

# Report: Navigating the Complexities: The State of Enterprise IT Decision Makers & B2B Tech Buyers (2024/2025)

This report was created using ChatGPT's Deep Research on March 15, 2025 using the following prompt:

*I need a comprehensive, data-driven research study on IT Decision Makers (ITDMs) and B2B Buyers to uncover key insights that will inform marketing, sales, and thought leadership strategies. The research should provide a detailed understanding of:*

- 1. Audience Demographics & Firmographics Who are IT Decision Makers and B2B Buyers? Roles, titles, and seniority levels (CIO, CTO, IT Manager, Procurement, etc.) Company size, industry verticals, and geographic distribution Buying power and decision-making influence*
- 2. Buying Behaviors & Decision-Making Process How do ITDMs and B2B buyers approach purchasing decisions? Key triggers that lead to solution exploration Research habits: where do they go for information (analyst reports, peer reviews, social media, vendor websites, etc.)? Average length of the buying cycle and critical decision points Key stakeholders involved in the approval process*
- 3. Pain Points & Business Challenges What are their top pain points? (e.g., security concerns, budget constraints, integration challenges) How do these challenges vary by industry, company size, and seniority level? What solutions and technologies are they prioritizing in the next 12-24 months?*
- 4. Content & Messaging Preferences What type of content resonates with ITDMs and B2B buyers? (e.g., whitepapers, webinars, case studies, analyst reports, peer recommendations) Preferred channels for consuming business content (LinkedIn, trade publications, industry events, etc.) What messaging and value propositions are most persuasive to them?*
- 5. Competitive & Market Insights Which vendors or brands are most trusted by ITDMs? How do they evaluate and compare vendors? What are the key differentiators that make a provider stand out? How does the perception of traditional vendors compare to emerging players in the market?*

*6. Future Trends & Emerging Technologies How are trends like AI, automation, cloud computing, and cybersecurity impacting their decisions? What are their biggest concerns about future tech adoption? How do they stay informed about industry innovations?*

*7. Data Sources & Methodology Leverage a mix of qualitative (expert interviews, focus groups) and quantitative (surveys, industry reports) methods Use third-party research, social listening, and proprietary data sources to validate findings Competitive benchmarking to compare ITDM priorities across industries*

## Executive Summary

**IT Decision Makers (ITDMs)** in U.S. enterprise tech companies play a pivotal role in evaluating and purchasing technology solutions. Over the past 12 months, research shows that these buyers face **more complex decision processes, larger buying committees, and heightened scrutiny on ROI**. Key takeaways include:

- **Buyer Profile:** ITDMs span C-level executives (CIO, CTO) to mid-level IT managers and even procurement and line-of-business (LOB) leaders ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)) (). They primarily work at large enterprises (often 1,000+ employees) across industries like finance, healthcare, tech, and manufacturing. These ITDMs wield significant buying power and influence, with CIOs still leading most IT purchase decisions ().
- **Buying Behavior:** Enterprise tech purchases now involve an **average of 25 stakeholders**, up from 16 just a few years ago (). Buying cycles stretch around **6–7 months on average** (). Buyers increasingly demand detailed ROI analysis and peer input before committing ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). Nearly **77% of B2B buyers research independently** before engaging sales ([77% of B2B Buyers Do Their Own Research Before Speaking to Sales - Saleslion](#)), using ~5–6 information sources throughout their journey ().
- **Challenges & Priorities:** **Cybersecurity remains the #1 priority** for enterprise ITDMs, followed by data analytics and cloud integration ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). **Security concerns, budget pressures, and legacy integration** issues are top pain points. Despite economic uncertainty, **IT budgets are largely holding steady or growing** – 88% of ITDMs expected 2023 budgets to stay same or increase (), and 66% plan budget increases in 2024 ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)) – with investment focused on cloud, AI, and automation.
- **Content & Influence:** ITDMs are **information-hungry but filter out noise**. They prefer credible content like whitepapers, case studies, webinars, and analyst reports during decision-making. A majority (54%) feel **overwhelmed by content overload** ([2023 Content Preferences Survey Report: Personalized, Data-Backed Content Enables B2B Teams To Fast Track Buyer Enablement, Speed Up Path To Purchase - Demand Gen Report](#)), so they gravitate to trusted sources: tech news sites, peer communities, and vendor

resources. **Peer recommendations and brand trust** strongly influence decisions – 24.7% base decisions on peer input ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)), and prior experience with a vendor grew from 25% to 40% in importance last year ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)).

- **Competitive Landscape:** Enterprise buyers show a **loyalty bias toward established vendors**, with 57% expecting to buy from incumbent providers (). Familiar tech brands (Microsoft, IBM, Cisco, etc.) enjoy trust and installed base advantages. However, **buyers will switch for better value or innovation** – 48% would seek a new vendor if it offers more innovative features (), and 35% cite poor service as a driver to replace a current provider ().
- **Emerging Trends: AI, cloud, and automation** are top-of-mind. ITDM conversations are dominated by topics like artificial intelligence, cloud security, and big data ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). Companies plan to **double their use of edge computing, serverless, and AI** in the next two years ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)). While excited about innovation, ITDMs are cautious about skills gaps, integration challenges, and security risks when adopting new tech. Keeping up via industry events, communities, and analyst insights is crucial for these buyers.
- **Actionable Insights:** Marketers and sales teams must **align messaging with ITDMs' priorities** – emphasizing security, ROI, and strategic value. An effective engagement strategy will leverage **multi-channel content marketing** (thought leadership, peer testimonials, tailored whitepapers) and position the vendor as a **trusted advisor**. Given the large buying committees, providing **tools to sell internally** (e.g. ROI calculators, case studies, analyst endorsements) is key to speeding up the purchase process.

In summary, today's enterprise IT buyers are **savvy, collaborative, and value-driven**. Winning their business requires understanding their complex environment, addressing their pains with relevant solutions, and building credibility through consistent value-driven messaging.

## Audience Demographics & Firmographics

**Defining ITDMs and B2B Tech Buyers:** IT Decision Makers (ITDMs) are the professionals responsible for evaluating and choosing technology solutions for their organization. They “**make decisions about acquiring and implementing software technologies within an enterprise**” ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)), ensuring IT investments meet business needs. In tech B2B contexts, ITDMs often overlap with B2B buyers – individuals or committees tasked with purchasing hardware, software, or services for the company. These buyers include both technical leaders and business stakeholders who influence tech purchases.

**Roles, Titles, and Seniority:** In enterprise environments, ITDMs typically hold senior roles. At the top are C-suite executives – **Chief Information Officer (CIO)** and **Chief Technology Officer (CTO)** – who set IT strategy and often have final approval authority ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers](#)

(ITDMs) With the Right Message). Large organizations may also have specialized C-level roles like Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) or Chief Data Officer, reflecting the importance of security and data in decision making ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). Below the C-suite, **VPs and Directors of IT** (or Infrastructure, Engineering, etc.) manage specific domains and contribute to purchase decisions, especially by vetting technical requirements ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). **IT Managers and Architects** often evaluate solutions and vendors on a technical level, playing a key role in recommendation and implementation. In addition, **line-of-business (LOB) leaders** – e.g. a VP of Finance or Operations – become ITDMs when technology purchases affect their departments; research shows about **23% of tech projects are initially requested by LOB leaders** rather than IT (). Finally, **Procurement and Sourcing managers** are B2B buyers who handle vendor selection, contracts, and cost negotiations, ensuring purchases meet budget and compliance requirements. Each of these roles brings a different perspective: the CIO focuses on strategic alignment, IT managers on technical fit, and LOB executives on business outcomes.

**Company Size and Industry Verticals:** This research focuses on **enterprise-level companies in the U.S.**, generally meaning organizations with **hundreds to thousands of employees** (often \$500M+ revenue or 1,000+ staff). Within such large firms, IT buying is typically a team sport. A recent global study had an average respondent company size of ~14,732 employees and \$336M revenue (), indicating the scale of organizations considered. These enterprises span all major verticals in the tech-buying landscape: **Technology and Software** companies (who buy tools to build their products and run operations), **Financial Services, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Retail, and Government/Education** are all heavy IT investors. Each vertical has unique drivers (e.g. healthcare prioritizes compliance and data security, manufacturing focuses on IoT and automation), but all rely on ITDMs to guide tech decisions. Geographically, ITDMs are distributed across the U.S., with concentrations in tech hubs (Silicon Valley, Seattle, Austin, New York, etc.) but significant presence in every region given the ubiquity of enterprise IT. In our sources, **61% of surveyed ITDMs were from North America** (), reflecting strong U.S. representation.

**Buying Power and Influence:** Enterprise ITDMs command substantial buying power – often managing **million-dollar IT budgets**. **CIOs and CTOs** typically have the authority to approve large expenditures and are accountable for the success of those investments. They “**lead all stages of the IT purchase process**” in most organizations (), from setting requirements to final selection. However, influence is distributed: Buying committees are expanding to include many stakeholders for consensus-driven decisions. In fact, the **average enterprise tech buying team involves 33 people (17 from IT and 16 from LOB)** in large enterprises (). This means many influencers (architects, engineers, finance managers, end-users, etc.) have a say, even if they aren’t the final signatory. Mid-level IT managers can strongly shape requirements and vendor shortlists – one exception noted is that **IT managers and staff often “take the reins” in determining technical requirements** (), with CIOs deferring to their expertise at that stage. **Procurement officers** exercise influence by enforcing budgets and negotiating terms, effectively gatekeeping the purchase. Importantly, **line-of-business managers and CEOs** are involved in defining business needs and approving large projects, ensuring the tech decision will deliver

business value. Overall, enterprise ITDMs operate in a **matrix of influencers**, but those with senior titles (CIO, VP IT) carry the most weight in guiding and finalizing B2B tech buying decisions ().

## Buying Behaviors & Decision-Making Process

**Approach to Purchasing Decisions:** ITDMs in enterprises follow a **structured, multi-stage buying process** to mitigate risk and ensure the right choice. Typically, it begins with **identifying a business need or problem**, followed by researching potential solutions, evaluating a short list of vendors, obtaining stakeholder buy-in, and finally negotiating/purchasing. Research confirms that this process has grown more extensive: **61% of ITDMs say the tech purchase process is becoming more complex** (). One major reason is the inclusion of more stakeholders – as noted, an average of 25 people now participate in the journey (). These committees include both IT and non-IT (business) members, reflecting the need to satisfy technical requirements and business objectives simultaneously (). The **buying cycle length** in enterprise tech often spans **several months**. According to Foundry's 2023 study, enterprise IT purchases take around **6.2 months on average** for buyers at large companies (). Senior executives sometimes perceive slightly shorter cycles (~6.1 months) than IT staff (~7.6 months) (), possibly because top leaders are engaged more in the later approval stages. Overall, **6–7 months is common for enterprise deals**, though higher-cost or high-complexity solutions can take a year or more, and simpler purchases might be faster.

**Key Triggers for Solution Exploration:** Several factors can trigger ITDMs to initiate a purchase process. **Business needs and pain points** are primary drivers – for example, a need to improve cybersecurity, support growth, or replace aging infrastructure. In Foundry's survey, ITDMs indicated that about **37% of new technology purchases are to add net-new capabilities, 35% are upgrades, and 28% are replacements of existing solutions** (). This shows that innovation and scaling (adding new tech) slightly edge out routine upgrades as triggers. External events can also act as catalysts: a security breach might spur investment in new security tools, or new regulations might require compliance solutions. In 24% of cases, buyers even **alter decision timelines due to changing business priorities** mid-process ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) – for instance, pausing a project if budgets freeze, or fast-tracking it if a competitive need arises. Notably, **economic conditions** recently have created conflicting triggers: **31% of buyers said they delayed purchases due to budget freezes, while 29% had to accelerate purchases due to urgent needs** ([B2B Buyer's Survey: Economic Uncertainties Renew Buyers' Focus On Price & Functionality - Demand Gen Report](#)). This underscores that while cost control can slow decisions, mission-critical needs (like enabling remote work or launching a new product) can speed them up. Another trigger is **vendor-related**: if current vendors falter or new entrants offer compelling innovation, ITDMs will explore alternatives. For example, common reasons IT buyers seek a new vendor include a **new provider offering more innovative features (cited by 48%) or the current product no longer meeting business needs (40%)** (). Overall, a mix

of internal strategy, pain point severity, technology lifecycle, and external pressures determines when ITDMs decide it's time to shop for a solution.

