION SALES STRATEGY



LONG FUNNELS MAKE SHORT-TERM WINS HARDER

Many B2C brands rely on short-term sales activation to cushion their revenue during recessions - big discounts, hard-to-resist deals that convince cash-strapped customers to spend. But the B2B sales cycle is too long and complex to mimic those tactics.

Instead, B2B sales must take a long view; 75% of B2B organisations take at least 4 months to win a new customer in normal economic circumstances. But the current economic situation will eventually ease up, and those businesses that have focused on building relationships will reap the benefits of increased trust and authority.

B2B sales cycles are expected to expand to 12 months or more.



2

BUYERS ARE INCENTIVISED TO SWITCH VENDORS

The pressure to cut costs affects all businesses. That means many businesses are likely to look very closely at the value of their existing vendors, and may determine they could cut costs by switching to a cheaper alternative.

Studies suggest that buyers will generally stick with their current supplier unless there is a 10% difference with competitors. But this is unlikely to hold true during a recession, meaning B2B organisations cannot afford to be lax with their existing customer relationships.

A 5% increase in customer retention can produce more than a 25% increase in profit.



3

B2B SALES TEAMS NEED TO INCREASE EFFICIENCY

Few organisations can afford to cut sales budgets dramatically - that would be entirely self-defeating. But most will put greater pressure on their sales teams to deliver value, reduce costs and generally work in more efficient ways.

Fortunately, there are some easy wins to be made. 15% of B2B organisations don't include nurture in their marketing and sales process at all, while plenty more don't do nearly enough of it. Yet studies find that nurturing leads produces 50% more sales, and those sales cost an average of 33% less.

Nurtured prospects make 47% larger purchases than non-nurtured prospects.



4

DATA WILL BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER

The pressure to increase efficiency leads directly to an emphasis on data: how well can you target efforts? Are you able to measure progress and make informed decisions? And can your sales team leverage technology like AI to augment the sales experience?

These factors will play a crucial role during a recession: more than half of all B2B sales teams that adopt AI see significant savings, and 73% of B2B buyers now say they expect a personalised, B2C-like customer experience of the kind only possible with a mature data strategy.

Just 41% of B2B marketing organisations can view and analyse content performance metrics by “audience.”



5

MOST SALES TEAMS DON'T HAVE A SOLID RECESSION PLAN

Ultimately, the biggest challenges most B2B organisations face is a lack of long-term strategy that will address the impact of a recession. Fewer than 20% of respondents said they have a data-driven, quantified understanding of the total market opportunity and untapped customer potential.

What would such a strategy look like? It would emphasise the central role of data and lead nurture, enabling B2B businesses to weather the storm and invest in sustainable long-term growth.

Companies that plan in advance for a recession outperform competitors by at least 10%.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE RECESSION SALES STRATEGY



DATA-DRIVEN PROCESSES

Whether it's making your budget go further or demonstrating your effectiveness, data will be essential for any sales organisation during a recession. Now is the perfect time to introduce cost-saving, efficiency-enhancing technology like AI and machine learning - and that all starts with data.

62% of C-suite executives say non-agile data processes hindered their response to the pandemic. To avoid the same fate during the recession, B2B sales organisations should focus on removing silos, creating a centrally owned database and ensuring every member of the team is capable of harnessing data.



2

INTELLIGENT NURTURE PROGRAMS

As we've discussed, nurture programs are a vital tool during an economic downturn. Both leads and existing customers will respond to high-quality, carefully curated content that speaks to their needs and provides genuinely useful information.

The key is to make life easy for your audience. 73% of organisations say that content is often too hard to consume, and Gartner has found that conflicting information is a constant frustration for buyers. Sales teams should partner with marketing to understand what information audiences want and which formats they want it in.



3

END-TO-END TRACKING

Sales teams need to understand what's working faster. Most B2B sales organisations have historically been hugely wasteful; they play a volume-based game, assuming there is an infinite number of potential leads. But during a recession, accuracy and effectiveness are far more important.

Ensure you have the capacity to track all parts of the sales process. Data should be easily accessible to all team members; ideally you would have technology in place to analyse it in real-time and deliver actionable insights. This will allow your people to dial down approaches that are less successful and zero in on what's really working.



4

OMNICHANNEL ALIGNMENT

As buyers become more cautious, sales teams will have to adapt to their needs. Buyers won't go out of their way to interact with your brand, so sales and marketing need to join forces to achieve a truly omnichannel approach. Such alignment can lead to 38% higher sales win rates, while poor alignment can cost organisations 10% or more of annual revenue.

This will allow B2B brands to remain top of mind throughout the recession. Whether it's using paid media to talk to your audience digitally or producing high-level inbound content, the goal throughout should be to expand your brand's presence in a smart, cost-efficient manner.



5

END-TO-END LEAD GENERATION

During a recession, every lead counts. Organisations need to deliver a seamless experience across the sales process, ensuring that the gains created by nurture campaigns are carried across into the next phase of buying. This requires an end-to-end lead generation process - driven by what we at Ampli call our "360 call" approach.

A 360 call bridges the gap between different individuals in a sales team. Anytime a prospect is set to deal with a new salesperson, a call is set up with the brand representative they have previously engaged with to check how they found the new salesperson. This gives prospects an opportunity to raise issues; allows sales teams to gather more insight into their lead's needs and wants; and ultimately creates a more consistent, positive brand experience.

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BUSINESSES GROWTH
THROUGH THE
RECESSION?

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