

**ACCELERANT**

by Chris Leger, CEO Bython

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**bython**  
we're on it!

# Building a Collaborative, Strategic B2B Demand Generation Process From the Ground Up



Marketers expect more transparency into how their B2B lead campaigns are executed, opening the door to strategic collaboration with the front engage directly with prospects to generate demand.

Our team here at Bython is spending more and more of our time educating the market about the strategies and tactics — “where the rubber hits the road,” so to speak — of our **B2B demand generation process**. Customers want to know what they are getting for their dollars. They are asking...

*“Where is the contact data coming from?”*

*“What tactics will we use in the email campaign, and how does our demand generation process stand out from the competition?”*

Increasingly, potential customers ask how the value we provide compares to what they get from working with two or three middlemen to execute similar campaigns. In fact, I've recently heard some industry experts talk about an emerging distinction between middlemen and “factories,” the handful of B2B lead generation providers that actually own their own data and work directly with contacts to activate revenue potential.

That’s good news for us at Bython, since we consider ourselves one of the leading “factories” that can map our our own first- and third-party data and campaign expertise to customers’ heightened expectations.

## Essentially, the questions we get from customers center on three key concerns:

### Quality



Can we credibly deliver campaigns that are genuinely in-market for your product, and not just get “close enough” with look-alike modeling and best guesses?

### Transparency



Are we willing — and more importantly, able — to show our customers exactly how we are executing their demand gen programs, and the results we are getting in real-time?

### Accountability



Do our campaigns convert against target demand generation marketing metrics, and does working directly with us result in the best ROI on marketing budgets?

These issues have always been front-and-center for smart B2B marketers. But as the demand gen industry matures, more and more customers know how to ask genuinely tough questions. Which is good for both B2B sellers and their partners who can provide the right answers.

## ABOUT OUR CEO



### CHRIS LEGER

*Chief Executive Officer Bython Media*

Chris joined in May of 2022. He quickly added marketing agency partners to the Bython community and expanded Bython into the UK and Asia.

Chris was recently named to the Forbes “Top 10 Innovators Shaping Industry in 2023.” For over 20 years Chris has been a noteworthy leader in the global marketing and sales industry. You may know him from his work as the Senior Vice President and General Manager for Merkle B2B which quickly became an agency powerhouse in the tech industry. Chris is credited in-part with Merkle ranking #2 on LinkedIn’s list of top companies for marketing and advertising, and named the “Fastest Growing B2B Agency in B2B Marketing’s 2020 US Benchmarking Report.

Chris Leger’s background includes performance media, content syndication, demand generation, and global marketing. He is known for creating trusting partnerships that enable the innovative services that he brings to market.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from the Boston College Carroll School of Business.

## Market position

At this point, I should note that this year is shaping up to be a strong year for us at Bython. As our relationships with customers grow, we are being trusted with higher volumes of their demand generation pipeline, at all points in the revenue funnel.

Across the industry, most B2B marketing budgets are projected to grow or hold steady, with the shift to digital and away from traditional media showing no signs of slowing down. Overall, demand generation remains an overwhelming priority for most B2B marketers; more than 90 percent listed it as their top goal in a survey by Ruler Analytics.

Honestly, I can't say if our own growth is being driven by higher customer spending, or by us winning bigger shares of existing budgets. I can say that in addition to traditional demo / firmographic criteria, we are seeing a lot of interest in how we design and execute campaigns.

We do much of our business in the tech sector, so layoffs and economic uncertainty may be driving this demand for confidence in the process. But I also think it's because B2B marketers are just better educated about the demand generation process. It's not a black box anymore. They want to know what they are getting for that 30 percent or greater mark-up they are paying for working with numerous middle-men.

We don't operate in the middle, so I can't say exactly how those conversations are going. But I can tell you how we are able to answer the tough questions from our perspective from the "factory" floor.

## Quality

The first question is always, do we own the data? Yes, we do, both first- and third-party. And of course we enforce the highest standards of data hygiene and enrichment with intent and multiple other public sources. We have built-in machine learning functions in our data quality regime to help identify gaps, and with every touch we update records to provide the most current and accurate picture of the market. (You can get the full story-by-the-numbers here).

Ultimately, though, this question really boils down to: **can we produce the quantity of demand a customer needs, at the quality they expect?** We've lost some substantial RFPs because we didn't have as big an audience in certain markets as some competitors purport to have. But at the end of the day, there's only so many people that fit a profile. If we say we can find 10,000 prospects you want to talk to, and someone else says they have five million by stretching account based marketing personas and rolling in non-related verticals, so be it.

There are still some customers and agencies who make decisions purely on who has the "biggest" audience, without considering the pitfalls that come with that spray-and-pray approach.





## Transparency

### *This is where I believe Bython really stands out*

Customers want a clear understanding of how we are generating demand, and they want to see how their campaigns are progressing in real time. Transparency begins before we drop the first email — I find myself spending more and more time discussing detailed campaign strategies and tactics as part of the initial engagement. Marketers want to have input into the process, but just as importantly, they want to be confident in our ability to execute and differentiate their message in a crowded marketplace. (More on that in a bit).

Once we start work, customers can access our Byonic platform to monitor demand generation marketing metrics in real-time and adjust criteria, based on either how the campaign is going or their own needs. We had a request come through recently from one of our customers saying “Hey, you know, we don’t want any marketing or sales functions anymore.” Okay, we’ll take it off the list. It’s important to note that changes often aren’t the result of a misfire on anybody’s part — we’re just reacting to market conditions and new information gathered during the sales process.

## Accountability

The ultimate test of demand quality boils down to if the campaign results in booked revenue. That’s what we’re doing here, afterall.