**Research Habits and Information Sources:** Once a need is identified, ITDMs turn into diligent researchers. **Today's B2B tech buyers typically use multiple information sources (about 5–6 on average)** to educate themselves and compare options (). This research is heavily digital. In fact, **77% of B2B buyers won't engage a salesperson until after they've done their own research** ([77% of B2B Buyers Do Their Own Research Before Speaking to Sales - Saleslion](#)). Early in the process, ITDMs favor **independent, expert content**: technology news websites, industry publications, and community forums. According to Foundry, **technology content sites (with product reviews, expert opinions) are the most-used resources in the exploratory stage**, alongside search engines (). Peer insights are crucial as well – buyers often consult **peer reviews on sites like G2 or Gartner Peer Insights and ask colleagues in their network**. Indeed, **84% of B2B decision-makers start the buying process with a referral or recommendation from someone they trust** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)). As they progress to creating a shortlist, **analyst reports** (e.g. Gartner Magic Quadrants, Forrester Waves) and vendor websites become more influential (). Vendor-provided content like case studies, demo videos, and whitepapers are sought to validate specific capabilities. By the time the ITDMs are building an internal business case, **analyst firms leap to the top of the influence list** () – likely because third-party endorsement helps convince finance and executive committees. Notably, **peer recommendations remain key throughout**: even in later stages, direct interactions with peers and user communities guide final confidence in the choice (). Social media plays a role too: about **24% of buyers reported spending more time using social media to research solutions** in the past year ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) (e.g. browsing LinkedIn discussions or tech Twitter for real-user opinions). On average, enterprise buyers tend to consult **slightly more sources (6.2 sources)** than small-business buyers (who use ~4 sources) (), reflecting the need to educate a larger team. This multi-channel research habit means **vendors must be discoverable and credible across forums, review sites, search results, and analyst publications** to effectively reach ITDMs during their self-guided journey.

**Buying Cycle Length and Decision Points:** The path from initial research to signed contract is long and has critical checkpoints. We've noted the **buying cycle often lasts 6+ months** for enterprises (). This journey can be mapped in stages: **1) Needs Identification, 2) Research/Education, 3) Evaluation of Options, 4) Recommendation/Proposal, 5) Approval, and 6) Purchase/Negotiation**. At each stage, certain decision points occur. For example, at the end of the research stage, **buyers narrow the field to a shortlist of vendors** – this is a key decision point influenced by which vendors made the best case in content and initial discussions. Another critical point is the **internal presentation or proposal**: ITDMs often must justify the chosen solution to an internal committee or executive board (the **"sell internally" stage** ()). This is where having analyst backing or strong ROI data can make or break the deal. Surveys show the number of info sources used peaks during evaluation (averaging 4.1 sources at that stage) and then drops to about 2.3 sources by the approval stage () as the focus narrows (). **If consensus fails or doubts emerge at a decision point, the purchase can stall** – something



many vendors fear. Indeed, complex B2B deals can get derailed by indecision or changing priorities. To mitigate this, ITDMs often seek **buy-in from key stakeholders early** (e.g. involving security teams to vet compliance, or finance to budget) so that by the final approval stage there are fewer surprises. Nonetheless, **extended reviews by legal/procurement** or last-minute executive concerns are common final hurdles that can elongate the cycle. The trend in 2023 is that **tight budgets are slightly extending these cycles**, as buyers do more ROI analysis and due diligence ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). They are adding steps like extra approval layers or pilot tests. For instance, 38% of buyers said they are conducting **more detailed ROI analysis** than before, and 31% are spending more time on research per decision ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) – all contributing to longer decision timelines. Therefore, vendors must be prepared for a marathon, not a sprint, and enable ITDMs at each critical decision point with the right information to keep the process moving.

**Stakeholders and Approval Process:** Enterprise tech buying is a **team decision**, and mapping the stakeholders is crucial. As mentioned, an **average enterprise buying committee has 30+ people involved across IT and business functions** (). Not all of these are decision-makers; many are influencers or evaluators. Let's break down some typical stakeholders in the approval chain:

- **IT Executive (CIO/CTO)** – Usually the **project sponsor and final decision-maker**. They often chair the committee or at least have veto power. The CIO cares about strategic fit and ROI, and according to Foundry, **the top IT executive “leads all stages” of the purchase process except a couple (technical eval)** (). They guide the team, weigh everyone's input, and ensure the purchase aligns with business strategy.
- **IT Managers/Architects** – These are the **technical evaluators and implementers**. They define requirements, assess vendor solutions in depth, and report findings to the executive. They might run proof-of-concepts or pilot projects. Foundry notes that determining technical requirements is one stage where **IT staff take the reins over the CIO** (), highlighting their influence on what will or won't work technically. Their thumbs-up is crucial for a vendor to make the short list.
- **Line-of-Business (LOB) Leaders** – Department heads or business unit managers who need the solution (e.g. a Marketing VP for a marketing automation tool, or Operations head for an ERP system). They **initiate projects (23% of the time)** () and focus on how the technology will deliver business outcomes (increase revenue, efficiency, etc.). During approval, they advocate for the solution by showing the business case. They may also hold budget authority for departmental tech spend.
- **Procurement & Finance** – These stakeholders enter heavily in the **approval/negotiation stage**. Procurement ensures the vendor meets all requirements (pricing, contract terms, compliance) and often runs RFPs or vendor comparisons. Finance reviews the investment's ROI and whether it fits the fiscal plans. While they might not choose the technology, they can delay or block approval if cost/benefit doesn't check out. In some enterprises, a **Purchasing Committee** or CFO sign-off is required for deals above a threshold.

- **CEO or Board** – For very large or strategic purchases, the CEO, other C-suite members, or even the board might need to approve. They rely on CIO and CFO recommendations. Their focus is high-level: is this investment worth it for the company's direction? In tech-centric enterprises, the CEO might be closely involved in big IT decisions; in others, they stay informed but delegate the choice to the CIO and team.
- **Security and Compliance Officers** – With cybersecurity top-of-mind, **InfoSec teams (CISO, security architects)** now have a say in almost every IT purchase. In 2023, security staff became **“top influencers at all stages”** of the buying process (), whereas previously their input was mostly towards the end. They evaluate vendors for security posture, data protection, and compliance with regulations. A negative review from security can veto an otherwise appealing product, especially in regulated industries.
- **End Users or IT Staff** – Sometimes the eventual users of the system (e.g. developers for a DevOps tool, or analysts for a BI software) are consulted via trials or feedback sessions. They provide input on usability and needs. While they rarely have decision power, their buy-in can smooth adoption post-purchase, so many ITDMs include them in the evaluation phase for feedback.

The **approval process** typically culminates in a formal proposal or business case document that the core team (CIO, project lead, LOB sponsor) presents to the approving authority (could be a steering committee, CFO, or CEO). At that point, **consensus among key stakeholders is critical**. If any major stakeholder (security, finance, etc.) dissents, the purchase may be sent back for reconsideration or alternate solutions. Thus, ITDMs often engage stakeholders early to incorporate their feedback and avoid last-minute objections. As an example of stakeholder mapping: in smaller firms, you might have 8 people (IT and LOB) in a committee, whereas in large enterprises it can be 30+ (), as noted. But regardless of size, **CIOs still call most of the shots, and CIO/IT leadership involvement is constant from start to finish** (). The best practice for enterprise buying is a **collaborative approach** – IT provides technical due diligence, business owners ensure value, and finance/procurement enforce feasibility – resulting in decisions that are both technically sound and business-justified.

## Pain Points & Business Challenges

**Top Pain Points for ITDMs:** Enterprise ITDMs are tasked with solving complex challenges, and certain pain points consistently rise to the top in surveys. **Cybersecurity concerns are arguably the number-one pain point** across industries. Protecting the organization from cyber threats and data breaches is a constant worry as threats evolve. In 2023, **CIOs again cited cybersecurity as their top functional priority, for the third year running** ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). This is driven by an environment where ransomware and cyber attacks are ever-present; as one CIO put it, *“it’s not a question of if, but when [an incident occurs]”* ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). Following security, **“data and analytics” is the second-highest priority area for CIOs** ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)), reflecting challenges around managing big data, gleaning insights, and enabling data-driven decisions.



Closely tied to that is the challenge of **integration** – integrating new systems with legacy infrastructure and ensuring data flows smoothly is a perennial technical headache. Many enterprises have decades-old systems (technical debt) that are costly or risky to replace, so new solutions must mesh with old ones. This makes “**integration and architecture**” a **key concern cited by IT leaders** ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)) (often mentioned under application and architecture priorities).

Another core pain point is **budget constraints and cost management**. Even though many IT budgets are growing, ITDMs must often “do more with less.” They face pressure to justify every expense, especially in an uncertain economy. For instance, **high inflation and economic concerns** were noted as factors making it challenging for CIOs to grow and innovate ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). **Balancing competing priorities under limited resources** was explicitly cited as a challenge by many IT leaders ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). We saw that 31% of buyers had to delay purchases due to budget freezes ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)), showing how financial constraints can pause important projects – a frustrating challenge when needs are urgent.

Additionally, **workforce and talent shortages** are emerging as a pain point: enterprises struggle to find and retain skilled IT staff (in areas like cybersecurity, cloud, AI). This talent gap means ITDMs worry if they have the right people to implement and maintain new technologies ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)) ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)). Indeed, rising IT labor costs and worker shortages ranked as top anticipated challenges for 2025 in Spiceworks’ survey ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)).

For many ITDMs, **legacy infrastructure** and technical debt are daily burdens. Maintaining old systems (and keeping “the lights on”) still consumes a large share of IT resources – one study found about **36% of IT resources are devoted to maintaining existing environments** (). This leaves fewer resources for innovation, which is a pain point for CIOs wanting to modernize. **Integration challenges** go hand-in-hand, as connecting old and new tech or migrating off legacy platforms is risky and complex. Another pain point is **user adoption and change management** – getting internal teams to adopt new tools. If employees resist change or lack training, even a great solution can fail to deliver value, so ITDMs worry about choosing technologies that users will embrace and about providing adequate support.

**Variations by Industry:** While many challenges are universal, certain industries have unique pain point emphases. For example, in **healthcare**, compliance with regulations like HIPAA and ensuring patient data security add extra weight to security and privacy concerns. **Financial**

**services** firms likewise put security and regulatory compliance (SOX, PCI, etc.) at the forefront, and they prize low-latency, high-reliability systems for trading or transactions – so downtime is a critical pain point. **Manufacturing and retail** ITDMs often struggle with integrating operational technology (IoT, supply chain systems) with IT systems, and with modernizing legacy ERPs. They might cite **supply chain disruptions** or the need for real-time analytics as top challenges. **Public sector (government/education)** buyers might face painfully long procurement cycles and budget constraints due to funding processes, plus the need to secure aging systems. Despite these differences, **security, cost control, and integration** tend to be common threads, just weighted differently. For instance, an IDG survey noted that across job titles, IT executives focus more on responding to internal/external events and strategy, while lower-level IT pros are “more preoccupied with the status quo” maintenance (). This suggests in more conservative industries, ITDMs might be more occupied with simply keeping systems running (status quo) versus innovating.

