



 Digital Markets

The State of Software Buying in 2026

4 trends guiding vendors to foster successful software purchase and adoption.

77% of organizations expect to increase their software budget in 2026, but earning their trust is becoming harder.

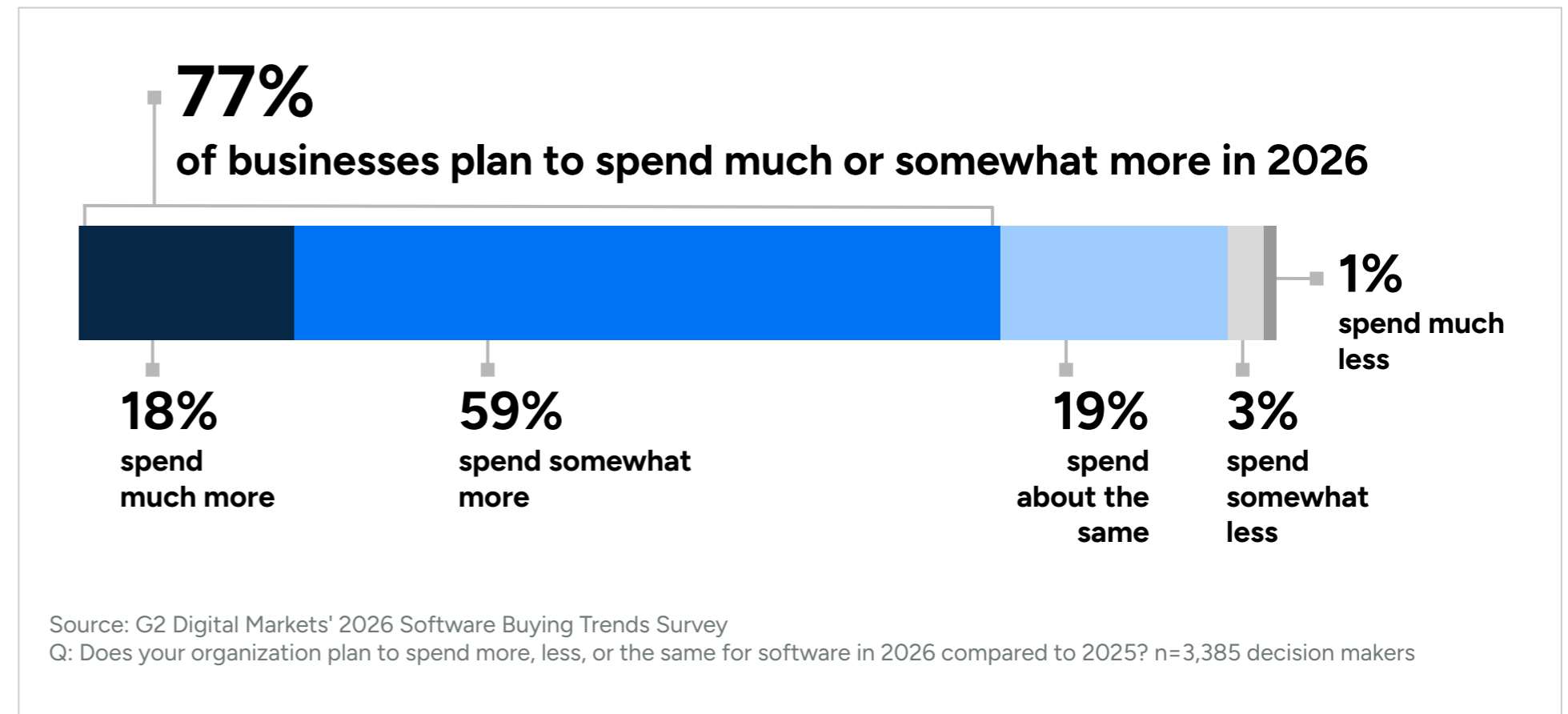
A recent G2 Digital Markets survey of 3,385 global decision makers shows:

- 77% of organizations plan to increase software budgets
- Only 4% expect to cut spending, signaling strong demand
- U.S. buyers spent an average of \$72,000 on their latest software purchase
- High spend = high scrutiny, raising the bar for clear value and ROI

Strong budgets don't guarantee easy wins. Buyers judge vendors on execution, transparency, and readiness to support adoption.

