



HIRING GUIDE

# The B2B Marketing Skills That Actually Matter

## A Hiring Manager's Guide

Technical skills can be taught. The patience to survive an 18-month sales cycle, the resolve not to panic after one bad quarter, and the confidence to hold your own in a room full of salespeople can't — and that's what actually separates hires who thrive from hires who burn out.

Three years of white-collar recession have squeezed marketing teams hard, and B2B marketers now wear more hats than they used to. The old model — a person for content, a person for ads, a person for SEO — is gone. What's replaced it is a hybrid of channel skill and subject-matter expertise that the market prizes highly, precisely because so few people have it.

Today's B2B marketer is part data analyst, part psychologist, part technologist, part diplomat. They're working sales processes that can run 18 months, trying to get 6 to 11 stakeholders to agree before anyone buys anything, and proving their work is worth the spend when the results might not land for months. And they're doing all of that in rooms full of salespeople who want new customers yesterday, product people who assume features sell themselves, and finance directors who want a straight line from every pound spent to revenue in the door.

### Fastest-growing marketing skills, 2021–2024

Creative skills

**443% growth in demand**

AI skills

**392% growth in demand**

Technology skills

**351% growth in demand**

Source: Example Recruitment research

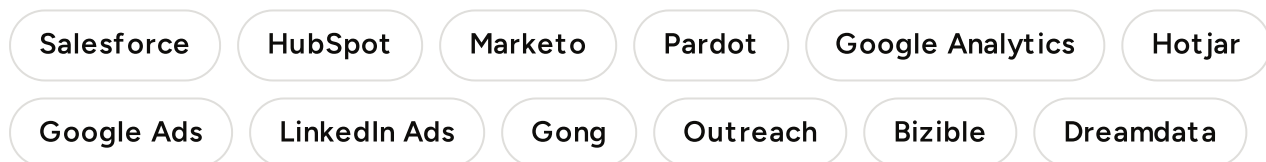
Those growth numbers tell you the job has changed, but they don't tell you the real difficulty: finding people who can handle the specific complexity of B2B. It's no longer just a technical-skills problem. It's a mindset problem, a behaviours problem, and a question of whether someone can function in an environment where everything takes longer, costs more, and involves more people than anyone expects going in. This guide covers the data skills that are now table stakes, the cross-functional collaboration that separates marketers who deliver from marketers who get stuck in their own department, the confidence needed to hold ground in sales-heavy cultures, and the behaviours that let someone stay patient and resolved through a long sales cycle rather than making

knee-jerk calls when nothing happens immediately. Most usefully, it gives you a practical way to spot these things in a hiring process.

## SKILL ONE · DATA

# Data Analytics: The Foundation Skill

In B2B marketing you cannot make decisions without data — not because it's fashionable, but because you're drowning in information from dozens of sources and data is the only way to turn that into something usable. A typical B2B team is pulling from CRM platforms like Salesforce and HubSpot, email systems like Marketo and Pardot, web analytics like Google Analytics and Hotjar, ad platforms including Google Ads and LinkedIn Ads, sales tools like Gong and Outreach, plus event platforms, social tools, and attribution tools like Bizible and Dreamdata. Somebody has to turn all of that into decisions, and that somebody is your marketer — data analysis has to be a core part of the job, not a nice-to-have, and it's made harder still by sales cycles too long to simply wait 18 months to find out if the marketing worked.



Practically, that means spotting the early signals that predict later success: which content downloads lead to sales conversations, which website behaviour flags a qualified lead, which email engagement patterns suggest buying intent, how event attendance correlates with deal progression. B2B buyers don't move in a straight line either — they research anonymously for months, pull in multiple stakeholders, and touch dozens of pieces of content before deciding anything. So your marketer needs to track multi-touch attribution across that whole journey, understand how different stakeholders engage with different content, spot the combination of activities that actually closes deals, and measure how brand awareness affects deal velocity and size. That's genuinely sophisticated analytical work — it needs both the technical skill and the strategic thinking to know what the numbers mean.

## Cross-Functional Collaboration: The Make-or-Break Skill

**“In modern B2B marketing, the ability to collaborate across functions isn't optional — it's the difference between campaigns that fail in silos and strategies that drive real revenue.”**

The days of a marketer working their own patch and lobbing leads over the fence to sales are over. Today's B2B marketers move across demand generation, product marketing and account-based marketing, and collaborate daily with sales, product, revenue operations and customer success — because the disciplines are now genuinely interdependent. Demand gen needs product marketing's positioning to build campaigns that land. ABM needs sales development's account insight to work at all. Product marketing needs demand gen's lead intelligence to stay sharp. Content marketing needs customer success's win/loss data for its case studies. None of it functions in isolation any more.