**Variations by Company Size:** In enterprise-level companies (our focus), complexity is a top challenge: more users, more data, and more at stake. Large enterprises often have **global operations**, meaning ITDMs handle challenges of scale (e.g. global network performance, multi-country compliance, diverse user needs).

**Smaller organizations (SMBs)** might cite budget limits or lack of in-house expertise as their biggest challenges, whereas enterprises might cite inter-departmental alignment or bureaucracy as hurdles. The Foundry study showed a contrast: **smaller firms average 15 people on buying committees vs. 33 in enterprises** (), so SMB ITDMs might decide faster but have less specialized input; enterprises have the opposite – lots of input (which can slow things). Budget trajectory can differ too: in 2023, **57% of large enterprises expected IT budget increases, versus 44% of the smallest companies** ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)). Thus, enterprise ITDMs may have larger budgets to allocate but also larger demands. A pain point unique to big companies is **siloed systems and data** – with many departments and legacy applications, creating a unified view or platform is difficult.

Also, **governance** is a challenge: enforcing security and data policies consistently across a huge organization tests even seasoned CIOs. Conversely, SMBs’ pain points often revolve around getting affordable solutions and support, so they rely more on turnkey cloud services. For enterprises, customization and integration of solutions (to fit into a complex environment) is a bigger pain, whereas for SMBs it’s usually the lack of resources to even manage the tech.

**Variations by Seniority:** The priorities of a CIO versus an IT manager can differ, which in turn highlights different pain points. **C-level ITDMs (CIO/CTO)** tend to worry about high-level challenges: ensuring cybersecurity (as evidenced by 81% of CIOs aiming to mitigate cyber risks ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#))), aligning IT projects with business strategy, controlling costs, and managing talent. They also face the challenge of “**competing priorities**”,

as noted: with so many strategic initiatives (digital transformation, AI projects, etc.), deciding what to focus on is a challenge in itself ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). By contrast, **mid-level IT managers or Directors** are closer to day-to-day operations. Their pain points might include **project overload**, troubleshooting system outages, or juggling demands from multiple departments. For example, a Director of IT might struggle with how to integrate a new SaaS tool with on-prem systems, or how to clear a backlog of support tickets with an understaffed team – very tactical pains.

They also feel the frustration of insufficient budget more acutely at times; interestingly, Spiceworks found a **perception gap**: 54% of IT staff felt tech spending was insufficient, whereas only 15% of senior leaders felt the same ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)). This suggests lower-level staff often feel pain from resource constraints that higher-ups might not see. **Procurement and finance stakeholders** have their own angle: their “pain” is paying too much or getting locked into a bad deal, so they worry about cost, vendor viability, and contract flexibility. And as mentioned, **security officers** are focused on minimizing risk – their challenge is evaluating myriad new threats and solutions quickly (43% of CIOs said the fast-changing threat landscape is a challenge ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#))). Senior execs also keep an eye on **innovation**: a CIO might feel pain if the company is falling behind competitors technologically, so missing out on emerging tech could be seen as a business risk.

**Tech Priorities for the Next 12–24 Months:** Despite the challenges, ITDMs are proactively planning investments to address pain points and drive growth. Over the next year or two, several **technology and solution priorities** stand out:

- **Cybersecurity and Risk Management:** Given its top priority status, spending on security is set to increase. Many organizations plan to invest in **advanced threat protection, Zero Trust architectures, security monitoring, and employee security training**. In fact, a recent report shows **53% of companies are increasing budgets specifically due to heightened security concerns** ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)). We also see more enterprises hiring dedicated security staff and services. This focus is to plug gaps exposed by remote work and sophisticated attacks.
- **Cloud Computing & “As-a-Service” Adoption:** The **march to cloud continues at full speed**. Foundry noted **82% of ITDMs (and 87% of enterprises) planned to accelerate their adoption of cloud and X-as-a-service solutions** (). Over the next 12–24 months, enterprises are migrating more workloads to public cloud providers (AWS, Azure, GCP), adopting hybrid cloud management tools, and containerizing applications. **Edge computing and serverless** are also on the rise, as the Spiceworks data showed plans to **double use of edge and serverless tech in 2 years** ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report](#)

[from Spiceworks](#)) – indicating new architectures to support latency-sensitive and scalable applications.

- **Data Analytics and AI:** Organizations are prioritizing better use of data. This includes **business intelligence (BI) tools, data warehousing, and analytics platforms** to derive insights. Crucially, **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning** are breaking out – from automating processes to AI-driven analytics. Generative AI especially surged onto the scene; many CIOs are evaluating use cases for AI in customer service, coding assistance, and decision support. The 2025 outlook has **security and generative AI as top areas likely to see budget growth** ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)). So in the next 1-2 years, we expect pilots and deployments of AI solutions (from chatbots to AI ops tools) to tackle tasks that were manual or to create new capabilities.
- **Automation & Workflow Efficiency:** Another priority is automating routine tasks to alleviate workload and address talent shortages. This spans **IT process automation (DevOps CI/CD, cloud automation), Robotic Process Automation (RPA) for business workflows, and AI-driven automation**. The goal is to improve efficiency and free up staff for higher-value work – a direct response to the pain point of having to “do more with less.”
- **Digital Transformation & Modernization Projects:** Enterprises continue multi-year transformation programs – e.g. implementing modern ERP/CRM systems, enabling omnichannel customer experiences, or digitizing supply chains. Upgrading or replacing legacy core systems (where feasible) is in plan for many, to reduce technical debt. **Updating infrastructure** is a top driver for increased IT spend ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)). For 66% of companies increasing budgets in 2024, a key reason is “propelling new initiatives and modernizing aging infrastructure” despite economic worries ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)) ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)).
- **Hybrid Work and Collaboration Tools:** The pandemic aftermath still shapes priorities – supporting **remote/hybrid work** is essential. ITDMs are investing in secure collaboration tools, VPN and remote access security, and redefining office networks. Ensuring employees can work seamlessly from anywhere (and securely) remains a challenge being actively addressed in the near term.
- **Integration and API Strategy:** To tackle integration pain, many IT leaders are prioritizing establishing an **API-driven architecture or using integration-platform-as-a-service (iPaaS)** solutions. This makes it easier to plug new tech into the existing environment. So, projects around data integration, single sign-on (SSO), and master data management are on roadmaps.
- **Cost Optimization:** Interestingly, while new investments are planned, **cost optimization** is also a priority. This includes **cloud cost management** (FinOps), consolidating redundant software licenses, and leveraging automation to save costs. Essentially, ITDMs want to reinvest savings into innovation – a continual balancing act.

In summary, ITDMs' near-term priorities align directly with their pain points: strengthen security, leverage cloud and AI to drive agility, and modernize systems to support business growth. They aim to do this while controlling costs and navigating a tricky economic landscape. The next 12-24 months will likely see enterprise tech buyers **double down on strategic tech (cloud/AI) even as they cautiously manage risk and budget** ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)) ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)).

## Content & Messaging Preferences

**Preferred Content Types:** When engaging with content during their buyer's journey, ITDMs exhibit clear preferences for formats that are **informative, credible, and efficient**. A recent Demand Gen survey highlights that **visual and easily digestible content is highly appealing** – with **65% of B2B buyers citing infographics and blog posts as top content formats** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)). Infographics provide quick insights and data points in a visual form, which busy decision-makers appreciate for initial learning. Blog articles (especially thought leadership or how-to pieces on tech trends) also rank high, likely because they can be consumed quickly and shared with colleagues. As buyers move deeper into evaluation, **longer-form content becomes valuable**: about **50% of buyers find value in white papers and eBooks** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)). These formats allow a detailed dive into a technology or case study and often provide the data or strategic rationale needed to convince stakeholders. **Webinars and virtual events are also popular (52% preference)** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)) – they offer an interactive way to learn, with the bonus of live Q&A with experts. ITDMs often register for webinars that promise insights on best practices or emerging trends relevant to their needs. Case studies are another favored format (often presented as PDFs or web pages); ITDMs love to see **real-world examples** of a solution in action, especially in their industry. In fact, third-party analysis suggests that **buyers who consume case studies are significantly more likely to move toward purchase** (it signals intent) ([\[PDF\] 2024 STATE OF B2B CONTENT CONSUMPTION & DEMAND ...](#)). **Video content** is rising in prominence too – short explainer videos, demo videos, or customer testimonial videos cater to those who prefer audiovisual learning. According to one source, **90% of B2B buyers said video content is a preferred way to learn about products** ([39 Crucial B2B Marketing Statistics \(2025\) - SellersCommerce](#)). However, the preference can depend on the stage: a 2-minute product intro video might hook interest early on, whereas a 15-page technical whitepaper might seal the deal later. **Interactive content** (assessment tools, ROI calculators, product sandboxes) is also gaining favor as it actively engages the buyer. Overall, ITDMs consume a **mix of content types** – the key is that each piece should be high-quality and relevant, as they have limited time for content that doesn't add value.

**Effective Channels for Business Content:** Enterprise ITDMs access content through numerous channels, but a few stand out as especially effective for reaching and influencing them. **Professional networks and communities** are crucial – **LinkedIn** is widely used for professional



updates, networking and content discovery. Tech decision-makers often follow industry influencers on LinkedIn and engage with posts or articles shared there. **Industry-specific online communities** (like Spiceworks, Stack Exchange, Reddit's r/sysadmin or r/ITdept, etc.) are also frequented for peer advice and content recommendations. Many IT pros trust content that comes from fellow practitioners in these forums. Traditional **trade publications and tech news sites** remain very important; sites such as CIO.com, Computerworld, TechTarget, ZDNet, etc., have authoritative content and are often referenced. In fact, in content consumption research, **"technology content sites" were cited as the most-used resource in early learning stages** (). These sites aggregate articles, reviews, and sometimes host sponsored content or webinars that ITDMs find useful. **Search engines** are, of course, a key channel – many buyer journeys start with a Google search ("top X solutions" or "X vs Y software"). So SEO-optimized content (blogs, comparison pages) is vital to capture that demand. **Analyst outlets** (like Gartner,

Forrester, IDC reports) are another channel: whether through paid subscriptions or public summaries, ITDMs often seek out these reports for vendor shortlists and trend analysis. On the more personal side, **industry events and conferences** have bounced back in influence. According to a LinkedIn B2B marketing report, **60% of B2B marketers rated in-person events as a top channel** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)), which aligns with buyers valuing face-to-face learning and networking. Events like RSA (for security), AWS re:Invent (cloud), or Gartner summits gather ITDMs who consume keynotes, visit vendor booths, and attend workshops – all content forms in a sense. Even virtual events and digital conferences (49% rated important) remain in the mix ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)) for those who prefer not to travel. **Email newsletters** from trusted sources (e.g., industry news roundups, Gartner's newsletters, vendor newsletters if they are seen as useful) can also be a content delivery channel that ITDMs read regularly. Social media beyond LinkedIn has a role: Twitter (now X) is used by some tech leaders to follow breaking tech news and commentary; YouTube is used for how-to videos and tech reviews. However, direct **advertising** on social or other sites has limited influence on ITDMs' decisions – only **18% said advertising significantly sways their purchase decisions** ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). This means paid ads might increase awareness, but the heavy lifting of persuasion happens via the content channels above that provide substance. In summary, **meet ITDMs where they already seek information**: on professional networks, respected publications, peer communities, and in both digital and physical forums for the industry.

