



# What Does the Millennial B2B Buyer Really Want?

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	<b>3</b>
Who is the Millennial B2B Buyer ? .....	<b>4</b>
Getting to Know the Millennial B2B Buyer..	<b>5</b>
Digital First	
Trust	
Values	
Self-service	
Collaboration	
Millennial Perspectives: Full Interviews.....	<b>11</b>
Miguel.....	<b>12</b>
Andrew.....	<b>14</b>
Jimmy.....	<b>16</b>
Conclusion.....	<b>18</b>
Source List.....	<b>20</b>

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

They are less trusting of corporations. They vote with their dollars. They prefer user-generated content and feedback from peers. They expect information to be online. They favor group decision-making in the workplace over individualism.

They are Millennial B2B buyers and they should be on every business's mind, because they make up the largest cohort of the US working population. And soon, they'll be making the majority of B2B buying decisions.

As this younger generation of workers take the lead, B2B organizations must evolve to match their expectations and values.

In this analysis you will learn insights about Millennials to help your business better sell to these buyers:

- Millennials are digital natives—suppliers must have a strong digital brand presence.
- Millennials are skeptical of corporate intentions. Businesses need a new approach to build trust.
- Millennials value social and environmental responsibility and they expect their business partners to demonstrate commitment to these causes.
- Millennials want to control their own buying experiences. Businesses need to offer digital self-service options.
- Millennials value collaboration. Suppliers should prepare to sell to buyer committees instead of solo key decision-makers.

Millennial workers will continue to make up a significant portion of the workforce for the next 40 years. By making the effort to understand this social and economic force, businesses can arm themselves with the tools and practices to prosper through the changes that this generation is already driving.

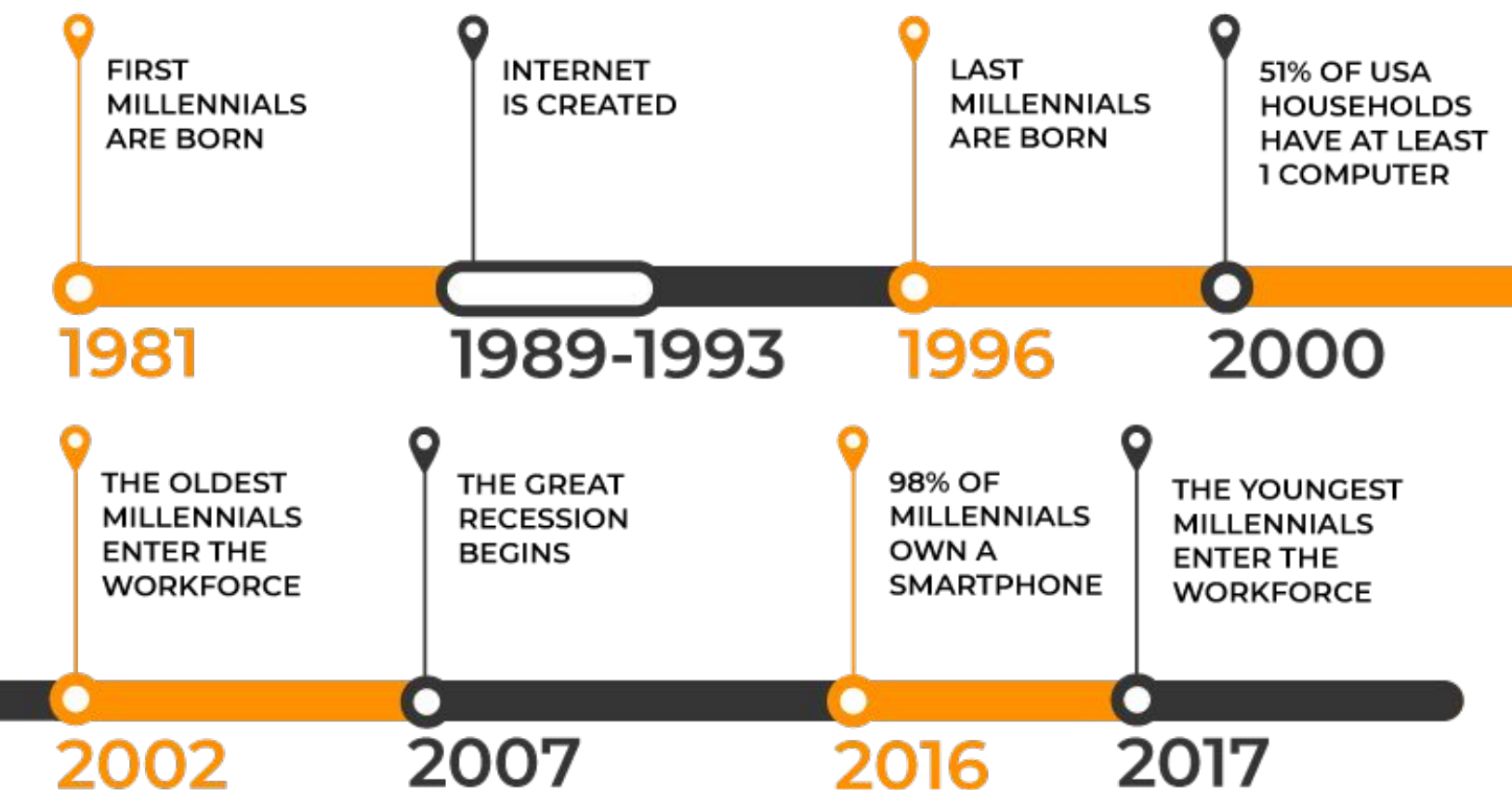
At Inception, our digital commerce platform is designed to meet the needs of all segments of buyers and sellers. With our suite of digital tools, you can maintain the business flexibility to evolve at pace with buyer preferences and economic conditions.

