



The Evolution of the B2B Buyer

How shifting expectations around payments, automation and experience are reshaping supplier relationships

The B2B Buyer Has Changed.

The Payment Experience Now Carries More Weight

In 2023, we set out to better understand how B2B buyers evaluate suppliers and what drives their purchasing decisions. That research established a clear baseline: trust, relationships and onboarding experience played a central role in how buyers chose who to work with. The response to that initial study made it clear this was a conversation worth continuing.

We've since made this research a recurring effort to track how buyer expectations evolve over time. This report represents the next wave of that work. By revisiting these questions today, we can see not only what buyers value, but how those priorities are changing as B2B commerce continues to evolve.

B2B commerce is becoming more complex, not less. That complexity is changing how buyers evaluate suppliers. Across industries, buyers are navigating more stakeholders, tighter controls and greater pressure to manage cash flow. At the same time, their expectations for how purchasing should work have increased.

The findings in this report show a clear shift. While relationships still matter, buyers are placing greater weight on how consistently and efficiently suppliers execute across the purchasing experience.

This change is subtle but important. Loyalty has not disappeared, but it is being reinforced through execution. Performance across payments, invoicing and the broader order-to-cash process now plays a direct role in whether suppliers retain and grow customer relationships.

Today's B2B buyers expect a purchasing and payment experience that is smooth, flexible and consistent across channels, and aligned with how their business operates. When that experience falls short, loyalty is at risk.

Suppliers that invest in the right infrastructure across the full order-to-cash journey can reduce friction, support repeat purchasing and strengthen long-term relationships. Increasingly, growth is determined by how easy you are to do business with.

Discover how [TreviPay](#) helps you optimize the payment experience and better meet the needs of modern B2B buyers.



By **Brandon Spear**
CEO | TreviPay

Methodology

This report compares findings from TreviPay's 2023 and new global B2B buyer research studies.

- **Sample size:** 300 buyers in both 2023 and 2026
- **Geography:** United States and United Kingdom
- **Roles:** CFOs, COOs and senior leaders across finance, procurement and general management
- **Decision-making authority:** Sole, shared or moderate influence

The 2026 study replicates the 2023 methodology with minor updates to reflect changes in the payments landscape, enabling direct comparison across key trends.

		2023	2026
Number of Employees	200-499	14%	17%
	500-999	22%	31% ▲
	1,000-5,000	38% ▲	29%
	5,000+	26%	23%
Average Annual Revenue		\$402.7 million ▲	\$354.3 million
Industry	Financial Services	35% ▲	24%
	Manufacturing	14%	20%
	Retail	13%	15%
	Healthcare	8%	13% ▲
	CPG	4%	10% ▲
	Professional Services	8%	6%

Triangles indicate an increase over the previous research conducted in 2021 or 2023.

Executive Summary:

The Shift from Relationship to Experience

Loyalty remains strong across both studies. In 2023, 88% of B2B buyers reported high loyalty to their suppliers, and that level remains consistent today. However, the factors driving loyalty have changed.

The data shows a move in how buyers evaluate suppliers and make purchasing decisions. While trust and relationships remain important, they are no longer the primary drivers of retention.

Instead, buyers are placing greater emphasis on how effectively suppliers deliver across the purchasing experience.

Key Shifts from 2023 to 2026



73% of buyers now use AI in purchasing workflows, embedding automation into everyday decision making



The likelihood of choosing a supplier offering invoice terms increased from **51% to 68%**, highlighting the growing importance of financial flexibility



Trade credit has moved into the top tier of supplier selection criteria, reflecting increased demand for payment options that support cash flow



Tolerance for onboarding delays declined from **6.7 days to 5.1 days**, reducing the margin for operational inefficiency

Executive Summary:

The Shift from Relationship to Experience

Together, these changes signal a broader shift in buyer expectations. Suppliers are no longer evaluated primarily on relationship strength or brand reputation. They are evaluated on how consistently they deliver efficient, flexible and seamless purchasing experiences.