**Messaging That Resonates:** Crafting the right message for ITDMs is critical. This audience tends to be **skeptical of hype and marketing fluff**, and responsive to messaging that is **credible, technically sound, and aligned to business outcomes**. Based on research and industry observations, a few messaging approaches stand out:

- **Focus on Solutions to Pain Points:** ITDMs respond well when you speak directly to the problems they are trying to solve. Messaging that acknowledges their challenges (e.g.



“Struggling with integrating cloud apps with legacy systems? Our solution can seamlessly bridge that gap...” shows empathy and understanding. Since **security, cost, and integration** are top concerns, value propositions that emphasize **security improvements, cost savings/ROI, and compatibility** will get attention. For example, highlighting that a product can reduce cyber risk by X% or save Y hours of manual work per week ties the solution to tangible relief of pain.

- **Value and Outcome Oriented:** While features matter, ITDMs (especially at the executive level) ultimately want to know the **business value**. Messages framed around **outcomes** (e.g., **faster time to market, increased productivity by X%, ROI within 12 months**) are persuasive. One survey found that buyers are 50% more likely to buy if they see *personal value* (like how it will make their job/life easier or advance their goals) in addition to business value ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)). So, messaging should connect the dots from technical capability to business result and even individual stakeholder success (e.g., “This analytics platform will not only improve reporting speed (business outcome) but also free up your team to work on strategic projects (personal value)”).
- **Proof and Credibility:** ITDMs trust **data, case studies, and peer validation** over bold claims. Including statistics or facts (with sources) in messaging increases credibility. For instance, stating “88% of breaches are due to human error – our solution targets that by doing XYZ” grounds the pitch in reality. **Customer success stories** (especially from well-known companies or within the same industry) are extremely persuasive: they demonstrate that “others like me have succeeded with this solution.” Peer recommendations carry weight – recall that ~25% of ITDMs make decisions based on peer input ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). So, testimonials, reviews, and third-party endorsements (awards, high ratings on Gartner Peer Insights, etc.) should be woven into messaging. In essence, let your customers and experts speak for you whenever possible.
- **Thought Leadership & Innovation:** ITDMs, particularly tech-savvy and C-level ones, like to partner with vendors who are **thought leaders and innovators**. Messaging that educates (without immediately selling) can build trust. For example, producing insightful content on future trends (AI, zero-trust security, etc.) positions a vendor as an innovative partner. Within marketing copy, striking a visionary tone – “enable your digital transformation” or “prepare for the AI-enabled future” – can inspire, but it must be backed by substance. Importantly, ITDMs want to see that a vendor understands emerging tech but also can **apply it pragmatically**.
- **Straightforward and Jargon-Appropriate:** The tone of messaging should respect the intelligence of ITDMs. Overly simplistic or gimmicky messages may turn off a technical audience. Conversely, being too jargon-heavy can alienate LOB stakeholders. The best practice is **clarity and precision** – use technical terms where appropriate (to show depth) but always explain the benefit in clear business terms. For instance, instead of just saying “uses AI-enabled predictive analytics,” one might add “...so you can

proactively address system outages before they happen.” This way both technical and non-technical members of the buying committee grasp the value.

- **Personalization and Role-Based Messaging:** Different ITDM personas care about different angles (we detail personas below). Effective messaging is tailored: for a CIO, emphasize strategic alignment, risk reduction, and total cost of ownership; for an IT manager, highlight ease of implementation, performance, and support; for a finance stakeholder, underscore cost-effectiveness and ROI. Delivering the right message to the right person (for example, via segmented email campaigns or personalized website content – and note **59% of B2B customers expect personalized web content** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#))) can significantly improve engagement.

**Content Tone and Quality:** It’s worth noting that **quality trumps quantity** in content. Over half of buyers (54%) say they are **overwhelmed by the sheer amount of content available** ([2023 Content Preferences Survey Report: Personalized, Data-Backed Content Enables B2B Teams To Fast Track Buyer Enablement, Speed Up Path To Purchase - Demand Gen Report](#)), and they often complain that much of it is not useful. Common pitfalls that turn off ITDMs include content that is too salesy, doesn’t provide actionable insight, or is a thinly veiled product pitch. On the other hand, content that is **educational, research-based, and addresses real questions** will stand out. For example, an in-depth whitepaper with original research or a webinar featuring a panel of industry experts will be more valued than another generic brochure. **Timeliness** is also part of messaging – addressing current trends (like “how to leverage generative AI safely in your enterprise” in 2024) shows that a vendor is relevant and up-to-date. Lastly, **call-to-action and next-step guidance** in content should match ITDM preferences. They often prefer to self-educate deeply before contacting sales, so providing links to more detailed technical info, free trials, or community forums can be more effective than a hard “Contact Sales now” push.

In summary, **ITDM content and messaging preferences revolve around trust, value, and relevance**. They want content that helps them make informed decisions – be it a compelling case study, a data-rich whitepaper, or a pithy infographic – delivered via channels they frequent, and messaging that speaks to their needs without the fluff. Vendors who master this will more easily gain mindshare among B2B tech buyers.

## Competitive & Market Insights

**Trusted Vendors and Brand Perception:** In the enterprise tech arena, **brand trust and reputation carry significant weight**. IT decision-makers, being risk-averse in many cases, often gravitate towards vendors with a proven track record. Surveys show that **ITDMs are quite brand-loyal – 66% prefer to purchase from brands they’ve used before** ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). This loyalty stems from familiarity with the product, trust in the support and reliability, and having existing relationships (account reps, customer success teams) in place. Additionally, in an uncertain economy, sticking with **“tried-and-true” solutions** feels safer; indeed, the importance of prior vendor experience jumped from 25% to 40% as a

decision factor in the past year ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)), indicating buyers doubled-down on known vendors to reduce risk. In practical terms, this means big industry players like **Microsoft, Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google Cloud, IBM, Oracle, Cisco, Dell, HP, SAP, Salesforce** (depending on the product domain) are often on the short list by default for enterprise purchases. These established companies are trusted for their robustness, support, and ecosystem. However, loyalty has limits – ITDMs will consider other options if incumbents don't meet new needs or if a challenger offers clear superiority. In fact, one study found **57% of tech buyers expect to purchase from an incumbent provider, while 43% are open to new vendors** () – a significant portion willing to switch given the right incentive. And as noted, **businesses are open to changing vendors for roughly 59% of the technologies they use** ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)), reflecting that multi-vendor environments and churn are normal if value is found elsewhere.

**How Vendors Are Evaluated:** Enterprise buyers employ rigorous evaluation processes to compare vendors. Key evaluation steps include: reviewing features and technical capabilities, comparing costs (both initial and TCO), checking customer reviews/references, assessing vendor stability and support, and often running demos or proof-of-concept trials. Many organizations formalize this via **RFP (Request for Proposal)** processes for big purchases, where vendors must answer detailed requirements. ITDMs rely on a variety of inputs during evaluation. As discussed earlier, they consult **analyst rankings** (e.g., Gartner Magic Quadrant – being a Leader in the MQ can heavily sway an ITDM to include a vendor; conversely, absence from the MQ might raise doubts about an emerging player). They also use **peer review platforms** (like G2, TrustRadius, or IT Central Station) to read first-hand reviews. In 2023, the trend was a greater reliance on such peer content – 23% of buyers said they increasingly use peer recommendations and review sites in their process ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). **Vendor presentations and demos** are pivotal as well: ITDMs will attend webinars, watch recorded demos, or invite vendors to present to their committees. These sessions are where vendors can showcase usability and performance. **Pilot projects or trials** are common for substantial investments: an enterprise might test a new software with one department or run a 30-day trial to gauge results before full commitment. ITDMs also evaluate vendors on **non-product factors**: support responsiveness, professional services, roadmap vision, and compatibility with existing tech stack. A vendor that integrates well with the company's current tools (e.g., an add-on that works smoothly with their Microsoft environment) gets bonus points. **Security and compliance** evaluation is mandatory now – vendors often must fill lengthy security questionnaires or demonstrate certifications (ISO, SOC2, etc.) as part of being evaluated. Finally, ITDMs compare **ROI and cost of ownership**: they will crunch numbers on license/subscription costs, required hardware or cloud costs, implementation effort, and potential savings. Vendors who help provide these numbers (via ROI calculators or case study data) assist the ITDM's internal evaluation. It's worth noting that **the evaluation stage can involve multiple rounds of elimination**: initial long list to short list to final two, often culminating in a bake-off or detailed proposal comparison by the committee. At the end, ITDMs will have a ranking or a preferred vendor, which then goes into final due diligence and contract negotiation.

**Key Differentiators for Providers:** In crowded B2B tech markets, certain differentiators determine which vendor wins. **Product innovation and features** are a top differentiator – as found, **48% of ITDMs would seek a new vendor if it offers more innovative, feature-rich products** (). Being able to solve a problem in a new or better way than competitors is critical. For example, a storage vendor might differentiate on superior performance or an AI tool on more advanced algorithms. **Reliability and performance** – enterprise buyers need solutions that are proven to work at scale. Any evidence of higher uptime, better scalability, or benchmark wins can set a provider apart. **Integration and openness** – a solution that “plays well with others” (open APIs, pre-built connectors) is attractive in complex IT environments. **Cost and value** – while not always choosing the cheapest, enterprises heavily weigh cost-benefit. A vendor that can demonstrate lower total cost for the same outcome, or more value for a similar price, gains favor. According to Foundry’s research, **33% cite increased cost of their current solution as a reason to look for alternatives** (), and we saw many buyers now performing detailed ROI checks ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). This means competitive pricing and clear ROI is a differentiator. **Customer service and support** is another key factor: **35% of buyers would switch due to poor customer service from a current vendor** (). Enterprises want partners who will be responsive when issues arise. Case in point: emerging SaaS companies often try to differentiate against big vendors by offering more high-touch support and flexibility. **Security posture** can be a differentiator too – some buyers might favor a vendor that offers better security features or has a sterling security record, especially if their current solution had vulnerabilities (29% would switch if the current product didn’t meet security requirements ()). **User experience (UX)** can set providers apart: a product that is easier to use or administer will win points with the actual users and IT staff. Finally, **brand reputation and vision** – a vendor known for excellence or one that articulates a compelling vision for the future of their product (and by extension, the customer’s future) often stands out. For example, companies like Salesforce and ServiceNow have built strong reputations not just on features, but on the vision of a platform/ecosystem – this can be a differentiator versus point solution competitors.

**Traditional Vendors vs. Emerging Players:** Enterprise ITDMs often compare **incumbent vendors (with decades in the market)** to **newer, disruptive companies**. Each has pros and cons in buyer perception. **Traditional vendors** (think IBM, Cisco, Oracle, Microsoft, etc.) are seen as **stable, experienced, and scalable**. They tend to have comprehensive product suites and global support. ITDMs trust that these companies will be around in a decade (low risk of bankruptcy) and have extensive documentation and integrators familiar with them. On the flip side, incumbents can be viewed as **slower-moving or more expensive**. Sometimes their technology is seen as legacy or not as cutting-edge, and their licensing models can be complex. **Emerging vendors and startups** are often appealing for their **innovation and agility**. They might offer a novel approach (a new AI-driven tool, a revolutionary architecture) or a niche solution that fills a gap the big players haven’t addressed. They can also be more **flexible on pricing or terms**, eager to win marquee customers. ITDMs might consider an emerging player if the fit is very strong for their specific problem or if they promise significantly better performance. However, concerns around new players include: *Are they financially stable? Will they scale to enterprise needs? Do they have support resources?* This is why we see a pattern: **many enterprises stick with traditional**

**vendors for core mission-critical systems, but introduce emerging vendors for specific innovation projects.** For example, they might keep using a big-name network vendor for core routing, but try a startup's SD-WAN solution for a subset of branches to see results. Importantly, there's evidence that **incumbents currently have an advantage** – e.g., 57% expect to buy from existing vendors () and the trend of sticking with known vendors rose in 2023 ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). But at the same time, a Spiceworks report found **businesses are willing to change vendors for the majority (59%) of technologies if needed** ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)), which suggests openness to new players if they prove their value. Essentially, ITDMs will give emerging players a shot especially if the **emerging tech is in areas like AI, automation, or cloud-native solutions** where incumbents might not be as ahead. It's also common to see **hybrid vendor strategies**: using a stable vendor for backbone systems and an innovative vendor for competitive edge solutions.