Organizations expect a positive return on software investments in just 8.75 months, putting pressure on vendors to deliver value fast.

Success depends on aligning with buyer behaviors, meeting real needs not just selling features.



\$72,000

annual average software spend of the most recent purchase by U.S. buyers in 2025.

8.75 month

is the average time to prove ROI.

Only 1 in 3 software buyers is successful.

Unexpected implementation disruption is the biggest threat to a successful software buying experience.

61% of software buyers experienced at least one disruption in the past 18 months.

These issues—failed integrations, stalled migrations, and missed timelines—quickly determine whether buyers can adopt a new system successfully.

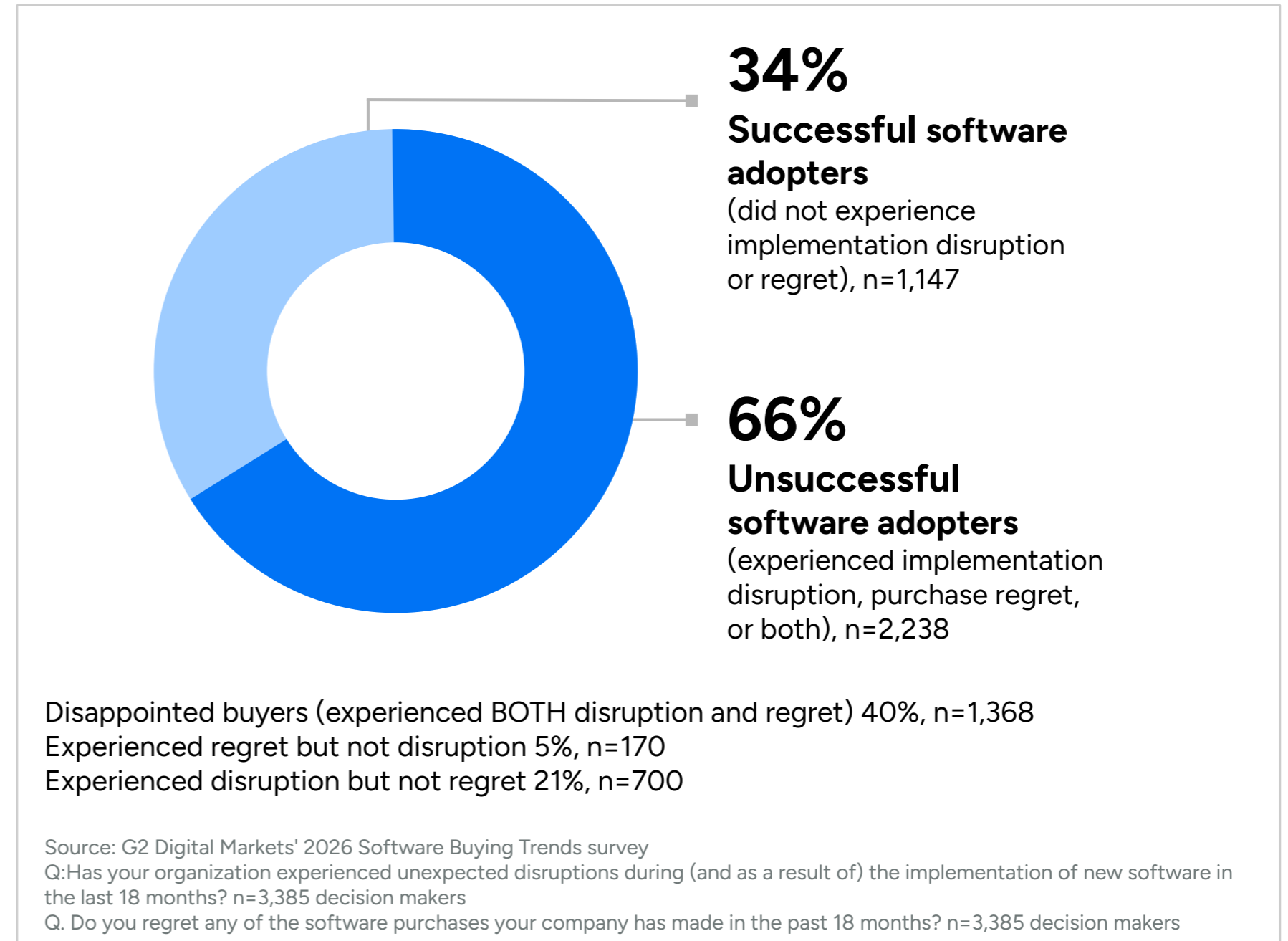
Disruption drives regret for many buyers. 40% of buyers faced both, forming a group we call **disappointed buyers**.