# Who Is the Millennial buyer?

Those born between 1981 and 1996—the age group demographers call Millennials—are now the largest cohort of the US working population. According to Pew Research, in just four years more Millennials than Baby Boomers will hold executive and managerial positions.

As per a 2016 Merit survey, one-third of employed Millennials reported that they were the sole decision maker in their department. It will be another 25 years before the oldest Millennials reach retirement age. Between now and then, these digitally savvy workers will increasingly lead organizations and make B2B purchasing decisions.

To remain competitive, companies must build buying experiences that align with the preferences and expectations of Millennial buyers.



# Getting to Know the Millennial B2B buyer

To present a snapshot of the Millennial business buyer, we have compiled data from sources like Deloitte, Dell, and TrustRadius. But we wanted to dig a little deeper than data. That's why we sat down with three Millennial buyers to compare data insights to the actual experiences of Millennial buyers. Meet Miguel, Andrew, and Jimmy.



**Miguel**

Works for an online home and office furniture reseller.



**Andrew**

Works for a startup that makes nanomaterials research and manufacturing.



**Jimmy**

The CFO of a family-owned painting and drywalling business in New York City.

## Millennials live online.

They grew up with access to technology and the internet. From a young age, they used mobile phones, computers, and software programs for school and leisure. If not in high school, then certainly in college, they researched their homework assignments online and emailed them to the professor—or even submitted them through a learning management system (LMS).

As adults today, they shop with their smartphones. They date online. They read Google and Yelp reviews to decide where to eat. They have groceries delivered to their door. In urban areas, they use rideshare apps to get from place to place.

In their work life, they want the same conveniences technology brings to their personal life. And as they advance in their careers, they are driving technology adoption and making decisions that shape the future of their organizations—and yours too.

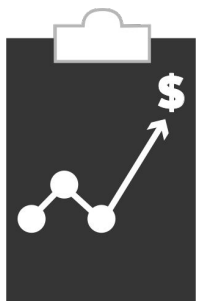
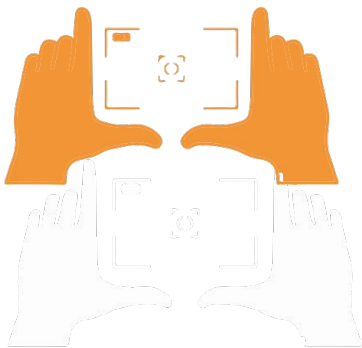
# Millennials by the numbers: how do they assess vendors and make purchase decisions?

## 01 Digital First

The first place Millennials look for information is online. They Google it! They rely on the internet and digital technologies to research business partners.

### Key Data Points

- 72% of all B2B researchers start with a generic online search. This percentage rises among the Millennial population.
- 85% of employed Millennials use social media to research products and services for their companies.
- 82% of Millennials think mobile devices are important when researching new products and services.