The metric our campaigns are usually measured against is conversion rate, typically to the next stage of the sales funnel. Some customers do factor in attribution to final closed business, but in reality that’s a complicated proposition, at best. Most sellers understand that closing the deal relies on a lot more than just the initial quality of the delivered contact. We are often one of many providers in large companies’ demand gen pipelines, so we don’t have full visibility into the intricacies of their sales ops. So mapping revenue to delivered AQLs is most often a swag, at best.

We do find ourselves working with customers to manage what amounts to sentiment analysis of the Sales team — do they believe that our programs are good, and so commit to working them through the revenue lifecycle? Again, this is where transparency really sets us apart. If the customer understands our plan and process, they are more likely to be confident in the results.

We work with customers to meet expectations here. But when it comes to metrics, most of our performance tracking still boils down to next-stage conversion.



## What the trends mean from the ‘factory floor’

So, that’s my take on the major trends that are shaping the demand generation market for 2023, and really the foreseeable future. B2B marketers are better educated and want to be involved in the demand generation process, and that is leading them to question the value they get from working with layers of middle men. This, in turn, creates a great opportunity for “factories” – B2B demand gen providers who own the data and interact directly with contacts to generate demand – to differentiate themselves.

### ***But how does this affect the strategies and tactics that actually move the needle?***


Here are some of my observations about what’s happening on the ground in B2B. You’ve heard some of them before; some of them may seem contrarian – they are my personal takes, afterall.

## Creativity Drives Content Engagement

There’s so much content in the market that it’s tough to stand out. With ChatGPT and other AI technologies just beginning to mature (I dabbled with GPT myself recently; it’s neat), virtually anybody is going to be able to create a data sheet or a two-pager.

So now it’s about relevance and engagement. How do you write something that’s memorable and really leaves an impression? Do you try to be funny, or to be disruptive? There’s a lot of people on LinkedIn and other social media that are aggressively calling out other people in the industry. And it makes them stand out.

I haven’t seen wholesale changes in our customer’s content approach. We still get hundreds of white papers (I confess, I don’t read them all). The expectation remains that we’re going to continue delivering the quality and quantity of campaigns they expect, based on old-school content. So we have to get creative to drive that engagement with interactive landing pages, entertaining emails, provocative social posts – new and creative ways to drive engagement.



You need new and creative ways to drive engagement.



## Your B2B Lead Gen Content is Your Brand

Most B2B sellers are not investing heavily in pure branding right now. The economy remains uncertain, and Sales still needs to keep the lights on. At the same time, content creation is booming – Neil Patel’s most recent survey says that 83 percent of marketers intend to increase their content budgets in 2023, primarily because they are communicating with customers in so many different channels.

The moral of this story? If you are using the bulk of your customer touches to drive lead gen, those conversations need to be high-quality. You may need to be funny or provocative to get attention in a crowded space, but ultimately B2B buyers do want to talk to people who can solve their problems.

*Quality content never goes out of style. I just don't have the time to read all those whitepapers.*

## Knowing the Customer Drives Personalization

All B2B marketing boils down to speaking to your customer on a one-to-few or a one-to-one basis. And that includes factoring in your existing relationship with a potential customer. If you are already selling into an organization, lean on that. If you are trying to break into a few new target accounts, get creative with your messaging and see what works. Track response and replicate the winning equation for the next 500 or so targets. Again, demand transparency and be prepared to react to what you learn.

*You have one relationship with your customer, and every time you speak to them you need to build a stronger connection. That's it.*

## ABM is a baseline

Honestly, I'm tired of hearing about ABM. Every piece of business we do comes with a target account list, whether the campaign is labeled as "ABM" or not. It's just intelligent B2B marketing. ABM just means that you're thinking about what you're doing in a meaningful way. Account based marketing personas are simply what you know about your customers in a data-driven world.

I'm not the only one who is beginning to see ABM as a best practice, if not just table stakes. Forty-five percent of executives in a recent survey say they have aligned ABM and demand gen into one internal process. It's the same common sense that's driving the ABM-to-ABX narrative.

## Relationships with demand gen partners begin before the contract is signed

For most of our 10 years of business here at Bython, the RFP process has boiled down to “we have this much money, give us this many leads.” But B2B marketer’s demand for transparency into the demand generation process is resulting in some very interesting conversations in our own sales efforts.

I had a call recently with a potential customer who challenged me: **“There’s a million companies who do what you do, how are you guys any different?”** And about 15 or 20 minutes later, he said **“I think I might have a project for you.”**

This is the kind of upfront, strategic conversations I’ve been trying to have with customers for about four years, and it’s finally happening. We’re now having thought-provoking give-and-take about building a methodology to generate demand with your ultimate purpose in mind, as opposed to just taking batch orders on how many and how much.

**We’ve invested in senior industry strategists and built out a customer success account management function to meet this demand for strategic, smart campaign design.** I like to think of it as building a direct line to the factory floor, where the end user and creator of the product can collaborate and cut out the middleman.

## Expect further consolidation in the B2B lead gen market

Of course, all the trends I discussed here point to an industry that’s primed for vendor consolidation. Frankly, folks sitting in the middle who are not providing value are getting called out. Some of them are two guys in a food truck that found a pile of data that fell off the back of a UPS truck – that’s just natural selection. But big, established shops are also being challenged for just doing things they always have, because as it turns out, they’ve been driving the race to the bottom.

The cream will rise to the top. We’re sticking with our demand generation strategy, and it seems to be paying off. We’re going to go toe-to-toe on RFPs, and we’re going to win. Ultimately, the factories with an outstanding demand generation process that makes and delivers high-quality B2B campaigns directly to marketers are in the best position to move the industry forward.

**We’re going to go toe-to-toe on RFPs, and we’re going to win.**