When evaluating traditional vs emerging, ITDMs often compare them directly in pilots. An emerging vendor can overcome skepticism by showcasing reference clients (especially other enterprises) and by partnering with larger firms (for instance, being available in Azure/AWS marketplaces or integrating with Microsoft, which gives a signal of credibility). **Market Insights:** Another consideration is how the market itself is consolidating or evolving. Enterprises watch industry news – if a startup is being acquired by an IBM or Cisco, that can either comfort a buyer (knowing it now has big backing) or concern them (fear of changes post-acquisition). Meanwhile, big vendors launching new versions that incorporate features similar to what startups offer can influence buying (why buy from a small vendor if your current big vendor adds the capability next quarter?).

In summary, **ITDMs perform a balancing act**: they trust big brands but don't want to miss out on innovation. The key for any vendor, big or small, is to **demonstrate clear superiority on the buyer's key criteria** (be it innovation, cost, support, etc.) and mitigate any concerns (for startups, that's proving reliability and support; for incumbents, showing you're not "yesterday's tech"). The competitive landscape is therefore dynamic, and from the buyer's perspective, it's all about finding which provider can best align to their needs with minimal risk.

## Future Trends & Emerging Technologies

**Impact of Emerging Tech (AI, Automation, Cloud, Cybersecurity) on Decision-Making:** The rapid evolution of technology is significantly influencing ITDMs' strategies and purchase decisions. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and machine learning have arguably had the biggest impact in the last 12 months. ITDMs are extremely interested in AI's potential – a social analysis found **AI and machine learning are among the most discussed topics by IT decision-makers** ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). Executives see AI as transformative, potentially enabling advanced data analytics, automation of routine tasks, and new capabilities like predictive maintenance. This excitement translates to **active exploration of**



**AI-enabled solutions.** For example, ITDMs might favor vendors who incorporate AI for better performance (like AI-driven security analytics that detect threats faster, or AI in IT operations to automate incident response). However, AI's impact on decisions is double-edged: while it attracts interest, it also raises **concerns about ethics, job displacement, and hype vs reality** ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). Decision-makers are asking pointed questions such as "What are the real business use cases of AI?" and "How do we govern AI output responsibly?" ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). Thus, any product pitching AI must come with credible use cases and assurances around issues like bias and security.

**Automation** (which overlaps with AI but also includes non-AI process automation) is another trend shaping priorities. In an environment where efficiency is king and talent is scarce, ITDMs are looking to automation to handle repetitive processes both in IT (DevOps, cloud management) and business workflows. Many enterprise software decisions now evaluate the level of automation: e.g., does an ITSM (IT service management) tool provide automated ticket routing? Does a cloud management platform automate cost optimizations? Those that do will be favored as they promise to relieve overstretched teams. Automation is also seen as a way to maintain service levels despite headcount limits – which is crucial because 57% of tech leaders say hiring is tough, even as demand for IT staff grows ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)). So, solutions that include automation or AI assist can tip the scales in decision-making.

**Cloud Computing** is not new, but its pervasiveness means ITDMs are now often taking a "cloud-first" approach to new purchases. Over the past year, cloud's influence remains strong: enterprises are accelerating cloud adoption (as noted, 87% plan to speed up cloud/aaS adoption ()). This means when evaluating any new IT solution, ITDMs consider cloud options (SaaS or cloud-hosted) very seriously, often preferring them for agility and scalability. Decisions are influenced by how well a solution fits into their cloud strategy – e.g., does it support multi-cloud deployments, containers, microservices? Even for traditionally on-prem areas, many ITDMs are looking at cloud-managed alternatives. The **emergence of edge computing and serverless** also plays in: companies intending to double usage of edge and serverless tech in 2 years ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)) show that architecture choices (central cloud vs edge) are an active area of decision-making. If a new technology can leverage edge computing (for low latency) or offers a serverless model (for better scalability/cost), ITDMs will weigh those benefits. Essentially, cloud has set expectations for quick deployment and OPEX pricing, and those expectations now extend to all IT purchases (even hardware purchases might be influenced by whether there's an as-a-service leasing model).

**Cybersecurity** remains a backdrop to everything. Any future tech adoption is scrutinized through a security lens. With rising threats, **ITDMs have to consider security implications of each innovation**. For instance, adopting IoT or edge computing introduces new threat vectors – ITDMs must ensure vendors have security controls in place. The heightened focus is evidenced



by security staff now being influential at all purchase stages (). Also, when asked what could prompt switching vendors, **29% said if a product didn't meet security requirements** (), highlighting that future tech must clear a high security bar to be accepted. Emerging tech in security itself (like zero trust frameworks, SASE networking, AI-based threat detection) are high on agendas. Many organizations plan to invest in **next-gen cybersecurity tech** – e.g., extended detection and response (XDR), identity access management improvements, etc. – to fortify their defenses in the next year or two.

**Concerns Regarding Future Tech Adoption:** Despite enthusiasm for emerging tech, ITDMs have several concerns as they look ahead. **Skill gaps and training needs** are a top concern – adopting AI or new cloud platforms may require skills the current team doesn't have. In Spiceworks' 2025 findings, only **63% of IT pros felt confident in their cybersecurity skills and 53% in coding skills** ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)), and younger pros value AI skills more than older ones, indicating a skills shift. ITDMs worry whether their staff can effectively implement and manage new systems. This concern often leads to decisions to invest in training or managed services alongside the tech. **Integration and interoperability** remain a worry: Will the new tech work with our existing tools? If not, the burden of integration could offset its benefits. **Cost and ROI of unproven tech** is another – emerging tech can be expensive or its benefits hard to quantify (think AI projects where ROI might be uncertain). In tight budget conditions, ITDMs have to justify these investments, so they're concerned about choosing correctly and not over-hyping the benefits. **Security and compliance** for new tech is also a concern: for example, using generative AI raises questions about data privacy (what data is being fed into models?), or deploying IoT widely raises questions about network security. **Vendor viability** for new tech is on their mind – going with a startup for a critical system means betting that the company will survive or won't get acquired and change direction. The finding that **over half of IT staff feel budgets still fall short of needs** ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)) hints that ITDMs are concerned they won't get enough funding to do all the innovation required, forcing tough choices.

**Staying Informed on Industry Innovations:** ITDMs make it a point to keep abreast of tech trends, as part of their role is strategic planning. They utilize a variety of methods for continuous learning:

- **Industry Reports & Analyst Research:** Many ITDMs read annual trend reports (like Gartner's Top Strategic Tech Trends, Deloitte Tech Trends, etc.) and subscribe to research services. Foundry's study noted that **analyst firms become the top influence during internal selling stages** (), suggesting ITDMs trust and use that insight when validating choices. They likely also attend webinars or download reports from these analysts to understand innovations.
- **Peer Networks and Communities:** As discussed, ITDMs often learn about new tech from peers. An IT leader might hear at a user group meeting or on a Slack/Teams forum about

a colleague's experience with a new tool. Online communities like Spiceworks facilitate Q&A where emerging solutions get discussed. Also, **younger ITDMs especially turn to online communities** – the Foundry study found that the youngest cohort of buyers listed **online communities and peers outside their company among top info sources** (in addition to usual ones) ().

- **Newsletters, Blogs, and Podcasts:** Many ITDMs follow tech news sites (TechCrunch for emerging startups, Wired, etc.) and subscribe to newsletters like TLDR or industry-specific ones that summarize what's new. Podcasts and YouTube channels with tech discussions (like cloud podcasts, AI podcasts) can also be part of their diet, as they often feature expert guests.
- **Vendor Outreach and Demos:** Interestingly, ITDMs do sometimes rely on vendors to learn about new tech – for instance, tech giants host events (AWS re:Invent, Microsoft Ignite) where new products and trends are showcased. Even smaller vendor webinars can be educational about a certain approach. The caution is they prefer less sales pitch and more real content. According to one study, **only 14% of APAC buyers (and similarly low in NA) first turn to vendors for info** (), implying initial info comes from elsewhere. But once aware, they will engage vendors to dive deeper.
- **Conferences and Trade Shows:** Events like CES (for broader tech) or RSA (for security) are places ITDMs go to see “what's new.” These venues allow them to see demos, talk to innovators, and compare many solutions at once. Post-pandemic, there's been a noted eagerness to return to physical events – **58% of tech buyers said they are likely to increase attendance at in-person events over the next year** () as part of their information gathering. This underscores that conferences remain a key way to stay current.
- **Academic and R&D Outreach:** In some cutting-edge areas (AI, blockchain, quantum computing), ITDMs might connect with academia or research groups, or at least follow their publications, to gauge what might become commercially viable soon. Large enterprises sometimes have innovation labs that trial new tech on a small scale, essentially internal R&D to inform future larger investments.

In essence, ITDMs maintain an **ongoing learning mindset** – they can't afford to be caught off-guard by a disruptive tech. They balance consuming quick-hit daily info (news, forums) with deeper dives (reports, training courses). By doing so, when an emerging technology like generative AI suddenly hits the mainstream (as ChatGPT did), they are in a better position to evaluate its relevance for their business and to make informed decisions about if or when to invest. The best vendors understand this and often contribute to the education process by providing valuable thought leadership content.

Looking to the future, trends like **AI everywhere, heightened cybersecurity, cloud ubiquity, and data privacy** will continue to shape ITDM decisions. These decision-makers will be weighing how each new wave (be it **metaverse/AR, Web3, quantum computing, or the next AI leap**) can either solve their current challenges or create new ones. Those vendors and partners who can

guide ITDMs through these changes – as trusted advisors armed with expertise – will be highly valued.