### Millennial Perspective - Andrew

*The process usually goes like this: I search for an online spec sheet, I request a quote online, then I get an email, we respond to the email and solicit more technical information, then we set up a team call (online).*

### Selling Strategy

- Digitize your sales process. Have clear online pricing or a quoting tool on your website.
- Use a scheduling tool like Calendly or Acuity to allow buyers to set up a discovery call or sales call. This gives the buyer maximum control with the ability to choose the date, time, and call method.



# 02 Trust Gap

Millennials are less trusting of companies and corporate entities. The internet has drastically improved transparency. The public can scrutinize business leaders and practices much more closely and hold them accountable to their actions.

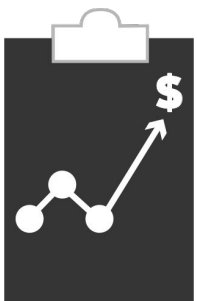
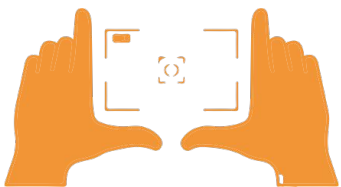
From BP's Deepwater Horizon oil calamity, to the big pharma-fuelled opioid crisis, to a series of high-profile harassment cases that sparked the #Me-too movement, bad behavior in the business world has constantly been on display to this generation of younger workers.

In addition, the technology-enabled gig economy has brought more opportunities to both employee and employer, with neither as reliant on the other as they once were.

Whereas their more senior counterparts might look to download an industry report or search for information on a company website, Millennials prefer to rely on their peers, user-generated content, product demos, and free trials.

## Key Data Points

- Less than 20% of Millennials use analyst rankings and reports. Instead, they rely on free trials, product demos, and user reviews.
- 8 out of 10 Millennials won't make a purchase without reading a review first.
- 56% of people believe business leaders purposely try to mislead people.



## Millennial Perspective - Andrew

*I don't want to be at the mercy of a salesman.*

## Selling Strategy

- Feature user testimonials and reviews on your site.
- Direct satisfied customers to third-party platforms to leave reviews.
- Feature interactive videos, product demos, and trials.

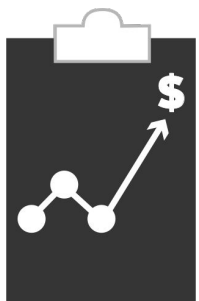
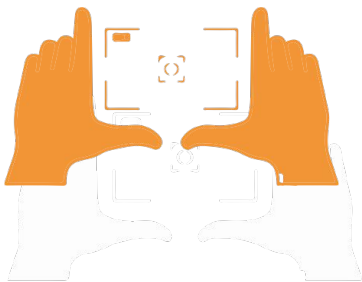
# 03 Millennials Are Value Driven

Many Millennials have taken a stance against discrimination and inequality. They believe in their collective ability to bring about change. And they expect corporate entities to play their part, especially those they work for or buy from.



## Key Data Points

- In one study, eighty percent of Millennials indicated that social, environmental, or philanthropic efforts of companies are important to their purchase decisions.
- 7 in 10 Millennials consider company values when making a purchase.
- 53% of the US public believe companies that issue a statement on racial equality need to follow up with concrete action.



## Millennial Perspective - Miguel

*Many of our end customers are now asking for diversity businesses. Minority, woman, locally-owned. It's my job to find these suppliers.*

## Selling Strategy

- Listen to the values your customers articulate.
- Define your company values and mission. Share it on your website.
- Have a business/corporate social responsibility initiative that goes beyond words.
- Continually vet your supply chain and avoid partners with questionable labor practices.



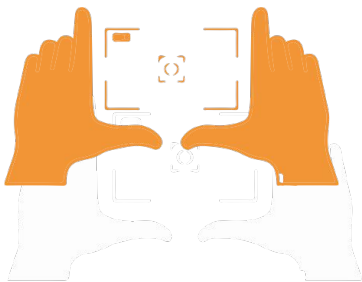
# 04 Millennials Buyers Want Self-service

Millennial buyers are used to having the information they are looking for at their fingertips. They want to do their own research. They don't want to be "sold to" and they aren't interested in a sales pitch.



