The Buying Committee Problem

Why Single-Contact Selling is Killing Your B2B Pipeline: How to Fix It

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Native Salesforce App - Buying Groups - Available on AppExchange

Executive Summary

B2B buying has fundamentally changed. The average enterprise purchase now involves 6 to 10 stakeholders, yet most sales teams are still managing relationships with individual contacts rather than buying committees. The result is missed deals, longer cycles and a CRM full of disconnected data.

This whitepaper examines why the shift to committee-based buying demands a new approach to CRM data management, and how sales and revenue operations teams can use buying committee intelligence to improve win rates, shorten cycles and align sales and marketing activity more effectively.

We also introduce Buying Groups, a native Salesforce application that automatically identifies and tracks buying committees by intelligently grouping Accounts, Leads and Contacts, and explains how it addresses the structural limitations that make committee-based selling difficult in standard Salesforce.

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1. The Changing Face of B2B Buying

A decade ago, a skilled salesperson could navigate a deal by building a strong relationship with a single senior decision maker. The economic buyer said yes, the deal closed. Simple.

That world no longer exists. Research from Gartner consistently shows that the average B2B purchase now involves between 6 and 10 decision makers [1], each bringing their own priorities, concerns and approval requirements to the process. In enterprise deals the number is frequently higher.

This shift has been driven by several forces working together:

- Risk aversion - organisations have become more cautious about technology and vendor commitments following high-profile project failures. Decisions that used to sit with one executive now require sign-off from finance, legal, IT security and operations.
- Digital buying journeys - buyers now complete 60 to 70 percent of their research before speaking to a salesperson [2]. By the time a rep enters the picture, multiple stakeholders have already formed opinions.
- Organisational complexity - matrix management structures mean that no single person has the authority to make significant purchasing decisions alone. Consensus is required.
- Increased scrutiny of technology spend - in a tighter economic environment, every significant purchase requires a business case, a competitive evaluation and multiple approvals.

"The typical buying group for a complex B2B solution involves 6 to 10 decision makers, each armed with four or five pieces of information they have gathered independently."
[1] - Gartner, The New B2B Buying Journey

The implications for sales teams are significant. A salesperson who manages a deal through a single contact is, at best, only seeing part of the picture. At worst, they are building a relationship with someone who lacks the authority to close the deal; while competitors are quietly engaging with the economic buyer, the technical evaluator and the procurement team.

2. Why Your CRM Was Not Built for Committee-Based Selling

Salesforce and similar CRM platforms were designed around the concept of a single contact owning a relationship. The standard data model reflects this: an Opportunity belongs to an Account, and the primary contact on that Opportunity is the person your rep is talking to.

This model worked well when deals were closed with individuals. But when a buying committee of eight people spread across multiple job titles and, in larger organisations, multiple subsidiary companies needs to be managed, the standard CRM model starts to break down.

The Fragmentation Problem

Consider a typical enterprise deal. Your marketing team generates a Lead from a webinar: a junior IT manager at Acme Corporation. Your BDR qualifies it and converts the Lead. Meanwhile, the VP of Finance at Acme Corporation is an existing Account contact. The Head of Procurement is also a contact, but under a different Account record for Acme's parent company. And there is a new Lead in the system for the CTO who attended a trade show last month.

In standard Salesforce, these four people are completely disconnected. There is no object that says they all belong to the same buying committee. Your sales rep has to manually piece this together, if they even know to look.

6-10	**60-70%**	**4x**
Avg. stakeholders per B2B purchase [1]	Of buying journey completed before vendor contact [2]	More likely to win when engaging the full committee

The New Business vs Existing Customer Problem

Another structural challenge is distinguishing between pure new business opportunities and expansion revenue from existing customers. When Leads and Accounts coexist for the same company, which is common in any active sales pipeline, it is genuinely difficult to know whether you are talking to a new buyer or someone whose company already has a relationship with you.

This matters because the sales motion is fundamentally different. New logo acquisition requires education, trust building and competitive positioning. Account expansion requires understanding existing usage, identifying new use cases and leveraging your customer success relationship. Treating them the same way is a common and costly mistake.

The Engagement Blindspot

Marketing teams invest significantly in campaign activity: events, webinars, content, email programmes. This activity touches multiple people at the same account, often in the same week. But without a way to aggregate that engagement at the buying committee level, the sales team cannot see it.

A rep might have a conversation with their main contact and hear that the account is not ready to engage. Meanwhile, three other people at that account have attended two webinars and downloaded the pricing guide. The account is warming up; the rep has no visibility of this because they are looking at individual contact records, not the buying committee as a whole.