Why it matters:

These buyers are twice as likely to spend significantly more on software next year and 44% will switch to a different vendor's product.

The opportunity:

Savvy vendors can capitalize on this by understanding buyer pain points and positioning their solutions as reliable alternatives.



Align with buyer behaviors for success in 2026.

Successful adopters do things differently.

Our report highlights key behaviors so vendors can engage earlier, support buyers, and sustain success after the sale.

The 5 habits of successful software adopters



Requirements

They set their budget, define desired outcomes, and identify the challenges that the new software is meant to solve.



Expertise

They rely on industry experts, software review sites, and professional associations in addition to GenAI.



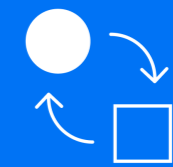
Decisiveness

They keep their vendor shortlist tight and make a purchase decision within three months.



Negotiation

They maintain focus on contract terms and negotiation, rather than the sales pitch.



Execution

They develop a formal plan for implementation, keying in on integrations and data migration.

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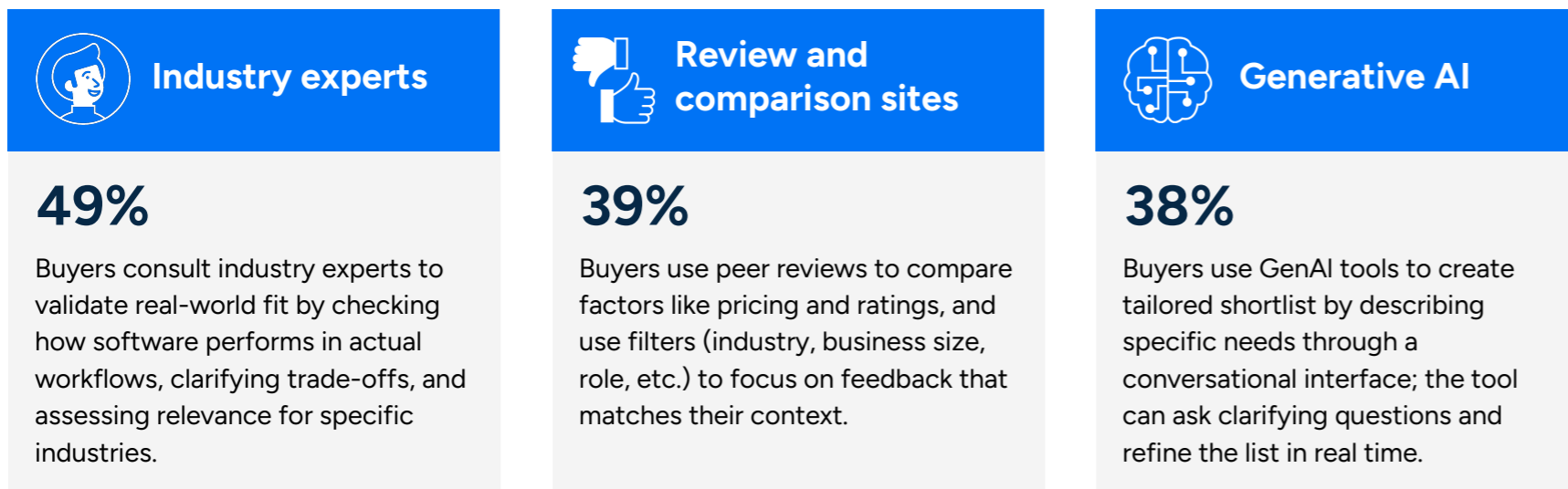
**Building
buyer confidence
starts early.**



Visibility on trusted review sites drives buyer decisions.

- Our research highlights the growing role of GenAI in software research, and more recent G2 data now shows AI chat pulling ahead as buyers' first stop for building shortlists.
- Buyers rely on multiple research sources to create their shortlists, requiring vendors to build trust signals via software review sites and industry experts beyond their own websites, which also improves their product's visibility in GenAI platforms.
- Vendors that align messaging, demos, pricing, and presence on credible platforms are more likely to reach informed buyers, earn shortlist consideration, and support long-term retention.