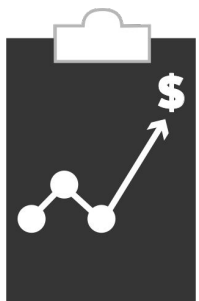
## Key Data Points

- 29% of Millennials wish they could self-serve the entire buyer's journey without ever speaking with a vendor rep.
- 45% of Millennials say they prefer buying online because they can run comparisons on products and prices.



## Millennial Perspective - Andrew

*I want to be able to compare apples to apples on my own, but that's tough to do if there is inadequate information online.*

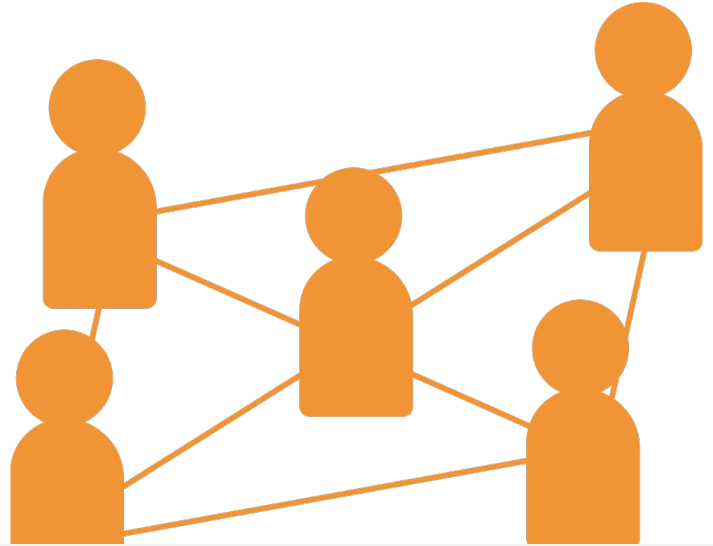


## Selling Strategy

- Build site-search functionality for shoppers to find specific information or products.
- Have a dedicated FAQ page to answer questions about shipping, payments, and returns.
- Empower shoppers to self-serve as much of their buyer's journey as possible, from generating quotes to selecting the shipping method and reordering parts. 9

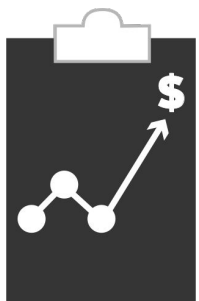
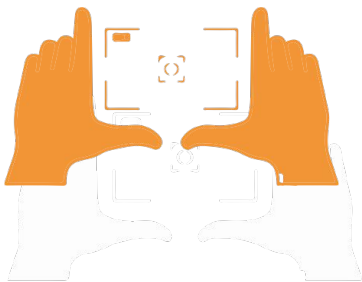
# 05 Millennial Buyers are More Collaborative

Between school, sports, and other extra curriculars, most Millennials grew up in highly structured environments that emphasized sharing and being a team player. This has carried over into their work lives. Vendors beware—moving forward you'll need to convince a team to buy, not just a key individual.



## Key Data Points

- Teamwork is important—One study found that 74 % of Millennials prefer to collaborate in small groups.
- 60% of buying committees with Millennials had four or more members—in line with the Millennial values of inclusivity and collaboration.



## Millennial Perspective - Andrew

*Before a final decision, we have an internal meeting comparing our experience with the vendors. Usually there are 4 to 5 people involved in these discussions*

## Selling Strategy

- Understand you are not selling to a “key man.” You are partnering with a team.
- Build out multiple buyer personas—even within the same company.
- Create informative content that is easy to share.



# Millennial Perspectives - Full Interviews



## Miguel - The Furniture Reseller

Miguel works for an online home and office furniture reseller. His job is to identify manufacturers that can fill orders from his end customers, and get them up and running on his company's platform.

**A baseline of technology and data share capabilities are a must.**

**Inception:** **How do you vet vendors or suppliers before you decide to work together?**

**Mike:** When we are deciding which companies to work with, we first check to see if the brand has mindshare and whether there is consumer demand. The place to start is with long-tail keyword search volume. For example, "black sofa Ashley model ###." Basically, the brand has to have an online presence, otherwise we are not going to get any orders.