As a result, payments and A/R are playing a more visible role in supplier selection and retention. Back-end processes are now front and center and impact buyer experiences and business outcomes.

This makes the systems supporting the order-to-cash process more important. When connected and consistent, it enables smoother transactions and supports repeat purchasing. When it is fragmented, it introduces friction that can impact both conversion and retention. Efficient onboarding, flexible payment options and consistent execution make it easier for buyers to complete purchases and buy again.



AI Integration and Digital Maturity:

From Exploration to Embedded

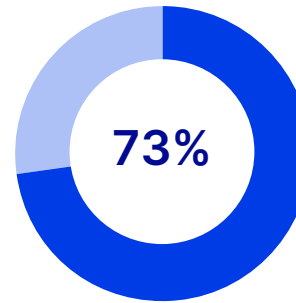
In 2023, innovation focused primarily on improving pricing, purchasing controls and payment options. Automation was part of that conversation, but it was not yet a defining factor in how buyers evaluated suppliers or managed purchasing processes.

Today, AI has become embedded in purchasing workflows.

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of buyers now use AI, applying it to automate routine tasks, detect fraud, manage suppliers and analyze spend.

This changes how purchasing decisions are made and how suppliers are evaluated. AI is no longer experimental. It is a core tool that supports faster decision-making, reduces manual effort and improves accuracy across the purchasing process. As buyers increasingly use AI to evaluate suppliers, compare options and streamline purchasing decisions, suppliers need to ensure their processes can keep pace.

Organizations with connected order-to-cash processes can respond faster, reduce friction and align with how buyers are making decisions. Those that rely on manual or fragmented processes risk slowing down transactions, limiting conversion and increasing the likelihood of being overlooked.



■ Use AI in purchasing

Of buyers using AI technologies in purchasing and payment processing, the most widely reported applications include:

- 1 Automating routine tasks and invoice processing (**core operational use case across purchasing workflows**)
- 2 Fraud detection, risk mitigation, security (**primary risk and control application**)
- 3 Supplier selection and management (**increasingly embedded in evaluation and decision-making processes**)

Operational Efficiency:

Rising Expectations, Lower Tolerance

Operational efficiency now directly influences supplier selection and retention.

In 2023, buyers cited slow onboarding, inefficient processes and lack of support as key pain points. While these issues created friction, buyers were more tolerant. The average acceptable onboarding time was 6.7 days.

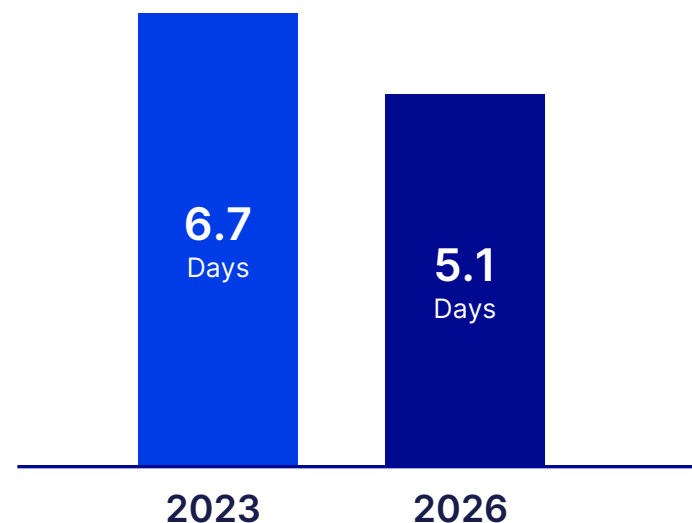
Now, that tolerance has declined to 5.1 days, even though actual onboarding timelines remain largely unchanged. This gap reflects a change in expectations. Buyers are no longer willing to wait, even when processes remain the same.