Top 3 influential source when buyers research software



Source: G2 Digital Markets' 2026 Software Buying Trends survey
Q: When conducting research for a new software purchase, what are the most influential information sources? Select up to four.
n: 3,385 software buyers. Note: Only 3 out of 10 answer options are displayed.

Which sources influence your decision to add a vendor to your shortlist?

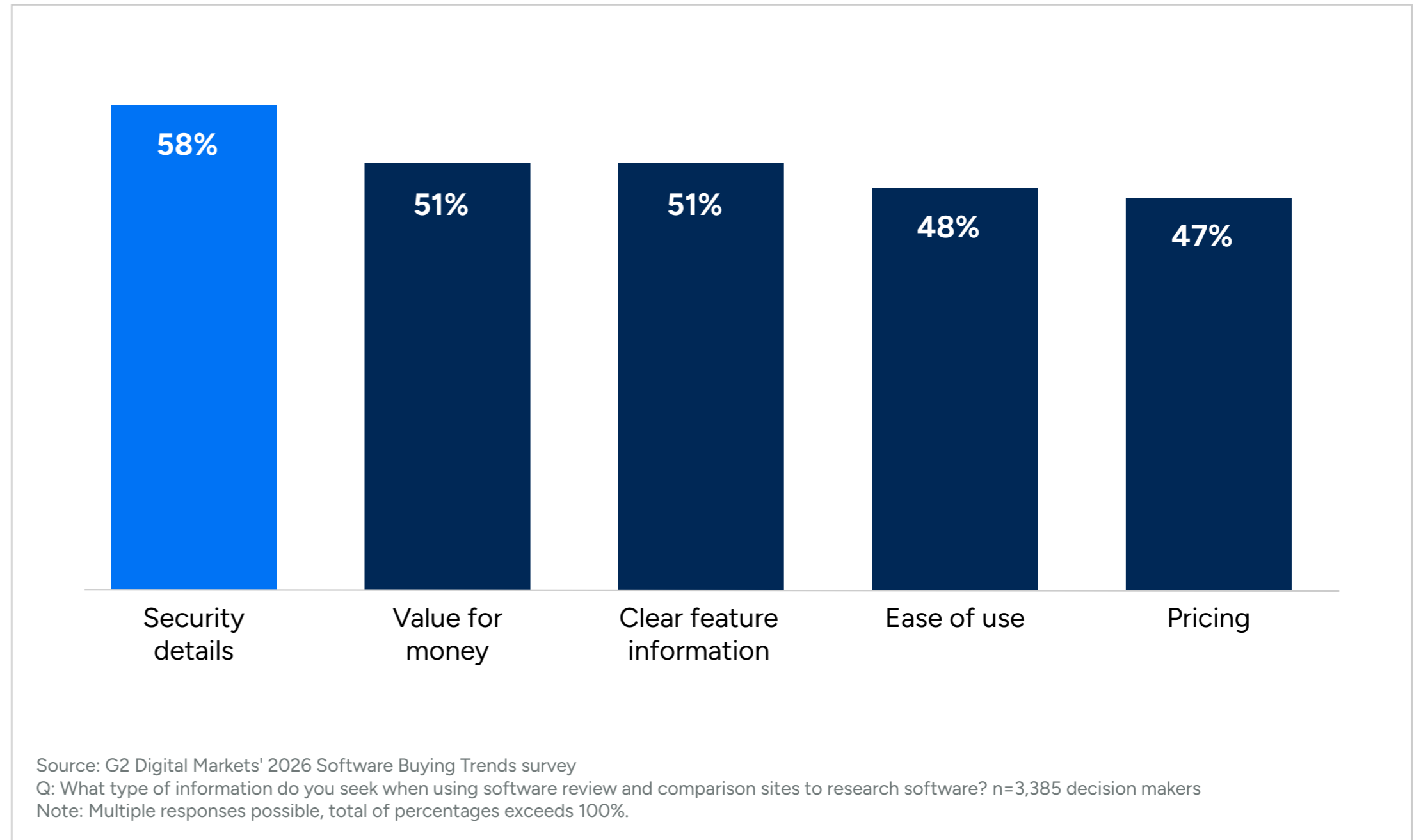


G2 March 2026 Survey of B2B Software Buyers. Online survey of 1,076 B2B decision makers across North America, EMEA, and APAC who are responsible for or influence purchase decisions for departments, multiple departments, operating units, or entire businesses.