## Buyer Personas

To translate the above into concrete personas, we outline a few **primary ITDM and B2B buyer segments** often involved in enterprise tech purchases. Each persona has distinct goals, pain points, and criteria for decision-making:

- **The Strategic CIO/CTO (Executive Sponsor):** *Profile:* C-level executive, head of IT or technology. Often a veteran in the industry with 15+ years experience. *Goals:* Align technology investments with business strategy, drive innovation, and manage risk. Focused on big-picture outcomes like digital transformation, revenue growth, and competitive advantage. *Pain Points:* Concerned with cybersecurity threats (sees risk mitigation as critical) ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)), balancing IT spend with ROI, and ensuring the IT organization can meet business demands. Often juggling a portfolio of projects and facing pressure from CEO/Board to modernize quickly. *Influence:* Leads or sponsors the buying committee – “**calls most of the shots**” in the **purchase process** (). Signs off on final decisions. *Information Needs:* High-level insights, analyst reports, and peer input from other executives. Prefers content like executive summaries, industry trend reports, and ROI projections. Values vendor’s vision and stability; likely to ask “will this partner help our long-term strategy?” *Messaging Triggers:* Wants to hear about **business outcomes and risk reduction**. For example, how a solution improves resilience, enables new capabilities, or saves money. Case studies of similar enterprises and Gartner/Forrester endorsements resonate strongly. Likely brand-loyal unless given a strong reason to switch (remembers that prior experience is important, given 40% uptick in its importance ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#))). Time is limited, so expects concise, credible pitches.
- **The IT Director/Manager (Technical Evaluator):** *Profile:* Mid-senior IT manager or director (Infrastructure Manager, Head of Applications, etc.). Often leads a team of engineers or admins. *Goals:* Ensure the technology chosen meets the technical requirements, is reliable, and can be implemented smoothly. Cares about system performance, compatibility, and support, as they will manage the day-to-day operation. *Pain Points:* Overseeing legacy systems and integration issues, resource constraints (maybe understaffed teams), and pressure to minimize downtime. They are the ones who will “make it work,” so they fear choosing a solution that is cumbersome or doesn’t deliver as promised. *Influence:* Significant – this persona often “**determines technical requirements**”**[8+L7-L10]** and heavily influences which vendors make the shortlist or pass technical proof-of-concept. While they may not have final sign-off, their recommendation is usually heeded by the CIO for tech matters. *Information Needs:* Deep technical information – detailed product specs, architectures, hands-on demos, and

maybe trial access. They read documentation, attend technical workshops or webinars, and might engage in online communities to ask others about their experiences. They use about **6+ info sources on average** – being thorough. *Messaging Triggers:* Responds to **practical and factual messaging**. Proof that the solution can integrate via APIs, supports X environment, complies with relevant standards. They like to see feature-by-feature comparisons, migration plans, and how the vendor will support the implementation. Support and training offerings are also key messages for them (since lack of resources is a challenge ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#))). They appreciate when a vendor provides a sandbox or trial – “let me test under the hood.” Unlike the CIO, they might engage more with how-to blogs or technical case studies and are more tolerant of jargon (as long as it’s accurate). A big plus is if they see active user communities or strong peer reviews backing the product’s usability and support.

- **The Line-of-Business (LOB) Leader (Business Sponsor):** *Profile:* An executive or senior manager outside of IT – e.g., CFO, CMO, Head of Operations, etc. They become part of IT buying when the solution affects their department’s work (like a CRM for sales, or an analytics tool for finance). *Goals:* Solve a specific business problem or capitalize on an opportunity. For example, a Marketing VP wants a marketing automation platform to increase lead generation, or an HR director wants better analytics to improve hiring. Their goal is departmental performance. *Pain Points:* They often initiated the project because of a pain (inefficient process, lack of insight, slow manual work, etc.). They worry about adoption by their team, the disruption of implementing new tech, and proving that the investment yields results. Also, if they rely on IT to implement, they are concerned IT might not prioritize their project (hence they push as a champion). *Influence:* They might be the **requestor of 23% of purchases ()**, driving the need. In the buying committee, they champion the business case and often co-approve the budget. Their buy-in is necessary for funding and for ensuring user acceptance. If the CIO is the tech gatekeeper, the LOB leader is the business gatekeeper. *Information Needs:* They look for **business-centric evidence**. They may not delve into technical specs; instead, they want to see how this solution has benefited companies in their industry or function. Metrics like “increased productivity by 20%” or “ROI in 10 months” catch their eye. They are likely to read case studies, industry benchmark reports, and even watch videos of how it helped end-users. They’ll also heed recommendations from peers in their field (another CFO at a conference mentioning a great tool). *Messaging Triggers:* Needs **value proposition in plain language**. Words like “save costs,” “drive revenue,” “ensure compliance,” “improve customer satisfaction” are persuasive. They also want reassurance that the solution won’t be a headache – that it’s user-friendly (so their team will actually use it) and that it won’t create new risks (like a CFO will worry a finance system is secure/compliant). LOB leaders are often conscious of **total cost and ROI** – since it might hit their departmental budget – so messaging about low total cost of ownership or quick payback is effective. They may leave the vendor comparison to IT, but if they hear a certain vendor is the market leader or has an award (e.g. “ranked #1 by

J.D. Power for customer satisfaction”), that gives comfort.

- **The Procurement Officer (Financial Gatekeeper):** *Profile:* Procurement manager or sourcing specialist, sometimes within finance or a dedicated procurement department. Not the user of the technology, but oversees vendor contracts and purchasing. *Goals:* Ensure the organization gets the best value and that purchases comply with policies. They aim to minimize cost, mitigate vendor risks (financial stability, legal compliance), and enforce contract terms that protect the company. *Pain Points:* Tedious RFP processes, negotiating with vendors, managing multiple contracts. They might be juggling cost-saving mandates from the CFO while trying to keep internal stakeholders (IT, LOB) happy. They’re wary of maverick spending or tech purchases made without due diligence. *Influence:* They typically come into play in the **final selection and negotiation stage**. They may not decide *which* product is best (that’s driven by IT/LOB input), but they decide **which deal** is best. They can stall or push back on a selection if the vendor doesn’t meet requirements or if price negotiations fail. Many enterprises won’t finalize a deal without procurement’s sign-off. *Information Needs:* They look for commercial information: pricing models, vendor financial health, references, compliance info (like diversity spend or sustainability, if those are company priorities). They consult supplier ratings services or require completion of vendor risk assessments. Procurement also loves **benchmarking data** – e.g., knowing what similar companies pay for a product to leverage negotiations. *Messaging Triggers:* **Flexibility and cost-effectiveness** are key to win this persona. Messages about “cost savings,” “volume discounts,” or “favorable licensing terms” are attractive. They will also respond to vendors who are transparent and easy to do business with (e.g., willingness to negotiate terms, low red-line on contracts). Procurement often appreciates when vendors can bundle solutions or demonstrate long-term partnership potential (reducing the need to source again soon). Additionally, any assurances on compliance (e.g., the vendor meets all regulatory requirements, has insurance, etc.) ease their mind. While they might not directly consume marketing content like a whitepaper, they heavily read the **Master Service Agreement and SLA** – so in a sense, the content aimed at them is the proposal/contract itself. To support them indirectly, ITDMs often need ROI calculators or cost comparison sheets from vendors to justify the spend – so a vendor providing those helps procurement feel the purchase is justified.
- **The Security and Compliance Officer (Risk Advisor):** *Profile:* Could be a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) or an IT Security Manager, or a Compliance Officer especially in regulated industries. *Goals:* Protect the enterprise from risk – cybersecurity breaches, data leaks, compliance violations. Ensure any new technology meets the company’s security standards and regulatory obligations. *Pain Points:* Constantly evolving threats, too many alerts, and a shortage of security personnel. Worried that a new system might open a backdoor or that sensitive data could be exposed. They often have to be the “brakes” in a fast-moving IT environment, which can be stressful.

*Influence:* Increasing – as noted, **security staff are now among top influencers in all purchase stages** (). They have veto power if a vendor fails security checks. They influence architecture decisions (preferring vendors that support encryption, single sign-on, etc.). In some cases, a CISO may require specific risk assessments or even be the project sponsor if the purchase is a security solution. *Information Needs:* Very detailed security documentation: data handling practices, encryption standards, access controls, compliance certificates (PCI, HIPAA, GDPR readiness, etc.). They often want to speak to the vendor's security team or see a demo of security features. They might consult external reports (e.g., vulnerability scan results, penetration test attestations) if available. For compliance folks, they need to understand data residency and audit capabilities. *Messaging Triggers:* **"Security-by-design" messaging** wins them. If a vendor emphasizes how security is built into the product (not an afterthought), and can narrate features like continuous monitoring, role-based access, audit logs, etc., that's compelling. Also, any third-party validations (for example, "our solution is FedRAMP authorized" or "ISO 27001 certified") are big trust signals. Conversely, any hint of a past security issue that isn't addressed can sour this persona quickly. So transparency is valued – acknowledging concerns and showing how they're mitigated. This persona also likes messaging around **compliance**: if a solution simplifies compliance reporting or has pre-built controls, that's a plus. In terms of content, they may read whitepapers on security architecture or watch webinars about securing cloud deployments. But often their involvement is via checklists and meetings rather than consuming marketing content. So, a vendor's sales engineers and documentation play a big role in convincing the security stakeholder.

These personas collaborate during the buying process. For example, the CIO (strategic) and LOB leader (business sponsor) might agree on the need and budget, the IT Manager (technical) evaluates options and recommends one, the Security Officer vetos one option due to a red flag and approves another, and Procurement then negotiates the final contract – with all parties signing off. **Mapping content to personas:** A successful sales/marketing strategy will ensure there's content for each: an executive brief for the CIO, a case study for the LOB leader, a technical demo for the IT manager, a security FAQ for the CISO, and a clear ROI/cost breakdown for procurement. By addressing each persona's unique concerns and criteria, the buying committee as a whole moves towards consensus more easily.

## Competitive Landscape

The enterprise tech market is broad, but we can analyze key players and positioning in a few major domains, plus how ITDMs perceive them:

### Key Player Categories:



- *Cloud & Infrastructure Providers:* The big three **public cloud vendors (AWS, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud)** dominate mindshare for any cloud-related purchases. Enterprises often use more than one (multi-cloud) and compare their offerings. AWS is seen as a pioneer with breadth of services, Azure often strong in enterprise integration (especially if a company is a Microsoft shop), and GCP known for analytics and AI capabilities. Other infrastructure players include **IBM (hybrid cloud and mainframe legacy), Oracle (especially for databases and ERP infrastructure), Dell Technologies & HPE (data center hardware and hybrid cloud offerings),** and **Cisco** (networking, security hardware). These incumbents are generally trusted for performance and support, but face competition from specialized startups in areas like software-defined networking or hyperconverged infrastructure.
- *Enterprise Software Giants:* **SAP, Oracle, Microsoft, Salesforce, Adobe, ServiceNow, Workday** – these companies provide enterprise applications (ERP, CRM, HR, ITSM, etc.). ITDMs often have these as incumbent solutions and evaluate within their ecosystems (e.g., considering a Salesforce add-on vs. a third-party CRM tool). They stand out for end-to-end solutions and integration within their product suite. The downside can be cost and complexity. Emerging competitors or niche players (like a fresh CRM startup or an open-source ERP) sometimes challenge on cost or specific features, but often need to prove they can match the scale.
- *Security Vendors:* This landscape includes traditional players like **Palo Alto Networks, Cisco (Security division), Symantec/Broadcom, Check Point, IBM Security**, etc., and newer leaders like **CrowdStrike, Zscaler, Okta** for identity, and a host of startups in areas like cloud security (Wiz, Lacework), zero trust (Illumio), etc. ITDMs in security often prefer vendors recognized in Gartner's Magic Quadrants for their segment, but also keep an eye on innovative startups (because threats evolve quickly, sometimes startups address new threats faster). Trusted security vendors are those known for reliability (e.g., Cisco for network security, Palo Alto for firewalls, Microsoft for certain cloud security if using Azure).
- *Data & Analytics:* **Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, SAP** have core database and BI offerings, but **newer players like Snowflake (cloud data warehouse), Databricks (data science/ML platform),** and **Tableau (now Salesforce), Power BI (Microsoft)** for BI are very prominent. ITDMs in analytics often consider scalability (can it handle our big data?), ease of use for business analysts, and ecosystem. Cloud-native data warehouses and AI platforms have gained huge ground – Snowflake and Databricks are examples of emerging vendors now considered leaders due to their innovation. Traditional database vendors are still around mostly for legacy systems, but for new projects many enterprises are looking at those newer solutions.
- *Networking & Telecom:* **Cisco** is a powerhouse, as are **Juniper, Arista** in networking. For telecom services, the large carriers (AT&T, Verizon, etc.) come into play for connectivity. But software-defined WAN (SD-WAN) introduced players like **VMware (Velocloud), Fortinet, Silver Peak (HPE)**. ITDMs often default to known network equipment providers

for stability, but for things like SD-WAN or edge networking, they will consider specialized solutions that might be more agile or cost-effective.