Underneath that is a structural shift: B2B companies are increasingly organised around revenue rather than departments, with marketing, sales and customer success sharing the same targets and the same outcomes, and RevOps managing the whole customer journey from first contact through to renewal. That means your marketer has to think past their own function and understand how their work rolls up into the wider revenue goal — not just run campaigns and report on them.

- With sales — attending pipeline and deal-progression meetings, understanding where marketing adds value across the whole cycle (not just at the top), building content sales teams actually use, and acting fast on sales feedback.
- With product — translating market insight into product requirements, positioning new features, feeding in competitive intelligence, and helping product understand real customer pain points.

- With revenue operations — improving lead handoff and qualification, contributing to revenue forecasting, helping design lead scoring and routing, and treating themselves as part of the revenue team rather than a separate marketing team.
- With customer success — helping customers adopt the product, spotting upsell and expansion opportunities, feeding messaging back from CS insight, and building advocacy programmes out of happy customers.

Because so many B2B companies are sales-led, marketers also need the confidence to advocate for marketing's value in language salespeople understand — pushing back respectfully when a sales request cuts against marketing strategy, educating other teams on marketing's role in revenue, and defending budget and priorities with data rather than opinion. The strongest B2B marketers flex their pitch by audience: ROI and pipeline for sales leaders, user experience and adoption for product, data quality and process for RevOps, customer insight and market trends for execs. What earns the credibility to do that isn't the pitch itself — it's delivering on promises, being upfront when they can't, sharing credit, owning mistakes, and consistently making other teams' jobs easier.

Questions to cover in interview:

- ☐ **Ask about a time they had to win buy-in from a department that didn't report to them.**
- ☐ **Ask how they've navigated conflicting priorities between marketing and sales.**
- ☐ **Ask how marketing, in their view, contributes to retention and expansion, not just acquisition.**
- ☐ **Ask what they need from sales to do their job better, and how they balance competing stakeholder demands.**

- Talks only in marketing metrics and struggles to connect their work to business outcomes.
- Shows little awareness of how other departments measure their own success.
- Gets defensive about marketing's role, or avoids the hard cross-functional conversations.
- Shifts blame onto other teams instead of owning shared problems.

## The B2B Mindset: What Can't Be Trained

**“In B2B marketing, technical skills can be taught, but patience, resilience, strategic thinking, and emotional intelligence can't. Success belongs to those who think in quarters, embrace complexity, and stay the course when results aren't immediate.”**

Technical skills can be taught. Cross-functional habits can be developed. But there's a set of traits underneath both of those that people either have or don't, and they're what separates marketers who thrive in B2B from those who burn out, get frustrated, or simply stop delivering. Patience is probably the most important of them — the ability to stick with a sales cycle running 12 to 18 months or more, knowing this quarter's campaign may not show results until well into next year, and measuring progress in quarters and years rather than days and weeks.

Close behind it is resolve: sticking with a strategy when early numbers disappoint, continuing to invest in thought leadership when competitors pull back, holding the line on content quality under pressure to just churn more out, and defending long-term brand building when everyone wants short-term leads. Strategic thinking in B2B means planning in quarters, not weeks, and holding several time horizons in your head at once — optimising and nurturing daily, managing content weekly, analysing performance monthly, planning programmes quarterly, and shaping positioning annually. Few people are comfortable operating at all of those levels simultaneously, but in B2B it's the job.

- 1 Daily — optimising and nurturing
- 2 Weekly — managing content
- 3 Monthly — analysing performance

**4****Quarterly — planning programmes****5****Annually — shaping positioning**

B2B marketers are also almost never selling to one person. Economic buyers care about ROI and budget, technical buyers scrutinise features and integrations, user buyers worry about usability and adoption, and influencers want industry trends and best practice. Crafting one coherent message that lands with all four at once takes both strategic thinking and real emotional intelligence — B2B buying is far more emotional than it looks, with buyers fearing career-limiting mistakes and pressure to justify decisions to multiple stakeholders, while also wanting to look forward-thinking.

**Economic buyers: ROI & budget****Technical buyers: features & integrations****User buyers: usability & adoption****Influencers: industry trends & best practice**

Resilience matters just as much: juggling multiple personas, long cycles full of potential stalls, attribution spanning countless touchpoints, and constant pressure to prove ROI on things that are hard to measure — on top of fast-moving technology and shifting buyer behaviour. That takes the capacity to bounce back from underperforming campaigns, extract the lesson without getting stuck in the post-mortem, and keep energy up through a drawn-out cycle without losing sight of the strategy.