What buyers value most when shortlisting vendors.

In assessing vendors for their shortlist, buyers look for signs that a vendor is credible, secure, transparent, and easy to evaluate.

Buyers most value security details, followed by value for money and clear feature information.



Earn trust before the first conversation.

Buyers make decisions early. Help them see your value without asking them to dig for it.

1

Show up where buyers shortlist early

Build a strong presence across GenAI tools, review platforms ([Capterra](#), [Software Advice](#), and [GetApp](#)) and expert listings. These sources shape early confidence and influence who makes the shortlist.

2

Make essentials easy to find

Publish transparent pricing, integration details, security information, and ROI examples openly. Clear, direct information lowers friction and signals readiness.

3

Clarify your differentiation early

Use your product profile, case studies, and [third-party verified reviews](#) to explain why buyers choose you. Specific proof points make your product easier to compare and harder to overlook.

**Short evaluation
cycles require
transparency.**



Decisive buyers drive faster outcomes.

Software buyers draw on multiple sources when building their shortlist. Rather than relying on sales pitches, most prefer hands-on experience, with 50% citing a trial as the decisive factor in their purchase decision, compared to just 35% who were influenced by a sales presentation.

With limited opportunities for direct interaction with buyers, delivering clear, comprehensive product information and offering full-featured trial experiences are essential to earn trust and maintain a competitive edge.

Successful software adopters evaluate faster with fewer options.



Successful software adopters work on a shorter decision timeline

They usually decide on a product within three months.



Successful adopters favor a focused vendor shortlist

The most effective software adopters focus on three vendors and engage with them.

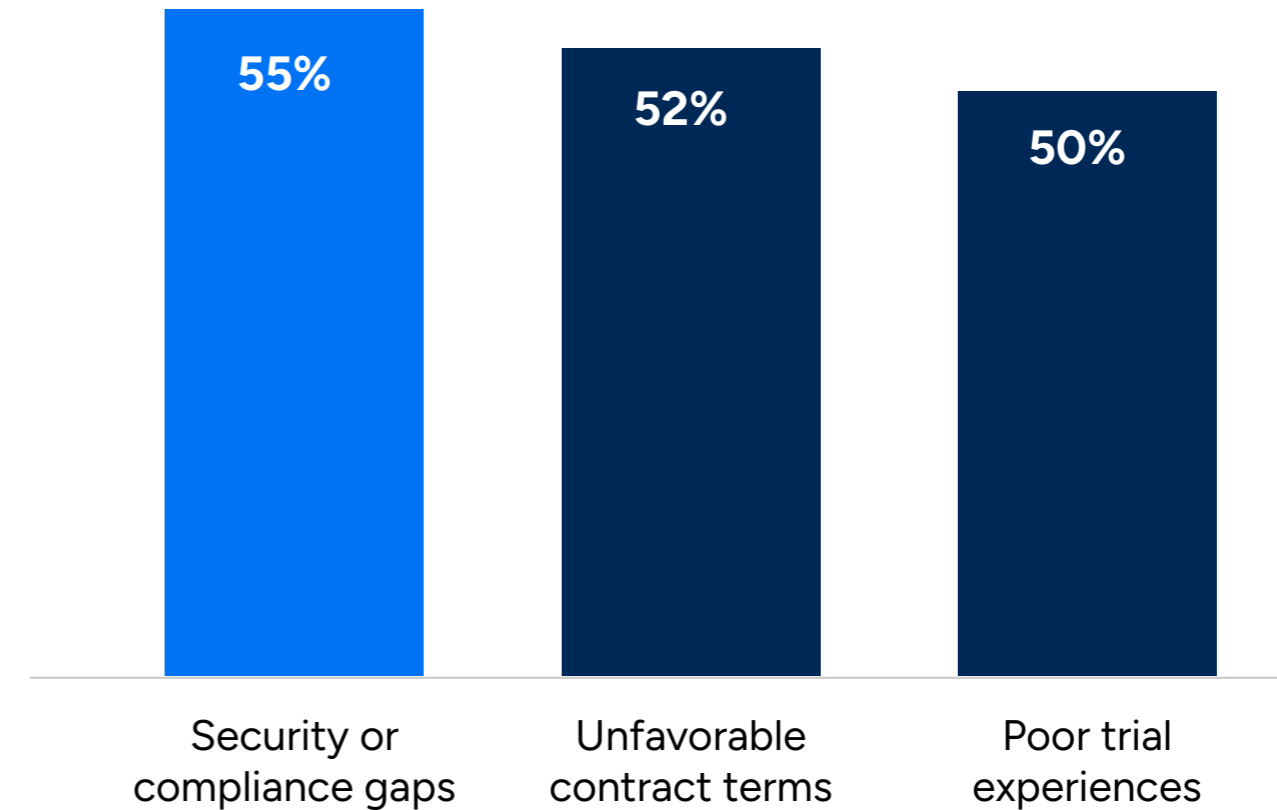
Reasons why buyers remove vendors from their shortlist.