- **Consulting & Service Providers:** Not exactly product vendors, but big consultancies like **Accenture, Deloitte, IBM Global Services, Infosys** etc., influence decisions too – sometimes an ITDM will lean towards whatever solution their trusted integrator recommends or has expertise in. Also, many emerging tech solutions get validated through pilot projects run by these integrators.

**Market Positioning and Differentiation:** Established vendors typically position themselves as **full-service, integrated, and enterprise-grade**. They emphasize their longevity, support, and breadth. For example, IBM's pitch often revolves around being your digital transformation partner with a full stack (hardware to AI). Microsoft's positioning in enterprise is about an integrated ecosystem (from Office 365 to Azure to Dynamics) that simplifies management and security. These are attractive to ITDMs who want one throat to choke and less integration work. Meanwhile, **emerging and mid-sized vendors position around innovation, specialization, and often cost-effectiveness or flexibility**. A company like Snowflake positioned itself as the best at what it does (cloud data warehousing) and cloud-agnostic, which appealed to those frustrated with older on-prem data warehouses. A security startup might pitch itself as using AI to catch threats that legacy systems miss, showing technical superiority in a niche area. Price can be a differentiator: while enterprises will pay for quality, if a smaller vendor can undercut a giant by 20% with similar results, that gets noticed (especially in times where 38% are doing more ROI analysis ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#))). However, incumbents often have competitive programs (like Cisco or Microsoft bundle discounts) to maintain their hold.

**Evaluation: Traditional vs. Emerging (continued):** We noted earlier the trust vs. innovation trade-off. Many ITDMs actually pursue a **"best-of-breed vs single-vendor" evaluation**. Some prefer best-of-breed, picking the top solution in each category (often leading to a mix of vendors, including startups). Others lean to single-vendor or suite approaches (maybe sacrificing some feature excellence for simplicity and integration). This philosophy can vary by company culture or the CIO's strategy.

**Standout Differentiators in Market:** In today's market, a few differentiators are very important:

- **Integration Ecosystem:** Vendors that provide extensive integration capabilities (APIs, marketplace of third-party integrations, modular architectures) stand out because enterprises need new solutions to slot into existing environments. Tech buyers often favor vendors who partner well – e.g., a software that natively integrates with Salesforce, SAP, and Workday might outshine one that requires custom integration for each.
- **Future-Proofing:** Given rapid change, ITDMs value vendors who articulate a clear roadmap and show they're investing in emerging areas like AI, edge, etc. In Foundry's study, **incumbents had an advantage with 57% preferring them, but note that 48% seek innovation/features** () – this means even incumbents need to prove they're innovating

or risk losing those seeking cutting-edge. So, market positioning that “we are leaders in innovation” (backed by R&D and new releases) can tip scales.

- **Customer Experience:** Word-of-mouth travels fast in B2B circles. Vendors known for **exceptional customer support and success** often have an edge. For example, ServiceNow grew partly because its customers raved about the product and support in ITSM circles, challenging older BMC/HP systems. So in the competitive landscape, providers that invest in customer success can differentiate beyond just product specs. This aligns with the stat that **poor customer service is a driver for 35% to switch vendors** – meaning good service can be a reason they stay or choose you.
- **Open Source vs Proprietary:** In some segments, open-source backed solutions (with enterprise support options) are challenging proprietary ones. For instance, open-source databases (PostgreSQL, etc.) or Kafka for streaming have enterprise-grade versions by companies like Confluent. ITDMs often consider open source for flexibility and avoiding vendor lock-in. So, a competitive insight is that vendors who embrace or incorporate open-source technologies (and present themselves as open and non-lock-in) might earn goodwill.

### Comparing Perceptions:

- *Traditional Vendor Perception:* Reliable, “no one got fired for buying IBM” mindset, but maybe less nimble and sometimes pushing their entire stack. Could be seen as pricey and heavy. They often rank high in completeness of offering but not always in user-friendliness.
- *Emerging Vendor Perception:* Innovative, can be a “secret weapon” for a specific need, more personalized attention (their execs might personally engage a big customer). But risk of them being acquired or going under, or not having 24/7 support in every country, etc. Great for point solutions, not always for broad platform needs.
- *Example:* In cloud, AWS (though not exactly “traditional” in age, it is dominant) is trusted for wide services but some enterprises worry about lock-in or support costs; a smaller cloud like Oracle Cloud might pitch better performance for Oracle apps or lower cost – some will experiment but not all will jump ship from AWS/Azure because of the proven track record of the big ones.

**Market Trends in Vendor Landscape:** Consolidation is common – big fish acquiring little fish (e.g., security giant acquiring a small AI security startup). ITDMs watch these because it can change who they consider (an acquired startup might now have better support, or conversely, its product might get merged or killed, introducing uncertainty). Also, **co-opetition** is notable: vendors partner with former competitors to integrate (like Microsoft and Oracle interconnecting clouds). From the buyer’s perspective, that’s positive if it reduces integration friction. Another insight: **regional preferences** – some U.S. enterprises might prefer U.S.-based vendors for data sovereignty or geopolitical reasons (for example, caution with certain foreign tech providers). This can influence competitive choices depending on context (government buyers especially sensitive here).

In summary, the competitive landscape is shaped by a handful of dominant players in each category and a long tail of innovators. ITDMs use a combination of **incumbent advantage, peer recommendations, and independent evaluations** to navigate this landscape ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)).

Providers that stand out do so either by **being consistently reliable and expansive** (the one-stop shops) or by **excelling in a niche and proving their value** (the specialists). To win in this market, vendors must understand how they are positioned against others in ITDMs' minds and emphasize the factors that make them stand out – whether that's **long-term trust or fresh innovation**.

## Marketing & Sales Recommendations

Given the comprehensive insights into ITDMs and B2B tech buyers, companies targeting this audience should adapt their marketing, demand generation, PR, and sales enablement strategies accordingly. Here are strategic recommendations to effectively engage enterprise IT decision-makers and align messaging with their evolving needs:

**1. Develop Targeted, Persona-Based Messaging:** Craft messaging that speaks directly to each stakeholder in the buying committee. Use the personas outlined (CIO, IT manager, LOB leader, etc.) to tailor your value propositions. For example, create an **executive brief** highlighting strategic ROI and risk mitigation for CIOs, and a separate **technical whitepaper or demo video** for IT architects focusing on features and integration. Ensure that your content addresses the specific pain points of that persona (security for CISO, cost for CFO, usability for end-user manager). This personalized approach shows that you understand the diverse concerns within an enterprise committee. Tools like account-based marketing (ABM) can help deliver the right content to the right role at the right time.

**2. Emphasize Thought Leadership and Education:** Position your brand as a **trusted advisor** rather than just a vendor. Given that ITDMs rely on research and peers, providing valuable thought leadership content will draw them in. Produce high-quality **whitepapers, research reports, and webinars** on topics your audience cares about (e.g., “2025 Trends in AI for Finance Industry” or “Best Practices for Zero Trust Security”). Avoid overt sales pitches; instead, share insights, data, and solutions to common challenges. If you have proprietary data or can commission a study, publish those findings (much like the surveys we cited). This not only attracts ITDMs (who love data-driven insights) but also gives your sales team credible content to reference. Remember, **65% of ITDMs spend significant time on educational content sites** (), so meeting them with educational content builds trust.

**3. Leverage Multi-Channel Content Distribution:** Use a mix of channels to reach ITDMs, matching their content consumption habits. Some tactics:

- **LinkedIn and Social Media:** Share thought leadership articles and infographics on LinkedIn where ITDMs actively engage. Encourage your subject matter experts or

executives to post commentary on industry news (building personal thought leadership that reflects on your brand). Also participate in LinkedIn Groups relevant to your industry. On Twitter, engage in tech conversations or host tweet chats on emerging topics. While only ~14% say social media directly drives purchase decisions ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)), a growing 24% are using social for research ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) – meaning a strong social presence reinforces your credibility during their info-gathering.

- **Webinars and Virtual Events:** Host regular webinars, possibly co-presented with industry analysts or existing customers for added credibility. Make them interactive (live Q&A, polls) to engage ITDMs. Recorded webinars can be gated content for lead capture (but be mindful to only gate high-value content, as buyers are selective about what they'll register for). Given **52% find webinars appealing** ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)), this is a proven format.
- **In-Person Events and Meetups:** With 60% of B2B marketers citing in-person events as key ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)), invest in event strategy. This could mean sponsoring major conferences (to get speaking slots or booth presence), hosting your own customer summit or roundtable, or even informal meetups/user groups in tech hub cities. Post-pandemic, many ITDMs are eager to network face-to-face again, and personal relationships forged can heavily influence deals. Ensure sales and technical teams attend to have meaningful discussions, not just sales pitches.
- **Email and Nurture Campaigns:** Use targeted email campaigns to nurture leads over the lengthy sales cycle. Segment email lists by persona, industry, or stage in the buyer's journey. For instance, send CIOs a quarterly "Insights Newsletter" with high-level trends and send architects a "Tech Tips" series. Personalize where possible (45% of buyers want personalized content portals or experiences ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#))). Use marketing automation to trigger emails based on behavior (e.g., if someone downloads a whitepaper on cloud security, follow up with a case study on that topic).
- **Content Syndication and PR:** Place your content on platforms ITDMs trust. This could involve syndicating articles or sponsoring content on TechTarget, CIO.com, or industry-specific sites. Also, pursue **PR opportunities**: contribute guest articles to trade publications, get your experts quoted in relevant news stories (which increases brand visibility and third-party validation), and publish press releases about your research findings or customer wins. Being visible in the media that ITDMs consume (like Business Insider, TechCrunch for some, or industry journals) keeps you on their radar.

**4. Provide Peer Validation and Community Engagement:** Since peer recommendations and reviews carry so much weight (nearly **25% influence from peer input** ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)) and 84% start with referrals ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#))), incorporate the **voice of the customer** into your marketing. Develop detailed case studies and video testimonials featuring recognizable clients (especially enterprise logos that will impress your target buyers). Encourage satisfied customers to leave reviews on platforms like G2, Gartner Peer Insights, TrustRadius – and reference those in

marketing (“Rated 4.7/5 on Gartner Peer Insights”). You might even facilitate **customer reference calls** or forums where prospects can directly ask current customers about their experience. Additionally, engage in **community building**: perhaps start a user community or a Slack/Discord for your product where IT professionals can discuss not just your solution but industry issues. By hosting a space for peer interaction, your brand becomes associated with valuable peer learning. In social media, consider advocating for your champions: e.g., quote-tweet a customer’s post or invite them to speak in your webinars. The goal is to **amplify authentic voices** that can vouch for your solutions, as this greatly persuades skeptical ITDMs.

**5. Equip Sales Teams with Insights and Enablement:** Sales cycles for enterprise IT are long and involve multiple stakeholders, so sales teams need to be consultative and well-armed with content. Provide them with **persona cheat-sheets** – e.g., a one-pager on “CIO priorities and how our solution addresses them” with relevant stats (like security being top priority ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#))), so they can tailor conversations. Also, ensure they have **ROI calculators and assessment tools**; since **38% of buyers are doing more ROI analysis** ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)), being proactive in providing financial justification can set you apart. Create a library of case studies segmented by industry and use case, so reps can share exactly the most relevant stories with a prospect (e.g., a healthcare case study to a healthcare ITDM). Additionally, train sales on using insight-based selling: leveraging industry research (like those cited in this study) to inform the buyer. For instance, a rep might say “We know from IDG’s survey that enterprises have 25 people in buying teams now () – how are you managing consensus on your side?” – this shows understanding and helps the rep align with the buyer’s context. Sales enablement should also include handling of common objections that ITDMs raise (security concerns, integration questions, etc.), ideally with documented answers or customer examples for each. Essentially, treat your sales team as an extension of your content marketing – they should deliver value in every interaction, not just push the product.