3. The Cost of Getting This Wrong

The commercial consequences of managing deals contact-by-contact rather than committee-by-committee are well documented. According to Forrester's State of Business Buying 2024 report, 86 percent of B2B purchases stall at some point in the buying process, and 81 percent of buyers end up dissatisfied with their chosen provider. [4] Sales cycles lengthen, win rates fall and revenue that should have been closed is lost to better-organised competitors.

Lost Deals

When a salesperson builds a relationship with the wrong stakeholder, someone who is interested but lacks authority: the deal stalls at the point where it needs executive approval. By that time it may be too late to build relationships with the people who actually matter. Competitors who engaged the full committee earlier in the process have a significant advantage.

Longer Sales Cycles

Deals that lack committee-wide engagement take longer to close. Each new stakeholder who enters the process late requires their own education and trust-building phase. A salesperson who has mapped the full buying committee from the start can run a parallel engagement strategy, moving all stakeholders forward simultaneously rather than sequentially.

Misaligned Sales and Marketing Activity

When marketing cannot see which campaigns are reaching which buying committees, they cannot optimise their spend. A campaign that generates ten responses from eight different people all at the same account is far more valuable than ten responses from ten different companies; without buying committee visibility, both look the same in the reporting.

Poor Revenue Forecasting

Sales leaders who cannot see the full buying committee on a deal are making forecast decisions based on incomplete information. A deal that looks close because the champion is enthusiastic may be much further from closing if the economic buyer and procurement team are not yet engaged.

When buyers experience buying group relevance, they are three times more likely to report a high-quality deal. [3] - Gartner, 2025

4. What Buying Committee Intelligence Looks Like in Practice

Buying committee intelligence means having, at any point in your sales process, a clear and current view of:

- Who is in the buying committee - all the Accounts, Leads and Contacts associated with a purchase decision, regardless of how they are structured in your CRM
- How engaged they are - which members of the committee are responding to your marketing activity, attending events, consuming content
- Where you have relationships - which members you have active conversations with and which are currently unknown to your sales team
- Whether they are a new logo or existing customer - so you can apply the right sales motion from the start
- What pipeline exists - open opportunities, values, stages, so sales leaders can see buying-committee-level pipeline health

The Revenue Operations Perspective

For revenue operations teams, buying committee intelligence is a data quality and process efficiency challenge as much as a sales enablement one. The fundamental question is: how do you structure CRM data so that it reflects how buying decisions are actually made, rather than how your CRM was originally designed?

The answer requires a layer of organisation on top of the standard CRM data model: a way to group related records into a single buying committee view without disrupting the underlying data structure or requiring significant manual maintenance from the sales team.

The Marketing Perspective

For marketing teams, buying committee intelligence transforms campaign measurement. Instead of reporting on individual contact responses, you can report on buying committee engagement: how many committees have at least one engaged member, which are showing the strongest engagement signals, and how engagement scores correlate with pipeline progression and win rates.

This enables a much more sophisticated approach to account-based marketing. Rather than targeting individual contacts, you can target buying committees, ensuring your campaign activity reaches the right people across the full committee, not just the one contact your BDR happened to meet at a trade show.

5. Introducing Buying Groups for Salesforce

Buying Groups is a native Salesforce application that addresses the buying committee problem directly. It automatically identifies and tracks buying committees by grouping related Accounts, Leads and Contacts into Buying Group records, giving sales, marketing and revenue operations teams the committee-level visibility they need.

How It Works

Buying Groups uses a five-method intelligent matching engine to group related records automatically:

Method	How It Works	Example
Exact Name	Matches records with identical company names	"Acme Corp" matches "Acme Corp"
Stripped Name	Matches after removing common suffixes and prefixes such as Ltd, Inc, Corp, The	"Acme Corporation" matches "Acme"
Account Hierarchy	Walks the Salesforce Account parent chain to group subsidiaries with their parent	"Acme UK Ltd" (child of Acme Corp) joins Acme Corp Buying Group
Email Domain	Matches Leads to Accounts sharing the same corporate email domain	Lead with jane@acmecorp.com matches Account with john@acmecorp.com
Fuzzy Name	Uses Jaro-Winkler similarity algorithm to match names with typos or spelling variations	"Johnson Controls" matches "Johnson Contrals"

New Logo Tracking

Every Buying Group is automatically flagged as a New Logo or Existing Customer based on the presence of Closed Won opportunities. This flag updates in real time as opportunities progress through the pipeline, giving sales teams instant clarity on which buying committees represent pure new business and which are existing customer relationships.

Real-Time Engagement Scoring

Campaign responses from every Contact and Lead in a Buying Group are aggregated into a Total Engagement Score at the buying committee level. The score updates the moment a campaign response is recorded in Salesforce; no batch jobs, no overnight delays. Sales reps can see at a glance which buying committees are warming up based on their marketing engagement.