This decisiveness gives vendors a narrow window to make an impact and every interaction counts. When successful buyers move quickly, they also become more selective, removing vendors for specific reasons such as security or risk review, contract terms, and demo or trial quality.

Vendors that clearly communicate contract flexibility, demonstrate compliance with industry-specific requirements, and deliver a smooth trial experience are more likely to remain in contention.

Since successful buyers define requirements early, vendors that proactively address these areas can reduce friction and accelerate the path to purchase.

Top 3 reasons why a vendor is removed from the final shortlist



Source: G2 Digital Markets' 2026 Software Buying Trends survey

Q: When making the final purchase decision for your most recent software purchase, what were the reasons for removing vendors from your shortlist? Select all that apply. n: 3,385 decision makers

Note: Multiple responses possible, total of percentages exceeds 100%.

Remove friction from the evaluation experience.

Buyers move faster when they feel that product evaluation is simple and transparent.

1

Offer clean, self-guided demos and trials

Let buyers explore the product without scheduling calls. A seamless trial builds confidence before you ever speak.

2

Spotlight product features in reviews

Help buyers evaluate the features and capabilities that set your product apart from the competition by staying engaged with reviews platforms.

3

Align your content with real buyer questions

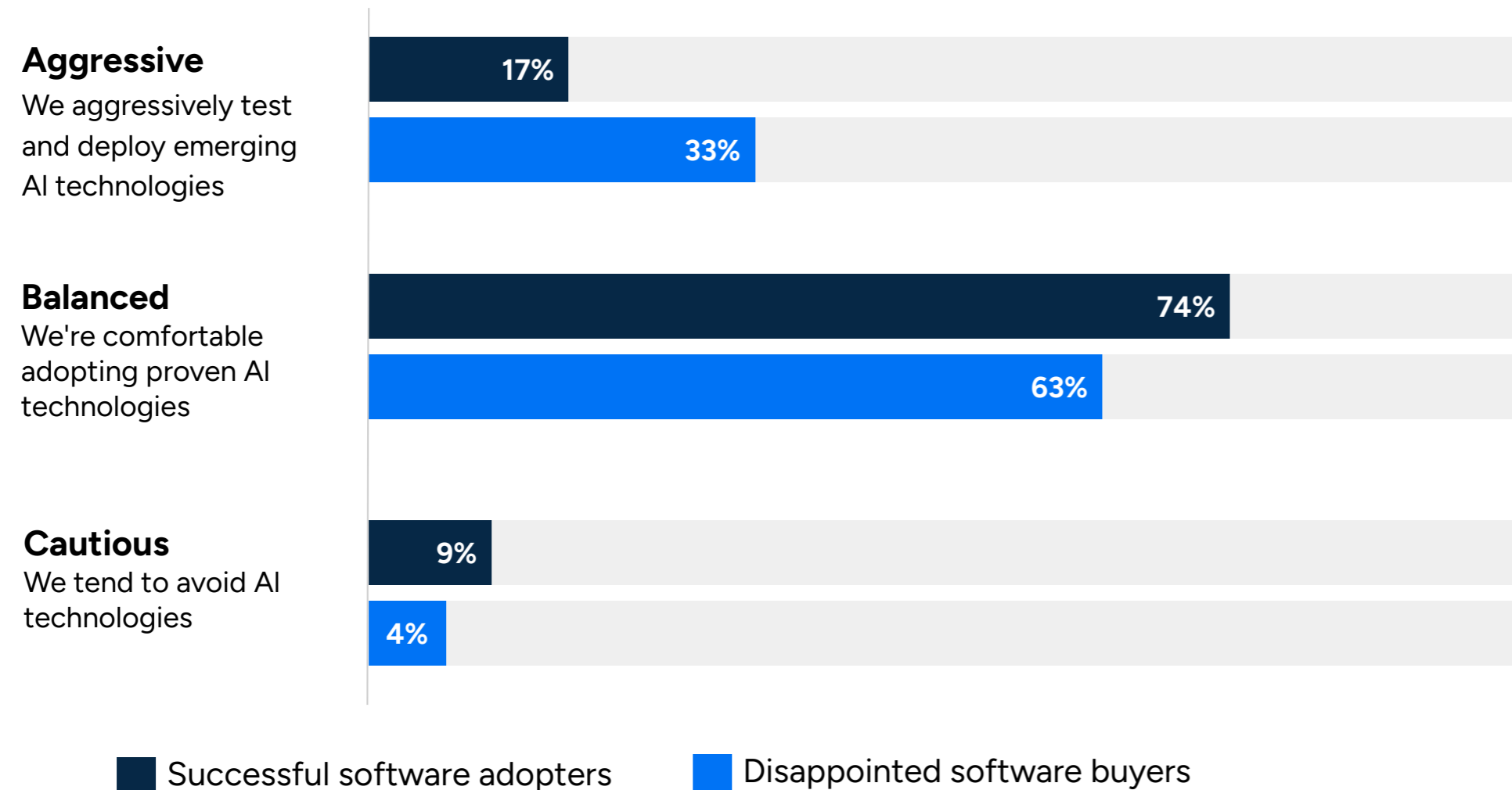
Use product profiles, FAQs, and comparison pages to answer the questions buyers are already searching for. When your information lines up with their workflow, you stay on their shortlist.



**AI adoption
requires proof,
not hype.**

A smarter approach to AI adoption

Successful adopters vs. disappointed buyers AI adoption rates



Source: G2 Digital Markets' 2026 Software Buying Trends survey

Q: Which of the following best describes your organization's approach to AI adoption (i.e., the assertiveness with which you have adopted AI functionality into business processes)?

Successful software adopters n=1,147; Disappointed software buyers n=1,368