And because the landscape genuinely never sits still — new platforms, shifting buyer behaviour, consolidating competitors, economic swings — a real growth mindset matters too: seeking out new things to learn, experimenting with emerging channels, borrowing ideas from other industries, and treating setbacks as something to learn from rather than something that happened to you.

Questions to test for the B2B mindset:



**What's the longest sales cycle you've managed, and how did you keep momentum alive through it?**

- ☐ Tell me about a time you had to defend a strategy that wasn't delivering immediate results.
- ☐ How do you balance pressure for short-term ROI against long-term brand building?
- ☐ A CEO wants instant lead volume when the strategy needs more time — what do you do?
- ☐ A key prospect goes quiet for months after heavy engagement — what's your next move?
- ☐ What excites you about B2B specifically, versus other kinds of marketing?

- Expects instant results from every activity, or gets frustrated by long sales cycles.
- Wants to switch strategy after one bad month rather than looking at the quarter.
- Undervalues brand building and thought leadership, or needs constant feedback to stay motivated.
- Feels overwhelmed by multiple stakeholders and competing priorities.
- Can't adapt their communication style, doesn't understand buyer psychology, or takes feedback personally.

#### SKILL FOUR · TECHNICAL

## The Technical Skills That Power B2B Marketing

**“B2B marketing success isn't just about tools — it's about mastering the technical complexity of long sales cycles, multi-stakeholder journeys, and integrated technology stacks to turn insight into action.”**

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# 78%

of B2B companies have adopted AI in at least one business function, as of 2025

# 15%

revenue growth reported by companies using AI in B2B marketing

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B2B creative execution is a different job from B2C. Marketers have to make technical products compelling to several stakeholders at once, sustain engagement across a 12 to 18 month cycle, build out genuine thought leadership, and make it work across digital and in-person channels. Content has to educate and tell a clear business-value story that lands with everyone in the buying committee, from economic and technical buyers through to users and influencers.

AI and automation have become central rather than optional: predictive lead scoring, account intelligence, content personalisation, sales enablement and advanced attribution all help marketers manage multi-stakeholder journeys and prioritise the accounts worth chasing. The typical B2B martech stack now runs to 20 or more integrated tools — CRMs, ABM platforms, marketing automation, sales enablement, intent data, tracking — and seamless integration, clean data and privacy compliance across all of it are essential just to get accurate measurement and smooth lead handoffs.

Content strategy has to map to every stage of a long buying journey — thought leadership, comparison content, ROI calculators, demos, onboarding guides, best-practice material — built to hold attention over time and to work for several stakeholders reading it in parallel. Measurement and attribution are inherently harder in B2B because of the long cycle and the number of touchpoints: the metrics that matter are pipeline velocity, deal-size impact, account engagement and content influence, and getting credit right usually needs more advanced models — time-decay, position-based, account-based — to connect activity to revenue honestly.

When you're assessing candidates on this, use real scenarios: ask them to design a campaign for a complex product, to explain how they'd use AI to personalise experiences and coordinate with sales, or how they'd integrate several platforms inside an ABM

programme. This expertise is scarce enough that B2B-specific technical skill commands a 20–30% salary premium over general marketing roles.

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**20–30%**

**salary premium** commanded by B2B-specific technical skill over general marketing roles.

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#### PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

### Building a B2B-Specific Hiring Framework

**“In B2B marketing, the right hire isn't just technically skilled — they think long-term, navigate complexity, collaborate across functions, and maintain patience and strategic focus through extended sales cycles.”**



**of recruiters report being ghosted by candidates** — sharper still in specialised, competitive B2B markets.

Job descriptions written for general marketing roles quietly undersell what a B2B role actually needs, so the first fix is rewriting them in B2B terms. Rather than "manage email marketing campaigns," describe developing and running nurture programmes that sustain engagement across a 12 to 18 month cycle and demonstrably improve lead-to-opportunity conversion. Rather than "work with the sales team," spell out partnering closely with sales, product and customer success, including sitting in on sales meetings and pipeline reviews. Be explicit that the role uses multi-touch attribution and advanced analytics to connect marketing activity to pipeline and revenue, and name the mindset

requirement directly — demonstrated patience and strategic thinking through long-cycle B2B work, with real examples of holding programme momentum and stakeholder confidence over an extended process.

At screening stage, watch for CVs showing only B2C or short-cycle B2B experience, no mention of CRM, marketing automation or sales collaboration, or a focus on vanity metrics rather than pipeline and revenue. Early questions should probe the longest sales cycle they've handled, how they structured their approach to it, how they measured their contribution to deals spanning 18 months, and how they kept prospects warm when things went quiet for months.