Buyers also report increased frustration with lack of standardization, unclear onboarding steps and system integration challenges, issues that can delay onboarding, slow transactions and create ongoing inefficiencies. For example, 40% of buyers cite integration challenges as a key operational concern, highlighting how system compatibility can impact both initial supplier selection and long-term satisfaction.

Operational performance now determines whether buyers complete transactions, return for repeat purchases or move to alternative suppliers. Efficiency is no longer just about internal optimization for suppliers. It is a commercial requirement that directly impacts revenue, influencing how quickly buyers can transact, how often they return and whether they choose to continue working with a supplier.

Onboarding timeline comparison:

Average acceptable onboarding time



Payments Choice:

From Preference to Expectation, and Trade Credit is Essential in the Mix

Payment flexibility has become a defining factor in how B2B buyers evaluate and choose suppliers. Trade credit sits at the center, enabling buyers to purchase now and pay later through invoice-based terms at checkout.

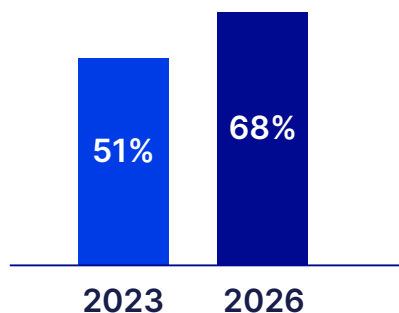
This change shows up first in supplier selection. In 2023, 51% of buyers said they were more likely to choose a supplier offering invoice terms. Today, that figure has increased to 68%, indicating that access to trade credit is increasingly influencing which suppliers buyers select. In fact, among loyal buyers who are likely to change suppliers, trade credit options rose from #17 to #1 in “extremely important” factors influencing supplier selection.

It is also reflected in how buyers prefer to pay. The share of buyers who say they prefer to make purchases using payment terms has increased from 59% to 72%, pointing to a broader move toward purchasing models that support cash flow control.

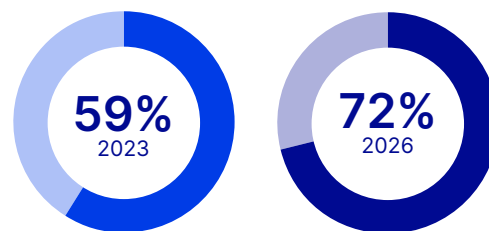
However, this is not about replacing one payment method with another. 77% of buyers say trade credit offered alongside credit cards increases supplier preference, reinforcing the value of combining payment methods with flexible terms. Buyers are increasingly looking for flexibility across methods, with variety across payment options now the top factor likely to increase purchasing, rising from 28% in 2023 to 49% now. Also, digital wallets and other emerging payment methods are gaining traction.

Buyers want the ability to choose how and when they pay, whether that means leveraging invoice terms for larger purchases or using cards and other methods for speed and convenience. Payment flexibility is no longer a feature set. It shapes how easily buyers can transact, manage cash flow and return for future purchases.

Likelihood to choose a supplier offering invoice terms



Preference for paying with terms (pay later vs. immediate payment) increased from:



Among loyal buyers likely to switch suppliers, trade credit options rose from **#17 to #1** among factors rated “**extremely important**” in supplier selection

Frictionless, Consistent Checkout Across Channels

Buyers now expect a seamless experience across all purchasing channels, including eCommerce, sales-assisted transactions and integrated procurement systems.