**6. Highlight Differentiators and Proof at Every Stage:** In all messaging and sales conversations, make sure to emphasize what makes your solution stand out (from the competitive insights we gathered). If brand trust is in your favor (e.g., you’re a well-known incumbent), emphasize your longevity, large customer base, and support infrastructure – but also showcase innovation to avoid seeming stale. If you’re a newer player, tackle the credibility concern head-on by showing testimonials, performance data, and perhaps offering risk reducers (like pilot programs or flexible contracts). Tie differentiators to customer priorities: e.g., “Our solution has 30% lower TCO than the leading competitor (), which can free budget for other projects – a big plus if you’re dealing with tight budgets.” Or, “Unlike others, we offer a fully cloud-agnostic deployment – giving you flexibility and avoiding lock-in, which we know many IT strategists prefer.” Additionally, incorporate the triggers that prompt switching: since 48% seek better features (), regularly communicate your new features and innovation roadmap; since 35% leave due to poor service (), underscore your award-winning support or customer success model. And because **prior experience counts** (if you already have a footprint in the account or a reference they trust),



leverage that by expanding within existing customers (land-and-expand) and making sure new prospects try your product (so they gain “experience” with it, making them more likely to buy).

**7. Support the Self-Service Research Process:** Recognize that buyers want to self-educate extensively. Ensure your **website is a rich resource center** – with easy navigation by topic or role. Offer ungated content for early stages (blogs, short videos, infographics) to build awareness and SEO, and gate high-value content (detailed eBooks, reports) strategically to capture leads who are deeper in research. Provide interactive elements like product demos or sandboxes that curious engineers can play with (perhaps a free trial or a freemium tier if feasible). Also, incorporate a **chatbot or live chat** on your site to answer common questions in real-time – some ITDMs might engage there before they’re ready for a formal meeting. Given that **77% won’t talk to sales until later** ([77% of B2B Buyers Do Their Own Research Before Speaking to Sales - Saleslion](#)), make sure by the time they do reach out, they might have already had a positive experience with your content and maybe even your product in trial form. Keep technical documentation and FAQs openly available; sophisticated buyers will read docs to answer their own questions (and they’ll appreciate transparency). Essentially, **be the best source of information about your product and its domain** – if you aren’t, they’ll find info (or misinformation) elsewhere.

**8. Foster Trust through Transparency and Customer-Centric Practices:** Building trust is paramount. Be transparent in your messaging – avoid exaggerated claims that savvy ITDMs will doubt. Instead, use specific data and case evidence (with citations or references) to back up statements. A marketing style that’s more consultative will differentiate you from competitors that push too hard. Encourage trials or proof-of-concepts – letting the product prove itself shows confidence and builds trust. Also, acknowledge weaknesses or limitations honestly when asked (and show how you mitigate them); this candor can impress experienced buyers used to sales spin. In PR and communications, highlight your **customer success stories and retention rates**, implying that you focus on making current customers happy (which future customers take as a good sign). Considering **40% of buyers value prior experience** ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)), emphasize long-term partnerships with clients (e.g., “90% of our first clients are still with us 5 years later”). Additionally, since ITDMs value company stability and support, if applicable mention milestones like years in business, financial stability, or well-known investors/parent company to alleviate concerns about vendor viability (particularly if you’re an emerging vendor). All these efforts in transparency and customer-centric culture should also be reflected by your spokespeople and sales reps in their interactions.

**9. Align Demand Generation with Buyer Journey Stages:** Map your demand gen tactics to early, mid, and late stage of the buying cycle. For **early-stage (awareness)**: focus on content marketing, SEO, social media, and PR to make buyers aware of your solution and educate them on the problem space. KPIs here are traffic, engagement, and new leads. For **mid-stage (consideration)**: nurture leads with email campaigns, retargeting ads (e.g., LinkedIn Sponsored content targeting those who visited your whitepaper page), invite leads to webinars, and perhaps use account-based ads for key target accounts. Provide comparison guides or

checklists that help them evaluate options (featuring your strengths). For **late-stage (decision/validation)**: equip your sales team to provide custom demos, workshops, or even on-site visits. Also, at this stage, offering to connect the prospect with a reference customer can push them over the line. Align your marketing-sales handoff so that when a lead hits a certain score (viewed pricing page, attended demo), sales reaches out with context on what content they consumed. Given the long cycle, also implement **lead nurturing for the long haul** – sometimes leads stall, but a well-timed “we just launched X feature that you might find interesting” email 3 months later can re-engage them.

**10. Monitor and Adapt via Feedback and Social Listening:** Keep a pulse on what ITDMs are saying and needing in real time. Engage in **social listening** on platforms like Reddit, Spiceworks, or Twitter for your product category or brand mentions – this can reveal emerging concerns or interests (just as our research saw AI and hybrid work trending in ITDM conversations ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#))). Use surveys or feedback forms in webinars to ask prospects what topics they want to learn more about. Talk to your current customers regularly – their evolving challenges often mirror the market. This feedback loop will inform your content strategy (e.g., if many ITDMs suddenly show interest in “edge computing security”, create content on that). It also helps in refining messaging – you might discover that certain buzzwords aren’t resonating and adjust accordingly. Additionally, track engagement metrics on your content to see what’s working: if your case study videos have low completion, maybe they need to be shorter or more focused. An agile approach to marketing strategy, informed by data and feedback, will keep your efforts aligned with ITDMs’ changing preferences.

By implementing these strategies, marketing and sales teams can better connect with enterprise IT decision-makers on their terms. The overarching theme is to **provide value at every touchpoint** – be it insightful content, helpful interactions, or evidence that your solution delivers. When ITDMs perceive a vendor as understanding their needs and contributing to their decision process (not just pushing a product), that vendor gains a significant edge. All the research indicates that this audience is **knowledge-driven and value-focused**, so centering your go-to-market approach around education, trust-building, and demonstrating value will significantly improve demand generation, pipeline velocity, and ultimately win rates in this segment.

## Data Sources & Methodology

This research study on ITDMs and B2B tech buyers synthesized insights from a wide range of **qualitative and quantitative sources** to ensure a comprehensive and validated understanding:

- **Industry Surveys & Reports:** We leveraged recent third-party research reports targeting IT decision-makers. Notably, Foundry’s *“Role and Influence of the Technology Decision-Maker Study 2023”* provided quantitative data on buying committees, cycle lengths, and influence factors (846 ITDM respondents globally, with ~61% North

America) () (). We also incorporated findings from Demand Gen Report's "2023 B2B Buyer Behavior Survey" and "2023 Content Preferences Survey", which offered insights into buyer journey changes, content usage, and timeline (nearly 300 B2B buyers, roles spanning IT, finance, etc., majority from sub-\$1B companies) ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). Spiceworks Ziff Davis' "State of IT 2024" report and BusinessWire release of the 2025 State of IT (with Aberdeen research) gave perspective on IT budget trends, emerging tech adoption plans, and challenges (sample ~530 global IT orgs for 2024 report) ([Review of "State of IT 2024" Report from Spiceworks](#)) ([Spiceworks Launches 13th Annual State of IT Report: Rising Costs, AI Investments, and Workforce Challenges Take Center Stage | Business Wire](#)). Wherever possible, we cited these sources directly to provide concrete data points (indicated by the [†] citations throughout).

- **Expert Interviews & Executive Insights:** While this written format doesn't include live interviews, we integrated qualitative insights from CIO commentary found in sources like the Evanta/Gartner CIO survey report ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)) ([Top 3 Goals & Challenges for CIOs in 2023](#)). These quote snippets and analysis of CIO goals/challenges gave context beyond raw numbers – illustrating sentiments like security complexity and balancing priorities. We treated published quotes and qualitative findings as proxy for expert input. Additionally, thought leadership blogs (e.g., Britopian on reaching ITDMs ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)) ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#))) were used to gather perspective on ITDM behavior patterns and preferences.
- **Social Listening & Community Data:** The study considered "social listening" type information by examining content from IT professional communities. For instance, the Britopian article analyzed "ITDM conversation topics", highlighting popular discussion themes on social platforms (AI, cloud security, etc.) ([How to Reach IT Decision Makers \(ITDMs\) With the Right Message](#)). We also noted trends reported by MarTech and others about increased social media research by buyers ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)). While we did not directly scrape social media, we relied on secondary sources that summarized social and community trends among IT pros. This qualitative angle ensured the research captures the voice of ITDMs as seen in forums and discussions, not just formal surveys.
- **Proprietary and Secondary Data:** If this were an internal study, we'd incorporate proprietary data (like CRM data on deal cycles or win/loss insights), but for this report, we focused on secondary published data due to context. Competitive benchmarking data was included by comparing statistics across different reports – e.g., how many stakeholders noted by Foundry vs. others, content preferences from Demand Gen vs. LinkedIn benchmarks ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#)). By cross-referencing multiple sources, we validated that certain trends (like longer buying

cycles, preference for trusted brands) are consistent and not just anomalies of one study. Each data point used was checked against at least one other source when available. For example, the finding that “prior experience with a vendor” rose in importance came from Demand Gen ([Tighter budgets are extending the B2B purchase cycle](#)) and was echoed by a Corporate Visions stat that 84% of buyers choose vendors they've worked with (6sense research) ([B2B Buying Behavior in 2025: 40 Stats and Five Hard Truths That...](#)) – demonstrating consistency.

- **Methodological Approach:** The research was conducted by first identifying the key focus areas (demographics, behavior, etc.) and then gathering data for each. We utilized advanced search to find relevant 2023–2024 studies, ensuring recency (past 12-18 months) for the freshest insights. We prioritized U.S. and enterprise-relevant data. After data gathering, we organized findings by theme and synthesized the narrative, using quantitative data to back assertions. We included multiple examples and case-in-point stats to illustrate each point. Charts and data visualizations referenced (like tables of buying committee size () or content format popularity ([2024 B2B Marketing Statistics and Research | Extu](#))) are based on the cited sources; in a full report deliverable, we would include original charts recreated from those data for visual illustration.
- **Citations:** Throughout the report, you'll see citations in the format[**source**line-range] linking to the original reference material. This ensures transparency of data and allows verification. For instance, when we state “average buying team of 25 people, up from 16 in 2017,” we cite Foundry (). This rigorous citation method underscores that our analysis is grounded in reputable research, lending credibility to the findings. All external sources are from recognized industry research firms, analyst groups, or tech media.
- **Reliability and Limitations:** By using multiple data sources, we increased reliability – consistent findings across IDG, DGR, Spiceworks, etc., suggest robust trends. However, note that some surveys have their own biases (e.g., a vendor-sponsored survey might over-represent certain findings). We attempted to mitigate bias by cross-verifying data points. The focus on U.S. enterprise means we leaned heavily on North America data; global differences were noted where relevant (but we largely assume U.S. trends align with NA data given 61% NA composition in Foundry's study ()). One limitation is that fast-changing areas (like AI interest post-ChatGPT) might evolve even month-to-month; we captured the snapshot as of the latest available reports. We also did not conduct primary research interviews in this context; doing so (e.g., interviewing a panel of CIOs) could further enrich the qualitative perspective, but our use of published interview insights aims to fill that gap.

In conclusion, this research blends the **hard data of surveys with the soft insights of expert commentary** to paint a full picture of ITDMs and B2B buyers. The methodology ensures that the recommendations and conclusions are evidence-based. For anyone using this study to inform

strategy, the combination of statistical trends and real-world concerns (validated by multiple reputable sources) provides a reliable foundation to act upon. All sources are cited for further exploration, and data has been interpreted in context to avoid misrepresentation. This methodology delivers a balanced and actionable understanding of the enterprise IT buyer mindset in the past year.