**Inception:** **What's important when it comes to technology and digital capabilities?**

**Mike:** With items that can be damaged in transit [like furniture], we want to check the claims process. Manual claims are a time waster. We want a smooth online claims process, or we want to agree to damage rebates upfront.

We are looking for the supplier to have a baseline of technology. This is especially important for smaller, lower value orders (those below \$2,500 or so). Do they have EDI? Do they have an online catalog? Can I place orders from an online portal? Can they send invoices digitally?

**Inception:** **What would be a red flag or cause you to second guess working with a potential supplier?**

**Mike:** If they don't have strong data share capabilities and they have limited brand presence, it's often not worth it to do business.

**Inception:** What is the final step before you decide to work with and onboard a new supplier?

**Mike:** The final decision does fall to my team, the commercial team. We then have a cross-departmental team vet and onboard the new partner. Team size varies based on expected sales tier. For a \$50 million account, there are 6 people, one from each of the following teams: commercial, legal, operations, marketing, product, and customer team. Larger accounts have more legal and marketing team members, plus a dedicated account manager.

**Inception:** What's one important thing that guides decision-making?

**Mike:** The goal is to make it easy for the end customers to source their furniture.

## Key Takeaways

### Digitize the buyer's journey

- **Have a digital marketing strategy.** Suppliers and manufacturers that want to do business with online resellers like this must have a digital presence. Fill your website with informative, keyword-optimized content that helps shoppers find you. Get active on the social media platforms your audience is on. Engage repeat shoppers with email campaigns that deliver company news, helpful tips, and special offers.
- **Create digital self-service capabilities** for: customer service, claims, and reordering.
- **Build third-party integrations** and data share capabilities to facilitate electronic transfer of order information, invoices, shipping labels, and other business documents.



## Andrew - The Scientific Researcher

Andrew works for a startup that makes nanomaterials for aerospace, textile, and energy applications. Part of his job is to source highly technical materials, machines, software, and sensors for research and manufacturing purposes.

**Digitization must supplement, not replace human support and relationships.**

**Inxeption:** **How are procurements handled at your company?**

**Andrew:** From the early days of the company, we have had a dedicated person that handles purchasing for the things we use every day. But as one of the younger team members, when we need something new, I am often the go-to person tasked with researching vendors and setting up a meeting.

**Inxeption:** **And what is that processes like? How do you research and vet vendors?**

**Andrew:** I search for an online spec sheet, I request a quote online, then I get an email, we respond to the email and solicit more technical information. For anything over \$1,000, I have an exploratory call. Then we set up a team call (online).

**Inxeption:** **What would be a red flag or cause you to second guess working with a potential vendor?**

**Andrew:** I am looking to purchase highly technical machines for research applications. If the technical sales person can't answer my technical questions, how can I justify the purchase of a \$100,000 machine?

**Inxeption:** **What are the final steps before a purchase decision?**

**Andrew:** Before a final decision we have an internal meeting comparing our experience with the vendors. Usually there are 4 to 5 people involved in these discussions. It comes down to how well they answered our questions, the technical specs, and whether we have a previous relationship with the vendor.



**Inception:** Do you have any concerns when it comes to after-sales support?

**Andrew:** With research and development, what we are really looking for is a good customer relationship with knowledgeable support staff. I need to be able to pick up the phone, get in touch with the right person, and say “hey, I need help with this particular setting.”

If I call with a specific question, and support staff tells me to check the manual, that’s pretty frustrating. When my company scales up to purchase more of this type of equipment, I’m not going to recommend the vendor. I’m going to look for their competitors.

**Inception:** Are there any principles or goals that guide decision making?

**Andrew:** The goal is to bring nanomaterial technology out of the lab and into the real world. This takes a combination of the right research and development process, and partners who are exceptionally skilled at communicating.

## Key Takeaways

Build online information and processes— maintain offline support

- **Make information and processes available online.** This generation of buyers wants to find information and have conversations digitally.
- **Maintain offline personal contacts.** Millennial buyers also want human support. Digitization should supplement, not replace human relationships and support processes.
- **Make knowledgeable staff available** to your customers throughout the life of the customer relationship.



## Jimmy - The Contractor CFO

Jimmy runs the finance operations for an NYC-based family-owned painting and drywalling business. As a subcontractor, timing and cash flow are his biggest concerns.

Digitization is about more than technology. It's using technology to diversify your product and service offerings.