Zero Manual Maintenance

New Accounts and Leads are matched into Buying Groups automatically as they are created in Salesforce. When an Account moves, its Contacts and Opportunities move with it. The system maintains itself; your sales team spends their time selling, not managing CRM data.

6. Business Impact

Implementing buying committee intelligence through Buying Groups delivers measurable benefits across sales, marketing and revenue operations.

Team	Challenge Solved	Business Benefit
Sales	No visibility of the full buying committee on a deal	Reps can identify and engage all stakeholders earlier, reducing deal stall risk and improving win rates
Sales	Cannot distinguish new logos from existing customers	Correct sales motion applied from the start - new business vs expansion treated differently
Marketing	Campaign engagement visible at contact level only	Committee-level engagement scoring enables account-based marketing and better campaign ROI measurement
Marketing	Cannot see which accounts are warming up	Total Engagement Score surfaces high-engagement buying committees for sales follow-up
Revenue Operations	CRM data fragmented across Accounts, Leads and Contacts	Single unified view of every buying committee, maintained automatically with no manual effort
Revenue Operations	Forecast based on individual contact relationships	Pipeline visible at buying committee level - better quality forecast data for sales leadership
Sales Leadership	Cannot see buying committee health across the pipeline	Dashboard visibility of engagement scores, pipeline values and New Logo vs Existing Customer split across all Buying Groups

Implementation Simplicity

One of the most common objections to buying committee management tools is implementation complexity. Buying Groups is designed to eliminate this concern entirely. It installs from the Salesforce AppExchange in minutes, creates its own configuration automatically on installation, and requires no custom development, no complex data migration and no ongoing technical maintenance.

The matching engine begins grouping your existing Accounts and Leads as soon as you run the initial matching batch. From that point forward, new records are matched automatically in real time as they are created.

7. Getting Started

Buying Groups is available on the Salesforce AppExchange with a 30-day free trial. No credit card is required to start the trial.

Step	Action	Time Required
1	Install Buying Groups from the AppExchange	5 minutes
2	Assign the Buying Groups User permission set to your team	5 minutes
3	Add Buying Group fields to your Account and Lead page layouts	10 minutes
4	Review the Default Settings and adjust matching configuration if needed	5 minutes
5	Run the Initial Matching Batch to group your existing data	Automated
6	Review the Buying Groups created and begin using committee-level intelligence	Ongoing

Most teams are up and running with full buying committee visibility within 30 minutes of installation.

Pricing

Buying Groups is priced at £30 per Salesforce org per month: a flat fee that covers unlimited users. There are no per-seat charges and no hidden costs. The 30-day free trial gives your team full access to all features with no commitment required.

Requirements

- Salesforce Enterprise, Professional, Unlimited, Performance or Developer Edition
- Lightning Experience enabled
- System Administrator access for installation

Conclusion

The shift to committee-based B2B buying is not a trend; it is the new reality of enterprise sales. Organisations that continue to manage deals through individual contacts are fighting with one hand tied behind their back.

Buying committee intelligence does not require a wholesale replacement of your CRM or a complex implementation project. With Buying Groups for Salesforce, it requires an AppExchange installation and thirty minutes of setup.

The result is a sales team that can see the full buying committee on every deal, a marketing team that can measure engagement at the account level, and a revenue operations function with clean, structured CRM data that reflects how buying decisions are actually made.

Start your 30-day free trial today. Search for Buying Groups on the Salesforce AppExchange.

References

[1] Gartner, The New B2B Buying Journey. Gartner research finding that a typical buying group for a complex B2B solution involves 6 to 10 decision makers, each with 4 to 5 independently gathered pieces of information. Available at gartner.com

[2] CEB (now Gartner) / Forrester Research. Multiple studies consistently show that B2B buyers complete 60 to 70 percent of their purchase research before engaging with a sales representative. CEB originally published a figure of 57% (2015); Forrester subsequently reported 70% in digital-first categories. Referenced across: Forrester Business Technographics Global Priorities and Journey Survey; CEB, The Challenger Sale (Dixon and Adamson, 2011).

[3] Gartner, Inc. Press Release: Gartner Sales Survey Finds 74% of B2B Buyer Teams Demonstrate Unhealthy Conflict During the Decision Process, May 2025. Finding: When buyers experience buying group relevance, they are three times more likely to report a high-quality deal. Available at gartner.com/en/newsroom

[4] Forrester Research, The State of Business Buying 2024. Key findings: 86% of B2B purchases stall during the buying process; 81% of buyers express dissatisfaction with their chosen provider. Published December 2024. Available at forrester.com

[5] Gartner, Navigating Personalization Challenges in Buying Groups, 2025. Research on buying group dynamics and the impact of committee-level vs individual-level messaging on deal quality and consensus.