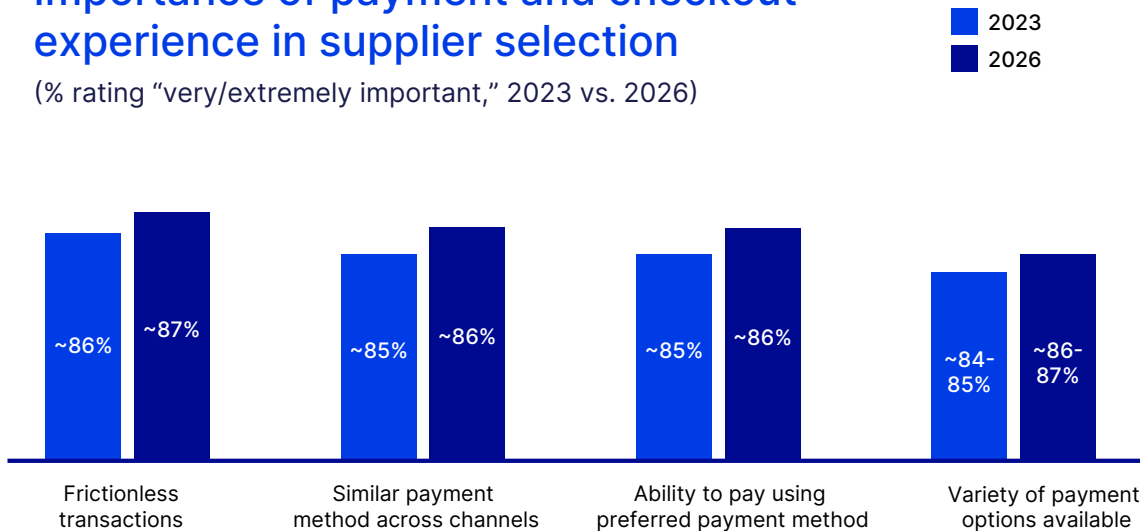
In 2023, these experiences were often inconsistent, with friction caused by lengthy checkout processes, onboarding delays and disconnected systems.

Today, buyers are less patient of that fragmentation. They expect consistent payment options and frictionless transactions across every channel they use.

Aligned experiences reduce friction and support both transaction completion and repeat purchasing. When they are not, suppliers risk losing business.

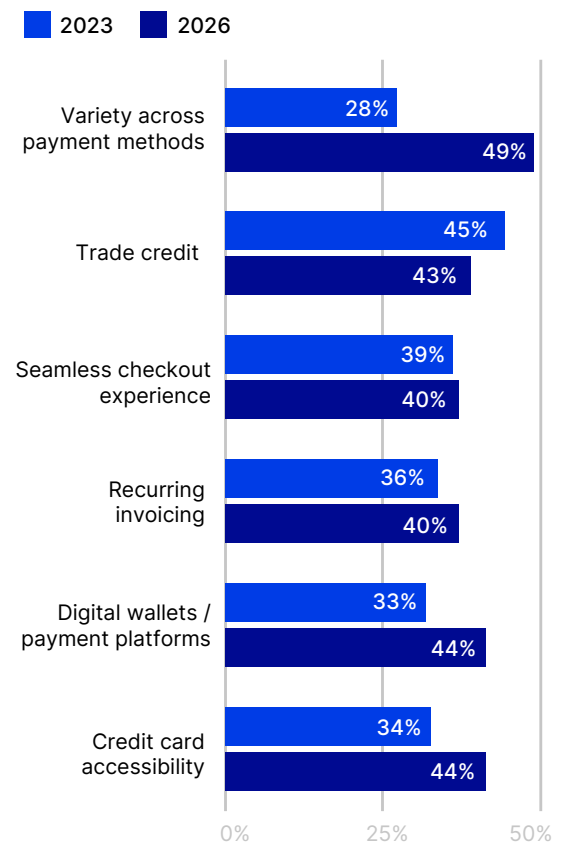
Importance of payment and checkout experience in supplier selection

(% rating "very/extremely important," 2023 vs. 2026)



What would make buyers purchase more from suppliers

(% of buyers selecting each factor, 2023 vs. 2026)



What Has Changed...

Some things remain consistent. Loyalty is still strong across B2B relationships. In both 2023 and now, 88% of buyers report they are likely to continue purchasing from existing suppliers. Relationships still matter, particularly when expectations are met.

What has changed is how loyalty is earned.