Successful buyers take a balanced approach to AI adoption. They prioritize proven use cases to tempered innovation with risk management. They recognize AI's role in competitiveness but avoid overextending into emerging technologies too quickly.

In contrast, **disappointed buyers are nearly twice as likely to adopt AI aggressively.** But experimenting with complex AI applications can lead to misalignment and implementation challenges.

For vendors, this means positioning AI capabilities around practical, high-value outcomes rather than pushing cutting-edge features that may introduce unnecessary complexity.

Position AI as practical, not experimental.

Successful buyers adopt AI cautiously, focusing on proven use cases that deliver clear business value. Vendors that frame AI as a tool for measurable outcomes, rather than a risky leap into emerging technology, are more likely to win trust and stay on the shortlist.

1

Showcase practical AI applications

Highlight features such as predictive analytics, automated scheduling, and content generation in demos and marketing materials. Connect these capabilities to real SMB challenges.

2


Reduce perceived risk

Provide clear implementation guidance, security assurances, and ROI examples to help buyers feel confident about adoption.

3

Use proof, not hype

Share case studies and success stories from similar businesses to demonstrate tangible results. Avoid overselling cutting-edge AI features unless the buyer signals readiness.

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a green jacket, is smiling and looking at a laptop. A woman with glasses and a white top is also smiling and looking at the laptop. They are in a modern office environment with a desk, a glass of water, and a stack of papers. The background shows a wall with sticky notes and a window with a plant.

**Implementation
and post-sale
support define
long-term loyalty.**

Retention starts at implementation and depends on post-sale engagement.

Implementation is no longer just a technical milestone. It's a trust test.



61% of buyers experienced at least one unexpected disruption during implementation in the past 18 months.

Most common disruptions software buyers experience during implementation

Rollout qualities decides whether confidence grows or collapses.