### Inception:

#### What are your biggest business challenges?

**Jimmy**

As a subcontractor in NYC, cash flow is everything. We lay out the payroll every week, the cost of material every month, insurance, and other overhead expenses. We then wait 60, 90, or even 120 days to recover that cost.

### Inception:

#### Do you source materials direct from manufacturers or middle supply chain vendors?

**Jimmy**

We considered going direct-to-manufacturers to source material. But ultimately, it wasn't worth the pressure on our cash flow. Manufacturers have much harsher payment terms, whereas my relationship with vendors gives me much more leniency to pay for material.

Plus, manufacturers won't drop ship unless it's a huge order. So I have to coordinate and pay for the delivery (drivers, trucks, paperwork, sales tax, etc). It may save me 2% in material cost, but it doesn't mean much if I have to turn down work because I can't get material due to payment terms.

At the end of the day it (direct from manufacturer) was minor savings and a huge headache.

## Inception:

### What goes into the final purchase decision?

**Jimmy**

In contracting, things can change fast and there is a lot of uncertainty. Project costs and timelines are based on estimates, which can be thrown off for any number of reasons. When project scope or timeline change, I need to be able to get the proper tools and materials quickly.

I also need billing and receivables transparency. I need to know when money will be coming out of my account so I can manage my cash flow and pay my workers. When checks are late, guys stop coming to work and we risk missing project milestones.

## Inception:

### What are the most important goals or principles that guide decision making?

**Jimmy:**

I need to be able to pay my guys on-time, in-full, twice per month, without fail. I also need reliable vendors to get the right materials at the right time. Without these two things, we wouldn't have a business for long.

## Key Takeaways

Leverage technology to offer more diverse services to more diverse buyers

- **Streamline logistics operations** by working with aggregated freight carriers that can deliver different size orders from from parcel to FTL.
- **Offer more flexible payments terms** with embedded financing for your online store.

# A BETTER WAY TO DO BUSINESS

Study after study shows that this younger generation of buyers want to research online before they make a purchase. That they rely on user-generated content over company sponsored content. That they prefer a demo or a trial over a sales pitch. And they expect a seamless digital buying experience with self-service options. But that doesn't diminish the importance of human relationships in business.

From our conversations, it's clear that many of the business problems that companies have always struggled with still exist:

- Lost or damaged products
- Lack of specific product information
- Slow delivery of materials
- Lack of visibility into finance operations
- Poor post-sales product support

The difference is, now there is the capability, and the expectation, for technology AND skilled professionals to come together to provide a better solution.



# Ready to Do Business Better?

Inxeption can help you meet buyer expectations by:

- **Building a user-friendly online** store with self-service and repeat purchase functionality.
- **Conducting market research** to understand your most important prospects and how to reach them online.
- **Using pre-built and custom integrations** to facilitate data share across your organization and with partners.
- **Connecting you to a network of trusted freight forwarders** and carriers to ship orders of all different sizes.
- **Offering payment processing** to suit the complex needs of B2B buying, as well as other financial services.

[Visit us online](#) or give us a call at **888.852.4783** to schedule a free consultation with one of our experts to learn about our B2B digital commerce solutions.



**Want to learn more about  
Inxeption?**

**GET A DEMO**

# SOURCE LIST

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/29/facts-about-american-workers/>

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/353284>

[https://madewithmerit.com/reports/Millennial\\_B2B-Report-Merit.pdf](https://madewithmerit.com/reports/Millennial_B2B-Report-Merit.pdf)

<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/the-changing-face-b2b-marketing/>

<https://www.trustradius.com/vendor-blog/millennial-b2b-buyers-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-new-wave-of-decision-makers>

<https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2021-03/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer.pdf>

<https://go.forrester.com/blogs/the-data-digest-millennials-call-for-values-driven-companies-but-theyre-not-the-only-ones-interested/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/millennial-online-review-products-research-internet-trusted-recommendations-a8245781.html>

<https://www.inc.com/peter-economy/the-millennial-workplace-of-future-is-almost-here-these-3-things-are-about-to-change-big-time.html>

[https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2021-05/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Special%20Report\\_Business%20and%20Racial%20Justice%20in%20America.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2021-05/2021%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Special%20Report_Business%20and%20Racial%20Justice%20in%20America.pdf)