In 2023, buyers were more willing to work through operational friction. Trust, reputation and strong relationships could offset inefficiencies in onboarding, payments or processes.

Today, that willingness has decreased. Buyers still value trust, but they are less willing to compensate for delays, inconsistencies or manual workarounds. Instead, they expect suppliers to deliver efficient, predictable experiences across the purchasing journey.

This shift is reflected in three areas:

- **Operational performance** now directly influences whether buyers complete transactions and return
- **Payment flexibility** has become a core expectation, not a value-add
- **Consistency across channels** is required to support how buyers purchase today

Loyalty remains high while drivers shift

(2023 vs. 2026, using % of buyers and purchasing impact data)

	2023	2026
Buyer Loyalty	88% <i>Loyalty remains stable</i>	89% <i>Loyalty remains stable</i>
Primary Drivers	45% <i>Trust</i> 40% <i>Customer support</i> 39% <i>Onboarding experience</i>	34% <i>Frictionless transactions</i> 33-35% <i>Invoicing flexibility</i>

...And What Has Not

Together, these changes redefine what it means to be “easy to do business with.” In 2023, strong relationships could offset operational gaps. Now, ease is defined by how reliably and seamlessly suppliers execute. This is where payment infrastructure plays a critical role.

Payments, invoicing and A/R are no longer separate processes. They shape how buyers transact, how quickly they can complete purchases and whether they return. A well-structured payments foundation brings these elements together, creating a more consistent and predictable experience for buyers while improving visibility and control for suppliers. When these systems are connected, they reduce friction and support repeat business. When they are not, they introduce delays and increase the risk of switching.



Implications for Suppliers:

Competing in the New B2B Environment

To remain competitive, suppliers need to rethink how they deliver the buying experience.

Key priorities include:

- Connecting payments, invoicing and credit into a unified payments infrastructure
- Offering flexible payment options (including trade credit) as a standard capability
- Reducing onboarding and transaction friction
- Investing in automation and AI with clear operational use cases
- Delivering consistent experiences across all channels

Growth comes from removing friction across the entire order-to-cash process, not adding more features.

Suppliers that simplify purchasing and align with buyer expectations will retain customers and expand share of wallet. Those that do not will face increasing pressure on both revenue and retention.

What buyers expect from suppliers today

(ranked by priority based on 2026 research)



Fast, clear onboarding



Flexible payment options and terms



Consistent experience across channels



Seamless system integration (ERP, procurement)



Accurate, easy-to-manage invoicing

Building a Future-Ready Order-to-Cash Strategy

The priorities outlined earlier are interconnected. Addressing them individually is not enough. Leading organizations are rethinking how the entire order-to-cash process works together as a unified experience.

Instead of managing onboarding, payments and invoicing as separate steps, they are building a coordinated system designed around how buyers purchase and how finance teams operate.

This approach is often described as Zero Touch A/R, where automation connects workflows across the order-to-cash process to reduce manual effort, improve accuracy and provide greater visibility into receivables.

At its core, this model brings together several key capabilities:

- Payment experiences designed around how buyers operate
- Automation across invoicing, reconciliation and collections
- Flexible net terms that align with buyer cash flow needs
- Integrated infrastructure that supports transactions across all channels

The goal is not just speed. It is consistency, predictability and ease of doing business. When these elements work together, suppliers can reduce friction, accelerate transactions and create a more reliable experience for both buyers and internal teams.

Payments are no longer the end of the transaction. They are part of a connected system that shapes how the entire customer relationship is delivered and experienced.