Integration issues

40%

Data migration problems

38%

Delays

38%

Source: G2 Digital Markets' Software Buying Trends survey

Q: Which of the following disruptions has your team encountered during a software implementation process? Select all that apply.

n=2,068 software buyers who have experienced one or more implementation disruption

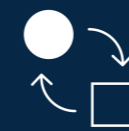
Note: Multiple responses possible, total of percentages exceeds 100%.

Disruptions carry long shadows.

Implementation alone doesn't secure loyalty; ongoing post-sale engagement drives retention. Buyers appreciate vendors who deliver consistent updates and proactive support after go-live. When support fades, buyer regret increases and many quickly replace products or renegotiate contracts. Post-sale silence is now a risk, not a neutral stance.

What happens during implementation determines whether a buyer moves into optimization or damage control.

Nearly half of affected buyers regret the purchase, and many take corrective action:



44%

replace software entirely



43%

ask the vendor to remedy issues



38%

seek to renegotiate the contract

Make implementation a strength, not a risk.

Buyers want assurance that implementation will be simple and transparent. Help them understand your product by clearly outlining onboarding and support processes, setting clear expectations for the post-purchase experience.

1

Deliver a frictionless rollout

Provide clear timelines, migration support, and proactive communication to prevent integration failures and delays.

2

Stay engaged beyond go-live

Offer product enhancements, responsive support, and ongoing training to strengthen post-sale relationships and reduce buyer attrition.

3

Turn adoption into advocacy

Structured onboarding and ongoing support don't just reduce churn—they create loyal customers who advocate for your product.

Win the shortlist, earn the renewal.

Buyer expectations have shifted from long, exploratory evaluations to fast, focused decisions

Vendors now have fewer chances to stand out and must earn trust early through transparency and accessible information, such as clear pricing, security details, and integration documentation.

Post-purchase engagement drives success

Buyers expect vendors to stay involved after go-live, making the post-purchase experience as decisive as the initial purchase journey.

Clarity and support set vendors apart

Trust is reinforced at every stage, from evaluation to renewal, when vendors prioritize clarity, reliability, and ongoing support in a market where buyers move fast and expect more.

Implementation is a critical risk point

A smooth rollout is essential, as setbacks during implementation can erode buyer confidence and increase churn risk.

Ongoing engagement builds loyalty

Proactive support, regular updates, and structured customer success efforts after go-live help turn adoption into long-term loyalty, while post-implementation silence increases risk and accelerates buyer regret.

Methodology

G2 Digital Markets' 2026 Software Buying Trends Survey was conducted online in August 2025 among 3,385 respondents in Australia (n=281), Brazil (n=278), Canada (n=293), France (n=283), Germany (n=279), India (n=260), Italy (n=263), Mexico (n=288), Spain (n=273), the U.K. (n=299), and the U.S. (n=588), at businesses across multiple industries, ages (1 year in business or longer), and sizes (5 or more employees). Business sizes represented in the survey include: 1,676 small (5-249 full-time employees), 822 midsize (250-999), and 887 enterprise (1,000+).

The goal of this study was to understand the timelines, organizational challenges, research behaviors, and adoption processes of business software buyers. Respondents were screened to ensure their involvement in business software purchasing decisions.

For the purposes of this report, disappointed buyers are defined as those who experienced both an unexpected business disruption resulting from software implementation and purchase regret (n=1,368), while successful buyers are those who did not experience disruption or regret (n=1,147).

Discover growth strategies that drive revenue.

Understanding your market and adapting to changing buying behaviors is key to attracting buyers and making it into the shortlist, securing the sale, and avoiding churn this year.

[Get started](#)

About G2 Digital Markets

G2 is the world's largest and most trusted data source for B2B software, helping businesses reach their peak potential by enabling confident buying and go-to-market decisions. Offering trusted data, authentic peer reviews, and real-time market intelligence, the G2 ecosystem — which includes Capterra, Software Advice, and GetApp — serves more than 200 million annual buyers, representing teams at every Fortune 500 company. As buyers increasingly shift from traditional search to AI search platforms, G2 has become the most-cited B2B software source across those AI-first channels where software discovery happens. Leading software and services companies like Salesforce, IBM, SAP, and Adobe also trust G2 to influence discovery, build brand credibility, reach in-market buyers, and accelerate revenue growth.

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