Further into the process, present live stakeholder-conflict scenarios — sales saying marketing leads are poor quality, product wanting to chase new features, demand generation pushing for more budget, a CEO expecting immediate pipeline impact — and see how candidates navigate them. Done well, this reveals their grasp of B2B buying complexity, their approach to content across different stakeholders and stages, how they'd integrate marketing and sales activity, whether their timelines are realistic, how they'd measure long-cycle attribution, and how they resolve conflict with data rather than opinion.

- 1** Round one — technical skills and experience: long-cycle campaign execution, data analysis and attribution, martech stack management, content strategy for complex buying, and cross-functional collaboration examples.
- 2** Round two — mindset and behaviours: patience, long-term thinking, stakeholder management, conflict resolution, adaptability, learning agility, B2B-specific emotional intelligence and business acumen.
- 3** Round three — team integration and fit: an assessment exercise presented to marketing and sales together, a mock pipeline review or sales meeting, and evidence they can work with your company's specific B2B challenges and personalities.

On the offer itself: expect B2B marketing roles to command a 15–25% premium over general marketing positions, reflecting the long cycles, complex attribution, cross-functional demands, technical skill and sheer scarcity of good candidates. Beyond salary,

strong B2B marketers care about access to decent marketing technology, visibility into sales and customer data, B2B-specific development and certifications, working alongside strong sales and product teams, and a visible path upward. Because the talent pool is thin, move fast — ideally a decision within 24–48 hours of final interview — with onboarding and growth plans ready to go and room to negotiate the wider package.

- Underestimating how complex B2B actually is, or assuming general marketing skills transfer without adjustment.
- Not testing for patience and long-term thinking at all.
- Overlooking sales-collaboration skills, or over-indexing on creative ability without checking analytical capability.
- Under-assessing data skills and cross-functional requirements.
- Failing to test conflict resolution and cross-stakeholder communication.
- Rushing the process, skipping reference checks with sales colleagues, or making an offer without fully understanding a candidate's actual B2B experience.

Longer term, building a pipeline of this talent means working both sides: internally, identifying high-potential marketers who could move into B2B, giving them targeted training and certifications, running rotations between marketing and sales, and pairing them with experienced B2B mentors; externally, building relationships with B2B marketing communities, specialist agencies, consultants and freelancers, and running internship routes focused on B2B skills specifically. Conferences, certifications, internal knowledge-sharing and recognising people who develop these skills all help keep the pipeline moving.

- 1** 3–6 months: how well they've integrated with sales, collaborated across functions, understood your tech stack, executed early campaigns, and gathered positive stakeholder feedback.
- 2** 6–12 months: impact on lead quality and sales conversion, improvements in marketing–sales alignment, B2B-specific content and campaigns delivered, and contribution to pipeline and revenue attribution.
- 3** 12+ months: leadership of cross-functional initiatives, strategic contribution to growth, development of other team members' B2B skills, and recognition as a

genuine B2B marketing expert internally.

## FINAL WORD

### The Final Word, Finally...

B2B marketing has become one of the most complex, demanding roles in business. Long sales cycles, sophisticated technology stacks, heavy cross-functional collaboration and genuinely complicated attribution combine into a set of requirements that few marketers actually possess — and hiring a general marketer and hoping they adapt no longer works when the stakes, the cycle length and the sophistication required have all gone up together.

The core lesson is that technical skill has to be B2B-specific, not general marketing capability with a different logo on it. Data skills aren't optional any more — every B2B marketer needs to be genuinely comfortable across multiple data sources, complex attribution and real analytics. Cross-functional collaboration is equally non-negotiable, because B2B marketers have to work seamlessly with sales, product, customer success and revenue operations, and need both the confidence to advocate for marketing in sales-heavy rooms and the track record to be believed when they do.

Most importantly, mindset and behaviour usually matter more than technical skill, because the patience, strategic thinking and emotional intelligence B2B success needs are hard to train into someone who doesn't already have the instinct for them. Hire for those qualities first, and build the technical skills around them. The pool of experienced B2B marketers is small and fought over — companies that adapt their hiring process to that reality will build teams that can actually thrive in it, while those still hiring on general marketing criteria risk high turnover, weak performance and frustrated stakeholders.

**“The future belongs to teams that combine technical expertise with strong people skills, strategic thinking with creative execution, and data-driven decision making with genuine customer empathy.”**



**Example Recruitment** — marketing-led headhunters for SaaS and FinTech startups and scaleups in New York and London.

Read the live report and get in touch at [theexample.co/reports/b2b-marketing-skills-that-actually-matter](https://theexample.co/reports/b2b-marketing-skills-that-actually-matter)