Order-to-cash foundation

Payments
Invoicing
A/R

Supporting key capabilities

Automation
Omnichannel enablement
Flexible terms
Buyer-centric experiences

Outcomes

Consistency
Predictability
Ease

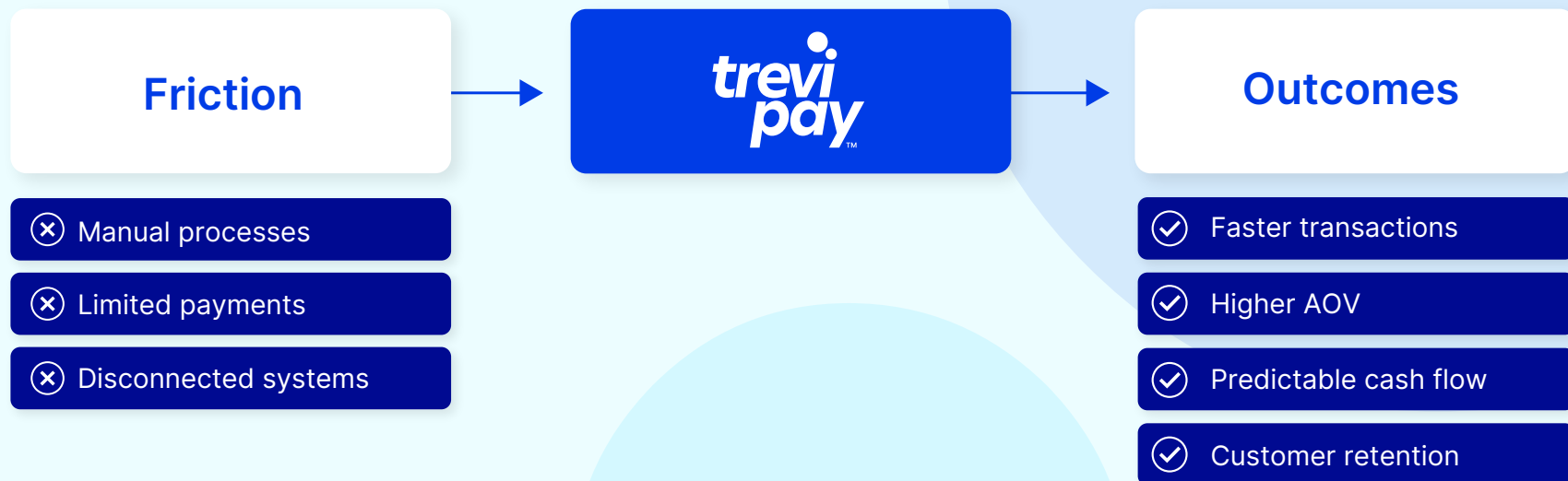
Optimize Order-to-Cash with TreviPay

TreviPay enables suppliers to meet evolving buyer expectations by connecting payments, invoicing and credit into a single, coordinated experience.

This allows suppliers to:

- **Accelerate conversion and strengthen retention:** Reduce delays in onboarding and payments, making it easier for buyers to choose and stay with your business
- **Deliver consistent experiences across every channel:** Support buyers whether they transact online, through sales or within procurement systems
- **Remove friction and keep transactions moving:** Replace manual processes and disconnected systems with a streamlined purchasing and payment experience
- **Increase AOV and grow revenue:** Enable buyers to transact more easily, support larger order sizes and expand share of wallet
- **Improve cash flow predictability and reduce risk:** Gain greater visibility into receivables while maintaining control over credit and collections

TreviPay helps suppliers turn operational complexity into a buying experience that flows, supporting growth, retention and long-term customer relationships.



About TreviPay

TreviPay, The Pay by Invoice Company™, is the global B2B payments infrastructure partner for manufacturers, retailers, travel companies and banks. With our fully managed platform, intelligent apps, and 40 years of buyer intelligence, we help buyers buy, and sellers grow and get paid faster. Behind the scenes, we streamline the order-to-cash process, from fast customer onboarding and predictive marketing to smart invoicing and settlement, all powered by AI that improves with every transaction. The result is fewer errors, higher AOV and guaranteed DSO. Enabling more than \$8B in global trade annually, TreviPay operates in 35 countries and was named a Leader for Embedded Payment Applications by IDC and a top vendor in cash application by The Hackett Group.

For more information, visit www.trevipay.com.

